

# ReStart: Refugee Integration Project



Ariennir yn Rhannol gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Part Funded by  
**Welsh Government**

Caiff y prosiect AilGychwyn: Integreiddio Ffoaduriaid ei ariannu'n rhannol drwy Gronfa Lloches, Ymfudo ac Integreiddio yr Undeb Ewropeaidd. Gwneud rheoli llif ymfudo'n fwy effeithiol ar draws yr Undeb Ewropeaidd.

The ReStart: Refugee Integration project is part-funded through the European Union Asylum Migration Integration Fund. Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.

## Increasing Employability Opportunities for Refugees in Wales

### Introduction to the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project

The Welsh Government has established an innovative programme of support for refugees through the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project.

It aims to deliver an ambitious and innovative integration support programme, primarily in Wales' four asylum dispersal clusters (Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham). The project also aims to improve access to language tuition, employability support and local cultural knowledge to aid integration. Our Clients receive a holistic assessment of their needs and be routed through targeted support to enhance their efforts to integrate into society. The project plays a key part in the Welsh Government's commitment to develop a 'Nation of Sanctuary'.

The project has four interlinking elements:

- The Integration Centre;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Hubs;
- Pan-Wales Employer Engagement; and
- Development of a Wales-wide refugee integration website.

### The Integration Centre

The Integration Centre provides a dedicated advice and drop-in service for individuals in the locations of Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham. It undertakes holistic assessments of needs for language tuition, job skills and other skills training and will appoint a caseworker or mentor to each client to maintain regular contact, identify and resolve barriers to integration and monitor progress over time.

If individuals accessing the service require language support, the Integration Centre refers them to the ESOL Hub. Where they require employability support, the integration centre initially arranges for participation in existing employment support schemes, such as Communities4Work; and where appropriate, also provides in-house job skills training, for example, help with CV writing, understanding Welsh or UK legislation as it relates to workplace standards, achieving health and safety certificates, etc. The Integration Centre also arranges for recognition of qualifications or support workplace Recognition of Prior Learning, where possible through the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC). NARIC provide the only official source of information on international education and training systems and wide-ranging international qualifications and skills attained from outside the UK. In addition to this, the Integration Centre operates a 'Barriers Fund' which ensures that the service is flexible to meet the specific needs of service users.

## ESOL Hubs



Welsh Government provided funding to develop the sustainable Cardiff Regional ESOL Assessment Central Hub (REACH) over the last two years, which undertakes language proficiency assessments of those requiring language tuition, a central database of ESOL provision in the area and more appropriate routing of individuals to a class which will aid their language acquisition. The ReStart project has rolled out this service to the other three asylum dispersal areas in Wales – Swansea, Newport and Wrexham.

The establishment of ESOL Hubs for each of the Welsh dispersal areas supports individuals to access ESOL provision more quickly and support better progression as they are allocated a class more closely aligned to their ability, rather than on the basis of their immigration status. The hubs are centrally administered at a location in each dispersal area, with a peripatetic service provided by adult learning partners.

Beneficiaries had started to access the services from June 2019 in Cardiff, as recruitment is completed, databases and processes developed and physical locations equipped. The other locations have been accessible since July 2019.



## Welsh Government ReStart : Refugee Integration Project



The Provider of these services is a consortium led by Cardiff and Vale College and also including Gower College (Swansea), Coleg Gwent (Newport) and Newport City Council, Coleg Cambria (Wrexham), and Adult Learning Wales.

Both the Integration Centres and ESOL hubs are co-located within the following confirmed places:

- **Cardiff** – Cardiff and Vale College (located in REACH City Centre Campus, Dumballs Road);
- **Newport** – Newport City Council and Coleg Gwent (located at the Central Library, Newport);
- **Swansea** – Gower College Swansea (located at The Kingsway Centre, Swansea);
- **Wrexham** – Coleg Cambria (located at Yale Campus, Wrexham).

