

# **REPORT OF THE REFUGEE TEACHERS TASK FORCE**

**OPENING DOORS for refugees working in education**

**Conference - 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006**

**Refugee Teachers Task Force and Employability Forum**

# REFUGEE TEACHERS TASK FORCE

## REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### SUMMARY

This report proposes practical measures to improve the integration of refugee professionals into the education workforce. The report has been drawn up by the Refugee Teachers Task Force<sup>1</sup>, convened by the Employability Forum, to consider how the barriers refugee teachers face in accessing jobs in education might be overcome and the skills which they bring can be unlocked.

It recommends that the Department:

- (a) gives recognition and support for an infrastructure, based on regional hubs, to help refugee teachers get the advice and support they need to adapt their qualifications and find employment in schools and colleges in England
- (b) supports the development of a regional hub which will significantly increase the number of refugee teachers finding employment in the education workforce.

The report specifically recommends that the Department:

- *Funds proposals* that provide for the infrastructure that will promote a smoother pathway into jobs in education for refugee teachers and a pilot regional hub.
- Builds and strengthens current provision by *encouraging donors to support the development of regional hubs* made up of specialist partnerships of voluntary sector, university, local authority, schools and colleges as proposed in 7.1.
- Requests the Learning and Skills Council to *review early English language provision for refugee professionals* and consider fast-track provision in association with universities and language colleges as proposed in 4.3.
- *Promotes the recommendations of this report*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Refugee teachers have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the education service but face barriers in terms of language, recognition of their qualifications, and knowledge of how the education system works here. A hostile media climate towards asylum seekers and refugees contributes to their difficulties. Skills are being wasted as a result and an opportunity to build a diverse workforce is being lost.

There is a strong business case for making better use of the skills of refugee professionals who are already resident in the UK for some of the following reasons:

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for Terms of Reference and membership

- Refugee teachers arrive in this country with qualifications, experience and a strong desire to integrate and contribute to our society. Many will have already held positions of responsibility in their home countries and have a good understanding of a range of ethnic groups. Some will be involved in informal education initiatives since their arrival in the UK such as supplementary and mother tongue schools. Drawing on skills already in the country should take precedence over recruiting overseas to meet shortages.
- The wider experience that refugees bring with them can add positive value to the education workforce while assisting the integration into the UK of an individual and his or her family.
- “Every Child Matters”<sup>2</sup> argues the need to engage children from marginal and disadvantaged groups such as refugees and ensure their voices and needs are heard and met. Refugee teachers can provide a bridge between refugee children and young people, their parents and communities and the education sector.

Government has taken steps to enhance the integration of refugees. Employment is seen as a key step to integration. In 2005 the Department for Work and Pensions launched their refugee employment strategy “*Working to Rebuild Lives*” alongside the Home Office’s “*Integration Matters*”. The DWP strategy stresses the role to be played by the voluntary sector in helping refugee professionals into work, and refers to the work of the Refugee Teachers Task Force.

The Employability Forum and the Confederation of Education and Children Services’ Managers (Confed) convened a Task Force in 2004 to examine how refugee teachers might be helped to take up posts in education. The Task Force, which includes all major stakeholders, has met nine times. The scope of its concern has been England although links have been established with a parallel initiative in Scotland.

The Task Force now wants to convince Government of the case for action. The proposals in this paper set out in more detail how the Government’s refugee employment strategy can be implemented for this key group of refugee professionals.

In its deliberations the Task Force has addressed the concerns of:

- Refugees<sup>3</sup> qualified overseas who are already working as teachers in this country or who wish to return to teaching;
- Refugees with other professional backgrounds wishing to enter the teaching profession;
- Refugee teachers wishing to work in education but not necessarily as teachers i.e. as teaching assistants, co-educators etc;
- Other teachers qualified overseas and resident in this country with permission to work who are in a similar situation to refugees in accessing employment, for example Somalis who have other forms of residency.

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<sup>2</sup> Every Child Matters: Change for Children was published November 2004  
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

<sup>3</sup> Including those with humanitarian protection or discretionary leave

## **2. CONTEXT**

There is no easy way of estimating how many refugee teachers there are in England. The Home Office does not collect data on the skills of those seeking asylum. Research has shown that more than 30% of all refugees come from higher education or professional backgrounds. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers are the largest professional group. The Refugee Doctors database held by the BMA has details of over 1,000 doctors. An informal survey carried out among voluntary sector providers in London in 2004 reported they had over 750 refugee teachers among their clients. It is believed that the number of refugee teachers in England may be upwards of 1,500.

Refugee teachers are not a homogeneous group. They come from countries with widely differing education systems and entrance requirements for teacher training. Some refugee teachers may be able to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) but many will not because of language and the level of their original qualifications. Nevertheless they have the potential to make an important contribution in support roles. For this reason the Task Force has focused on pathways into working in education generally rather than only into teaching.

In addition there are refugees who have not previously taught but who have strong academic backgrounds, for example in science, who could be encouraged to qualify as teachers. Research suggests the unemployment rate for refugees to be around 36% or 6 times the national average, and refugee professionals are often under-employed. Failure to find an appropriate job has led some refugees to retrain as teachers.

It is not possible to estimate the number of refugees who have succeeded in obtaining QTS or found work in schools or colleges as data is not recorded based on immigration status. Examples of refugee teachers who have succeeded are included in appendix 2. But there are many not currently employed in education who could make a significant contribution.

The current provision for refugee teachers is haphazard and much is left to chance, for example where a refugee teacher lives, to whom they turn to for advice, etc. In the last three years a number of non-governmental projects have emerged offering specialist support to refugee teachers. Significantly, in April 2006 the Refugee Council started a major new project with funding from the Training and Development Agency. A summary of current programmes is included in Appendix 3.

## **3. FINDING SOLUTIONS**

There is a need to:

- Establish a clearer pathway to employment for refugee teachers
- Exploit the full range of opportunities in Further Education
- Increase awareness in the education sector of the contribution which refugee teachers can make
- Secure more effective use of current provision
- Encourage better collaboration within Government and between Government and voluntary sector providers.

The Task Force believes that progress is possible. What is needed is a sense of direction, coherence, and energy. Currently worthwhile efforts are weakened by lack of a policy framework. While additional resources may be needed to plug some gaps we do not believe it is all about additional money. A clearer plan of action could ensure better value from funds currently allocated to the sector from a range of different sources.

