



# Migrants and work

*Introduction to Migration*

**Guidance booklet #11**



**Migration Yorkshire**  
supporting local migration services



**Integration up North**  
Training and Development in the North of England



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## **Who is this guidance for?**

*Migrants and work* is part of the *Introduction to Migration* series from the Integration up North project. The series provides a basic guide to migration for people working in public sector organisations: local authorities (including health services), police, fire and rescue services, probation services, Jobcentre Plus, Trades Unions and others. It should also be useful for those working in the voluntary and community sector.

The guidance aims to improve the knowledge and understanding of migration among service providers, so that they can shape their service to support the integration of new arrivals to the benefit of both the newly-arrived migrants and the wider local community. Throughout the guidance there are examples from practice across the northern region, and experiences of new arrivals in these areas. While the focus is migration to the north of England, it should also be useable in other areas of the UK.

This is intended to be an easy-to-use reference document. It does not provide legal advice or a detailed guide to immigration law and policy. In such a fast-changing context, information can quickly become out of date. All information should be checked with an expert or the Home Office if in doubt. We have highlighted other sources of information and guidance where it exists, for further reading and future reference.

## **About the contributors**

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The *Introduction to Migration* series was edited by Pip Tyler with most Integration up North (IUN) case studies written by Nahida Khan, although in this booklet itself, RETAS and individual migrants also shared their stories. The project and guidance documents would not have been possible without contributions and advice from our migrant volunteers, migration champions in our partner organisations, our training delegates who commented on the materials.

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## Introduction: why *Migrants and work*?

This guidance aims to raise awareness amongst service providers of the barriers that some migrants face when seeking employment. The guidance will equip services with knowledge of ways to offer appropriate support and advice in assisting migrants to overcome these barriers and successfully engage in the UK workplace. The guidance also aims to clarify eligibility to work and address misunderstandings or uncertainty around recruitment.

The next section of the guidance aims to provide clarity on which groups of migrants are eligible to work and details the current makeup of the migrant workforce in the UK and the contribution they bring to the economy. The booklet then goes on to:

- Explore some of the barriers that migrants face when seeking employment, including English language and the approach to job hunting in the UK
- Suggest ways in to the job market including volunteering, vocational training and requalification, as well as setting up businesses
- Consider the role of the employer in easing the transition to work in the UK.

Throughout, there are case studies to illuminate the issues described and to present the migrant viewpoint, as well as key messages which are summarised at the end.

### **Key message 1: Employment helps migrants to integrate and adjust to the host society.**

People migrate to different countries far more than ever before and for many different reasons. This change presents a challenge to European countries in facilitating successful integration of new migrant groups and managing community cohesion. Employment plays a crucial role in helping migrants positively interact and engage with their new communities, and measures to help them engage in the workplace will do much to address this challenge.

Employment has been identified as a primary factor in the integration of migrants into UK society.<sup>1</sup> It is recognised that it increases opportunities to improve English language skills and enables adjustment to the host society through a degree of economic independence.

People migrate for a whole range of reasons. For many it is employment and economic opportunities that are the primary motivation for relocating. The UK is internationally regarded as a peaceful, democratic and wealthy country, ranking 5<sup>th</sup> of 194 countries in the global list of total GDP for 2014 (after the USA, China, Japan and Germany).<sup>2</sup> It should therefore not be surprising that migration is an inevitable consequence and should be valued as an essential component of a successful country in the global economy. Around 40% of inflows to the UK are primarily labour related.<sup>3</sup> There is a significant demand for migrant workers among some employers and there are recognised skill shortages, as identified by the UK government, where migrants are encouraged to apply.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J Philimore (2006) *Employability initiatives for refugees in Europe: looking at, and learning from, good practice. Report for Equal and the Home Office.* [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/7087/Integration\\_employment\\_and\\_training\\_2](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/7087/Integration_employment_and_training_2)

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2015) *GDP Ranking* <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table>

<sup>3</sup> W Somerville (2009) *Immigration in the UK the Recession and Beyond*, Equality and Human Rights Institute

<sup>4</sup> UK Visas and Immigration (2015) *Tier 2 shortage occupation list, government-approved version: valid from 6 April 2015* [www.gov.uk/government/publications/tier-2-shortage-occupation-list](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tier-2-shortage-occupation-list)

## The UK migrant workforce

**Key message 2: The number of migrants in the UK workplace has increased over the last ten years.**

The UK has experienced a noticeable increase in the number of migrants in the workplace over the past 10 years. This has led to an emerging discontent from certain sections of UK society, and is now an important political debate.

- The number of foreign-born people of working age in the UK has risen from 2.9 million in 1993 to more than 6 million in 2013. The percentage share of foreign-born workers in employment therefore also increased, from 7% in 1993 to 15% in 2013.<sup>5</sup>
- A higher proportion of foreign nationals are economically active compared with UK nationals. The percentage of foreign nationals economically active in the Census was 71%, compared with 67% of UK nationals. However, these proportions alter when full-time study is excluded as an activity, resulting in the percentage for economically active foreign nationals falling to 65% and 64% for UK nationals.<sup>6</sup>

### Why come to the UK to work?

Immigration in pursuit of labour is driven by several factors. Among the most important are:

- labour demands in the receiving country relative to supply in the sending countries
- the 'opportunity differential' between senders and receivers
- the existence of established immigrant communities in the host country
- host country immigration policies.<sup>7</sup>

Even for those other groups of migrants who may have relocated to the UK for other reasons such as marriage, family re-union, protection from persecution or for study, employment is also likely to be a high consideration during their stay.

### Are all migrants eligible to work in the UK?

Migrants have differing rights and entitlements to work in the UK dependent on their immigration status. It is essential for employers to understand eligibility to work as employers have responsibility for carrying out eligibility to work checks for new starters. Any recruiter caught employing a worker who is not eligible to work could face a fine of up to £20 000. Further details of this can be found in the legislation<sup>8</sup> and in government guidance.<sup>9</sup>

*Figure i* provides a general overview of the eligibility to work in the UK for common groups of migrants according to immigration status.

<sup>5</sup> C Rienzo (2014) *Migrants in the UK Labour Market: an overview*. Migration Observatory.

[www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-uk-labour-market-overview](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-uk-labour-market-overview)

<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics (2011) Analysis of economic activity data from 2011 Census by nationality.

[www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/detailed-characteristics-for-regions-in-england-and-for-wales/sty-economic-activity.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/detailed-characteristics-for-regions-in-england-and-for-wales/sty-economic-activity.html)

<sup>7</sup> W Somerville (2009) *Immigration in the UK the Recession and Beyond*, Equality and Human Rights Institute

<sup>8</sup> *Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006*, sections 15-26. [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/13/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/13/contents).

<sup>9</sup> *Penalties for employing illegal workers* [www.gov.uk/penalties-for-employing-illegal-workers](http://www.gov.uk/penalties-for-employing-illegal-workers)

The five tiers of the Points Based System (PBS) provide the framework for third country nationals (non-EEA migrants) applying to work or study in the UK. They have different conditions, entitlements and entry-clearance checks:

- Tier 1: Highly skilled individuals - to contribute to growth and productivity
- Tier 2: Skilled workers - with a job offer to fill gaps in UK labour force
- [Tier 3: Low skilled workers - to fill temporary labour shortages, currently closed]
- Tier 4: Students
- Tier 5: Temporary workers and youth mobility - people allowed to work in the UK for a limited period of time to satisfy primarily non-economic objectives.

Tiers 1, 2 and 4 visa holders may switch between tiers subject to meeting the requirements of the tier, although these are limited opportunities. Tiers 1 and 2 are most likely to eventually lead to settlement and British citizenship. Tier 5 is a temporary route and migrants in this category are unable to move out of them once in the UK.

As *Figure i* highlights, due to the wide range in categories of migrants and the varied motivations and eligibility for entry into the UK to live and work, migrants bring a whole spectrum of both highly skilled and unskilled potential labour to the UK economy.

