

Refugee Matters: Preparing for Life and Living in the UK

**Final external evaluation covering Years 1 to 5,
from June 2017 to May 2022**

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Acronyms

ASR	Asylum seekers and refugees
CoS	City of Sanctuary
GL	Global Link
RAIS	Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support
SRP	Syrian Resettlement Programme
VCRP	Vulnerable Children Resettlement Programme

Summary

Background: This evaluation covers Years 1 to 5 of Global Link's five year *Refugee Matters* project, running from June 2017 to May 2022, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. During this time the number of houses accommodating asylum seekers in Lancaster & Morecambe district grew by around 80%, 22 families arrived under resettlement schemes, and the number of refugees opting to stay in the district also increased. Furthermore, in the final year of the project Serco placed 218 male asylum seekers in two former hotels (now hostels) in the district.

Methodology: This report assesses whether Global Link (GL) is meeting each of six outcomes, using data from a survey of 56 asylum seekers and refugees (ASR), six workshops involving 52 ASR, interviews with 13 ASR, a survey of 20 stakeholders, GL's annual WhatsApp survey, an end-of-project reflection workshop with GL staff, as well as the author's observations of GL's activities.

Findings: The following table summarises my findings for each outcome:

Outcome 1: ASR have become less isolated and more engaged and settled in the Lancaster community through accessing the project's services and training.	ASR report significant reductions in feelings of isolation and positive assessments of Lancaster. GL greatly exceeded targets for engagement at its lunch drop-in and learning workshops, and through its move on support.
Outcome 2: ASR have developed a range of skills, increasing their employability.	GL both provided training and facilitated access to training in vocational skills that should help ASR to find work. Getting ASR voluntary placements was hampered by the majority's lack of English, and for all but one year GL did meet its target of supporting 40 ASR to find voluntary placements. Nonetheless, over the five years it supported 132 individuals to get voluntary work experience, for their benefit and that of the wider community.
Outcome 3: ASR have improved their English language competency and communication skills.	After a slow start Global Link and its partners exceeded the targets for this outcome, despite cuts in provision by the local college. They served a wide range of needs among increasing numbers of ASR, and gave ASR regular opportunities to improve their English language competency and communication skills, and to gain language qualifications. The provision is highly appreciated by ASR whose main request at mid-term was for more classes.
Outcome 4: Refugees have improved knowledge and confidence to access support for job-seeking.	GL exceeded its target of supporting 30 refugees to gain paid employment by 26%, and provided a range of workshops and assistance to ASR to understand and be more effective at job seeking in the UK. The task of finding work is challenging due to limited English competency and because around a quarter of ASR have no qualifications in their own language ¹ .
Outcome 5: ASR have improved quality of life due to increased access to food/clothing.	At mid-term two thirds of ASR reported regularly receiving free food and clothes from or via GL, to the benefit of their well-being, and those services continued in the second half of the project.

1 Dr Mohamed Yakalhef, *Lancaster & Morecambe City of Sanctuary Refugees' Challenges of Integration*, Global Link DEC, April 2019, page 11.

Outcome 6: ASR well-being is enhanced by contributing to the local community through voluntary cooking and other voluntary work.	At mid-term almost half of survey respondents had volunteered, with the proportion rising with their time in Lancaster. Those who have experience of volunteering were positive about it, with 76% saying it is ‘definitely good’ for their well-being.
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Stakeholders mainly viewed Global Link positively: when asked (as part of the mid-term research) to compare GL with similar organisations that they interact with professionally 70% rated GL to be ‘better’ or ‘much better’ than most. All agreed that the situation for ASR would be much worse without GL’s work, including that without the hub of GL – a place to get support and a place for socialising – there would be more isolation, homelessness, and mental health problems among ASR.

Overall **asylum seekers and refugees** assessed Global Link’s work very positively, with 89% of survey respondents in 2022 viewing GL’s services as ‘very good’ or ‘good’.

From my observations, and in comparison with other organisations I have worked with, I found Global Link to be a very **responsive** and agile organisation. Its staff and volunteers (including ASR) involve ASR and take up their ideas, and are able to adapt their work to changing circumstances, including the challenges thrown up by the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic and the sudden placement of asylum seekers in former hotels in the district.

Conclusion: Earlier comparative research in Lancashire² indicates that Lancaster offers a relatively favourable environment for community integration of refugees. Global Link is making the most of that context, and employing all the key evidence-based strategies identified by a Home Office review³ of what works to support refugees to integrate. It is carrying out its work effectively, and delivering its outcomes, while remaining a warm and human-centred organisation which responds to the messy and continually changing realities of people’s lives.

Global Link is greatly appreciated, and even loved, by asylum seekers and refugees in the district, and with good reason. As one interviewee commented *“I am not happy when I came to here ...Now I say it for everyone, if a new asylum seeker comes through the door I tell them ‘you are very lucky to be in Lancaster’, because I know what support you will get.”*

2 Dr Caroline Blunt, *Community Integration Assessment: Story of Window on Tool Kit for Community Integration*, UCLan, October 2018.

3 Home Office, *Integrating Refugees: What works? What can work? What does not work? A summary of the evidence*, June 2019, pages 5-7.

1. Background

This evaluation is of Global Link's project entitled *Refugee Matters: Preparing for Life and Living in the UK*. It is the final evaluation of a five year project, running from June 2017 to May 2022, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

Dispersal of asylum seekers to Lancaster began in December 2015. This quickly led to the formation of Lancaster & Morecambe City of Sanctuary, which acts as a network for civil society organisations and individuals keen to support asylum seekers. Building on a previous project with refugees in Blackburn, and having observed the Blackburn drop-in, Global Link worked with a refugee to plan for a drop-in in Lancaster, and secured seed funding for this from the New Beginnings Fund in June 2016. By that time there were four Serco houses (where AS are accommodated) with a total of around 30 residents.

In June 2017 GL secured funding for the *Refugee Matters* project, and also won the contract to support refugee families brought to Lancaster under the Syrian Resettlement and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Programmes (SRP & VCRP). By this time there were around 24 Serco houses with around 110 residents, and a growing number of people who had leave to remain and had stayed in Lancaster. The first 10 SRP/VCRP families arrived in July 2017.

In around August 2018 funding for Lancaster & Morecambe Asylum and Refugee Support (part of the work of Marsh Community Centre) finished. LMARS had had a system of house volunteers (pairs of people who supported individuals in a particular Serco house through weekly visits), and also provided drop-in support for case work and legal issues. Its closure meant a significant cut in the support to ASR, although some volunteers from LMARS did set up RAIS (Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support), providing drop-in support but not house volunteers. The loss of LMARS led to Global Link needing to provide more case work and legal support, as the dispersal of asylum seekers to the district continued. By July 2018 there were 29 Serco houses.

By June 2020 there were 35 houses with beds for 150 people, and around 106 recent refugees who have opted to stay in Lancaster, some of whom have been joined by their spouses and children. In addition there were 15 refugee families (70 individuals) who came through the SRP & VCRP.

While Serco initially accommodated asylum seekers within Lancaster, during the second half of the project it also placed asylum seekers in houses outside of the city, in Galgate, Carnforth, Morecambe. This was due to difficulty finding suitable houses within the city, a problem also faced by Global Link when seeking homes for refugees within the resettlement programmes.

In September 2021 Global Link won the Afghan Resettlement Assistance Programme contract, and subsequently supported five refugee families to settle in Lancaster, in addition to the contract to support a further five Syrian families, of whom two had arrived by the end of this project.

During the second half of the project GL invested a lot of time in attempting to secure its own premises for its own long-term future, without being subject to a landlord's restrictions. It sought a bigger social space, room for workshop activities and staff offices, and rooms to rent and therefore generate income. On each of three attempts to buy a building GL was outbid. However, a supporter is willing to sell a suitable building to GL at less than the market price; at the time of writing GL is awaiting planning permission to convert it into community centre, and has raised £185,000 in donations towards the deposit.

In March 2022 Global Link and the City Council were informed – with one week's notice - that Serco would be moving up to 220 asylum seekers into temporary accommodation in one of Lancaster's former hotels. In May 2022 Serco opened a second hostel, housing 78 men in a former hotel in

Morecambe. As a result demand for GL's services increased massively. GL responded by organising clothing, welcome packs, phone donations, and four English classes per week for the Lancaster hostel residents. Classes for the Morecambe hostel began in June 2022, just after the end of this project.

At the time of writing there are around 43 Serco houses in the district, with beds for perhaps 190 people, and around 180 refugees who have decided to stay here. There were also 21 refugee families who came through the three resettlement programmes, and approximately 218 men temporarily housed in the two hostels.

To situate myself in this context, I worked as a volunteer for LMARS from October 2016 until May 2017, assisting the Coordinator at the time when Serco was rapidly expanding the number of houses. In October 2017 I took on the voluntary role of coordinating the City of Sanctuary bike project, a task that I still do. I am therefore known to the many ASR who have borrowed bikes and attended cycle training. I came to this evaluation having never been involved in Global Link's initiatives, but with five years' familiarity of the local civil society response to supporting ASR, and 27 years' experience as a self-employed consultant, working in and evaluating civil society efforts for greater wellbeing.

Aims of this evaluation

The main aims are:

- To assess the extent to which Global Link's work is meeting the project's planned outcomes;
- To reflect on the project's achievements and challenges;
- To learn from those ASR who are not using Global Link's services.

2.1 Project outcomes

These are the outcomes that Global Link specified in its *Refugee Matters* project proposal:

Outcome 1: ASR have become less isolated and more engaged and settled in the Lancaster community through accessing the project's services and training;

Outcome 2: ASR have developed a range of skills, increasing their employability;

Outcome 3: ASR have improved their English language competency and communication skills;

Outcome 4: Refugees have improved knowledge and confidence to access support for job-seeking.

In addition, in the report on the first year of the project, Global Link added two more outcomes:

Outcome 5: ASR have improved quality of life due to increased access to food/clothing;

Outcome 6: ASR well-being is enhanced by contributing to the local community through voluntary cooking and other voluntary work.

2.2 Scope of this evaluation

Third sector organisations⁴ provide a range of support services for ASR in Lancaster and Morecambe District. For clarity, Box 1 sets out which services are the subject of this evaluation, while Box 2 contains those that are beyond the scope of this research.

4 Organisations that are neither public sector nor private sector, including registered charities, community organisations and social enterprises.

Box 1: Global Link activities in Years 4 & 5 funded by the Big Lottery Fund that are part of this evaluation

Tuesday lunch drop-in: from 12 until 2, ASR take it in turns to cook lunch with support from a regular team of volunteers. There are also announcements about ASR arrivals and departures, events and opportunities. Due to lockdown restrictions GL was only able to run the lunch drop-in in Y5, from September 2021.

Tuesday presentations at the drop-in: at least once a month, straight after the lunch, these short sessions cover a variety of topics of relevance to ASR. For example, how to set up a business, driving in the UK, ideas about how to sleep well, LGBT history, politics and democracy.

Education support: The Big Lottery funding paid for one day a week of GL's Education Access Tutor's salary. Her role includes carrying out English assessments (in order to ascertain which English class each individual should join) and making referrals to all CoS English classes as well as all courses at Lancaster & Morecambe College and the WEA.

English language classes: GL contributed funding for venue hire and materials and DBS checks for volunteer teachers, including those providing one-to-one tuition to individuals, mainly mothers of young children who would otherwise not access English tuition. GL's Education Access Tutor organises ESOL classes with GL's partners, and in Y5 has also taught in classes for resettled families and men living in the Lancaster hostel.

The Sewing Circle: gives ASR access to sewing machines plus training and peer-learning in sewing skills.

Vocational training: Global Link provides training in IT and, with the WEA, community interpretation, in order to help ASR find voluntary and paid work.

'Move on' support to refugees: providing rapid support when leave to remain has been awarded to support refugees to find work, or to access universal credit and other benefits, find housing, and open a bank account before they must leave their Serco accommodation.

Employment support: GL staff support people to find work, and also refer to Inspira for support in creating a CV.

Referring and linking to other services: Global Link helps ASR access other forms of support by, for example, providing referrals to the Olive Branch food bank, and linking them to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Tara Centre, Bikes for Lancaster, and East Meets West. This includes helping refugees to access Red Cross support for family reunion.

Advocacy: when necessary Global Link advocates with and on behalf of ASR, including regarding employment terms and conditions, benefits, and health issues.

Box 2: local third sector activities that are not part of this evaluation

Global Link activities in Years 4 & 5 concerning ASR which are not funded by the Big Lottery Fund

Case work and support to refugees arriving through the three resettlement programmes.

Case work drop-ins: GL is open every day from 10 until 4 for ASR queries, for example, support accessing health care, school issues including uniforms and free school meals, housing issues, understanding official letters and much more, funded by Awards for All.

Claver Hill community farm, where ASR grow and harvest food.

City of Sanctuary support that involves Global Link: specifically Global Link gives a CoS welcome pack to each asylum seeker on arrival in Lancaster, and distributes destitution grants, and social grants, all of which are funded by CoS.

Health & well-being projects, such as football, walking and running, funded by Platinum Jubilee Fund of the National Lottery.

Cultural events: events that Global Link runs such as Refugee Week and the Christmas party, usually with a dual function of promoting community cohesion and enabling ASR and local residents to mix and learn from each other. These activities were run by GL's Lived Experience group with funding from the County Council's Community Integration Fund.

Other third sector activities currently serving ASR in the district (not an exhaustive list)

Band of Brothers: a group that brings men together for lunch and socialising.

Bikes for Lancaster: a CoS project which repairs donated bikes and loans them to ASR.

Eggcup: using food surpluses and Food Clubs to address food poverty among ASR and the general population.

Citizens Advice Bureau services.

East Meets West: a group that brings together women with different cultural backgrounds to celebrate friendship through events and social gatherings.

Global Village Café: A social enterprise that gives ASR meaningful training and development opportunities and employment through providing catering services, as well as improving cultural understanding and relations within the local community.

Lancaster Boys and Girls club: provides one-off activities for young ASR.

RAIS (Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support): provides a drop-in for all ASR queries on Mondays and Thursdays from 3 until 5.

St Thomas' church: provides support to ASR, and organises an annual Autumn Fiesta which is both a cultural and fundraising event.

Tara Centre: a not-for-profit healing centre practicing kindness, including a weekly well-being drop-in providing massage for ASR and volunteers in ASR projects.

The football project: a CoS project that provides regular meet-ups for ASR and local people for fitness and friendship.

The Olive Branch: a project providing support to socially-disadvantaged people, including a food bank.

The violin project: a CoS project through which ASR learn to play violin.

2. Evaluation methodology

70% of the total funding for evaluating this project was invested in the mid-term evaluation, in order to maximise the chance to act on what was learned during the second half of the project.

I used a mixture of methods in the research for the mid-term evaluation, as summarised below. **Appendix A** provides more detail about the process I followed for each method.

Method	Purpose
Literature review	To gain information from existing monitoring and evaluation data and research.
Survey of ASR	To gain feedback from a significant proportion of ASR concerning the project's key outcomes. To invite their feedback and ideas about other issues.
Workshops with ASR	To learn about how ASR value GL's different services and to invite their practical ideas as to how GL might improve the delivery of those services.
Semi-structured interviews with ASR	To learn from individuals about their experience of living in Lancaster, how they have interacted with GL, and with what effect.
Survey of stakeholders	To gather feedback from GL's key stakeholders.
Observation	To learn and develop ideas for improvement by observing GL activities

Appendix B presents the ASR survey, **Appendix C** is the guide for the semi-structured interviews, and **Appendix D** sets out the stakeholders that I contacted and the contents of their survey.

For the final evaluation I interviewed some Global Link employees, and held a short reflection workshop with Global Link's staff. I used data from Global Link to update the project outcomes, including from the social impact interviews that they conducted in Y4 of the project and the survey that they conducted in Y5.

3.1 Evaluation participants

The following table presents the numbers of people involved in the mid-term research by sex (female, male, and unknown) and immigration status:

Method	Asylum Seekers			Refugees			Total		Total			Total
	F	M	?	F	M	?	AS	R	F	M	?	
<i>Survey of ASR</i>												
Number of respondents	7	24	2	4	15	4	33	23	11	39	6	56
As % of total respondents	13%	43%	4%	7%	27%	7%	59%	41%	20%	70%	11%	
<i>6 Workshops with ASR</i>												
Number of participants	10	26		3	13		36	16	13	39		52
As % of total participants	19%	50%		6%	25%		69%	31%	25%	75%		
<i>Interviews with ASR</i>												
Number of interviewees	3	2		2	6		5	8	5	8		13
As % of total interviewees	23%	15%		15%	46%		38%	62%	38%	62%		
<i>Survey of stakeholders</i>												
Number of respondents									13	3	4	20
As % of total respondents									65%	15%	20%	
Total	20	52	2	9	34	4	74	47	42	89	10	141

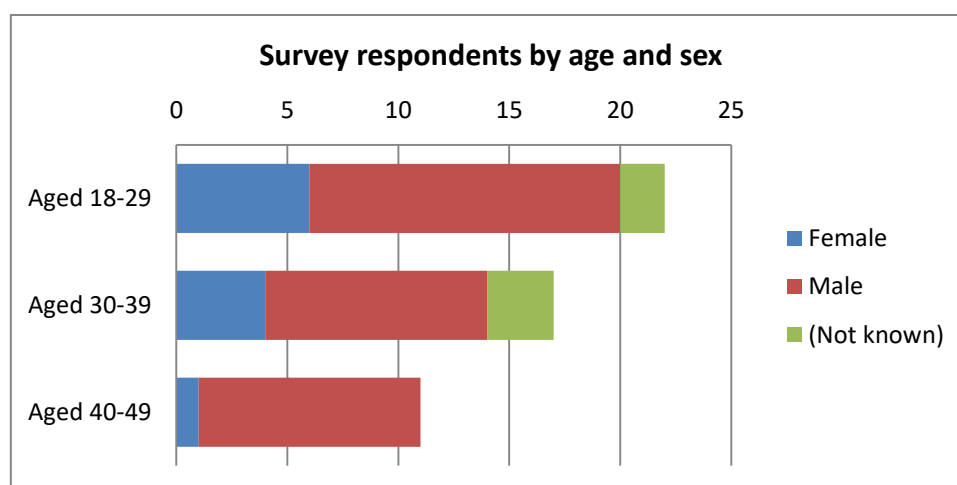
The response rate for the stakeholder survey was 77%, which is a very high return; by comparison, the stakeholder survey for the Lancashire Community Integration Assessment had a response rate of

19.5%⁵. I cannot be accurate about the response rate to the ASR survey, as I have to make assumptions about the number of adult ASR in the district who were eligible to fill in the survey⁶, but I estimate it to be around 34%⁷.

Regarding GL's survey at the close of the project, GL sent the survey link – in English, Arabic and Farsi – via the local WhatsApp group for asylum seekers and refugees in May 22, and achieved a response rate of at least 52%⁸.

3.1a ASR survey respondents

The age and sex split among those ASR who completed the mid-term survey is as follows:



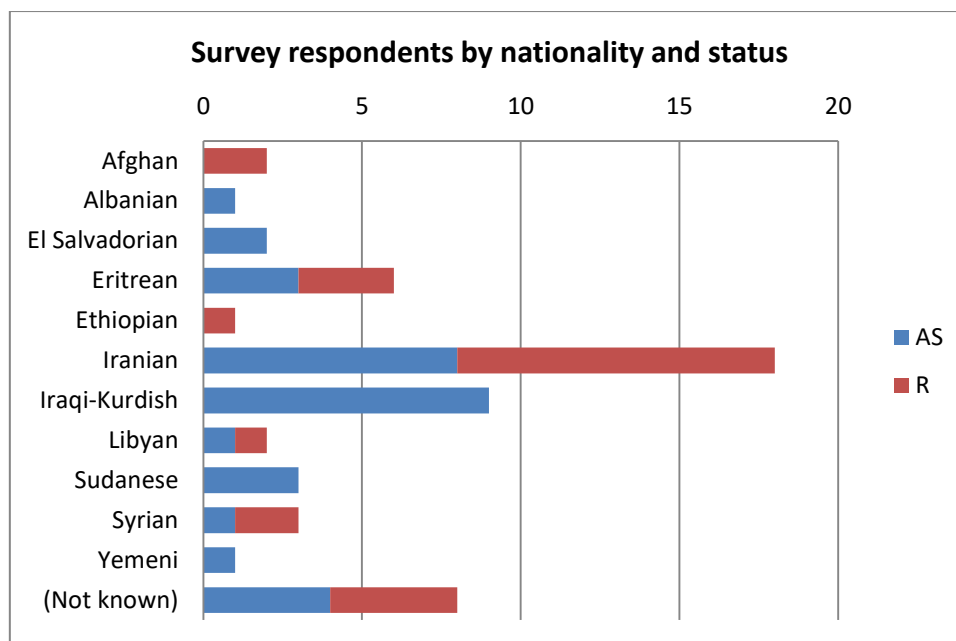
The proportion of women to men is approximately representative of the proportions in the ASR community. The age profile also echoes that of the ASR community in Lancaster, though none of the very small number of ASR who are over 50 years old filled in the survey.

