

# From Sanctuary to Opportunity 2024

Full Report

**Better training and job outcomes  
for refugees and migrants**

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# Foreword

At ACH, we have been leading the effort, alongside partners across the West of England, to ensure we achieve a joined up and integrated support structure for refugees and migrants. We believe effective learner-led ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision and employment support is vital to ensure positive employment outcomes for refugees and migrants.



We are delighted so many public policy practitioners, employers and education providers are joining us in this endeavour.

“ **Each year, ACH delivers positive outcomes for more than 1,000 refugees and migrants through our provision of integrated services; including affordable housing options, skills training, language support, employment entry opportunities and business start-up assistance.**

**The UK economy is in desperate need of these skills with 85,000 national job vacancies and significant skills shortages across key sectors.** ”

As the West of England continues to experience demographic changes and increased diversity within its population, there is a clear need for tailored, accessible, and impactful language and skills provision. This report is an important step in creating a cohesive, effective and inclusive ESOL and training pathway for learners. A key starting point to realising this vision is the introduction of a common ESOL initial assessment process.

This report also advocates for an expansion of ESOL provision, focussing on ESOL for both work and academic studies. This would ensure that learners gain the skills needed for career progression or further study as well as for everyday communication to ensure effective integration.

Ultimately, this report sets the stage for a more cohesive and responsive ESOL and skills provision in the West of England. At ACH, we are excited to progress these recommendations and look forward to working with stakeholders to turn these goals into a reality. This should be delivered in a way that is sensitive to the needs of learners and linked to the recruitment requirements of employers whilst enabling refugees and migrants to realise their potential and contribute more fully to the economy.

**Fuad Mahamed**  
CEO

# Executive summary

## Fuad Mahamed, CEO:

*“At ACH, we are committed to a future in which all refugees have equitable access to language learning, skills support and employment opportunities, so that they can rebuild their lives with dignity and thrive in their communities, resulting in a more inclusive and resilient society for all. With the launch of this full report we are continuing our work to make this a reality.”*

Our research aims to improve training and employment outcomes for people from refugee and migrant communities by shaping improvements in ESOL, training and work. We held interviews, focus groups, workshops and other events with more than 160 people, 72 of whom have lived experience of displacement and migration.

## ACH has identified the following six key priorities:



**1 - A common ESOL initial assessment process for the West of England.** This would enable potential learners to have a single interview, from which they can be referred into suitable courses or placed on one waiting list. This assessment should identify learners' existing skills and qualifications as well as their aspirations. This would enable a fairer and faster way of matching people with appropriate ESOL classes, as well as other training and guidance, to better support learning and progression.



**2 - Boost provision of ESOL for work and academic study courses.** We must increase the number of courses which combine language with employability or study skills training, make them more accessible and enhance their effectiveness.



**3 - Provide appropriate work experience opportunities.** Career guidance should be available to support finding and applying for good quality, appropriate placements. These placements should include ongoing support and tangible outcomes, such as a reference, accreditation or the possibility of a job interview. Policy makers need to work with employers to remove barriers to them offering work experience to people from migrant and refugee communities. Specialist, tailored support for refugees and migrants who wish to start and grow their businesses is key.



**4 - A scheme for recognition and accreditation of prior learning and skills verification.** It should combine a digital platform with face-to-face services and would be recognised by participating education providers and employers. It would provide employers with an assessment of an applicant's skills and suitability for a role. This could be initiated locally and be scaled up to regional and national levels.



**5 - More inclusive recruitment and retention practices by employers.** Employers should adapt their practices to ensure they attract and recruit skilled migrants and refugees. This includes reviewing job descriptions, essential and desirable criteria, recruitment tests and job interview procedures. Support should be offered to companies to retain people once employed.



**6. Integrated collaboration between employment, training and support stakeholders to form a foundation to facilitate the above priorities.** It is important to deepen involvement of people with lived experiences of migration, to ensure services meet their needs. There is strong support for a central hub to support migrant and refugee communities to settle and thrive in the West of England. This could offer a single point from which to access ESOL, training and employment, as well as support with accessing healthcare, schools and other services. A hub would provide a central point for integrated collaboration between stakeholder organisations.



ACH's vision is for a streamlined and integrated skills and employment landscape in the West of England that ensures people can thrive and achieve their aspirations. Our work so far has already facilitated a much greater knowledge of what is needed to achieve this, has strengthened collaboration, and has influenced the thinking of stakeholders working with us towards this goal.

# Introduction

## Our aims

People who seek sanctuary in the UK bring a wealth of skills and experiences. Our research repeatedly tells us that people who come here have a strong desire to use their skills to find fulfilling work, become financially independent and participate fully in their new society.

It is widely recognised that there is a need to boost and integrate ESOL, training and employment support in Bristol and the West of England to enable refugee and migrant communities to achieve their aspirations.<sup>1 2</sup> Improving training and skills to enable disadvantaged and underemployed people to find work and progress to higher level jobs will benefit not just individuals, families and communities, but also fulfil the economic and skills needs of the region by helping to address skills shortages.<sup>3</sup> In the UK, a third of job vacancies are attributed to skills shortages.<sup>4</sup>



ACH's 2024 research responds to this need and aims to improve training and employment outcomes to enable people from migration backgrounds to find sustainable jobs, financial security and successful futures. We are creating change by using robust evidence gathered from people with lived experience and expert practitioners to shape policies and practices.

More than 160 people were involved in our 2024 research, of which 72 people (from 22 countries) had lived experience of displacement and migration. This builds on our 2023 report which drew on the voices of 49 participants and illustrated the challenges and opportunities for refugee and migrant communities in Bristol.

Our participants' accounts emphasise the importance of good education and English language training for having a good life and getting the work they want. Meaningful employment and earning a decent income are essential elements of leading a fulfilling life in the UK. Employment experiences are strongly linked to experiences in other aspects of integration, such as physical and mental health, financial security, housing and social relations.<sup>5 6</sup>



People from refugee and migration backgrounds face many challenges to finding a job and progressing their careers. Overall, they have worse employment outcomes than locally born people. For example, refugees are less likely to be employed than UK-born people,<sup>7</sup> and migrants and refugees are more likely to be underemployed or in precarious work, with a greater likelihood of being on temporary and zero-hour contracts, shift work and night shifts, or to be overqualified for their jobs when compared to UK-born people.<sup>8</sup> Displaced people also face significant barriers to accessing higher education.<sup>9</sup>

People born overseas are, on average, 1.6 times more likely to be self-employed or have their own business than those born in the UK.<sup>10</sup> Lack of ability to find suitable employment is one of the reasons for becoming self-employed and many take precarious and badly paid work such as taxi driving or delivery roles, which is not commensurate with their skills. Refugee and migrant entrepreneurs face many barriers to accessing mainstream business support<sup>12</sup> and to building a sustainable business.<sup>13</sup>

Lack of English language skills prevents many people from finding work suitable for their qualifications and experience. Data from the 2021 census shows there are 11,406 people in the four local authority areas in the West who report to not speak English well or at all.<sup>14</sup>

For newcomers to the UK, it can take time to settle and adjust. Poor mental health can be a factor for many, resulting from trauma, experiences of the asylum process or living in precarious circumstances.

