

Asylum seekers employment project

Wednesday 28 November, 2018

The UK currently has one of the most restrictive policies in Europe in relation to the opportunity for those seeking political asylum gaining work. Not only is this debilitating for the individuals concerned, but it also increases the burden on hard pressed public services.

Thanks to a small grant from the Quartet Community Foundation, ACH / Himilo is working with Bristol Refugee Rights to give asylum seekers experience of employment in the UK through short visits to employers across the city - including Bristol City Council, UWE and First West of England. This project began today with a workshop at St Paul's Learning Centre.

Even though asylum seekers aren't currently able to work, we believe this will help integration. We are also hopeful that the recent campaign by the [#LiftTheBan coalition](#), of which ACH / Himilo are a member, will result in some of the restrictions on asylum seekers working being lifted in the near future.

David Jepson, ACH / Himilo Director and Policy Advisor, said: "We do need a change in the law to reform this absurd system, but rather than just wait for this we have introduced this pilot scheme so that those concerned can have a better understanding of the range of work available and the pathways to it."

Cllr. Ruth Pickersgill, Easton Ward, said: "So many asylum seekers in my ward and in other parts of Bristol have qualifications, skills and experience that we desperately need in our City, and yet they are unable to put them to use. I really welcome this scheme which will help them to be 'work ready' as soon as their refugee status is agreed, and enable them to support themselves and their families, contribute to the local economy and enrich our local workforce."

One of the attendees at the workshop was Aimee, an asylum seeker from Sierra Leone. She said: "I've been in the UK for 14 years but haven't been permitted to work since I arrived. I'm not happy as I've been here for a long time and I have no job. I have children back home and it makes me sad. I came across with some people from Germany who have all been allowed to work and no longer depend on the Government."

"The workshop today has inspired me greatly because we don't know how to do things and the first thing you have to learn about is people and the British culture. Some people don't know this and want it to be like what it was when they were back home, but it is different here."

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