## **Pan-Wales Employer Engagement**

The project funds three Regional Employer Engagement Officer roles, which will operate across Wales, increasing workplace opportunities for the individuals accessing the hubs. These roles operate on a regional basis (two officers in South Wales and one in North Wales), working closely with employers and identifying opportunities in the local job market to demonstrate the assets of our clients.

The roles will work to identify large employers and Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who work across Wales with a view to promoting refugee employment/placement opportunities in each dispersal area. The project aims to approach Welsh Government 'Anchor companies' and others to have a wider impact.



The Regional Employer Engagement Officers will also seek to educate employers in relation to the differences between refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants and where employment restrictions apply.

## **Development of a Wales-wide refugee integration website**

Due to the use of innovative approaches through the project and the time-limited nature of this funding, it is crucial that the lessons learned from the project are shared for future development of this kind of service across Wales. A bilingual, well-promoted website will be developed to demonstrate the effectiveness of targeted approaches within this project (as well as other integration activities with migrant Communities in Wales), develop a repository of data and resources on migration and resettlement and underpin partnership working between local and national organisations and individuals working in this field.

The website will be managed by Welsh Government through Objective Connect, which has already been utilised on other Welsh Government projects such as the Valleys Taskforce. Equality officials are currently in initial discussions with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership to see how they may be able to support this work.

## **Our clients and their employment in the UK**

It is known that many of our clients were employed before they arrived in the UK [1] with qualifications, skills and experience from a wide variety of roles, but once they are permitted to work in the UK many struggle to find jobs that match their abilities. The outcome of this is that valuable skills, experience or qualifications are left unnoticed and cannot be utilised by businesses. The "ReStart: Refugee Integration Project", aims to both prepare for the local employment markets and help businesses in Wales to understand the potential benefits of employing these candidates.

## What you should know:

Under The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees; refugees are permitted to work in the UK without any restrictions regarding chosen profession or skill level. It is important to remember that the rules relating to asylum seekers are different to refugees as due to immigration restrictions they are generally prohibited from working in the UK as it is determined that asylum seekers are “*people who have left their country of nationality and applied for protection in another country, but their application has not yet been concluded*”. Support given within the scope of the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project only applies to refugees. There is a useful link that can be used to check if an individual holds the correct permissions to work in the UK: [www.gov.uk/legal-right-work-uk](http://www.gov.uk/legal-right-work-uk).

## What barriers do our clients face when they look for work?

Often these individuals have worked in their countries of origin and hold qualifications or university level education [1] and according to research by the Nuffield Foundation [2] many bring skills and experience from a wide variety of roles to the UK. They are highly motivated and keen to find work and make a positive contribution to the local economy, this group of people have a 73% higher retention rate in jobs than the general US population [3]; however, often face a number barriers in finding fulfilling employment [4]:

- English Language ability.
- Gaps in their employment history.
- Lack of work experience in the UK.
- Limited knowledge of the local job market.
- Unfamiliarity with recruitment processes.
- No access to references from previous employment.
- No cultural expectation of work in original country (particularly applicable to females).
- Difficulty in recognising previous qualifications and experience.
- Employer perception that they are over-qualified or under-qualified for roles.
- Employer uncertainty over their right to work and restrictions.

Many vacancies are advertised online or via business networks and do not reach the refugee community. These individuals can and do find work, but this tends to be within their own communities through word of mouth or in the low-skilled end of the employment market, earning 55% less per week than the UK-born employees and 38% less per hour [5].



## What does the “ReStart: Refugee Integration Project offer to it’s clients?

The ReStart: Refugee Integration Project has been designed to provide tailored specialist support for clients, to help them overcome the barriers to employment. At the beginning of their journey, each individual will receive a holistic assessment that identifies any barriers that they are facing regarding integration and strives to mitigate those barriers by offering services within the project or identifying referral opportunities that suit the individual’s needs. This can include:

- A language assessment and enrolment on an appropriate English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course.
- Employability support including core employability skills and digital skills, job search, interview skills, CV building, personal brand and self-employment.
- Provide support to clients who need UK recognition of qualifications and experience that have been gained outside the UK using National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC).
- Arrange work experience or work placements with employers to help overcome gaps in employment and experience of working in the UK.