Discrimination is another barrier. Significant numbers of migrants and refugees feel that they experience discrimination or harassment, or report feeling unsafe.<sup>15</sup> In general, minoritised ethnic groups experience discrimination in the labour market<sup>16</sup> and as business owners.<sup>17</sup> Research shows that a person's accent can impact ratings of their performance in job interviews.<sup>18</sup>



## Political and social landscape

Bristol and the West of England are culturally rich with more than 90 languages spoken, and 12% of people in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority area were born outside the UK.<sup>19</sup>

2021 Census data for population of West of England <sup>20</sup>	Bristol	Bath and North East Somerset	South Glos	North Somerset
Percentage born outside the UK	18.8%	12.1%	10.6%	8.4%
Percentage who speak a main language other than English	10.1%	4.9%	5.4%	3.9%
Number who report to not speak English well or at all	7,147	934	2,108	1,217

People have always been on the move in search of safety, security or a better future. There are currently around 281 million international migrants, according to UN estimates, with increasing numbers displaced due to conflict, violence, political or economic instability, climate change and other disasters.<sup>21</sup>

The UK has long provided a place of sanctuary to countless people fleeing war and persecution. Safe passage has been given to 56,259 people through refugee resettlement schemes since 2015<sup>22</sup>, and recent visa schemes have allowed the arrival of 215,900 Ukrainians<sup>23</sup> and 144,400 Hong Kong nationals.<sup>24</sup>

Many people in the UK feel positively about others moving to and seeking sanctuary in this country. Research suggests that people in the UK tend to have a more positive attitude towards refugees and migrants compared to other countries.<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup> Recent polling shows that the majority of people feel that migration is positive for the UK.<sup>27</sup>

However, detrimental policies of previous governments, negative stereotypes, xenophobia, racism and anti-migrant sentiments from some sections of society can impact the experiences of people from migration and displacement backgrounds.

The far-right activities and riots in August 2024 targeted minoritised groups including Muslims and people seeking asylum. This has led to increased fear, discrimination and a reluctance of many minoritised groups to leave their home and access services.<sup>28</sup>



Photo Credit: Pexels

'Hostile environment' policies have moved border control work into everyday spaces, making employers, landlords, healthcare workers and other public servants and private companies responsible for checking people's immigration status and sharing their data with the Home Office. Regularly having to prove the right to be in the UK has impacted people from migration and minoritised communities as well as causing general feelings of instability, insecurity and anxiety. The policies justify discriminatory practices and result in many people being refused jobs and services to which they are entitled.<sup>29</sup> Anti-migration political and media rhetoric has increased with the implementation of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and Illegal Migration Act 2023, which have criminalised many people seeking sanctuary in the UK.

Evidence shows that policies and discourse which dehumanise people on the move, depicting them as 'illegal' and a threat, shapes public attitudes and increases hostility to people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The last government's highly visible and often repeated 'Stop the Boats' slogan has been echoed by anti-migrant protestors as well as the rioters in August 2024.<sup>30</sup> And recent polling shows that while 70% of people believe that "people fleeing war, conflict and persecution" should be able to settle in the UK, only 19% think that "people who cross the channel in small boats should" settle in this country.<sup>31</sup> Online engagement by far-right activists has been found to increase following key government announcements and increased tabloid media coverage of immigration issues.<sup>32</sup>

Narratives around scarcity and competition for resources due to migration feed on people's concerns about the rising cost of living, the housing crisis and lack of access to healthcare. This is harnessed by extreme right groups and some politicians to stoke anti-migrant sentiments. Continued political and media focus on immigration then intensifies public concerns.<sup>33</sup>

However, we must remember that, as the evidence above shows, political and media rhetoric does not reflect the attitudes of everyone. This was highlighted on the evening of 7 August 2024, when tens of thousands of people across the UK turned out to show support for their communities and counter the far-right action allegedly planned for that evening. The following morning, headlines in support of the counter protests showed a back pedalling by newspapers that had previously shared anti-migrant messages, demonstrating they had underestimated the extent of public opposition to racism and anti-migrant hate.

And in our research, we have seen evidence of a strong desire to tackle the barriers which prevent refugees and migrants from leading fulfilling lives and achieving their potentials.

# Methods

Our findings are underpinned by a robust evidence base, utilising a range of methods to gather insights from over 160 stakeholders, including 72 with lived experience of migration.



We held seven focus groups and 16 interviews with 66 people\* with lived experience of displacement and migration from 22 countries, seven of these had also participated in our 2023 research. Participants discussed their experiences and suggestions regarding the process of being assessed and placed in an ESOL class; the challenges for finding work in the UK; and suggestions to improve their employment outcomes. Eight interviews were conducted in Arabic and several interviews and focus groups involved informal interpreting. We reimbursed participants for their time and expenses. In this report, all names have been changed and identifying details removed to respect anonymity.



\*A further 6 people with lived experience participated in subsequent activities



We also interviewed 13 specialists in ESOL, careers guidance and recruitment, some of whom have lived experience of displacement or migration. We gathered expert opinions on the benefits, challenges and enablers for improving migrants' and refugees' employment outcomes, and recommendations to improve recruitment, employment and training practices. The specialists discussed important features of an inclusive and effective initial assessment tool, their opinions on a common ESOL assessment process, and suggestions for a pilot initial assessment tool.\*\*

Two stakeholder workshops were held to share the findings from the focus groups and interviews, and attendees were able to collaborate and develop the findings into actions for creating change. The first workshop focused on shaping ESOL initial assessment in the West of England and was attended by 13 managers and practitioners from ESOL stakeholders. The second workshop focused on improving migrants' and refugees' routes to employment. Some 18 professionals attended from a range of training, employment, support and other stakeholder organisations.

Altogether, the expertise of 110 stakeholders shaped our interim report, which detailed our six priorities for improving training and employment outcomes for refugee and migrant communities. We launched the report at an event in Bristol on 21st June 2024 where more than 50 stakeholders responded to and elaborated on the six priorities. We have since met with further key stakeholders to hear their thoughts on how current practices can be developed, and new ones initiated, to action the priorities.

## Interim report launch

We launched the interim report at ACH's From Sanctuary to Opportunity event on 21 June 2024 at Triodos Bank, Bristol.

More than 50 key stakeholders attended, including people with lived experience of displacement and migration, senior professionals from across the support, training and employment sector, unitary authorities and the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

The issues were reflected upon by Stephen Bashford, Strategic Director of Economy and Skills at West of England Mayoral Combined Authority; Jane Taylor, Head of Service (Employment, Skills and Learning) at Bristol City Council; ACH's Nesrin Ayad, MIS Officer at ACH and former client of ACH's business support who now runs her own business; Zeinab Abdelrahman, an ACH learner who is volunteering at the Red Cross; and Lisa Saunders, Project Manager at YTKO West of England.

During table discussions, attendees responded to, developed and added to the six key priorities which emerged from the research, and identified specific actions needed. Their responses were fed into this full report.





