



Yorkshire & Humber Regional Development Agency



The back to work company



Learning+Skills Council
West Yorkshire

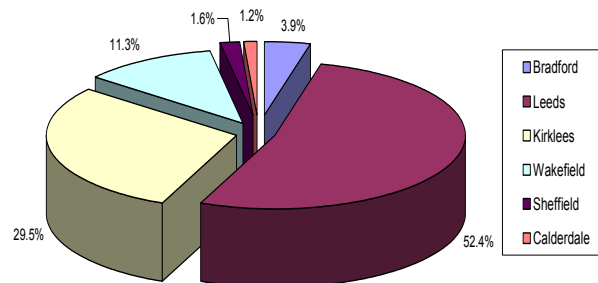
SKILLS AUDIT OF REFUGEES IN WEST YORKSHIRE

Executive summary

The Back to Work Company was commissioned through the West Yorkshire Refugee Network, to conduct a skills audit of refugees and asylum seekers in the West Yorkshire area, to map existing forms of jobsearch support, and look at how these might be strengthened. The study focused on refugees and asylum seekers with permission to work.

Changes in the global economy have contributed to an increasing number of people moving between country borders. The history of refugees and asylum seekers concludes that many have sought refuge in the UK against war, harsh political regimes, persecution and discrimination in their county of origin.

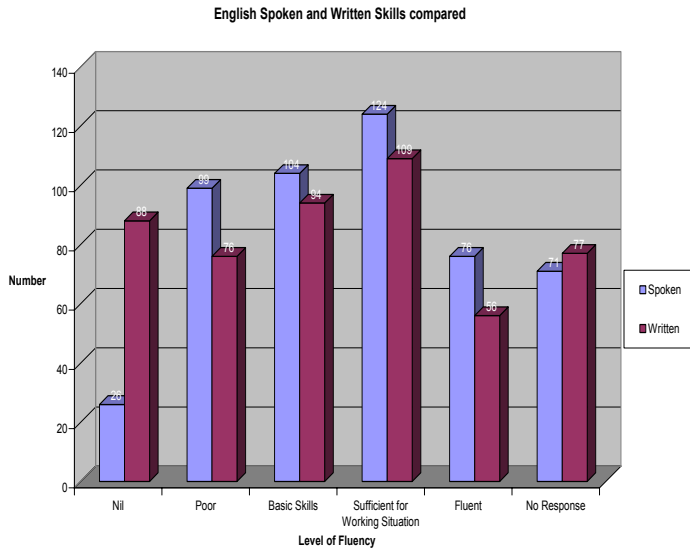
Interviews by Local Authority Area



Getting into employment is a key area of concern for refugees who are building their new lives in the UK. Those unable to gain employment find integration more difficult; further exclusion from society; and dependence on the UK Benefits System.

Levels of claimant unemployment in West Yorkshire are at the lowest levels for a generation. These low levels create recruitment difficulties for employers - particularly those in occupational areas experiencing a skills shortage and in lower skilled jobs. It is important that the untapped resource offered by the refugee community can be harnessed to help contribute to the West Yorkshire economy.

In this study the term '*refugee*' applies to someone who, having applied for asylum, has been given 'recognised refugee' status, Exceptional Leave to Remain, or Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK.

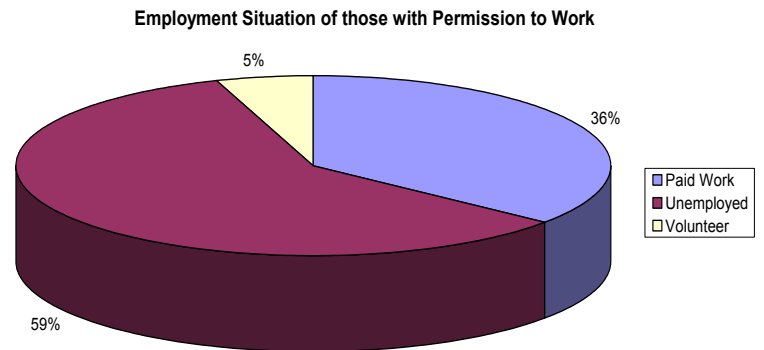


The term *'asylum seeker'* refers to either someone who has applied for asylum and whose application is still under consideration; someone who has received a refusal decision but has not yet returned to their home country; or someone who has received a refusal decision but is appealing that decision.

