



## Refugees & Mentors CIC impact report

April 2018 - March 2019

*Refugees & Mentors (R&M) supports refugees and migrants to improve their employment prospects and get jobs.*

### Mentoring Project

*"The work the team does is valuable, I feel that what (R&M) provides is an authentic and organic model of support for those in our communities who are facing multiple difficulties due to their background and status. Being part of this has enabled me to give back... to ensure that everyone is given the support and opportunity to grow and create a new life for themselves."* Volunteer mentor

Our core service, the Mentoring Project, is for people with refugee status living in Manchester or Salford. It offers support through information & guidance, mentoring, events & workshops, weekly 'opportunities' emails and a women's book club.

Our evaluation of the 2018-19 Mentoring Project was carried out by one existing and three new R&M directors.

The mentoring project has supported a total of 21 people in the last year supported by 20 volunteers. 15 service users (representing 71% of all service users) and 12 volunteers (representing 60% of all volunteer mentors) responded to our evaluation.

## Information & Guidance

All service users have an initial appointment where they can hear about the support we offer and explore possible next steps for them. The project manager and a volunteer mentor work together to support each service user, linking people into external services and opportunities.

Service users' feedback:

*"It has not just been the employment support but more importantly the connection with local people and community that I value."*

*"Helping you see the right way to find a job. Help me to search online and find jobs. Help me to find things and understand what (I) want to do."*

*"(I'm) 100% more confident (in my) pronunciation and fluency. Before, I knew the theory, but I felt my brain stop and couldn't speak, now when that happens, I pause and keep speaking."*

*"My mentor was very good and we had a great relationship."*

Volunteers were asked to name two things they thought had most helped the service user they supported:

*"Friendship - chance of social cohesion, having a CV done."*

*"Practice in speaking English, application and interview process with tips and advice."*

*"Having someone they can trust and building confidence."*

## Mentoring relationships

Mentoring relationships offer the opportunity to form a safe and friendly relationship with someone who has UK knowledge and experience and who, alongside the manager, can offer relevant information, guidance and ongoing encouragement to service users in achieving their goals.

What volunteers said:

*"The option to deliver the mentoring sessions by Skype help both my client and I manage our busy schedules."*

*"This partnership has helped him to find volunteering work so that he can practice his English more. He has found somewhere that he likes and is planning to go fairly regularly. I believe he has grown in confidence with his English speaking and writing."*

## Events & workshops, for clients & volunteers

During the year we ran workshops and events, to share information, enable volunteers and service users to meet and help build a sense of connection to the project.

- Applying for NHS jobs and volunteer roles workshop, in partnership with REACHE North West and NHS Careers Hub.
- CVs & RefuAid workshop, in partnership with Google Digital Garage and RefuAid.
- 2018 End of Year Event.

*"The most helpful event I think was actually the Christmas Party - allowed the clients to meet each other and other volunteers." Volunteer*

## **Weekly opportunities' emails**

*"Very useful, is a good resource for other refugees as well."* Service user

R&M shares up-to-date information on local jobs, courses, training, work experience, volunteering and events with volunteers and with service users who have accessed the mentoring project.

## **Women's book club**

*"I like that the book club has smaller numbers, I can get more time to speak and read."*

*"I can improve my English speaking and reading, meet new people."*

Piloted in January, the book club met regularly in Levenshulme.

House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros a Mexican-American writer, tells the story of a young girl from Latin America coping with life in America. The book was a really useful way to explore how we use imagery when we speak and help people build up their English vocabulary. Relaxed, the group had a lot of fun together.

- 3 book club meetings.
- 4 women attended.

