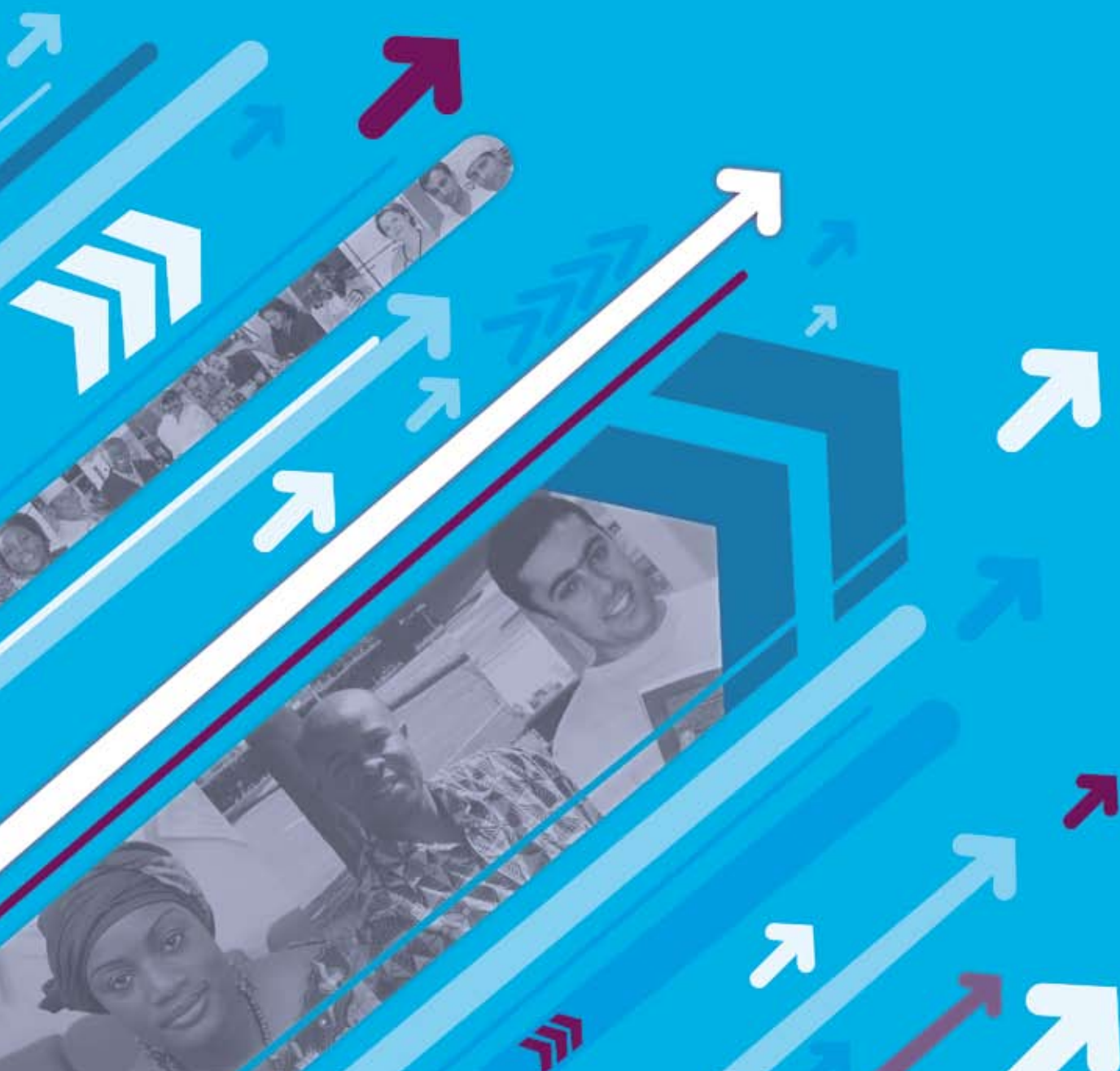


routes to integration and inclusion

new approaches to enable refugee and migrant
workers to progress in the labour market

Sue Waddington





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“With thanks to the members of the PGB partnership, MEET and our funders”

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- Working Links
- Advice For Life
- The North East Strategic Migration Partnership
- Your Homes Newcastle
- The North of England Refugee Service
- learndirect Careers Advice
- ConstructionSkills
- Refugees Into Jobs

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Executive summary

The Progress GB Development Partnership consists of eleven organisations, led by NIACE, and based in seven regions of England, who worked together between 2004 and 2007 to pilot new approaches to improve lifelong learning and employment opportunities, and enhance the careers and integration of refugees and migrants in the UK labour market and the wider society.

While migration to the UK has increased in the beginning of the twenty-first century, the majority of refugees in the UK are unemployed and a significant number of economic migrants occupy low-paid, insecure employment.

Refugees and migrants experience a range of barriers to progress in the labour market.

These include:

- Lack of UK work experience, references, qualifications and appropriate English language skills
- Lack of appropriate learning opportunities and information, advice and guidance services
- Negative perceptions and the failure of mainstream services to meet the needs of new and emerging communities.

The Progress GB partners worked with nearly 7000 refugees and migrants and recorded detailed information about over 700 of these. The partnership also benefited by learning from the work being carried out with refugees and migrants by Development Partnerships in Austria, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

Chapter 2 of the report describes the new approaches, learning programmes and IAG services developed by PGB. These included the piloting of skills recognition and vocational adaptation pathways; new information services including the introduction of national advice lines in three different languages; and regional and local partnerships that provided advice services in parts of the country which were experiencing new patterns of inward migration.

Chapter 3 identifies the successful factors and the lessons learned by the partners, which should be borne in mind by policy makers and practitioners who are considering how the integration and employability of refugees and migrants can be advanced.

The pre-requirements of establishing successful learning programmes and IAG services include researching the needs, forming partnerships and networks, adopting recruitment strategies that build trust and confidence, and identifying sufficient financial support.

To overcome the barriers to progress faced by refugees and migrants in the labour market, the partners found it necessary to recognise the existing skills and qualifications of the participants, design integrated pathways of learning and support, adopt learner-centred approaches that enabled participants to meet basic needs, and provide work experience, mentoring and job coaching as part of a comprehensive package.

Information, advice and guidance services need expert staff to address the complex needs of and legislation relating to refugees and migrants. Employers and mainstream services also benefit from access to expert advice and exposure to positive images to enable them to contribute to overcoming the barriers.

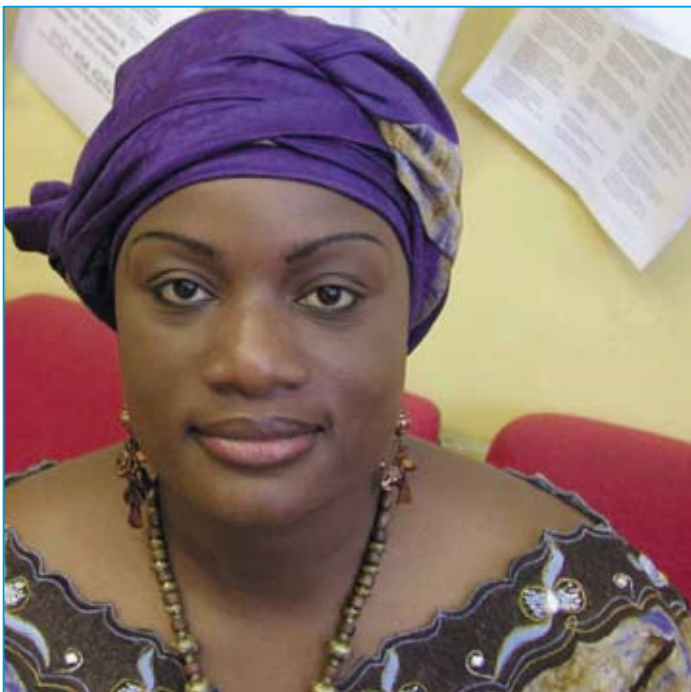
Chapter 4 states that the consequence of the barriers to progress in the labour market experienced by refugees and some migrant communities is that the UK is failing to fully benefit from their talents; and while these groups fail to make their way in the labour market, they are less likely to fully integrate into the wider UK society.

The chapter provides ten recommendations for change, based upon the lessons learned by PGB, including proposals covering information for new arrivals; researching needs; recognising skills and qualifications; delivering integrated learning packages; providing work experience; forming and sustaining regional and local partnerships; building specialised services and capacity in mainstream and voluntary organisations; better protection at work; supporting employers; and campaigning around positive images of refugees and migrants.

Finally the report commends the successful new approaches to learning and information advice and guidance developed by the PGB partners and recommends that these approaches be mainstreamed in order to provide routes to integration and inclusion for refugees and migrants.

chapter 1

The partnership and the background





Introduction

In 2004, NIACE, having already developed and piloted a successful model of skills auditing and work orientation for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK¹, established a national partnership to address the barriers to progress in the labour market faced by refugee and migrant workers. The aim was to test new approaches and to form new transnational, national and regional partnerships, which would develop lifelong learning and information, advice and guidance methodologies.

The work, which was part funded by ESF/EQUAL, began at a time in the UK when refugee unemployment was high and estimated to be more than ten times the national average and under-employment the norm; economic migration from the new Member States (the A8) was increasing; the UK was experiencing increasing levels of demand for high- and low-skilled labour; and several areas in England were beginning to experience a significant growth of new inward migration.

At the end of 2007, the national partnership, entitled Progress GB, is coming to a conclusion, having provided support to almost 7000 refugees and migrants, and having recorded in detail the progress made by over 700 beneficiaries, of whom 57% were refugees and 43% were migrants.