Extract from keynote speech by Stephen Bashford, Strategic Director of Economy and Skills at West of England Mayoral Combined Authority:

*“Refugees and migrants often face barriers such as language difficulties, lack of qualification recognition, and limited access to training. Critically there are also issues of social cohesion, marginalisation and discrimination to be addressed. Tailored and inclusive skills programmes are essential to address these barriers effectively. They enable refugees and migrants to access better employment and business development opportunities, and in doing so, significantly contribute to our regional economy. Programmes to support the development of English language skills help seamless integration, and active participation, for these residents into their new communities.*”

*The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority continues to invest in these programmes so we can harness potential, foster economic growth, promote social cohesion, and ensure a more inclusive society. In 23/24, programmes such as the Adult Skills Fund, Mayoral Priority Skills Fund, and Multiply funded around 150 basic skills courses, supporting residents in developing essential skills such as language, maths, and employability. Over 4,640 residents attended these courses, with nearly 2000 attending at least one of the numerous English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses across the region. We have also worked with our partners to help over 850 individuals to start new businesses.”*

# Findings

Our research highlights that people with experience of migration and displacement have agency and a strong desire to use their skills to find fulfilling work, live autonomous lives and participate fully in their communities. The findings show the clear benefits of improving employment outcomes for refugee and migrant communities.

These people bring a wealth of talent and transferable skills, much of which is untapped. Unleashing this will provide benefits for individuals, communities, employers and economies and help address skills shortages.



Photo Credit: Pexels

The research found that migrants and refugees bring assets such as multilingual skills which are invaluable to a multicultural country. They often bring resilience, which can increase an organisation's strength. Additionally, increasing the diversity of a workforce benefits organisations<sup>34</sup> by bringing a range of experiences, viewpoints and approaches to working and increasing cognitive diversity.<sup>35</sup> A more culturally diverse workforce can improve organisational effectiveness or quality of service because it better reflects the diversity of customers, clients or patients. Improving the employment outcomes for migrants and refugees helps reduce poverty, deprivation and societal inequalities.

Our research highlights that these communities face many challenges in achieving their employment aspirations. Level of English language ability is a barrier for many, but our participants described many other barriers to accessing meaningful and sustainable employment besides language.

**Racism, anti-migrant sentiment or linguistic discrimination that exists in wider society can impact refugees' and migrants' employment opportunities and progression paths.**

**Farnaz:** *"I was told that I'm so ambitious, you know, I came to this country and I'm not English and I shouldn't be thinking of applying for another job in five years because I can't, I'm not ready to do a PhD. So all of these were comments that she used to make to put me off progressing because in her opinion I wasn't in a position to be ambitious, I was a refugee. Another manager when I was working in a care home as a carer and I was just like, I got my first job, she used to say, 'Oh don't tell people that you are a refugee, nobody is going to like you and nobody is going to respect you and nobody wants to employ you.' ... I had an awful experience."*

**The account from Bahnam, who is in his 40s, highlights how age discrimination can be an added barrier for more mature migrants and refugees who must apply for entry level jobs.**

**Bahnam:** *"So I am ready for all... all job. The job is problem [laughs]... and I'm going to his restaurant. The man is looking at me and said, 'No, you are old man' ... Not accept me because of my ... The whole people has said, 'You old'. [laughs] ... The jobs officer, all people accepted young ... young man like 20, 23, yes 19. It's the experience is also important. As just before I am army. Not another option."*

**Researcher:** *"What would you like to do?"*

**Bahnam:** *[sighs] "I like anything. Anything job."*



## Key barriers to sustainable employment for refugees and migrants:

- ▼ Level of English language, including the need to acquire vocational, technical and colloquial workplace language.
- ▼ Difficulty accessing, and long waiting times for, appropriate ESOL classes.
- ▼ Many people are ineligible for free or affordable training due to their immigration status.
- ▼ Qualifications and experience gained overseas are often not recognised in the UK.
- ▼ Understanding the norms and requirements of the UK labour market and job application processes.

## Key enablers to sustainable employment for refugees and migrants:

- A single point of contact and referral system for ESOL to enable access to appropriate classes.
- Training in sector specific and everyday workplace language.
- Support with childcare, transport and other costs of attending training or unpaid work experience. This is particularly important to ensure equal access for women.
- Support with recognising and accrediting existing skills and qualifications.
- Training that acknowledges and builds on a person's skills.
- Recruitment practices that support applicants to demonstrate their experience and achievements.
- Tailored guidance to understand career progression pathways and access appropriate support and training.
- Specialist support for refugee and migrant entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses.

## Priority 1 - Common ESOL initial assessment for the West of England

Our research shows there is a need for ESOL provision that is appropriate, accessible, flexible, local and fits around caring responsibilities and working patterns. Improving the ESOL initial assessment would help learners access the right training and progress to good quality employment.

Perspectives from learners who have experienced the process firsthand, as well as from ESOL professionals, emphasise that initial assessment and placement in ESOL classes should identify a person's wider needs such as childcare, financial barriers, disability or mental and physical wellbeing, as well as understanding their level of English. The assessment should identify learners' existing skills, qualifications and aspirations so that the learner can be referred to relevant additional training, for example ICT and maths courses. This also enables teachers to work with the learner as a whole person and tailor their teaching to build on existing strengths, rather than viewing the learner in terms of having a skills and language 'deficit'. This helps people to have hope that they will achieve their goals, improving their investment in their learning.<sup>36</sup> Our research also confirms that placement in ESOL, like all aspects of ESOL provision, needs to be trauma informed.

“*The teacher should know this person's social life. How is social interact? Is he living somewhere safe with the community? Have community here? Is he lonely? Teacher should ask those things. And they should ask also, this person's health. Is he healthy? Some people, we can see outside is good, or maybe inside is not healthy. And the third thing is that you should ask is that person immigration state, how he's going. Some people, they need help, but they don't have anybody to help them. So teachers should ask all these question. And she should refer who can help this person financially, healthy, immigration, all these thing. The teacher, when they enrol in a course or something, they should ask.*”

-Mukhtar

“*Everybody's not same, different ages, different life experience, different level of education. So when we came here, they put us all in one basket. So that's not right thing to do... Here, no one ask you, because we cannot speak English. We cannot express what we learn, what we want. So no one give us that chance. When we come here, there was 10 people, they treat us all same - we come from Asia, all Asian are same, ignorant. We come from Africa, all African [laughs], like we are ignorant. But we are not.*”

-Ssanyu



“ [My suggestion] is to take care of those who are experienced, and who are skilful because there are some points which they are lacking now, but they are trying to stand on their own feet and do something in the country and work like any other citizens and pay their taxes and be helpful and everything. ”

-Amna

ESOL professionals told us how a single initial assessment interview through which learners can be directed to an appropriate class would lead to faster access to training. It would avoid the stress of multiple assessments with different providers and would result in a central waiting list which is fairer to learners. Instead of having to navigate, often alone, the currently fragmented ESOL provision, people could be signposted to suitable courses, support or training.

A common assessment process would benefit ESOL providers by addressing the long waiting lists that some experience and helping others to fill courses. It could also provide useful data for curriculum planning and improve communication between providers. A common process would streamline assessment and enrolment, eliminate duplication and identify gaps in ESOL provision, as well as in wider skills and professional training. Information about assessment outcomes, referrals and enrolments could be stored on an online ESOL hub for the West of England, which would have a secure portal where learner data is stored and referrals can be made to training and support services. It would also have a public interface providing individuals and organisations with easy access to information about ESOL. A learner's training needs and career goals could be picked up from the hub by an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) professional who can offer support through ESOL into further training and education. This model would require funding for staff to set up, maintain and update the hub.

