



Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration

Final Evaluation Report

July 2022



ERS Bristol Office

48 Corn St
Bristol
BS1 1HQ

T: 0117 927 3401

E: bristol@ers.org.uk

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS REPORT

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EELGA SMP

The Strategic Migration Partnership is hosted by the East of England Local Government Association. The Strategic Migration Partnership is a tiered regional network which works with partners to develop and support local migrant worker, asylum seeker and refugee networks, encompassing grass roots organisations and a network of multi-agency fora as well as specialist and task groups. [Home - EELGA SMP](#)

The Bell Foundation

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The Bell Foundation provided the funding for the evaluation of the Work and Wellbeing for Refugee Integration (WW4RI) project. Funding was not provided by the Foundation for the WW4RI project itself.

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Glossary of terms

AMIF	European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.
Brass	Bedford Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support.
CAD	Community Action Dacorum.
CSCS	Construction skills certification.
EELGA SMP	The East of England Local Government Association Strategic Migration Partnership.
EPUT	Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust.
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages.
GLADCA	Gladstone Community Association.
IELTS	International English Language Testing System.
MENTA	Mid-Anglian Enterprise Agency.
PARCA	Peterborough Asylum and Refugee Community Association.
SIA	Security guard licence.
SLC	Specialist Language Courses.
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
WEA	Workers' Educational Association.
WW4RI	Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration ('the project').

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

- E.1 The Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration (WW4RI) project aims to support the integration of 600-650 refugees in the East of England between April 2020 and December 2022 by providing support for employment, language and skills and wellbeing. The project's ten partners are the East of England Local Government Association Strategic Migration Partnership (EELGA SMP) (lead partner), Essex Integration, the Refugee Council, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk Refugee Support, EPUT (Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust) Health Outreach NHS, Peterborough Asylum and Refugee Community Association (PARCA), Gladstone Community Association (GLADCA), Mid-Anglian Enterprise Agency (MENTA) and Concept Training. There are also five subcontracted partners: Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Bedford Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS), Specialist Language Courses (SLC), Community Action Dacorum (CAD) and the Kings Arms Project.
- E.2 WW4RI is funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), with funding for the project's evaluation provided by The Bell Foundation.
- E.3 ERS Ltd was commissioned in May 2021 to evaluate Phase 1 of the WW4RI project. This final report summarises progress on delivery, emerging beneficiary outcomes and recommendations for the future. Primary research took place from mid-2021 to mid-2022 and included consultations with WW4RI project team members and partner organisation managers, focus groups with frontline workers (therapists and employment advisors) and UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) leads across the region, e-surveys of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers and employers, plus consultations with project beneficiaries and with wider stakeholders.

Project rationale and context

- E.4 The WW4RI project was inspired by the ambition to improve the levels and speed of refugee integration and informed by other initiatives to reduce the time needed to access the labour market and find appropriate employment, critical to integration, wellness and independent living. By providing a comprehensive support structure which recognises the multiple aspects of a refugee's life, project beneficiaries receive tailored support for their employment skills, English language skills and health and wellbeing to tackle barriers to integration holistically.
- E.5 The employment strand of WW4RI involves advisors assisting beneficiaries with their employment skills, helping them to understand the UK job market and to find appropriate work. Advisors support beneficiaries throughout the project and create individual action plans to guide beneficiaries' professional and personal development. This could be activities provided by the project or by signposting them to other forms of support.
 - 1.1 The ESOL and skills strand responds to refugees' need for language support. Sector-specific ESOL courses facilitate the improvement of English language skills and learning about particular sectors; on completion, work placements are offered with local employers. These provide valuable employment experience and expose employers to the benefits of employing refugees. More generic skills courses, such as IT Skills, Job Search Skills, Study Skills, Confident Women and Driving Theory, are also available. In addition, an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) course is offered, providing support to help beneficiaries pass the IELTS exam. There is also an option to gain a Construction Skills Certification (CSCS card) for work in the construction industry. A course to obtain a security guard card (SIA) was available for part of the project. MENTA provides support for those wishing to start their own business, including those who have previously run businesses in their countries of origin.

