

ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

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What are perceived to be the major barriers to employment facing the asylum seeker community in Glasgow and how do guidance and other agencies work with individuals and each other to address them?



SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

WHY GUIDANCE WORK WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS IS BENEFICIAL?

The multiple barriers faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the methods which the individuals themselves and the guidance and other agencies who work with them utilise to address them are important issues. In the case of refugees, it assists with the effective transition to paid work and other opportunities and in the case of asylum seekers in preparing a relevant repertoire of skills, study and unpaid work experience to bridge the gap between their own current situation and the demands of the Scottish labour market.

Recent research indicates that both refugees and asylum seekers have diverse and complex guidance needs. Steels and England (ECOTEC, 2004, p27) in a report to the Dept for Work and Pensions indicated that often refugees' 'aspirations were unrealistic and based on an inaccurate image of the UK labour market'. This statement could be viewed from different perspectives i.e. what is 'unrealistic' from the viewpoint of UK job centre employees may not be 'unrealistic' from the viewpoints of individuals who may expect the Scottish labour market to operate like their own and to apply their own frames of references about labour markets to it. Viewed from this angle this could indicate unfamiliarity with the way recruitment procedures and conventions are followed in Scotland and a lack of awareness of the Scottish labour market.

In order to operate in the Scottish labour market the individual has to know how to translate their own previous knowledge and skills and be able to present it in a method that meets the expectations of Scottish employers. The process of re-establishing one's expectations of the labour market in a language that is not one's native tongue may take some time and it would appear from this report that asylum seekers are expected to make a quantum leap from a position where they are individuals who are not allowed to work to 'active job seekers' in the Scottish labour market. Guidance at earlier stages might help with this transition.

The purpose of this project is to investigate what asylum seekers perceive to be the main barriers to employment and how they perceive their previous experience and qualifications to relate to the Scottish labour market. Also, I will also investigate how agencies try to address the barriers.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR BARRIERS FACING THE ASYLUM SEEKER COMMUNITY?

If the question is asked 'What are the major barriers to employment facing the asylum seeking community?' there would appear to be a straightforward answer. The current legal situation is that since the Summer of 2002 asylum seekers have not been entitled to work and this is therefore the major barrier they face (**APPENDIX 1**).

As a consequence there is a trend for individuals and agencies to wait until a positive decision is reached on a claim and only then focus on employment related activity and guidance. It is the case that asylum seekers have very limited options. Funding is often sourced from public money and this would deter much guidance work with asylum seekers because a positive outcome – i.e. sustained return to employment cannot legally be achieved with this client group due to asylum seekers' entitlement issues. An example of this is government training programmes such as Get Ready for Work, New Deal, Modern Apprenticeship and Skillseekers which are not open to individuals with asylum seeker status.

However there is also a serious issue with the length of time that asylum seekers are currently waiting to hear a decision – this could be for several years or even in some cases decades. There is a strong case (both on humanitarian and economic grounds) for guidance at an earlier stage in order to avoid the barriers of long-term unemployment. There may be issues which could be identified as an

earlier intervention for preparation albeit from a limited range of options. This would assist transition from asylum seeker to refugee status and thereafter into employment.

The Scottish Refugee Centre published statistics in 2003 which indicated that while the UK average of positive decisions of asylum cases is 41% in Glasgow it is 80% (www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk – cited in Dorrian, 2004, p280 – **APPENDIX 2**). This would indicate a strong case for employability and guidance work with asylum seekers from an earlier stage as around 4/5 of them will require to make the transition from refugee status to employment in the future

Asylum seekers from predominantly the North of Glasgow (Sighthill and Barmulloch) were interviewed regarding previous experience, expectations, the barriers they perceive themselves as facing and experience of guidance. Interviews were also conducted with a range of agencies who work with asylum seekers.

The approaches that guidance staff currently working with the asylum seeker and refugee community utilise with this group were examined and from the comments of guidance workers regarding their approach to interview and my own experience of the interviews suggestions were made about how guidance needs could be identified and discussed using narrative and multicultural approaches.

Another important aspect is how the different agencies work in partnership and their referral systems and this will also be examined. This is an important aspect as the projects that are open to asylum seekers are often targeted to specific groups e.g. Refugee Doctors Project (doctors) , CARA (academics), Bridges Project (skilled professionals) meaning the individual's previous qualifications and experience need to be specifically related. How do the agencies communicate and share information with each other?

Multi-agency working has been identified in the Scottish Executive report 'Asylum Seekers in Scotland' as the basis of 'good practice in work with asylum seekers' (Scottish Executive, 2003, p100). The report concluded that 'joint working allows all agencies to have 'ownership' of the issues and solutions and examples of good practice ... exchanged between organisations' (Scottish Executive, 2003, p100) although possible issues of the 'time commitment' required, 'lack of commitment by partners' and 'demands on specialist agencies' were also raised. How do the individuals find out about these projects and if they meet the profile?

Asylum seekers also rely on word of mouth as a means of communication so there may be confusion if they rely on a neighbour who may have totally different experience and qualification as a source of information also due to the fact that guidance work involves rather complex information concerning work being conveyed in another language there could be misunderstandings between guidance workers and clients. These features have a bearing on how agencies market themselves to clients and the mediums they select for communicating information.

MY MOTIVATION FOR UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT

My interest in this topic emerged from two sources.

The first was my experience delivering ESOL classes at Glasgow College of Food Technology (now the MET) last year. The classes were comprised predominantly of groups of asylum seekers and it struck me that in many cases they appeared to be unaware of differences between the labour market in their own countries and Scotland. This was particularly striking when the individual had been employed in a craft area e.g. an Iraqi described his previous experience of making ornate items of gold jewellery and the skills involved in shaping the metal. It seemed that he looked on obtaining refugee status as a solution to all his problems. While entitlement to work is a massive barrier there are other clear guidance needs that asylum seekers could examine in preparation for the transition that the decision on their case will present. In such a case an intervention that advises a person solely about the legal situation could be counterproductive as it a) does not give scope for the individual to reflect on how they could relate their skills to the Scottish labour market and the requirements of employers or demands of the public b) is not empowering for clients to hear what they are not able to do when they could take strength in reflecting on their achievements in their own countries and how they could prepare themselves as much as they can for the transition. The individual has to recognise the differences and similarities between the labour market in Scotland and their own country and fit it in with their own experience in the Scottish labour market.

