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Executive Summary

This report sets out the key barriers young refugees face when they try to gain access to, and progress within the labour market. It puts forward a series of recommendations, which detail how these barriers can be overcome.

Many young people face barriers to employment because of poor qualifications and lack of work experience. For young refugees, finding work can be even more difficult than for others. Particular barriers are: disruption to education, the impact of the asylum system and lack of guidance or support.

There are a number of measures which would make this process easier for young refugees, enabling them to progress in all aspects of their lives, and contribute to society. The key measures are listed below:

Government

Unemployed young refugees represent a cost to government in terms of benefits payments and forgone tax revenues. The DWP should undertake a cost benefit analysis of the measures, listed in this report, to get young refugees into work.

The Government’s guidance to employers must include: the benefits of employing refugees, the difficulties refugees face getting references, and the legal implications of employing people with temporary or indefinite leave.

Exempt English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from the Jobseeker’s Allowance 16-hour rule.

Provide more robust, intensive and work-focused language provision.

Do not take students off ESOL courses to start New Deal courses before they have acquired the language skills needed to work.

Recognition is needed that young refugees are often desperate to work, and placements provided by the New Deal for Young People must give them an opportunity to progress.

Do not use temporary leave as a substitute for a permanent decision, as it prevents young people from progressing and gaining valuable qualifications.

Provide financial support for those with temporary leave to remain, to enable them to remain in full-time education.

Other key agencies

Connexions and Jobcentre Plus should use outreach work to reach young refugees who are afraid or reluctant to ask for help, and guide them into fulfilling employment.

Greater use of mentoring schemes for young refugees and those with temporary leave to remain, to increase confidence, give young people access to larger networks and provide cultural reorientation.

Accreditation of prior learning and experience for refugees under the age of 20.

Do not place unaccompanied minors with older siblings and other adults who are not natural parents unless it is demonstrably in their best interests. These placements must be carefully monitored by social services.
Introduction

“I would like to be a secretary and work in an office. I think of it every day... When I find a job I want to do, that’s more important than money” - Elisabella, 19.

“Why me? Every time I try to do something there’s something else in my way.” - Hasret, 17.

The number of refugees Centrepoint works with has increased significantly over the last five years [table 1]. Currently one in four of the young people Centrepoint supports have temporary leave or refugee status, nearly three times the number of refugees in Centrepoint hostels five years ago1.

While the barriers to work that refugees face are increasingly being explored, there has been little research looking specifically at the situation of young refugees.

The Home Office is consulting on a National Strategy for Refugee Integration between July and October 2004. The strategy sets out some new, welcome initiatives to tackle the barriers to employment facing refugees. In particular it establishes the refugee integration loan which could help to meet some of the prohibitive costs referred to in this report. It also proposes the ‘SUNRISE’ programme; a 28 day package of advice and support for new refugees, which includes employment advice. This report demonstrates that these initiatives are much-needed.

The DWP published a draft strategy for refugee employment in 2003 and is due to publish a full strategy this year. It is crucial that young refugees’ interests and experiences are fully reflected in this strategy.

Many young refugees are motivated to find work. 65% of refugees in Centrepoint hostels are currently looking for work, compared to 42% of the young people overall1. Some are driven by the desire to be financially secure and independent or to support family in their home countries. Others see work as a way to achieve security and stability, or as something positive to focus on while they struggle to come to terms with upheaval and trauma. For many it is the key to boosting self-esteem and integrating into the UK.

The young refugees supported by Centrepoint are generally a focused group who use their initiative and have high skills. Experience of working with young refugees has demonstrated that they are often highly motivated and make use of the resources and services that are known and available to them. They may come from wealthy, educated families and as a result have high aspirations3.

Yet despite this drive and ability, young refugees are remarkably unsuccessful in their attempts to find work. When they do find work this often does not allow them to fulfil their potential. The barriers faced by refugees when they try to get into work are well documented4. The largest study to date established that only 29% of refugees were in work, compared with 60% of all people from ethnic minorities. It found that refugees earned only 79% of the wages of other ethnic minority groups and just 62% of the average hourly rate. More than 11% were paid less than the National Minimum Wage5.

NOTES
In addition to the barriers which prevent refugees from finding work, young refugees also face barriers relating to their age and inexperience. While young refugees face multiple barriers to work, these barriers are often different from those facing older refugees. A study for the Refugee Council found that young refugees follow a different route to employment from their adult counterparts. Although younger refugees get jobs more quickly and face less of the employment barriers which older refugees encounter, problems with language proficiency and lack of employment opportunities prevent them from accessing apprenticeships and the New Deal routes followed by other young people.

Research has found that ‘the early experience of asylum seekers is likely to have a profound impact on their preparedness as refugees to integrate into the UK economy’. For young people with a strong sense of fairness, being accepted into the labour market can be a crucial factor in how they view the UK and in their subsequent experiences.

Initial periods outside the labour market also have longer-term adverse effects on the labour market experiences of refugees.

A recent study found that experiences outside the labour market at a young age affect people throughout their working lives.

This report sets out the key barriers young refugees face when they try to access the labour market and progress within it. It puts forward a series of recommendations to help overcome these barriers.

### TABLE 1: Number of refugees entering Centrepoint hostels, year by year

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NOTES
10 This report is based on interviews with young people aged 16-25 who have refugee status or subsidiary protection, in London and the North East. Some names have been changed.
Education and Qualifications

Qualifications can be crucial for young people trying to enter the labour market as they compensate for limited work experience. The majority of refugees who travel at a young age have faced disruption to their education, in their home countries or in the UK. Young refugees often lack UK qualifications and struggle to gain recognition for qualifications gained overseas which they need in order to move into work. Thirty-nine per cent of young refugees currently supported by Centrepoint have no qualifications at all\(^1\).

Disruption in Britain

Changes to allocated accommodation while waiting for a decision on an asylum claim commonly disrupts education. Asylum seekers are often placed into emergency accommodation and this can result in several moves.

Fuad, 20, was moved twice while waiting for a decision and had to attend three different colleges. As a result, he was not able to finish his course and start work. He is unsure whether he will return to college:

> “I waste two years in a hostel. I don't want to waste more time. It’s not fair. If you move to another area you have to start again. People I used to live with have their own flats, nice jobs, good life. My heart is broken.”

Adapting to British teaching

Young refugees may also have studied in several different countries and this can make it difficult for them to adjust to changes in the curriculum:

> “Sometimes I get stuck with my subjects, even after two years. Subjects were really different in Iran. It was really difficult to get used to it here.” - Elika, 18.

