

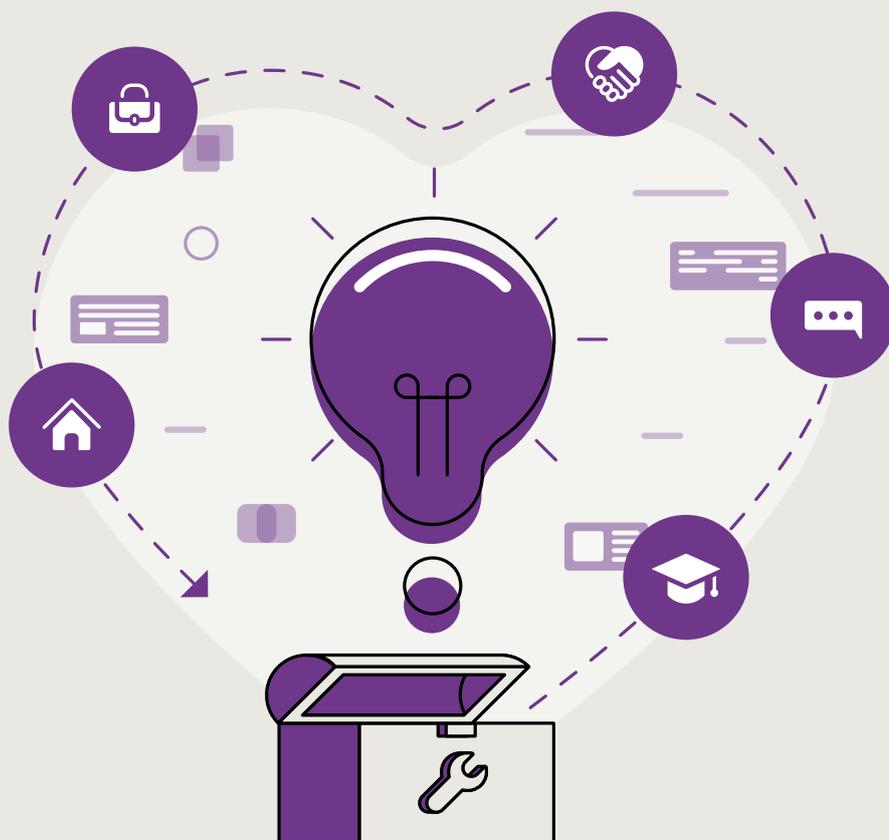
# ReStart: Refugee Integration Project



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.

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## Tools for harnessing the skills of refugees in your workplace

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## Introduction

The purpose of this Toolkit is to support you as an employer in Wales by providing important information, best practice and tips for supporting refugees into employment. You may have been interested in employing refugees in the past but not known where to start and whether there were legal or cultural pitfalls which need to be avoided. The Toolkit aims to give you clear answers to the questions which some you may have.

The Welsh Government is committed to helping Wales to become a **Nation of Sanctuary**. This means supporting people seeking sanctuary to rebuild their lives in Wales and to help communities integrate effectively. We believe that businesses have a vital role to play in achieving the Nation of Sanctuary vision and we are sharing these tools to help businesses to do so.

The majority of refugees were working in their home countries before they arrived in the UK and have skills and experience in a wide variety of roles. However many refugees struggle to navigate various barriers in the UK labour market to find fulfilling employment. It is hoped that this Toolkit supports local and national companies to work with refugees at all stages of the employment process and create a diverse, inclusive workforce.

If you still have questions which this Toolkit has been unable to answer, the Welsh Government's ReStart: Refugee Integration project can provide support directly to your organisation. More information about the project is at the end of this toolkit and we can be contacted at: [refugees@gov.wales](mailto:refugees@gov.wales)



# What is the challenge we want to solve?

## Refugee employment compared to the wider population

**Figure 1: How do labour market outcomes differ between refugees and other foreign-born groups? [1]**

Variable	Refugees	Other foreign-born
In employment	50%	70%
High skilled job	24%	44%
Annual earnings	£16,000	£26,000

The employment rate for refugees is lower than that of UK nationals and other foreign-born migrants [2] and their average earning tends to be considerably lower and in lower skilled jobs [1]. 5 years after coming to the UK, only a quarter of refugees have obtained employment, the lowest of all migrant groups. After 10 years, their employment rate has been found to reach 56% but it remains below the employment rate of native-born persons in most countries.

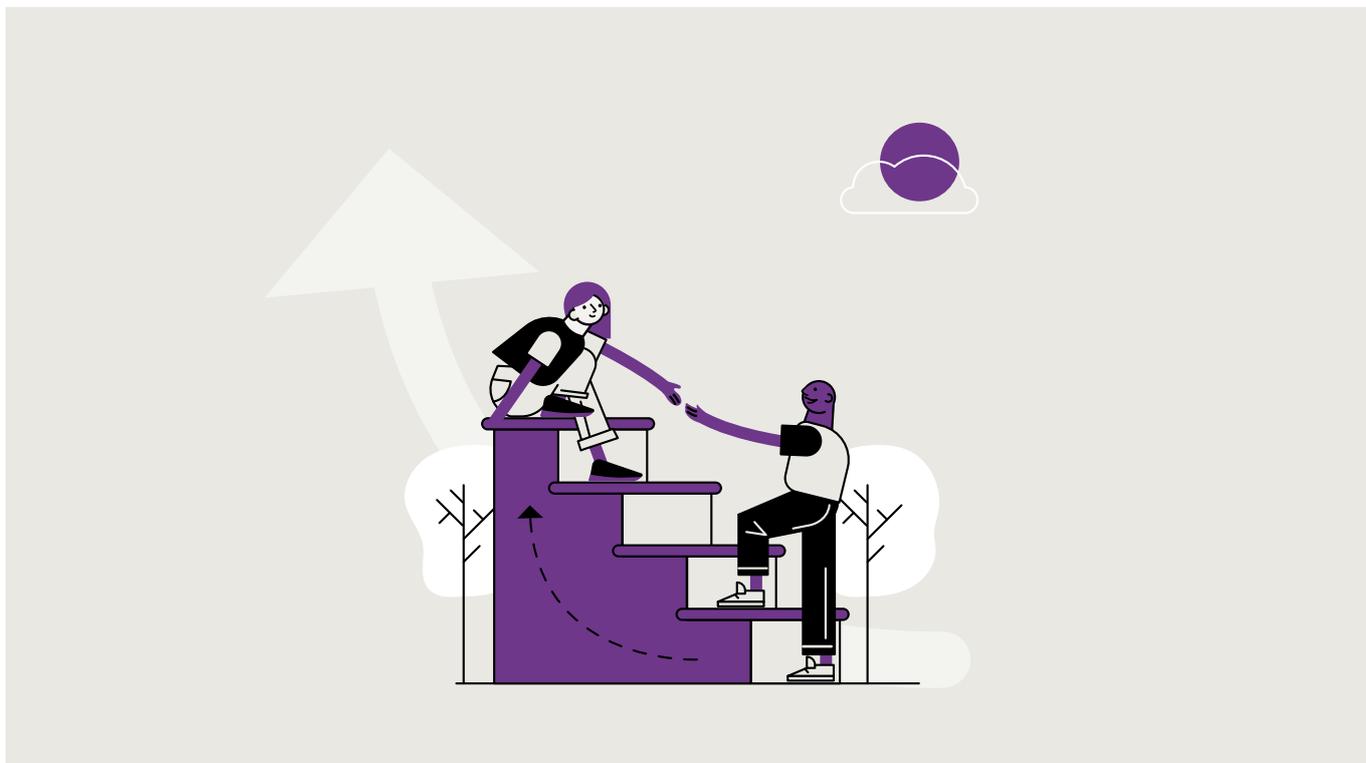
Refugees are much more likely to be overqualified than other migrants. Almost 60% of employed refugees who have achieved qualifications in tertiary education in the EU are overqualified for the jobs they occupy. This is double the rate compared to their native-born counterparts [2].

