

Working to Rebuild Lives

A Refugee Employment Strategy

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Foreword



In September 2003, the Department for Work and Pensions published *Working to Rebuild Lives: a preliminary report towards a refugee employment strategy*. That report outlined our developing work to tackle the high rate of refugee unemployment by giving refugees the initial support they need to start work and participate in society.

This refugee employment strategy reports on that work and explains the approach that we intend to take over the coming years to attract more refugees into Jobcentre Plus offices and to give them practical employment and language support when they are there. It outlines what Jobcentre Plus will do, but it acknowledges that no single agency can achieve results alone. We will continue to depend on the strong partnerships that we have built across Government and with the voluntary sector. For that reason, this strategy includes developments by others, principally the Home Office and the employment subgroup of the National Refugee Integration Forum, led by the Employability Forum. In particular, it has been re-assessed in the light of the changes in refugee status announced in February 2005 in *Controlling Our Borders: Making Migration Work for Britain*.

Much has been achieved but this publication does not close the debate on refugee employment. The National Refugee Integration Forum's employment subgroup will continue to address refugees' barriers to work and will monitor the progress of the measures within this document, the success of which depends on the strength of local partnerships working together to plan and deliver the support that refugees need. The National Refugee Integration Forum will continue to develop the Home Office's Refugee Integration Strategy, *Integration Matters*, which is being published simultaneously with this strategy.

This strategy has been produced after consultation with government and voluntary sector partners and I should like to thank everyone who has contributed to it. This document could not have been produced without the support of these partners and I am very pleased that Des Browne and Ram Gidoomal join me in signing it.

Rt Hon Jane Kennedy MP,
Minister of State for Work
(pictured)

Des Browne MP,
Minister of State for
Citizenship, Immigration
and Nationality

Ram Gidoomal CBE
Chair, Employability Forum

Strategic Aims

The Government is working to help refugees¹ integrate here by identifying and tackling the inequalities they face and by empowering them to make the most of opportunities available. Finding a job is crucial to that process.

This strategy shows the approach that we need to be taking to help more refugees into jobs. It identifies

- ways in which UK and devolved Government and its agencies can work more closely to make it easier for refugees to get the help they need;
- work that has already started to help refugees find jobs; and
- where more needs to be done.

It acknowledges that Jobcentre Plus has a key role in helping refugees to find work, but that it cannot do it alone and that local effective partnerships are critical to success. Voluntary organisations will continue to provide specialist advice and guidance to refugee professionals and this strategy recognises the key role that the voluntary sector as a whole will play in its delivery.

It sets the direction of travel but it does not give all the answers. As a first step, **this strategy introduces measures to**

- **move more unemployed refugees into Jobcentre Plus support quickly after they receive refugee status; and**
- **ensure that Jobcentre Plus gives them the help they need to find sustainable work.**

Jobcentre Plus is developing a Refugee Operational Framework to improve the service it gives to refugees, which underpins this strategy.

Over time, we might expect these measures to impact positively on refugees' employment rates. However, we must be cautious in any prediction about the impact on the employment rate since, to a large extent, any movement will depend on factors that are outside our control. We cannot predict when or how future overseas trouble spots will impact on numbers or skill profiles of refugees who come to UK. We also have to recognise that refugees' employment rates in UK are driven by many factors, which might include conditions of status, English language skills, extent of education in their home country, cultural issues, etc.

Nonetheless, we would expect to see a gradual improvement, subject to the caveats expressed above. **In 2005, we will**

- **establish with the Home Office how, using data sharing and government research programmes, we might capture baseline and progression data about refugees' employment rates and engagement with the labour market; and**
- **agree with the NRIF employment subgroup how and when we will be able to make this information available to them and how they might advise on refugees' employment rates within their continuing work to advise Government in this area.**

¹This document applies to all customers who have been granted refugee status or other leave to remain in the UK, through the asylum process. To avoid repetition of a lengthy definition of the different types of leave, the document will often refer to the overarching term 'refugee'. It is important to understand that in this context, the term refugee is not the strict interpretation applied by the Home Office.

Introduction

- 1.1** This document results from recent work by Government and its partners to increase the number of refugees in work. It summarises the achievements made and outlines the collective approach we need to take to give refugees the employment chances they need. It introduces Jobcentre Plus measures that apply in England, Scotland and Wales.
- 1.2** The Government established the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) in 2001, led by the Home Office and supported by a number of advisory subgroups (including one on employment) to examine and report on ways in which refugees may better integrate here. Integration is a long process for the individual and involves long-term commitment from those in the voluntary sector, government and elsewhere who are involved with managing support. This is made very clear in *Integration Matters*, the Home Office's new strategy for refugee integration in England, which is being published at the same time as this strategy. The Scottish Executive established the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF) in January 2002, which produced its own Action Plan in February 2003 and which works in parallel with NRIF. There will be a Welsh strategy in due course. The NRIF will continue to provide the overall framework for developing the refugee integration strategy in England. The advisory subgroup on employment, which is chaired by Ram Gidoomal of the Employability Forum, will continue to identify and tackle barriers to employment and share examples of good practice within England, Scotland and Wales. ***The NRIF employment subgroup will monitor the progress of the measures introduced in this strategy. It will consider how lessons may be learned from, and shared with, those responsible for refugee integration in Scotland, and Wales and will design its future workplan to include the areas identified for development.*** The work and membership of employment subgroup are at Annex 1.
- 1.3** In December 2002, DWP published research by Dr Alice Bloch entitled *Refugees' opportunities and barriers in employment and training* (DWP Research 179) which examined the extent of difficulty faced by refugees in finding work. It made a number of recommendations for improvements. This research and the advisory input of the NRIF employment subgroup have been fundamental in producing this strategy. Other important pieces of research, evaluation reports, conference reports and policy papers on refugee employment have influenced this strategy and Annex 2 lists some of the main ones over the last 3 years. Annex 2 also gives useful websites for refugee research material.

- 1.4** Consultation on the strategy began with the publication of *Working to Rebuild Lives; a preliminary report towards a refugee employment strategy* in September 2003. This report outlined work underway to increase (a) the number of unemployed refugees using Jobcentre Plus offices and (b) their participation on employment programmes. Des Browne, then DWP Minister for Work, introduced the intended focus of the strategy at the Employability Forum's *Working to Rebuild Lives* conference in November 2003. This strategy results from the developments in the preliminary report, which are summarised in DWP's report *Emerging Findings for the Refugee Strategy* (DWP Research Report W201) and from stakeholders' responses throughout the consultation period.
- 1.5** DWP published *Building on New Deal: Local solutions meeting individual needs (BoND)* in June 2004. That document sets out how Jobcentre Plus support, particularly the New Deal, might evolve in GB to give individuals more tailored help back to work. The measures that we are introducing in this refugee employment strategy are consistent with the proposed direction for Jobcentre Plus programmes and support, outlined in BoND.
- 1.6** This refugee strategy sets out the approach that we need to take to increase refugee employment. We want to increase and improve refugees' participation in Jobcentre Plus provision. Jobcentre Plus plays a major part in supporting refugees into jobs, but relies in no small way on the contribution of others in planning and providing appropriate support, training and advice. ***Jobcentre Plus is producing a Refugee Operational Framework (outlined in Annex 3) this year to help Jobcentre Plus people across GB in delivering services that meet the needs of refugees and help them into jobs.*** The Refugee Operational Framework operates in England, Scotland and Wales and underpins this strategy. Since the work of Jobcentre Plus cannot be taken in isolation when looking at the whole package of employment help for refugees, this strategy includes developments by other partners, especially the Home Office, the Employability Forum Policy Group and the NRIF employment subgroup.