- E.6 The wellbeing strand provides access to individual, targeted, mental health support, in response to the traumatic experiences of some refugees and the psychological stress of migration, plus the lack of available mainstream mental health support. Group activities have also been developed to extend the reach of the service and to provide a different option for those who are reluctant to access a one-to-one service.

Progress

- E.7 WW4RI is performing very well against most of its AMIF reporting targets. The numbers of beneficiaries meeting an employment advisor (686), accessing wellbeing support (219), registering for ESOL and skills courses and/or the refugee entrepreneurship programme (369) are all exceeding the targets set. However, the number of beneficiaries accessing work placements has been adversely affected by delays with the project, due to COVID-19 and sector-specific courses not being able to start until April 2021. During 2022, WW4RI has been able to make good progress with organising work placements for its sector-specific course graduates, with 54 organised so far.

Management and processes

- E.8 The management of the WW4RI project is widely praised. Regular feedback and support with challenges or queries is provided to the delivery team, fostering positive working relationships. Consultees commended the learning and responsiveness that the team facilitates. Good communication via regular meetings is highlighted, with communication improving throughout the project's operation as processes have been refined.
- E.9 However, at times it has been difficult for the project team to ensure consistent, clear communication about eligibility and project aims. This is due to the large number of partners involved and the complexity of the project, staff having worked on similar projects previously with different aims, plus changes in personnel and limitations on face-to-face meetings to establish shared understanding due to COVID-19.
- E.10 Involving multiple partner organisations has enabled team members to share contacts and reduced the need to refer to external organisations. The delivery team is active in promoting the project to different organisations and ensuring that information is accessible. However, some consultees felt there is scope for more information sharing and collaboration between partners, to promote understanding and cohesiveness across WW4RI. In 2022, employment advisors from different counties took part in some work shadowing to share best practice between different organisations taking part in the project, which was thought to be very helpful.
- E.11 To date (July 2022), monitoring and reporting processes have worked well throughout the project. Internal referrals are a key element of WW4RI, allowing beneficiaries access to several types of support as needed. To promote referrals to the wellbeing strand, therapists have organised meetings with employment advisors to present their work and attended ESOL classes to raise the awareness of learners and teachers.

Delivery

- E.12 The delivery of the support is generally praised by consultees, with many noting the synergistic value of the project's three strands working together. Within the client population, over 90 per cent of the beneficiaries consulted stated that they were happy and almost 80 per cent were very happy with the support received (n=68). Members of the delivery team identified some overarching challenges, including staff capacity and changes in personnel. Consultees also identified that the project potentially could have included a budget for volunteers and might explore offering support for the

cultural shock that many refugees experience as new arrivals to the UK. This was made available towards the end of the project but recruitment of the coordinator was unsuccessful.

- E.13 Not only have COVID-19 and Brexit altered the circumstances under which refugees have arrived in the UK, but the continual changing nature of refugee arrivals themselves impacts WW4RI and the project team. The increasing number of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees have changed the make-up of beneficiaries being supported. This in turn is changing the project offer as these beneficiaries require more tailored employment support as they come to the UK with transferable qualifications and employment experience. The sector-specific ESOL support is becoming increasingly irrelevant, whereas the foundation skills course are much more relevant.
- E.14 Advisors within the employment strand were commended by clients for being approachable, caring, kind and easy to contact. They have tailored the support successfully and remained flexible, putting clients at ease and balancing employment support with people's daily schedules and commitments. Clients have been able to see their advisors online or face-to-face, depending on what suits them best.
- E.15 Challenges to employment support include differing levels of client motivation and many external difficulties. These include qualifications not being recognised in the UK and COVID-19 reducing the availability of placements and making online support obligatory, thereby reducing advisors' ability to reach new clients and form strong relationships at an early stage.
- E.16 A higher-level skills advisor was employed in early 2022 to help those who arrived in the UK already highly skilled in a specific profession e.g. mechanical engineering or nursing, but who were struggling to get their qualifications recognised by employers and secure work commensurate with their skills and experience. Unfortunately, due to staff turnover, there were delays with the progress of this support, but this has since been addressed and there are intentions for the advisor to adopt a brokerage role, connecting suitably qualified refugees with large employers, such as the NHS.
- E.17 Project team members reflected positively on the delivery of work placements to clients and the methods used to secure opportunities by employment advisors. Employers have generally had a good experience taking part in the project. Most thought the management of placements and the support and communication from the WW4RI team were excellent. Challenges included finding the most appropriate placements for clients, communication between employment advisors and other WW4RI team members, finding placements with employers who have time for inductions, ongoing in-work support, obtaining necessary DBS and health checks etc., plus COVID-19 restricting the number of placements available.
- E.18 Successes from the ESOL and skills strand include the flexibility to deliver online or face-to-face support, IT devices being made available to students, the use of different online learning tools and breakout rooms the modular structure of courses and a summer school for those with lower levels of English. Courses that have proved most popular are Driving Theory, IT Skills, Job Search Skills and Childcare. Challenges include differing levels of ability, possibly related to inconsistency in assessing ESOL competency levels, a lack of general English language skills development within courses, some sector-specific courses not meeting client demand and online delivery not being suitable for everyone.
- E.19 The enterprise support delivered by MENTA has been highlighted as an effective approach for providing tailored business advice, with the flexibility and practicality of the support being noted as useful by clients. However, there have been some concerns from clients about slow rates of progress.
- E.20 WW4RI's wellbeing delivery strand has made a significant difference in the counties where it is available. The need for the service is clear, as highlighted by partner managers, frontline delivery staff and local authority UASC leads, alongside demand for the service and associated waiting lists. The

