



NEWSLETTER



Helping the integration of asylum seekers by providing information, training and preparation for the labour market

ISSUE FIVE

MARCH 2005

Editorial

At a time when debate continues about when in the asylum process to allow asylum seekers permission to work, if at all, ASSET UK's message is clear: preparing asylum seekers for the labour market is important for integration, inclusion and can be beneficial for social cohesion and the economy.

Solving complex challenges in preparing asylum seekers for the labour market should they stay in the UK or return, requires a careful balance of expertise, new innovative methodology and plenty of strategic action. In the last few years, this has been the focus of ASSET UK. We have been busy developing practice in online information, advice and guidance, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, volunteering placement, developing skills audits and working with employers. If carefully planned, this preparatory stage enables asylum seekers to be effective in the labour market and contribute to the host community should they stay, or take new skills to their country of origin should they return.

We are committed to sharing our findings, experiences and thoughts with you, and this newsletter is one way we disseminate our actions. You will read in the article 'RAGU on Tour!' that we do our best to obtain feedback from asylum seekers and the people who work for them. We have been active in showcasing our work, which you will also be able to read about. In this edition, you will also find information on our transnational activities, partner updates and wider publications and events that are about preparing asylum seekers for the labour market.

Please do email us at asset.uk@refugeecouncil.org.uk if you have any comments and suggestions. We invite you to tell us about any events and publications that you think our readers would be interested in.

Saba Khan
Information Officer to the European Integration Project



Supported by the Learning Skills Council



Learning+Skills Council



LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

Contents

Feature: ASSET UK policy and practice, showcasing our achievements	page 2
Our success stories!	page 3
Partners update	page 5
Transnational news	page 6
Bulletin board	page 8
Contact us	page 12

This newsletter is produced by ASSET UK. Editorial board: Diana Bowers, Susan Davenport, Edin Hromadzic, Saba Khan, Emma Saunders.

The UK Asylum Seekers Development Partnership - ASSET UK is part funded by the European Social Fund under the Equal Community Initiative Programme. ASSET UK's implementation phase is co-funded by a number of different UK funding sources. The dissemination and mainstreaming phase is co-funded by the National Learning and Skills Council.



Feature

ASSET UK policy and practice - showcasing our achievements

November saw the ASSET UK Development Partnership (DP) hold an internal showcasing event in Birmingham. This day enabled partners to gain greater awareness of actions within the DP and to learn how their own work can further compliment and support each other activities. It also provided the useful opportunity to hear the views and experiences of clients who have gained from the project. Most importantly asylum seekers were able to obtain information about the partnership and how they could increase their involvement with ASSET UK.

Activities and work that were showcased included:

- A comprehensive CD-ROM on Citizenship
- On-line orientation resources to improve practice in giving information, advice and guidance for asylum seekers.
- Good practice in skills audits. Much work with employers with continuous support and supervision for the client has led to many successful education and training placements and volunteering opportunities.
- ESOL activities. ASSET UK provides ESOL classes run by volunteer tutors for newly arrived asylum seekers in emergency accommodation. Partners gained an insight into how these tutors were recruited, trained and supported. They also found out about embedded ESOL provision and a teacher training course, which has highlighted the challenge learners face when learning a new language. A beneficiary currently involved in the ESOL class and is also volunteering for the project spoke of their experience.

The event was thoroughly enjoyed and there were many positive comments from the partners:

"Good opportunity to take time out, see and discuss each other's work in more detail. Very helpful to hear about participants' experience".

"Good participatory exercises in the afternoon".

"It is absolutely important to share the lessons".

This successful day gave partners the opportunity to plan and prepare for the forthcoming Mainstreaming Conference called *Towards an Employment Strategy for Asylum Seekers in the UK* on Thursday March 17 2005, in Birmingham.

We will be showcasing at this event and it will mark the culmination of our work in trying to develop an employment strategy for asylum seekers. This event is designed for practitioners, policy makers and key stakeholders in the fields of education, training, employment and community regeneration. Participants will be able to attend two workshops on skills audits, ESOL, information, advice and guidance and building bridges with employers.

If you would like to attend this conference please email:
diana.bowers@refugeecouncil.org.uk

In January, ASSET UK also showed its work at an ECOTEC transnational conference in Birmingham called 'Building an Equal Europe' (see Transnational News) and at a conference that was held by the Danish Red Cross Want2Work in Copenhagen called Refugee Days.

Our success stories!

