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Initial interview and assessment

Previous sections have described the diversity of skills and needs that refugee learners bring to ESOL programmes and the need for these programmes to provide a menu of opportunities that can help learners to develop the English language skills that they need to function and progress in the UK. This section discusses and describes different models developed with the needs of refugees in mind, after first considering the processes that are key to developing good quality, effective ESOL programmes.

Good quality programmes start with the learner's prior experience and aspirations, and an assessment of their level of proficiency. These are then considered together in order to identify the steps learners need to take to achieve their learning goals. The assessment process is common to any English language provision; when designing individual learning plans and schemes of work, however, it is important to bear in mind the issues specific to refugees that were highlighted in Section 3.

All learners should have a private interview before joining a programme. This interview should gather information on educational background, aims and aspirations and should, ideally, be conducted in the learner's first language. The sample ESOL learner registration form (p. 54) provides an indication of the kind of information post-16 programmes need to record. In many cases, learners may have already had an interview with guidance or admission staff, in which case the relevant information should be passed on to the ESOL programme. It would also be helpful to agree on an initial contact form to be shared within a local area or network.

Interviewers should be trained and knowledgeable about the programmes their institution offers. The initial interview may include filling in a registration form, which should be used flexibly, sensitively and with due regard to confidentiality. People who have experienced political persecution, and are insecure about their status, may be reluctant to give away too much information.

Assessment

The introduction of the adult ESOL core curriculum will enable practitioners to identify language skills levels and needs more accurately and consistently. Learners are likely to come across different assessment processes at different stages of their learning journey. Five of these assessment processes (which are used for different purposes) are described below: screening, initial assessment, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment.

1. **Screening** is used to refer learners to an ESOL programme. It may be undertaken by non-specialist staff (such as employment advisers or guidance workers) who have been trained to use appropriate screening materials. In the case of individuals at an early stage of learning English, this may be no more than a short interview in English.

2. **Initial assessment** will help identify a learner's skills against a level or levels within the national standards. Learners may have different levels of speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. In general, initial assessment is administered when a potential learner applies to join an ESOL programme. Staff who have gained a specialist national qualification of level 3 may contribute to initial assessment of the needs of the learner. Initial assessment is often carried out by an ESOL programme co-ordinator or ESOL teacher during the initial interview, in order to place the learner in a class at the right level and, where there is a choice, with a group that shares similar interests and aspirations (e.g. an access, family or employment-related programme). A structured interview may be used to assess the speaking and listening skills of the learner while the interviewer completes a registration form. If the learner is able to see the form (e.g. by sitting on the right of a right-handed interviewer), then the interviewer may get a feel for their level of reading too.

The information gathered through the initial interview and initial assessment may be used to draw up a group or class profile and to develop schemes of work and individual learning plans.

3. **Diagnostic assessment** helps to build up a detailed learner profile and individual learning plan, which should be referenced to the national standards and curriculum documents. It will enable the teacher to identify the steps a learner needs to take in order to achieve the next level in a particular skill, and to develop the learner's individual learning plan or, in the case of a group, scheme of work. Diagnostic assessment should be carried out, over a period of time, by specialist ESOL teachers with level 4 qualifications. New diagnostic assessment tools mapped to the ESOL curriculum will be available from Spring 2003.

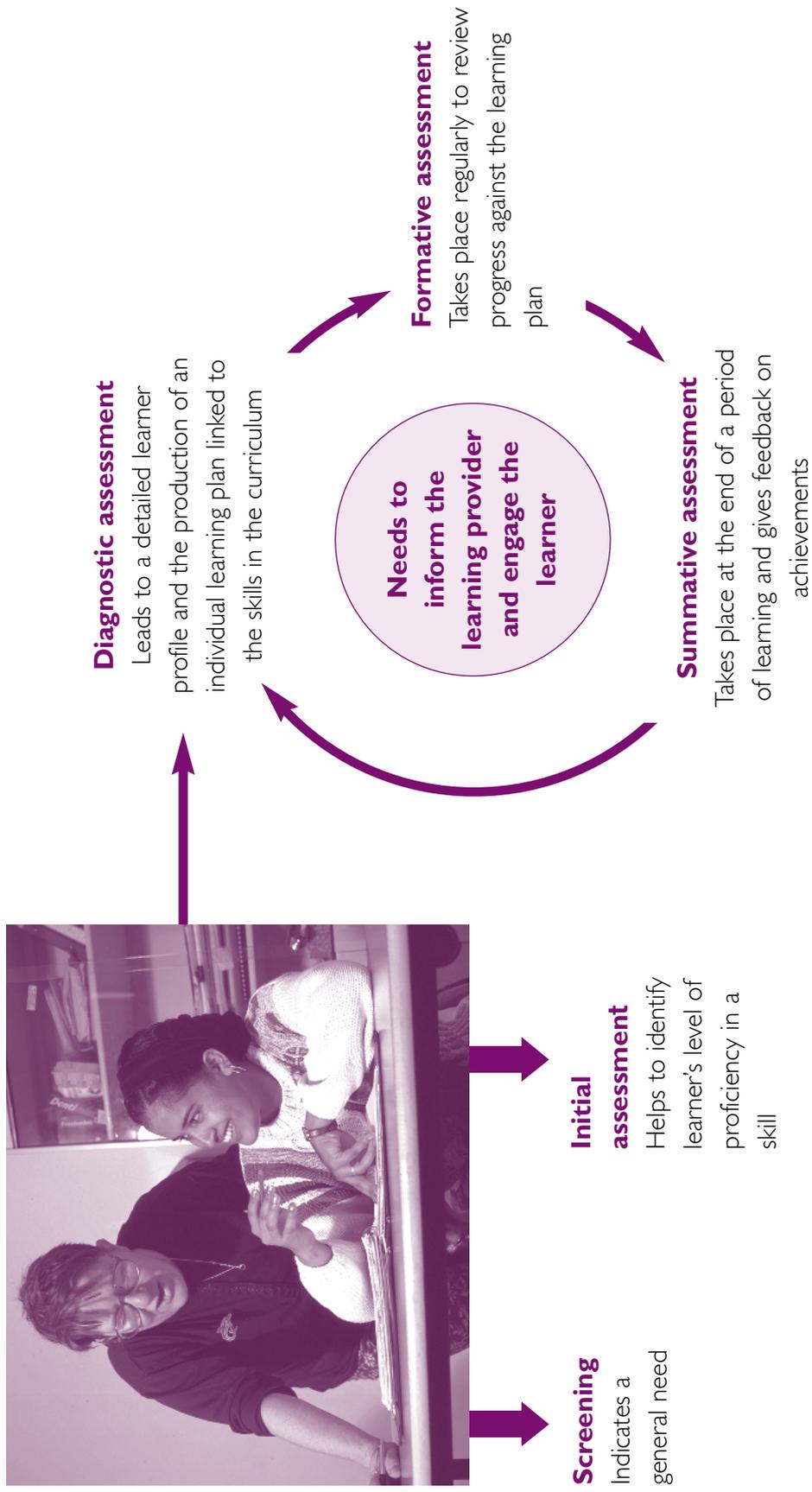
4. **Formative assessment** is a central part of the learning process and should take place on a regular basis – e.g. after about 40 to 60 hours of tuition – to review the progress the learner has made towards targets in the learning plan. It should be as objective as possible but also involve individual learners in assessing their own progress. Progress should be recorded in writing and new learning goals identified.