Within the refugee population, women are least likely to be employed [1]. The employment rate for refugee women is on average 45%, whereas employment rates for male refugees is 62%. The percentage of other non-EU born women in employment is 51% [1]. Oxfam delivered a series of projects in Wales focussed to support female refugees and asylum seekers into employment (see reference [3] to read more about this).

The reasons for these inequalities are complex but refugees face a number of barriers to employment which can be addressed with relatively straightforward solutions. You can read more about these in **Annex 2**. We have developed this toolkit to address this challenge because Wales is currently missing out on rare skills which refugees possess and this under-employment makes true community integration very difficult.

The majority of refugees were employed in their country of origin in a variety of different industries. The ReStart Project has data on the number of beneficiaries in the ReStart Project with experience in different jobs/sectors in their countries of origin for Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. If you would like to find out more about this please contact: [refugees@gov.wales](mailto:refugees@gov.wales)

This toolkit sets out to address these challenges by working collaboratively with Welsh employers. Below you will find tools to understand how and why you should consider employing refugees within your organisation.



## Why should I be thinking of employing refugees?

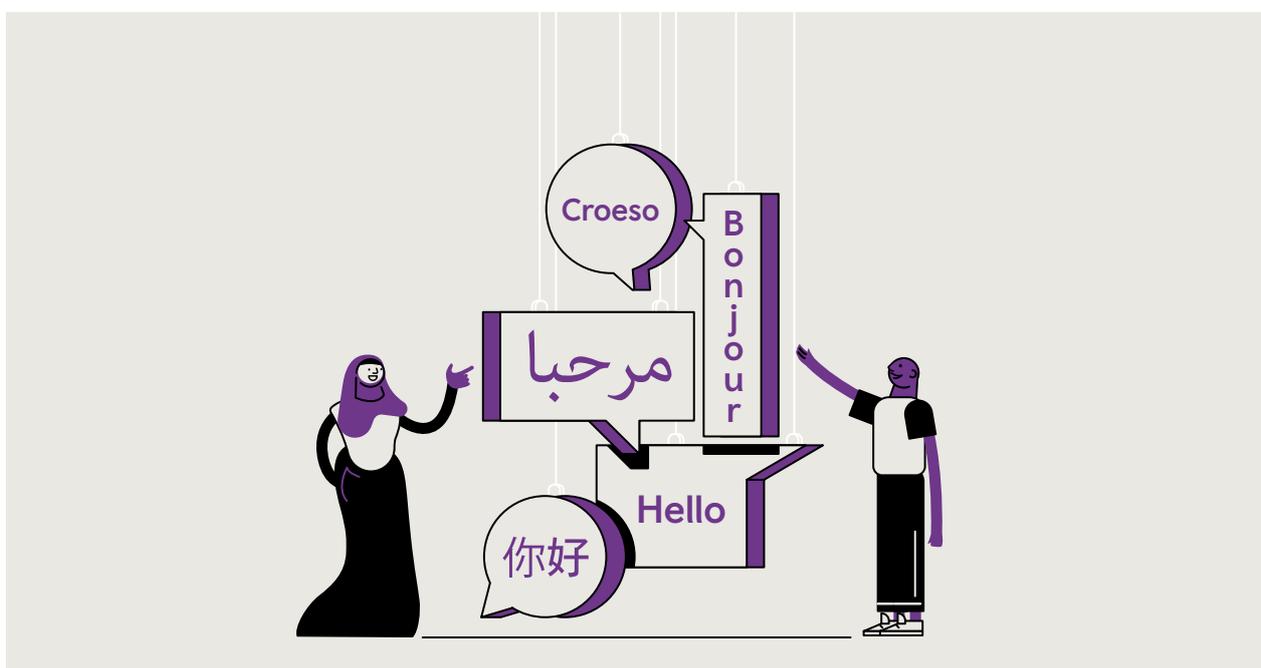
Although employment rates are lower for refugees than many other communities within the UK, we are not urging businesses to employ refugees out of sympathy or charity. Refugees are forced to leave their countries because of war or persecution, meaning individuals with high levels of qualification or high work ethic can be displaced as easily as anyone else. Those who make it to the UK have also had to demonstrate resilience, resourcefulness and aptitude – an impressive mix for any employee. Not all refugees will have the right skills for your organisation but we are confident that you can find many of the skills you need from within refugee communities in the UK.

### Qualifications and Higher Skills

Refugees come to the UK from a range of backgrounds of educational qualifications and work related skills [1]. A large proportion of these candidates are **highly educated**. 45% of refugees held a qualification before travelling to the UK [1]. UK Labour Market research found that more refugees were in tertiary education in their countries of origin than UK nationals [2]. These **highly skilled** and educated individuals can be great assets to your business, enabling you to utilise higher level qualifications from individuals with extensive lived experiences.

### Language Skills

Many refugees speak several languages. They are also well-motivated to develop their English language skills further. Integration within the workplace will help with this. Languages such as **Arabic, Mandarin** and **French**, can be very useful in the **post-EU trading environment** and these are widely spoken by refugees in Wales. If your business is aiming to expand into international markets, employing refugees can often give you the language needs you seek in addition to cultural, religious or geographic insights which cannot easily be found through other means.



## Cultural Insights

Refugees come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures who can offer **new ways of thinking** and understanding of how to appeal to culturally diverse customers. Highly diverse teams are 33% more likely to outperform competitors on profitability. Diversity can lead to 57% better collaboration [5]. As well as understanding language, cultural fluency is also important in the international market. This can help your business to understand what products are likely to sell in different markets or knowledge of competitors in that country. Having team members on board who understand this can give you an advantage in that market.

