



integration
support

STRATEGY
2024-2027

INTRODUCTION

Integration Support is a charity based in Harlow, Essex. Originally founded by a group of migrants and refugees as a community group in 2005, Integration Support attained charity status in May 2007. Initially, we focused on providing ESOL lessons, play groups for young children and information, advice and guidance to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, services that we are proud to continue to this day.

Over the last 17 years, we have supported thousands of beneficiaries with their journeys to successful integration through a variety of projects. We have been assisted by funders and numerous partner organisations, including county and local councils, statutory services, other small charities, businesses and generous community members who are passionate about our work.

In 2024, we rebranded, changing our name from Integration Support Services to Integration Support. Our team of diverse and experienced team members continues to empower beneficiaries by offering holistic packages that meet various needs.

We look forward to enabling the independence of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and ethnically diverse communities for many years to come.

We did not decide on this strategy alone. We engaged with a range of people — refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities, staff, volunteers, external stakeholders and more.

This strategy is the result of careful listening and reflection. We listened, we learned, and we took that on board when planning our approach for 2024 - 2027. Alongside this work, we considered the latest research, what we know about the needs and experiences of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other ethnically diverse communities in the UK. We looked to ourselves too — weighing up what our strengths are as an organisation and where we can add the most value in making a difference for the communities we support. We completed Stakeholder survey and received very positive comments on the quality and range of Integration Support's services. Our contribution to integration and social cohesion is highly valued and the organisation is seen as professional and credible, with strong expertise in its field. Our stakeholders showed a keen interest to know more about Integration Support, with some specific comments that more could be done to communicate and promote the organisation's work. There is also an interest in building on Integration Support's existing partnership working in order to continue to improve and integrate support to refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities in the area.

We know it's vital to go into this next chapter with our eyes wide open — recognising where we are today and the impact of current challenges. This is a strengths-based strategy, built on our credibility and experience, as well as insight from you and others we work with. It's focused on the areas where we can make the biggest difference, together.



THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS, MIGRANTS AND OTHER ETHNICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN OUR AREA



Integration Support's target beneficiaries are Refugees, Asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities in and around West Essex. Many will be recent arrivals to the UK, others may have been in the UK for some time but have struggled to integrate successfully. The people Integration Support supports are experiencing language and cultural barriers, lack of understanding around education system and NHS, social isolation, lack of social support network, low income or/and no recourse to public funds, digital exclusion, poor living conditions and/or overcrowded accommodation, poor physical and/or mental health, lack of affordable housing.

According to Essex wide Census 2021 data, 27.1% of Harlow population are ethnically diverse communities, 24.4% in Epping Forest and 11.1% in Uttlesford. Since 2021 five hotels in West Essex offered asylum accommodation for more than 600 asylum seekers.

2613 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Essex under Homes for Ukraine scheme by June 2024 (gov.uk).

Harlow is one of the areas in Essex with the highest number of residents with low English language proficiency (Census 2021). In Harlow 14.4% cannot speak English well and 2.2% cannot speak English at all. In Epping Forest 13.5% cannot speak English well and 2.2% cannot speak English at all. In Uttlesford 10.1% cannot speak English well and 2% cannot speak English at all.

In 2023, our organisation experienced significant growth and impact in our efforts to support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Over 80% of our beneficiaries are referred by statutory and non-statutory bodies for example councils in and around West Essex, GPs, dentists, hospitals, community organisations and schools, highlighting our trusted status in the community. We witnessed a remarkable 136% growth in the number of individuals we supported compared to the previous year, totalling 756 people. Notably, nearly 92% of these individuals were new registered service users, reflecting our expanding reach and ability to connect with diverse communities from 60 different countries. Our Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) sessions played a crucial role in empowering individuals to navigate various aspects of life in the UK. We conducted 1484 IAG sessions, providing support and assistance to 566 beneficiaries.

The needs of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in and around West Essex are diverse and multifaceted.

Addressing these needs holistically can significantly improve the quality of life for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, helping them to integrate successfully and contribute to the local community.



VISION

Our vision is a society where refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and ethnically diverse communities are welcomed compassionately and empowered to thrive as valued members of society and achieve integration and long-term success.

MISSION

Our mission is to support, empower and enable refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other ethnically diverse communities on their journey towards successful integration. We are committed to providing a foundation of support that not only meets immediate needs but also empowers individuals to build resilient, self-sufficient lives. Through our programmes and initiatives, we aim to foster a sense of belonging and facilitate the successful integration of diverse communities.

VALUES

INTEGRITY: We operate with integrity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that our actions align with our values and that we use our resources responsibly and ethically to achieve our mission.

