



# Working to Rebuild Careers

*An assessment of the provision  
to assist refugees seeking employment  
in the East Midlands*

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## THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following assessment of the provision to assist refugees seeking employment in the East Midlands begins by describing the national and regional context of refugee employment provision and goes on to identify the characteristics of East Midlands based mainstream provision, minority ethnic focused provision and refugee community focused provision. The current roles of these three forms of provision and any overlaps between them are identified along with their relative abilities to address the very complex and significant employment support needs of refugees. The picture of provision that emerges from the assessment presents several challenges as there are clear gaps in provision and limits to the provision that is available. Some of these gaps can be addressed by orientating existing provision to enable it to more effectively engage with refugees or meet their needs. However, the assessment also identifies shortfalls in the levels and the nature of funding that must be addressed if a serious attempt is to be made to effectively help refugees to engage with the labour market and find employment that is commensurate with their level of skills and experience.

### We would therefore recommend

1. that **providers find new ways to proactively reach out to hidden communities of refugees** rather than only serving those that are known to them and referred through the normal channels.
2. that either:
  - a. **ethnic community focused provision be strengthened**, possibly by funding to enable collaboration with existing refugee community focused provision, to provide it with the necessary capability to meet all the needs of refugees and for its coverage to be extended to all areas where refugees are found in the East Midlands, **or**
  - b. **refugee community focused provision be funded through longer term**, renewable funding and at much greater levels of funding, to enable it to build its capacity to serve the needs of all the refugees within the region
3. that if refugee community focused providers are not chosen as the main vehicle to deliver employment support to refugees in our region, that **a more sustained means of funding from the DWP for refugee community focused provision be made available** to enable these organisations to inform the work of other providers over the long term.
4. that **funds be made available through employment application support programmes**, which could adequately cover costs incurred by refugees in pursuing their vocational re-orientation or self-employment objectives
5. that **all agencies feed in data to the Government Office for the East Midlands** on the skills, aspirations and employment outcomes of refugees to enable monitoring to take place.
6. that **an analysis of the impact of other barriers on the employment outcomes of refugees be undertaken** to enable the region to gain a fuller understanding and be pre-warned of any factor causing considerable difficulty.

**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL**

7. that asylum seekers and refugees be encouraged and helped to access IAG provision. This could be achieved by offering IAG to all participants undertaking SOL provision and all refugees visiting Jobcentre Plus.
8. that any future progression and training route mapping exercises identify points on careers ladders at which skilled refugees can engage.
9. that ESOL provision be funded by the LSC at above level 2 and that this ESOL provision be either work focused or occupationally focused.
10. that whenever possible, FE provision be also made available outside of normal working hours and access to this provision is enhanced through the availability of childcare provision.
11. that the region attempt to develop vocational re-orientation programmes and that these programmes are located in a convenient location to enable refugees from across the region possessing relevant skills to travel to this provision. These vocational re-orientation programmes could be co-ordinated by the ethnic community or refugee community focused providers. Strong links between these programmes and training provision at Centres of Vocational Education and the new Skills Academies could be very helpful
12. that attempts be made by the LSC to encourage employers of significant numbers of refugees to take part in National Employer Training Pilots, Apprenticeship Programmes and Advanced Apprenticeship Programmes

**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR JOBCENTRE PLUS**

13. that Jobcentre Plus act as a first point of contact and offer all refugees accessing its services the opportunity to be referred to comprehensive support provision.
14. that Jobcentre Plus apply its Job Seekers Allowance availability criteria more flexibly, to enable people claiming Jobseekers Allowance to participate in full time training and work experience to the long-term benefit of themselves and ultimately the regional economy.
15. that safeguards should be put in place to ensure that provision is not so closely aligned to government employment targets that it ever causes providers to place meeting these targets ahead of encouraging refugees to find employment commensurate with their skills and experience.
16. that efforts should be made to raise employer's awareness of the skills and potential of refugees and that employers should be encouraged and supported financially through DWP funded incentives to offer work experience opportunities to refugees.

## INTRODUCTION

The East Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support (EMCARS) commissioned NIACE to undertake this assessment of provision supporting refugees seeking employment with the intention that its findings could contribute to the East Midlands Refugee Integration Strategy to be published in the spring of 2006. This report documents our findings and makes recommendations, which we hope may be adopted within the East Midlands. The findings and recommendations may be relevant for other regions of the UK also. The assessment was part funded by EMCARS and the European Social Fund under the Equal Community Initiative Programme.

### About EMCARS

The East Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support, known as EMCARS, is a regional partnership of organisations and agencies working to support asylum seekers and refugees. The two staff based at East Midlands Local Government Association's office in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, are wholly funded by Home Office (NASS) grant.

Originally established in March 2000 to support asylum seekers in the region, in 2003 the consortium became EMCARS and now aims to meet the needs of refugees as well as asylum seekers. The main aim is to facilitate the cooperation of a range of stakeholders to enhance and coordinate services and support to meet the needs and aspirations of asylum seekers and refugees.

### The National Context

Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration<sup>1</sup> and Working to Rebuild Lives<sup>2</sup>, the DWP refugee employment strategy, were both published in March 2005. These strategies identify finding employment as a pivotal factor in securing integration, the integration strategy placing great importance on promoting financial independence through access to paid work. These strategies were partly based on findings of previous studies undertaken on the nature of refugee employment and the barriers faced by refugees in securing work that was commensurate with their skills and experience. The studies found that unemployment rates amongst refugees are particularly high in comparison with the general population, the unemployment rate for refugees being estimated more recently in 'Working to rebuild lives' to be at approximately 36%. Another study identified that for refugees there was 'a notable lack of involvement in professional jobs despite pre-migration experience with many refugees finding themselves in low skilled, short term employment with little opportunity to develop their skills'<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Working to Rebuild Lives, A Refugee Employment Strategy, Department of Work and Pensions, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Refugees' Opportunities and Barriers in Employment and Training, Department of Work and Pensions, 2002

The publication of the NIACE skills audit of asylum seekers in Leicester in 2001<sup>4</sup> and several subsequent skills audits of other regional and local asylum seeker populations have all identified the great variety and often high level of skills possessed by people seeking asylum in the UK. Recognition of these skills and the implications of refugees finding work at levels below their capability has been acknowledged in the DWP preliminary report towards an employment strategy 'Working to Rebuild Lives'<sup>5</sup> which stated, "For so many refugees to be unemployed or underemployed, is a waste of human resource and is socially divisive, since work helps integrate people into the community and in the case of refugees, helps them settle and rebuild their lives". A report<sup>5</sup> on several DWP pilot projects established to test new initiatives prior to incorporation in the Refugee Employment Strategy was published by ECOTEC in 2004.

The nature and multiplicity of barriers to employment faced by refugees are well recorded. As many of these relate to their initial difficulties in finding adequate skills re-orientation provision, the Working to Rebuild Lives preliminary report<sup>6</sup> states that 'Getting early and correct advice on how to proceed is vital'. To support practitioners in providing guidance to young refugees and asylum seekers, Connexions published a manual<sup>7</sup> in 2003, much of which is equally applicable to older refugees.

Several helpful reports from the voluntary sector have been published examining issues related to the provision of employment advice for refugees. Centrepoint published a report<sup>8</sup> examining the challenges facing young refugees and made many useful recommendations which are applicable to the East Midlands region. A Refugee Council report<sup>9</sup> examining the progression routes to employment taken by refugees also made many useful recommendations applicable to the East Midlands. The Employability Forum report<sup>10</sup> describing employers' experiences of employing refugees is a very helpful addition for those organisations wishing to engage with employers.

## **The Regional Context**

The East Midlands has a long history of providing refuge to people fleeing from persecution and its character is partly defined by its settled communities of refugees and migrants. The industrial nature of the region's cities and the potential employment to be found in its factories helped previous refugee communities settle and prosper. However, since the 1980s there has been a steady decline in manufacturing with particularly drastic reductions in employment opportunities available in the textile industry and engineering. The decline in work available in manufacturing since this time has been

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<sup>4</sup> Asylum Seekers' Skills and Qualifications Audit Project Pilot, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Emerging Findings for the Refugee Employment Strategy, ECOTEC, 2004

<sup>6</sup> Working to Rebuild Lives, A Preliminary Report Towards a Refugee Employment Strategy, Department of Work and Pensions, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Working Together: Connexions supporting Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Connexions, 2003

<sup>8</sup> Waiting in Line, Young Refugees in the Labour Market, Centrepoint, 2004

<sup>9</sup> Refugees and Progression Routes to Employment, Refugee Council, 2002

<sup>10</sup> Employing Refugees: Some Organisations' Experiences, Employability Forum and the Institute for Employment Studies, 2004

compensated for by an increase in work available in the service sector, now making the East Midlands a predominantly service based economy. However, this reliance on the service sector has resulted in many jobs in the East Midlands being of low quality, poorly paid and unskilled, which has generated pockets of high deprivation and unemployment in inner city areas and outer city estates<sup>11</sup>. Despite many service sector jobs being of low quality, there are skills shortages in the East Midlands in other sectors. It is hoped that the East Midlands Regional Development Agency will succeed in its intention to increase levels of innovation and enterprise and develop more high value businesses subsequently creating increased levels of demand for skilled individuals. Refugees could form a significant proportion of these individuals.

Since 2000, the policy of national dispersal of asylum seekers has resulted in an estimated 10,000 asylum seekers being dispersed to the East Midlands, predominantly to its cities. The majority of people who gain refugee status remain in the East Midlands, estimates of the proportion of asylum seekers gaining refugee status varying between 35% and 50%. This is a significant number of people. The results of the NIACE skills audit survey and the NIACE ASSET UK project indicate that many of these people are already skilled. If the regional economy can engage effectively with its new refugee population and capitalise on their skills both the refugee individuals and the region will benefit. The East Midlands Development Agency's Employment, Skills and Productivity Partnership has recently published its action plan which seeks in part to achieve elements of the National Skills Strategy for the region. The exciting proposals outlined in the action plan should bring benefits to the region as a whole, including its refugee communities, especially if employers are helped to recognise the existing skills possessed by refugees.

## Report Structure

Following the above description of the national context and regional context of the support provided to refugees seeking employment by organisations in the East Midlands, a short section follows on the methods used to collect findings. The results of the study then begin with a discussion of the regional provision followed by a more detailed discussion of groups within this provision namely: mainstream advice providers, minority ethnic community focused provision and refugee community focused provision. Following this a series of recommendations are made. Case studies for the work of organisations providing support to refugees seeking employment follow with shorter notes being included on organisations, which provide related support.

