



We are part of the #LiftTheBan coalition which is urging the UK Government to lift the ban which denies asylum seekers the right to work. This document provides evidence to support this campaign.

Lift the Ban: Our experience

Who are we?

ACH are a leading provider of refugee integration services in the UK, supporting refugees and newly arrived communities through supported housing and training. We work in the South West and West Midlands with 3 offices and we employ around 70 staff. Every year we work with over 2,500 people through our housing, training and careers services.

Housing – We provide safe and secure supported housing for refugees and other vulnerable homeless people. Recently we have also worked with local councils to bring empty properties back into use and have started providing emergency accommodation.

Economic Opportunity – Our training subsidiary, Himilo, runs short courses to enable people to get into work. We are also working with several large employers such as First Bus and Starbucks to get refugees and members of the local community into work.

Careers Advice – We have a dedicated team of Job Coaches who provide individualised careers advice and guidance to our tenants, learners and the wider community.

What did we do?

We recently ran a 4-month project funded by Quartet Community Foundation alongside Bristol Refugee Rights, a support service for asylum seekers and refugees. The project facilitated visits from asylum seekers to a cross-section of employers in Bristol, together with a launch event and a final event. The group of asylum seekers were also offered briefings on the local labour market and individual careers advice from the ACH team. We also gave professional advice to those aiming for self-employment or small business development.



Benefiting around 50 individuals in total, the attendees were of mixed genders, multiple countries of origin and the age range was between 25 and 50.

This project linked closely to the current #LiftTheBan coalition which is calling for the right to work for people seeking asylum, and their adult dependents, unconstrained by the shortage occupation list after six months of having lodged an asylum claim or further submission. Throughout the programme, these asylum seekers consistently showed willingness and passion for wanting to work and contribute back to society, and most of all, get their lives back on track.

Overall, the project aims were to;

- Teach asylum seekers about the UK job market with information on CVs, applications, job searches, employment rights, salary expectations and much more
- Link asylum seekers to a variety of local employers and arrange visits to 5 businesses

Findings

In evidence to support the #LiftTheBan campaign, we found that the group of asylum seekers have many attributes that should be taken into consideration by the UK Government to change the policy on their right to work. These include;

- **Good levels of English** – most attendees on the course had high levels of English and were able to have in-depth conversations with employers
- **Highly qualified** – asylum seekers have previous education and skills from their home countries and have had training and work experience which they could use in the UK, e.g. one member of the group had previously gained a degree and had been a teacher for 4 years
- **Work ethic, motivation and passion** – everyone we talked to wanted to be contributing back to society instead of taking the Governments money and being unemployed, everyone was extremely motivated to work, and this showed by the high levels of attendance we saw on each employer visit

We also found that there was a highly positive reception from employers regarding asylum seekers and their rights to work. In Bristol we visited 5 different companies which included Bristol City Council, ACH (social enterprise), First Bus, Engine Shed and UWE (University of the West of England). Each organisation saw the passion and skills these individuals could bring to their workforce and were all on board for supporting the #LiftTheBan campaign. They saw these people's skills going to waste for no real reason.



There was a lack of understanding amongst attendees about how the recruitment and selection process works in the UK. For example, First Bus recruitment includes a 6-week training course which people can fail, before they start work. This is a barrier to refugees gaining employment and we are also encouraging businesses to rethink their hiring practices to be more inclusive and open to the refugee community.

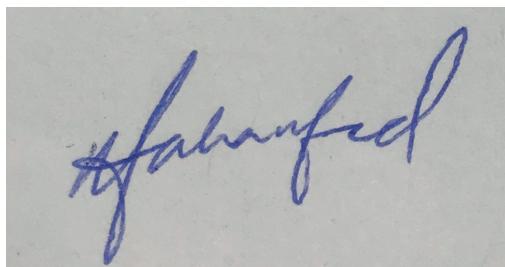
We strongly believe that access to economic opportunity is crucial to wider and meaningful integration of the refugee and asylum seeker community.

Proposal

We propose for asylum seekers to be given the right to work in the UK after the initial 6 months of their asylum claim. This benefits their health and well-being, reduces dependence on the government, and promotes autonomy. You can read more on the benefits of this [here](#).

This system needs to be as simple as possible to make the recruitment process for employers easy and clear. There also needs to be an emphasis on offering support for asylum seekers to prepare them for employment in the UK in terms of training, awareness and accessing work.

Signed by

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "Fuad Mahamed".

Fuad Mahamed, ACH CEO

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