


Getting started in the UK – The Challenge of Refugee Integration

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The UK Context

- Asylum claims are falling, but processing is slow
- Refugee numbers are also falling, 10,000 in 2005
- The main nationalities are Eritrean, Iranian, Somali, Afghan, and Chinese.
- 150,000 gained refugee status since 2001
- Refugees are a small part of the overall migration
- 500,000 migrants entered in 2005, inc. 250,000 from the EU accession countries
- Widespread employer skill shortages
- The *Employability* Forum are leading a monitoring of refugee integration in to employment

Current issues

- Asylum seekers not normally allowed to seek employment, slows subsequent integration
 - Refugees prioritise accommodation, welfare and health support before employment
 - Unemployment rates are high, often above 30%, under employment is widespread
 - Data are poor about refugees in the labour market
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Barriers to employment

- Include lack of
 - English language skills
 - Work preparedness
 - Job search skills
 - Work based skills
 - Recognition of qualifications and work experience
 - Appropriate, local job opportunities
- Barriers often reflect wider community problems eg skills

Government policy

- To disperse asylum seekers away from London
- No statutory programme for refugee integration
- Policy is to
 - fund selected integration schemes
 - support voluntary and community groups
 - prioritise refugees within the government's work placement service *Jobcentre Plus*

National schemes

- For refugees entering directly from refugee camps (*Gateway*)
- Case workers (*SUNRISE*) for small numbers
- Mentoring (*Time Together*) for small numbers
- Schemes being developed for doctors, nurses, teachers and other groups of professionals
- Part time English language courses in many colleges
- Loans to be introduced in late 2006

Local activity

- 1,000 overlapping schemes, some receive public or charitable funding
- Focus on particular localities, ethnic or national groups, or specific needs eg women
- Often work in partnership with other local and public bodies
- Include lobbying, advice centres, case workers, mentoring, coaching and training

Conclusions and issues

- Numbers falling, small part of overall migration
- Time while AS wasted
- No statutory integration programme
- Multiplicity of organisations and schemes, fragmented support
- High unemployment and under-employment
- Need for simpler, structured and sustained strategy
- Need to integrate with wider skills and employment schemes
- New proposals to be discussed