## **Mentoring project by numbers**

- 29 one-to-one initial appointments
- 21 mentoring matches
- 7 different countries of origin
- 13 people in the UK 3 years or less
- 52/48% gender split (women/men)
- 14% single parent households
- 19% separated from family
- 19% gained jobs after mentoring

Type of support given to service users:

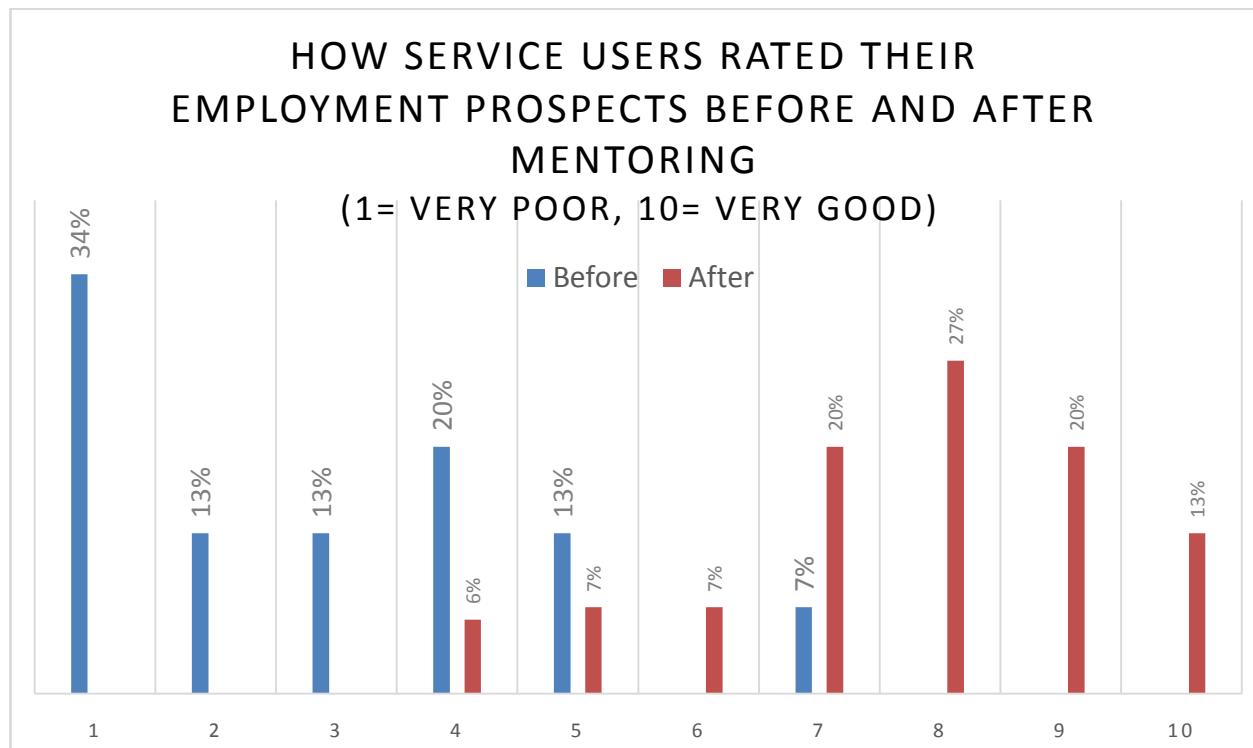
- 21 people - English speaking, listening, reading and/or writing
- 7 people - volunteering
- 10 people - CVs
- 5 people - job application forms
- 6 people - job search
- 5 people - welfare issues
- 4 - work experience
- 1 - start up business
- 5 - mock interviews

## Referral agencies

Boaz Trust  
Manchester City of Sanctuary  
Rainbow Haven, Gorton  
Rethink Rebuild Society

REACHE North West  
Refugee Action  
REVIVE

## Feedback from mentoring service users on R&M



60% of service users who responded to our evaluation rated their employment prospects before mentoring as 3 or lower (very poor). After mentoring, 60% rated their employment prospects as 8 or higher (very good).

*"I am happy with all the service actually, I like (manager) and (volunteer), they are human based, they understand our situation."*

*"Job search support was good. However R&M needs to give more effort to help clients find jobs."*