The second was my interest in readjustment issues faced by ex pats after being one myself.

It seemed to me that these barriers which appear major ones to those who experience them are actually minor if they are compared with the barriers faced by asylum seekers e.g. entitlement to work, lack of recognised Scottish qualifications, language barriers, health issues, trauma etc.

SECTION TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently much research has been undertaken on the various issues involving asylum seekers and refugees and employment with much publicity in the newspapers recently on the topic of underemployment of skilled refugees as a result of CARA (Council for Assisting Refugee Academics) research on this issue which included a discussion during a March 2005 'Today' programme. CARA have indicated that more support and investment is needed to enable CARA to 'change a refugee's whole life and give the UK a key worker' R Smithers in Britain Fails to tap skills of highly qualified workers Monday 14th March 2005.

(http: //
education.guardian.co.uk/higher/worldwide/story/0,9959,1437219,00.html
Accessed – 4/4/04)

CARA have recently produced an information pack for refugees (**APPENDIX 3**) and have indicated that they are currently applying for funding to assist the academic refugee and asylum seeker community in Glasgow.

A range of relevant issues regarding guidance for asylum seekers and refugees have been raised in policy reports.

In the report 'Meeting Refugees' needs in Britain: the role of Refugee-specific initiatives' Jenny Carey-Wood indicated that RSIs could play a role in educating mainstream services

“there may be ignorance about their culture, their customs, their rights, and particularly the experience of being a refugee – of having lost everything, not being able to communicate, of having skills undervalued or not recognised’ (Carey-Wood)

A Home Office report has linked the ‘psychological well-being of ethnic minority migrants’ to policies that would lower unemployment, improve health, reduce crime and deal with racial harassment and also advocated that ‘recent ethnic minority migrants could be given appropriate employment advice and support to enable to quickly engage in productive labour market activity’. (Home Office, 2003, p5).

Proficiency in English language is another important feature. In the report ‘English Language as a Barrier to Employment, Education and Training’ Schellekens indicated that Employability events with second language speakers ‘should include not just standard job search techniques but also job preparation aimed specifically at people who have a different concept of job hunting, qualifications and presentation skills’ (Schellekens, 2001, p19).

Schellekens’ report also looked at barriers faced by examining the employers’ perspective on four main areas: -

- English language skills
- Recruitment
- Qualifications and experience
- Developing skills at work

Regarding language skills one manager had suggested that recruitment tests for financial services that measured voice quality, expression speed and empathy could be used as a training tool by language teachers (Schellekens, 2001, p15). The Health Sector and bus companies were identified as two sectors where English language requirements were at a lower level.

With regard to the recruitment, qualification and experience sections Schellekens raised some interesting questions regarding presentation at interviews e.g. not being perceived as dynamic and confident which could be perceived as lack of interest by employers but actually be an interviewing style in other cultures.

“It is true that each country and culture has its own concept of presenting skills and job interview”. (Schellekens, 2001, p16). This is also evident in cv and application form preparation. For example, in former-Eastern Europe it was the convention to include information about other members of the family in a cv as this indicated ‘good family stock’ whereas in Scotland it is irrelevant.

Schellekens also identifies the Bridge to Work project as an example of good practice (Schellekens, 2001, p36 – 37). I include comments from a telephone interview with this project in the Discussion section. Bridge identifies that not knowing the system and getting the wrong advice as a major barrier. An example is given of a qualified Algerian lawyer who was advised to do an access to law course instead of structural English which was his real need (Schellekens, 2001, p36).

The Scottish Executive Report ‘Asylum Seekers in Scotland’ also identified models of good practice: -

- The Bridges Project
- Bridging the Gap
- The Scottish Refugee Council

(Scottish Executive, 2003, p99)

All these organisations were interviewed in this project.

In the next few sections (*SECTION THREE, SECTION 5*) I will be referring to another important piece of research from the Scottish Executive entitled ‘Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: a Skills and Aspirations Audit’ which was a survey undertaken to audit skills and aspirations (Scottish Executive, 2004)

ENTITLEMENT

In an information leaflet from the Scottish Refugee Council entitled ‘The Rules on Seeking Work (Scottish Refugee Council, January 2005) the current legal situation is defined as: -

Asylum seeker – not entitled to work but permitted to ‘undertake voluntary work, mentoring or work shadowing’.

Refugee – have ‘automatic right to seek work’.

Exceptional leave to remain – entitled to work and benefits

Humanitarian Protection – entitled to work and benefits

Discretionary leave to remain – entitled to work and benefits

(APPENDIX 1)

It is clear that the law concerning employability of refugees and asylum seekers could be confusing for employers and other members of the general public especially as the terminology can be used incorrectly i.e. refugee means that the permission has been granted 'right to remain' in the UK and asylum seekers are applying for this status. The law has also changed regularly recently and affected huge changes on the scope of asylum seekers.

Granted the complexity of the situation it is clear that there is a need for asylum seekers to receive effective guidance and for partnership and referral systems between agencies. As the Refugee Doctors (**APPENDIX 4**) GOPIP (**APPENDIX 5**), the teachers and Bridges projects indicate there are specific projects which asylum seekers with previous background and experience could participate in at an early stage.

SECTION THREE

METHODOLOGY

AGENCIES

A series of face-to-face and telephone interviews were utilised. In the case of telephone interviews this method was selected due to commitments and timing and in the case of the Croydon project, distance. The interviewing style was open to enable issues to be raised that the agencies felt were relevant to address and to report generally on specific cases of interventions that illustrated particular aspects of work they undertake or barriers facing particular clients. To ensure the confidential nature of the discussion details were made anonymous. A range of individuals and agencies participated for triangulation purposes.