5. **Summative assessment** provides evidence of what a learner has achieved at the end of a specific period of learning in relation to the national standards and curriculum documents. Summative assessment may take the form of a record of achievement, one or more units of a qualification, or a test.

Since September 2002, all literacy, numeracy and ESOL learning programmes have had to be based on the national standards in order to attract Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding, including the 1.4 cost weighting for all basic skills programmes and the 10% disadvantage uplift. Using the ESOL curriculum will help teachers make sure that they are interpreting the standards appropriately for learners who have a first language other than English. Although ESOL programmes do not have to be externally accredited in order to be eligible for LSC achievement funding, learning aims for ESOL programmes need to be mapped to the new national standards for adult literacy. Teachers need to retain 'a record of achievement and/or progress reports indicating achievement of the learner's learning programme'.

For more information on ESOL qualifications, visit
www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/ESOL_Qualifications_Report.

Figure 3: A summary of the assessment process



Sample registration form for ESOL learners

Assessment and Personal Details		
First name: _____		Date of birth _____
Family name: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> EFL (learners on student/visitor visa)
Address _____ _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Post code _____	Telephone _____	E-mail _____
Country of origin _____	Nationality _____	Date of arrival in UK _____
1st Interview Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Do you live: <input type="checkbox"/> With family <input type="checkbox"/> With foster carer <input type="checkbox"/> In a children's home <input type="checkbox"/> In a hostel/hotel/bed & breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Alone <input type="checkbox"/> With friends	Do you have any dependents? (Please give details.) If you are 18 or younger, what is the name and address of your parent/guardian/social worker?	Source of referral Where did you hear about us? <input type="checkbox"/> Guide delivered to door <input type="checkbox"/> Job Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Advice Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Community Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please give details):
Languages spoken	Languages written	
Date assessed	Level assessed <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Writing	Learner availability (hours) <input type="checkbox"/>
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX FROM EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES		
Eligibility and Country of Domicile	Fee remission	Unemployment
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylum seeker (England) <input type="checkbox"/> ELR/Humanitarian protection <input type="checkbox"/> Settled/Refugee status/ILR <input type="checkbox"/> Dependent on UK/EEA Nat but without settled status (own nationality) <input type="checkbox"/> EU/EEA national (own nationality) <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor (own nationality) <input type="checkbox"/> Resident in UK 3 yrs or more (England)	<input type="checkbox"/> JSA <input type="checkbox"/> Income Support <input type="checkbox"/> Unwaged Dependent of JSA/IS <input type="checkbox"/> Council support <input type="checkbox"/> NASS support <input type="checkbox"/> In care of Social Services <input type="checkbox"/> Working Family Tax Credit <input type="checkbox"/> Disability Living Allowance <input type="checkbox"/> No fee payable <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Full Fee	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> Up to 6 months <input type="checkbox"/> 6–12 months <input type="checkbox"/> 1–2 years <input type="checkbox"/> 2–3 years <input type="checkbox"/> Over 3 years <input type="checkbox"/> Working

Ethnic group

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed – White & Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Asian British – Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed – White & Black African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed – White & Black Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed – any other mixed background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or Black British – African | <input type="checkbox"/> White – British |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or Black British – Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> White – Irish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or Black British – any other Black background | <input type="checkbox"/> White – any other white background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other – please specify |
| | |

Support needs

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| Name:..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical | Please state support required |
| DoB:.....M/F | <input type="checkbox"/> No support required | |

Non-UK education/training		
Primary: From:..... To:..... At what age did you leave school? Secondary: From:..... To:..... At what age did you leave school?	Further education From:..... To:..... Higher education From:..... To:.....	In what language were you taught in school/college/at university? Did you study English in your country? For how long?

UK education/training

Supply details of schools, further education, including ESOL classes, and qualifications achieved.

Employment

Non-UK employment:

UK employment:

Long-term aims

Please give details:

Other information

Please give details of skills and interests:

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information on this form is correct.

Learner signature:.....

Date:.....

■.....Developing ESOL programmes for refugees

Forms of provision

Refugees include young people who need to complete their education, families who need to understand the education system, and adults who wish to gain academic or vocational qualifications or to continue their careers in their chosen field. This range of skills, experience and qualifications is matched by an equally wide range of language and training needs. These needs should not be considered separately: as well as offering refugees choices about how and where they learn English, organisations need to consider their wider needs, including such issues as health and housing. This is particularly important given that refugees are unlikely to have the support of friends, relatives and a settled community from a similar linguistic or cultural background to help them understand and integrate into British society.

To cater for the diverse needs of this group of learners, organisations should try to offer as many choices as staff and organisational structure allow – and to link up with other providers and organisations to offer learners opportunities they cannot provide on their own. Learners with some English – above Entry 3 – may prefer to join a vocational, leisure or academic course that includes language support, or a course with 'embedded' ESOL. Within such courses it is important to ensure that learners are clear about ESOL learning objectives and that English language skills are taught alongside other skills or subjects, and not just used in the classroom.

Opportunities available to learners should include:

- short courses
- intensive provision
- independent learning facilities
- fast track courses for learners with higher levels of English language (level 1 and above)
- short courses or workshops on a variety of themes such as:
 - orientation/induction into the local community as well as the institution
 - citizenship
 - study skills
 - health, housing, leisure activities, financial capability and other issues that arise in adult life.

Young learners, and learners of working age, would benefit from the following:

- a focus on employability skills
- vocational tasters
- pre-access courses
- family programmes.

Programmes should offer a range of teaching and learning styles including:

- whole class, pair, small group and individual work
- video, audio tapes and information communications technology (ICT)
- role play
- presentations
- out of class activities.

■.....Models of delivery

The following section explores different approaches to use in the development of your programmes. As well as offering suggestions for introductory programmes, it includes a number of case studies to illustrate how organisations have responded to the needs of refugees.

Some of the case studies that follow have been designed specifically for refugees, while others are open to linguistic minorities in general but include a high proportion of refugees among the learners. These case studies include short-term projects, ongoing provision and services for refugees.

This account of the case studies groups them according to models of delivery.

Discrete provision

- **Induction programme for new arrivals**
 - Introduction to life in Britain (pp. 64–9)
- **Provision for families**
 - Norfolk Family Learning Programme (pp. 70–1)
- **Courses for young people**
 - Access to BiLingual Education (ABLE) courses at Croydon College (pp. 72–4)
 - Year II Language Link Project, Croydon College (p. 74)
- **Open and flexible learning**
 - Open Learning Centre, the Refugee Council (p. 75)

Progression routes

- **Employment-related provision and access to further or higher education and training**
 - Bridge course, Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS) (pp. 75–8)
 - Skills Match, Birmingham (p. 79)
 - The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) (pp. 80–1)
- **Mentoring**
 - The London Language and Literacy Unit (LLLLU), South Bank University Refugee Mentoring Project (pp. 82–3)
 - Croydon Joint Summer School mentoring project (p. 83)

Discrete provision

Starting points

New arrivals have to deal with a great number of unfamiliar situations as well as the trauma associated with the disruption that brought them to this country. As learners, they may also be uncomfortable with learner-centred teaching styles, the choices available and the notion that they have equal responsibility for their learning – they are also unlikely to be familiar with our education system.