This report aims to identify the main lessons learned in order to enable both policy makers and practitioners to have a greater understanding of the systems and methods needed to enable refugees and migrants to successfully integrate into and make progress in the UK labour market and to overcome problems of social and economic exclusion.

While this report will provide an overview of the methods, outcomes and recommendations from the Progress GB partnership, further more detailed reports are available setting out the work of some of the partners².

The barriers to progress in the UK labour market

At the beginning of the work of the partnership, the following barriers to refugees and migrants securing appropriate employment were identified: -

- Lack of UK work experience, references and qualifications
- Non-recognition of qualifications, skills and experience gained overseas
- Poor English language skills, particularly in relation to vocational language
- Shortage of appropriate vocational ESOL, work-based training and adaptation courses
- Effects of a disrupted education leading to low attainment or a lack of post-school education and training in the countries of origin of some refugees and migrants
- Lack of awareness and provision of effective, relevant and accessible IAG services

As the work progressed these barriers were evidenced by the experiences and skills of the refugee and migrant participants. For example, it was discovered that 87% of Progress GB beneficiaries lacked the necessary English language skills to gain work or improve their employment status. Even those with higher-level English language skills needed to learn the specialist vocabulary required to pursue employment in specific sectors.

¹ Waddington, S. (2005) *Valuing Skills and Supporting Integration: A policy report on the lessons learned by auditing and developing the skills of asylum seekers as the basis for social and vocational integration*, Leicester: NIACE, and Aldridge, F. et al (2005) *Skills Audits for Asylum Seekers and Refugees: A Practitioners' Manual*, Leicester: NIACE.

² A list of Progress GB reports can be found in Appendix 1.



In addition further barriers were identified. These included: -

- Lack of appropriate services and infrastructure in some geographical areas to meet the basic needs of refugees and some migrants to enable them to take the appropriate steps to gain employment.
- Inadequate provision of local services in meeting the needs of newly emerging communities seeking employment advice.
- Lack of understanding of some migrant groups of employment rights and responsibilities and the culture of the UK work place.
- Negative attitudes by the host community and media surrounding refugees and migrants, which impacted upon employers' attitudes.
- Exploitation of some migrant workers by unscrupulous employers and employment agencies.
- The concentration of migrant workers in certain low-paid sectors of the labour market, with few opportunities for progression.

The partnership members and their roles

In addition to leading the partnership, NIACE also decided to develop and test new learning programmes for refugees and migrants by combining skills audits, ESOL, and occupational skills adaptation courses in health and social care, accountancy and business administration.

Sheffield College piloted courses for migrant health professionals aimed at enabling them to re-qualify and acquire the English language skills necessary to gain employment in the NHS.

The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham developed approaches to recognising the existing skills of refugees and migrants by testing new employability pathways in the fields of construction, social research, business administration and healthcare.

Heartland Homes in Birmingham explored methods of supporting refugees to set up new businesses for self-employment.

learnirect Careers Advice set up three new language advice lines for refugees and migrants speaking Polish, French or Farsi.

Three organisations built partnerships in their regions to provide networks of information, advice and guidance to migrants and refugees and to other organisations concerned with issues of migration. The information and advice given was both face-to-face and through the development of a new web-based service.

Plymouth and District Mind and *Advice for Life* (based in Cambridge) led two of these partnerships. In both of these areas mass inward migration was a new experience.

In the North East a partnership was built up by *the North East Strategic Migration Partnership* and *the North of England Refugee Service* to assist refugees to find employment.

In the third year of its operation the Progress GB partnership gained two new partners. These were *Refugees into Jobs*, a London-based organisation developing confidence-building courses for female refugees, and *ConstructionSkills*, which is undertaking research into migrant workers and the construction industry in the Midlands.

The benefits of an EQUAL Development Partnership

EQUAL provided an opportunity for the diverse and dispersed organisations that made up the Progress GB Development Partnership to work together and share experiences and knowledge. The size, sector, background and location of the organisations working together were very different but they were all confronting similar issues and exploring new ways to deal with them. These were the barriers that confronted both refugees and migrants to vocational and social integration and how to overcome them. The partners therefore were able to learn from the approaches being tested by others and gain insights into national and regional policy developments. There was also some joint research undertaken, including a study of employers' attitudes to the employment and progress of refugees and migrants in the labour market. This study explored the perceptions of employers from different sectors based in the partners' regions, and highlighted the main advantages of and barriers to employing refugees and migrants as identified by employers³.

³ *Progress GB Study of Employers' Attitudes to Employing Migrants and Refugees*, April 2007.



The Progress GB partners also benefited by being members of a strong transnational partnership - MEET (Migrants, Employment, Empowerment and Training) - which also included Development Partnerships from Austria, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. The MEET partnership worked in depth on three main issues. These were:

- Recognising the skills of migrants and refugees
- Raising awareness and positive images
- Skills development approaches

The results of the transnational work have been published and were presented at a European Conference in Brussels in June 2007. The Progress GB partners contributed fully to the work of the transnational partnership by making and hosting study visits and sharing in the production of the materials. These experiences enabled the UK partners to understand the wider European dimension to their work and the shared concerns and solutions which impact upon all EU countries around issues of migration, integration and social inclusion.

Conclusion

Progress GB consists of a range of diverse partner organisations, led by NIACE, who have worked together for three years to test new approaches to the integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants in the UK labour market. They aimed to develop a range of new approaches, including new programmes of education and training; new methods to recognise and build upon existing skills; new partnerships and networks; and new research. By working together and with transnational partners they have been able to develop their knowledge and record the methods and outcomes of their work. The next chapter will explore these methods in greater depth.

Case Study: Mifi Ingende



Mifi was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1974. She is a Lingala, French and English speaker, and in 1999 she graduated from university in Johannesburg with a degree in Marketing and Business Management.

On her return home, she gained a job working for the government, but her boss was sent to prison and killed there. Fearing that she might be next, Mifi fled the country and arrived in the UK in 2002, where she became a refugee.

Mifi was unsuccessful in gaining a job in marketing in the UK, but she worked occasionally as a freelance interpreter for various public bodies including hospitals.

Mifi helped to found 'Cite Celeste', a refugee community organisation for Francophone Africans in the UK. Whilst volunteering at Cite Celeste, Mifi learned about the Community Researchers Course set up by CURS for the PGB project. She successfully applied for a place and completed the course. Mifi then successfully applied for a job at the Centre for the Unemployed as an outreach worker. This was no easy feat, since she had been turned down for jobs many times before and her South African degree was not recognized. She is still taking training courses in IAG, which are necessary for her new career, and says that the course at CURS has been very useful in enabling her to understand the systems and provide training advice.

Figure 1: Progress GB partners' aims, methods and outcomes

Progress GB Partner	Aims	Methods	Outcomes
<p>NIACE Upskill Project</p>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support refugees and migrants to overcome the barriers associated with accessing employment commensurate with their skills and experience in three occupational areas of key importance to the regional economy (business administration, accountancy, and health and social care). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided personal advisor and occupationally specific careers guidance support through the assessment of occupational ESOL levels, skills and experiences; developed occupational ESOL provision; arranged vocational course provision and work placements; provided assistance in the job search and application process. The Upskill project worked with Skills for Care to ascertain the level of support needs of Polish workers in one particular care home. The project worked with the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) to map occupational ESOL needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upskill provided personal advisor and occupationally specific careers guidance support to 119 participants (60 refugees and 59 migrant workers)
<p>Skills for Business, The Sheffield College</p>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support refugees and migrant workers who are medical professionals through the development of high-level vocational ESOL courses; to develop IT/interactive materials to aid workers in interview techniques; to provide a one-stop shop referral, advice and guidance unit at the college for medical professionals and others wanting to work in the NHS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESOL courses for medical professionals including preparation for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and PLAB (Professional & Linguistic Assessment Board) tests; interactive IELTS DVD to aid workers in interview techniques; one-stop shop referral, advice and guidance unit at the college for medical professionals across Sheffield to access courses offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported 54 participants (14 refugees and 40 migrant workers), who were qualified medical professionals interested in a career in the NHS
<p>learndirect Careers Advice</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a national telephone service, offering information, advice and guidance in learning and careers to support languages chosen through consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national telephone service offering information, advice and guidance in learning and careers in three languages Farsi, French and Polish. Trained bilingual advisors, including information advisors and learning advisors, offer help and advice to refugee and migrant workers on how to improve skills or convert existing qualifications to UK standards to help achieve a chosen career or job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three languages - Farsi, French and Polish - will be mainstreamed into the learndirect Careers Advice language line service. 5,615 calls received between February 2006 and September 2007 (Polish 3,991, Farsi 1,033, French 591)








Progress GB Partner	Aims	Methods	Outcomes
<p>Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham</p>  <p>THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support refugees and migrant workers through the accreditation of skills, experience and work-based learning and establish criteria for good practice. To develop models of Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL) and Work-Based Learning (WBL). Introduce refugee-specific accredited APEL and work-based learning programmes in conjunction with employers in sectors of skills shortages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employability pathway models using work experience as the main method. Pathways were developed in social research, construction, general maintenance, health care and business administration. Other methods used were CV and interview preparation, one-to-one mentor support, specialist CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) ESOL provision, IELTS and CSCS tests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 136 individuals entered the employability pathways (social research 39, construction 31, general maintenance 46, health care 12, business administration 8) and 123 participants completed the pathways (91%).
<p>Heartland Homes Ltd</p>  <p>Heartland Homes Ltd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and support refugees who are self-employed or intending to be self-employed. Mobilise and adapt existing self-employment facilitators in the West Midlands region to refugees' needs. New project to enable visual and performing artists, musicians and creative writers to enter into self-employment. 10 new business start-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal advisor support and integrated information, advice and guidance provision about self-employment issues Specialist support for self-employment within the creative and performing arts sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported 54 refugees who were self-employed or intending to be self-employed. 12 new business start-ups in the following areas: arts (5), repair and decoration (1), importing and exporting (1), accountancy (1), and retail (4).
<p>Refugees Into Jobs</p>  <p>Refugees Into Jobs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support refugee women through the delivery of a course focusing on citizenship and participation, and developing knowledge, confidence and competence for them to participate with authorities and agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of Pathways to Participation courses focusing on the four components of the Active Learning for Active Citizenship core curriculum including Social Justice, Participation, Equality & Diversity and Cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees Into Jobs supported 40 refugee women onto the Pathways to Participation courses.

