



## case study 1

An office manager from Iran was referred by Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) to Workfinder (a local authority employment and training IAG project). A summary of the client's circumstances was provided by YHN and used to assess the client's 'distance from the labour market' (DLM). An initial assessment of the client's needs and an action plan were made. The client was finding it difficult to secure employment in the UK due to a lack of UK work experience and a limited understanding of UK recruitment procedures. She was referred to an 'ESOL for Jobs' course at Jobs, Education and Training (JET) and was supported to apply to the Refugees into Sustainable Employment (RISE) project for a six-month paid work placement. She successfully completed both the ESOL course and the work placement.

This case illustrates the effectiveness of the referral system established in the North East between YHN's Move On team and Workfinder. To enhance this process, a wider network has now been established, incorporating local providers of employment support for refugees and migrant workers.



## case study 2

A young woman from a refugee family came to the UK from Sri Lanka with qualifications in accountancy. She joined an ESOL course and rapidly improved her English, but she was unsure how to return to accountancy. The NIACE Upskill project helped her to find an intensive one-year AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) course, which enabled her to learn English terminology and provided an introduction to UK accountancy methods. On completing the course she undertook paid work experience in an accountancy firm and began a higher level AAT course. After completing this course she will be in a position to apply for a range of accountancy jobs, with the aim of returning to her original profession.



## case study 3

A migrant from Latvia with experience as a farm labourer was working in a bakery when he contacted the Progress GB project in Plymouth to seek help finding work in the agricultural sector. The project arranged for the client to visit a local farmer with a case worker. The meeting was a success, and the project was then able to give the farmer advice about documentation and information from the Agricultural Wages Board on rates of pay. As a result of this positive experience, the farmer is eager to take on more migrants and refugees as employees. The migrant worker himself has benefited from secure permanent work in the sector of his choosing.



## outline findings

Access to tailored, specialist and integrated IAG, delivered by personal advisors on an ongoing basis, enables migrant workers and refugees to gain appropriate employment. IAG is most successful when it provides clear signposting to further opportunities and services within a network of support.

Refugees and migrants particularly benefit from careers guidance, labour market orientation, mentoring, and information about employment rights in the UK.

Opportunities to learn occupationally specific ESOL should be available for all adults who might benefit. Further Education providers should be supported to develop and establish this provision alongside vocational training.

Systems to recognise prior learning, skills, experience and qualifications should be developed. The approaches should be sustainable and clear to all: migrants themselves, learning providers, employers, and professional bodies.

Europass and the European Qualifications Framework need to be extended to include new arrivals from outside the European Union.

A national scheme for work experience is needed to enable disadvantaged groups to participate, including refugees and migrants, and new and returning entrants to the labour market. A range of organisations should be brought together to establish common protocols.

UK employers need access to awareness-raising opportunities that will demonstrate the benefits of employing refugee and migrant workers. Information materials should also be available, including examples of good practice, and support with documentation requirements.

Local authorities would benefit from opportunities to draw on national funding sources to enable them to make provision to support the integration of new communities.

The approaches used by Progress GB are also relevant to other disadvantaged groups faced with similar barriers to those experienced by refugees and migrants. For example, workers who are made redundant after a long time in one industry, and people returning to work after breaks for childcare, caring responsibilities, or after periods of ill health; all of these groups can benefit from intensive and ongoing IAG, the recognition of prior experience, and mentoring support.

## further information

Contact email: [progressGB@niace.org.uk](mailto:progressGB@niace.org.uk)

Further information plus links to Progress GB reports and materials:

NIACE: [www.niace.org.uk/ProgressGB](http://www.niace.org.uk/ProgressGB)

Equal Works: [www.equal-works.com](http://www.equal-works.com)

Theparliament.com: [www.eupolitix.com/EN/Forums/Progress+GB](http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/Forums/Progress+GB)

MEET: [www.meetequal.org](http://www.meetequal.org)



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# overcoming barriers

to appropriate employment for refugees and migrant workers

## progress GB

The Progress GB EQUAL Development Partnership is working to address the barriers to appropriate employment for refugees and migrant workers in the UK labour market.