The interview was structured to allow the following aspects were probed: -

- What agencies perceive to be the main barriers faced by asylum seekers and how their organisation endeavours to address them
- How their agency communicates with other agencies e.g. referral procedures in the interests of asylum seekers.

As these issues were major ones it was not always necessary to prompt as the interviewees automatically started to discuss them.

In most cases the agencies were contacted initially by telephone although in the case of the Croydon project e-mail was utilised (**APPENDIX 6**). A letter of introduction on Strathclyde University letterhead was also prepared as proof research purposes to ease access (**APPENDIX 7**).

In order to get a clear picture of multi-agency working a wide range of agencies were contacted.

Some agencies had guidance workers and careers advisers (Dip in Careers Guidance or VQ in Guidance Level IV qualified) and offered a careers guidance service as part of their provision: -

- Careers Scotland
- Scottish Refugee Council – Marilyn Mackie
- Glasgow North – Kim Murphy

Other agencies offered services such as employment advice and job search skills e.g. cv preparation, interview skills or specialised services (Bridge Project – work placement project designed for skilled professionals) and referred guidance cases on to other agencies.

AGENCY AND CONTACT	METHOD OF INTERVIEW
Careers Scotland, Ardoch House, Glasgow Contact: <i>Helen Dollan</i>	Face to Face
Careers Scotland Atlantic Quay Contact: <i>Brian Climie</i>	Telephone
Glasgow North Contact: <i>Kim Murphy</i>	Face-to-face
Scottish Refugee Centre Contact: <i>Marilyn Mackie</i>	Face-to-face
Bridges Project: Contacts: <i>Maggie Lennon</i> <i>Kate Davidson</i>	Face-to-face
Reed in Partnership Crown Street GLASGOW Contact: <i>Tricia McCaffrey</i>	Face-to-face
The MET ESOL Department Contact: <i>John Lamont</i>	Face-to-face
Creative Community Crafts Contact: <i>Jean Sechaud</i>	Face-to-face
Bridge to Work Project (Croydon) Contact: <i>Janet Morley</i>	Telephone
Bridging the Gap Contact: <i>Alice Duncan</i>	Telephone
Refugee Doctors Programme Contact: <i>Frances Dorrian</i>	Telephone
Govan Integration Network Contact: <i>Ruth Gow</i>	Telephone

Table 1 indicates the agencies that contributed to the report:-

ASYLUM SEEKERS

An open approach to the interviews was undertaken. Interviews were conducted with 8 asylum seekers and one former asylum seeker who had just made the transition to refugee status.

Recent research from the Scottish Executive and Scottish Refugee Council Project - 'Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: A Skills and Aspiration Audit' has presented an overview of the situation regarding refugees and asylum seekers, their previous experience and qualifications, the activities they had undertaken in Scotland (e.g. FE courses, ESOL classes and voluntary work) and other specific questions such as whether they had their qualifications with them in Scotland.

'coming from a war torn country, obviously I was running to save my life, let alone picking up certificates' (female asylum seeker, Somalia).

(Scottish Executive, 2004, p19)

The Skills Audit was undertaken as a questionnaire (Scottish Executive, 2004, p58 – 69) which was completed by 523 asylum seekers and refugees. This report was a useful overview of larger number of individuals in the area. Due to the timescale required and the fact that it would only repeat existing current research I decided to use a qualitative methodology of in depth interviews.

I referred to the skills audit to ensure relevant points would be included in the interview and as a guide afterwards to identify what was a trend and what was more specific e.g. Level of English Language Skills, Childcare and caring responsibilities, inability to provide documentation of qualifications (Scottish Executive, 2004, p13). A major issue with undertaking research with small groups of a target group is that generalisations which can be applied to asylum seekers as a whole do not directly follow as it could be that interviews were 'atypical' in some way or another. The Skills Audit and the examples the agencies gave of clients they had worked with allowed an opportunity to fit the in depth interviews in to a wider population. After completing the interviews and I was able to weigh up and compare the comments with the Skills Audit.

I interviewed people of different ages, sex, education and experience and tried to ensure a good mixture of countries of origin. The respondents included skilled

professionals e.g. a Project Manager who had undertaken positions such as Co-ordinating an international charity organisation in the Congo, an Algerian Journalist and two individuals who had run their own businesses. Interviews were also conducted with people from business backgrounds - a woman who had run her own beauty salon in Pakistan and a Russian businessman. Another interview was conducted with a man without formal schooling who was illiterate and had previously worked as a fisherman.

The interviewees were recruited through networks and personal contact rather than through the agencies. I felt that it was more appropriate to approach the asylum seekers myself rather than ask the agencies as due to issues of data protection it might be difficult to contact asylum seekers utilising this method. However, during the interviews it emerged that several of the asylum seekers had been in to see Marilyn Mackie, the guidance worker at the Scottish Refugee Council and one had an appointment coming up with the Bridges Project.

Two of the interviewees were recruited purely by chance. I had gone to St Georges Cross library one day when one of them asked me for help with the English contained in a description of a job vacancy from the Job Centre for Modern Apprenticeships in Fishing: they recognised me from ESOL classes at the MET. It was clear that this would make an interesting interview.

The interviews were conducted in the asylum seekers' own homes which meant that other family members e.g. teenage children who had just left school or were just about to, spouses also contributed to the interview. Although this was unintentional it enabled a picture of the different issues and barriers facing each family member to be examined (See Section 6).

THE INTERVIEW

The asylum seekers were asked the following: -

- What is/were the main barriers they felt they faced to accessing employment and other opportunities.
- Previous experience of work/study in their own countries. How the labour market operated, recruitment procedures, networking, workplace conventions etc.

- Their experience of study/unpaid work in Scotland.
- Their expectations (and if relevant) observations of the Scottish Labour Market.
- Their experience of guidance (or lack of it).

METHODOLOGIES UTILISED IN PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

A range of methods have been utilised for previous studies on issues faced by asylum seekers regarding employment and training.