5 Dr Caroline Blunt, *Community Integration Assessment: Story of Window on Tool Kit for Community Integration*, UCLan, October 2018, page 7.

6 Serco tracks which AS are allocated to their houses, but does not share this data with Global Link. The situation also changes frequently, as people vacate the houses and new AS arrive. Some AS who are officially accommodated in Lancaster spend much of their time staying with friends and relatives in other locations. Moreover, there is no accurate tally of how many recent refugees remain in Lancaster. The only group for whom there is accurate data is the resettlement families.

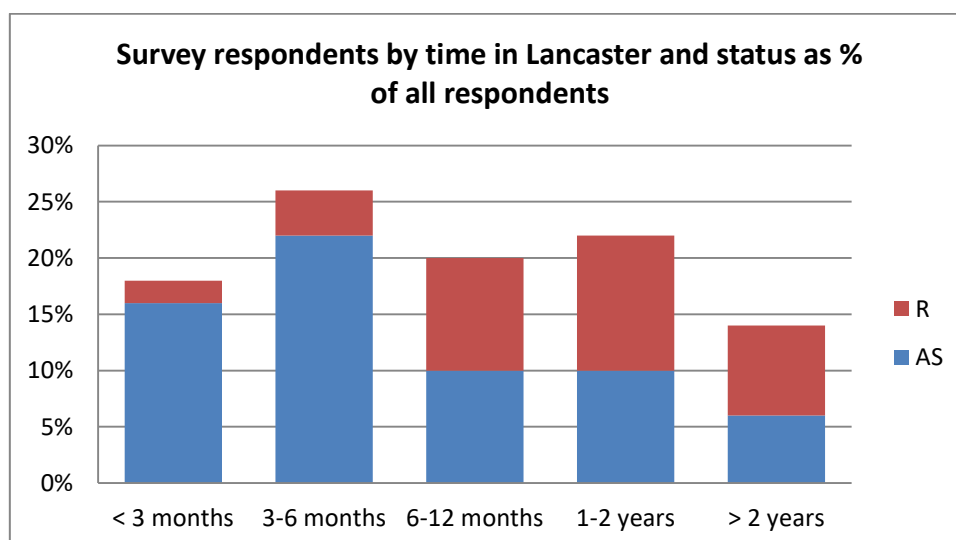
7 My estimate for the number of adult ASR in the district at mid-term was:
AS: 150 Serco beds less 30 AS children less 20 AS who mainly don't reside in Lancaster less 10 empty beds equals approximately 90 adult AS;
R: 30 adult SRP/VCRP, plus estimated 42 adult refugees who have remained in Lancaster equals 72 adult refugees;
Total of 90 + 72 = 162 adult ASR against 56 survey respondents equals a response rate of 34%.

8 At the time of writing this group has 211 members, but at least 20 people were not eligible to respond (being local residents who volunteer on ASR projects or GL staff members) and at least 10 had left Lancaster. GL received 94 responses which yields a response rate of a minimum of 52%.



In terms of the nationality of respondents, the distribution does not reflect the local ASR population, as Syrians and Sudanese are the biggest groups. The large number of responses from Iranians reflects the efforts of volunteer translator Ali Edalati to support his compatriots to complete the survey.

This final chart shows how the length of time respondents had been in Lancaster at the time of filling in the survey, varied, among those for whom that data could be calculated (ie excluding six respondents who did not answer the questions about dates). Not surprisingly refugees were more likely than asylum seekers to have been in Lancaster for longer, though ten asylum seekers reported being here for more than a year.



The mean time in Lancaster for respondents who identified as asylum seekers was 9 months, with a range of 2 months to 2 years and 8 months. For refugees the mean was 1 year and 5 months, with a range of 2 months to 5 years.

3.2 Research limitations

As no one has accurate data about ASR living in Lancaster (number, sex, age, nationality and so on) I cannot accurately compare the profile of those that took part in the mid-term research with the profile of the local ASR population. I therefore cannot assess how representative the participants are of the wider community. It is certain that there is a bias in my sample towards Global Link users, and that non-users are under-represented, because most of the data was gathered at Global Link events, with the support of Global Link volunteers. However, as this research focusses on Global Link's services that bias does not invalidate the research, and is in some respects a useful one, by gaining an informed perspective from users of those services rather than from those who make little use of them. As explained in 4.3c, I did explore why some people make little use of GL's services, and the reasons relate to their situation rather than deficiencies in the service provision.

Although around a third of the ASR population took part in the research, the number of respondents is too low for thorough and statistically significant analysis. Comparisons of, for example, the feedback from females compared to males, or asylum seekers compared to refugees, are impressions rather than statistically validated differences.

I should note that the local ASR population is very diverse. It contains a range of people: of different ages and life stages, arriving alone or with families; from different countries and faiths, with different histories, experiences and social norms (eg regarding racism and sexism); with education experience ranging from post-doctoral qualifications to those who are not literate in their mother tongue; with greatly different levels of wealth and privilege in their homelands, and varied access to resources here; with differences in gender and sexual identities; a range of English language ability, and ability to learn; a wide range of physical and mental health problems; with very different journeys that lead to their arrival in Lancaster; and facing very different treatment by the Home Office. I think it is legitimate to refer to the ASR 'community' in the sense of a subsection of the local population who share in common their ASR status and being recent arrivals; however, beyond that it does not make sense to generalise about ASR as a single group.

3. Evaluation findings

3.1. Findings from existing literature

3.1a Community Integration Assessment

While this evaluation focuses only on Global Link's work as funded by the Big Lottery Fund, we can gain some comparison to nearby places from Dr Caroline Blunt's research. In 2018 Lancashire County Council commissioned her to carry out an assessment of community integration, focusing on families who had been resettled in 7 areas of Lancashire through the Syrian Resettlement Programme. She found that Lancaster was one of only two areas in which refugees generally spoke positively about the quality of community integration and formation of social bonds. Her report⁹ singles out Global Link's weekly drop-in lunch, saying:

"This CW [Case Worker] provider not only had a venue which was a safe place for refugees to go, be seen by a CW or other staff available through this organisation, but this organisation had instituted a weekly drop-in lunch event for which volunteers (including refugees) would cook a meal for all attending. With the overview that this research provided, this appeared to be a significant quantitative and qualitative intervention in or contribution to the lives of refugees settled in this

9 Dr Caroline Blunt, *Community Integration Assessment: Story of Window on Tool Kit for Community Integration*, UCLan, October 2018, page 66.

area, the rarity of which they could not be fully aware. Interestingly, however, this was one of only two areas in which negative comparisons were not made with the other resettlement areas. There was a sense of needs being met.”

Her report also notes the salience of a focus group with women in Lancaster, compared to all the other focus groups she had run, “...whose positive stance from the speaking positions of potential workers and students and parents, was noticeable.”

Blunt also carried out research with case workers, and produced a table based on their perceptions of the positive resources available in their locality and the challenges they faced¹⁰. It is noticeable that the case workers in Lancaster produced the longest list of positive elements (12 items) and shortest list of challenges (one), in comparison to the other areas in Lancashire. Among the other locations case workers listed between 3 and 8 positives, and between 4 and 9 challenges, with the average for each being 5.

The resources listed by case workers in Lancaster were:

- Knowledge and understanding of global issues and human rights
- Relatively recent but supported presence of ASR in the city
- Global Link’s venue and resources
- Drop-in lunch, modelled on The ARC Project’s lunch in Blackburn
- City of Sanctuary network and events
- Informal support for ASR established
- Generosity/ sympathy of critical mass of local people
- Organisations/individuals make connections with ASR
- Dedicated voluntary placement role within Global Link
- ASR can blend in with students
- Relatively low levels of hate crimes
- Careful choice of housing areas by Lancaster City Council (some no-go areas identified and avoided)

The only challenge listed in Blunt’s table for Lancaster is that there are some no-go areas in the district, where the English Defence League is active. However, this problem had been successfully tackled by a senior staff member within the city council taking the initiative over which areas to avoid for resettlement.

3.1b Refugees’ Challenges of Integration

In 2018 Dr Mohamed Yakalhef undertook quantitative research with asylum seekers and refugees in Lancaster & Morecambe district. As a trustee of Global Link, he undertook the research to learn more about the challenges they face and to identify gaps that City of Sanctuary partners might try to meet. 38 respondents completed his self-administered questionnaire: of the total 60% were asylum seekers, 82% were male, 50% were under 30 years old, and 27% had no formal qualifications.

Key findings from his report¹¹ of relevance to this evaluation include:

- 24% said it is ‘not true’ that ‘I have enough money to buy food’.
- 47% said it is ‘not true’ that ‘I have enough money to buy clothes’
- 60% said it is ‘sometimes’ or ‘always true’ that ‘I feel isolated and alone’.

¹⁰ Ibid, page 96.

¹¹ Dr Mohamed Yakalhef, *Lancaster & Morecambe City of Sanctuary Refugees’ Challenges of Integration*, Global Link DEC, April 2019.

- 73% felt that 'the Global Link lunch drop-in alleviates my feelings of isolation' either 'a lot' or 'some'.
- 87% said it is 'sometimes' or 'always true' that 'I feel supported by the community in Lancaster'.
- 65% said it is 'sometimes' or 'always true' that 'I have English language difficulties'.
- 85% said it is 'sometimes' or 'always true' that 'I have been able to access education and training'.
- 77% felt 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with Global Link's support of their education.
- 57% felt 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with Global Link's help with their legal needs.
- 77% felt 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their life in Lancaster.
- 26% felt there is 'a lot' or 'some' racial discrimination in Lancaster.
- 77% felt that people in Lancaster display tolerance towards people of other races, cultures and countries 'a lot' or 'some'.

3.2. Findings from this evaluation research by project outcome

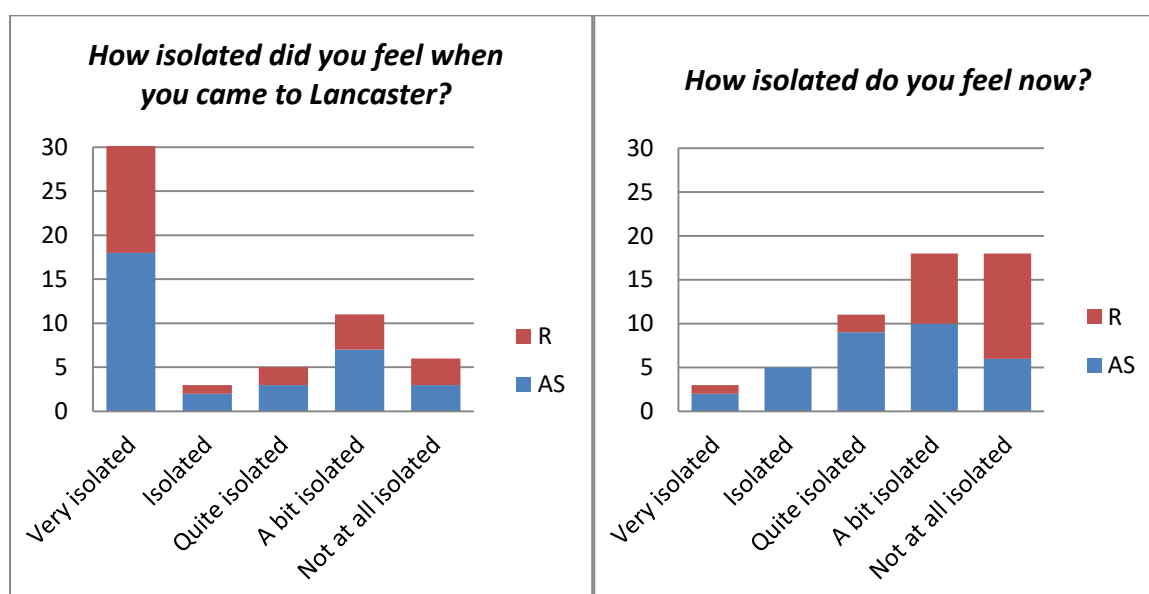
Global Link has reported to the Big Lottery Fund by outlining work and achievements as they relate to each project activity. Instead here I deal with each of the six outcomes in turn. To avoid repetition I have included each project activity under its most relevant outcome. For example, I have included the sewing circle under Outcome 2 relating to skills, but it also brings benefits to ASR relating to Outcomes 1 and 3 from interacting with others while speaking English.

Outcome 1: ASR have become less isolated and more engaged and settled in the Lancaster community through accessing the project's services and training

a) Feelings of isolation

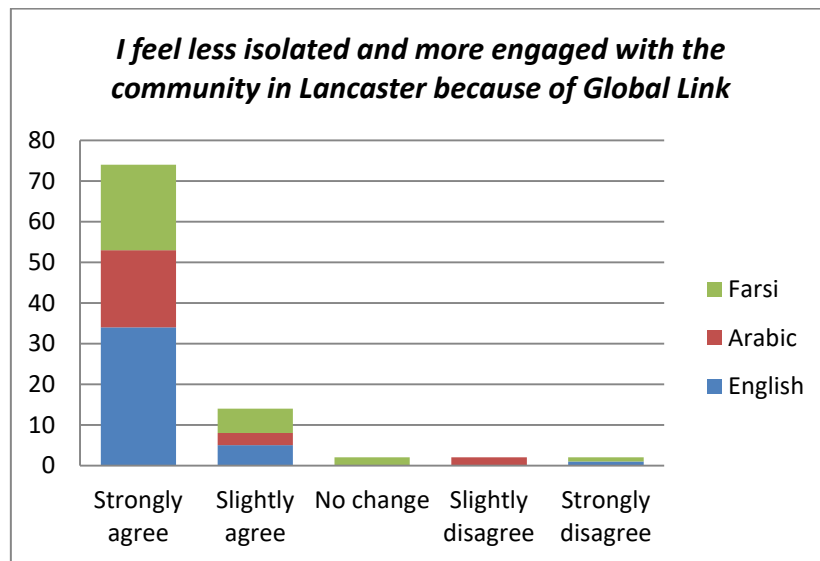
GL's target for this element of Outcome 1 is that 100 ASR say they feel less isolated per year.

The mid-term survey contained 2 questions about feelings of isolation; the following two figures illustrate a big shift in ASR perceptions between when they first arrived and when they completed the survey.



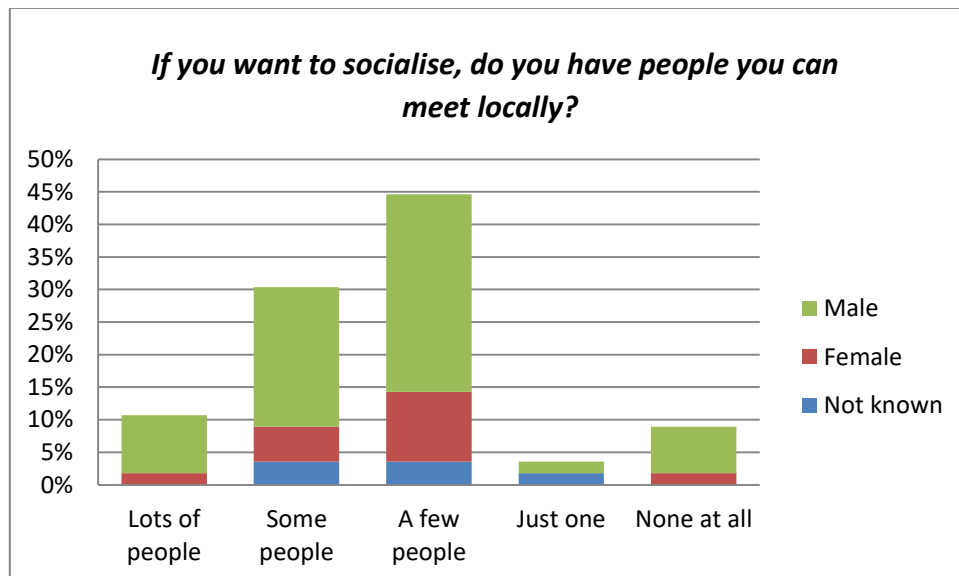
In percentage terms, the shift is from 60% feeling isolated or very isolated, to 14% feeling that way. The mean for all respondents moved from 'isolated' to 'a bit isolated', with a bigger shift among refugees compared to asylum seekers.

Global Link's brief survey in May 2022 yielded the following response:



Overall 79% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, and 15% agreed slightly, with little variation by the language of the survey.

The mid-term survey also asked about socialising. As the next figure shows, 41% of respondents said they have some or lots of people to meet up locally; however, 15% reported having just one person or no one to call on.



There was no strong difference in responses to this question by gender, nor by whether respondents had arrived in Lancaster alone or with family members. As the next figure shows, there is a pattern if we consider how long respondents have been in Lancaster. The only four people to say they had no one to meet with had all arrived within the last 3 months.



The mid-term survey data does not confirm that GL has met its indicator of 100 ASR per year feeling less isolated, because I did not canvass 100 or more people. However, this data, along with that gathered by Yakalhef in 2018¹², demonstrates that the majority (93%) of ASR who gave us feedback feel less isolated. Indeed, out of the 56 survey respondents only two reported no improvement (feeling ‘very isolated’ on arrival and now) and two reported feeling more isolated now than when they first arrived. In GL’s survey of May 2022 only six of the 94 respondents (6%) indicated no change or slight or strong disagreement with the idea that they feel less isolated and more engaged due to GL’s work. With 88 respondents indicating slight or strong agreement it is safe to assume that GL did meet its target of 100 ASR during the final year of the project.

One respondent’s comment illustrates how asylum seekers may not be happy to be placed in a small city, but it can become their home: *“...me and my family, we refuse to stay in Lancaster, but because of Global Link and the support they offered us and help now we feel we are part of Lancaster.”* In summary, although it is far from the only influence on ASR’s feelings of isolation, Global Link’s work definitely assists the majority of ASR to feel and become less isolated.

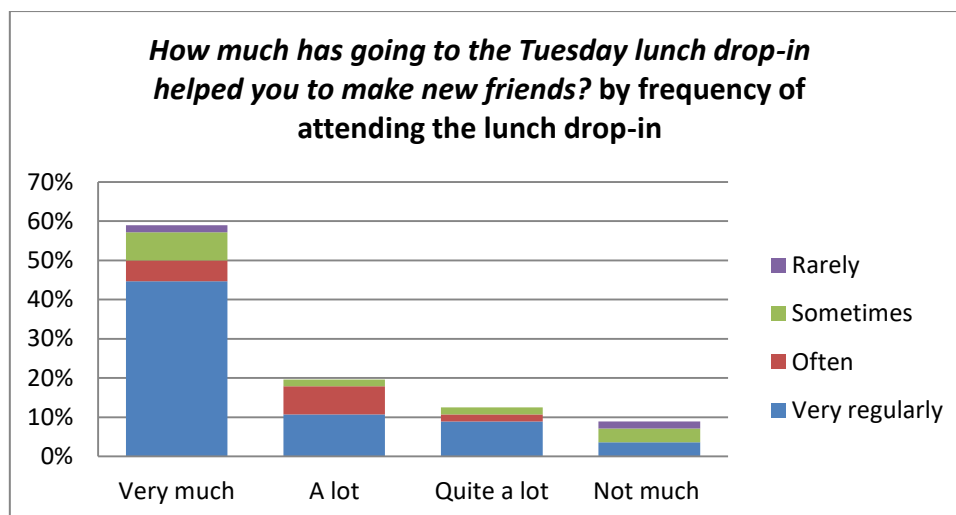
b) Participation and engagement

GL’s target is that 150 ASR per year participate in learning workshops, social and cultural events.