Figure 1: Progress GB partners' aims, methods and outcomes (continued)

Progress GB Partner	Aims	Methods	Outcomes
<p>Progress GB South West</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support refugees and migrant workers to help them overcome barriers to employment. • Pilot and evaluate a multi-agency/multi-sectoral approach. • Provide appropriate employment and learning support/information. • Capacity-building and awareness-raising activities amongst different types of agencies and organisations. • Create links and develop employment training packages with employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of personal advisor and integrated information, advice and guidance support incorporating the complex needs of refugees and migrant workers including housing issues, benefits advice, health etc. • Other activities including capacity-building and awareness-raising activities; employment workshops, the facilitation of work placements and volunteering opportunities, and work with employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided personal advisor support and integrated information, advice and guidance provision to 143 participants (57 refugees and 86 migrant workers).
<p>Advice For Life</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support migrant workers and refugees in the East of England through access to advice, information and training, particularly focused around employment rights. • To develop the first centre of excellence in advice, information and training for and about migrant workers' rights and responsibilities. • To work with a wide range of agencies, service providers and employers to promote good practice and develop a network of appropriate support services and assistance for migrant workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal advisor support and information, advice and guidance provision. • Development of the Migrant Gateway web-based information, advice and guidance for migrants, trade unions and employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided advice and support to 187 migrant workers and refugees in the following areas: employment, housing, immigration, benefits and job applications.



Progress GB Partner	Aims	Methods	Outcomes
<p>North-East Projects</p>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the needs of refugees and migrant workers to develop and adapt their skills for the UK labour market through a range of life long learning opportunities. • Pilot a model produced in the Netherlands called the Distance to the Labour Market (DLM) as a tool for measuring the progress of individuals with complex needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal advisor support and information, advice and guidance provision. • Piloting of the DLM model by the North of England Refugee Service and Your Homes Newcastle in Newcastle and Middlesbrough. • Building networks with all providers involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The north-east network worked with 77 participants (51 refugees and 26 migrant workers) as follows: North of England Refugee Service (41), Your Homes Newcastle (36).
<p>ConstructionSkills</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake an 'action research' project to support migrant workers in the Midlands to integrate effectively into the construction industry. • To assist employers in the Midlands region in meeting labour requirements through migrant labour. • To map migrant workers in the Midlands and identify employers and providers who will work on future project activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research, including the interviewing of training providers, employers and migrant workers; analysis and completion of a final report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report will be completed in December 2007.

chapter 2

Testing new methods to overcome the barriers





Introduction

The new approaches, learning programmes and IAG services initiated by the Progress GB partners can be divided into three main areas. These are: -

- Skills recognition and vocational adaptation
- Information services
- Network development

In each case the programmes developed were based upon the findings of national research which highlighted the barriers faced by refugees and migrants, including specific groups within the refugee and migrant communities, and regional or local research carried out in the particular location of the project, which examined the needs of migrants living in the area, existing provision and gaps, and labour market needs. The work of the main partners is described below and is illustrative of the approaches adopted by the partnership as a whole. A full table describing the aims, methods and outcomes of the whole partnership is set out on pages 10-13.

2.1 Skills recognition and vocational adaptation

Surveys have indicated that a sizeable proportion of refugees living in the UK possess high levels of skills and qualifications⁴. Despite this, the majority remain unemployed and those who gain employment are in low-skilled, insecure jobs. Although no recent research findings are available regarding the levels of skills and qualifications of economic migrants from the A8 countries, there is evidence to suggest that amongst these migrants there are significant numbers who are considered to be under-employed, in that their qualifications equip them for posts requiring higher skills than those needed for jobs they currently occupy. It appears that the UK is not making the most of the talents of its migrant residents. Three of the Progress GB partners developed new approaches to address these issues.

2.1.1 The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS), University of Birmingham

CURS had undertaken research for the LSC in the West Midlands in 2002 and 2003, which revealed very high levels of unemployment amongst refugees.

In Birmingham only 12% were in employment; in Coventry, 24.2%. The research also revealed that refugees had a similar level of education to the general population and that the majority wanted to find work related to their former careers as soon as possible.

Further research in the region discovered that while there was some provision to assist refugee professionals to re-qualify and some projects designed to help the unskilled, no work was being undertaken to help refugees with intermediate skills to re-enter the labour market. CURS decided to become a partner in the EQUAL project in order to enhance the employability of skilled refugees and migrants by piloting integrated pathways of activities, including vocational language training, work experience, and the accreditation of prior learning through testing and the provision of workplace-based opportunities to demonstrate skills.

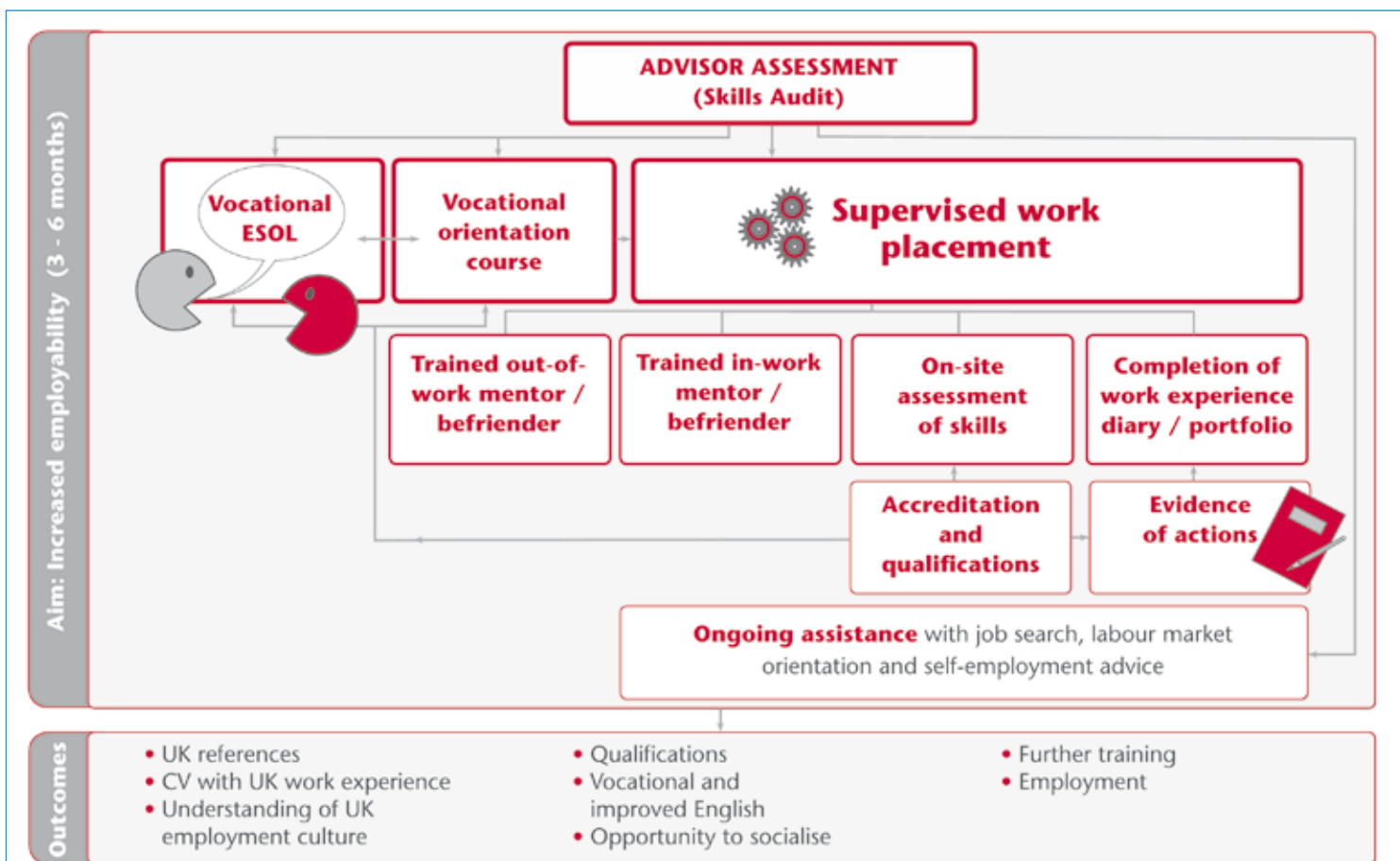
The pathways were developed in five different vocational areas. These were social research, construction, general maintenance, health care and business administration. In order to develop and implement these pilots it was necessary for CURS to gain the support of a range of stakeholders, including those from the voluntary sector and refugee community organisations, training bodies and colleges, employers' organisations and local authorities.

While the pilot pathways differed in relation to the needs of the learners, the locations, the vocational specialisms and the stakeholders' requirements, they shared common elements. These were the recruitment processes, which included skills audits and assessments to ensure that the applicants were suitable for the pathway; vocational ESOL; classroom and workplace learning; mentoring support; accreditation of skills; and help to move on to employment or further education or training.