For many young refugees this causes disillusionment and low self-esteem, which hampers their ability to gain higher qualifications and may curb their aspirations.\(^2\)

Bullying

Many young refugees struggle to make progress at school in the UK. Some young people find it hard to adjust to cultural differences, such as lack of discipline. Many refugees interviewed had experienced racist bullying at school, sometimes resulting from their asylum-seeking status and felt this had seriously hampered their ability to make progress. This was particularly common in the dispersal areas:

> “I've been through enough violence - people in school didn't understand. I'm old now, I've been through a lot. I feel so old.” - Mirand, 20.

Hardship

Many students find it difficult to afford books for study and others have to walk long distances to college because they are ineligible for travel allowances.

The extension of learner support funds to 16-18 year old asylum seekers is a welcome development, but those asylum seekers aged 19 and over who have been delayed in their education because of their experiences still face

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\(^2\) The commitment in the Home Office Strategy (2004) to ensure that all newly qualified teachers have the skills and support to teach refugee children should help to lessen the impact of this.
hardship, and are sometimes forced to leave their courses because of this.

In addition, those with temporary leave are subject to the ordinary residence requirement which requires them to live in the UK for at least three years before they are eligible for learner support funds in both further and higher education. They are immediately eligible for home student rate tuition fees, but may be barred from participating in higher education by hardship. It is inconsistent that they are immediately regarded as home students for the purposes of tuition fees but not for learner support funds. Centrepoint staff regularly see young people who have to leave education because of this rule.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is strongly recommended that the ordinary residence rule should be removed for those with temporary leave, so that they can progress in their education.

**Overseas qualifications**

Those young refugees who have qualifications from their home countries find it hard to gain recognition in the UK for their qualifications. Many young refugees describe the lack of interest employers show in the qualifications they have gained overseas.
The National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) offers a qualifications translations service in the UK\textsuperscript{13}. This was not widely known amongst the refugees interviewed, but for all of them the cost would be prohibitive. The refugee integration loan, soon to be introduced, may help to cover this cost. In their draft strategy for refugee employment, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) suggested that the Adviser Discretion Fund (ADF) could be used to pay for NARIC where it would lead to specific job opportunities\textsuperscript{14}.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The DWP suggestion that the Adviser Discretion Fund can be used to pay for the qualifications translation service should be implemented as it would raise awareness about the service and overcome the financial barrier.

Refugees with vocational qualifications often have to retrain in the UK to meet higher standards. This can be demoralising. In addition, retraining is costly, and can take some time.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Jobcentre Plus should offer support and guidance to all refugees who are considering retraining to meet UK standards.

NOTES  
\textsuperscript{13} NARIC can provide statements of comparability and certificates of comparability at a cost of £35.25 and £70.25 respectively.  
\textsuperscript{14} 'Working to Rebuild Lives', DWP, 2003.
Experience of Work

Although qualifications are important for young refugees who are looking for work, research has found that redressing the lack of UK qualifications alone does not lead to success in the job market. A study carried out for the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) found that studying at degree or postgraduate level in the UK helps to reduce the disparity between refugees' levels of pay and qualifications and that of others 'but not eliminate it'.

There are several other factors which affect refugees' access to quality employment, one of the most important of which is work experience.

Finding work experience

Young people are often hampered by lack of work experience and find it difficult to get their first job. Because of the additional factors at play, some of which have been discussed in earlier chapters, young refugees can find it almost impossible to get their first job or placement.

"How am I meant to get experience if I can't get a job?" - Mirand, 20.

Centrepoint’s Learning and Work Team identifies UK work experience as the first requirement before an employer will consider a young refugee for work.

Muse, 21, has been looking for a part-time job for 18 months. He has had some interviews:

"I have no experience, that's the problem. Most of them tell me that."

This is a common pattern amongst young refugees. The Connexions Service recommends that personal advisers can overcome these barriers by liaising with Jobcentre Plus and local employers to help young refugees into work. Personal advisers should also work with local employers to help them overcome their concerns about employing refugees.

Employers have highlighted the need for support when running programmes for refugees, particularly support from voluntary sector organisations which have expertise in this area.

RECOMMENDATION

Partnership working, coordinated by Jobcentre Plus and Connexions Services, involving employers and voluntary community organisations, would be highly effective.

Mentoring

Research has noted that young refugees can be greatly assisted through mentoring programmes and apprenticeships. For young people with no work experience this could prove to be the first, vital step into work. Younger refugees who attend school in the UK take part in work placements organised by the school, and if they and the employers are supported through this process it can prove to be very successful. Those who arrive at an older age miss this opportunity to gain valuable experience of working in the UK. Work experience is crucial for young refugees who often lack prior

NOTES

16 'Working Together: Connexions Supporting Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees', Connexions and Save the Children, 2003.
qualifications. Finding ways for young refugees to access some work in the UK, either through training, mentoring schemes or in paid employment is the first priority for Centrepoint’s Learning and Work Team, a specialist service helping young people to access education, training and employment.

Recognising overseas work experience

Those refugees who have worked prior to entering the UK find it difficult to get employers to recognise this experience. There is a strong need for accreditation of prior learning, qualifications and experience. While some colleges are very good at assessing young refugees’ skills and qualifications, it can be difficult for employers to navigate this unfamiliar area.

The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) runs the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning programme which helps trainees codify skills they have acquired through experience as well as through formal and informal training. They leave with a portfolio which demonstrates their skills and experience. It also helps to highlight gaps in skills which need to be overcome for the person to achieve their employment goals. The programme is open to those over the age of 20 with higher level skills and experience.

RECOMMENDATION

It would be helpful for refugees under the age of 20, or those with fewer skills also to have access to a service like APEL, provided for those over 20 with higher level skills.

References

Young refugees’ lack of UK work experience means they do not have any references. In addition many young refugees cannot find anyone who has known them long enough to serve as a character referee. This can operate as a significant barrier to employment. In a study of employers for the Employability Forum, Angel Human Resources reported that many employers require two years of reference cover, which can be difficult to obtain for refugees who do not have references from their home countries and may have been unable to work for some considerable time.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government intends to issue guidance for employers. This should include information about the difficulties refugees have obtaining references. In addition the Government should work with groups of employers to promote understanding of these difficulties.

Getting a first work placement or job in the UK is vital for young refugees who hope to enter the labour market. However, even those young refugees who have some work experience, including paid work, still face a number of barriers when they try to get another job.

