

Refugees helped into teaching

By Irena Barker

REFUGEES WHO want to work as teachers in England are to be helped by a new £1 million project that will promote the benefits of employing them to schools.

The Employability Forum has received the grant from the Department for Children, Schools and Families to co-ordinate a network of training providers, employers and existing projects supporting refugee teachers.

The money will also fund a campaign to raise awareness in schools of the benefits of employing refugees as teachers or classroom assistants.

Schools will be provided with easier access to information on how to employ refugee teachers. This will include dealing with paperwork, criminal records checks and CVs and finding appropriate training courses. Refugees themselves will have a one-stop shop for information on training and jobs.

The project will initially focus on

London, where about half of the refugees in England are based, but will expand to incorporate schemes in other regions.

The grant, spread over three years, follows a 2006 report from the Refugee Teachers Taskforce that recommended an "information hub" to bring different bodies together. The Refugee Council, the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit and Refugees into Jobs in West London will be among the members. Government organisations such as the Training and Development Agency for Schools and the Association of Directors of Children's Services, will also play a role.

The exact number of refugees available to teach in schools is unknown, but the charity Refugees into Teaching estimates that there are around 1,000 in England and

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Wales. Many are teachers qualified in shortage subjects.

Robert Garnett, co-chair of the Refugee Teachers Taskforce, said said: "We have local authorities scouring the world for teachers when we have refugees in this country with skills and qualifications who can't get into education."

For information on the refugee teacher hub, call co-ordinator Beryl Randall on 0207 7856270.