## Methods

The scoping exercise was carried out primarily through face to face or telephone interviews with staff from provider organisations. The results have been written up as case studies and included in the appendices. The face to face interviews took between one and two hours, with an in depth discussion of the issues facing refugees as well as recording the nature of each organisation's provision. Many organisations recommended other provision to

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<sup>11</sup> Employment, Skills and Productivity Partnership Action Plan, East Midlands Development Agency, 2005

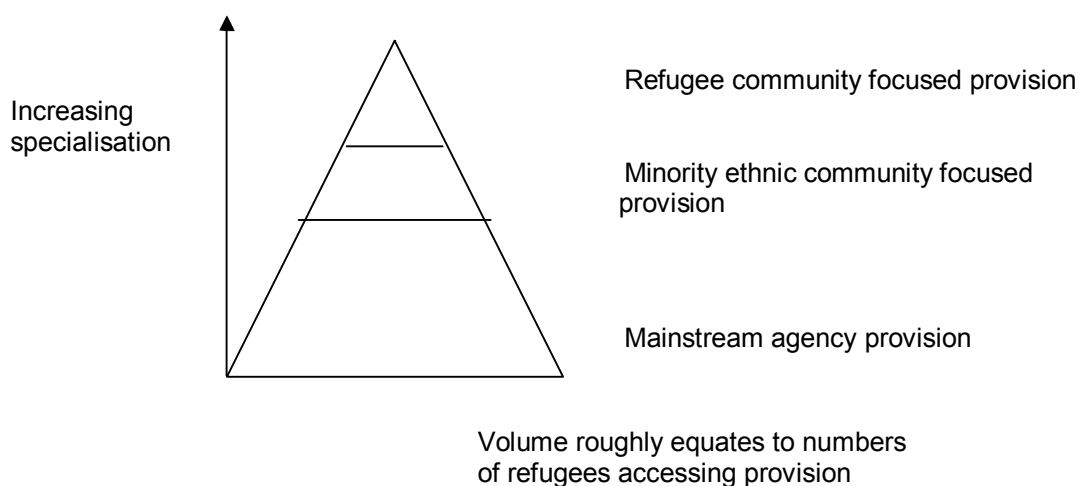
which they had referred refugees for additional support as being worth contacting as part of the scoping exercise. In this way the scoping exercise revealed an extensive network of organisations working well together to try to achieve the best outcomes for their clients. Refugees currently seeking work were also interviewed and a questionnaire completed, providing very helpful insights into their perception of the regional provision. Further insights from stakeholders were recorded from the June 2005 EMCARS stakeholders' event in Derby.

## REGIONAL PROVISION TO ASSIST REFUGEES SEEKING EMPLOYMENT OR MORE APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT

Regional provision of support for refugees seeking employment or more appropriate employment can be categorised into three groupings:

- Mainstream advice provision
- Minority ethnic community focused provision
- Refugee community focused provision

This categorisation is helpful because we can identify many shared characteristics within each group and determine the role each group plays in assisting refugees. A refugee may source support from all three categories: he/she would generally access the mainstream advice provider for initial support and could from there be referred for more specialised jobsearch support to a minority ethnic community focused provider. A further referral to a refugee community focused provider could then be made for occupationally specific support. The categorisation is helpful also as the funding streams available to members of each group are similar. The diagram below helps in visualising the categorisation:



Before we examine the nature of each group we can describe the characteristics shared by all providers regardless of their grouping. We were pleased to find that all the organisations visited were made up of dedicated staff and management teams whose strong commitment to serving their clients was clearly demonstrated in everyday provision and their enthusiasm about developing enhanced provision in the future. Furthermore, each provider was providing a high quality service in meeting its objectives, although sometimes these objectives were not well aligned to the needs of the participants, as objectives were generally funding driven.

All the organisations were aware of the vital importance of partnership working in addressing the variety of barriers facing refugee jobseekers and there was no evidence of projects taking an insular approach.

Every organisation provided one to one support and many provided significant levels of sustained support for individual participants, which is of great benefit to refugees with multiple or successive barriers. Each organisation had given consideration to the needs of participants facing disadvantage and had used creative approaches to meet these needs, innovative ways of addressing needs being tried and tested continuously.

Examples of innovation abound such as the IAG advice alongside ESOL provision at the Leicester Adult Education College, the Refugee Employment Project location and embedded position within the Racial Equality Council premises in close contact with RASAP, the provision of work experience placements offered by the Manna Resource Centre and occupational training provided by the Nottingham Refugee Forum in catering, administration and retail. Consideration of participant needs was also exhibited in aspects such as the choice of opening times, location of service provision and provision of staff training. It was also apparent that all the organisations had knowledge of their local refugee communities and therefore consistently met participant recruitment targets through effective marketing of services to refugee individuals and community groups.

### **Mainstream advice organisations**

Mainstream advice providers such as Jobcentre Plus, Nextstep, Connexions and careers and welfare advice provision within FE colleges play a fundamental role in the provision for refugees. This is in part because the mainstream advice providers are potentially accessed by refugees at pivotal points in their transition from asylum seekers to refugees. FE colleges are often the first port of call for asylum seekers seeking ESOL provision and the FE college careers advice and welfare provision is therefore potentially available to them within weeks or even days of coming to the UK.

Individuals gain access to Jobcentre Plus one to one advice provision on gaining a positive decision on their asylum claim. Therefore, Jobcentre Plus is well placed to be the first port of call for assistance for all unemployed refugees. Jobcentre Plus has strong links to other regional provision through its funding of, and direct involvement in, some of this provision, and its membership of advisory and steering groups for the remainder. In Leicester, Jobcentre Plus has taken an innovative approach in its appointment of a coordinator, whose role is to provide guidance to support the lead advisers and advisers in their face to face work with refugee clients by maintaining an overview of this specialist area and maintaining strong links with external organisations.

Nextstep and Connexions provision of IAG is available to both people seeking asylum and refugees; the overview of these organisations and their awareness of more specialised providers of support often enabling them to play a coordinating role in career re-orientation for new refugees.

Provision available through mainstream advice providers is well resourced and often available in a similar format across the country, this being important to refugees, who are known to be more likely to relocate than other groups. Mainstream advice providers often have strong links with or influence upon

other statutory provision and can resolve administrative difficulties or remove obstacles with relative ease. The greater capacity of mainstream advice providers to maintain a comprehensive overview of the range of specialised provision enables them to bring together and create synergy between smaller, more specialised providers and make helpful recommendations to policy and decision makers. The constancy of presence of mainstream providers is also a defining feature of this group, non-mainstream providers being much more vulnerable to loss of funding and the risk of closure.

However, although important mainstream advice providers can be limited in the scope of their provision, this is often generic in nature and therefore gives little scope for specialisation. These providers are therefore a natural first port of call for IAG and employment application support but may not be equipped to provide highly specialised vocational re-orientation support or to overcome problems specifically faced by refugees. Therefore smaller scale providers have become established to meet the more specialised needs of minority ethnic communities and the even more specialised needs of refugees.

### **Minority ethnic community focused provision**

In recognition that mainstream advice providers are not in the best position effectively to meet all the needs of minority ethnic communities as well the refugee sub group within them, funding streams are available either from mainstream advice providers or independently of them which have enabled a significant number of small scale providers of employment application support for minority ethnic communities to become established. In the East Midlands, these include the Derby Livelihood Project, the Derby based Fern Training and Development Minority Ethnic Outreach project, the Leicester based Business 2 Business Minority Ethnic Outreach Project and the Derby based Support into Work project.

Concentrating on meeting the needs of minority ethnic individuals and often embedded in minority ethnic communities, these organisations have an enhanced knowledge and awareness of issues facing minority communities as a whole and an often detailed knowledge of the predominant minority communities in their locality. They are able to develop helpful engagement and support strategies such as community focused childcare and transport assistance, thereby reaching out to the most disadvantaged individuals, who would be unlikely to reach mainstream providers.

Innovation and adaptability are characteristics of this group. These providers readily identify helpful provision and the means of delivering it, such as community based ESOL and IT provision. Both Fern Training and Development and Business 2 Business offer or intend to offer Learndirect IT provision in community settings and hope to expand their provision of other skills development and training services. Staff are encouraged to be flexible in their approach, enabling them to adapt provision to suit the needs of participants. Staff will go so far as to accompany participants if necessary to ensure they are able to pursue their objectives and will advocate on their behalf if need be.

In comparison to mainstream providers these organisations have an enhanced knowledge of the barriers faced by refugees, who form a significant proportion of their participants. They can also address some of the problems commonly encountered by refugees, such as NI number issuing delays, employers' enquiries about employment eligibility and problems encountered in trying to open bank accounts. However, these organisations can only be considered to be a halfway house in terms of their ability to meet the specific needs of refugees. Their ability to advise on or deliver vocational re-orientation support, often the most complex need, is particularly limited.

### **Refugee community focused provision**

Often small scale and due to funding difficulties of a temporary nature, refugee community focused provision is nevertheless powerful in its ability to engage with and transform the prospects of the refugees with whom it interacts. Such organisations are able to provide very specialised provision to address the full range of refugee jobseeker advice and application needs. They tend to have strong links to occupationally specific career re-orientation provision, with an element of this often being provided in house, as in the NIACE Upskill project's vocational re-orientation provision for accountancy, care, construction and business administration and the Nottingham Refugee Forum's provision of training and re-orientation in catering, retail and administration. Their staff possess an in depth and expert knowledge of the issues facing refugees in particular and become extremely experienced in providing one to one sustained support for individuals.

Strong links to nationwide refugee support provision enable these organisations to maintain an awareness of leading edge developments in the provision of refugee employment support and an understanding of the rapidly changing circumstances of refugees and their communities. Their small scale enables them to adapt and evolve to meet changing needs, enabling them to respond to unanticipated demands, such as provision by the Refugee Employment Project of intermediate labour market courses for a group of refugees wishing to learn plastering techniques. Their awareness of issues affecting refugee jobseekers enables them to develop refugee focused provision, such as the courses giving an introduction to the labour market developed by the Refugee Employment Project and the NIACE ASSET-UK project.

Their strong emphasis on meeting individual needs often enables these organisations to provide the long term sustained support needed by refugee individuals wishing to enter new careers or re-orientate existing skills to UK occupational requirements. Significant financial support through project funding may also be available for individuals on a needs led basis. These organisations are able to help individuals raise additional funds from charitable sources by keeping abreast of the transient and ethereal existence of many of these funding streams. Awareness of the local circumstances of refugee jobseekers enables these organisations to inform other jobsearch programmes and act as an expert resource on these issues.

Unfortunately the project based funding upon which refugee focused provision often relies is generally short-term. They shine brightly but not for very long,

their infrastructure and expertise being lost as premises close and staff move on. The transient availability of this provision often results in new organisations reinventing the wheel again and again and leads to the process of keeping up with changes to networks becoming a major task in itself.

**Table identifying differences between mainstream, minority ethnic and refugee focused provision**

	Mainstream provision	Minority ethnic community focused provision	Refugee community focused provision
Funding	Ongoing funding	Renewable short term funding	Short term funding
Duration of provision	Ongoing	Ongoing	Short term
Needs satisfied	Generic and mainstream needs met	Able to meet some refugee specific needs	Able to meet almost all refugee specific needs through a holistic approach
Contact with and means of referral to specialist providers of support for refugees	Variable	Moderate	Substantial
Funding available for individual clients for training and re-orientation needs	Limited	Limited	Moderate
Knowledge of eligibility regulations and processes	Variable	Moderate	Substantial

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**arising from the analysis of provision helping refugees seeking employment in the East Midlands**

Recommendations relevant to all bodies working to develop the economy of the East Midlands such as the **East Midlands Development Agency**, the **Learning and Skills Council**, **Jobcentre Plus** and the **Government Office for the East Midlands**

## 1. ENGAGING WITH REFUGEES

At present many refugees are never reached by any employment application support provision. Many never claim benefits, finding work due to the currently relatively benign labour market, although this work is almost always low skilled and low paid. A significant proportion of the refugee population never visit Jobcentre Plus and many never receive IAG. Some groups within the refugee population are particularly unlikely to use Jobcentre Plus or other providers, due to cultural pre-disposition or due to their circumstances: for example, spouses of refugees may be ineligible to benefits for substantial time periods. To make a real impact on the employment outcomes and quality of life of refugees in our region it is important to try to facilitate means by which all can participate in provision designed to help.

