

Refugees & Mentors CIC Impact Report

1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

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.

“I feel much better than before and I think my confidence has been improved, as well as my stress when I search for jobs.” [Service user](#)

“Not only has this raised awareness of the refugee candidates, it has helped us recruit roles we may traditionally struggle to recruit due to skills shortages. What is more, our staff really engaged in supporting this programme as they feel it shows how we demonstrate our values around inclusion and diversity” [Jacobs Mentoring programme](#)

“It has helped me with sense of purpose, it gives me the opportunity to start doing again what I love doing, most which has been taken away from me because of my immigration status.” [R&M volunteer, on the impact of volunteering](#)

“Arranging someone in (the) engineering industry as a mentor was really beneficial. I gained more knowledge about the UK labour market and the possible job roles that match my background” [Candidate, Returner Project](#)

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Who are we and what do we do?

Refugees & Mentors is a not-for-profit social enterprise committed to reducing under and unemployment in Greater Manchester. We provide specialist employment support services which focus on the needs and aspirations of individuals and organisations. Our approach is supportive and collaborative; with a strong emphasis on goal setting, taking small steps, increasing take up of opportunities and bridging gaps.



We are a team of 2 paid staff (1.5 FTE) and 30+ volunteers. Services for refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants are free. Services for organisations enable us to generate income to sustain the organisation and free services.

Services for refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants

	Mentoring	Returner Project	Rainbow Haven Work Club	Group sessions courses, Workshops etc	R&M Bulletin
Service by numbers	17 Mentoring matches	23 Candidates	129 Service users	39 Service users	156 Subscribed on mailing list

Example information and guidance topics: • Education and training • ENIC • Finding & applying for jobs • Interview skills • Volunteering • Learning English • Paid and unpaid work experience • Digital skills and inclusion • Professional body membership • LinkedIn

Services for organisations



Reflections on 2021-22

The most significant impacts of the pandemic have been the increased isolation of refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrants; a reduction in volunteering; slow uptake of services by employers and general uncertainty.

Two refugee professionals joined our staff team on temporary short-term contracts, bringing valuable skills and perspectives, and gaining UK office work experience. This gave us first-hand experience of supporting people to prosper in their first office job, bearing some similarities to placements with employers.

What we said we would do & what we achieved:

“Expand our Mentoring Project to increase the level of support offered by industry professionals and by people with lived experience of the asylum system.”

- We developed a professional mentoring programme with Jacobs
- We held an information session for refugee service users now in work who wanted to explore becoming mentors.

“Continue to support employers to offer returner placements.”

- We created 3 short films featuring refugee professionals and an employer to raise awareness of professionals and placements.
- We brokered 2 placements and provided wrap around support to one person on placement, resulting in permanent hire.

“Work towards the Matrix quality standard.”

- We took the difficult decision to revisit this goal next year, due to capacity.

“Continue to recruit and train volunteers to help with our infrastructure.”

- We recruited 2 new directors and identified new volunteer roles for 2022-23.

“Complete our organisation governance and strategy plan.”

- We held an away day and identified some organisation and stakeholder needs to inform our future work.

“Return to a blended approach of in person and remote services.”

- We continued to focus on high quality remote service provision, to reduce the impact of the continuous changes in COVID-19 restrictions.

Mentoring

Our mentoring services are for refugees and support people to set individual goals and take small steps. Mentoring is offered for around five hours each month for up to 5 months. This year our core Mentoring Project offered mentoring to less people, but we developed a Jacobs and Refugees & Mentors Refugee Mentoring Programme for Returner Project candidates.

Mentoring Project

5 refugees already in work came to an information session to find out about volunteering as mentors and 2 existing volunteers shared their experiences.

“I achieved lot of information about jobs and their procedure. I can understand lots of information. It was a fabulous time for me.” [Service user, Mentoring Project](#)

Jacobs and Refugees & Mentors Professional Mentoring Programme

With Jacobs, we developed a 6 month pilot programme to meet the needs of Returner Project candidates and provide opportunities for Jacobs staff to support refugees restarting their career in the UK.

6 Mentoring Project matches • 11 Jacobs and Refugees & Mentors professional mentoring matches • 12 Jacobs employees attended volunteer training • 2 people offered placements with Jacobs.