- 1.7 The measures in this strategy are in line with the aims identified in the preliminary report and fall into three broad themes, each of which is developed in a separate chapter:
- (a) local development of **stakeholder partnerships** to plan and deliver employment services to refugees;
 - (b) **easing the transition** to refugee status with national measures to help bring more unemployed refugees into Jobcentre Plus offices, with appropriate support into work when they get there;
 - (c) the role of the voluntary sector in developing opportunities to help **refugee professionals** towards work appropriate to their skills.
- 1.8 The first of these considers planning for refugees within Jobcentre Plus's local partnerships arrangements in England, Scotland and Wales. It also introduces the role of the Refugee Operational Framework in helping Jobcentre Plus to develop partnership plans to deliver the national strategy. The second outlines measures across Government and in the voluntary sector to encourage better referral routes and to ensure that Jobcentre Plus' services and provision respond to refugees' needs. The third brings in work underway, particularly in the voluntary sector, to help those with professional level skills and explores how to develop and maximise partnerships to support this group.
- 1.9 The new measures are shown in **bold italics** and are summarised in Part 5: Conclusions and next steps.

Developing partnerships

- 2.1** Jobcentre Plus is part of the picture but not all of it. A number of Government agencies and voluntary organisations have a stake in the route that an individual takes from an asylum claim, through transition to refugee status and into employment. Effective partnership working by all stakeholders is crucial to establishing and achieving individual and joint objectives.
- 2.2** Jobcentre Plus launched a Partnerships Strategy in June 2004 that defines how they will work with others strategically and operationally. Planning support for refugees is integral to its partnership arrangements.
- 2.3** Strategic partnership is about longer term vision and leads to shared priorities and planning. Nationally, Jobcentre Plus will continue to be part of the NRIF employment subgroup.
- 2.4** Operational partnerships focus on local practical activity in which partners collaborate on service delivery. Jobcentre Plus is committed to local partnership working with the following key players:
- local authorities;** Jobcentre Plus has an Accord with local authorities in England which encourages joint working on reaching the hardest to help and getting them into work. This is now being implemented at local level. A similar Accord has just been signed in Wales and one is planned for Scotland.
- development agencies;** Jobcentre Plus collaborates on skills, economic development and regeneration with Regional Development Agencies in England; Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise; and the Welsh Development Agency.
- learning and skills providers;** Learning and Skills Councils in England; Education and Learning Wales; and Scottish Enterprise and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise, with whom Jobcentre Plus shares the skills agenda and works to increase economic development. Learning and Skills Councils and Jobcentre Plus are both involved with delivering on skills. From April 2004 they have been involved with joint delivery and planning.

- 2.5** Jobcentre Plus has a key role in Local Strategic Partnerships and Regional Skills Partnerships (England); with Community First Partnership (Wales); and with Local Authority led Partnerships (Scotland).
- 2.6** The London Development Agency and the Government Office for London have commissioned work on behalf of the London Skills Commission to explore arrangements for a new body to coordinate and promote work on employment, enterprise and training for refugees in London. This will be developed by the FRESA (Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action) and will involve refugee community organisations and other non-government organisations working with refugees in London. The new body, to be known as London Refugee Economic Action (LORECA), will aim to facilitate measures so that the London economy can fully benefit from the positive contribution of refugees.
- 2.7** Jobcentre Plus *districts* are clearly central to decision making about the nature and extent of partnership working. In areas of high refugee numbers, Jobcentre Plus district managers have a role in ensuring that refugee employment issues are reflected in the partnership arrangements described above. They will want to ensure that local partnership arrangements respond to the needs of refugees. They may, for example, embrace refugee and community groups, asylum support services, the voluntary sector, further education providers, local authorities and employers. Input from partners is key to ensuring that employment measures cater for the employment and skills needs of refugees in their area, tie into the local labour market and make best use of existing resources and the range of funding streams available. Annex 4 gives potential funding sources for use by partnerships.

Leicester has long had a tradition of welcoming new communities and refugees and has become one of the most culturally diverse cities in Britain. The City Council and Jobcentre Plus agreed to a formal recruitment target for refugees in order to demonstrate the city's commitment to establishing a workforce that reflects the wider community. The Refugee Employment Project (REP) forms part of the authority's Local Public Service agreement with Government. It aims to move over 180 refugees with support from Jobcentre Plus, into sustainable work over the period from 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2005. The city council supports its new refugee recruits with training and other assistance. The project is on target, with 180 refugees already in jobs. Jobcentre Plus is supporting REP with activity to help its advisers understand more about refugee issues. Jobcentre Plus in Leicester has developed guidance to help its 'frontline' advisers welcome refugees and help them to understand arrangements for finding work. The advisers are supported by a refugee coordinator and lead advisers in each Jobcentre Plus office who have expert knowledge about refugee issues. They help with particular difficulties and develop products and services to support refugees into work.

2.8 Building on New Deal (BoND) proposes increased flexibility and devolution of decision making and some specialist provision for the most disadvantaged jobseekers, including those refugees who face particular disadvantage in the labour market. This would allow Jobcentre Plus managers to be more actively involved with key local partners, by giving them greater accountability for delivering local service standards, obtaining the most effective provision and providing value for money. Prototypes of this approach are proposed in a number of Jobcentre Plus districts in England,

Scotland and Wales. Within BoND, a national strategy for supporting the most disadvantaged groups into work is being developed, supported at a local level by delivery plans in BoND prototype areas. A component of the local delivery plan could show how Jobcentre Plus will work with partners to draw more unemployed refugees into Jobcentre Plus provision, in line with our aim to increase the percentage of unemployed refugees who engage with Jobcentre Plus after receiving refugee status.

The Jobcentre Plus Operational Framework will advise Jobcentre Plus districts on developing local partnerships and services that meet the needs of refugees, helping them to progress into employment and integrate into the UK labour market at the earliest opportunity.

- 2.9** Voluntary sector participation in partnerships is crucial if we are to address the employment needs of this very diverse group. It is in everyone's interest to encourage refugees to make the best use of opportunities to develop their potential. Jobcentre Plus does not have the expertise to advise those with higher or professional level skills. Jobcentre Plus will work with voluntary organisations and professional bodies that have expertise in education, health, engineering, etc, in order to refer refugee professionals to specialist sources of advice and guidance. The Compact on relationships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in England recognises the role that the VCS can play in the delivery of Government services, and encourages Departments to make better use of these. The Scottish Compact endorses this ethos. It states "in working with voluntary organisations, volunteer and community development groups the

Executive will promote an understanding of the value of voluntary sector activity to all public sector bodies and stakeholders." In line with Compact principles, we recognise the key role the VCS has in drawing together the expertise needed to deliver an improved service to refugees.