Our central recommendation is for recognition to be given to a network of regional hubs or partnerships to assist refugee teachers. These should build on current project activity and encourage universities, voluntary agencies and local authorities to work together in specialist regional partnerships.

#### **4. A CLEARER PATHWAY** (see Appendix 4)

Overseas trained teachers, who are also refugees, face extra challenges. Their arrival is unplanned and often traumatic. This, and the uncertainty created waiting for the asylum decision, is likely to have reduced self-confidence. Official documentation that is not well understood by employers and a negative media climate complicates the search for employment. There is a need to establish a clearer pathway for refugees that allows flexibility for individual circumstances and ensures the necessary support to enable the teacher to pass into mainstream provision or employment. Sections 4.1 to 4.6 below set out the components of this pathway.

**4.1. Creating a better evidence base** Lack of official data makes refugee teachers invisible. The Task Force sees the need for a refugee teachers' database for England from which refugee teachers can be referred for advice and guidance. Information gathered will be useful to policy makers in determining the geographical distribution of refugee teachers and the gaps in provision. It should be linked to an official agency such as the Training and Development Agency (TDA).

The database could help the early identification of skills. Experience suggests that the sooner a refugee can be signposted on the pathway to appropriate employment the easier and quicker will be the process of integration. For this reason the Task Force believes that the database should also be open to asylum seekers who, although not permitted to work, are encouraged to volunteer.

The Training and Development Agency has recently contracted the Refugee Council to establish a database that has the potential to be the refugee teachers database for England.

**4.2. Information, advice and guidance** Refugee teachers need access to appropriate and accurate information.

Guidance for overseas trained teachers already exists on Government websites but refugee teachers are not making use of these. Experience suggests that information, such as an initial signposting leaflet and a Guide are needed, which address refugee teachers' specific concerns. Where possible this should be branded by the DfES or TDA to build consistency of information and reduce the current tendency for

duplication.<sup>4</sup> Information could also be placed on specialist websites. It would be helpful if mainstream information for Overseas Trained Teachers could include mention of refugees.

Jobcentre Plus has, after consultation with the Task Force, added information on refugee teachers to their intranet system. This will need to be kept up to date.

Some refugees currently receive inappropriate advice and can be misdirected by well-intentioned but partially informed advisors. Refugee teachers should be signposted to those able to offer authoritative and realistic advice.

Since 2003, the Refugee Teachers Steering Group has provided a useful forum for networking projects in England which assist refugee teachers to adapt their skills and find work in education. A strengthened role for the Group, possibly associated with a website, could foster the sharing of information and good practice and raise standards of information, advice and guidance to refugee teachers.

**4.3. English language and communication skills** The majority of refugees arrive without a good command of English. In a 2004 Home Office Skills Audit only a third of respondents rated themselves as having fairly good English and above. To teach in English schools the refugee teacher will need a fluent command of English, an understanding of the language of the classroom, and good communication skills. Those applying for support roles will have similar needs, although possibly not to such a demanding level.

*Early language provision* English language is the first priority of most refugee professionals. Without intensive language provision the process of learning or improving language skills through ESOL classes will take time. Refugee teachers need to have a reasonable competence in English before the process of adaptation can begin.

Initial assessment should take place as soon as possible after arrival in the country. For those with little prior knowledge of English, this will take place before referral to specialist providers. Refugee professionals, including teachers, with limited language are likely to benefit from fast track provision that is more intensive or academic in approach than is generally the case in ESOL classes provided through Further Education Colleges.

*Specialist language provision* As soon as a refugee teacher has a reasonable command of English (at least to Level 2), a specialist provider will be able to assess what further language training is need to prepare for entry into the education workforce.

There is at present no specific English language requirement for teachers seeking QTS beyond the need to have passed GCSE English. The Task Force considered the feasibility of introducing a requirement for refugee teachers to pass a recognised test, such as that offered by IELTS (International English Language Testing System), prior

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<sup>4</sup> The Employability Forum will shortly publish a Guide for Refugee Teachers produced on behalf of the Refugee Teachers Task Force

to entry to the profession in the UK. However, it was not convinced that this was appropriate for teachers and instead proposes the development of *an assessment process* supported by a standard assessment tool.

This assessment process should explore competence in English as well as understanding of what is required of professional teachers in the UK. Ideally it should be provided in the context of a two semester / 9 month bridging course prior to mainstream provision along lines outlined in 4.5 below. Some examples of bridging provision are given in appendix 3 which maps current provision.

**4.4. Assessment of qualifications and experience** Every refugee teacher should be given an opportunity to have his or her skills assessed. Refugees need a staged but flexible pathway which allows for different exit points for individuals e.g. into support roles in schools, QTS or Further Education (FE).

The Task Force considered both the assessment of qualifications and the assessment of skills. The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC) provides information on the comparability of overseas qualifications. Refugee teachers need to be signposted to NARIC for the equivalence of their qualifications to be assessed.

The Task Force received reports of confusion and misunderstanding about the work of NARIC. It was able to discuss these directly with NARIC who made a presentation to the Task Force and indicated their readiness to examine ways of ensuring that their assessment process was as clear and comprehensible as possible. The answer may rest with better communication between NARIC and agencies advising refugees.

The assessment of prior experience is also important but has been given less attention. Refugee teachers may have many years of experience that needs recognition. This may include experience gained working in mother tongue and supplementary schools since arrival in the UK. The process of building a personal portfolio of prior learning and experience can begin during adaptation, for example as part of a bridging course. There is also an opportunity for a university to develop assessment models so that prior learning can be accredited towards the achievement of a first degree.

Prior learning and experience may also be submitted as part of the evidence needed to meet the standards required for QTS for those following the assessment only route. However, in reality, few refugees are likely to be able to follow this route.

**Stage One.** Assessment should take place once a refugee teacher has acquired basic English. An advisor will assess the likelihood of an individual returning to teaching and offer, where relevant, advice on alternative career paths (A summary of teaching and alternative career paths is included in Appendix 5). The motivation of the teacher will need to be tested against the realities and challenges of working in education in England. Some refugee teachers may decide that the education sector is not for them.

Assessment should be undertaken by an advisor who has received appropriate training and is supported by a standard assessment tool.

**Stage Two.** Once the teacher has the language skills and confidence to enter mainstream provision, a further assessment should take place. This will determine the readiness of the individual for mainstream training, work experience or more detailed assessment through the accreditation of prior learning (APEL). The current emphasis on recognition of overseas qualifications means that insufficient value is being given to the years of experience which refugee teachers may bring with them.