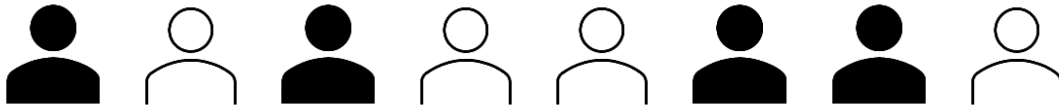
Candidate Feedback:

“How have your future plans changed as a result of professional mentoring?” I have..

- A clearer understanding of which professional jobs to apply for
- A clearer understanding of my industry in the UK
- Identified achievable steps I can take to improve my employment prospects

“Did working with a Jacobs mentor provide extra benefits, in addition to the support offered by the Returner Project so far? “

- More personal interaction
- Deeper insight into my profession in the UK
- Specialist information



“What did you particularly value about the mentor or their professional background?”

“I got really amazing support to update my CV.”

“(my mentor) was very supportive polite and helped with whatever possible to not only cover the goals and aims of the mentoring but gave detailed advice and guidance about any question I had. literally, I have not enough words to thank him.”

“(My mentor) was very professional both in providing Engineering related advice and helping with motivating and building self-confidence.”

“In what ways did you find mentoring useful?”

“Being able to talk to someone in my profession”

“It helped me to increase my professional confidence”

“Finding out more about UK practices”

Volunteer feedback

“What benefits did you gain from the mentoring relationship?”

“A better understanding of the situation of refugees in the UK”

“Experience in providing help and guidance to another professional”

“A feeling of satisfaction at doing something worthwhile”

“Improved communication skills”

“A better appreciation of the quality of the skills and experience possessed by members of the refugee community”

Benefits for Jacobs:

“Not only have we secured two great new employees, but our mentors have learnt so much from the refugees they have worked with and the daily struggle and prejudice they face to gain quality employment. Our staff really enjoyed the experience and have shared their experiences across the rest of the business”

Rainbow Haven Work Club

Rainbow Haven is a community advice centre in Gorton providing advice, wellbeing activities and ESOL for people living in Manchester. Our partnership offers the work club to increase service users access to employability support and in turn help people to build their confidence and improve their employment prospects.

Year on Year Work Club Numbers	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Summary
Service users supported	89	75	129	This year the service was delivered between 31 st May 21 – 31 st March 22. We reached more people through group sessions and delivered fewer appointments.
Appointments	115	232	141	
Referrals / signposts	129	227	137	
Started volunteering	11	8	13	
Jobs gained	3	11	12	

We held a recruitment event with Morgan Sindall attended by **19** service users and reached **7** new parents attending Rainbow Haven’s Mamas & Babies group.

Feedback

Service users fed back that after using the Work Club they had:

- Increased **knowledge** of Job searching processes
- Increased **motivation** to set goals and take small steps
- Increased **confidence** in progressing with learning and communicating with organisations which provide assistance with training, learning, volunteering etc.

“Support in converting my certificate from Africa”

“Joined ESOL class and Math”

“More confident to speak, write and listen to English”

Returner Project

The overarching aim of this project is to support 'work ready' skilled refugee engineers, architects, business service, IT and telecom professionals to gain paid UK professional experience. To reach this goal we offer a specialist casework and placement service, for refugee candidates and support employers to fill skills gaps, recruit inclusively and diversify.

This year in addition to our specialist services for refugee candidates and employers, we developed 3 short films and a Training Fund to support candidates' professional development.

Candidates service

Year on year numbers	2020 -21	2021-22	Summary
Candidates supported	14	23	All candidates have a degree and at least 2 years industry experience
Gained jobs in their profession	6	6	Supply chain, Aerospace; IT project management; Digital skills project worker; Trainee accountant; Junior project engineer and HR admin & compliance Assistant
Supported on placements	1	2	HR co-ordinator and Building surveyor
Assisted by the RP Training Fund	0	10	9 people assisted to join professional bodies (ICE, AAT, CIAT) and 1 person with a course.

Workshops: ● 3 people attended GDPR ● 5 people attended a Visa workshop.

Candidate Feedback

"I've learned how to present my CV professionally... gained knowledge and became a member of a professional body and learned interview skills for job interview, as result became more confident."

“I am not lost and working alone and not knowing where to start. Knowing there is someone to help you is of great value, in addition to the value provided by the service itself.”

Employers service

We continued to raise awareness of the untapped talent pool of refugee professionals, the challenges they face and benefits of placements. We had at least **25** meetings with employers and made **2** new employer agreements.