The Refugee and Asylum Seekers Skills Audit involved a *questionnaire* which was introduced to respondents at a range of locations e.g. SRC offices, ESOL classes, drop in services at church and community groups to target a broad range of respondents. The group filled in the questionnaire with the assistance of interpreters or self-completed.

Another approach is to use focus groups which can be a way of including interactions between different participants and enable them 'to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understanding of specific experiences' (www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU19.html - accessed 31/01/2005). Focus groups were therefore utilised in research undertaken to review particular projects where the participants will report back on 'specific experiences'. For example, a baseline report was undertaken on the Home Office Refugee Integration Challenge Fund for 2001/2002 where eleven of CARA's (Council for Assisting Refugees Academics) users attended a focus group to discuss:-

"The impact that CARA support and services have had on their lives

Their need for CARA's services

The acceptability and effectiveness of CARA's current services

Ideas for improvement in the service"

(Michael Bell Associates, 2002, p13).

I therefore decided that focus groups would not be suitable for this type of research where more individual expectations and previous experience were being examined. It would however be an appropriate way of gauging shared experience of particular projects refugees and asylum seekers might be involved with such as the one described above (CARA) or it could be utilised for evaluating other specific refugee and asylum seeker programmes such as the Refugee Doctors Programme and GOPIP.

Case studies are also regularly utilised for a range of different purposes. The Rainbow group utilised a case study approach for training sessions on the multicultural approach (**APPENDIX 6**). A case study approach has also been utilised in the information booklet prepared to ease the transition for young people from ethnic minorities (**APPENDIX 7**).

Case studies were also utilised by the Commission for Racial Equality to highlight specific situations where employers had misunderstood and wrongly applied Section 8 of the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act by informing authorities when there was no legal obligation to do so (CRE, 1998).

APPROACH TO THE INTERVIEW

Autobiographical reporting and gathering, the stories of the asylum seeker's previous experience could enable them to "recognise the relevance of experience to his or her own purpose" (Law – Using Stories – www.hihohiho.com – accessed 20th March 2005).

The stories in these interviews were the interviewee's previous work history and through telling them they also explained the way the labour market in their country of origin worked, how recruitment processes worked. This assists guidance workers to identify themes and guidance needs which they may not otherwise recognise or expect.

As discussed in the previous section the multicultural approach encouraged guidance workers to consider their own expectations and reflect on how the frameworks of reference regarding recruitment methods and expectations of the labour market. The interview was undertaken in a way that encouraged a narrative and multicultural perspective.

WHY THIS METHODOLOGY WAS SELECTED

In his article 'Measuring the Outcomes of Careers Guidance' Maguire concludes that practitioners are more likely to utilise qualitative methods and focus 'at the micro-level of individual clients and their own endeavours, aspirations and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction' (Maguire, 2003, p184).

The purpose of the study was to look at people's aspirations, previous experience and expectations of the Scottish Labour Market and it was clear that focus at an individual level via qualitative methods would be the most suitable.

Interviews with asylum seekers built in to a small number of case studies were utilised as this would enable the themes and connections to be drawn out.

With regard to small scale studies one advantage is that they can be very specific. However, the difficulty is then in generalising from these specific cases to issues faced by groups of asylum seekers. I therefore referred to other cases presented by agencies and outlined in the Skills Audit (Scottish Executive, 2004).

SECTION FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

INTERVIEWS WITH THE AGENCIES

ENTITLEMENT

Asylum seekers have some options for employment related activity and education although these are very restricted. The Scottish Refugee Council indicated that the most common activities undertaken were ESOL classes, further education courses (under 16 hours a week) and work in the voluntary sector with organisations such as the Red Cross and Citizens Advice Bureau. Projects such as the Bridges Project, CARA, GOPIP, the Teacher Project at Jordanhill Campus and the Refugee Doctors Project are also open to asylum seekers although the person must meet a particular profile. CARA only assists people with a previous background as academics. The Scottish Refugee Council had enquired on behalf a man who had had a senior administrative post at a University but CARA were not able to provide assistance. Similarly, CARA was not able to assist the Bridges programme with a University course designed for Engineers to requalify.

The Scottish Refugee Council have produced information leaflets on entitlement issues which explains clearly the current situation (since Summer of 2002) for those with asylum seeker, refugee, ILR or ELR status (**APPENDIX 1**). They also indicated that there was much confusion about entitlement amongst both employers and the general public. This could be because the terms asylum seeker and refugee are often used incorrectly as alternative words rather than describing a person's specific entitlement. It is not unusual to read a newspaper article and read the two words to describe the same person. Similarly the report from the Commission of Racial Equality describing employers' reactions to Section 8 would confirm this (Commission for Racial Equality, 1998). The Scottish Refugee Council indicated that raising employers' awareness of the current legal situation regarding employment was an important aspect of guidance work.

Agencies indicated that entitlement issues could be very complex and they would refer to sources of expert knowledge when dealing with clients. Reed in Partnership indicated that they refer to the number given for the Integrated Casework Directorate on Home Office documentation while Careers Scotland refer to a contact at Springburn Job Centre, Bill Anderson, to check entitlement for opportunities. Careers Scotland indicated the complexity of the entitlement situation by describing a situation where they were able to arrange places on hairdressing and engineering skillseekers programmes for two care leavers on ELR status as individuals with ELR status are entitled to undertake a course up to a year as long as their start date is before their 18th birthday. Asylum seekers are not entitled to undertake Modern Apprenticeships or Skillseekers at all while those on Refugee status are eligible for all Modern Apprenticeship or Skillseekers positions.

MAJOR BARRIERS AND HOW THE AGENCIES ADDRESS THEM

The agencies tended to identify major barriers which reflected their client group and the stage that their clients were at. The widest ranging description of barriers came from the Scottish Refugee Council and the fact that they have such a wide client base could account for this.

