



# TAPPING POTENTIAL

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## Guidelines to Help British Businesses Employ Refugees



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network

supported by



Home Office



Department  
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Cover photo: A Syrian-born entrepreneur employs refugees at a catering company. © UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

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“ Refugees are like everybody else. We want to study, work and also support the communities that we are living in. My ambition is to be a valuable member of the community and also part of the leadership within National Grid. To move forward: look what is the next step and then and also to make sure that National Grid achieve what they need to achieve.”

Biniam Haddish, 37, a power engineer from Eritrea, was accepted onto the graduate scheme at National Grid in Coventry – in power systems engineering, the field of the degree he’d completed eight years before. Since then, National Grid has funded him to do a part-time masters degree, is encouraging him to apply to become a chartered engineer, and is investing in him for leadership training.

# INTRODUCTION

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We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented **68.5 million** people around the world have been forced from home because of conflict or persecution – more than the population of the United Kingdom. Among them are **25.4 million refugees**.

## A whole-of-society response

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On 18 December 2018, 181 UN Member states, including the UK, voted in favour of adopting the Global Compact on Refugees, which establishes an international framework for a stronger, more predictable and more equitable international response to large refugee situations. A key component of the Compact is to foster the resilience and self-reliance of refugees. In working towards these goals the Compact highlights the need for cross-society partnerships, and a crucial role for the private sector – whether through providing investment in areas hosting refugees, making refugees part of their supply chains, helping humanitarian agencies innovate to better deliver assistance, skills acquisition or providing employment.

## Integration through employment in the UK

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One of the key contributors to refugee integration is meaningful employment. Employment enables self-sufficiency and provides social connections as refugees are able to use their skills and experience in a new context. Yet many refugees in the UK struggle to gain employment, or find themselves in jobs that do not match their skills and experience.

UK businesses are beginning to respond to this, adopting refugee-friendly employment practices to address core business challenges including:

- ➔ Recruitment and retention
- ➔ Diversity
- ➔ Skills gaps
- ➔ Employee engagement
- ➔ Purpose

The guide builds on the UNHCR and OECD global action plan to boost refugee employment, and research commissioned by the Refugee Employment Network in the UK.<sup>1</sup> It provides advice and case studies tailored to the UK context.

**85%** of refugees live in developing countries  
**LEBANON** hosts the greatest number of refugees relative to its population size

**1 in 4** people in Lebanon is a refugee  
**vs**  
**1.8/1,000** people in the UK are refugees

“ Business has a responsibility to get involved and support refugees to integrate into society – to make a positive change, government, charity and business have to work together. Employment is a really important part of the picture and can bring business benefits such as increasing the diversity of your workforce and addressing skills gaps.”

Karen Higgins, Head of Sustainability, Grant Thornton UK LLP



## GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT: REFUGEES IN THE UK

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In 2017 there were approximately 120,000 refugees in the UK<sup>2</sup> and 37,453 people sought asylum in the UK in 2018.<sup>3</sup> A person with refugee status in the UK has been recognised as a refugee in accordance with the legal definition outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Some refugees are recognised in the UK after applying for asylum here while others are resettled to the UK after being recognised as refugees in another country. Refugees are usually given five years' leave to remain, after which they can apply to stay in the UK permanently.<sup>4</sup>

### Where do refugees live in the UK?

The UK aims to disperse resettled refugees and asylum-seekers who need accommodation evenly across the country. The system of dispersal is based on local authority agreement so the distribution of individuals is not always equal.

In 2018, 129 local authorities participated in the asylum-seeker dispersal scheme. Once they receive status, some refugees will move to other areas of the

### HOW DOES THE 1951 REFUGEE CONVENTION DEFINE A REFUGEE?

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. They cannot return home or are afraid to do so. In the UK, refugee status is given to anyone that can prove to the UK Government that they meet this definition.

UK though many will stay in the area where they were dispersed. Under the resettlement schemes<sup>5</sup> roughly two-thirds of local authorities across all regions in the UK have welcomed refugees.

As a result of the different resettlement and dispersal schemes, there are significant refugee communities in large cities such as London, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff, but also smaller numbers in towns and villages across the country.

## Can refugees work in the UK?

Anyone with refugee status in the UK has the legal right to work. Further guidance for human resources teams is provided at the end of this guide, including the different legal definitions, and rights and entitlements for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Like any group, refugees come from a diverse range of backgrounds. Some are highly educated and have worked in skilled professions before fleeing their home country, while others may have low levels of education. Others still will have experience in manual work, or a range of transferable skills – meaning businesses from all sectors can benefit from refugee-friendly employment.

One study amongst adult refugees in the UK found two thirds had previously been in employment, self-employment or study.<sup>6</sup> Data from the UK Labour Force Survey also shows that:

**31% of asylum-seekers in the UK left education after the age of 20 which compares with 23% of those born in the UK.<sup>7</sup>**

## So what's the problem?

Despite having skills, experience and qualifications, refugees struggle to gain employment.

**While 78% of UK nationals are in employment, only 56% of refugees have found work.<sup>8</sup> There are similar differences in the unemployment rate which is estimated at 18% for refugees, three times higher than that of the UK-born.<sup>9</sup>**

A recent study amongst organisations supporting refugees into employment in the UK identified the top barriers refugees face.<sup>10</sup>

- 1 English language
- 2 Employers' recognition of skills and experience
- 3 Personal circumstances (e.g. past trauma or low confidence)
- 4 Public and employer perceptions of refugees
- 5 A lack of support due to limited employment support infrastructure
- 6 Practical barriers (e.g. childcare, transport, accommodation)

As the Global Compact on Refugees sets out, a cross-society approach is needed to help refugees overcome these barriers in order to access employment and make a contribution to the UK's economy. Employers can play a vital role through refugee-friendly employment.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REFUGEE AND AN ASYLUM-SEEKER?

