

North Yorkshire Council Refugee Employability Project

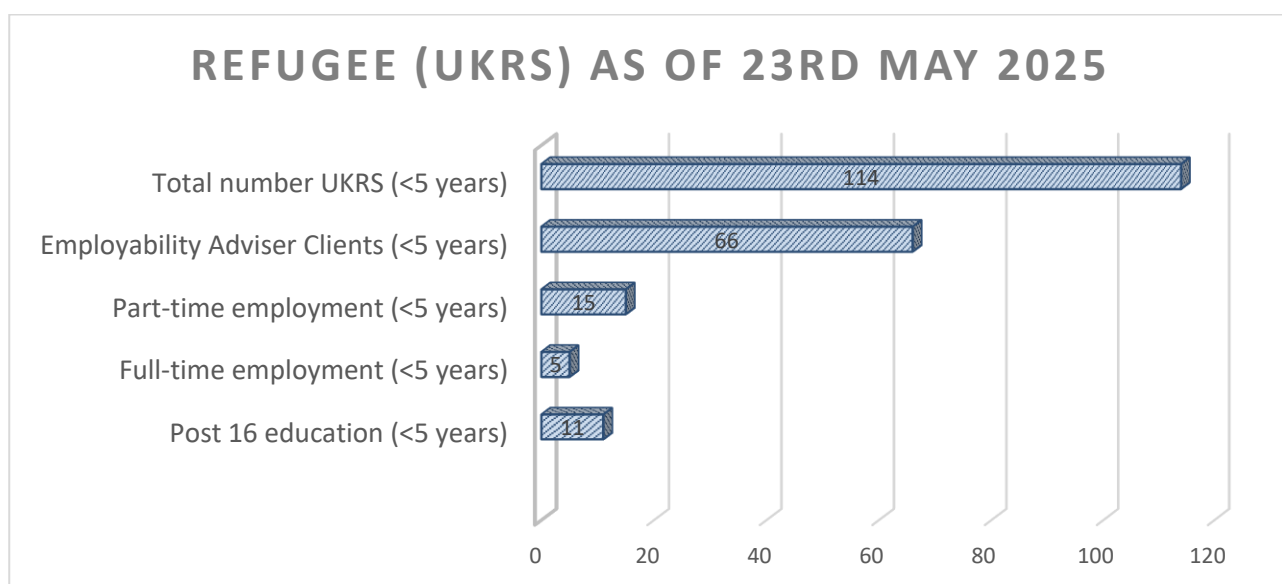
The Refugee Employability Project was established to assist in the resettlement of Syrian refugees in North Yorkshire, in alignment with the UK Government's commitment to relocate refugees through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme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

In August 2021, we began receiving families under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Programme (ACRS), with this process continuing to the present.

The primary objective of the Employability Adviser is to support refugee clients in securing meaningful and sustainable employment, facilitating their progress toward full integration and independence. This includes offering relevant education, training, and volunteering opportunities to validate existing skills and provide additional training to enhance their capabilities.

United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

The clients outlined below are part of the 31 UKRS families still within their five-year support period. Aside from a family of five associated with an already supported family, there have been no new arrivals since September 2023. There are now 55 families (246 individuals), and 126 previous Employability Adviser Clients who are past their five-year support period.



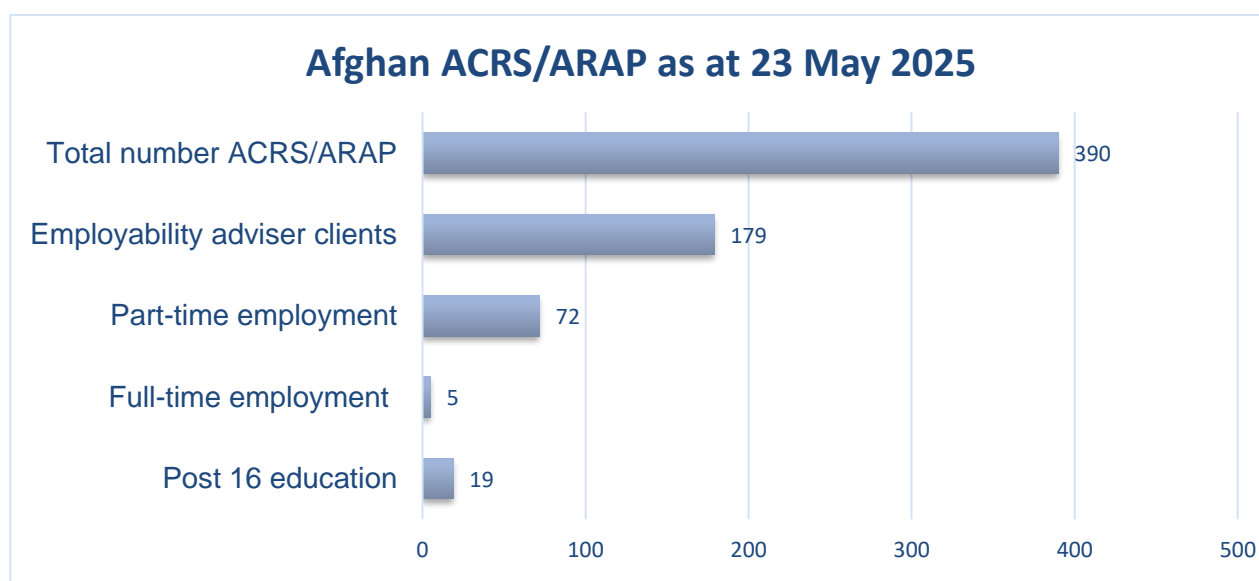
Families from Afghanistan

Most Afghan families supported in North Yorkshire include at least one individual who previously worked with the British government and/or armed forces—often as interpreters, translators, or in other key roles—during the military presence in Afghanistan. These individuals have arrived under two main pathways: the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Programme (ACRS).