The project was carried out using a team of one manager and ten researchers, some of whom were able to speak a number of the required languages. Work was conducted between mid-March and May 2003. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

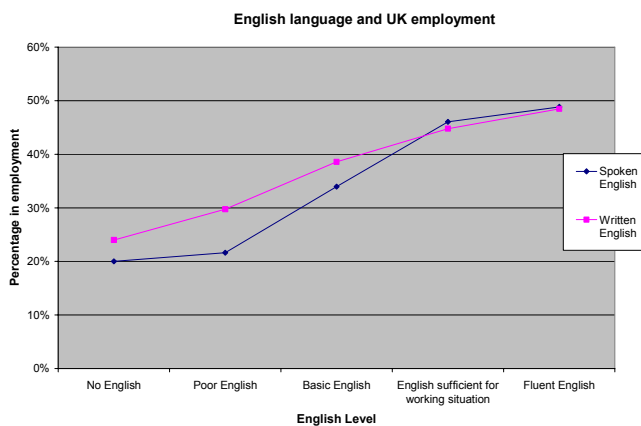
Interviews were conducted with 503 candidates. 500 interviews were analysed, the remaining 3 were incomplete and so could not be used. Of the 500 analysed it was found that

- ⇒ 71% were men.
- ⇒ 75% were between the ages of 18 and 34
- ⇒ 11% had ailments that may restrict their working capacity
- ⇒ 50 Nationalities were represented of which - Iraq (30%), Iran (15%), Afghanistan (12%) & Zimbabwe (10%)
- ⇒ The most commonly spoken first languages were Kurdish (26%), Farsi (16.6%) Arabic (9.4%) and Dari (7.4%)
- ⇒ 40% of interviewees felt that their spoken and/or written English was sufficient for a working situation
- ⇒ 33% had been educated to University level



- ⇒ 7% had no vocational skills or qualifications gained in their home countries.
- ⇒ Over a quarter of respondents said they would be willing to do any job in the UK

31 organisations in 73 locations were identified offering services to help the unemployed back into the labour market. There were 14 refugee specific initiatives and these were based within Bradford (3), Calderdale (1), Kirklees (1), Leeds (5), Wakefield (1) and 3 cover the region



A consistent message from employers was that those recruited from refugee groups were motivated and had a good work ethic. “*Language difficulties*” was mentioned as the main problem – very often the only problem – in recruitment.

Feedback indicated that:-

- ⇒ Mentor support can ease absorption into the work place
- ⇒ English skills can be rapidly gained in a work setting
- ⇒ Workplace based language tuition can be provided to support groups of refugee employees with language difficulties
- ⇒ It is not easy for employers to find out about services that are available to support their refugee recruits.

Recommendations

There is a need for more coordination of services, the sharing of good practice and easier referrals.

The West Yorkshire Refugee Network prioritised the most effective ways in which Jobsearch support could be improved under the following headings:

- **Building stronger links between employers and support services** - creating a positive, informed and supportive climate with employers raising the profile and knowledge of recruitment of refugees with employers, and of the support services available
- **Support for workplace mentors** - developing the capacity, where appropriate, for individuals within the workplace to act as informal mentors
- **Language training linked to job or work experience** - improving the access to language support, and where possible linking this to the workplace
- **Better co-ordination of support services** - improving the linkages and referrals between organisations, and the knowledge of staff within those organisations

Next Steps

- To build on the work of the West Yorkshire Refugee Network and develop a staff resource to undertake the co-ordination and communication activities described above.
- to promote the recruitment of refugees with employers and to help them access support services
- to help refugees access and use the job search support available
- The Fair Play Partnership has been identified to manage and co-ordinate the West Yorkshire Refugee Network and to take it to the next step of strategic development. This task will involve seeking appropriate funding, and developing and supporting activities to further integrate refugees into the labour market.

Full copies of this report are available from:

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