#### Refugee

- ✓ Has been granted leave to remain in the UK
- ✓ Can access welfare benefits
- ✓ Has the right to work

VS

#### Asylum-seeker

- ✓ Is applying to be recognised as a refugee and granted the right to remain in the UK
- ✓ Can access accommodation and limited subsistence from the Government
- ✗ Does not normally have the right to work in the UK (for further details see Annex on page 27)



## IKEA employee: Sheun

A refugee from Nigeria since the age of 11, Sheun received support from Breaking Barriers and IKEA to prepare for the UK workplace. He then went on to apply for a job at IKEA where he now works in the Bistro and Swedish Food Market.

“ I’ve learned such a lot....like how to cope under pressure and not to be impatient. I’m more confident now. Everyone’s really supportive here and works as a team. IKEA is like a big family and I’m proud to be part of it.”



# BUSINESS BENEFITS OF HIRING REFUGEES

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## Recruitment and retention

Due to high employment rates in the UK, vacancies are at a record high, with employers struggling to fill roles, particularly in sectors with large numbers of entry level jobs.<sup>11</sup> Despite wanting to find work where they can use their skills and experience, many refugees struggle to find employment. By adopting principles of refugee-friendly employment your business can access a pipeline of diverse talent for roles at every skill level.

**A survey of German employers found that 80% of those that had hired refugees were broadly or fully satisfied with their work.<sup>12</sup> In the United States, 73% of employers surveyed reported a higher retention rate for refugees than for other employees.<sup>13</sup>**

## Diversity

Diversity is good for business. Teams that rate highly for ethnic and cultural diversity are 33% more likely to outperform competitors on profitability.<sup>14</sup> It has also been shown that diversity leads to 57% better collaboration and 19% greater retention rates.<sup>15</sup>

Refugees are not a homogenous group, representing a wide range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds that could help to diversify thinking and attract new talent within any business.

**Deloitte surveyed 305 Syrian refugees in Europe and found 38% have university education and one third were previously employed in either skilled work or the professional services industry.<sup>16</sup>**

Creating opportunities for employees to interact with refugees can also be beneficial both for reducing unconscious bias that can hamper workplace diversity, and can help to improve integration for a cohesive workforce.<sup>17</sup>

## Addressing skills gaps

Refugees have a range of skills and experience, including proficiency in different languages. Research published by Nuffield Foundation shows that nearly half of the refugees surveyed (45%) already held a qualification before coming to the UK, and many have previous experience working as professionals.<sup>18</sup> In addition to these professional skills, many refugees have overcome significant adversity and developed an adaptability beneficial for a range of roles.

## Employee engagement

Targeted initiatives to support refugees into employment can offer staff development opportunities, for example through participating in workplace 'buddying' schemes. Employees learn from those they are supporting, developing soft skills such as communication and empathy. Involving staff in these activities can also help employees to feel more engaged, which in turn has a positive impact on staff retention.

**Business in the Community research amongst 40 companies running targeted employment programmes for disadvantaged groups found that 90% reported benefits to their existing workforce.<sup>19</sup>**

## Purpose

More and more businesses are moving away from traditional philanthropy towards having a core purpose that addresses societal challenges. This is influenced by consumer and customer behaviour, as well as changing attitudes about the role of business in society. In an era of mistrust, citizens are looking to business to not only 'do less harm' but actively be a force for good in their communities.

**60% of millennials want to join companies with a 'purpose' that is embedded in the business.<sup>20</sup>**



Hayder Al Saadi, 30, from Baghdad, Iraq, is the floor manager of A Beautiful Mess restaurant.

© UNHCR/Miquel Gonzalez

Responding to the challenges faced by refugees worldwide is unlikely to be the core purpose of your business. However, addressing refugee situations is widely considered to be one of the biggest social challenges of our time. There is a business case for the private sector to be involved in the solution and encouraging refugee-friendly employment is one way businesses can take action.

“ Consumers are increasingly looking for – and expecting to see – the purpose behind the brand. The expectation not just that they won’t ‘be bad’ but that they should actively ‘do good’, is not going to go away.”

Keith Weed, CMO of Unilever

# A GOOD PLACE TO START

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As your business sets out to become a refugee-friendly employer, there is some important groundwork to be done which will help to enable change in your business.

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**1 UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE.** Raise awareness amongst colleagues about refugees and the opportunity for your business to respond. Share this guide and consider organising a training workshop for colleagues to bust some myths and drive engagement.

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**2 ALIGN YOUR FOCUS TO YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS AND PURPOSE.** Factors such as your business' size, sector and location will all determine where you should focus your efforts. You should also review any existing employability or employment programmes that your business offers and consider where adaptations may be needed to open these up to refugees.

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**3 FIND A PARTNER THAT CAN SUPPORT YOU TO ACHIEVE YOUR AIMS.** Organisations supporting refugees have a great deal of expertise and knowledge of the people they support and their situation in the UK, and run a wide range of programmes to support refugees to gain employment. With the focus areas for your business identified, you will be better placed to identify the right organisation(s) for your business to work with. As a business you can also bring important expertise and understanding of the market to make your collaboration with refugee-supporting organisations more effective.

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**4 ENGAGE YOUR LEADERS TO CHAMPION THE WORK.** Securing the support of a leader within the business early on – through events, training and impact reports – will be beneficial as you take action.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLE GRANT THORNTON'S RESPONSE TO A GLOBAL PROBLEM



Grant Thornton supports refugees because it believes that business has a responsibility to support those who have had to flee their countries and have a wealth of skills and talent to offer.