⇒ **We therefore recommend that providers find new ways to proactively reach out to hidden communities of refugees rather than only serving those that are known to them and referred through the normal channels.**

## 2. DELIVERY OF PROVISION

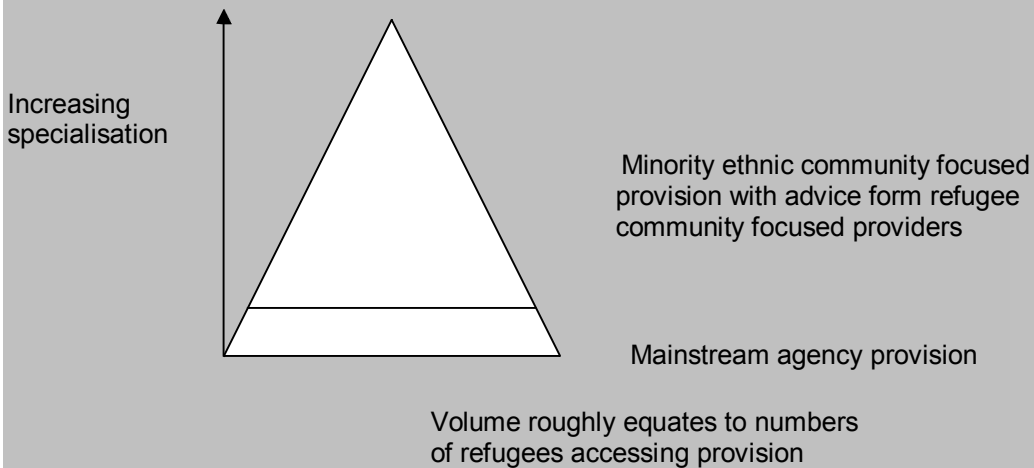
Ideally, there would be a provider or a series of providers of employment application support, which could meet all the needs of refugees across the whole of the East Midlands. Currently, there is only very patchy provision of employment application support at the calibre required to meet all the needs of refugees, the needs of skilled refugees being particularly poorly addressed. Even in areas where refugee community focused programmes exist, these have by no means the capacity to effectively serve their whole local refugee community. Although there will always be a role for refugee community focused programmes, the transient and small scale nature of the funding on which they currently rely will never give them the capacity needed to serve the whole refugee community effectively. Ethnic community focused provision has greater capacity, but currently lacks the specialist skills, which currently only reside in the refugee community focused providers, to meet all the needs of refugees. Mainstream focused providers are unlikely to wish directly to deliver specialised provision of the kind required to meet all the needs of refugees.

⇒ We would therefore recommend that either:

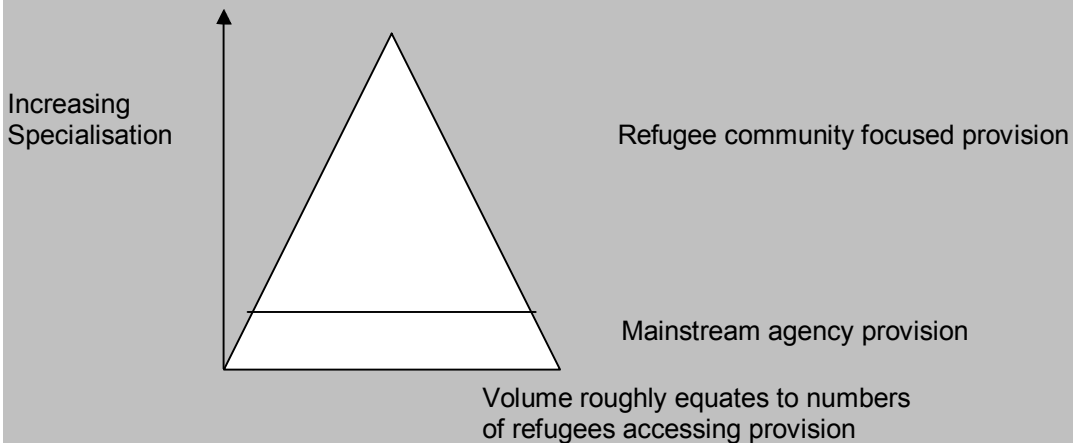
- a) ethnic community focused provision be strengthened, possibly by funding to enable collaboration with existing refugee community focused provision, to provide it with the necessary capability to meet all the needs of refugees and for its coverage to be extended to all areas where refugees are found in the East Midlands, or
- b) refugee community focused provision be funded through longer term, renewable funding and at much greater levels of funding, to enable it to build its capacity to serve the needs of all the refugees within the region

With reference to the diagram on page 6 the distribution of provision would change giving

a) if based mainly within an ethnic community focused provider:



b) if based mainly within a refugee community focused provider:



### 3. SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR REFUGEE COMMUNITY FOCUSED PROVIDERS

Funding associated with pilot and development projects, upon which refugee community focused provision is often reliant, is generally short term and can only provide for small-scale initiatives.

⇒ We therefore recommend that, if refugee community focused providers are not chosen as the main vehicle to deliver employment support to refugees in our region, that a more sustained means of funding from the DWP for refugee community focused provision be made available to enable these organisations to inform the work of other providers over the long term.

### 4. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL REFUGEES

The financial costs to refugee individuals of undertaking vocational re-orientation can be prohibitively high. The recent decision to remove the right to backdated payments of income support for people granted refugee status will remove a source of financial assistance for many people that had previously been very helpful in meeting the costs of vocational re-orientation. Many people wishing to become self-employed are also prevented from doing so by lack of financial resources.

⇒ We therefore recommend that funds be made available through employment application support programmes, which could adequately cover costs incurred by refugees in pursuing their vocational re-orientation or self-employment objectives

### 5. FUTURE DATA GATHERING

The combination of the recent NIACE ASSET-UK asylum seeker skills audit and this scoping exercise should help provide the region with a much clearer understanding of the needs of refugees and the provision available to meet these needs. Ongoing monitoring of needs is necessary in this field, as the countries of origin and occupational backgrounds of refugees shift over time with changing locations of global conflicts and strife. This monitoring could also be used to map the skills of the refugee population against skills shortages, to enable a match to be made between vacancies and skilled individuals.

⇒ We therefore recommend that all agencies feed in data to the Government Office for the East Midlands on the skills, aspirations and employment outcomes of refugees to enable monitoring to take place.

### 6. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES FACING REFUGEES

Finding suitable employment is only one of the many challenges facing refugees. The majority of refugees face multiple difficulties, these difficulties impacting detrimentally upon one another.

⇒ We therefore recommend that an analysis of the impact of other barriers on the employment outcomes of refugees be undertaken to enable the region to gain a fuller understanding and be pre-warned of any factor causing considerable difficulty.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL**

### **7. ACCESS TO IAG**

Refugees often do not access IAG provision. If asylum seekers were able to make constructive use of their time by accessing IAG, while waiting for a decision on their asylum claim, they would have a clear idea of how to progress on gaining refugee status. A helpful and straightforward means of engaging with many asylum seekers would be to offer IAG to all asylum seekers attending ESOL classes. Currently, although ESOL is often taught in a further education setting, relatively few asylum seekers are aware that IAG may be provided by their ESOL provider organisation. Refugees who make a new claim for benefits at Jobcentre Plus could also be referred to an IAG provider to ensure this provision is accessed at an early stage in their jobsearch.

⇒ We therefore recommend that asylum seekers and refugees be encouraged and helped to access IAG provision. This could be achieved by offering IAG to all participants undertaking ESOL provision and all refugees visiting Jobcentre Plus.

### **8. MAPPING PROGRESSION AND TRAINING ROUTES**

The East Midlands Development Agency has identified a need within its Employment Skills and Productivity Partnership to map existing skills structures for each occupational sector. This will identify clear progression and training routes to enable careers ladders to be established for occupations in which it is currently not clear how to progress.

⇒ We therefore recommend that any future progression and training route mapping exercises identify points on careers ladders at which skilled refugees can engage.

## 9. ESOL PROVISION

Although there is reasonable provision of ESOL up to level 2 in most areas, the English language level required for many job vacancies in the East Midlands is above this level. Only the least skilled jobs are available to people with ESOL at level 2 or below.

⇒ **We therefore recommend that ESOL provision be funded by the LSC at above level 2 and that this ESOL provision be either work focused or occupationally focused.**

## 10. FLEXIBLE PROVISION OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION

For many refugees with skills, a relevant FE course can be a very helpful vocational re-orientation activity, as it can familiarise them with UK methods and terminology, which may be difficult to learn in any other way. However, some training within further education is still only available in a full time format, ruling out participation by refugees who are working during the day but who would like to undertake training in the evening or at weekends. Where part-time evening or weekend training opportunities are available, students attending rarely have access to childcare facilities, which prohibits the take up of this provision by single parents or by people from two parent families whilst their partner is at work.

⇒ **We therefore recommend, that whenever possible, FE provision be also made available outside of normal working hours and access to this provision is enhanced through the availability of childcare provision.**

## 11. VOCATIONAL RE-ORIENTATION PROVISION

At present, provision of vocational re-orientation programmes is extremely limited, only the Nottingham Refugee forum and the NIACE Upskill project providing any vocational re-orientation programmes outside the healthcare sector. Access to such programmes is crucial if the many skilled refugees, we are aware of from the work of the NIACE ASSET-UK skills audit programme, are ever to return to working in their previous occupations at a level commensurate with their skills and experience.

⇒ **We therefore recommend that the region attempt to develop vocational re-orientation programmes and that these programmes are located in a convenient location to enable refugees from across the region possessing relevant skills to travel to this provision. These vocational re-orientation programmes could be co-ordinated by the ethnic community or refugee community focused providers. Strong links between these programmes and training provision at Centres of Vocational Education and the new Skills Academies could be very helpful**

## 12. IN-WORK TRAINING

Many refugees are anxious to enter employment immediately on gaining permission to work. However, without IAG and access to vocational re-orientation provision they end up trapped in the low pay/no pay cycle, moving from temporary, low paid, low skilled work, back on to benefits and then back again to low paid, low skilled, temporary work. In order to provide opportunities for everyone to gain skills and for the regional economy to become a high skill/high value economy, it is important to try to engage with everyone, including refugees, trapped in the low pay/no pay cycle.

⇒ We therefore recommend that attempts be made by the LSC to encourage employers of significant numbers of refugees to take part in National Employer Training Pilots, Apprenticeship Programmes and Advanced Apprenticeship Programmes

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR JOBCENTRE PLUS

### 13. ROLE OF JOBCENTRE PLUS

As yet, due to the lack of any comprehensive regional coverage of dedicated support for refugees seeking employment, there has been little demand for a first port of call for all refugees to engage with provision. However, if we wish to provide comprehensive coverage in the future, it would be essential to establish a first port of contact through which we could engage with all refugee jobseekers.

⇒ We recommend that Jobcentre Plus act as a first point of contact and offer all refugees accessing its services the opportunity to be referred to comprehensive support provision.

### 14. APPROPRIATE APPLICATION OF BENEFIT REGULATIONS

Many refugees need to claim benefits whilst seeking employment but would like to make the most constructive use of this time by undertaking training or work experience. Unfortunately, the 'availability for work' restriction of Jobseekers Allowance prevents them from undertaking full time work experience or full time training provision, as they are not considered to be available for employment whilst undertaking these pursuits.

⇒ We would recommend that Jobcentre Plus apply its Job Seekers Allowance availability criteria more flexibly, to enable people claiming Jobseekers Allowance to participate in full time training and work experience to the long-term benefit of themselves and ultimately the regional economy.