<b>Figure i: Eligibility to work – general rules in the UK</b>		
EEA national	EEA national <sup>10</sup> or Switzerland	Permission to work in UK (no restrictions).
	EEA nationals subject to transitional controls (Croatia only)	Require a purple registration certificate (accession worker authorisation document) and is usually limited to skilled work Tier 2 or temporary worker Tier 5 classification.
Third country (non-EEA) national	Third country nationals with Indefinite Leave (ILR)	Permission to work in UK (no restrictions).
	Third country nationals with limited leave and a work visa (under the PBS)	Permission to work in UK – restrictions dependent on Tier type. Can be recruited to ‘shortage occupations’ or if an employer was unable to recruit from the UK/EEA. Employers sponsor workers and report changes of circumstance to Home Office.
	Third country nationals with limited leave and a study visa (Tier 4)	Permission to work in UK (but only 20 hours maximum during term time, full time out of term time. Permission is time limited based on the length of course).
	Third country nationals with a limited leave family/spouse visa	Permission to work in UK (no restrictions).
	Dependants of third country nationals	Dependants are generally eligible to work, except when accompanying a student (Tier 4) or a temporary worker (Tier5).
	Refugee status / Humanitarian Protection	Permission to work in UK (no restrictions but may be time limited).
	Asylum seeker	Employment prohibited (a few exceptions).
Undocumented migrant		Employment prohibited

<sup>10</sup> EEA countries: all EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Switzerland is often included in policies applying to EEA members. Note that Croatia remains subject to transitional controls on employment until 2020.

## The impact of migrant workers on the economy

**Key message 3: There is much evidence of the positive contribution migrants make to the UK economy.**

There is a mixed debate on the question of migrant impacts. Migrants generally tend to be young but, even more usefully to the economy, not too young. They arrive ready to work, so the state does not bear the costs of their upbringing and education. Several studies provide evidence that migrant workers into the UK have boosted economic growth and helped control inflation without undermining the jobs of British-born workers:

- New arrivals from Eastern Europe have helped to keep inflation and interest rates lower by increasing the supply of labour relative to demand.<sup>11</sup> This study also shows that public finances have not suffered as a result of the influx of migrant workers.
- Migrants have very little negative impact on wage levels and do not displace UK-born workers in any demographic sub-group.<sup>12</sup>
- The fiscal effect of immigration is 'close to zero' demonstrating that immigrants represent no additional costs to the tax-payer.<sup>13</sup>

The common fear often expressed by groups who wish to curb immigration is that migrants come to the UK to take 'our jobs'. UKIP billboards for the European elections in 2014 is just one recent example of this where an image of a finger is pointing at the viewer with the wording '26 million people in Europe are looking for work. And whose jobs are they after?' This notion that there are a fixed number of job opportunities available and that for every job taken up by a migrant they are somehow displacing or preventing a UK born jobseeker from that role is simply inaccurate.

### What jobs do migrants do in the UK?

Although migrants engage in all sections of the UK workplace, there are some distinguishable common trends relating to the jobs migrants do after arrival in the UK. Migrants can become concentrated at the two ends of the skill spectrum, being over-represented in both low-skilled and high-skilled jobs.

Workers originating from wealthier countries such as France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and North America are strongly represented in finance and business, while those from Africa, the Caribbean and South East Asia worked primarily in less skilled transport, communications and services jobs. EEA migrants are more heavily concentrated in manufacturing than other immigrant groups. Foreign-born workers, many of whom are EEA

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<sup>11</sup> PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2007) IV – *The economic impact of increased net migration to the UK*

<sup>12</sup> W Somerville and M Sumption (2009) *Immigration and the labour market: Theory, evidence and policy*. Equality and Human Rights Commission / Migration Policy Institute. [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-and-labour-market-theory-evidence-and-policy](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-and-labour-market-theory-evidence-and-policy)

<sup>13</sup> Migrant Workers North West (2012) *Exploring the risks about migration and exploring the motivations which bring migrant workers to the UK*. Migration Works  
[www.migrantworkersnorthwest.org/pdfs/Migration\\_Works\\_Website\\_Version\\_2012.pdf](http://www.migrantworkersnorthwest.org/pdfs/Migration_Works_Website_Version_2012.pdf)

migrants, make up over 80 percent of the seasonal agricultural workforce during peak months.<sup>14</sup>

Figures from 2013 found that foreign-born workers made up significant proportions in particular occupational sectors. For example:<sup>15</sup>

- 43% of workers in elementary process plant occupations (e.g. bottlers, canners, fillers)
- 32% in food preparation trades
- 25% of workers in health professionals (e.g. medical practitioners and dental practitioners).

The increase in the share of migrant labour has shown to be greatest among process operatives (e.g. food, drink and tobacco process operatives, plastics process operatives, chemical and related process operatives) up from 8.5% in 2002 to 28% in 2012. A significant share of relatively skilled recent migrants have taken up employment in less-skilled occupations in the UK<sup>16</sup> i.e. underemployment is common.

London and other major UK cities such as Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield, can now be described as 24 hour cities, requiring people to staff the restaurants, shops, hotels, offices, shipping and factories that run around the clock. Taxi drivers, cleaners, market traders and security guards are a common sight, working long hours throughout the night. Britain's night workers are predominantly taken up by migrants, working unsociable hours in low paid jobs and sometimes in dangerous working conditions.

It is estimated that there are around 1.5 million permanent night workers in the UK on various shift patterns, the majority being male. These poorly paid and low skilled night shift jobs are carried out by migrants primarily from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds. In addition, a significant number of migrants balance working night shifts with other daytime work activities or study, often in addition to family commitments.<sup>17</sup>

Migrants in lower skilled work can be concentrated in particular areas, most obviously London but also areas with a history of migration. EU migrants in low-skilled work tend to be less concentrated than third country nationals, but still congregate in certain areas, such as Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> S Scott (2008) *Staff shortages and immigration in agriculture*, Migration Advisory Committee, University of Liverpool. [www.researchgate.net/publication/239923723\\_STAFF\\_SHORTAGES\\_AND\\_IMMIGRATION\\_IN\\_AGRICULTURE](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/239923723_STAFF_SHORTAGES_AND_IMMIGRATION_IN_AGRICULTURE)

<sup>15</sup> C Rienzo (2014) *Migrants in the UK Labour Market: an overview*. Migration Observatory. [www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-uk-labour-market-overview](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-uk-labour-market-overview)

<sup>16</sup> Aldin et al. (2010) *The Changing Shares of Migrant Labour in Different Sectors and Occupations in the UK Economy: an Overview*. In *Who Needs Migrant Workers? Labour Shortages, Immigration and Public Policy*. Oxford OUP.

<sup>17</sup> I-C Macarie (2013) *Migrant Night Workers*, Migrant Forum. <http://migrantforum.org.uk/category/migrant-night-workers/>

<sup>18</sup> Migration Advisory Committee (2014) *Migrants in low-skilled work: The growth of EU and non-EU labour in low-skilled jobs and its impact on the UK*. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-in-low-skilled-work](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-in-low-skilled-work)

## Barriers to employment

**Key message 4: For the majority of migrants there are multiple barriers to overcome before securing regular, sustainable and fulfilling employment.**

Securing eligibility to come and work in the UK is just the first major step for new migrants in successfully engaging in the workplace. For the majority of migrants there are multiple barriers and obstacles to overcome before securing regular, sustainable and fulfilling employment. The next section seeks to raise awareness amongst practitioners and services about common barriers and provide advice on how to empower migrants in overcoming these pitfalls they may face when seeking to access employment.

### **Figure ii: Common barriers faced by migrants in securing work**

- English language, communication skills and literacy
- Getting recognition of past experience and achievements
- UK work experience and references
- Not understanding how systems work in the UK
- Not knowing where to access appropriate information and advice
- Application forms, form filling culture and IT skills
- CV gaps and long periods of inactivity in the workplace
- Lack of confidence and facing the 'selling yourself' culture
- Financial struggles (lack of, or limited income, bank accounts, limited mobility)
- Isolation
- Transport (lack of a driving licence, no car, unfamiliar public transport routes) Childcare constraints (making attending job interviews difficult)
- Employer misunderstanding, fear of penalties and prejudice
- Understanding Jobcentre Plus and requirements of mandatory Welfare to Work schemes such as the Work Programme
- Uncertainty of the future (time limited immigration status)
- Disrupted lifestyle (Home Office demands, frequent change of address)
- False expectations ('land of milk and honey' and the hope of entering back into previous profession at the same level)
- Live in areas of multiple deprivation where there may be limited local job opportunities.

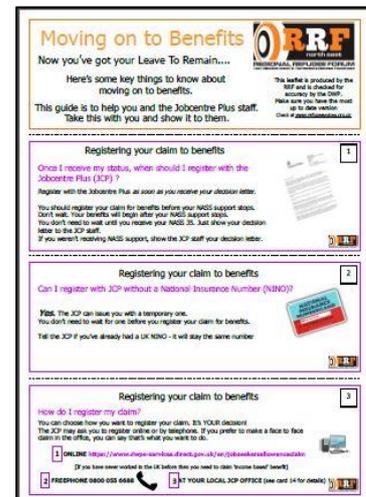
Although this is not an exhaustive list, *Figure ii* shows some of the common barriers migrants face when attempting to secure employment and for many, there will be multiple barriers to address and overcome. For particular migrant groups, barriers to employment may vary.