The firm began by running workshops to increase understanding of global refugee issues and brainstorm ways in which the business could help individuals to integrate into society. More than 30 ideas came out of these workshops, which the firm categorised as short, medium and long-term responses.

➡ **Short term:** Providing frontline support

➡ **Medium term:** Supporting with employment skills and work experience

➡ **Long term:** Addressing the challenge of skills translation for refugees within the professional services industry and beyond

Karen Higgins, Head of Sustainability, Grant Thornton UK LLP, explains how this links to the company's core purpose:

“ At Grant Thornton we have defined the purpose of our business. We believe that by unlocking the potential for growth in our people, clients and our communities we can help shape a vibrant economy where no-one gets left behind. Unfortunately we can't change the terrible events that individuals have experienced, but what we can do is to support them in building a life for themselves in the UK.”



**INSPIRE**

**HIRE**

**GROW**

**A FRAMEWORK FOR  
REFUGEE-FRIENDLY  
EMPLOYMENT**

Biniam Haddish, 37, a power engineer from Eritrea, was accepted onto the graduate scheme at National Grid.



# INSPIRE

## INSPIRE AND PREPARE REFUGEES FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK

Refugees have a range of valuable skills and experience, however many will be unfamiliar with UK culture and the labour market. Employers can provide stepping stones for refugees to move closer to employment.

### BUSINESS BENEFITS OF TAKING ACTION

- Build employee skills such as communication, empathy and coaching
- Provide corporate volunteering opportunities for staff
- Develop a talent pipeline to fill vacancies
- Increase employee awareness of different cultures, helping to reduce unconscious bias
- Introduce new and valuable skills, capacities and contributions

### Deliver work preparation activities

Refugees who have recently arrived in the UK are likely to have been out of work for some time. Those who have been here longer may have struggled for years to find employment in the UK despite having qualifications and experience in their home countries.

### TOP TIP

It is important to recognise the cultural differences many refugees entering the UK workplace for the first time will face. Allow time to discuss these and align expectations focusing on communication style, punctuality, and workers' rights and entitlements.



## BUSINESS EXAMPLE

### STARBUCKS EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME



In 2017, Starbucks' global Chairman Howard Schultz committed to hire 10,000 refugees in Starbucks operations globally, which set the wheels in motion for action across Europe.

Starbucks has partnered with a number of leading refugee specialist agencies in the UK including the Refugee Council UK, Scottish Refugee Council, Welsh Refugee Council, the Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) and Ashley Community Housing to deliver business led employment support programmes, enabling refugees to improve their prospects of gaining employment and working in its stores.

The course includes work-readiness training, a session on working in the UK labour market, and a half day workshop explaining expectations of Starbucks partners (employees). At the end of the course all participants are guaranteed an interview.

Starbucks can provide long term sustainable career pathways, as well as opportunities for partners to access a rich range of free training, education and skills development. Leading initiatives such as apprenticeships, English language training, via the Starbucks online Global Academy, and its flagship rental deposit scheme, Home Sweet Loans, all provide great options for refugee partners.

#### Business benefits

- Over 40% of participants interviewed have gained employment with Starbucks through the programme.
- Starbucks reports a higher rate of retention amongst the refugees it has employed compared to its other employees in the UK

Activities can be delivered in partnership with organisations supporting refugees, and might include:

- ➔ Confidence building
- ➔ Interview preparation
- ➔ Workplace visits
- ➔ Training on workplace culture in the UK

### Embed English language training

Research amongst refugees across Europe has shown that language ability is closely linked with employment outcomes.<sup>21</sup> In the UK, refugees can access English language tuition, funded through the Adult Education Budget, if they are unemployed and looking for work. Availability of courses can vary, and many refugees and providers report that practical and vocationally focused language learning opportunities are also important in the context of finding work.

**84% of Syrian refugees surveyed by Deloitte cited language ability as a barrier to employment.<sup>22</sup>**

Integrating formal ESOL training within work-preparation activities has been found to be very effective, but activities which allow for the development of conversational English can also help to build confidence.

- ➔ Develop work-preparation activities for refugees which embed sector-based English language
- ➔ Ensure existing work-preparation activities are accessible by embedding or adding an element of English language training
- ➔ Engage business volunteers in mentoring to improve language skills through conversation

### Provide good quality work placements

#### TOP TIP

Your business may decide to develop a work placement programme targeting refugees, or make adjustments to existing programmes to ensure they are accessible for refugees.

A lack of UK work experience is often cited by refugees as a barrier to gaining employment. Work placements, internships and training programmes can provide refugees, who may be disadvantaged by a standard application process, the opportunity to demonstrate the aptitude and attitude needed for a role.

- ➡ Partner with organisations supporting refugees to create a referral pipeline for your work placements.
- ➡ Organise induction training or appoint a buddy to help participants settle in quickly, making sure that important instructions are understood.
- ➡ Ensure participants are given a variety of work to do, rather than simply shadowing.
- ➡ De-brief participants once the placement has ended and support them to develop an employment action plan.

## COMMUNITY EXAMPLE

### RUSHOLME

Rusholme Jobcentre has developed an ESOL 'hub' for refugees and other jobseekers with low levels of English, after identifying a lack of ESOL provision or long waiting times for customers. The hub focuses on developing employability skills and language, and is tailored to those who may have little knowledge of the UK job market. It is supported by local businesses who give talks to participants and offer work placements.

This approach has enabled a number of local businesses to fill vacancies, and is demonstrating how a community can work collaboratively to address challenges with great success – 49% of ESOL hub participants have moved into sustainable employment since taking part in the hub.