Our research highlighted the need for all participating providers to agree on the content of the initial assessment, so that learners are assessed in a consistent manner and referred directly into the correct classes. It is essential that providers are included in the development and design of the common assessment process so that any concerns are addressed.

Additionally, training for assessors and regular moderation is needed to ensure the assessment tool meets the requirements of all providers and satisfies their quality assurance and auditing processes. Some providers stressed that initial assessments should continue to be carried out within training providers and support organisations to ensure that learners have a welcoming experience from staff who understand their requirements. The process should also be flexible enough to accommodate the working dynamics of providers and the communities they work with.

Since the start of our research, there has been increased interest from key decision makers in a common ESOL assessment process. The research has provided in-depth insights into the requirements of ESOL learners and providers, providing robust evidence to shape the design of a common initial assessment tool produced by Community Learning at Bristol City Council. The project has strengthened collaboration among local ESOL providers and fed into the development of a common assessment process in the region.



# Bristol City Council Community Learning and ESOL initial assessment

The ESOL lead at Community Learning is designing a common initial assessment tool to be used by ESOL providers in the West of England.

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The tool has been developed through the synthesis of nationally published best practice guidance, consultation with regional providers and wider stakeholders, and the findings from ACH’s research. The current version of the assessment tool has been trialled by eight ESOL providers, including with more than 600 learners at one FE college. The assessment includes questions to establish a learner’s existing skills and qualifications, as well as their aspirations.

Five providers in the West of England region have committed to using this tool in their ESOL initial assessments going forward, with a strong interest from six other providers.

“ACH’s research has been a key part of the process of gathering feedback from a wide range of stakeholders and has provided a rich evidence base on which to build an informed Initial Assessment tool. Crucially, it has enabled our work to be informed by the voices of ESOL learners themselves.”

-Bristol City Council Community Learning’s ESOL team leader

## BRASP ESOL assessment

The Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership (BRASP) consists of 15 Bristol-based organisations working in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers in the city.

Six BRASP partners (ACH, AidBox Community, Borderlands, Bristol Hospitality Network Bristol Refugee Rights, Refugee Women of Bristol) provide ESOL and operate a shared referral process. When a potential learner visits one of the BRASP partners, they are assessed using that providers’ own ESOL initial assessment. The person is given a card specifying their ESOL level, which means they do not have to be reassessed by another BRASP partner.



BRASP ESOL providers regularly meet to share updates, resources, training and plan how to meet emerging ESOL needs of refugee and migrant communities.

## Priority 2 – Boost provision of ESOL for work and academic study

Our findings emphasise the need to promote courses that provide training in the language and skills necessary for finding work or progressing to other courses. This would speed up a learner's progress and help them to identify and plan their career



Photo Credit: Pexels

ESOL for employability courses cover the skills and language necessary for applying for and starting work. Vocational ESOL classes cover training for specific jobs or industries, and should include training in colloquial, as well as technical, workplace language.

Many people find the literacy skills and cultural knowledge needed to complete job applications and CVs can be an obstacle. Additionally, many require support with promoting and 'talking up' their skills, as this can be contrary to job market norms in other countries. Lack of confidence and worries about being judged or rejected can also be a barrier.

Courses should incorporate tailored training and IAG to help with understanding the norms and cultures of the UK job market, digital literacy, and tackling job descriptions, CVs and job applications.

Proper support with interview preparation is needed, including clarifying interview expectations and processes, eg SMART interview scoring, STAR interview response technique, support with AI-led recruitment processes, and how to describe and showcase skills, achievements and values.

The current vocational and employment specific ESOL provision needs to be expanded, and a stronger collaboration with employers would enable better tailoring of the curriculum to include sector-specific language as well as general workplace language needs. Teaching contracts should include sufficient time to allow for proper course design and planning.

Employer input into curriculum design is key, but course content must be informed by the needs of the learners. Courses should include workplace rights and entitlements, equalities legislation and facilitate course participants to have agency at work, progress out of entry level roles and achieve their potential.



ESOL and skills funding should be remodelled to enable increased provision of these courses and allow them to be free for those who need it. As with all ESOL courses, accessibility should be maximised through providing support with transport costs and childcare, as well as offering flexibility and different modes of learning such as online, short intensive courses and longer part-time courses.

Designing and teaching the vocational content of these courses can be challenging for already busy teachers. To ensure the effectiveness of courses, funding should enable co-delivery by a vocational and an ESOL lecturer. There is a need for standardised resources for vocational ESOL courses developed by language and industry experts, which would enable trainers to share knowledge, keep up to date with industry skills needs, and reduce duplication and workload. This should include a mechanism where teachers can access information on local employers. The resources need to be kept up to date and be EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) focused and trauma informed.

There should be better alignment of all ESOL provision with 'mainstream' vocational courses. There is a need to raise awareness of the validity of ESOL qualifications, which are often not recognised by employers or training providers as being as on par with Functional Skills or other qualifications.

It is also imperative to support refugee and migrant communities to progress to higher level professions by improving access to further and higher education courses. ESOL providers should strengthen partnership working with further and higher education institutions to improve progression pathways into university preparation courses. Programmes such as OLIVE: The Open Learning Initiative and RefugEAP provide expert support and training for refugees aiming to attend university. There is a need to expand this provision to reach wider groups of migrants to unleash untapped academic and professional potential, with resultant benefits for individual wellbeing, communities and the economy.