A total of 135 refugees and migrants participated in the employability pathways programme and all of the courses were oversubscribed. Appendix 2 provides information about the CURS project outcomes.

⁴ For example, Bloch, A. (2002) *Refugee Opportunities and barriers in employment and training*, London: Department for Work and Pensions /Goldsmiths College, University of London, and Kirk, R. (2004) *Home Office Online Report 37/04: Skills Audit of Refugees*, Home Office.

Figure 2: The CURS Pathway to Enhanced Employability for Refugees and Migrants



The model pictured here is a general version of several vocational models, all aimed at refugees. The refugee is assessed by an advisor who discusses the programme and explores the candidate’s language and skills levels. The refugee is then sent to either a vocational orientation programme to help them decide how their skills can be used in the UK, or to a vocational language programme. The orientation programme identifies gaps in ability and signposts to further appropriate training. In some vocational areas skills may be accredited whilst on the orientation programme. Once

they are work-ready, refugees are offered a supervised work experience place. On-site they are matched with a befriender or mentor to help them integrate into the workplace, they have the option to complete a work experience diary and are observed by their supervisor who will at a later stage provide them with a reference. Throughout the process the refugee is offered ongoing assistance with job search and self employment advice, and may leave the programme at any time to take up paid employment.



“Central to the NIACE approach was the role of the personal advisor”

2.1.2 NIACE Upskill Project

The NIACE project was based in Leicester and Derby. The project officers, who had gained considerable experience of developing skills audit approaches with over 700 asylum seekers and refugees living in the East Midlands, identified the need to provide structured programmes of vocational preparation for work in business administration, accountancy, and health and social care. Not only were there refugees and migrants living in the East Midlands with qualifications or previous experience of work in these vocational areas, there was also a demand for skilled labour in these sectors in the region.

Central to the NIACE approach was the role of the **personal advisor** who recruited the participants; undertook skills audits and skills assessments; assisted the participants in gaining recognition for overseas qualifications and experience; provided careers guidance and action planning support; arranged education, training and work experience placements; supported the production of CVs and the preparation of job applications; and provided interview experience. The personal advisors worked intensively with the participants for periods from three to eighteen months, depending upon each individual's needs, progress and aspirations.

In addition, the personal advisors worked in partnership with local FE colleges and ESOL advisors to pilot the development and provision of new courses in the three vocational areas, with embedded ESOL teaching and learning, to enable the participants to gain the vocational English language skills that they needed alongside vocationally specific knowledge and qualifications. The demand for participation in the Upskill project from refugees and migrants quickly exceeded expectations. A total of 119 participants joined the Upskill programme.

Regional shortages of labour to meet major new developments in retail outlets in Leicester and Derby have resulted in the NIACE personal advisors being commissioned to extend their remit to provide the Upskill personal advisor approach to prepare unemployed people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to enter careers in retail. Appendix 2 provides information about the NIACE Upskill project outcomes.

2.1.3 Sheffield College

Sheffield College has worked in partnership with the South Yorkshire Health Authority and the LSC to develop pilot courses to meet the needs of refugee and migrant medical professionals for intensive language learning and to address skills shortages in the NHS.

The college established that migrant and refugee medical professionals were well qualified but often did not have the required knowledge or command of the English language or a full understanding of the workings of the NHS. They needed to obtain a relevant language qualification, usually IELTS (International English Language Testing System), at the appropriate level and some form of work experience, preferably within the NHS.

The college developed and delivered an intensive English language programme designed for health professionals, together with workshops involving preparation for the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) qualification. In addition many of the participants undertook work experience placements. Nearly 70 learners participated in the programme.

Early in 2006 it became apparent that the demand for overseas medical professionals in the NHS was reducing and the Department of Health announced that medical graduates who are not UK or EEA nationals will only be able to obtain a work permit if a genuine vacancy exists which cannot be filled by a UK or EEA national. This resulted in the South Yorkshire Health Authority withdrawing its match funding from the programme, but LSC funding allowed the learners to complete their course.

In response to this changing demand in the UK for qualified medical professionals from overseas, the college used the experience gained in piloting the learning programmes to introduce a new twelve-week online IELTS course which may be taken by students anywhere in the world. This will enable medical professionals to gain their IELTS qualifications before they make the decision to travel to the UK.



2.2 Information services

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned research into the new patterns of migration and its impact upon communities and the migrants themselves. One of the findings was that new migrants suffered from a lack of practical information and advice upon arrival in the UK, which delayed their ability to fully participate in the labour market and the wider society.

learndirect Careers Advice is a national organisation, which provides information to those calling its advice lines about appropriate learning and career opportunities. *learndirect* was already providing advice lines in languages other than English, and on joining the Progress GB partnership decided to extend its language advice lines to meet the needs of new emerging migrant communities in the UK. Research was carried out in order to determine which additional language lines should be introduced to help refugees and migrant workers gain access to mainstream services. The criteria for selection of the three additional language services were the size of the community, intention to stay in the UK, perceived levels of discrimination, attitudes to learning and employment, and the type of workforce. The following languages were selected: Polish, French and Farsi.

Two tiers of advisor are available to support callers. These are the information advisors, who primarily help callers to find appropriate courses such as ESOL, and the learning advisors, who assist with specific careers enquiries and find the UK-equivalent qualifications to those gained in the caller's home country.

In order to market the new services, *learndirect* has produced posters and leaflets in all three languages and bilingual leaflets to enable those working with migrant communities to disseminate the messages. Leaflets have been handed out to members of the communities attending relevant events. Adverts have also appeared in the publications used by people from these language groups. *learndirect* advisors with the relevant language skills have undertaken outreach work by visiting community organisations to raise awareness of the services. Although there are still challenges to be overcome in reaching the communities and providing an understanding of the services offered, a large number of callers have made use of the services. By October 2007, 5615 calls had been received – 591 to the French line, 1033 to the Farsi line and 3991 to the Polish line.

learndirect has decided to continue providing these services in the three new language lines after the EQUAL funding comes to an end.

2.3 Network development to provide IAG

The policy of dispersing asylum seekers to areas across the country, many of whom choose to settle in these areas when they gain permission to remain, and the new patterns of migration from the A8 countries have resulted in some regions and sub-regions of the UK experiencing new levels of inward migration. Cities, towns and rural areas with little previous multicultural experience have become hosts to new communities of migrants. In many cases there were few existing services to provide the support that migrants need to successfully integrate into the labour market and the local community. In two such regions, the South West and the East of England, several small organisations joined the EQUAL partnership in order to establish networks of information, advice and guidance for the new arrivals.

2.3.1 Progress GB South West

Plymouth and District Mind was formed in 1985 to provide services and raise awareness relating to mental health. The organisation led a project to promote the social inclusion of refugees and migrants within the community. On joining the EQUAL partnership, PDM aimed to build a local multi-agency network to support refugees and migrants gain appropriate employment. They were joined by Open Doors International Language School, a Christian charity providing English language teaching, Students and Refugees Together (START) who use student volunteers to support migrants through case work, drop-in sessions and skills exchanges, and Working Links, which specialises in helping the long-term unemployed find work. This partnership developed a larger network of organisations from the voluntary, statutory and private sectors, which was used both to refer clients to Progress GB and provide services to the Progress GB beneficiaries.

The activities of Progress GB SW included the provision of a range of training programmes and workshops for migrants and refugees seeking employment. These covered areas such as job searching, CV and interview preparation, employment rights and responsibilities, health and safety, and the culture of the workplace. A range of materials was produced and translated into different languages. The project assisted beneficiaries



to find appropriate ESOL classes and provided caseworkers to support individuals who needed information, advice and guidance in work-related areas, including cases where migrants had suffered as a consequence of injuries at work. In addition the project ran job shops for migrants and held conferences for employers and other organisations to raise awareness and build capacity amongst mainstream organisations that were coming into contact with the new communities of refugees and migrants. These organisations also turned to the project for advice when they identified the need to gain further information about refugees and migrants. In the final months of the project a welcome pack was produced to introduce newcomers to Plymouth and provide them with information about the area and the local services and organisations.

Progress GB SW worked with 143 refugees and migrants.

“Cities, towns and rural areas with little multicultural experience have become hosts to new communities of migrants”



Case Study: Merlin



Merlin is 33 years old and was born in Cameroon. He came to the UK as an asylum seeker in 2004, after fleeing Cameroon for political reasons. Merlin's wife and four children were unable to join him in the UK at first, but eventually they gained permission because of the UK government's policy of family reunification.

Merlin's first language is French and his English is of a good standard. He has a university degree and a master's qualification in accountancy from Cameroon. He worked there as a senior accountant, managing teams of people.

Initially he found life difficult in the UK. However with the support of Progress GB SW, Merlin was introduced to a local organisation where he became a volunteer and attended adult education classes in order to learn about UK accountancy systems. PGB negotiated with a range of funding bodies in order to find the fees necessary for him to undertake a SAGE course and work experience to enable him to sit his level 4 AAT exams. Merlin's motivation and confidence increased, and he joined the management committee of a local charity as the treasurer.

Merlin was successful in his applications for part-time work as administrator at a local refugee organisation, the Devon & Cornwall Refugee Support Council, and for a firm of accountants. These salaried positions enable Merlin to support his wife and children financially, and he is proving a great asset. He is continuing to look for full-time employment in accountancy, with the aim of re-entering his field of expertise.

His children attend a Catholic school and he regularly attends the local church. Merlin's interests include music and football.

2.3.2 Advice for Life (AFL)

AFL is an independent specialist advice provider based in Cambridgeshire. It provides IAG in the areas of employment, housing, immigration and welfare benefits. AFL's aims in joining the EQUAL partnership were to develop a pilot project in the East of England to test new ways of delivering IAG to migrant workers, employers, trade unions and other practitioners, with a view to reducing barriers to employment and lifelong learning.