Assessment should generally be undertaken by staff of a university education department and a voluntary sector provider, and may include an employer. Staff training and a standard assessment tool would help to ensure consistency.

Advice and guidance should also be open and attractive to refugees from non-teaching backgrounds interested in building a career in education.

**4.5. Adaptation** Refugee teachers do not have uniform needs and provision must be tailored. The need for adaptation should not be under-estimated since refugee teachers will have to adapt to a very different learning culture and environment (classroom, school or college).

Refugees who come from countries where English is used in schools and which have a similar education system may be able to proceed quickly into mainstream provision for overseas trained teachers. For the majority, however, some kind of specialised provision will be the next step. This will include language and communication skills for teaching and orientation e.g. how the English education system works and visits to a classroom of a local school.

The Task Force considered two kinds of special provision, both with a strong focus on language and communication, but aimed at refugee teachers with different adaptation needs.

- The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) at London Metropolitan University for 3 years ran a 6 month certificate course for refugees seeking employment in support roles in schools. The course offered orientation to teaching in England, language and communication, and a work placement that was supervised by the local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) team.
- Middlesex University ran a 25 hour course in communication for overseas trained teachers. The overseas trained teachers selected for this course, who included refugees, were already judged to have advanced language ability but needed support to achieve the level of language and communication skills necessary to enter PGCE. This course was TDA funded.

Efforts should be made to learn lessons and create linkages with appropriate mainstream provision e.g. Access courses, Return to Teaching Programmes, University mentoring programmes.

### Bridging course

The Task Force believes that most refugee teachers could benefit from a bridging programme before moving into mainstream provision. A bridging programme tailored to the differing needs of participants could shorten the overall period of adaptation and reduce the current wastage of valuable skills. Some examples of bridging courses are listed in appendix 3 (mapping current provision).

A six month course, which should be designed to restore and build individual confidence, should include the following elements:

- An introduction to education in England and the national curriculum
- English language and communication skills required for academic study and the workplace
- Advice and guidance support
- IT
- A placement in a school or college
- A start in building personal portfolio of prior learning and experience

**4.6. Into employment** Most refugee teachers will benefit from support, best provided by specialist projects, in preparing a CV, identifying posts to apply for, or preparing for interview. These projects should continue support for their former clients newly employed in schools and colleges.

Refugee teachers need to be made aware of support which might be available to them as newly qualified teachers e.g. some teacher unions provide professional development courses specifically targeted at overseas trained teachers.

Newly qualified teachers in the UK and Overseas Trained Teachers when gaining QTS are eligible for support in the form of an extra half day a week support from a trained mentor and access to local authority training where available.

## **5. FURTHER EDUCATION**

Further Education offers employment opportunities for refugee teachers which may have been overlooked. Refugees could play a significant role in helping Colleges fulfil the objectives that Government has placed on them to promote economic regeneration, and diversity and basic skills provision. FE is seldom the first choice of refugees and it is important to include information on the opportunities that exist within the sector in initial advice and guidance to refugee teachers.

It is worth noting:

- The demand for teaching staff within the sector. There are currently many teaching vacancies. The new website for jobs developed in association with the Association of Colleges (AOC) – [www.fejobs.com](http://www.fejobs.com) – is currently advertising 366 vacancies. Refugees with a background in higher education are more likely to find posts in FE than in universities. There are opportunities for those with prior experience in secondary and adult education too.
- A higher proportion of teachers from ethnic minorities are employed within Further Education and the sector may be a more receptive environment for the refugee teacher

- FE plays a key role in refugee integration through ESOL provision. Colleges such as City and Islington and Tower Hamlets have developed programmes specifically to aid refugees and are therefore more aware of the issues.
- To teach full-time in FE new entrants require a PGCE (Post Compulsory Education and Training). Part-timers are now required to obtain an FE teaching qualification within 2 – 4 years.
- Opportunities exist for those with excellent English as ESOL teachers – for example some may have worked as teachers of English in their home countries. From 2007 all new entrants teaching a “Skills for Life” programme will be required to be working to the new professional standards developed by Lifelong Learning UK and if full time have acquired Qualified Teacher in Learning and Skills status.

However, refugee teachers entering FE will face many of the same barriers as those entering primary and secondary, e.g. lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and experience, and language. Bridging courses such as the Passport to Teaching Plus programme piloted at Birkbeck offers a potential model. Through course work, mentoring and placement in Colleges, it offers an opportunity for refugee teachers to familiarise themselves with the sector.

The Task Force concludes that there is potential, which is not currently being realised, for refugees to find jobs in FE colleges and make a significant contribution.

## **6. RAISING AWARENESS – THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS**

**Raising awareness** Employers and the wider public need to be made aware of the potential pool of refugees from teaching backgrounds whose skills could add real value to their school or college. There is a need to raise awareness of the skills that refugees have to offer. A school or college employing a refugee teacher may well find that the teacher brings a number of benefits in addition to their professional skills for example:

- Enhancement of the curriculum through their direct experience;
- Knowledge of other countries, religious practice, and cultures;
- As a role model for students from similar backgrounds;
- Language skills in community languages as well as languages which may be taught as part of the curriculum e.g. French, Arabic, Russian
- Inter-cultural skills;
- Help promote racial equality;
- Challenge negative stereotypes.

Efforts are needed to raise the profile of refugee teachers among employers in order to counteract the negative images of refugees in the media. A good example of this has been the short programme run by Teachers TV to highlight the contribution being made by a refugee now working as a qualified teacher in a secondary school. The case studies of refugees who have found their way into working in schools are highlighted in appendix 2. More information of this kind is needed.

**The needs of employers** The Task Force has looked at the needs of employers – of local authorities, governors and school heads – and has concluded that they need better access to information so that they can feel confident in their recruitment that the

individual applicant has the right to work, the skills and qualifications required for the post and that they can be safely employed to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.

Specifically employers may need:

- Access to information on the variety of documentation issued to refugees by the Home Office and their permission to work;
- Information on refugees. Refugees are no different to other overseas teachers seeking employment although they are more likely to have career gaps as a result of the circumstances that have forced them to flee their country and delays in settlement of their asylum claim in the UK;
- Information on routes into teaching for overseas trained teachers;
- Details of the National Academic Recognition Centre for the UK;
- To know that a refugee can obtain an enhanced clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau for the period they have been in the UK, but will not normally be able to provide a police check to cover the period before their arrival in the UK;
- Availability of specialist local provision to assist refugee teachers find their way back into working in education (which might also be able to provide answers to some queries which arise in the appointment process);
- To be made aware of the refugee teachers database which has the potential to become a resource for employers seeking staff.

