

'SKILLED'



engineering
teaching
mining



Finding routes for Refugees to use their skills and experience and contribute to the North East region's economic future



REGIONAL REFUGEE FORUM
The Collective Voice Of The Region's Refugee Community

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The Regional Refugee Forum North East is an independent self-managed membership body for the region's Refugee-led community organisations. Our members work together to gather evidence and ideas and produce their Collective Voice to inform regional policy making and service provision.

Skilled has been made possible with support from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust Fund at the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, and by The Millfield House Foundation.



Our findings and recommendations arise from the collective and collaborative nature of the research process. They are therefore informed by the experiences, perspectives and expert practical knowledge of both our members and the range of agencies and organisations who participated in the process and contributed to a bigger richer picture. This final report represents the views of the Regional Refugee Forum North East and the Action Plans details our strategy for sustaining Skilled beyond June 2011.

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**Finding routes for Refugees to use their skills and
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economic future**

Final Report

June 2011



Foreward



Panganai Svatwa, Leader of Skilled Project and Trustee of the Regional Refugee Forum North East

Back in 2007 I came to the conclusion that I would never re-establish myself in retail management. When I had to get out of Zimbabwe I left behind many things, including a good career managing a major retail store. I waited 7 years before I was finally granted status and was allowed at last to work to support myself and family. But the closest I came to using my skills and experience was a backroom job unpacking and hanging clothes. So I decided to take a new direction in life and study photography at University with the aim of documenting social issues and climate change. But I saw my own story repeated over and over again across the community of refugees in the region. For my first year degree project I decided to use photography to raise awareness of this loss of skills and the loss it represents not just in the lives of people like myself but also, as I firmly believe, to the region that is our new home. I took this idea to the Regional Refugee Forum North East. It became the Skilled Project and since then what has happened has gone way beyond my expectations. Forum members took up the challenge to do something about it. And over the last year we have met with so many representatives from across all sectors – public, private and voluntary. All have contributed to building a 360 degrees picture of the situation, from all perspectives. I feel so positive now that we have a realistic understanding of what needs to be done and what *can* be done, and that so many people are willing to work on this. Practical change has already begun. We have already started to act on the findings and recommendations made from the project. Our commitment to seeing this through is strong and we have many partners on board. I am more confident about the future – that the skills, experience and enterprise that refugees bring with them will find a home in the region's economy, just as their commitment to community work has found a home in the Third Sector.

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Introduction

As one should expect, many refugees arrive in the UK with skills, qualifications and experience across a great range of professions, subjects, trades and enterprise. However, evidence from across the UK and the European Union highlights their underemployment or unemployment, and frustrated entrepreneurship in relation to both internal markets and the business potential of their international knowledge and connections. This is the situation in the North East of England.

From 2008 the Forum has been actively supporting the national 'Let Us Work Campaign', which seeks to restore permission to work – to restore the chance for dignity, self-reliance and active contribution to the economy and society - for those waiting more than 6 months for a final decision on their asylum claims, and those who were unable to return to their countries of origin. But we realised that even when status was granted and people were allowed to work, they were still unable to use their prior skills and experience.

Skilled arose therefore from our membership's commitment to share responsibility and their determination to be proactive in finding routes to use their skills in the region's labour market and enterprise sector. It was designed as an action research project, with the intention of change being generated through the process of project itself, in addition to the recommendations for action resulting from it. This report details the project process and practical actions arising directly from it, the learning gained and shared about the *specific and additional* barriers faced by refugees, the ideas and recommendations identified for removing those barriers at both the level of Practice and Policy, and a detailed Action Plan for how we intend to implement them from July 2011 onwards.

Our project has taken place in a transitional moment for all concerned with employability, skills, enterprise and economic growth. It started in May 2010, the same month that the General Election resulted in the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition coming to power. Since then there has been a radical and far reaching change in the landscape of Policy and the structures and arrangements for its delivery. The timing of Skilled has enabled us to engage the interest of key agencies involved in employment and enterprise, keen to assess collectively the implications and challenges of these changes and to identify the windows of opportunity presented by them. This shared understanding is vital for how our issue is problematised, for developing a realistic Strategy, and for repositioning ourselves in the field of influence. This report therefore captures this valuable learning in the hope that it can be of value to those without the capacity to explore this at depth. The Policy landscape will keep changing over the coming year, and structures and arrangements will keep emerging, and we will keep looking for the opportunities this presents or can be created from it.

Of key value to our work has been the understanding that:

- With the focus on private sector led economic growth and a commercialised context, primary attention will focus on special/added value rather than special needs

- Deep and on-going spending cuts across the public sector (including a 62% cut to refugee integration services), with its knock on impact to the VCS, will mean more need to focus on transferring and generalising Good Practice into mainstream support
- Decentralisation and localism, with the decommissioning and fragmentation of regional policy making, will mean a greater need for proactive engagement in planning at the local level
- Welfare to Work reforms contain a shift in objective to securing sustainable work, greater opportunity for flexibility and discretion, and advice work tailored to individual needs and skills
- The Equality Act 2010 has provisions for monitoring and progressing implementation of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice in service delivery and employer practice

Any strategy to find routes to transfer of refugees' prior skills needs to be balanced. It should not only be determined by the economic context, with an argument based on harnessing the potential of refugee skills and international connections to match the UK's skills shortages, labour market needs and new business growth drive. Refugees want to make a contribution to society, and economic contribution is one way. But a Strategy must also be based in the values of equality of opportunity, the realisations of long term benefit for all underlying socio-economic inclusion and diversity, and a humanitarian approach to new citizens rebuilding their lives here.

A key achievement of Skilled has been to establish Economic Inclusion as an objective of the North East Strategic Migration Partnership's 2011-12 Business Plan. Our new role as Co-Chair of the newly launched Economic Inclusion Subgroup will be a key element in sustaining our work to enable the transfer of prior skills and promote routes for new enterprise.

SKILLED PROJECT: TIMELINE OF PROJECT PROCESS

	Jan 2010	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2011	Feb	March	April	May	June
Project proposal submitted	x														
Evidence gathering by membership		x	x	x	x	x	x	x							
Meetings with specialist agencies							x	x				x			
Contribution to research & consultations		x		x			x			x					
Desk-top Research							x	x	x						
Analysis									x		x			x	x
Exhibitions										x		x			x
'Big Conversations'										x				x	
Meetings with generalist agencies										x	x	x		x	x
Actions begun											x	x	x	x	x
Dissemination												x			x

CHAPTER 1: Project Process, Activities & Outputs

PHASE 1: May 2010 – January 2011

Raising awareness, problematising the issue, securing buy in from key agencies

Phase 1 sought to raise awareness of the prior skills and experience of refugees, and the barriers to their transfer, through creating an exhibition of portrait photographs and personal testimony from across our membership. The exhibition was designed to humanise the issue and engage and capture the attention of key agencies, to secure their buy in to the need for change.

1. 1 Planning

Our project activities began with 2 sub-regional planning meetings with members, held on 10th May (Tees Valley) and 12th May (Tyne & Wear). The meeting agendas covered discussion of:

- the aims, intended outcomes and support for and resourcing of the project
- some of the barriers faced to prior skills transfer
- what is already known about support services available locally
- some initial ideas as to what would or could work better
- details of the actual qualitative evidence to be gathered and methods for collecting it

Participants then worked to draft an area Action Plan which identified specific tasks and deadlines, and who would volunteer to play what role in progressing them.

Representatives from 5 RCOs attended the Tees Valley planning meeting, and from 9 RCOs at the Tyne & Wear meeting.

1.2 Identifying the ‘Case Studies’

Evidence from across the membership was collected in order to fulfil the following targets:

1. To produce materials for a public Exhibition whose target was to engage initial interest through presenting the human face of the issue (ie: to reveal the personal / human stories behind the categoric identity so often referred to in the terms ‘asylum seekers and refugees’). The testimonies would also help raise awareness of some of the specific elements that create the barrier to prior-skills transfer
2. To provide evidence on which to construct an ‘*Actual Journey*’ that would form the basis of our first multi-agency Workshop discussions. That is a generic journey (a base line) that would reflect that shared experience of refugees, from whatever country of origin

and whatever prior-skills sector, on the *specific and additional needs and barriers*¹ they faced in transferring those skills

We set ourselves a target of 40 case studies (portrait photo and personal testimony), this being the maximum number of photographs we considered viable for an exhibition space. It was decided that the sample should include:

1. Men and women
2. From a range of countries of origin
3. Demonstrating a range of prior skills, qualifications and experience
4. Who had been in the region for varying lengths of time
5. Some of whom were still awaiting a decision on their asylum case (the forced exclusion from work whilst awaiting a decision on asylum claims impacts deeply on employability and skills transfer²)
6. Could demonstrate a range of experience of support from different agencies
7. Would demonstrate motivations for wanting to use those skills here in the UK

Planning group members used this 'wish list' and identified members of their community willing to offer their testimony.

1.3 Testimony and Portrait Photographs

With the assistance of 14 member RCOs, a total of 37 volunteers (22 men, 15 women) from 19 countries of origin representing 28 different prior skills had their photographs taken and gave their testimony.

Countries of origin: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Georgia, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, Liberia, Morocco, Sudan, Zimbabwe, West and Southern Africa (volunteers not wishing specific countries of origin to be identified)

Prior skills areas: Tailor (2), athlete, accountancy (3), vet, industrial chemist, research biochemist, IT specialist, business (3), retail management, human resources management (2), mining geologist, doctor, university lecturer, television broadcaster, teacher (3), pharmacist (2), immigration officer, ceramic artist, professional musician, soldier, dental nurse, civil engineer, journalist, mine manager, mathematician, demobilisation and re-integration support, microbiologist, telecommunications engineer.

At the time of being interviewed no volunteer was in employment that had any match to their prior skills, qualification or experience.

¹ It has been important throughout the project process to maintain clarity and distinction about what is specific and additional to refugees, what is shared by non-refugee BME community, and what is shared with all those looking to use their skills

² See our website <http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/right-to-work-campaign/44> for our members' testimony on the impact of no permission to work whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum claim

1.3.1 Interviews

Face to face interviews were held with those volunteering to contribute their personal testimony. With the agreement of the volunteers, a digital voice recorder was used to record the conversation. This would enable conversations ('interviews') to be more fluid and interactive, without the need for interruptions to the flow of information. It also enabled us to create a CD compilation of edits from the testimonies to play as a continuous loop during the Exhibitions to allow the portraits to 'speak'.

The interviews sought to gather testimony that would reveal a personal and human story. The journey from early dreams and aspirations to actual work and careers is one we can all relate to. This gives access to those whose perception or understanding of 'refugees and asylum seekers' derives from the media or indirect sources. For each volunteer the interview sought to capture:

a) In their country of origin:

- Their early interests, ambitions and vision for their life, as a child or young person, which might include the hopes their parents had for them
- Their progression into choosing to study or train for their future career or occupation
- Their own attitudes to work, and the attitudes to work and worklessness within their countries of origin
- How far they progressed with their work or business, and what they imagine would have happened to their career/business if they had not had to leave their country
- What they liked and missed most about their working life

b) In North East UK

- What they are currently doing here: whether they are working, and whether that work relates to their prior skills
- Their experience in trying to find work/a route to work that relates to their prior skills
- Compare and contrast their experience of support received: what/who helped them and what worked and what didn't
- The impact it has on their life and that of their family, and their ability to be or feel part of the community
- Give their own ideas and recommendations for what would work better
- Anything else they wanted to add

Volunteers were not asked questions about the circumstances in which they had to leave their country to seek asylum. This information was not relevant to our issue, and it ensures people do not feel under pressure to 'justify' their need to seek asylum.

The type of information we sought, and reason for it, was explained to interviewees at the start. No formalised interview question sheet was created. Instead interviews took the form of conversations, with the listener taking mental note of the areas covered by the interviewee within their reminiscences, so that they could add prompts where and when appropriate to seek any missing information. When people are reflecting on their lives, interruptions or interventions to attempt to shape those reflections to the format of a question sheet risk losing the

spontaneity of the testimony, and the emotional content of it. As a result the information may be depersonalised (and so dehumanised for our purposes).

The recorded interviews were then transcribed and quotes selected across the testimony range to illustrate the points listed in (a) and (b) above to create the document 'Voices of our Members' (Included as Appendix 1)

1.3.2 Photographs

Portrait photographs of the volunteers were taken by Skilled Project leader Panganai Svatwa. His original hope had been to photograph people 'in situ' – either within an environment that related to their prior skills or, if currently employed, in their current place of work to visually highlight the contrast with their prior skills. However, volunteers who worked did not feel confident to ask their employers for permission to be photographed in their workplace. They preferred not to attract attention to themselves. Neither did people have visual references with them in the UK relating to their prior-skills. In a few cases we were able to find some props and costumes, or secure the agreement of a local business to use their facilities as 'back drop'.

A2 prints of the photographs, and a quote to accompany each, were mounted on 3mm foamex board. This enabled them to be mounted onto felt or directly onto walls using velcro pads, and removed and remounted without damage and giving us a re-useable resource. All volunteers were given A4 colour prints and JPEGs of their photographs.



"I used to be a professional microbiologist in the medical laboratory in Iran, for 8 years. Now I am staff manager at an Iranian restaurant. I'm also studying health and social care at college. I'm hoping to go to university to become a Nurse in the future. I believe if I had got good support and advice to direct me to my own profession, it would take a very short time and I would have been able to continue sooner and further through the skills I had from back home"

"I got my status after 3 months in UK. So for over 1 year I have been looking for a job. I graduated in India with BA in Economics and masters degrees in Management. I intended to go back to my homeland to help Africans as well as my own people. Even though I have these qualifications I can't get any job. I have studied the A4E internet and use the computer at the job centre, been to work agencies, and applied to many companies. They call me for interview and their main question is always *"Do you have any work experience in the UK?"*. I don't have work experience here, but I do have work experience in my homeland. I am totally frustrated by this. One day I requested a job for cleaning and they requested *"do you have work experience for cleaning?"*. How do you develop your work experience? This problem is affecting a lot of people. I know I'm going to deteriorate instead of develop. I hate to sign at Job Centre Plus every two weeks, because I have the ability to work but life is pressurising me to go there. I don't feel comfortable to speak with them, they don't have any good reaction with me also. There is a lot of very educated and talented people here and they may contribute something to this country. But they can't get a good opportunity. People in human resources development should understand this complicated problem with refugees. I would organize work placements or shadow working in specific areas. Then one can get a reference, and create new channels. This is a good opportunity"



1.4 Publicity Materials and Issues of personal security

Publicity materials created for the project consisted of:

1. a printed leaflet
2. a banner display stand
3. exhibition posters and flyers
4. dedicated project webpages on our website
<http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/skilled>

(Documents attached as Appendix 2)

There is a tension between creating publicity materials and a public exhibition of local human stories, and the continuing need amongst a community who have fled persecution (that is often on-going) to protect their own and their families' personal security. In addition, for those in the vulnerable position of awaiting a decision on the asylum case, there is also a desire to maintain a low profile, or not to be seen to be challenging UK policy, as they fear provoking a negative reaction or 'punishment' by decision makers.

Our volunteer contributors had varying degrees of concern about anonymity of personal identifying details. A few were happy for their name, country of origin and testimony to be associated with their photograph and used in any media. Others did not want their details to appear on the internet, as they did not want to be googled. Some preferred not to have their full name declared in case it might allow people to trace their local residence, and some did not want their country of origin to be specified. While some were happy for their photograph to appear in an exhibition, they did not want their photograph to be reproduced in printed literature over which they would have no distribution control.

Therefore we made a decision to standardise the information which would be attached to their photographs as just initials (sometimes made up) and country of origin or area of origin. We also deliberately avoided including references to specific organisations or locations in the accompanying testimonies.

The particular preferences of each volunteer was agreed at the time of interview. This enabled us to later select which photographs and details could be used for the project's publicity materials. However, we also double checked on permission by sending drafts of any publicity materials to each volunteer appearing in them to seek their final agreement.

Beyond all measures to respect the above personal security concerns, the willingness to be part of a publicly accessible exhibition displayed in the area in which you live is still a very courageous decision. Negative public perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees, with the risks of discrimination, harassment and abuse, mean that people publicly identified as refugees may be putting themselves at some personal risk. We therefore respect enormously the willingness of our volunteers to contribute to raising awareness of this issue, in the interests of all RRF members.

1.5 Exhibitions

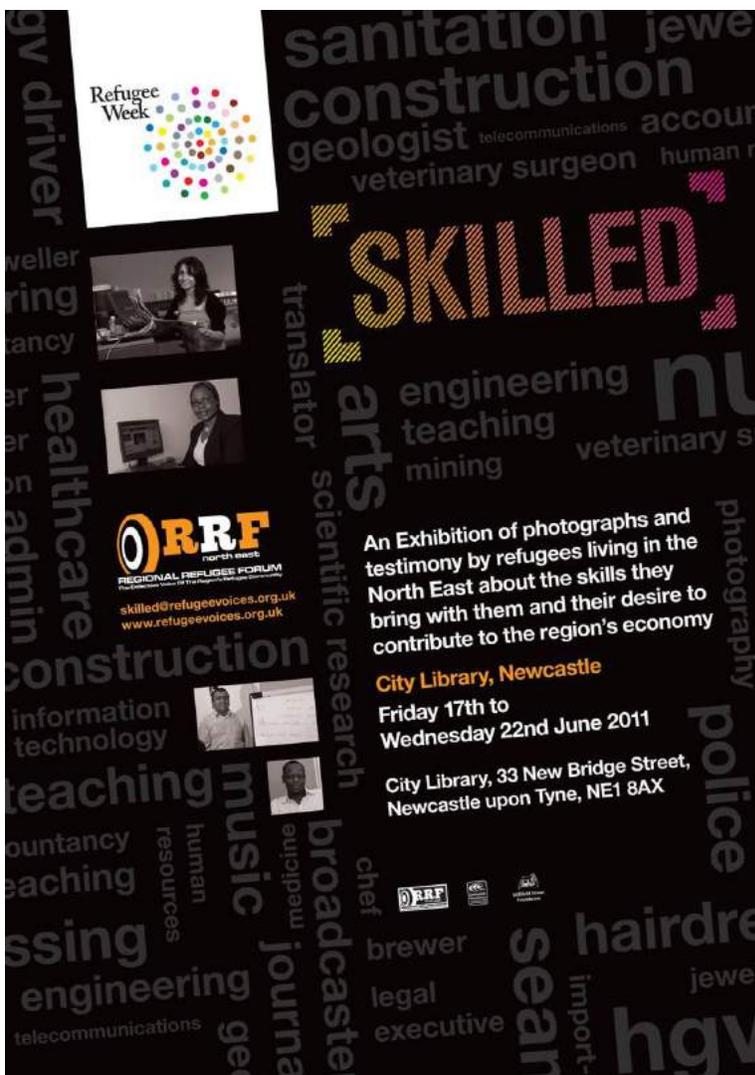
Three public Exhibitions of the photographs and testimony took place between January and June 2011.

We aimed to identify and secure exhibition venues that had an established profile, space in their schedule, were accessible to all (including our membership), in both the north and south of the region, of sufficient size, and could be offered at no cost to us.

Our Exhibitions took place at

1. Newcastle Arts Centre 19th – 31st January 2011
2. Stockton Arts Centre 26th March – 2nd April 2011
3. City Library, Newcastle 17th – 22nd June 2011 (during Refugee Week)

We are very grateful to these venues for agreeing to host our exhibition at no cost.





1.6 Meetings with key specialist agencies

In October and November 2010 we met with three Refugee and/or BME specialist agencies in the region, and a senior business director, with the aim of engaging their expert and practical perspective to establish a base line from which to explore Good Practice through our planned Workshop activities.

- North of England Refugee Service (NERS)³: Dr Mohamed Nasreldin, Manager of the Refugee Integration & Employment Service (RIES). NERS is the largest and longest serving independent refugee charity in the North East region. It also delivers the One Stop Service (OSS) which provides case work support for all asylum seekers dispersed to the region. RIES is a UKBA funded national service for new status refugees, sub-contracted by the Refugee Council to NERS for the NE region. It will end in September 2011. The service has a target of 30% of clients in employment at the end of 12 months. Most higher skills opportunities had been sourced from outside of the NE region.
- Jobs, Education & Training (JET)⁴: Julie Fernyhough, Manager and Hilary Brockway, Assistant Manager. JET. JET deliver a Next Step sub-contract, and a range of employability and into work courses and support, have developed a managed work placement and volunteering programme, and delivered the Refugees Into Teaching⁵ sub-contract in the region which has secured teaching placements for 18 refugees (the project ended at March 2011). Previously, Hilary had 6 years experience of arranging work placements for refugee in the region under an ESF funded ILM project⁶ which funded their salaries for 6 months. That project success rate was more that 70% (refugees in sustained employment at 12 months).
- Sunderland BME Employment Access Project⁷: Abu Khaled, Project Manager and Gauthier Matho, Project Worker. The project had identified that as many individuals from the BME community chose not to sign on for benefits at Jobcentre Plus, they are not reached by major employers who seek to recruit via JCP. The project offered a route for major public sector employers, such as the NHS, who were seeking diversity in their workforce. This project completed in March 2011.

³ <http://www.refugee.org.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.jetnorth.org.uk/> JET is a registered charity which helps people from the BME community, asylum seekers, refugees and New Migrant communities to find work, improve their skills and to integrate into the community.

⁵ <http://www.rit.refugeecouncil.org.uk/> The programme has been run by the Refugee Council since 2008 and is supported by tda

⁶ <http://www.equal-works.com/ProjectHome.aspx?ety=0e5a8a78-063f-41aa-bf59-0cbcf196e046> RISE (Refugees Into Sustainable Employment) initially funded under the European Social Fund and then by a range of charitable funders. This project piloted an Intermediate Labour Market Scheme for 33 refugees, engaging them in positions in partner companies and organisations within the private, public and voluntary/community sector. The placements were identified to match existing skills and qualifications, and taking into account the individual's career aspirations. The project worked with refugees both with higher and lower levels of qualifications

⁷ <http://sbmen.org/about.html> Sunderland BME Employment Access Project targets black and minority ethnic adults in Sunderland who have not had contact with core employment services

- John Dobie⁸, Director of Griersons⁹ and Advanced Environmental Technologies¹⁰ for the private sector and entrepreneur perspective on the business case for investment in prior skills transfer and the potential of refugees' international links to contribute to economic growth in the region.

1.7 Desktop Research

Throughout this first phase we also carried out an internet search to identify existing national and regionally produced research, project evaluations, and policy documents relevant to employment and enterprise routes for prior skilled refugees. This was a selective rather than an exhaustive exercise.