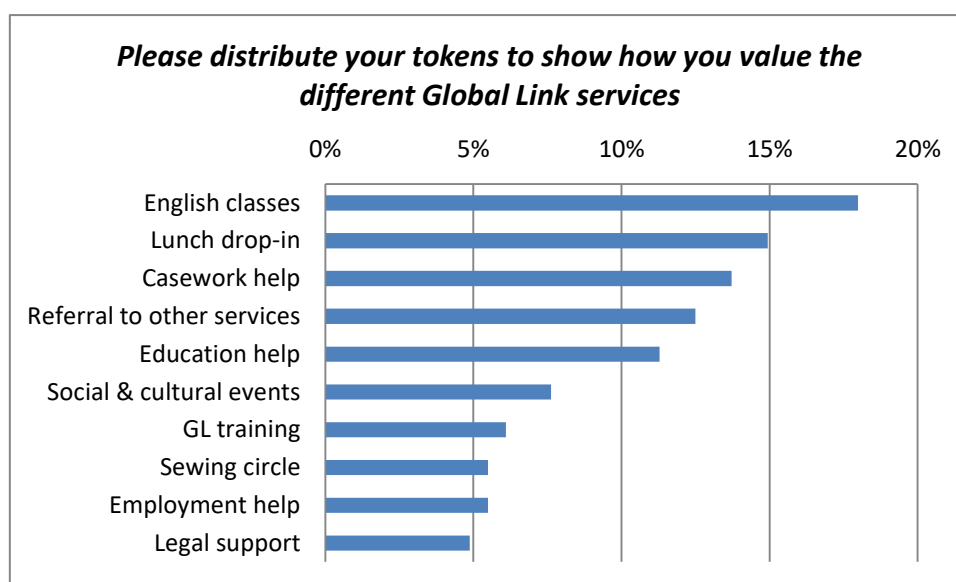
The lunch drop-in

This event happened each week, at GL’s premises, and was restarted after lockdowns in September 20 21. The majority of mid-term survey respondents indicated that attending the drop-in had helped them to make friends:

¹² Ibid, page 25, his research found that 73% felt that ‘the Global Link lunch drop-in alleviates my feelings of isolation’ either ‘a lot’ or ‘some’, and that 76% felt that ‘the Global Link entertainment activates help alleviate my feelings of loneliness, stress or depression? either ‘a lot’ or ‘some’.



The lunch drop-in was one of 10 Global Link services that some workshop participants were asked to value; the method was a relative one, in that each participant had 15 pieces of pasta to distribute among the 10 services to show how they value the different services. As the next chart shows, it was the second most popular service.



GL was not able to run the lunch drop-in from March 2020 until September 2021 due to coronavirus restrictions and strict interpretation of them by the premises landlord. Instead it used the funding to run an online conversation space, which had 15 regular attendees and a total of 25 participants in Y4. In the impact interviews one refugee referred to this, saying *"If it wasn't for the online zoom conversation space, I would go crazy because you cannot meet people outside, you can only talk on the phone, that really increases the stress... everytime I tried something I get frustrated and think what's the point and I would stop. And every time you watch the news it's all about coronavirus and people dying. That was a really hard time. But one thing, thanks to that online zoom conversation I could survive, thanks to zoom, I could breathe again."*

On restarting the lunch drop-in GL took the pragmatic decision to discontinue its use of sign in sheets (and the time consuming task of then entering the data for each individual), so the numbers for Y5 are less certain than those for years 1 to 3.

	# of core attendees	Average attendance	Total # of individuals who
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			attended at least once
Year 1	Around 35	Around 50	158
Year 2	Around 40	Around 70	280
Year 3	Around 40	Around 70	329
Year 4	Unable to run the drop-in due to covid restrictions and landlord's strict interpretation of them		
Year 5	Around 30	Around 50	180

Most of the interviewees at mid-term talked warmly about the lunch drop-in. One woman recounted *"The most beautiful thing they [Global Link] do is the lunch, they talk to you, they give you the announcements...when you hear that someone has leave to remain, then it is a form of hope."* A male asylum seeker said *"Every week I have been to the Tuesday drop ins ... so important, because you can find people for your own country, culture and also meet people from other cultures and share our story, tastes... You can share connections, and also speak about family and job, every person has different ideas and it can help you cope with your situation."* These and other interviewees gain solace from socialising with people facing similar challenges to their own. There is also a benefit to the distraction that the lunch interactions provide, as one female asylum seeker explained: *"I have been waiting 27 months, and I am nervous and anxious, but when I come to the Tuesday I forget everything"*.

The main criticism of the lunch drop-in by ASR concerned lack of space: it is very crowded, and most people have to stand to eat. Participants wished for a bigger space, and with fun things to do (such as to play pool). GL hopes to purchase its own premises and thus have more space for the drop-in.

Another issue raised in two mid-term workshops was the need for translation to several languages, not only Arabic (for which Lancashire County Council pays for the services of a professional translator). When I fed this back to Global Link the issue was quickly resolved by following the workshop participants' suggestion: people gather in their language groups, with a volunteer translator for each group, and each announcement is simultaneously translated to those languages, with people leaning in to listen.



Global Link tries to undermine the stereotype of women being responsible for cooking! Here men from Yemen, The Sudan and Syria cook together for the lunch drop-in.

From my observations the drop-in meets Outcome 1 of reducing isolation and helping ASR to feel more settled in various ways:

- ✓ It is the only regular opportunity for face-to-face socialising in the district that is open to all ASR.
- ✓ The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, and ASR and local residents mix and talk in a relaxed and friendly way. It thus provides both social and physical nourishment.
- ✓ ASR are encouraged to volunteer to cook, and form bonds through the shared activity of planning for the meal, buying the food, and cooking it, and by making themselves useful and more visible to the ASR community.
- ✓ The announcements (after the food) always begin by publically welcoming people who have arrived recently, as well as congratulating those who have been giving leave to remain, and saying farewells to those leaving Lancaster. As such it is the main forum in which the local ASR community, with its ever-shifting membership, is delineated and formed.
- ✓ The announcements inform ASR about upcoming events and opportunities.

Listening to an announcement at the lunch drop-in.



Other engagement opportunities

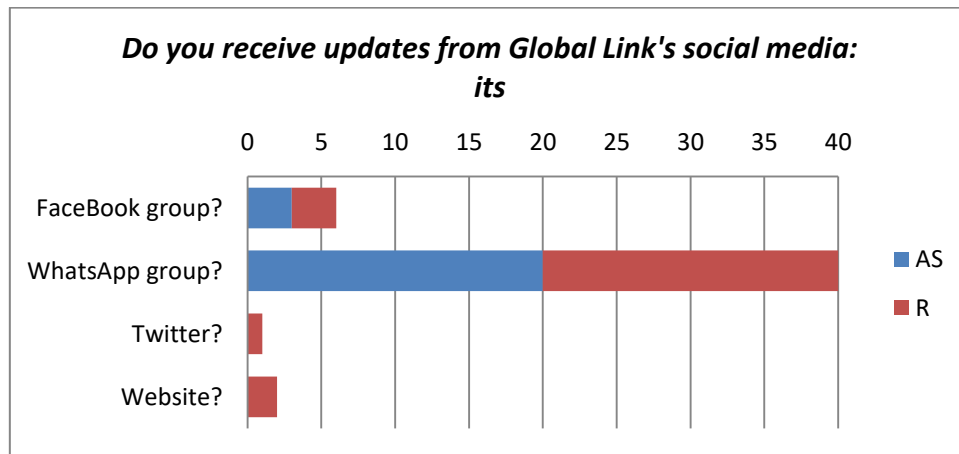
During the last two years of the project GL expanded the range of engagement opportunities for local ASR, mindful of how isolating the lockdown restrictions were. With the support of various funders, these included holding summer walks, bike rides, trips to nature reserves, and socially distanced children's events at Claver Hill.

Cultural events

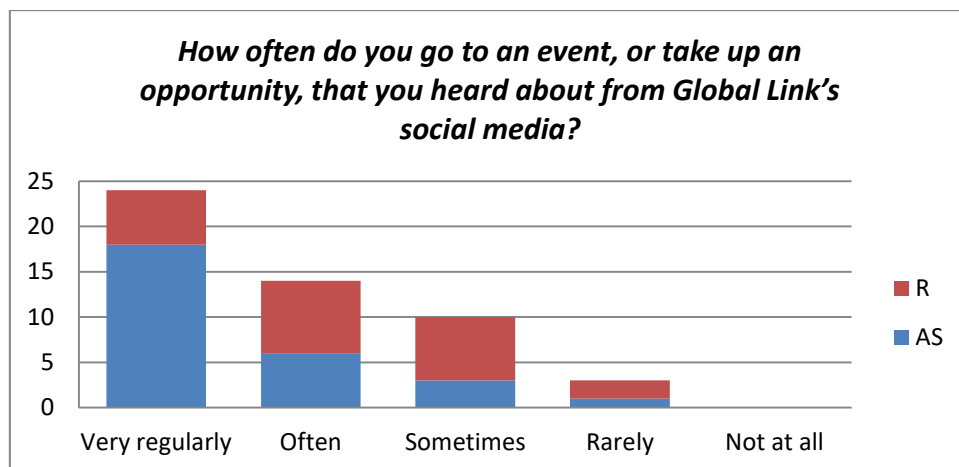
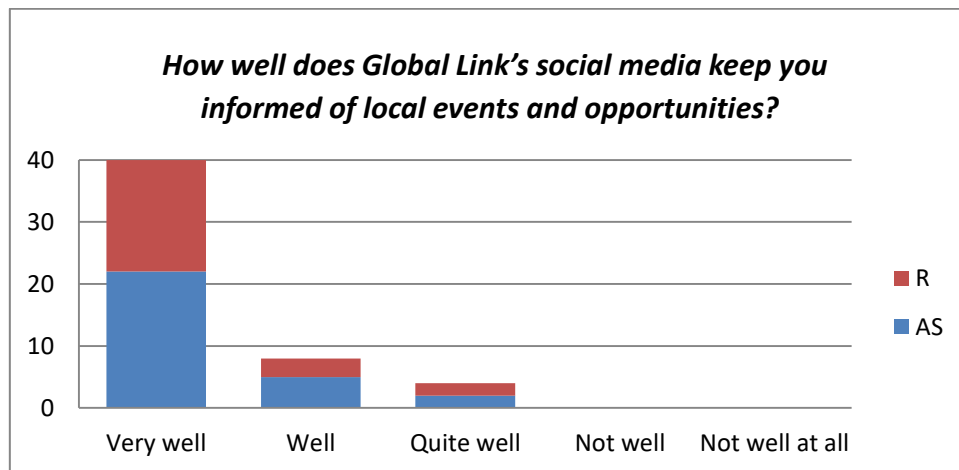
In addition to the regular lunch drop-in GL has put on or supported annual cultural events for ASR. In Year 5 around 250 people attended the Refugee Week event, 60 attended the (socially distanced) Christmas celebration, 350 ASR and local people attended the Eid party, held close to the city centre, and 150 went to the Nowruz party held on the outskirts of the city at Claver Hill. Significantly some of the work for these events was carried out by members of the Lived Experience group which GL initiated in Y4 of the project. It is open to all Lancaster ASR, and had around 12 people regularly participating, with funding from the County Council's Community Integration Fund. However, that fund no longer exists, so the future of the group is unclear.

Global Link and City of Sanctuary's social media

At Global Link's request the mid-term survey asked respondents which of GL and CoS's four social media they use: as the following chart shows, it is the WhatsApp group that predominates, with 87% of refugees and 65% of asylum seekers indicating that they use that method.



Respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction with the social media and reported that it does enable them to attend events or take up opportunities.



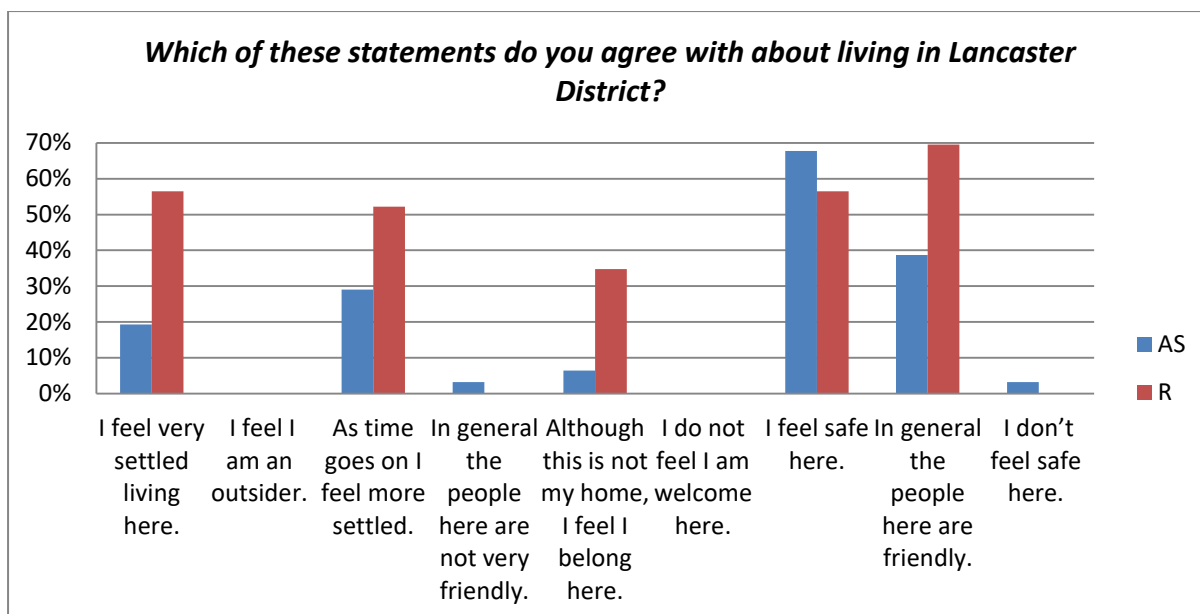
From my observation, the WhatsApp group (which at mid-term had 125 members but now has 211) has the appeal of being very immediate and interactive, and GL volunteers quickly translate key messages into Sorani, Farsi, Tigrinya, Spanish and Arabic. However, WhatsApp is linear and unstructured, so messages about different topics quickly become muddled, and personal communications (from one user to another) can cause additional traffic and confusion. The establishment of a separate “information only” WhatsApp group, in which only those with admin privileges can post messages, provides a single location for the latest announcements.

Global Link’s FaceBook page is also immediate and allows interaction around posts, however, it concerns all of Global Link’s development education work, so is not focussed on communicating with ASR, whereas the local City of Sanctuary FaceBook page is. As such the latter is a more useful place for information exchange, because City of Sanctuary’s umbrella status means it features content from all the local organisations, including Global Link.

Similarly Global Link’s own development education website does not have the purpose of serving ASR, so it is not surprising that few respondents reported using it. However, in 2020 Global Link launched <http://refugeehome.uk/>, created by a staff member (who is a refugee), with the strapline *BY refugees ABOUT refugees FOR refugees*. During Y3 GL got Catalyst funding from the national lottery to develop the website, so that it is now a useful source of information for local ASR and those further afield (including a parallel site for the Pendle New Neighbours project). In Y5 the site had 2,500 quick hits and 425 hits of more than 3 minutes, with the page about driving in the UK being viewed the most often. However, on-going attention is needed to keep the site up to date, and to improve some aspects, for which unfortunately GL has not yet found further funding. The Catalyst funding also enabled GL to develop its Moodle learning platform, but, as the resources that GL developed were more presentations than interactive courses, GL decided to stop investing in Moodle, and to move the content to RefugeeHome. This content included and added content about Life, Work & Culture in the UK, ESOL, instructional videos from the Sewing Circle, and IT help about using Zoom and Moodle.

Feelings of being settled

The next chart shows the proportion of ASR mid-term survey respondents who indicated their agreement with different statements (shown in the same order as in the survey) about living in Lancaster. It’s notable that just two asylum seekers ticked any of the four negative statements. 63% of all the survey respondents (68% of AS and 57% of R) agreed with the statement ‘I feel safe here’ while 52% indicated that they generally find people in Lancaster to be friendly. Refugees – who, unlike asylum seekers, have the freedom to move to anywhere in the UK but have elected to stay in Lancaster – unsurprisingly agreed with the statements about feeling settled and belonging at a much higher rate than asylum seekers. None the less, overall 39% of ASR agreed that ‘as time goes on I feel more settled’ and 35% said they already ‘feel very settled living here’. These are high proportions when we take into account that 44% of all respondents had been living in Lancaster for less than six months.



Sadly, at the time the writing, feelings of safety are being undermined in the district. The hostel in Lancaster has attracted the attention of people who have shared stories on social media about two individuals supposedly following or assaulting local women, leading to an attack on one AS and another being moved out of the district for his safety.

Perspectives on staying in Lancaster

To further gauge feelings about being settled, the mid-term survey asked asylum seekers if they intend to stay or leave Lancaster if they get leave to remain. Of the 24 people who answered this question, 63% said they would stay. 20 provided further explanation, with the most common theme relating to feeling safe in Lancaster. One older man explained *"I have too much friends in Lancaster. I like this city and we have very good place to start in the UK."* A woman said *"Because I love Lancaster and when I came I feel I am welcome here. People around me they are sitting help me and support me."* Among those who had said they plan to leave the comments all concerned needing to go to a bigger city to find work, with the exception of one man who stated *"I want to move where I can be around my friends, people I can trust."*

The survey also gave refugees the opportunity to explain why they had remained in Lancaster. 14 gave their feedback, which had themes of feeling safe, finding the people friendly, and a good place for children. For example, one woman said *"If I can find a good job I will stay in Lancaster. I like small cities. I like rainy days. I found out Lancaster very friendly"*, while a man commented, *"I have lots of native friends here and I like this city. It makes me comfortable and safe."* One man simply answered *"Because I am feeling this is my new home."*

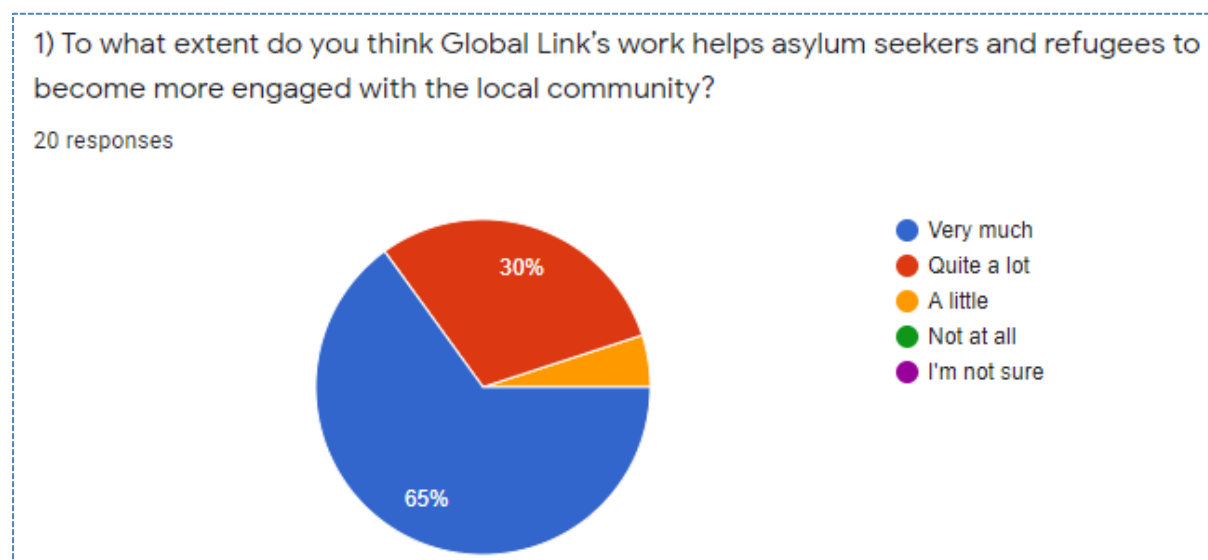
Among the interviewees the main reason for leaving Lancaster was to look for work. One man, who had been wealthy in his home country, explained *"I like small cities, but if I can't find a job then I must leave...UK for me is like ocean, any place is not important for me because I don't know any place, if I can find a job in that place I will be satisfied"*. In contrast a woman said *"It's better that the city is safe than having lots of jobs"*. A mother awaiting decision on her application explained *"My sons they say 'when we get leave to remain we need to stay in Lancaster', I ask them 'why you love Lancaster?', they say 'my mum we are very safe'. We came from a war in my country. They feel this is home country for us, because when we came here they support us for everything"*.