**What employers can do** Schools and colleges can also play a positive role in assisting the integration of refugees into the education workforce. For example, experience has shown that refugee skills should be identified as early as possible and signposted for assessment and adaptation. Opportunities for refugees, to visit schools, while their claim for asylum is still under consideration, can help them build understanding of the English education system and decide what career route they might follow. Asylum seekers are not entitled to work but may volunteer and can benefit from exposure visits to schools and colleges.

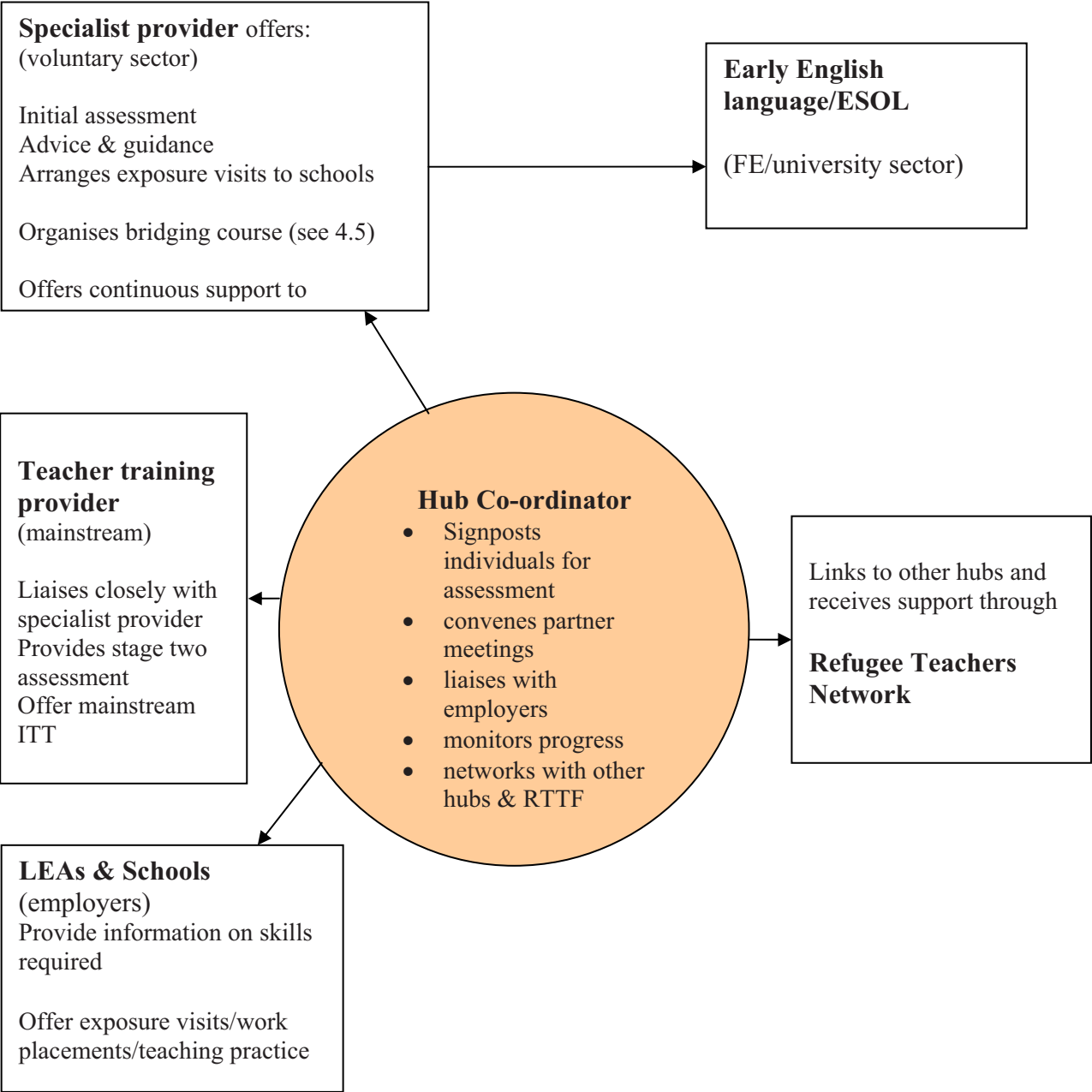
## **7. DELIVERY**

**7.1 Regional hubs** The Task Force proposes “regional hubs” as the key mechanism for integrating refugees into the education workforce. There might be 4/5 “hubs” across England – in London and major dispersal areas (e.g. West Midlands, North East, North West).

Each “hub” would normally involve a partnership that includes a teacher training provider, a specialist voluntary sector service provider, local education authority and FE College. “Hubs” should be built around existing programmes with providers working within the same region being encouraged to work together.

In return for commitment to a set of principles and guidelines based on this report, the partnership would be given recognition for providing this specialised service and donors would be encouraged to provide funding over a three year period. Some standard tools (e.g. standard assessment tool) would be developed nationally for use regionally. However, specialist provision cannot be universal. Clients at a distance from “hubs” should be supported to travel to appropriate provision.

**REGIONAL HUBS IN PRACTICE**  
Partners include specialist voluntary sector provider, mainstream provider (university) and local employers



**7.2 Current provision** Wherever possible these centres should build upon expertise and knowledge that currently exists. It is not practical for specialist provision to be made available throughout England or even in every area to which refugees are dispersed by NASS. Two or three specialist centres in London and two outside London may be sufficient. There is currently more provision in London than elsewhere reflecting the concentration of refugees in the capital (see Appendix 3). There is a programme in Sheffield/Leeds and the TDA has recently funded the Refugee Council to develop a programme in the West Midlands. In most cases a voluntary agency is already working in partnership with a university and local employers.

**7.3 Funding** Adaptation projects are currently being funded from a variety of sources including Home Office, LDA, local authorities, TDA, European sources and independent trusts. There are two major problems:

- funding is often short term leading to unstable provision. As a result projects are not able to provide for their clients the continuous support that their adaptation requires;
- funding decisions are seldom based on scoping current local provision or best practice. As a result there is duplication and opportunities for learning from experience lost.

**7.4 Co-ordination** The Task Force has identified the need for better co-ordination at a national and local level. This should include better co-ordination between:

(a) the Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions.