## High employee retention rates

**The majority of employers who were at first apprehensive to employ refugees were surprised to find they had few or no difficulties with their daily work and were satisfied** with their work [11] and employers have identified a **higher retention rate** for this group of determined individuals compared to other employees [1]. This is attributed to the loyalty that these individuals say they have to the company that they work for. Some companies worry that refugees may start work in the UK and shortly return to their country of origin. However, this is in fact a misconception. The majority of refugees stay in the UK for the long term. After gaining refugee status they can apply to extend their stay in the UK.

## Return on investment

Businesses can develop existing employees' skills by giving them the opportunity to train and mentor new starters, which in turn assists with successfully integrating refugees. Business in the Community's research [6] found 90% of businesses doing this found it benefitted their workforce. We encourage you to look at this opportunity as a long term investment and the value that the individuals can add to your business. **The return on investment from hiring refugees as employees has been calculated to be positive in the majority of cases.** The Hague Process [4] collected data before and after employing refugees and discovered there were high returns by doing so, both financially and in terms of quality of work and with a **return rate up to 706%.**

## Resilience and Resourcefulness

Most refugees have experienced significant adversity and trauma in their countries of origin over coming persecution and often enduring a difficult journey to the UK [8]. These individuals often possess great resilience as a result of their experiences. **Determination, resourcefulness and adaptability learnt from these experiences** can be utilised in the workplace and strengthen your business [9].

## Social responsibility

60% of millennials intend to join companies with a positive social purpose embedded in their ethos [12]. Supporting this group of people into employment is a way your company can **lead by example** and ensure it is a workplace to be proud of, contributing to **community cohesion and refugee integration.**

## What do I need to know?

### What is the difference between a refugee and asylum seeker?

There is often confusion about what these terms mean. When someone seeking sanctuary arrives in a country they will apply for 'refugee status.' When this application is made the individual will be considered an '**asylum seeker**' and they will await a decision from the UK Government about whether they have a valid claim for international protection.

An asylum seeker has not yet had their refugee status determined and is waiting to hear the outcome of their application. Whereas a '**refugee**' has had their application approved and given refugee status or another form of protection. Refugees are forced to flee their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions.

### Do refugees have the right to work?

Yes – Refugees are not restricted in the type of work they are permitted to undertake in the UK. They have the **same rights to employment as British citizens**, they are not subject to the visa system which migrants are subject to. Work permission is valid, along with a National Insurance Number, for the length of their granted leave and they can apply for further leave to remain.

Refugees may need to apply for further Leave to Remain in the UK after their initial period. During the application period, the refugee continues to have the same rights to employment and training as before, as long as they have applied for the leave before their current leave period has expired. If you are recruiting refugees who have made applications for further leave to remain or have an appeal pending against a decision on an application, or have employees in this situation, you should complete the Employer Checking Service (ECS) form. [www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status](http://www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status)

**Important Note:** it is the responsibility of the employer to check that the individual has a 'work permitted' status and to use ECS to check that they have applied for further leave (if required). This is easy to do but failure to do so may result in a significant fine.

## **How does someone prove that they are a refugee?**

When a person gets their refugee status, The Home office will issue a card known as a Biometric Residence Permit, which shows the period of the card's validation, personal details of the refugee, evidence of entitlement to work in the UK, access to public funds, and the type of protection they have been granted.

Individuals will get a National insurance Number (NINO) and can apply for a Travel Document which can be used as their Passport.

The Home Office has an easy-to-use online checking service for employers and individuals who wish to ensure that a biometric residence permit is valid. Details can be found at:

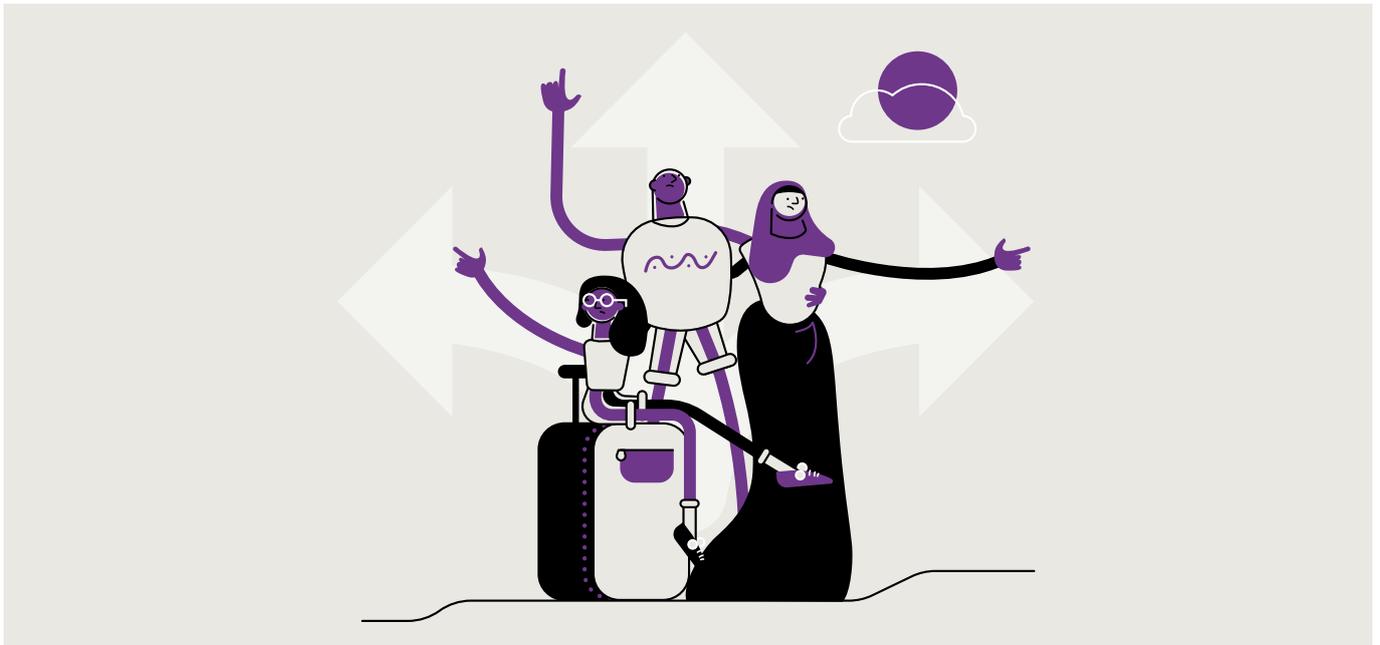
[www.gov.uk/check-biometric-residence-permit](https://www.gov.uk/check-biometric-residence-permit)

## What do I need to consider?

Refugees come from a variety of different countries with cultures very different to the UK. It is important to try to gain an understanding of an individual's culture so you can be prepared for differences and behaviours that may appear strange to you. Since arriving in the UK Refugees are likely to be learning about British culture and their rights and responsibilities in the UK, but there may still be unfamiliar customs which seem strange.