It is worth addressing these issues as part of an induction or introductory programme that might also include an extended period of assessment and guidance. Here are four suggestions for such a programme.

- Introduce learners to the teaching and learning approaches that you use by showing them illustrations, or videos, of **different contexts for learning** (e.g. learners sitting in rows behind desks, a group of children gathered around listening to a teacher; a group of learners doing a science experiment without a teacher; learners using computers, video and audio facilities). See if any of these contexts reminds them of how they learned in school, in college or in the work-place. Depending on their level of English, devise activities that will allow them to indicate their preferences or to discuss with others in the group their memories of learning, whether these be good or bad. This initial discussion can lead on to discussions on the range of teaching, learning and assessment methods they have experienced and those that will be used on their course.
- Use an **induction pack** as a teaching resource for all learners. You could include your organisation's code of conduct and contacts, vital local information (e.g. emergency services, GP, dentist, optician, 24-hour chemist) as well as more general information about the local area (libraries, places of worship, leisure facilities, etc.) and key words and phrases in relevant languages. Encourage them to think of items they might wish to include in such a pack. It would be worth returning to the pack at a later date and asking learners to evaluate its usefulness for the next group of learners.
- ESOL programmes can help the learners understand the society and systems they are now living in by teaching English in the context of a **citizenship course**. There are a variety of resources (e.g. from the Refugee Council, RETAS or the Basic Skills Agency, which has a Citizenship pack) that you can draw on to help you, for example, integrate teaching UK systems with teaching grammar. Topics could include our education, welfare, legal and political systems.
- A good strategy is to invite **outside speakers** to talk to your group, for instance:
 - school staff, or staff from the LEA bilingual/Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG) support service
 - community police
 - council staff or a councillor
 - a Trade Union representative
 - a statutory or voluntary health organisation worker
 - employment and guidance advisers
 - Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) staff.

These visits are most successful when some preparatory work has been done for them, and when they lead into follow-on activities.

Case study 1, *Introduction to Life in Britain*, gives an account of an induction programme (see pp. 64–9).

Family programmes

Many refugees have children in school but are unfamiliar with the education system in this country. An ESOL family programme not only will give them the opportunity to understand the education system and help them to help their children, but may also provide the first step to helping them integrate themselves into the local community – it may even show them a route back to learning for themselves.

Family programmes can take many forms, but the curriculum in all of them focuses on helping parents to improve their language, literacy and/or numeracy skills in the context of supporting their children's education. A crèche will have to be provided if there are pre-school children. Trained crèche workers can be an asset to your programme: as well as providing appropriate activities for the children in their care, they could contribute to the programme by talking to the parents about the benefits of play and by participating in joint activities, if appropriate.

These programmes have highlighted the need to:

- develop first-step outreach programmes that may be delivered where participants are housed
- involve school staff in programme design and delivery
- include welfare support
- draw on community resources and staff from agencies working with the refugees.

Case study 2, *Norfolk Family Learning Programme*, describes one organisation's attempts to construct a family programme (see pp. 70–1).

Courses for young people

A high proportion of refugees are unaccompanied young people, mainly young men, between 16 and 25 years old; a significant proportion are between the ages of 14 and 16. These young people often have difficulty finding places at secondary school and are usually not accepted by further or adult education organisations, even though they are entitled to full-time compulsory education.

Young people are more likely to have experienced disrupted education and to need to catch up through intensive provision. Outside their educational needs they are likely to have similar interests to other young people: they will want to participate in sporting and other leisure interests with people of their own age, activities that will allow them to use their English language skills in informal contexts. If you work in a further education college, your learners are ideally placed to meet and make friends with their contemporaries. However, many will need some support, particularly those who are in discrete ESOL provision. Some colleges have set up buddy or mentoring systems – either through the student union or through other college structures. If you work in a small community provider, it would be worth contacting local youth work organisations: they may be willing to organise extra-curricular activities for your learners.

Young people will also need good, independent guidance and advice about further education, training and employment. Giving young people the opportunity to do taster courses, meet with people doing the kind of work to which they aspire, and do work placements is a good way of helping them to make decisions about their future.

As with the other models, partnership with other agencies can make these courses much more effective.

Case studies 3 and 4, *Access to BiLingual Education Courses at Croydon College* and *Year 11 Language Link Project*, describe programmes with these features that have been developed by a college for young people (see pp. 72–4).

Open learning centres

Open learning centres can cater for a range of learning styles and preferences. Above all, unlike

class or course provision, they can offer learning facilities at times that suit the learners and allow them to work at their own pace. Open learning centres are an invaluable resource for learners who wish to progress more quickly through intensive study, and are essential to learners who may not easily be able to study where they live. Open learning centres should offer ICT facilities, printed materials and, if designed for language learners, audio facilities such as listening booths, and video facilities.

Some well-educated refugees will already have developed independent learning skills and may choose to do most of their studying in such a centre. However, it is important to ensure equality of access to open learning facilities to all learners, whatever their level of education or English language proficiency.

Open and distance learning facilities are widely available – in FE colleges, adult education institutes and community centres. Access to ICT is improving with the establishment of UK online centres for people who have limited skills in using new technologies; these are intended as stepping-stones to the 1,000 new 'Learndirect' centres. Many of these are based in community and voluntary organisations. More and more libraries are being equipped with ICT facilities with Internet access free to local communities. If you work in an organisation with limited or no access to ICT and few paper-based resources, contact your nearest library and find out where your local UK online centre is located – further information can be found on www.dfes.gov.uk/ukonlinecentres.

Effective open learning centres provide an induction programme for new learners once they have had their initial interview and assessment; many of these centres have produced study guides containing the information provided in the induction session. Some learners will need further support and instruction in using ICT facilities. There is no substitute for experienced staff who are available at specified times and who are designated tutors to the language learners. Volunteers or experienced centre users provide helpful support, but they need to be properly trained and supported by professional staff.

Case study 5, *Open Learning Centre – the Refugee Council*, incorporates many of the key features outlined above (see p. 75).

Progression

Paid employment will be high on the agenda of the majority of refugees, most of whom are in their 20s and 30s. A significant proportion of refugees will also want to get vocational or academic qualifications. It is always good practice to build information on progression opportunities into any ESOL programme, but it is particularly important to include information on employment issues. Include information on:

- higher-level ESOL courses run by other organisations
- vocational courses with language support
- access to higher education
- work-based learning
- voluntary work
- job search and work-related skills.

Bear in mind that many countries organise progression differently (e.g. if you are among the highest achievers, you will be offered certain courses automatically; if your marks are average, you

will be channelled through a different route), so learners may not expect to choose or apply for a course. The choice can be overwhelming, and difficult, even more so when you do not know the system and are unaware of the implications of choosing a particular course.

Learners will need an explanation of the range of options available; they will also need information on the employment opportunities to which these options can lead. When asked about their employment aims, learners may suggest areas with which they are familiar, or which have status in their country of origin: for example, they may suggest business or computers without knowing the options for working in the ICT sector in the business world.