Get in touch with your nearest Jobcentre to find out about opportunities for partnership:  
<https://find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk>

## BUSINESS EXAMPLE

### CAPGEMINI



Capgemini – a leader in consulting, technology and services – first began working with refugees by offering placements in partnership with [Transitions London CIC](#), a not-for-profit organisation that matches employers with refugee professionals.

Building on this experience, Capgemini has developed a Coding Academy to help refugees gain skills and progress into employment at the company. The six-month training course is run in partnership with [Code your Future](#) and gives refugees and other disadvantaged groups the chance to learn digital skills which are high in demand.

Participants can fit the course around existing commitments, with weekend lectures and collaborative tutor groups, and receive mentoring support from Capgemini employees. Students also learn a variety of employability skills including digital interview techniques, communication, team working and problem solving, and can access English language support if needed.

Each course has a cohort of 25 students, giving 10 the opportunity to enter permanent roles at Capgemini on completion. Once they join Capgemini, internal networks championing diversity and active inclusion support employees who may be unfamiliar with the UK workplace.

#### Business benefits

Paul Margetts, UK MD at Capgemini and Chair of the UK Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Board explains the purpose of the new Coding Academy:

“As a technology company, we have a responsibility to ensure that everyone benefits from the digital revolution. Working with Code Your Future enables us to use our expertise to help individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds develop the skills they need to be included in society. In this way, we support the participants with gaining employment, address the skills gap and help both our business and the wider UK economy.”

## BUSINESS EXAMPLE LINKLATERS

# Linklaters

Global law firm Linklaters began working with Business in the Community to address high rates of unemployment and underemployment amongst migrant communities and newcomers in the London borough of Haringey. English language was identified as a major barrier – which led Linklaters to develop a programme called Careers Conversations. The course is delivered in partnership with local authority adult learning services to residents with English as a second language.

Linklaters employees are trained by Business in the Community, before being matched with participants. Volunteers then deliver a 6-week programme of employability support combined with employment-related English language coaching.

### Business benefits

Careers Conversations offers Linklaters the chance to upskill its employees through coaching, and has found that the programme has attracted a more diverse group of volunteers than other opportunities.

### Impact on participants

- 75% increased their ability to write job applications and CVs in English
- 75% increased their ability to job search online
- 75% increased their knowledge of the UK Job Market
- 100% increased their ability to speak with an employer

The programme has been so successful it is now being beyond Linklaters through BITC in Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and London offering volunteering opportunities to many different employers – with courses specifically targeting refugees.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLE WAITROSE



Waitrose & Partners is offering work placements to resettled Syrian refugees in partnership with Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme. Participants are referred to the programme by World Jewish Relief as part of a holistic package of support.

The Ready for Work programme gives participants two-days' training to prepare them for the workplace, followed by a two-week work placement and post-placement support. Waitrose & Partners has offered five placements to resettled Syrian refugees.

Kerrie Neal, Deputy Branch Manager at the retailer's Kenilworth store, explains:

“ Working with Business in the Community has meant we can support and offer opportunities to more people – helping us to continue building the skills of future generations and creating better places for people to live, work in and enjoy.”

## Prudence: from Zambia to Grant Thornton

A refugee from Zambia, Prudence was referred to [Breaking Barriers](#) for employment support after struggling to gain work that matched her skills and experience. She was offered a placement at Grant Thornton to gain UK work experience in her sector:

“ My placement at Grant Thornton taught me many things. In Zambia, the pace of life is slower and the culture submissive. British working culture is very fast-paced. What people take for granted – making calls, answering emails and talking to clients – I had to re-learn. It was a genuine culture shock. My life is richer now as I have transferable skills in project management, administration and I am more assertive. Though I recognise there are many more rivers to cross, I am truly grateful, more confident and motivated to find my next opportunity.”





## HIRE: CREATE A REFUGEE-FRIENDLY RECRUITMENT PROCESS

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Standard recruitment processes can create barriers for many jobseekers. This section outlines principles of refugee-friendly recruitment that will help your business break down some of these barriers for refugees.

### BUSINESS BENEFITS OF ADOPTING THESE PRINCIPLES

- Access to a more diverse talent pipeline
- Access to skilled and qualified candidates
- Greater cultural awareness amongst hiring managers

### Review the level of English language required for all roles

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Job descriptions which specify a 'good level' of English can be off-putting for refugees still developing their language skills. For some roles an ability to understand and communicate in English will be essential, but others may allow for a degree of flexibility.

- ➡ Review the level of English needed for a role and be specific about this in the job description and advert
- ➡ Consider whether key instructions (such as health and safety) could be translated
- ➡ Be open to proposals from refugees to bring an interpreter or facilitator for the job interview

## SMALL BUSINESS EXAMPLE CHUNKY CHICKEN – NELSON



Local fast food shop Chunky Chicken in the Lancashire town of Nelson have partnered with the [People's Enterprise and Employment Forum](#) (PEEF) to offer job opportunities to resettled Syrian refugees.

PEEF engage with the local DWP jobcentre in Nelson to identify refugees in need of employment support, and provide employability training, language classes and work experience opportunities.

Chunky Chicken has provided week long 'work trials' to two Syrian refugees. Through the means of translation and demonstration, the shop was able to overcome language barriers and both individuals have gained employment at the shop.

### Business benefits

“ We want to invest in the local community, and we're happy to employ anyone as long as they have the right attitude. The refugees we have supported have taken to the challenge, and we've been able to offer them a foot in the door. Now we have the link with PEEF, it's a great way to fill our vacancies while responding to the needs of our community.”