Some individuals may wish to work part time to continue studying English or take English evening classes. The workplace is an excellent setting to improve English language skills. It is recommended that a mentor who is fluent in English to be partnered with a refugee and to teach them about the job role using the terminology of your company and promote integration, which in turn increases employee retention for both new and current employees.

Due to the persecution, torture and other traumatic events that some of our clients suffered in their home country, as well as the difficult journey to the UK and leaving all their friends and family, some candidates may be overcoming mental health struggles. Our clients demonstrate remarkable resilience despite all these setbacks. Employment is a vital factor in helping refugees to avoid ongoing mental health issues, as unemployment in a strange land prevents our clients from having purpose in their lives and contributing to the society which has provided them with sanctuary. The strength in character to overcome these difficulties is a valuable trait. You may already have mental health support services and well-being services in place for your employees, it may be helpful to signpost these to candidates, as it may make them feel more at ease starting a job and knowing there will be support there.



# I am interested in employing refugees – where do I start?

This toolkit can help you to ensure you can find and attract refugee applicants, remove any unfair recruitment barriers you may have, and make your workplace inclusive for the benefit of all.

Recruiting refugees is not particularly complex but it does require you to think more carefully about how your organisation may be unintentionally restricting applications from refugees.

In this chapter, we will give you the tools to get started. The flowchart below outlines the recruitment journey.

## Finding Applicants

- Do not rely on typical recruitment channels. The next chapter will help you understand where to advertise roles.
- Refugees often utilise charities and colleges to meet their education and employability support needs.



## Removing Barriers

- Carefully consider the requirements of the role. For example, does it really need a GCSE in English?
- Consider unconscious bias of recruitment staff - could you use a 'name-blind' recruitment exercise?
- Be mindful of the costs required to apply and attend an interview. Could you encourage informal attire for the interview and minimise the need for pre-prepared presentations.



## Inclusive workplace

- Consider whether you could provide English language training within the workplace. This has been found to be effective and helps you to ensure sector terminology is well-understood.
- Encourage two-way knowledge exchange between refugee employees and others. This is likely to improve productivity and job retention for all, as working for your company has an added cultural dimension.
- Understanding the cultural and religious needs of your employees and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate this, where possible.

## Job Design

You may already have a vacancy which you are aiming to fill. If that is the case, consider your person specification carefully. Sometimes organisations include essential requirements (such as a GCSE in English) when the role itself does not require this level of knowledge. Refugees have not often been through the British schooling system so GCSEs are rare, and English language proficiency will be variable. However, refugees are highly motivated to learn the language and are likely to be able to adapt quickly.

If the job role has not yet been designed, consider the rare labour market skills which a refugee candidate could bring (see [previous chapter](#)) to your organisation.

## Advertising your role

Once you have your job description and person specification, you will wish to ensure you attract refugee candidates. The first stage of this process will be understanding the links to refugee communities in the areas where your business operates ([see the next chapter](#)).

If you are not able to work with an organisation which supports refugees directly, you will need to ensure your application documents are as accessible as possible. Ensure the language used is free of jargon and complex grammar, where possible. The [Hemingway App](#) is a great way of ensuring your text is easy to read.

State that you particularly welcome applications from refugees. If you are using 'name blind' recruitment, state this on the job advert to increase the confidence of potential refugee applicants. Carefully consider whether other information you are requesting may unintentionally reveal the migrant background of an individual, such as school attended. More information about name blind recruitment can be found [here](#).

Include details of inclusive practices which you are implementing in your workplace in your advert. If you are able to offer workplace English language provision this is likely to be a significant draw. Stating your commitment to supporting cultural and religious observances will also be useful.

## Assessing applicants

Utilise 'name blind' recruitment to ensure the unconscious biases of any recruitment staff can be kept to a minimum. More information about avoiding unconscious bias can be found [here](#).

Consider the proportionality of discarding applications because of spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. If the role requires excellent written communication skills, this would be understandable. However, if this is a more manual role you may unintentionally discard refugee applications when you would probably value work ethic, resourcefulness and resilience as more important characteristics of a good employee.

At interview, some candidates may not wish to shake hands for religious reasons. Once you understand this it should not negatively impact an applicant.

Allow the applicant to check their understanding of the questions being asked. English (or Welsh) is likely to be one of several languages which the applicant speaks.

## Offering a role

If you feel confident that the refugee applicant is best suited to the role, you will need to undertake a Right to Work check. This is a quick and simple process which the UK Government administers to ensure employers are only employing those with the right to work in the UK. Every refugee will have a Biometric Residence Permit (or BRP) which is their proof of the right to work in the UK. You will need to ring the UK Government helpline and quote the number on the BRP for a quick check of the Home Office database. More information about Right to Work checks can be found [here](#).

Once this has been done and the right to work has been confirmed, you can discuss any reasonable adjustments which may be needed for your workplace to be as inclusive as possible.



# How do I find Refugees that want to work in my Sector?

There are a few routes to finding suitable refugee candidates but our advice essentially boils down one thing – consider who knows the refugees in your local area.

The Welsh Government's ReStart Regional Employment Engagement Officers (REEOs) can connect you with project clients who are looking for work and help identify suitable candidates for the job roles you are looking to fill. The REEOs will guide you through the recruitment process and answer any questions you may have. The ReStart project will run until the end of December 2021.

If you are reading this from 2022 onwards, you can check what other employment support services are available by emailing the Welsh Government Refugee mailbox at [refugees@gov.wales](mailto:refugees@gov.wales). You may also be able to find help by engaged with refugee support services which have meaningful links with refugees in your area. These groups are often best placed to understand refugee employability needs.

Most of these services in Wales support refugees with employability skills and ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) needs and can promote your employment opportunities to suitable candidates whom access their services.

For a good understanding of which charities work with refugees in the areas in which you operate, visit the Welsh Government's Sanctuary website and search for the local authority area: [sanctuary.gov.wales/dewis](https://sanctuary.gov.wales/dewis)

You may find it useful to speak to all or some of these organisations to gain more information about the local refugee population.

As well as the support services mentioned above you can contact:

## **ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) Providers**

These providers offer English Language classes to refugees and would understand their aspirations and levels of English the cohort would have. In the four asylum dispersal areas of Wales (Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham), regional ESOL assessment central hubs (also known as REACH Hubs) operate to bring all ESOL providers together. You can find out more at [reach.wales](https://reach.wales)

## **The Refugee Employment Network**

The Refugee Employment Network aims to:

**Broker opportunities:** connecting employers with appropriate local, regional and national service providers, and vice versa.