Of course, respondents' feelings of safety and being settled cannot be attributed to Global Link's work alone, but I believe it is safe to assume, taking the other data into account, that Global Link is a significant factor in engendering these positive feelings. In one of the social impact interviews that

GL conducted in Y4, an Eritrean refugee specifically linked the work of GL to feeling safe and settled, saying *“The relationships with the volunteers and the staff that helped me and making me feel like this is home..... I felt like they were my friends. Our connection became very strong. It made me feel that I wasn’t away from home, that this was my home, and I felt safe.”*

Stakeholders’ perspective

Finally, with regard to participation and engagement, I asked stakeholders for their perspective; their very positive responses are shown in the following chart:



Nine stakeholders responded to the invitation to *comment further, or to suggest how Global Link could improve how it addresses isolation and encourages integration*. Five made positive comments to explain their assessment of Global Link’s efforts. For example, *“GL offers essential services that the as/r community needs. But it also offers information, volunteering possibilities and supports extra English classes which all help integration into the local community.”* One wrote *“I think with the level of funding they have, they literally couldn't do one more thing.”*

Four stakeholders made suggestions, as follows:

“More activities which encourage engagement between asylum seekers and local community groups, including people who do not understand asylum seekers' needs, such as the presentations which Global Link has done would be excellent. For example, friendly matches between the ASR football players and other football teams. Are there any other community groups doing sewing which the sewing cafe could connect with? My ideas include things like youth projects involving local young people as well as asylum seekers and refugees.”

“We [Citizen Advice Bureau] would be very interested in training some of the asylum seekers into advisers for their community, given language skills can act as a barrier.”

“Widen participation. Try some new venues perhaps for events rather than Friends Meeting House? More emphasis on developing volunteering links or work more with CVS.”

“Link with settings such as pre-schools and schools.”

Learning workshops

GL organises informal workshops after the Tuesday lunch drop in, and presentations relating to Life, Work and Culture in the UK during the Lunch Drop in. Some are run by GL staff or volunteers (including ASR) while others are led by staff from outside agencies such as the Job Centre, police or other charities. During Y4 the workshops were all held online. GL also created 11 presentations about life, work and culture in the UK, including British etiquette, equalities, sexual consent, tax & NI, and UK politics and democracy. It posted them all as courses at <http://www.refugeehome.uk/Globallink/>, along with 3 courses about IT, 3 about ESOL, and 5 tutorials about sewing projects. In Y5 GL changed tactic from having workshops in the space at the top of the YMCA building to making presentations just after the lunch drop-in, meaning that more people attend as there's no pause between the two events nor need to move upstairs.

The data for each year of the project is as follows:

	# of workshops	Total # of participants	# who attended at least one workshop	# run by outside agencies
Year 1	15	271	40	5
Year 2	19	350	50	10
Year 3	17	496	60	5
Year 4*	19	152	25	6
Year 5*	15	375	120	4

* These numbers are estimates, as GL did not use sign in sheets during and after lockdown.

The workshops cover a wide range of topics which can be categorised as follows:

Employment-related workshops such as a visit from employment agencies, exploring interview techniques, and ideas about how to set up a business (which link to Outcome 4);

Gaining life skills such as those relating to parenting, oral hygiene, budgeting, sexual health, and tips for better wellbeing;

Improving cultural literacy, for example gaining better understanding of Remembrance Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day, and the context of LGBT rights in the UK;

Factual workshops concerning issues such as fire safety, domestic violence, understanding the NHS, hate crimes, legal requirements to drive in the UK, online security, and steps to take when you have leave to remain in the UK.

In the ASR mid-term survey two thirds of respondents said they had attended at least one workshop. Ten made suggestions for future workshops: three asked for workshops about jobs and finding work; three suggested a workshop about sleep (this topic was subsequently covered); and one each suggested English culture, English law, 'global hot', and how to attend to child health.

Overall, it's clear that GL is far exceeding its annual target of 150 ASR participating in learning workshops, social and cultural events, mainly through the lunch drop-in and learning workshops.

c) Move on support

GL's target is to support 18 refugees with leave to remain per year to access Universal Credit and/or employment and housing.

In Years 1 to 3 this important work has to be done quickly, as people had a maximum of four weeks between gaining leave to remain and needing to leave their Serco accommodation. This changed during Y4, when Serco had a policy of moving people as little as possible, meaning that refugees

were able to stay in their Serco housing for months after getting leave to remain, but has now reverted to the initial situation.

The number of refugees that GL has assisted in each year is shown below. In Year 1 the work was mainly undertaken by LMARS, but after its closure at the beginning of Year 2, more refugees came to GL for assistance, so that in Years 2 to 5 GL greatly exceeded its annual target of supporting 18 refugees.

	# helped to access Universal Credit	# leave to remain consultations, including help to open a bank account	# helped to access housing
Year 1	5	5	3
Year 2	25	30	11
Year 3	34	50	11
Year 4	13	13	4
Year 5	33	35	4

I note that while ‘move on support’ refers to the transition period from asylum seeker to refugee, GL’s support continues indefinitely. For example, through assistance in attaining family reunion, gaining skills, seeking work, and coping with health issues.

Summary for Outcome 1: the data from the surveys, interviews and stakeholders all demonstrate that Global Link is successfully achieving the outcome of assisting ASR to become less isolated and more engaged and settled in the Lancaster community. It is also exceeding its targets. ASR value the lunch drop-in as a place to make friends and act on information from the WhatsApp group to engage with events and opportunities. They can access relevant workshops about living in the UK, and timely support to assist them to settle in Lancaster when they get leave to remain. Significantly the majority report feeling safe in Lancaster, and a third feel very settled living here.

Outcome 2: ASR have developed a range of skills, increasing their employability

a) Formal training

GL’s targets are to support 40 ASR per year to improve their vocational (including sewing) and maths skills, and for 30 ASR per year to gain training qualifications in short courses such as for food hygiene and first aid.

Global Link’s Education Access Tutor facilitates ASRs’ access to formal courses by assessing and learning about their interests, then referring them to Lancaster & Morecambe College and the WEA. The following tables show how many ASR have completed vocational training courses in each year of the project, and does not include English qualifications, which are quantified in Section 3b.

Vocational courses	Provider	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Sewing skills	Global Link	10	10	13	14	12
Functional maths (all levels)	L&M College	11	8	17	1	9
Maths GCSE	L&M College	7	5		2	1
Health & Social Care Level 2	L&M College	1				
Sports skills Level 2	L&M College	1		13		
Barbering Level 2	L&M College	2				
Beauty therapy Level 2	L&M College	2	1	1	1	1
Accountancy Level 2	L&M College		1			

Pre-access Level 2	L&M College			1		
Working in digital technologies industries Level 2	L&M College			1		
ITQ (IT User Skills) Level 1	L&M College					2
IT Level 2	L&M College			1	2	
Psychology	L&M College				1	
Plastering Level 2	L&M College					1
Vehicle fitting operations Level 2	L&M College					2
Introduction to professional cooking	L&M College					5
Engineering Level 3	L&M College					2
Coding (online course)	Code Your Future					1
Access course for university Level 3	L&M College				1	
Access course Level 3	Kendal College					1
Driving theory test (online course)	Global Link				26	
Total		34	25	47	48	37

I note that the numbers of individuals supported by GL is greater than that shown above, as it is not uncommon for someone to be assessed, referred and then attending the course and yet not to finish the course and gain the qualification. ASR may leave a course for a variety of reasons, including language difficulties, mental health problems and moving out of Lancaster. Nonetheless, GL has mostly been in vicinity of its target of 40 ASR improving their vocations skills each year.

As the next table shows, GL did not meet its target of 30 ASR per year gaining qualifications from short courses. One change is that the Global Village Café started doing its own Food & Hygiene training, meaning there was less need for Global Link to provide that course.

Short courses	Provider	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Community Interpreting Level 2	WEA & GL		3	13	2	12
Food & Hygiene Level 2	Global Link		6	3		
Safeguarding Level 1	Global Link		6			
Total		0	15	16	2	12

Global Link has, however, been investing in the slow process of setting up ASR-accessible courses through which ASR can gain specific industry qualifications that are required for paid work. For example, many organisations require interpreters to have a Level 2 Community Interpreting qualification, but that course was not offered in Lancaster. In Year 2 Global Link supported three ASR to travel to Blackburn to undertake the course. In Year 3 it successfully set up a course in Lancaster with the WEA, organising assessments and room hire. Fortunately, during lockdown the WEA managed to take the course online. But getting the course set up in Lancaster was time consuming, and investing time does not always get a positive result. For example, GL put effort into trying to get Security Industry Authority courses run locally, and the CITB Health, Safety and Environment course, but neither came to fruition.

One barrier to employment is that ASR's qualifications are often not recognised in the UK. Thus, Global Link supports and pays for refugees' applications to NARIC, the national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills. This should enable refugees to get jobs in their professions that are otherwise inaccessible, and so use their talents more fully. In total, as shown below, GL has helped 59 refugees to get their qualifications validated and so hopefully able to use their professional skills and experience in the UK. In the next phase of its work GL intends to pass the responsibility and cost of this to a statutory body such as the job centre.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
NARIC applications supported	7	16	9	7	20

GL also supports refugees to get UK driving licences, as some jobs require staff members to have a driving licence. GL helped four people in this way in Year 2; in Year 3 GL added advice on driving to its new website www.RefugeeHome.uk, and in Y4 it created and funded a 10 week online course – translated into 4 languages - about the driving theory test, attended by 26 ASR. It continues also to give verbal advice about driving and occasionally to include the topic as a presentation after the lunch drop-in.

Another route to work is through higher education. Global Link supports refugees to understand the UK's systems and to apply to university. However, the number supported does not necessarily result in them starting university. For example, while in Year 1 four refugees were accepted to begin university courses, of the five people supported in Year 3 only one began their course September 2020, due to issues with their language capabilities, finding suitable courses and, in one case, concerns about balancing study and childcare. In Years 4 & 5 GL supported 9 and 6 ASR respectively to access higher education courses, including referring them to the County Council's ESOL Coordinator for further assistance.

b) The sewing circle

This project enables ASR to learn sewing skills through undertaking practical projects, including upcycling items and making new items such as string bags, curtains and dolls with different skin tones for the mums and toddlers English class. Some members have started without any sewing experience at all, and progressed to learning how to follow patterns and make clothes from scratch. One Ethiopian man began with no experience and is now able to adjust clothes for his friends and even made himself a jacket. The members have also worked collaboratively on shared projects to make banners (and many sashes) for the Women's March in Edinburgh, Refugee Week events, the Sudanese Gathering, and the Norwuz celebrations.

One asylum seeker from El Salvador used training and materials from the sewing circle to make lots of cloth masks during lockdown, which she distributed to other asylum seekers. She commented *"I recommend you always use all the time you can doing things you enjoy to help other people, and knowing how to occupy your time for not to think about sad things or bad things but to have opportunities to go always ahead."* While she has now found work in a service industry she still takes on sewing projects.

One of the mid-term interviewees, who was still sewing at the end of the project, reflected *"It's special for women, in my culture the woman is not free. You think maybe in the future you can work in this sewing. And you feel free to learn English in there."*



Sewing Circle members and members of East Meets West display their banners at the march to mark 100 years since women in the UK got the vote

Attendance was consistent at around ten people, rising to 13 on average. There has also been the change that from Year 3 some men have committed to the project whereas previously the regular attendees were all women. The project encourages peer learning and also fosters belonging through occasional social events. It also supports members to sell their creations at community events such as the farmers' market and craft fayres.

c) *Voluntary work*

GL's target is to support 40 ASR per year into voluntary work.

Global Link links ASR to volunteering opportunities, and pays for DBS checks and asylum-seekers' transport costs where necessary. The number of individual ASR supported each year are as follows:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
ASR supported into volunteering	25	23	45	14	25

Note, the above figures do not include those people who participated in farm activities at Claver Hill.

46% of respondents to the ASR mid-term survey said they had been involved in voluntary work. 19 of them gave further information; below are the types of volunteering they added, and how many individuals reported each type.

Food bank	5	Claver Hill	3	Coaching football	1
Interpreter	5	St John's Hospice	2	Support worker	1
Global Link	4	Assistant teacher	1	Tailor	1
Charity shop	4	Community café	1	RAIS	1

It's interesting to note that more than half (those in bold) are opportunities within the sphere of projects serving the ASR: the football project, sewing project, growing food at Claver Hill,

interpreting and so on. In Year 3, for example, only 8 of the 45 ASR supported into volunteering were in placements outside of the ASR sphere. In Years 4 and 5 two ASR volunteered as hairdressers, cutting their peers' hair for free. This concentration of ASR volunteering within ASR circles reflects two things. First, Global Link and related local organisations actively seek the voluntary involvement of ASR out of self-interest (for example, needing their translation skills, or asking them to accompany someone to a health appointment) *and* because investing in ASRs as volunteers helps them to develop skills, socialise and maintain mental health. Second, Global Link has found it difficult to place ASR in meaningful volunteer roles in the wider community, particularly for ASR who do not speak fluent English. For other organisations the motive of self-interest (needing an extra pair of hands) generally takes precedence over the desire to invest in individuals. For example, one interviewee complained that he had worked in a charity shop, but was left to steam clothes by himself and so did not benefit from socialising or practising English; however, his language skills were probably too underdeveloped for him to serve customers, so the shop manager had trained him in a solitary task that needed doing.

The coronavirus lockdown made ASR volunteering almost impossible. GL helped one asylum seeker register on the Council for Voluntary Service database following the national call for volunteers. 750 people registered, but only 250 were given volunteer jobs. GL managed to secure one voluntary placement for a refugee who delivered food to vulnerable people. Partly in response to this GL initiated the [Covid-19 stories project](#) which both provided 8 ASR with volunteer work – researching and editing the stories - and documented how 9 individuals (including two ASR) had contributed to the district's impressive response to the challenges of lockdown. GL was also glad to have the outdoor space at its Claver Hill farming project, where it restarted farming and socially distanced activities for adults and children as soon as it was able. During Years 4 & 5 30 ASR volunteered at the farm.

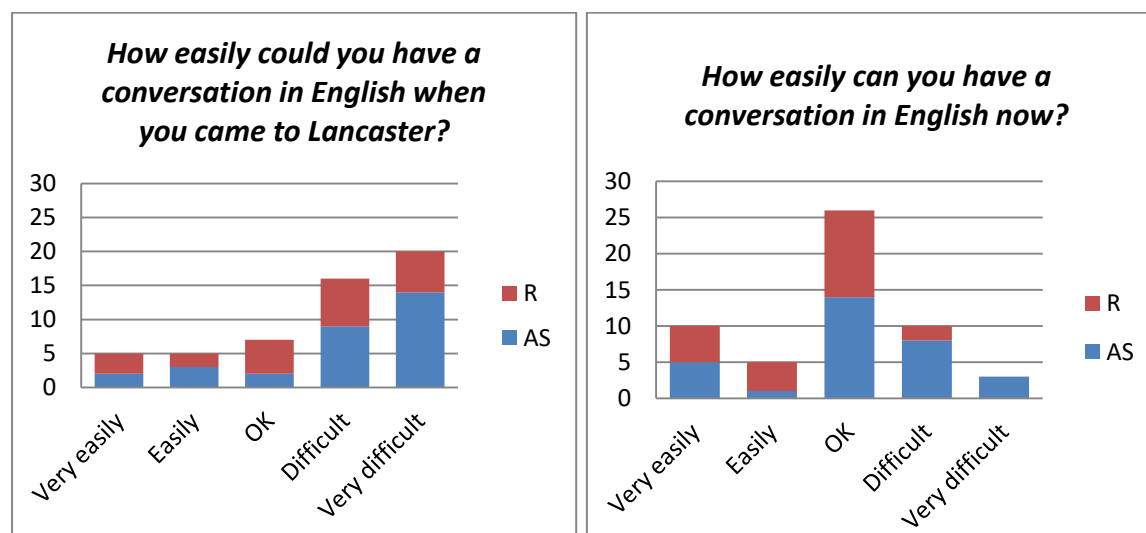
Summary for Outcome 2: Global Link is achieving this outcome of supporting ASR to improve their skills and increase their employability. It is both providing training and facilitating access to training in skills that should help ASR to find work. It has exceeded its target for vocational training each year, though has not met its target for training qualifications from short courses.

With regard to volunteering, GL only exceeded its target in Y3. I think this reflects the difficulty of this task, rather than lack of effort on GL's part. It is difficult to find relevant and meaningful voluntary work experience for ASR who lack English skills. As a result the majority of ASR are gaining purpose and structure by volunteering within the ASR sphere, some of which may help them find work in the future. And supporting a total of 132 people to gain voluntary work experience and contribute to various projects is a significant achievement.

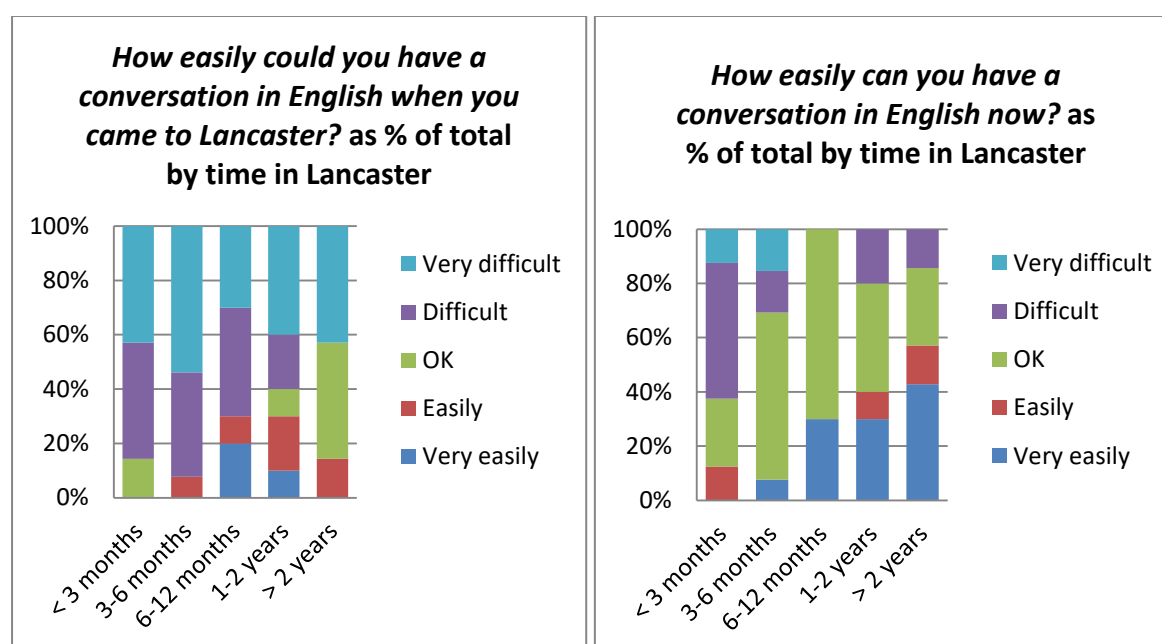
Outcome 3: ASR have improved their English language competency and communication skills

a) ASRs' assessment of their skills

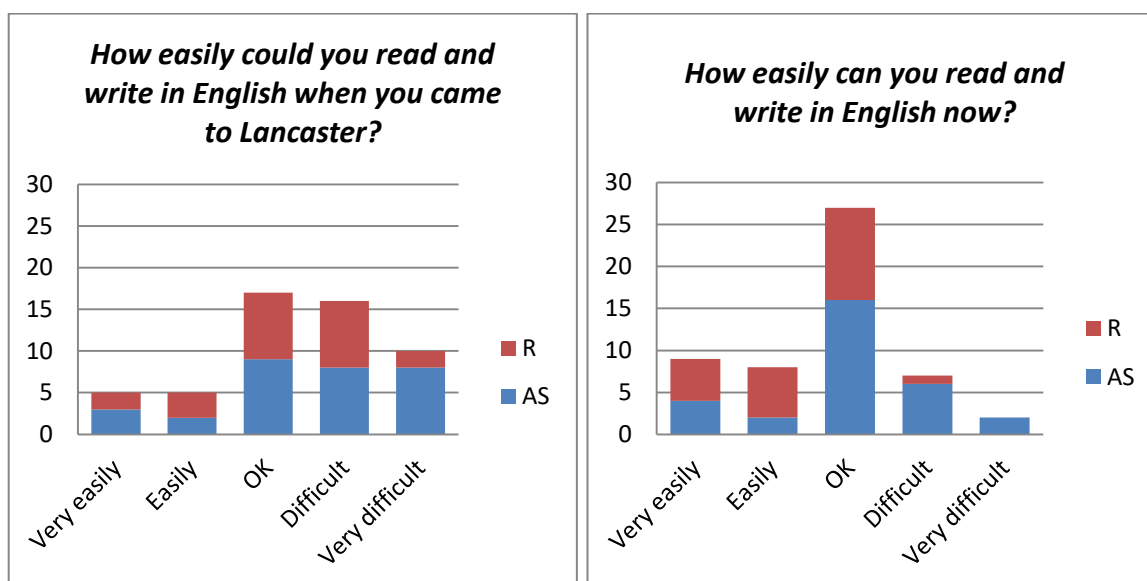
As the following charts show, at mid-term the survey respondents reported a significant improvement in the ease with which they can have a conversation in English.