Nasir Iqbal, Manager, Chunky Chicken



### Make use of traineeships and apprenticeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships which provide training on the job can also enable refugees to learn new skills and qualifications, or adapt their experience for a new sector. Unlike other migrants, refugees are not subject to the three-year residency requirement which often applies to apprenticeship eligibility.<sup>23</sup>

- ☛ Offer traineeships and apprenticeships and review entry requirements to ensure they are accessible to refugees

## BUSINESS EXAMPLE ARCADIS



Leading design and consultancy firm Arcadis has worked with [Transitions London CIC](#) to create a programme offering graduate refugee engineers UK work experience and orientation.

Participants take part in six month paid internships, paid at the London Living Wage.

### Business benefits

- Arcadis has hosted **17 paid internships** in engineering, architecture, administration and project management, taking on participants with a wealth of qualifications and experience.
- **15 participants** are now in professional jobs.
- **9 participants** have been offered permanent professional positions by Arcadis.

This has enabled Arcadis to fill vacancies, and has also helped to increase the diversity of its workforce.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLE

### IKEA AND BREAKING BARRIERS CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAMME



Global retailer IKEA has partnered with [Breaking Barriers](#) - a charity aiming to integrate refugees through employment - to deliver a tailored customer service course which prepares refugees for employment in IKEA stores.

- Breaking Barriers sources candidates and manage 'right to work' checks.
- The candidate takes part in the Customer Service course, which includes an overview of the different areas of the store, retail basics, and some English language training.
- At the end of the course every candidate takes part in an assessment day, and is given feedback.

### IMPACT

- IKEA has funded 122 refugees to receive employability support from Breaking Barriers
- 155 refugees have been trained through the Customer Service English and Business English courses
- 30 have gained employment at IKEA stores across London
- 50% of candidates that have gone to a bespoke assessment day (after their Customer Service course) have been offered a job at IKEA

### INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT

40% of participants on the customer service course have gained employment at IKEA, and have benefited from the company's inclusive recruitment process. IKEA assesses candidates on the basis of attitudes and values, meaning refugees are not disadvantaged by a lack of UK work experience or qualifications.



© Amanda Nero/10M

### BUSINESS BENEFITS

Like many retailers in London IKEA faces a high turnover in the first six months of employment which comes at a cost for the business. The programme is addressing this challenge by creating a new talent pipeline to fill vacancies, and seeing a high retention rate amongst refugees employed through the programme. The programme also builds pride in IKEA as a values led and inclusive employer among co-workers.

People and Communications Leader Hiliary Jenkins explains why the programme is so important:

“ At IKEA we believe in People and the importance of quality work in order to live a good life. For us it's a clear win win. A lot of candidates we're working with are incredibly capable, and even have more education and skills than we are looking for. It's a real shame that gaps in their CVs or interviews is what's stopping them getting a good job. When they come on board they're really enthusiastic so it makes sense to be giving them opportunities.”



## BUSINESS EXAMPLE

### GRANT THORNTON



As a professional services firm, Grant Thornton recognised that many of its roles may be inaccessible for refugees who may not have the paperwork to prove their skills and experience or whose qualifications may not be recognised within the UK.

To begin to address this problem, Grant Thornton is working with regulated industry bodies to find solutions. Starting within its own sector, the firm is working with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to explore how they can support individuals with accountancy qualifications which are not currently recognised in the UK.

The benefits to the business are clear: by enabling more refugees to access vacancies at Grant Thornton, the firm is unlocking a skilled talent pool that could also help to increase the diversity of its workforce.

“ Consulting with refugee professionals has provided us the opportunity to review our hiring strategies and processes to ensure they’re as inclusive as possible. We want to give everyone the best chance to be successful when interviewing with Capgemini (or other prospective employers) – no matter the individual’s cultural expectations and background. Refugee professionals represent a new, untapped talent pool.”

Joe Shahmoradian, Head of Recruitment,  
UK Practices, Capgemini

### Support refugees to transfer qualifications gained in their home country

A survey of Syrian refugees conducted by Deloitte found that a third of respondents had been employed in either skilled work or the professional service industry in Syria.<sup>24</sup> Though wanting to find work that fits their existing skills, the majority of those in employment were working in manual or unskilled work.

- ➊ Provide assistance to refugee applicants to verify their qualifications.
- ➋ Work with your regulatory or industry body to identify and address the blockers for refugees seeking to translate their qualifications.

#### TOP TIP

**NARIC** (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) provides an official source of information on international education and training systems and wide-ranging international qualifications and skills attained from outside the UK.

<https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>



A refugee from Ivory Coast, at a social enterprise, contributes to design and product creation.

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# GROW: ENABLE REFUGEES TO THRIVE IN THE WORKPLACE

The barriers refugees face gaining employment can continue to make it difficult to progress. Refugees are more likely to be in work below their formal education level<sup>25</sup> and earn 59% less per hour than those born in the UK.<sup>26</sup>

Building a working environment which enables refugees to thrive will help your business capitalise on the skills and experience refugees can offer.

**BUSINESS BENEFITS OF ADOPTING THESE PRINCIPLES**

- Reduce recruitment costs by providing progression pathways to retain staff
- Improve employee engagement through mentoring opportunities
- Upskill existing workforce to learn other languages

## Provide progression pathways

It is important for your business to understand the career ambitions of any refugees you employ and provide additional support where needed.

- ➔ Define and communicate progression pathways for all roles, with incremental progression steps where possible
- ➔ Develop an internal mentoring scheme for any refugees you recruit
- ➔ Ensure progression opportunities are equally accessible for part time and flexible workers
- ➔ Ensure that training is accessible for all employees regardless of shift patterns, travel and location
- ➔ Deliver a range of training, which could include bite-sized sessions and softer skills

## PUBLIC SECTOR EXAMPLE

### NHS



In London, the NHS has partnered with Refugee Council, Glowing Results and the London Metropolitan University, to support refugee healthcare professionals to restart their careers in the UK.