Volunteering, learning and achieving

TES at the Refugee Council run an ESOL class at an Emergency Accommodation Centre for asylum seekers and some of the students also volunteer for the project. One of the students, Celestin Olingou has written about his experience of these classes and the ASSET UK project:

"My name is Celestin Olingou. I have been in the UK since May 2004. I'm an asylum seeker. I come from Congo Brazzaville. My qualification is Industrial Planning, I was teaching and working in the Humanitarian Association called Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH), in English, the Human Rights Congolese Observatory in my free time.

When I arrived in this country I didn't speak or write in English, I couldn't understand English speakers.

Swiftly, I made an application to learn English at City College and I joined an English class in the Hostel (Emergency Accommodation) with the ASSET UK project, where I acquired some knowledge. At this time I can understand, speak and write more than before.

This experience gave me the opportunity to translate for some people's meetings in the Hostel, also in my new apartment when we received a visit from the authorities and the caseworkers. I can now explain everything that we need, I can make appointments anywhere especially for myself.

In this learning I'm involved in voluntary work with ASSET UK, I was an assistant teacher and I received transport every week. Now I am collecting information to help asylum seekers to integrate in to British society.

I hope ASSET UK will continue to assist asylum seekers to integrate into UK society." For more details contact Katie Evans, Regional ESOL Co-ordinator, at the Refugee Council on 0121 622 0963 or email her at: katie.evans@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Cool News

Susan came to UK from Cameroon in February 2004 and was referred to ASSET UK by her housing provider. Before coming to the UK she had done well at school passing 'O' levels and 'A' levels, had considered being a journalist but didn't pass the exams, but found her vocation in business. She ran her own shop for four years selling fresh and dried food, groceries and hardware.

Susan had developed an interest in business and wished to follow a business course at the local college. Her goal was to have her own business large enough to have some employees. She is particularly interested in employee's rights and running a business with a social conscience. We talked about rights and Susan talked about her interest in gender issues and how she would like to work in equal opportunities with emphasis on gender in UK or overseas.

She is keen to learn and wanted a job that also provided training opportunities so that she could develop her business skills and knowledge. We discussed college courses and ASSET UK arranged for her to be sent a prospectus to look at courses and consider which would suit her interests. However before arrangements were made for study, an opportunity came up for which she was very suitable.

The Director of a local company had heard of ASSET UK and felt he would like to offer a work placement for a person seeking asylum. His company 'Cool Milk' organises milk for children in schools on behalf of individuals and local authorities. 'Cool Milk' is particularly aware of its responsibilities to the local community and in the profile of its employees.

They were able to offer Susan a range of office based experiences. Together we agreed a number of work shadows that would enable her to see the range of activities the company pursued in the course of its business. She answered the phones, dealt with the administration and accompanied the Director to some of his meetings. We agreed that she should do the work experience and apply for a college course to start in September.

Susan began at 'Cool Milk' at the beginning of April 2004 and continued until September. The experiences she had were very successful. There had been reservations amongst the employees of the company, many of which were based on the image that the press portray of people seeking asylum. Susan is an outgoing person and her personality has managed to change the attitude of the people she met. It worked for her too; she found learning about UK business very beneficial and informative.

Whilst at 'Cool Milk' she was granted leave to remain. When the work placement finished, a full time course was put on hold whilst she searched for work and accommodation. The search for work was difficult with visits to the job centre and completing unsuccessful applications.

'Cool Milk' had been very supportive and asked me before she left how they could further support her, now that she had leave to remain. Fortunately, a vacancy came up and they were pleased to be able to offer Susan a job.

The job is going well for Susan. The company offers much to its employees in terms of individual development and encourages them to improve their skills. Opportunities come up; they are considering working in France and Susan speaks French! Susan's wish was to run her own business. She has ability, drive and determination. I think she is planning already and I am sure that she will do it!

Max Webb, Project Worker, NIACE, Tel: 0788 4186729, Email: max.webb@niace.org.uk



© Parade ESOL Service
Students and tutors from
Course 1 of Childcare
and Employability Wales
(ASSET UK)

Childcare and employability in Wales

The Parade ESOL Service is part of Cardiff Council, with over 2000 students, it is the main provider of English language classes in the city. 24 per cent of the student body is comprised of asylum seekers, so the opportunity to be part of an ASSET UK project was a challenge we welcomed.

The venture that we are involved in is the sister project to the Build Up: ESOL for Construction project in Peterborough. The focus of the course is, as the title suggests, childcare and employability. The students attend classes for twelve hours a week and study English and IT along with two Basic Skills Agency family learning programmes, 'Keeping Up With The Children' and 'Language and Play', which have been specially adapted for ESOL students. Our partners for this project are SOVA, Wales Pre-school Playgroup Association, Welsh Refugee Council, Cardiff community education, Careers Wales and South Wales Police.