English Language

“If you have no English you have nothing at all” - Claudia, 25.

The link between language proficiency and access to employment is clear. A study carried out in 2002 confirmed this link, and found that a refugee's level of English also had an impact on the quality of employment they were able to find. Most of the respondents in the study who spoke limited or no English were in low-skilled jobs.20

The growth and relative strength of the service industry in the UK21, with its emphasis on interpersonal and communication skills, causes problems for refugees, particularly for young refugees who are often keen to work in these areas.22 Good English language provision is, therefore, key to improving the prospects of a young refugee hoping to work in the UK.

English for Speakers of Other Languages

On the whole, asylum seekers learn English through English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. When asylum seekers receive a positive decision on their application, they are no longer supported within the asylum system. For those over the age of 18, support is terminated within 28 days and most young refugees begin claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) while they look for work. They then become subject to the rule which restricts learning to 16 hours per week. This rule also restricts access to English classes, which can cause serious problems for young people, particularly as waiting times for asylum claims continue to fall, because they have less time to learn English before the 16-hour rule comes into force.

RECOMMENDATION
ESOL classes should be exempted from the 16 hour rule which restricts learning to 16 hours per week for JSA recipients.

In addition, it is important that young people are not taken off ESOL courses in order to attend Jobcentre Plus training courses. Without a good level of English they are not able to progress in work. Removing people from ESOL to get them into the labour market is short-sighted and counter-productive.

Young refugees and asylum seekers can experience some difficulty getting a place on an ESOL course, particularly over the summer when colleges tend to be full. This situation is improving and the majority of young refugees who took part in this research only had to wait for around three months to access ESOL at the busiest times. However, for some young people this is a very long time, because they cannot progress in any areas of their lives until they can speak and understand English. This wait can be very demotivating, and may lead to apathy or an unwillingness to engage, which impacts on their prospects of early employment. Some further education colleges run summer schools in ESOL, which can help to prepare asylum seekers and refugees to enter ESOL at a higher level in September.

NOTES
RECOMMENDATION
Enough places should be made available for asylum seekers and refugees to have early access to the ESOL system at any time of year.

Most of the young people interviewed felt that ESOL was too basic and they were frustrated and demotivated because it did not allow them to learn English fast enough.

“It’s helpful sometimes but really it’s a waste of time. It’s easy. In the class we are different; some high, some low. I need help with spelling, that’s all.” - Nawal, 24.

Many young people also complain that they cannot access enough hours and would like the course to be more intensive. Young refugees see English as the key to a new life. They find repeating ESOL courses very discouraging and once they have progressed beyond the limitations of the course content they need something practical and constructive to do, such as voluntary work, in order to learn English faster. This is borne out by research. South Thames College offers courses in other areas, such as childcare, with ESOL support, which can help to attract and engage refugees and asylum seekers who may not be confident about improving their English. At the same time it provides them with a skill to ease the transition into work. These courses are popular and could be used as a model for other ESOL providers to adopt.

It is vital that refugees can access the right English course at the right stage of their integration. It is important
that classes are tiered to accommodate different starting points and ranges of ability. Some further education colleges have piloted courses which cater for these needs and this should be extended where possible.

RECOMMENDATION

ESOL provision should be more intensive and links could be made with organisations that can offer voluntary work as a natural next step once ESOL has reached its limits.

Young refugees are also critical of ESOL because it does not equip them for work. Many still lack the technical language needed to work in the UK after completing the ESOL course. A Home Office Study in 2003 found ‘a noticeable lack of English for professional or vocational development’ amongst refugees. Language proficiency for the purposes of work is partly a matter of health and safety, and partly a matter of being able to do the job. Therefore employers are understandably reluctant to employ refugees without good language skills.

The DWP’s draft strategy committed to a work-based ESOL pilot at South Thames College which looked at ways to deliver ESOL and labour market advice within Work Based Learning for Adults. Indications show that the pilot was successful for those with a certain basic level of English, particularly the work experience aspect. However Work Based Learning for Adults is only open to over 25s.

RECOMMENDATION

It would also be beneficial to roll out work-based ESOL across the country through the New Deal for Young People.

Employers’ Role

There is room for employers to play a greater role in equipping refugees with the technical language skills for work in different sectors. However while effective schemes have been implemented, some employers are reluctant to provide this for fear that refugees will move on once they have gained these skills. The Government cannot rely solely on employers to provide technical language training and whilst it is important to encourage this provision, it is equally important that technical language for work is provided as part of the ESOL programme.

Young refugees can also find it difficult to gain vocational qualifications because of the technical language involved in their course. Because ESOL does not cover specialist areas students are dependent on any extra help and support their tutor can offer.

“Practical is easy, the problem is theory. That’s the difficult thing, but I do get extra support from the college.” - Emmanuel, 21, studying engineering.

Making applications

Language barriers can also prevent young refugees from applying for work. Some are deterred because they cannot understand job descriptions and application forms.

“I was looking for a job so I was told to contact Connexions. The woman told me to go to places and ask for a job. I went to Fenwick’s but they told me to fill in a form. It was a long form and I didn’t understand the words. I needed a dictionary just to understand the form. I don’t think I’m going to get that job.” - Hasret, 17.

NOTES

25 The findings will be published in late-summer 2004.
RECOMMENDATION
There is a need for Jobcentre Plus and Connexions to provide ongoing specialist employment guidance for refugees, to work in conjunction with work-focused language provision.

Racism and discrimination
Many refugees face hostility when entering the labour market, on grounds of ethnicity, refugee status or simply because they are different. This can make it difficult for them to find work, particularly in certain sectors.

The Home Office document, Full and Equal Citizens acknowledged that ‘racism is one of the key issues that affects refugees’. Refuges face racism in the labour market in a similar way to other minority ethnic groups. For example, Centrepoint’s Learning and Work Team have found that non-anglicised names appear to reduce the likelihood of employment in some industries, particularly if those names are African rather than European. Young people are quick to recognise this and many find it helpful to give themselves a European or anglicised first name to help them fit in.

Young refugees are acutely aware of the stigma associated with claiming asylum. This can translate into an unwillingness to seek help and support for fear of a hostile reaction.

“‘To know something you have to ask. Many refugees are convinced there’s racism so they’re afraid to ask.’” - Carlos, 25.

In a recent study, the Prince’s Trust found that young refugees who travelled on their own were five times more likely to be reluctant to seek help or advice.

This fear of asking for help can prevent young refugees from finding work. Many of the young people interviewed for this report had looked for work for a year or more without seeking help and advice. Centrepoint’s Learning and Work Team helps to combat this by engaging with refugees through both referral and outreach work.

