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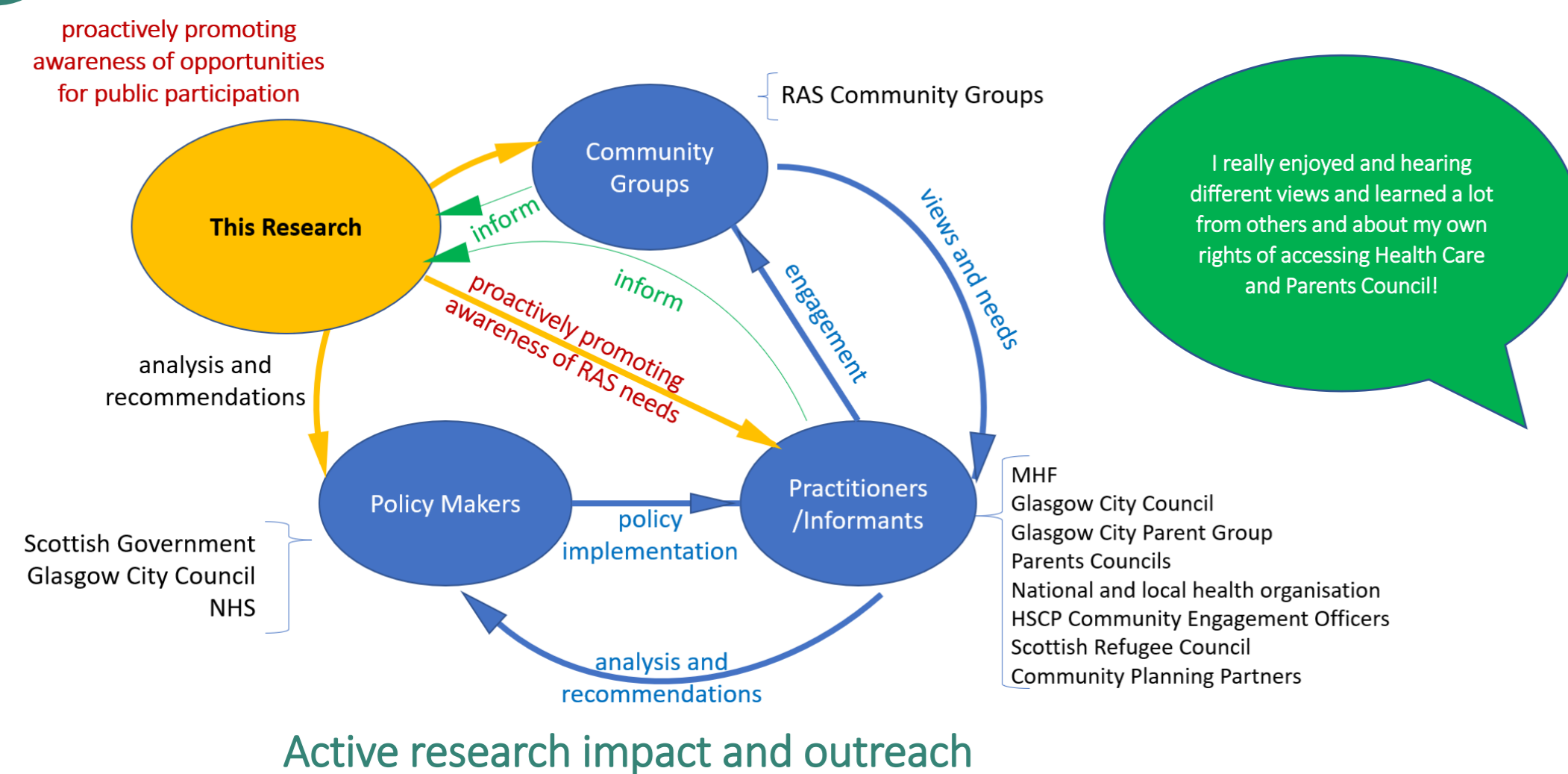
### 1 INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion has been identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the social determinants of health (SDH) that contribute to promoting mental wellbeing (WHO, 2008). Cities play an important role in promoting diversity and social inclusion, targeting the most disadvantaged groups, such as disabled people, indigenous people, youth, migrants and refugees, vulnerable women and girls, and older people (UNESCO, 2021). Refugees and asylum seekers (RAS) are known to face adversity before, during and after their arrival in the UK, with complex needs arising from their experiences of traumatic events, loss and grief (Refugee Council, 2021). 'Voices and Visibility' is a new initiative funded by Glasgow City Council (GCC) and delivered by then Mental Health Foundation (MHF), aiming to increase the representation of people from refugee backgrounds on civic forums in Glasgow, linking refugees and asylum seekers (RAS) with Parents' Councils (PCs) and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). The key aim of the project is to develop recommendations on how RAS communities can actively participate in civic forums and other decision-making structures.

### 2 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What connection (if any) is there between mental health and participating in decision-making structures and forums (including for the RAS communities)?
  2. What are the barriers for RAS communities participating in civic forums (or other decision-making processes)?
- From the point of view of RAS communities (taking a gendered approach).  
From the point of view of institutions/decision-making structures (including PCs and HSCPs).