As asylum seekers are mainly not able to work in the UK, our aim is to provide the knowledge and vocabulary specific to childcare to ease the students' transition into the British workforce should they get a positive decision. We encourage the students to pursue further courses and to become involved in voluntary work. Five students from previous courses are now volunteering with local organisations; including a local hospital, the Welsh Refugee Council and the Somali Advice Centre. Another four students are attending an Access to FE course that is being run in partnership with Coleg Glan Hafren, a local FE college. Others are attending further classes at the Parade ESOL Service.

22 students have so far benefited from this venture, with a further 10 on the current course. It has been highly successful bringing together both male and female students from ten different countries. Attendance and retention have been excellent (88% attendance, 83% retention for courses 1 & 2). The course has proved very popular with students and we are currently trying to secure funding to continue and expand the provision and to embed it in our mainstream programme.

Students have their say:

"I am enjoying this course very much. I learn lots of things such as grammar, conversation with others, how to pronounce the words. Also I learn how to care for a child. Although I am a mum there are different ways. Now I have self confidence."

"I know there are some people that want to help asylum seekers. They like that we will improve in this country. I learned more grammar, writing, spelling."

"I think, I feel more confident about speaking in English. I learned more computers. I made more friends."

"For me this course is excellent because in my country we don't speak to the baby. We thought that the baby don't hear us. Today I know that the baby can understand."

Victoria White, Development Worker, Parade ESOL Service
Tel: 02920 495578; Email: vwhite@cardiff.gov.uk

Partners update:

RAGU on tour!

RAGU (Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit) recently visited several towns and cities across the UK to gain feedback on their website, 'Information for asylum seekers' (www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu/asset). The website offers information to this marginalised group about education, training and employment. As it is aimed at asylum seekers around the UK, RAGU has actively identified beneficiaries with help from RCOs and ASSET UK partners in the regions.

Having completed four units for the website RAGU were keen to get feedback from asylum seekers and people working with them. RAGU believe that the involvement of beneficiaries is vital to the development of a high quality information resource for asylum seekers. In the last few months RAGU has visited Leeds, Sunderland, Washington,

Middlesbrough and Birmingham. Around 25 asylum seekers have given their feedback on the website so far. Participants involved are from 16 countries of origin, including Gambia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Russia, Azerbaijan, Libya, Burundi and Sri Lanka.

Both men and women, from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds have been involved. RAGU will seek input from another 25 beneficiaries when all seven units have been completed in the New Year.

Organisations kindly offered the use of their facilities, including computers with internet access, to make the feedback sessions a success. Washington Asylum Seekers Project, Refugee Action (Leeds), the North of England Refugee Service (Sunderland) and the Middlesbrough Asylum Seeker Resource Centre all had fantastic resources and helped us to find people to look at the website. RAGU also worked with Katie Evans from TES, another ASSET UK partner, to arrange a session held at Birmingham City Library.

The focus groups were the perfect opportunity for RAGU to see asylum seekers using the website and to get their opinions. The overall reaction was very positive. The focus groups participants were delighted to see a website with detailed information relevant for them. The website needs the input of this diverse group in order to cater for a wide range of interests and abilities.

"This website is better for asylum seekers. There is more information and it is true information, specific information".

"It is so nice to have a website for us".

The sessions were designed to be enjoyable and informative for all. Whilst the participants found out more about issues that were confusing to them, RAGU also learnt about the priorities of the asylum seekers looking at the information. The website has been amended accordingly and RAGU would like to thank all the participants for the time and effort they put into the feedback sessions.

Emma Saunders, Project Development Officer, RAGU
Tel: 020 7133 2283; Email: e.saunders@londonmet.ac.uk



© RAGU
*Participants and
RAGU staff at a focus
group for 'Information
for asylum
seekers' in
Middlesbrough.*

Transnational news

Building an equal Europe - a conference on transnational working

What it really means to work transnationally in Equal was the subject of discussion at this conference held in Birmingham on 12 -13 January 2005. The primary aim of this event was to improve the quality and impact of transnational co-operation by DPs in the second round of EQUAL and to maintain the European profile of EQUAL in GB. Specific objectives included an opportunity for Member States to network; continuing to support new Member States; and building on previous transnational seminars and experience. ASSET UK, with our partner Want2Work in Denmark, was one of the transnational partnerships selected to make a presentation and exhibit our 'Transnational Success Stories from the First Round'. There were also presentations from all European Union members states about their Round 2 activities.