Our **3** films featured **6** candidates and **1** employer. ● Business services ● Engineering ● Spotlight on a placement

3 - 12-month placements and direct hire

Returner Project candidates have the ability and potential to help employers meet permanent and temporary recruitment needs, but often struggle to compete against UK educated and experienced candidates through mainstream recruitment processes. We brokered **2** new engineering 12-month placements and supported **1** HR placement.

HR coordinator placement

Refugee Action had an urgent, temporary need for a human resources coordinator. The Returner Project sent CVs and **2** candidates were invited to a virtual interview. Example questions were sent to candidates on a Friday, with interviews on Monday.

1 candidate was appointable and we worked together to finalise the role description, taking into account the needs of the HR team and the candidates experience, skills and potential. The candidate started a **3**-month placement, extended to **6** months.

The Employment worker, placementee and their manager met regularly to support onboarding and review progress and objectives.

After the placement, the candidate was interviewed for a permanent role and was successful. The HR coordinator is still at Refugee Action.

Feedback

“My skills in recruitment as a HR professional have been enhanced. My confidence has improved from working with the team and communicating professionally in English on a daily basis. I am very pleased to now have UK work experience” **HR Coordinator**

“Traditionally, Refugee Action has had fairly healthy lived experience representation in front line roles. This has been less easy to achieve in support roles. Offering a placement via R&M has helped us to fill a key support role which is really influential in helping to bring other refugees onboard.” **HR manager, Refugee Action**

R&M Bulletin, courses and digital inclusion



The R&M Bulletin shares information about different opportunities, such as courses, training or jobs, to increase knowledge and take up of mainstream and specialist employability opportunities. It's an essential resource for our casework and is shared in weekly emails with anyone who uses our services, volunteers and some external organisations. This year we shared **30** bulletins. At the end of the year **156** people were receiving the bulletin.

“has been a fantastic resource for us, as it allows us to keep informed...so we are then able to signpost” **ESOL Advice Service Manchester**

“It has helped me to learn of so many opportunities that I never knew existed.” **R&M volunteer**

Courses: 5 people participated in an employability course delivered with Inspire.

Digital inclusion: We increased the number of devices in our Device Lending Scheme, lent **8** devices to service users and increased knowledge of and access to external device schemes. We worked with Community Calling to donate phones and data to **4** people.

Hassan was referred to the Work Club by a friend to explore care jobs. At initial assessment, Hassan explained that he had started a Nursing Access Level 3 course remotely but was struggling to complete modules using a smartphone. Hassan was working 40 hrs a week in a warehouse, so found it hard to get to the library.

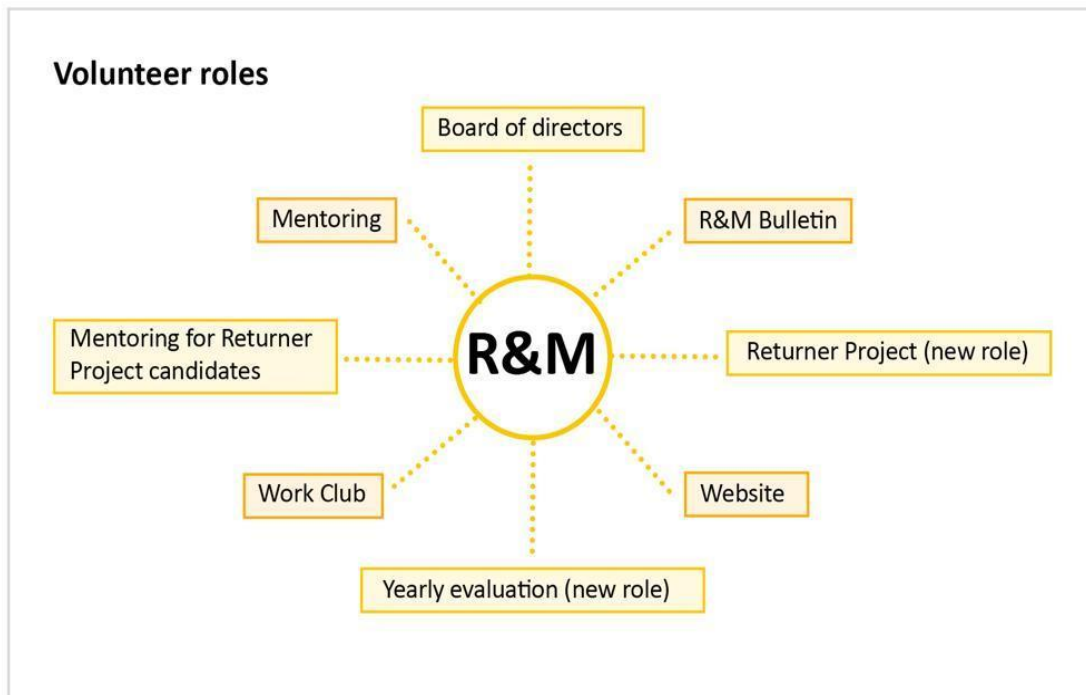
We helped Hassan to apply for a free PC from a charity which refurbishes devices, advocating that although he had a full time job he was paying for course fees, leaving little money at the end of each month.

