

## North Yorkshire Council Refugee Employability Project

(Report as at 19 May 2023)

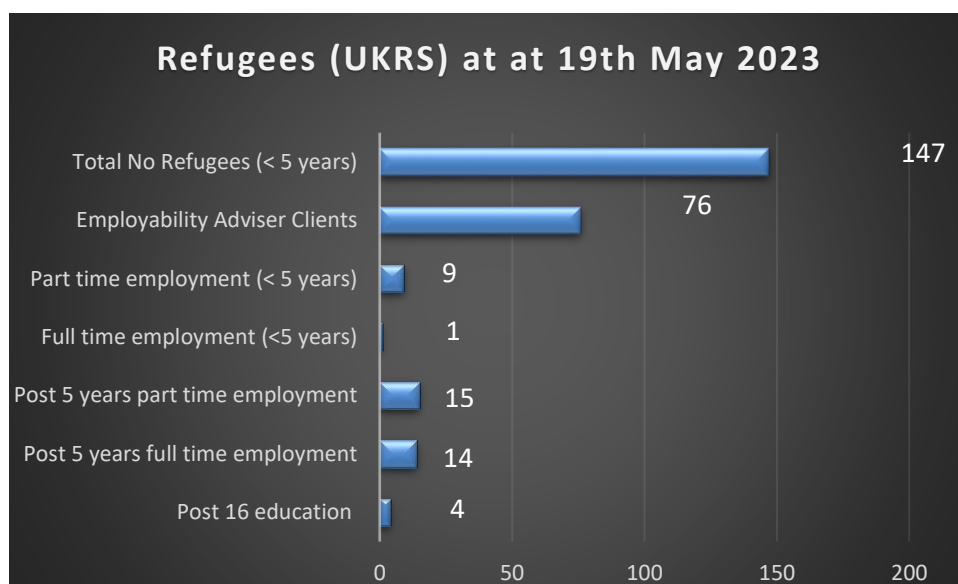
### Overview

The Refugee Employability Project was set up to assist with the resettlement of Syrian refugees in North Yorkshire as part of the UK Government's commitment to relocate refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). Since 2021, new arrivals are now supported under the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), which provides the same level of support as the previous schemes.

In addition, we now have 3 Afghan families in the county, which equates to 73 Employability Adviser Clients.

The primary aim of the Employability Adviser is to support refugee clients into meaningful and sustainable employment and, through this, help them move towards full integration and independence. This also requires the provision of relevant training to validate existing skills and also to provide additional skills and training.

For the UKRS refugees resettled from 2021 onwards and VPRS and VCRS arrivals resettled between July 2016 and February 2018, the position as at 19 May 2023 was:



The 147 individuals, and 76 Employability Adviser Clients, detailed above are accounted for within 38 families who are still within their five-year support period. There is one family and 1 individual who have relocated to other areas. There are now 44 families (112 individuals), and 105 previous Employability Adviser Clients who are past their five-year support period.

Despite the issues around COVID, continuing language barriers and employer reluctance, the number of clients in either part or full time employment continues to show an upward trend. The number of post-16 UKRS refugees in education (4) has reduced, although this will increase in time due to new arrivals expressing an interest in further education.

The figures on the chart account for all UKRS refugee families who arrived during 2021 and 2023, with additional families due to arrive over the period 23/24.

### Families from Afghanistan

The majority of Afghan families include at least one individual who supported the British government and/or troops with interpretation, translation, and other services during the occupation.

The table below indicates the current numbers and locations of Afghan Employability Adviser Clients:

Location	Number of Clients
Harrogate & Knaresborough	19
Northallerton	13
Richmondshire	25
Selby	9
Skipton	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

There are currently 30 Afghan families being supported in the county through the Afghan resettlement programme.

There are currently 20 Afghans in full-time or part-time employment but this figure continues to fluctuate as some adults have done agency work or are on temporary contracts.

Under the Afghan resettlement programme, support will be provided for up to three years. It mirrors the support provided to the UKRS families (5 years) but is of shorter duration because people arriving on the Afghan schemes are perceived to have better English skills and should therefore require less support to achieve employment and integration.