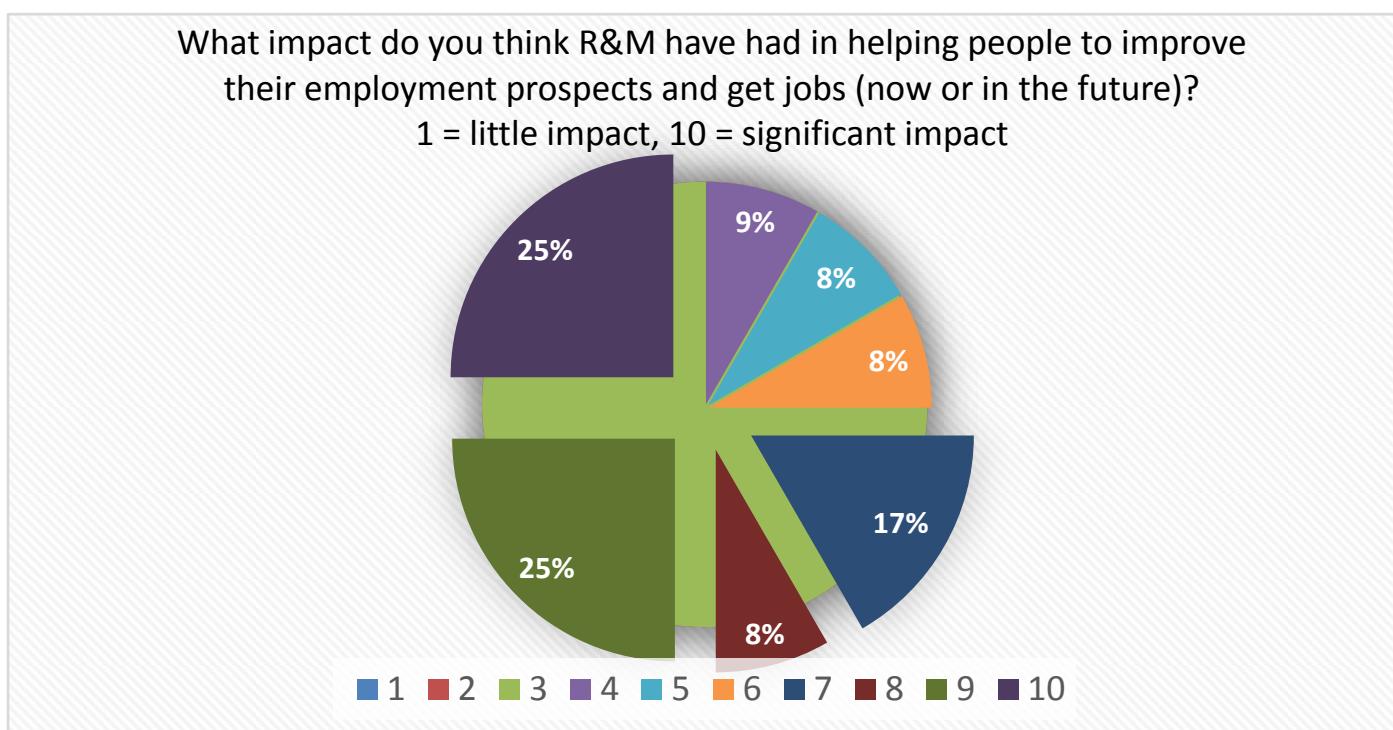
*"I am really happy with every member I have met in this organisation. They are so lovely, so kind and helpful. They offer everything they can. I want to say thank you so much."*

*"Just thanks and appreciation for the support. I also suggest that R&M partners with other companies and send interested clients to work with them as it's hard to get jobs."*

*"R&M support me and my family in different issues and problem we faced in our new country. Its support never stops and extended to help us in our personal problems, such as housing and they provide us with endless information and advice."*

*"(They) offered me persistent support through the whole process. I got the job thanks to their support."*

### Feedback from mentoring volunteers on R&M



75% of the volunteers who responded to our evaluation have rated R&M's impact in helping people to improve their employment prospects and get jobs as 7 or above.



In August the mentoring project was accredited with the NCVO Mentoring and Befriending Approved Provider Standard, the national quality standard for mentoring.

## Rainbow Haven Work Club

Based in Rainbow Haven's community advice centre in Gorton, the Work Club runs two days a week and is for refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants. This is a partnership with Rainbow Haven to increase employability support for service users. It has a computer drop-in and appointments offering information, guidance and encouragement.

- ✓ Career planning
- ✓ ESOL
- ✓ Requalification
- ✓ Digital skills
- ✓ volunteering
- ✓ Interview skills
- ✓ job search
- ✓ job applications
- ✓ Grants

### **Hassan, international HGV driver, Sudan.**

When talking about driving HGVs Hassan's eyes lit up. He spent his first year in the UK waiting for a decision on his asylum case without the right to work and trying to bring his family to safety.