The Building Bridges programme provides:

- Specialist careers guidance and orientation to the NHS
- Training to help with English language exams and professional medical exams
- Training to develop job search skills
- Structured work placements in GP practices and clinical attachments in hospitals
- A Clinical Apprenticeship Scheme to help refugee doctors access their first NHS posts
- Financial help with travel, childcare, course, exam and professional registration costs

#### Impact

595 refugee healthcare professionals have taken part in the programme. Of those that are refugee doctors:

- 153 passed Professional Linguistic and Assessment Board exams
- 110 completed work placements in hospitals
- 98 gained employment

#### Benefits

“NHS is the largest employer in the UK, and like any other employer we have a skills shortage, so Building Bridges enables us to find talented and hardworking individuals to fill vacancies. It's a worthwhile investment for the NHS – and is hugely cost efficient when you consider that for the same cost of training one doctor from scratch we can support 10 refugee doctors into employment. It's also helping to ensure our workforce is as diverse as the communities we serve.”

Sandy Gupta, MD FRCP, Consultant Cardiologist at Whipps Cross/Barts Health NHS Trust London

## NHS employee: Jamal

Dr. Rajiv,\* an ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist, was granted asylum after arriving from Afghanistan. After settling his family he managed to secure a shadowing placement at an ENT department for a year. He went on to gain a diploma, enabling him to work as an audiologist.

With support from the Building Bridges programme he worked towards obtaining professional registration and gained full General Medical Council membership four years later. He got his first NHS job through the Clinical Apprenticeship Scheme, becoming an ENT Registrar the following year.

\* Name has been changed to protect identity

### Help refugees to improve their English language skills within the workplace

Low levels of English language can prevent refugees from progressing within the workplace, increasing the likelihood of becoming stuck in low-paid or low-skilled work.

- ➔ Provide English language training for staff. You could arrange for a tutor to come into the workplace, or provide access to English language training online.
- ➔ Run language lunch clubs for refugees to improve language skills through conversation and help other staff members to learn new languages.

UNHCR/Stefanie J. Steidl



Promote inclusion at all levels, emphasising the value of different cultural and religious backgrounds

Refugees represent a wide range of nationalities, cultures and religions. Ensuring everyone in your business values diversity and feels comfortable to bring their whole self to work will benefit everyone in your business and help refugees grow within the workplace and integrate in society.

#### TOP TIP

Some refugees may feel there is stigma attached to their refugee status, while others may not feel able to share information about their background with colleagues. This will vary from person to person, and is a decision that must be made by the individual.

The following pointers may be particularly helpful for helping refugees to integrate within your business:

- ➔ Make sure internal communications are easy to understand
- ➔ Make accommodation for religious holidays or customs
- ➔ Set up an internal Cultural Awareness Network to celebrate and raise awareness of different cultures and faith backgrounds
- ➔ Deliver unconscious bias training for all employees, not only for hiring managers
- ➔ Engage senior management to ensure the rationale behind hiring refugees is understood and communicated
- ➔ Offer training to both supervisors and staff on how they can support refugees
- ➔ Provide incoming refugees with clear information on company policies and work habits

**There are many areas to consider here, and Business in the Community has a range of resources and can offer bespoke advice to employers on diversity in the workplace. For more information visit: <https://race.bitc.org.uk>**



Martin Moma, a participant of STEP in Coventry, works in Waitrose

## Waitrose employee: Khaled

Khaled was resettled to Coventry in 2016 from Turkey, after fleeing the conflict in Syria with his family. On arrival to the UK, Khaled spoke very little English which made it difficult to find work. He was supported by [World Jewish Relief's](#) Specialist Training and Employment Programme (STEP) to access English language training and work towards gaining employment.

Through STEP, Khaled received support from Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme which included a two-week work placement at Waitrose & Partners in Coventry. The store was very impressed with Khaled and at the end of his placement he was offered a permanent job at the store.

One day Khaled would like to return to Syria. But with his job at Waitrose & Partners he is able to make a life for himself in the UK, and has goals to eventually find work as a pharmacist again:

“ The Waitrose & Partners team were really friendly and accommodating. My placement helped me to develop my English, and I learned customer service skills. Waitrose & Partners respects me and my religion. I have made a life here. I would like to go back to Syria, but there is no freedom there. Here I am a free man.”



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## An International Action Plan: OECD and UNHCR stakeholder 10-point Action Plan

Through a series of regional dialogues on “Employing Refugees”, the OECD and UNHCR brought together more than 150 employers and employer organisations to inform a whole-of-society action plan for addressing refugee employment.

This 10-point Action Plan aims to inspire focused policy action and increase co-ordination among employers, governments, civil society actors and refugees to help society make the most of refugees’ skills and experience. It can help your business understand the wider policy framework and the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

1. Navigate the administrative framework
2. Provide employers with sufficient legal certainty (regarding refugees’ right to work)
3. Identify and verify refugees’ skills
4. Developing skills for job-readiness
5. Match refugee talent with employers’ needs
6. Provide equal opportunities in recruitment and combat stereotypes
7. Prepare the working environment
8. Enable long-term employability
9. Make the business case for hiring refugees
10. Coordinate actions between all stakeholders

The action plan can be found at <https://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904>



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## What does the HR team need to know?

Anyone who is granted permission to remain in the UK as a refugee or who is granted humanitarian protection has unrestricted access to the labour market. A refugee may demonstrate their work entitlement through their Biometric Residence Permit or Immigration Status Document (an older form of document issued to refugees and certain other categories of migrant prior to the introduction of the Biometric Residence Permit).

A refugee can simply demonstrate their right to work in the same way as a non-EEA national. Full details are provided on Gov.uk in the Right to Work Checks – Employer Guidance

<https://bit.ly/2I75xmc>

All refugees issued with a Biometric Residence Permit are able to use the Home Office online checking service to evidence their right to work.