**Develop best practice:** collating research and data to evidence best practice in service areas and businesses sectors.

**Provide advice and guidance:** proactively offering support to member organisations to create and attain standards for meaningful and long-lasting refugee employment.

**Leveraging resources and support:** finding funding and opportunities that could support meaningful job creation and employment support programmes for refugees.

You can find out more about the Refugee Employment Network here:

[refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk/](https://refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk/)

### **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus**

The job centre engages with a large number of people searching for work on a daily basis and are used to working with refugees and asylum seekers, staff would be able to give guidance and support as well as a link to finding suitable candidates.

# Effective Business Practices

Several pieces of research and previous employability toolkits have been analysed and the recommendations for best practice in Refugee Employability have been divided into common themes.

## Common Recommendations for Businesses

1. Increase work-based ESOL, sector-based ESOL and accredited employability ESOL to ensure language progression and employment readiness [5] maximising the use of existing resources to tackle language barriers.
2. Increase conversational ESOL provision, working with native speakers wherever possible. [5]
3. Training, to develop skills and ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are able to look for work. [6]
4. Provide in-work support to sustain employment [5] 1:1 support is key in determining individual requirements [6] Peer-to-peer mentoring and support. [3]
5. Working with partners to ensure that frontline staff have an awareness and understanding of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers as part of their workforce development. [6]
6. Encourage early labour market integration. [5]
7. Encourage social connections and networks. [5]
8. Audit the skills and experience of refugees [7] and increase skills assessments and skills recognition services for refugees. [5]
9. Refer refugees between employment programmes where beneficial. [7]
10. Working with partners to ensure that frontline staff have an awareness and understanding of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers as part of their workforce development. [6]
11. Information advice and guidance and employment support to inform aspirations and job search strategies. [6]

# Case studies of effective practices

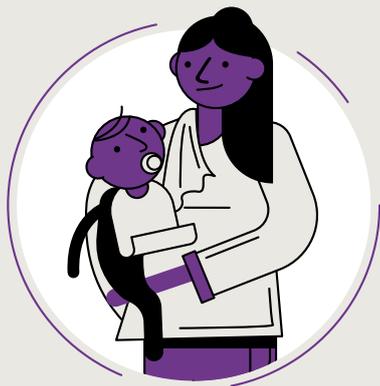
## 1 – Considering skills and qualifications needed for the role

### Attributes

Understanding the personal attributes and qualities a person carries can be a helpful way to see how a person would fit into a team or the potential for personal and professional growth. For example someone may not have the skills for the job right away but has the discipline and patience to learn. The team may be dominated by certain personalities and finding a candidate who will fit in well to a team is essential to keeping new and current employees working well collaboratively.

The Sanctuary in Wales study [3] used 'The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach' (SLA) a method of understanding the lives of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, used extensively by Oxfam and other international development organisations. It helps people understand and address their own poverty from a holistic perspective rather than simply addressing in isolation the surface problem that a person has no job or appears to suffer from depression. Oxfam advocates for ongoing training and sharing of practice which would strengthen this approach.

The SLA has significant potential to build on community level work already being undertaken by a range of third sector and statutory agencies and can offer a bridge between work supporting communities and support directed at individuals. It could be adapted to be used by a business to support a new employee who has come from a background with challenging personal circumstances. The advantage of this approach is that it does not require your business to create lots of support but simply points out existing support services and reap the benefits of an employee increasing their confidence, becoming more aware of their own personal qualities, improved ability to make decisions, take up learning opportunities and being successful in taking up and maintaining employment. Your company would not have to provide SLA but could **refer an employee to an organisation like Oxfam that is already practiced in offering this support.**



## Amina's case study.

### Case Study 1

“As a young single mother, Amina\* was struggling to cope with having a baby to care for without the support of family or friends close to her. She didn't know where to go to for information about the services she could access, and felt isolated and excluded from participating in mainstream activities. Since attending the SLA women's group meetings and using the various tools, she has been able to identify and explore assets that are available, such as free access to learning and skills offered by community services such as the library. As she put it, “it's something that gets you thinking about your day-to-day life and you start to think about the people that come in and out of your life and the effect they have on your livelihood”.

In the months since joining the SLA project, she has attended interviewing skills training, a parliamentary training workshop and signed up at her local college to take up a course of study with the hope of going on to university. Now she says she is ready to meet with policy makers to raise issues that affect her as a single mother as well as other women in the group, such as the high transport cost and the poor childcare support for women with young children.”

\*not her real name

### What was successful?

Amina learnt how to identify and explore services and identify free access to learning and skills that she could make use of. She implemented this and attended interview skills training which helped with confidence and job searching. She decided to build on her education skills and took up a college course and not only is studying but looking at further education in university. She has become more confident as a single mother and now is looking to influence change in policy to help other single mothers in her position.

### Lessons Learnt

Simple advice and guidance can help an individual see what attributes and skills they possess and how these can be built on and adapted to day-to-day life, education and to build a career.

## Skills from previous experience

Candidates may have previous experience working in this role or sector with skills ready to be put into action in your business. For those who have not worked in your industry before, consider carefully whether the skills are essential at the start of employment or whether they **can be learned along the way**. Would an induction solve the knowledge gap? Is there an apprenticeship scheme available? Can they learn on the job? Is there training available?

There are **Welsh Government schemes that can help provide funded training** for individuals once employed:

- **Skills Gateway**
- **Business Wales**
- **Apprenticeships**

Consider organisations that provide free/funded training

- **Princes Trust** 18-30 year olds.
- Local Colleges – 4 of the main colleges in Wales are connected to the ReStart Project and offer many programmes and courses.
- Adult learning Wales (the outreach partner for the ESOL delivery connected to the ReStart Project).
- Open University.

The ReStart Project can help individuals have their existing overseas qualifications recognised through the NARIC process. However, there are some instances where recognition of qualifications gained overseas is not possible in the UK or there may be a delay in getting this approved or a case of passing UK based exams. Yet the skills an individual has should not be forgotten as they may help the individual excel in a similar role.



## Fatima's case study.

### **Case Study 2**

Fatima is a qualified Nurse in her country, she is applying through NARIC to have her qualification recognised here and applying to be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. She needs to sit some exams before she can work as a nurse in the UK. In the meantime she is working in a nursing home as a care assistant.

#### **What was successful?**

Fatima is able to use her nursing skills to excel in this job role. Even though she is over qualified for the role, she is happy because she is able to improve her English in the workplace before taking on more responsibility as a qualified nurse.

#### **Lessons Learnt**

Some applicants may not be considered for a role due to being overqualified. This case study helps to demonstrate that refugee applicants may need to undertake a more junior role in the short-term to build their confidence, language proficiency and familiarity with UK concepts before progressing. The care home benefitted as they had someone working for them who excelled as a care assistant because she already had all the required skills and was more than qualified for the role. Although she could not undertake the role of a registered nurse, it helped that she had a greater understanding of healthcare and patient's needs.