In reality, the level of English demonstrated by the Afghan arrivals varies tremendously and many will require higher levels of support than first anticipated. Most will require substantial help to integrate effectively into the UK. Those with higher levels of education and experience are seeking jobs in more professional and skilled sectors, which are very competitive. In some cases, this will make it more difficult to secure employment. It has also been apparent that the majority of those who have a good grasp of speaking English (formally interpreters) and not so good with their reading and writing skills. Something both the Curriculum Manager and Employability Adviser are trying to address.

We continue to obtain 'Statements of Comparability' for the degree level, and above, qualifications held by many of the Afghan adults. This is being done through the NARIC scheme provided by Ecctis.

The Employability Adviser continues to meet with new families within a few weeks of arrival and actively attends all drop in centres on a regular basis to build rapport. As with the other refugees resettled in North Yorkshire, they will continue to be supported to secure employment, training and with other work related activities.

### **Self-Employment**

Self-employment continues to be the aim of many of our refugee adults. In reality, few have the skills required to set-up and run a business in the UK whilst they are in their resettlement support period. The levels of control and legislation are much greater in the UK and, for those who wish to pursue this option, a substantial amount of support is required from the Employability Adviser and other organisation such as TERN (The Entrepreneurial Refugee Network) and the North Yorkshire Growth Hub.

There are currently five businesses being operated within the county. They are:

- Takeaway business in Scarborough
- Barber Shops (2) in Scarborough & Harrogate
- Tailoring business in Malton

- Carpet & Rug sales – operated from home

### **Apprenticeships**

We do not have any active apprentices as the level of English reading and writing is not at an acceptable level currently. There is a possibility of a Plumbing apprenticeship being sought later in the year.

### **DWP Communications**

The Employability Adviser has continued to maintain contact, with various offices of the DWP, in relation to issues with benefit claims, ESOL attendance, and employment.

### **Other Support**

Support is provided to clients relating to:

- College, and training applications
- Online training
- DBS applications
- Qualification conversion (NARIC)
- Preparation for interviews
- Job applications
- Benefit related support
- New businesses and self-employment
- ESOL issues
- General advice

### **Work with Employers**

As most success in securing work has been achieved when working with local employers, or through local organisations, this approach will continue. Applications will still be made online, through agencies, and by networking with the Volunteers, the DWP Employer Engagement teams and employer organisations. The issues continue to be the skills match and, for many, their levels of English. The employability Adviser continues to contact local employers to discuss the impact of the level of English but highlight the relevant skills the refugees have.

A 'refugee' website, which can be used to promote the skills, experience and availability of all refugees across the County has been live for around 8 months but even though it is updated regularly it is not having the desired effect. This is being monitored and the Employability Adviser is working to look at any possible changes that can be made to increase viewing figures.

### **Volunteering**

Volunteering continues to be a valuable method of improving English language and social skills and we currently have individuals in charity shops, schools and working with the Refugee Council. Discussions with voluntary networks, and organisations such the Citizens Advice Bureau, are ongoing.

### **Training & Education**

Individuals have secured training courses with local colleges in areas such as Plumbing, Tiling, Painting and Decorating and Electrical one individual recently passed his HGV 2 driving test and has secured employment for a local dairy firm.

**English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**

ESOL is delivered both online and face2face. Attendance in some areas, and with some clients, is still an issue and the Employability Adviser is supporting ESOL Tutors, and Refugee Council Advisers, to reduce the levels of non-attendance. As English language skills continues to be the most common barrier to achieving progression and employment, this is of great importance.

**Key Challenges**

Even though some clients have lived in the UK for almost five years, their level of English continues as a barrier to them securing employment.

The level of English of some of the Afghan clients is lower than previously expected and they will require more intense support. Refugees are often competing for work against individuals with higher and more appropriate skills. For many, in both communities, the level of their English remains a distinct barrier.

**Key statistics 2022/23**

- Continuing upward trend for those in employment
- Attendance at drop-in sessions to build rapport
- Level of part-time jobs and full-time jobs maintained, or increased
- Five businesses continue to operate, this will increase over time as there is a high level of interest in self-employment.

**Priorities 2022/23**

- Continue to meet with all Refugees on a regular basis
- Improve ESOL attendance but working with the Curriculum Manager and promoting the classes with the refugees
- Continue to support and enable all Refugees to apply for, and secure, work
- Develop 'Refugee' website

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**19 May 2023**