<https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work>

Alternatively, you can check the refugee's documents in person. <https://bit.ly/1qtUfVh>

If the refugee cannot show you any documents because of an outstanding appeal, review or application with the Home Office you can use the Home Office Employer Checking Service to confirm their right to work. <https://bit.ly/1Aqa6h8>

Refugees and people with humanitarian protection may not find it easy to provide references because of the circumstances which brought them to the United Kingdom, and the qualifications they hold may not seem comparable to UK qualifications. However, refugees are able to seek a "Statement of Comparability" for the qualifications that they hold from the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC). <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric>

## Can I prioritise refugees in recruitment?

In any recruitment you should offer the job to whichever candidate is most suitable. If however you have two equally suitable candidates, you can choose a candidate who has a protected characteristic<sup>27</sup> over one who does not if they're both suitable for the job and you think that people with that characteristic:

- are under-represented in the workforce, profession or industry
- suffer a disadvantage connected to that characteristic (for example people from a certain ethnic group are not often given jobs in your sector)

You cannot choose a candidate who is not as suitable for the job just because they have a protected characteristic.

## How do I know which organisation my business should partner with?

There are many different organisations supporting refugees throughout the UK beyond those referenced in this guide. At a local level, Jobcentres can help connect you with local partners working with employers.

You could also contact the **Refugee Employment Network** which has a membership of over 80 refugee integration support organisations across the UK. Their membership supports refugees in the UK to be able to access appropriate, fulfilling, paid employment or self-employment. They also work to set best practice guidelines and offer support to organisations to attain these standards. Please contact REN: [hello@refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk](mailto:hello@refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk)



Aygun from Azerbaijan now works as a Visual Merchandiser, having completed a work placement in retail.

Where can I learn more?

### UNHCR's annual global trends report

<https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>

### UNHCR and OECD multi-stakeholder action plan on employing refugees

<https://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904>

### TENT Private Sector Partnership for Refugees

[www.tent.org](http://www.tent.org)

If you have any questions which are not answered in this toolkit you can contact the following organisations for further information:

- **UNHCR United Kingdom**  
[GBRLO@unhcr.org](mailto:GBRLO@unhcr.org) | 0203 761 9500 | @UNHCRUK  
<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/livelihoods.html>
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM) United Kingdom**  
IOM also works with both refugees and employers within the UK to promote employment opportunities. IOM provide information and support to refugees resettling to the UK both before and after their arrival, and provide training and guidance to employers interested in hiring refugees. To find out more, or to contact IOM:  
<https://unitedkingdom.iom.int/labour-market-integration> | [iomukLMI@iom.int](mailto:iomukLMI@iom.int) | 020 7811 6000 | @IOM\_UK
- **Business in the Community**  
Members of Business in the Community can access bespoke advice and training on employing refugees  
[Info@bitc.org.uk](mailto:Info@bitc.org.uk) | 0207 566 8650 | @BITC

# ANNEX

## Some types of immigration status in the UK and associated entitlements to work

| Status   | Description   | Can this person work?   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>REFUGEE LEAVE</b>                               | Refugee leave is a form of immigration status. Asylum-seekers who meet the definition of a refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention are entitled to recognition as a refugee and a grant of refugee leave.   | Yes   |
| <b>HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION</b>                     | Humanitarian protection is a form of immigration status. It is granted to a person with a need for protection but who does not meet the criteria for refugee status.  | Yes   |
| <b>ASYLUM-SEEKER</b>                               | A person who has made a request to be recognised as a refugee in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and is waiting for a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee.   | <u>Not</u> usually. After 12 months of waiting for a decision, and where that delay is through no fault of their own, asylum-seekers can apply for permission to work, which, if granted, allows them to apply for roles listed on the Government's Shortage Occupation List. |
| <b>DISCRETIONARY LEAVE (DL)</b>                    | DL is a form of immigration status granted to those whose situation falls outside the Immigration Rules, but the Home Office decides there are nonetheless exceptional and/or compassionate reasons for allowing them to remain here. Examples include victims of trafficking and those with serious medical conditions.  | Usually. Discretionary leave would normally give the person legal right to live and work in the UK. Sometimes the condition of no recourse to public funds is attached to this status.  |
| <b>INDEFINITE LEAVE TO REMAIN/ ENTER (ILR/ILE)</b> | ILR /ILE are both forms of immigration status granted which allow the person to permanently reside in the UK. ILR is granted to those who have been in the UK for a specified amount of time. Individuals with refugee leave or humanitarian protection are generally able to apply for ILR after they have held that status for 5 years. Some resettled refugees to the UK are granted ILR on arrival to the UK. | Yes   |
| <b>LEAVE OUTSIDE THE RULES (LOTR)</b>              | LOTR is leave outside the Immigration Rules, on the basis of compelling compassionate grounds (that are not related to family and private life, medical or protection matters).   | <u>Not</u> usually. Most grants of LOTR will be for a single short period of limited leave to enter or remain. The conditions specified by the Home Office for such leave normally include no recourse to public funds, no work and no study.                                 |