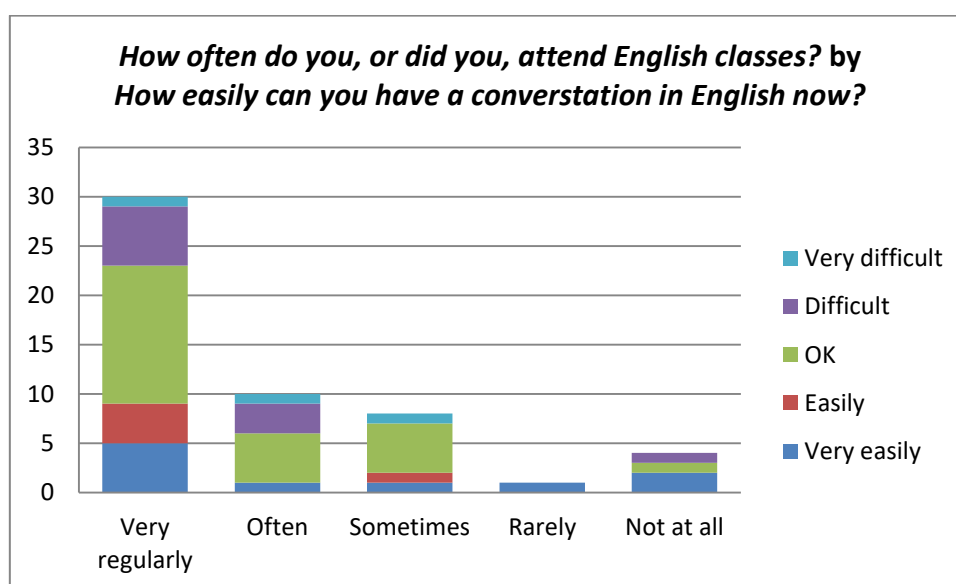
If we look at the same question but broken down by the time in which each respondents has been in Lancaster (for those respondents for whom we have both data) we find, as we would expect, there is no strong relationship between time and ease of conversation when respondents first arrived. In each column between 30% and 54% of respondents found talking in English 'very difficult' when they first arrived. A pattern emerges, however, when looking at their conversational ease now: the only respondents finding it 'very difficult' are those who have been in Lancaster for less than 6 months, and the proportion reporting that they can converse 'very easily' rises with time.



We see a similar shift in respondents' self assessment of their ability to read and write in English:



Survey respondents also indicated how often they attend English classes; 57% said they attend 'very regularly', and 19% said they go 'often'. There is no discernable pattern, however, between their self-reports of attendance and conversational ease:



Of course, English classes are not the only influence on ASR's English skills; although some may stay in their bubble of people who speak the same mother tongue and invest little time outside of the classroom to learning English, others access additional learning resources, read and view English-language media, and volunteer in order to accelerate their learning.

b) CoS English classes and ESOL qualifications

GL's targets are that each year 50 ASR will have improved their English language by regularly attending City of Sanctuary English classes, and that 50 ASR will have gained an ESOL qualification¹³.

For most of the project GL did not run English classes itself, but supported CoS to run classes. Initially GL hired Eleanor Denvir from Lancaster & Morecambe College to provide a weekly education surgery (including English language assessments); it also paid for venue hire, plus materials and DBS checks for volunteers who provide one-to-one tuition to ASR with young children. From April 2022 GL employed Eleanor as a full time Education Access Tutor who assesses and supports eligible ASR to access English classes and vocational courses, and has overall responsibility for all the ESOL classes delivered by CoS volunteers. In Y5 she also delivered English classes to resettlement families and to men in the Lancaster hostel.



The CoS classes are run by trained ESOL volunteer tutors who each provide two hours of teaching per week, supported by volunteer assistants who help in the sessions and also lead the class if the tutor cannot attend. Over summer, when there are no college classes, CoS runs a six week summer programme.

At the end of Year 2 there was a major change to ESOL provision in the district, when the college announced it would be cutting its weekly provision by one third from September 2019, would have a shorter academic year (ending in May rather than June), and would enforce the government rule that asylum seekers cannot access state-funded English classes for their first six months in the UK. GL and CoS felt strongly that provision should not be cut, particularly as learning English on arrival is so important for integration and wellbeing. Thus GL wrote a one year funding proposal (submitted by CoS) to Awards for All for additional funds to support more ESOL provision. A further external shock was faced in Year 5 with the sudden arrival of 218 asylum seekers in the district, placed by Serco in hostel accommodation in two former hotels. This also coincided with the arrival of around 30 Ukrainian refugees, who were immediately eligible for access to formal classes.

English class provision over the course of the project is shown in the following table:

¹³ The project proposal uses the targets of 250 ASR improving their English language and 250 ASR gaining an ESOL qualification by the end of the project. I have reframed the targets here as annual ones because the original target indicators, if followed assiduously, could be counterproductive: to meet the targets it would make strategic sense to work with more people for a short period of time, and to focus on supporting as many ASR as possible to get the most basic qualification, rather than supporting ASR to keep learning, to progress through the CoS classes, and to take progressively harder qualifications.

	Classes per week	# attending CoS classes	# getting 1-2-1 tuition	# gaining an ESOL/functional English qualification	# taking GCSE English
Year 1	2 classes at 2 levels in 1 venue on 1 day	18	9	58	6
Year 2	2 classes at 3 levels in 1 venue on 1 day	35	12	85	4
Year 3	9 classes at 5 levels in 3 venues on 2 days	62	18	62	1
Year 4	10 classes at 5 levels in 2 venues on 2 days	63	8	55	2
Year 5	16 classes at 6 levels in 5 venues on 4 days	198*	33	79	1

~ Results for Y5 unknown at time of writing, this is the number of people sitting the exams.

* This is comprised of 89 ASR living in Serco houses or their own homes, and 109 ASR accommodated at the Lancaster hostel. It does not include 79 living at the Morecambe hostel, for whom ESOL classes began just after the end of this project.

During and after lockdown GL used additional Big Lottery funding to ensure that English learners had access to wifi: this action supported 150 AS and 20 refugees in Y4 and 106 AS in Y5. Global Link also received and serviced donated computers, and issued them to the child and adult learners most in need of them; 17 in Y3, 22 in Y4 (plus funding to buy 6), and 11 in Y5: a total of 56. Remembering lockdown one mother said *'The wifi ...was the relief of most of our problems. Because we couldn't apply [for wifi], we don't have any documents, we don't have a bank account, and without wifi our life is gone. Because I've got nothing to do, and my husband has nothing to do, and the kids have nothing to do, and sometimes they have this online stuff that they need to do, With the laptop, my son is doing all his homeworks on it. I'm also actually doing things on it, whenever we have meetings or zooms. It was really, really perfect...'*

In addition to the ESOL classes, in Y5 14 parents attended a pre-school Rhythm and Rhyme English weekly language session, delivered in partnership with More Music, during which their toddlers – raised during lockdown – very noticeably learned a lot about socialising and became much happier. 13 parents also attended an English literacy class with their child, at which two volunteers played with the children, leaving the parents free to learn.

The table shows that the numbers gaining ESOL or functional English qualifications has exceeded the target of 50 each year, even with funding cuts at the college in Year 3. Regarding the number attending English classes, the target of 50 was not met in Years 1 and 2, but was far exceeded in Years 3, 4 and 5.

From my observation of three classes at mid-term, the CoS tutors create a warm and informal environment for learning, with plenty of humour, and tutors delivering interesting content that also improves cultural literacy (for example, learning cooking terms on Shrove Tuesday via a recipe for pancakes). The two hour sessions have a break for refreshments, enabling students from the different classes to mix, and so making the sessions more attractive and sociable.

Worthy of note is how the ESOL volunteers work to provide tailored support to enthusiastic individuals as need arises. For example, a student began the beauty therapy course at college, but was downhearted after the first week as she could not cope with the vocabulary. In response the ESOL Coordinator quickly found her a tutor to help her learn the specialist vocabulary. In the same vein, one man was linked with a maths teacher to provide additional support to help him get his functional maths qualification, while the CoS class for English GCSE prepares ASR who are not yet of a good enough standard to attend the college's GCSE class.

The rapid expansion in ESOL provision in Year 3 and again in Year 5 is impressive both in terms of the speed and scale of the response. For example, providing two classes a week to each of the two large groups of learners from the Lancaster hostel required 22 additional volunteers. Despite additional funding, the ESOL provision depends on the unpaid commitment of two volunteer coordinators, many class tutors, class assistants and one-to-one tutors.

As the previous section showed, ASR feel that their language skills have improved a lot, and the ESOL qualifications they have achieved corroborate their self-assessment. In addition, as the chart on page 18 shows, the English language classes delivered by City of Sanctuary were the service that ASR workshop participants most valued out of the 10 services on offer. One of the impact interviewees reflected *"I don't want to sit at home and not do anything, because I am usually a social busy person. Eleanor enrolled me Tuesdays, Wednesday, Thursdays, Fridays into classes, the whole week I am busy, I'm totally occupied which you know was really a great help, a great advantage for me."*

In one workshop a participant said *"These classes are very important but not everyone goes to them. Why are we providing translation for people who have been here for two years?"*. It is the case that a minority opt not to attend English classes at all, while others attend erratically and thus make slow progress. It's also possible that GL's provision of translation reduces some people's need or motivation to learn English. Yet it would be unsupportive to cut back on translation, and while Global Link and CoS can encourage ASR to attend English classes, they cannot insist on it.

c) IT skills

GL's target is that 30 ASR each year improve their IT skills, enabling them to communicate more effectively online.

Global Link provided IT-related courses for ASR, as well as, in Years 1 to 4, an annual digital storytelling workshop, and in Y5 the Migration Stories project and related training.

IT courses	Provider	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Computer Skills for Overseas Learners	Global Link/ L&M College	18	14	24		
Basic IT skills	Global Link					20
Digital storytelling (video editing skills)	Global Link	8	8	8	6	
Research, IT & communication skills (Migration Stories project)	Global Link					8
Total		26	22	32	6	28

During lockdown GL made videos about basic IT skills which are available on its RefugeeHome website. This means that although it did not quite meet its target in terms of direct training, it probably achieved it with the addition of online support accessed by ASR. Furthermore GL refers ASR each year to the local college for formal IT courses.



Global Link's IT Worker runs a training session for ASR

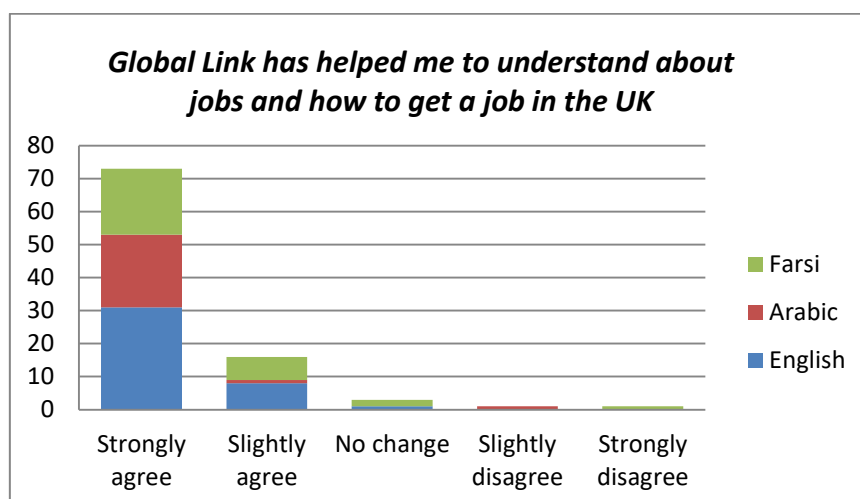
Summary for Outcome 3: After a slow start in terms of provision in Year 1, Global Link - with its partners in City of Sanctuary and Lancaster & Morecambe College – has exceeded the targets for this outcome. They are now serving a wide range of needs among ASR, and jointly giving ASR regular opportunities to improve their English language competency and communication skills, and to gain language qualifications. By securing additional funding and garnering the dedication of a large number of volunteers CoS has plugged the gaps left by funding cuts and changes in provision by the college. It has also rapidly responded to the increased need stemming from the placing of 140 AS at the former hotel in Lancaster, and a further 78 in Morecambe. The provision is highly appreciated by ASR whose main request during the mid-term review was for more classes.

Outcome 4: Refugees have improved knowledge and confidence to access support for job-seeking

a) *Refugees' perspectives about jobs and job-seeking*

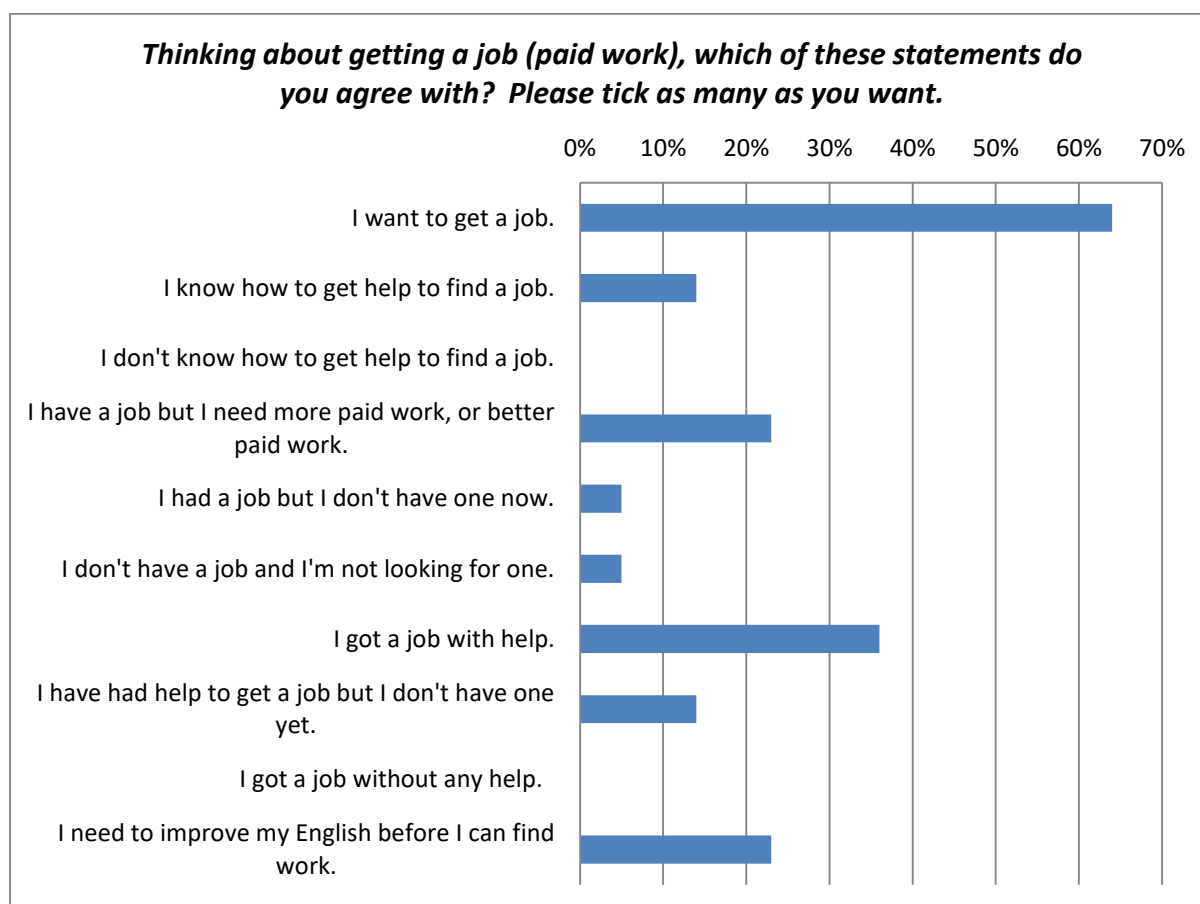
GL's target is that 100 ASR per year report increased understanding of the UK job market and what they need to do to boost their employability.

GL's May 2022 survey sought ASR feedback on this subject, with the following result:



In total 89 of 94 respondents (95%) strongly or slightly agreed that GL had helped them in this way, with little variation between the three languages. With only 5 out of 94 respondents giving neutral or negative responses, and with many ASR not having filled in the survey, we can be confident that GL has met this target.

The mid-term survey asked refugees (but not asylum seekers, who were not at that time permitted to take any paid work) if they agreed with ten statements about jobs and job seeking. As the following chart shows, among the 22 refugees who did respond to this question, 64% indicated that they want to get paid work, and 23% said they have paid work but want more work or better paid work. Only one person said that they did not have a job and were not looking for one.



Only three respondents (14%) ticked the statement “I know how to get help to get a job”; however, half said they had received help in looking for work, so it seems safe to assume that at least that half *did* know how to access support as they had already done so. 36% said they had found a job with help, while 14% had had help but not yet found work. 23% said they had a job but wanted more work or better paid work. In total 45% indicated that they currently had paid work. Noticeably no one said they did not know how to get help to get a job, and no one reported having got a job without help.

In terms of confidence about getting a job, five refugees indicated that they need to improve their English skills before they can find work.

One of the mid-term interviewees explained her position, which seems fairly typical regarding ASR attitudes to work: *“I have been working for my whole life, so it was weird for me to sit down, and do nothing. I am planning to be an auditor, now I am trying to find an apprenticeship. I want to work*

and study at the same time....now I am just looking for jobs everywhere.... I will do anything, because it is the same way I start in my country. Here it is the same because you have to start from nothing ...I can't just sit down in the corner and do nothing! And when you are working, this experience gives you lots of things that are more than the money."

b) *Employment and job-seeking*

GL's targets are that each year 30 ASR create CVs and are regularly applying for jobs and undertaking training to support their CV development, and that by the end of the project 30 refugees have been supported into employment.

In years 1 to 3 Global Link ran a regular employment surgery staffed by its part-time Refugee Support Worker and a volunteer who is a human resources consultant. They helped refugees to create a CV in English, and gave advice on job searching, support to complete job applications, and help to prepare for interviews. As one male interviewee explained *"Getting in contact with people, that can help you with information about future jobs. They [GL] help me, they send me so many places with finding voluntary jobs, and future jobs. They are so useful - you know. Here the structure is totally different from my country, you don't know anything about the rules."* As part of this linking GL networks with local employers through the Chamber of Commerce and other routes, which led to one refugee getting a full-time job in Year 1. In Year 2 GL facilitated two work trials which both lead to paid work. GL has also referred three highly skilled refugees to RefuAid and RESTART, to access the specialist support that those two organisations offer.

Lockdown made it more difficult for refugees to find work, with so many businesses affected. For example, GL worked with a restaurant that was due to hire several refugees, but it did not reopen as planned. To ease GL's workload, and following a change in staffing, GL stopped holding an employment surgery and instead moved to all case workers offering employment support, and making more use of the local employment support organisation Inspira. In Y4 GL referred 7 refugees to them for help with writing their CVs and applying for work, and supported a further 9 refugees in Y4 with advice, signposting and references. In Y5 the figures were 14 referrals and 21 getting further support from GL.

In Y4 Global Link hired Mi-gen to run the workshop *How To Create a Business Plan*, which was attended by 7 people. GL also supported a refugee family to set a takeaway business, and advised refugees about setting up his own IT business.