For some the time, effort, expense and energy needed to surmount these barriers, with many false hopes along the way, can be very disheartening and lead to a loss of confidence and even bitterness, which can be compounded by the fear of becoming de-skilled in the time it takes to re-enter the labour market.

**Key message 5: Services offering holistic employment support can make a huge difference in helping migrants succeed in their journey towards employment.**

Services offering accurate and expert information, guidance and assistance and who have advisers that take a holistic approach to support can make a huge difference to migrants and can be the lifeline in encouraging them to continue their progression towards work. An example is given in *Figure iii*. A more detailed discussion of integrated approaches to improving employment opportunities for migrant Roma is provided in a *Good Practice Guide* which provides a range of examples from the UK and Europe.<sup>19</sup>

Resources that may support holistic employment initiatives include an information leaflet produced by the Regional Refugee Forum in the North East<sup>20</sup> that provides important information for refugees who are moving from Home Office support to mainstream services. The leaflet gives specific information on registering for a National Insurance Number and benefits, how to prepare for a jobseeker interview, and looking for work. It is designed to be shared with Jobcentre Plus advisors to better understand client support needs. The *Refugee transition guide*<sup>21</sup> offers similar but more detailed advice (although some elements are specific to Northern Ireland).



**Figure iii: Jobcentre Plus supporting work-ready migrants who lack confidence in their language skills – case study**

Part of the Jobcentre Plus remit is to support individuals with additional barriers to employment. A Jobcentre Plus branch in West Yorkshire provide ‘Community Work Coaches’ to support individuals into work or training, for example: helping individuals to find particular jobs, making phone calls and advocacy work. The service is aimed at anyone who needs this additional support, including those claiming jobseeker’s allowance who are seeking work.

Staff realised that for some migrant customers their language skills didn’t inhibit them from working, but were impacting on their ability to apply for work. For example, where a customer is not confident speaking to a prospective employer over the telephone.

Community Work Coaches now work with this group too. They attend a monthly community work club aimed at ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) customers to engage with individuals who may lack confidence in their language skills. The work club is well utilised and they feel that this approach has improved access to their services by migrants.

Source: DWP/Jobcentre Plus, West Yorkshire

The next section of this document offers some detailed practical guidance to services in supporting migrants to overcome some of the key barriers identified.

<sup>19</sup> Roma MATRIX (2015) *Employment of Roma*. Good Practice Guide 5.

[https://romamatrix.eu/downloads?tid%5B%5D=3&sort\\_bef\\_combine=field\\_publication\\_date\\_value+DESC&=Apply](https://romamatrix.eu/downloads?tid%5B%5D=3&sort_bef_combine=field_publication_date_value+DESC&=Apply)

<sup>20</sup> Regional Refugee Forum North East, *Moving on to benefits* [www.refugeevoices.org.uk/news/reports-a-publications](http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/news/reports-a-publications)

<sup>21</sup> Belfast City Council (2014) *Refugee Transition: A guide for people who have just received refugee status and for their advisers* [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/advice/migrants.aspx](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/advice/migrants.aspx)

## English language

**Key message 6: English language is the most important barrier to overcome in becoming work-ready.**

People who move to the UK require English language skills to access training, gain employment and participate in society. Enabling new arrivals to fulfil their potential is fundamental: migrants bring with them valuable abilities, qualifications and experience which can lie untapped unless they have the chance to learn English to an appropriate level. The way that this is frequently achieved is through English language provision known as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Gaining access to appropriate ESOL classes, other forms of English language learning such as community based conversation classes or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a key issue for migrants (as outlined in the YHRMP Framework for action report<sup>22</sup>).

There is a broad spectrum of English language needs amongst migrants in the UK:

- Fully fluent (migrants coming from countries where English is widely used e.g. Ireland or Canada)
- Competent (migrants who can effectively communicate using English as their secondary language)
- Basic (migrants who have limited English)
- Very low level/illiterate (migrants with knowledge of one or two phrases in English and who may not be able to read or write in their original language).

As a result, the vast majority of migrants in the UK require some form of English language development to fully participate in the workplace and society at large. Clearly the lower the level of an individual's English, the greater the likelihood this is to have a negative impact on the individual's ability to secure employment.

Migrants who are not literate in their own first language can experience great difficulty in learning English. This is in contrast to those who have been to school as children and who are literate in their expert tongue. A lack of literacy skills has significant consequences for educational progression and especially in accessing employment. A teacher interviewed in Leeds as part of an ESOL audit<sup>23</sup> highlights the difficulties that girls from particular countries face. She observed that the number of students faced with the particular issue of lack of literacy and education appears to be growing. Of a female student from Afghanistan, the teacher said:

*'She wasn't allowed to go to school at all so she's got no education whatsoever, so she's got no context of learning and whereas her brother who's used facilities at Way In, he's almost university standard and they're similar ages, she is really struggling to learn and it will take a long time for her to get the basics really.'*

<sup>22</sup> YHRMP and Regional Skills Partnership (2008) *Framework for action on employment and skills for refugees and asylum seekers in Yorkshire and Humber*.

[www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/userfiles/file/PolicyandResearch/YHRMP\\_Reports/SkillsFrameworkForAction-Final\\_Dec08.pdf](http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/userfiles/file/PolicyandResearch/YHRMP_Reports/SkillsFrameworkForAction-Final_Dec08.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> J Simpson (2011) *ESOL neighbourhood audit*, HENNA (Harehills ESOL Needs Neighbourhood Audit), University of Leeds. [www.education.leeds.ac.uk/research/projects/henna-project](http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/research/projects/henna-project)

## Identifying adequate and appropriate English language courses

**Key message 7: All forms of English language provision should be seen as valuable, not just ESOL.**

There are a wide range of English classes available for migrants ranging from structured and funded ESOL classes at differing levels in further education institutions, employment related English courses that are linked in with DWP requirements for jobseekers on Job Seekers Allowance, private English courses at various independent English schools, courses online, funded voluntary sector provision and non-funded voluntary community based conversation classes, just to name a few. Not all migrants are entitled to access funded ESOL classes (for example, third country nationals are often not permitted to access these and those who are entitled usually must have lived in the UK for several years already).<sup>24</sup>

All forms of English language provision should be seen as valuable, as each play a unique role in addressing some of the specific needs of certain groups of migrants (e.g. women's only classes with free childcare based in a voluntary organisation working specifically with migrant women, ESOL classes in a mosque, or IELTS provision for migrants wishing to access higher education or requalify in their profession).

Not all forms of provision are accredited and may not be recognised by a prospective employer. Accredited English language classes are essential for most migrants if they wish to progress in their careers or have aspirations to access further or higher education. There is a vast array of options when considering which accredited form of English language qualification to choose and course fees vary considerably. Government guidance is frequently updated on this so it is important to investigate carefully.<sup>25</sup>

It is important that services encourage migrants to access English language classes and to be aware of the range of provision available locally. When exploring what class is most suitable for an individual, advice services should consider the following:

- English language level – is the provision the right level for the individual?
- What areas of the individual's listening, reading, speaking and writing skills require most improvement?
- Is an English language assessment required as part of the enrolment process for the course?
- Is the course accredited, if so is the accreditation appropriate for the individual's career aspirations?
- Are there waiting lists for particular courses?
- Costs involved – what are the course fees? Will it cost to travel or arrange childcare?
- Eligibility – is the course specifically funded / tailored for a specific group?

<sup>24</sup> See Integration up North (2015) *Migrant rights and entitlements*. Introduction to Migration guidance booklet #4 and accompanying appendix tables. [www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/introductiontomigration-iun](http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/introductiontomigration-iun)

<sup>25</sup> See for example: UK Visas & Immigration (2015) *Applying for a UK visa: approved English language tests* [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests) and: '3. Approved English language qualifications' in *Prove your knowledge of English for citizenship and settling* [www.gov.uk/english-language/approved-english-language-qualifications](http://www.gov.uk/english-language/approved-english-language-qualifications)

- Length of course, number of days/hours per week and timings of classes – can the individual commit?