Research carried out in the region estimated that there were between 50,000 and 80,000 migrant workers, and that there were unmet needs for IAG relating to employment issues amongst the migrant workers themselves and amongst the region's employers. AFL worked with a number of agencies to establish the new service, including the East of England Development Agency, local authorities and the Legal Services Commission.

The service was publicised initially by the use of leaflets in a range of languages aimed at migrant workers and materials aimed at employers and trade unions. The advice was provided by a caseworker in face-to-face interviews, by telephone and online. Interpreters were used when necessary. The migrants using the service sought help on a variety of issues. The largest group needed advice, including legal advice, about employment law as a result of problems at work, including the non-payment of holiday pay and dismissals due to pregnancy. Others were seeking training to further their careers or help with job applications and CVs. A third group needed information and guidance relating to housing, immigration, finance and opening bank accounts.

In addition to the IAG service provided to migrants, AFL also undertook research into the needs of migrant communities living in the East of England and the needs of employers for information concerning the employment of migrants. They were able to assist local employers by providing an advice line for employers and by running workshops on UK employment rights for A8 workers. The project also produced information packs for use by migrants, employers and IAG providers.

The project has tested and piloted its approaches with financial support from EQUAL. AFL has now gained financial support from within the region to continue to provide the IAG services, which have been named the 'Migrant Gateway'. The Migrant Gateway will continue

to provide advice to migrants, employers and other practitioners through face-to-face, telephone and online contacts, but will also include a website that will provide information about migration and employment rights in the UK, which will be of use both to employers and those considering becoming migrant workers.

The Migrant Gateway website

The Migrant Gateway website (www.migrantgateway.eu) began to be developed in April 2007, with match funding from EEDA through Investing in Communities. The project was able to employ a migrant worker as the Advice and Information Coordinator for the site. The site launched as a living project in September 2007. The choice of domain name was made following testing with potential users; the aim was to develop a site that would be accessible by migrants (both workers and their families), their employers, and other people working with them. The project aimed to position the site firmly as a European site, with a view to its future post-ESF development. The site is under development and content will be available initially in at least six languages (Czech, English, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, and Russian).





Conclusion

The examples of the work of the Progress GB partners described above shared some common elements. Each of the methods adopted was based upon research of the needs of migrants and refugees to gain access to specific learning programmes and advice services which were designed to address barriers to them entering and progressing in the UK labour market. In some cases this also required researching the needs of employers and local labour markets. In all cases the leading organisations built partnerships or networks to enable them to publicise, pilot or implement the services. While these pilot projects can be recognised as good practice, without the financial support of the EQUAL programme, the initiatives would not have been undertaken. Some of the approaches have now been funded at a local or national level to enable them to be sustained for a further period. The next chapter will provide information about the successful methods developed by the Progress GB partners.

“The largest group needed advice, including legal advice, about employment law as a result of problems at work”

Case Study: Rukkaiya

Rukkaiya joined the NIACE Upskill project in 2005, hoping to adapt her skills and experience gained as a planning officer in a large city in Africa. Rukkaiya hoped to find employment in a related field in the UK. However, apart from temporary work as a cleaner, Rukkaiya had been unemployed since gaining refugee status in 2002. During this time, Rukkaiya had achieved ESOL level 1, but English language still remained a significant problem for her, particularly in interview situations and when trying to communicate on work-related issues.

Rukkaiya was encouraged to join the Upskill English for Administration course, as this covered vocational terminology, formal language use, office communication and UK employment familiarisation. As the course was a part-time evening course, it did not affect Rukkaiya’s availability for work. Many of the students on the course had worked abroad in management positions or in professional occupations but like Rukkaiya they had been, since coming to the UK, either unemployed or in transient low-skilled employment. Rukkaiya’s English language improved rapidly, helping her gain confidence and a more positive outlook

In June 2006, a 3-month full-time subsidised work placement within a local Housing Association was arranged for Rukkaiya through the Upskill project. This gave her a valuable opportunity to practise her newly acquired formal language and office communication skills. On completing the subsidised placement, Rukkaiya applied for and secured a full-time permanent position in their organisation. Rukkaiya continues to attend the English for Administration class because she wishes to improve her English language skills still further, as this will give her a greater number of options in the labour market.

chapter 3

Overcoming the barriers - the lessons learned





Introduction

The Progress GB partnership has researched the needs of refugees and migrant workers; developed, piloted and implemented new approaches to addressing the barriers to the labour market experienced by these groups; and evaluated the outcomes. It is therefore possible to draw conclusions about the successful practices and limiting factors, which should be borne in mind by policy makers and practitioners who are considering how the integration of refugees and migrants can be advanced.

One of the strengths of the partnership was that it was able to work with both refugees and economic migrants. While the reasons why these groups come to the UK differ in that refugees come to the UK in search of humanitarian protection, while economic migrants come in order to gain employment, both groups share the challenge of learning how to adapt to a new society. They need to understand how to find their way in a new social, economic, linguistic, geographic and cultural environment; how to communicate with the people who live around them; how to gain access to goods, services and an income; how the labour market operates and what is expected of them as newly arrived residents.

The UK, unlike some other European countries such as Sweden, does not provide a standard and mandatory induction programme for new arrivals. Instead the knowledge that migrants acquire about living and working in the UK depends upon their existing networks and the particular services that exist and that they access, in the areas where they live or work. In many areas of the country such services are not available or accessible. In addition there are few specialist employment services that provide support, information, advice and guidance to refugees and migrants. Progress GB partners found it necessary in most cases to build new learning programmes and advice services to meet the needs that had been identified. On the whole it was found that existing mainstream services were not reaching the target groups and the services they provided were not appropriate or accessible. In building these new services and testing new approaches it was possible to learn how services could be made to be effective.

3.1 The Pre-requirements

3.1.1 Research

The first step was to **undertake research** into the numbers, categories and unmet needs of refugees and migrants. While at a national level studies have indicated the very high levels of unemployment of refugees and the predominance of economic migrants in low-paid employment in a limited number of sectors, in each region or sub-region patterns may differ, as will the level, accessibility and reach of existing mainstream and community services.

3.1.2 Partnerships and Networks

A second pre-requirement to establishing a successful service was the ability to create **partnerships and networks** to help design the pilot, support the work and understand the contribution that mainstream and community organisations can make to the new service and the integration of refugees and migrants. The membership of the partnerships and networks varied according to the particular initiative being developed but most included learning providers such as colleges, local authorities or regional agencies including regional development agencies and health authorities, voluntary and community organisations, and some also included employers organisations, the LSC and JCP, legal and advice-giving organisations. Forming and holding such partnerships together and facilitating teamwork was sometimes a challenge, which required constant attention and support from the lead organisations.

3.1.3 Recruitment Strategies

Having identified the needs, built partnerships and designed a service to address the issues, it was necessary for the partner organisations to consider **recruitment strategies**. In areas where the PGB partners had existing links with migrant and refugee community organisations, these provided the opportunity for publicity campaigns and to gain feedback and interest in the proposed initiatives. In other areas where the partners were relatively new to the field, or where there were few such community organisations, it was necessary for the partners to build trust and find avenues for communication. In all cases the partners created publicity materials in a range of languages and undertook outreach and awareness-raising activities. Once work had commenced it was found that the best method of recruitment was through word of mouth from satisfied beneficiaries.

3.1.4 Recruit Specialist Staff

All of the PGB partners emphasised the importance of recruiting **specialist expert staff** to work on the initiatives. The staff needed specialised knowledge in the fields in which they were working that related to understanding the barriers confronting refugees and migrants. These included: -


- understanding and appreciating the cultural, social and economic backgrounds of refugees and migrants
- knowing how, when and where to signpost clients to other relevant services;
- being aware of legislation and benefit rules relating to refugees and migrants;
- having the personal qualities necessary to create trust and confidence;
- being able to negotiate with a range of agencies to meet the different learning aspirations;
- understanding the local or national labour market and the requirements to enter or re-enter a range of vocational and career routes;
- having access to interpreters when necessary.

3.1.5 Client-centred services

Many of the partners stressed the need for the services to be **client-centred and independent**.

3.1.6 Financial Support

Finally the pilot projects needed **financial support** to enable them to develop, deliver and test the new approaches. While half of the costs were met by EQUAL/ESF each partner had to gain the additional finance from other funding bodies within the UK. The majority of the partners found gaining this additional funding to be one of the most difficult aspects of taking part in the project. For some the original planned work programme was reduced or modified because of the lack of match funding or the different requirements of the match funders. It is a tribute therefore to the partnership that the innovative and successful models developed have not only enabled a large number of migrants and refugees to overcome the barriers confronting them but have also provided examples of good practice which can be mainstreamed.



Case Study: Eugenie Muhayimana



Eugenie was born in 1969 in Rwanda. She was married with two children and employed as a business manager by an international company. When war started in 1994 Eugenie fled Rwanda and spent two years in a refugee camp in Congo, where she found employment as a tracing officer with the International Red Cross, working to reunite dispersed family members. War began in Congo in 1996, so Eugenie and her children went into hiding in the jungle, until they managed to flee to the UK to seek asylum in 2000.

On arrival in the UK, Eugenie and her children were sent to the north east of England as part of the asylum seeker dispersal programme. In 2001 the family began learning English. Two years later Eugenie gained qualifications in English, computing and accountancy, and she was offered a place on a business degree course at Northumbria University. Her course included a one-year work placement with the North of England Refugee Service, which enabled her to gain experience in the UK labour market. When she completed her studies she was offered a post as an administrator working with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

In June 2006, Eugenie, surrounded by many friends, attended her British citizenship ceremony, and she is now looking forward to completing her university degree. She says that she is settled and happy, and feels that the UK offers her and her children a safe, secure place to live and to plan for their future.