service complements existing services, providing a bespoke service catered to the distinct needs of refugees and offers lower-level support that equips refugees with coping strategies to deal more effectively with the impact of past traumas on their current day-to-day lives.

- E.21 Beneficiaries accessing the project's wellbeing strand felt listened to and understood by therapists. A key part of this is the therapists' ability to acknowledge clients' experiences, trauma and culture. The stigma around mental health in certain cultures is recognised, possibly affecting client numbers, and efforts are made consistently to address this sensitively. The use of different psychosocial group sessions as a way of reaching more clients was also appreciated, as was the use of creative tools and approaches to engaging with clients.
- E.22 The impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions have been widely felt. Delivery team consultees felt that partner communication would have been better had it not been for the pandemic. Beneficiaries' lives have been severely impacted, with lockdowns increasing how isolated and anxious people feel in an unfamiliar country. The impact of the pandemic on the labour market and job prospects was highlighted by those looking for job opportunities or to start their own businesses, as well as affecting WW4RI staff looking for work placements.

Outcomes and impacts

- E.23 The project is clearly having an important impact on beneficiaries' lives, demonstrating the importance of employment skills and wellbeing on refugee integration, reinforced by wider research such as the Home Office Integration Framework.¹ As well as developing communication skills through ESOL support, the project has supported other 'facilitators' of integration, such as cultural understanding, digital skills, financial stability and a sense of safety. These facilitators in turn have supported clients' ability to build 'social connections' with peers, neighbours, members of other communities and the wider institutions of UK society, all ultimately feeding into better health and wellbeing and the ability to participate in the labour force and live independently.
- E.24 WW4RI clients have secured employment in sectors such as retail, warehousing, administration, hairdressing and customer service. Where beneficiaries have not yet secured employment, many still believe that project support has helped them to move towards work, by improving their confidence, communication and job search skills and/or through gaining experience and qualifications. 88 per cent of beneficiaries consulted thought that their employment skills had improved as a result of the programme (n=61). 72 per cent of the beneficiaries reported improved English language skills (n=64) and some discussed greater confidence when speaking to neighbours, schools and healthcare professionals.
- E.25 Beyond employment support, by referring to the resettlement team in their organisations, employment advisors have assisted clients with other aspects of their lives linked to integration, as well as basic needs such as housing, education, healthcare, welfare and financial stability. Through their employment advisor or ESOL courses, beneficiaries have also been enabled to understand more about UK culture, systems and institutions and therefore live more independently. Some also highlighted how they have been able to make new friends within and beyond the project. As some project support has been online, and with IT skills forming part of the core curriculum, many clients also reported improved IT skills.

¹ [Indicators of Integration Framework](#), UK Home Office (2019).