## Cassie's case study.

### Case Study 3

Cassie\* was initially attending counselling sessions. The counsellor referred her to the Sanctuary in Wales project. The responsibility of taking care of three young children alone was overwhelming. Bringing up the children alone had taken its toll on her life. She was emotionally drained and physically tired. She did not have time for herself or to think about what she might want to do to improve her self-worth and self-esteem.

Initially, when I explained what the project had to offer her, she could not believe that such support was available. The fact that childcare provision would be covered made her come alive. She became interested and willing to take the opportunity of improving herself and engaging in the community.

We explored her areas of expertise and interest, the skills and talents she already had. Since she had already acquired a degree qualification from her country of origin and spoke fluent English, I suggested she might take up the ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] training that the project offered. Her initial reaction was 'maybe not'. But when she learnt that the training was to start the following week, she relished the opportunity of meeting with adults and being useful to the community. This also gave her a chance to have time for herself, away from the children.

Attending the training sessions in Cardiff was a great challenge for her but she was committed to it. She feels more confident and useful. She has hopes for the future and is ready to enter into training in the next academic year.

'I have twin babies who I love to bits and enjoy taking care of, but I also sometimes got overwhelmed and wished I could get to do something useful, but I thought that was impossible till I met the SLA worker I got the breather I craved and am now equipped to teach. This experience has definitely added value to my life and opened my mind to possibilities.'

\*not her real name

### **What was successful?**

Acknowledgement of her skills increased confidence. A quick start date for training helped her stay focussed. Meeting others socially and having a focus helped her to deal with stress at home.

### **Lessons Learnt**

Giving opportunities to build on existing skills can help someone become more confident, determined and engaged. SLA helps open people's minds to the possibility of achieving what they thought was not possible before and overcoming barriers to reaching their goal for employment.

### **How can I find out more about SLA?**

For more information on how to implement this practice the SLA toolkit is available at: [policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-toolkit-for-wales-297233](https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-toolkit-for-wales-297233)

You can contact Oxfam Cymru using the following details:

Address: Oxfam Cymru Market Buildings 5 – 7 St Mary Street, Cardiff CF10 1AT

Telephone: 0300 200 1269

Email: [oxfamcymru@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:oxfamcymru@oxfam.org.uk) Web: [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)

### **Planning and development of further skills**

A common recruitment pitfall is not recruiting someone due to overlooking the potential they have to develop, or because they have different skills to those you might usually employ. Plan carefully to identify potential skill gaps in your company, look to invest in employees who have a range of skills and encourage them to share their talent with other employees. Look at where you see your business going in the future and what skills are going to be needed then. Careful future planning could involve supporting development opportunities and upskilling an individual as an investment in your workforce.

## 2 – Would the individual be well-suited to the role?

It is important to employ someone for what they bring to your organisation, i.e. skill talent and determination to learn. A common recruitment pitfall is hiring only those who are similar to you, have common interests or those in your social circle – something which typically arises when using ‘Word of mouth recruitment.’ Employing a diverse workforce can offer a new perspective on decision making, problem solving and ways of thinking.

Another common pitfall is recruiting somebody similar to the last person in the role. Think about whether somebody new could offer positive change and new ideas and how the job role could grow and evolve with the company.

The Civil Service’s ‘Refreshed Talent Action Plan: Removing the barriers to success’ gives guidance on measures to remove barriers to create a more diverse workforce in the civil service, but there are many practices mentioned in here that you can apply to your own organisation. You can read the full article [here](#) [8], but below are some key tips taken from the publication that you may find useful:

- Focus on employing individuals for their talent without knowing their background, you could use name blind recruitment to do this.
- Nominate board-level diversity champions with real power to drive change who can promote an open and constructive two-way dialogue with representatives of staff groups and associations. The champions will be expected to challenge the status quo and represent these issues at board level.
- Value skills and experience gained outside your organisation.
- Listen to feedback from current employees as to whether they feel valued and promoted for what they do and what they know, not who they are. Use this feedback as a tool to reform.
- Sign up to the **Social Mobility Business Compact**, an agreement to commit to recruiting fairly and ensuring that recruitment practices eliminate barriers to social mobility and join other businesses committing to doing the same.

## **Case Study 4**

In IKEA's Refugee Recruitment Programme they assess candidate attitudes and values, meaning refugees are not disadvantaged by a lack of local work experience or qualifications. In their programme in Switzerland, IKEA set up a work experience programme and collaborated with refugee integration services which helped 'preselect' candidates according to criteria and competence profiles for the IKEA HR department to review.

### **What was successful?**

Refugees were not disadvantaged as they normally would be in the labour market but with a specific programme tailored to this group it allowed for them to gain employment opportunities.

### **Lessons Learnt**

If your company wants to offer opportunities for employment to refugees make sure they can access them. Skills can be taught and experience gained but attitudes and eagerness to work hard is difficult to promote. In this example IKEA employed people because of their values and work ethic rather than experience the local labour market, they could see the potential someone had and how they could help them grow to deliver the role.

### 3 – Ensure refugees are not disadvantaged in the application or interview stages

#### Application

When writing the job description and person specification make sure it gives a clear sense of the role, complexity of the job and your expectations of performance. Key points to specifically mention would be:

- Level of language skills required and whether that needs to be spoken, written and reading. Perhaps a good level of spoken English/Welsh is required but ability to read and write is not required in this job. For example a barista needs to understand orders and instruction but a basic reading skill would suffice.
- Do you expect language skills to be proven by passing accredited courses or would an informal level of spoken English/Welsh be sufficient for the job role? You may be happy with the person's language proficiency but wish to support them to gain accredited qualifications and provide time for in work ESOL support (you can find information about how to do this in the next chapter).
- Would fluency in another language be desirable? As discussed earlier in this toolkit many refugees speak another language (or multiple). If they know this is something you are looking for, this is something they can be proud to demonstrate in their application and may set them apart from other candidates.
- If application requires proof of qualifications consider that refugees would not have gained their qualifications in the UK. Would you accept an overseas equivalent?
- Do you need an official translation of these qualifications to UK equivalents? This may be required for certain job roles like medicine, yet for other jobs just the knowledge that someone has a degree or masters would be enough to meet the job requirements. **NARIC** may be used to have some qualifications recognised, but this may not work for all. Most refugees did not bring evidence of qualifications with them to the UK and they may not have family who can post the documents for various reasons.
- Use the Hemmingway app (as mentioned previously) to avoid the use of excess jargon and complex sentences.
- Avoid relying on word of mouth among friends, job sites and social media to advertise jobs. Some Refugees may have limited access to technology devices and WiFi and may have not built up a large social network in the UK.
- Use 'Name blind' recruitment.
- Consider whether in-person or virtual interviews could be organised to observe how the candidates interact with each other and react to scenarios, as opposed to extensive written personality tests or multiple choice application forms.

