Unlocking the Entrepreneurial Talent of Refugees

Wednesday 15 November, 2017

On 30th October, over 50 people from a wide range of organisations attended the 'Unlocking the Entrepreneurial Talent of Refugees' conference at the Engine Shed in Bristol.

At this event, Ashley Community Housing presented their ground-breaking research project, in collaboration with the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME). This research revealed some of the opportunities and challenges facing new migrant entrepreneurs, and made recommendations for supporting them. You can read the full or summarised report at http://www.ashleyhousing.com/about-us/research/.

Topics included the valuable economic contribution of migrants to the UK, and the mismatch between their aspirations and reality. From the evidence presented, it was clear that while refugee entrepreneurs have the skill and talent to succeed in growing a business, a number of barriers prevent them from meeting their full potential.

Some of these barriers were identified during the conference, and possible solutions were put forward: such as the need to make mainstream business support more accessible and inclusive, and to develop new methods of accessing finance for refugees. Another focus of the discussion was the communication gap between support services and potential service users, and the ways that providers can effectively reach out to refugee and migrant communities.

Councillor Asher Craig closed the conference by emphasising the need for communication between key organisations, and for clear, practical actions going forward:

"*We are committed to making a difference and improving the lives of migrant entrepreneurs. We need actions and purpose.*" Cllr. Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor – Communities, Equalities & Public Health, Bristol City Council.

This event was part of ACH's commitment to share their expertise refugee resettlement and integration across the West of England. They look forward to continuing this dialogue with interested parties across the West of England.

"*Great discussion about building a more inclusive and diverse business ecosystem in Bristol*" Zara Nanu, Gapsquare.

(ends)

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About Ashley Community Housing

Ashley Community Housing (ACH) was established in 2008 as a social enterprise specialising in the economic, social and civil integration of refugees through accommodation and community based training support. We have successfully resettled over 2000 individuals from refugee backgrounds in this time.

We employ 60 staff and operate in the West of England and the West Midlands as a strategic partner for local authorities and government prime contractors. Through the establishment of our subsidiary training arm 'Himilo Training' we are committed to supporting refugees through work experience, language training, IT literacy and employability skills.

Our #rethinkingrefugee programme is considered outstanding and reflects our commitment to making sure refugees become part of society rather than remaining marginalised and under-employed.

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