- E.26 Clients also highlighted improved health and wellbeing, a stronger sense of safety, better social inclusion and their ability to make informed choices. 82 per cent of client consultees stated that they had experienced an improvement in their health and wellbeing as a result of the support (n=61).
- E.27 Delivery staff and stakeholders have had opportunities to learn about other organisations in the region working with refugees, connecting, networking and strengthening working relationships. It was thought that the wellbeing service has likely lessened the burden on the local health system.
- E.28 New employers have been engaged in hosting refugees in work placements, many of which would not have done so without WW4RI's involvement. In addition, seven of the eight employers who responded to the survey said they will likely host further placements or employ refugees as a result of taking part. These host organisations have also benefitted in other ways, such as gaining new ideas, having a greater commitment to diversity and a better understanding of the needs of refugees.
- E.29 Without WW4RI, many refugees would be adversely affected. While beneficiaries may still have been able to access employment, language and wellbeing support without the project's support, this would have been less accessible, fragmented and less tailored. Many clients stressed that without WW4RI support they would not be in their current position, especially in relation to their mental wellbeing.

Conclusions and recommendations

- E.30 WW4RI is clearly working effectively to provide holistic support to refugees in the East of England. Bringing together multiple partners with expertise across the different strands has resulted in excellent engagement throughout the region. The flexibility and responsiveness of the project has been a key success factor for the project and will be moving forwards, given the ever-changing nature of refugee arrivals. Evidence shows the project is achieving its objectives, has coped well with changes forced by COVID-19, and has enabled many positive outcomes and impacts for beneficiaries, ultimately supporting refugee integration in the EELGA region. Successor projects will benefit from the learning around best practice and challenges identified within this report. There has been excellent progress towards building a comprehensive EELGA region-wide refugee support infrastructure. It will be important to continue to capitalise on this, so that these relationships, expertise and shared learning and understanding are not wasted.
- E.31 Recommendations at project level include:
- More opportunities to connect with colleagues from partner organisations, such as through more project days.
 - Regular meetings for partner managers across the different project strands.
 - Centralised training for all frontline staff to develop a shared understanding of the client cohort.
 - Review of monitoring data collected in order to better evaluate outcomes and better understand how improvements can be made.
 - Clarification of client eligibility and how to manage the end of project participation.
 - Ensuring client awareness of the WW4RI brand to help broaden the project's reach.
- E.32 Strand level recommendations include:
- The appointment of an employment advisor manager to improve coordination.
 - Greater promotion of placement opportunities to encourage uptake.
 - A common ESOL assessment tool to ensure consistency of referrals.
 - ESOL courses focusing on UK culture and systems more generally and exploring course possibilities for refugees with lower levels of English.
 - Further wellbeing training for advisors to aid identification of clients in need.
 - Ensure wellbeing provision is consistently available across all six counties in the EELGA region.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 This report is the final evaluation of the Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration (WW4RI) project, commissioned from ERS Ltd in May 2021 by the East of England Local Government Association Strategic Migration Partnership (EELGA SMP). This initial chapter provides background information about the project and the evaluation methodology, covering:

- Overview of Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration.
- Project delivery and structure.
- Project evaluation.

Overview of Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration

1.3 WW4RI aims to support refugees in the East of England to integrate into their local communities. The project is based on the principle that being able and well enough to be economically active is a significant step towards becoming integrated. The project is managed by the EELGA SMP, with nine other partners and now five subcontractors delivering support. In total, WW4RI aims to support 870 refugees between April 2020 and December 2022 with their wellbeing, language and skills, and journey into employment and training, ultimately helping them to integrate into UK society.

1.4 The project's rationale acknowledges that there are integration-related issues associated with the demand for labour. Its design takes account of the fact that employers may be apprehensive about recruitment, due to their own lack of awareness and knowledge of refugees, as well as limited understanding of refugees' qualifications and permission to work status. Ensuring employers are better informed and providing support, while also bridging the gap with the refugee community and creating links, is intended to help overcome barriers to the employment of refugees.

1.5 WW4RI is funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), with funding for the evaluation from The Bell Foundation. The budget for the project's delivery and other financial information is found in Appendix B.