This is developed in Chapter 4.

Helping more refugees through Jobcentre Plus

- 3.1** In Bloch's survey, just over half (54%) of those who were looking for work had used Jobcentre Plus and just under half (49%) had heard of any of its programmes. Our strategy aims to improve services for refugees by introducing measures to
- (a) increase the proportion of unemployed newly recognised refugees who use Jobcentre Plus offices; and
 - (b) offer those who identify themselves to Jobcentre Plus as refugees a package of early employment and language support.
- 3.2** Bloch's survey included new arrivals and those who had been in UK for some years. Difficulties in accessing the labour market are particularly acute in the early stages after transition from asylum seeker status to refugee status. If successful asylum seekers are to integrate more quickly, they need to be better prepared for the changes that will happen at that stage. They need real support at that point so they know what to do and they can make the right choices. We have worked closely with the Home Office to build measures to support refugees at this early stage and we aim to take action to avoid them falling through the cracks. This strategy focuses particularly on the activity we are taking to give this group help with information, documentation and jobs.
- 3.3** We have no baseline information to inform us about newly recognised refugees' rates of participation in Jobcentre Plus provision. ***In 2005, DWP and the Home Office will establish how, using data sharing and government research programmes, we might capture baseline and progression data about refugees' employment rates and engagement with the labour market which will impact across GB.***
- Easing the transition to refugee status**
- 3.4** Refugees need relevant information during the transition period from asylum seeker to refugee status to help them make the right connections. The Home Office currently issues a short signposting leaflet about Jobcentre Plus services with letters to terminate NASS support when a positive decision has been made; the Home Office will continue to issue the leaflet with their new letter that combines the decision with information to terminate NASS support. In addition, ***the Home Office is developing a short guide containing useful information, including a section on employment, for new arrivals, which will be made available to refugees and other migrants with a route to citizenship. The guide will be called 'Welcome to the UK; what you need to know.'***

- 3.5** Successful asylum seekers have 28 days of continued NASS support following the issue of their positive decision letter. It is vital that they connect quickly with Jobcentre Plus at the start of this period to get help with employment and make a claim for appropriate benefits.
- 3.6** *The Home Office has consulted on a new pilot initiative to support refugees during this early period. In the pilot areas, all refugees who wish to take part will be provided with caseworker support to help them make the right connections with employment services, housing, English language classes, schooling for children, registering with a GP, etc.* The caseworker will work with the refugee as early as possible in the 28 days following receipt of notification about their changed status and will help the refugee to establish a Personal Integration Plan. This new initiative is known as SUNRISE (Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services) and will be piloted in 2005. The results will inform decisions on national roll-out. ***The Home Office is also implementing legislation for the introduction of Refugee Integration Loans to support refugees with expenses necessary to help them with integration.*** The Home Office's strategy *Integration Matters* gives more detail on these important initiatives.
- 3.7** The Home Office funds voluntary sector caseworker support to refugees who arrive through the Home Office's Gateway Protection Programme. ***The Home Office, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector support agencies are working together in partnership to ensure that this group access Jobcentre Plus services as soon as possible after arrival.***
- 3.8** *The Home Office intends to publish a policy document this year that aims to increase volunteering amongst asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with government policy. The Home Office will liaise with appropriate officials in the Scottish Executive in development of this policy.* The policy document will show how volunteering can help people to support their local community or the wider voluntary/charity sectors, as well as help them to retain and refresh skills that may help them to find and keep work.
- 3.9** The European Community initiative, EQUAL, has been developing ways to support asylum seekers, including those with temporary protection and permission to work, with appropriate activity. Three development partnerships have been taking this work forward in the first round of EQUAL's Theme 1: and four development partnerships have been identified for round 2.

3.10 The partnerships are developing a range of support, including skills audits, orientation packages, English language tuition, volunteering activities and building the capacity of local asylum support services. The three partnerships in Round 1 are working now on plans to mainstream their work. They plan to hold a joint national conference in spring 2005 to showcase their work. Further information about this work is on www.equal.ecotec.co.uk.

Improving documentation

3.11 The Home Office and the NRIF employment subgroup have examined issues around secure documentation and personal identification, both of which are crucial in clarifying to an employer that an individual has permission to work.

3.12 *The Home Office introduced Immigration Status Documents (ISDs) in March 2004.* These documents are used to convey endorsements of leave when passports cannot be used for that purpose. ISDs state that the person has permission to work.

3.13 Jobcentre Plus, Home Office and Inland Revenue have worked together to improve the allocation of National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) for new refugees. *From April 2004, they introduced a new process whereby asylum seekers granted*

leave to enter/remain, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave are notified of their NINO at the same time as they are served with their Home Office decision letter.

3.14 The Home Office will continue work aimed at wider acceptance of status documentation when refugees apply to open bank accounts.

Specialist support through Jobcentre Plus

3.15 Jobcentre Plus needs to be able to identify refugees among their customers in order to support them with appropriate measures and to plan provision to meet demand. *In April 2004, Jobcentre Plus introduced a voluntary refugee 'marker' on its Labour Market System (LMS), to provide management information about customers who have been awarded refugee status or other leave to remain in the United Kingdom.* This marker will help Jobcentre Plus capture information and monitor how its services and provision help refugees into work. It also supports Jobcentre Plus in complying with requirements under the Race Relations Act (Amendment) Act 2000. *The Jobcentre Plus Refugee Operational Framework gives guidance to staff on identifying and supporting refugee customers.*

It contains links to sources of information and support across GB, including specialist advice for those with professional level skills.

3.16 Jobcentre Plus contracted with 5E in Haringey in north east London to pilot a programme to test a new approach to refugee employment help, giving immediate, specialist support to successful asylum seekers who have recently received status to remain in the UK. The programme, RIFCO (Refugee Integration for Career Opportunities), was designed to

- bring newly recognised refugees quickly into Jobcentre Plus help and services;
- ensure that they receive appropriate support with housing and welfare issues;
- refer to, or provide, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learning and employment help;
- offer a modular, holistic approach tailored to individual needs.

3.17 Early findings from the pilot were reported in the report *Emerging findings for the Refugee Employment Strategy*. **Decisions about the future shape of provision for refugees will be taken in 2005 in line with BoND developments. DWP and the Home Office will consider how SUNRISE proposals and the specialist refugee employment pilot can inform and complement each other, in line with BoND.** The Home Office and DWP will liaise with the Scottish Executive on the development of these provisions.

Mehmet is 27 years old and is Kurdish. His parents were killed when he was a child. His political beliefs made it impossible for him to stay at home. He came to Britain in August 2000, with no money, no family support and speaking no English.

He received refugee status in May 2003. He went to the Jobcentre in Haringey and was given a place on the RIFCO programme in June 2003.