## 15. DEVELOPING TARGETS THAT PRIMARILY REFLECT MEETING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS

At present much of the funding provided by the Department of Work and Pensions is given in its attempt to meet broad government employment targets. There is a danger that funding reliant upon meeting these employment targets could lead providers to focus on finding the most easily accessible employment rather than the most appropriate employment commensurate with the skills possessed by refugee participants.

⇒ We therefore recommend that safeguards should be put in place to ensure that provision is not so closely aligned to government employment targets that it ever causes providers to place meeting these targets ahead of encouraging refugees to find employment commensurate with their skills and experience.

## 16. EMPLOYER AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

The opportunity to undertake work experience is a vital part of vocational re-orientation for skilled refugees. At present there are few opportunities to access work experience. The organisations that do offer volunteering opportunities are generally in the voluntary and charitable sector and primarily offer volunteering opportunities to increase their capacity. These existing opportunities therefore rarely provide training, as these organisations are looking for people who already possess the full range of skills needed rather than people wishing to develop skills. Vocational re-orientation programmes for highly skilled occupations that would involve a compulsory element of work experience are often compromised by the lack of availability of these work experience opportunities. The clinical attachments required in the vocational re-orientation of overseas trained doctors are an example of essential work experience in very short supply.

⇒ We therefore recommend that efforts should be made to raise employer's awareness of the skills and potential of refugees and that employers should be encouraged and supported financially through DWP funded incentives to offer work experience opportunities to refugees.

# CASE STUDIES

Full case studies are given for organisations directly providing jobsearch support. Shorter notes are given for organisations providing relevant related support. The case studies are grouped according to the city in which they are based.

The **Derby** based organisations include, described in the following order:

- The Refugee Housing Association Derby Refugee Learning and Employment Support Project
- The FERN Training and Development Derby Based Minority Ethnic Outreach Service
- The Derby Support into Work Project
- The Derby Livelihood Project
- The Derwent Refugee Support Project

The **Leicester** based organisations include, described in the following order:

- The Business 2 Business Leicester and Leicestershire Minority Ethnic Outreach Service
- Leicester Adult Education College Learner Support
- The Leicester Jobservice Partnership
- Leicester Manna Resource Centre
- Leicester East Primary Care Trust Overseas Healthcare Professionals Project
- The Leicester Refugee Employment Project
- The Work in Progress Refugee Outreach Project
- The NIACE ASSET-UK Project
- The NIACE Upskill Project

The **Lincoln** based organisations include, described in the following order:

- Lincoln Welcome
- The Lincoln Rainer Advice Project

The **Nottingham** based organisations include, described in the following order:

- The Nottingham Refugee Forum
- The Nottingham Arena Learning Centre
- Nottingham Rebuild

# DERBY

## The Refugee Housing Association DRLES Derby Refugee Learning and Employment Support Project

### 1. Contact details

Andrew Walden  
DRLES Project Coordinator  
Refugee Housing Association  
Navigation House  
Unit 1 Derwent Park  
213 London Road  
Derby DE1 2SX  
01332 334 520      Email: DRLESP@mht.co.uk

### 2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved.

DRLES was developed in consultation with refugees and their representatives as well as other projects involved in their support such as ASSET UK and Livelihood Project. The project continues to work closely with a number of agencies in Derby. The main referral source is RHA Floating Support Team, but referrals are also received from Derby based Refugee Community Organisations, other NASS accommodation providers, Registered Social landlords and private landlords in Derby. Clients are being referred from and to: Derby College; University of Derby; Jobcentre plus; Livelihood Project; Connexions Derbyshire; Derby Multicultural Centre; local employers.

### 3. Aims and objectives

To assist refugees living in the Derby City area to overcome difficulties and barriers in accessing and sustaining education and training and ultimately to gain suitable employment. To include the hardest to help, the difficult to reach and the socially excluded.

Identify the skills and aspirations of refugee clients and provide an individually tailored support service for them.

Enable refugees to integrate into wider society and to achieve social cohesion, to take control over their own lives, to become self-sufficient and to recognise and realise their true potential.

Link and join up existing key refugee service providers, to co-ordinate their provision and form a creative partnership utilising available resources and facilitate their delivery to maximum effectiveness.

Make the necessary support services readily available to refugee clients to enable them to establish career paths and study routes to meet their employment aspirations.

Develop working relationships with local employers and engage refugees with employment that meets their career needs and aspirations.

Raise awareness of refugee needs among mainstream service providers in the City.

Provide two Learning Support Officers to deliver support to each client through an Individual Learning Support Plan, assessing needs and supporting people from one

learning experience (e.g. education or training course) to another or into employment.

Provide a mentoring service, to provide additional assistance in education and employment settings and in accessing jobs.

Develop a greater awareness of the needs of refugees amongst the mainstream service providers of education, training and employment and advocate the positive contributions that they bring to the UK. A formal group will be created to lead on this objective with members consisting of representatives from all the partnering organisations.

Broker deals with mainstream training and education providers to run courses to meet the needs of refugees. RHA will link up with specialist BME agencies through existing relationships to help meet specific requirements.

Work in a partnership with mainstream employment agencies to cater sensitively for the needs of refugees and aid in their recruitment.

Work with local housing associations to engage their refugee tenants and help them to realise their education and employment ambitions.

#### **4. Background to project**

Based on the figure of dispersed asylum seekers in Derby, RHA estimated that the number of those who could potentially benefit of DRLES project is likely to be 560. The research, conducted nationally and locally, which highlights the refugee overrepresentation in unemployment and underemployment figures as well as the studies that identify high level of skills and aspirations amongst refugees, provided the rationale for the project. This was further supported by the findings of the consultation exercise with potential service users in Derby that RHA undertook in February 2004 and the RHA resident survey carried out nationally, which identified:

- A general perception that there is a lack of availability of certain education courses to refugees.
- Students required specialist support, particularly around the techniques of studying.
- Being out of work for lengthy periods of time whilst waiting for a Home Office decision on asylum claims was demoralising and often resulted in becoming distant from current working practices and resulted in a gradual loss of skills.
- Child day care commitments place many constraints on women who are studying and working. Also most evening classes can be inconvenient due to family commitments.
- Mainstream providers often created confusion by disseminating uncoordinated and disjointed information, advice and guidance. They offer various levels of service and at different times, but there is not always continuity in leading from one type of course to the other.
- There were frequently unfilled gaps in time through having to wait to start another course.
- Qualification matching is a problem. Very often courses previously completed in home countries are repeated – this can mean losing 1, 2 or more years in order to pass equivalent exams in this country. There is also much frustration in proving that the standards have previously been reached.
- Restricted access to courses at colleges and universities and further restriction and missed opportunities due to the lack of clarity about

entitlements to education funding for people with different immigration statuses

## 5. Activities

The project launch on 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 2005 attended by projects partners, stakeholders and potential beneficiaries provided further consultation opportunity for the project.

The three project staff, project coordinator and two learning support officers, are concerned with meeting the project's three year targets of supporting 180 refugees in accessing accredited education, training that leads to qualification or appropriate employment. This is achieved through direct contact with project clients resulting in development of action plans and their implementation through close liaison with IAG, education and employment support providers in Derby.

## 6. Outcomes

Progress against Year 1 targets at 1<sup>st</sup> June 2005 is shown in bold type.

### Year 1 targets

- 1) 60 clients receive learning support (e.g. Individual Learning Support Plans drawn up and implemented)  
**50 clients have an ILSP drawn up and implemented, waiting list in place**
- 2) (a) 40 clients enrolled onto accredited education courses  
**18 clients enrolled onto accredited courses**
- 2) (b) 30 clients gain recognised qualifications  
**0 clients have gained accredited qualifications (awaiting July 2005 results)**
- 3) Within 6 months of completing appropriate education or training, 25% of clients obtain employment  
**Not applicable at this date**
- 4) 10 mentors identified and trained  
**14 mentors identified, 15 mentors trained**

## FERN Training and Development Derby Based Minority Ethnic Outreach Service

### 1. Contact details

Anne Whitfield  
Operations manager Derby  
St Peter's House, Gower Street, Derby  
01332 208 505  
annewhitfield@ferntd.com  
[www.ferntd.com](http://www.ferntd.com)

### 2. Start and finish dates of project to support refugees:

October 2004 to March 2006

### 3. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved

Clients are referred to:

- Derby Refugee Advice Centre for general advice and information
- Jobcentre Plus and other IAG advisers and job search organisations, such as The Livelihood Project and ASSET UK Derby

- Providers of ESOL/ICT training: Derby City Council, Adult Learning Service, Derby Multicultural Centre, CITA

The organisation receives referrals from:

- Derby Afghani Community Association

#### **4. Aims and objectives**

The project is aimed specifically at providing support into education, training and employment opportunities through adviser support and a mentoring programme. The participants are members of the minority ethnic community in Normanton and it is estimated that 50-60% are refugees, with an increasing number of non-refugee migrants in the recent months. The overall project aims to achieve its JCP target as in the contract, i.e. to work with 600 clients, of whom 150 will move into employment and 120 into sustainable employment (13 weeks or more). The project started at a time of year when not many employers were recruiting people. This time has been utilised to prepare clients for work. Engaging clients has not been problematic and the situation with job outcomes has improved.

#### **5. Background to project**

*Fern* is a Training Group that obtains contracts from Jobcentre plus to deliver New Deal and Work Based Learning for Adults. In addition, *Fern* functions as a Derby College franchise to deliver ESOL within its Further Education programme. *Fern* has had 100 learners on its courses. Thirty of the learners within the FE programme have been asylum seekers. *Fern* can offer flexible starting dates for ESOL. It also provides NOCN accreditation, delivering from Pre-Entry to Level Two. Learners' success stories are celebrated with, for example, a certificate presentation ceremony.

There are six people in a team:

- Team Leader (also works as job broker and has a caseload)
- 2 Job Brokers
- 2 Support and Engagement Officers to recruit and help to engage community
- Support from other *Fern* staff from Derby area and the region.

The project was devised and developed through local knowledge, experience of ESOL and advice from refugee and community agencies. It is also shaped around the requirements of the Jobcentre plus tender.

#### **6. Activities**

The project aims to be community based so that it is within easy reach of potential clients. Outreach surgeries in relevant community settings are run as well as community events and job fairs. Participation is on a voluntary basis. After expressing interest clients are referred to job-brokers on a one-to-one basis. Learning plans and set actions are done with every client. Assistance in CV development and job search is ongoing for each client.

There is a training budget for staff as well as a budget for client expenditure. This budget is used at job brokers' discretion and can help clients with the cost of travel to an interview, for special/protective clothing for work or possibly for exam costs such as a driving test. Staff can earn rewards for job outcomes. There is a budget for marketing events to help engage employers.

Challenges include dealing with asylum seekers as the project is unable to support them, as they do not have permission to work. Now that the ASSET UK project is closed it is not possible to refer appropriately. One concern is that many clients are Kurdish people with limited leave to remain due to expire in 2006, whose future in the UK is uncertain. Clients are often frustrated if they are unable to find work but also if

they have problems with housing or health. The project's challenge is to achieve better job outcomes in the future.

## **7. Outcomes**

100 people joined the project and received support in developing a learning plan and a CV.

Better awareness of issues faced by refugees looking for work.

The views of project clients have not been captured in the project evaluation. However, Fern does follow the philosophy of 'you said, we listened', which they hope to introduce within this project.

## **Derby Support into Work**

### **1. Contact details**

Anita Elwell (training manager)  
Fourth Floor,  
St Peter's House,  
Gower Street,  
Derby,  
DE1 1SB  
01332 292 915

**2. Start and finish dates:** Learndirect funding runs from 2005-6, LSC funding from 2005-7

### **3. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

Partnering relationships are being formed: SureStart, Walbrook Derby Asylum Seekers Learning Co-ordinator and Derby City Equalities Unit. Existing ones are YMCA, Leonard Cheshire, English Churches Houses and Jobcentre Plus.