Refugees face many barriers to finding appropriate employment: some of these are the same as those faced by other minority ethnic groups; others are specific to their status. These are summarised on the page opposite.

- ESOL provision can help learners to overcome some of the barriers to employment, either by incorporating employability skills into the learning programme in discrete courses, or by providing special ESOL employment-related courses, or vocational training with language support. Mentoring and voluntary work experience, supported by a structured language programme, would also provide valuable opportunities for learners to gain work experience and use language skills in 'real' contexts.
- It is very important to give learners the opportunity to train for work, or actual work experience. Many believe that the more they study, the better placed they will be to find work. However, the opposite is often true – employers value recent work experience over years of studying, and may reject candidates they regard as over-qualified.
- An understanding of the workplace may be acquired in a variety of ways, all of which provide effective and relevant opportunities for language development:
 - role plays in the classroom
 - videos (e.g. of video work-related programmes from the BBC's Learning Zone)
 - presentations from guidance staff, employers, employees, trade union representatives: such presentations should be preceded by language preparation work, including research about the relevant job/organisation
 - visits to workplaces (e.g. a visit to a leisure centre could help learners to find out about social and sporting activities as well as the range of employment opportunities available there)
 - work shadowing, from merely a few hours to a week or more
 - mentoring/buddy system with employed or recently retired volunteers
 - voluntary work
 - work placements.

Case studies 6–8 (pp. 75–81) illustrate how three organisations have tried to overcome both external barriers (those outside the refugees' control) and also internal ones (those that refugees can overcome, with help, support and goodwill on the part of employers).

Barriers to employment for refugees and asylum seekers

1. Language barriers

Many refugees speak little or no English. Even if they have learned English in their own countries, the focus may have been on reading and writing and their speaking and listening skills may be at a much lower level.

2. Cultural barriers

Refugees may not understand how to seek work in Britain, or they may be unfamiliar with its workplace culture. A lack of support networks also makes it difficult for them to find work.

3. Status

Permission to work and participate in vocational training is dependent on status.

4. Paperwork

Even where asylum seekers have written permission, their papers may state that they are subject to checks or detention. Employers may not fully understand these papers and may be unwilling to risk employing asylum seekers as a result.

5. National Insurance numbers

Asylum seekers may have difficulty in obtaining National Insurance (NI) numbers. Employment services do not usually issue an NI number without a job offer, and employers may be reluctant to make an offer without a number. However, evidence of vocational training may be enough to obtain an NI number, since such training includes job placement that may lead to full-time employment.

6. Work experience

Lack of work experience and lack of references from UK employers are off-putting for many employers.

7. Gender

In many cases, only principal asylum applicants, usually the male head of the family, are granted the right to work. This factor, together with childcare responsibilities, excludes many women from the workplace.

8. Qualifications

Asylum seekers may not have copies of their certificates. In addition, qualifications from abroad may not be recognised in the UK, so people may have to requalify. Appropriate conversion courses may not be available in the area where asylum seekers have been housed.

9. Racism

Racism is a recognised barrier to employment for ethnic minorities, particularly recent immigrants. This problem can be exacerbated in many areas where there has been unfavourable reporting of issues related to asylum seekers in the media.

Refugees as mentors

The recently issued White Paper highlights the Government's intention to explore the development of effective mentoring schemes that can assist refugees to settle successfully in the UK (para 4.101). New schemes will be developed to help refugees find and sustain suitable housing, improve their language skills, find employment, make positive links with the wider community and understand the culture and values of the host country.

Refugees who have been in this country for some time can play a very effective role in helping recent arrivals to integrate. They can:

- provide valuable insights and relevant information from their own experience
- communicate in the same language
- understand what the new arrivals are going through
- act as role models.

Case studies 9 and 10 (pp. 82–3) demonstrate how mentors also gain from this process, in particular by acquiring new skills and confidence in their own abilities, which may help them in finding suitable employment or achieving other aims.

The case studies

Case study 1 – Introduction to life in Britain

The following is an example of a short course designed for a group of newly arrived refugees who are profiled in the table on pages 66–7.

The class profile

The information from the initial assessment was used to draw up a class profile for a group of 10 learners on a 10-week ESOL course. It shows each learner's:

- name, age and date of arrival in UK
- status (in this case they are mainly asylum seekers – AS)
- country of origin and mother tongue
- previous education
- work experience
- level of English (across the four skills)
- goals
- language needs (e.g. to improve vocabulary).

The information to be included in the class profile may vary. Its importance is in establishing common ground and differences among the learners. This will help in the planning and delivery of the course.

Level: Entry 1 – 3

Number of students: **10**

Hours: **12 hours a week (Monday to Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 13:00 p.m.)**

Duration: **10 weeks, a total of 120 hours' tuition.**

The topic areas covered are:

1. Introduction to British culture
2. Health
3. Finding your way around your local area
4. Housing and budgeting
5. Education opportunities
6. The world of work
7. Social issues – Equal Opportunities/Asylum seekers/Racism
8. Leisure and recreation

Class profile						
<i>Name/Age/Arrival in UK/Status</i>	<i>Country/language</i>	<i>Previous education</i>	<i>Work experience</i>	<i>Level of English</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Priorities</i>
Svetlana (21) 4 months in UK AS	Lithuania/ Lithuanian	Chemistry graduate Learnt English for 6 months at college in Lithuania.	Laboratory technician.	L=E3 S=E3 R=E3 W=E2	To access a training course for work. To develop confidence in writing.	Articles. Weak grammar, i.e. tenses. Word order.
Ardan (53) 1 year in UK ELR	Kosova/Albanian	Completed secondary education. Some English at school.	Worked as a sign writer.	L=E3 S=E2 R=E2 W=E1	To talk to doctor, neighbours. To develop confidence in speaking. To read newspapers.	Weak structure, tenses, articles, plurals. Needs to improve pronunciation.
Niama (46) 10 months in UK AS	Somalia/Somali	Primary education. Little English before coming to UK.	Housewife Mother – 3 children.	L=E2 S=E2 R=E2 W=E1	To improve English and literacy skills. To talk to doctor and school. To improve accuracy.	Needs to improve accuracy in tenses usage. To improve vocabulary. Develop writing skills.
Tahir (26) 3 months in UK AS	Iraq/Kurdish	Studied photography at university. Some English at school.	Worked as a photographer.	L=E3 S=E2 R=E3 W=E2	To get on a media studies course at university. To improve writing skills. To gain confidence in spoken English.	Pronunciation – vowel sounds and final consonants. Present perfect, modals and conditionals.
Marian (32) 8 months in UK AS	Ivory Coast/ French	Secondary education. Little English before coming to UK.	Worked as a seamstress. Mother – 4 children.	L=E2 S=E2 R=E2 W=E1	To deal with everyday needs. To train in a related field.	Articles, conjugation of verbs. Tenses, spelling, prepositions and punctuation.
Ousman (28) 11 months in UK AS	Chad/Arabic and French	Completed secondary school. No English before arriving in UK.	Worked in family retail business – import and export.	L=E2 S=E2 R=E2 W=E2	To access an IT training course for work. To improve all four skills.	To improve aural comprehension. Weak grammar, structure, tenses, articles, etc. Handwriting. Pronunciation.

