



## Unravelling the challenges faced by refugees in Nottingham when accessing mental health support to enhance support and foster integration

### About the Project

The global refugee and asylum seeker (RAS) crisis continues to escalate, with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reporting a record 122.6 million displaced people in 2023. Nottinghamshire has welcomed and hosted approximately 7,000 RAS (Nottingham City of Sanctuary, 2023), however, they face significant challenges in integrating into local communities and economies, particularly as a result of mental health (MH) issues.

RAS are vulnerable to PTSD, depression, anxiety, and psychosis (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024), but despite the scale of the issue, MH support for RAS remains inadequate (Mental Health Foundation, 2024), with barriers such as language, inaccessible technology, and long waiting times (NNRF, 2023). However, research suggests that if these challenges are effectively addressed, their inclusion in local communities could have a substantial positive impact on the economy (NIESR, 2023).

As highlighted by a recent study conducted by the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF), addressing these barriers is essential for cities like Nottingham (Nottingham City of Sanctuary, 2023). The NNRF identified a critical gap in the understanding of the severity and extent of the MH struggles of RAS by local support services. It emphasises the urgent need for service providers to tailor their offerings to the complex needs of this population.

This PhD project aims to explore the MH journeys of refugees and asylum seekers in Nottingham(shire), with a particular focus on the barriers and enablers they encounter when accessing MH services. We seek to gain insights into the effective MH support RAS needs, creating a blueprint design for it that can be implemented by public, private, and third-sector MH providers. Hence, positioning Nottingham as a pioneer in empathetic and effective service design, and enabling it to reap the socio-economic rewards of immigration.



## About the Project

This project has been co-created and is supported by researchers from Nottingham Trent University (NTU), the University of Nottingham (UoN) and partners at Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum. The successful candidate for this project will be enrolled at Nottingham Trent University.

## Project Aims

The overall aims of this project are to:

1. Explore and map the journey of refugees and asylum seekers (RAS) from the moment they anticipate becoming RAS, with a particular focus on their mental health challenges.
2. Identify RAS key touchpoints with mental health service providers when seeking mental health support.
3. Understand non-support seekers and their challenges in accessing mental health support.
4. Outline potential interventions and policies that could assist in addressing refugees' mental health and aid in their social integration.

## Supervisory Team

1. Lead Academic Supervisor: Dr Sahar Bakr (NTU)
2. Academic Co-Supervisor(s): Prof. Jo Richardson (NTU), Dr Samantha Gallage (UoN), and Dr Simon Bishop (UoN)
3. Community Supervisor: Debbie Royle, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

## Key Details

Host University:	Nottingham Trent University
School / department:	Nottingham Business School
Start date:	01 April 2025
Financial offer:	Tuition fees covered in full (worth approx. £15k across full PhD programme). Monthly stipend based on £19,237 per annum, pro rata, tax free.



## Key Details

<b>Working hours</b>	Full-time (minimum 37.5 hrs per week)
<b>Working Style:</b>	Primarily in-person at host university. Flexible working supported. Working pattern to be agreed between successful candidate and lead supervisor.

## Competencies

### Co(I)laboratory Core Competencies

Category	Competency	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
<b>Comprehension and evaluation</b>	Strong understanding of the project and its subject matter.	A / I
	Analytical, researcher mindset with keen attention to detail.	A / I
	Communicate complex concepts with clarity and precision.	A / I
	Able to identify connections, patterns, gaps, and irregularities in information/data.	I
	Able to interpret data/information confidently with logic and empathy to derive meaning.	I
<b>Social and emotional</b>	Demonstrable experience of responding effectively changing contexts, information and demands.	A
	Ability to persevere in the face of challenges/failures and to remain constructive in developing solutions.	A
	Demonstrable passion for learning with clear drive and curiosity to undertake this specific research project.	A / I
	Willingness to immerse oneself in the research subject matter and make a contribute to new knowledge through a PhD.	A / I
	Strong desire to make a positive community impact through the research.	A / I
	Willingness to think deeply about complex concepts and engage with academic ideas and theory.	A / I