RECOMMENDATION
Government agencies, like the Connexions Service and Jobcentre Plus, need to understand this fear of asking for help and place greater emphasis on outreach work to help combat it.

Isolated work placements
Young refugees may also find themselves isolated on work placements. Work placements can often be a difficult experience because, as a temporary member of the organisation, it is easy to become sidelined and feel ignored or different. Young refugees often report these feelings after a work placement. This is difficult for any age group but for many young refugees this is their only experience of work and it compounds the sense of rejection they carry with them from their previous experiences.

Personal relationships are the key to combating this. Young refugees who are supported through work placements report very positive feelings about work. Elika, 18, did some work experience at a well-known hardware store as part of a school programme. She was supported by the employees and learnt a great deal through the experience. This is a good example of how positive experiences of work can be fostered by sensitive, supported placements.

Hasret, 17, also had some work experience arranged through her school. She did not know enough English to understand what she was being asked to do and was too embarrassed to ask for help. When it
transpired that she had not understood her instructions she was reprimanded in front of co-workers. This was her only experience of work and she is now very pessimistic about her ability to get paid work in the future.

RECOMMENDATION
It is important that work placements are supported and that organisations which employ refugees allocate a mentor or ‘buddy’ to help young refugees acclimatise and integrate into the workplace.

This can also help young refugees to develop within the organisation. Marks and Spencer runs a scheme which offers supported work placements to disadvantaged groups and has reported benefits to both the new employee and their mentor from the relationship\(^9\).

Kamal, 26, has had two experiences of work in the UK. He has attended a training scheme and undertaken a work placement at a museum. Both times he felt isolated from the social aspect of work:

“I decided I need to find my feet for the working culture here. For the whole period I wasn’t really happy. It’s not a matter of the work. You feel isolated. I speak English well but when you go to a workplace the office are not really helpful. Some people are really nice and ready to teach you. If people are nice this language barrier is so minor. When you go to school you do English for a long time but they teach you grammar not slang. That doesn’t really help when you’re at work.”

It is vital that young refugees are supported throughout work placements and jobs. Without this support many young refugees are hesitant to return to the workplace.
Waiting for a decision

The asylum system impacts on refugees' attempts to access employment. Waiting for a decision on an asylum claim is inevitably a difficult time because of concern that their application may be rejected. Currently asylum seekers wait for six months on average for an initial decision on their application. Many young asylum seekers choose to attend college during this time to occupy themselves, with most studying ESOL and another subject. It is a difficult period as asylum seekers have to survive on a cash allowance which amounts to approximately two-thirds of JSA, and have no stability or certainty about the future.

“I would like to stay but it’s not up to me. Of course it makes it difficult. They can even send me back. If you go back you’ll have to start everything again - find friends. You have a life here.” - Aleksander, 16.

Kamal, 26, had to wait a year for Indefinite Leave to Remain:

“That was a very stressful period. I was sharing a room with five people. You can’t look for work, or anything. Everything is just blocked, everything. It’s the freedom. You can’t do anything at all.”

During this period, asylum seekers are usually prevented from working and many feel their lives are stalled because they cannot make plans for the future. In addition such low levels of financial support can mean they have no money at all for leisure and transport and are unable to mix with their peers.

It is important that young asylum seekers are engaged in some constructive activity during this time.

Study can provide this for some, and prove to be useful bridge to their lives after status. However, for other young people this is a time they could use to gain experience of work in the UK. Gaining work experience would make a substantial difference to those who are granted leave to remain, and provide them with skills to take back to their home countries if they are unsuccessful. It would also benefit the wider community by allowing asylum seekers to contribute their skills and talents. Increasing voluntary work opportunities would be a positive way of achieving this.

“I can’t do anything until it’s decided” - Elisabella, 19.

The practice of granting temporary leave prolongs this situation. Elisabella has been waiting for a year for a decision from the Home Office about whether to extend her Exceptional Leave to Remain and is delaying any decision about her college course until she receives a decision.

NOTES
31 The weekly allowance for a single asylum seeker aged 18-25 is currently £30.84, compared to £44.05 for a single jobseeker aged 18-24.
32 The Government’s commitment to the ‘reception directive’ as part of the common European asylum system negotiations means that by February 2005 asylum seekers can only be denied the right to work for one year. The Government announced this in a written answer to a Parliamentary question (Hansard, 24 June 2004).
In 2002, 24% of applicants received Exceptional Leave to Remain but amongst unaccompanied asylum-seeking children it was 69%\(^\text{34}\). The Government practice of granting temporary leave until the age of 18 causes a number of problems for young refugees who are unable to plan for their future. It can cause depression, distress and, above all, an inability to make any future plans. Young people feel this very acutely and many describe how important it is to them to keep up with their peers. Many young people are granted leave to remain and find they have lost the skills they previously held and the motivation to create a future for themselves.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Temporary leave should not used as a substitute for making a permanent decision, where a permanent decision is possible.

**Dispersal**

“I don’t understand why the Home Office put people from other countries in the worst places. We saw lots of crime. It was shocking to me.” - Hasret, 17.

Dispersing asylum seekers can mean they live in areas with high levels of unemployment and few opportunities. They may also face increased levels of racial discrimination in the job market. Although they can move to other areas once they are given status, it can be hard for families who are settled in an area to move because of their children’s education\(^\text{35}\). It can also be difficult for young refugees who are alone, who may feel settled and unable to face more disruption.

Although all refugees face problems, in areas where there is little casual employment young refugees are disproportionately affected because this is the only type of work they can usually get. This places them at risk of being excluded from the job market altogether.

Dispersal removes refugees from informal job-seeking networks which they tend to rely on. The DWP study found two-thirds of refugees accessed work through family, friends or community groups prior to the dispersal system being introduced\(^\text{34}\).

In addition, dispersal can cause a multitude of problems for asylum seekers. It can remove them from their support networks and place them in a hostile environment. Many young refugees who are dealing with practical matters on behalf of their families find they are also battling racism alone. Dispersal areas unused to significant numbers of asylum seekers may not have support services in place, or the necessary expertise to help them.

In the short-term this can mean that looking for work is the last thing a young refugee is able to do. It can affect their long-term aspirations leaving them with little confidence or focus. In addition it can lead them to make the wrong choices or under-achieve, which may leave them unable to proceed in a chosen career.

