

Refugees & Mentors CIC

Mentoring Project Impact Report

April 2020 - March 2021

Vision

An inclusive society where refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants have equal access to job opportunities, in order to build a sustainable life in the UK.

Mission

To support refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants to improve their employment prospects and to collaborate with other organisations to offer inclusive opportunities.

Service user feedback:

“I really appreciated RM’s support during the pandemic, (it) was very helpful to me mentally and emotionally”

“Nicola has been more than helpful every step of the way. I am grateful I have her in my corner.”

“Best support system ever”

Volunteer feedback:

“It was delightful to volunteer with R&M. Helping someone to find a job, course or scholarship, which could markedly influence their life, is very rewarding”



Report Summary

This is the Refugees & Mentors CIC Impact Report exclusively for the Mentoring Project covering 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The Mentoring Project is in its 4th year.

The main Refugees & Mentors Impact Report describes all our work and can be found here [Refmentors.org.uk/what-we-do](https://refmentors.org.uk/what-we-do)

Refugees & Mentors support:

- Refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants in Greater Manchester to improve their employment prospects and get jobs.
- Employers to develop inclusive recruitment practices, to diversify their workforces, fill skill gaps and to offer support to refugees.

We offer high quality employment focused, holistic services, which are confidential and impartial.

Unemployment in Greater Manchester for people with refugee status has been estimated at 44% by the Manchester Refugee Employment Partnership in 2013. In our experience this estimate has not changed in the last 7 years. The 2019 'Tapping Potential' report by UNHCR, BITC and Prince's Trust, estimated the unemployment rate for refugees nationally at 18%, three times higher than the UK-born population.

The main countries Refugees & Mentors service users have sought sanctuary in the UK from are Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Palestine.

How we have evaluated the project and our support for volunteer mentors

This evaluation is underpinned by an *Evaluation Survey*, carried out by members of our volunteer board of directors and a volunteer mentor.

The aims of the *Evaluation Survey* are to:

- Identify potential for improving or changing a service.
- Ensure services are relevant and effective to meet the stakeholder needs.
- Highlight the most important aspects of services from the stakeholder's perspective.
- Seek new ideas.
- Continue to learn and improve as individuals and as an organisation.

We asked service users and volunteers for feedback by using a questionnaire (service users and volunteers) and inviting people to a group session (service users only).

Mentoring Project summary

The Mentoring Project aims to offer a safe, professional and friendly service for refugees who want support to develop their employability knowledge, skills, experience and confidence. It's an employment focused but holistic service. Refugees can access mentoring support for as little as one meeting, however most matches are for around 5 months. We aim to be as flexible as possible so that we can meet individual needs within the resources of the project. The project has been awarded the national quality mark for mentoring, the NCVO Mentoring and Befriending Approved Provider Standard.

This service is for people with refugee status. Due to the pandemic, this year we offered the service remotely to refugees living in Greater Manchester. Support is offered for approximately five hours each month, by phone, video call and email.

The service was provided by a manager and 13 volunteers, from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Each volunteer has at least 15 years' work experience in the UK, has participated in induction/training/ongoing support and undergone checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Service users have a range of work and education backgrounds and for most people English is their second language.

Access to good information, opportunities and services

At the heart of the Mentoring Project is a commitment to helping service users to have access to good information and to navigate and access opportunities. We encourage people to seek help from a range of organisations best able to meet their needs and follow up with people to ensure they can take up services. This project, the Rainbow Haven Work Club and the Returner Project, can be accessed interchangeably. We hope our services go some way to filling the gap in specialist services and complement existing services. This year, 5 Mentoring Project service users were also supported in the Returner Project.

The main areas that support was provided in this year were:

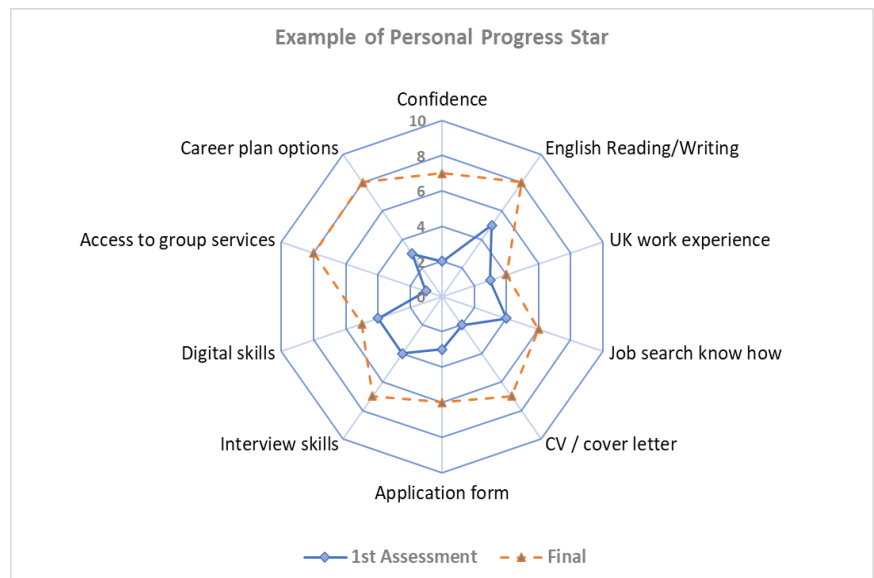
- ESOL/English courses.
- Goal setting.
- Access to mainstream employment support services.
- Volunteering.
- Finding and applying for jobs
- Education and training.
- Unpaid work experience.
- Recognition of qualifications.
- Digital inclusion.
- Professional body membership.
- LinkedIn.

Organisations referred/signposted to for welfare support (housing etc)

- Rainbow Haven advice team.
- Refugee Action.
- CAB.
- Shelter.
- COVID-19 hubs.
- Local community organisations.
- GPs.

How we reduced risk, supported people to progress and maintained successful relationships

- Initial service user-led assessments.
- Impact measuring.
- Action plans.
- Mentoring agreements.
- STAR method (job applications).
- Accessible support and supervision.



Service in numbers

22 People provided with information and guidance

19 Mentoring Relationships

13 Volunteers in mentoring relationships

Highlights

6 x Jobs (4 x permanent 2 x temporary)

14 People supported with job applications

6 People supported to learn English

9 People supported with interviews

2 Digital devices loaned and 1 person helped to gain a device from the Princes Trust

2 people gained unpaid work experience

3 people supported to start volunteering

1 person supported to apply for COVID-19 Test and Trace payment (unsuccessful)

2 x people assisted to gain UKNARIC qualification comparisons

Permanent jobs

- Warehouse assistant
- HMRC
- Bank Business Account Onboarding
- Business Administration Apprenticeship (Level 3) at a primary school

Temporary jobs

- Legal assistant
- Bar person

Unpaid work experience

2 x Hospital health care assistant placements, Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust



Service user feedback: Key benefits

Service users were asked which two project activities had helped them the most?

“They helped me to join the organisation as a volunteer”

“Helped me to apply for a course with the NHS”

“Improve my CV”

“... and professional mentoring”

“I find a person who always makes me feel I'm not alone...”

“gave me advice about health, reading books, activities”

“..what to expect in a competitive market”

“... helped me reboot myself, esteem and confidence”

“Finding volunteering .”

“Improving my interview skills.”

“Yes, I got help with my job application”

“job interview skills”

“... helped me reboot myself esteem and confidence”

“Know the companies working in my profession”

“Directing me to right websites and sources to find the right information.”

“I had the time to look at the information... and go back to the mentor to talk about it.”

“job interview skills”

“advice and support”

Service user feedback: Impact on confidence and self-belief

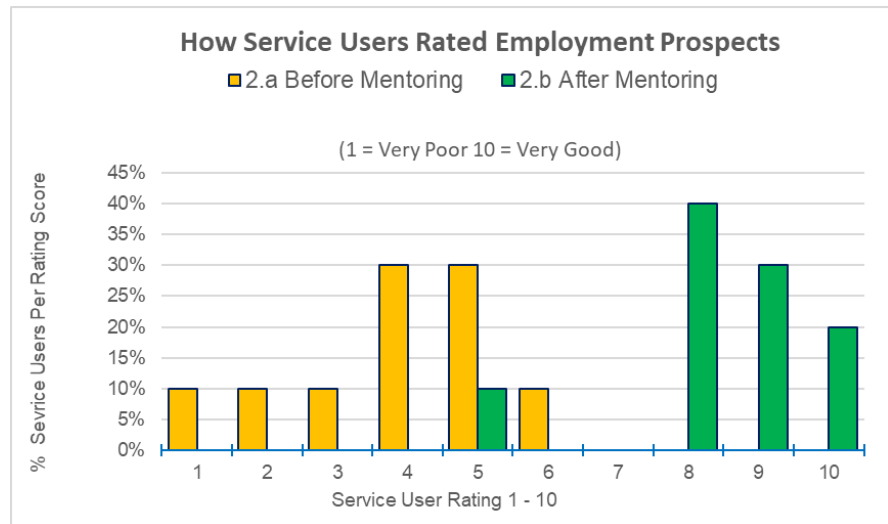


Service users were asked “How confident were you feeling about gaining employment before and after mentoring?”