Through eleven separate projects, working with 650 beneficiaries, the partnership has found that the employability of refugees and migrant workers can be significantly enhanced by providing:

- information, advice and guidance (IAG)
- education and training, including vocational English courses
- work experience placements
- awareness-raising with employers
- new ways to validate the skills, experience and learning gained by refugees and migrants before coming to the UK

## information, advice and guidance (IAG)

Tailored, specialist and integrated IAG, delivered by personal advisors on an ongoing basis, has proved successful in enabling migrant workers and refugees to gain appropriate employment. The partnership has developed an approach called 'expert signposting', whereby networks of advice providers support the different needs of their clients. The range of advice on offer must encompass not only education and training, but also the multiple welfare and support needs of refugees and migrants, providing them with clear routes and signposting to appropriate support services.

The Progress GB projects have developed different approaches to IAG, including:

- The Migrants' Integrated Gateway™ ([www.migrantgateway.eu](http://www.migrantgateway.eu)), a web- and telephone-based advice service, developed by Advice for Life in the East of England
- A 'Distance to the Labour Market' model being tested by one of the projects in the North East, whereby mainstream agencies offer integrated support to provide refugees and migrants with pathways to employment
- A network approach developed by Plymouth and District Mind, which has demonstrated that different agencies can work together to offer an integrated package of support to refugees and migrants
- Telephone advice lines introduced by learndirect Advice in Farsi, French and Polish, with dedicated bi-lingual advisors
- A peer mentoring approach used by Heartland Homes in the West Midlands to help refugees start up in business
- Programmes to support the integration of female refugees into the labour market, run by Refugees into Jobs in London

## english language

Competence in the English language is key to accessing appropriate employment and vocational training, as many employers expect a high level of English from prospective employees. To cater for this need, the projects run by NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education – England and Wales) and Sheffield College developed vocational English programmes. The NIACE Upskill project piloted English courses in the occupational sectors of health and social care, accountancy, and administration; Sheffield College provided English courses for medical professionals. Further work would be required to develop vocational English provision in other sectors.

When Progress GB began in 2005, many ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses were oversubscribed, and provision in some parts of the country was very limited. Since then, funding for ESOL has become an area of considerable contention, as new plans have been put in place to restrict learners' eligibility for free classes. The ability to speak English is key to progressing in the labour market, is essential for health and safety in the workplace, and is vital to promoting community cohesion. Therefore refugees and migrants need access to work-related ESOL and vocational training to enable them to fully utilise their skills in the labour market.



## the role of employers

Progress GB carried out a survey of employers to discover their attitudes to the employment of migrants and refugees. This indicated that the majority of employers held positive views of migrant workers. Therefore it is particularly regrettable that, Progress GB has found evidence which indicates that many migrant workers suffer from discrimination and illegal or poor employment practices. Employers held less positive views of refugees as potential employees, and the partnership often experienced difficulties in finding work placements for refugee beneficiaries. Employers also noted the problems they experience with the documentation required to establish the right to work.

The survey and the partnership's work with employers has resulted in a number of recommendations aimed at employers, with a view to enabling migrant and refugee workers to make a greater contribution to the labour market.

A project run by ConstructionSkills (the Sector Skills Council for the construction industry) is undertaking research into the integration of migrant workers into the construction sector in the Midlands.

## recognition of experience

People who come to the UK from other countries encounter considerable difficulties in gaining recognition for their existing skills, experience and qualifications. The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham has developed new models to support recognition through skills auditing, work experience, top-up training, and developing migrants' awareness of the UK labour market. Refugees are offered an assessment by an advisor, who discusses the programme and audits candidates' language and skills levels. They are then directed either to a vocational orientation programme, which identifies gaps in ability and further appropriate training, or to a vocational language programme. In some vocational areas, skills can be accredited whilst on the orientation programme. Once they are work-ready, refugees are offered a supervised work experience placement, where a mentor is assigned to help them integrate into the workplace. Throughout the process, refugees are offered ongoing assistance with looking for a job or becoming self-employed, and may leave the programme at any time to take up paid employment.

*Progress GB is a member of a transnational partnership of EQUAL Development Partnerships from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and the UK. Called MEET (Migrants-Employment-Empowerment-Training), the partnership is working together on the areas of skills development, the recognition of experience and qualifications, and on raising awareness of the contribution that refugees and migrants can make to the EU labour market.*