Whilst accessing English classes is preferable for migrants in learning the language effectively it is important not to consider this in isolation. Encouraging migrants to participate in mainstream UK society and offering opportunities to engage are equally important in ensuring individuals practice their language skills, learning through 'doing' and gaining confidence in their use of English. Activities such as voluntary work, participating in sports, social events and groups, visiting the library and enrolling on mentoring schemes can all help encourage individuals to practice their English and connect with the general public.

#### Assisting migrants with English language needs: other tips

- **Use interpreting or translation:** When supporting migrants who have limited language needs it is important to ensure that services, where appropriate, make use of interpreting services and that key information provided to migrants is translated or is at least written in easy to read format (plain English or using symbols).
- **Write down verbal advice for reference:** When dealing with a migrant with limited English on a one-to-one basis advisers should write down a summary of what has been discussed in simple English so that the individual can take this away and seek clarification as to what was discussed if uncertain at the time. This practice can significantly reduce misunderstanding for the individual. One example where this practice is important is when migrants are engaging with Jobcentre Plus. Ensuring advisers make clear the implications of not turning up to appointments, lack of compliance or failure to update them on changes in circumstances is vitally important in preventing sanctions and other unintended knock-on negative consequences for migrants on benefits.

## UK job hunting culture

**Key message 8: The UK job hunting process and working culture in the UK is unfamiliar to many migrants.**

This section outlines some of the barriers that migrants may face in navigating the UK job hunting culture and gives suggestions for overcoming these and supporting migrants into work. It covers:

- Cultural practices and expectations
- Common routes to finding work: agencies and informal contacts
- Overcoming barriers
- Getting recognition for past work experience
- Getting recognition for overseas qualifications and experiences
- Managing expectations about higher education
- Working out the implications of taking paid employment

### Cultural practices and expectations

Many migrants have worked in some form in their home countries. The UK job hunting process, working culture and the labour market can be very different from what they have experienced previously. Examples include:

**In many countries applying for a job is much simpler**, often only requiring the individual to attend an interview to present their credentials but where the decision may have effectively already been made through other processes.

**Migrants are likely to be unfamiliar with elements of the process:** person and job specifications, personal statements on application forms, targeted CVs and cover letters, equal opportunities monitoring procedures or the idea of 'added value' or 'selling yourself' at interview. The process of applying for jobs is increasingly complex, requiring competent IT skills for applications required to be completed and submitted online.

**In other countries, options can be predetermined:** for many professional and civil service roles, once qualifications have been completed, the government will allocate a role on behalf of the graduate, sometimes leaving the individual with limited choice regarding location or department in where they are to work.

For some migrants, a **combination of lack of understanding with limited communication skills can lead to a lack of (or perceived lack of) confidence**, which can be particularly noticeable in job interviews. When an individual is not comfortable in communicating in their secondary language, it is twice as hard to 'sell oneself' as the interviewee is not able to express themselves fully and can be worried about getting the language wrong, not knowing the answer or saying the wrong thing.

**It can be seen as shameful to 'boast' about yourself** for some migrants in interview situations, to brag about your skills, knowledge and abilities and even more minor behaviours such as body language, posture, looking people in the eye and firm handshakes are not culturally practiced, or in some cultures actively discouraged or even prohibited.

## Common routes to finding work: agencies and informal contacts

**Key message 9: Employment agencies and friends and family may provide quick routes into work but are not always beneficial in the long term.**

### *Employment agencies*

For many migrants the use of employment agencies is a key factor in securing initial employment. Whilst employment agencies often serve as a quick route into work, they do not always prove beneficial in the long term. The vast array of employment agencies operating across the country can lead to risk of exploitation from rogue agencies which, coupled with migrants' limited understanding of UK working conditions (such as knowledge of the minimum wage, overworking legislation and treatment of employees) can leave them open to abuse.

In a 2012 report<sup>26</sup> Chinese migrants working through agents were found to have worked particularly long hours in the Chinese catering sector. They appeared to have no life outside work; this also applied to farm workers in peak seasons. Non-payment or under-payment of wages was remarkably common, and migrants seemed unable to get back pay that they were owed.

A popular tactic was to deduct a few hours' pay each week: *'The boss was very, very stingy. When I worked ten hours, he would note it down as six or seven hours. Always a few hours less ... Every week when the pay day came, we had to argue with the boss.'* - Li Xia, from China.

Complications can also occur with taking up periods of temporary work through employment agencies as migrants may not understand that it could have a knock-on effect on their welfare benefits, possibly leading to losing benefits all together, and the lengthy process of having to reapply.

### *Informal networks*

Making sense of the different options and new opportunities in the UK labour market can also be a challenge for new migrants. For many the use of informal networks is the most common method of job seeking and gaining employment advice, such as friends and family.<sup>27</sup> This may be a quick route in securing a job, but the reliance on friends and family to locate information about employment can be unhelpful as individuals often need specific and specialist advice which could be best provided by statutory bodies or specialist employment agencies.<sup>28</sup> Migrants in this situation may also not be aware of the dangers of taking up 'easy', informal working arrangements that leave them at risk of exploitation and are more likely to end up underemployed and not fully utilising their skills.

Access to statutory bodies or employment agencies may be an issue for many migrants. Not knowing what local services are available to them or where to go to receive suitable

<sup>26</sup> S Scott (2012) *Experiences of forced labour in the UK food industry*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. [www.jrf.org.uk/publications/forced-labour-uk-food-industry](http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/forced-labour-uk-food-industry)

<sup>27</sup> D Shiferaw and H Hagos (2001) *Refugees and Progression Routes into Employment*, Refugee Council/Pan London Refugee Training and Employment Network (PLRTEN)

<sup>28</sup> J Philimore (2003) *Asylum seekers and refugees: education, training, employment, skills and services in Coventry and Warwickshire*. Birmingham Centre for Urban and regional studies, University of Birmingham, NIACE and Bostock Marketing Group.

professional careers advice and guidance can affect whether migrants make informed choices about their career path. Some more highly skilled migrants may wish to return to their previous occupation. This may or may not be possible dependent on their levels of English, available finance and provision of requalification routes. In other cases, due to the make up of the UK economy, some migrants' skills and professional expertise may be limited in terms of demand or may not even exist.

### Overcoming barriers

Jobcentre Plus and employment and careers advice services play an essential part in supporting migrants to overcome barriers associated with the UK job culture. Specialist migrant employment services do exist, such as the Northern Welcome employment service in Sheffield<sup>29</sup> that delivers specialist employment support to migrants on the DWP Work Programme, RETAS (Refugee Education Training and Advice Service) in Leeds,<sup>30</sup> ARKH in Hull<sup>31</sup> and Migrant Workers North West<sup>32</sup> and are all good examples of best practice. However, provision is often limited to specific migrant groups, is not available across many parts of the country and is heavily dependent on voluntary sector grant funding. *Figure iv* gives an example of how new arrivals can be supported into employment.

#### **Figure iv: How advice agencies can help with finding a job - Esi's story**

Esi from Ghana has lived in Manchester since 2009. She previously worked as a team leader in a bank in the capital city Accra.

*'Since moving to join my husband in Manchester getting a job to suit my skills and experience was, and still is, my greatest challenge. After trying unsuccessfully to make any headway with job applications, an acquaintance mentioned that it might be a good idea to go to the Job Centre Plus because they help people find work. I got my first disappointment when the official I met said they could not help me because I was not claiming any benefits.*

*I was directed to go to an NGO that helped local residents to get into work. The NGO were quite helpful and the advisor helped me streamline my CV and gave me links/addresses of possible job opportunities. It gave me confidence in my job searching efforts.*

*After about 150 job applications across different sectors I was granted an interview and got a 1-year contract with a charity as an administrative assistant. Undoubtedly my chances of getting short-listed were hindered because of the current economic climate, so many new graduates and redundant employees chasing work. And there I was with all my work experience from abroad in Ghana. I was of the opinion that employers may be wary and want people who in their estimation, would need less training.'*

Source: Integration up North (IUN) volunteer project

*Getting a job to suit my skills and experience was, and still is, my greatest challenge.*

*I got my first disappointment when the official I met said they could not help me because I was not claiming any benefits.*

<sup>29</sup> Northern Welcome (formerly Northern Refugee Centre) [www.nrcentre.org.uk/](http://www.nrcentre.org.uk/)

<sup>30</sup> Refugee Education Training and Advice Service (RETAS) <http://retasleeds.wix.com/retasleeds>

<sup>31</sup> Asylum Seekers & Refugees of Kingston upon Hull (ARKH) <http://arkh-hull.com/>

<sup>32</sup> At the time of writing, the Migrant Workers North West website was not functional [www.migrantworkersnorthwest.org](http://www.migrantworkersnorthwest.org)

Many migrants may end up on compulsory DWP-funded welfare-to-work employability programmes such as the 'Work Programme' (that replaced 'New Deal' to help those at risk of long-term unemployment) which include intensive job search and job hunting workshops, where individuals create CVs and cover letters and make applications for work. These intensive programmes can prove successful for some migrants. However, many of these training courses are rather generic, don't address many of the specific barriers faced by migrants and can sometimes seem hostile to migrants due to the attitudes of other non-migrant students, as experienced by Remè in *Figure v*.