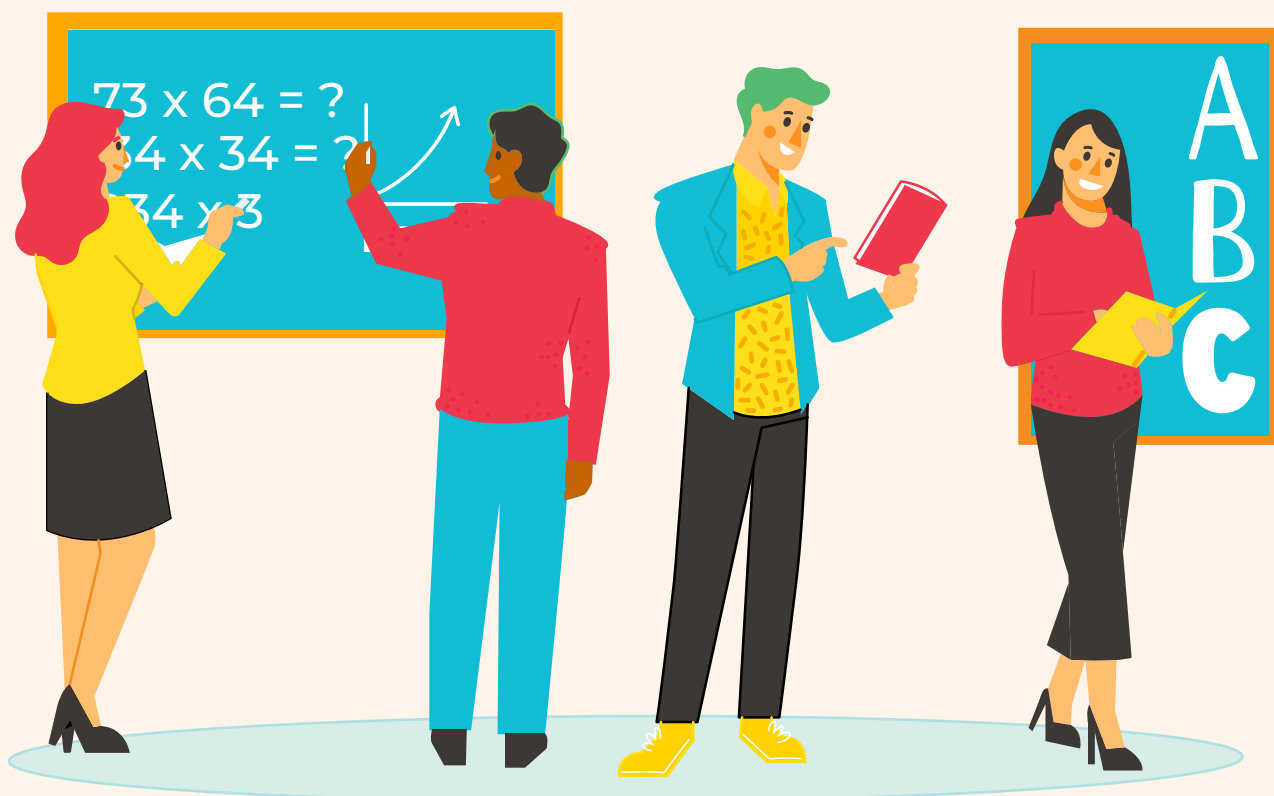
## City of Bristol College

City of Bristol College delivers the English Speaking Board curriculum from Pre-Entry to Level 2 to more than 1,200 adult ESOL students. This curriculum supports people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to develop and gain the English qualifications they need to progress towards their personal and career goals.

City of Bristol College also works with employers to inform, co-design and co-deliver their vocational provision. ESOL adult students are offered a range of 10-week, part-time courses which combine vocational and language skill development informed by regional skills needs, eg ESOL for Care, ESOL for Construction and ESOL for Cooking. These courses are non-accredited, and teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the requirements of the students and the local job landscape. Content includes profession specific skills and attributes, preparation for workplace scenarios and relevant technical language. Past students have progressed to accredited vocational Level 1 courses, into employment or have started their own businesses.

For example, the leader of the ESOL for Care course works closely with an employer who facilitates group visits to a care centre. Students can view the facility and equipment, see a care professional in action, and talk with the manager about the requirements of care work. As a result of attending the course, a former student has now secured a job with that employer.

The ESOL leadership team is developing internal work experience or volunteering opportunities for the ESOL learners at the college. As well as developing valuable skills and knowledge, learners will have the opportunity of securing a reference to help with their job applications.





## Priority 3 – Provide appropriate work experience

“ Maybe people assume... how they know about me if you don't give me that chance? If you give me that chance, [you will see], 'Oh, she can do that'. Just if you are thinking, 'Oh maybe she can't do that', even if you've not tried, maybe you've not given me a chance. That's my big issue, yeah, my problem is confidence, really, yeah... Give them a chance ... For example, if that person in the interview, 'OK, if you do this I try one week or two week and two or three days, can you show me your skills? And can you try? If I'm happy you can carry on, if not, oh, maybe you cannot do more' ... They do not give you a chance. ”

-Hawa

Participants wanted to be given the chance to gain experience in their chosen field or have the opportunity to demonstrate their existing skills. Providing work experience for people without recognised qualifications or UK work experience is another vital element of improving employment outcomes. Some participants wanted to demonstrate their practical skills as part of the job application process, for example in a work trial.

Proper support is needed to ensure good quality and appropriate placements are found. In addition, support with childcare and transport costs should be offered to ensure equity of access to opportunities. It is vital that work experience offers a real chance to gain skills and a reference, with the chance of a guaranteed interview if an applicant meets certain criteria. Before work experience starts, a clear understanding of the expectations of both parties should be ensured, eg participants should be briefed in UK working norms, and employers need to be aware of potential cultural and linguistic issues.

Work placements could form part of the curriculum of ESOL for work and general ESOL courses, boosting the effectiveness and success rates of these courses. Training providers could partner with employers to arrange work experience. Creative ways of funding work placements should be explored, for example, whether it could form part of accreditation to meet existing skills funding requirements.





Training providers should develop partnerships with businesses in different language communities to provide volunteer or work placement positions so people could get initial experience in a context where they can use their expert language.

For employers, costs of offering work experience were highlighted as a barrier, with calls for increased funding to help employers and incentivise a wider range of businesses and organisations to participate. Another barrier can be the paperwork and regulations which employers may have to comply with. These barriers could be overcome by working with local and regional authorities.

Partnership working between training providers, IAG professionals and employers is crucial to create meaningful work experience opportunities.

Besides support for those seeking employment, specialist, tailored support for refugee and migrant entrepreneurs is a key part of the picture of assisting people to make a sustainable living. These groups need support with building networks, marketing and publicity, understanding local demand and customer needs, and English language.

Business support should enable people to understand and comply with the many regulations in place, including UK tax rules. Better access to loans for business start-up and growth is needed, and Sharia-compliant loans should be more widely available. Support with understanding an individual's rights and entitlements is crucial to prevent people from falling into the trap of precarious entrepreneurship, or to help people move out of this. Funding for childcare is essential to ensure women entrepreneurs can access support. Many people from refugee and migrant communities have a strong drive to succeed as entrepreneurs, so it is vital that this is harnessed so that more people can build successful and thriving businesses that will improve their lives and benefit the regional economy.

## ACH

# CASE STUDY

ACH provides a range of services to support people with experience of migration and displacement to lead fulfilling lives. Our projects are designed in response to the complex intersectional needs of our service users.

For example, Coventry Language Integration Project plans to provide English language training to fast-track employability. Learners are assigned pathway navigators who provide additional support and mentoring for practicing English outside of classes, job searches and applications, attending social activities and building confidence. The combined approach of 'real world' English language training and practical support should fast-track learners into employment and aid holistic integration.

ACH proactively engages with employers. We have worked with NHS, Visit West, Bristol Waste and the Pret Foundation to offer not just recruitment support but also training in accessible and inclusive recruitment practices and employer working groups to share best practice.

Bridge to Employment is a pre-employment training programme, funded by Comic Relief, that partners with employers in Bristol and Bath. Partners have included hotels in the region, Bristol Waste and Pret a Manger. So far, we have delivered accredited training with placement opportunities to 24 candidates resulting in 11 people securing employment. The project also offers six months of in-work support to enhance career progression.





The Migrant Business Support project was delivered in partnership with University of Bristol and the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Growth Hub. The project provided personalised business support to 860 refugees and migrants in Bristol and Birmingham to reinforce the launch, stabilisation and growth of their businesses and support them into employment.

ACH partnered with TERN to deliver the UP Collective, a 12-week entrepreneurial programme which supports individuals through forming a business idea to business testing and a final showcase. On the programme, 28 people were matched with an experienced business mentor for 1:1 coaching sessions complementing weekly workshops.