<i>Name/Age/Arrival in UK/Status</i>	<i>Country/language</i>	<i>Previous education</i>	<i>Work experience</i>	<i>Level of English</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Priorities</i>
Selamawit (36) 6 months in UK AS	Eritrea/Tigrignian and Amharic	Primary education. No English before arriving in UK.	Housewife Mother – 2 children.	L=E2 S=E2 R=E2 W=E1	To improve literacy skills. To deal with everyday needs. To speak to doctors, at school and when shopping.	Needs to improve accuracy in tenses. Articles, spelling. Handwriting and pronunciation need a lot of work.
Leonora (34) 9 months in UK AS	Colombia/ Spanish	Completed secondary education. Studied English for 2 months in UK.	Worked as an accountant in Bogota.	L=E3 S=E3 R=E3 W=E3	To train for work in accountancy. To develop confidence in spoken and written English.	To improve pronunciation to distinguish between 'b' and 'v' sounds. Present perfect and conditional tenses, modals.
Landu (29) 1 year in UK ELR	Zaire/Bangante and French	Secondary education. Little English before arriving in UK.	Worked as a carpenter.	L=E2 S=E2 R=E3 W=E1	Improve English for work, especially literacy skills. To listen to radio and TV. To read newspapers and fill out forms.	To use written words and phrases to record info. Punctuation and spelling. Articles, tenses.
Mohammed (24) 7 months in UK AS	Afghanistan/ Durrani	Completed secondary education. No English before arriving in the UK.	Studying agriculture at University. Education interrupted due to political situation.	L=E2 S=E1 R=E2 W=E1	To improve English for everyday needs. To speak to doctor, teachers, etc. To improve English for work.	To improve listening for detail. Use basic sounds and symbol association for pronunciation and to help spelling. Write letters of alphabet.

Scheme of work

Week	Topic	Learning objectives Component skills	Knowledge and understanding
1	Induction Introduction to learners in the class Timetables Tour of the building	Lr/E1.3 & Lr/E2.4 Sc/E2.2 Listen and follow short explanations and instructions	Understand key forms, imperatives and <i>must</i> , in instructions. Recognise and respond to sequence. Take appropriate action.
2	Introduction to life in Britain Greetings Cultural differences in class Customs and traditions	Rt/E2.3a) Identify common sources of information Rs/E2.1–4 Read and understand linking words and instructions Sc/E2.3f) Give short (personal) descriptions and make comparisons Wt/E2 Construct simple and compound sentences	Identify a range of common sources of everyday information. Describe country and make comparisons. Combine simple sentences to make compound sentences.
3	Finding your way around your local area Transport systems Form filling	Sc/E3.3c) Ask for directions Lr/E2.4–5) Listen to and follow straightforward explanations and instructions Rt/E2.3a) Read a bus timetable Wt/E2.1 Use written words or phrases to record or present information	Use range of direct and indirect ways of asking directions, including embedded questions. Understand directions and instructions. Record information on forms.
4	Health Visiting the doctor Healthy eating/Lifestyle Health and Safety	Sc/E3.4b) Express clearly statements of fact Rw/E3.2a) Read and understand words commonly used on forms Lr/E2.4–5 (see Week 2 above)	

Week	Topic	Learning objectives Component skills	Knowledge and understanding
5	Overcoming hurdles	Sd/E3.1 e) Discuss housing and budgeting problems.	Use suitable phrases to make suggestions and give advice.
6	Housing and budgeting	Wt/E2.1 & Rw/E3.2a (as above Week 4)	Scan headings and subheadings.
	Education opportunities in GB	Rt/E3.7a) Scan different parts of the text to locate information	Take part in formal discussions.
	Interview skills	Sd/L2 Engage in discussion	Focus on topic, choose appropriate format and style.
7	Writing application forms	Wt/L2.5a) Choose formal and informal language appropriate to purpose and audience	Scan headings and subheadings.
	The world of work	Rt/E3.7a) Scan different parts of the texts to locate information	Follow up statement of liking and disliking with reason and explanation.
8	Looking at job ads and talking about job preferences	Sd/E3.1 c) Express feelings, likes and dislikes	Use a range of adjectives and intensifiers for expressing feelings, with appropriate intonation.
	Social issues	Sd/E3.1 a–e) Take part in social interaction	Understand and identify meaning in chronological, continuous descriptive and explanatory texts.
	Equal opportunities	Lr/E3.2a) Listen for detail in narratives and explanations	Understand words and sentences on forms and know how to respond.
9	Asylum seekers/Racism	Rw/E2.1 Read and understand words on forms related to personal information	Articulate the sounds of English to make meaning understood.
	Leisure and recreation Keeping fit/Joining a leisure centre	Sc/E2.1b) Obtain information from texts	
10	Visiting a museum		
	Revision of course		

Case study 2 – Norfolk Family Learning Programmes

Background

A local Christian community established Great Yarmouth Refugee Outreach and Support (GYROS) in response to the growing numbers of refugees in Great Yarmouth in 1997. It took on the role of co-ordinating voluntary and statutory agencies and liaising with them. In this role, GYROS also aimed to develop an effective and well-planned reception and support system, to raise awareness in the local community and encourage the sharing of information, resources and problem solving. GYROS identified the need for English language provision for families. With Norfolk Family Learning Programme (NFLP) it successfully bid for a grant from the Adult Community Learning Fund to work with refugee families with pre-school and school-aged children.

There were obvious immediate difficulties, many practical, many linked to the anxiety and uncertainty experienced daily by the refugees. The accommodation situation was changeable and the hotels were far from ideal residences for young children. Parents had few resources with which to support their children, and contact/communication with schools was often difficult. Sessions were held in the hotels, a familiar environment for the families. Parents were understandably very wary, and personal circumstances, often traumatic, affected attendance. Although the refugees greatly enjoyed the adult-only activities and the joint activities with the children, staff often had to find, persuade and reassure people at the beginning of a session. The learning environment also posed problems: sessions had to take place in the main communal areas, but this meant that other residents could also see what was happening and would occasionally join in.

Provision

The NFLP team comprised two adult tutors with EAL experience, one early-years teacher, and crèche staff. A teacher working with the English Language Support Service, who knew all the families with school-aged children, accompanied NFLP staff on visits to families and hotel managers to make initial contact. Project staff paid follow-up visits to chat informally to residents and to meet the managers.

The initial target group was families with pre-school children, who were least able to find other provision. The target group was very mixed, with families from Somalia, Kosovo, Lithuania, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Afghanistan. Levels of spoken English ranged from beginner to proficient.

Each session focused on developing language, with a lot of oral work. The sessions used child-based topics, and activities and language relevant to parents wishing to develop their own skills, in order to support their children.

Part of each session offered stimulating activities for parents to develop and share with their children. These resulted in useful resources, which could be left at the hotels for parents to use with their children. Staff were aware that, if children are able to come home from school and share activities with their parents, it provides a real stimulus to learning English.