**Figure v: DWP employment programme experience - Remè's story**

Remè is from Cameroon and now lives in Bradford.

*'Even though I am originally from Cameroon, I went to university in Russia and qualified as a pharmacist. After moving to the UK and coming to live in Bradford I found it difficult as I could hardly speak a word of English.*

*I was desperate to find work and after a while the Jobcentre told me I had to go on a course called New Deal. It was supposed to help me apply for jobs, but really I was stuck in a room for 5 hours a day with quite a lot of British people who I felt didn't want to be there and didn't seem to care. It was terrible, all I had to do was just look through newspapers and job adverts and write applications for jobs all day. It was boring and a difficult environment because a lot of people were not making any effort, even making trouble. I don't feel I learnt anything during this time, apart from other students telling me where to go to get illegal drugs!'*

Holistic orientation programmes targeted specifically at new migrants can prove far more effective in moving migrants closer to employment and hasten integration. Previous initiatives such as the Home Office RIES (Refugee Integration and Employment Service 2008-2011) project enabled about 20% of new refugees in Yorkshire and Humberside to achieve employment within 12 months of arrival in the UK.

Another current example of an intensive, and holistic, employability programme for migrants is the Steps to Settlement course<sup>33</sup> (provided by RETAS in Leeds) which covers topics such as managing finances, confidence building, IT skills, healthy living, English language classes and understanding welfare benefits alongside key modules on employability skills.

**Key message 10: It is important to think about employment support holistically and refer to appropriate specialist agencies for additional support where necessary.**

For many areas in the north of England, and across the UK at large, these specialist courses are not available and as a result Jobcentre Plus advisers and other public services often find themselves on the front line in offering employment related guidance to migrants. *Figure vi* provides some practical tips for careers and employment advisers when working one-to-one with migrants.

<sup>33</sup> Refugee Education Training Advice Service, *Steps to Settlement* <http://retasleeds.wix.com/retasleeds#!steps-to-settlement/c32k>

**Figure vi: Practical tips for advising migrants in engaging in the UK job hunting culture**

- **Include past qualifications and work experience** when assisting a migrant with compiling a CV (paid or non-paid) despite the experience occurring outside the UK.
- **Consider how to explain ‘career gaps’:** Some migrants may have ‘career gaps’ of many years. Two migrant groups who typically have this issue are refugees who may have a gap where they were economically inactive due to waiting for an outcome on their asylum claim and third country (from outside the EEA) migrant women who came to the UK on a marriage visa and have spent a long time bringing up their children. Explore any voluntary work or other activities (including raising a family) that the individual may have carried out during this time and enable the individual to have an appropriate response if questioned in an interview.
- **Encourage the individual to get certificates, references or other relevant work-related documents sent over from their country of origin and translated** if currently not in English.
- **Explore transferable skills** with the individual and the most useful and appropriate courses or training to achieve a change in career.
- **Manage the individual’s expectations** – set achievable goals whilst also aiming to maximise the individual’s potential.
- **Work on building the individual’s confidence;** instil a sense of belief that the individual can achieve their goals, emphasising their skills and expertise and the ability to overcome adversities.
- **Emphasise unique skills migrants may have in comparison with the ‘host community’.** Common attributes of migrants may include fluency in multiple languages, adapting to change and entrepreneurship.
- **Explain what employers are looking for** with regards to application forms and meeting the person specifications on the job description.
- **Practice mock job interviews,** preferably by setting-up interviews in a work based environment with a local employer, using unfamiliar interviewers who are willing to provide honest feedback. This can often be set up with local employers as part of their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) commitments. Filming individuals participating in mock interviews and playing the recordings back can help highlight where they need to make improvements.
- **If a migrant is required to make a phone call to apply for a job, services can assist by writing down what they should say in preparation before the call is made.** This reduces the risk of the individual losing confidence during the conversation and not knowing what to say.
- **Make a note of sympathetic employers or agencies** who are willing to take on migrants and who have a good reputation. Make efforts to build a relationship with them and offer in-work support if there is capacity to do so.

In any information, advice and guidance session, services should be explicit and not make assumptions about existing knowledge. Understanding should be double-checked and if necessary advice repeated due to overload of information, especially for migrants in the early stages of their time in the UK.

### Getting recognition for past work experience

Some migrants may not have certificates or transcripts of work they have carried out previously in their home countries. It is possible to assist migrants in gathering information and evidence to prove their experiences. This can be done through building a portfolio; a compilation of documents and other evidence of past experience and skills. The contents of the document is dependent on how it will be used and could include:

- CV and references
- Full details of any courses taken and any learning outcomes
- Details of other educational modules/units completed
- Full details of any positions held (paid or voluntary) and the learning outcomes
- Full copies or abstracts of dissertations or research projects
- Photographic evidence of creative work (artists, designers, architects)
- Press cuttings, articles and reviews by or about the individual's work
- Any other evidence of academic or work achievement.

Some educational institutions will consider an APEL (Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning)<sup>34</sup> which involves looking at learning that comes from experience and recognising this formally. A comprehensive portfolio is usually required in order to complete a successful APEL.

### Getting recognition for overseas qualifications and experiences

Migrants who come to the UK with qualifications and solid work experience can find it difficult to get their qualifications and experience recognised by employers and training institutions. 'Ethnocentric credentialism' is where qualifications, experience and training gained in other countries (especially poorer countries) are not recognised.<sup>35</sup> *Figure vii* highlights the perseverance of one migrant to use his accountancy skills in the UK.

#### ***Figure vii: Qualifications not recognised - Shiva's story***

*Shiva is from Bhutan and now lives in Manchester. 'I'm happy here in the UK. But every day is a challenge. My priority is to find work, but my accounting degree is not recognised here and I don't have any UK work experience. I completed IELTS in India, but it has expired so I have had to take it again.*

*I travelled from Manchester to Leeds three times a week to attend an IELTS preparation class which was very tiring. I'm now studying at Manchester Metropolitan University to gain a UK qualification in accountancy. I hope I will be able to work soon to support my family'.*

Advisers can support migrants to get recognition through formal channels and work with them to reflect on and record past learning and experiences so they can use it proactively and creatively to shape their future. Advisers can also play a role in empowering and supporting qualified and experienced migrants in advocating for themselves with employers to gain recognition and acknowledgement about what they have achieved.

<sup>34</sup> London Metropolitan University, APEL (Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning) <http://apel.londonmet.ac.uk/>

<sup>35</sup> P Coare and Freda (2005) *Race and Ethnicity – refugees' researching discrimination and employability*

The main body that compares international qualifications with those in the UK is NARIC.<sup>36</sup> Working on behalf of the UK government, NARIC offers equivalency assessments that are intended as guidelines. It is important that this is explained as it can seem disappointing to feel a hard-earned degree is undervalued. There is no legal requirement for educational institutions, professional bodies or employers to use the NARIC equivalents as part of their recruitment or enrolment procedures. Some employers will be familiar with NARIC but others may have alternative means to assess qualifications and experience. NARIC usually charges for its services and it can be expensive (£55.20 for an individual statement of comparability, at the time of writing<sup>37</sup>). If budgets allow, advice services can register for a membership package and provide comparison support to clients directly at limited or no cost to themselves. Translating documents often incurs additional costs so it is important that advisers working with migrants with academic certificates in another language carefully consider whether the individual really requires an assessment or not.

There is a similar requalification service online based in the Republic of Ireland (Quality and Qualifications Ireland).<sup>38</sup> This is a more limited service but for simple overseas comparisons it is free to use online. It can be useful for individuals and services with limited budgets as Irish academic qualifications are, in the main, graded the same as UK qualifications.

#### Managing expectations about higher education

**Key message 11: Higher education is not always beneficial; explore all education and training routes available.**

In many countries gaining a degree is a passport to securing employment. It is important for advisers to explain that this is not necessarily the case in the UK. If a migrant already has a degree in their home country they may seem determined to re-enter higher education. This may perhaps be a poor decision due to escalating costs of higher education and time, but also it may not enhance employment prospects or earnings. As an adviser it is important to explore client expectations from higher education and whether these are realistic. There may be several routes to the individual's goal that do not require education.