### 3 RESEARCH IMPACT AND OUTREACH



### 4 RESULTS

#### Key Benefits of RAS engagement in PCs and HSCPs

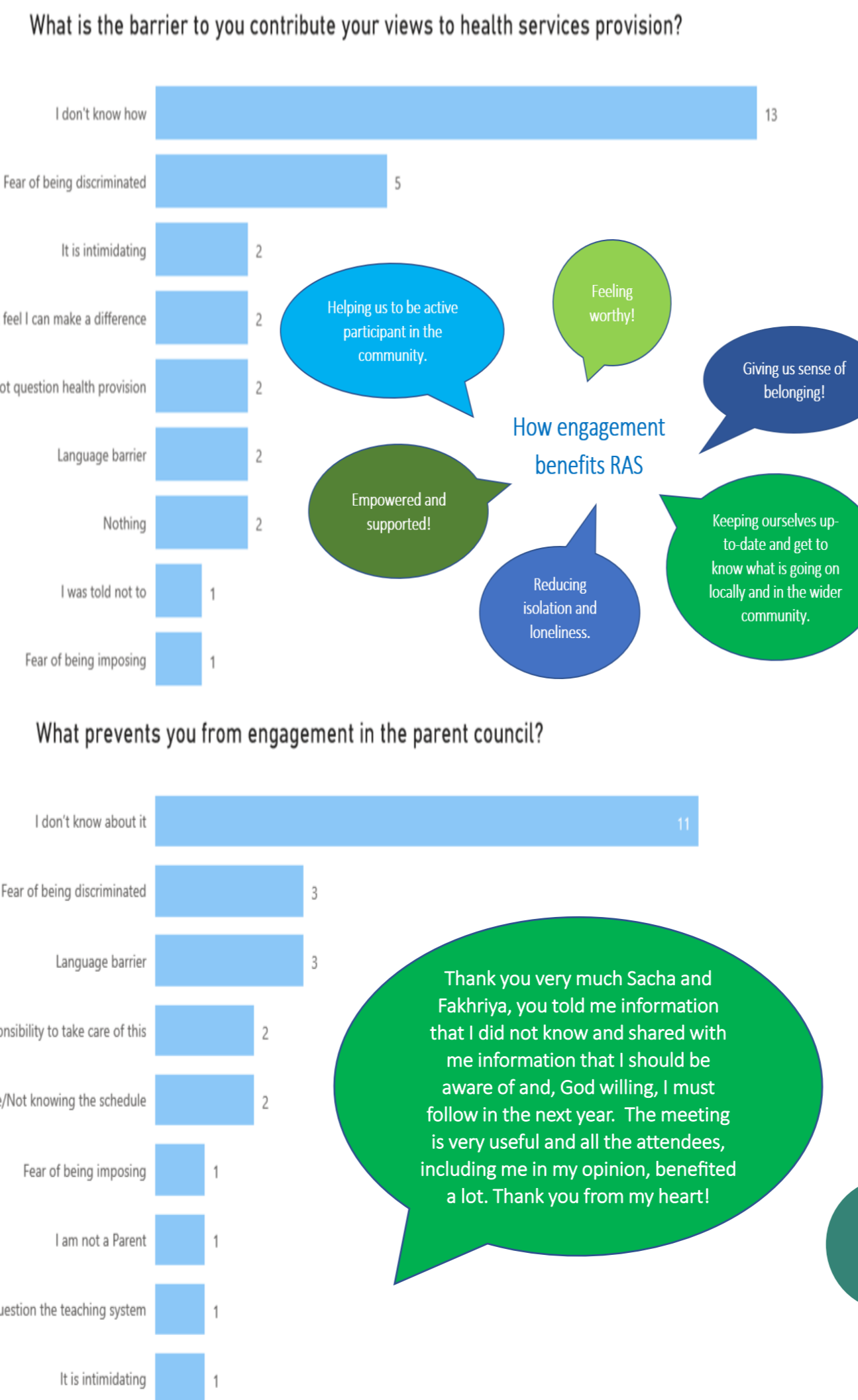
- Emotional and mental wellbeing
- Social circles
- Active citizenship
- Reduce inequalities
- Tackle discrimination