The main sources of referrals of refugees have been:

Derby Refugee Forum  
Derby Voluntary Refugee Advice Centre  
Hallmark Housing

### **4. Aims and objectives**

Support Into Work aims to support refugees into work through offering support, advice and information about employment opportunities and relevant courses, such as ESOL.

### **5. Background to project**

Support Into Work has a contract to deliver Learndirect. Learndirect provides a platform for training in ESOL and in Basic Skills, and runs across academic years. This covers literacy and numeracy up to Level 2. Learndirect also provides ICT training to those who are suitably able to work with English: this is a natural progression.

Support Into Work also manages several Jobcentre Plus contracts, some of which can be accessed by refugees. This is encouraged and integrated to enable such clients to benefit not only from ESOL training but also from gaining cultural insights into how we go about getting work and other kinds of support, including work experience.

## **6. Activities**

Derby LSC funds the first 40 learners; Ufi funds the remainder. All the funding in some way supports refugees and asylum seekers. Funding from Ufi (University for Industry) has been made available for up to two years to research barriers to learning in the area of working with the homeless (social housing and supported housing). A written report will be produced at the end of year one. This is focused within the City of Derby. Beneficiaries to date number circa 65, of whom 80% are refugees/asylum seekers.

This started in December 2004, and runs to the end of phase 1 in July 2005.

This has possibly provided Support Into Work with the award of an LSC contract starting July 2005, which is larger in size and covers a two-year period. This is to support initial assessment and non-accredited learning.

LSC funded project Step Change 1 offers support, work advice and guidance, job search, ESOL, non-accredited first-steps and basic skills training at entry level for unemployed people seeking to access further learning or secure employment. Assistance is available to refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

Support Into Work has contracts with the Jobcentre to help people get back into work. With regard to ESOL provision it uses a Learndirect ESOL package called ELLIS, a computer based course accredited by OCR / LCCI.

Support Into Work regularly attends centres that refugees use to carry out informal one-to-one assessments as appropriate with individuals.

Most of the learning takes place at the Support into Work premises, which have good access and amenities. Support Into Work continuously looks to support learners in community venues.

## **7. Outcomes**

The organisation's strengths are: going out to community groups; helping learners who want to start immediately or who want to learn at 'awkward' times, because they can start at any time; ease of access in the summer months when a lot of providers are shut; one to one attention.

## **The Livelihood Project, Derby**

### **1. Contact details**

Suman Gupta

Project Manager

Livelihood Project (managed by Connexions Derbyshire Ltd)

284 – 6 Normanton Road, Derby DE23 6WD

01332 298495

Email: [suman.gupta@connexions-derbyshire.org](mailto:suman.gupta@connexions-derbyshire.org)

### **Date of case study visit: 21/06/05**

Start and finish dates of project/organisational initiative to support refugees: 06/10/2003 – 31/12/2005 (at present)

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved.**

In the time limit imposed for the completion of the case study I am not able to complete this section fully, as there are many organisations we work with both in

referring to and accepting referrals from including: Refugee Housing, SureStart Rosehill, NIACE, Connexions Derbyshire Ltd (through its Connexions and NextStep work), PATRA, Job Centre Plus, Derby College and other providers of ESOL provision in Derby and University of Derby.

### **3. Aims and objectives**

The project aims to contribute to the regeneration agenda for the Normanton area as set by Derby City Partnership through its stakeholders through ensuring access to sustainable training and employment opportunities by the residents.

### **4. Background to project**

The project was established in 2003 through URBAN 11 and SRB 6 regeneration funds to provide information, advice, guidance around accessing training and employment opportunities in a deprived inner city area of Derby called Normanton. The project is open to all residents although the priority customers are women, young people and ethnic minorities, and includes refugees (not asylum seekers due to funding constraints). Our colleagues in NextStep can see asylum seekers so we tend to refer to them.

The Normanton area continues to have the highest unemployment levels and lowest skill/qualification levels in Derby, which is why the project is based here. It was funded through Derby City Partnership initially for a 10-month pilot period and was extended until 30/09/05 and has been offered another extension due to its success in meeting its targets. It is anticipated that the project will be granted further two years funding. The project offers doorstep delivery to residents through a variety of staff such as Connexions Personal Advisors and Information Advisors, NextStep Careers Advisors, and Job Centre Plus Advisor who also happen to be of various cultural backgrounds able to support local people in some community languages.

### **5. Activities**

The project initially started very slowly as it was a new initiative and needed 3 – 6 months development time which was not available due to it being a pilot for 10 months. Having shop front premises on the main thoroughfare provided passing trade, and then word of mouth about our services. The original staff team of two people networked with a number of organisations and individuals to promote the project and to encourage referrals. The original stakeholders who include Job Centre Plus, Derby Council for Voluntary Services, Connexions Derbyshire Ltd and NextStep provided support to establish the project. To provide a diverse work force and add value the project obtained the services of existing Connexions staff to work flexibly to meet the needs of the clients.

### **6. Outcomes**

Due to the limited resources at the time of participation in the survey I am unable to give full outcomes report. I am able to say that work with refugees presents us with ongoing challenges. For example:

- Even after a NARIC conversion has been obtained, employers do not accept the qualifications gained from other countries – need to educate employers.
- Qualified nurses and doctors from other countries find it difficult to find supervised placements to be able to practise in the UK
- English language skills being taught is not sufficient to be able to communicate effectively in a work environment – current ESOL provision needs to be re-vamped

**The following feedback provided by one of our clients illustrates the work and the achievements of the project:**

*'I was an asylum seeker and was successful in gaining refugee status. Once I gained legal status to stay in this country I wanted a job to be able to support myself.*

*Patricia Sutherns told me about the careers for Adults service and I contacted Leonard Haye, one of the Careers Advisors at the Livelihood project. I gained advice on colleges and careers. My Careers Advisor also helped me write my CV, which was useful as I had something on paper, which I could show to potential employers. Because of this help I was able to obtain a job. The careers advisor gave me a lot of help and support, and made me focus my ideas so I can put them down on paper for my CV. I hope to become more self-confident; I am involved in various programs that will help me to achieve self-fulfilment. In order to achieve your goals you have to be determined and never give up. Things never change until we become dissatisfied with our present circumstances and make the first step to change.'*

## **The Derwent Refugee Support Project**

### **1. Contact details**

Andrew Jackson  
17 St Marks Road  
Derby  
01332 361 189

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

Many local community groups, ASSET UK and the local police force

### **3. Aims and outcomes**

The project delivers services to the refugee and asylum seeking community in Derwent, and also works with other community residents. It aims to:

- help asylum seekers and refugees to get more involved in the community
- improve access to services and refer asylum seekers and refugees onto other opportunities in the area
- integrate with local residents through awareness raising and cross-cultural activities
- provide a voice and input into the project for both refugee and non-refugee groups
- promote the work of the project to agencies and groups across the city
- provide volunteering opportunities to residents (both refugees and non-refugees)

### **4. Background**

The project was started to help refugees coming into the area integrate with the local community.

### **5. Activities**

The project relates indirectly to employment support for refugees. The Community Development Worker assisted on the ASSET UK project: in addition to gaining an insight into the project's work he also developed knowledge of skills audit methodology and good practice in supporting refugees and asylum seekers into learning and employment opportunities. He also learned about their entitlements and available resources locally and wider. He is now in a position, and willing, to use this capacity to support some former ASSET UK beneficiaries who are in his area of work and other refugees and asylum seekers.

The project has worked in close collaboration and consultation with clients, local communities and agencies in the area. The Community Development Officer and others involved in the project have made practical contributions that showed the project in a positive light: not only for asylum seekers and refugees in the area, but

also for service providers. Services or activities that the project has been involved in include:

- Advice & information, drop in sessions
- Advocacy for Refugees/Asylum Seekers
- Training

## **6. Outcomes**

Other service providers have reported an increase in use of their services, along with the benefits of having a single point of reference in the Derwent area for all matters in the Refugee/Asylum Seeker field. The project has built a format for service to Refugees and has assisted in improving their acceptance. It is raising awareness of Refugee/Asylum Seekers and the issues surrounding them among the residents of Derwent.

# LEICESTER

## The Business 2 Business Leicester and Leicestershire Minority Ethnic Outreach Service

### 1. Contact details

Varsha Patel, Joint Managing Director  
Business 2 Business  
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St. Nicholas Circle  
Leicester  
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0116 2424075  
vpatel9898@aol.com

### 2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved

Business 2 Business provide many different projects onto which refugees can be referred, each project having a range of different partners. The Minority Ethnic Pilot Projects, for instance, are a Jobcentre Plus funded programme. Informal partnership agreements exist with many organisations, which may involve short-term collaboration on specific initiatives or longer term, more strategic collaboration. Community based job fairs have been particularly beneficial when held in conjunction with other projects such as the Refugee Employment Project and Refugee Action.

### 3. Background to project

Jobcentre Plus identified the need for specific projects to address the needs of people from minority ethnic communities and established the Minority Ethnic Outreach Pilots in 1999 to try to meet these needs. Business 2 Business was contracted to deliver the Leicester and Leicestershire Minority Ethnic Outreach Pilot. Engagement and delivery strategies were researched and developed in preparation for the contractual process. Partnerships were developed following a rigorous assessment of community needs involving extensive consultation with community leaders, tenants' associations and community forums. Awareness of the new provision was raised through significant marketing initiatives such as adverts on MATV, door to door leafleting and shop-based advertising. Leaflets were translated into many languages and bilingual advisers recruited.

### 4. Activities

All the provision is delivered from outreach centres embedded within minority ethnic communities. Support is provided through a series of interviews with advisers, all of whom are qualified to NVQ level 4 in guidance. Ongoing support from the same adviser is available if requested. At the initial interview an action plan is created; successive interviews are used to facilitate actions and make referrals. Job vacancies are held on a database and can be matched with the client's skills and experience. Participants are offered support to apply for these matched vacancies. Jobsearch and CV workshops are also available every Thursday, providing support for clients to apply for vacancies not held on the database. Community based job fairs and employer events are held regularly; this approach was pioneered at neighbourhood centres throughout Leicester and subsequently in Loughborough. In-work support is offered to participants as they find work.

If training needs are identified on the action plan referrals are made during subsequent interviews to a wide range of provision including vocational training, ESOL and IT training.

A range of organisations are invited to hold activities in the Business 2 Business outreach centres to facilitate in house referrals, thereby ensuring that clients are not asked to seek help in unfamiliar environments. An example of this is the Childcare Information Service, which offers surgery type provision. Business 2 Business also has strong links with local nurseries and playgroups. The latest development will be the opening of an in house Learndirect centre in August.

## **5. Outcomes**

More than 1500 individuals per year are assisted through the Business 2 Business provision. The immigration status of refugee participants is established in the first interview in order to tailor the provision to meet their needs. However, the number of refugee individuals assisted is not gathered centrally.

# **Leicester Adult Education College Learner Support**

## **1. Contact details**

Louise Armstrong (Learner Support Worker ESOL)  
Leicester Adult Education College  
Wellington Street  
Leicester  
LE1 6HL  
0116 233 4343

## **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

The Learner Support Worker has referred many people to ASSET-UK. She is linked to a variety of extents to almost all the organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers and regularly attends the monthly multi-agency forum.