(b) statutory and non-statutory services at a local level, e.g. more effective referral from Jobcentre Plus to local specialist providers.

**7.5 Maintaining momentum** Some mechanism is needed to promote the measures outlined in this report, encourage networking, and updating information. The Task Force will continue in existence to promote the report findings at a policy level but to translate the report's recommendations into action, practitioners need to be involved. The Refugee Teachers Steering Group convened by the Employability Forum and the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit at London Metropolitan can play a role here.

**7.6 Evaluation** The Task Force has not been able to assess the quality of current provision. Examples of good practice need to be written up. There would be value in conducting an overall monitoring and evaluation exercise of current provision so as to assess what works well in practice for different kinds of clients.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

These recommendations arise from arguments outlined in this report. While the report is directed to the Department for Education and Skills in the first instance, a number of recommendations will depend on the action of other stakeholders. In setting out the recommendations, we have separated those directed specifically to the Department for

Education and Skills from those directed to other stakeholders, many of whom have been members of this Task Force.

The Task Force believes that for progress to be made, the overall endorsement of the Department for Education and Skills, and the Department's leadership in promoting its recommendations, will be critical to achieving change and securing a quicker and smoother route into the education workforce for refugee teachers.

Implementation will need to be phased.

### **Principal recommendations to the Department for Education and Skills:**

The Task Force recommends that the Department demonstrates its recognition of the scale and value of the contribution that refugee teachers can potentially make to the education service by acting on the recommendations made to it, and by actively encouraging its partners in the education service to respond likewise to the report.

It further specifically recommends that the Department:

- *Funds proposals* which provide for the infrastructure which will promote a smoother pathway into jobs in education for refugee teachers;
- *Considers a proposal for a pilot "regional hub"* made up of specialist partnerships of voluntary sector, university, local authority, schools and colleges to be developed in Autumn 2006;
- Builds and strengthens current provision by *encouraging donors to support the development of regional hubs* proposed in 7.1;
- Requests the Learning and Skills Council to *review early English language provision for refugee professionals* and consider fast-track provision in association with universities and independent language colleges as proposed in 4.3;
- *Promotes the recommendations of this report.*

### **Detailed recommendations<sup>5</sup>**

#### *4.1 Building a better evidence base*

Promote co-operation between service providers to ensure as many refugee teachers (and asylum seekers) as possible register on the database (RTSG).

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<sup>5</sup> Key to who *might* implement recommendations: CARA = Council for Assisting Refugee Academics; Department for Education and Skills (DfES), EF = Employability Forum; NARIC = National Recognition Information Centre; RH= Regional hubs, RTSG = Refugee Teachers Steering Group; SP = specialist providers; TB= TimeBank; Training and Development Agency (TDA)

#### *4.2 Information, advice and guidance*

Produce a signposting leaflet and guide, branded by an official body and information posted on accessible website (RTSG and EF).

Include mention of refugees in information/websites for Overseas Trained Teachers (TDA).

Keep all information, including Jobcentre Plus intranet information, up to date (RTSG and JC+).

Establish quality standards for advice and guidance to refugee teachers (RTSG).

#### *4.3 English language and Communication Skills*

English language and communication skills should be integrated within orientation to teaching in England (ALL PROVIDERS).

Develop a standard language assessment process to be delivered at the level of regional hubs supported by a standard assessment tool (RAGU).

#### *4.4 Assessment of qualifications and experience*

NARIC to meet with refugee agencies and consider waiving charges for services to refugee teachers (NARIC & RTSG).

Assessment should undertaken by regional partnerships (RH)

Develop a standard assessment tool (RAGU).

Encourage refugees without teaching backgrounds to consider teaching as a career option (TDA, RTSG, RH).

#### *4.5 Adaptation*

Develop case-studies of current examples of adaptation (RAGU).

#### *4.6 Into employment*

Specialist providers should seek funding to enable them to continue support of clients during first six months in employment (SP).

#### *5. Further Education*

Engage with the Association of Colleges and NATFHE to stimulate the development of working partnerships between colleges and local providers (CARA & EF).

## 6. *Raising awareness – the needs of employers*

A media campaign should accompany the launch of this report. This should include the placement of articles in the education press, professional and union journals (EF).

Production of an exhibition stand to highlight what refugee teachers have to offer which could be displayed at key education conferences attended by Governors, local authorities and head teachers (EF).

Encourage teachers to mentor refugees e.g. through the Time Together programme run by TimeBank (Unions & TimeBank).

Production of an information sheet on employing refugee teachers to be included on the “*Teaching in England*” section of the Government’s Teachernet website ([www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)) (Unions/EF).

A working party (including the Criminal Records Bureau) should develop guidance which might take the form of case-studies to help employers assess the suitability of candidates who cannot provide police checks for the period before their arrival in the UK. A similar working party has been meeting in Scotland in recent months (Home Office/DfES/EF/Unions/Governors/RTSG).

Inclusion of issues relating to refugees seeking to return to work in education in the curriculum of the leadership course offered by the National College for School Leadership working for those working towards the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NCSL).

Schools and colleges, in London and dispersal areas, are encouraged to offer opportunities for asylum seekers with teaching backgrounds to visit and/or volunteer (RH).

### 7.1 *Regional hubs*

Regional partnerships should take responsibility for adapting and utilising the skills of refugee teachers in their region (RH).

### 7.3 *Funding*

Circulate this report to statutory and non-statutory funders to encourage consolidation of funding where provision exists (EF).

### 7.5 *Maintaining momentum*

The Refugee Teachers Steering Group should maintain a network of providers who meet and share information on a regular basis (RTSG).

The National Refugee Integration Forum to promote inter-governmental co-ordination through its Employment Sub-Group (NRIF).

## *7.6 Monitoring & evaluation*

Consider a framework for monitoring current provision and undertake an overall evaluation (TDA).

## *Appendix 1*

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE REFUGEE TEACHERS TASK FORCE**

A seminar “Refugee Working in Education” was held at the Nuffield Foundation on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2004. It brought together key stakeholders to consider how refugees from teaching backgrounds might be assisted to integrate their skills into the UK workforce. The seminar recommended that a Task Force be set up to develop a national strategy to ensure that we made effective use of the experience which refugee professionals can bring to the education sector.