Hasret, 17, wants to go to university but has spent so much time sorting out problems for her family and dealing with racism on behalf of herself and her brother that she lacks qualifications and has little confidence in herself. She did not know she would need GCSEs to go to university until recently.

“It’s hard because I didn’t get maths and English. I looked at the prospectus and you need so many qualifications. I think I’ll never go to university. It seems hopeless.”
It is vital that dispersal placements are well supported in order to take the pressure off young refugees and allow them to achieve. Those families who are housed in the private sector by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) can face considerable disadvantage in relation to those who are supported by the local authority because they slip through the net more easily.

Dispersal areas can also be very geographically wide and cluster areas tend to be very dispersed making it difficult to link services. This can isolate both asylum seekers and those practitioners who work with them. Partnerships between all agencies working with asylum seekers are increasingly important in these areas, with a specific named person responsible for each partnership. It is important that all families are able to access help and support from the local authority.

**RECOMMENDATION**

A duty should be placed on the local authority to review regularly the progress of all young asylum seekers, in areas like school or college, friendships, and relationships with their family, separately from their parents. Some local authorities, like Gateshead, are already doing this. This must be supported by adequate funding from central Government.

Refugees in dispersal areas may need extra intensive help to gain access to information about what is available, to help them into the labour market. There is a particular problem with access to services in large geographical areas and much needed extra support should be achieved through outreach work.
Getting status

Once asylum seekers are granted status their situation immediately changes. A positive decision immediately sets in motion a chain of events including changes to housing, financial support and rights to work and travel.

‘What happens at this stage truncates or prolongs the resettlement process. It is vital that services connect, are easily accessible and intelligible to all, allow the individual to make informed choices’. 37

For young people, this can be a very difficult time. They may have to leave courses of study in order to claim JSA, which can remove a much needed source of stability and support in the form of their college. They may also find that they are coping alone, in a strange system, for the first time in their lives.

Denying asylum seekers access to employment services creates problems for those who are given status after the age of 18 because they only have 28 days before NASS support is ended. This is a very short time to prepare a CV and learn to navigate the job market in the UK. Once status is granted, refugees have many other things to think about, such as claiming benefits and finding somewhere to live.

The Government has proposed to pilot the SUNRISE scheme, which would provide refugees with a 28 day, intensive support package and a named caseworker to help them during this difficult time.

It is crucial that all young refugees have access to an holistic package of support and guidance at the time at which they are given status.

RECOMMENDATION
An extended preparation time beyond 28 days with an intensive package of help and support, including employment guidance and advice is needed. The SUNRISE scheme should be rolled-out nationally, after the initial pilot tests determine how it can best be implemented.

When a person is granted asylum they are issued with status papers which provide details of their refugee status and right to work. Employers have a duty to check that an applicant has the right to work before they can take up employment. Delays in issuing status papers can cause problems for refugees who may have the right to work but are not able to demonstrate this. It is crucial that documents are issued without delay.

There are some imaginative schemes that seek to lessen the impact of this. Interior PLC, a refurbishment company, runs a part-time work scheme for refugees who have leave to remain but are still waiting to receive their documents. This enables them to find a job when they get their papers, as they have work experience, references and an understanding of office culture. 38

RECOMMENDATION
The DWP has started to issue National Insurance numbers to refugees with their status papers, and this will make a significant difference to refugees. It should be extended to asylum seekers who are granted leave to remain on appeal as soon as is practicable.

RECOMMENDATION
The Immigration Nationality Directorate (IND) must be more proactive in keeping employers aware of changes to work documents. This would break down the barriers to work that result from reluctance or confusion on the part of employers.

NOTES
Difficulties Adjusting to Life in the UK

Cultural differences

Young refugees face difficulties finding and progressing in work because of cultural differences in job seeking and the work culture in the UK. Where many young people may turn to support networks like parents or friends to help them navigate their way through this process, young refugees often lack support from those who understand the system and may be hampered by simple factors like not knowing how to write a CV. For this group, guidance is crucial.  

Centrepont’s Learning and Work Team teaches young refugees the basics of job search in the UK, such as how to approach potential employers by telephone or letter rather than in person. They often find that young refugees are unfamiliar with devices such as telephone interviews, which may not be used in the young person’s home country. 

The study on refugee employment carried out for the DWP in 2002 found that 33% of refugees had used family networks to find work before arriving in the UK, but only 7% had managed to do this since. Since arriving in the UK the most important route to work was through friends (32%), private agencies (7%) and a community group (5%) [table 2].

“it is completely different. In my country there are no employment agencies. Unions are responsible; they post out adverts. We have CVs but they don’t really employ you on your CV.” - Kamal, 26.

RECOMMENDATION

The Connexions Service should make more use of community groups to reach refugees who are in need of help and advice by working with schools, colleges and community groups particularly to reach young refugees and provide them with the support and guidance that they need to find work.

In the UK, job advertisements require the applicant to show how and why they are equipped for a job. This is different to many other countries which give greater weight to qualifications. This can be a very difficult system to learn and navigate without help and advice. Job specifications also tend to place a great deal of emphasis on communication skills and UK work experience, which cannot be met by refugees. Refugees’ comparative advantages such as language skills need to be given credit.

Community groups play a crucial role in reaching refugees who may be reluctant to approach people or organisations in positions of authority because of past persecution, or simply not know of the services they can offer.

Lack of British support networks

Many young refugees find their lack of knowledge about Britain's job-seeking culture is compounded by their inability to turn to family for advice.

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41 The SUNRISE programme, if implemented, will help refugees with these skills. However it will not extend to the children of refugee families who reach the age when they want to work.
For young people who arrive in the UK without their families, this option does not exist. Others find their parents are struggling to understand the UK system themselves and cannot help them.

“\textit{I have to do a CV before I can get a job but I don’t know what to put down, that’s the thing.}” - Hasret, 17.

Many young refugees rely on British friends for advice, but this can lead to limited guidance. Others do not have British friends: they mix solely with other refugees and may not have the opportunity to seek advice from someone who understands the job-seeking culture in the UK.

Mentors can help to expand the circle of contacts for young refugees and provide a useful source of help and guidance with CVs and other aspects of the job-search system. Through its work with asylum seekers, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has found that carrying out a skills audit and creating a CV can raise self-esteem because it is the first time many people have documentation detailing what they can do, leading to a more positive attitude towards finding work\textsuperscript{43}.