Mehmet did not know much about RIFCO, but knew that he wanted to learn English, find a job and settle in the area. But his priority was to find somewhere to live. He had lived temporarily with friends, but was about to become homeless. RIFCO helped him complete and submit a housing application to APEX House and supplied an interpreter for him. The RIFCO team also made phone calls to agencies to find suitable accommodation and finally managed to locate a room for him. RIFCO made telephone calls on his behalf to help him acquire a permanent NI number. They helped him with the paperwork to open a bank account.

He began an English language course with RIFCO and was given practical support to find a job, with help to understand how the UK labour market works and individual help with job applications. His experience of work in the textile industry in his home country helped him to secure a job as a machinist with a local clothing company, where he has been working for almost a year. Through the individual attention that RIFCO was able to give him after he gained refugee status, he has been able to start building a new life. He is still learning English and is beginning to feel settled in his new home.

3.18 During 2003, ECOTEC studied how Jobcentre Plus provides interpreters and translators. A summary of their study is given in *Emerging findings for the Refugee Employment Strategy*. The study looked at provision in five English districts. It examined how, and when, offices use professional interpreters

(including Language Line), bi-lingual staff and family/friends of customers. It identified particular issues for Jobcentre Plus offices and their contractors in communicating with refugee and migrant customers who have a low level of English language skills and suggested ways in which services might be improved.

Jobcentre Plus is taking the study findings forward by undertaking a review of interpreter services in England, Scotland and Wales to identify delivery needs; re-examine guidance to staff; identify and share good practice within the field; and work with other public sector partners to consider partnership options around translation and interpreter services.

In addition, an inter-Departmental group is examining the provision of interpreting services in the public sector, particularly around supply and standards. DWP, including Jobcentre Plus, are contributing to this work.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

3.19 The report *Emerging Findings for the Refugee Employment Strategy* sets out the need for ESOL among Jobcentre Plus customers. It reports on the work of the 13 week ESOL “Prototype” course in South Thames College which was designed for refugees who wanted a faster and more intensive route through language learning.

3.20 Refugee jobseekers with ESOL needs can be referred immediately to Jobcentre Plus language programmes. This is full-time ESOL provision lasting up to six months. It provides job-focused language tuition alongside practical support to

In 2002, Handsworth Jobcentre in Birmingham had a large number of new refugee customers. Since most did not speak English, staff used Language Line to conduct three way interviews, but the Jobcentre felt that it was not the best way to support these customers. The Jobcentre manager asked a training provider in the area if they could supply a member of their staff to be based permanently at the Jobcentre to interpret for refugees, paid for by the Jobcentre. They came to an arrangement which worked so well that the provider went on to supply two members of staff to Handsworth Jobcentre. The idea was then used as a blueprint for interpreting services across Birmingham and Solihull, which led to Jobcentre Plus working in partnership with a number of interpreting organisations.

understand and access the labour market. It aims to help each customer move as far as possible towards Level 1, which is equivalent to Key Stage 3 of the National Schools Curriculum.

3.21 ESOL Provision extends beyond 26 weeks where needed. Similarly, Jobcentre Plus offices have introduced flexibility in programmes to contract for ESOL in the most appropriate way for their customers. This may mean shorter 13 week provision, such as that trialled for refugees at South Thames College, for those who it is felt could make faster progress in learning. It may also be offered as a discrete element within specific vocational courses; some Jobcentres are contracting for construction courses that offer ESOL, for instance.

3.22 *From April 2004, Jobcentre Plus began screening all customers for literacy, numeracy and language needs at or before their six month interview or at their Work Focused Interview. This applies GB-wide. Those with identifiable ESOL needs are offered help through Jobcentre Plus work focused ESOL programmes or signposted to part-time ESOL provision funded by the LSC, as appropriate.*

3.23 *From April 2004, incentives have been available to Jobcentre Plus customers (on New Deal only in Scotland and Wales; and all customers in England) who take up Jobcentre Plus basic skills and ESOL training.* They receive £10 per week in addition to their training allowance while on programmes and £100 for achieving a qualification at Entry 3 or Level 1.

Engaging employers

3.24 The Jobcentre Plus Employer Engagement Strategy recognises the need to extend its vacancy business because its customers, including refugees, have diverse needs and employment aspirations. The strategy gives clear messages about the benefits to employers of diversifying their workforces. Diversity Managers are employed in Scotland, Wales and each of the nine English regions. They work with key national employers to develop recruitment strategies to target people from under-represented groups and ensure recruitment and employee practices are fair to all.

3.25 The Jobcentre Plus Nursing and Healthcare Employer Unit confirms nursing registrations and provides information about the employment of registered nurses, including issues around refugees and foreign nationals with overseas nursing qualifications.

3.26 In 2004 the Employability Forum commissioned research into the attitudes of employers towards refugees. *'Employing Refugees – some organisations' experience'*, published by the Institute for Employment Studies in March 2004, included examples of positive action by employers and highlighted the contribution which refugees made in the workplace. The Institute interviewed ten employers about their experience of employing refugees. The key issues that need to be addressed with employers generally are:

- concern about documentation clarifying that permission to work had been granted;
- recognition of the important role of the voluntary sector connecting refugee jobseekers with employers;
- the value of work experience;
- the need for more focused English language teaching; and
- the impact of negative media reporting on the perceptions of employers.

3.27 *The Employability Forum will expand its work with employers and professional bodies in the light of this study, to promote the employment of refugees and to draw attention to the skills and experience which refugees bring with them to the UK.*

3.28 The NRIF employment subgroup will encourage public sector employers to provide work experience wherever practicable. *As part of that work, the Employability Forum will examine the current nationality restrictions that exclude refugees from working in some sectors of public service and make recommendations in 2005.*

Travel West Midlands

The Employability Forum has been working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus in Birmingham to help a local travel company recruit refugees to fill vacancies for bus drivers. Employability Forum seconded a member of their staff, himself a refugee, to the Handsworth Jobcentre to work with refugee communities locally to identify suitable staff for the travel company. Over 20 refugees registered their interest; training provided by PERTEMPS has so far led to four being employed by the travel company. This piece of work has shown that refugees can be the best advocates for demonstrating to employers the benefits of a diverse workforce. Since then, over 30 refugee community organisations in the West Midlands have come together to form RETAF - Refugee Employment and Training Advocacy Forum – with the aim of maximising the number of refugees getting into work. RETAF works with the Employability Forum and Jobcentre Plus in a partnership which plans to involve more refugees as advocates to work with their communities, employers and Jobcentre Plus to share information and encourage greater recruitment from this group.