#### ***The Task***

To identify practical solutions to overcome:

- (a) the difficulties refugee teachers face in
  - accessing accurate information and advice
  - gaining recognition of their qualifications and previous teaching experience
  - accessing intensive English and communication skills
  - gaining exposure to the UK workplace
  - identifying an appropriate pathway to QTS or support role
  - finding a job and career progression
- (b) the challenges which employers face in:
  - recognising the potential which refugee teachers bring to the UK workforce
  - integrating refugee teachers
  - supporting their career progression

#### ***Co- Chairs***

Dr. Robert Garnett (Confed) and Stephen Jones (Employability Forum)

#### ***Membership***

Association of Colleges  
Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA)  
Confederation of Education and Children’s Services Managers (Confed)  
Department for Education and Skills  
The Education Network  
The Employability Forum  
School Governor  
Lifelong Learning UK  
National Association of Head Teachers  
National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) Sub-Group on Children and Young People  
National Union of Teachers  
The Nuffield Foundation  
Training and Development Agency  
General Teaching Council – England  
Refugee Council  
Refugee Teachers Steering Group – chaired by Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU)  
London Metropolitan University Department of Education  
University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET)

***Timetable*** The Task Force started its work in June 2004 and met nine times before submitting its report to the Department for Education and Skills in June 2006.

#### ***Role of Employability Forum and Confed***

The Employability Forum has been responsible for arranging the meetings and preparing and circulating minutes of the Task Force.

## Case studies - Refugee Teachers

### 1. Halima

Halima was a nursery teacher in Somalia for seven years. She fled when the civil war broke out, lived for two years in refugee camps in Kenya before being able to leave for the UK. Upon gaining refugee status in Britain, Halima was keen to get a job and worked first in a Royal Mail sorting office until in the following year she and her husband up a catering business. A year later she took up a job as a language assistant with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Services.

In 2004, she moved to Edinburgh to study on a one year Learning Assistant course. She completed her studies and got a job at Stenhouse Primary.  
“I learned from the head that they were impressed with me during my placement and offered me the job before I was snatched by another school.”

Halima found teaching in British schools was quite a culture shock. However, she feels that self-motivation has helped her get back into working in education. She was determined to improve herself and her family and not depend on state benefit. She was excited by the opportunities for retraining in her profession.

Halima has found that some organisations are more helpful than others. She thinks that people in Edinburgh are very helpful:

“... they give you the information you need to guide and help you. For example, I had an opportunity to do a diploma in preschool practice, and I needed a placement for 16hrs per week. The teacher in my previous school in Milton Keynes wasn't cooperative. That prevented me from training. But in Scotland, I went to the Primary School my children attend and the head teacher was so helpful. She said I am welcome at any time to do my placement”.

### 2. Amra

Amra graduated from Sarajevo University with a degree in English. Her first teaching post was in a secondary school, where she taught English. The start of the Bosnian war interrupted her teaching career and she was able to reach the UK with her husband and baby daughter to claim asylum. Amra's first year in Britain was very difficult:

“After fleeing Bosnia, overnight I lost my status, my confidence and self-esteem. The fact that my qualification was not recognised here and that I was not allowed to work for 6 months did not help. It made things worse.”

Her desire to do better for herself and her love of teaching were strong and a year after her arrival she started work as a part-time bilingual instructor. For two years she worked part-time as an unqualified teacher, supporting students with English as an additional language. She also worked as an interpreter to boost her income.

Amra wanted to be a mainstream teacher again, and so in 1994 she started a 12 month Overseas Trained Teacher Course leading to Qualified Teacher Status. While studying she worked part time in a supplementary school supporting children in the Bosnian community and gained experience as an EAL teacher and as a learning support teacher, helping students who experience language and learning difficulties.

Amra is now a Maths teacher at a school for girls and Head of the Department responsible for coordinating and deploying resources to raise literacy and achievement of students from ethnic minorities.

“I was lucky that I was able to speak and write good English when I came to the UK. I also had teaching experience in Bosnia ..... Looking back, I think it is quite important for newcomers to learn English well and to find out about (and use) the support and advice available. For example, community groups in the area, refugee support groups, Citizen Advice Bureau, Careers Service, etc.”

### **3. Abdi**

Abdi Barre completed his teacher training in Somalia and worked for four years teaching Mathematics in a Primary school. After successfully gaining a degree in English he moved into secondary education and taught English language until forced to flee the country in 1999 due to the civil war.

In the UK, Abdi took a City and Guilds teaching certificate and started to use his experience teaching in a supplementary school near to his home. After seeing a leaflet at his local Somali community organisation he joined the UCEP course (Routes into Employment in Schools for Refugees – run by RAGU at the London Metropolitan University) in 2003. Using the knowledge and experience he gained on the course he immediately started applying for jobs and in time he found work at Greenwich Community College supporting students with English and Maths.

In 2005 he started a new post as a Bilingual Teaching Assistant in a South London primary school with responsibility for supporting over 50 Somali pupils. He is continuing in this post and has recently started doing some work for another school in the area.

### **4. Arta**

Arta completed a degree in her home country of Kosovo. She was in her first year as a Literature teacher when she was forced to leave in 1999 and move to the UK. After the birth of her daughter, Arta started to study for an NVQ in Business Administration at her local college as she wanted to improve her English and obtain a UK qualification. Arta was keen to return to teaching though and heard about RAGU’s UCEP course from a friend. They both joined the course in 2002.

For her placement Arta spent a week in a Secondary school before deciding that Primary level was more suitable for her. A local Primary school was found and after a very successful placement Arta was encouraged to apply for a paid position at the school. She was successfully appointed as a Teaching Assistant and now works with children at Key Stage 1. Arta has recently started the Registered Teacher Programme and is working towards gaining Qualified Teacher Status.

**REFUGEE TEACHERS TASK FORCE  
CURRENT PROVISION**

**November 2006** These projects/partnerships offer specialised support which assists refugee teachers find work in education.

