

Barriers to Asylum Seekers and Refugees accessing the workplace

maggie lennon

Basic Principles

- **Integration outwith the workplace will never be full integration**
- **Denying access to the workplace is to deny a basic human right**
- **Denying access to the workplace is to deny the country the benefits of new potential**

Don't forget

- **Although asylum seekers and refugees have unique circumstances, their lack of participation is as damaging as any groups in society**
- **People are not statistics**
- **With the right combination of skills and groups the barriers can be overcome**

FOR MORE INFO...

www.contemporaryscotland.com

Barriers

- **Access to the work place**
- **Access to training**
- **Accreditation of prior learning**
- **Careers Advice**
- **Prejudice**
- **Related problems**

Access to the Workplace

- **Barriers**

- **Right of asylum seekers to apply for a work permit has been removed**
- **Asylum seekers cannot work and cannot receive any payment**
- **Motivation seems to be political**

Access to the work place

- **Removing the barriers**
 - **Re-instate the right to apply for a work permit**
 - **Lobby for an exemption in Scotland (due to high levels of successful applicants) either on a residency or profession based criteria**

Access to Training

● The Barriers

- Asylum seekers can access ESOL classes but the resource is limited and waiting lists are growing (600 at Anniesland alone)
- Last year the Scottish Executive allowed asylum seekers to have some access to HNC courses and limited HND courses, but no extra funding was made available meaning that some asylum seekers are not following relevant or appropriate training
- There is no access for asylum seekers to vocational training
- There is no access to Higher Education for Asylum seekers
- There is no effective strategy for 16-18 year olds especially the unaccompanied minors
- Those with refugee status have wider access on the same level as anyone unemployed but their personal circumstances may mean that low levels of student support prevent them from taking up places

Access to training

- **Removing the barriers**
 - Review of FE and HE funding
 - Engage with Scottish Universities
 - Improve understanding amongst admissions secretaries
 - Develop ESOL in the workplace
 - Greater access to existing workbased training (Proposed UNISON scheme)
 - Greater awareness of existing successful conversion programmes
 - Refugee Doctors Programme
 - PEPE (qualified Engineers)
 - OTAR (skilled tradespeople)
 - GOPIP (Nurses)

Accreditation

- **Barriers**

- **Lack of documents and evidence of prior learning or experience**
- **National Academic Recognition information Centre NARIC isn't working**

Accreditation

- **Removing the Barriers**
 - **Creation of a national accreditation system drawing on existing knowledge of the academic establishments, employers, professional and trade bodies**
 - **Development of more pilots like OTAR**
 - **Development of profession based ESOL to assess suitability for the job market**

Careers Advice and job searching

- **Barriers**

- **Lack of information and advice**
- **Poor quality of service in Job Centres as recognised by DWP**
- **Few networking opportunities to build up employability and sector knowledge**

Careers Advice and job searching

- **Removing the Barriers**
 - **Named representatives in Job Centre Plus offices**
 - **Improved and targeted communication through Job Centre Plus Offices**
 - **Ready for work training schemes like New Glaswegians Project run by the Chamber of Commerce**
 - **Increase initiatives that link this group to the workplace eg ESOL in the workplace, Mentoring/Buddy schemes**

Prejudice and Racism

● The Barriers

- Often ignored especially “black on black”
- Lack of understanding of the “soft skills” and different work ethics
- Opportunities for exploitation keep workers away from the legitimate job market, becoming a self fulfilling prophecy

Prejudice and Racism

- **Removing the barriers**
 - Educate the media
 - Educate the public
 - Educate employers and the workforce at large
 - Persuade politicians to remove Institutional barriers
 - Extend the range of groups willing to develop services, eg Trade Union Movement

Other issues

- **The Barriers**

- **Poor physical health**
- **High level of mental health problems at various levels**
- **Poor quality housing**
- **The international situation and rise fo the far right**

All of these have a bearing on the abilities of this group to make a sustained and worthwhile contribution.

Is there a bright side?

- **Always**

- **Problems not insurmountable**
- **We can all do something**
- **The benefits are so worth it**
- **If we are serious about integration, serious about welcoming a workforce from overseas, serious about social justice and serious about making workplaces more supportive of all its workforce, then things have to change**

Anuerin Bevan, In Place of Fear

“Discontent arises from a knowledge of the possible as contrasted with the actual”