Outcomes

During the early stages of the project, outcomes were positive, but difficult to quantify. They included the fact that participants:

- were able to give simple personal information
- produced a short piece of writing in English
- became more familiar with some systems, e.g. school
- asked questions
- had more relaxed social interaction
- experienced greater confidence in using English to experiment and confront new situations

Developing greater confidence and an increased ability to use English has contributed to:

- two Kosovan mothers obtaining part-time volunteer work
- three mothers joining a mother and toddler group
- several participants joining adult education courses and other family learning courses at alternative venues.

While continuing to develop these skills, the project has also identified the need for students to achieve accreditation. Recent course work has prepared participants to work towards gaining certification. As part of this progression:

- nine course participants have obtained a First Aid certificate
- six course participants have obtained a Food Hygiene certificate
- sixteen course participants have gained Open College Network accreditation, either English as an Additional Language, or the Pre-Foundation Progression Award (Communication: Writing and Reading).

Some sessions have also focused on job-seeking and related skills.

Future plans include taking the families to the Family Learning Project base at a local school, for a single, whole-day session. Having built up both trust and expectations among the refugees, there is now a willingness to work outside the hotels.

Among the advantages of this approach are:

- better opportunities for parents to work with their school-age children
- increased contact hours per participant
- more appropriate learning environment and better facilities
- increased home/school contact
- opportunities to involve other refugee families who do not live in the hotels.

Case study 3 – Access to BiLingual Education (ABLE) courses at Croydon College

Background

These courses were developed to cater for the substantial numbers of newly arrived 16–19 year olds at Croydon College who require full-time education. The learners (currently 140 learners on 8 courses at 5 levels) are almost exclusively recently arrived, unaccompanied refugees. The newest arrivals live in bed and breakfasts. Those who have lived in the UK longer are often in shared flats; a smaller number live with relatives, foster parents or in a children's home. About 50% of the learners have had, in their country of origin, an education above primary level. Learners come from many countries, but the largest numbers are from Somalia, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Turkey, Angola, Zaire, and Afghanistan. Approximately 65% of learners are male.

The majority of the learners are brought to the college by a friend or sent by their social worker, foster parent or a key worker from the home. Applicants arrive throughout the year and the college has to be very flexible in opening new classes to meet demand.

Provision

As many of the learners have missed so much of their education – and to enable those with some secondary education to learn English and transfer their skills to an English context – the range of provision offered includes maths, IT, Business English, study skills, careers, and science, as well as English. Learners have varied targets – from attending a vocational course and seeking employment as soon as they have sufficient language skills to cope, to aiming for higher education. Applicants who already have English language skills are referred to vocational or academic courses.

Many of the learners have been out of education for many years, and many have been traumatised by what has happened to them in their short lives. As new arrivals in the UK, they will have regular appointments with officials (medical, housing, legal, financial).

Initial assessment

Learners are given a detailed interview, and language and numeracy tests. The language test includes grammar, speaking, listening, reading, a dictation and free writing; complete beginners are asked to write about themselves in their mother tongue only if they cannot write any English. There are several versions of the grammar test: each tests the same grammar points, in the same order, but with variations. A second version, with more free writing, is also given at the end of the year – to enable teachers to calculate value-added scores, over the year, at the class or cohort level. The test has also been used to claim non-accredited achievement. The college plans to use sections of the test at the end of each term, as well as at the end of the year, to judge value added over a shorter period.

Programme outline

The lowest level, pre-entry, called Prep, caters for learners who are complete beginners in English – in both spoken and written language. The test of mother tongue writing, in conjunction with a numeracy test (expressed purely in numerical terms), is used to divide the large group of applicants at this level into teaching groups based on similar levels of education. This has been the best predictor of improvement through the year and means there is less need to move learners between groups.

The next levels are called ABLE 1, 2 and 3, and the highest level is called GOALS. The range of subjects learners take is shown in the table below.

Group	English	Maths	IT	Science	Business English
Prep (2 groups)	✓	✓	✓		
ABLE 1 (2 groups)	✓	✓	✓		
ABLE 2 (2 groups)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ABLE 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GOALS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Courses run for 18 hours per week, except for GOALS, which runs for 20 hours. Each of the subsidiary subjects would normally be given two hours per week (except again for GOALS, which has four hours for IT and Science) with the remainder of the time being given over to ESOL. Each level has a scheme of work to which the teachers work. The two highest level groups undertake work experience for two weeks: GOALS learners do their two weeks during the Easter vacation, so they don't miss any GCSE work. ABLE 3 learners do their work experience during the Spring term. The college also offers a summer school for new learners in the August before the start of the academic year; a two-week ESOL course and an Internet course at Easter. It is currently planning revision sessions to help learners prepare for their exams during the same period.

Learners have access to all the college facilities, including the open access areas, the IT centre, and the gym.

Course enrichment

Because of their age, learners fall under the aegis of Curriculum 2000. They have thus been able to access enrichment funding for extra provision, such as driving theory lessons, and expressive communication (in liaison with the mental health team). Croydon also has a Homeless Health team of nurses who help the learners to get onto a GP's list, and the programme is currently working with another nursing team on reducing teenage pregnancy.

The borough has recently established a youth club in a nearby refugee centre, with SRB funding. The youth club is run by the youth service and assisted by the mental health team; all 15–19 learners are invited to the club twice a week after class.

A Connexions personal adviser has been allocated to work with the group: the adviser's remit includes reducing learner absences, which tend to be caused by financial, legal, and housing problems.

Outcomes

English qualifications (Pitmans and AEB) are taken twice a year, in January and June, to give learners two chances to take an award, or to improve and get a higher award, if they are fast learners. It also allows those who are dispersed, or who leave to get work in mid-course, the chance to get an award before they leave.

The other awards include a range of ICT qualifications and Edexcel's Test of Achievement in Science, with GCSEs in maths and science for the GOALS group. Where possible, learners take a GCSE in their mother tongue.

All learners achieved an English and Maths award in 2001. Many learners progressed to mainstream courses, ranging from GNVQ Foundation to A levels.

Case study 4 – Year 11 Language Link Project – Croydon College

Background

Croydon LEA identified a number of 15-year-old unaccompanied refugee new arrivals, who were not in school. There was a mutual disengagement between them and the schools, partly because the students saw themselves as adults – having left school in their country of origin possibly five or six years earlier; they were unwilling to accept the discipline needed to attend school. In addition, however, most local schools were reluctant to take large numbers of 15 year olds unable to access the curriculum because of the effect this would have on GCSE classes and league tables.

These young men (only about 20% of them are female) would come to enrolment sessions at college with their slightly older friends, but the college was unable to enrol them.

Provision

Following an agreement with the LEA and schools, a Language Link course based at the college was started in 2000 for Year 11s, who had to be on the roll of a school. This was helped by a change in regulations that allowed new arrivals to be taken out of the league tables. By the end of the academic year 74 students had enrolled.

As under 16s are not eligible for LSC funding, the schools pay for the students out of the capitation they receive per student, provided students enrol before the school census date in January. The borough pays for the students who enrol after that date – although they are still on the roll of a school. The borough also pays for a dedicated administrator two days a week, to liaise between school, social workers and college.

