

North Yorkshire Council Refugee Employability Project (UKRS/Afghan ARAP and ACRS)

(Report as of 17 May 2024)

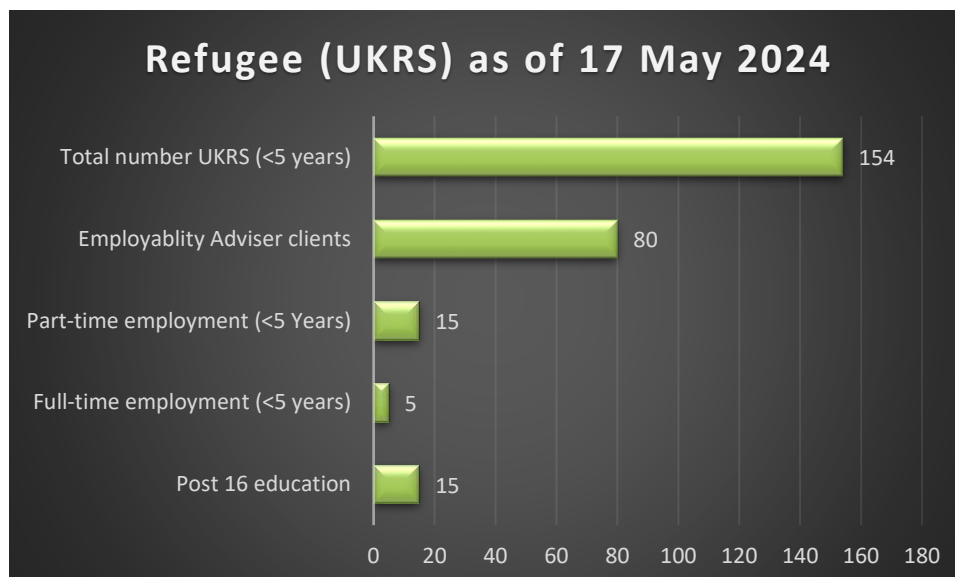
Overview

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, to the 80 UKRS clients North Yorkshire now has 75 Afghan families in the county, which equates to 170 clients. This is a total of 250 clients that are being supported by the Employability Adviser.

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 requires the provision of relevant education, training and volunteering to validate and build on existing skills and to provide additional skills and training.

The 80 Employability Adviser Clients detailed below are accounted for within 40 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.



The figures on the chart account for all UKRS persons (adults and children) who arrived during 2021 to current.

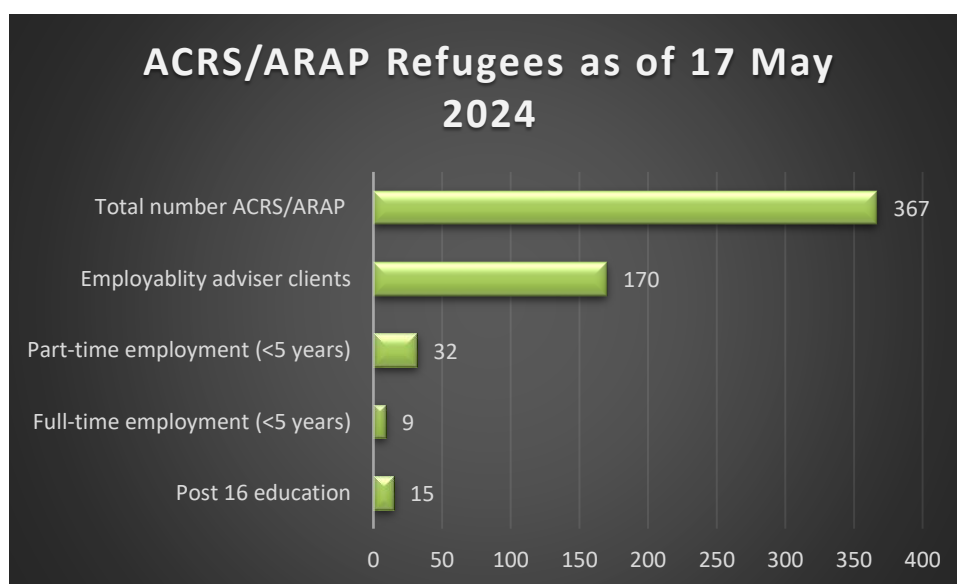
Families from Afghanistan

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	38
Ripon	29
Northallerton	12
Richmondshire	69
Selby	10
Scarborough	5
Skipton	7
Total	170

There are currently 75 Afghan families, 367 individuals (adults and children), being supported in the county through the Afghan resettlement programme.



The figure in employment continues to fluctuate as some adults have done agency work or are on temporary contracts.

The level of English demonstrated by the Afghan arrivals varies tremendously and many require higher levels of support than first anticipated. Most 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 has made 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) are not so good with their reading and writing skills. This has been addressed by NYC's Curriculum Manager and Employability Adviser with provision of extra ESOL classes focusing on the higher-level speakers.

The Employability Adviser continues 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 ENIC 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 thirteen businesses known to be being operated within the county by refugees. They are:

- Takeaway business in Scarborough
- Barber Shops (2) in Scarborough & Harrogate
- Tailoring business in Malton
- Fish and Chip shop on the outskirts of York
- Outside caterers (3) in Skipton, Harrogate and Richmond
- Market stall (food) in Ripon
- Handyman in Malton (very early start up)
- Beautician in Ripon (very early start up)
- Couriers (food and parcel delivery) in Harrogate and Richmond (2)

There are two market stall applications pending for Ripon (mobile phone equipment) and Harrogate (food) Markets.

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, university 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 continues. Applications are 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. More recently a visit to Wensleydale Creamery was arranged for nine of the Afghan gentlemen in Catterick, this was very successful with the first three starting work on 27th May and hopefully several more in due course. McDonalds in Ripon and Catterick have been very proactive in employing four Afghan gentlemen,

two of whom are also at college. Tesco in Catterick has recently employed two Catterick based Afghan gentlemen with the hope of two pending applications being successful.

Since 2021 North Yorkshire Council has employed six Syrian/Afghan refugees, one in payroll, four in the Minority Inclusion Support Team (MIST) and one in the Care sector in Starbeck.

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 colleges and local training providers in areas such as Prince 2 training, plumbing, tiling, painting and decorating, electrical installation, construction, beauty, food hygiene, Taxi licence, teaching assistant and HGV.

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 even for those whose English-speaking skills are very good, the reading and writing skills are not. 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 2023/24

- Continuing upward trend for those in employment
- Level of part-time jobs and full-time jobs maintained, or increased
- Provide ongoing support for those who are looking for self-employment roles

Priorities 2024/25

- Continue to support and enable all Refugees to apply for, and secure, work
- Continue to initiate work experience, volunteering and training opportunities where this is seen as a method to develop work readiness.
- Continue to work with businesses and local employers to raise the profile of employing refugees and provision of relevant advice and guidance re. eligibility to work guidance.

Julie Tasker
Refugee Employability Adviser
17 May 2024