Many refugees are at an additional disadvantage in the labour market because they are not equipped with the right skills for UK industry. In their home countries the dominating industries may be areas like agriculture, manufacturing and construction. In the UK, the service industry is dominant, and this demands different skills. A study for the Refugee Council found the service industry ‘demands a fitting in skill which is best acquired by years of acculturation. This is a difficult thing for refugees to learn’\textsuperscript{44}.

\textbf{RECOMMENDATION}

Extra support should be made available to help refugees acquire the skills needed to work in the UK, with particular emphasis on language skills and supported work placements to help young refugees to learn and adapt. This could be provided through colleges, universities or voluntary and community groups.

\textbf{Learning new skills}

Young refugees from poorer or less developed countries also face a steep learning curve to gain the skills needed for work in the UK. Many have never used computers, fax machines and other technology.

Aleksander, 16, knew nothing about computers before he came to the UK from Kosovo: “I’d never used one before in my life.” He would like to work in an office and is undertaking a computer studies course as a way to achieve this.

Despite these barriers, young refugees can be quick to adapt and are aware of job culture in the UK in a way that older refugees sometimes are not. For example, they do not place undue emphasis on qualifications.

‘\textit{It’s hard for refugees. I know so many people who have qualifications, but that’s not all.}’ - Kamal, 26.

One solution is to encourage refugees to make more use of the skills they possess which give them some advantages in the UK workforce. For example, using their levels of motivation to set up in business or to use their language skills. One young refugee is planning to set up a business importing cultural items from his home country because he sees this as a field where he would have a competitive edge over his UK competitors.

\textbf{RECOMMENDATION}

Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions Service should encourage refugees to make more use of their distinctive skills to enter the workforce.

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Empowering Asylum Seekers to Support the Regional Economy}, NIACE, 2 March 2004.
\textsuperscript{44}Shiferaw and Hagos, ‘Refugees and Progression Routes to Employment’, Refugee Council, 2002.
Despite this initiative and realism, they face considerable difficulties acclimatising to the workplace and require additional guidance to overcome this.

**Additional pressures**

Young refugees have many outside pressures to deal with and this can make it difficult for them to focus on gaining employment. Outside pressures can take the form of practical support such as housing and income. In addition many young refugees have difficulty adjusting to life in the UK and this can impact on their ability to focus on work. It is therefore vital that support for young refugees is holistic, both emotional and practical, in all areas of their lives to enable them to focus on work.

**Practical difficulties**

Many young refugees have to deal with housing problems, benefits claims and their ongoing applications for leave to remain. They find it difficult to focus on employment until these aspects of their lives are settled.
Some have to deal with this alone, and are dependent on the advice or guidance they receive from social services, whereas others have to deal with these problems on behalf of their families. In addition some young refugees are taking sole care of their siblings.

Emmanuel came to the UK as an unaccompanied minor. He believed that his family had not survived the conflict in Angola and was delighted when his younger brother arrived in the UK. Social services gave Emmanuel care of his brother. He is now 21 and acts as a parent to a 14 year old, which imposes a considerable emotional and financial burden. He has had little contact with social services since taking care of his brother. “It’s quite hard. The problem is when he does something bad I have to talk to him, and it’s hard.” This pressure makes it hard for Emmanuel to concentrate on his college course and he is unsure whether he will reach his goal of finding work in his chosen area, engineering.

The IND defines an unaccompanied child as someone who appears to be under 18, is applying for asylum in his or her own right and has no adult relative to turn to in the UK. The IND does not consider a child to be unaccompanied if he or she is being cared for by an adult who is prepared to take responsibility for them. This is the case even if that adult has no previous experience of caring for children, or is not much older than the child they are caring for.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) adopts a stricter definition, defining an unaccompanied child as someone who is ‘separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so’.

**Recommendation**

While there are clear benefits to allowing unaccompanied minors to stay with siblings or close adults who are known to them, the practice of placing asylum-seeking children and young people with adults who may not be equipped to cope exposes the child to considerable risk and may hamper the development of both the child and their carer. It is therefore crucial that these placements are carefully chosen, monitored and supported in order to enable those young people involved to develop and achieve their goals. These requirements should be enforced through statutory guidance to local authorities and Children’s Trusts.

**Lack of support and guidance**

Local authorities must decide whether to support children in need under Section 17 or Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Section 20 places a duty on the local authority to ‘look after’ a child in need and this gives the child access to a comprehensive package of support. It also imposes a duty on the local authority to continue to support the young person after the age of 18 under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This includes a duty to provide support in education and employment. By contrast Section 17 provides lower level support which ends at 18.

Mirand arrived in the UK aged 14 from Kosovo. Social services supported him and his uncle in a private flat under Section 17 of the Children Act. When Mirand reached 18, support was ended and, because his uncle did not have status, they were evicted from their flat. Mirand had known this would happen and had to try and find an emergency shelter. He says it was a
very difficult time and he was scared about the prospect of living alone. It took him nearly a year to recover from the experience and begin to focus on the future again.

Those young people supported under Section 17 can have difficulties contacting social services. This has been documented by Centrepoint and is borne out by research.\textsuperscript{49}

The Department of Health issued guidance in June 2003 which recommended that unaccompanied children should receive Section 20 support. This development will make a significant difference to young people after 18 as they attempt to find work, provided the guidance is adhered to by all local authorities.

**Difficulties adjusting to life in the UK**

“\textit{No hope, no life. If you don’t have hope you have nothing. There’s no point.}” - Mirand, 20.

It has been noted that refugees’ attitudes towards their migration will affect their participation in the labour market; those who see the move as permanent may find it easier to integrate and progress.\textsuperscript{49} However, experiences in the home country can also cause difficulties for refugees and prevent them focusing on the future. In turn, accessing employment can give refugees a positive focus and help them to progress. There is a symbiotic relationship between integration and employment.

Willingness and ability to learn is key to breaking down these barriers.\textsuperscript{50} In general, young refugees have a positive outlook and are keen to progress. However, there are many reasons why young refugees might lose this natural enthusiasm.

Refugees can feel they have lost their economic and social status when they get to the UK and find it hard to start again.\textsuperscript{51} This can also affect young refugees as they often have successful parents.\textsuperscript{2}

Nawal, 24, used to work for his father who is a well known businessman in Eritrea. He has found adjusting to life in England difficult and has been disappointed by people’s attitudes towards him: “Even a dog in England gets more respect”. Regaining those things he had in his home country (money, possessions, respect, choices): “that’s the biggest thing in my life. You have those things, you have flexibility, you have power. I want that. If I can work, that’s easy. Then life is easy for me”.

Other young refugees may find it difficult to ask for help and support because of pride. One of the potential pitfalls for young refugees is that their self-reliance may lead to lack of progression.