For each document we selected we summarised:

1. Factors identified as specific and additional to refugees in employability and enterprise
2. Examples of what works (Good Practice) &/or recommendations for practical actions
3. Recommendations for policy change

A total of 18 reports (9 European and national, and 9 regional) were identified and analysed in this way. The analysis is included as Appendix 6.

Desk top research would enable us to gain additional learning to build a comprehensive picture of barriers and practical and policy led solutions and understand the scale of the problem with reference to other regions.

1.8 Contribution to policy making processes

In this first phase we took every opportunity to raise the issue and use our interim findings and recommendations to inform regional and national policy and planning.

1. In May 2010 we met with the Evidence Specialist Adviser at the North East Research & Information Partnership¹¹ (NERIP) to provide a briefing on our project and to understand how it could fit with the region's research plans, regional strategy and links between existing and planned evidence and research in the area of refugees, migration, BME, economic inclusion and skills policy. NERIP agreed to inform relevant task groups about work of Skilled Project and alert us to research and planning opportunities.

⁸ In 2006, John at had been instrumental in taking the idea of a Regional-International links Business Match Website to ONE (the regional economic development agency) alongside the RRF's 2006 report on entrepreneurship amongst the newly created refugee community. ONE subsequently commissioned the development of a software programme which was not completed as the company went into receivership

⁹ www.griersons.com

¹⁰ <http://www.a-e-t.co.uk/>

¹¹ <http://www.nerip.com/home.aspx> NERIP was the Observatory for North East England hosted by One North East, the Regional Development Agency. NERIP was committed to equality of opportunity and the principles of sustainable development. It operated in a strategic environment and enabled a range of partners to use sound evidence to develop strategy. It was formally dissolved in March 2011 with the closure of ONE.

2. Also in May we provided evidence to Centrifuge Consultanting Ltd to inform the report commissioned by One North East & North East Equality and Diversity Partnership Board: “*Differing Rates of Employment for a Range of Diverse Groups*”¹²

3. In July 2010 we submitted our interim findings and recommendations to Skills North East¹³ to inform the regional statement “*Skills and the North East Economy – North East Aspirations for Education, Employment and Skills 2011-2016*”¹⁴ which was submitted by ONE to the DBIS in September 2010 in advance of what, prior to changes to economic policy and structures, was intended to be the completion of a North East single integrated strategy. (This interim report is superseded by our final report so is not included here)

4. In October 2010 we used our interim findings to submit a response to the DBIS’s on line consultation on the future direction of Skills policy¹⁵. Our evidence supported the ‘*Principles for a Skills Strategy*’ - that there is a desire for a clearly identified and signposted, respected, credible vocational training offer that will provide people with a clear and realistic route into employment, help them progress in their careers or support them in starting their own business. Provision should enable timely prior skills accreditation, refreshing and updating of prior skills, opportunities for work placements or apprenticeships for orientation in UK workplace and references of skills demonstrated, and support for transfer and utilisation of skills which have a high value in the UK labour market. The investment in preparing the refugee for the labour market is not maximised unless there is a parallel investment in training the business sector/employers in Equality and Diversity, including how they are implemented in recruitment, in progression and in retention. (See Appendix 3 for a summary of our online response)

5. In January 2011 we attended the regional Jobcentre Plus Customer Advocate Group to seek routes for collaboration, and for a briefing on the re-structuring of JCP across the regions, the Get Briain Working agenda and in particular the provisions of the Work Programme to be introduced in the summer of 2011. This enabled us to identify potential new windows of opportunity in these emergent structures and programmes

6. In January 2011, as members of the Regional Strategic Board of the North East Strategic Migration Partnership¹⁶ (NESMP), we successfully advocated for the addition of Economic Inclusion as an objective of the 2011-12 Business Plan.

¹² Published September 2010 <http://www.nerip.com/library/view.aspx?id=1077>

¹³ Skills North East was the Regional Employment & Skills Partnership but ended in January 2011 with the closure of ONE <http://www.skillsnortheast.co.uk/page/skillsandthenortheasteconomy.cfm>

¹⁴ <http://www.skillsnortheast.co.uk/lib/liDownload/17254/Skills%20and%20The%20North%20East%20Economy.%20Definitive%20Version.%2030%20Sept%202010.pdf?CFID=900566&CFTOKEN=43003696> RRF listed as having been consulted, see Appendix A page 81

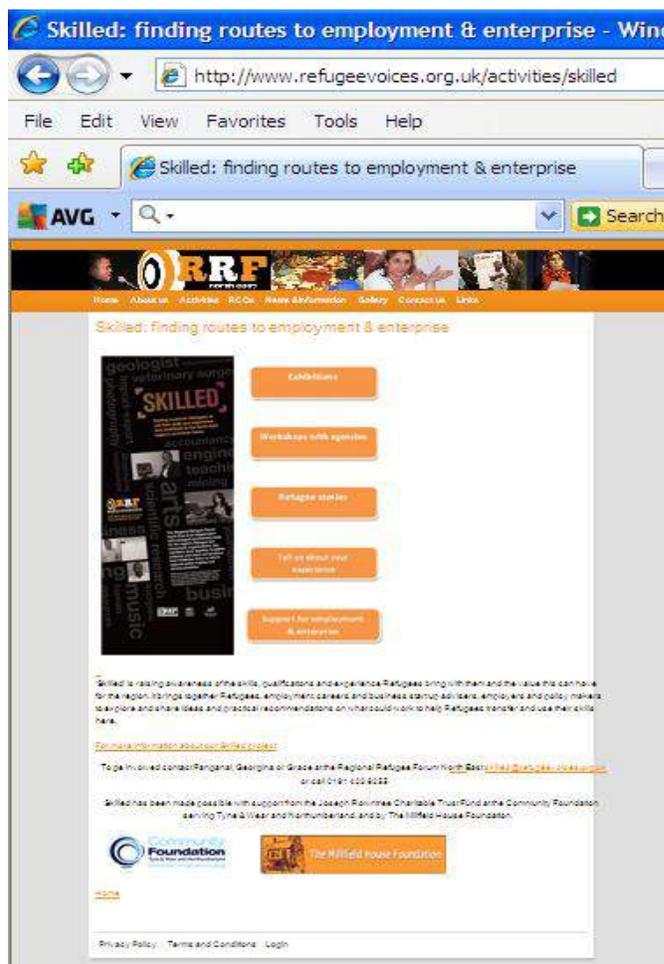
¹⁵ <http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/skills/> Skills for Sustainable Growth

¹⁶ <http://www.nesmp.org.uk/> The North East Strategic Migration Partnership is a partnership of statutory, voluntary, community and private sector organisations in the North East. It was formed by contract with the Home Office/UKBA in May 2000 to support the Government’s dispersal policy and the settlement of refugees. In 2007 Migration was added to its remit. Its purpose is ‘*To provide a leadership, co-ordination and advisory function for migration in the region*’

7. Also in January, as members of the NE Policy & Representation Partnership Policy Forum, we contributed our views to the report being prepared by Ippr North into the challenges and opportunities represented by Big Society and Localism¹⁷

1. 9 Creation of online information and resources

The evidence and information generated through the project were used to create dedicated webpages on our website www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/skilled, with the aim of further raising awareness, sharing findings, and to link our membership to the range of support and services available in their locality. The site has been further developed and updated as the project has progressed. (See Appendix 7 for sample pages)



¹⁷ *Can the Big Society be a fair society? A North East perspective* Ippr North published April 2011
<http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=818>

PHASE 2: January 2011 – May 2011

Working together to identify and address specific barriers. Analysis of findings

The 2nd phase of our project brought together our members, employment and enterprise support agencies, bodies with a role in promoting economic inclusion, and representatives of the business sector in two interactive workshops which aimed to:

1. Collectively identify the elements that constitute Good Practice in service delivery i.e.: practice that addresses the specific and additional barriers to the transfer of prior skills identified during Phase 1
2. Collectively identify, at the level of practice, what could be transferable and generalisable from that Good Practice and actions through which this could be progressed
3. Collectively identify what needs to be addressed in the wider system (that is outside the control of front line provision) and the potential levers of change
4. Understand the Employers' perspective, their operational realities and the factors that could promote their increased engagement in or leadership in prior-skills transfer

Both workshops were designed to encourage the sharing and testing of practical experience, evidence and ideas based on the understanding that we are all experts by experience but none of us has the full picture. Only by sharing our expertise can we draw a richer picture. It also means that the project findings and recommendations reflect the collective experience and expertise of the region, rather than of the RRF alone.

The first workshop took place in Newcastle upon Tyne, with the majority of participants being drawn from the north of the region. The second was held in Stockton on Tees, with the majority coming from the south of the region. This design enabled us to engage our membership and agencies across the whole region, and ensure learning was gained and shared within and between the sub-regions, to maximise the impact of our project.

2.1 Big Conversation 1: January 25th 2011 Newcastle upon Tyne

Our first multi-agency 'Big Conversation' event was held on 25th January at the Newcastle Arts Centre Gallery (with the Skilled Exhibition on display). Participants from a range of agencies and some of our Skilled members worked together in a series of customised interactive sessions to consider the evidence from our membership, presented as a composite 'Actual Journey' chart, and to construct the elements of support that would provide an 'Ideal Journey'.

Our aim was

- To bring the right mix of people together in focused discussion to listen to all perspectives and realities, and allow creative thinking to go *further* than what is already known, documented, reported or evidenced.
- To identify what needs to happen and practical steps to achieve it

2.1.1 Preparations

We worked with an independent expert facilitator¹⁸ to design the customised interactive sessions that could best achieve the aims of the Workshop

We developed a database of target agencies and personnel to invite. We were seeking those with direct practical experience and expertise in employment and business support, who could contribute their expert opinion on *what has worked*, *what needs to change* and make recommendations on *how*. It was also vital to engage representation from both specialist and generic service providers. We sent out invitations according to the priorities we had established and worked hard to chase up key targets.

We prepared a briefing pack which was sent to participants before the event, with the aim of establishing some shared baseline knowledge and to help focus and stimulate thinking. The pack consisted of:

- the 'Voices of our Members' document that contained extracts from the testimonies provided by our members
- a Briefing document which summarised the key specific and additional barriers to skills transfer identified through our research in Phase 1

We held a pre-meeting with members who would be attending the workshop to discuss the aims, programme of activities, roles and strategy for positive engagement and constructive action¹⁹. This helped to promote confidence about their input and a clear focus on the intended outcomes for the event.

We prepared a chart presenting the 'Actual Journey' composed of a summary of the elements identified by our members as being the specific and additional barriers they faced in using their prior skills from day 1 of arrival in the UK through to actual employment..

2.1.2 Delivery

47 participants took part in Big Conversation 1, mostly drawn from the north of the region. Our members and agency participants worked on 7 mixed tables of 7 or 8 persons, facilitated by RRF Staff.

¹⁸ Our sincere thanks to Chris Ford for his expert input and energy

¹⁹ It was understood that an engagement strategy focused on constructive positive engagement with agencies would provide the best chance of creating sustained and action oriented relationships in the long term. It would also enable a knowledge deficit about needs and operational realities on both sides (customer and service delivery) to be explored more openly. However, it should not be under-estimated how difficult it can be for anyone who has been so frustrated in their ambitions, had a negative personal experience with a particular agency or hears assumptions or opinions which do not reflect their reality to refrain from being critical and challenging.

- Session 1: Each table considered the composite 'Actual Journey' chart, and added any other elements they had identified as specific and additional to refugees from their own work or experience. They then worked to identify elements of practice address or could address (provide solutions to) the barriers identified on the 'Actual Journey' chart. These recommendations were noted in 'Good Practice?' sheets.
- Session 2: The 'Good Practice?' sheets from each table were swapped with another table, and each table then worked to consider and refine the ideas, and to identify what would help or hinder making this good practice into standard practice. This was noted on the 'Good Practice? Yes, No, Maybe' sheets
- Session 3: Each table participant noted any practical action they would pursue to take any of these recommendations forwards in their own work or through their organisation

All documents referred to are attached in Appendix 4).

Asylum Seeker – Refugee Journey into Employment relating to their prior skills				
Period whilst waiting for decision on asylum case	After 5 months	Grant of status	Pre-employment	Employment
<p>By 5 months</p> <p>Language barrier</p> <p>Current access to UK. Not eligible</p> <p>Difficult to provide qualifications, experience and references from home country. Difficult to bring proof of skills. Not able to request these case</p> <p>No proper advice on options or route to take</p> <p>Agencies don't know of NASS, or don't have the access to it.</p> <p>NASS explanation scale</p> <p>Domestic violence and disabilities – have to keep up or correct. Means re-doing A levels then degree, again, re-qualifying. Too long, time up</p> <p>Difficult to access University</p> <p>Not allowed to study</p> <p>Skills being lost/undermined by agencies if they are not a list of times and opportunities</p> <p>Don't know who to ask for guidance</p> <p>Want to keep and accept that it is a challenge rather than a dead end and a waste of time</p> <p>No advice or advice too late, or wrong advice – no clear route map</p> <p>Where if no assistance?</p>	<p>Not allowed to work. Have to live in a man's tent for 20 days to move house and start to move forward</p> <p>ESOL classes full / waiting list.</p> <p>ESOL classes include a few hours per week, and very rarely skills related content</p> <p>Asylum seekers and colleges lack of knowledge on how to find out eligibility criteria for different courses and support programmes</p> <p>No advice on how to go to classes</p> <p>Can't afford to travel to night courses</p> <p>Can't go to University to gain UK equivalent. Some can't give part time access, but only in some courses, and can take 3 years to finish</p> <p>Can take years for a degree in some cases. If can't work they years they will have expired, or they will become outdated</p> <p>Negative media reporting / perceptions and representations of asylum seekers: from British, racist, depression</p> <p>Loss confidence about yourself. Loss self-esteem</p> <p>Drop out of classes. Lose heart. Too depressed. Lose track of time</p> <p>Waiting for result of asylum skills. Don't know what to do when applying when you have no other choice</p> <p>Not easy to find a volunteering chance – especially one relating to your skills. And can't afford to take risks for volunteering</p> <p>No proper advice to further Education/colleges. Courses don't match skills and lower level. In many countries the UK and that, but still employers refuse them? Why they be so hard?</p>	<p>Very positive and with conditions. Less than 20 days to move house and start to move forward</p> <p>High powered level of disruption</p> <p>Can't access the UKBA or other UK Refugee Employment Service if you are not on the legacy case (2005)</p>	<p>Have to sign at job centre – don't feel comfortable talking with them. They don't seem comfortable talking to me</p> <p>Job centre not interested in my skills. And jobs that have jobs to do that they give you have to see your skills. Don't pressure to get any job, with no reference to skills, to move off the queue</p> <p>Conflict between getting a job immediately and finishing course (M or college). We have to prove we are looking for work so how can we finish?</p> <p>Many refugees don't sign on or go to JCP. They don't feel comfortable with the benefits advice here. So don't get access to JCP support programmes or job advice at this stage</p> <p>Lack of UK references: how can you get a work reference when you can't get work without them?</p> <p>Good line workers seem to receive we don't have skills or qualifications. Their expectations are very low. They don't offer us any support</p> <p>Poor attitudes and awareness within support agencies</p> <p>We've never heard of these or enhanced services. We never get referred there either</p> <p>Don't know how the recruitment process works here. Don't understand importance of application form or how to do interviews. Need support either for interviews</p> <p>Employers seem to be uncontactable with us. They are not sure of all the paperwork and our permission to work either</p> <p>Provision: Discrimination and racism</p> <p>Need advice on how to do business here. All the bureaucracy and legislation. And help to start up business</p> <p>Lack of capital for new business start up</p> <p>Limited work placement opportunities</p> <p>Limited long-term specialist support</p>	<p>End up in factory production line or cleaning. Low skilled low paid.</p> <p>Hard to keep going with career objectives seen in this kind of job. In agencies, skills work, night work.</p> <p>Employers don't care about us, they don't like us anymore. They don't interested in helping us improve our skills or do anything. And some that are cheap labour to work shifts</p> <p>We don't know what rights we have, or what rights employer has</p> <p>Hard to find college or university course</p> <p>Difficult to bring in to the work place. Different work place culture can lead to bad experience on health care, language and employment (UK). Harder to provide a real programme</p> <p>Feel different. People avoid us. Feel isolated.</p>

GOOD PRACTICE ?	
What? Please describe this element of good practice	
What is it that makes it good practice?	
What are its essential features?	
What is it dependent on?	
What's your evidence base?	
Reference Name	



2.1.3 Analysis: Findings and Recommendations

Our Skilled member Elvis Katoto (himself a professional documentary film maker) made a short film of Big Conversation 1 which appears on his UCOMDIA website ²⁰ and also on our RRF website at www.refugeevoices.org.uk/about-us/watch-our-films .

The learning generated through the interactive sessions was written up as *The Essential Features of Good Practice*. This is included in Appendix 4. This document was shared with all participants along with the contact list of all participants.

The analysis was then used to inform the design of our second Big Conversation and *The Essential Features of Good Practice* formed the Briefing document which was sent to all participants before the 2nd workshop.



BRIEFING DOCUMENT

May 2011



**What works in promoting the employability and entrepreneurship of
prior skilled and experienced Refugees**

GOOD PRACTICE:
its essential features identified in working with RAS* clients

* 'RAS' = Refugees & Asylum Seekers

1. INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Why is IAG considered to be Good Practice?
RAS have less knowledge of, and little accurate peer learning opportunities for

1. Routes to employment in the different skills sectors (such as where those skills jobs are advertised, how to engage in recruitment processes)
2. The North East labour market
3. Roles and remits of different agencies
4. Support packages offered by the whole range of agencies
5. Rights and responsibilities as an employee
6. UK work place culture
7. How to establish equivalence of skills, qualifications and experience gained outside the UK

Essential Features of Good Practice
Case Work is the most effective form of support.
But it needs to

1. Be Career (skills) focused, rather than 'into work' focused, if prior skills are to be utilised again
2. Based on individual tailoring rather than generalised
3. Dependent on the sensitivity of initial needs assessment and diagnostic tools, to be effective in identify skills and aspirations.
4. Job Seeker Agreement needs to include route for transfer or prior skills
5. Consider the pyramid of needs, with case workers knowledgeable about map of relevant support in locality/region to signpost and refer to other appropriate opportunities.
6. Include referral to ESOL: identify organisations that can deliver ESOL (English language training) as part of their provision. Map available services and understand eligibility
7. Create an individual action plan, arising from the assessment, with regular review to open up new options /flexibility
8. Consistent in quality across the service and across the region

Regional Refugee Forum North East 'Skilled' Project: summary of findings from research with membership and from Big Conversation 1 (multi-agency discussions) held 25th January 2011 Page 1

²⁰ <http://www.ucomedia.co.uk/?p=304> United Community Media is a not for profit community organisation. It is a platform for volunteer broadcasters, filmmakers, journalists and individual from the BME community in the North East to practice their profession and for communities to promote their values and integrate in the community.

2.1.4 Actions arising from Big Conversation 1

Our Skilled Project was designed as an *action research project*, so our intention was for change to be delivered through and during the actual research process itself²¹, as well as through the learning and recommendations captured and shared by active dissemination of a final report.

Therefore following Big Conversation 1 we began a series of meetings with agencies engaged as participants, which has led to specific practical actions being developed to address the barriers identified, to be delivered by RRF itself and/or in collaboration with a range of public, VCS and private sector agencies.

We also considered the recommendations for specific actions made by participants:

- Need to explore Local Enterprise Partnership role, remit and receptiveness. Are LEP's the way forwards?
- More engagement with employers and business sector and more awareness raising with them
- Provide actual case studies to demonstrate where and how barriers actually kick in at JCP for potential of discretionary / flexible response to be assessed further
- Put all today's ideas onto the REF diagram/model and see how it matches / mismatches
- More network for refugees around employability
- Increase knowledge of refugee community about range of support available
- Increase knowledge of refugee community about the sector skills and labour market needs / profile of the region
- Increase contact between refugee community and services
- Increase knowledge of service providers about the map of support available locally for 'pyramid of needs' for effective signposting and referral
- More collaborative work with and between agencies
- RRF event with positive role models, and 'success stories' in local media and libraries
- Test out Work Clubs route
- Coalition work nationally and locally
- Talk to supportive MPs
- Explore business models for delivery of employment support and ESOL for refugees
- RRF to speak about today's outcomes to Government
- This event 1 year later – what have we achieved?

These recommendations and the ideas and arrangements generated through subsequent meetings with participating agencies have informed our action plan described in Chapter 4: Actions to implement Practice and Policy recommendations.

²¹ This includes the new learning gained by participants themselves (from increased understanding of barriers and practical expertise of specialists) and the new connections made

2.2 Big Conversation 2: May 19th Stockton-on-Tees

Our 2nd workshop was held at the Stockton Arts Centre. Participants again included our members and staff from specialist and generalist services, but this time included those with a role in policy making and planning services.

The design of this 2nd workshop reflected the radical changes in the region's structures and arrangements for planning and progressing the employment, skills and enterprise agendas arising from the Coalition Government's introduction of a tranche of new policies during 2010-11. The context at this time was that while much of the prior existing structure had been decommissioned, which also led to the ending of forums sponsored by them, new structures were only just beginning to emerge. Everyone was in search of clarity and understanding of roles, responsibilities, targets and priorities, and was seeking routes to connect to new emergent structures.

Therefore we ensured Big Conversation 2 provided the opportunity both to (re)contextualise our project and to explore the new landscape we all worked within.

Four priority themes arose from the findings of Big Conversation 1. These were

1. Case work (information, advice, guidance)
2. Business start up and development
3. Volunteering
4. Work placements and Apprenticeships

For each of these themes, interactive sessions were designed to

1. Explore further the practicalities of and practical actions for transferability of Good Practice (for incorporation in generalist practice or scale up)
2. Identify barriers or opportunities for transferability or scale up that lie outside the control of service deliverers
3. Identify the potential levers of change for those barriers and opportunities and a strategy for influencing them

2.2.1 Preparation

For each of the themes chosen we invited people with expert knowledge to act as Table Leads. We provided them with detailed briefing notes on the aim of that session so that they were fully prepared for their role. In some cases we met with them to discuss the aims in more details and help them prepare.

We sent out invitations according to the themes and priorities we had established, and the mix of service deliverers, planners and policy makers we sought. Again, we worked hard to chase up our key targets to engage them in the workshop.