#### Working out the implications of taking paid employment

Advisers play an important role in supporting migrants with the implications of taking on a job. Factors such as income, budgeting, the impact on the loss of benefits and the capacity to study full-time need exploring with the individual.

Services also need to be aware of other reliable networks and referral agencies that can address non-employment related issues. Advisers need to be clear about their limitations, where their role ends and when referral is required. Migrants may need assistance with a range of issues affecting the ability to secure employment (e.g. obtaining a National Insurance number, opening a bank account, health needs, living in temporary accommodation, applying for family reunion and arranging schooling for children).

<sup>36</sup> UK NARIC [www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/](http://www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/)

<sup>37</sup> UK NARIC *Statement of Comparability*

[www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/Individuals/Compare%20Qualifications/Statement%20of%20Comparability.aspx](http://www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/Individuals/Compare%20Qualifications/Statement%20of%20Comparability.aspx)

<sup>38</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), *NARIC Ireland: Advice on the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications* [www.qqi.ie/Pages/Recognition-of-Foreign-Qualifications-.aspx](http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Recognition-of-Foreign-Qualifications-.aspx)

## Volunteering

**Key message 12: Volunteering is highly effective in moving migrants closer to employment, but may be a new concept that requires explanation.**

Unfortunately UK work experience is most desirable for most employers. One way of achieving this is by encouraging migrants to secure job placement and volunteering opportunities in the UK. Gaining UK work experience is not the sole benefit of volunteering. Volunteering can also help migrants:

- Familiarise themselves with the UK work environment and culture
- Gain work references
- Improve English language and communication skills
- Increase self confidence
- Overcome isolation, widening social and professional networks
- Engage with wider society
- Become known and build a good reputation for themselves
- Develop new skills and knowledge
- Position themselves to secure paid opportunities with the host organisation.

Volunteering, or working without financial reward, is a new concept for certain groups of migrants. Some may not see voluntary opportunities as beneficial; perceptions may include: no financial reward, it takes up valuable time, job role is 'beneath them'. It is important an adviser clarifies the advantages of a work placement or volunteering to the individual.

Ideally, secure job placements or volunteering opportunities in a field relevant to previous experience or chosen future career aspirations. This may not always be possible, especially if the individual wishes to volunteer at a higher grade or level in a specific profession. In such cases, due to the many off-shoot benefits it is still worth encouraging migrants to engage with other available volunteering opportunities, even if it is work that they have not previously been exposed to or work that is perceived as low skilled or a minor activity.

For advisers working with migrants who are registered with them at Jobcentre Plus it is important to seek to work closely and flexibly with volunteer placement providers in supporting the individual in meeting their Jobcentre Plus obligations.

Some examples of the benefits of volunteering are provided in *Figures viii* and *ix*. A fuller discussion of volunteering and its benefits for asylum seekers and refugees is also available, with case study examples from Manchester, South Yorkshire and Leeds.<sup>39</sup>

In many cases it has proven highly beneficial to encourage new migrants to get involved in local groups or community based activities. Free, or low cost activities are often co-ordinated by local voluntary groups based in places of worship, community centres or local charities. These centres provide opportunities for migrants to meet new people, socialise, relax, have fun, give something back, widen their networks and develop a greater sense of

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<sup>39</sup> R Wilson and H Lewis (2006) *A part of society: Refugees and asylum seekers volunteering in the UK. A report based on case studies of ten organisations*. Tandem. [http://tandem-uk.co.uk/vol\\_asylum.htm#society](http://tandem-uk.co.uk/vol_asylum.htm#society)

connection and belonging to the local community, all of which can have a positive knock-on effect on an individual’s mental wellbeing. Additionally in many cases volunteers, helpers and co-ordinators involved in running activities are willing to offer informal help with practicing English and giving basic advice and support with helping someone look for work.

Mentoring schemes can also have similar positive knock-on effects on migrant’s well-being, support networks and ability to seek out work. See for example, the Roma MATRIX Good Practice Guide on mentoring in public authorities,<sup>40</sup> and their case study of a Roma person who benefited from a mentoring scheme in Glasgow.<sup>41</sup>

**Figure viii: Benefits of volunteering - Carissa’s story**

Carissa, originally from Columbia, arrived in the UK in February 2013 and now lives in Leeds.

*‘My English was not very good and I was looking for work. I did not have much money and didn’t know where to find an English class. Friends at the church encouraged me to find out about volunteering and told me about a charity shop in my area which might give me an opportunity. I am very glad I took their advice! I started working in the shop and met new friends and practiced my English. Volunteering in the shop is fantastic. I enjoy meeting people from the community and I have had fun meeting other volunteers who are also helping out at the shop, everyone is so friendly.*

*Suzie, the shop manager, has helped me find out about English classes nearby and because I volunteer at the shop she offered to pay for my travel expenses to get to college. This was amazing. After volunteering in the shop for 4 months, I managed to get a part time job working in a restaurant in Leeds city centre which is great. My experience working in a shop helped me get this job. I still remain committed to my volunteering days at the shop and have even been given some occasional paid work when covering for other staff. This volunteering opportunity has been a fantastic help for me and my English is improving fast’.*

**Figure ix: Providing experience for jobseeking - the IUN volunteer project**

New arrivals to the UK can find it difficult to find UK work experience as a first step to finding employment. The Integration up North (IUN) volunteer project recruited new arrivals from third countries (outside the EEA) to help deliver introductory training sessions for staff in public services across the north of England. Through an interview with the trainers in front of delegates, volunteers present their experiences and provide a new insight into the challenges facing new arrivals to a local area.

Volunteers were motivated to join the project partly in the hope that it would improve their employment prospects. Several volunteers have now secured paid work, and felt that a formal reference from a project with statutory backing and EU funding added credibility to their CVs. These successes meant longer-standing volunteers able to secure paid work no longer had time to volunteer, and the project has had to recruit new volunteers.

Source: The Integration up North (IUN) volunteer project

<sup>40</sup> Roma MATRIX (2015) *Roma Mentoring in Public Authorities*. Good Practice Guide 8. [https://romamatrix.eu/downloads?&&sort\\_bef\\_combine=field\\_publication\\_date\\_value%20DESC&sort\\_order=DESC&sort\\_by=field\\_publication\\_date\\_value&page=2](https://romamatrix.eu/downloads?&&sort_bef_combine=field_publication_date_value%20DESC&sort_order=DESC&sort_by=field_publication_date_value&page=2)

<sup>41</sup> Roma MATRIX (2015) *Public authority mentoring programme: Eugen Balog’s story*. Mentoring Programme case study, Glasgow, Scotland, UK. <https://romamatrix.eu/public-authority-mentoring-programme-eugen-balogs-story>

## Vocational training and requalification

**Key message 13: The quickest or cheapest route to an employment goal may not be clear and migrants may need advice on the best pathway.**

The extensive choice of career paths, training and educational courses available in the UK can seem confusing. Some migrants may have assumptions about the value and status of some of the more vocational and informal qualifications and institutions on offer as the range of choice may not be as broad in their country of origin.

Migrants may not be aware there could be different routes to the same goal, or mistakenly believe that some routes are 'inferior'. This can come at great cost, leading them to pay high tuition fees and spending additional time doing courses at higher education level when an NVQ 3 or 4 from a college of further education or training organisation might have been a cheaper, quicker and more suitable option. It is important to stress that alternative training courses are equally as valid and that going to university is not always the best use of someone's time, energy and financial resources.

### Numeracy and IT skills

In addition to competency in the language, the vast majority of jobs in the UK also require a basic level of numeracy and IT skills. It is important when advising a newly arrived migrant not to overlook these key skills. Always enquire of the individual's level of numeracy and where possible check their IT skills such as basic word processing, email and internet searching. Courses for both are widely available at most further education institutions and are sometimes combined with ESOL or other language learning classes.

### Requalification

**Key message 14: Requalification for professionals from overseas can be possible; look out for specific requalification routes for migrants. An intermediate job in the same field will keep skills relevant.**

For many highly skilled migrants and professionals in the UK, employment is already secured prior to arrival in the country. In the majority of cases, these individuals will forge a long and successful career in the UK and eventually become British citizens. For others however, unforeseen circumstances at work may result in redundancy and unemployment.