The students follow an English-language based curriculum, which is very similar to that for the 16–18 year old ABE groups except that it includes a range of National Curriculum subjects. There are closer links for this group with the Youth Service, who work with each class once a week. The Youth Service also gets input every week from a careers guidance specialist from the Connexions service.

Further support for these very vulnerable young people, who have had horrific experiences, is provided by the LEA's Education Welfare and Special Needs services. More recently the Education Psychology service has begun to provide individual support for those who need it.

Case study 5 – Open Learning Centre, the Refugee Council

The Refugee Council's Training and Employment Section offers a range of provision including:

- Plan for Action: a one-week workshop focusing on UK qualifications and the current UK job market that includes an in-depth assessment of English language skills and of work-related skills, with a view to identifying the next steps for training or education
- vocational courses with language support, job search and work placements
- discrete EAL provision and family workshops at weekends and during school holidays.

All learners and trainees are encouraged to use the Open Learning Centre, which is staffed by language, literacy and numeracy teachers. Language support staff are available all day from Monday to Friday to provide an induction to using the centre, assist with Jobsearch, coursework, speaking and listening skills, literacy skills, grammar, letter writing and so on.

Special emphasis is given to the language laboratory, video and audio facilities as well as the wide range of computer-based packages. Learners can also book the computers and use the Internet to assist in their learning.

Family workshops are held in the centre in the evenings, weekends and school holidays for parents to work with their children and gain an understanding of the National Curriculum.

Case study 6 – Bridge course, Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS)

Background

The Bridge course was started in 1998 with European funding in response to a need, identified by many ESOL learners with professional qualifications or experience, for a specialised course to help them use their specific skills and knowledge in the UK. Many trainees are refugees with qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience from their own country who want to find work in this country that makes use of these valuable skills and experience. Many are qualified in areas of skill shortage in the UK and yet may be working at levels well below their level of skill and training, or may not even be using their skills and knowledge at all. The trainees include doctors, accountants, lawyers, engineers, administrators, teachers, nurses and a range of other professionals, and they come from a variety of countries, many from areas of major conflict or political upheaval such as Iraq, Algeria, Congo, Afghanistan, Somalia and Kosovo. Others have migrated to the UK for family or personal reasons, so there are also trainees from India, Pakistan, the EU and Eastern Europe. Lack of information and advice, lack of familiarity with UK employment culture, little relevant UK work experience, lack of confidence, language difficulties and financial problems were all identified as barriers to finding work in the UK.

continued overleaf

Course aims and structure

The aims of the course are to support overseas professionally qualified trainees to identify pathways into work appropriate to their level of skills, knowledge, expertise and experience and to help them develop the skills needed to find employment in the UK. The course is structured specifically to meet the learning needs of this group and includes both group and individual support and work experience. The barriers outlined on the previous page are also addressed in the structure of the programme and in funding applications. The course lasts 10 weeks and the programme structure includes:

- initial interview
- 6-hour weekly training course
- weekly Learning Centre session
- weekly ICT training (2 hours)
- optional English class (6 hours weekly)
- work experience (1 week minimum)
- exit interview.

The course has different components: trainees can take all of them, some of them, or only the weekly Bridge training course.

All trainees complete an initial application form and have a short interview to assess their level of skills (including their language skills) and identify needs, prior learning, educational and employment background and career aims. Applicants have to have good language skills and appropriate educational background to benefit from the course. Their learning programme is discussed, and individual needs identified.

The course content is tailored to the identified needs of this group of learners and includes:

- familiarisation with UK employment culture
- assessment of skills
- transferable skills
- career information and advice
- personal development and career pathways
- education, training and employment routes
- job analysis
- job seeking (where and how)
- CV writing
- application forms
- research into careers and training in the UK
- PowerPoint presentations
- mock interviews
- ICT.

There are opportunities within the course to discuss individual needs and issues, both as a group and in individual sessions. The individual needs and experiences of the trainees help shape the programme and content of the course. All trainees have to complete a portfolio which includes a CV, application form, research on their chosen career; equivalence of their qualifications, presentation on their career; mock interview assessments and an action plan. Individual work is a key element of the course, and trainees attend the Learning Centre weekly to carry out research, write their CVs and work on their language. The course teacher supports trainees in the Learning Centre in a weekly session, but trainees can also attend the centre on other days, in addition to the weekly session or instead of it. The Learning Centre has 15 computers with Internet access and resources on careers, training and employment, including access to equivalence software for documentation.

The weekly ICT course covers word processing, Internet and PowerPoint presentations. Trainees have different levels of IT skills, from beginners to advanced, so it is a mixed-level class with individual support. Use of the Internet for research, word processing for CVs and PowerPoint presentations are key parts of the course.

The Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS) runs a range of English classes. Many trainees opt to do the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) course, which is required for registration as a doctor or for university entrance: other professions also recognise its validity. However, there is also an English for Work course, covering pronunciation and spoken skills, report and letter writing and presentation skills. This is a 10-week course and can be done at the same time as the main Bridge course.

The final component of the course is the work experience element, which usually takes place after the main course ends. The work placement can last as little as a week or as much as three to four months and is usually with an employer who can offer experience close to the trainee's own: each employer is first inspected for health and safety purposes. Trainees have to keep a record of their work, and employers submit a report or reference on trainees' work. This is a key component of the programme and in many cases has led to paid employment. This part of the course is now funded through the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), which funds a post to work with employers and develop work experience placements. A small fund (for which trainees have to apply) is available to help with further training and re-qualification. There is close monitoring of progress and outcomes.

Outcomes

The Bridge course has London Open College Network (LOCN) accreditation, as does the English for Work element. Other accreditation is available with ESOL classes (IELTS and Pitman ESOL accreditation). Identified core learning outcomes for the course are:

- knowledge of UK employment culture and application process
- knowledge of equivalence of qualifications and understanding of acquired employment-related skills
- knowledge about chosen career and training opportunities in the UK

continued overleaf

- completed application form and CV (word-processed) and ability to amend
- knowledge of, and ability to participate in, interview process
- ability to give a presentation using PowerPoint
- ability to use the Internet
- completed action plan with clear employment routes and learning pathways
- experience of work related to previous career.

All trainees complete a portfolio, which they can use after the course (see above).

Progression and evaluation

In terms of progression, 35–40% of trainees find employment, and 45–50% go on to further training. Retention is high, with most trainees completing the course. Those that do not finish usually leave because they have found employment, a key aim of the programme.

Evaluations from the course are all positive, with high levels of learner satisfaction and trainees all commenting on the value of the course. Some of the key success factors identified by trainees, staff and employers include:

- individual interview and assessment of existing skills and needs
- individual support throughout the course with clear individual focus
- clear focus on personal development and training needs
- work placements and experience
- financial support (childcare, travel, re-qualification)
- recognition of achievements and prior learning
- good resources
- Learning Centre access and support
- peer group support (all trainees from similar background with similar issues)
- confidence boosting
- good preparation for employment
- links with employers
- relevant course content
- mapping of progression pathways
- flexible provision
- specialist career advice and guidance
- continuing post-course support through Learning Centres, individual advice and work experience.