In Y5 the situation changed radically, as, in response to a national labour shortage, the government decided that AS who have been in the UK for 12 months may take up paid work in certain jobs. However, as any AS who arrived 12 months or more can get a NI number (regardless of their skills and qualifications), many have found work for themselves. In Y5 GL supported 20 AS to get their NI number. In Y5 a GL trustee, Keri Brown, ran a workshop about self-employment which four people attended, and 40 people participated in another entitled *How to Find Work*, facilitated by consultant Anne Baker.

As the following table shows, GL has so far supported 38 refugees into paid work, so has exceeded its target of 30 by the end of the project by 26%, though it has sometimes/mainly fallen short on the target of giving 30 ASR employment support each year.

	# of ASRs who created their CV and received employment support from GL	# of refugees who secured paid work
Year 1	21	13
Year 2	30	6
Year 3	17	6
Year 4	16	4
Year 5	35	9 (6 in permanent posts, 3 doing freelance work)
Total	119	38

During Year 2 Global Link supported the development of the Global Village Café, a local catering social enterprise, which offers training and employment to refugees. Until Y5 Global Link continued to provide practical support by doing their payroll, but ceased as the project matured.

Advocacy

Global Link is also sometimes involved in advocacy to support individual's work place rights. In one case a refugee did not get the job she had applied for despite being the only applicant and having the ability to do the work; after pressure from Global Link she was put in post and has proved to be a reliable worker. In another case a refugee left his job as he was being paid less than the minimum wage; with support from GL he went back to the employer and explained he would be involving the Citizens Advice Bureau in his case, at which point the employer paid what was due to him.

Summary for Outcome 4: Global Link did not always meet its target for supporting ASR to become more employable, but exceeded the target of supporting 30 ASR into paid employment by the end of the project. The support work is time consuming and difficult in a market where there are limited opportunities for those who do not speak English well and who do not have many skills or qualifications. Yakalhef's research with ASR in Lancaster in 2018 found that a quarter of respondents had no formal qualifications, and a further half had only high school qualifications¹⁴. Add to that the difficulties with speaking English, and it is clear that the task is a challenging one.

Outcome 5: ASR have improved quality of life due to increased access to food/clothing

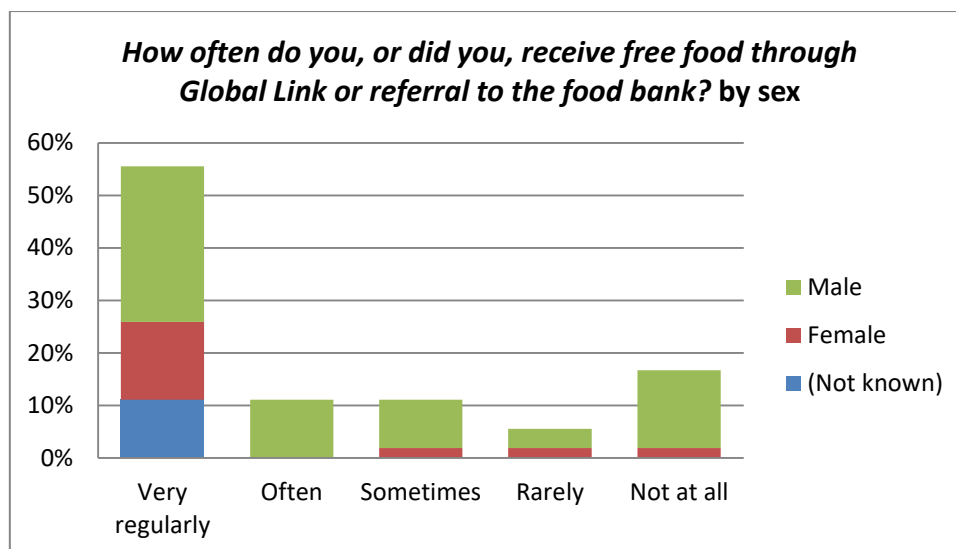
Global Link added Outcomes 5 and 6 at the end of the first year of the project, to reflect work that it was doing but which was not captured by the original four outcomes. No targets were set for these outcomes.

a) Access to food

With regard to free food, Global Link makes this available in four ways: first, the hot meal served as the lunch-drop in is free for ASR (and by donation to volunteers); second, surplus food is sometimes available at that drop in (for example, donations of tinned food or surplus allotment produce); third, through referral to the Olive Tree food bank; and fourth, ASR who work at the Claver Hill farming project can also harvest food there.

Two thirds of the mid-term survey respondents said they had 'often' or 'very regularly' received free food. A higher proportion of female respondents reported this than males (73% compared to 59%, though we do not know the sex of the 6 individuals who did not tick if they were male or female).

¹⁴ Dr Mohamed Yakalhef, *Lancaster & Morecambe City of Sanctuary Refugees' Challenges of Integration*, Global Link DEC, April 2019, page 11.

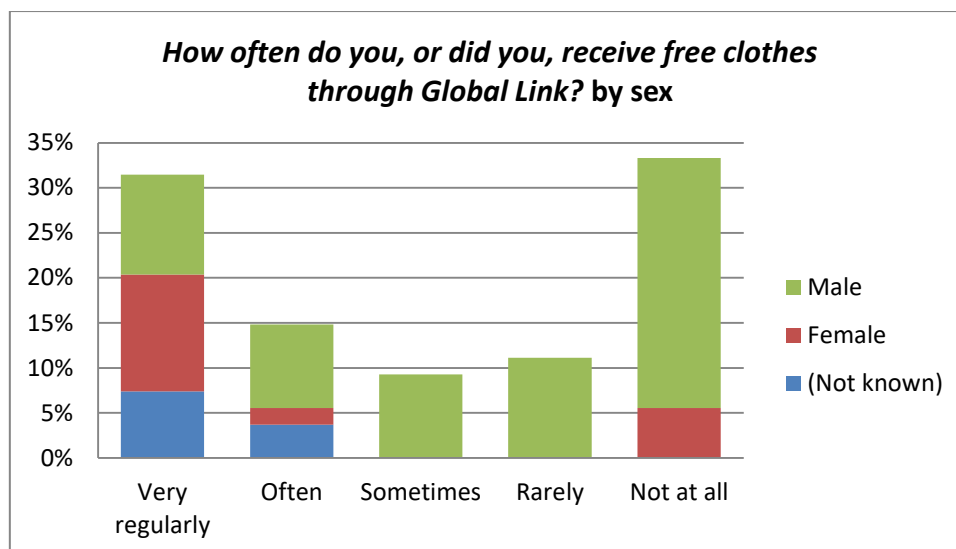


During the first lockdown all 150 asylum seekers in Serco houses received food parcels, which the Olive Tree Food Bank delivered to their homes. Since July 2020 GL has been referring individuals according to their need, with 29 referrals made in Y5.

b) Access to free clothing

Until February 2020 the Sewing Circle members held a pop-up shop once a month at which ASR could get clothes, shoes and bedding during or after the lunch drop-in. This involved moving heavy loads by hand up several flights of stairs. New arrivals were given priority, and items are also sometimes given directly, for example, when a family arrived needing clothes who could not wait for the next pop-up shop. While Covid restrictions were in place fewer events were held, and with the numbers of shoppers limited, but GL still held 6 sessions during Y4 at which 50 people got clothes. In Y5 GL was given access to a small room within the YMCA building where it could leave a small selection of clothing – saving the effort of having to move items from the store to the pop-up shop and back. As women are now able to access clothes and children’s clothes from East Meets West, GL decided to focus on men’s clothes. During Y5 150 ASR accessed clothing from this new store, in particular many of the men newly arrived at the hostel.

In total at mid-term 64% of respondents indicated that they had received free clothes ‘often’ or ‘very regularly’. Among female respondents the proportion was 73%, while among males it was 30%. This is not surprising, given that women often take responsibility for sourcing clothes for other family members as well as for themselves, and that more women than men participate in Global Link’s sewing project (which organises the pop-up clothes shop). As some interviewees explained, the need for free clothes varies. One single man said that once his acute need on arrival in Lancaster was met he had less need for the service, except to get clothes as the seasons change, and to replace worn clothes. For those with children, however, the need continues because children outgrow the clothes and so require a steady stream of replacement items.



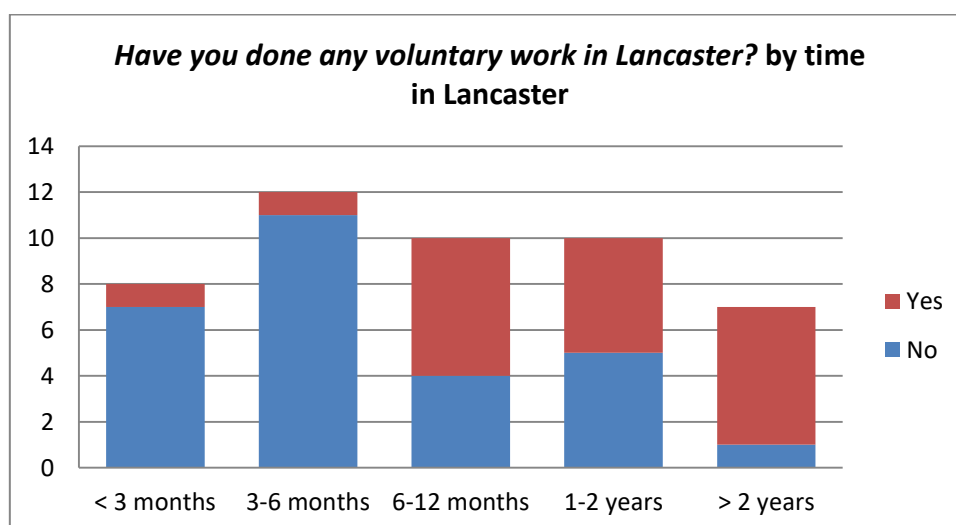
c) Additional support

During the latter part of the project GL facilitated some further forms of practical support. In Y5 40 ASR received a free haircut, supplied by two suitably skilled ASRs, and 15 AS received a donated refurbished phone. The phone recipients were mainly men placed in the hostel, some of whom arrived straight from the South coast with very few belongings. 213 received a CoS welcome pack, and 106 received a SIM card.

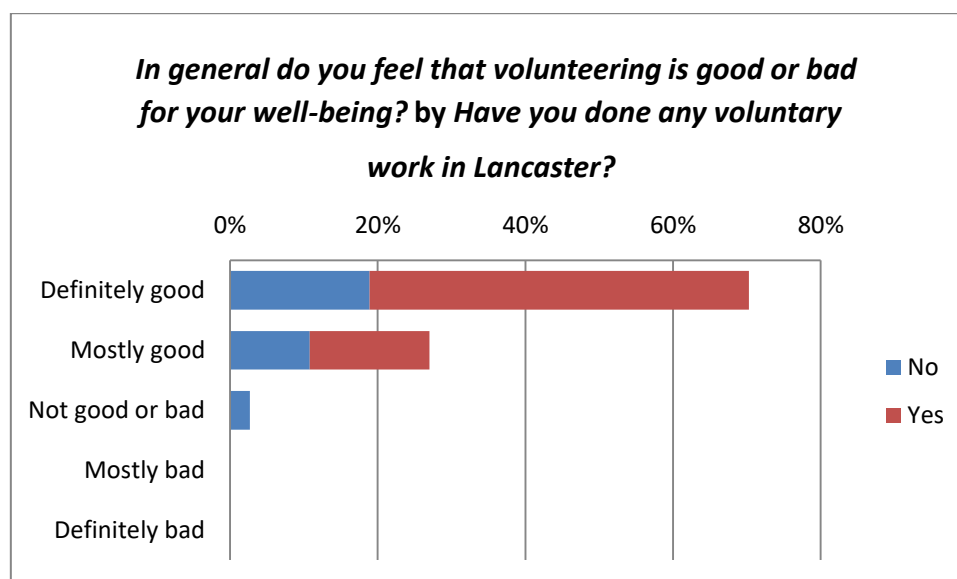
Summary for Outcome 5: Global Link is certainly meeting this outcome, enabling better quality of life for those ASR that need or want free food and clothes.

Outcome 6: ASR well-being is enhanced by contributing to the local community through voluntary cooking and other voluntary work

At mid-term 47% of survey respondents said that they have done some voluntary work, with little difference between men and women. As the next chart shows, the proportion that reported engaging in voluntary work was low for recent arrivals (10% among those who arrived less than six months ago), but higher for the other categories (in total 63% of those who arrived more than six months ago).



Almost all respondents indicated that volunteering is ‘mostly’ or ‘definitely’ good for their well-being. Those who have experience of volunteering were more positive, with 76% saying it is definitely good compared to 58% among those who have not volunteered in Lancaster.



As already outlined under Outcome 2, it’s difficult for ASR with limited English to find meaningful volunteering roles in the wider community, and much of their volunteering is within the sphere of ASR projects. That sphere, however, provides a forgiving environment in which ASR can interact, learn skills and make a useful contribution, whether it be fixing bikes for other ASR, growing food at Claver Hill, cooking food for the Tuesday lunch, or providing translation and support to GL’s services. It also helps some organisations to keep their costs down. For example, in Y2 at the weekly lunch Global Link had one AS volunteer assisting her peers to fill in their HC1 form (concerning health care costs) and other refugee monitoring the number of attendees and organising food bank referrals. These are tasks that might otherwise be done by paid members of staff.

Summary for Outcome 6: By supporting ASR into voluntary roles GL is undoubtedly helping many ASR to improve their well-being.

3.3. Additional findings

3.3a Further feedback from ASR

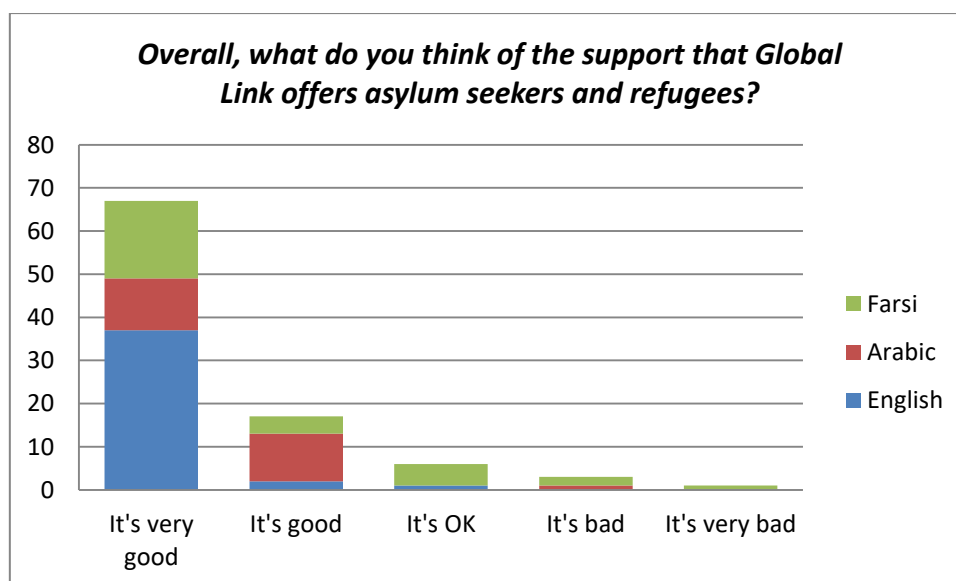
Requests from the workshops

At the mid-term workshops I asked ASR participants to put forward their own ideas for how GL can improve its work. I have included many of those ideas in Section 4.2, and here list some of the remaining suggestions that do not relate directly to a specific outcome, with an update for Years 4 and 5.

ASR idea	Y4 & Y5 response
GL could provide more hours of case work drop-in, education surgery, legal drop-in and move on support.	GL expanded its casework hours from six hours a week (in three two-hour sessions) to 30 (in five six-hour sessions). This is a 500% increase.
GL could provide more access to computers.	GL issued 56 computers to adult and child learners during Years 3 to 5 (6 new laptops and 50 donated and serviced laptops and computers).
Requests for trips to other places, activities for children, picnics.	GL organised informal bike rides and walks, arranged for more football sessions at Lancaster FC's grounds, and secured funding for guided walks in nature reserves and for an informal ASR running group. It also got funding for the Rhythm & Rhyme parent and toddler sessions and literacy classes with children. CoS also responded by organising meet ups with games in a park, and adding children's activities at the regular football club.
Requests for access to a gym, but paying with cash and monthly; also gym classes and swimming.	GL has secured funding to hire the YMCA gym twice a week, for use by ASR.
Requests for Wi-Fi and TVs in the Serco houses	GL provided 9 months unlimited data to all AS during lockdown to prevent exclusion from learning, and continued after lockdown to support AS with some data in partnership with CoS. It cannot however afford to pay for on-going broadband provision, TVs and TV licences in 43 houses.

Overall assessment of Global Link by ASR

GL's May 2022 survey asked ASR to rate GL's overall performance, and their responses are shown in the following chart:



The end of project survey also asked ASR *If you had to choose one word, what word would you use to describe Global Link?* The results are shown below, with the size of the font reflecting how many times the word was used. (Note: where respondents had used more than one word I selected the

key word or words: for example, I entered the response “*Global Link is my everything*” as ‘My everything’ and recorded “*Sensitive, particularly the head of the organisation*” as ‘Sensitive’.



The only criticism expressed by respondent was one comment “*Good but not enough*”. Some people also made longer comments. One person wrote “*Humanity and helping others is its title. You have my respect and my love for helping me on my first day that I arrived to the UK until this day*”.

The mid-term survey invited respondents to leave any further comments about living in Lancaster District and the work of Global Link, and 21 people did so:

- None of the comments were negative.
- Four were positive about Lancaster, including praise for the attitude of police towards refugees, and feeling good about being in *“very beautiful Lancaster”*.
- 11 simply expressed thanks to GL, for example *“I admire and like the work of Global Link, they give us a lot of help and support”* and *“It's really good and helpful for people who recently come to the UK and don't know what to do. So Global Link help them in any kind of issues.”*
- Two comments were positive about GL but included suggestions: *“I really am satisfied with the work of Global Link, but I suggest that they should help asylum seekers and refugees to get to different kind of voluntary work.”* and *“Everything is fine but there is some staff that need to be more attention for us to be worked like: 1) having gym. 2) working same thing. 3) voluntary offering job. 4) to work strongly in our case.”*
- Four comments were suggestions to GL: requests for access to a gym, more English classes, and support to ASR to follow their personal interests, such as painting.

The social impact interviews from Y4 also yield very positive assessments of Global Link, including these excerpts:

An Iranian refugee reflected: “During this year I have been waiting for the home office interview but I have to say that it was not that scary or stressful for me. I feel relaxed during this year because I try to keep myself busy. I can say that 50% of this good feeling is because of Global Link, because of all the things they did for people like me, to keep us busy, to engage us, to encourage us, to go out, to learn, to make this easier, to make us happier...I appreciate for all of them”.