The Green Growth Accelerator Project, funded by Community Climate Action, offers essential resources and expertise in sustainability, empowering entrepreneurs and job seekers to make informed decisions about their careers and businesses. Many of our entrepreneurs already maintain a low carbon footprint, and we support them in transitioning to sustainable packaging, accessing green grants, and understanding terminology.

The Accelerated Cooking Entrepreneurship programme stems from the Green Growth Accelerator Project and is a seven-week course for people who are considering a food business. They can learn about the fundamentals of starting a food business, trial their recipes and test trade. We have had eight businesses start from the programme, all of which are still trading.

ACH actively supports clients to work within the organisation and has recruited several former clients and tenants to voluntary and paid roles. Eight of our current staff are former clients.

## Priority 4 - A scheme for accreditation of prior learning and skills

“ **Researcher:** *“Is [working in a similar role to before] something you’d like to do in the future?”*”

**Khadija:** *“Maybe, maybe, maybe. I feel it’s too late now and this is one of the things, we feel like it’s too late for us to start from the beginning, most of us, when we come here, like old ... Some of us, we feel like it is waste of time to get a qualification from the beginning and start the same thing again and again, so they just go to these kind of jobs which doesn’t allow, doesn’t require a qualification like they have.”*”

A common issue was the lack of UK qualifications and experience. For many people, their overseas qualifications and work experience are not accepted by employers or have a lower equivalence in the UK. Being forced to leave behind qualification certificates and other credentials is a common experience for a displaced person. Similarly, many migrants and refugees are unable to supply references or the required information for DBS checks because they have had to leave documents behind. Requalifying can be expensive and time consuming, and language competence presents a further barrier to this.

Financial constraints and the structure of the UK benefits system can force people to take any job, while time and financial constraints may lead them to becoming ‘trapped’ in unsuitable jobs but unable to retrain for work matching their actual skills and qualifications.

Our findings highlight that, to help people find work and achieve their potential, there is a need for a process which aids recognition and accreditation of refugees’ and migrants’ prior learning and existing skills. There are existing models of skills verification or competence mapping used overseas. For example, a scheme run by the German public employment service involves tests that cover all a specific occupation’s skills and involve practice-oriented tasks. This can give employers an accurate picture of a candidate’s suitability for the role.<sup>37</sup>





The skills accreditation scheme should combine a digital platform for testing, analysis and matching candidates to opportunities with face-to-face assessment and support. The possibility to map existing skills and qualifications to UK qualifications should be explored.

The implementation of such a scheme calls for collaboration between government or local authority bodies, training providers, advice and guidance professionals, job coaches and employers. In particular, support from employers is crucial, which could be achieved by forming a partnership with key local employers to set standards for the scheme, understand and address employers' concerns, challenges and practicalities, and ensure compatibility with job requirements.

Initially, a local pilot scheme should be conducted, focusing on one or two skill sectors in the region. This should be established by a working group of employers, training providers, subject experts and policy makers. This could be scaled up to include more employment sectors and regions.

Such a scheme would generate more accurate, local data on the skills and qualifications that people have, enabling better planning at delivery and policy levels.

## Stakeholder perspective: Department of Work and Pensions Avon, Somerset & Gloucestershire

A large number of Jobcentre clients are from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and many have English language needs. The Avon, Somerset & Gloucestershire team at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) recognises the imperative to meet the needs of these individuals to enable them to access employment and progress to higher level work.

ACH's research provides valuable insights which help the DWP to understand the barriers many clients face to progressing once in support and training. The findings will help to shape delivery to ensure clients access the right training and progression pathways and support a business case for increased investment in understanding the language and training needs of this group of customers.

Employers need proper training on regulations regarding the right to work in the UK, especially with the introduction of eVisas. Many people still hold BRPs (Biometric Residence Permits) with expiry dates which indicate the deadline for switching to an eVisa. Some employers misinterpret this date as the end of a person's right to work in the UK and therefore don't even consider those applicants for jobs.

Work experience is another important element. There are employers who demonstrate good practices in engaging with people from refugee and migrant communities, including offering work experience. These employers should be supported to share the ways their companies have benefited from providing work experience to encourage other employers to follow suit.



## Priority 5 - Inclusive recruitment practices

ACH's research emphasised the need for employers to adapt and diversify their recruitment practices to reach migrants and refugees who have the required skills. Employers must understand the communities they are in and provide outreach and engagement activities, for example workshops and job fairs.

To increase inclusivity, employers should evaluate job adverts and descriptions to remove unnecessary jargon and ensure that the stated desired candidate criteria is reasonable, including the levels of English or qualifications specified. By requiring an unnecessarily high level of English, or not accepting overseas qualifications, an employer may be indirectly discriminatory because of race (which includes nationality or national origins) under the Equality Act.<sup>38</sup> Work coaches, IAG, training and support professional should be able to challenge employers who appear to be indirectly discriminating in this way.



Existing recruitment tests should be reviewed to eliminate cultural bias or accessibility barriers. Providing advance notice of interview questions and scoring techniques, allowing more thinking time, or providing the questions in writing as well as orally, using plain English were possible, and including tasks to demonstrate ability rather than sole reliance on spoken interview, would also help level the playing field, as would providing clear feedback after the interview.







Employers should consider accepting a digital or video CV, enabling people to demonstrate skills visually, or to pre-prepare some aspects of the interview. Many of these strategies would be consistent with a robust EDI strategy and would benefit a range of people in society, as well as employers themselves.

Some employers are reluctant to employ refugees and migrants due to uncertainty around immigration law or preconceptions of migrants in general. Training in unconscious bias, cultural awareness and relevant immigration law, and electing organisational EDI champions who sit on interview panels would improve inclusive and effective recruitment practices.

Employers should support employees from migration backgrounds to achieve their potential by facilitating career progression by recording employees' skills and achievements, providing training and constructive feedback, and providing English language support where needed. The option to work part-time or flexible hours would enable some refugees and migrants to continue their ESOL or other training, as well as meet any caring commitments. It is essential to ensure learning and upskilling can continue to enable career progression and prevent stagnation in entry-level jobs.

Inclusive recruitment means a personalised approach, for example by implementing alternative approaches to obtaining a DBS certificate for those without an address (or in a hotel or safe house) or references. Employers should challenge negative DBS decisions on this basis, rather than simply accepting them.

## The BRASP commitment to lived experience

**C** Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership (BRASP) aims to shift the balance of power within our organisations to people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary to enable them, ultimately, to lead our organisations. BRASP believes people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary are assets, and lived experience leadership is an avenue of growth for individuals and organisations.

**A** This includes developing structured training that supports people's journey to leadership, inclusive recruitment processes that prioritise people with lived experience, providing trauma informed support for employees and volunteers, as well as committing to the co-design of services.

### **S** **E** **T** **U** **D** **Y** **Experts by Experience Employment Initiative**

Some BRASP partners are also members of the Experts by Experience (EbE) Employment Initiative which aims to improve recruitment processes in the UK migration and asylum sector, and to improve the representation of people with lived experience of asylum and migration at all levels of organisations. BRASP supports people with lived experience with their job applications, including providing training and organising mentors. Member organisations of EbE commit to good practices of inclusive recruiting.