Enabling migrants to reach their potential and to fully utilise their skills and expertise is good for them and good for the UK economy. Indeed significant savings to the public purse can be made if more resources were put towards retraining this potentially untapped resource. As an example, it has been estimated that if only 50% of the unemployed refugees in the UK who are qualified as doctors in their home countries were to enter the NHS, £120 million would be saved relative to the cost of training new doctors. Services who help refugee doctors to requalify save society £240,000 (which is the cost of training a school leaver from scratch). This is a return of 6 000%.<sup>42</sup> There are a significant number of professional migrants

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<sup>42</sup> S Sandford and T Lumley (2006) *Home Truths*. New Philanthropy Capital. [www.thinknpc.org/publications/home-truths/](http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/home-truths/)

in the UK who arrived in different circumstances and whom the desire to re-enter their chosen profession is still strong. Many migrants in this category may seek out advice with regards to requalification and this is where high quality advice and guidance is crucial. For some young, recently qualified individuals fluent in the language, requalification may be quick. For others it may be a long road back into their profession.

The most suitable advice for many migrant professionals who have not already secured work is to start the requalification process as a long-term goal whilst at the same time working towards shorter term employment in an intermediate position in the same professional field using transferable skills (working as a classroom assistant, for example, while planning to re-qualify as a teacher). This will help to keep the individual's skills relevant as they improve their English and cultural understanding of work practices in the profession in the UK while in employment.

When advising migrant professionals about professional requalification, it is important to consider the following:

- Cost of requalification and possible sources of funding
- Length of time required to requalify
- Level of English required, likelihood of achieving this level and length of time it may take to achieve
- Whether the profession in the UK is anything like the same standard or process as in the migrant's home country
- Age of the individual
- Whether there is demand for certain roles and assessing the job market and taking note of who is recruiting.

When considering requalification, it is important for migrants to contact the appropriate professional body. Most skilled professions are regulated (Medicine and Law for example) and as a result it is against the law to practice without meeting the standards set by each professional body. Other professions are not (such as engineering or finance) but often there are some common exams that are still expected by employers.

Each professional body should be able to offer advice on the requalification process for migrants and can also assess whether or not the individual's overseas qualifications can be recognised (or partially recognised). For a small selection of professions, such as medicine, there are specific requalification routes that exist for migrants.

**Figure x: Requalification in dentistry - Suli's story**

Suli entered the UK following his marriage to Aliaa, a British national. Suli went to a local careers guidance service after a friend recommended that they might be able to help him. In his initial meeting with the project officer he completed a skills audit which identified that Suli had worked as a qualified dentist for four years following his achievement of a Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree in India and subsequent clinical training.

An English language assessment was carried out where he achieved Level 2 results for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. It was noted that whilst this was a good level of English, Suli would need to achieve a higher grade in IELTS (International English Language Testing System) at level 7 in order to meet the required level of English to requalify. Together the adviser and Suli created an action plan, which involved:

- enrolling on an IELTS preparation course
- registering with the General Dental Council (GDC)
- undertaking a qualification comparison through UK NARIC
- contacting local dental surgeries in the hope that a voluntary work placement could be arranged.

The outcome of the qualification comparison was that his degree was equivalent to that of a UK BA Degree.

Suli was successful in securing work experience in a local dental surgery in Calderdale who, after a few weeks, offered him work in a paid position as a dental surgery assistant. This enabled Suli to gain knowledge of UK dental surgery procedures and systems by observing the work of the dental surgeon whilst he continues to pursue his ambition to complete his route to requalification.

Further resources for professional requalification

General advice: [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

Health professionals: [www.rose.nhs.uk/](http://www.rose.nhs.uk/) and <https://reache.wordpress.com/>

Law professionals: [www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)

Teachers: [www.gov.uk/qualified-teacher-status-qts](http://www.gov.uk/qualified-teacher-status-qts)  
<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/overseas-applicants>

Doctors: PLAB (Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board) medical requalification route for overseas doctors [www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/plab/before\\_you\\_apply.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/plab/before_you_apply.asp)

## Enterprise

**Key message 15: Don't overlook opportunities to support migrants who wish to set up their own business.**

Starting up a business is an alternative route for many migrants in securing employment and in making a living for themselves. Evidence of enterprise initiated by migrants can be observed across all aspects of UK life from local shops, restaurants and small businesses to well-known high street brands. In a globalised economy, the UK is dependent on wealthy foreign investors and major overseas and multinational companies setting up base in the UK, contributing to the economy and creating jobs for the citizens of the UK.

Over the centuries, the UK has presented new opportunities for business and there are countless 'rags to riches' stories where migrants living in the UK became major employers. Some examples include: Michael Marks (Marks & Spencer's), Sir Montague Burton (Burton's menswear), Sir Anwar Pervez, OBE (Bestway group), Gulam Kaderbhoy Noon, Baron Noon MBE (Noon products) Isaac Moses (Moss Bros) and Jack Cohen (Tesco).

Many economic migrants can be described as opportunists, risk takers and budding entrepreneurs. The very fact that someone has had the initiative, intuition and drive to leave behind family, home, friends, work and a stable life to seek a 'better future' shows that they are more likely to be highly motivated, driven to work hard, willing to make sacrifices and flexible enough to take up opportunities that are presented. There have been enough success stories over the generations to show that if you are lucky, energetic, or both, Britain can offer migrants the chance to blossom in commerce. As a consequence, this encourages more migrants to emulate them.

### Supporting migrants who wish to set up their own business

The practical realities of starting up a business in the UK can be far more complicated than first thought and can cause discouragement, leading some to give up. *Figure xi* highlights some common issues migrants face when seeking to start up a new business in the UK.

#### ***Figure xi: Starting up a business – common issues***

- Limited access to finance, securing a business start-up loan
- Not knowing how to compile a comprehensive business plan
- Lack of understanding of the UK job market and how to gather evidence of need
- Lack of understanding around employment and health and safety legislation
- Not knowing how to register as a company
- Lack of understanding of the role of HMRC and tax requirements
- Not knowing where to get specialist advice.

It is important that advice services strive to take individuals seriously when approached for business start-up support, no matter how unusual the proposal. At the same time expectations do need to be carefully managed and realistic, honest advice should be given.

In some cases, migrant entrepreneurs may be ignorant of their legal requirements or will knowingly choose to ignore them all together (e.g. paying employees cash-in-hand, not registering with HMRC, not getting a food and hygiene certificate). This is where advice services play an important role in raising awareness of the serious implications of not operating legally in the UK and offer guidance as to where they can receive support.

There are various business start-up courses available, especially for young people. Advice services should have information about local business start-up courses and sign-post budding migrant entrepreneurs accordingly. In addition to courses, there are other available grants and funding opportunities, including local government initiatives, available for small businesses and social enterprises.

#### Possible sources of business start-up advice and funding

Advice:        *Setting up* [www.gov.uk/browse/business/setting-up](http://www.gov.uk/browse/business/setting-up)

Finance:       *Credit unions* [www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk/home](http://www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk/home)

*The Princes Trust*

[www.princes-trust.org.uk/need\\_help/enterprise\\_programme.aspx](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/enterprise_programme.aspx)

## Raising awareness with employers

**Key message 16: Work closely with employers to improve understanding of migrants' eligibility to work and the benefits of having a diverse workforce.**

Many high tech industries and multinational corporations are constantly on the lookout for the very best in global talent and are familiar with the process of recruiting and supporting new employees from overseas. In addition there are numerous businesses, especially in the production and service industries, that are heavily reliant on a migrant workforce and promote employment opportunities through these communities.

### **Figure xii: Positive employer experience - Lisbeth's story**

Lisbeth is from Venezuela and is currently studying at Leeds Met University.

*'My dad was working as a mechanical engineer for 20 years in Venezuela, he is very experienced and has an Master's Degree from the USA. He was head hunted for a job by an engineering company in London which he accepted in 2007.*

*They sorted everything for him including visas and accommodation, not just for him but for all the family so we all came over. Even though I didn't want to come, I have to admit, they (the company) were very good to us.'*

Despite examples of good practice, there is still further work to be done with UK employers in other sectors to encourage recruitment of migrants in the workplace. Addressing misunderstandings around eligibility to work for certain migrants, such as those with refugee status, is an important issue. For small and medium sized enterprises in particular, keeping up with changes in legislation, migrant visa documentation and eligibility to work can be off-putting and may result in a cautious approach when considering applications from migrants for fears of future complications or of recruiting an illegal immigrant.

A depot manager at a recycling plant who was questioned in a report said that the company undertook careful checks of refugee applicants' documents. But he felt that this process was one for which employers did not receive enough help (*right*).