A conference report will be available on the ECOTEC EQUAL website. To access the website, please visit: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm

ASSET UK has worked in partnership with Want2Work of the Danish Red Cross, Kista Open Academy in Sweden and in association with the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee in Ireland. Activities have included learning from transnational exchange, improving practice in giving information, advice and guidance to asylum seekers, working with employers, volunteering, teaching materials for language classes, and developing skills audits.

EQUAL launches a guide for transnationality

At the conference a new EQUAL Guide for Transnationality was also launched. Developed by the European Commission, this comprehensive guide for the second round of EQUAL provides practical information on how to plan and deliver transnational work under EQUAL. It includes sections on understanding EQUAL, preparing for transnational work (including finding transnational partners), completing your TCA and making transnationality work. It also contains many practical examples of good practice from the first round of EQUAL.

This guide is available on the Commission website at:
http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/empl/equal_etg/library?l=/etg0/transnationality/transnational_revision&vm=detailed&sb=Title

Finding good ideas from all EQUAL themes

A dissemination conference on the results of EQUAL Round 1 was held in Warsaw on 25 and 26 February 2005. The conference was organised by the European Commission and co-hosted by the Polish government. The conference provided the opportunity for policy makers, policy advisers and implementing bodies to become aware of good practice tested under all of the EQUAL themes. This enabled them to shape and adapt policies and practices. The new approaches and models to prevent unemployment and support

the integration of disadvantaged groups into work were discussed. As well as this, there was a debate the relevance and integration of good practice in policy at local, regional, national and European levels.

ASSET UK made a presentation at this conference through Sue Waddington from NIACE. As part of our transnational work within ASSET UK (in partnership with the Danish Red Cross Want2Work DP) NIACE and NICEM have been working on the issue of skill audits for asylum seekers. This work has led to the European Thematic Group on Asylum Seekers (ETG5), a European Union working group on skills audits for asylum seekers which also included DPs from Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. Sue presented the work of this group.

For a draft summary of this work at ETG5 level see the *Policy Brief, 'Right Opportunity for the Right Skills* on the ETG5 website at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/policy-briefs/etg5-skill-audits-as_en.cfm

More ASSET UK ETG5 activities

Through David Hudson of the Refugee Council, ASSET UK has been involved in ETG5. The group has been preparing new policy briefs arising from the first two years work under EQUAL Theme I including from the various ETG5 seminars held in Brussels, Haarlem and Dublin, and the Dublin European Conference "Asylum Seekers in Europe: the challenge of integration. 1st April 2004". In all of these, ASSET UK partners participated. Reports and documents relating to these events and the policy briefs will be available on the EQUAL website. The policy briefs and fact sheets will cover advice to new member states and new DPs on "Promoting Skills Audits"; "Advice, Education and Training"; "Building Capacity"; "Getting Asylum Seekers into Employment"; "How EQUAL experience in the asylum seekers theme can contribute to policy development and complement other re EU policy instruments".

For more information on ETG5 contact David Hudson or go to ETG5 website via
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/activities/etg5_en.cfm

For more general information about EQUAL in the EU go to:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index.cfm?file=listart.cfm&nav_id_menu=10238&lang_id=5

Bulletin board

On the bulletin board you will find lots of information on issues relating to EQUAL, asylum seekers and integration. This includes interesting publications and reporting on recent and forthcoming events. We will also try to keep you updated on new websites and new information on existing websites. If there is anything that you would like to post on the bulletin board, please contact us at: asset.uk@refugeecouncil.org.uk
We would like to hear from you!

Publications

First European handbook on integration of immigrants launched by European Commission

On 10 November, the European Commission presented a European Handbook on Integration 2004, to EU immigration ministers, at the Dutch Presidency ministerial conference on integration policy in Groningen. The handbook aims to promote co-operation at the European level on integration by facilitating the exchange of experience and information and targets policy-makers and practitioners at local, regional, national and EU level.

Refugee Employment in Europe

The European Integration Project at the Refugee Council produces a bulletin called *Refugee Employment in Europe*. It focuses on refugee employment rights and more general topics related to integration and discrimination in Europe. If you would like to subscribe to this bulletin please contact Saba Khan on +44(0)20 7820 3080 or email her at: saba.khan@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Useful websites

Visit The Basic Skills Agency's Citizenskills website at www.citizenskills.co.uk. They are also producing a CD-Rom on Citizenship, which is aimed at asylum seekers and tutors. For further details, please contact Celine Castelino at: celinec@basic-skills.co.uk

To find out more about LLU+'s courses, please visit their website at: www.lsbu.ac.uk/lluplus

For further information on NIACE's ASSET UK work, please visit their website at: www.niace.org.uk

Visit NICEM's website at: www.nicem.org.uk

Visit RAGU's 'Information for asylum seekers' website at: www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu/asset

Visit the Refugee Council's website at: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Forthcoming events

Equal ASSET UK Beneficiaries Meeting - 16 March 2005

The Central Co-ordination Team will organise a beneficiary meeting that will take place in Birmingham on 16 March 2005. It is intended that asylum seeker representatives from each of the Equal ASSET UK partners will attend.