He told us about his work history and that he had started getting Universal Credit but didn't know what he was meant to do. He didn't have a CV or digital skills and his level of English meant he wouldn't be accepted onto mainstream computer classes. Hassan was still expected to search for work, mostly online and really wanted to look for HGV jobs.

We helped Hassan to write a CV and gave guidance on registering for ESOL.

An Arabic speaking volunteer supported Hassan to learn email, the internet and MS Word. Digital skills support was provided over eight one-to-one appointments and Hassan can now use email, the internet and Ms Word.

Hassan went on to look for jobs, maintain his Universal Credit and practice for the driving theory test, with a clear path to re-qualifying as an HGV driver in the UK.

## **Employability courses**

Provided at Rainbow Haven, Gorton, these short courses focus on helping people to improve their knowledge, skills and to identify the next steps in their journey towards work. Courses aim to empower and encourage, often acting as a bridge into one-to-one Work Club support.

- 66 people attended Employability courses.
- 26 people attended a Learning English course.
- 7 people attended a job application & interview skills course.
- 16 different languages spoken by learners.
- Majority of learners at Pre & Entry level English.

### **Aya, computer programmer, Libya**

Aya came to Rainbow Haven with nothing to do, except wait for a decision on her asylum claim and a place in an ESOL class. At Rainbow Haven for advice, Aya was also offered a place on our 6-week employability course, in which we discussed the benefits of volunteering.

Aya requested a one-to-one appointment to discuss volunteering. As Aya lived a long way from Rainbow Haven, we signposted her for help to volunteer in her local area. Aya returned later and said she couldn't volunteer until she had been in the UK for 6 months, as she wouldn't be able to get a reference.

With great English, lots of overseas work experience and clearly motivated, we wanted to support Aya to gain UK work experience and regain a sense of purpose. We suggested Aya looked at the Rainbow Haven Work Club Job Applications volunteer role we were struggling to recruit for. Aya was interested, and we agreed to gradually induct her into the role.

Aya is now a Work Club volunteer, supporting clients with CVs, job search, to volunteer and helping to develop the service. The course provided a link into employability support at an early stage of her asylum claim; Aya now has almost unbroken work history, despite fleeing Libya; has gained experience of team work in the UK, of working with vulnerable people and shown an ability to take on new challenges and transfer her skills to a different area.

## Research

In January we started to research the feasibility of R&M developing partnerships with employers to offer paid internships to skilled refugee professionals. This was in response to high unemployment rates for refugees, feedback on the benefits of relevant UK work experience and established good practice by Transitions <https://transitions-london.co.uk/>. We started to look at the feasibility of a similar service to Transitions in Greater Manchester. This was supported by Salford University Business School.

## R&M team

R&M have a board of volunteer directors, paid project manager (p/t) and volunteers who provide mentoring or who support the Rainbow Haven Work Club. In March we advertised for new directors with and without lived experience of the UK asylum system.

- 47 people responded to our advert for volunteer mentors
- 21 mentoring volunteers
- 3 Rainbow Haven Work club volunteers
- 2 Book club volunteers
- 3 directors
- 3 volunteer group support sessions
- 92 % of volunteers would recommend becoming a R&M mentor to a friend

## Thank you to the funders and organisations which supported R&M

- Focusing First on People
- Forever Manchester
- Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- Leigh Day
- Manchester City Council
- One Manchester
- The Salvation Army
- The National Lottery Community Fund

## **Over the next year R&M will**

- Increase the capacity and diversity of our board.
- Develop online - in our work with service users, volunteers and other stakeholders.
- Improve the quality of support to volunteers and service users, one-to-one and in groups.
- Improve job application, interview skills and Entry Level ESOL support and resources.
- Enable more service users to gain relevant UK work experience and get jobs.

## **About R&M**

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.

For more information or to get in touch;

Tel: 07747080523

Email: [info@refmentors.org.uk](mailto:info@refmentors.org.uk)

Face book: <https://www.facebook.com/RefMentors>

Website: being developed in 2019-20

**Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our work.**