## What does the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project offer to businesses?

Some businesses in Wales have recruited refugees, yet there is still a high unemployment rate [6] others may have considered recruiting refugees but have some reservations [3] and may be unaware of the many benefits other businesses have experienced when hiring these resilient and determined individuals. The ReStart: Refugee Integration Project can provide support to businesses through the three “Regional Employer Engagement Officers” (REEO), who operate in the four Welsh regional areas; Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. The REEO’s primary role is to work closely with businesses who have considered recruiting refugees and address any concerns they may have. The REEO’s offer a range of benefits to businesses, which are:

- The REEOs can work with all types of businesses, answer any questions and highlight the benefits of recruiting this group of individuals.
- Businesses will have an opportunity to expand their search for suitable employees by including these candidates with useful skills and experience.
- The REEOs will regularly liaise with the integration centres and maintain strong relationships to share information of clients who are work ready.



- Businesses can choose to offer work placements or work experience to our clients.
- Some candidates are keen to better their English through being in a work environment. Work experience or work placements can help individuals improve their language skills.
- REEO'S can offer on-going follow up sessions with both the client and employer to receive updates on progress.
- The REEOs can coordinate local employer engagement sessions for employers to share best practice and aid in information sharing between sectors.

In recruitment although widening scope of applicants to include these candidates is encouraged, the candidate most suitable for the job must be always be chosen. If there is a person with a protected characteristic (e.g. a refugee) they cannot be chosen over someone who does not, if they are not as suitable for the advertised position. However if two candidates were equally suitable for the job and one of them is a refugee and it is known that it may be more difficult for them to gain employment elsewhere than the other candidate, then it would be suitable to consider this as a preference for their employment. It is important note that there is no obligation for a business to recruit candidates through the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project, as all recruitment processes and decisions are under the full control and independence of the employers.

## **How does your business benefit?**

- Our clients come to the UK from a range of backgrounds with both educational and work related skills and experiences [1].
- A large proportion of these candidates are highly educated. UK Labour Market research stipulates that more refugees (31%) were in education after the age of 20, compared to UK nationals (23%) [7].
- Research by TENT [3] has shown that this group of individuals are highly motivated to find and sustain employment, both as part of developing their new lives in the UK and also to make a positive contribution to their local community.
- Many of these candidates speak several languages, and are keen to develop their English skills further.
- Many of our clients have experienced adversity in their countries of origin and have been forced to leave their homes, move to another country and start a new life in the UK which demonstrates their resilience, determination and resourcefulness [8].
- Our clients can give businesses the opportunity to develop existing employees by giving them the opportunity to train, support and mentor new starters, which in turn assists with successfully integrating refugees into businesses. Research by Business in the Community [9] showed 90% of businesses doing this benefitted.
- The return on investment from hiring refugees as employees has been calculated to be positive in 75% of cases, with return to be between 44% and 706% [10].

## Regional Employer Engagement Officers Contact Information

If you are interested in more information about recruiting refugees from the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project and would like to speak to the Employer Engagement Officers for your region please contact:

<b>North Wales</b>	<b>Wrexham</b> Graham Hughes Email: <a href="mailto:refugees@gov.wales">refugees@gov.wales</a> Tel: 0300 062 5365
<b>South Wales</b>	<b>Swansea</b> Nadir Taha Email: <a href="mailto:refugees@gov.wales">refugees@gov.wales</a> Tel: 0300 2500 29
	<b>Cardiff and Newport</b> Lydia Brownlow Email: <a href="mailto:refugees@gov.wales">refugees@gov.wales</a> Tel: 0300 2509 47



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