MISSION-DRIVEN: We are committed to supporting refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and ethnically diverse communities by providing them with the necessary resources and opportunities to rebuild their lives with dignity and resilience. We will do the things we believe in: empower, enable, care and foster integration of the communities we support.

COMPASSION: We approach our work with empathy and compassion, recognising the inherent humanity and worth of every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances. All of our work with refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities will be underpinned by an understanding of trauma and crisis. We will help others with this too – developing a shared awareness of trauma and making sure refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities get the response and support they need.



INCLUSIVITY: We believe in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment that celebrates diversity and promotes the full participation and integration of all members of society, regardless of race, ethnicity, or nationality.

We believe every individual is worth fighting for. Together, we'll remove real and perceived barriers to inclusion and diversity. Because recognising, embracing and valuing difference leads to improvements for all.

We will involve refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other ethnically diverse communities (children and adults) in our work and decision-making through meaningful participation. We'll continue to listen to them, learn from them, and be inspired by them.

EMPOWERMENT: We empower individuals from marginalised communities to take control of their own futures by providing them with the tools, skills, and support they need to thrive and succeed.

COLLABORATION: We recognise that addressing the complex challenges facing refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and ethnically diverse communities requires collaboration and partnership with other organisations, government agencies, and stakeholders. We'll work together with everyone – from schools, GP practices, voluntary organisations to local authorities and corporate partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for the communities we support.. And, by working together with communities, we'll strive to be locally relevant and responsive to local need.



RESPECT: We uphold the principles of respect, dignity, and equality in all aspects of our work, valuing the unique experiences, perspectives, and contributions of every individual we serve.

ADVOCACY: We advocate for the rights and interests of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other ethnically diverse communities at the local level, working to eliminate discrimination, injustice, and inequality.

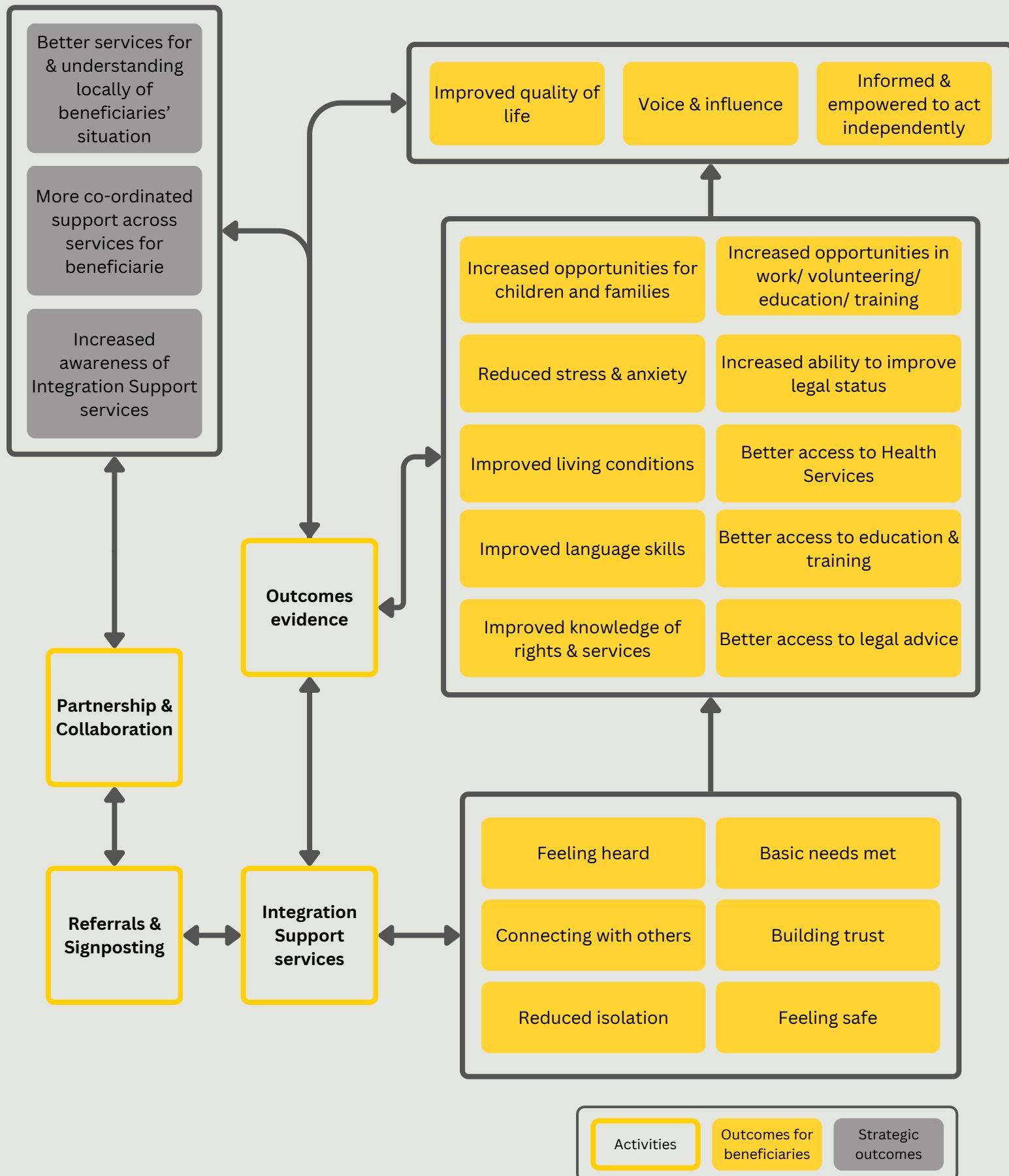
We'll inspire more people to be culturally aware and responsive, so we can ensure that our response efforts are truly effective and inclusive, leaving no one behind. We will encourage and inspire to respect cultural practices, to accommodate linguistic diversity within community, to foster collaboration.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING: We are committed to continuous learning and improvement, regularly seeking feedback, evaluating our impact, and adapting our strategies and approaches to better meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