There was a significant increase in the feeling of confidence following a mentoring relationship indicating more positive self-belief and optimism.

90% rated their employment prospects as 1 to 5 (very poor to poor) before mentoring

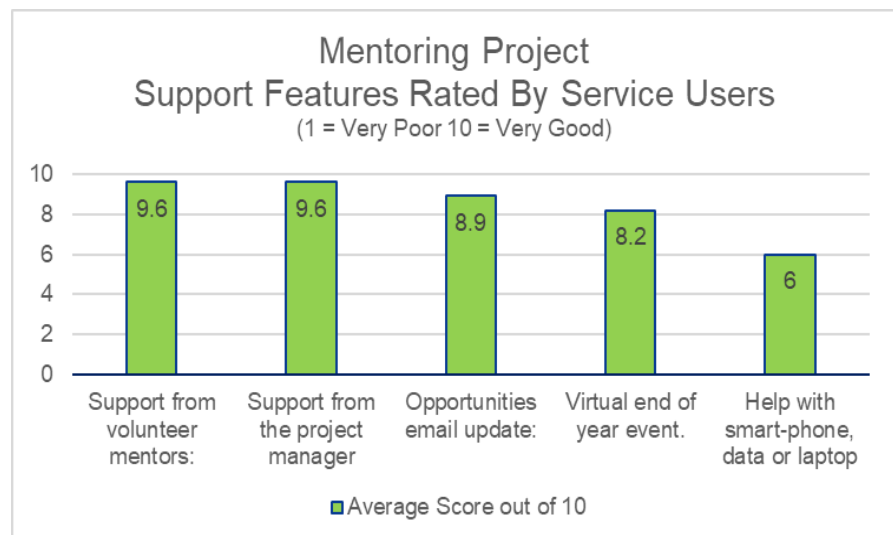
90% rated their employment prospects as 6 to 10 (good to very good) after mentoring



Service user feedback: Which activities were most beneficial and why?

Service users were asked to score each activity based on their experience (1 = Not good, 10 = very good.)