This view was echoed in the same report by the HR manager at a confectionery manufacturer, who also expressed her concerns about checking documentation and believed there should be more support for employers (*right*).

*'There appears to be very little guidance to employers on how to check or verify the accuracy of refugee documentation. Suspect documentation could be avoided if there was a 'fast track' system to check every individual who applies for work. This could be in favour of both the employee and the employer'.*

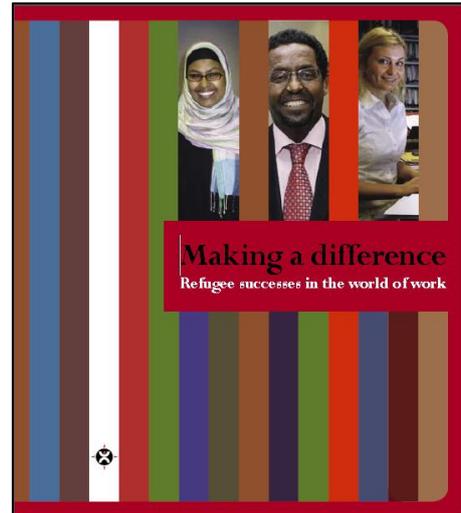
*'If you have concerns about an individual, there is little help available, whereas if you want information on general principles, that help is readily available'.<sup>43</sup>*

<sup>43</sup> J Hurtsfield et al. (2004) *Employing Refugees*. Employability Forum and Institute for Employment Studies. [www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/employing-refugees](http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/employing-refugees)

Further work also needs to be done to challenge employer misconceptions and prejudice relating to migrant workers and to promote the benefits of having a diverse workforce which includes employees from differing nations and cultures. Positive case studies can be very helpful in encouraging employers to get involved, such as the *Making a difference* report (right).<sup>44</sup>

Employers uncertain about eligibility to work can make use of the Home Office Employer Checking Service.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, migrants can find themselves in precarious employment situations, as illustrated by *Figure xiii*. Exploitation is explored in more detail in *Trafficking for labour exploitation*.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure xiii: Under pressure to accept poor work conditions - Ibraheem's experience**

Ibraheem came to Bradford from Pakistan on a student visa in 2006. He later switched to the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (an immigration route that no longer exists) but then lost his job.

Ibraheem had no support from his family back in Pakistan. His financial situation was becoming very difficult as he needed to finance his accommodation, studies and general living expenses and was not permitted to claim benefits. He was finding it extremely difficult to find employment and eventually found work in an Asian takeaway. Ibraheem's experiences were very difficult. He was paid a wage of £25 per night for a 12-14 hour shift, had to work 6 days a week and had little time off. He was trying to fit his studies around these long shifts.

Since he was never given any paid leave, Ibraheem saved some money so that he could take time off work and look for better employment. He managed to secure part-time work and ever since has been working part-time or on short term contracts. He used the university facilities such as the computers to help him find work. The careers department were helpful and gave him focus and direction on how and where to apply for relevant jobs.

Source: The Integration up North (IUN) volunteer project

*'In takeaways and petrol stations they look for people who are in a desperate situation and employ them as they are the only ones who would be vulnerable and not in position to complain or leave.'*

*No-one else would put up with those kinds of work conditions if they didn't have to.'*

<sup>44</sup> The Employability Forum (undated) *Making a difference: Refugee successes in the world of work*. [www.employabilityforum.co.uk/documents/Making%20a%20Difference.pdf](http://www.employabilityforum.co.uk/documents/Making%20a%20Difference.pdf)

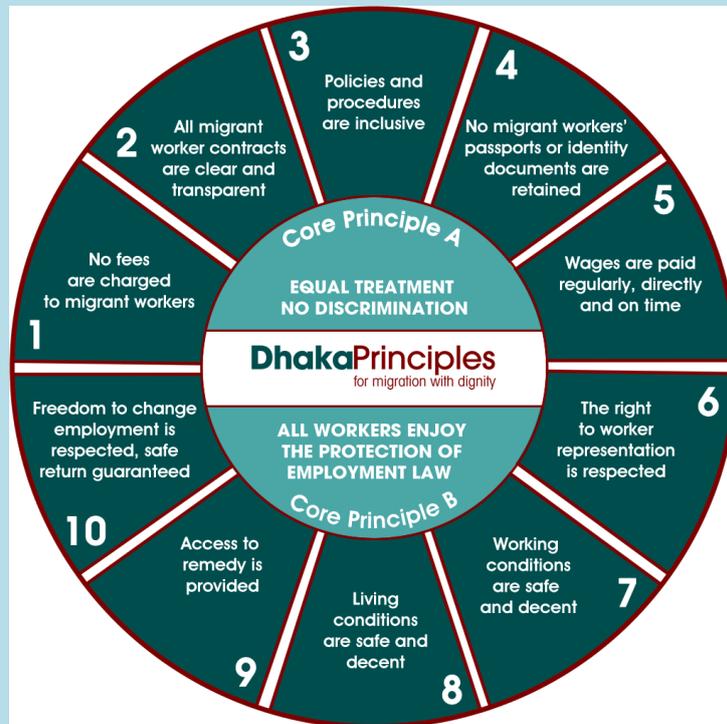
<sup>45</sup> *Sponsorship, Employer and Education helpline*: 0300 123 4699

*Check a job applicant's right-to-work documents* [www.gov.uk/check-job-applicant-right-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/check-job-applicant-right-to-work)

<sup>46</sup> Integration up North (2015) *Trafficking for labour exploitation*. Introduction to Migration series, Guidance booklet #9. [www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/introductiontomigration-iun](http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/introductiontomigration-iun)

Employers wishing to recruit migrant workers should be abiding by the Dhaka Principles launched in 2012. Based on the UN guiding principles on business and human rights, these principles are designed to enhance respect for the rights of migrant workers from the moment of recruitment, during overseas employment and through to further employment or safe return to country of origin.

Figure xiv: Dhaka Principles for migration with dignity



Source: Institute for Human Rights and Business<sup>47</sup>

One important final issue around protection of migrant workers relates to (lack of) unionisation. Some unions have developed work with migrants. Some migrants such as outsourced workers can be the most in need of representation yet difficult to organise.<sup>48</sup>

There are a number of resources available for migrants, advising them of their rights in relation to pay, contracts, working hours etc. A new online guide from the TUC (right) is available in over a dozen European languages.<sup>49</sup>

## Working in the UK

Translate:



<sup>47</sup> Institute for Human Rights and Business *Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity* [www.dhaka-principles.org](http://www.dhaka-principles.org)

<sup>48</sup> Care Connect (2013) *Access to paid work, volunteering and work experience for migrant in Greater Manchester: report of the main issues discussed at a consultation workshop on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2013.*

<http://care-connect.leeds.ac.uk/publications/conference-reports/>

<sup>49</sup> TUC (2015) *Working in the UK* [www.tuc.org.uk/workingintheuk](http://www.tuc.org.uk/workingintheuk)



## ***Migrants and work***

### **Summary of key messages**

- 1. Employment helps migrants to integrate and adjust to the host society.**
- 2. The number of migrants in the UK workplace has increased over the last ten years.**
- 3. There is much evidence of the positive contribution migrants make to the UK economy.**
- 4. For the majority of migrants there are multiple barriers to overcome before securing regular, sustainable and fulfilling employment.**
- 5. Services offering holistic employment support can make a huge difference in helping migrants succeed in their journey towards employment.**
- 6. English language is the most important barrier to overcome in becoming work-ready.**
- 7. All forms of English language provision should be seen as valuable, not just ESOL.**
- 8. The UK job hunting process and working culture in the UK is unfamiliar to many migrants.**
- 9. Employment agencies and friends and family may provide quick routes into work but are not always beneficial in the long term.**
- 10. It is important to think about employment support holistically and refer to appropriate specialist agencies for additional support where necessary.**
- 11. Higher education is not always beneficial; explore all education and training routes available**
- 12. Volunteering is highly effective in moving migrants closer to employment, but may be a new concept that requires explanation.**
- 13. The quickest or cheapest route to an employment goal may not be clear and migrants may need advice on the best pathway.**
- 14. Requalification for professionals from overseas can be possible; look out for specific requalification routes for migrants. An intermediate job in the same field will keep skills relevant.**
- 15. Don't overlook opportunities to support migrants who wish to set up their own business.**
- 16. Work closely with employers to improve understanding of migrants' eligibility to work and the benefits of having a diverse workforce.**