“No hope, no life. If you don’t have hope you have nothing. There’s no point.” - Mirand, 20.

“It’s hard having to ask social services for money all the time but they’re your family now. You have no-one else to ask.” - Aleksander, 16.

Services for young refugees must recognise the fact that young refugees may also be affected by loss of status and find it hard to adjust to a life where they have nothing.

In addition to these difficulties, young refugees have to deal with the lasting effects of their experiences in their home countries.

Carlos found work as a security guard through the New Deal but was only able to work for five weeks because of injuries sustained when he was tortured. He has been unable to return to work since. Torture has affected him very negatively and he has had difficulty adjusting to life in England.

NOTES
\textsuperscript{50} Shiferaw and Hagos, ‘Refugees and Progression Routes to Employment’, Refugee Council, 2002.
\textsuperscript{52} By nature of the fact that their parents often help them to escape their home country, which can require significant resources.
That’s my problem. Since I was in prison and tortured I can’t concentrate on anything like that. I’m getting depression. I’m trying my best but it affected me a lot. Because I’m getting treatment now I’m striving to get better.”

Some refugees may find they have support from friends or family to deal with these emotional problems. However, family relationships can be complex and may add to the problem. For example a common situation is that tensions arise between siblings after arriving in the UK often as a result of cultural divisions.

Nawal, 24, and his siblings argued after arriving in the UK because his brother and sister accepted the UK’s more liberal culture and Nawal did not. He was unable to cope with the sense of rejection and dropped out of his ESOL course. In addition, lack of housing support meant he had to leave his college course in engineering as he was embarrassed about having to take his sleeping bag to college.

While emotional support, in the form of counselling, may be beneficial to some refugees others simply need a friend to talk to. Centrepoint’s Lifeskills and Youthwork team plays an invaluable role, providing a space for young people to explore personal and social issues with the aim of increasing motivation and self-esteem, and
achieving greater independence and healthier lifestyles. The service runs activities and workshops providing an opportunity for young people to mix. For young refugees this can prove to be one of the few forums they have for meeting people and making friends. The Home Office runs the Challenge Fund which provides money for projects to help integrate refugees into the UK. It is vital that projects which allow young refugees to mix with their peers (both British and non-British) continue to receive funding.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Job Search</th>
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<tr>
<td>Existing Employee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Group</td>
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<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Private Agencies</td>
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**TABLE 2: Methods of Job Search**
Quality of Work

As already touched upon, young refugees tend to use casual labour as a means of entering the workforce and gaining some experience, which many see as a stepping stone to better paid and more fulfilling employment.

However, this work often does not lead to better quality employment. There is a danger that, in addition to facing barriers to the workplace, young refugees face additional barriers to finding work that is fulfilling or well paid [tables 3 and 4]. Many young refugees end up in jobs with less money and working for less hours than their skills merit. They may be unable to focus on long-term goals because of limited aspirations or more immediate concerns. Effectively, they are unable to build a career.

The difficulties young refugees face entering the labour market can translate into a willingness to accept any available work. Many refugees at Centrepoint pursue jobs in catering or administration because they are easier to get. Many also attend college as a second choice option because it is accessible.

This concentration of refugees in certain industries is well documented. Sixty per cent of refugees in the 2002 DWP study were working in translating, retail, administration or catering after arriving in the UK [3]. Diversity of employment had been much greater in their home countries. The study also found refugees were in jobs with very few opportunities for progression and with poor terms and conditions of employment.

Financial pressures

New refugees are under pressure to earn money and this can also lead them to take the first job they can find. Many are motivated by a desire to be independent. Many young refugees are self-reliant, and used to coping alone. The concept of benefits is alien to them and a number of them view it as charity.

“I don’t like benefits. I do nothing, so why do I take from the Jobcentre?” - Nawal, 24.

“I don’t want the Government to pay my bills all the time. I want to be a grown woman - independent. I’m healthy. You should not pay for me. The Government’s the one doing all this for me. That’s not my future. I want to get straight to a job” - Lela, 18.

Nawal is currently learning to drive so he can become a bus driver. He chose bus driving because it is achievable. He sees it as a way of earning money and not having to rely on benefits any longer, but he thinks it may be hard to progress to a job that he would find more stimulating.

Nawal wants to earn so that he can save some money and secure his future. He is anxious about the time he has already lost:

“You have to do something to collect money for the future. If they become disabled what can they do? I lose six years, I want those back.”

Young refugees also feel pressure to take work as soon as possible because of financial commitments. Many are supporting their families in their home countries.

NOTES
A report by the Employability Forum highlighted some of the schemes employers are operating to try to help refugees progress within their organisations. For example, Travel West Midlands operates a training programme, but finds many refugees cannot remain on benefits for long periods of time because they have commitments to family, both in the UK and back home. This may prevent young refugees from taking advantage of opportunities to advance their employment prospects.

Fuad, 20, from Somalia would like to go to university but is sceptical about whether he can: “I have to work for my family so I don’t know what will happen.” His parents and sister are still in Somalia.

In addition, there are young refugees who are having to act as parents to younger siblings in the UK, and this brings with it financial pressures which can force them into work too soon.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that social services provide more support to young refugees who are in the position of having to care for siblings to avoid wasted potential.

**Unaware of opportunities**

Many young refugees end up in unfulfilling work because they do not know what else is on offer. Providing a thorough employment service must entail explaining to young refugees all the options. Centrepoint aims to encourage young refugees to work towards realistic aspirations.

Mirand has wanted to join the police since arriving in the UK from Kosovo. He sought advice from Centrepoint and has decided he would like to specialise in forensics. He is currently studying Criminology at Birkbeck College, London to help him to achieve this goal.

With so much else to deal with, it can be easy for young refugees to slip through the net in terms of career guidance and support. This can lead to under-fulfillment of employment potential in the long term.

Hasret wants to be a fashion designer. She had no guidance at school and made the wrong choices, which now prevents her from achieving her goals. She has become demotivated and feels trapped. “It didn’t work out as I didn’t do art. I don’t want to waste my years in college and do another course. I have to go to university next year.” As a result she has chosen to study something else.

**Formal guidance**

For those who do not access formal guidance systems, this can prove detrimental to their long-term employment prospects. Networking within their own community can only lead refugees into a narrow range of jobs. The DWP’s draft strategy on refugee employment concluded that the informal system of job seeking ‘severely limits choice and perpetuates a culture of low expectation and acceptance of low skilled work. To realise the full potential of refugees a formal system is needed with appropriate guidance and support’.