A Briefing pack was sent out to participants prior to the event, again with the aim of establishing a shared base line knowledge and focus. It consisted of

- The Agenda
- Voices of our members
- The Actual Journey chart
- The Essential Features of Good Practice (the findings and recommendations from Big Conversation 1. (See Appendix 4)



Finding routes for Refugees to use their skills and experience and contribute to the North East region's economic future

What works in supporting Refugees to transfer, utilise, and build on their prior skills and experience in the North East labour market & enterprise economy

Agenda

Thursday 19th May 2011 10.00 – 13.00

At The Stockton ARC (Arts Centre), Dovecote Street, Stockton on Tees. TS18 1LL

09.30 **Arrival and registration**

10.00 **Welcome and Contextualisation**

- Georgina Fletcher, Regional Refugee Forum North East
- Ian Dodds, Policy Officer, Big Society (North East) Cabinet Office

10.30 **Group Discussions : Session 1**

Questions for each table to consider:

What can we learn that is transferable and generalisable?

What can be done at the level of practice, what do we need others to do?

Table	Theme	Table leads
1	Careers & Employment support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edward Ralston, North Team Manager : Refugees Into Teaching Project (RiT) • Dr David Chappel, Assistant Director, NEPHO: Refugee Health Professionals Programme 2001-2011
2	Self Employment & Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norbert Konga, Director, ITID Ltd Computer Recycling • Tbc – Business support

3	Volunteering & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roger Mundangepfupfu, Regional Volunteer Co-ordinator, North of England Refugee Service • Michele Stewart, Volunteer Centre Manager, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
4	Work Placements & Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hilary Brockway, Assistant Manager, JET (Jobs, Education & Training) and previously Co-ordinator of the Refugee ILM project • Kath Roe, Director Newcastle UXL: (Diversity in Apprenticeships & Training)

Break

11.45 **Group Discussions : Session 2**

Question for each table to consider:

What opportunities exist within the broader systems, outside the immediate control of front-line providers, to make the refugee journey more effective?

Table	Theme	Table leads
1	Commissioning, Procurement & Contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annette Nylund, Business Development Officer, Stockton Borough Council • Julie Fernyhough, Manager, JET (Jobs, Education & Training)
2	Emerging structures and mechanisms of Strategic Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Barlow, Employability Project Manager, Tees Valley Unlimited • Simon Underwood, Lead officer for North East Strategic Migration Partnership; Newcastle City Council Senior Specialist Social Policy & Inclusion and Lead Officer International Relations

12.45 **Next Steps** Chris Ford

2.2.2 Delivery

40 participants took part in our 2nd workshop. They were drawn mostly from the south of the region.

- Session 1: Each Table Lead gave a 10 minute talk on their particular experience, before opening up discussions to all participants. Discussion was focused on the practicalities of and practical actions for transferability of Good Practice into generalist practice. Barriers or opportunities for transferability or scale up that existed outside the control of service delivery itself were noted. Participants self-selected the table they wished to join for the first session.
- Session 2: The Factors identified in session 1 as being part of the wider system were used to inform discussions in session 2. There were two tables for the second session and again people chose which table they wanted to contribute to and learn from. Table 1 focused on how those factors might be addressed in the arena of Commissioning, Contracting and Procurement of support/services. Table 2 explored how they related to emerging structures and mechanisms of strategic influence.

Documents referred to are attached in Appendix 5.





2.2.3 Analysis: Findings & Recommendations

Learning gained from the event is detailed in Chapter 3 'Windows of Opportunity' at 3.1 and in Appendix 5.

SKILLED PROJECT: BIG CONVERSATION 2

MAY 19TH 2011 at STOCKTON ARC

Findings & Recommendations from Session 1

What is transferable and generalisable from specialist practice?
 What can be achieved at level of practice?
 What needs to be addressed in the wider arena?

Table 1: INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

General Summary

Two specialist support programmes exist for prior skills (judged to be of particular value in meeting UK labour market / skills needs: those who are medically trained and those with teaching experience. These programmes provide holistic support. That is they are designed to meet a pyramid of specific and additional needs, provided through and intensive programme. Support elements specific to the needs of refugees include:

- a. 'UK familiarisation': intensive courses run via universities to prepare refugee doctors for the UK medical context.
- b. Peer group sessions: where refugees and non-refugee doctors can share experiences, illustrating that refugees are not 'alone' in some of their concerns. A space for people to meet, with additional support available if needed.
- c. One-to-one mentoring
- d. Work placements

A short film of Big Conversation 2 appears on the UCOMDIA website ²² and also on our RRF website at www.refugeevoices.org.uk/about-us/watch-our-films

2.3 Follow up meetings and actions

2.3.1 Following Big Conversation 2 we spoke with a number of agencies engaged through the invitation process, who had not been able to attend our Big Conversation events but expressed their interest in being further informed, or providing more information, or being involved in developing future actions.

In May and June 2011 we met with

- Policy Officer for Big Society (North East) at the Cabinet Office
- Regional Director, Business in the Community (North East)
- CEO of Equality North East

2.3.2 We also submitted our findings and discussed some of the barriers identified and how they can be addressed at the national level with the Refugee Council Employment & Training Policy Adviser.

2.3.3 One of our member entrepreneurs attended the Federation of Small Businesses business networking event in Middlesbrough to explore the support and business contacts accessible through this membership body.

2.3.4 We attended the major regional conference - '*Rebalancing the Economy: Beyond One Size Fits All*'²³ - held in Newcastle on 26th May 2011, organised by the 'think tank' Ippr North²⁴.

2.3.5 We explored routes for influencing policy making through British and European Parliamentary processes:

- 2 of our members attended the *Public Bill Workshop* on 10th June at Northumbria University organised by the Houses of Parliament's Parliamentary Outreach Service²⁵
- 4 of our members attended the "*Getting Involved Beyond the Vote*" event at Durham Town Hall on 24th June organised by Europe Direct North East²⁶, and introduced ourselves afterwards to Fiona Hall, one of the North East's three MEPs

2.3.6 Two of our members are attending training '*From Law into Practice: Making the Equality Act 2010 work for you and your organisation*', Manchester 29th & 30th June delivered by Oxfam GB with EU funding. The project is specifically to raise awareness about the new Equality Act among voluntary and community organisations in England, Scotland and Wales.

²² <http://www.ucomedia.co.uk/?p=304>

²³ <http://www.ippr.org.uk/ipprnorth/events/archive.asp?id=4429&fid=304>

²⁴ <http://www.ippr.org.uk/ipprnorth/>

²⁵ www.parliament.uk/outreach

²⁶ europe.direct@durham.gov.uk

2.3.7 Four of our members will be attending the '*LEAD programme (Leadership Entrepreneurship & Development Programme) for SME's*', 4th-7th July 2011 at University of Durham

2.4 Strategy for implementing findings and recommendations of Skilled Project

The information and recommendations generated through the workshop and subsequent actions has been used to inform our Strategy for progressing and sustaining the aims and work Skilled beyond June 2011.

1. Practical actions to address the issues and recommendations identified for what can be achieved at the level of Practice are detailed in Chapter 4 (4.1) Actions to implement recommendations at level of Practice.
2. Practical actions to address issues in the wider system are detailed in Chapter 4 (4.2) Actions to implement recommendations at the level of Policy.

Some of these actions have already begun, as they were generated by the new contacts established through the activities, as intended by the action research design of the project.

Phase 3: May – June 2011

Dissemination & action to implement findings and recommendations

The 3rd phase of our project was designed to:

1. Share the project's findings and recommendations within the region and nationally
2. Develop a regional strategy for implementing the findings and recommendations from July 2011

3.1 Dissemination of findings and recommendations

3.1.1 Regional

The project's key findings and recommendations were presented by project leader Panganai Svotwa at the '3E's' event organised by the North East Migration Partnership to mark Refugee Week 2011. The event, being held in the Banqueting Hall of Newcastle Civic Centre on Monday 20th June 2011, marks the launch of NESMP's Economic Inclusion objective, which the RRF had advocated for inclusion in the NESMP work plan for 2011-12.



The 3 Es Event

Employability, Employment, Entrepreneurship

When

Monday 20th June 2011 6.00 to 9.30pm

Where

Banqueting Hall, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne

Aims

This event marks the launch of NESMP's work on promoting the Economic Inclusion of Migrants in the region

It will give an overview of the context for this strand of NESMP's work, and some examples of work currently being undertaken by some of the partnership's members.

It will also provide an opportunity for those designing and delivering employment and enterprise support to meet with individuals and representatives from our new and emerging communities.

The Format

Participants will be able to visit the information stands of a range of agencies and migrant organisations, to learn about the support available, hear about particular issues faced by new communities, and make connections for future access and collaboration.

Participants will also be able to register their ideas and recommendations so that their expertise and experience can help inform the development of NESMP's strategy

Programme

6.00pm Arrival and Refreshments

6.30 Welcome and opening remarks by

Paul Johnstone, Chair Equality North East and Partner at Muckle LLP

Speakers : Perspectives from the new communities:

Recommendations from 'Skilled': finding routes for the transfer of Refugees' prior skills and experience
Panganai Sivotwa, Regional Refugee Forum North East Trustee and Leader of Skilled Project

Key results and pilot products from ESF Supporting People in the North East Project

Basagitz Guereno Omil, Senior Research Fellow, Sunderland University & Joanna Lompart- Chlasciak, North East Polish Community Organisation (NEPCO)

Social Enterprise: Kate Welch, Chief Executive, Acumen Trust

7.15 Networking Market Place & Buffet

An opportunity for individuals wanting to train, seeking employment or looking to set up business/social expertise to talk to agencies that can help.

Some of the organisations booked to attend include:-

North East Apprenticeship	Regional Refugee Forum	Barnardos
CfBT Education Trust	Newcastle UXL	And others.....
Nexus	YHN	
JET	BECON	
Newcastle Futures	Sunderland University	



The RRF has also been invited to Co-Chair the NESMP Sub-group on Economic Inclusion which will be established following the launch. Panganai will take up this role. This key regional platform will enable us to promote the implementation of recommendations collectively identified by Skilled's participants, both at the level of policy and practice. 2 representatives from NESMP also attend the National Migration Forum, so connecting the regional to the national.

The RRF has been invited to attend the Equality North East ConNEcting for Change²⁷ Steering Group on 22nd July 2011 to explore how our findings and recommendations could be actioned through its cross sector network (voluntary, private and public sector) which brings together those who face disadvantage with those who can influence and make change. The aim of the network is to *“improve economic inclusion for minority and disadvantage groups by identifying and addressing barriers within employment, entry to employment, training and services”*.

Findings and recommendations from both our Big Conversation events are being shared with participants in both events, and will appear on our website for wider access.

At the local level, our members will be able to use the evidence and practical recommendations when advocating for 'what works' at local community engagement platforms and in developing relations with local service delivery agencies.

²⁷ <http://www.equality-ne.co.uk/projects/nfc/>

3.1.2 Other regions of the UK

To enable transfer of learning and ideas for practical and strategic local or regional action to refugee communities in other regions, we will share our report with refugee forums in Yorkshire & Humberside, the North West and Wales, with whom we have established relations and a commitment to learning exchange: Refugee Voice Wales, Leeds Refugee Forum, Manchester Refugee & Migrant Forum, London Migrant & Refugee Communities Forum, Northern Refugee Centre.

This report is therefore written in some detail to maximise the sharing of process and learning with the grass roots level. We will also explore the possibility of forming a 'Bigger Voice' on refugee employment with them.

3.1.3 National

We have arranged to submit our report to James Lee, Employment and Training Policy Adviser at the Refugee Council. James sits on the DWP Ethnic Minority Advisory Group²⁸ (EMAG) and meets with BIS. He can use evidence from across the UK to lobby at the Government department and ministerial level.

One of the consequences of the deep cuts to the Refugee Council's funding is the loss of this post in July 2011. The Refugee Council will seek to maintain its position on EMAG and we wait to hear how this will be structured. On James' advice we will also send our findings to Wilf Sullivan of the TUC, who also sits on EMAG. We aim to do this through the Northern TUC Policy & Campaigns Officer in order to promote regional – national communications loops.

We have also discussed our findings with Ian Dodds, Policy Manager, Big Society (North East) at the Cabinet Office. He is able to share evidence directly with Cabinet Office in Whitehall.

Our Exhibition exists as a mobile resource which we can continue to use to secure attention and engagement in the issue.

3.2 Development of a regional strategy for implementing recommendations

The project's collective work has allowed us to understand the perspectives of a range of actors across the sectors, to review the emerging policy landscape and structures and identify new opportunities to harness for change. We have developed a strategy for sustaining the work of Skilled beyond June 2011 and will use the combined resources of our Training & Development Programme²⁹ and Subgroups programme to deliver this work.

²⁸ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/emag/what-we-do/> The DWP Ethnic Minority Advisory Group has 3 key aims: ensuring, where relevant, that Government initiatives have a clear focus on reducing the ethnic minority employment gap; encouraging employers to tackle discrimination in the work place and embrace diversity practices; ensuring ethnic minority perspectives and considerations are kept high on the agenda for policy makers

²⁹ <http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/training-a-development> Our Training & Development programme supports and empowers our member organisations to progress objectives of Economic Inclusion, Health, and Community Safety through becoming effective advocates for the community.

Practical actions which could help to close the gap between prior skills and employment and between entrepreneurial ambition and business start up were identified through the process of the project. Some have already begun. The learning gained in each phase, the new contact made with participating agencies and collaborative work planned as a result have allowed us to create an Action Plan to progress our aims from July 2011. These are detailed in Chapter 4: Actions to implement recommendations at the level of Practice and Policy.

CHAPTER 2 : Contextualising the project

2.1 The 'Bigger Picture' presented in our project proposal January 2010

We submitted our proposal for 'Skilled' in January 2010. It was approved in March and delivery started in May 2010.

In our submission of January 2010 we proposed to establish regional interest in the endemic underemployment and unemployment of prior skilled refugees by problematising the issue through reference to 2 key regional research and policy documents. These were:

a) *'Building a Competitive City-Region: the Case of Newcastle in the North East'*. OECD July 2006³⁰

“The economic performance of Tyneside has been weak when compared to the UK average. The low skilled labour force constitutes an impediment to a rapid transformation of the city region’s economy. Addressing the present poor levels of human capital will be vital if the city region is to be successful. *At the same time the Regional Economic Strategy does not provide the detail to determine whether it will be radical in implementation....* Attracting and retaining skilled and talented people is a challenge for regional policy makers. With the regional population aging at a faster rate than the UK average and with migration out of the region particularly of skilled workers, there is an acknowledgement that the region needs to attract and retain more skilled workers. *The policy initiatives in this area, however, remain relatively minor and often indirect.* Rather than the general promotion of the region as a migration destination, a targeted approach in which individual high skilled workers or small groups of high skilled workers are in effect case managed into the region, maybe sensible. In addition national migration policy could be given a regional dimension.... For disadvantaged communities, programmes which bring broad range of Government programmes together, and which are tailored to the particular circumstances of the community, *with local participation in the design and delivery of the programmes, is required.*”

In response to (a) above, the Chief Executive of One NorthEast said:

“One NorthEast will seriously consider the findings of the territorial review and use the analysis to inform our work across the North East as a whole ...by shaping the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy ”.

³⁰ <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/press.nsf/newsbyid/1FA55DE04A75F861802571B2003A4CF8?opendocument>

b) 'Leading the Way: Regional Economic Strategy for the North East 2006-11' (RES): ONE North East (Regional Economic Development Agency – RDA) 2006³¹

The RES states,

“The UK has one of the richest mixtures of people from different ethnic backgrounds and it is relatively open to migrants from overseas. This has consistently been a key part of its economic vitality. Economic inclusion therefore remains a major competitive advantage for the UK economy. North East England, however, has lower levels of ethnic diversity than other UK regions, and less involvement by people from such backgrounds in the economy. *So it has more to gain than any other English region by promoting economic inclusion.*”

In a section of the RES entitled “Why We Must Embrace Equality and Diversity“ the following actions are proposed:

“Research led by diversity groups, to identify the economic costs of exclusion and the economic benefits of promoting equality and diversity, and to identify and share good practice in promoting equality and diversity within and beyond the region; Strong joint working between employers and diversity groups to highlight the *economic benefits of promoting equality and diversity to employers* and to support employers in realising these benefits; Targeted actions to promote the North East to potential migrants, and to maximise the economic contribution of new migrants to the region through support for them to take up employment and to start new businesses”.

In 2006 the Regional Refugee Forum took part in research undertaken by Ippr north for their report '*Destination North East: Harnessing the regional potential of migration*'³². The report detailed the added value of migrants to the region's economy, but also highlighted the very real barriers to their economic inclusion and to minimising 'brain waste'.

The premise therefore was that amongst the factors necessary for promoting economic growth, the North East region needed

1. More and higher skills in the labour force
2. Greater inclusion of diversity in the work force
3. Policy to drive this change

Our response was that the prior skills of its Refugee residents, matched these key labour market and economic growth needs and so had economic value for the region.

³¹ <http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/res.cfm>. The RES priorities were translated in to an Action Plan which was launched in May 2007 as a 'live document' – with the actual delivery arrangements to be developed over time. The Action Plan committed to developing a '*framework for Regional talent attraction and retention*' and would incorporate '*provision of tailored start-up support for those moving into the region and graduating from regional universities*'. The Action Plan also committed to progress the aim to '*promote economic inclusion by addressing worklessness and promoting equality and diversity in skills and employment*'.

<http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/lib/Download/11364/47442%20%20GA%20RES%20Action%20Plan%20Summary.pdf?CFID=918142&CFTOKEN=17550382>

³² http://www.ippr.org/index.php?option=com_ippr&view=publication&id=1528&siteid=ipprnorth&Itemid=55
Published July 2006

We also highlighted the potential for refugee entrepreneurs to contribute to economic growth through creation of new businesses, generation of new jobs, and links to international markets and resources. Many refugees are from countries of origin with high levels of entrepreneurship and SME's and seek to apply that approach here in the region. The new community has generated new internal market demands (for goods and services not previously provided in the region) which refugees themselves wish to serve. In addition the refugee community is international in its outlook and contacts, with languages and expertise in other business cultures and bureaucracy and have networks within their countries of origin for access to a range of resources, materials and markets. If links could be made between them and businesses interested in expanding their operations in the increasingly globalised economy, this could promote economic growth within the region as well as contribute to development in countries of origin.

In this context our strategy was to:

1. evidence and raise awareness of the skills pool and new business potential represented amongst the refugee residents and how barriers to the transfer of these prior skills and entrepreneurship were limiting their potential to contribute to the region's economic growth
2. work collaboratively with a wide range of players involved to identify solutions for the removal of these barriers, both at the level of practice and policy

This was the process through which Skilled intended to 're-awaken' and drive forwards the implementation of the proposals contained in the 2 key reports, to bring that paper vision into reality.

However, the Bigger Picture has been radically and deeply transformed since our project proposal of January 2010. The General Election on 6th May 2010 resulted in a hung parliament and the subsequent formation of a Coalition Government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. They immediately began implementing a radical and far reaching set of policy changes which have had huge implications for our work as well as for all agencies involved in promoting employability and enterprise. It has significantly altered the landscape of 'key target agencies' referred to in our original proposal. Most no longer exist. For example, ONE and GONE have been decommissioned, with the consequent loss of many regional policy and planning structures sponsored by them, including Skills North East, (the Regional Skills Partnership), Employability Action NE and associated city wide employment and skills structures are in flux. The Equalities & Human Rights Commission North East office has been closed. The LSC has restructured. The Home Office has ended funding for RIES and the Refugee Council is losing its specialist policy posts, including Employment. All these changes have necessitated a reformulation of the way in which the barrier to prior skills transfer is problematised and a repositioning of our work in relation to new and emergent policies, structures and arrangements for employability, skills, enterprise and equality.

2.2 The Changing Policy Landscape: May 2010 - June 2011

This section aims to summarise how radical changes in national Policy and the beginning of its implementation over the last 12 months began to create significant changes at the regional and local level in relation to promoting employment, skills and enterprise. Our task during Skilled (unforeseen at the time of developing the project) has been to seek an understanding of this changing policy landscape in order to identify the specific *challenges* and *opportunities* it presents for how refugees' prior skills transfer can be progressed at the levels of both policy and practice in our region.

The key policy changes³³ from which these challenges and opportunities arise are:

1. Fiscal policy with the priority and primary aim of eliminating the structural budget deficit by 2015
2. Decentralisation and Localism
3. New drivers and tools for promoting Economic Growth
4. Major Welfare to Work reforms
5. Big Society

2.2.1 Spending cuts and impact on generalist and specialist employment and enterprise support

Throughout the period of our Skilled project the practical implications of spending cuts, designed to reduce the structural deficit, have been at the forefront. The Treasury's comprehensive Spending Review, announced in October 2010, contained an average 19% four-year cut in departmental budgets, with the likely loss of around half a million job losses across the public sector. Subsequently, in March 2011, each local authority announced where and by how much the axe would fall across their services, contracts and grants³⁴. Throughout this period therefore, agencies with policy, planning and delivery roles in employment and enterprise who were wholly funded or part funded through public sector finance were very unsure of their future role and capacity, or even if they would continue to exist beyond the end of the 2010-11 financial year end. With public spending cuts continuing to bite year on year for the next 4 years, the picture will be constantly changing. The proportion of the NE region's VCS' funding that derives from the public sector is higher than the national average at around 50%, so it is clear that the region's charities and voluntary groups delivering public services are going to be heavily affected by these cuts³⁵. In addition the capital assets of independent funders' had been devalued, creating

³³ At the Conservative Party conference in October 2010, Ippr North held an event called '*A perfect storm for the North of England? Localism, devolution, cuts and the Big Society*'

³⁴ These differ across the NE region. For example, Gateshead announced 1000 posts would go and Newcastle more than 600, while Sunderland will not cut any posts. Newcastle plans to make £3.5m available to the voluntary and community sector in the next financial year and committed to a 4 year dedicated grant programme, while for the first time in more than 30 years Sunderland will have no direct grant available for the most deprived communities. Source: VONNE e-bulletin 04/03/11

³⁵ On 16th June the Cabinet Office announced that 43 charities in the North East have been awarded a total of £4.3million from the Transition Fund. The funding is designed to help charities which are most vulnerable to public spending cuts prepare for new opportunities being created through the Government's support for a Big Society.

a squeeze on grant funding for charitable activity that has been funded to deliver economic inclusion and social justice outcomes³⁶ .