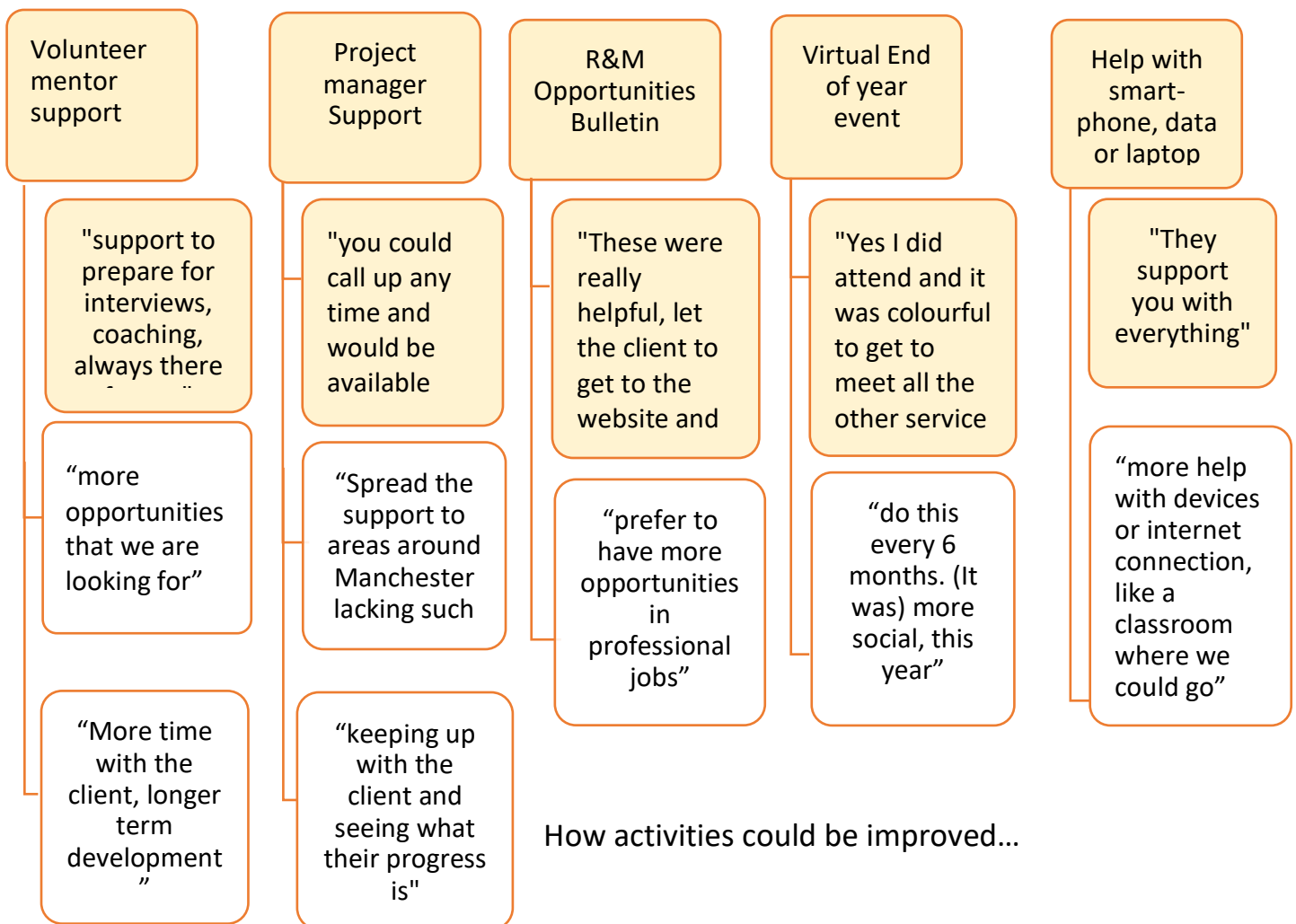
The most appreciated services, with average scores of 9.6/10, were those based on the one-to-one relationship with the *volunteer mentor* and the *Project Manager*.



What comes across from the supporting comments is the personal interest and empathy that goes along with practical guidance, structured planning and information essential for people new to the UK and the complexities of employment requirements.


A common theme in the feedback from service users was the importance of providing a structured approach to finding employment, by identifying personal goals and actions. Often this had come after a deeply stressful and chaotic period of their lives. A key impact was from an experienced mentor listening and boosting morale as well as providing practical support. The greatest challenge for most people was the initial impetus - how to start searching and acquiring the credentials for employment opportunities in a new country with unfamiliar culture, language, practices and procedures.

The good things...



Service user feedback: Would you recommend the project to a friend?

100% confirmed that “yes” they would recommend the Mentoring Project to a friend. Some of the reasons given were:



“The professional support that Refugees & Mentors provide is very valuable for any refugee seeking to restart his career in UK.”

“It is a supportive organisation. The staff are friendly and do the best to help the

“Because I got help so much, it was very beneficial for me. I would like to say thank you everyone, great appreciated for all your hard working”

Volunteer mentor feedback: Positive benefits for service users



“Helped provide her with volunteering opportunities and made her more prepared for job opportunities”

“Providing information on how and where to job search, explaining interview procedures, STAR examples. Researching company activities online.”

“Acting as a sounding board, providing connections, support and an interface to local employers”

“A safety net of support- often acting as a signpost or a simple check-in”

“Improved knowledge of job search platforms, increased confidence in applying for jobs independently, improved written and spoken English”

“They provided support in the form of a laptop, children’s bicycle, and tools to support the search for work; Naric certs, CV improvements... Well being support as family illness and deaths have added to the ongoing stresses from Covid19”

Supporters, location and contact us

Thank you to the following:

Leigh Day



**REFUGEE
ACTION**



Location

We are based in the offices of Rethink Rebuild Society, Unit 7, Longsight Business Park, M13 0PD. We are a not-for-profit community interest company. Our financial accounts are at Companies House <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house>

Registered company number: 10373232.

Contact us

Email: info@refmentors.org.uk

Website: <https://refmentors.org.uk/>

Thank you for taking the time to learn about people seeking asylum, refugees, vulnerable migrants and Refugees & Mentors CIC