However, the New Deal, with its emphasis on getting people into jobs, further encourages young refugees to take the most achievable option. ‘There is a conflict between Government priorities to get refugees into the right jobs, and employment services, where

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**NOTES**

the priority is to get people into jobs even if the jobs don’t reflect skills and lack opportunities for progression."56

Fessha, 23, has wanted to be a chef for as long as he can remember but there were no New Deal places available in catering so he is training to drive a forklift truck: “Next six months I do the forklift truck. I prefer catering but they don’t have a place left. My dream is catering.” Fessha hopes he will be able to train to be a chef in the future.

RECOMMENDATION
The New Deal for Young People should place more emphasis on getting young people into jobs which give them opportunities to progress to a level which will suit their skills and abilities, and prevent wasted potential.

Low self-esteem

Sometimes young refugees undervalue their own abilities because of poor past experiences.

Hasret experienced much disruption at school and had very negative experiences in this country. As a result she has lower aspirations than her abilities merit. When she chose her college course she opted for a low level vocational qualification but her teachers recognised she could aim higher and do an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE).

Confidence building can be crucial for this group and is a central plank of Centrepoint’s approach.

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Recommendations

**DWP**

Unemployed young refugees do represent a cost to government in terms of benefits payments and forgone tax revenues. The DWP should undertake a cost benefit analysis of the measures, listed in this report, to get young refugees into work.

The Government published a draft strategy for refugee employment in 2003 and is due to publish a full strategy this year. It is crucial that young refugees' interests and experiences are fully represented in this strategy.

Refugees do not always have references. Increased understanding of these circumstances amongst employers is needed. The Government's guidance for employers should include this. In addition, the Government should work with employers to promote understanding of these difficulties.

Allocating a National Insurance number with status papers should be extended to asylum seekers who are granted leave to remain on appeal as soon as is practicable.

English classes should be exempted from the 16 hour rule which restricts learning to 16 hours for those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance.

**Home Office**

There should be an extended gateway period, beyond the 28 days that refugees have after leave to remain is granted to arrange alternative accommodation and claim mainstream benefits, for refugees to receive guidance training: learning basic skills, and raising awareness about opportunities and constraints in the labour market and Assessment of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL). The SUNRISE scheme must include these elements and be rolled out nationally, after the initial pilot tests determine how it can be best implemented.

The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) runs the APEL course for refugees with higher level skills to give them a portfolio demonstrating their skills and experience. It would be helpful for under 20s and those with skills at a lower level to have access to a similar service.

The Immigration Nationality Directorate must be proactive and keep employers informed about changes to work documents.

Temporary Leave should not be used as a substitute for a permanent decision, where a permanent decision is possible.

After a positive decision status papers detailing the right to work should be issued without delay.

There should be a duty on local authorities to support dispersed young refugees in all areas of their lives.

A duty should be placed on the local authority to review regularly the progress of all young asylum seekers, in areas like school or college, friendships, and relationships with their family, separately from their parents. Some local authorities are already doing this. This must be supported by adequate funding from central Government.

**DfES**

ESOL provision must be more intensive and tiered at different levels. There is also still some need to expand capacity, particularly in the dispersal areas.
The ordinary residence rule should be removed for those with temporary leave.

**Employers**

Job specifications tend to demand place most emphasis on communication skills and UK work experience, which cannot be met by refugees. Refugees’ comparative advantages such as experience prior to entering the UK and proficiency in several languages should be given credit.

Those who employ refugees should consider whether they would benefit from a mentor or ‘buddy’. Mentoring within the workplace and guided apprenticeships can help refugees to develop within jobs and avoid potential misunderstandings and tensions.

**The Connexions Service and Jobcentre Plus**

Employment advice alone is not sufficient in the context of the pressures that face young refugees. Holistic support including housing, health, income, employment and education is needed.

The Connexions Service is responsible for helping 16-17s find work and Jobcentre Plus after 18. Young refugees would benefit from more continuity. Therefore joint working between agencies is vital.

Employers need support when running programmes for refugees, particularly from voluntary sector organisations with expertise in this area. The Connexions Service and Jobcentre Plus should coordinate partnerships between employers and voluntary and community organisations to tackle this.

Refugees should be given more encouragement to exploit their distinctive skills in the marketplace e.g. setting up in business or using their language skills, where they have a competitive edge.
There is a need for Jobcentre Plus and Connexions to provide ongoing specialist employment guidance for refugees.

The Connexions Service should be publicised through refugee community groups - outreach work on the part of the Connexions Service and Jobcentre Plus is vital.

The Connexions Service should ensure that personal advisers liaise with Jobcentre Plus and local employers to help young refugees into work. They should also work with local employers to help them overcome their concerns.

The Connexions Service must ensure that young refugees understand the options that are available and not just help them to achieve those aspirations they mention themselves.

Jobcentre Plus should offer advice and guidance to all refugees who have to retrain to UK standards.

The DWP suggestion that the Adviser Discretion Fund can be used to pay for the qualifications translation service should be implemented as it would raise awareness about the service and overcome the financial barrier.

The New Deal for Young People should place more emphasis on getting young people into jobs which give them opportunities to progress to a level which will suit their skills and abilities, to prevent wasted potential.

Work-based ESOL should be rolled out through the New Deal for Young People.

Young people should not be taken off ESOL courses in order to attend Jobcentre Plus training courses.

Local authorities

Dispersal areas can be very geographically wide so cluster areas tend to be very dispersed and it is difficult to link up services. This means that asylum seekers are isolated, but, importantly, so are practitioners. It is vital that agencies working with asylum seekers work in partnership, and that specific people have responsibility for these partnerships.

Children and young people should not be placed with adults who are unsuitable or unable to look after them. It is vital that these placements are only made after an assessment of their needs, and are regularly monitored. These requirements should be enforced through statutory guidance to local authorities and Children's Trusts.

Some young refugees are having to act as parents to younger siblings in the UK and this brings with it financial pressures which can force them into work too soon. It is strongly recommended that social services provide more support to young people who are in this position, to avoid wasted potential.

Voluntary sector

Extra support is needed to help refugees learn the particular skills demanded by the service industry. This could be provided through colleges, universities or voluntary or community groups.

Colleges and voluntary organisations

Supported work placements and voluntary work opportunities should be made available for all asylum seekers while waiting for a decision, not just for those in schools.

Links could be made between ESOL providers and voluntary work placements, along the South Thames College model.