In February 2011 the Government announced that funding for specialist Asylum & Refugee support services were being cut by 61.7%, to be fully implemented by May 2011 and on top of the 22% cuts made in 2010³⁷. This includes the national One Stop Service (OSS) to Asylum Seekers which provides immediate and ongoing settlement support for new arrivals and those waiting for a decision. The employment strand of the national Refugee Integration & Employment Support Service (RIES), which provided case work support for new status Refugees for 12 months focused on employability and employment, was ended in April 2011. The rest of the service will go in September 2011. The Refugee Council's CEO said that this *"means that for the first time in living memory there will be no UK government statutory funding to support refugees to integrate in the UK"*³⁸. 78% of the Refugee Council's revenue was derived from contracts with the UK Border Agency (UKBA), so the cuts are resulting in extensive restructuring and loss of capacity within the UK's largest independent refugee charity, including the loss of its specialist policy posts such as the Employment & Training Policy Adviser. The OSS and RIES are delivered through sub-contract in the North East region by the North of England Refugee Service, which has also had to implement cuts. In addition, from April 2011 the Home Office ended its asylum accommodation and support contract with NECASS (North East Consortium for Asylum Support Services), which was composed of seven Local Authority teams. The contract was awarded to a 38% lower cost bid from a single private sector contractor and the Local Authority teams have been disbanded. Concerns have been expressed from a range of public sector and VCS agencies to local MPs and to the UKBA about the impact arising from a loss of connection to both integrated support and transitional support at 'move on' (when a client receives their leave to remain and is then has permission to work).

In the light of these cuts, our members were concerned whether generalist services would have the reach, capacity, knowledge and skills to respond to special and additional needs and diversity once the specialist provision ended. We were concerned there would be a tension between efficiency and diversity needs and wondered how commissioners would deal with this challenge.

2.2.2 Decentralisation and Localism

On 25th May 2010 the Decentralisation and Localism Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech as the intention to *'devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local*

³⁶ http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/news/news_Mar11.html The Northern Rock Foundation, the largest independent grant maker in the NE region, has £8 million grant programme from 2011, compared with £15 million in previous years as it's the agreement on pre-tax profits from the Northern Rock bank was reduced to 1%. The Northern Rock Bank was put up for sale by the Chancellor in June 2011 so the foundation faces an uncertain future.

³⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/01/refugee-services-heavy-hit-cuts> In this article the Home Office admits that the UKBA is imposing significantly greater cuts on the Refugee Council than it is facing itself, but cites the reason that since grant payment agreements were first put in place asylum intake has reduced significantly

³⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/01/refugee-services-heavy-hit-cuts>

*communities control over housing and planning decision*³⁹. One of the Bill's main aims was 'Freeing local government from central and regional control' and one of its main elements was to 'Create Local Enterprise Partnerships (to replace Regional Development Agencies) – joint local authority-business bodies brought forward by local authorities to promote local economic development'.

Thereafter, in June 2010, the Government announced the abolition of Regional Development Agencies, including ONE North East. Regional bodies previously tasked with creating socio-economic strategy, that had a holistic (total place) dimension, were decommissioned. In addition, most of the functions carried out by regional Government Offices ceased by March 2011. Government Office North East (GONE) closed, with its functions recentralised to London, leaving the region more remote from the policy making interface. The various issue-based regional forums and structures which had been sponsored by ONE and GONE to provide the evidence base and expertise to inform regional employment, enterprise and skills strategy also faced closure or unsure futures.

In the wake of dismantling of 'Big Government' the structures and arrangements to develop and deliver planning and policy making at the 'local level' are only emergent. So the questions we faced were where would policy making be focused? What are the emergent structures and processes that will now have the influence to shape policy, and will they engage in this issue of transfer of refugees' prior skills?

2.2.3 New drivers of Economic Growth

Under the Decentralisation agenda, new structures have been created across the UK to drive private sector led Economic Growth. The Government believes "*It is the private sector that will provide the growth this country needs*"⁴⁰ and the catalyst for new leadership is to be the Local Enterprise Partnerships which have been created across the UK. The intention is for LEPs to drive the Government's vision for economic growth as set out by The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in July 2011 in its '*A Strategy for Sustainable Growth*'.

The strategy aims to rebalance the economy – both economically in terms of the contributions of the private sector and public sector, and environmentally – and deliver sustainable private sector led growth to meet the UK's long term economic challenges. Business will drive economic strategy and delivery with the aim of creating sustainable jobs through encouraging enterprise, business growth, stronger key economic sectors and improved skills, transport and infrastructure and "*seize the opportunity of a recovering global economy to develop our exports*".

In October and January 2011 the Secretaries of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and Communities and Local Government approved two Local Enterprise Partnerships⁴¹ for the North East region. Tees Valley Unlimited⁴² and The North Eastern Local Enterprise Partnership⁴³ are

³⁹ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/queens-speech/2010/05/queens-speech-decentralisation-and-localism-bill-50673>

⁴⁰ <http://www.dti.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/s/10-1058-strategy-for-sustainable-growth.pdf>

⁴¹ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economic-development/leps>

⁴² <http://www.teesvalleyunlimited.gov.uk/documents/LEP%20A%20Proposal.pdf>

now both in the process of establishing themselves, and are bidding for a share of Round 2 of the Government's Regional Growth Fund⁴⁴, whose criteria is that proposals must lead to the creation of sustainable private sector jobs and growth.

While the LEPs replace the RDAs, they are not equivalents in scope, capacity or role. Third sector organisations are now exploring arrangements for 'stakeholder engagement' at various levels with these new emerging structures and leaders of regional economic growth. It seems likely that the region will continue to see more new structures and arrangements emerging over the next months.

This changing economic policy landscape was the focus of a major regional conference - 'Rebalancing the Economy: Beyond One Size Fits All'⁴⁵ - held in Newcastle on 26th May 2011, organised by the 'think tank' Ippr North⁴⁶ and attended by the RRF. After listening to contributions from Ministers and Shadow Ministers, the Deputy Chair of the Regional Growth Fund, LEP board members, TUC, Local Authorities, and agencies from across all sectors, we felt there was no longer any policy driven link between socio-economic inclusion and economic growth. Rather, inclusion and improvement in quality of opportunity and life for the wider community is to be dependent on trickle down economics. It also appeared a LEPs view of the VCS is as part of the enterprise sector (as social enterprise or small businesses, and as generating employment). There seemed to be less awareness or consideration of the VCS role within planning as contributors of expert knowledge on what works for inclusion of marginalised or disadvantaged members of the whole community, or their role as representing the voice of communities⁴⁷.

With the demise of Regional Development Agencies and The Northern Way and plans for economic growth looking increasingly fragmented and piecemeal, two new regional initiatives have been developed outside of the Government's own design for growth. a North East Economic Partnership (NEEP) is being established as a partnership between business, local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, universities and others. Its role in working on issues of strategic importance across the North East has been recognised by Government⁴⁸. Ippr north announced in May 2011 that it is setting up the Northern Economic Futures Commission to generate a vision and a voice for economic development in the North of England. The Commission will bring together a small group of leaders from key sectors of the economy, from Local Enterprise Partnerships, universities and civil society to examine evidence

⁴³ <http://www.tynearcityregion.co.uk/> <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=9955> for link to NE LEP Proposal Decemeber 2010

⁴⁴ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economic-development/regional-growth-fund>

⁴⁵ <http://www.ippr.org.uk/ipprnorth/events/archive.asp?id=4429&fid=304>

⁴⁶ <http://www.ippr.org.uk/ipprnorth/>

⁴⁷ www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/05/Drawing%20on%20all%20resources%20Mar2011_1828.pdf Ippr North report 'Drawing on all Resources' published in March 2011: Ippr analysed the proposals of LEPs across the Northern England and identified that *'while all proposals made by LEPS acknowledge roles and value of VCS...many of the proposals offer warm words about the importance of the sector.... but lack specific detail on what their role will look like in practice'*

⁴⁸ http://www.necc.co.uk/uploadedFiles/NEEPbriefing_Feb2011.pdf

and set out a 10-year strategy for economic growth across the three Northern regions of England⁴⁹.

The Government's vision is that economic growth, as driven by LEPS, will be fuelled by increased numbers of skilled jobs and skilled people at all levels. In November 2010 the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) published its report '*Skills for Sustainable Growth*'⁵⁰. In it the Secretary of State for BIS stated "*There is an urgent need to raise UK skills levels to help drive productivity, growth and job creation.... Our working age population is less skilled than that of France, Germany and the US and this contributes to the UK being at least 15% less productive than those countries. We are currently weak in the vital intermediate technical skills that are increasingly important as jobs become more highly skilled and technological change accelerates... If we are to achieve a world-class skills base we need to increase the level of their skills and meet the demands of our economy*".

The clear intention is that the skills system will be driven by employer demand. Training and qualifications funded by Government will be those that are valued by business. Delivery will be through a broad range of autonomous providers who will attract learners depending on the quality of their offer. Apprenticeships are at the heart of the system and will be reshaped so that technician level – Level 3 – becomes the level to which learners and employers aspire. Alongside Apprenticeships there will be a wider and more flexible system of vocational qualifications that meets the needs of the economy.

In its response to the BIS' consultation on the future direction of skills policy early in 2010, the CBI had stated, "*There must be a "respected and credible" vocational offer to employers and individuals that can command the same respect as academic options. This should be based on an expanded Apprenticeships scheme and reformed vocational qualifications*". This statement reflects the concerns expressed by our members within the RRF's consultation response, that '*they wanted more evidence that employers recognise the value of qualifications / accredited learning as they felt they had a 'pile of certificates' already but nothing had helped in getting a job.... the courses are unconnected to improved employability*'. The new skills system outlined in Skills for Growth does match the recommendations of a majority of our members that they would only consider learning that has a realistic chance of leading to employment and careers progression (transfer), is pitched at a higher level, with clear progression routes, qualifications respected by employers, and learning connected up to support for enterprise start up (see [Appendix 3](#)).

⁴⁹ http://www.ippr.org/index.php?option=com_ippr&view=project&id=7405&megafilter=&siteid=ipprnorth&Itemid=44

⁵⁰ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/s/10-1274-skills-for-sustainable-growth-strategy.pdf>

2.2.4 Welfare to Work reforms: 'Get Britain Working'

In May 2010 the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced 'A radical welfare reform programme designed to tackle entrenched poverty and end the curse of intergenerational worklessness' and called 'for an end to a culture of welfare dependency by bringing the welfare system into the 21st century'⁵¹. The DWP's new 'Get Britain Working'⁵² programme is being rolled out by a re-structured Jobcentre Plus. The DWP has announced this involves

- "modernising the way Jobcentre Plus delivers its services – giving more responsibility to Jobcentre Plus advisers to assess customers' individual needs and to offer the support they think most appropriate, including access to a number of Get Britain Working measures.
- a greater focus on partnership working – Jobcentre Plus, providers, local authorities, employers, and jobseekers working together to find new solutions to unemployment.
- a focus on results: Jobcentre Plus staff will be more results-focused, providers will be paid by results and incentivised to support the hardest to help'⁵³.

At the core of the new 'Get Britain Working' agenda is the single Work Programme⁵⁴, providing a mandatory 'integrated package of personalised support' to those who had been 'out of work for sometime'.⁵⁵ The Work Programme prospectus⁵⁶ was issued in November 2010 and the contracting process continued through to the announcement of the successful Prime Contractors for each region on 1st April 2011, all but two being private sector contractors. The proportion of self-delivery and of delivery partnership arrangements across the public, private and VCS sectors varies with each contractor⁵⁷. The North East region contracts were awarded to Avanta and Ingeus Deloitte⁵⁸. They in turn announced their supply chain arrangements for end to end sub-contractors and specialist support partners at the end of May 2011⁵⁹.

The launch of the new Work Programme was announced by the Employment minister on June 10th⁶⁰ and Primes in the North East will be starting delivery by the end of the month. Thereafter all other existing employment support schemes, pilots and projects will cease or be rolled into the Work Programme.

⁵¹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2010/may-2010/dwp070-10-270510.shtml>

⁵² <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/get-britain-working/>

⁵³ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/get-britain-working/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/get-britain-working/>

⁵⁵ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp-business-plan-may-2011.pdf>

⁵⁶ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/work-prog-prospectus-v2.pdf>

⁵⁷ The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion produced a detailed presentation of the results and at the time of announcement the volume by supply chain composition and contractor sector was: Private 72% (including SMEs), Public, and 8.5% VCS 19.4%

http://www.cesi.org.uk/NewPolicy/news/inclusion_work_programme_results?time=634372649843618724

⁵⁸ Avanta participated in both our Big Conversation events, but we were unable to get any response from Ingeus

⁵⁹ Including in presentations to skills and performance focus groups in the region

⁶⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk-13723477>

Throughout this large scale and lengthy overhaul there has been much uncertainty amongst our region's current providers of specialist or enhanced support as to whether they will still be part of the supply chain, or even be able to engage in the sub-contracting process, for example if the geographical delivery scale required and payment conditions are beyond their reach or capacity. In addition, there is no real clarity yet on how many referrals will be made by Job Centre Plus to the Work Programme, and what categories of special needs they will fall into. One prime envisages reviewing its Work Programme supply chain between 3 to 6 months after the programme inception.

The Welfare Reform Bill was introduced in February 2011 and is still progressing through parliament⁶¹ so the full picture is still emergant.

2.2.5 Big Society

On 19th July 2010 the Prime Minister launched the Big Society initiative, which had been a flagship feature of the Conservative Party's 2010 election manifesto. Since then there have been on-going attempts to clarify what many feel is an elusive concept, while many in the VCS considered they have already been delivering it. In essence the Big Society is another tool to drive the localism agenda. It is operated out of the new Office for Civil Society, part of the Cabinet Office and *'works across government departments to translate the Big Society agenda into practical policies, provides support to voluntary and community organisations and is responsible for delivering a number of key Big Society programmes. The Big Society is about helping people to come together to improve their own lives. It's about putting more power in people's hands – a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to local communities'*⁶².

It has three key strands: Community Empowerment (to localise planning and decision making); opening up public services (for delivery by greater range of sectors); and Social action (community organisers, citizen activists and community volunteering). A new post of Policy Manager for Big Society (North East) has been created in the region, reporting to Cabinet Office.

In October 2010 the region's VCS Policy Forum met to discuss the question 'Can a Big Society be a Fair Society?'⁶³. Led by Ippr north the discussion looked at the implications of the Big Society agenda on the VCS. In April 2011 Ippr north published its report *'Can the Big Society be a fair society?: a North East perspective'*⁶⁴. It suggested that one of the fairness tests should be whether marginal voices would be heard, and how local expertise in the VCS would be able to engage in reformed commissioning and procurement. It also raised the question of how the government's concept of 'Fairness' as its stated goal was equated with Equality.

⁶¹ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/welfarereform.html>

⁶² <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview>

⁶³ http://www.vonne.org.uk/policy/partnership/policy_forum.php of which the Regional Refugee Forum North East is a member

⁶⁴ http://www.ippr.org/index.php?option=com_ippr&view=publication&id=1840&Itemid=55

Our members were already worried about the potential of Big Society to favour majority views or the views of those most able and confident to engage in local planning processes. They thought that decision makers, with reduced spending power, would begin to focus or limit their support to 'issues' shared by a greater number of beneficiaries, rather than minority sections of the local community, which they recognise themselves to be. They realised that as a 'community of interest or identity' the voice of refugees only really achieves critical mass at a regional level, with the risk of the voice and needs of local resident refugees being overshadowed at the neighbourhood level. They are also concerned that their issues would be subsumed as a 'BME' issue, when in reality there are specific and additional barriers faced by refugees and only limited overlap

Debate around Big Society also shows that the VCS consider they are already doing it. Community empowerment and engagement have been part of their agenda for years. Some therefore feel that it is an agenda introduced to 'paper over or provide soft front cover' for a loss of resources and routes for the VCS to influence policy. There may be increasing reluctance to buy into the agenda and an increasing toxicity of the brand.

2.2.6 Other changes in 2010-2011 relevant to our project

1 Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act brings together nine separate pieces of legislation into one single Act, which protects the rights of individuals and advances equality of opportunity for all. Provisions of the Act are being brought into force at different times, starting from 1st October 2010. Some of its provisions will be particularly relevant. On 5 April 2011 the new public sector Equality Duty came into force, entailing a duty on public bodies to consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work, in developing policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees. On 6 April 2011 provisions related to positive action in recruitment and promotion were commenced. These voluntary provisions cover the use of positive action in matters of recruitment and employment and can be used by an employer to address under-representation or other forms of disadvantage within the workforce⁶⁵.

However, the Government has decided not to take forward some of the measures in the Act. In November 2010 the Home Secretary announced that they would not be taking forward the socio-economic duty for public bodies. If commenced, this duty would have required key public bodies, such as Government departments and local authorities, when making strategic decisions, to consider addressing unequal outcomes⁶⁶.

In May 2011 the Cabinet Office launched a 'Challenge to Equality Regulation' on its Red Tape Challenge website⁶⁷ which asks '*what more we can do to simplify or deregulate equality legislation*' as '*one of the key priorities of the Coalition Government is to support economic*

⁶⁵ http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/equality_act_2010_what_do_i_n.aspx For example, this can help employers achieve a more diverse workforce by giving them the option, when faced with candidates of equal merit, to choose a candidate from an under-represented group

⁶⁶ http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/faqs_on_the_equality_act_2010/socio-economic_duty.aspx

⁶⁷ <http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/home/index/>

recovery and remove unnecessary burdens on business⁶⁸. The Equality Act is the only piece of statutory legislation – as opposed to regulation – on the website whose provisions are up for challenge⁶⁹.

The Equalities Minister said *“The Equality Act is here to stay. Fairness and opportunity for all remain at the heart of government. But there is always more we can do to ensure that business is not being strangled by red tape. This government is committed to economic prosperity and reducing unnecessary rules and regulations. We want to hear from individuals, businesses, public sector organisations and voluntary and community organisations about how the Act is working in practice. We want to know whether the Act could be simplified, better implemented, or if certain provisions should be dropped or amended, or whether it should be kept exactly as it is.”*

2 Capping net migration

The Conservative Party election campaign included the promise to set a permanent annual limit on the number of non-EU arrivals entering the UK. In January 2010 the Prime Minister announced that *‘Overall, net immigration would be kept in the “tens of thousands,” rather than the current rate of “hundreds of thousands”*⁷⁰. This has led to an on-going national debate on the economic value of migration – in both the high skills and low skills end of the UK’s labour market. While migration is always a political issue and a favourite topic to boost media’s sales figures, this time Britain’s business leaders joined their voices to the mix, citing the business case for migration. Employers groups – including representatives from the CBI, Federation of Small Businesses, and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development - warned the Government that limiting their ability to recruit migrant workers to plug skills gaps in the UK could damage the UK’s competitiveness⁷¹ and joined forces in sustained heavy duty lobbying against the Government’s plans to limit their access to skilled overseas workers⁷².

The Office of National Statistics showed a net migration in 2009 of 198,000⁷³. Migration refers to voluntary migrants (such as economic migrants, students and family members) and forced migrants (those in need of asylum or humanitarian protection). Home Office statistics for 2010⁷⁴ show that, nationally, the total number of asylum applications made in that year was 17,790,

⁶⁸ <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1816>

⁶⁹ <http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/themehome/equalities-act/> one of the questions asked for each area of provision is *“Should we scrap them all together”*

⁷⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/6961675/David-Cameron-net-immigration-will-be-capped-at-tens-of-thousands.html>

⁷¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/7859616/Immigration-cap-plan-reluctantly-backed-by-employers.html>

⁷² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/aug/23/employment-cbi-immigration-cap>

⁷³ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=260>

⁷⁴ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/control-immigration-q1-2011-t/> Home Office (National Statistics) *Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary, United Kingdom Quarter 1 2011 (January – March)* Pages 17-20

while a total of 9,225 forced migrants were granted status⁷⁵ and therefore permission to work or start a business. Since the General Election asylum has featured relatively little in national migration debate. The contribution of asylum to the overall net migration figure is low, and the Government's measures to cut net migration and debate around it has focused on economic migrants, overseas students and family members.

3 Public attitudes to 'Migrants'

Accumulated job losses arising from the economic downturn in 2008 and from the impact of spending cuts from 2011 have the potential to, at best, lower receptivity to the issue of refugee under and unemployment or, at worst, to create a negative response from a hardening 'British Jobs for British Workers' attitude. The North East region has had the highest proportion of its workforce supported by public sector finance. It does not have a large or diverse enterprise sector. Many job losses arising from spending cuts have yet to be implemented or their knock on effects felt. It is unclear yet when or whether the private sector growth engine will generate the jobs to match those lost across the region.

In this context it is possible we will see an expectation that 'migrants' join the bottom of the job queue or wait for growth. Our members' evidence shows that they feel they are already at the end of the queue due to the additional barriers they face. Their evidence also demonstrates that barriers to their economic participation persist in all contexts, they are correlates of the strength or weakness of the regional economy.

It may be harder to maintain a distinction between voluntary economic migrants and refugees, many of whom after 10 years of Dispersal into the region are now themselves British Citizens.

Will attention to promoting refugee skills transfer arise from the value they represent in filling labour market shortages or presenting access to global markets, or will it be founded on rights and the social justice values of equality, diversity or inclusion?.

There is a key question as to whether and how new centres of leadership in the region will play a role in creating and managing public and business perceptions of migration and migrants. With a region's new private sector leadership focused on generating economic added value, will they also develop an approach to migration that fits the region's particular economic profile?.

4 Asylum Improvement Project

In July 2010 the Coalition Government set up The Asylum Improvement Project tasked with taking action to reform the Asylum support system to reduce costs. As part of this focus it

⁷⁵ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/control-immigration-q1-2011-t/> These are our figures calculated from the statistics provided in the Home Office National Statistics for 2010 and refer to principal applicants and do not include their dependents: 3,480 people were granted asylum and a further 1,715 were granted humanitarian or discretionary leave to remain in the UK. Of the nearly 15,000 asylum appeals determined in 2010, just under 28% were allowed. The percentage of main applicants granted asylum, Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary leave to remain at initial decision has remained in the range of 22 and 29 per cent since Quarter 2 of 2009.

aimed to speed up the rate at which final decisions on asylum claims are made. The impacts of these measures are also beginning to have implications for our work:

a) Our members who have been waiting since before March 2007⁷⁶ for a decision on their asylum case have been receiving final decisions over the last 12 months. This accords with the announcement by the Home Office that the backlog of unresolved asylum cases was finally cleared at May 2011, on schedule, under the UKBA's Legacy programme (These were asylum applications made before March 2007). During 2010-2011 therefore many members who had been excluded from the labour market for all these years suddenly received status and therefore permission to work⁷⁷.

b) Evidence from our membership and both mainstream and specialist employment support agencies in our region during 2010 -11 pointed to an increase in very quick case decisions, some within 2 months of arrival. The Asylum Improvement Project's commitment to "*explore new ways to speed up the processing of asylum applications*" is reporting some results. Its Progress Report published in May 2011 states "*We are making decisions more quickly. On average 60% of applications now receive a decision with 30 days*"⁷⁸. Whilst relieving the individual of the stress of waiting for a decision, this rapid decision making raises new issues for prior skills transfer, as it means that some refugees reach the labour market within only a couple of months of arrival in the UK. An individual must move into the mainstream housing and welfare system within 28 days of receiving a decision. Unless they have their own resources, or walk straight into a job, this means signing onto Job Seekers Allowance, and they must therefore be actively looking for work.