#### Key Barriers to RAS engagement with PCs and HSCPs

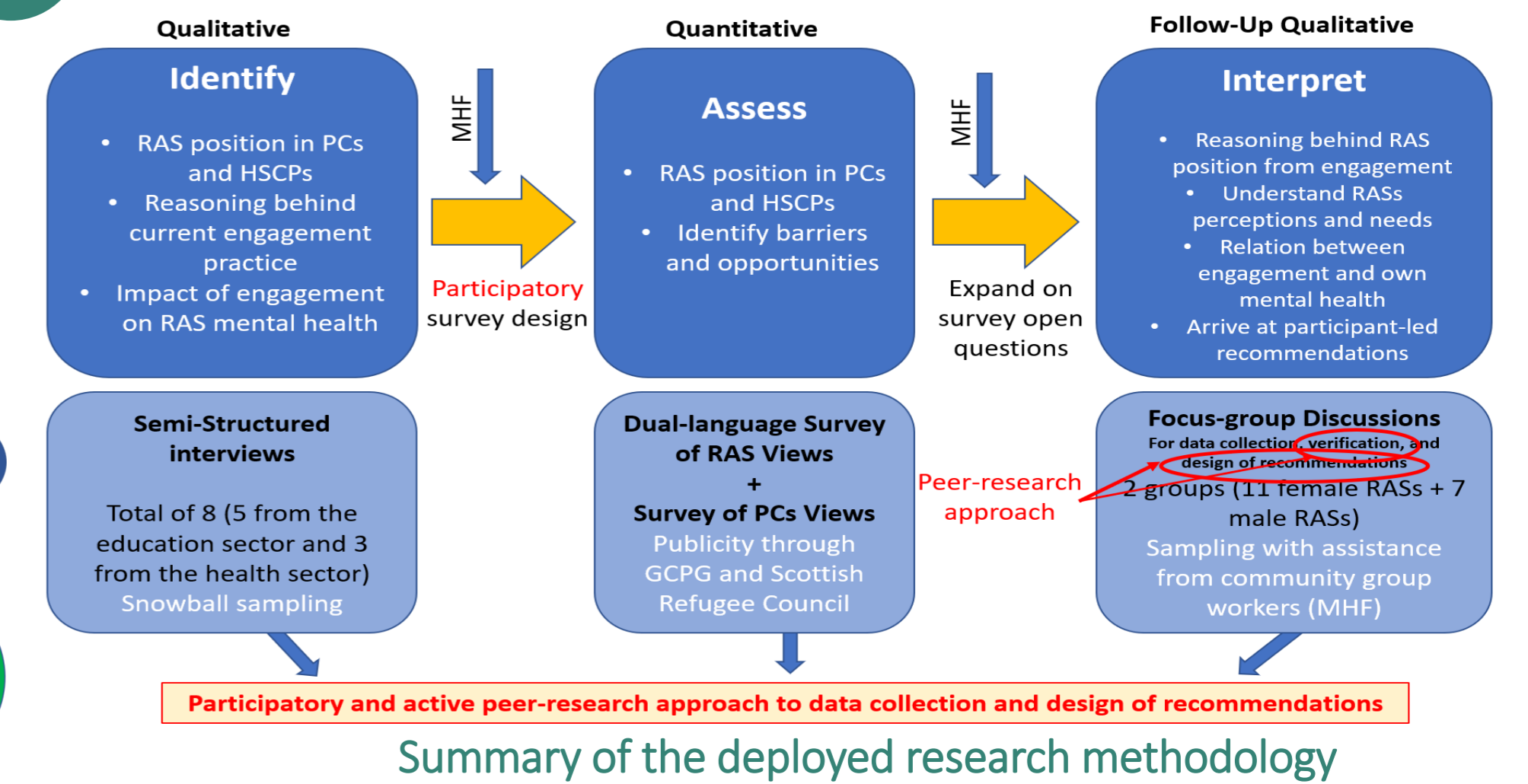
- Cultural barriers
- Mental health barriers
- Societal barriers
- Organisational barriers

#### Key Initiatives towards a more efficient RAS engagement.

- Access to information
- Capacity building
- Organisational and institutional structures



### 5 METHODS



#### Participatory and action-based peer-research approach.

- mixture of quantitative and qualitative, bottom-up and top-down data collection methods are employed.
  - This is to allow
  - real screening of RAS experiences in engaging with civic forums
  - help to arrive at more reflective participant-led research findings and recommendations
- A mechanism for proactively promoting awareness of opportunities for public participation as part of action research

### 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### This study recommends the following proactive areas of immediate action:

- supporting communication and collaboration between PCs, HSCPs and RAS;
- the promotion of diversity and inclusion to the decision-makers in education and health sectors and assessing the impact on service provision and the wellbeing of the community groups; and
- supporting a two-way awareness campaign to educate RAS of the decision-making forums and their methods of engagement, and to build the capacity of current decision-making boards to become more confident accommodating RAS needs in service provision.

#### The long-term recommendations emphasise

- the need for decision-making cultural change which includes shifting power imbalances between RAS and decision-makers;
- a rights-based approach; partnership and intersectoral action; and
- a 'whole of government' approach to public services planning, delivery and access, towards a more sustainable and inclusive process of RAS engagement in decision-making forums that can support their mental health and wellbeing.

"... there is no any way to know about the right because when we came here we just involved in our situation, our cases.....different appointments.....we did not focus on our kids' education... we were busy with the solicitor facilitating our asylum seeking issues." Refugee Male, June 2021

"... stigma mostly, refugees and asylum seekers communities becoming more stigmatised because of ..... stereotyping prejudices and discrimination. Those challenges would impact on their own, our, day-to-day.... mental conditions" Refugee Male, June 2021

"...we need to have mothers from ethnic and minority background at those tables, in those meetings, at the centre of those meetings, because if you have three mothers from ethnic minority backgrounds, they'll bring it up." Refugee Female, July 2021