Current Client Numbers by Location (Employability Adviser Caseload):

Location	Number of Clients
Harrogate & Knaresborough	36
Ripon	31
Northallerton	13
Richmondshire	81
Selby	7
Scarborough	8
Skipton	3
Total	179

There are currently 74 Afghan families, comprising 390 individuals, receiving support through the Afghan resettlement programme across the county. An additional 18 families have either completed their three-year support period or have moved out of the area.



Employment and Integration Support

Employment figures among Afghan adults continue to fluctuate, due in part to the individuals choosing agency work and temporary contracts. Under the Afghan resettlement schemes, families are entitled to up to three years of support. While this mirrors the structure of the UKRS programme (which offers five years of support), the shorter duration was based on the expectation that Afghan arrivals would generally have stronger English language skills and therefore require less time to achieve integration and employment.

In practice, English proficiency has varied significantly. Many individuals require more intensive language support than initially anticipated. Those with higher education and professional experience are often aiming for roles in competitive, skilled sectors, which can present additional challenges in securing employment. Moreover, while several arrivals—especially those who served as interpreters—speak English well, their reading and writing skills are often less developed. To address this, North Yorkshire Council's Curriculum Manager and the Employability Adviser have introduced additional ESOL classes tailored to higher-level speakers.

The Employability Adviser is also assisting clients with obtaining 'Statements of Comparability' for degree-level and higher qualifications through the UK ENIC service (formerly NARIC), delivered by Ecctis. This is a critical step in enabling clients to access employment or further education aligned with their qualifications.

The Employability Adviser meets with new families within weeks of their arrival and regularly attends local drop-in centres to build trust and provide ongoing support. As with other refugee

groups resettled in North Yorkshire, Afghan families continue to receive tailored assistance to help them access employment, training, and other work-related opportunities.

Self-Employment

Self-employment remains a popular aspiration among many refugee adults. However, few possess the necessary skills, experience, or understanding of the UK's regulatory environment to successfully establish and manage a business during their resettlement support period. The UK's legal and operational requirements for running a business are significantly more complex than in many of the refugees' countries of origin. As a result, individuals pursuing this path often require extensive support from the Employability Adviser and partner organisations such as TERN (The Entrepreneurial Refugee Network) and the North Yorkshire Growth Hub.

Currently, there are **fourteen refugee-run businesses** known to be operating within the county:

- Takeaway business (2) – Scarborough and Northallerton
- Barber shops (2) – Scarborough and Harrogate
- Tailoring business – Malton
- Fish and chip shop – Outskirts of York
- Outside catering services (4) – Northallerton, Skipton, Harrogate, and Richmond
- Market food stall – Ripon
- Handyman service – Malton
- Beautician – Ripon
- Couriers (food and parcel delivery) (6) – Harrogate and Richmond

DWP Communications

The Employability Adviser continues to maintain regular contact with various local offices of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This engagement helps to resolve issues related to benefit claims, ESOL course attendance, and employment matters, ensuring smoother integration and support for clients.

Other Support Provided

The Employability Adviser also offers assistance across a wide range of areas, including:

- College, university, and vocational training applications
- Access to online training resources
- DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) applications
- Qualification recognition and conversion via UK ENIC (formerly NARIC)
- Interview preparation and job application support
- Benefit-related guidance
- Business development and self-employment support
- ESOL-related issues
- General advice and signposting

This holistic approach is designed to support refugee clients at all stages of their integration and employment journey.

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. The past year has seen success with employers such as Wensleydale Creamery, Bullough Cleaning, Pro-Clean, The Station (Richmond), The Capri Lounge and McDonalds.

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

Volunteering

Volunteering continues to be a valuable pathway for refugees to improve their English language skills, build confidence, and develop social connections within their communities. Currently, several individuals are volunteering in charity shops, schools, and with the Refugee Council. Ongoing discussions are taking place with voluntary networks and organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau to identify additional opportunities.

Most recently, a conversation with Oxfam led the Employability Adviser to coordinate a meeting involving the Community Support Adviser from the Refugee Council, and Oxfam's Head of Volunteering for the North East. As a result, Oxfam has agreed to visit local women's groups to introduce the volunteering roles available in their shops, with the intention of recruiting several participants from these groups in the near future.

Training & Education

Over the past year, the Employability Adviser has provided support to individuals in various vocational fields, including plumbing, tiling, painting and decorating, electrical installation, construction, beauty, food hygiene, taxi licensing, and teaching assistant roles.

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 2024/25

- 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 2025/26

- 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
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