This meeting is an opportunity for beneficiaries to learn about what the ASSET UK Partnership has undertaken during the past 3 years. Asylum seekers will share information and experiences about the various courses they have attended, volunteering activities they have participated in, and the support they have received from the partnership.

They will have a chance to freely discuss how they have benefited from each of the partners as well as discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each of the projects they have been involved in.

Beneficiaries will also have the opportunity to attend the Equal ASSET UK Conference 'Towards an Employment Strategy for Asylum Seekers in the UK' that takes place the next day (see above ASSET UK policy and practice, showcasing our achievements).

For further information about both events please contact Edin Hromadzic at the Refugee Council on 0121 622 0968.

Working with Volunteers and Asylum Seekers Seminars - 24 March 2005 - Refugee Council, Birmingham

A one-day seminar entitled 'Working with Volunteers and Asylum Seekers' is to be held at the Refugee Council Training and Employment Section, Birmingham. The seminar is looking at working with volunteers and/or asylum seekers in areas such as health, education, advice and guidance or any other capacity.

TES welcomes your support and input at this dissemination and mainstreaming event, as we come together to exchange ideas and viewpoints on working with volunteers and asylum seekers. There will be guest speakers and afternoon workshops. The next event will be on 24 March 2005.

For more details contact: Katie Evans, Regional ESOL Co-ordinator at the Refugee Council on 0121 622 0963 or email her at: katie.evans@refugeecouncil.org.

For general enquiries please email us at: asset.uk@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Postal address	Contact	Telephone/Fax
ASSET UK		
British Refugee Council 4th Floor, Smithfield House Digbeth, Birmingham B5 6BS	Lynda Lawrence, Project Manager, ASSET UK lynda.lawrence@refugeecouncil.org.uk	Tel: 0121 622 0964 Fax: 0121 622 0967
	Diana Bowers, Admin and Info Co-ordinator diana.bowers@refugeecouncil.org.uk	Tel: 0121 622 0965 Fax: 0121 622 0967
BRITISH REFUGEE COUNCIL		
240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB	David Hudson, Transnational Manager david.hudson@refugeecouncil.org.uk	Tel: 020 7820 3106 Fax: 020 7737 3306
	Saba Khan, Transnational Information Officer saba.khan@refugeecouncil.org.uk	Tel: 020 7820 3080 Fax: 020 7737 3306
PARTNERS		
Basic Skills Agency		
7th Floor, Commonwealth House London WC1A 1NU 1-19 New Oxford Street	Celine Castelino celinec@basic-skills.co.uk	Tel: 020 7440 6531 Fax: 020 7440 6624
LLU+		
London South Bank University London SE1 0AA 103 Borough Road	Pauline Moon, Project Worker moonp@lsbu.ac.uk	Tel: 020 7815 6253 Fax: 020 7815 6296
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education		
21 De Montfort Street Leicester LE1 7GE	Sue Waddington, Project Manager sue.waddington@niace.org.uk	Tel: 0116 255 1451 Fax: 0116 285 4514
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities		
3rd Floor, Ascot House 24-31 Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7DB	Patrick Yu, Project Manager pyu@nicem.org.uk	Tel: 02890 238 645 Fax: 02890 319 485
London Metropolitan University		
The Learning Centre 236-250 Holloway Road London N7 6PP	Susan Davenport, European Programmes Co-ordinator s.davenport@londonmet.ac.uk	Tel: 020 7133 4051 Fax: 020 7753 5012
Sheffield College		
Castle Centre Granville Road Sheffield S2 2RL	Andrew Oatridge, Project Manager andrew.oatridge@sheffcol.ac.uk	Tel: 0114 260 2448 Fax: 0114 260 2169
Refugee Council Training and Employment Section		
	Katie Evans, Regional ESOL Co-ordinator katie.evans@refugeecouncil.org.uk	Tel: 0121 622 0963 Fax: 0121 622 0967

Visit our website at:
www.asset-uk.org.uk

This newsletter is available on request in alternative formats. Please contact Saba Khan on 020 7820 3080 or email her at: saba.khan@refugeecouncil.org.uk

For general enquiries please email us at:
asset.uk@refugeecouncil.org.uk