We're drawing on over 17 years of experience. We'll do the things we do well — that others can't, won't or don't do. We'll do more to be present in communities, understand their needs and work with them to shape what we do. We will be curious and innovative.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: We will work towards building resilient and eco conscious community. We will reduce waste by opting to reusable alternatives, reducing paper usage and printing. We will choose eco-friendly supplies and sustainable transportation. We will raise the awareness of the importance of reuse and recycling. We will empower individuals to take action towards greener, more resilient future.

THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE (THEORY OF CHANGE)





OUR STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2024-2027



- 1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT:** Conduct a thorough assessment of the needs and challenges faced by refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and ethnically diverse communities in our target areas
- 2 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Develop tailored programs and services focused on empowering individuals from these communities, including language classes, vocational training, legal assistance, and mental health support.
- 3 PARTNERSHIPS:** Forge strategic partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and businesses to leverage resources and expertise in addressing the multifaceted needs of our beneficiaries.
- 4 ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS:** Advocate for the rights and dignity of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers through public awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and community engagement activities.
- 5 CAPACITY BUILDING:** Invest in capacity building initiatives to strengthen the skills and capabilities of our staff and volunteers, ensuring effective service delivery and organizational sustainability.
- 6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION:** Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of our programs, track progress towards our goals, and continuously improve our interventions.
- 7 SUSTAINABILITY:** Develop diversified funding streams, including grants, donations, and social enterprise initiatives, to ensure the long-term sustainability of our organization and its impact on the communities we serve.
- 8 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Foster a sense of belonging and community cohesion among beneficiaries through cultural exchange events, support groups, and volunteer opportunities that promote social integration and mutual understanding.
- 9 FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY:** Remain responsive to the evolving needs and dynamics of the communities we serve, regularly reviewing and adapting our strategies and interventions to maximize our effectiveness and relevance.
- 10 IMPACT COMMUNICATION:** Effectively communicate our impact and success stories to stakeholders, donors, and the wider public, showcasing the positive outcomes achieved through our work and inspiring continued support and engagement.

HOW EVERYONE CAN GET INVOLVED

We can achieve so much more for refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities by working together. Each and every act from our incredible staff, volunteers and supporters makes our work possible. But to make an even bigger leap forward, we need an even bigger team. There are so many ways for everyone to get involved:

1 **Donate**

No matter how big or small the donation, every pound counts towards our shared vision of a society where refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and ethnically diverse communities are welcomed compassionately and empowered to thrive as valued members of society and achieve integration and long-term success.

2 **Fundraise**

From baking cakes to running marathons, and everything in between. Giving your time and energy to raise vital funds for refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities will always be worth it.

3 **Volunteer**

Whether you support our English learning classes and clubs, visit schools, lead our Women's Clubs or Play activities for children, volunteer in your community or at one of our events, you'll be helping us turn our beneficiaries lives around.

4 **Partner with us**

We're proud to work with companies and organisations who share our mission to support, empower and enable refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other ethnically diverse communities on their journey towards successful integration. Let's get to work, together.

5 **Be there** for refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other ethnically diverse communities.

Visit our website for more information about our work and services we offer.