1.1 WW4RI is delivered across six counties in the East of England, comprising Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, and Hertfordshire. Alongside EELGA SMP, the partner organisations are Essex Integration, the Refugee Council, Norfolk County Council (Norfolk People from Abroad Team and Norfolk Adult Learning), Suffolk Refugee Support, EPUT Health Outreach NHS, PARCA, GLADCA, MENTA and Concept Training.

There are also subcontracted organisations, Workers Educational Association and BRASS, that have been involved since the start of the project and, since early 2022, there has been a new relationship with Specialist Language Courses (SLC) which has run the IELTS courses, and included beneficiaries in their OET ([OET - English language test for healthcare professionals \(occupationalenglishtest.org\)](https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/)) classes, alongside the 2022 summer courses. Community Action Dacorum (CAD) will also be running summer classes for beneficiaries from around the region. In addition, Community Action Dacorum and the King's Arms Project have been contracted to provide mobile ESOL teachers in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire respectively, along with a language café in Bedford.

1.2 All of the project's partners plus BRASS were caseworker agencies for the refugee resettlement programme in April 2020. The caseworkers refer their clients to support from either an employment advisor who assesses their skills, referring them to additional support via WW4RI's ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and skills strand, or to a wellbeing therapist. The employment advisors continue working and supporting clients on a one-to-one basis as they progress by completing project activities.