An Albanian refugee, who arrived in Lancaster traumatised and shy, explained *“Global Link gave me the opportunity to volunteer with them and they have helped me to grow as a person.... I want to help more people who have been in similar situations and I want more people to help others....I am very thankful to Global Link. They have given me many opportunities for which I am grateful for. I am now a better person, with more confidence in myself and better self-esteem, all thanks to Global Link.”*

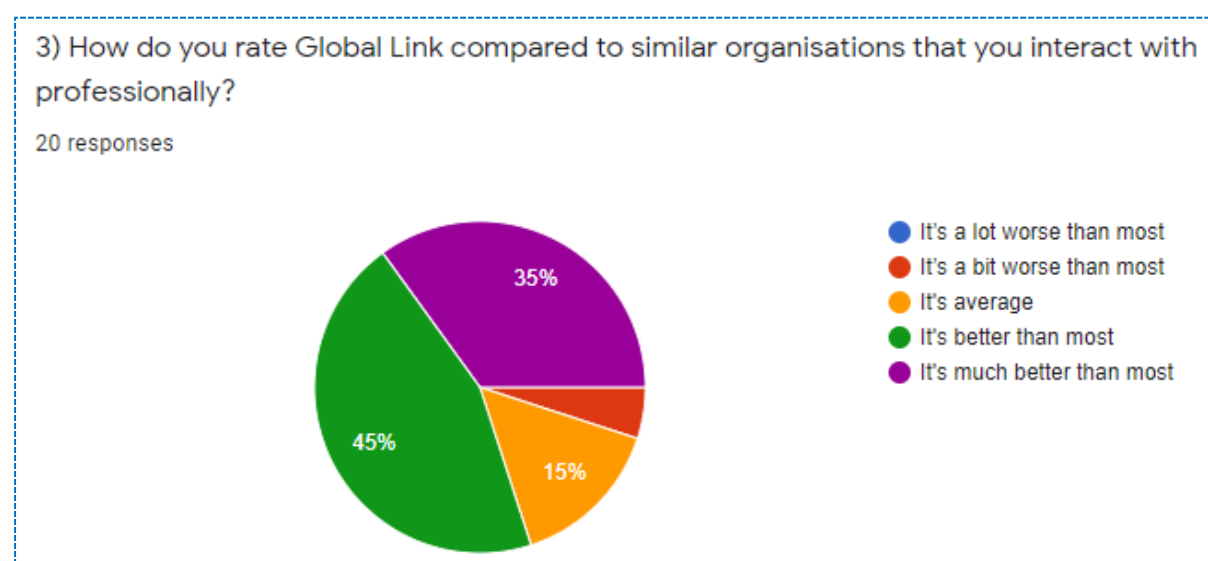
An Eritrean remembered: *“When I arrived here I felt like I was in a weird place... a small town and at first I didn’t like it... I felt isolated at first, I was a bit lost actually....when I came to the first lunch drop- in, I felt alive again, I felt like I could finally breathe again!. At the house I couldn’t find anyone to communicate with, but when I came here to GL, I started to spend such good moments with different people. The staff were amazing, so welcoming. I really liked it because all of them were friendly... everyone was coming close to me, to meet me, they were happy and smiley, and I was like WHAT! ... So I really liked the environment, I felt like I was finally safe... the staff were understand what we are going through and were always here to help us with what we need.”*

An Iranian asylum seeker recalled *“As I had trained and worked in the field of IT, I have started my first volunteer job at Global Link as assistant IT technician to repair the donated PCs and made it ready for use of asylum seekers and refugees during lockdown...I spend most of my time with learning English language. I do have some classes of maths too. I do volunteer for Eggcup and a stable around the Morecambe. Both of these volunteer works are extremely interesting for me. In addition I am trying to participate in most of asylum seekers and refugees’ online gathering and meetings...Honestly if there weren’t all these opportunities what I have enjoyed with assistance of the Global Link, I am certain I would not have had the current mental condition, which would have been far worsened.”*

3.3b Stakeholders’ assessment of Global Link

Comparison to similar organisations

In attempt to provide some context, as part of the mid-term research I asked stakeholders how they rate Global Link compared to similar organisations. One respondent felt it is a bit worse than most, and three felt it was average. The remaining 16 (70%) viewed Global Link favourably, being either better or much better than most.



I asked stakeholders *What do you think Global Link does well?* The word cloud below gives a feel for their comments, in which most answered by identifying more than one element. For example:

“Be inclusive and respectful. Works hard to help refugees in every possible way. Works hard to involve other local people/groups/organisations and work in partnership as much as possible.”

“Making people feel welcome and cared for, taking a personal interest in people and understanding their needs. Giving people the chance to get involved and build a mutually supportive network.”

“Networking, multi agency working, communication.”



Strengths and weaknesses

I also asked stakeholders *What does Global Link do less well?* Six respondents (30%) answered by saying they had no criticisms. Four (20%) made positive suggestions about wanting Global Link to **get more funding to expand its existing services**, including its hours, more staff, increasing support to ASR wanting volunteering and paid work, and securing more spacious premises. So in total half of the respondents did not give any criticism of GL’s work in answer to this question.

Among the other half three respondents’ comments (15%) concerned **communication and coordination with other agencies**; for example *“It is perhaps so busy with what it does that it does not have enough time to foster relationships with partners and check that we are not overlapping in our offers and services and also avoiding clashes regarding planned events.”*

The remaining seven stakeholders identified the following shortcomings:

“Support towards getting housing benefits etc, which they don't follow through beyond registration.”

“Advice in various social welfare areas such as housing, debt benefits and budgeting - not less well because agencies can't be expected to do everything. Partnerships and collaboration are needed to ensure a wraparound service.”

“Including the wider community - not well known outside particular circles and age groups.”

“Liaise with settings, in my experience.”

“Quality of service can differ from one case to another – inconsistent”.

“There are talks from time to time about aspects of living in England. It is difficult to get the content appropriate for the varying levels of English among the audience. I don't know how to get over this problem.”

“Very difficult to say. Too involved certain situations sometimes. But it is a very difficult job not to.”

Imagining the situation without Global Link's work

In an attempt to get stakeholders to assess GL's contribution I asked two 'thought experiment' questions: *What do you think Lancaster would be like, as a dispersal area for asylum seekers and refugees, without Global Link?* and *How do you think life for asylum seekers and refugees in Lancaster would be different if Global Link wasn't here?* 19 stakeholders responded to each question. All imagined that the situation be worse. The main themes of their comments were:

- There are other voluntary organisations who could expand their services, but they would need premises, paid staff and greater expertise.
- ASR would greatly miss the hub of GL, and the way in which they can go there for assistance with any issue.
- Without the community-building social hub of GL and the impact of its support and case work, there would be more isolation, homelessness, and mental health problems among ASR, which would create more work for other service providers such as the NHS, police and city council.
- ASR would need to rely on statutory organisations more, but those services are already stretched and would struggle to respond without additional resources.
- Less integration and support might result in more friction between ASR and local communities.

3.3c Equity and lower use of GL's services by some ASR

At the suggestion of the Global Link ASR staff members and the volunteers who pilot-tested the ASR survey, I included the question *Do you think all asylum seekers and refugees are treated equally by Global Link? If possible, please explain your answer.* They wanted to ask this because sometimes they hear of discontent, with people from certain language or national groups feeling that other groups get preferential treatment. Without exception, however, respondents answered that yes, they think people are treated equally. The question yielded only two comments: *"Some people think that Arabic speakers are favoured, with the Arabic translator at the drop in"* and *"Yes they didn't have discrimination among us!!! They treat us equally!"* One interviewee talked about this issue, explaining that while he has had problems with certain people and their religious rules, for Global Link *"the welcome is genuine, they are fair, they don't have a problem with religion."*

From my observation, GL seems very attentive to the need for equity and to avoid discrimination (and, of course, is founded on these principles). For example, Global Link's messages about the Sudanese Celebration and the Norwuz party strongly emphasised that all are welcome. GL also hires suitably qualified refugees as staff members, and has three refugees on its Board of Trustees.

Use of GL's services by ASR is very variable, however. On the demand side there is variability among ASR as to when and how often individuals access the available services. This is dependent on a lot of factors, but appears to be mainly due to different needs, access to other resources, personality differences, and mental health. On the supply side of GL, and from my own experiences in the bike project, I suspect it is difficult to be completely even handed: it is more efficient and effective (in terms of outcomes) to support some individuals than others. For example, one person may attend their appointment while another misses several appointments despite repeated reminders. This may not mean, however, that the latter is discriminated against. For example, GL staff spend a disproportionate amount of time supporting a minority of ASR with severe mental health problems, and dealing with the consequences for their housemates.

As part of the evaluation I attempted to find out why a minority of ASR in the district make little use of GL's services. The following categories emerged:

ASR who have the resources to manage without much support from GL:

- have claimed asylum after living in the UK, and therefore already understand the systems, have a bank account and so on;
- speak good English and are competent at researching how to meet their needs independently;
- mostly not living in Lancaster and accessing support elsewhere through friends or family;
- used to use GL's services but have outgrown the need for them.

Personality preferences:

- occasionally access GL services for case work issues, but prefer to stay away from socialising and other events;
- perceive issues (political, personal, religious) between themselves and other GL users and opt to avoid the possibility of conflict;
- not having a commitment to learning English, or to gaining qualifications or voluntary work experience.

ASR with mental health issues:

- experiencing depression and withdrawal, unable to leave home;
- experiencing anxiety in groups;
- having challenging behaviours that make them less welcome and less supported by other ASR.

I note that while GL has some influence on some of these issues, none of the reasons for not using GL's services relate to GL's actions or lack of action.

3.3d Responsiveness

From my observations, and in comparison with other organisations I have worked with, I found Global Link to be a very responsive and agile organisation.

Responding to the sudden use by Serco of two former hotels as temporary accommodation for AS:

For the first hostel, in Lancaster, the City Council and other bodies had less than a week's notice before asylum seekers arrived, and even then the information was vague, with Serco unable to say who would be coming (male, female, adults only or children also). Serco gave local groups more notice about the second hostel, in Morecambe. Nonetheless, GL and other ASR-related organisations in the district acted quickly to extend some support to the total of 218 hostel residents, while being careful not to take on roles that Serco is paid to undertake. GL secured funding from the City Council to rent a social space for three afternoons a week within their building, where ASR can gather (as the Lancaster hostel has no meeting spaces), and provided clothing and phone donations, and distributed CoS welcome packs. It also rapidly provided four new English classes per week for the hostel residents in Lancaster, and just after the end of this project, four more classes per week at the hostel in Morecambe. This rapid response was possible due to the hard work of GL staff, securing funding from the Henry Smith Trust for additional staff hours, and of those working in the City Council and other local organisations.

Providing mental health support

GL staff spend a disproportionate amount of time responding to a small number of ASRs' needs in relation to their mental health, despite not being formally trained in providing such support. In Y4, for example, GL referred 11 people for mental health treatment, and prevented one suicide. In response to this GL's Executive Director invested a significant amount of time in Y5 to attempting to access funding from the NHS to increase and professionalise the support that GL offers ASR. While GL was successful in its application to join the framework for commissioning of mental health support for delivery by voluntary organisations, no further progress has been made, with the process

being very slow and unclear. In April 2022, and in the absence of any indication of NHS funding in the near future, GL took the initiative to fund a part time post for one year itself. A half-time Health Advocacy Support Worker – himself a refugee – started work at the end of June 2022. Other members of staff will still need to respond to ASR needs on days when he is not working, but GL has at least expanded its provision, despite the failure, at the time of writing, of the NHS platform to commission any work in North Lancashire.

Responding to ASR suggestions and requests that arose during the mid-term research:

- When I passed on a suggestion that arose at an ASR workshop of having clustered simultaneous translation into many languages at the lunch drop-in Global Link immediately tried and adopted the approach.
- As part of the evaluation Sorani speakers requested a cultural event to celebrate Nowruz on 21st March, which is the start of the Persian new year. On further discussion, Iranians and Afghans said they also celebrate Nowruz, while Albanians celebrate a spring festival on the same day. Global Link quickly secured funding from the Local Integration Fund for an event, and then handed responsibility to a group of ASR to organise it. Unfortunately it was cancelled due to the lockdown.
- Global Link attempted to respond to the demand expressed by male ASR in the workshops for access to a gym. After several false starts this has now been achieved, with GL securing funding to access the gym within the YMCA premises, as well as funding football, running and walking sessions.

Responding to demand for ESOL classes:

As discussed under Outcome 3, GL supported CoS to rapidly expand the number and range of classes that it offered following cuts in provision from the college in Y3. In Y5 GL's Education Access Tutor had to cope with assessing large numbers of new arrivals who wanted to access English classes (187 asylum seekers who had been placed in the two hostels and 10 Ukrainian refugees arriving in the district). For the Ukrainians (who were immediately eligible for formal classes) and for many of the asylum seekers placed in Morecambe (who were eligible because they had already spent more than 6 months in the UK) this also involved referral to classes at the college. Expanding CoS provision of classes to cater for the hostel residents involved recruiting and interviewing new volunteer teachers and assistants, as well as completing their DBS checks and securing premises, with 22 volunteers involved in running the classes for the Lancaster hostel's residents.

Responding to changes in context that affect ASR:

Since summer 2019 asylum seekers have been expected to use the Migrant Help asylum helpline as a single national point of contact for assistance. However, when the helpline was launched users faced long waiting times, and many were cut off without any resolution after waiting for hours. This meant they were unable to report issues such as the heating not working in their Serco house. In response GL acted as an advocate for affected AS, contacting Serco staff members directly to report issues and to chase them up when they were not quickly resolved. This created additional work for GL, but was needed to support AS well-being.

During Y4 there was disruption nationally, when the Home Office transferred the NASS contract from one company to another, and thousands of asylum seekers were left with no money. GL's caseworkers advocated daily for over 20 asylum seekers who were not receiving any NASS payments, ensuring that either SERCO was providing them with emergency cash, or that Global Link stepped in to provide loans.

Responding to new needs:

In January 2020 the need emerged that some refugees do not have birth certificates for their children and thus need to get DNA tests before their children can come to the UK. Global Link committed to exploring local options for Home Office-approved DNA testing and arranged with CoS that the cost be split three ways between the refugee, CoS and GL.

In the final year of the project GL has been supporting asylum seekers to get their National Insurance numbers; this was due to a change in government policy, allowing those who have been waiting for on their claim for asylum for more than 12 months to take up certain types of employment.

Responding to the Covid-19 lockdown:

- GL staff provided daily case work support to ASR by phone, and made weekly referrals to the food bank for all Serco houses.
- GL appealed for laptops, and serviced and issued 17 laptops in Y3, 22 in Y4 (plus 6 that it bought) and 11 in Y5. These were issued to ASR children and adults to prevent their exclusion from online learning.
- GL divided all the AS households among its staff, and each staff member called each of 'their' houses every seven to 10 days to check if support was needed.
- City of Sanctuary's English classes moved online, along with one-to-one phone calls for additional support. GL paid for Wi-Fi boosts for 17 AS houses to enable learners to access the classes.
- The Sewing Circle gave four sewing machines to its members and distributed sewing kits and materials. The coordinator made videos to explain how to make masks, reusable panty pads and other simple projects.
- GL used funding from Catalyst to develop online resources, mainly the Refugee Home website and Moodle.

GL's responsiveness is of great benefit to ASR: a place where requests are as likely to be met with a response of "interesting, we'll look into it" as a "no". Of course, GL cannot respond to everything: the needs are too great, and it is constrained by its resources and commitments to how those must be spent. But its informal and cooperative workplace culture, along with its focus on supporting ASR, enables it to be agile and open to change.

3.3e Challenges faced by Global Link staff

At our reflection workshop at the end of the project I asked the five Global Link staff present to reflect on the personal challenges that they face in their work. We discussed a range of issues and possible responses, as well as some things that have improved.

Challenges and possible responses

All staff experience moral discomfort when clients express views or behave in ways that are at odds with your own codes. They agreed that in some cases this requires challenging, for example, through anti-racist messaging, or by explaining how transgressions can result in a claim for asylum being rejected. GL is also active in putting the spotlight on role models with the ASR community, and sharing positive information about, for example, rights-based attitudes, how to find work, and how to follow UK laws. But we also noted that staff members are not responsible for other's views and behaviours, and similar attitudes and behaviours are also common among the resident population. Staff may dislike it, and fear for the repercussions in terms of negative assessments of ASR, but ultimately have limited influence over other individuals.

Difficulties relating to **accusations of racism**, which seems to be experienced more by staff who are themselves refugees, as they are perceived as being biased in favour of ASR from their own nation. Staff agreed that they need to be transparent about their work and decision making to show that they treat ASR equitably, though some people may still feel aggrieved.

Coordination with other agencies is difficult to achieve, and a lack of coordination can be very inefficient when some ASR approach multiple services with the same issue. Lancashire County Council's move to providing direct support, rather than commissioning delivery via local organisations, increases the potential for duplication. However, it also provides an opportunity for GL to refer ASR for specialist support. For example, getting help to apply to go to university from the County Council's ESOL Coordinator, and help with certain work issues from their Employment Officer. Overall, though, the issue of coordination is difficult because it would be time consuming and likely breach confidentiality requirements if local agencies were constantly to share details of their client interactions with each other. GL and RAIS are however sharing information on an ad hoc basis about significant issues, and increasingly collaborating and communicating about their work.

Communication with ASR who do not speak English continues to be a challenge, but GL is not able to insist that ASR attend English classes, nor to penalise those that do not. In one case providing a family with wifi providing they attended class did not succeed. The best it can do is to support the provision of relevant tuition. For example, the shared project with More Music, providing English tuition through a musical group for mums with young children, who may not otherwise attend classes.

Despite Global Link renting additional office space in the last year of the project to accommodate additional staff, they felt that the **premises** are quite constraining. In particular, because staff share offices it is often not possible to have confidential conversations when meeting with ASR clients. However, this problem can only be solved by securing bigger premises, or renting a larger proportion of the existing premises or renting different premises. If GL succeeds in getting planning permission it hopes to buy and convert a building of its own in the coming months.

ASR sometimes have **unrealistic expectations**, which makes the work difficult. We agreed that GL staff need to make their own role clear – that they are not, for example, Home Office staff – and to explain the situation to ASR. For example, to explain that many local residents are also unable to get a NHS dentist, and that they too face long waits for access to NHS services. In the case of the AS being 'temporarily' housed in the hotels GL can prepare them for significant delays, as a stay which is supposed to be counted in weeks may easily extend to many months.

Staff fear there will be an increase in **racist abuse** of ASR due to Serco putting large groups in former hotels, along with the scapegoating which may occur as a result of the cost of living crisis. While the policy of dispersal in small houses has been very effective – situating small groups of asylum seekers as neighbours on residential streets, often in areas used to having a lot of students - putting large numbers of AS in former hotels renders them more of a mass and makes them an easier target for attack. GL is deliberately referring to the former hotels as *hostels* because they are not functioning or experienced as luxury accommodation.

With regard to how GL is perceived, the expansion in its ASR support means that it's now often viewed only in that way, at the expense of its original and core role of **delivering development education**. This requires GL to keep promoting its development education projects, and making the most of the synergies between the two strands of work, as it is now doing through its participation in the Migration Stories project.

Staff also expect that they may increasingly need to support people who have had their claims refused, and have lost access to their NASS payments and who are therefore **homeless and destitute**. Such cases are quite complex and can be emotionally costly for the staff concerned.

Overall we agreed that for their own mental health resilience staff have to focus on their own work, and the things that they can influence, and try to set aside their frustrations and annoyance about external factors. For example, aside from taking part in advocacy efforts, there is little point in repeatedly losing energy to anger and frustration about the Home Office being ineffective, the lack of NHS dentists, and other structural issues. GL's main sphere of influence concerns how it delivers its own services, and that is where each member of staff has the greatest leverage for change.

Improvements

While talking about the challenges they face, GL staff also mentioned several things that have improved over the 5 years of the project. These included:

- The opening in Lancaster of a legal practice specialising in immigration law, which means that GL staff now spend less time on legal issues and supporting AS who previously had to travel to see their lawyer. This has also lightened the emotional burden for staff, who were previously party to the often upsetting details of people's claims.
- The organisation's funding situation is currently quite stable.
- GL has benefitted from the Lloyds Bank Foundation's investment in capacity building, focusing on increasing GL's strategic management capacity, developing a fundraising strategy, strengthening governance, improving its ability to measure our social impact through training and development, and the development of a bespoke data management system. All of this has helped GL to mature and professionalise.
- GL has good relationships with local organisations, including Lancaster City Council, schools, L&M College, and health services, and in some cases those relationships have improved.
- The staff felt that they work well as a team, with a lot of flexibility and give and take between the different roles. GL now also has three staff members who are refugees, whereas at the start of the project none of GL's staff had experienced seeking asylum. It also has three refugees on its Board of Trustees.
- GL is getting better at referring ASR to other services where it makes sense to do so. This spreads the workload and helps ASR to draw on a wider network of support.

4. Discussion & suggestions

4.1. The context of Global Link's work

How much of the good feedback from ASR is due to the context of Lancaster rather than Global Link's work? This is, of course, impossible to answer with any certainty. But Caroline Blunt's report gives us some clues. She identified a wide range of influences¹⁵ when comparing the different

15 Dr Caroline Blunt, *Community Integration Assessment: Story of Window on Tool Kit for Community Integration*, UCLan, October 2018, page 7: "It emerged from the research that the following characteristics made material and wider differences to refugees' experience of community integration: % BME population but moreover how mixed the population was in any neighbourhood; prior experience of refugee resettlement; size of place/ overall population; economic vitality of an area; geographic location and transport links; general degree of awareness and network of sympathetic organisations in area; quality of housing stock and types of tenure available through SRP; voluntary sector activity in particular areas of

experiences and level of community integration within Lancashire. Lancaster is a favourable environment in certain ways:

- Out of the 7 locations Lancaster had the lowest proportion of people voting to leave the European Union (51%, compared to the highest proportion of two thirds of the population in Blackpool and in Burnley);
- Around 4.4% of Lancaster's population is black or minority ethnic, compared to a range within the 7 areas of 1.8% in Fleetwood to 20% in Nelson. In addition, the BME population in Lancaster is not highly concentrated, plus Lancaster has long hosted many international students. So the city's residents are familiar with "people from other places" without the sense of neighbourhoods being dominated by them.
- According to Blunt's research, Lancaster has the second highest number of third sector organisations (14 per 10,000 people; the range among the 7 locations was from 23 per 10,000 people in Preston to only 1.4 in Skelmersdale.)¹⁶
- Blunt also notes that the situation in Lancaster is unusual in that Global Link is a secular organisation, with a non-religious venue, whereas in some areas the only third sector organisations that refugees had come into contact with were churches¹⁷. So although churches are involved in City of Sanctuary in Lancaster, they are not the main hub as in other locations.