“Since last year I started online course, but I didn't have device to study. Thank you for all your help and support to provide a PC for me. Now I do my assignments without any worrying about PC”.

Volunteering

Volunteers are essential team members and volunteering can be incredibly valuable, providing an opportunity to learn, develop skills, build confidence and 'give back'. For many service users, it is also a way to gain UK work experience. Our volunteer team includes people seeking asylum, refugees looking for work, people working in the corporate, voluntary and public sectors or who are retired.

30+ volunteers • **2** new volunteer roles created • **17** new volunteers recruited and supported to volunteer • **12** Jacobs employees attended mentoring training • **5** refugees in work attended a mentoring information session



Feedback

Volunteering helped **1** person to increase their knowledge of companies, roles and standards being used in the UK, as well as their ability to analyse information.

“Helped me reduce loneliness and depression.”

“It has also helped increase my knowledge and integration to the community.”

“I feel so good because I feel so useful again.”

Partnerships, collaborations, and referrals

This year we reached out to more organisations, continued our partnership with Rainbow Haven and to share work with Transitions, Renaisi and started a new mentoring programme with Jacobs.

Examples of IAG referral organisations:

- ❖ GMESOL Advice Service
- ❖ Mustard Tree
- ❖ Caritas
- ❖ Boaz Trust
- ❖ Manchester City of Sanctuary
- ❖ MRSN
- ❖ Asylum teams
- ❖ Course/training providers
- ❖ Professional bodies
- ❖ RESTART
- ❖ Work & Skills
- ❖ Refugee Council

1 Paid placements presentation delivered to 9 refugee organisations, with Rainbow Haven. At least 43 meetings with organisations.

Feedback

“Our clients and volunteers gained a lot from Refugees & Mentors' employability support which provided them with a really personal, tailored service, and many people also benefited from their employability courses” [Rainbow Haven](#)

“Refugees & Mentors is a valuable service for learners, particularly those with industry experience in their own country.. we additionally benefit from the referrals to ESOL from the R&M team” [ESOL Advice Service Manchester](#)

“Offer(ed) some employment / training advice such as improving her digital skills and creating a CV, both of which I then did with the service user here at MT.” [Mustard Tree](#)

“Great.. to share information .. to be able to refer people to their services and know they will be supported.” [Manchester City of Sanctuary](#)

“This programme (mentoring) also helps us deliver against the governments new social value model providing us with great case studies to use in work winning, to demonstrate our commitment to driving positive outcomes for society.” [Jacobs](#)

Evaluation, our team, supporters and the year ahead

Evaluation: This year's evaluation was carried out by 4 volunteers and staff. We used a mixture of anonymous online questionnaires and telephone interviews to gain feedback from service users, volunteers, and other organisations. Participants included:

- 6 Mentoring service users
- 10 Returner Project service users
- 8 Volunteers
- 20 Rainbow Haven Work Club service users
- 5 Organisations

Team: We continued to build a team of staff and volunteers which meets the needs of service users, the organisation and reflects the employment market. This includes people with experience in the private, public and voluntary sectors and lived experience of the UK asylum system.

Supporters



Leigh Day



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



WEA
Adult Learning Within Reach



Jacobs

The year ahead - We will:

- Mentoring: Review our core project and strengthen our ability to offer industry mentoring for Returner Project candidates.
- Increase our support for employers to recruit inclusively.
- Work with organisations across sectors to meet service users' needs and aspirations.
- Recruit and train volunteers to help with our infrastructure.
- Work towards the Matrix quality standard.
- Review our blended approach of in person and remote services.
- Strengthen our organisation (infrastructure, governance and strategy).

Location: We are based in the offices of Rethink Rebuild Society, Unit 7, Longsight Business Park, M13 0PD. Registered company number:10373232. Our financial accounts are at Companies House: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house>

Contact us: <https://refmentors.org.uk/>

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