Scottish Refugee Council - Main Barriers:

- Entitlement to work
- English language – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Doctors may be referred to the Refugee Doctors Project which runs a specialised IELTS preparatory course and asylum seekers can attend ESOL classes
- Lack of knowledge of work culture and practices – Referrals are made to the voluntary sector and to projects such as the Bridges Project which organise work placements and CARA which organises assistance for academics.
- Not having their qualifications in Scotland
- Lack of UK qualifications – Scottish Refugee Council contacts professional organisations and runs NARIC checks
- Caring and child care responsibilities
- Health issues e.g. torture and trauma
- Long term unemployment

- Lack of knowledge among employers – don't want to employ people illegally – work with employers and participating in the provision of information e.g. the leaflet on entitlement (**APPENDIX 1**)
- Negative coverage in the press

The Bridges Project works with skilled professionals at creating work placement opportunities. In this way the clients gain experience of working in Scottish companies and the opportunity to build up a network and obtain a reference.

They indicated that lack of Scottish experience, lack of awareness of the Scottish work culture, no professional network or references can be barriers to employment. It could often be hard for asylum seekers when the placement came to an end and they were not entitled to convert their progress into employment. The Bridges Project indicated that the range of emotions could vary from frustration and anger to stoicism and acceptance that this was as good as it could get. Those with refugee status have the opportunity of taking up employment at that stage.

Reed in Partnership indicated that although they were unable to work with asylum seekers they felt that earlier interventions could prevent the massive barriers exacerbated by being in a state of long term unemployment while they waited for a decision on their case. Formal recruitment processes could be a barrier and overcome by the use of work trials to provide experience of the Scottish workplace.

Occasionally individuals may face rather less commonplace obstacles. One Iraqi client was not able to return to his original work as it involved working in an area of national security!

Glasgow North indicated that the main barriers were 'cultural' ones e.g. understanding how to look for employment, lack of knowledge about the way the workplace operated in Scotland and the interview process e.g. recognising different norms of communication. Work is undertaken in small groups and 1-1 to address these barriers. Glasgow North indicated it was usual for the client to achieve employment in Scotland that was slightly below their level in their first position because of an 'automatic dip'. Scottish employers tended to rate overseas experience rather low. It was therefore necessary to gain experience at a lower level and use it as a stepping stone. This tendency could be compared to

the recommendations in Smart Successful Scotland where an international approach is viewed as a positive and modern contribution (Scottish Executive, 2001).

THE PROVISION

The Scottish Refugee Council indicated that a 'troubleshooting' approach was often used and this was also indicated by a couple of other agencies as a method they used.

Guidance was client-centred and based on the needs of the clients e.g. assisting with personal statements, articulation routes or familiarisation with the Scottish labour market and recruitment conventions. An interesting example was presented by the Scottish Refugee Centre regarding provision for the guidance needs of an entire family as a unit. This consisted of the guidance needs of three individuals in a family: a sibling with a learning disability, an elderly father and a daughter who was undertaking a caring role and was therefore unable to study which were met in the same guidance intervention by arranging suitable provision for the needs of each individual. It was an observation I made myself when undertaking the interviews in the homes of the asylum seeking community as it was apparent that there were multiple guidance needs in the home. During the interview spouses and daughters and sons would start to discuss their situations too.

A different service is provided by Reed in Partnership. As they are funded from the Department of Work and Pensions and require to demonstrate evidence of clients accessing the labour market the service is only available to those who have permission to work. Reed in Partnership undertake employability work and liaise with local employers to arrange work trials or work placements. Refugees are one part of the client base.

Reed in Partnership work at encouraging local employers to employ refugees and noted that a local bakery now regards them as very reliable and hard working employees. Skilled professionals may also be referred to projects like the Chamber of Commerce New Glaswegians Project (**APPENDIX 8**). Other referrals are regularly made to EMEC, Bridging the Gap and the Scottish Refugee Council.

The Bridges Project, the Scottish Refugee Centre and Glasgow North referred to work undertaken by their organisations to establish articulation routes. This

could involve running a NARIC check (a database that checks equivalence of qualifications) and this service and assistance with the translation of certificates is provided by the Scottish Refugee Council. On other occasions the professional bodies such as the Law Society are contacted to discuss articulation routes.

MULTI AGENCY WORKING

There was evidence of multi-agency working and both joint working and referral. Careers Scotland tended to refer adult asylum seeker and refugee clients to Glasgow North's Integration Support programme while Glasgow North worked jointly with the Refugee Doctors Programme in assisting refugee and asylum seeker doctors. In these cases the Refugee Doctors programme provides assistance with arranging medical articulation routes and with preparation for IELTS and PLAB. An IELTS course for doctors is organised through Anniesland College and the Refugee Doctors Programme. In order to work in Scotland a score of 6.5 (GPs) or 7 (Consultants) is required. Glasgow North worked on employability. Glasgow North indicated that when they work with other professionals e.g. accountants the articulation route part is undertaken in house.

Bridging the Gap indicated that they regularly referred refugees to the New Glaswegians programme which is being run through the Chamber of Commerce. It is apparent that excellent communication between agencies is vital in this area of guidance where entitlement and provision are so very specific. For the organisations funded from sources such as Department of Work and Pensions such as Reed in Partnership issues of entitlement were crucial as they were only able to work with clients who were permitted to work.

It was clear that there was a need for capacity building with organisations that work directly with asylum seekers (charities and ESOL tutors) regarding information on referrals, awareness of agencies and information such as entitlement.

ASYLUM SEEKER INTERVIEWS

6 out of 9 respondents had been waiting for a decision on their claim for more than 4 years. The husband of the Algerian female had been seeking asylum since 1994.

One respondent (Palestinian male, 29) was unskilled and previously worked as a fisherman, a waiter and in a ceramic tile factory.

He indicated his barriers were:

- Language
- Paper to work
- Understanding the system

He had been finding out about Modern Apprenticeship vacancies in the fishing industry which he had obtained from the Job Centre (**APPENDIX 9**). Aside from entitlement there appeared to be other issues and barriers he did not personally identify:

- Lack of freedom to locate to the coast – his location is controlled by NASS
- No previous experience of formal learning
- Illiteracy – he had been to ESOL classes but stopped as it was too difficult to review work and he couldn't look words up in the dictionary
- Relying on word of mouth as sources of information i.e. other Arabic speaking asylum seekers
- Focus and concentration on written work – required for building VQ evidence
- Awareness of the Scottish fishing industry and work culture

Asked about the way he learned to fish: -

"If it's my job I ask and they explain. Different people have different experiences. Give me experience and I learn"

When asked about the Scottish MA in fishing he replied that it would be a similar experience to the informal approach in his country rather than the more structured system in the UK.