## Priority 6 - Integrated collaboration

To improve training and employment outcomes for refugees and migrants, we need stronger collaboration between employers, ESOL and training providers, refugee support organisations, advice and guidance professionals, work coaches, the DWP, and local and regional authorities.

It is important to deepen the involvement of people with lived experiences of migration and displacement in these partnerships. Their knowledge and insight in the design and delivery of services aimed at them is a vital part of making these strategies work.

Our findings strongly support the need for a central ESOL hub, with potential to be developed into a Multilingual Residents' Hub, serving as a one-stop-shop to enable settling and thriving in the West of England. This hub should consist of portals for different stakeholder groups. People from migration backgrounds could have a single point through which to access services and resources for ESOL, training, apprenticeships, work experience, careers and university.



They would benefit from the inclusion of more holistic support, eg accessing support services, healthcare, immigration advice, supporting children in schools, leisure and sports facilities. The hub should have a separate portal for training providers, support organisations, advice and guidance professionals, work coaches, and employers to share information and work to improve training, skills and support delivery.

The online hub should be combined with a physical space that offers in-person support as well as being a place to socialise. There is potential for this to build on the Welcome Hub model in which community venues are used to provide a safe place and to offer support with applying for work and accessing local services and social activities.

The need for a central hub for multilingual migrants is supported by previous research with local stakeholders<sup>39</sup> and would strengthen current systems, provide transparency and enable streamlined provision. Ideally, the ESOL hub would be a specialised 'spoke' in a future regional skills and employment hub which meets the needs of all residents in the region.

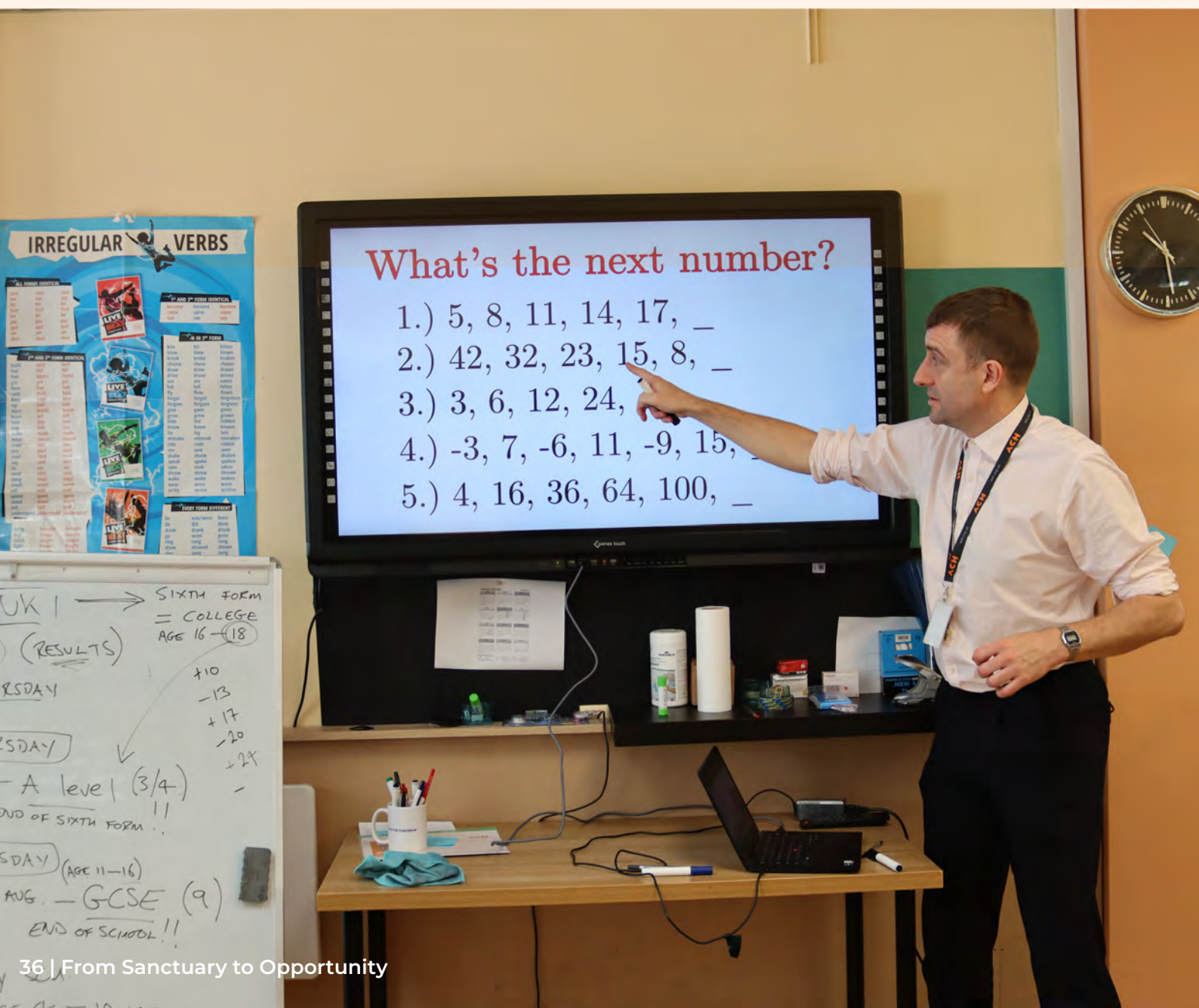
## The ESOL Provider Network

### CASE STUDY

The ESOL Provider Network was formed in 2014<sup>41</sup> and includes ESOL providers from Bristol and the West of England. Any organisation interested in ESOL can attend meetings.

The Network has facilitated relationship building and better collaboration between providers and enabled the sharing of resources and information, so that organisations and their clients/learners can keep up to date with opportunities. It has helped form connections with employers and other ESOL networks (eg South West Councils' ESOL Network).

The Network has been a vital forum for discussing ways of streamlining provision such as a single assessment hub and an ESOL strategy for the region. It enabled the establishing of the Learning English in Bristol & Beyond website which provides information about ESOL classes and conversation classes.



# Conclusion and next steps

ACH has been engaging with a range of experts in our research. We have documented the perspectives, concerns and recommendations of people with lived experiences of migration and of navigating the fragmented ESOL, skills and employment landscape locally. We have had substantial participation from many stakeholder organisations, from community organisations to large training providers and local authorities. We have been working with a range of professionals, from frontline workers to strategic leads, from teachers and career advisors to senior managers and departmental heads, and from community representatives to local councillors. Following this collaboration, we have developed the six key priorities detailed in this report and identified actions to implement them and ensure their success.

Our findings show that working to improve the education and employment outcomes of people who have experienced migration and displacement will clearly benefit individuals, families, local communities and the economy.