Case study 7 – Skills Match, Birmingham

Background

Concern about the number of professionally qualified refugees who were unemployed or in low-skilled, low-paid work led to the development of Skills Match with funding from the European Union's integration of refugees budget. Skills Match aims to overcome both professional and institutional barriers – and to provide a path through the often complicated, confusing maze of bureaucracy – through a mentoring scheme. Under this scheme doctors, engineers, lawyers and architects in the West Midlands, attached to professional bodies, introduce refugees in their field to the British system and guide them towards employment.

Provision

Alongside mentoring and work-related English-language support, more than 40 refugees have completed work placements in solicitors' offices, at the Arts Council, with Channel 4 and in libraries. About the same number have been advised or financially assisted in academic or professional re-qualification. For instance, the Electrical Contractors' Association and the sector's joint industry board have helped refugees from Iran and the Ukraine to re-qualify as electricians at Wolverhampton University.

Most progress has been made in the medical field through the setting up of the Midland Refugee Doctors' Group, which has the backing of a Birmingham-based senior consultant. Six refugee medics met the director of Birmingham's medical school after they had successfully passed the required English language exams, and gained the qualifications necessary to register with the General Medical Council. This meeting resulted in three of them obtaining clinical attachments.

Skills Match also provides financial support for exam fees, as well as help in 'understanding the system' – a vital resource, given that British-born people within professional bodies do not necessarily know the answers to the many detailed questions refugees may raise.

Outcomes

Skills Match has worked with about 250 refugees from more than 30 countries since 1998. Unfortunately, however, only just a dozen of the 40 who found jobs through the scheme managed to find employment commensurate with their professional level. Professional barriers prevent people such as lawyers and teachers getting work. Professional qualifications are either not recognised or devalued, so much of the work of Skills Match concentrates on re-qualifying refugees in their particular field.

Case study 8 – The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU)

Background

The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) was set up in 1995 and aims to improve the employment prospects of refugees with higher-level education or professional qualifications from their own countries. The premise of RAGU is that refugees have a wide range of skills and experiences that represent a valuable but under-used resource. The unit's services are therefore focused on identifying individual strengths and abilities and providing support towards achieving realistic and relevant educational and employment goals. These services include: specifically targeted training programmes, individual advice and guidance sessions, and help into employment through long-term support. RAGU aims to provide a safe and empowering environment in which refugees can improve their language skills, build self-confidence and find routes into appropriate education, vocational training or employment.

Situated in London Metropolitan University, RAGU offers a wide range of facilities and opportunities for access into higher education. As well as IT studios, the Learning Centre provides study areas, individual computer, internet and video access, a multimedia language centre and library services. RAGU also has its own lending library and resources, including books and tapes on improving language skills, employment, personal development and English for specific purposes.

Provision

Advice and guidance

RAGU has a team of advisers who offer advice and guidance to refugees and asylum seekers on:

- progression routes to higher education
- re-qualification in the UK
- funding availability for higher education
- accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Employment support project

The employment support project is a long-term project, the aim of which is to provide individual support for refugees with work permission, in order to assist them into employment suitable for their experience and skills. RAGU's employment advisers help clients with their CVs and job applications, and offer mock interviews and specialist workshops. RAGU liaises with employers and has established links with businesses throughout London. Clients can also use resources such as telephone, stationery, computers, Internet, professional journals and newspapers. The advisers also provide financial support for work placements.

Courses

RAGU's courses are specifically targeted at professionals who wish to continue working in their chosen field and need information and guidance about routes into the British education system and employment. The unit has developed a holistic approach to refugees' needs, combining elements from courses, workshops and advice sessions in different programmes to suit individual clients.

Workshops

RAGU offers a wide range of workshops aimed at improving and developing relevant skills and providing information. There are specialist workshops in professional areas (engineers, doctors, accountants etc.), communication and IT skills and employment support.

Examples of courses offered by RAGU

The Certificate in Professional Development (12-week programme, 12-week tutorial support) is for those with complete or incomplete degree-level education, professional qualifications or substantial work experience. It includes:

- portfolio building for the purposes of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- employment workshops
- orientation and personal development
- communication skills
- educational and vocational advice and guidance
- Information Technology and Internet
- introduction to British higher education.

Co-educators in Schools (with the School of Education) (15-week programme) is for teachers and community development workers or those with an interest in working with refugee teachers and families in schools. It leads to a University Certificate in Educational Partnership. Run in partnership with the School of Education, it includes:

- teaching in the urban context
- communication skills in the classroom
- developing advocacy skills
- the National Curriculum.

A 16-day placement in schools is also part of the programme. Learners are expected to use this programme as a route to employment in roles such as a Home/School Liaison Officer or Bilingual Learning Mentor or to access further training in teaching.

Management Skills for Refugee Community Organisations is a course for those already working in refugee community organisations who wish to improve their managerial skills and build capacity within their organisation.

Case study 9 – The London Language and Literacy Unit, South Bank University Refugee Mentoring Project

Background

Lambeth College and South Bank University, where the London Language and Literacy Unit is based, had identified the need:

- for refugees in college to have a realistic idea of what goes on in higher education (HE)
- for mentees to feel informed and clearer when making decisions about future study
- to enable mentors to reflect on and share information on what they have learnt about studying in HE.

Provision

Refugee learners at South Bank University were recruited to mentor refugee learners at Lambeth College who were planning to go to university in the near future.

The mentors received preliminary training on their role as well as help in drawing up a programme of what they could cover during their mentoring sessions. The topics included:

- assignments – what is expected, what you need to do to complete them, where you can research the information, etc.
- living on a low budget – concessions available to learners, buying second-hand textbooks, working and studying, etc.
- facilities offered by the university – sports facilities, learning resource centre, library, careers service, etc.

Mentors met their mentees five times over a three-month period. Each session lasted for about two hours. The sessions took place at South Bank University, and each one included a visit, for example to the library and other services/facilities the university offers.

Mentors were given the option of working with someone from their country of origin. Where possible, mentees were matched with mentors who were studying their subject area.

Outcomes

For mentees

- At least one mentee applied for the university's 'Fast Track' summer course.
- At least one mentee has applied for a university course.
- All mentees were made members of South Bank University Associate Student Scheme, so they were able to use the university facilities from the end of the project to the end of that academic year.

For mentors

- One mentor has undertaken a further mentoring role in a hostel for refugees.
- Others gained confidence through the experience and were pleased to have something extra to include on their CV.
- All had the opportunity for careers advice from RETAS.

Case study 10 – Croydon Joint Summer School mentoring project

Background

In Summer 2001 Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS), Croydon College and Croydon Refugee Centre ran a four-week course for newly arrived families who had been placed in a NASS hotel in Croydon. The majority of the students were adults, but there was a crèche for children and activities for school-age children. College students from the ABLE 3 and GOALS courses for 16–19 year olds were invited to become mentors and assist the teaching staff.

Provision and outcomes

Mentors were able to help to explain, in mother tongue where appropriate, access issues that the new arrivals needed to address. Six learners were given training in mentoring, and three chose to go ahead and help. They were very successful and highly motivated, for example working well over the class hours that had been agreed, and choosing to help out on trips. The summer school was visited by the BBC English language service and students were interviewed for a programme. CETS recommended the three learners for an Adult Learners Award.