Recruitment procedures also varied. In his country fishing industry workers, builders all went to different cafes and waited for employers to come in and recruit them. Previous work experience and transitions were from word of mouth i.e. friends and families.

The limited choice available meant that people were denied opportunities at their level.

The Zambian female respondent who had previously been a Secretary to an Ambassador indicated that doing an NQ in Travel in Tourism was frustrating as "Sometimes I feel I could teach the class." (Zambian, female, 31).

Other issues were child care ones and difficulties accessing courses with recognised articulation routes as they had been full time e.g. Access to Nursing was offered full time only. Child care issues had caused her to drop out when her child became ill and she lost her nursery place.

She was one of four interviewees who were undertaking voluntary work. Herself and another interviewee (Female, Congo, 52) undertook work with an African women advocacy project in the North of Glasgow supporting with form filling, phoning for ambulances and providing information about rights. She also represented the asylum seeker community at Scottish Refugee Council meetings and had lobbied parliament. Another respondent (Female, Kosova, 21) worked for a support and information charity. The respondent from the Congo also had completed the Citizens Advice Bureau training which many asylum seekers undertake and worked voluntarily for CAB. A fourth (Male, Sri Lanka, 34) had been born again and was evangelising for his church.

The beauty therapist from Pakistan indicated that she had trained at a vocational school and eventually started up her own business (Female, Pakistan, 42).

She indicated that she kept up her skills by doing beauty therapy treatments for friends and families. This was unpaid as she did not want to work illegally. She indicated that she was not aware of needing Scottish qualifications and didn't think she would need any as she wanted to work in the Asian sector. She identified that different processes were sometimes used. One treatment was hair removal by a threading process instead of electrolysis or waxing. She was not aware of Career Guidance services although her daughter had been to the Careers Adviser at school.

Her daughter and the son of a male Russian were disappointed at not being able to study at University.

"It's not fair. We do hard work for our exams and we just want to go to Uni. It hurts us that they refused. That's why we are so depressed" (Female, Pakistan, 17).

Finance was also a barrier. She outlined that full time study has no fee waiver and asylum seekers cannot afford to pay up front and are not eligible for loans. She was going to College to do an HND in Accounts and Finance but felt the four years to complete her course was too long to wait. The Russian male was doing a part time multi media course at FE College and indicated that he would need to get permission to work then work to raise funds before he could consider University.

The Kosovan respondent originally an asylum seeker who had recently received a British passport indicated that she is delighted to have been able to open a bank account as not having ID was a barrier.

"I'm so happy now. All the doors have opened".

(Female, Kosova, 21).

The female from the Congo indicated that the stress of waiting for an appeal meant that "my morale was low" (Female, Congo, 52). She has kept very active doing a range of short courses e.g. ECDL which she completed in 2002, a course in Media and Communication and the voluntary work mentioned earlier.

She identified networking and awareness of the Scottish work culture as the main barriers. The respondent has just been referred to the Bridges Project through the Scottish Refugee Council and indicated:-

"I have much experience with management and now I need to transfer skills to the Scottish environment".

(Female, Congo, 52).

As asylum seekers may have a limited support network to assist them with weighing up and making a decision on courses they appear (like the indigenous white Scottish) to be vulnerable targets of a leafleting marketing practice in the multi stories in Glasgow North. Perhaps after encountering a vast range of obstacles the leaflets advertising courses appear to be an 'open door'.

An Algerian journalist had signed up for a child care course by direct debit and had got into financial difficulties. She reflected that "you are starving and you see some food in a shop. You won't think and you'll just pay anything for it" (female, Algerian, 32).

She indicated that she had not checked if the course was recognised by employers before she started as it was a Child Care course and had been caught out by the small print.

Loss of status and having an identity of an asylum seeker was hard for the Algerian female who had had a high standard of living in her own country although others took a different approach.

“They want us to be educated but some British people think Anglia is in Africa. We are to be integrated but we cannot do this without working”
(Female, Zambia, 31).

There was evidence of lack of information. The Russian male who had a previous background in plumbing and engineering before he started his own business was not aware of the Bridges Project or the Scottish Refugee Council employment and advice service. His wife, a qualified nurse, was unaware of the GOPIP project
(Male, Russian, 41).

SECTION FIVE

DISCUSSION

Adopting the 'autobiographical discussion' approach enabled themes in the person's previous experience to be drawn out.

In the book 'Careers Guidance in Context' Gothard et al refer to the narrative approach of career counselling which is advocated by Cochran (1997) and Savickas (1993). This would appear to be a relevant approach for adult asylum seekers and for the complex situations they face re-establishing themselves in another country as it helps 'the client to identify themes in their life, with the overarching theme being the search for identity' (Gothard et al, 2001, p35).

One aspect of asylum seeker's condition is that they have lost their previous identity e.g. the Zambian woman who had previously worked as a Secretary to an ambassador in an embassy said that she enjoyed talking about her previous experience and that she felt she had little opportunity to express it in her present situation.

Meijers and Piggott have indicated that in order to 'empower clients' practitioners need to question their own values. There may be an assumption that clients understand the Scottish work culture and recruitment procedures although as the analysis section indicated the Palestinian male's experience of recruitment procedure was to sit in a café with other fishermen and wait for employers to visit the café. They outline that 'techniques to draw out information from the client may be less relevant than autobiographical discussion to establish the client's frame of reference'. (Meijers & Piggott, 1995, p 55).

The Rainbow project (a partnership of six countries with a focus on multiculturalism) is argued to be a response to the fact 'European societies are gradually becoming more and more multicultural and pluralistic ... especially because of immigration and floods of refugees from outside of Europe' (www.guidance-research.org). The multicultural approach encourages the adviser to question their own ethnocentricity and recognise the different frameworks of reference.