3.2 Methods to overcome labour market barriers

The partners who developed skills recognition and vocational pathways included CURS, NIACE and Sheffield College. The outcomes of their work were seen as successful in that a very high proportion of the participants completed the learning programmes and progressed into employment, better employment or further vocational education and training.

The methodologies tested, which resulted in the successful outcomes, are summarised below.

3.2.1 Recognising the existing skills of the participants

Undertaking initial skills audits with the participants provided a basis for developing relevant learning and career adaptation programmes and building motivation. Migrants bring skills, work, community and life experience and qualifications with them, but these are often ignored or disregarded by mainstream organisations such as colleges or employment services. This is one of the reasons that refugees and migrants fail to make progress in the labour market. They are expected to begin again at the bottom rung of the ladder of qualifications or careers. By undertaking skills audits, and where possible assessing and validating existing skills it is possible for refugees and migrants to gain quicker access to the appropriate learning or employment opportunities. Such recognition also provides the participants with a level of confidence to enable them to set goals and maintain their motivation to return to employment after adapting these skills and acquiring new ones for use in the UK.

Within the UK there is a lack of provision to assess and validate the skills that migrants bring with them. The Progress GB partners, who developed pilot projects in this field were breaking new ground and have demonstrated effective methods, which could be mainstreamed at local, regional and national levels.

3.2.2 Providing integrated packages of learning and support

The successful programmes addressed the learning needs of the refugees and migrants in a personalised, co-ordinated, holistic manner. The participants often

needed to improve their English language skills at the same time as adapting their vocational skills and acquiring vocational language, while learning about and experiencing the UK labour market. Several partners designed learning programmes to meet these needs in a range of vocational areas. Such integrated learning packages relating to specific vocational areas are not generally available so in each case the partners needed to develop and pilot new courses, bringing together ESOL and vocational tutors, careers advice and work experience and delivering new learning packages which met the appropriate qualification requirements.

3.2.3 Learner-centred approaches

ESOL classes frequently have high drop-out rates. The retention rates for the Progress GB courses were very high and the majority of the participants successfully completed their courses. This was in part because the recruitment process involving skills audits and the integrated design of the courses ensured that the learners were appropriately placed, but also because it was recognised that the refugee learners in particular can need a higher level of support. Refugees may be dealing with traumatic situations which caused them to leave their countries of origin; many face difficulties in the UK related to basic welfare and needs for housing, health services, child care and incomes. The PGB partners used a variety of methods to help overcome these barriers to learning.

NIACE used the personal advisor approach, enabling the participants to have access to a person who was able to provide advice, support and encouragement whenever the need occurred. The personal advisor spoke with the participants on a regular and frequent basis to see if they needed help.

CURS appointed paid mentors for each participant while learning in college and during work experience placement. The mentors were often refugees or migrants themselves, who had previously successfully completed learning programmes.

In Sheffield, the tutors recognised that while the participants were highly motivated, they needed more individual support and tutor time than mainstream students to overcome the barriers.

“Within the UK there is a lack of provision to assess and validate the skills that migrants bring with them”

“Lack of UK work experience and a UK reference are often stated as the two main reasons why refugees are unable to get employment”

In all cases the partners found that it was essential that flexibility be built into the learning pilots to enable the participants to successfully complete the programmes.

Some participants needed small amounts of financial support to enable them to travel to college, buy the necessary equipment, and cover childcare costs, and the partners provided this support.

Finally it was important for the partners to have an effective signposting network so that learners with problems relating to basic welfare needs could be referred to agencies who could help address problems with housing, health and income etc.

3.2.4 Work experience

While the recognition of skills gained in other countries, the successful completion of a course and the gaining of a UK qualification improve refugees’ and migrants’ chances of getting appropriate work, barriers still remain in the UK labour market. Lack of UK work experience and a UK reference are often stated as the two main reasons why refugees are unable to gain employment. The PGB partners therefore aimed to build work experience into the new learning pathways. Work experience placements enabled participants to learn about the UK work environment and culture; provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate, use and adapt their skills in a new environment; contributed to their integration; and resulted in employers providing a work reference for the participants.

The partners concluded that the provision of work experience was one of the main requirements for the success of the new learning pathways. It was also one of the most challenging elements to manage in that finding employers prepared to offer such placements was very difficult and in some areas Jobcentre Plus decided that claimants of Jobseeker’s Allowance could not undertake work experience and training which exceeded 16 hours a week.

Where these problems were overcome, it was discovered that the participants had a much greater chance of gaining sustainable employment if they had been able to take up a work experience placement.

3.2.5 Support in applying for jobs

As the learning programmes drew to an end the participants were very motivated to gain employment. The partners found that it was important to provide coaching to refugees and migrants to enable them to consider job advertisements, select relevant vacancies, prepare applications and understand the interview process. The systems used in the UK to fill job vacancies are often very different from those which the participants had experienced in their home countries. Therefore the opportunity to learn how to find appropriate job vacancies, prepare CVs and job applications and to practise interviewing techniques was built into the successful learning programmes.

3.2.6 Positive images

Refugees and migrants in the UK suffer as a consequence of negative perceptions, which can be fuelled by media stereotyping of them as placing a burden upon UK resources. In some cases this negativity can result in employers being reluctant to offer jobs when they believe that their other employees will resent fellow workers from other countries. The study carried out by PGB indicated that this was one of the barriers identified by employers to the entry and progress of migrants and refugees in the UK labour market. The PGB partners found that providing case studies of successful refugees and migrants, who had brought skills and experience with them and who were motivated to work and contribute to their new environment, could be very powerful in influencing the opinions of employers. Refugees and migrants told their stories at conferences, on films and in printed material which was disseminated through a variety of networks. In addition, award ceremonies that celebrated the successful course completions and drew attention to the achievements of the participants provided an opportunity for a range of stakeholders to appreciate the talents of refugees and migrants.



3.3 Providing information, advice and guidance

The PGB partners, including Advice for Life, learndirect and Plymouth and District Mind, when providing information, advice and guidance services, implemented many of the successful elements described above. However some of the partners were setting up new IAG services in areas where recent inward migration was a relatively new phenomenon. They found that it was necessary to build relationships with the new and emerging communities, who had yet to establish strong local community organisations. This required time, commitment to extensive outreach activities and very detailed attention to the issues raised by the first participants. Once successful early work has been undertaken and trust established, word of mouth became the most effective way of publicising the services.

The successful IAG services needed specialised staff, but they also found that having staff or volunteers who spoke the languages of their clients was very important. Having refugees or migrants on the staff was seen as particularly beneficial. Not only could such staff communicate with the clients in their own language, they also understood the experience of being a newcomer to the UK, could empathise with the participants, and provide guidance and in-service training to mainstream providers.

The new PGB IAG services discovered that mainstream providers and employers often require help and information relating to refugees and migrants. Employers were frequently uncertain about the documentation needed by refugees and migrants to demonstrate that they were eligible for work. They did not understand the relevance or level of the qualifications or previous work experience of potential employees from overseas. For some, the problems related to gaining CRB checks for potential employees, to enable them to work in particular occupations, proved a disincentive to recruiting people from abroad. Employers and employees also required information relating to the employment rights of migrants. Therefore a local service, which provided information about these kinds of issues, was valued in areas where migrants were becoming increasingly significant in the local labour force.

Other mainstream organisations such as colleges, advice bureaux, JCP, and local authority services also

benefited from the specialist knowledge, information bulletins, conferences, seminars and in-service training provided by the new PGB IAG services for migrants and refugees. Such mainstream organisations became more aware of the issues facing newcomers and their needs and aspirations. This enabled them to consider how their services could address the barriers to access experienced by refugees and migrants.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided information about the successful elements of learning programmes and IAG services, which resulted in positive outcomes for refugees and migrants living in the UK. On the whole the partners were developing local pilots and finding local solutions to address barriers that confront refugees and migrants throughout the UK. The successful elements included undertaking research into the characteristics and needs of the new arrivals; building partnerships and networks; building trust with the new and emerging communities and using specialised and informed staff. The successful learning pathways created required recognition of the existing skills and experience that refugees and migrants bring with them; designing integrated packages of learning which included both English language and vocational teaching, careers guidance, work experience, mentoring and help with job applications. All participants benefited from a tailor-made system of support, which enabled basic welfare needs to be addressed and self esteem and confidence to be developed. The IAG services also discovered that using migrant staff brought benefits and that in addition to the needs of refugees and migrants for IAG, employers and mainstream organisations needed and welcomed specialised information and advice about migration issues.

This chapter has provided a few examples of the factors that limited the success of the pilots. These included the difficulties in building and sustaining partnerships; in finding funding; and in providing work experience placements. In fact the partners worked to overcome as many barriers as possible while developing the new approaches. The next chapter provides a set of recommendations, derived from evaluating the methods and the outcomes, which will draw attention to proposals to mainstream good practice and address the limitations and barriers to the integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants in the UK labour market.

chapter 4

Recommendations

Why is it necessary to address the barriers to integration and progress in the UK labour market faced by refugees and migrants?





Introduction

As inward migration to the UK by EU nationals has increased there has been a growth in the number of economic migrants employed in low-skilled occupations in a limited number of sectors. Employers regard migrant workers as essential to their businesses, since they fill job vacancies in these sectors, which could not otherwise be filled. The government has welcomed the contribution made by migrant workers to the national economy.