5 English Language provision (ESOL)

In January 2011 the DBIS announced a new funding structure for adult education that effectively removes the 100% fee remissions that had enabled asylum seekers (who had been in the UK for more than 6 months) and refugees on low incomes to access free English language tuition (ESOL). Funding for ESOL learners will be restricted to people on active benefits, that is people actively looking for work (either on Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or employment support allowance (ESA)). Of the 195,000 people on college and community group Esol courses in England, an estimated 100,000 will lose out⁷⁹. Asylum seekers and refugees will be hit hard by these changes. English language proficiency has been cited by all our participants (members and agencies), as well as by other research, as being a fundamental pre-requisite for employability and for effective delivery of employment and enterprise support services.

⁷⁶ Many of our members have waited 5-10 years for a final decision on their case. During that time they are not allowed to work

⁷⁷ <http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/right-to-work-campaign/44> for evidence from our Right to Work Campaign. Our members gave testimony about the impact on skills and employability of long term forced exclusion from work.

⁷⁸ <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/reports/asylum-improvement-project/aip.pdf?view=Binary>

⁷⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/jan/18/esol-courses-funding-cuts>

Without fee remission, the cost of a course to the learner will be around £1,300. Asylum seekers and those on Section 4 support are not allowed to work, and therefore not eligible for JSA, so cannot be eligible for these courses. Refugees on income support such as parents, carers or elderly people, as well as those on low incomes, will be exempt from funding⁸⁰.

With enrollment for the 2011-2012 academic year due to begin in August, there is intensive challenge to these changes. The Action for ESOL Campaign⁸¹ was set up in 2011 and a coalition of national agencies, including the Refugee Council and NIACE, are lobbying the Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning at BIS to re-establish full fee remission for asylum seekers post 6 months⁸² and for newly recognised refugees to be eligible for free ESOL up to Level 2. There may also be reconsideration for reinstating the discretionary fund that allowed FE colleges to support those classed as 'vulnerable learners'.

2.2.7 Loss of Expertise

One consequence of the decommissioning of regional structures and job losses arising from public spending cuts is the loss of expert knowledge and social capital in the region and nationally. Many people with years of specialist service delivery experience, an established connection and reach into the refugee community, in depth awareness and knowledge of asylum and refugee issues, and experience in lobbying on policy at the highest levels are no longer be players in the field⁸³. The connections, sharing of good practice and collaborations that had been developed across organisations from different sectors have been severed. It will take some time for those left to re-orientate themselves in the new landscape and identify and establish the most effective links again.

⁸⁰ http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/archive/news/2011/january/190111_news_refugees_lose_out_on_ESOL.htm?WBCMODE=%2f%2f%2f

⁸¹ <http://actionforesol.org/>

⁸² They are also lobbying for eligibility from Day 1 of arrival

⁸³ For example, this includes at a regional level the employment support workers within the North of England Refugee Service through to the Employment & Training Policy Adviser post in the Refugee Council at the national level

CHAPTER 3: 'Windows of Opportunity'

In the light of this rapidly and radically changing external context of policy, roles, remits, relationships and resources from the moment our Skilled Project began, we have sought to identify new windows of opportunity and new levers of influence for promoting refugees' prior skills transfer and entrepreneurship in the region, and to consider the most effective strategy for acting on them.

The willingness of the agencies we engaged through Skilled, who contributed their expertise, experience and views to our collaborative research process, may have arisen not just from their shared concern and interest in the issue, but in their desire to explore, discuss and map the changing context which we must all work in. It was also evident that agencies were either actively looking for, or very receptive to:

- practical ideas and pathways for marketing and delivering their (new) programmes
- more understanding of and connections to the refugee 'customer group', with whom they might be working for the first time or on a greater scale (as specialist services end)
- more understanding of the map of support that will exist to meet the 'pyramid of needs' specific to refugees in closing the gap to the labour market
- connections to sub-contracting partners
- identifying where '*competence*' now lies (where decision making power lies / levers of influence) and routes for connecting to them

In this sense we can say that Skilled has taken place in a transitional moment and that the changing external context actually provided a significant window of opportunity:

- to enable us to engage interest in the issue
- to identify and develop specific practical actions to progress it
- to achieve the level of understanding and new connections needed to re-problematise our issue, re-formulate our strategy and re-position ourselves within the new field of competencies

The scale of this change is demonstrated by the fact that most of the agencies referred to in our Skilled proposal at January 2010 as 'key targets' no longer exist. Those centres of policy making and the routes to influencing them have gone. This is true also for many of the policy based recommendations of the reports we analysed in our desk top research process. In addition other agencies we identified as key targets to influence are undergoing significant re-sizing &/or re-structuring, or have had to develop new priorities for action to take up the challenge of change.

3.1 Opportunities identified through Big Conversation 2

The agenda of our Big Conversation 2 included the opportunity to explore emerging structures and mechanisms of strategic influence and the implications of this contextual change for actions

to promote skills transfer. We are grateful for the expert input of both Simon Underwood⁸⁴, Lead Officer of NESMP, and Chris Barlow from the Employability team at Tees Valley Unlimited (LEP), who provided participants with an up to date briefing to inform discussions.

We gained the following learning and messages:

1. All policy change creates a window of opportunity to influence both the end form of the policy and the way in which it is implemented on the ground. That window is still open as some of the policy is still going through parliament and implementation just starting. So we need to use our evidence and experience to feed up and inform policy and strategy....now.
2. While the Coalition Government 'don't do regional policy', this does not mean we should not be doing it.
3. Policy needs to be influenced at the level of competence (ie: where power is actually held to influence that policy). In the changing context and decommissioning of structures we need to identify where that level of competence now is, and what geographical level is appropriate for that particular issue. This may be at the local, sub-regional, regional, super-regional, national, European or international level. For each barrier we need to identify the 'competency' involved, and the route to it. We should consider for example:
 - a. The disbanding of all other regional structures increases the importance of NESMP as an ally in progressing this work. It offers a key strategic platform for migration issues, with an ideal membership, but it needs more dynamic engagement from many of them. Agencies should utilise NESMP and ensure its effectiveness is maximised. There is a direct route from NESMP to National Government. 2 representatives from NESMP attend the quarterly meetings of the National Migration Group, at which the Immigration Minister is sometimes present. While it is 75% funded by the UKBA, they are not directive. Every region involved in dispersal has such a migration partnership.
 - b. ANEC (The Association of North East Councils) also remains as a regional body attended by the Leaders and CEOs of the 12 North East Local Authorities. Tabling a report to ANEC is an important route for influencing all Local Authorities.
 - c. The two new Local Enterprise Partnerships are engaged in bidding for Round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund. There are now discussions between leaders in the business sector and in Local Authorities about the setting up the North East Economic Partnership.
 - d. Local MPs and members of the House of Lords can be engaged if we identify their specialist interests. Lords Beecham (Labour) and Lord Shipley (Liberal

⁸⁴ Simon Underwood is Lead Officer, North East Strategic Migration Partnership & Newcastle City Council Senior Specialist Social Policy & Inclusion and Lead Officer International Relations

Democrat) are both very experienced and senior local government politicians and both are positive on migration.

4. We need to recognise and be realistic about the new 'commercialised' context, with commercialisation of the social (for example the Care UK model) and the business sector increasingly becomes deliverers of publicly financed contracts. Through this commercialisation process, policy is being run along business lines, services themselves become businesses, and the business sector takes a role in policy setting. It is being delivered through contracts, contracting across all sectors, but with increasing focus on the private sector. This means that activities to influence policy will also need to be directed to the private sector, not just the public sector.
5. In this commercialised context we must learn to frame arguments to fit the approach and language used. Therefore our strategy needs to move from an argument based on *need* to one based on *value*. To get this issue onto the agenda of the new leaders of economic planning the challenge is to provide *evidence of value added* to the region through the economic inclusion of refugees. It needs to be quantified to be presented as *an asset worth investing in*.
6. Does the support needed to remove barriers have the potential to be structured along the lines of a not-for profit business model? (i.e: that the activity generates and income to cover its costs). For example, could it be delivered as a social enterprise, consortia, partnerships, or through commercialising training? Any business model would need an effective code of ethics, and would need to be outcome driven rather than outputs/targets driven⁸⁵.
7. A 'victim mentality' could hold refugees back when the focus has moved to proving value over need. "Be dynamic, rather than needy". Instead of 'pleading a special case', collect and use the best possible evidence to establish a clear case for change based on value too. We cannot afford to wait for others to do this (there is no one left). We must do it ourselves. Instead of presenting an issue we need to talk in terms of value, and that for a little investment (for example, of resources, or time, or placement opportunity) there would be a comparatively large return.
8. In the context of widespread job losses across the region, the need for employment and employability support and measures is equally widespread. In order to justify refugee skills transfer being a specific item on the agenda, we will need to produce an evidence base that quantifies what Refugees can contribute to economic growth in the region. For example, statistical data on scale and specific skills profiles in a sub-region so that local businesses can tap into them; or data relating to the economic potential of the international (market) links refugees can harness for the region such opportunities for

⁸⁵ http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-news//2011/06/14/north-east-charities-tell-government-to-do-more-for-good-causes-61634-28871994/?campaign=Newcastle_email_journalliveemail:20110614 in The Journal 14th June, the CEO of VONE said "*the perception that if charities could just modernise and be a bit more commercially astute then their problems would be solved is not (welcomed). The fact remains that in many cases Charities support people that do not pay directly for their services. If those services to the most vulnerable are to continue then they need to be paid for.*"

exporting North East knowledge economy, such as the Green technology, to other countries. This will have to be raised by the refugee community itself, as there is no one else left out there to stimulate these ideas. In the commercialised context, any investment in skills transfer needs to be justified by the value added to the economy. Or evidence to show that by not investing in releasing untapped potential will be putting North East companies at a disadvantage.

9. The role and capacity of a LEP's is nothing like an RDA's. The key role of a LEP is to create jobs, including high value jobs. For example, Tees Valley Unlimited has a budget of £2.3 million and 40 staff/members, whereas ONE had a budget of £9 million and employed c.400 people⁸⁶. While LEPs can play a co-ordinating and overarching role, and connect the right people up, they have no capacity for carrying out large skills audits. A LEP must rely on information that is out there, provided by others. They need to look to other partners to input information to make up the whole picture. Others will need to provide the statistical evidence of why the issue is important and justify its place on the agenda
10. Tees Valley Unlimited is working closely with Job Centre Plus on the Work Programme. Within its structure it has an Employment & Skills Advisory Group, within which they can create task and finish focused sub-groups – for example the RRF could get involved in this with a sub-group dedicated to refugee skills transfer. The LEP has an officer focused on the Green Economy too. LEPs need to communicate more about their role and structure.
11. Raising the awareness of the wider business sector on the pool of value represented by refugee prior skills will be needed. Stories in the local media, sent to HR managers locally, and networking with local structures such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the local Chamber of Commerce are good routes for engaging the local business. The RRF can play a role in engaging interest of more businesses through the human face of the issue – such as through our Skilled exhibition - can work in challenging stereotyping and assumptions. This can help sensitise local businesses so that they are more receptive when they are approached by an agency (such as JET or JCP for example) seeking work placement opportunities for clients or to place someone in employment. Case studies of satisfied employers will also be useful (as support agencies have evidence of some employers welcoming refugee employees for the motivation and drive they bring with them). But this awareness raising needs to be accompanied by actual case studies of refugees using their skills, and of refugee entrepreneurs, to that prove value and the commercial appeal of a refugee applicant's skills to a business.
12. In parallel we need to collaborate with those who pushing forwards the provisions of the Equality Act 2010⁸⁷. We can contribute evidence to the Northern TUC's policy work on investigating how equality, and diversity, is actually being implemented in practice (such

⁸⁶ Apologies to TVU if our recording of these figures is inaccurate.

⁸⁷ http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx

as in planning, recruitment, in the work place, in delivery of services), or even understood, by organisations - both service providers and employers. There is a need to raise awareness of the distinctions between Equality and Diversity, to challenge some entrenched perceptions and attitudes and to upskill competence of front line providers in delivering to diversity.

13. The Government's policy framework is creating 'super-regions', with the North East being combined with Yorkshire and Humberside. The North East needs to pull together otherwise there is a risk that centres of leadership and power will gravitate to the larger cities in the south of this super-region. For example, the 2 North East LEPs need to work together

3.2 Opportunities identified in the DWP *Get Britain Working* agenda

The new '*Get Britain Working*'⁸⁸ agenda has provisions which should lead to a more skills focused case managed support for Jobcentre Plus customers:

- A customer will have the same advice worker throughout
- And receive support that is appropriate for that particular needs More diagnosis of an individual's skills and needs, and a flexible response
- The focus will be on helping the customer secure sustainable employment (ie: longer term employment), rather than early entry to any job (which they may not remain in for long). So it includes focus on skills, as a person is more likely to remain in a skills related job in the longer term
- Support for would be entrepreneurs is now a specific agenda objective, to reflect national policy which sees the business sector as the key driver of the economic growth and job creation
- Advice workers and district teams will have greater flexibility and discretion in decision making, based on what is appropriate for that particular customer

The Structural Reform Plan⁸⁹ within the DWP's Business Plan 2011-15, published in May 2011, details specific measures to support people into work and to promote self-employment, some of which are already being implemented. These measures include:

- Supporting the establishment of locally led Work Clubs in community settings where people can meet, exchange skills, share experiences and receive support in finding local job opportunities

⁸⁸ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/get-britain-working>

⁸⁹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp-business-plan-may-2011.pdf> Pages 11-20. Each government department has to produce a structural reform plan which details how it will contribute to the Coalition Government's commitment to '*a programme of reform that will turn government on its head. We want to bring about a power shift, taking power away from Whitehall and putting it into the hands of people and communities, and a horizon shift, making the decisions that will equip Britain for long term success. For too long citizens have been treated as passive recipients of centralised, standardised services. This Government is putting citizens back in charge, and Structural Reform Plans are part of this shift of power from government to people.*'

- Offering work experience placements to young unemployed people, including those from disadvantaged groups who lack experience or basic skills or face other barriers to work
- Helping connect unemployed people with volunteering opportunities in their area through a new volunteering initiative called Work Together
- Supporting the growth of locally-led, community-based Enterprise Clubs
- Access to a New Enterprise Allowance
- Customer access to business mentors

These provisions and measures match elements of Good Practice identified through our project so represent an opportunity through which to progress skills transfer and business start up.

The DWP also intends to save money by making online services their preferred channel. For some refugees who chose not to sign on for benefits - because they do not like a benefits culture or feel comfortable at the JCP office – this may encourage them to sign up for the access it could provide to the support programmes for JCP clients and recruitment opportunities they currently miss out on.

There will be a greater focus on partnership working and joined up working. The stated aim is for Jobcentre Plus, providers, local authorities, employers, and jobseekers to work together to find new solutions to unemployment. Key contacts for stakeholder engagement within district teams are the Local Partnership Officers and External Relations officers (such as Employer Engagement Officers).

The DWP is committed to working with BIS *“to ensure that Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme providers, further education colleges and other training providers collaborate so that people on active benefits have access to training to find and keep work, and progress once in work. This collaboration will include work with employers to give benefit claimants access to sector-specific training (alongside work experience and guaranteed interviews brokered by Jobcentre Plus) through the proposed sector-based work academies”*⁹⁰

Much of our project discussion focused on the need for refugees to have some form of ‘Grace Period’ when signing onto Job Seekers Allowance for the first time. They need the chance to work on their prior skills transfer or enterprise idea, rather than risk being penalised for not taking up the earliest job opportunity, which is unlikely to relate to their prior skills, or for not complying with mandatory employability training that again may not meet their specific needs.

Under the new DWP approach, securing *sustainable* employment is the key target of Jobcentre Plus advice work, as opposed to securing any job which someone has no real incentive or desire to remain with. Sustainable employment refers to a job that someone is likely to remain in, and want to remain in, as it relates to their skills or career field. JCP advisers will no longer be under pressure to monitor so intensively a customer’s efforts to find (any) work during the first 12 months of benefit as that period is now as much about skills development. This means a refugee customer – as long as they have a good effective route map and guidance for their particular skills transfer or business idea – may have more opportunity to work towards this.

⁹⁰ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp-business-plan-may-2011.pdf>

Several agencies we spoke to consider this new approach to offer real opportunity for refugee skills transfer and enterprise, as long as there really is a shift in culture of the approach of advice workers that reflects the shift in agenda.

The DWP has said 620,000 unemployed people would be referred to the Work Programme in the remainder of this financial year, and around the same number in the next year. While they face specific disadvantage, Refugees are not defined as a priority group for early entry into the Work Programme. However, anyone is potentially eligible for early entry because of the new flexibility a JCP case worker has in deciding what is appropriate for each individual. But as noted above, early entry to the Work Programme may not necessarily an advantage for a refugee aiming to re-use their skills. There is much conditionality attached to a customer of the Work Programme, which could interrupt their pathway to skills transfer rather than aid it. The effectiveness of the support provided through early entry to the Work Programme will depend on the skills of the agency contracted to deliver it. However, the actual volume and proportions of relative needs (for different special or additional needs groups) is as will only be known after referrals actually start to the Work Programme from the end of June 2011. Only then will the effectiveness of supply chains set by the Prime contractors become clearer.

Appeal to new flexible and discretionary powers may enable refugees to enter support measures designed for young people – such as the New Enterprise Allowance.

The more information an advice worker has, the more able they will be to exercise flexibility and discretion. There is every advantage therefore in supporting a refugee to understand the importance of ensuring the adviser knows about their prior skills or business idea and plans for transferring them.

The DWP's Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (EMAG)⁹¹ sub-group will finalise its work plan in the next 3 months. The window is still open to inform their work, or provide additional evidence of barriers operating on the ground – such as lack of clarity around refugee eligibility for apprenticeships as reported to us by agencies organising Apprenticeships across our region⁹². The Refugee Council⁹³ sits on this group and has been pushing for high level apprenticeships to be available for overseas qualified professionals as a more effective re-qualifying route than having to start training/qualification again from scratch. This matches the evidence from our membership where many people have abandoned their prior skills, or are facing years of requalification, and their recommendation for work based skills validation routes. Also, they are pushing for a skills equivalent of NARIC (which matches academic qualifications only), which was also recommended by our project participants. EMAG provides a route for us to use our regional evidence to strengthen the case for change.

The DWP's new Work Together initiative does provide for a more systematic approach to securing volunteering opportunities. However, with increasing numbers of people out of work, there is likely to be increasing competition for volunteering opportunities as a route back to

⁹¹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/emag/what-we-do/>

⁹² Several agencies had been told / or believed that the 3 year residency rule applied to eligibility, and refugees had been turned away from apprenticeship schemes for this reason

⁹³ Our thanks to James Lee, Refugee Council Employment & Training Policy Adviser for his information

work. This may bring higher skills or competences (such as in English language for example) into competition with lower skills, pushing many to the back of the queue whilst they may also be at the back of the jobs queue. In parallel there will be an increase in corporate volunteering, so even more people looking to secure volunteering placements. Part of the Government's new agenda is that all civil servants will be expected to volunteer. This additional demand may overload the capacity of local Volunteering Centres and also employer capacity. We need to consider options for generating more volunteering opportunities for refugees or for identifying how volunteers could be secured for the refugee community itself (such as business mentors or sector skills mentors).

3.3 Opportunities identified in the Big Society agenda

We met with the Ian Dodds, Policy Officer, Big Society (North East) to understand more about how provisions of the Big Society agenda could be harnessed as opportunities to progress routes for promoting prior skills transfer. The essential message was that waiting to find out what new structures and arrangements would be created to deliver Big Society reflected a mind set used to an 'old' top down approach. Instead communities are expected to be proactively involved in creating bottom up mechanisms. Alternatively or additionally, structures that already exist need to be utilised or re-energised.

3.3.1 Public Service planning and delivery (such as the commissioning, procurement and contracting employment, employability and enterprise support)

a) At the level of Local Authorities:

In October 2010 the Government announced it would produce a Public Services Reform White Paper, although this is still to be presented. The intention is for commissioning of public services to be more 'involving' and more transparent. This would mean that when Local Authorities seek to re-shape their services (such as employment and enterprise support), they would seek to involve users, or representatives of users, in the planning process. Involvement would entail consultation around effectiveness and potentially being part of the process through which delivery agents are selected. As part of the localism agenda, it will be up to each Local Authority to design the mechanism for involvement. They may choose to use existing mechanisms (such as local BME forums), or work with representatives voices, or set up something new. This approach is a change in both culture and scale, but with Local Authorities currently undergoing job losses and restructuring there is little clarity yet on how involvement will actually be achieved.

Under the Localism Bill, communities will be given the Right to Challenge⁹⁴. If an organisation feels it can deliver a service more effectively then it can challenge, which could lead to a procurement exercise for that service, or it could prompt an improvement to the existing service.

Fairness and Equality could be promoted through the practical implementation of opportunities provided by the '*Power to improve well-being*'. This was introduced in 2000 "*to give local authorities the statutory powers necessary to allow them to play their full part in improving the*

⁹⁴ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismrighttochallenge>

quality of life for local people. The Well-Being Power is part of a range of tools which help local authorities to exercise their role as strategic leaders of their communities”⁹⁵.

b) At the level of Government Departments:

Functions of the decommissioned regional Government Offices (e.g: GONE) will not be replaced. Evidence to inform Government department policy – such as DWP policy – will need to be routed to Whitehall.

As representative of Cabinet Office⁹⁶ in the North East, Ian Dodds will play a role in gathering evidence of Good Practice in the region to share with others within the region and nationally, and sharing Good Practice identified from other regions with the North East. For example, practical examples of growing social capital, in particular the *linking up* of local communities to local agencies or a commissioning process. Sharing findings and recommendations with the region’s Big Society Policy Officer and being informed of what works in other regions can be one route to engagement at the national level.

Cabinet Office is also championing a national cross-sector Resolving Multiple Disadvantage (RMD) project being delivered by Local Inclusion Lab areas⁹⁷. 10 Pilot schemes to Resolve Multiple Disadvantage are running across the country between April – September 2011, delivered through local cross sector partnerships (joined up working). The aim is to share their learning process, and catalyse action and innovation in other localities. The work and learning of Lab areas will feed directly into Cabinet Office officials and Ministers to inform national policy developments⁹⁸. A Pilot Scheme to Help the Homeless is being run in Redcar⁹⁹.