# Competencies

Co(I)laboratory Core Competencies		
Category	Competency	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
<b>Preparedness and potential for success</b>	Experience of working, collaborating and communicating effectively with different stakeholders.	A
	High level of self-motivation and ability to work with minimal guidance.	A / I
	Strong organisational and time-management skills with the ability to balance and prioritise multiple tasks.	A / I
	Ability to identify potential challenges and complexities and thoughtfully consider possible solutions.	A / I
	Able to identify the technical, personal, or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop these.	A / I
<b>Community Context</b>	Genuine desire to undertake community-engaged research over more traditional approaches to research.	A
	Understand the impact of and need for the inclusion of diverse experiences and points of view in research.	A / I
	Appreciation/understanding of the importance of community insight and experience in the generation of new knowledge.	A / I
	Awareness/understanding of the broader societal context related to the subject matter of the project.	A / I

Project Specific Competencies			
Essential	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)	Desirable	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
Understanding and appreciation of the local context and challenges relating to refugees, asylum seekers and mental health services.	A / I	Professional fluency in a second language such as Kurdish, Arabic, Swahili, Urdu, Farsi, or similar.	A / I
Experience of the refugee and asylum seeker sector, whether personal, professional, voluntary, etc.	A / I	Lived experiences as a refugee, migrant or asylum-seeker, or close understanding of the experience through work or volunteering.	A / I



## Competencies

Project Specific Competencies			
Essential	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)	Desirable	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
Strong collaborative and team working skills.	A / I	Experience of community development or similar work.	A / I

## References for Further Reading

- Boenigk, S., Fisk, R., Kabadayi, S., Alkire, L., Cheung, L., Corus, C., ... & Smidt, N. (2021). Rethinking service systems and public policy: a transformative refugee service experience framework. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 40(2), 165-183. [https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/170226/1/Rethinking\\_refugees\\_services\\_accepted\\_manuscript.pdf](https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/170226/1/Rethinking_refugees_services_accepted_manuscript.pdf)
- O'Loughlin, D., Gummerus, J., & Kelleher, C. (2024). It never ends: vulnerable consumers' experiences of persistent liminality and resource (MIS) integration. *Journal of Service Research*, 27(3), 327-345. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372083659\\_It\\_Never\\_Ends\\_Vulnerable\\_Consumers'\\_Experiences\\_of\\_Persistent\\_Liminality\\_and\\_Resource\\_MisIntegration](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372083659_It_Never_Ends_Vulnerable_Consumers'_Experiences_of_Persistent_Liminality_and_Resource_MisIntegration)
- Sudbury-Riley, L., Hunter-Jones, P., Al-Abdin, A., Lewin, D., & Naraine, M. V. (2020). The trajectory touchpoint technique: A deep dive methodology for service innovation. *Journal of Service Research*, 23(2), 229-251. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338130822\\_The\\_Trajectory\\_Touchpoint\\_Technique\\_A\\_Deep\\_Dive\\_Methodology\\_for\\_Service\\_Innovation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338130822_The_Trajectory_Touchpoint_Technique_A_Deep_Dive_Methodology_for_Service_Innovation)
- Trueba, M.L., Axelrod, T. and Ayeb-Karlsson, S. (2023) 'Are asylum seekers and refugees provided with appropriate mental health support in the United Kingdom?', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(13), pp. 3163–3183. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10166876/1/Are%20asylum%20seekers%20and%20refugees%20provided%20with%20appropriate%20mental%20health%20support%20in%20the%20United%20Kingdom.pdf>
- Bartlett, R. et al. (2023) 'Using Walking / Go Along Interviews with People in Vulnerable Situations: A synthesized review of the research literature,' *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, p. 160940692311646. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370304743\\_Using\\_Walking\\_Go\\_Along\\_Interviews\\_With\\_People\\_in\\_Vulnerable\\_Situations\\_A\\_Synthesized\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_Research\\_Literature](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370304743_Using_Walking_Go_Along_Interviews_With_People_in_Vulnerable_Situations_A_Synthesized_Review_of_the_Research_Literature)