## The six priorities

- 1** A common ESOL initial assessment process for the West of England. This would enable potential learners to have a single placement interview from which they can be referred directly into suitable courses.
- 2** Boost provision of ESOL for work and academic study. We must increase the number of courses which combine language with employability or study skills training, make them more accessible and enhance their effectiveness.
- 3** Provide appropriate work experience. Placements should include ongoing support with tangible outcomes, such as a reference, accreditation or the possibility of a job interview.
- 4** A scheme for accreditation of prior learning and skills. This would be recognised by participating education providers and employers and will provide employers with a meaningful assessment of the skills of a job applicant and their suitability for the role.
- 5** Inclusive recruitment and retention practices. Employers should adapt and diversify their recruitment and retention practices to ensure they attract and retain migrants and refugees who have the skills for the job.
- 6** Integrated collaboration. This is an overarching priority for stakeholders which could form a strong foundation to facilitate the above priorities.



Underpinning these priorities are several conditions that need to be met to ensure we properly level the playing field and enable equitable access to sustainable and fulfilling employment for these groups

We must challenge hostility and discrimination towards refugee and migrant communities. Politicians, media outlets and those with a public voice must take responsibility for the impact their words have. It is important to tackle misinformation with facts about immigration. However, arming people with correct facts must be coupled with enabling people to be able to discuss their concerns. In South Yorkshire, the 'Who is Your Neighbour?' project hosts conversations about 'difficult topics' where people can voice their concerns regarding their community. These conversations ensure all participants are able to talk and be heard. This work should be replicated in communities across the country.

We must increase community resilience by building social connections, ensuring resource availability and economic security, and building a sense of empowerment.

National and local authorities should initiate policies and fund projects which promote community resilience, and authorities should ensure there are sufficient resources.<sup>42</sup>

Like all members of society, refugees and migrants should be able to access education that enables personal and community growth, and fosters voice and active citizenship; rather than preparing people for passive and permanent engagement in low-skilled, low-paid work.<sup>43</sup> All ESOL provision must be learner led, not solely shaped by the needs of employers or funders.

People who have experienced migration and displacement have different characteristics which intersect, including age, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, educational and immigration and settlement experiences. We must take appropriate measures to ensure equitable access to training and skills development. For example, providing translation and interpreting, and support with course costs is vital. There must be more support with childcare because caring commitments are a huge barrier for many women. Crucially, work needs to be done to remove barriers to participation faced by people with disabilities.

People seeking asylum are usually barred from work and this, coupled with restrictions on many other aspects of their life, can have lasting effects on their employment and other integration experiences once they have refugee status. There needs to be consideration of how to include people seeking asylum in training, advice and guidance provision to improve their employment outcomes. There is strong public support for ending the ban for people seeking asylum taking paid employment.<sup>44</sup> Enabling this demographic to work will benefit their long-term future and has positive effects on the economy.<sup>45</sup>

More work needs to be done to ensure people are aware of their existing options, and of the work we are all doing to improve the current systems. This would bring hope to those who feel that they will never have a chance to use their talents so accept low-skilled work, or who lose momentum in their ESOL journey, and would reignite their motivation to continue towards their goals.

The Labour government has announced several policies which potentially provide opportunities for this work. The Skills England Bill aims to meet skills needs and drive growth. The intention is to support people to get better jobs and improve their standard of living by bringing together local and regional authorities, businesses, training providers and unions in new training and skills initiatives. It is hoped that this will help remove barriers to economic inclusion. The government has also promised new rights for employees. The English Devolution Bill aims to give combined authorities greater powers for local growth strategies, skills and employment support. And the 2024 Labour Budget designated an additional £300 million to further education, although it has not yet been announced how this is to be spent. This could be a pivotal moment, potentially increasing opportunities for funding and regional collaboration to further the priorities.

**Comments from public sector bodies:**

*"We're very interested in hearing what you've got to say and supporting where we can."*

*"The research feeds really well into our agenda."*

*"The research helps us to understand the barriers faced by our service users."*

**Comment from training provider:**

*"Thanks for the work you are doing. It's great."*





ACH have had a very positive response to our work so far. Migrant and refugee participants have emphasised how important it is to keep improving training and employment opportunities in the region. We have heard how our work is influencing changes in areas such as partnership working, course planning, work experience and employer recruitment practices. Professionals have told us how our research has provided collaborative opportunities and space for ideas to form. But our research shows there is a pressing need to action these priorities and harness the relationships we have built to keep creating a positive future in the UK for refugee and migrant communities.

ACH's future research will expand the existing evidence and build on these relationships. We aim to strengthen and develop partnership working between employers and training and support providers. We will deepen our collaborative working with people from refugee and migrant communities. ACH is looking to form working groups to action these six priorities.



# Our vision for 2034

What would a streamlined and coherent skills and employment landscape for new arrivals in the West of England look like? We explore this through the fictional story of Sara.

It is 2034 and, in the UK, the visions of the many organisations that seek social justice and rights for refugees have been realised. On arrival, they are welcomed, the barriers to full and meaningful participation have been eliminated, and robust systems are in place to enable new arrivals to immediately access the support they need to fulfil their potential. Legislation has been changed and people seeking asylum can now access fully funded training and are allowed to work.

Sara arrives in Bristol as a person seeking asylum. She finds her new environment quite different and, although she has studied English before, she doesn't always understand what people are saying. She talks to her support worker about wanting to meet people and find a job. Her support worker accompanies her to the Multilingual Residents' Hub where she finds a warm welcome with tea and biscuits. Sara is matched with an advice and guidance mentor who asks about her career aspirations, qualifications and previous work experience. As Sara wants to improve her English, her level of competence is assessed. She is offered an interpreter to help with the discussion but feels she doesn't need one. Sara describes her previous work running a restaurant in her country, and that she would like to open a restaurant in the UK one day.



Photo Credit: Pexels



1

Once Sara's mentor understands Sara's goals and her holistic needs, she is shown how to use the digital Career Mapping and Skills Recognition tool, which provides Sara with an individually tailored map of the different career routes available to her. She decides to gain experience of the restaurant sector in the UK while also improving her English skills, focusing on language for work. To evaluate the restaurateur skills she already has, Sara is assessed using the virtual reality skills recognition software where she demonstrates her existing skills and identifies those she needs to develop. The results are compiled on a certificate.



2

Sara takes the certificate to her local college where they match her to an appropriate course and suitable work experience. Over the academic year, Sara gains practical skills and knowledge of the catering industry and works in a restaurant kitchen. She gains confidence in her English skills and learns workplace technical and colloquial language.



3

At the hub Sara also finds out how to access a range of other services in the area. She becomes a member of a refugee support organisation and joins the leisure centre. She makes friends and starts to support other people who come to the hub, as well as those in her community. During this time, Sara's claim for refugee status is approved and she feels even more settled and secure in the city she now calls home.



4

After Sara successfully completes her course and work experience, her mentor supports her to apply for work, including how to tackle the daunting job interview process. Sara secures a job in the kitchen of a small café, and is provided with glowing references from her work experience boss and the course lecturer. Her mentor supports Sara as she starts work and helps her to understand the paperwork and her employment rights. Sara soon feels confident in her job and enjoys using her skills and the social contacts she is making. She is exploring her future career path - perhaps she will open a café of her own in the UK one day.



5

One year after arriving in the UK, Sara feels she has gained valuable experience and knowledge, established good networks in the food industry, and knows how to access support as she takes her next steps to achieve her aspirations and lead a self-sufficient and ambitious life.

# ACH

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