However, there is evidence of underemployment, with migrants being unable to use their skills and qualifications to gain career advancement. Migrant workers have also experienced exploitation at work. Some regions and sub-regions of the UK were unprepared for the sudden growth of new and emerging communities of migrants.

These problems illustrate the need to provide appropriate services and learning opportunities to support migrant workers and mainstream organisations including employers, who are increasingly aware of the fact that migrants require access to a range of services and to relevant employment opportunities.

At the same time levels of unemployment among refugee communities and some other groups of migrants from outside the EU, including spouses, remains stubbornly high. Indeed all the evidence suggests that despite high levels of motivation and the same or higher levels of skills as the host community, the majority of refugees are unemployed.

Over time the expectation is that migrants and refugees improve their position in the UK labour market. However for some groups this is not the case. A significant number of Polish workers remain in low-skilled employment for many years after their arrival in the UK and particular groups of refugees remain unemployed after spending very long periods of time seeking work in the UK.

The barriers identified to the integration and progress of migrants and refugees in the UK labour market have been described on pages 7-8. These include the lack of UK work experience, references and qualifications; the non-recognition of qualifications and skills gained abroad; limited English language skills and a shortage of appropriate vocational ESOL provision; inadequate IAG and careers coaching; and negative attitudes by the host community.

The consequences of these barriers are that the UK is failing to benefit fully from the talents of refugees and migrants; and while these groups fail to make their way in the labour market, they are less likely to integrate fully into the wider UK society.

The Progress GB partners developed and delivered a variety of pilot learning packages and advice services in several regions of England; one providing a new national service. These innovations were designed to help overcome the barriers to employability and integration. The successful elements of the pilots are described in Chapter 3. The following recommendations are based upon the evidence provided by the pilots and the lessons learned by the Progress GB Development Partnership.

“The consequences of these barriers are that the UK is failing to benefit fully from the talents of refugees and migrants...”

Recommendations

1 Information for new arrivals

All newly arrived migrants including asylum seekers and refugees should be provided with comprehensive information about living and working in the UK. Such information should be regularly updated and available in the relevant mother tongues and include sources and contact details for those seeking more detailed information and advice relating to employment and training. Local authorities should also provide relevant information materials and contact details appropriate to their area for the new and emerging migrant communities who are moving in.

2 Researching the needs

In order to plan and deliver appropriate learning opportunities and advice services in areas of inward migration it is necessary for research to be undertaken in each region and sub-region to identify the needs. It is recommended that the research explores the numbers, characteristics and countries of origin of the migrant communities; their employment status; the level of skills in the use of English; levels of qualifications and competences; existing provision to meet learning and IAG needs and the use that migrant communities make of it; and the ability of mainstream and voluntary organisations to meet the needs of the new arrivals. Such research may be commissioned by regional bodies such as the LSCs or RDAs or by local authorities.

3 Recognising skills and qualifications

In the UK there are few opportunities for refugees and migrants to have skills and qualifications gained overseas assessed, validated and recognised by employers or education and training providers. NARIC provides an equivalency service mainly for academic qualifications but this does not meet the needs of the majority of refugees and migrants. It is therefore recommended that accessible, comprehensive validation services be established in all UK regions. The purpose of such recognition services or centres would be to measure and test the vocational skills of individuals from overseas to determine the extent to which their knowledge and experience meets UK requirements; and to establish the additional learning required to reach UK occupational standards. Such services or centres could be led by regional LSCs and

linked with employers, sector skills councils, further education colleges, universities, professional bodies and JCP in order to assess and test individuals' skills. Guidance could then be offered to migrants and refugees to enable them to adapt and develop their skills in order to rebuild their careers in the UK.

4 Developing and delivering integrated learning programmes

One of the most successful approaches piloted by Progress GB was the integrated learning programme, which was tested in several vocational fields and run in several locations over two years. The majority of the refugee participants successfully completed

the courses and moved on to sustainable employment or higher-level courses. It is therefore recommended that such learning programmes are developed and delivered in all areas where there are high levels of unemployment among refugee communities. Integrated learning programmes

should include skills auditing and bring together vocational and ESOL training; provide appropriate levels of student support including mentoring, personal advisors and financial support; work experience and job coaching; and lead to the gaining of appropriate qualifications.

5 Work experience

The opportunity to experience the culture of the UK work environment and participate in the daily life of the work place has proved to be a very important factor in increasing the employability of unemployed refugees and migrants. Not only do work placements improve the confidence of individuals, they also provide concrete benefits including proven UK work experience and employer references, which increase the chances of the participants' gaining permanent employment. However appropriate work placements can be difficult to find for refugees and migrants. It is therefore recommended that a national system of work placements be introduced, with resources being made available to encourage employers to offer and provide placement opportunities and in-work mentoring for refugees as part of an integrated learning package. Employers' organisations, trade unions and sector skills councils should be encouraged to act as advocates for such a national scheme.

“Accessible, comprehensive validation services should be established in all UK regions”



In addition the Department for Work and Pensions should review the operation of the 16-hour rule, which has prevented refugee participants from taking up work placements if they are in receipt of JSA. Consideration should be given to introducing a system whereby individuals are able to undertake integrated learning programmes involving language and vocational learning including work experience in excess of 16 hours, if they can demonstrate that such a programme will lead to sustainable employment.

6 Forming and sustaining regional and local partnerships

In order to establish the appropriate services to meet the needs of refugees and migrants to improve their employability, make progress in the UK labour market and gain access to relevant information, advice and guidance, it is necessary for a range of organisations to work together to develop and deliver services and provide a network of agencies to whom participants can be referred. Where strong partnerships have been set up with the resources and commitment to identify and solve the problems and work together to introduce new services and improve the accessibility of existing services, the new communities have a better chance of successfully integrating into the regions or sub-regions where they are settling. It is therefore recommended that such partnerships, involving JCP, the LSC, local authorities, voluntary organisations, education and training providers, and other relevant organisations such as health authorities and employers' bodies, be established in all areas where there are new communities of migrants. It is important that these partnerships are effectively led and serviced, and therefore the lead organisation should be clearly identified, and the roles, resources and accountability of the partners and the partnership be established.

7 Specialised services, mainstream and voluntary organisations

The Progress GB partners identified a need for specialist services with expert staff to address the complex needs presented by some refugee and migrant participants. Such services were able to provide advice in areas such as employment law, careers guidance, skills recognition, appropriate learning programmes, job searching etc. The staff also had an understanding of the cultural background of the participants and the barriers that they were facing. Specialised services of this kind were particularly necessary in areas where mainstream organisations were unfamiliar with the issues facing refugees and migrants or where mainstream systems were inappropriate to meet their needs or were inaccessible. It is firstly recommended that specialised services be established to concentrate on improving the employability of refugees in areas where there are high levels of unemployment amongst refugee communities and where no such services exist. Secondly it is recommended that in-service training be provided for staff in mainstream service organisations to enable them to understand and address the needs of refugees and migrants and to make mainstream services more accessible and successful in meeting these needs. In particular JCP staff and those who will be appointed to work in the new Adult Careers Service should be given support and training to enable them to provide for clients from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Building the capacity of voluntary and community organisations to address issues of employability among migrant and refugee groups is also recommended. Such organisations may be the first port of call for groups who are unfamiliar or distrustful of more formal services. These organisations can provide initial guidance and advice on overcoming problems and rebuilding careers if they have the knowledge, skills and contacts to signpost individuals to the relevant employability pathways.



8 Better protection at work

The Progress GB partners assisted migrants who encountered problems at work. These included work-related accidents and injuries, non-payment of the minimum wage, unfair deductions from the pay packet for travel and housing, unfair dismissals, lack of holiday pay, failure to provide contracts of employment etc. Migrants, particularly those with poor English skills, were often unsure about their rights and responsibilities at work. These partners identified a need to provide accessible and independent employment-related advice and legal representation at tribunals. They also recommend that:

- the UK should adopt and implement the European Union Agency and Temporary Workers Directive, since many migrants have fewer rights than other workers because they are employed by agencies on temporary contracts.
- the Gangmasters Licensing Authority powers should be extended to include other sectors of employment and a higher number of inspectors should be employed with greater powers to ensure that the minimum wage and statutory employment rights are enforced.
- Employers should be compelled to ensure that workers receive and understand work contracts including their terms of employment and health and safety regulations.

9 Supporting employers

Progress GB carried out a study involving 68 employers from six regions to identify their perceptions of employing refugees and migrants. The employers varied in size and sector. Over 60% had previous experience of employing workers from these groups.

As part of the research employers were asked about the barriers they perceived to migrants and refugees making progress in the UK labour market. In addition to the barriers related to poor English skills and lack of familiarity with UK work culture, the employers cited their own needs for support to enable them to assist refugees and migrants gain and progress in employment. These included a simpler and more transparent system regarding the documentation required to demonstrate the right to work. Employers needed support in providing induction programmes and language tuition for their employees from migrant backgrounds. It is therefore recommended that

employers have access to clearer advice and guidance on documentation requirements and on the provision of learning opportunities in the workplace.

10 Positive images

The research referred to above demonstrated that the majority of employers are very positive about migrant workers. Indeed many stated that without their migrant workforce they would be unable to continue in business. However they were far less familiar with and positive about refugee workers. The majority did not have positive opinions about refugees as workers. Negative media coverage of refugees and some other groups of migrants has contributed to the perception by employers and the wider society that some categories of migrants are a burden rather than a potential asset to the UK. These perceptions, and the stereotypes they give rise to, create further barriers to refugees gaining appropriate employment. Progress GB recommends that more action be taken to demonstrate that refugees can make a positive contribution to the UK, both in the labour market and in their local communities. The pilot projects recruited many refugees whose achievements were outstanding. Not only did they prove to be dedicated learners, with commitment and motivation to gain employment, they also acted as volunteers in their localities and used their talents and time to support others. There are many positive case stories, which can be used to raise awareness of the contribution that refugees have made to the UK in a range of fields. It is suggested that an information campaign be planned and led by a government task force, involving employers and their organisations, trade unions and regional and voluntary bodies to provide the evidence and positive stories about the skills, talents and strengths of refugees in the UK.