## **3. Aims and objectives**

To provide advice and information for people on ESOL courses about educational, training and employment opportunities and progression; to provide support on settlement issues such as health, housing, child care, disability, racial equality.

## **4. Background to project**

The role of the Learner Support Worker evolved from the need to provide further support alongside ESOL classes, as the ESOL tutors were not able to deal with additional enquiries effectively in the class setting. A work-focused ESOL course was also established; however, the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum now has a major work element built into it so this is no longer needed. Instead the Support Worker has established a resource bank of authentic materials to supplement Skills for Life materials e.g. application forms for local jobs and voluntary work opportunities.

## **5. Activities**

Work is done through groups and on a 1-to-1 basis. Many refugees come to the ESOL courses. These are open to asylum seekers, permanent UK residents and EU citizens. Participants are told that if they want more employment information they should contact the Learner Support Worker. She holds a drop-in session once a week and longer appointments are available throughout the week. External speakers are invited to talk to learners about being employed in different fields, such as the NHS. Where possible, the Support Worker tries to arrange for refugees to come back and talk about their employment experience or asks them to write a paragraph, which is displayed with a photo to encourage others and provide a positive role model.

When someone comes to see the Learner Support Worker for advice related to employment, she can note this in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The ESOL tutor will then tailor learning activities around the needs of that individual, for instance to provide help with interview questions. The Learner Support Worker might also help with written applications, confidence building and phoning for feedback from job interviews. The biggest barrier to employment is usually English language skills.

Through the multi-agency forum the college lets people know enrolment dates throughout the year. Referral is also based on word of mouth and there is a brochure available. There are always more people wanting to do courses than places available. The challenge for the ESOL department is not attracting learners but maintaining attendance once courses have started. This has improved with the introduction of the Trinity ESOL exams, which are offered free to all learners. In addition, the Support Worker makes it easier for learners to attend regularly by providing support on settlement issues; she also helps motivate learners through the setting and achievement of external goals related to training and employment.

It can be challenging to support those who already have qualifications and experience: the difficulty is in providing the opportunity for them to find work in their own field. Again, a common barrier is the level of spoken and written English required to function in a skilled or professional context. Contrary to expectation, it may not be the specialised vocabulary that presents a problem, but rather the communicative aspects of a job e.g. an overseas trained doctor familiar with English textbooks may still have difficulty interacting effectively with patients and colleagues.

In the case of people who have gained only low literacy skills in their own country, it may take a long time for them to develop their English language skills. They need to be given at least enough time to reach a functional level of English before looking for employment.

## **6. Outcomes**

Many individuals have gone on to further training, courses or employment (paid or voluntary) at a level appropriate to their ability, not just a job for the sake of it.

Feedback from participants is obtained in various ways. The Learner Support Worker follows people up informally and keeps a record of this. She does this by letter, email and telephone. Follow-ups are important, as people sometimes need ongoing support and some re-contact her. Records are kept about what people go on to do and what employment they may get.

Some people start part-time courses while still attending ESOL. Currently 6 ESOL learners are doing childcare courses, using the college crèche for their placements. Several have undertaken a Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene. Interest in health care is strong, with learners registered on the NHS Support Worker Programme with various providers; the programme will be offered by the Adult Education College from January 2006, as well as an NHS Job Search Workshop in November 2005. There is also demand for a proposed course in Effective Communication for International Nurses. Other vocational courses run by the college are open to refugees with higher level English language skills: these include English for Office Skills, Reception Skills, Starting a Small Business and Business Administration.

Many refugees have enrolled on the college's Interpreting courses, which are externally accredited at two levels, and have subsequently found work with agencies such as the Ujala Centre (NHS).

## The Leicester Jobservice Partnership

### 1. Contact details

Marylin Turner, Team Manager  
Leicester City Council  
13 to 15 Belvoir Street  
Leicester  
LE1 6LS  
0116 2851700  
marylin.turner@leicester.gov.uk

### 2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved

Jobcentre Plus is involved as a member of the strategic steering group as well as at an operational level through a service level agreement. A wide variety of organisations are members of the steering group, such as Leicestershire LSC, the Chamber of Commerce, Community and NIACE.

### 3. Aims and objectives

The Jobservice Partnership aims to deliver an enhanced service which is client centred in helping people into jobs by engaging with employers to enhance recruitment, improving job retention by supporting managers and workers, thereby tackling deprivation and exclusion by targeting the areas of Leicester with the lowest rates of employment.

The challenge set for the JSP was to improve the employment rates within the most deprived wards of the city and in particular groups that have been identified as having significantly lower employment rates than average: e.g. people bringing up children on their own, people with disabilities or health conditions, people from ethnic minorities, people over 50 and people with low level or no qualifications. The Jobservice partnership aims to address the needs of 500 clients, of whom 200 should move into employment, 175 of these sustaining employment for 13 weeks or more.

### 4. Background to project

Although Leicester has a lower than average employment rate there are still wide disparities in employment and unemployment rates across the city. Some Leicester wards are known to be within the most deprived 10% in the UK. In order to tackle this, LERP agreed to assign funding to try to meet Neighbourhood Renewal Fund employment targets. A project specification was written and taken to the Leicester Partnership board where it was appraised and approved. Following this a steering group was established, a project implementation plan created and staff recruited. The roles of the staff recruited are:

Team manager – coordinate the activities and determine the direction of the project  
Personal advisers – to take individual client referrals, undertake client assessments and create action plans, facilitate actions and signpost appropriately according to needs until the client has reached a point of being job-ready

Employer engagement officer – to target major employers in the city proactively and persuade them to sign up to the job interview guarantee scheme

Team assistant – to act as the first point of contact for participants wishing to join the programme.

### 5. Activities

Help for each participant is initially provided through a series of one to one interviews with an assigned personal adviser. Personal advisers are based in a variety of community centre settings in assigned geographical areas. Initial assessment of each participant takes one hour plus, subsequent action planning and activity

arrangement interviews varying in length according to client needs. The total number of interviews for each client is determined by the time needed for them to become job-ready. The initial assessment records previous employment history, aspirations, expectations and qualifications. An action plan is created aimed at meeting employment objectives, after which activities are arranged in accordance with the action plan: e.g. occupational research, matching clients to existing vacancies within the job interview guarantee scheme and arranging vocational training. Financial support to meet other needs such as travel costs and childcare can be provided. Support for the participant transfers to the employment support unit when he/she secures employment, ensuring a seamless transition between the jobsearch support provided by the personal adviser and support in work.

## **8. Outcomes**

The Jobservice partnership has only recently begun and it is therefore too early to analyse results effectively.

## **Leicester Manna Resource Centre**

### **1. Contact details**

El Fatah Saeed (Advice Worker)  
Manna Resource Centre  
18a Halford Street,  
Leicester,  
LE1 1JB  
0116 262 8442

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

Community organisations representing different groups of people are involved in the project. A steering group also supports the development of the service. Social Services, Leicester City Council, Learning and Skills Council, the Red Cross, Refugee Action and another aid charity, JCP, all refer people to the centre for advice or to attend a course.

### **3. Aims and objectives**

To provide a practical service for asylum seekers and refugees to help them integrate and settle into Leicester through any support they require.

### **4. Background to project and activities**

The centre was established to provide a one-stop shop providing a wide range of services which all help to facilitate the integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Services provided include an advisory service, adult education (ICT, ESOL, Basic Skills), employment support, childcare, housing support, gymnasium and other cultural and recreational activities. The centre tries to integrate all of its services and to have staff with different language skills and from different backgrounds.

ESOL, Basic Skills and IT courses are run by the project, as levels of English will affect people's chances of employment. The centre has Internet access for refugees and beneficiaries with permission to work, which they can use to get information about available local jobs. Jobcentre Plus also sends on information about available jobs.

When a refugee finds a job they want to apply for, the project will help and support them by supplying information, giving assistance with application forms and helping them prepare for interview. Refugees and asylum seekers are also helped with immigration issues, the project being able to contact the Home Office on their behalf.

The centre helps students with education advice if they have been studying in their own country: help with English first and then in obtaining NVQs, CSEs and further education. The centre also provides information to students and helps them into further and higher education through their working partnership with Regent College.

The centre is located within the city centre and sees 30-55 refugees and asylum seekers a week. Many people seek assistance on successive occasions.

The project needs to be as successful as possible in terms of providing this service, however it is a challenging to meet the wide variety of needs from housing to employment.

Voluntary jobs are available within the centre: 2/3 rotating days, 3 people at a time, 3 hours a day. The volunteers gain experience in different departments.

The centre also has voluntary teachers working under supervision and 7 paid staff, employed on a part time or full time basis.

Funding is a major concern as funding is generally given for very specific purposes and is short lived.

## **5. Outcomes**

There is no other holistic community facility in the centre of Leicester giving easy access from all parts of the city.

All services are provided under one roof and serve as one stop shop to potential users

No one else provides such an in depth and all round service to this particular client group in such a central location

The project is compared continuously with others, and it is believed it provides a service with which people are satisfied.

So far the centre has over achieved in all its project and service provision. This demonstrates the urgent need for its service.

Beneficiaries are regularly asked to provide informal feedback on the wide range of advice that they receive.

*The main products and services offered include:*

- 1 Community Education
- 2 Employment Support
- 3 ICT centre & Internet Café
- 4 Child Care & Youth initiate
- 5 Immigration/Housing, Welfare Advice
- 6 Health and Fitness Studio
- 7 Cultural and Heritage Programmes

## Leicester East Primary Care Trust Overseas Healthcare Professionals Project

### 1. Contact details

Kulvinder Sidki (Leads the project, the only paid member of staff)  
East Leicester PCT  
Enkalon House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor,  
Leicester  
0781 0398 483 or 0116 295 1594  
Email: [kulvinder.fibki@elpct.nhs.uk](mailto:kulvinder.fibki@elpct.nhs.uk)

### 2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved

With all of the organisations the relationship is a two-way network, as referrals happen in both directions. The contacts also help to disseminate information about the project and increase awareness of the issues. They have links with the refugee forum, advice worker forums and employment and advice agencies.

Within the NHS the project works with the University Hospital of Leicester, particular trusts in the area and all of the local PCTs. It works with representatives from these organisations to develop the project.

### 3. Aims and objectives

The project aims to help all refugees who previously worked in the health care sector in their country of origin to find employment in the UK health sector. This is achieved through helping refugees have their qualifications transferred into the British equivalent qualification, helping improve participants' English language skills and helping them find appropriate courses or placements to qualify for work within the UK health care sector.

### 4. Background to project

It was difficult to get the NHS to recognise that its skills shortages could be partly helped by the refugees in this country. Then an opportunity arose: in the local area two GPs were retiring, which led to a shortage of GPs in the area. As a result local people campaigned about the loss of their GPs (as they had to go elsewhere), particularly as there were doctors in the area who had qualified abroad and were not able to practise in the UK. This brought the issue to the attention of the NHS. The focus was very much how refugees could help with the shortage of skills in some NHS areas.

Meanwhile there was a project, the Overseas Qualification Development Project, where the project leader originally worked. This project provided the worker with the skills to help with the bid for this project and to carry out the work.

It took a long time to get funding, which was awarded for a 12-month pilot. Originally the funding was to be long-term mainstream WDC funding.

The project covers the Leicester area, but is also region wide as it is funded by the WDC.