3.3.2 Empowering local communities to benefit from these opportunities

There is real concern that not all parts of the local community will be equally ‘empowered’ by these measures or opportunities. Having one’s voice heard and genuinely having a share of localised control will rely on people having the knowledge, competence and confidence to get involved and articulate needs and aspirations. Disadvantaged communities in inner urban

⁹⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/10614461.pdf> ‘Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 (the ‘2000 Act’) allows principal local authorities in England and Wales to do anything they consider likely to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area unless explicitly prohibited elsewhere in legislation. This Power (‘the Well-Being Power’) is intended to be all-embracing and in practice, the three objectives of economic, social or environmental well-being have been interpreted by local authorities to encompass cultural well-being and the promotion or improvement of the health of residents and visitors. The Government is therefore keen to encourage more local authorities to consider the potential that this Power has to transform their role, support service improvement and improve outcomes for local people’.

⁹⁶ <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>

⁹⁷ <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/becoming-resolving-multiple-disadvantage-local-inclusion-lab-area> ‘A range of Big Society partners working with a small number of localities from April to September 2011 to find ways to reduce multiple disadvantage amongst adults’.

⁹⁸ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/local-inclusion-labs-invite_0.pdf

⁹⁹ <http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/partnership>

[rcbc.nsf/Web?ReadForm&id=824C48902A873ADB80257892004DOCA1](http://www.rcbc.nsf/Web?ReadForm&id=824C48902A873ADB80257892004DOCA1) ‘It will examine how joined-up services can best be used to improve people’s quality of life’

areas may have neither the 'skills capital' nor the social capital required (bonds, bridges or links), whereas more affluent areas with a greater proportion of professionals will be able to draw on both social capital and expertise (such as in law, planning, finance etc).

The Community Organisers Programme is a tool of Big Society intended to address this. The programme began in February 2011. It aims to *"strengthen communities and give them the relevant skills, knowledge and confidence to tackle local issues themselves. It will do this by recruiting and training a new generation of 'Community Organisers' as experts who will work with local communities to spot opportunities, support ideas and identify local leadersThe programme will recruit and train up to 500 senior Community Organisers, along with a further 4,500 part-time and voluntary organisers who will support them."*¹⁰⁰ Led by delivery partner Locality, 11 'kickstarter' organisations (none in the North East region) were chosen and began to recruit and host the first tranche of community organisers¹⁰¹. Expressions of Interest for the next set of Kickstarter organisations will be open for October 2011, and Cabinet Office is keen to see interest from the North East.

At an event organised by Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS) on 22nd March 2011, we joined representatives from other VCS organisations to consider the Government's expectations of community organising and discuss some of its strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. On balance there were many more questions and doubts expressed about community organising and its potential to be a successful vehicle for communities to achieve change. In contrast to community development, with its occupational standards, commitment to equality and diversity and strong working practices and ethics, community organising appears much more loose and adaptable; something that may in practice may be a strength or weakness. It was questioned whether a 'top down' initiative could succeed locally, particularly when community organising is meant to come from the grassroots. Concern was expressed about the activities of self appointed community organisers whose actions are without scrutiny or accountability to established local networks or groups and the potential for it to create division. How will tensions that may arise from one group's or community's 'empowerment' be alleviated, if community organising gives authority to those with the loudest voice at the expense of vulnerable or minority interests¹⁰². It was agreed to take a neutral position and watching brief, and to organise another meeting to develop the discussion in early autumn 2011 to learn from the first six months of the programme work and work together on any

¹⁰⁰ <http://locality.org.uk/news/locality-leads-community-organisers/>

¹⁰¹ <http://locality.org.uk/projects/community-organisers/> *"The work of the community organisers will enable people to take action on their own behalf and have the power and confidence to tackle the issues which are important to them, rather than wait for the local authority or the government to do it for them. It will also enable them to make the most of new local community rights and opportunities to achieve their own aspirations. Community organisers will be recruited and hosted by local community host organisations, often in deprived areas of the country. They will listen to residents in their homes, on the street and where they gather, and they will listen to public service and third sector workers, small businesses and local institutions to help develop their collective power to act together for the common good, as identified locally"*

¹⁰² For example, reference was made to another north east example where community organising involved identifying young people's behaviour as 'anti-social' leading to increase surveillance being placed upon them. Criticism of the impact organising had on these youngpeople was, we were told, angrily dismissed.

future North East initiative to add local knowledge and ensure organisers are not simply parachuted in¹⁰³.

It is also envisaged that the local business sector will play a role in Big Society by speaking up for all residents, or in providing the relevant professional skills and expertise – as the business sector is a part of the local community that gets its voice heard. This will depend on local businesses understanding their connection to the local community, more links being fostered and brokered between them and the community, and identifying shared and collective interest in the local environment and opportunities for people to achieve better quality of life. The business sector is therefore expected to play a role in planning at the community/local level as well as being tasked with leading economic growth in the wider system.

The question for Skilled is how best can refugees progress issues of economic inclusion through these provisions of Big Society and Localism?. *'Destination North East: Harnessing the regional potential of migration'*, published by Ipsr north in 2006, reported that *"Within the North East region, almost double the proportions (33 per cent) of non-EU born migrants are educated to a higher level than the British Isles- born population of the North East (18 per cent) although these migrants are slightly over-represented in the category of those with no qualifications"*¹⁰⁴. The large majority of Refugees who arrived in the North East under Dispersal measures since 2000 are still living in areas to which they were dispersed – that is urban wards within the top 10% of deprivation indices. Their aspirations are typical of the middle class anywhere, with a focus on their children's educational achievement and opportunity. There is a potential for those educated, vocal and skilled refugees to play a leading role in community empowerment, not just in championing the issues of members of their own community (for example speaking up for those refugees without a higher educational or skills background) but also as *residents*, as members of the wider local community. However, if they are to perform this role, refugees need information about and links to the provisions for community engagement, and support with brokering relationships with the wider local community for the opportunity to identify shared interest, trust and collaboration. The objective of the Regional Refugee Forum's Training & Development project (commenced November 2010) is to support refugee community activists to engage in local and regional planning processes, not just as advocates of refugees but as members of the local community, through 'Access, Empowerment and Advocacy'¹⁰⁵. There is evidence from our membership that this is happening on the ground, with refugee residents leading calls for neighbourhood regeneration and improved local community safety.

Another important question is the level at which communities will be defined. How will communities of interest or identity (such as the region's refugee community), which only achieve critical mass at a wider level than neighbourhood or local community, engage their collective voice across a region? Where there are issues that are regional in spread, but are issues of the minority at the local level, what will be the opportunities for influencing change? As members of the local community they may engage with Local Authority planning arrangements; as

¹⁰³ Extract from the report of 'Community Organising...Starting the debate' NCVS March 2011

¹⁰⁴ http://www.ippr.org/index.php?option=com_ippr&view=publication&id=1528&siteid=ipprnorth&Itemid=55 Page 28

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/training-a-development>

customers of the JCP or Work Programme they can engage with area teams and local service providers. As members of a community of interest they could engage with ANEC (Association of North East Councils) and with DWP or Prime Contractors. It will necessitate acting strategically at the level at which competence lies.

3.4 Opportunities identified with the business sector

Engaging the business sector is a key element for transfer of refugee skills - as employers, as providers of work based opportunities, as sector skills or business mentors, or potential business partners. We learned much about the need, in the new commercialised context, to engage the business sector through an even greater focus on proving 'added value' to the regional economy. But we also learnt about the opportunities for engaging the business sector through an appeal to social justice, corporate social responsibility, and the business case for diversity.

In May we met with the Regional Director of Business in the Community (North East) which can be described as the social conscience of the NE business sector. BITC is a business-led charity with a growing membership of 850 companies, from large multinational household names to small local businesses and public sector organisations¹⁰⁶. Their vision is *"for every business to act responsibly to help build a sustainable future"*. BIC helps its members *"drive performance through responsible business practice"* which includes *"Demonstrating clear leadership, governance and values; Developing employees and the future workforce; Investing in their local communities focused on those in greatest need; Working with others to create change that benefits business and society"*

The BIC organises '*Seeing is Believing*' events, which go under the banner of '*Transforming Business, Transforming Communities*' where senior leaders of companies explore relevant business action at local and regional level in relation particular social challenges in the community. We discussed the possibility of BIC North East organising such an event to explore the issue of a) creating pathways for refugees to use their prior skills and contribute to the economy and b) the potential to support refugee entrepreneurship and realise the potential of their international links for trade and development¹⁰⁷. BIC members also organise employee volunteers for community initiatives through its Give & Gain programme. As a result of our meeting the Regional Director is meeting with JET to explore (a) and understand the infrastructure of managed work placement support that already exists should businesses wish get involved and test out an initial 'wish list' of placements. She is also meeting with John Dobie to discuss the potential of global connections for NE businesses (b).

From John we learnt that business growth depends as much opportunities arising from the contacts and friendships created through networking as it does on the initial idea or business skills. There is a real need for refugee entrepreneurs to network with North East businesses – to

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.bitc.org.uk/index.html>

¹⁰⁷ For example, under this programme BIC North East have previously worked to provide opportunities for ex-offenders

develop business relationships with people, with exporting companies who are keen for knowledge about and connection to other countries.

One barrier identified through our research was the lack of confidence or clarity amongst some employers about the eligibility, or legality, of refugee applicants for work (although this may not be related to status but about 'foreign workers'). One national research report suggested that Many employers thought that ID cards would help to make it easier to check applicant's right to work¹⁰⁸. While the proposal for universal ID cards has been scrapped, under a European Union directive the UKBA is still implementing Biometric Residents Permits for all Foreign Nationals, which will include refugees not yet British Citizens.

3.5 Opportunities identified within regional debate on migration

At the national level the Government sees migration and asylum as *problems* that are under control.

At a conference held on 22nd June 2011 at Newcastle Civic Centre during Refugee Week, Simon Underwood (Lead Officer for International Relations at Newcastle City Council, and Lead Officer for North East Strategic Migration Partnership) presented the perspective of the North East¹⁰⁹. He said "*There is a big difference between how the Government sees migration and how we see it in the North East*". There is recognition amongst Local Authorities that the region needs migrants to improve both its economic and culturally led regeneration prospects from which the whole community will benefit¹¹⁰. The region has a big need for skills, enterprise, and innovation. The North East faces the challenge of very small population growth (until recently it was negative growth) with an ageing demographic, low graduate retention (as the region does not offer them employment at the level they seek), lower skills levels, and a smaller and less diversified private sector (as demonstrated by the fact that the public sector provides 31% of employment compared to a national average of 20%), and the second lowest proportion of residents born outside the UK of all regions of the UK. The engine of the gradual population growth in the region has been migrants arriving in the region over the last 10 years.

The North East region has a population of around 2.5 million, of whom 3.5% were born outside of the UK. The 'migrant' population amounts to around 100,000 people – composed of economic migrants, international students, family reunions, refugees and asylum seekers. Current net migration in the region is around 5,000 per year. In May 2010, 2,950 people waiting for a decision on their asylum case were supported in North East¹¹¹. In June 2011 the figure was 2,199¹¹². The number of refugees or those granted other forms of leave to remain is not known,

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/01550ef.pdf> Employing Refugees: Some Organizations' Experiences 2003

¹⁰⁹ 'Celebrating a decade of ACANE (African Community Advice North East: learning from the past and looking into the future'

¹¹⁰ One sign of this recognition is that 8 of the region's 12 Local Authorities are jointly bidding for the new UKBA COMPASS contract, offering dispersal accommodation for asylum seekers from 2012.

¹¹¹ Of 32,694 asylum seekers being supported across the UK under the dispersal system

¹¹² Source: NESMP Management Statistics May 2010 and June 2011. This includes both Section 4 and Section 95 support.

as there is no statistical recording measures for tracking numbers or those that remain living in the region¹¹³. While the last 10 years of dispersal has focused on survival and support for the newly arrived asylum seekers, the future is about their full integration as refugees (and therefore able to engage in economic activity) and as British Citizens, fully participating in and contributing to the social and economic wealth of the region. Our challenge is to find routes for this recognition of the value of migration to the region to be part of the wider public awareness and perspective.

There is recognition of the value of refugees to local regeneration at the community level, within wards of highest deprivation indices where they were dispersed to. At the conference on 22nd June, speakers from Northumbria Police, Your Homes Newcastle (local housing team), and local community workers testified to the contribution the new African residents had made to the Byker estate, where ACANE had established a community centre in 2003 which is now used by all the local community: improved safety for all on the estate, its school has remained open and with improved performance, and more services have been delivered into the whole community through outreach at the Community Centre.

More awareness of the social and the economic value of refugees needs to be raised in areas where refugees were not dispersed and are not yet resident, which are the areas where potential employers and business partners live.

3.6 Opportunities identified through NESMP for collaborative work with EU migrants

The North East Strategic Migration Partnership works strategically to promote support for and co-ordination of integration measures for all migrants. At the event 20th June 2011 to launch the Economic Inclusion objective we heard findings from an ESF¹¹⁴ funded partnership programme involving a number of agencies including NESMP, University of Sunderland and the North East Polish Community Organisation (NEPCO). The project, '*Rising to the Challenge of Demographic Change in the North East of England and Beyond*' aims to '*develop, test and deliver new ways of addressing a range of inter-linked employment and skills dimensions posed by demographic challenges*'. One of the strategic priorities is '*developing and piloting innovative ways of integrating migrant workers into the workforce to address employers' skills needs*'¹¹⁵

We learnt that the project has been researching the main barriers to economic inclusion of skilled economic migrants and students from within the EU living in the North East. We learnt that these migrants' main need was for more and more joined up information on routes for

¹¹³ 'Interim dispersal' began in 1998, and full Dispersal started in 2000 with 5,000 units of accommodation contracted across the region.

¹¹⁴ <http://www.esf-works.com/about-us/what-is-esf-works/what-is-esf> *The European Social Fund exists to extend employment opportunities, invest in jobs and skills, and create a skilled and adaptable workforce. The ESF transforms the lives of people across England by working with people at a disadvantage in the labour market – assisting them to gain better skills and look forward to better job prospects. The ESF helps to increase employment by contributing to policies to help more unemployed people to develop the skills they have, acquire new ones, and enter sustainable jobs, improving their futures and those of their families*

¹¹⁵ <http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/faculties/bl/research/tourism/changingpeople-esffundedproject/>

transferring skills into the regional labour market. This is also a fundamental need identified through Skilled for transfer of refugee skills. The University is just starting to pilot two measures to use information to close the gap to the labour market for EU migrants. One is delivered by a mobile phone application, and the other is a 'website within websites'. The polish community will be testing out these measures for their effectiveness before final versions are produced. However, we will look at the measures to see if they are useful for or can be adapted for the refugee community. NEPCO will be Co-Chairing the NESMP Economic Inclusion subgroup with the RRF. This will provide a valuable synergy for identifying commonly shared barriers and solutions.

The very existence of the ESF fund recognises that people at disadvantage in the labour market, or unable to use their skills in the labour market, need targeted measures to overcome their specific barriers. Refugees are not eligible for support under and are not part of the objective of ESF funded programmes as they are only in relation to migrants from within the EU. However, we will look for transferability of initiatives developed under this programme.

We have seen that regionally specific debate recognises the added value of migration to the region's economy, and EU funds are being sourced to identify measures to promote this. We have seen also that EU migrants share some common barriers to skills transfer as refugees – notably the need for information. Refugees are only a small proportion of total migrant numbers in the region, and they cannot benefit directly from European funded measures to support EU migrant economic integration. Attaching the issue of refugee skills transfer to the wider issue of migrant skills transfer may be an effective way of achieving our objectives, through maximising opportunities to raise wider awareness of value, and learn from and adapt measures aimed at promoting wider migrant inclusion.

However there are also specifics that should inform our approach. The international reach of refugees goes much further than EU migrants. Most EU migrants are white. Most refugees are not. Measures aimed at equality of opportunity, anti-discrimination and anti-racism must be part of the approach to refugee skills transfer. The humanitarian case for rebuilding of lives after forced exile and loss should also persist alongside arguments of added value or a need to fill labour market shortages.

3.7 Opportunities identified within British and European Parliamentary processes

From our attendance at the *Public Bill Workshop* organised by the Houses of Parliament's Parliamentary Outreach Service¹¹⁶ and the "*Getting Involved Beyond the Vote*" event organised by Europe Direct North East¹¹⁷ we are aware how we can engage our Voice in the process through which legislation is passed at the UK and European levels. Through our constituency MPs and Member of the House of Lords living in the region, and through providing evidence to appropriate select committees and adjournment debates, and All Parliamentary Groups, we can inform the process of scrutiny of legislation and raise issues for debate and questions for response. We can also contribute to legislative processes at the European level by contacting

¹¹⁶ www.parliament.uk/outreach

¹¹⁷ europe.direct@durham.gov.uk

the Members of European Parliament (MEP) serving the North East. One of the region's three MEPs, Stephen Hughes, serves on the Committee on Employment & Social Affairs.

Some aspects of policy that determine reception and support of asylum seekers and refugee integration is made at the European level. We asked how NGOs could hope to inform European Parliamentary legislation without the capacity and resources available to other interested lobbyists. We were advised to seek collaboration with sister organisations from across the EU, in order to present a collective voice that demonstrated relevance to more than just the UK. . The Regional Refugee Forum North East was itself born of the recommendations from a transnational research project for the European Commission in 2000, lead by the North of England Refugee Service¹¹⁸ . Through introducing ourselves to Fiona Hall MEP we aim to take up the opportunity for 15 members to visit the European Parliament under the visiting scheme and combine it with the European Commission Visitors programme, and a visit to the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)¹¹⁹.

3.8 Reflections of our members

In his opening address to participants in our Big Conversation 1 our then Chair, Chester Thete, said:

“We understand that there are many things that we, within the refugee community, can and should do. We want to take responsibility and an active role in helping organisations from all sectors to do this work. We recognize that we ourselves need to understand the context you work in. To appreciate the frameworks and constraints you work under, including the limitations of funding. We want to be realistic. We need to appreciate your position, and also be aware of what support is available. But we also want to help with generating ideas for what could be made available, or made more effective, and to be part of innovative work. So we have arranged this day in the spirit of joint working, collaboration and partnership”

The project process helped our members to identify the knowledge deficit within the refugee community of the range of services and support that exists, are in development or will emerge during the second half of 2011. It also provoked further reflection that the community itself has significant issues with its own attitudes and practice that presents self-imposed barriers to their entrepreneurship and employability. They decided that it was important to:

¹¹⁸ http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/assets/files/Reports%20&%20Publications/fullreportof_transanational.pdf

¹¹⁹ <http://www.ecre.org/> The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) is a pan-European Alliance of some 70 organisations in 30 countries, working to protect and promote respect of all individuals seeking asylum in Europe. ECRE responds to EU and governmental initiatives at EU level. Through our pro-active policy work and research, we encourage new thinking on refugees and asylum in Europe. We also aim to strengthen contacts between refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations in Europe through networking and by organising different events.

1. remain clear about what the actual *specific and additional* barriers faced by refugees are, as distinct from barriers faced by the wider community, especially in a context of recession and an increase in unemployment across the region
2. address short termism in the community's thinking, such as scepticism about benefit arising from non-income generating activity, or being unaware of delayed benefits from time invested. Too many people did not see the direct connection between volunteering, training, community work and networking and progression and success. They saw it as a 'waste of time', 'foolish' or 'exploitation'.
3. address defeatism, inaction, lack of self-reliance, unrealistic expectations (if the right path not pursued)

They understood this situation as arising from:

1. being crushed by the asylum system
2. long term forced exclusion from work, whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum claim (recognised amongst the long term unemployed too)
3. experience of negative attitudes, assumptions of low education and achievement, racism, abuse, hostile media, lack of competency or confidence in front line staff in working with diversity
4. 'cultural capital' or being used things happening in certain ways that does not travel well i.e: that you only get somewhere through who you know, through someone with power or resources giving you the break

They said that any challenge to these attitudes needed to come from within the community itself. The solutions they proposed were aimed at encouraging 'adaptive strategies':

1. Provide motivational speakers (role models) from the community, who can use their own experience to demonstrate the fundamental importance of 'grasping any opportunity' and remaining self-reliant and determined
2. Provide cases studies of success, detailing the elements underlying progression and identifying how they connect up
3. Where there is discrimination, challenge it. But also recognise all forms of discrimination, such as gender and disability, their long history and ways in which they have been tackled

Break through and success stories will be valuable tools for promoting engagement from both sides of the equation: from the refugee community itself, and from the employers and business sector.

3.8 Applying the learning gained

The scale and depth of changes in the policy landscape since May 2010 - in which agendas, sites of competence and delivery arrangements have significantly altered – has necessitated a re-problematisation of refugee prior skills transfer and the development of a strategy to act on new opportunities, implement recommendations, and monitor new arrangements as they begin to be rolled out. The RRF has also had to reposition itself within the emerging arrangements

and Skilled has allowed us to make the relevant new connections and establish a place within new structures and networks.

We are also aware that change within the bigger picture is likely to continue for some time. But we have identified the essential direction of that change, the values underlying it and the expectations within it.

Chapter 4 represents the Actions we have identified to influence development and change in the wider system (at the level of 'Policy') and at the level of Practice.