## Case Study 5

By implementing 'name blind' recruitment, alongside other recruitment practices (that you can read more about [here](#)), the Welsh Government successfully increased the diversity of the ethnic minority employees in their workforce [9].

### What was successful?

An increase in workforce diversity and increased employment for a group of individuals who are known to be disadvantaged due to unconscious bias.

### Lessons Learnt

'Name blind' recruitment and other Welsh Government strategies for increasing diversity in the workplace are successful in achieving the goal of increasing the number of ethnic minority employees. It is likely that this strategy would also be successful in increasing the number of refugee applicants.

## Interview

Think about question wording, try to keep it simple and without jargon if a non-technical role is being advertised. Try to avoid local colloquiums which could be confusing to someone not from the UK.

Be aware that some accents may be difficult to understand, even though the candidate may understand the language used. It may help the interviewee to feel more relaxed by asking you to repeat something if it is not clear. If you are asked to repeat the question it may be helpful to rephrase rather than repeating exactly the same wording.

Bear in mind some refugees may not wish to shake hands at the start of the interview due to religious reasons, however this may anyway become less of a standard practice since COVID-19.

Avoid asking personal questions such as "Why did you come to the UK?" or "Have you found it difficult being in the UK?" Instead keep the questions directly related to the job.

Keep records and be prepared to give feedback to help an unsuccessful candidate prepare for interviews in the future.

## Case Study 6

In IKEA's Refugee Inclusion Programme they wanted to maximise the performance of refugee candidates in their interview by allowing use of translators or support workers. 'Many refugees are not familiar with the procedure and the (unwritten) rules for interviews so they often do not react in the way that HR managers expect. In addition, the applicants are extremely nervous and uncertain, which is often only exacerbated by their inadequate language skills. Consequently, their true potential can sometimes remain hidden. Some applicants were accompanied by their supervisors or by interpreters.'

### What was successful?

This enabled interviewees to be more confident during the interview process and show their true potential.

### Lessons Learnt

IKEA have rolled out this practice throughout their Refugee Inclusion Programme. Consider if this might be appropriate for your organisation. This would depend on the level of English required for the role – it may not be appropriate to use a translator for a job that requires demonstration of high levels of language proficiency but may be appropriate for a job where only basic language skills are required.

If you have trouble with a language barrier, **Language Line** can be a useful tool. See if there is already an employee working in the company that could help and even google translate can be helpful (for use in informal conversations to explain the odd word/sentence).

## 4 – Consider reasonable adjustments to allow Refugees to join the team on equal footing

Consider reasonable adjustments to make your new employee feel comfortable at work and excel in their development.



### ESOL classes and language support

Some refugees may wish to continue studying English/Welsh after gaining employment. Most refugees will already be enrolled in ESOL classes. It is worth checking whether this is the case and working to support them to continue accessing these. Speak to your new employee to see if you can help them to continue progressing around their work. Some people may enjoy the convenience of online learning, others may struggle to engage and learn this way. They may wish to seek a different method of ESOL delivery since starting employment.

**Nearby classes** – depending on the working hours and location of the job it may be possible for them to attend classes on a lunch break or after work. The REACH hubs as part of the ReStart Project provides assessments for people who want to enrol on an ESOL course and assigns them to appropriate provision. As a central point of contact, and within 3 weeks of being assessed, learners are referred either onto mainstream provision within Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) or Adult Learning Wales (ALW); onto specially designed flexible courses provided by ALW in partnership with charities; or online learning courses through CAVC.

**Virtual ESOL** – with more courses becoming accessible online since the pandemic there may be an option for your employee to attend classes online (during a lunch break for example). It would be useful to enable access to a computer to facilitate this or give time to attend as part for their training or personal development. There are many ESOL online courses available through the Adult Learning Wales website: [www.adultlearning.wales/en/courses/course-results?&subject=esol-and-basic-skills](http://www.adultlearning.wales/en/courses/course-results?&subject=esol-and-basic-skills)

There are also fully funded digital literacy courses available through this website in addition to ESOL.

**Work place ESOL** – it may be possible to arrange for ESOL classes to be delivered in the workplace, particularly if there are a few employees who would benefit from this. Adult Learning Wales can provide these.

### **Case Study 7**

Adult Learning Wales has delivered four ESOL classes at Dawn Meats Factory in Carmarthenshire. ESOL courses have been delivered at the factory since 2012.

ALW first started delivering there through the Regional Essential Skills project, which was a European funded initiative for employed people to develop their Essential skills through Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL. This proved to be very successful for the employer, employee and provider, engaging around 30 to 40 learners and still maintaining these numbers today, with excellent attainment.

Commitment from the employers at Dawn Meats has remained constant. Each academic year begins with an Initial Assessment session to ascertain the clients' skills levels. This year, the session took place between 12 noon until 8.00pm to accommodate shift workers. This process was carefully coordinated to allow employees from all the various departments to attend whilst not disrupting production.

#### **What was successful?**

High engagement with 30-40 learners, long term maintenance of these numbers and excellent attainment in an accredited course. Works around shift patterns not to disrupt company productivity.

#### **Lessons Learnt**

ESOL works well in the workplace, particularly if there are a group of employees who would benefit from the delivery (these may be other individuals whose first language is not English and wish to develop their skills). Many learners attended these classes and they are still running several years later. This case study demonstrates it can be possible to work around shift patterns with careful planning to deliver ESOL provision that benefits both the staff and the company.

## **Mentorship**

Allocating a mentor to a new employee can help them to settle into the company, starting any new job can be daunting and it would be helpful to have someone they do not feel embarrassed or afraid to ask questions to and help them learn the job. Although it may seem a good idea to match a new employee with someone who is from the new employee's country of origin or who speaks their mother tongue, it would actually be more beneficial to arrange for someone without a shared native tongue to mentor. This will help the employee to converse in English/Welsh as well as expanding their social network.

### **Case Study 8**

Linklaters law firm worked on a project with Business in the Community to address high rates of unemployment amongst migrant communities and was designed with the local authority to support ESOL class attendees.

'Linklaters employees are trained by Business in the Community, before being matched with participants. Volunteers then deliver a 6-week programme of employability support combined with employment-related English language coaching.'

#### **What was successful?**

The business upskilled their employees through the training, discovered a more diverse group of employees volunteered for this scheme, compared to other opportunities. Benefits for the ESOL learners: 75% increased their ability to write job applications and CVs in English. 75% increased their ability to job search online. 75% increased their knowledge of the UK Job Market. 100% increased their ability to speak with an employer.

#### **Lessons learnt**

Introducing a mentoring programme benefits both the refugees and mentors.