Of course, a small part of Lancaster's favourable context is *due to* Global Link; for 27 years it has been an active presence in the district's schools, its media and at numerous events, providing development education and countering simplistic narratives about the causes of poverty, conflict and injustice. Some of this work is focussed on learning why people leave their homes to seek refuge and challenging stereotypes and myths around immigration. It has presented its *Escape to Safety* interactive exhibition, an immersive experience about seeking asylum, many times since its launch (as *Fortress Europe*) in 1999. It has also run many workshops about the refugee crisis, usually delivered with by a refugee, in the region's primary and senior schools.

4.2. Suggestions

It is clear that Global Link is meeting its objectives; as such this report does not require any recommendations, other than that GL keeps working, and keeps securing funding for its work. I make these suggestions as possible ways to improve its work.

Global Link's customer relations management system could be used to track its interactions with individuals and thereby to spot gaps: for example, to make sure that all AS are either accessing classes at the college, or have actively turned down that opportunity, when they have been in the UK for six months. By tracking interactions - or the lack of them - GL might proactively extend support to those who are reluctant to seek it. For example, to find a volunteer to befriend someone who avoids group situations. However, given that GL is already working at full capacity to meet demand from those that do ask for help, switching to a more proactive approach may not be feasible or a priority.

With regard to volunteering in the community, and to the suggestion made at one workshop to help ASR join local clubs (not ASR clubs), it's possible that GL could make use of local volunteers to facilitate that process. These people could either be go-betweens (GL volunteers who research and initially go to the group with the ASR) or a GL volunteer could seek out helpful folk from within the

work offering groups, activities and community volunteers; pro-activeness of library as safe public place/venue for activities."

¹⁶ Ibid, page 47, calculated by me from Blunt's figures.

¹⁷ Ibid page 66.

groups, who then make the effort to welcome ASR. In either case, however, ASR who speak little English may find it difficult to enjoy their participation, and GL would need to be willing to take on the extra work of managing the local volunteers.

4.3. Conclusion

This evaluation clearly shows that Global Link performed well and delivered the *Refugee Matters* project outcomes to a high standard. It has carried out its work effectively while remaining a warm and human-centred organisation which can respond to the messy and continually changing realities of people's lives. It is entirely deserved that the Big Lottery Fund has agreed to fund the next five years of GL's work. During that phase GL will hopefully be able to move into its own premises, and so improve the 'home' context in which it delivers its services.

In 2019 the Home Office published an updated review of evidence¹⁸ about what does and does not work in terms of efforts to support refugees to integrate. Although that task does not exactly coincide with what GL aims to do, it is notable that Global Link is using all the key evidence-based strategies that were identified by that review, to varying degrees:

- ✓✓ Providing cultural orientation;
- ✓✓✓ Providing language programmes tailored to individuals' needs;
- ✓✓ Supporting the development of high-quality social connections through social activities, training and volunteering;
- ✓ Working with other institutions to make their services more refugee-friendly;
- ✓✓✓ Tailoring support to needs, enabling refugees to participate in integration projects, and being willing to make a long-term investment.

Global Link has proved itself to be an agile and responsive organisation, handling the external shocks of the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic and coping with the challenges arising from the sudden arrival of large numbers of temporarily resident asylum seekers. Over the course of the project staff, volunteers and trustees have adapted and innovated, in order to support ASR and deliver good value for money from donors' investments. Global Link is greatly appreciated, and even loved, by asylum seekers and refugees in the district, and with good reason.

18 Home Office, *Integrating Refugees: What works? What can work? What does not work? A summary of the evidence*, June 2019, pages 5-7.

Appendix A: Research methods used in the mid-term evaluation

Method	Purpose	Process
Literature review	To gain information from existing monitoring and evaluation data and research	I read Global Link's reports to the Big Lottery, the results of a survey of Global Link ASR clients carried out by Dr Mohammed Yakalhef, and Dr Caroline Blunt's community integration assessment report (which covered 7 dispersal locations in Lancashire, including Lancaster).
Survey of AS&R	To gain feedback from a significant proportion of ASR concerning the project's key outcomes. To invite feedback and ideas about other issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I wrote the first draft which two GL staff then reviewed, and suggested some extra questions. ▪ I created a second draft, which was reviewed by two further GL staff, with the addition of another question. ▪ A group of ASR staff and GL volunteers filled in the survey, and suggested improvements, which I used to create the final version. ▪ A GL staff member translated it into Arabic and another colleague checked the translation. ▪ ASR adults were invited to fill in the survey at four Tuesday lunches during January and February. GL volunteer translators assisted speakers of Tigrinya, Sorani, Farsi and Spanish to fill in their surveys. ▪ GL distributed the survey to SRP/VCRP families who had not attended the Tuesday drop-in, with a covering note from me and a stamped addressed envelope to return the survey to my home. ▪ Flo Horton, a volunteer, entered the survey data into excel, and I analysed it
Observation	To learn and develop ideas for improvement by observing GL activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I attended six Tuesday drop-ins, one sewing circle pop-up shop, and three English classes, and joined the LAS WhatsApp group.

Method	Purpose	Process
Workshops with ASR	To learn about how ASR value GL's different services and to invite their practical ideas as to how GL might improve the delivery of those services	<p>Each workshop contained people from a single language group (Tigrinya, Arabic, Farsi and Sorani), with a translator, with the exceptions of the initial workshop with ASR staff and volunteers, and one workshop attended by members of the less common language groups (Oromo, Albanian and Spanish).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I analysed all the services within the scope of the evaluation and distilled them into 10 cards with words and images to depict the activities. ▪ I ran a test workshop with a group of ASR staff and volunteers, including people who would act as translators during the workshops. ▪ In the following two workshops I asked participants to show how they value the different services by distributing 15 tokens between the 10 activities. They then split into smaller groups to discuss possible ways of improving each activity. ▪ In the next two workshops I asked small groups to explore the issues of isolation and boredom, and to generate ideas for tackling those problems. ▪ In the final workshop I asked participants to generate a card for each way in which they get support, and then to distribute 15 tokens among them, to explore the relative value they placed on all the services available to them (formal and informal). ▪ I recorded the quantitative and qualitative data in excel.
Semi-structured interviews with ASR	To learn from individuals about their experience of living in Lancaster, how they have interacted with GL, and with what effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I drafted an interview guideline, focussing on learning about each interviewee's timeline in relation to the project outcomes. ▪ Latifa Alkhanjary, a student volunteer, carried out the interviews, mainly using an opportunistic approach of talking with people who had come to Global Link for the Thursday drop-in. ▪ We abandoned the idea of asking people to draw their timelines as the first few interviewees were resistant to doing this. ▪ Latifa typed up her notes and I contacted a few interviewees by phone for further clarification.
Survey of stakeholders	To gather feedback from GL's key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As there were too many stakeholders to interview in person I opted for an online survey. ▪ I drafted the survey, put it into Google forms, and adjusted it following review by two GL staff members. ▪ I emailed each stakeholder separately, explaining the purpose of the evaluation and reminding them of the services that GL offers through the funding from the Big Lottery Fund. ▪ I sent up to two reminder emails to respondents as needed.

Appendix B: Mid-term survey of ASR

This appendix reproduces the survey that *refugees* were invited to complete.

The survey of *asylum seekers* was identical with these three exceptions:

- No question “When did you get leave to remain/your BRP?” as that question does not apply to asylum seekers.
- Question 10 (“If possible, please explain why you have stayed in Lancaster:”) replaced by
If you get leave to remain, will you ☐ stay in Lancaster? Or ☐ move?
If possible, please explain why you will stay or move:
- Question 19 (about paid work) not asked as asylum seekers are prohibited from seeking paid work.

Both surveys were translated into Arabic and filled in as paper surveys. GL volunteer translators assisted speakers of Tigrinya, Sorani, Farsi and Spanish to fill in their surveys.

Survey of Refugees in Lancaster District

Global Link has hired Sue Holden to research how well we are doing our work.

This survey is help us learn from asylum seekers and refugees.

We will use what we learn to

- 1) improve our work, and
2) get more funding to help you and others in the future.

Please answer honestly! Your identity will not be known.

If you have any extra comments you can write them on the side of the paper.

If you want to contact Sue her number is 07490 459265.

Are you ☐ Male ☐ 18-29 years old
☐ Female ☐ 30-39 years old
☐ 40-49 years old
☐ 50-59 years old
☐ 60+ years old

If you don't mind saying, what is your nationality?

When did you arrive in the UK?

When did you arrive in Lancaster?

When did you get leave to remain/your BRP?

Did you arrive ☐ with family members? ☐ or with no family members?

1) How isolated did you feel when you came to Lancaster?

Very isolated	Isolated	Quite isolated	A bit isolated	Not at all isolated
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2) How isolated do you feel now?

Very isolated	Isolated	Quite isolated	A bit isolated	Not at all isolated
---------------	----------	----------------	----------------	---------------------

3) If you want to socialise, do you have people you can meet locally?

Lots of people	Some people	A few people	Just one	None at all
----------------	-------------	--------------	----------	-------------

4) How often do you go to the Tuesday lunch drop-in at the YMCA?

Very regularly	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
----------------	-------	-----------	--------	------------

5) How much has going to the Tuesday lunch drop-in helped you to make new friends?

Very much	A lot	Quite a lot	Not much	Not at all
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- 6) Do you receive updates from Global Link's social media: its
- ☐ FaceBook group (<https://www.facebook.com/globalink.dec/>)?
 - ☐ WhatsApp group (LAS)?
 - ☐ Twitter (https://twitter.com/globalink_dec)?
 - ☐ Website (<http://globalink.org.uk/>)?

- 7) How well does Global Link's social media keep you informed of local events and opportunities?

Very well	Well	Quite well	Not well	Not at all
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- 8) How often do you go to an event, or take up an opportunity, that you heard about from Global Link's social media?

Very regularly	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
----------------	-------	-----------	--------	------------

- 9) Which of these statements do you agree with about living in Lancaster District?
Please tick as many as you want.

- ☐ I feel very settled living here.
- ☐ I feel I am an outsider.
- ☐ As time goes on I am feeling more settled.
- ☐ In general the people here are not very friendly.
- ☐ This is not my home, but I feel I belong here.
- ☐ I do not feel that I am welcome here.
- ☐ I feel safe here.
- ☐ In general the people here are friendly.
- ☐ I don't feel safe here.

- 10) If possible, please explain why you have stayed in Lancaster:

- 11) Have you taken part in any Global Link trainings (at the YMCA or Cornerstone)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- 12) If you want to suggest any topics for workshops or presentations at Global Link please write them here:

13) Have you been to any training courses at Lancaster & Morecambe College?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14) How easily could you have a conversation in English when you came to Lancaster?

Very easily	Easily	OK	Difficult	Very difficult
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15) How easily can you have a conversation in English now?

Very easily	Easily	OK	Difficult	Very difficult
-------------	--------	----	-----------	----------------

16) How easily could you read and write in English when you came to Lancaster?

Very easily	Easily	OK	Difficult	Very difficult
-------------	--------	----	-----------	----------------

17) How easily can you read and write in English now?

Very easily	Easily	OK	Difficult	Very difficult
-------------	--------	----	-----------	----------------

18) How often do you, or did you, go to English classes?

Very regularly	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
----------------	-------	-----------	--------	------------

19) Thinking about getting a job (paid work), which of these statements do you agree with?

Please tick as many as you want.

- ☐ I want to get a job.
- ☐ I don't know how to get help to find a job.
- ☐ I don't have a job and I am not looking for one.
- ☐ I know how to get help to find a job.
- ☐ I have had help to get a job but I don't have a job yet.
- ☐ I got a job without any help.
- ☐ I got a job with help.
- ☐ I had a job but I don't have one now.
- ☐ I have a job but I need more paid work, or better paid work.
- ☐ I need to improve my English before I can find work.

20) How often do you, or did you, receive free clothes through Global Link?

Very regularly	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
----------------	-------	-----------	--------	------------

21) How often do you, or did you, receive free food through Global Link or referral to the food bank?

Very regularly	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
----------------	-------	-----------	--------	------------

22) Have you done any voluntary work in Lancaster? ☐ Yes ☐ No – **go to question 25**

23) Please tell us about each type of voluntary work you do or you have done:

What kind of work?		How often?	
What kind of work?		How often?	
What kind of work?		How often?	

24) In general do you feel that volunteering is good or bad for your well-being?

Definitely good	Mostly good	Not good or bad	Mostly bad	Definitely bad
-----------------	-------------	-----------------	------------	----------------

25) Do you think all asylum seekers and refugees are treated equally by Global Link?

☐ Yes ☐ No If possible, please explain your answer:

26) Overall, what do you think of the support that Global Link offers to asylum seekers and refugees?

It's very good	It's good	It's OK	It's bad	It's very bad
----------------	-----------	---------	----------	---------------

27) If you have anything you want to add about living in Lancaster District and the work of Global Link please write it here:

😊 THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP 😊

Appendix C: Guide for mid-term semi-structured interviews

Greetings and gaining informed written consent

“Global Link gets money to run services to support asylum seekers and refugees; I’d like to learn from your experiences, as part of research into how the money is being used.

Before we start do you agree that we can use the information that you give us in our reports?

Would you prefer us to disguise your identity, by not using your name or sharing details that might identify you?”

Guide

Main themes: Feelings of isolation vs inclusion & engagement Participation in learning, socialising, working (paid and unpaid) especially those linked to Global Link	Main dynamic: Their journey since arriving in Lancaster: HOW things (feelings, behaviours) have changed WHY they changed, and Global Link’s role in that
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Question/task	Purpose/notes
When did you first arrive in the UK? And in Lancaster?	Enable you to know how long their journey from arrival to now is.
Ask them to draw or explain the key things that have happened since they arrived in Lancaster.	To hear what has happened, and what’s GL’s role in that has been.
Ask any of the following questions to raise issues that they haven’t covered spontaneously.	
Possible Qs:	
When did you first come into contact with Global Link?	...explore their relationship with GL since then.
When you first arrived here did you know anyone in Lancaster?	...explore how their friendship networks have changed, and how they have met other people.
What about English classes?	...explore if they have been attending English classes in town (run by City of Sanctuary) and/or at Lancaster & Morecambe college. If they haven’t been to class, or have stopped, explore why. Has their English has improved and what difference has that made for them?
Do you come to the Tuesday lunch drop in here?	Explore what they think of it....why they do or don’t come.
Have you been to any trainings here with Global Link? (Available trainings have been: Sewing First aid IT skills Food hygiene Employability workshop)	If yes, learn a little about whether the training has helped them; if not try to explore why. If they talk about courses at L&M college (eg maths, hairdressing) try to ascertain if Global Link (Eleanor) helped them to access the course.

Question/task	Purpose/notes
Have you come to any of the other drop ins here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - casework (all GL staff incl Sophie, Gisela) - employment (Sara & Anne) - education (Eleanor) - legal advice (Primis solicitor)
Have you done unpaid work as a volunteer in Lancaster?	Explore how this came about (whether GL was involved) and how they feel about volunteering.
For refugees only:	
Did you get support from Global Link once you got leave to remain?	Eg to find accommodation, to claim Universal Credit, to get a bank account
Have you had paid work in Lancaster? Or are you looking for paid work?	Explore what support they have had, and what they think they need to find work.

Appendix D: Stakeholders and their mid-term survey

I sent the following email to the stakeholders shown in Table Y:

Dear []

I have been hired by Global Link to do a mid-term evaluation of their project supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Lancaster & Morecambe. As part of this I want to get feedback from stakeholders, and, as there are a lot of stakeholders, I'm doing this through an on-line survey.

*Would you kindly click [here](#) and give your feedback by **Friday 6th December**? There are just 8 questions, of which only 4 are mandatory, and 2 of those are multiple choice! It should take no more than 10 minutes. Alternatively, if you would prefer to talk, or want to talk to me in addition to filling in this survey, please let me know.*

As a reminder, the project, which is funded by the Big Lottery and started in July 2017, aims to address:

- *Social isolation, loneliness and boredom;*
- *Difficulties in accessing employment on receipt of Leave to Remain;*
- *Lack of English language competency;*
- *Lack of IT skills;*
- *Difficulty in accessing housing and Universal Credit; and*
- *Poverty.*

Global Link's lottery-funded activities for asylum seekers and refugees include:

- *Weekly social drop-in with lunch;*
- *Bi-weekly workshops about living in the UK;*
- *Funding English classes run by City of Sanctuary;*
- *Vocational training;*
- *Weekly education surgery;*
- *Weekly employment surgery (for volunteering & paid work);*
- *Casework drop-in 3 times a week;*
- *Monthly legal drop-in;*
- *Weekly sewing circle and distribution of free clothes;*
- *Cultural events;*
- *Referrals to food bank, health care, accessing bikes and other local projects; and*
- *Support for family reunion.*

With thanks,

Sue Holden

[home telephone number]

www.sueholden.org.uk

Stakeholders invited to fill in the survey

Institution	Name	Role
Central High School	Victoria O'Farrell	Acting Principal
Citizens Advice Bureau	Helen Greatorex	Chief Officer
City of Sanctuary	Dorothea Williamson	ESOL lead for City of Sanctuary
City of Sanctuary	Elizabeth Roberts	Chair of City of Sanctuary
Dallas Road Primary School	Vic Matichecchia	SENCO
East Meets West	Hilary Hopwood	Coordinator
Job Centre	Janet Parkinson	Special Point of Contact for Refugees
Job Centre	Sue Thistlewaite	Employment Advisor and Partnership Manager
Lancashire Constabulary	Lindsay Brown	Partnerships Officer
Lancashire Constabulary	Cath Elliot	Police Community Support Officer
Lancashire County Council	Salma Ahmed	Interpreter
Lancashire County Council	Sara Almutairi	Interpreter
Lancashire Fire Service	Magda Stryjewska	Community Liaison and Community Safety
Lancaster and Morecambe College	Eleanor Denvir	ESOL teacher
Lancaster City Council	Fiona Macleod	Housing Standards Manager and refugee and asylum lead
Lancaster City Council	Kevin Earl	Housing Officer
Lancaster CVS	Yak Patel	Chief Executive
Lancaster Medical Practice	Kim Hesketh	Practice Manager
MP's office	Sam Harrison	Caseworker for Cat Smith MP
Mucky Pups Preschool	Jean	Manager
NHS Clinical Commissioning Group	Emma O'Kane	Safeguarding and Quality Practitioner
Our Ladies Catholic College	Joanne Loxam	Safeguarding Lead
RAIS (Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support)	Lizzie Hare	Coordinator
Serco	Victoria Dawson	Lancaster Housing Officer
Serco	Ged Swanson	Partnership Manager
Tara Centre	Elham Kashefi	Director

Survey of Global Link's Stakeholders

Form description

What's your name?

Short answer text

1) To what extent do you think Global Link's work helps asylum seekers and refugees to become more engaged with the local community? *

- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ I'm not sure

2) If you'd like to comment further, or to suggest how Global Link could improve how it addresses isolation and encourages integration, please do so here:

Long answer text

3) How do you rate Global Link compared to similar organisations that you interact with professionally? *

- ☐ It's a lot worse than most
- ☐ It's a bit worse than most
- ☐ It's average
- ☐ It's better than most
- ☐ It's much better than most

4) What do you think Global Link does well? *

Long answer text

5) And what does Global Link do less well? *

Long answer text

6) What do you think Lancaster would be like, as a dispersal area for asylum seekers and refugees, without Global Link?

Long answer text

7) How do you think life for asylum seekers and refugees in Lancaster would be different if Global Link wasn't here?

Long answer text

8) Please use this space for any further feedback, suggestions or questions:

Long answer text

Thank you for your help

holdensue@gmail.com