### 5. Activities

Resources: the project received £15,000 from the WDC for 12 months. This money is used to help participants pay for English courses and professional membership, and to ease financial hardship that participants might be experiencing while waiting to have their qualifications accepted and when looking for employment within the health care sector. The biggest challenge is finding long term funding. The project has been looking for alternative sources of funding since December 2004. The project has made its own publicity and flyers; word of mouth and going out to meet people and

organisations has been important. Staffing has been difficult: the project has a paid project worker who would have benefited from an admin assistant to free up some of his time.

The project is located in the city centre. The project worker and some helpers have also spent some time going out to community centres where they think they might reach refugees who would benefit from the project.

At the beginning a lot of work went on within the local NHS to increase awareness of refugees / asylum seekers and the role of the project. Now staff are more aware of the project and its aims and achievements. Staff are also more willing to participate in the project.

## **6. Outcomes**

80 refugees are registered on the project. It can also help people who come to the country and have problems with their health care qualifications being recognised, such as partners and legal immigrants.

- One doctor from Iraq now works in Leicester A&E – he is the project's biggest achievement. It took a lot of support to ensure he had the right qualifications and experience; money was spent on ensuring he had professional membership and a clinical attachment in a local hospital was arranged.
- 12 refugees have gone into employment in health care.
- 25 other refugees are on courses to help them achieve their employment goals.
- Others are still doing voluntary work and preparing their CVs.

Participants have not been asked via a survey about the project. Organisations working closely with the project and participants have started writing letters of support for the continuation of the project.

## **The Leicester Refugee Employment Project**

### **1. Contact details**

Asif Khan  
Refugee Employment Officer  
Leicester City Council  
c/o RASAP  
3rd Floor Epic House  
Lower Hill Street  
Leicester  
LE1 3SH  
0116 2628380  
khan001@leicester.gov.uk

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

The REP was a joint Jobcentre Plus/Leicester City Council partnership Public Sector Agreement project, directly managed through the Leicester City Council Regeneration and Culture Department and the Economic Development Team. The project worked closely with voluntary and community organisations, employers, colleges and training providers.

### **3. Aims and objectives**

The Refugee Employment Project aimed to utilise the skills and experiences of refugees residing in Leicester by helping them find appropriate employment to benefit

themselves and the local economy. The target for the project was to assist 180 refugees into employment lasting more than 13 weeks by March 2005.

Participants in the REP were referred from ASSET-UK, RASAP, The Manna Resource Centre, Jobcentre Plus, Refugee Housing, The City Council Refugees and Asylum Seekers Unit and the OQDP. However, the majority of participants in the last year of the project were self-referrals and referrals from family and friends who knew of the project.

#### **4. Background to project**

The rationale for the project arose following the MEL Research and Service Development Report 2002; this in turn followed research commissioned by Leicester City Council, which provided a social and economic baseline of Leicester's refugee and asylum seeker community. This showed that refugee groups had disproportionately high levels of unemployment and were often employed below their levels of expertise. Leicester City Council developed the Public Service Agreement target in agreement with the Department of Work and Pensions. An advisory group of key stakeholders was established, the core operational group set up and staff recruited.

#### **5. Activities**

The project provided sustained personal adviser support from a Project Officer through a series of interviews over a long-term period. Vacancy application support and interview preparation was provided, CVs created and mentoring relationships established. The project ensured that strong referral mechanisms were put in place with key organisations with strong contacts with the refugee and asylum seeker community. Being based in RASAP greatly assisted in this as RASAP was already providing significant support to the refugee community through its welfare and housing support provision. ASSET-UK was also in a helpful position to make referrals of people as they gained refugee status after benefiting from work orientation activities whilst on the ASSET-UK programme. The combination of welfare and housing support available through RASAP and the assistance from the Highfields Jobcentre in identifying job vacancies and arranging NI numbers and employment application support from REP ensured a holistic approach which overcame many barriers faced by the REP participants. The project was very effectively marketed in the form of a quarterly newsletter for participants and refugee support organisations.

Following a referral participants were offered interviews with the Refugee Employment Officer, who recorded skills and experiences, created CVs, explored aspirations and provided application support. An 'Introduction to the labour market' course was provided, covering employment rights, the minimum wage, CV preparation and interview techniques. Additionally commissioned training was offered when appropriate, such as an ILM plastering course for 5 participants, one of whom is now working as a professional painter. Forklift truck licence training was provided for 10 participants. Referrals were also made to help participants access other adult and further education opportunities. Financial support was made available to people wishing to begin their own businesses. Grants of approximately £1000 were made for a pizza takeaway to help purchase dough mixers and pizza pans, to a restaurant for kitchen appliances and kitchen renovation, to a cleaning company for hoovers, steamers and other specialised cleaning appliances and to a garage for a ramp and tools. 13-week employment placements were arranged with community organisations to provide initial paid work experience for participants on the project. These included: 20 administration placements at the Manna Resource Centre, One administration placement with the West Indian Senior Citizens project and 3 administration placements at RASAP.

The total number of clients registered was 362, plus a further 40 people without HO status documents who were given assistance in anticipation of their documentation arriving.

## **6. Outcomes**

The total number of participants finding work was 232, of whom 210 were still in employment 13 weeks after starting work. Participants found work in: factories 58%, skilled trades 23%, office based occupations 8%, professional appointments 9% and self-employed 2%.

15% of participants were female and 85% were male. The countries of origin of participants were: Afghanistan 6.5%, Iran 5%, Iraq 40%, Zimbabwe 16.4%, Somalia 9% and others 4.6%.

The project therefore met and exceeded its PSA target and met its aim. The project's success was highlighted in the DWP Refugee Employment Strategy 'Working to Rebuild Lives' 2005, which described the project and its strong links with Jobcentre Plus. Regrettably the project finished in June 2005.

## **The Work in Progress Refugee Outreach Project**

### **1. Contact details**

Lynn Higgins  
Refugee Outreach Worker  
Work in Progress  
94 New Walk  
Leicester  
LE1 7EA  
0116 2553331 Email: [suesmithwip@advanceuk.org](mailto:suesmithwip@advanceuk.org)

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

No other formal partners are involved; however, strong links have been made with other providers of support for the refugee and asylum seeker communities

### **3. Aims and objectives**

The aim of the project is to forge links in the community, enabling us to locate refugees in Leicester and Leicestershire who wish to find employment and to integrate them into existing employment programmes. The project will not focus exclusively on employment but will also integrate refugees into training, housing and support community activities and social care programmes.

### **4. Background to project**

Mental and physical health difficulties severely hinder significant numbers of refugees seeking employment and compound the challenging circumstances already faced by refugees.

One full time Refugee Outreach Worker, a part-time Refugee Outreach Worker and a part-time Administrative Assistant were recruited or assigned to the project. The initial steps involved visiting other projects to publicise the new provision, making links and designing leaflets and posters. Support was then delivered to participants through a series of interviews with the refugee outreach workers, comprising an initial welcome interview and subsequent interviews. Referrals were made to other provision and activities as identified to be of benefit in the action plan.

## **5. Activities**

Interpretation and translation support was provided by 3 part time interpreters. Interviews with the full time Refugee Outreach Worker were arranged around the availability of participants, with the possibility of extra interviews being arranged on booking of an appointment over the phone. Interviews took place during normal office hours at the Work in Progress Offices on New Walk, which is situated close to the city centre. As well as the ongoing interview support from the Refugee Outreach Worker participants were encouraged to take up development activities. Five participants gained Basic Food Hygiene Certificates, 3 enrolled at a local gym and one applied for and gained a place at university. On Wednesdays, to coincide with the publication of the Leicester Mercury Jobsday supplement, a drop in IT room facility was available where clients were allowed to email and telephone friends and relatives as well as receive help with application forms and tailoring CVs.

## **6. Outcomes**

Over 100 people met with the Refugee Outreach Worker: 33 of these received ongoing support, 28 of whom were male and 5 female. Thirty of the 33 clients were claiming Jobseekers Allowance and 3 were receiving Income Support. Of these 33, 17 undertook employment or training activities, with one finding full time work, 4 finding part time work, one starting higher education, 3 undertaking Basic Food Hygiene courses, 2 undertaking voluntary work and three joining an NHS recruitment scheme.

## **The NIACE ASSET-UK Project**

### **1. Contact details**

Robert Gray, Senior Project Officer  
NIACE  
21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester LE1 7GE  
0116 2042780  
[robert.gray@niace.org.uk](mailto:robert.gray@niace.org.uk)

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

The project was also part of the ASSET-UK Equal developmental partnership including other projects, which aimed to support the employment and education aspirations of asylum seekers. There were no formal partners within the East Midlands. However, the project worked closely with many organisations within the East Midlands: for example the NASS accommodation providers such as Refugee Housing, local authorities, social services, local FE and HE providers, employer representative bodies, voluntary sector groups and faith groups.

### **3. Aims and objectives**

ASSET-UK audited the skills, qualifications and experiences of asylum seekers to try to arrange packages of volunteering, learning and work orientation opportunities in order to facilitate the vocational re-orientation and social integration of participants.

### **4. Background to project**

NIACE surveyed the skills and qualifications of asylum seekers in Leicester in 2001 and established that a very wide diversity of skills were possessed by asylum seekers, these skills often being at a high level. The survey also established that many asylum seekers wished actively to pursue education and training whilst awaiting their asylum claim outcome. The NIACE ASSET-UK project was established in 2002 to try to assist asylum seekers to participate in learning, volunteering and work orientation activities following an individual skills audit to identify their needs.

Following the establishment of the ESF Equal ASSET-UK Developmental Partnership of which the ASSET-UK project was a part a major consultation exercise was undertaken with key stakeholders from across the East Midlands region. Project Officers were then assigned to specific locations in the East Midlands; each established steering groups in their assigned areas and developed the documentation and systems needed to begin working with participants. Project Officers began to make extensive links within the local communities to secure referrals and access learning and work orientation activities for participants.

## **5. Activities**

Interviews with participants took place in a variety of settings including fixed office premises in Derby and Leicester and outreach centres in Nottingham, Lincoln and Northampton. The interviews with participants were held during normal office hours; however, subsequent activities arranged by the project for participants took place at a variety of times and in a huge variety of settings including colleges, universities, voluntary and community sector premises, workplaces etc. A full skills audit was undertaken for each participant, followed by the provision of IAG. Although some participants completed their programme at this stage the majority of participants continued receiving support to identify appropriate learning, volunteering and work orientation activities. Significant financial assistance was provided to overcome the financial barriers to participation in the activities. A wide range of learning activities were undertaken, such as NVQ Beauty Therapy and A+ Computer Maintenance. Volunteering activities were also very diverse: these included volunteering at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, VAL or Environ. Work orientation placements were difficult to establish but were often very valuable in providing vocational re-orientation opportunities, such as work shadowing in the NIACE finance department.

The difficult circumstances of the asylum seeker participants caused significant numbers to miss appointments and a smaller proportion to fall away from the programme. Being re-housed, fluctuating financial support and health difficulties were major causes of participants being unable to continue on the project.

## **6. Outcomes**

The project undertook skills audits with 592 participants and was able to arrange learning, work orientation or volunteering placements for 488 of these participants, many undertaking more than one placement. The help received during ASSET-UK proved very valuable in re-orientating the vocational skills of the participants and helping them plan their careers on gaining refugee status.

A practitioner's manual is about to be published by NIACE to disseminate the methodology used. NIACE has now developed and is currently delivering the Upskill project for refugees and migrants, which evolved from the work undertaken in ASSET-UK. NIACE has also been able to provide advice to organisations wishing to develop similar provision and has already provided a training programme for staff from Refugee Housing in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. A project and policy report is also about to be published.