# END NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> BITC for the Refugee Employment Network (REN), *Effective Partnerships: A report on engaging employers to improved refugee employment in the UK*, 2018 and *Milestone Tweed for REN, Refugee Employment Support in the UK*, May 2018. Both reports can be provided by REN on request: [hello@refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk](mailto:hello@refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk)
- <sup>2</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, 19 June 2017, available at: [www.refworld.org/docid/5b2d1a867.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5b2d1a867.html)
- <sup>3</sup> Includes dependents of principal applicants, see UK Home Office, Immigration Statistics, year ending December 2018, [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2018)
- <sup>4</sup> Refugees arriving under different pathways may be granted different types of leave to remain. For further information see Annex on previous page.
- <sup>5</sup> The Home Office operates four resettlement schemes: the Gateway Protection Programme, for those in protracted refugee situations; Mandate, for refugees who have a close family member in the UK who is willing to accommodate them; the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) for refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict; and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) for 3000 children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa region.
- <sup>6</sup> Cardiff University for Nuffield Foundation, *Social networks, social capital and refugee integration*, 2013, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Uujf92>
- <sup>7</sup> Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2017).
- <sup>8</sup> Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C., *Differences in labour market outcomes between natives, refugees and other migrants in the UK*, *Journal of Economic Geography*, 2017. The study classifies as refugees someone who reports having migrated to the UK for asylum reasons, and pools Labour Force Survey data over the period of 2010 to 2017.
- <sup>9</sup> Kone, Z et al, *Refugees and the UK Labour Market*, April 2019, ECONREF, COMPAS, University of Oxford, <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ECONREF-Refugees-and-the-UKLabour-Market-report.pdf>. Note that this report does not actually refer to unemployment figures for 'refugees' by legal status but rather 'asylum migrants' defined as those whose motivation to come to the UK was to seek asylum.
- <sup>10</sup> Milestone Tweed for the Refugee Employment Network (REN), *Refugee Employment Support in the UK*, May 2018, report can be provided on request: [hello@refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk](mailto:hello@refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk)
- <sup>11</sup> Office for National Statistics, *UK labour market: January 2019*, available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk>
- <sup>12</sup> Joint survey conducted by the OECD, the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, and the German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Referenced in UNHCR and OECD, *Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society*, 2018, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904>
- <sup>13</sup> The TENT foundation and Fiscal Policy Institute, *Refugees as employees: Good retention, strong recruitment*, May 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2WF4VrW>
- <sup>14</sup> McKinsey & Company, *Delivering through diversity*, 2018, available at: <https://mck.co/2wrk8og>
- <sup>15</sup> Corporate Executive Board (CEB), *Driving Retention and Performance Through Employee Engagement*, 2008, available at <https://bit.ly/2HTQMUA>
- <sup>16</sup> Deloitte and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, *Talent displaced: The economic lives of Syrian refugees in Europe*, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2hW7aFt>

- <sup>17</sup> Research has shown that meaningful relationships between different racial groups can reduce racial anxiety. Davies et al, *Cross-Group Friendships and Intergroup Attitudes: A Meta-Analytic Review*, 2011, available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1088868311411103>
- <sup>18</sup> Cardiff University for Nuffield Foundation, 2013
- <sup>19</sup> Business in the Community, *The business benefits of work inclusion*, 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/2CQKKQI>
- <sup>20</sup> Deloitte, 2015, 'The 2015 Deloitte Millennial survey: Mind the Gaps', <https://bit.ly/1YAGoxZ>
- <sup>21</sup> UNHCR and OECD, *Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society*, 2018, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904>
- <sup>22</sup> Deloitte and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, *Talent displaced: The economic lives of Syrian refugees in Europe*, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2hW7aFt>
- <sup>23</sup> UK Education Skills and Funding Agency, 'Apprenticeship funding and performance-management rules for training providers', July 2018, <https://bit.ly/2QycdKL>
- <sup>24</sup> Deloitte and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (2018), *Talent displaced: The economic lives of Syrian refugees in Europe*, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2hW7aFt>
- <sup>25</sup> European Labour Force Survey shows that tertiary-educated refugees in employment in Europe were three times more likely to be in jobs below their formal qualification level than the native-born (60% versus 21%) and twice more likely than other migrants (30%). See European Commission and OECD, "How are refugees faring on the labour market in Europe?: A first evaluation based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module," January 2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/2HXkXtL>
- <sup>26</sup> Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2017)
- <sup>27</sup> UK Government, *Discrimination and Your Rights*, <https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/types-of-discrimination>



**UNHCR**, the UN Refugee Agency, is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, internally displaced persons, refugee returnees and stateless people. We work to ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge, having fled violence, persecution, war or disaster at home. This includes enhancing pathways to protection and solutions for refugees and assessing and supporting their economic and social integration.



The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, UN Migration, is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. IOM works with migrants, governments and other partners to provide humane response to the growing migration challenges of today. By promoting international cooperation and dialogue on migration issues, IOM assists in the search for practical solutions to key issues facing migrants and societies alike.

In the UK, IOM's work encompasses resettlement and integration, community cohesion, combatting human trafficking and modern slavery, diaspora and development, migrant assistance, supporting migrant children and migration policy and research.



Created nearly 40 years ago by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, **Business in the Community** is the oldest and largest business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business. We inspire, engage and challenge members, mobilising that collective strength as a force for good in society.

Today, we have a vibrant membership of hundreds of businesses, large and small. Together, our ambition is to make the UK the world leader at responsible business



The **Home Office** is the lead government department for immigration and passports, and, through UK Visas and Immigration, runs the UK's asylum service, offering protection to those eligible under the 1951 Refugee Convention. One of our goals is to protect vulnerable people and communities. Through our four resettlement schemes we offer a safe and legal route to the UK for the most vulnerable refugees.



The **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. As the UK's biggest public service department it administers the State Pension and a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits to around 20 million claimants and customers.

**Thank you to the businesses and organisations that provided examples for this guide:**

- Arcadis
- Ashley Community Housing
- Breaking Barriers
- Capgemini
- Grant Thornton
- Chunky Chicken
- IKEA
- NHS
- Linklaters
- National Grid
- PEEF
- Refugee Council
- Starbucks
- Transitions London CIC
- Waitrose
- World Jewish Relief





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