Developing opportunities for refugee professionals

Giving advice

- 4.1** The measures identified so far are designed to encourage more refugees to engage with Jobcentre Plus for help into work. Refugees who have worked at a professional or technical level before coming to UK may want support over and above that available through Jobcentre Plus in order to resume their careers. Jobcentre Plus does not have the expertise to deliver that degree of specialist help (with the exception of advising on nursing and healthcare – see para 4.7) but the voluntary sector is well placed to work with these groups and have already made substantial developments. Jobcentre Plus's Refugee Operational Framework **will advise staff about sources of specialist support across GB in the voluntary sector and elsewhere for refugee professionals.** The intention is not to develop a separate pathway for refugee professionals within Jobcentre Plus support, but to continue the mainstream support currently available, whilst making them aware of any specialist help that might help them to resume a career.
- 4.2** It is important for refugees (and those advising them) to distinguish between professions where there is a statutory requirement in the UK for formal recognition (eg health professionals, teachers) and those professions that are not subject to such formal regulation (such as engineering or information technology). In the past three years a number of initiatives have been developed to help the integration of refugee professionals. Annex 5 details the considerable amount of work underway to chart pathways to registration and employment for health professionals, teachers and engineers.
- 4.3** A number of common issues need to be addressed to enable refugee professionals to return to practice. ***The NRIF employment subgroup will develop work in 2005 to encourage professional bodies to produce detailed guides to integration, similar to the Guide for Refugee Doctors, or to place information on websites, such as that being developed for health professionals by the North East London Strategic Health Authority.***

Pathways to professional recognition

- 4.4** Refugee professionals may need support with some or all of the following:
- recognition of their qualifications by NARIC - National Academic Recognition Information Centre (www.naric.org.uk);
 - work experience;
 - an opportunity for language study relevant to their profession; and
 - support with adapting to the requirements of UK professions, such as that offered to health professionals, teachers and engineers by Refugees into Jobs in Wembley.

The NRIF employment subgroup will work with voluntary organisations in 2005 to formalise the guidance available to them on supporting refugees across GB with this help.

- 4.5** ***The NRIF employment subgroup will develop work in 2005 to facilitate the registration of refugees with relevant professional bodies.***

- 4.6** On nurses, ***the Refugee Nurses Task Force, a group made up of a range of government and voluntary sector stakeholders, published 'Integrating refugee skills into the workforce – a strategy for refugee nurses' in July 2004.*** The Department of Health is funding Praxis Community Projects in East London to act as the reference point in England for implementing the strategy, with links to the established reference points in Scotland and Wales. In addition, ***the Home Office Challenge Fund funded the Refugee Nurses Task Force to produce a feasibility study on mechanisms for identifying nursing skills at the earliest opportunity.***

- 4.7** The Jobcentre Plus Nursing & Healthcare Employer Unit provides guidance for Jobcentre Plus advisers to help refugees who hold professional nursing or midwifery qualifications from their home country. The guidance provides direction on the three key issues for professional registration in the UK - English language competence, the process for achieving professional registration and supervised practice placements. Similar guidance is available for other healthcare professions.

4.8 On teachers, the Employability Forum is working with the Confederation of Education Service Managers (ConfED) to develop a strategy for integrating refugee teachers into employment in the UK workforce. ***A task force has been established involving the major stakeholders in England (including the Department for Education & Skills, the General Teaching Council and the Teacher Training Agency) and will report in June 2005.*** This follows in the wake of a similar initiative in Scotland led by the General Teaching Council. A Refugee Teachers Steering Group led by North London University's Refugee Advice and Guidance Unit brings together practitioners to share information and work towards common solutions.

4.9 ***The Home Office published a skills audit in summer 2004.*** It was the largest ever skills audit of refugees undertaken in the UK. The report presents the diversity among refugees in terms of their skills and employment histories on arrival. It makes the case for an employment strategy and wider government policies that are capable of responding to a wide range of needs. Clearly, the countries of origin of those seeking asylum in UK change over time, as do the political influences that shape the lives of those living in those countries. The

skills audit gives considerable detail about the skills of those who arrived in UK within a four-month period. Though it covers a snapshot of asylum decisions over a given period, it provides considerable and very specific information about groups that have been settling in UK for some time. It will be a very useful tool to practitioners and policy makers in the statutory, further education and voluntary sectors who are involved with helping refugees into sustainable jobs and who need to be informed about the facts and myths surrounding refugees and those with ESOL needs. The Scottish Executive in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council also carried out a Skills and Aspirations Audit to research the skills and aspirations of refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland. The study was conducted in parallel with the Home Office study. The findings suggest that refugees and asylum seekers have a wealth of skills and qualifications and high levels of motivation. However, a very small percentage of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit (who had the right to work) had been able to access paid employment in Scotland. As well as being a useful tool for those working with asylum seekers and refugees' employment in Scotland the audit reinforces the UK Audit's conclusions around the need for an employment strategy.

Self employment

4.10 The Home Office's skills audit shows that in some refugee communities more than 30% of the working age population were self-employed or running their own small businesses before coming to the UK. Though it may not be appropriate in all cases for this group to explore self-employment as an option in UK, nonetheless it is clear that some will consider this route and need help to understand the options. DWP business start up support is targeted at the long term unemployed and others facing labour market disadvantage. It is delivered through Jobcentre Plus programmes and supports participants with business planning and test trading. DTI's Small Business Service leads on a range of support for those in employment and for the short term unemployed. ***Employability Forum will produce guidance in 2005 which clarifies these and other sources of support for refugees who want to be self-employed.*** The guidance will help ensure that refugees and their supporting organisations understand the support mechanisms and share examples of successful refugee enterprises. It will include information on organisations that can provide training and support on the development of a basic business plan as well as sources of finance.

Funding

4.11 The NRIF employment subgroup will explore options for providing the essential longer term financial support required by those who need to acquire technical and/or higher level English language skills. DWP has been working with the Department of Health and the British Medical Association to consider the scope of supporting refugee doctors through Career Development Loans which apply across GB; and the Department for Education and Skills has been looking at the support needs of refugee teachers. ***The NRIF employment subgroup will consider both pieces of work in 2005 with a view to making recommendations for supporting a wider group of refugee professionals.***

Conclusions and next steps

- 5.1** Refugee unemployment is too high. This strategy shows the approach that we need to be taking to help more refugees into jobs.
- 5.2** Jobcentre Plus has a key role in helping refugees to find work, but it cannot do it alone. Local partnerships are critical to success. This strategy identifies how Government and its agencies are working with partners to make it easier for refugees to get the help they need. ***It introduces measures to bring more unemployed refugees into Jobcentre Plus support quickly after they receive refugee status and ensure that Jobcentre Plus gives them the help they need to find sustainable work.***
- 5.3** Over time, we might expect these measures to impact positively on refugees' employment rates. ***In 2005, we will establish with the Home Office how, using data sharing and government research programmes, we might capture baseline and progression data about refugees' employment rates and engagement with the labour market which will impact across GB. We will also agree with the NRIF employment subgroup how and when we will be able to make this information available to them and how they might advise on refugees' employment rates within their continuing work to advise Government in this area.***
- 5.4** ***This strategy is underpinned by Jobcentre Plus's Refugee Operational Framework, which will support Jobcentre Plus people across GB in delivering services that meet the needs of refugees and help them to progress into employment at the earliest opportunity.*** The Framework will advise Jobcentre Plus districts in developing local partnerships and services that meet the needs of refugees.
- 5.5** This strategy outlines where changes have already been made, where work is currently underway and where more needs to be done. ***The NRIF employment subgroup will monitor the progress of the measures introduced in this strategy. It will consider how lessons may be learned from and shared with those responsible for refugee employment in Scotland and Wales, and will design its future workplan to include the areas identified for development.***