## **Religious needs**

There are often misconceptions that religious needs are difficult to accommodate, but there are lots of simple ways – even practices you may already have in place in your company – to help those who wish to practice their faith. Have discussions with individuals about what their needs are – although two people may follow the same faith, their practices of this faith may vary.

Some religious people may wish to pray during working hours. Consider if you could provide access to a prayer room, which could simply be a quiet room on the premises, to facilitate this.

## Cultural Differences

As you can imagine living and working in a new country may be quite daunting because of a change in cultural norms. Having an understanding of a refugee's culture and being open minded may help them settle in. You may learn things about their culture that you like and want to introduce this into your workforce to make a positive change. Communication is key.

Cultural literacy could be very valuable when accessing international markets. Post EU Withdrawal, many companies are looking to exploit new international markets.

Having someone in your company who not only speaks the language but also understands the values and customs of overseas cultures can be valuable.



## 5 – Job retention – feeling valued

Often just the opportunity to finally gain employment helps refugees feel valued and able to contribute to society and support themselves is very rewarding.

### Case Study 9

‘Since 2017, IKEA UK and Ireland have been working with Breaking Barriers, a London-based charity that helps refugees find meaningful employment. The programme, which includes English classes, customer service training and assessment days aims to improve employment prospects for refugee people living in the UK.

Chahla is a Sales Co-worker in the Home Decoration department at IKEA Greenwich. In her home country of Syria, Chahla was a lecturer in agricultural research, specialising in plant fungal disease and has a master’s degree in Plant Protection. Working in the Home Decorations department gives her the opportunity to work amongst plants once again and bring her expertise to the role.

Chahla says, “IKEA and Breaking Barriers have both given me the opportunity to gain meaningful employment in the UK – not only to earn money, but to use the skills I learnt during my degree for a real purpose. They have not only helped me adjust to working in the UK, but have helped me with everything from my initial application and CV through to the supportive training programmes available at IKEA. My team leader is my mentor and teaches me something new about my role every day and also encourages me to help out other colleagues. I very am excited to progress in my role and look forward to adding to my knowledge to the business.” [10]

#### What was successful?

IKEA have found employing refugees so beneficial for their workforce that they wish to roll this out to all of their stores and have created a toolkit for a standardised approach of best practice. You can read this [here](#).

Chahla was able to utilise her skills and knowledge from her horticulture lecturing background. The opportunity helped her to adjust to UK life and was keen to learn. She found the support and mentorship helpful and because.

#### Lessons Learnt

Thinking carefully about where to place someone within in the company is important to utilise their skills and knowledge, helps them feel valued and employees who feel valued are more likely to stay and be keen to add their knowledge to the business and help your company grow.

## 6 – Ensuring refugees are not employed within a role that is a ‘dead end’

Many refugees have had to leave a career or their own business and have had to start ‘from square one’ in a less skilled role whilst they improve their language skills, make connections in this country and start a new life here. You may already have a career development support programme in place in your company and opportunity to climb the company’s ladder.

### Case Study 10

The Refugee Employment Network give an example case study of a non-profit organisation CodeyourFuture who train refugees to become tech developers: ‘Sam fled his native Cameroon, where he feared persecution by the government, only to find himself stranded in London with no documents, no friends and no shelter.

Worried about his family back home, he was numb to his troubles. Sam spent one year sleeping rough on the streets of London. With no passport and no legal status in the UK, he did not have access to any social services and was unable to get a job. After another refugee helped him to begin the process of getting asylum, Sam gradually started to rebuild his life. He got a job as a cleaner and enrolled in college to learn English.

In his spare time, Sam used to go to the library to study and it was there that a chance meeting introduced him to the world of coding. With no prior experience, Sam was sceptical about his ability to learn something completely new but still applied for the course. A few months of hard work later, Sam graduated from CodeYourFuture and got his first full-time job as a junior developer.

His dream now is to become a senior full-stack developer and work on his own projects. He also wants to teach others how to code, not only in the UK but in Africa.’

#### What was successful?

Having focus and learning a new skill allowed Sam to leave the streets and start a new career. He not only wanted to maintain employment but then share his skills with others and progress in that career.

#### Lessons learnt

This is a good example of where the resilience and work ethic of refugees make them ideal candidates who can adapt and learn quickly for the benefit of your business.

## 7 – Additional Support

If you work in a trade you could contact your trade union or registered body, they may be able to give you advice from previous experience of working with refugees.

Other employment support schemes may be utilised to support your company and the candidate, if they meet the criteria for the scheme. Here is a list of various schemes that may provide additional benefits or support

- **Jobs Growth Wales** (for 16-24 year olds).
- **Flexible Skills Programme**
- **ReAct** (if the individual has been made redundant and is now looking for work).

## 8 – Early labour market integration

Unfortunately the majority of asylum seekers are not legally allowed to work. Only in exceptional circumstances can asylum seekers apply for permission to work and this would be in a role from the job shortage list. There is an ongoing campaign for the ban on asylum seekers working to be lifted, called 'Lift the ban'.

You can find out more about this [here](#).

### Asylum seeker volunteering

Asylum seekers are able to volunteer and this is something that helps them gain the skills and improve workplace English to enter the labour market when they receive their Refugee status. This may be something your company wants to consider to help asylum seekers build their future.

## 9 – Staff Training

The ReStart Project are able to provide training for staff to help your workforce understand the needs of refugees in your workforce if this is something you are looking for.

## Conclusion

Refugee outcomes in the labour market do not currently fair as well as other foreign born counterparts – more are unemployed, in lower-skilled and lower-paid work. With the practical tips and tools provided in the document these issues can be overcome. This can bring many benefits to your business, the refugees looking for work and the Welsh Economy. The guidance in this document can help your company to lead by example in to create a brighter future for Refugees, help to develop a more inclusive and diverse workforce and utilise the unique skills and aptitudes that Refugees bring to Wales.



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## Annex 1: About the ReStart: Refugee Integration Project

The ReStart: Refugee Integration project aims to deliver an ambitious and innovative integration support programme for refugees, 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. Refugees 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'. You can read more about the Nation of Sanctuary plan for Wales [here](#).

The project has four interlinking elements:

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

### The Integration Centre

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

If refugees 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.

The Integration Centre aspect of the project can provide support for refugees only.

## **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 refugees to access ESOL provision more quickly and support better progression as individuals 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.

Refugee 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.

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

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

- Cardiff – Delivered by CAVC and located in REACH City Centre Campus, Dumballs Rd.
- 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 operate across Wales, increasing workplace opportunities for refugees. 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 refugees.

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.

## **Project Legacy**

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. This toolkit has been developed to share knowledge even beyond the life of the ReStart Project. A 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.

## Annex 2: What barriers do Refugees face when they look for work?

- 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. [11]