Conclusion

Mainstreaming the successful work of Progress GB

This report has briefly:

- described the barriers to employability and progression in the UK labour market that are experienced by refugees and some migrant groups.
- set out new approaches tested, developed and delivered by Progress GB partners
- identified the successful elements and outcomes of the methodologies and partnerships
- proposed a set of recommendations based upon the lessons learned.

The new learning pathways and advice services developed have been partly funded by ESF through the EQUAL programme, which is now coming to an end. In some cases, most notably that of learndirect Careers Advice, mainstream funding and support have been made available to enable the services to continue. However in several English regions the future of these successful initiatives is less secure in that mainstream organisations have not taken ownership of the new learning pathways and IAG services. It is therefore recommended that the LSCs, JCP, RDAs, local authorities and other national, regional and local bodies consider the contribution made and methods developed in their areas by the Progress GB partners to enable refugees and migrants to overcome the barriers to employability and progress in the UK labour market. The costs of developing these new approaches have already been met and their effectiveness demonstrated. The final recommendation is therefore that mainstream organisations now support the continuation, replication and mainstreaming of the successful pilot projects in order to provide routes to integration and inclusion for refugees and migrants.

“Not only did they prove to be dedicated learners with commitment and motivation to gain employment, they also acted as volunteers in their localities and used their talents and time to support others”



Case Study: Mohammed Barei

Mohammed was born in 1975 in Iran. He obtained a BSc degree in Economics at Firooz-Abad University and subsequently worked in the accounts department of Shiraz Medical University.

His career opportunities declined in 1998 because of political difficulties, and he became a chef and shop assistant at an Iranian pizzeria in Shiraz. These difficulties led him to escape to the UK in 2001. Two years later he obtained refugee status and gained employment as a receptionist at the Midland Refugee Council, Birmingham.

Mohammed was ambitious to progress in the UK labour market, but his qualifications were not recognised, so he decided to set up his own small business. He approached Heartland Homes for assistance in setting up a barbershop business. Heartland Homes enabled him to gain access to advice and training to identify premises that could be used as a barber's shop and to prepare a business plan. His plan was submitted to a charitable trust that provides start-up grants for young entrepreneurs. The trust agreed to help him with a grant and the barber's shop was opened and run successfully in the inner city of Birmingham. In 2006 Mohammed sold the business and bought a café and take-away in a busy outer Birmingham suburb, which is doing well. During the changeover he continued to seek and gain advice from Heartland Homes.

Mohammed had a steep learning curve when he came to the UK. He is acting as a role model for other refugees who are aiming to start their new lives as self-employed people.

Appendix 1: *Main Progress GB reports and products, plus links to further information*

Advice For Life

- *Migrant Workers: A Survey of Employers Attitudes in the Eastern Region*, September 2006, Community Action Research East (CARE) Research and Evaluation Services.
- The Migrant Gateway website: www.migrantgateway.eu.

CURS

- *Employability initiatives for refugees in Europe: looking at and learning from good practice*, January 2006, Dr Jenny Phillimore, Louise Craig, Dr Lisa Goodson and Sian Sankey.
- *Now I do it by myself - Refugees and ESOL*, March 2007, Dr Jenny Phillimore, Dr Ergul Ergun, Dr Lisa Goodson, Deborah Hennessy with BNCN Community Researchers.
- *They do not understand the problem I have – Refugee well being and mental health*, April 2007, Dr Jenny Phillimore, Dr Lisa Goodson, Dr Ergul Ergun, Deborah Hennessy with BNCN Community Researchers.
- *Young refugees' experiences of education*, April 2007, Dr Jenny Phillimore, Dr Lisa Goodson, Dr Ergul Ergun, Deborah Hennessy with BNCN Community Researchers.
- *Refugee and new migrants' knowledge and use of employment services in Birmingham*, March 2007, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham New Communities network, Community Resource and Information Service.
- *Employability pathways: an integrated approach to recognising the skills and experiences of new migrants*, November 2007, Dr Jenny Phillimore, Dr Lisa Goodson, Deborah Hennessy, Dr Ergul Ergun, Ricky Joseph.

learnirect Careers Advice

- A national telephone service offering information, advice and guidance in learning and careers in three languages. The telephone numbers are as follows:

Farsi advice line	0800 093 1116
French advice line	0800 093 1115
Polish advice line	0800 093 1114

The MEET Transnational Partnership

- *Progress GB Study of Employers' Attitudes to Employing Migrants and Refugees*, April 2007.
- *Recognising Migrants' Skills and Qualifications: A Transnational Perspective. Final Report of Working Group 1 of the MEET EQUAL Transnational Partnership*, May 2007.
- *Skills Development for Migrants and Refugees: Final Report of Working Group 2 of the MEET EQUAL Transnational Partnership*, May 2007.

Progress GB South West

- A website (www.progressgb.plymouthmind.org.uk) designed as an information resource for migrants, refugees and local employers.
- A welcome pack for refugees and migrants new to the Plymouth area (www.plymouthmind.org.uk/welcomepack.html).

Skills for Business, The Sheffield College

- *Educating Migrant and Refugee Doctors and Nurses*, July 2007, Dave Pickersgill.
- *Employer Engagement Report*, November 2007, Dave Pickersgill.
- Also available is an interactive IELTS DVD on interview techniques.



Upskill

- *Counting Up – A study to estimate the existing and future numbers of refugees in the East Midlands region*, September 2006, Fiona Aldridge and Yanina Dutton.
- *Working to Rebuild Careers – An assessment of the provision to assist refugees seeking employment in the East Midlands*, Fiona Aldridge, Yanina Dutton, Robert Gray, Anne McLoughlin, Deborah Moss, Ljaja Sterland and Sue Waddington.
- *Support for refugees in Derby – Information about support available for asylum seekers and refugees in Derby in relation to accessing education and employment*, March 2007, Ljaja Sterland.
- *Advising for Adaptation: A guide to personal advisor-mediated IAG, careers and skills adaptation support for migrants and refugees*, November 2007, Robert Gray, Ljaja Sterland and Fiona Aldridge.

Websites

- Equal Works: www.equal-works.com
- NIACE: www.niace.org.uk/ProgressGB
- The MEET Partnership: www.meetequal.org

Appendix 2: *Outcomes for participants in the CURS and NIACE Upskill adaptation pathways*

CURS

Pathway	Number starting	Number completing	Outcomes for completers
Construction*	31	27	4 into construction employment 2 self-employed kitchen fitters 5 into other employment 2 work experience 3 into HE, FE or further training (in construction) 3 awaiting CSCS** re-sit 3 seeking employment 5 unknown
Social research*	40	38	24 in employment (2 also engaged in HE) 2 self-employed 1 into Higher Education 1 retired 10 unknown
General maintenance*	44	41	9 in construction employment 9 in other employment 5 into Further or Higher Education 6 unemployed 12 unknown
Business administration	8	5	1 in business administration employment 2 seeking employment 1 in voluntary work 1 unknown
Health care	12	12	2 employed in health care 4 applying to full-time nursing programme 2 seeking employment in health care whilst awaiting IELTS or PLAB exams 4 unknown

* The construction, social research and general maintenance pathways were each run as two separate courses. These are the combined figures.

** CSCS = Construction Skills Certification Scheme



Upskill*

Outcomes	Number of refugees	Number of migrant workers	Total number of participants
<i>1. Employment status upon accessing the project</i>			
Employed	7	5	12
Unemployed	44	16	60
<i>2. Education and training gained through the project</i>			
Started courses	38	12	50
Completed courses	35	11	46
<i>Level of courses completed</i>			
Below Level 1	1	1	2
Level 1	12	7	19
Level 2	8	3	11
Level 3	13	0	13
Level 4	1	0	1
<i>3. Subsequent education and training undertaken</i>			
Courses being attended	21	4	25
<i>Level of courses attended</i>			
Below Level 1	0	0	0
Level 1	1	2	3
Level 2	2	1	3
Level 3	5	1	6
Level 4	13	0	13
<i>4. Employment status upon leaving the project</i>			
Employed	30	15	45
Unemployed	21	6	27

*119 refugees and migrant workers registered on the NIACE Upskill project. Five months after the completion of the project, a survey was undertaken to discover the outcomes for the participants. 72 participants were contacted.

Refugees and migrants to the UK face considerable barriers to progress in the UK labour market. Some 70% of refugees are unemployed and economic migrants are over represented in low paid, low status employment.

A partnership of 11 organisations from 7 regions in England, led by NIACE and partly funded by ESF/EQUAL, has developed and tested a range of new approaches in the areas of lifelong learning, recognising skills and qualifications, and information, advice and guidance, aimed at overcoming the barriers to integration and inclusion faced by refugees and migrants.

The partners worked over 3 years with 7000 refugees and migrants and recorded in detail the work with 700 of these.

This report provides a description of the processes, learning packages and IAG services designed and implemented; the lessons learned; and the successful methods developed to overcome barriers.

The report puts forward ten recommendations based upon the evidence gained from the pilot initiatives, which should be borne in mind by policy makers and practitioners when considering how the integration and employability of migrants can be advanced.

further information

Contact email: progressGB@niace.org.uk. Further information plus links to Progress GB reports and materials: NIACE: www.niace.org.uk/ProgressGB
Equal Works: www.equal-works.com The MEET Transnational Partnership: www.meetequal.org