CHAPTER 4: Actions to implement findings & recommendations

4.1. At the level of Practice

4.4.1 Actions already underway through process of project

Action	Details of elements & how they could promote prior skills transfer
<p>Service provision: Jobcentre Plus</p>	<p>Under the new <i>Get Britain Working</i> provisions Jobcentre Plus will be providing a range of initiatives designed to support those on benefits to find sustained employment or to become self-employed. The support is available to those who are have permission to work (refugees) and who are signed onto the benefits system.</p> <p>In March 2011 we met with 4 Jobcentre Plus Local Partnership Managers for Tees Valley. It was agreed that we design a strategy for engaging more refugees with the programmes of support accessible through JCP and to pilot this in one locality, to test out what works best before rolling out across the region. We are working with Stockton-on-Tees Local Partnership Manager <i>'to use Stockton as a pilot in Tees Valley to consider the shared understanding of problems that refugees and asylum seekers encounter and the services that JCP and partners can provide to assist in claims to benefit and routes to employment'</i>. It includes the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Link local RCOs directly with Stockton JCP, for sustained 2 way communication and increased knowledge on both sides. This includes the offer to facilitate informal learning exchange, where RCO reps can be shown round JCP and learn about the operations and programmes, and JCP reps can spend half a day with the RCO to understand more about the community and its particular needs. We will also support RCOs to develop and deliver more formal training sessions to front line staff 2. Help RCOs to understand the importance of how a refugee signing at JCP for the first time should be proactive in preparing themselves for the appointment: for example, by ensuring they take with them any documentation/evidence of prior skills and clearly refer to them and career aims, or declare an interest in enterprise start up. With the aim that the resulting Job Seeker Agreement will reflect prior skills and its include actions for transferability, and the refugee is signposted and referred to the most relevant support. 3. Introduce RCOs to the mainstream/generalist Work Clubs that have recently set up in the locality, and gather feedback from those RCOs on any specific needs not covered within them and assess if they can be built in to

	<p>mainstream clubs, or if dedicated sessions can be arranged with RCOs, or RCOs work together in a locality to set up a Work Club to meet specific needs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. To this end we met with Stockton Riverside College in May 2011 and agreed an action plan to begin this engagement through their newly established Work Club and build a feedback and review loop 5. Repeat the above with Enterprise Clubs during their start up 6. Gather RCOs, JCP and local specialist agencies' knowledge on provision to create a 360 degree map of helper agencies in the locality that relates to the pyrammid of needs specific to refugees. This can be used to create example route maps for specific skills transfer 7. JCP Employer Engagement Manager is now sending RRF the monthly local labour market information, which identifies labour demand in Stockton area and across Tees Valley. We can share this with local RCOs to increase their awareness of the local economy, to assess realistic prospects and best opportunities across the region for transferability of prior skills. 8. Supply JCP Employer Engagement Manager with information about prior skills, and interest in skills related work placements within the local RCOs. Employer Engagement officer can then seek for any match within local businesses, or forward the request to JCP teams in other localities. 9. Provide feedback to the JCP Diversity lead for Tees Valley
<p>Service provision: Next Step (delivered in North East region by Cfbt)</p>	<p>Next Step: <i>'The integrated adult careers service will help people find the right combination of advice for them, reflecting their specific needs to help them progress in work and life'</i>.</p> <p>Our research with the membership identified that the Next Step was virtually unknown. None of the members we interviewed, who all had prior skills, knew of the service or had been referred to the service via Jobcentre Plus. Next Step is a potentially very valuable resource: its eligibility rules do not bar asylum seekers, so it can be accessed from day 1 of arrival in the UK; It is also designed for people <i>out of work</i> and <i>in work</i> (ie: to help people get into work, and also to help those in work progress forwards or change career or find new opportunities; advisers have access to the NARIC system.</p> <p>In February 2011 we met with Cfbt Partnership Co-ordinators for South Tyne & Wearside and Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland and agreed a process for marketing their support, connecting them to local RCOs, reviewing feedback about client's experiences with the service for regular review, and providing upskilling training to their advisers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some of our members are acting as 'Mystery Shoppers': opening an online <i>My Next Step Account</i>, and completing

	<p>the online skills assessment and CV documents¹²⁰, contacting the telephone advice line, making appointments for 1:1 case work with the service. We are gathering feedback of their experience and findings will be shared with Cfbt. Members will test out if the online account resources they have developed will be of value in informing first appointments with Jobcentre Plus.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Information about the Next Step service has been given to all RCOs via our Training & Development team, and 4 RCOs attended the opening of the new Next Step office in Middlesbrough on 13th May where appointments were also booked. The schedule of local Next Step workshops is listed on our Skilled webpages. 3. Some RCOs are arranging a first group session / workshop with Cfbt 4. We are using the findings and recommendations of Skilled to design training to deliver to Next Step advice workers so that <i>“they gain confidence in knowing how best to provide IAG to this client group with specific barriers and needs”</i> (request of Cfbt). We will collaborate with JET in designing and delivering this training so that generalist Next Step advisers can gain learning from the specialist adviser practice of JET (deliverers of a Next Step sub-contract) and so promote transfer of Good Practice. 5. In June we arranged a meeting of 45 members of RCOs in Sunderland with Next Step, from which further meetings and appointments have been made 6. We are linking members with the Connect2work service delivered by BECON
<p>Employer engagement</p>	<p>Helper agencies are constantly seeking to secure more and wider engagement with employers to provide volunteering and work placement opportunities. Some find the business sector difficult to engage, while they and the business sector also say that there are so many agencies contacting the same businesses, risking fatigue.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In June 2011 we met with Business in the Community (BITC) and explored the potential for engaging their membership in providing volunteering and work placement opportunities. There is a possibility of including refugee skills transfer as one of the region’s ‘Seeing is Believing’¹²¹ themes for 2011-12, which provide social

¹²⁰ It identifies current skills, areas for development, work options using labour market information, training and information about how much government funding is available for studies

¹²¹ http://www.bitc.org.uk/princes_programmes/the_princes_seeing_is_believing/index.html Since 1990, The Prince's Seeing is Believing has inspired and engaged more than 7,500 top business leaders to take action on key social responsibility issues. They have just completed a programme focused on opportunities for ex-offenders.

	<p>insights for business leaders. We can also learn from their Race for the Future programme¹²².</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. BITC is meeting with JET to understand the infrastructure existing to support such an interface through managed work placements so that businesses who want to get involved have clear route map to progress on. BIC will also consider a 'wish list' for 5 or 6 prior skilled refugees to start testing the water. 3. BITC is meeting with John Dobie to explore the potential that refugees' international knowledge and links presents for North East businesses
<p>Locality meetings between RCOs and local helper agencies</p>	<p>We are currently planning an event which will bring together representatives of RCOs working across Tees Valley with local helper agencies for employment and enterprise to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broker <i>direct</i> connection for sustained relationship and two way communications 2. Increase knowledge of refugee community about range of support in their area and how to access it 3. Increase knowledge and skills of helper agency in engaging with refugee community and understanding specific and additional needs 4. Promote an opportunity for direct collaborations between helper agency and RCO
<p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Apprenticeships offer a valuable opportunity for testing, validating (establishing equivalence) topping up and accrediting prior skills (if linked to vocational qualifications) as well as gaining work place experience and references. However, we found that there is currently a lack of clarity about the eligibility rules for refugees for government funded Apprenticeships schemes. Refugees are being turned away from the opportunity under a 3 year residency rule.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have provided evidence of this barrier to the Refugee Council Employment & Training Policy Adviser who is leading on Apprenticeships on the DWP EMAG steering group and also meets with BIS and Skills Funding Agency. The resident rule does not apply to refugees, and he will provide clarity on the eligibility rules for us to share across the region to open up routes to apprenticeships 2. He will present our evidence that a lack of clarity about eligibility rules is preventing access to apprenticeships by refugees to the next meetings of EMAG and BIS. 3. We are linking RCOs to Newcastle UXL Diversity Mentor

¹²² http://www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/diversity_and_inclusion/race/ For example, their Race for Opportunity (RFO) programme is committed to improving employment opportunities for ethnic minorities across the UK. It is the only race diversity campaign that has access to and influence over the leaders of the UK's best known organisations

	to promote awareness of the Apprenticeship Job Focus Training Day (which can be delivered as group training sessions)
Enterprise training & engaging with Business Networks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are informing RCOs of the opportunity offered from HM Customs and Revenue Education Team to deliver self-employment and import/export training to RCOs or groups of entrepreneurs. We will be consulting with members interested in or already in business to identify specific requests for customised training 2. At the suggestion of Jobcentre Plus, in June 2011 we attended, for the first time, a Federation of Small Businesses¹²³ (FSB) 'Business Engagement & Networking Event' in Middlesbrough. We will seek to engage our entrepreneur members in events in their area to expand their business network and understand support that is available to membership of FBS. 3. 4 of our members are attending the '<i>LEAD programme (Leadership Entrepreneurship & Development Programme) for SME's</i>', 4th-7th July 2011 at University of Durham
Volunteering	<p>Volunteering is open to all asylum seekers and refugees, from day 1 of arrival in the UK. They may find their own volunteering opportunities (self-referral), they can access support via local Volunteering Centres, or they can be referred to local Volunteering Centres via Jobcentre Plus. To maximise access and uptake of volunteering opportunities we are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visiting each local Volunteering Centre to promote the '<i>Overcoming Barriers to Volunteering: A Good Practice Guide for Volunteer Managers and Co-ordinators working with Volunteers from the Refugee Community</i>'¹²⁴ 2. Referring local Volunteering Centres to JET for transfer of expertise – for example in April & May 2011 JET ran a course on '<i>Vocabulary for Volunteering</i>'. 3. Linking RCOs to their local Volunteering Centre and facilitate learning exchange opportunities between RCOs and centre staff 4. Beginning to gather case studies to raise understanding of the value of Volunteering to RCOs
Information resources for the refugee community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are planning a series of short informational films in collaboration with professional documentary film maker and RRF member Elvis Katoto, who has filmed the RRF's campaign videos, much of our media archive and set up the UCOMEDIA website. The films will be accessible on-

¹²³ <http://www.fsb.org.uk/default.aspx?loc=030>

¹²⁴ This best practice guide was produced in 2010 by the CSV Volunteering Centre Newcastle in conjunction with Voluntary Action Sheffield and members of the NE Policy Action Community Team (input from a steering group composed of Newcastle CSV, JET, NERS, Crisis, Red Cross and others)

	<p>line and will profile local helper agencies - explaining the support available from a particular agency, how to access it, and contact information. We will include interviews with individuals who have trialed or been supported by that agency (Case Studies)</p> <p>2. We have developed the Skilled webpages¹²⁵ on our website to include links to all helper agencies engaged with through the project, arranged by clear categories of support type and by locality and are promoting knowledge of this resource to our membership.</p>
Equality	<p>1. We will be attending the Equality North East ConNEcting for Change¹²⁶ Steering Group on 22nd July 2011 to explore how our findings and recommendations could be actioned through its cross sector network (voluntary, private and public sector) which brings together those who face disadvantage with those who can influence and make change. The aim of the network is to “<i>improve economic inclusion for minority and disadvantage groups by identifying and addressing barriers within employment, entry to employment, training and services</i>”.</p> <p>2. Two of our members are attending training ‘From Law into Practice: Making the Equality Act 2010 work for you and your organisation’, Manchester 29th & 30th June delivered by Oxfam GB with EU funding. The project is specifically to raise awareness about the new Equality Act among voluntary and community organisations in England, Scotland and Wales</p>

4.1.2 Actions planned by RRF for July 2011 onwards, arising from the findings and recommendations of Skilled

Action	How this could promote prior skills transfer
Co-Chair the new Economic Inclusion Subgroup of North East Strategic Migration Partnership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use this position to advocate for implementation of specific recommendations of the Skilled Project 2. Promote regional co-ordination and joined up working between agencies to maximise scale and effectiveness 3. Test out transfer or adaptation of measures designed to promote EU economic migrant skills transfer in region 4. Through link to other regional migration partnerships, identify good practice developed outside of the region for transfer into the region
Gather specific refugee Case Studies demonstrating pathways to	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise confidence in the refugee community about what can be achieved 2. Identify a realistic route map of practical steps and helper

¹²⁵ <http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/skilled/107>

¹²⁶ <http://www.equality-ne.co.uk/projects/nfc/>

<p>'break through' / success in prior skills transfer and in enterprise</p>	<p>agencies on the way</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Show connections between unpaid activity (volunteering and work placements) and outcomes 4. Demonstrate pathways for specific sector skills (e.g: engineering, health) and enterprise (e.g: regional contracting, import/export, for profit, not for profit)
<p>Arrange Peer Learning sessions delivered by individuals from the community who have found a pathway</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivational and confidence building – what <i>is</i> possible 2. Challenge attitudes and practices within the refugee community that create self-imposed barriers 3. Promote clarity about which barriers are specific and additional to refugees, and which are shared with the wider community 4. Promote awareness of the current economic context and the North East's economic geography for informed strategies 5. Increase knowledge of how to maximise support available, such as through preparation before appointments
<p>Arrange meetings between RCOs and local helper agencies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broker <i>direct</i> connection for sustained relationship and 2 way communications 2. Increase knowledge of refugee community about range of support in their area and how to access it 3. Increase knowledge and skills of helper agency in engaging with refugee community and understanding specific and additional needs 4. Potential for direct collaboration between helper agency and RCO
<p>Help RCOs to trial / 'Mystery Shop' support available and review feedback with helper agencies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For an RCO member to test out a service/helper agency for first hand knowledge 2. Increase knowledge of what support is available 3. Share their experience with their community 4. Evaluate their experience for RRF to add to collective feedback for helper agency to identify what works and/or what could work better
<p>Support RCOs to effectively disseminate new information to their community</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For systematic and sustained mechanisms for sharing what is learnt, for maximum uptake of opportunities
<p>Gather specific refugee Case Studies demonstrating <i>value</i> to employers and business</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the business case for investment in skills transfer based on value 2. Promote awareness of value of refugees' international links
<p>Support refugee entrepreneurs to engage in NE Business Networks Such as Federation of Small Businesses, local Chambers of Commerce,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase business relationships and networks 2. Peer learning / mentors 3. Business information and support 4. Links to new business opportunities 5. Explore potential of international links 6. We will support our members to contribute to the

NE Entrepreneurs' Forum ¹²⁷	<p>development of new local Enterprise Clubs (being set up from autumn 2011 as part of the Get Britain Working measures) to include sessions with representatives of business networks, and specific enterprise sectors</p> <p>7. Explore potential for revival of 'business match' software programme commissioned by ONE in 2007 (linking businesses with those with knowledge, skills and connections to international markets and resources)</p>
Develop and maintain RRF information sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase access to and uptake of services through more multimedia profiling of helper agencies and case studies of refugee pathways 2. Develop social networking for exchange of information between members 3. Up to date information on new programmes, specific training etc 4. Keep agencies and employers informed of relevant policy and legislation, for example relating to eligibility 5. Include examples of good practice from other regions of UK
Provide awareness and upskilling training to agencies and employers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use Skilled evidence, findings and recommendations to promote awareness of specific and additional needs for planning 2. Promote confidence and competence of front line workers 3. In collaboration with other Equality & Diversity training organisations, such as the accredited training delivered by Equality NE to small and large employers
Evaluate progress 1 year on (June 2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-interview members to identify if or how they have moved forwards with skills transfer 2. Feedback from our member RCOs on knowledge of and connection to support agencies, and perceptions of their members 3. Interview key support agencies for their feedback on change or progress 4. Evaluate progress of the NESMP Economic Inclusion Sub-group 5. Reassess the policy landscape, and structures and arrangements developed since June 2011

¹²⁷ <http://www.entrepreneursforum.net/about-us/> "By entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs" . A transfer of wisdom that supports growing businesses, nurtures emerging talent and helps to create the wealth, jobs and opportunities that are a major contribution to the sustainable transformation of our regional economy.

4.2 Actions to implement recommendations at the level of Policy (influencing the wider system)

Objective 1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evidence of value and what works to the remaining and newly emerging centres / actors of competence • Contribute to framing the regional debate on refugees, and on migration 		
Key Target	Actions already underway / position established	Specific future actions
<p>North East Strategic Migration Partnership (NESMP) Regional Strategic Board</p> <p>With links to National Migration Forum and Immigration Minister</p>	<p>Member of Regional Strategic Board (includes the UKBA)</p>	<p>Inform regional migration strategy Inform refugee integration strategy Inform delivery of the UKBA COMPASS contact for asylum seeker support beginning March 2012, and the development of the advice services contract</p>
<p>North East Strategic Migration Partnership (NESMP) Economic Inclusion Sub-group</p>	<p>Successfully lobbied NESMP to include Economic Inclusion as a specific objective of the 2011-12 Business plan</p> <p>Skilled presented key findings and recommendations at the NESMP Refugee Week event 20th June 2011, where the Economic Inclusion strand was launched</p> <p>Skilled project leader will Co-Chair the subgroup on Economic Inclusion being formed July 2011</p>	<p>Continue to progress development and actions of the Economic Inclusion Sub-group, using findings and recommendations from Skilled</p> <p>Identify what is transferable from measures to support skills transfer of EU migrants and action them</p> <p>Identify what is transferable from other Regional Migration Partnerships across the UK and seek to action them</p>
<p>Local Enterprise Partnerships</p> <p>Tees Valley Unlimited & North Eastern Local Enterprise</p>	<p>Attending first meeting of newly formed Tees Valley Third Sector Employability and Skills Forum 28th June ¹²⁸</p> <p>Contribute as member to monthly meetings of the 'North</p>	<p>Explore suggestion from TVU of RRF joining or forming relevant issue-based subgroups / task & finish groups.</p> <p>Gather actual Case Studies ('success stories') to demonstrate 'value' of skills in labour market and in the</p>

¹²⁸ Facilitated by Catalyst with support from Pentagon Partnership

Partnership	Eastern LEP Third Sector Focus Group on Skills and Performance' ¹²⁹	enterprise economy, including international reach. To include stories in local media
Members of Parliament and House of Lords and parliamentary processes	2 members attended the ' <i>Public Bill Workshop</i> ' delivered by the Houses of Parliament's Parliamentary Outreach Service,	Identify relevant bills and their timetable of scrutiny as they pass through parliament. Identify 'interested' MPs and Lords in region and seek their representation in informing the passage of legislation and development of policy
Local Authorities	Newcastle, Gateshead, Stockton and Middlesbrough local authority employment, enterprise and HR officers engaged through process	Establish contact with Sunderland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Hartlepool and Darlington Local Authority employment and enterprise commissioning teams. Establish &/or identify processes for our members to engage in local planing and commissioning processes on employability, skills and enterprise Identify process for reporting to ANEC (Association of North East Councils) for regional level policy
Ippr North		Contribute evidence to the newly establishing Northern Economic Futures Commission ¹³⁰ Learn from policy research produced by Ippr North for application to our work
Jobcentre Plus North East	Contribute as member of Regional Customer Advocate Group	Continue to act on window of opportunity provided by roll out of the <i>Get Britain Working</i> provisions

¹²⁹ This group was established as the Tyne and Wear City Region Employment and Skills Focus Group. It has recently changed its name to align itself with the North Eastern LEP structures and geography. Membership of the LEP Board is currently being recruited. While there are no places on the LEP Board ring fenced for the Third Sector, this Focus Group is endorsing two applications from the 3rd sector. The Focus Group brings together a large number of third sector organisations from Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland⁹ and has developed extremely good relationships with public sector partners including the City Region Employment and Skills team (now the LEP Skills and Performance team), www.pentagonpartnership.org.uk

¹³⁰ http://www.ippr.org/index.php?option=com_ippr&view=project&id=7405&megafilter=&siteid=ipprnorth&Itemid=44 In May 2011 Ippr North announced its intention to establish 'The Northern Economic Futures Commission', with the intention of bringing together a small group of leaders from key sectors of the economy, from Local Enterprise Partnerships, universities and civil society, to examine evidence and set out a 10-year strategy for economic growth across the three Northern regions of England. Billed as '*a new approach to local and regional economic policy, driven by decision-makers in the North of England*'

<p>& Prime contractors of Work Programme</p>	<p>Engagement established through External Relations Manager with range of key personnel: Local Partnership Managers, Employer Engagement, Equality & Diversity</p> <p>Engagement established with Avanta for feedback route on how support provided by the Work Programme's supply chain is working</p>	<p>and <i>Work Programme</i> from July 2011, by informing the way in which the new arrangements and programmes are implemented.</p> <p>Gather Case Studies to support issue of transitional needs from asylum seeker to refugee arising from shorter time in which decisions on status are made ('grace period')</p> <p>Seek similar engagement with Ingeus Deloitte</p>
<p>Cabinet Office (Big Society)</p>	<p>Informed Policy Officer, Big Society North East of our work</p> <p>Policy Officer can feed our evidence to Cabinet Office, and share good practice from other regions</p>	<p>Create &/or identify platforms for community engagement in local planning. Support members (RCOs) to engage in those platforms & contribute evidence from Skilled</p> <p>Arrange meeting for Policy Officer with our members</p> <p>Contact NCVS to explore interest in Community Organising Kickstarter programme before 2nd round begins in October</p>
<p>2. Provide evidence to those with a role in promoting, monitoring and advocating for the implementation of the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act</p>		
<p>Northern TUC</p>	<p>Engagement established with Policy & Campaigns Officer and Union Development Officer. Their campaigns schedule includes work on the Equality Act</p>	<p>Understand timetable of their policy work and contribute evidence of inequality of opportunity and discrimination, and of poor practice in implementation of Equalities legislation</p> <p>Develop communication loop from Northern TUC to national TUC Race Equality Officer, Wilf Sullivan, who sits on the DWP EMAG¹³¹ steering Group</p>

¹³¹ www.dwp.gov.uk/emag/ Ethnic Minority Steering Group on which Refugee Council and TUC sit. The Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (EMAG) advises Government on actions it might take to ensure ethnic minorities do not face disproportionate barriers to achievement in the labour market

<p>Equality North East</p>	<p>We will attend the Equality North East ConNEcting for Change¹³² Steering Group to explore how our findings and recommendations could be actioned through its cross sector network (voluntary, private and public sector) which brings together those who face disadvantage with those who can influence and make change.</p>	<p>Identify how we can inform/collaborate with Equality North East's accredited training on equality delivered to small and large businesses in the region and service providers (for example in addressing barriers within recruitment processes</p>
<p>Oxfam Law into Practice Project</p>	<p>Two of our members are attending training '<i>From Law into Practice: Making the Equality Act 2010 work for you and your organisation</i>' delivered by Oxfam GB. The EU funded Law Into Practice project is designed to help organisations in the voluntary and community sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain knowledge and skills about the Equality Act and the specific duties it imposes on the public sector. • To engage with partners in the public sector about discrimination and equality. • To understand the Equality Act and how to use it to tackle multiple discrimination and help people experiencing poverty to get the services they need and deserve. • To give policy-makers a better picture of how equality law can be made to work in practice. 	<p>Use this knowledge about how to practically apply the Equality Act to upskill our members for their use in promoting its implementation in the employment and enterprise process, or to challenge practice at a local level.</p> <p>Forum will use these skills to challenge practice at a regional level</p> <p>Following the training 5 organisations from each country will have an opportunity to access up to £5000 in funding to develop advocacy or action plans to advance equality rights for their community.</p> <p>Participating organisations will be able to take part in Best Practice Exchange events in England, Scotland and Wales in September 2011.</p> <p>All participants will be invited to attend a national conference to share their learning and experiences with policy-makers from the local, national and European level in November 2011.</p>

¹³² <http://www.equality-ne.co.uk/projects/nfc/> The aim of the network is to “improve economic inclusion for minority and disadvantage groups by identifying and addressing barriers within employment, entry to employment, training and services”.