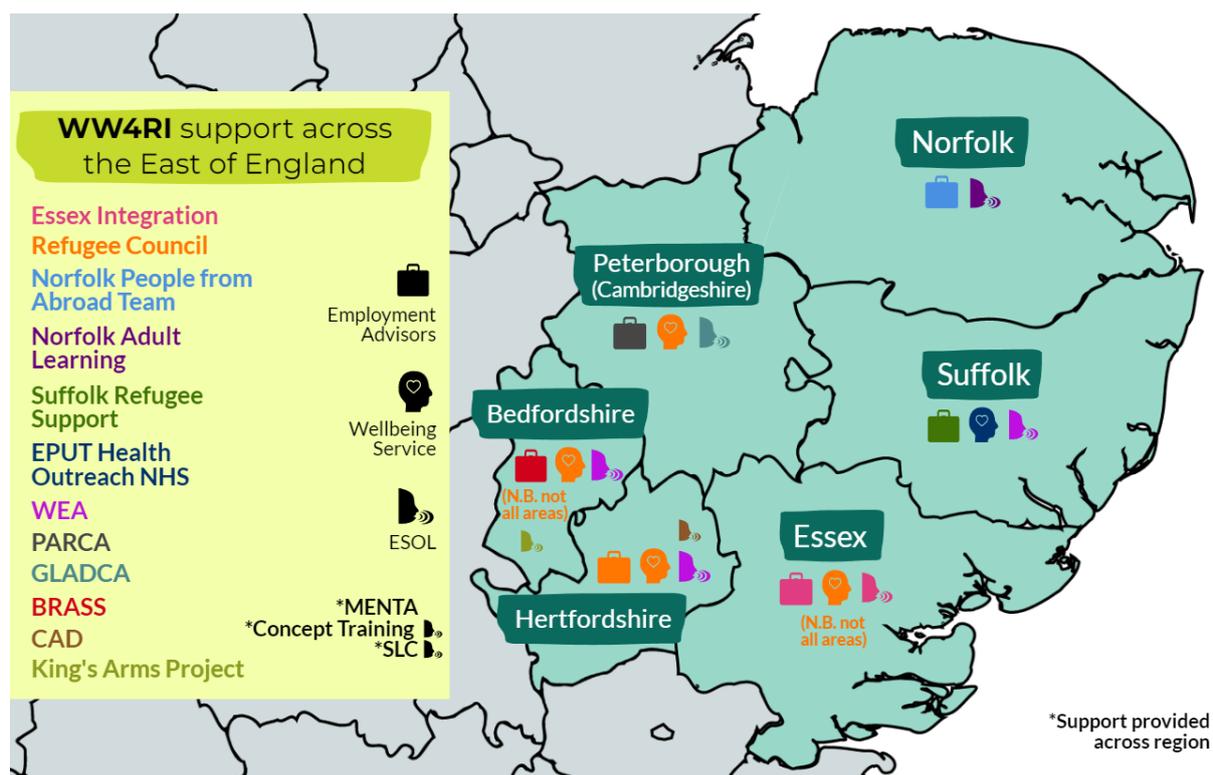
Project delivery and structure

- 1.3 The WW4RI project provides an intensive, wraparound model of support across the East of England region, with three specialist strands available to each beneficiary: tailored one-to-one employment support from an advisor; skills and technical language training for employment; and wellbeing support.
- 1.4 Employment advice is embedded within WW4RI, forming the central support system or backbone of the project for most beneficiaries, with a target to support 590 beneficiaries. Advisors work within local teams in their respective counties to provide support. This is tailored to individual clients' needs and includes help with creating CVs, identifying gaps in skills, referring to other WW4RI strands and courses and signposting to training or other courses which may be useful.
- 1.5 The ESOL and skills strand consists of ESOL courses with a target to support 405 beneficiaries. Beneficiaries are required to be at entry three in their language proficiency in order to participate effectively and gain most benefit. The project's language tuition is employment-focused, aiming to improve language skills specifically in relation to work in particular sectors. The following sector-specific courses are offered: Preparing to Work in Childcare; Preparing to Work with Customers; Preparing to Work in Warehousing, Logistics and Transport; and Preparing to Work in Food (previously Preparing to Work in Hospitality).
- 1.6 On completion of sector-specific courses, the project offers a work placement with a local employer. WW4RI's Employer Liaison Officer liaises with employers and beneficiaries to arrange placements – the project originally aimed to arrange 216 placements by the end of delivery in December 2022 (please refer to Chapter 3 for further detail).
- 1.7 Along with the sector-specific courses, five core skills courses are available, these are: IT Skills, Job Search Skills, Study Skills, Confident Women and Driving Theory. Due to many refugees not being at ESOL entry three, a summer school was made available in the summer of 2021 for those at entry two to improve their language skills. On completion, those attending the summer school could then be referred to the skills and sector-specific courses, creating a pipeline of project beneficiaries and allowing them to continue to make progress. The project team also received additional funding which in 2022 has allowed them to offer some mobile ESOL teaching across half the region, a short course for lower-level learners about access to the NHS in the other half of the region as well as a language café in Bedford. These services are aimed mainly at new Afghan arrivals.
- 1.8 There are opportunities to gain a Construction Skills Certification, known as a site safety card or CSCS card for work in the construction industry and for a limited time a security guard card (SIA) for work in the security industry, delivered by Concept Training. Beneficiaries interested in starting their own business can be referred for one-to-one support delivered by MENTA, a local business support and training provider. In addition, seed funding has recently been introduced to the project by MENTA, allowing beneficiaries wanting to start a business to access a small amount of seed funding to kickstart their enterprise. In addition, an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) course is offered, providing support to help beneficiaries pass the IELTS exam.
- 1.9 The project's wellbeing strand consists of therapists working in the different counties (except Norfolk) providing health and wellbeing support to refugees. Beneficiaries can attend up to 12 sessions with their therapist; these can help them come to terms with their past, including any trauma they or their family members have experienced. Therapists can help refugees to develop coping strategies for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression and 'survivor guilt'. They can also help beneficiaries adjust to their new surroundings and to life in the UK. To track and identify wellbeing progress, assessments are carried out during therapy, initially, at the mid-point and at the end. If beneficiaries require extended wellbeing support beyond the 12 sessions, they are referred by WW4RI

to external organisations offering longer term therapy, although it is almost impossible for people to access these mainstream services such as the levels of demand and threshold that clients need to have reached in order to be accepted for care. Overall, the wellbeing strand has a target to support 280 beneficiaries across project delivery.