<b>REGION</b>	<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>PROGRAMME</b>
London - wide	Routes into Employment in Schools for Refugees <a href="mailto:ragu@londonmet.ac.uk">ragu@londonmet.ac.uk</a> 020 7133 2110 <a href="http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu">www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu</a>	RAGU London Metropolitan Department of Education, Islington schools	RAGU has considerable experience in preparing refugee teachers for work in schools, particularly in support roles. Since 2002 they have run annual 6 month courses that offer university accreditation and include a 16 day school placement. Graduates are working as bilingual support workers, classroom assistants and three have gained QTS through the PGCE route. The course will not run in 2006/7 but RAGU are developing ideas for an extended programme in 2007/8. From October 2006 - February 2007 they are offering a new programme for refugee teachers working in supplementary schools to familiarise them with UK education system. This includes 8 week placement in schools 3 days a week.
London West	Refugees into Jobs <a href="mailto:fahira.mulamehic@brent.gov.uk">fahira.mulamehic@brent.gov.uk</a> 020 8908 4433	Refugees into Jobs, local authorities & schools in Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hillingdon, Hounslow, and Harrow	RIJ has experience of running familiarisation programmes for refugee teachers. It has run two six month courses including one day tutored session and 3 days a week placement in schools were run. Currently offer information, advice and guidance on routes into teaching, job search skills, referrals to language and financial support, and a job club.
London - wide	Gateway to teaching <a href="mailto:info@empoweringlearning.co.uk">info@empoweringlearning.co.uk</a> 0207 739 1144 <a href="http://www.empowering-learning.co.uk">www.empowering-learning.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.empoweringlearning.co.uk">Empowering Learning Ltd</a>	Training in QTS standards, providing work placements and then paid work in education. 15 week evening programme. 537 Overseas Trained Teachers have been through programme since 2001. 14% refugees. Training and placement free to trainee.

London North	ESOL for Overseas Trained Teachers <a href="mailto:gemma.baker@barnet.ac.uk">gemma.baker@barnet.ac.uk</a> 020 8266 4133	Barnet College, Barnet LEA	Provides language support to OTT and elements of education and work experience placement. 1 full year 12 hours a week. 30 have been through the programme 90% are refugees. 16 on current course.
London – wide	Refugee Teachers Training Project <a href="mailto:info@empowerteachers.co.uk">info@empowerteachers.co.uk</a> 020 8534 2586 <a href="http://www.empowerteachers.co.uk">www.empowerteachers.co.uk</a>	<u>Empower Teachers</u> , and partners including RETAS, Learning Trust, Newham Education	This is an LDA funded project, focusing on overseas qualified refugee teachers and providing a framework of support with training on the British education system. Interview skills guidance and CV writing is given to all candidates, as well as placement into voluntary and then full time employment in the education once the candidate is ready. Good working relationship with schools and colleges insures that our recruitment team is kept informed about any new vacancies in schools, colleges and training organisations.
London – wide	Passport to Teaching Plus <a href="mailto:theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk">theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk</a> 0207 471 5564 <a href="mailto:j.hoy@bbk.ac.uk">j.hoy@bbk.ac.uk</a> 0207 631 6672	Reconnect, Faculty of Continuing Education, Birkbeck, University of London and five FE colleges	Offers postgraduate certificate in teaching in lifelong learning; further, adult and community education. Programme aims to prepare graduate refugee teachers for employment in post compulsory education, mostly further education. Started January 2006 with 17 graduate refugees. Students have one - two years to complete. 2 days a week course 1 day at Birkbeck and 1 on placement in a college of FE. Funded by Home Office Refugee Integration Challenge Fund for initial year. 2 students have already found employment.
London and West Midlands	Refugees into Teaching <u>Registration and General Advice:</u> Referral and Admin Officer <a href="mailto:rit@refugeecouncil.org.uk">rit@refugeecouncil.org.uk</a> 020 7345 1166 Other Project Queries: Project Manager <a href="mailto:Fiona.prendergast@refugeecouncil.org.uk">Fiona.prendergast@refugeecouncil.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk">www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk</a>	<u>Refugee Council</u> , West London Partnership, Newman College and NARIC	The programme is funded by the TDA. Initial priority is routes leading to QTS with potential later for routes into support roles. Database with online registration through website set up with 50 teachers registered. 6 week familiarisation course due to start 05 December 2006 in Birmingham for a maximum of 20 students, with similar to follow in London early 2007.

Scotland	<p><u>RiTeS</u>  <a href="mailto:stewart.f.simpson@strath.ac.uk">stewart.f.simpson@strath.ac.uk</a>  0141 950 3673  <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/cps/rites">www.strath.ac.uk/cps/rites</a></p>	<p>Universities of Strathclyde,  Glasgow, Paisley and Edinburgh,  Anniesland College, GTC –  Scotland, Bridges Project, West  Forum, Scottish Refugee Council, ,  and Glasgow City Council</p>	<p>This project was established in 2005 to support refugees and asylum seekers with teaching qualifications living in Scotland. RiTeS assists teachers, where appropriate, through the registration process with the General Teaching Council for Scotland and into employment. It has over 100 teachers on its database; 15 of these teachers are now registered and a number are now employed. Initial funding from ERF now supported by the Scottish Executive.</p>
Sheffield	<p>Refugee New Arrivals Project  <a href="mailto:admin@new-arrivals.org.uk">admin@new-arrivals.org.uk</a>  0114 241 2785</p>	<p>Sheffield College, Sheffield Hallam,  Sheffield City Council LEA -  Teacher Recruitment Team, and  EMAS</p>	<p>Runs South Yorkshire refugee teachers' support group which meets monthly with input and activities on relevant educational topics prepared by volunteers who are all experienced teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets up volunteer placements (usually 1 day per week) in Sheffield schools</li> <li>• Maintains small resource collection for refugee teachers to loan out materials</li> <li>• Maintains South Yorkshire Refugee teachers' register</li> </ul>
Leeds	<p>Education Leeds  <a href="mailto:Julie.noble@educationleeds.co.uk">Julie.noble@educationleeds.co.uk</a>  0113 247 5795</p>	<p><u>RETAS Leeds</u>, Garforth Community College</p>	<p>Education Leeds is a 'not for profit' company, wholly owned by Leeds City Council. Education Leeds works in partnership with Refugee Education Training Advisory Service (Leeds) to address the under representation of black and minority ethnic teachers in Leeds schools and promote workforces which reflect diverse school communities. The project aims to harness the talents of refugee teachers by equipping them with the skills, qualifications and work experience to access employment in Leeds schools. Currently providing tailored support to 30 clients.</p>

