First West of England joins up with local organisation to help refugees in Bristol into employment.

Tuesday 18 December, 2018

First West of England has teamed up with Bristol-based ACH to help refugees in the city find work and build new careers.

The non-for-profit organization is a leading UK provider of resettlement services for refugees and has launched a new scheme with First to give local refugees the opportunity to become bus drivers through a special training programme.

The two-week course, which is funded by First, will see a group of 12 candidates complete employment masterclasses with ACH, which cover a range of customer service skills, before getting behind the wheel at the First Bus training depot in Lawrence Hill.

First has guaranteed interviews for all 12 participants and successful candidates will then go on to complete the formal six-week training to become bus drivers in the region and operate both single and double decker buses across all service routes.

Julia Palmer, Career Advice & Employment Manager at ACH, said: “Working in partnership with employers is paramount for helping skilled individuals get started in not just a job, but a career. First West of England staff have been incredible and involved in the programme every step of the way, from its design to the end recruitment process. The prospect of moving on to work as a First Bus Driver has created a real buzz amongst the group.”

ACH are already working with Starbucks to provide vocational training for refugees and have helped over 1500 learners gain new skills across Bristol and the West Midlands in the last academic year.

James Freeman, Managing Director of First West of England, added: “Through our partnership with ACH, we hope to provide refugees and vulnerable members of the community with a life-changing opportunity to develop real workplace skills and build a new life in the city.

“Our driver training programme offers excellent career prospects and by working with ACH we can now open up these opportunities to harder to reach communities in the city. ACH do fantastic work in helping refugees integrate into the region and we are delighted to be able to support them as we roll out the first course of our new training partnership”

For more information on how to become a driver with First West of England visit: https://www.firstgroup.com/about-us/careers.

Ends.

Notes to Editor

ACH (formerly Ashley Community Housing)

ACH was established in 2008 as a social enterprise specialising in integrating refugees through accommodation, support and community-based training.

They provide safe, secure and comfortable housing combined with culturally sensitive support and employability skills training. Their unique approach focuses on building individuals’ resilience in the labour market, upskilling and supporting refugees into sustainable, higher-level employment in order to develop their independence and ease their integration into UK life.

They have successfully resettled 2000 individuals from refugee backgrounds in this time and are now one of the UK’s leading providers of integration services for refugee and newly arrived communities.

For more information on ACH please visit: https://ach.org.uk/

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Scan Me:

Company Contact:

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ACH

T. 01179415339
E. matthew.rogers@ach.org.uk
W. https://www.ach.org.uk

Additional Contact(s):
Matt Rogers (Marketing & Communications Officer): matthew.rogers@ach.org.uk

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