## **The NIACE Upskill Project**

### **1. Contact details**

Robert Gray, Senior Project Officer  
NIACE  
21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester

LE1 7GE  
0116 2042780  
robert.gray@niace.org.uk

## **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

Leicester College  
Derby College

## **3. Aims and objectives**

The NIACE Upskill project aims to assist 100 refugees and migrants in the East Midlands to overcome barriers associated with accessing employment commensurate with their skills and experience in four occupational areas: accountancy, construction, health & social care and business administration.

## **4. Background to project**

NIACE became aware of the need for vocational re-orientation programmes during its work on the ASSET-UK project, which was able to undertake some preliminary re-orientation work with asylum seekers but fell short of the intensive and long term occupationally specific support needed to secure appropriate employment outcomes for people with significant prior skills and experience.

## **5. Activities**

The Upskill project provides assistance for refugees and migrants with previous experience in accountancy, business administration, construction and health and social care. It achieves this by providing skills auditing, IAG and career planning for each participant, followed by a menu of re-orientation activities from which participants can choose those that best meet their needs. Each participant is supported throughout the programme, which may last up to 18 months per participant, by an occupationally specific personal adviser. A typical programme of activities may be:

- Assessing a participant's occupational ESOL level, practical skills and experience
- Occupational ESOL provision
- Vocational course provision
- Occupational re-orientation and awareness building by introducing participants to employers and through the arrangement of work experience placements
- Application assistance and interview preparation to help secure appropriate paid employment

The intention is that this approach to vocational re-orientation for refugees and migrants will be extended to other occupational fields and delivered in a greater number of East Midlands locations by the end of the project in 2007, with the hope that it may be extended nationally in the future.

## **6. Outcomes**

As the Upskill project has been in operation for only two months it is too early to report outcomes. However, early indications are of great enthusiasm from employers and significant demand from participants.

# LINCOLN

## Lincoln Welcome

### 1. Contact details

Imogen Arnold  
5 North Parade  
Lincoln LN1 1LB  
01522 851 467

### 2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved

The project refers people to the local NOMAD project, a homeless charity. It also works closely with the RAINER project

### 3. Aims and Background to project

This is a small voluntary group set up by the Anglican Church in Lincoln and some other faith organisations in the area. These met once a month with asylum seekers and refugees: everyone shared a meal and it offered a social opportunity for people to meet others in the same situation. This event then became a weekly drop in session, which still takes place. The organisation provides support where needed, from accommodation to training opportunities. In relation to employment and training most of this work is in referring refugees on to the right organisations, but the project will also help with job information, applications and translating when required. Refugees who specifically need a training and employment project will be signposted to Connexions.

The organisation also provides membership of the local YMCA and a charity shop set up through the help of the local Co-op. The project was originally aimed at asylum seekers, but since they have stopped arriving in the area the project now concentrates on refugees. The employment opportunities in the area for refugees who cannot speak English are not good.

## Lincoln Project Rainer Advice Centre

### 1. Contact details

Rainer Advice Centre  
Lincoln. Lincolnshire  
01522 529 014

### 2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved

The centre signposts people to other agencies in the Lincoln area. It operates in a similar way to Connexions, but offers a wider range of advice beyond education, training and employment.

### 3. Aims, background and activities

The project offers accommodation for 16-25 year olds. It can also offer advice and assistance to people of any age.

In relation to employment project workers will go with refugees (and other people) to the Job centre, help them to register on ESOL courses, help them with interview skills and help them complete applications. If inquirers have employment queries the staff will try their best to provide information or signpost them to other local charities or advice places.

# NOTTINGHAM

## Nottingham Refugee Forum

### 1. Contact details

Clive Woonton (Employment, training and education co-ordinator)  
Nottingham Refugee Forum  
118 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, new address + contact number needed  
0115 959 8842, 0783 445 9076  
refugeeforum@tiscali.co.uk

### 2. Details of partner organisations

The forum works closely with:

- The City Council
- Work Directions, a project for long term UE. Refugees can be referred to the project if it is in their best interest. The project also runs an ESOL programme.
- Housing providers, which provide asylum seekers with accommodation. This relationship can be challenging, as sometimes the forum's objectives conflict with those of the housing agency, as when the project needs to ask a housing provider for help on something while at the same time wanting to complain about an individual case.
- Local colleges, which provide ESOL provision for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Jobcentre Plus, to which refugees are referred as JCP lacks the necessary expertise.
- A number of other projects, such as New Deals for Communities and New Deal projects.

### 3. Aims and objectives

The forum aims to:

- Target employment, training placements and courses
- Have more joined up working between organisations in order to offer progression routes into employment and training.

There are a number of local organisations that offer a large number of jobs to refugees, which results in them not improving their English. The project tries to focus on getting refugees onto proper English courses so that they can find long-term jobs that meet their previous experience. The aim is to get participants into a good job and out of the cycle of low-paid short-term work. The project is looking at basic skills and particular occupations (e.g. health and safety and the driving theory course, together with help to obtain a driving licence if needed).

### 4. Background to project

3 years ago a number of committed local people, some refugees themselves, saw the increasing need for support for refugees; prior to this there was not much dispersal to the Nottingham area. The group lacked resources but offered help where they could. They received funding for a centre. The problem was that the forum was reacting to situations after they had arisen. It is hoped that in future the project can be more proactive by helping asylum seekers and refugees think about their future and the steps they need to take if they are going to stay in the UK.

Neighbourhood Renewal funds the project: this is a two-year contract to place advisers in local community based organisations to try to reach the target groups. There are 4 co-ordinators to cover the groups: refugees, the homeless, ex-offenders and people experiencing addiction problems.

JCP and the City Council are the main organisations involved in the forum. The forum has targets for reaching particular groups. Support is provided to help people into education, training and employment. The forum also provides advice to JCP workers about how to work with refugees. The aim is to break down barriers to employment and to identify gaps in provision and where more resources are needed.

## **5. Activities**

The activities undertaken depend on individuals' needs. The work includes obtaining the UK equivalence of prior qualifications through the Connexions service's access to the NARIC database. How to convert people's experience into job opportunities in the UK is a major challenge and aim. Similarly to ASSET UK, the project aims to find work placements, help clients compile CVs, provide references where needed, help with interview preparation and go through the process. Funding for clothes is provided where possible. There are 12 week long courses that people can participate in, which offer experience in administration, retail or catering.

The forum would like the employment work to continue once the training and education co-ordinator post finishes. This would be done through setting up a job club to ensure there are enough IT and other resources available for people to come in and use. This would include examples of CVs, applications to try out and Internet access for jobs. Connexions is helping increase the available resources and the forum would hope to set up a database of organisations to contact for jobs. It is hoped that the ESOL course and other courses that have been set up will continue.

## **6. Outcomes**

The project has targets for numbers of participants to be helped into employment and training and the number of people generally using the project; it has a project database and the information goes to the centre. (All 4 co-ordinators keep records.) It is working well in the sense that individuals are motivated. The people at the forum have the capacity to listen and reflect, and to help people think logically about the way forward. It provides space for refugees to think, see alternatives and plan for the future. It also gives refugees a sense of somewhere to go if they need help. Informal feedback is obtained from the participants.

The project is increasing awareness of, among other issues, refugees' circumstances. There has been an increase in awareness of where the organisation can refer refugees to and what resources are available for them. The main challenge is finding enough money and resources.

## **Nottingham Arena Learning Centre**

### **1. Contact Details**

Richard Coe  
31-36 Avenue C,  
Sneinton Developments,  
Sneinton,  
Nottingham,  
NG1 1DT  
0115 950 7365  
E-Mail: richard\_coe@btconnect.com

## **2. Aims and activities**

The Arena Learning Centre is a Learndirect centre that focuses on delivering Skills For Life courses to people who are looking to improve their language skills or numeric skills. Many people attending the centre may improve their skills in order to find employment, to be able to integrate into society or to move on to further training.

The Learndirect centre opened in January 2004 and in this time has worked with a large number of students, all of whom arrived at the centre speaking varied levels of English.

Throughout 2005, the centre has provided a number of OCR National Tests in Adult Literacy and Numeracy. The tests available are at Levels 1 and 2. A level 2 qualification is regarded as the equivalent level as a GCSE.

The centre focuses on providing ESOL (English For Speakers of Other Languages). Those attending the courses comprise 75% asylum seekers, 15% refugees and 10% others (including British and European).

There are currently over 200 people registered with the learning centre. All courses are flexible and are designed to allow people to study whenever they have free time. All courses are free to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and British and European (those who have lived in the EU for 3 years).

Referrals are taking place by word of mouth, through leaflets and posters at refugee action groups and other organisations including Capital Accommodation, BEGIN, Job Centre Plus, Social Services and Connexions.

No appointments are necessary and people are free to visit the centre at any time to speak with an advisor, look around the learning centre or talk to any other students at the learning centre. There are free refreshments on site and students are able to use the kitchen facilities at any time.

## **Nottingham Rebuild**

### **1. Contact details**

Jerry Thomas (Rebuild Co-ordinator)  
164 Alfreton Road  
Nottingham  
NG7 3NS  
0115 924 4187 or 079 517 90218  
[jerryatlast@hotmail.com](mailto:jerryatlast@hotmail.com) or [ldxjct@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ldxjct@nottingham.ac.uk)

### **2. Details of partner organisations and agencies involved**

The key to mentoring is to be able to signpost people to the right contacts: this means the project knows a lot of community groups and organisations in the local Nottingham area. Contacts include:

Co-operative Community Action  
Capital Accommodation  
Nottingham Refugee Forum  
Multi-agency Forum  
Nottingham City Council

### **3. Aims and objectives**

The overall aim is to help refugees and new arrivals integrate into the community as smoothly as possible. The project is about developing self-awareness and self-esteem. Drawing support from the community is essential. The key is to train volunteers from the community as mentors. This makes sure that there are mentors from a wide range of countries that share the same language and culture as the people being mentored. This is important as it provides positive role models and helps to provide advice and information and to build confidence.

### **4. Background to project**

The organisation has always done mentoring work. Originally it focused on the black community, as traditionally they were not doing as well in education and employment as other groups. There are similar organisations around the UK. 2 years ago the project 'Build' started the project 'Rebuild' which was to focus on refugees and new arrivals.

Funding for Rebuild was received from the Diana Memorial Fund; this continues until next year. Attempts are currently being made to expand the project and ensure funding continues. An aim is to extend the project across the East Midlands, as it has been observed that sometimes families are spread throughout the region and some families that are part of the programme are shifted to other areas, which makes it difficult to continue helping them. If the project covered the local area it would be possible to continue to help them.

The project has 3 paid workers and 14 volunteers working on Rebuild.

### **7. Activities**

The project runs 10 week long training courses on personal development. 14 people are currently doing a mentoring course, 8 of whom have signed for 2 short courses. The group at the moment are very keen and keep coming back. The project also runs other more general courses that are attended by mentors and mentees, such as ESOL and Basic Skills.

Publicity is by outreach and networking by staff and trained volunteers: flyers, events and going to communities where it is known there will be refugees.

### **8. Outcomes**

Mentoring relationships are used as a way of judging success. Participants have feedback sessions. They monitor the quality and length of relationships (although these may break up because the mentor is a good one and the person no longer requires help, or there is not a good relationship and the person isn't receiving the help they need). Participants provide feedback that is built into the mentoring process. Questionnaires are sent from time to time.

The worker has designed 2 ESOL mentoring courses. One relates to filling out everyday forms needed to live in the UK, including applications. The other is a conversational course in local slang and in relation to living in Nottingham.

The challenges are: training, securing financial support and achieving recognition of the value of the project by others at a higher strategic level.

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