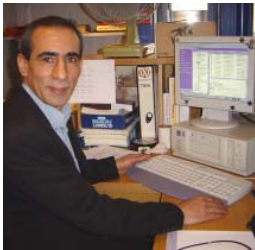


NIACE Research and Development



Key Findings



Photos © NIACE

The NIACE Equal ASSET-UK project

Abstract

The NIACE ASSET-UK project developed a skills audit methodology for use with asylum seekers and refugees which could be used as a basis for developing individually tailored skills development programmes, that included learning, volunteering and work shadowing and orientation. The project tested skills audit approaches and approaches to the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) for refugees and asylum seekers. A thorough skills audit was found to crucially underpin and inform the IAG process. Following the provision of IAG, facilitation of entry to appropriate learning opportunities, volunteering and work experience placements based on the overseas acquired skills and experience of individuals was found to be an effective means of overcoming barriers to social and vocational integration.

Research methodology:

Skills Audit Project Officers based in Derby, Leicester, Nottingham and Lincoln and Northampton provided skills audits and IAG to approximately 600 refugees and asylum seekers through a series of individual interviews followed by further sustained support to facilitate the arrangement of learning, volunteering and work experience placements. Sustained contact was maintained with participants for the full period of the project enabling tracking and evaluation through review interviews and postal questionnaires to take place. Further evaluation with placement providers and other stakeholders also took place. The results of the 592 individual skills audits were analysed and the impact of locality and different approaches by Project Officers assessed.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ The range and levels of skills possessed by asylum seekers dispersed to the East Midlands were very significant. Only 8% of participants had no formal education, 7% had qualifications at level 1, 32% had qualifications at level 2, 25% had qualifications at level 3 and 29% had qualifications at level 4 or above.
- ❖ Through the skills audit process, asylum seekers and refugees gain a more detailed insight into their own potential and were provided with the opportunities to acquire new skills and develop new ideas and objectives. The undertaking of a skills audit also contributed to raising individuals self esteem and building confidence.
- ❖ The skills audit crucially underpins subsequent IAG which can as a result be carried out in an informed manner.

- ❖ This one to one approach to skills auditing can effectively address a participant's individual concerns, greatly enhancing the possibilities of overcoming barriers to social and vocational integration.
- ❖ Contributions to the success of the project were also provided by the nature of the IAG specialist Project Officer staff with experience of working with disadvantaged groups, effective local interagency partnerships and strong links with national networks.

Recommendations

- ❖ The skills audit methodology piloted in the NIACE Equal ASSET-UK project should be mainstreamed and provided in all dispersal areas. The approach could be used at reception centres and within mainstream organisations such as Jobcentreplus and Further Education colleges.
- ❖ The government should reconsider the withdrawal of the concession to seek employment as this greatly reduces the ability of asylum seekers to interface with and adapt to the UK labour market in preparation for the possibility of receiving a positive decision to the asylum claim.
- ❖ A national system and regional centres should be established to assess and validate skills, experience and qualifications gained overseas and discussions should be held with professional bodies to identify the possible progress that could be made towards establishing clearer and more viable routes to professional accreditation and skills re-orientation for professionals of overseas origin.
- ❖ Greater information should be available to and about asylum seekers and refugees to inform individuals employers, education providers, voluntary organisations, statutory bodies and the media.
- ❖ Regional Development agencies should include consideration of the skills and training needs of asylum seekers and refugees in their skills development strategies.
- ❖ Education and training providers should enhance the relevance and accessibility of provision that is made available for refugees and asylum seekers.
- ❖ Both FE and HE providers should review the financial barriers to education and training.
- ❖ Jobcentreplus should implement policies and develop expertise designed to enable refugees to gain access to suitable employment commensurate with their skills.

Output

- ❖ Waddington, S. (2005) *Valuing Skills and Supporting Integration*. NIACE: Leicester
- ❖ Aldridge, F., Gray, R., McLoughlin, A., Sterland, L., Waddington, S. and Webb, M. (2005) *Skills Audits for Asylum Seekers and Refugees – A Practitioner's Manual*. NIACE: Leicester.

Funder: European Social Fund under the Equal Community Initiative programme and the National Learning and Skills Council. Locally derived funding was also received from Leics, Notts, Derbys, Lincs and Rutland LSCs, the Refugee Housing Association and the East Midlands Development Agency

Duration: November 2001 – May 2005

Project Manager: Sue Waddington

Email: sue.waddington@niace.org.uk

Requests for 'Key Findings' in other formats, such as large print, are welcome. We would be pleased to consider your request.



21 De Montfort Street
Leicester LE1 7GE

Tel: +44 (0)116 204 4200/1
Fax: +44 (0)116 2854514
Website: www.niace.org.uk

A company limited by guarantee.
Registered no. 2603322
Registered Charity no. 1002775