“Multicultural counselling does not mean that counsellors should know as much as possible about different cultures but that they are aware of the impact of culture on the personalities and behaviour of both the counsellor him- or herself and the client.”

Metsänen, R, in

[http://rainbow.cimo.fi/projects/rainbow/cettraining.nsf/\(unid\)/B176E97831C50DA3C2256A0E004B9372/\\$file/RB-MultiCoun.rtf](http://rainbow.cimo.fi/projects/rainbow/cettraining.nsf/(unid)/B176E97831C50DA3C2256A0E004B9372/$file/RB-MultiCoun.rtf) - accessed 10th April 2005

Pearce has discussed the issue of biases in trainee counsellors attitudes to clients from different cultures and identified that interpretation of a case study was affected (Pearce in Palmer, 2002). The Rainbow project identified that advisers did not need to be experts on recruitment procedures and labour market situation from all over the world which would be impossible but to have the skills to encourage the clients to discuss these through autobiographical discussion.

It would appear that creating an opportunity for the individual to describe their previous achievements at a time when they face major obstacles could be beneficial in adjusting to their situation in Scotland.

Janet Morley, a Careers Adviser from the Bridges to Employment project in Croydon indicated that her work is intensive and the process can take longer because of cultural differences and language and the difficulty of concepts when talking about jobs and opportunities. She will often have more than one meeting with a client and utilise either an autobiographical discussion approach or present career information to clients to demonstrate the differences.

BARRIERS IDENTIFIED

It was clear that interviewees identified barriers which correlated with the Skills Audit's findings with regard to features such as work and social integration (Zambian Female) and not working (Pakistani female, 42, Russian male, 41) depression (Pakistani female, 42 and access to employment (Palestinian male, 29) (Scottish Executive, 2004, p 37 – 41). The lack of part time courses in FE with articulation routes (Zambian female) and the length of time an HND takes part time (Pakistani female, 17) were also commented on (Scottish Executive, 2004, p 23).

CAPACITY BUILDING

Some guidance agencies indicated that they felt Careers Scotland could become more involved in guidance issues relating to this client group than they are as present. It was considered that Careers Scotland's national position would ensure continuity as much of this work was undertaken as project work on short term funding.

Careers Scotland indicated that there were plans to introduce staff training on vocational guidance to respond to a demand from the asylum seeker and refugee community and from migrant workers (especially former Eastern Europe) who are increasingly utilising guidance services. It was evident from the research that there was also scope for further capacity building (e.g. referral procedures, networking, information sources such as 'entitlement issues') with regard to charities and ESOL providers who are in direct contact with refugees.

A recent article in Newscheck (p21 – 22, May 2005) has indicated that there could be a demand for community languages in public service organisations. Some of the respondents were building up voluntary experience in a support capacity (Kosovan female: Support and information charity, Congo female: Zambian female: African advocacy project). Should this trend lead to paid employment opportunities then individuals from the refugee community with their diverse language skills would be in a strong position to contend. Further research could also examine this.

It is clear from the case of the Algerian female who has got into financial difficulties because of responding to a flyer put through her door in Barmulloch that there is a need for more support and advice provision as there appears to be a moral duty to protect vulnerable groups such as the asylum seeker community and the indigenous white community who are more likely to lack a support group they can refer to and check information with. Currently asylum seekers are bringing in correspondence such as letters informing them that they have won cars and holidays into the MET and are bewildered when ESOL teachers tell them there is a catch. Govan Integration Project indicated that sometimes asylum seekers get into money difficulties because they don't understand about small print. While ESOL teachers have a requirement to work with whole groups as well as individuals training sessions on entitlement and referral issues such as knowing the organisations and the type of people they work with might be helpful.

SECTION SIX

CONCLUSION

It is evident that asylum seekers face a wide range of barriers to accessing employment. Although entitlement to work is a major barrier there are many other barriers which the agencies prevail over through 'troubleshooting'.

MAJOR ISSUES

The 'entitlement' issue affected asylum seekers as an entire group and confusion and lack of awareness or misinformation by the general public, employers and in some cases the guidance community of the implications of a person's status was identified.

Another interrelated barrier was lack of finance which must be exacerbated by the fact that at this moment in time the opportunity of raising funds to raise capital for a business or to pay for a course is denied them. The MET indicated that lack of finance was a major issue. Although a former asylum seeker and former-ESOL student has managed to set up her own business and been a source of inspiration to other ESOL students this was possible because she arrived in Scotland with some money behind her which she was able to use to set up her business. People in other circumstances will have left their countries in situations of civil unrest and may arrive with nothing.

Language was another barrier for all the respondents from the Palestinian who had worked as a fisherman and had attended no formal education to the highly educated professionals such as the woman from the Congo in its affect on working in their field. The course at Anniesland College for Doctors is a situation where language for work purposes can be targeted in a way that would be problematic in a general ESOL class. One of the lecturers in hospitality at the MET outlined that the asylum seekers who undertake hospitality courses have to get used to responding to quick and brief instructions which is in contrast to ESOL classes where tutors are used to being very patient and supportive and taking things at a slower pace. This is an issue raised in Schellekens report (Schellekens, 2001).

OTHER BARRIERS

It appeared that there were barriers which affected some groups of asylum seekers and not others. One example of this was the situation facing asylum seekers leaving school. Their circumstances are problematic as they have initially been able to integrate in a way that parents have not i.e. attending school, mixing with Scottish people and developing their English through total immersion. They have also been able to acquire standard Scottish school qualifications. Then, when they leave school they are suddenly confronted with many barriers e.g. unable to enter paid employment, to study at University.

Due to this Careers Scotland are currently applying for funding to target young people from the asylum seeker and refugee communities who are in transition. This is a vulnerable point as having previously experienced entitlements in Scotland the barriers that face their parents start to kick in. Many would like to study at University and find that this is not open to them despite being high achievers.

As the 16 year old daughter of one of the respondents indicated "It's not fair. We all work really, really hard and get good grades in our exams and then we cannot go to study at university".