5.6 Measures in place from April 2004

- The Home Office introduced Immigration Status Documents in March 2004, which confirm permission to work.
- From April 2004, a new process was introduced whereby asylum seekers granted leave to enter/remain, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave are notified of their NINO at the same time as they are served with their Home Office decision letter.
- The Home Office, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector support agencies are working together in a partnership to ensure that Gateway Protection Programme refugees access Jobcentre Plus services as soon as possible after arrival.
- Jobcentre Plus introduced a voluntary refugee 'marker' on its Labour Market System (LMS), to provide management information about customers who have been awarded refugee status or other leave to remain in the United Kingdom. This will enable us to learn more about how best to help refugee customers.
- From April 2004, Jobcentre Plus began screening all customers for literacy, numeracy and language needs at or before their six month interview or at their Work Focused Interview. This applies GB-wide. Those with identifiable ESOL needs are offered help through Jobcentre Plus work focused ESOL programmes or signposted to part-time ESOL provision funded by the LSC, as appropriate.
- From April 2004, financial incentives have been available to Jobcentre Plus customers (on New Deal only in Scotland and Wales; and all customers in England) who take up Jobcentre Plus basic skills and ESOL training.
- The Refugee Nurses Task Force published *Integrating refugee skills into the workforce – a strategy for refugee nurses* in July 2004 and have reported on a feasibility study on mechanisms for identifying refugees' nursing skills at the earliest opportunity.
- The Home Office published a skills audit in July 2004. (Skills Audit of Refugees: Home Office Online Report 37/04).

5.7 Measures in development

- Jobcentre Plus has been piloting specialist employment support for newly recognised refugees. DWP will decide on the future shape of support for refugees in 2005 in line with BoND developments.
- The Home Office is developing a short handbook with useful information, including employment, for new arrivals, which will be made available to refugees and other migrants with a route to citizenship. The guide will be called *'Welcome to the UK; what you need to know.'*
- The Home Office has consulted on a new initiative, 'SUNRISE', to support refugees in the 28 days following issue of their positive decision letter. In the pilot areas, all refugees who wish to take part will be provided with caseworker support to help them make the right connections with employment services, housing, etc.
- The Home Office are implementing legislation this year for the introduction of Refugee Integration Loans to support refugees with expenses necessary to help them with integration.
- The Home Office intends to publish a policy document this year that aims to increase volunteering amongst asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with government policy. The Home Office will liaise with appropriate officials in the Scottish Executive in development of this policy.
- Jobcentre Plus is reviewing its interpreter and translation services in England, Scotland and Wales to identify delivery needs; re-examine guidance to staff; identify and share good practice within the field; and work with other public sector partners to consider partnership options around translation and interpreter services.
- A task force on refugee teachers has been established involving the major stakeholders in education and will report in June 2005. The task force will seek endorsement of the strategy from the DfES as the key stakeholder.
- The Employability Forum is producing guidance in 2005 to bring together guidance on sources of support for refugees who want to be self-employed.

5.8 Areas for future development

- The NRIF employment subgroup will monitor the progress of the measures introduced in this strategy. It will consider how lessons may be learned from and shared with those responsible for refugee employment in Scotland and Wales, and will design its future workplan to include the areas identified for development.
- Decisions about the future shape of provision for refugees will be taken in 2005 in line with BoND developments. DWP and the Home Office will consider how SUNRISE proposals and the specialist refugee employment pilot can inform and complement each other, in line with BoND. The Home Office and DWP will liaise with the Scottish Executive on the development of these provisions.
- The Employability Forum will expand its work with employers and professional bodies to promote the employment of refugees and to draw attention to the skills and experience that refugees bring with them to the UK.
- The NRIF employment subgroup will develop work to encourage professional bodies to produce detailed guides to integration, similar to the Guide for Refugee Doctors, and/or to place information on websites such as that being developed for health professionals by the North East London Strategic Health Authority.
- The NRIF employment subgroup will work with voluntary organisations in 2005 to formalise guidance on supporting refugees towards professional recognition.
- The NRIF employment subgroup will develop work in 2005 to facilitate the registration of refugees with relevant professional bodies.
- The NRIF employment subgroup will consider developments on financial support for health professionals and teachers with a view to making recommendations in 2005 for supporting a wider group of refugee professionals.
- The NRIF employment subgroup will examine the current nationality restrictions that exclude refugees from working in some sectors of public service and make recommendations in 2005.

Annex 1

The National Refugee Integration Forum's subgroup on employment and training

1. The Home Office established the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) in 2001 to monitor the implementation of the government's strategy on refugee integration outlined in *Full and Equal Citizens*. The Employability Forum was invited to lead the work of the employment and training subgroup of NRIF, which includes representatives from government departments and agencies, voluntary and refugee organisations, local authorities and Further Education Colleges.
2. The remit of the subgroup is to consider the government's overall strategy on refugee integration, to focus on the needs of refugees entering the UK labour market and to set out the practical action required to maximise the skills and experience which refugees bring to the world of work.
3. The subgroup has identified the major barriers that face refugee job seekers in the UK labour market and the key organisations involved in relevant policy making and the delivery of services. It has contributed to the development of the DWP and Home Office strategies on refugee employment and integration. The subgroup has provided an opportunity for key officials in government departments to 'join up' thinking around refugee employment and integration and to consult and communicate on plans that impact on the development of the overall strategy.
4. The membership of the subgroup includes representatives from:
 - City and Islington College
 - Department for Education & Skills
 - Employability Forum
 - Education, Training and Employment Working Group
 - Home Office
 - Department for Work & Pensions
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - Learning and Skills Council
 - London Language and Literacy Unit
 - The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
 - Refugees into Jobs
 - The Refugee Council
 - Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service
 - The Schellekens Consultancy
 - University for Industry
 - Commission for Racial Equality
 - Scottish Executive
 - Welsh Assembly

Annex 2

Research, evaluation reports, conference reports and policy papers in last 3 years

Refugees' opportunities and barriers in employment and training

DWP Research Report 179: A Bloch: 2002

(www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrep179.html)

Working to Rebuild Lives; a preliminary report towards a refugee employment strategy

DWP: September 2003

(www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2003/wrl/exec_sum.pdf)

Working to Rebuild Lives; conference report 11 November 2003

(copies from info@employabilityforum.co.uk)

Emerging Findings for the Refugee Employment Strategy

DWP Research Report W201: September 2004

([www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/researchanalysisandstatistics/working age researchandanalysis](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/researchanalysisandstatistics/working_age_researchandanalysis))

Full and Equal Citizens; a strategy for the integration of refugees into the United Kingdom

Home Office: November 2002

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind)

Integration Matters

Home Office strategy

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind)

Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan

Scottish Executive 2003

(www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/rfap-00.asp)