## PATHWAYS INTO EMPLOYMENT

	<b>Stages</b>	<b>Refugee viewpoint</b>	<b>Mainstream view point</b>	<b>Proposed pathway</b>	<b>Indicators of success</b>	<b>Risks</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Arrival and survival</b></p> <p>From the time a refugee seeks asylum until he or she receives a positive decision and after 28 days becomes eligible for mainstream provision (benefits etc..)</p>	<p>For asylum seekers and new refugees survival, recovery and finding their feet in a new country are the first priorities. This will include finding somewhere to live, schools for children, obtaining a NINO, opening a bank account etc..</p>	<p>The Home Office (NASS) is responsible for asylum support. Claims are decided on humanitarian grounds and Government does not collect data on skills. Refugees receive permission to work only when they receive a positive decision but are encouraged to volunteer during the asylum phase.</p>	<p>Early identification of skills will enable refugee teachers to be signposted – initially as an asylum seekers towards appropriate volunteering - and on receipt of a positive decision to a recognised centre for initial assessment and guidance.</p>	<p>The numbers referred to recognised centres for assessment and guidance</p>	<p>Mainstream agencies do not signpost teachers appropriately and teachers do not find their own way to recognised centres.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Develop potential</b></p> <p>From the time the refugee teacher gets permission to work until they are able to enter mainstream provision for adaptation</p>	<p>Refugee teachers need an opportunity to learn English, find out about the UK system, demonstrate their skills, and consider opportunities and pathways into working in education. Confidence building is very important at this stage.</p>	<p>Most refugee teachers need a period of guidance, learning and support before they can access mainstream provision. Unlike migrants their arrival in the UK country could not be planned in advance. Many come from non English speaking countries. DWP refugee employment strategy recognises that voluntary sector rather than statutory agencies best placed to guide at this stage.</p>	<p>Build on current expertise to create centres or hubs where - refugee teachers can receive - initial assessment &amp; guidance - access to English language - exposure to schools or colleges &amp; UK education system - support</p> <p>Guidance will help refugee teachers make realistic assessment of the best route to follow i.e. towards QTS or into support roles in schools, or into FE.</p>	<p>Progress is tracked via personal integration plans and/or portfolios</p>	<p>Centres lack stability i.e. sustainable finance, appropriate staffing. Refugee teachers are unable to access the centres (travel costs etc..).</p>

	<i>Stages of adaptation</i>	<i>Refugee viewpoint</i>	<i>Mainstream viewpoint</i>	<i>Proposed pathway</i>	<i>Indicators of success</i>	<i>Risks</i>
<b>3.</b>	<b><i>Securing the future</i></b> From acceptance on mainstream course until job ready	The refugee teacher has sufficient language and confidence to enter mainstream provision. A more thorough assessment of skills and opportunities is appropriate at this stage.	Recognition is needed for those universities which have working in partnership with s-specialist voluntary providers developed and expertise with refugee teachers.	Recognition of a few recognised centres (HEIs linked to voluntary sector, & employers) would be a cost effective way of moving forward both the “stock” of refugee teachers lost in the system and the smaller “flow” of new arrivals into mainstream provision. This would encourage resources to be concentrated where they can be most effective.	Numbers accessing mainstream stream training provision and gaining work experience.	Teachers drop out because of personal or financial difficulties or lack of appropriate support from centres.
<b>4.</b>	<b><i>Making a contribution</i></b> Job search to career development	After the struggle to adapt refugee teachers want an opportunity to use their skills in the education environment.  Need for more awareness and understanding by employers of what refugee teachers can offer in teaching and support roles.	The refugee is job ready but support should be continued through the recruitment process and into employment.  Employers need access to information which will make the employment of refugees from unconventional backgrounds less daunting.	On entering employment in schools refugees, and other overseas qualified teachers, should undergo the same induction process as other newly qualified teachers i.e. extra half day a week plus support of trained mentor and access to local authority training where available.	(a) numbers entering work in education as teachers in schools, in support roles or in FE.  (b) Retention rates.	Unsupported refugee teachers resign.  Refugee teachers taking up support roles feel they are in dead end roles.

## ROUTES INTO WORK IN EDUCATION

**Routes into teaching**

To teach as a qualified teacher you must have QTS; overseas trained teachers are allowed to teach as unqualified teachers (up to 4 years on a work permit).

There are three main training routes to achieve QTS: Undergraduate, Postgraduate and employment-based.

Note: GCSE Science \* is required for those born after 1 September 1979 who want to teach Key Stage 2/3 (ages 7-14).

<i>Route</i>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Entry requirements</b>	<b>Where to apply</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Undergraduate</b>				
<b>Bachelor in Education (B.Ed)</b>	3-4 years FT 6 years PT	2 A levels or equivalent GCSE Maths GCSE English GCSE Science* or equivalents	UCAS	Suitable for those with no teaching qualification who want to teach.
<b>BA or BSc with QTS</b>				
<b>Postgraduate</b>				
<b>PG Certificate in Education (PGCE)</b>	1 year FT 2 years PT	UK undergraduate degree or equivalent GCSE Maths GCSE English GCSE Science* or equivalents	GTTR	Applicants can check equivalence through NARIC
<b>Employment-based</b>				
<b>Graduate Teacher programme (GTP)</b>	3 months to 1 year	UK undergraduate degree or equivalent GCSE Maths GCSE English GCSE Science* or equivalents	Training provider DRB Advert for GTP	Qualifications must be recognised as equivalent to UK. Applicants can check through NARIC  Applicants have to find a teaching position first.
<b>Registered Teacher Programme (RTP)</b>	1 to 2 years	2 years of HE in UK or equivalent GCSE Maths GCSE English GCSE Science* or equivalents	Training provider DRB	

<b>Overseas Teacher Training Programme (OTTP)</b>	Tailored to individual needs	Overseas Teaching qualification Equivalent to UK first degree GCSE Maths GCSE English GCSE Science* or equivalents	DRB	Individuals can work as teachers without QTS for up to four years
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*Support roles in school*

One option for those wanting to enter a career in education but who do not want to work as a teacher is to consider learning support roles. The **Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS)** is responsible for supporting BME pupils and in many urban areas work largely with refugee children. Jobs in this field include **Bilingual Learning Assistants or Mentors** and **School/Home Liaison Officers** and usually require knowledge of ethnic communities and languages. EMAS teams are based within local Education Authorities or those responsible for running the education service.

Other support roles include **Teaching Assistants (TA)** and **Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA)**. These work alongside teachers in class providing extra help in required areas. There are few formal requirements for becoming a teaching assistant but once in post individuals can work towards qualifications at NVQ levels 2 and 3. The new role of HLTA provides a higher level of input and those reaching HLTA status need to meet required standards in key areas. More information is available on the TDA website.

A number of training providers are offering tailored programmes for refugees who want to pursue a career in education. These range from preparatory orientation courses to programmes for progressing job-ready applicants into employment. (See schedule Mapping Current Provision).





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