



## **Job Centre Plus and Refugee Council: joint communiqué on working in partnership.**

Mel Groves, Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus and Donna Covey, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council met recently to look at ways of working in partnership to support refugees onto training and into employment. Refugees are an important group of customers for Jobcentre Plus but many face particular barriers to getting work.

The Refugee Council and a number of other refugee agencies provide valuable support to help refugees into work, including the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES). This is a national service funded by the government to support refugees integrate into UK life and work. The RIES service involves a detailed skills assessment which will be useful for planning training and finding appropriate jobs.

Refugees want to work and to rebuild their lives here. Many will have qualifications and valuable work experience from other countries. We want to see refugees being able to use their skills in the UK.

Jobcentre Plus and the Refugee Council have agreed to work in partnership on a number of areas.

### **Employer Engagement**

The Refugee Council and the Equality and Human Rights Commission produced a guide in March 2009 for employers on the documents refugees have to show they have permission to work. Refugees will not usually have a passport as they are issued with separate documentation by the Home Office. These documents demonstrate that a refugee has no restriction on working in the UK. However, employers may not be familiar with these types of documents and therefore are concerned that a refugee may not have permission to work. The Guide aims to give employers confidence in knowing that a refugee's documentation is correct and to ensure that refugees are treated fairly.

Jobcentre Plus will promote this guide through our website, intranet and Local Employment Partnerships. You can download copies of the guide here: [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/employersguides/employing\\_refugees.htm](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/employersguides/employing_refugees.htm)

### **Using volunteering to strengthen work skills**

Volunteering can be an excellent way of getting work experience in the UK and strengthening work skills. Many people volunteer for charities and community organisations. But public sector organisations, including schools, hospitals, local authorities, etc., can also provide volunteering opportunities for Jobcentre Plus customers

([http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/webcontent/dev\\_015837.pdf](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/webcontent/dev_015837.pdf)). As well as benefiting the public sector, it also helps refugees get

valuable experience of areas that they previously worked in before coming to the UK. This can be the key step to refugees finding jobs again in education, health, finance, administration and other roles.

Jobcentre Plus will work with the Refugee Council and other organisations to support customers wishing to participate in volunteering placements that are relevant to a refugee's experience, skills and employment aims and where they bring benefit to the organisation they are volunteering for. Support for refugee health professionals can be found at <http://www.nhsemployers.org/RecruitmentAndRetention/RefugeeHealthcareProfessionals/refugee-healthcare-professionals-programme/Pages/National.aspx> and there is a similar programme for teachers at <http://www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk/>

## **The Refugee Marker**

The refugee marker is an important aspect of Jobcentre Plus' support for refugees. Refugees can sign the marker at any stage of their claims. Those who do so will be eligible for early entry onto a number of Jobcentre Products including Flexible New Deal, the Volunteering Offer and Work Trials.

The Refugee Council will promote the benefits to refugees of declaring their status to Jobcentre Plus and Jobcentre Plus will encourage advisers to promote the refugee marker, explaining its purpose, how the information will be used and covering issues of confidentiality.

The marker also means that refugees should be considered as priority customers within the wider partnership working. Jobcentre Plus will promote refugees for inclusion within its work with local authorities, Integrated Employment and Skills pilots and City Strategy Pathfinders. In doing so, Jobcentre Plus will seek to bring other local and regional refugee organisations into these partnerships.

## **Personalised support**

Jobcentre Plus is committed to providing support that is tailored to a customer's training needs and employment outcomes. This includes refugee customers.

Refugees are in the UK for very different reasons to European Union and other migrants. They are forced to leave their homes, often for fear of their lives and at short notice. As a result, refugees may not have the extra support here that we can take for granted - friends and family, experience of working in the UK, certificates of qualifications and references from previous employers.

Jobcentre Plus recognises that the distinct experiences of refugees can affect their employment opportunities. Intensive English language support early on, assessment of a refugee's previous work experience and skills, appropriate work placements, interview technique training and job search skills are all examples where Jobcentre Plus advisers have tailored support around what a refugee customer needs.

Working together, using the range of Jobcentre Plus products and initiatives and drawing on training and services provided by other organisations, Jobcentre Plus will offer personalised support that makes a difference. The flexibility is now there for Jobcentre Plus advisers to work in partnership with a range of providers to put that support in place.



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Chief Executive, Refugee Council



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August 2009