

Equal ASSET UK partners examples of involving asylum seekers in meaningful activities within the partnership by shaping the programme and its outcomes

RAGU has been involved with around 25 asylum seekers in the website development so far through focus groups in Leeds, Sunderland, Washington, Middlesbrough, Birmingham and London. RAGU clients have also been consulted. RAGU will seek input from another 25 beneficiaries when all seven units have been completed. The involvement of beneficiaries in the development of the online information for asylum seekers has been through individual or small group discussion. People have looked at the website and given their input about content, appearance, language and tone. The views of the beneficiaries have been listened to and responded to. For example, many people were confused by the term 'support on the course' as they thought this would have information about help with course costs, which was in fact found under the 'costs' section. The subheadings have now been rewritten to make this clearer. RAGU is also getting lot of feedback with RAGU clients using clients feedback.

TES asylum seekers (volunteer / beneficiaries) are involved in the following activities:

- Working on an Information Pack for asylum seekers in emergency Accommodation in Birmingham – providing useful information for asylum seekers in Birmingham.
- Using skills gained in their own country by taking on a language assistant position in Emergency accommodation centers where TES is providing language classes to build upon teaching skills gained in country of origin and to work towards employability in the UK.
- Actively participate in TES workshops and delivering presentations at internal and external training and dissemination events.
- Enabling an asylum seeker to volunteer with Equal ASSET UK Central Co-ordination Team to complement his college computer course and his ESOL study.

TES is empowering asylum seekers to become involved in a service that is for them. They are taking a central role in project activities rather than just receiving what the project provides.

Future plans:

- To carry out support and supervision sessions with all beneficiary volunteers.
- To involve volunteer beneficiaries in the external showcasing event.
- To involve volunteer beneficiaries in external training at the Centre for Social and Economic Inclusion with NIACE.
- To involve all beneficiary volunteers in future external evaluations.

LLU+ is offering up to 2 days of free advice, support &/or training for four voluntary sector organisations delivering ESOL to asylum seekers (including embedded ESOL). There is also a voluntary ESOL network

Basic Skills Agency: Cardiff LEA Parade ESOL Service, one of the **Agency's** sub-contracted partners, is exploring volunteering opportunities for their beneficiaries with local schools, nurseries, voluntary organisations and hospitals. Progress is hampered however, because of the need to obtain CRB checks for working with children and vulnerable adults, but they are working together to find the best possible solution. The prior knowledge and experiences of participants is always valued, encouraged and built upon. Two participants from the first course have been co-opted onto the local steering group and their contribution remains powerful. Participants have been involved in the trailing of new materials which has assisted the teachers to adapt and amend the materials accordingly. The Parade intends to involve participants in dissemination events whenever possible.

SHEFFIELD COLLEGE is currently raising awareness with employers about our beneficiaries and is also working on providing volunteer placements for them. The asylum steering group will be meeting in the first part of Q11 which would enable them to help in shaping the programme and guide them in finding the best ways to provide volunteering opportunities and encourage volunteering for the beneficiaries. Sheffield College has recently organised in conjunction with Transnational Team for Transnational partners to meet their beneficiaries to exchange experiences.

The way that **NIACE** is involving asylum seekers beneficiaries is twofold – providing volunteering opportunities with mainly voluntary, but also statutory and private sector agencies, as well as providing volunteering opportunities within the Project itself. This has enabled beneficiaries to become familiar with the Project and provide constructive feedback. Their volunteers have also participated in the work of local forums to help agencies in charge to understand the difficulties they've been faced with and how to overcome them. They supported some of the beneficiaries to set up Refugee community organisations and helping them in developing working relations with statutory service providers. Their volunteers have participated in the Team meetings providing feedback and helping to shape the work of the project. Some of their beneficiaries have also participated in the Transnational work attending the Transnational meetings. They have also

founded an annual ASSET UK Volunteers Award Ceremony. The Award Ceremonies have been well attended by both beneficiaries and practitioners and reports about the Award Ceremony were very positive in the local media. NIACE has also collected new evidence about the skills and qualifications of asylum seekers which they are using to raise awareness of potential employers about the asylum seeking community provides to fill vacancies where there are labour shortages in the locality.

Action 3 activities: Beneficiaries have also been involved in a wide range of dissemination events, where they have been able to present their own experiences of being involved in the project. Recently, this has involved speaking about their experiences and involvement at a ministerial visit with Des Browne and a joint ASSET UK and Business in the Community event to promote the work to businesses in the East Midlands. This has resulted in discussion of the barriers created by Government policies and practices. The project has also supported a number of beneficiaries to tell their stories through the media.

Future plans: NIACE has recently embarked on an exercise to seek beneficiary input in evaluating their work. They will be seeking to involve beneficiaries as they continue to disseminate and mainstream their work including through their practitioners manual and policy report.

NICEM: Employment: 15 of our current or previous beneficiaries are known to be working. This includes 4 (plus one Dependant) from the accession states; 8 with Refugee Status; 3 with permission to work from prior to 2002. One beneficiary has recently received permission to work and we assisted with this and one is currently looking for work.

Volunteering: 5 beneficiaries are currently known to be volunteering - all in agencies outside NICEM. They are currently working closely with the Conservation Volunteers who are keen to recruit some of our beneficiaries - taking people to the center for a discussion on opportunities for volunteering. One of Equal ASSET UK beneficiaries has recently been appointed to become one of NICEM's Trustees

Education & Training: 34 beneficiaries are currently enrolled and attending classes. These include ESOL, EFL, Plastering, Engineering, IT (including A+ PC Maintenance & Troubleshooting & ECDL), Beauty Therapy, Cookery, Marketing, Access to Nursing, Journeys for Women, 'A' Levels, Anatomy & Physiology.

Activities: Two beneficiaries organised the Christmas Party in partnership with a volunteer and member of staff. They arranged the venue, food, music, games for the children. Beneficiaries are involved in the organisation of most of the social and recreational activities from within the EQUAL project.

European Integration Project (EIP) is responsible for the co-ordination and management of Asset UK's transnational activities. We aim to empower and involve beneficiaries in the following ways:

- Working with Asset UK partners, to provide beneficiaries with the opportunity to meet transnational partners to exchange information and add to the development of transnational work and the resulting products.
- Providing ASSET UK partners with the opportunity to meet with beneficiaries from Denmark and Ireland and gain from their experiences.
- Working with asylum seekers in transnational meetings so that they can add to the work of Asset UK during its development stages. We aim to learn from the beneficiaries about their ideas on diversity and how to better design our products.
- To provide a transnational platform through transnational meetings, workshops and conferences where beneficiaries can talk about their asylum experiences to a large audience and raise awareness at a European level.

Edin Hromadzic
Project Development Officer
Equal ASSET UK