Supporting document

(www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/rfsd-00.asp)

Building on the New Deal: local solutions meeting individual needs

DWP: June 2004

(www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2004/buildingonnewdeal/index.asp)

English Language as a Barrier to Employment, Education and Training
DfEE research 4RP/210/98: Dr Philida Schellekens 2001

Skills Audit of Refugees
Home Office: R Kirk: July 2004
(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr3704.pdf)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: a skills and aspiration audit
(www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/rassa-00.asp)

A framework for strategic partnerships;
Jobcentre Plus:ref PARTSTRAT04EXT: June 2004
(email:sue.uttley@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk)

21st Century Skills; Realising our potential
DfES: July 2003
HMSO £24.00

Employing Refugees – some organisations' experiences
Institute for Employment Studies: March 2004
(www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/01550ef.pdf)

Silver Lining – Integrating refugee skills into the workforce – a strategy for refugee nurses
Employability Forum: July 2004
(copies from info@employabilityforum.co.uk)

Useful websites

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk **The Refugee Council** has a useful publications page; readers can request electronic newsletters and can subscribe to their *Inexile* magazine.

www.icar.org.uk **The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR)** is an independent information centre that promotes understanding of asylum and refugee issues. It provides a post-graduate network for students.

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk **The Scottish Refugee Council** provides advice and information to refugees in Scotland.

Annex 3

Jobcentre Plus's Refugee Operational Framework

The Jobcentre Plus Refugee Operational Framework has been developed in consultation with internal operational colleagues and external stakeholders. It provides information for Jobcentre Plus people who are involved in service delivery, by identifying and addressing key issues to support refugees seeking employment and claiming benefits. In addition it seeks to support the development of partnerships with voluntary sector and other organisations and to share good practice.

The Operational Framework underpins the DWP's aims of increasing the employment rate of refugees; increasing their participation on programmes; and providing them with a responsive quality service that equips them with the skills they need to get jobs. It seeks to support Jobcentre Plus people in delivering services that meet the needs of refugees and ensure that they progress into employment and integrate into the UK labour market at the earliest opportunity.

In order to achieve these objectives, Jobcentre Plus will continue to:

- Work with other Government Departments and agencies to improve routes to Jobcentre Plus support for refugees, particularly in the early days.
- Encourage unemployed refugees to use Jobcentre Plus services, helping them to access and understand the UK labour market and get help with English language and other skills to improve employability and access to employment.
- Provide information and guidance for Jobcentre Plus people across GB who are involved in service delivery, to ensure that they (a) identify and address key issues when supporting refugees and (b) ensure that they offer consistency in standards to refugee customers, while being responsive to individual needs.
- Where appropriate, work with local partnerships and develop services to meet the needs of refugee customers and local communities.
- Develop the role of Jobcentre Plus in promoting disadvantaged groups, including refugees, to employers.

The Framework helps to take forward this agenda through three separate sections:

Jobcentre Plus Strategic Planning and Working with Partners

This will provide policy advice and information for Jobcentre Plus District Managers and Business Development Managers across GB in developing local Jobcentre Plus services to meet the needs of refugees and their communities.

Guidance and support

This provides guidance and information, including signposting information, for Jobcentre Plus people across GB handling claims from refugees. The guidance is produced as a webpage with links to internal supporting guidance and appropriate, relevant external websites including those that affect refugees in Scotland and Wales.

Information for customers explaining Jobcentre Plus services and support for refugees

This will build on both Race Equality Scheme objectives and priorities and promote Jobcentre Plus's commitment to encourage refugees to access Jobcentre Plus services. Jobcentre Plus is exploring production of a leaflet (also available in languages other than English) aimed at refugees and refugee organisations to explain Jobcentre Plus services and support for refugees.

Annex 4

Potential sources of funding for local partnerships

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF) Objective 3

ESF Objective 3 aims to tackle long term unemployment; improve training, education and counselling for lifelong learning; and encourage entrepreneurship and adaptability in the workplace. Most regional ESF Objective 3 is available through Co-financing Organisations (CFOs) which provide 100% funding to successful applicants. CFOs are responsible for finding the required match funding so that applicants do not have to apply separately to other funding sources.

Jobcentre Plus is a CFO in England; the Learning and Skills Councils are CFOs in all regions. In some regions other public bodies, such as Regional Development Agencies and local authorities are also CFOs.

EQUAL

EQUAL is a transnational programme that tests new ways to reduce inequality in the labour market. Organisations taking part in EQUAL develop innovative approaches to fight discrimination faced by those in work and those seeking work. Development Partnerships work with and learn from other Member States taking part in the programme.

EQUAL mirrors the four key elements of the European Employment Strategy: employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. More information is on www.equal.ecotec.co.uk.

EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND (ERF)

The European Refugee Fund (ERF) is providing €216 million to Member States between 2000-2004 to help with reception of asylum seekers, integration of refugees and voluntary return to a home country. In 2004 the UK received approximately €10.8 million (£7.5 million). The fund can help asylum seekers with reception (over and above NASS support) and voluntary returns. The integration strand funds projects for refugees only. The nature of European funding means that the ERF best suits larger organisations and partnerships. ERF awards are usually £50,000-£80,000, but more can be given. The Home Office's Immigration and Nationality Directorate manages ERF; more information is on www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/content/ind/en/home.html.

HOME OFFICE CHALLENGE FUND

The Home Office Integration Challenge Fund supports the Refugee Integration Strategy *Full and Equal Citizens* published in November 2000. It was introduced in 2001 to support local projects for refugee integration. It does not support asylum seekers. It was initially a three-year scheme but has been extended. In 2004 the fund totalled £3 million. It is particularly suitable for smaller organisations, with most awards around £20,000-£50,000. The Home Office's Immigration and Nationality Directorate manages the fund; more information is available on www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/content/ind/en/home.html.

JOBCENTRE PLUS

Jobcentre Plus pays benefits and allowances to jobseekers and others of working age. It also administers discretionary payments through its Social Fund. Jobcentre Plus offers a range of services and programmes for jobseekers. This includes contracts with external providers to provide courses in work focused English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). More information is on www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

INVEST TO SAVE BUDGET

Through the Invest to Save Budget the Treasury encourages new and joined-up ways of working by funding projects that develop innovative ideas, bringing together organisations in partnership. In the 7th round, up to £90m is available for projects to draw down in 2005-06 and priority areas include integration for refugees and migrants.

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

The LSC is responsible for funding and planning education and training for those aged over 16 years in England. With a budget of £8.0 billion (2003-04) the LSC operates through 47 local offices. LSCs are responsible for funding the provision of ESOL in Further Education Colleges. More information is on www.lsc.gov.uk.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE COMPANIES

There is a network of 22 local enterprise companies in Scotland, provided by Scottish Enterprise (www.scottish-enterprise.com) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (www.hie.co.uk). Local enterprise companies work in partnership with the private and public sectors to support new and existing enterprises, develop skills and encourage economic growth.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING, WALES

Education and Learning Wales is a Welsh Assembly Sponsored Public Body. It is responsible for funding, planning and promoting all post-16 education and training in Wales with the exception of Higher Education. This includes further education, private and voluntary sector training provision, adult continuing education and sixth form provision. It has a duty to secure appropriate and reasonable provision to meet the needs of individuals, communities, employers and Wales as a whole, through the implementation of the policies and strategic priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government. More information is on www.elwa.ac.uk.