3. Share learning and what works with refugee specific policy bodies and networks outside the North East region, to inform policy and practice

<p>Collectives of refugee community organisations and regional infrastructure organisations in other UK regions</p>	<p>We already network and exchange learning with the following: Refugee Voice Wales Refugee & Migrant Forum, Manchester Leeds Refugee Forum Northern Refugee Centre Migrant & Refugee Communities Forum, London</p>	<p>Share Skilled findings & recommendations with these organisations, for transferability in other regions Seek target evidence (Case Studies, Good Practice,) and knowledge of emergent engagement platforms across all organisations.</p> <p>Towards building a Big Voice</p>
<p>National policy bodies</p>	<p>We have sent our members' evidence to the Employment & Training Policy Adviser at the Refugee Council, James Lee, for him to use in his lobbying work with DWP EMAG, BIS and the Skills Funding Agency. EMAG Task Groups will finalise their work plans in the next 3 months.</p> <p>We are working with local agencies to gather more evidence of the barrier to apprenticeships being created though lack of clarity of funding eligibility for refugees, as James leads on Apprenticeships within the EMAG Education & Skills Task Group</p>	<p>Continue to feed our evidence, findings and recommendations into national research, lobbying and campaigning</p> <p>Learn from research or good practice being conducted (in the emerging context) in other parts of UK for transfer into the North East</p> <p>Establish contact with the Migrant Rights Network¹³³</p>
<p>European Level</p>	<p>4 members attended the 'Getting Involved Beyond the Vote' event organised by Europe Direct North East, to understand how to engage with European Parliamentarians and in European legislative processes</p> <p>Introduction to Fiona Hall, MEP</p>	<p>Contact ECRE (European Council for Refugees & Exiles) to learn about latest research and advocacy work on refugee integration and economic inclusion, and offer our regional findings and recommendations. Arrange visit</p> <p>Arrange group visit with Fiona Hall MEP for members to the European Parliament, and European Commission</p> <p>Contact Stephen Hughes, MEP who</p>

¹³³ <http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/mrn-themes/employment> The Migrants' Rights Network works for a rights-based approach to migration

		<p>is Committee member on Employment & Social Affairs</p> <p>We will seek learning from the evaluation of 10 refugee employment focused projects¹³⁴ in other part of the UK which have been co-funded under the European Refugee Fund Phase 3 (reporting in 2011-12)</p>
4. Campaign for restoration of permission to work for Asylum Seekers		
Let Us Work Campaign	Continue our Right to Work Campaign ¹³⁵ as regional partner in the national campaign running since 2008 to restore permission to work for asylum seekers and those who cannot return to their country of origin through no fault of their own	Explore systematic route for prior skills to be identified on arrival in the region, and connection to accurate information on transfer options and routes, so that time spent waiting for a decision can be used most effectively. It will also enable those with quick decisions to be better prepared to access the most appropriate support

¹³⁴ <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/workingwithus/workingwithasylum/integration/european-refugee-fund/erfiii-fund-list-2008/>

¹³⁵ <http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/activities/right-to-work-campaign>

CHAPTER 5: Evaluation

5.1 Participant comments from Big Conversation 1, January 25th 2011

a) What was gained through the event taking place?

- *Absolutely brilliant learnt lots of new items and ways of working and engaging, thank you*
- *Able to carry through own ideas and other people's ideas in order to add to and comment on it*
- *Interacting with mixed groups with varied knowledge and skills*
- *I am very impressed by the brainstorming style meeting on how to integrate refugees and asylum seekers on how to use their prior skills*
- *By attending today I have certainly increased my knowledge base*
- *Focus on who to develop and help*
- *Diverse knowledge*
- *The event was very informative*
- *I enjoyed the sessions, good exchange of knowledge*
- *Useful information sharing*
- *Good workshop to spread in the North*
- *All very useful*
- *Good info and networking opportunities*
- *Very good and informative well done*
- *The session was very useful*
- *Positive workshop contributions*
- *Useful to share experiences and concerns for the future*

b) Recommendations for specific actions made by participants

- *Need to explore Local Enterprise Partnership role, remit and receptiveness. Are LEP's the way forwards?*
- *More engagement with employers and business sector and more awareness raising with them*
- *Provide actual case studies to demonstrate where and how barriers actually kick in at JCP for potential of discretionary / flexible response to be assessed further*
- *Put all today's ideas onto the REF diagram/model and see how it matches /mismatches*
- *More network for refugees around employability*
- *Increase knowledge of refugee community about range of support available*
- *Increase knowledge of refugee community about the sector skills and labour market needs / profile of the region*
- *Increase contact between refugee community and services*
- *Increase knowledge of service providers about the map of support available locally for 'pyramid of needs' for effective signposting and referral*

- *More collaborative work with and between agencies*
- *RRF event with positive role models, and 'success stories' in local media and libraries*
- *Test out Work Clubs route*
- *Coalition work nationally and locally*
- *Talk to supportive MPs*
- *More information about what is available for Refugees*
- *Employment support practitioners including IAG to share experiences and concerns*
- *RRF could contact the new contractors for the JCP Work Programme to offer assistance in identifying and accessing refugee communities*
- *Explore business models for delivery of employment support and ESOL for refugees*
- *RRF to speak about today's outcomes to Government*
- *This event 1 year later – what have we achieved?*

Feedback from participants demonstrated the workshop delivered:

1. New learning to apply to own practice
2. A bigger picture, through sharing diverse knowledge and perspectives of customers and practitioners
3. New contacts
4. New learning about ways of engaging with refugee communities
5. Practical suggestions for progressing towards objectives

c) Other feedback from members after the event

“Thank you too for all the hard work you have put in supporting all asylum seekers and refugees in the North East since the inception of RRF. As always, the event held on the 25th of January was very successful. I am hoping the Agencies who came will go back to their organisations and share what they have learnt with every department, especially the front line department who deal directly with asylum seekers and Refugees. I think getting this right is part of the foundation of the present and future recruitment and selection of Refugees into organisations”. (Elizabeth)

“It was my dream to see such an organization in the Diaspora which aims to integrate the refugees and asylum seekers according to our ability, prior skills and prior profession as to help us develop self esteem, career and recognition and thereby contribute to the economic development of the region and to the social and psychological cohesion. So let's have an information exchange any time on how can help each other and thus to build strengthen RRF and to make it achieve its goal” (Teshamariam)

5.2 Participant comments from Big Conversation 2, May 19th 2011

a) What was gained through the event taking place?

- *Well structured discussions that focused due to leaders on the table*
- *Case studies from RRF members*

- *A really interesting morning with some 'myths' debunked. A good mix of opinions and ideas for solution*
- *Informative and it challenged some perceptions I had*
- *Networking opportunity*
- *Engaging with communities*
- *Referral process to other agencies*
- *New contacts*
- *Very useful session, brokering array of good practice and working with refugees*
- *Great event for me to attend to and network with a particular customer group*
- *Good contacts and people with lots of information*
- *Simon gave a really great insight into influencing attitudes*
- *Good opportunity to hear from or include the private sector*
- *Appreciating partnership work and perspectives*
- *Good, interactive and the basis of a clear strategy on refugee employment if RRF can pull it together*

Feedback from participants demonstrated the workshop delivered:

1. Focus
2. Brokering good practice
3. New information
4. Challenging perceptions
5. Solutions
6. Networking, new contacts
7. Engaging with the community
8. Referral routes
9. Partnership working ideas
10. Insight into influencing
11. Private sector perspective added to the bigger picture

b) Excerpts from recorded interviews:

Panganai Sivotwa, Regional Refugee Forum North East, Skilled Project Leader

“What happened today in this workshop, and what has happened previously has really gone beyond my expectations. When this thing started it was just an individual artist work for my university project but now it has gone so much and I am glad this has happened. Today we had people from the government representatives, we had people from the Jobcentre Plus, different companies and organisations and the discussion was so fruitful and we hope to see some good results coming out from this workshop... We need to research as much as we can, as far as we can go because with more evidence, more research that is when we can have tangible evidence to really challenge things”

“We have just won the North East Prime Contract for the Work Programme. I’m here today because obviously we want to understand how the RRF provision can actually be integrated into the Work Programme. Today’s been an absolute eye-opener for me regarding the types of people that are out there. The entrepreneurs that are out there would definitely fit into the enterprise section and of course the regular provision as well. This is why I am here today to find out where that actually fits in. I think it’s safe to say that it hasn’t been a priority but that is something we need to look at. I see from today’s session that the enterprise side is key for the asylum seeker. We have a company who is under the umbrella of Avanta called InBiz. So there is definitely potential there and scope for us to work with asylum seekers in the North East. I would like to think that I can go back to my company now and actually raise awareness around the refugees in the North East and actually share with people the benefit of actually working with the refugees going forward. Part of the process for anybody coming into the Work programme is we do in-depth diagnostics to understand people’s skills set, also to understand what they are going through. Obviously we take all of that information to help put a detailed plan together for any of our customers, be it asylum seekers or long term unemployed. So we look at current skills, we look at current qualifications. Obviously with asylum seekers there is a bit of a different process that we need to work through in order to understand the qualifications from overseas. But JET – one of the companies that we will be working with - they obviously have that skills set so we will be working and engaging with them quite closely to make sure that we get it right and we can move people either into their own business or we can help them to get the full time employment going forward”

Norbert Konga, Director of IT ID Ltd & RRF member

“We are striving to bring about change in the region, economic growth. What we are talking about is not a joke, it is very important that immigrants in this country, people who do come in, they flee their country. African leaders are facing a challenge today, they are losing what you call ‘brain-drain’, they are losing their qualified people who could work for them. But what are we doing with those people that are coming here? A brain drain there should be a ‘brain-gain’ here. The UK should know how to use the skilled people who are coming into the UK especially in the North East, to share their experiences, their knowledge and potential in order to boost the economy of this region or of this country. Its very simple. The worldwide economic recession is well known. We need to do something to bring out change in this country. My advice for policy makers is to take this seriously, not to take asylum seekers and refugees as enemies like I usually see, such as “Oh there are many of them now, they are going to take jobs”. They are not coming here to take jobs. I am a technician coming here, what I need is just support and I’ll be self supporting and then I’ll build my own business. Why not? I have started paying tax. When we have thousands of private sector businesses, the more we have them, the more tax they will be paying and the more the country will reach the target”

Hilary Brockway, JET (Jobs, Education & Training), Assistant Manager

“The session today has been very interesting, I have come and talked about work placements and my experience about organising work placements for refugees and there have been a lot of people from different backgrounds who have contributed so I think it’s really great”

Simon Underwood, Lead Officer North East Strategic Migration Partnership (NESMP), Lead Officer International Relations, Senior Specialist Social Policy and Inclusion at Newcastle City Council

“The big thing that i learnt from today has reinforced for me that refugees are such an asset to the north east. They are a bit of a secret really. The skills and capacities they have could add valaue to our ecoomy as well as to the social infrastructure of the region. Its just a case of translating and explaining that to employers and others.”

I think that refugees are hugely adding value, and adding richness in every sense, social richness and economic richness to the North East. And the sooner people like me and others really realise that the better. There are studies that show that diverse places, diverse cities are the ones that prosper best internationally. And at a local level, there are studies that show that employers that are absolutely background blind to who they employ, and they only employ them for the quality of their skills - no other factors, are the most successful employers and some of the top international companies, software companies and so on show that. They employ them because they are brilliant soft programmers or a brilliant this or a brilliant that. So I think employers have got to be background blind and skills focused and that’s the future for the North East”

5.3 Examples of feedback from actions underway as result of engagement in project

a) Email from Jobcentre Plus 14th March 2011

From: Walker Neil JCP ESTON [NEIL.WALKER1@JOBCENTREPLUS.GSI.GOV.UK]
Sent: 14 March 2011 13:38
To: Georgina Fletcher
Cc: Bradbury Yvonne JCP STOCKTON DARYL HOUSE; Cannon Lesley JCP STOCKTON DARYL HOUSE; Clark Peter JCP STOCKTON DARYL HOUSE; Stubbs Janet JCP STOCKTON
Subject: Meeting Information
Attachments: Tees Valley Work Clubs Activity.doc; Annex B.doc; Work_Club_Guide_Eng.pdf; enterprise-club-guide.pdf; enterprise-club-guide-legal.pdf; Eligibility Doc1.doc; Outlook March11.pdf; Lone Parent Obligations.pdf

Georgina

Really pleased to have met with you and your colleagues. We all felt it was a very positive meeting and look forward to working with you in the near future. As agreed I have attached the various bits of information discussed which are listed below.

Work Clubs Activity across Tees Valley

Work Clubs Funding - I have attached the guide for applications, if you intend to pursue this let me know as I will need to give you a reference number.

Work Clubs Guide
Enterprise Clubs Guides
Work Programme Eligibility Criteria
Tees Valley Outlook
Lone Parent Obligations

Please do not hesitate to get back to me if you have any queries or if you require further information.

Regards

Neil Walker

Local Partnership Manager | Jobcentre Plus | Customer Service Directorate | External Relations Team |

b) Email from Cfbt (Next Step)

From: LThompson@cfbt.com
Sent: 17 February 2011 19:40
To: herbert.dirahu@refugeevoices.org.uk; georgina.fletcher@refugeevoices.org.uk
Cc: Joanne.Milnes@cfbt.com
Subject: Next Step Support
Attachments: Flyer on Next Step Support & Workshops .doc

Hi Herbert & Georgina

Thank you for a very productive meeting today, I can see this is an excellent opportunity for all to work well together and ensure the needs of asylum seekers and refugees are met with the cross skills and expertise of all parties involved. Again thank you for offering a briefing session to our advisers who'll be delivering the front line services as this will provide them with confidence in knowing how best to provide IAG to this group with specific barriers and needs, we will forward you dates for team meetings tomorrow and you can let us know your availability to come along.

I've attached an electronic version of the briefing note we provided you with today, please note this has the Customer Service Officer contact details on for South Tyne and Wearside Jo, can you forward Emma's direct contact details for Newcastle and North Tyneside. We also have an LMI officer who produces local weekly LMI bulletins and if you would like to be included in the circulation I can forward your details to Izzy.

Jo and I will pick up with our partnership manager at JCP and investigate the lack of referrals too, we'll also check out the language line service offer we've bought into and provide you with the languages they can translate, as I mentioned in the meeting we do hold a licence for the use of NARIC and everyone accessing the service can utilise this.

I look forward to meeting with Sam our link worker for Wearside and establishing some links to deliver group work sessions, likewise we're happy to support any of the work clubs in the areas.

If you require any further information or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact either one of us.

Regards Laura Thompson, Partnership Co-ordinator, South Tyne & Wearside CfBT Next Step

CHAPTER 6: Participants in Skilled

Our project was a collective process. It relied on the collaboration of our members and many agencies. So we offer sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who participated in and contributed to Skilled over the last 13 months.

We are very grateful to:

1. All the members of the Regional Refugee Forum who contributed to the collection and analysis of evidence and who participated in the Big Conversations

In particular we would like to thank **Panganai Svotwa**, Leader of Skilled and

Elizabeth	Samouka	Patti
Elvis	Joe	Fettlework
Sead	Nasrin A	Malik
Tesfarmariam	Atta	Sarah
Aisha	Herbert	Afsona
Mamadou	Nasrin M	Mohammed
Bini	Norbert	Ahmed
Chester	Abdo	Nestor
Philip	Roger	Gauthier
Ibtihal	Saphia	Rashidi
Sozan	Sheren	Anesit
Amal	Qadrya	Sabena
Lemo	Abdulla	Lenah
Burhan	Marjan	Marina
Gaby	Kader	
Diamond	Furzan	

2. The following agencies and personnel who participated in our Big Conversations

Agency	Personnel	Notes
A4E	Dougie Buchanan, Intensive Support Worker	www.a4eskills.co.uk
Action Foundation	Malcolm Warrin, Action Language Project Manager	www.actionfoundation.org.uk
Adventus Care Ltd	Chris Dube, Area Manager	www.adventuscare.co.uk
Advanced Environmental Technologies Ltd and Griersons	John Dobie, Director	www.griersons.com www.a-e-t.co.uk
Avanta (Incorporating InBiz & TNG) (Prime contractor for Work Programme)	Emma Conway, Business Manager Barbara Turner, Quality Improvement Coordinator	www.tng.uk.com www.avanta.uk.com
BECON (Black Minority Ethnic Community Organisations Network)	Dr Daljeet Singh, Regional Policy Officer Stuart Harvey, BECON 'Connect2work' Regional Employability Officer	www.becon.org.uk
BME Employment Access Project (EAP) Sunderland	Abu Khaled, Project Coordinator Gauthier Matho, Project Worker	http://sbmen.org
Cfbt (Next Step service)	Eddie Costello, Partnership Coordinator, Tees Valley Laura Thompson, Partnership Coordinator South Tyne & Wear Valley	www.cfbt.com
Connexions Stockton	Katie Muir, Personal Adviser	www.stockton.gov.uk

Crisis Skylight Newcastle	Claudene Cetinoglu, SmartSkills Tutor	www.crisis.org.uk
Equalities & Human Rights Commission (EHRC)	Mark Wright, NE Regional Manager	www.equalityhumanrights.com
Five Lamps	Deborah Shanley, Business Coach John Lawrenson, Business Coach	www.fivelamps.org.uk
Gateshead Council	Caroline Judson, HR Manager Angharad Watson, Economic Development Officer Michaella Wilson, Senior HR Adviser	www.gateshead.gov.uk
HM Revenue & Customs	Patricia Lilley, Business Advisor (Education Team)	www.hmrc.gov.uk
Intercultural Arts	Oscar Watson, Director	www.interculturalarts.co.uk
IT ID Ltd	Norbert Konga, Director	
JET (Jobs, Education & Training)	Julie Fernyhough, Manager Hilary Brockway, Assistant Manager Nasrin Ahmed, Case Worker Ibrahim Borhan, Teacher (Refugees into Teaching Project)	www.jetnorth.org.uk
Jobcentre Plus	Paul Robson, Employer Engagement/Account Manager External Relations Team and Diversity Lead for Tees Valley Carole Parker, Diversity Manager, South Tyne & Wear (special responsibility for Refugees and Veterans)	www.direct.gov.uk

	<p>Linda Seller, Regional External Relations</p> <p>Ivan Wright, Adviser (Middlesbrough)</p> <p>Anthony Williams, Adviser (Stockton)</p>	
Job Linkage	Nina Sumbly, Senior Guidance Support Worker	www.joblinkage.org.uk
Middlesbrough Adult Education	Alison Robinson, ESOL Coordinator	www.maes.ac.uk www.middlesbrough.gov.uk
Middlesbrough Volunteering Centre	Michele Stewart, Volunteer Centre Manager	www.mvda.info
Newcastle Futures Ltd	Graeme Atkinson, Customer Coordinator	www.newcastlefutures.co.uk
NESMP (North East Strategic Migration Partnership)	<p>Simon Underwood, Lead Officer North East Strategic Migration Partnership (NESMP) Senior Specialist Social Policy & Inclusion and Lead Officer International Relations at Newcastle City Council</p> <p>Rowenna Foggie, Regional Policy and Information Officer</p>	www.nesmp.org.uk www.newcastle.gov.uk www.nesmp.org.uk
North East NHS	Joy McGurk, NHS Workforce Secretary (Refugee Health Professionals Programme Co-ordinator to 2010)	www.northeast.nhs.uk
North of England Refugee Service	<p>Dr Mohamed Nasreldin, (RIES) Employment Programme Manager</p> <p>Pete Widlinski, Information & Communication Manager</p>	www.refugee.org.uk

	Roger Mundangepfufu, Regional Volunteer Coordinator Mamadou Alpha Balde, Case Worker (Employment Programme)	
Northern TUC	Linda Hughes, Union Development Co-ordinator	www.tuc.org.uk
PNE Group	Melissa Middleton, Business Counsellor/Project Manager	www.pne.org
Refugee Council	Edward Ralston, North Team Leader, Refugees into Teaching Project	www.rit.refugeecouncil.org.uk
North East Public Health Observatory	Dr David Chappel, Assistant Director (Director of Refugee Health Professionals Programme 2001-2011)	www.nepho.org.uk
Right to Work Campaign	Ben Sellers, Right to Work Campaign Associate	www.refugeevoices.org.uk /activities/right-to-work-campaign
Stockton Borough Council	Annette Nylund, Business Development Officer	www.stockton.gov.uk
Sunderland BME Network Ltd	Dean T. Huggins, Development Officer Mizan Rahman, Outreach Worker	www.sbmen.org
Tees Achieve	Kathy Howard, Service Development Manager	www.stockton.gov.uk
Teesside University	Hamad Hewa, Student	www.tees.ac.uk
Tees Valley Unlimited	Chris Barlow,	www.teesvalleyunlimited.gov.uk

(Local Enterprise Partnership)	Employability Project Manager	
UCOMEDIA	Elvis Katoto, Director	www.ucomedia.co.uk
UNISON	Emma Lipscombe, Community Organiser	www.unison.org.uk

3. Those who provided further information and ideas for taking forwards our findings during the project

- Nadeem Ahmad: Regional Partnerships Manager, North East Strategic Migration Partnership (NESMP)
- Ian Dodds: Policy Officer, Big Society (North East) at the Cabinet Office
- Lesley Cannon: Jobcentre Plus Local Partnership Manager, Tees Valley and colleagues in the Tees Valley district team
- Joanne Milnes: CfBT Next step Partnership Co-ordinator - Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland
- James Lee: Employment & Training Policy Adviser at the Refugee Council
- Liz Reay: Chief Executive, Equality North East
- Dan Aldridge, Diversity Mentor, Newcastle UXL (Diversity in Apprenticeship pilot)
- Joanne Scott and Sophie Pratt: Stockton Riverside College (Work Club)
- Karen Wilkinson-Bell, Regional Director, Business in the Community (BIC) North East

4. Chris Ford for his expert input as our Independent Facilitator for the two Big Conversation events.

5. Grace Essang, who joined us in September 2010 under the Sunderland University Graduate Internships Programme, for her hard work and dedicated contribution as Skilled Support Worker.

6. The Staff team at the Regional Refugee Forum North East who assisted in throughout the project and who are involved in supporting our members to implement the actions arising from the project:

Herbert Dirhau, Training & Development Project Manager
Samouka Dore, Training & Development Worker (Wearside)
Andrew Jackson, Training & Development Worker (Tees Valley)
Victoria Scott, Training & Development Worker (Tyne & Wear)
Joe Kamanga, ICT Project Officer

APPENDICES

- 1 Voices of our Members
- 2 Publicity materials
- 3 Summary of response to BIS future direction of skills
strategy consultation
- 4 Big Conversation 1 documents
- 5 Big Conversation 2 documents
- 6 Desk Top research
- 7 Skilled webpages
- 8 Financial report