Another issue was child care responsibilities. This had been a major issue for the Zambian respondent who indicated that her child's illness had cost her a nursery place at North Glasgow College and consequently her ability to continue her Health Care course.

Health issues and caring responsibilities were also a barrier. This was the situation with the Sri Lankan male who had been tortured and imprisoned as he was a Tamil and was still affected by his injuries. The Refugee Skills Audit raised the issue of refugee teachers and indicated that being used to different methods of discipline and previous experience of trauma were obstacles which the refugee may have to overcome if they wished to continue in the profession (Scottish Executive, 2004). The Kosovan female indicated that she has caring responsibilities for her father although in this particular situation the caring role is shared with other family members.

MORE SPECIFIC BARRIERS

There was evidence of barriers which were more specific to the individual such as the example given by Reed in Partnership of the Iraqi man whose previous experience was in an area of national security. As indicated in the methodology section this is an illustration of the pitfalls of qualitative research – when the experience of some may not be generalised to others.

HOW THESE BARRIERS ARE DEALT WITH

It was clear that providing guidance to asylum seekers is a very complicated business due to the multiple barriers they face, their experience of different types of labour markets and ways of working and the complex nature of entitlement.

It is very evident that in order to work with entitlement issues effectively guidance workers have to be very thorough. A superficial knowledge could be counterproductive as entitlement can vary considerably depending on a person's status if mainstream services are being accessed and it is also counterproductive with projects as they are often intended to meet the needs of a particular client profile. An example of the former was an example given by the Careers Scotland adviser when she described the case of the asylum seekers leaving care with ELR status who obtained skillseekers positions. The Scottish Refugee Centre and a contact at the Job Centre who was very knowledgeable about current entitlement to employment issues were valuable sources on this matter. The latter is illustrated by the situation of the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics who were unable to fund an individual who had been in a prestigious administrative post in a University as he was not an academic.

On occasions the use of the name asylum seeker or refugee may be misleading. On hearing about the Refugee Doctors Programme a Careers Adviser might surmise that it was not open to asylum seekers while a telephone call or more detailed examination of the course information leaflet (**APPENDIX 4**) indicates that this is not in fact the case.

It was clear that each agency was working at overcoming different barriers of which there was some overlap. With regard to developing employability skills Reed in Partnership, Glasgow North concentrated intensively while the Bridges

Project addressed in work barriers faced by skilled professionals such as re-establishing a network, the opportunity to obtain a Scottish reference and to gain experience of the work environment and develop their language in a work context. The Scottish Refugee Centre, Glasgow North and Bridges Project contacted the professional bodies to facilitate articulation routes for clients while the Doctors and Teachers projects specialise in liaising with their own professional body only. Glasgow North and Reed in Partnership indicated that work with local employers to encourage positive attitude about taking on employees from the refugee community was also vital. There are requirements for clearer communication to employers and the general public in order to prevent misinformation such as a generalisation that all asylum seekers and refugees are the same and none of them are entitled to work. When an employer is confident that they can legally employ someone there is more chance that a refugee may be given an opportunity. This was outlined in a recent home office report as a policy recommendation:

'greater assistance could be provided to employers to help them accurately assess the value and level of non-UK qualifications'

(Shields and Wheatley Price, 2003, p5)

EXPECTATIONS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

As discussed in the previous sections the interviewees expectations of the Scottish labour market varied quite considerably as did their expectations of the selection process (Zambian female, Palestinian male).

FUTURE RESEARCH

In a report of this nature it has been necessary to highlight some of the main features and trends that were emerging from the interviews and it is clear that additional interviews and case studies would reveal others. This is especially the case as entitlement issues may change and it could be that this could result in different trends than before.

Maguire (2004) indicated that there was a requirement in guidance for more studies with a longitudinal focus and this would appear to be the type of research in which this could be carried out although tracing individuals could be problematic. This type of research might be easier within the professions e.g. Refugee doctors.

As outlined before there is an opportunity for evaluative research and this may well be a necessity in the case of projects where funders may require evidence of effective guidance interventions. Glasgow North indicated that they were currently undertaking a guidance and research project to map articulation routes.

Another area of interest would be undertake further research on the guidance needs of entire families and the particular barriers faced by the different generations as it was evident from the experience of conducting the interviews that this emerged as an interesting feature.

As mentioned in the previous section a need for capacity building was also identified with regard to ESOL providers and charities through perhaps training presentations and distribution of information on topics such as entitlement.

Although Careers Advisers may prefer to work at a practitioner level with individual clients the issue of careers guidance for asylum seekers is also very political. Different perspectives (i.e. assimilation, multi-cultural, equality) suggest different solutions (Meijers & Piggott, 1995). A diversity perspective indicates cultural employability differences could be addressed whereas an equality could sometimes prove a barrier to employability work which could actually move clients forward due to a practitioner's concerns to work to a politically correct agenda. This is a core consideration for Careers work.

"We are not asylum seekers, we are people, just human who just want to live their lives in peace"

(Algerian female, 32)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX NUMBER	DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION
1	INFORMATION LEAFLET PRODUCED BY THE SCOTTISH REFUGEE CENTRE REGARDING CURRENT ENTITLEMENT FOR ASYLUM SEEKER, REFUGEE, ILR AND ELR STATUS REGARDING EMPLOYMENT
2	ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE BMJ REGARDING THE REFUGEE DOCTORS PROGRAMME
3	CARA GUIDE FOR REFUGEES
4	REFUGEE DOCTORS PROGRAMME INFORMATION BOOKLET
5	INFORMATION REGARDING GOPIP
6	CASE STUDY – RAINBOW
7	CASE STUDY – CAREERS SCOTLAND
8	INFORMATION LEAFLET – CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEW GLASWEGIAN'S PROJECT
9	MODERN APPRENTICESHIP IN FISHING – INFORMATION OBTAINED BY PALESTINIAN MALE RESPONDENT FROM JOB CENTRE
10	CSV GIVE AND GAIN VOLUNTEERING LEAFLET