INDEPENDENT TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

UK Trusts and Foundations give about £2 billion in grants each year to voluntary organisations, which is about the same as the total of grants given by government. Many of these funding bodies have identified refugees and asylum seekers as disadvantaged and minority groups which have trouble gaining access to ordinary services.

Annex 5

Developments to support refugee professionals

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Lead agency and partners

Department of Health Refugee Health Professionals Steering Group; NHS Strategic Health Authorities and Workforce Development Confederations; British Medical Association; Royal College of Nursing; British Dental Association; Employability Forum; PRAXIS; voluntary and refugee community organisations.

Background

The Department of Health recognises the importance of encouraging refugees with health professional skills to continue their careers in the NHS. The Department of Health established a high profile Refugee Health Professional Steering Group in 2001 to promote the needs of refugee health professionals and allocate funding to local projects and initiatives aimed at supporting refugees train and enter employment in the NHS. The British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing and British Dental Association have all built on the work of the Steering Group and put in place their own systems and initiatives for supporting refugee doctors, nurses and dentists respectively.

Achievements

- Department of Health funding of £2 million for over 40 projects helping refugee health professionals in England.
- Creation of refugee health professional databases through the British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing and British Dental Association. These help provide a much clearer picture of the numbers and location of refugee doctors, nurses and dentists. This has helped inform funding decisions and the development of new initiatives and services.
- Greater awareness amongst NHS employers and the health professions of the skills and potential that refugees have to offer the NHS workforce.
- Quarterly newsletters providing details of initiatives and services available to refugee doctors and nurses throughout the UK.
- BMA Refugee Doctor Initiative. A special membership package for refugee doctors including the BMJ weekly and access to the BMA Library.
- Guidance for refugee doctors and nurses. These guides help deliver a clear and reliable message to refugees trying to find employment in the NHS, with information and contact details for essential bodies and organisations.

- Professional communication and action groups - the Refugee Doctor Liaison Group at the BMA and the Refugee Dentist Steering Group at the BDA.
- Reduced fees and concessions for refugee doctors who register with the General Medical Council to work in the UK.
- Creation of a Refugee Nurses Task Force through the Employability Forum and subsequent publication of *Integrating refugee skills into the workforce – a strategy for refugee nurses*. The Department of Health Refugee Health Professional Steering Group is funding the implementation of this strategy.
- Feasibility study by the Refugee Nurses Task Force on mechanisms for identifying nursing skills at the earliest opportunity. The Home Office's Challenge Fund has funded this work.
- The development of a comprehensive national career advice and information website for refugee health professionals. The ROSE website [Refugee & Overseas Support into Employment] has been developed by North East London Strategic Health Authority.
- Glasgow Overseas Professionals into Practice (GOPIP) offers a programme to help refugee nurses into practice. The project allows qualified nurses entering Scotland to gain the necessary experience and education to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Funding per nurse is provided by NHS Education for Scotland. More information is on www.gcal.ac.uk.

Future areas for development

Health professionals who are in a position to apply for jobs within the NHS need support in drawing up CVs, completing application forms and developing interview skills. Many come from cultures where the application processes are different and they are not required to 'sell' themselves as required in the UK. Lack of experience in this area may hamper their chances of finding employment. Increasing the availability of clinical attachments also remains a priority. At the present time demand for work attachments far exceeds supply.

DWP and Jobcentre Plus are working with the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Skills and other partners to share understanding of the routes for refugee health professionals in resuming their careers. The Department of Health has provided guidance to help Jobcentre Plus staff refer refugee health professionals to agencies and other sources of support. DWP, Jobcentre Plus and the Department of Health are exploring possibilities for refugee health professionals to work in the NHS in a non-medical staff capacity whilst they are studying. DfES and the BMA are investigating how far Career Development Loans may be used to support refugee health professionals through their training and especially when undertaking clinical attachments.

NHS Workforce Development Confederations and Strategic Health Authorities will continue to play an important role as the key investors in the local workforce, building on existing projects and sharing good practice.

TEACHERS

Lead agency and partners

Employability Forum and Refugee Teachers Steering Group. Membership includes Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (London Metropolitan University); Refugee Council; Refugees in Jobs; Refugee Women's Association; RETAS and the Somali Teachers Education Association.

Background

A stakeholder seminar held in January 2004 led to the call for a Task Force to develop a national strategy. The strategy's purpose is to streamline the integration of refugees from teaching backgrounds into the workforce. The Task Force started work in June 2004 and will report in 2005.

Achievements

- Refugee Teachers Steering Group of voluntary sector providers established in April 2003 and has met the Department for Education and Skills and the Teacher Training Agency.
- Stakeholder Seminar led to ConfEd (Confederation of Education Service Managers) endorsing the production of a refugee teaching strategy.

- A national Task Force involving the DfES, Teacher Training Agency and GTC England, Local Education Authorities, school heads, training providers and the voluntary sector will report in 2005.
- Start of media campaign to raise issues with employers and the wider public.

Future areas for development

Refugee teachers constitute an important resource for British schools that is currently not being utilised. There is a need for data on numbers and location of refugees from teaching backgrounds and a system to allow their prior experience to be assessed effectively.

Not all overseas-qualified teachers will achieve Qualified Teacher Status. Those who do not qualify nonetheless have important skills to contribute in support roles. They need English language provision that is relevant to working in schools. And they need help to identify schools that will help them to access employment based training route to qualification.

The Task Force will develop a refugee teacher strategy in 2005 for endorsement by the DfES and other stakeholders.

ENGINEERS

Lead agency and partners

Refugees into Jobs and the Employability Forum

Background

Refugees into Jobs Steering Group for Engineers comprises members from refugee organisations and engineering professional institutes, but is primarily led by the Engineering Council and the Engineering Employers Federation. It has met three times to discuss issues around helping unemployed refugee engineers to enter the industry.

Achievements

- Refugee Engineers Steering Group (RESG) comprising refugee organisations, engineering institutions and stakeholders was established in February 2003.
- RESG has arranged a work placement programme for five refugee engineers, with the Engineering Council and the Engineering Employers Federation.
- RESG has negotiated with the Engineering Council to create a database of refugee engineers.

Future areas for development

Refugee engineers do not face complex registration procedures since the profession is unregulated in the UK, but they do have difficulty persuading employers to employ them. There is a need to determine numbers, location and engineering backgrounds. Work placements can help refugee engineers become familiar with health and safety codes etc.

Enquiries should be addressed to:

Jonathan Bailey
Department for Work and Pensions
Partnerships, Unemployment and
Inclusion Division
Room W8d
Moorfoot
Sheffield
S1 4PQ
Email: jonathan.bailey@dwp.gsi.gov.uk