- 1.10 The aim of WW4RI is not only to help refugees get into work, but to obtain a job that they enjoy, with an appropriate level of pay, good working conditions and in a role with the opportunity to grow and progress. There is no fixed exit point for this type of support; beneficiaries can receive support even if they are already in employment but would like help to find a more appropriate job. In terms of duration, beneficiaries are expected to work with the project for 12 months on average, but this largely depends on their needs and aspirations as well as the project strands and courses they access. In terms of content and depending on what they are comfortable with, clients can receive support of varying intensity from all project strands during their time with WW4RI.
- 1.11 In practice, while trying to build the network of support for refugees, the different partners and subcontractors involved in project delivery and their existing areas of operation has meant that the full range of WW4RI support is not distributed evenly across the six East of England counties. For instance, currently in Norfolk there is no wellbeing support available. Figure 1.1 below maps WW4RI support provision, showing the organisations working in each county and the types of support provided.

Figure 1.1: WW4RI project partners and services provided by county



- 1.12 The team from the SMP leading the WW4RI AMIF-funded project (referred to as the WW4RI project team throughout) provides oversight of the partner organisations and support strands across the region. Each partner and subcontractor has their own in-house manager who leads work on WW4RI, ultimately reporting to the SMP team and being accountable for performance. Figure 1.2 shows the structure of the project team. Members of the WW4RI project team are also in direct contact with the employment advisors, ESOL teachers and therapists to monitor progress between quarterly returns, share good practice and alert providers to new patterns of migration.

Figure 1.2: WW4RI project team



Project evaluation

- 1.13 WW4RI aims to establish and understand best practice in providing support for refugees; ERS was commissioned to undertake the independent evaluation of Phase 1. This is the final report, summarising the project’s development, progress on delivery and the impact of support on beneficiaries. The report also identifies the project’s strengths, the challenges encountered and WW4RI’s responses and the learning which can be derived to inform and influence future delivery and policy. This report builds on an interim report that was produced in January 2022.
- 1.14 Initially a review of project documents and data was undertaken, based on information supplied by the WW4RI project team. This included:
- Monitoring and evaluation data.
 - Funding application.
 - Reports and policy briefings.
 - Internal information documents.
- 1.15 Following an inception meeting, a logic model was developed by ERS (see Appendix A) and an online logic model workshop was facilitated by the evaluation team with WW4RI partners. This ensured that the logic model was accurate and effectively captured all aspects of the project. The logic model was then used, alongside project data and documentation, to underpin and inform the evaluation framework and tools.
- 1.16 Once the tools were developed, the following primary research was undertaken over two phases:
- Telephone interviews with 12 WW4RI project team members and managers of partner organisations.
 - 6 focus groups covering 21 frontline workers (therapists and employment advisors) and separate individual phone calls with two frontline workers.
 - An e-survey of 10 ESOL teachers.
 - An e-survey of 8 employers and phone calls with 2 employers.

- Consultations with 71 beneficiaries (45 individual interviews and 5 focus groups² covering 26 beneficiaries).
- Telephone interviews with 5 wider stakeholders.
- Focus group with 8 UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) leads from across the region.

Limitations of the evaluation

- 1.17 The evaluation process included the identification of risks and limitations related to the complexity of project delivery. Language is inevitably a challenge for consultations with refugee beneficiaries. To address this, ERS organised interpreters for consultees who felt that their level of English would be a barrier to participation. However, it should be noted that there were still variations in language proficiency, some project beneficiaries did not require interpreters, others wished to use the evaluation as an opportunity to practise their English, which in turn may affect the detail and quality of responses. Across all consultations, researchers took time to ensure that interviewees fully understood the questions and that their responses were recorded as fully and accurately as possible.
- 1.18 Given the nature of their experiences, interviewing refugees requires sensitivity to minimise the risk of revisiting past trauma. ERS researchers took this into account throughout and sought to avoid such risk. For this second period of research for the evaluation, it proved difficult to identify wellbeing clients willing or able to take part in the evaluation and the team was only able to speak to three clients in this period (compared with six clients in the previous, smaller phase). This appears to be due to several factors: (i) therapists generally being under pressure and/or near the end of their contracts and prioritising completion and handovers; (ii) some of the research period taking place during Ramadan; and (iii) a higher proportion of more complex cases than in phase one of the evaluation, involving individuals who were not well enough or sufficiently confident to take part in the evaluation.
- 1.19 In addition, therapists were only able to draw referrals from their current clients, rather than those they had finished working with. Ending mental health and wellbeing support is a sensitive process, with a clear cut-off date denoting the client's increased wellbeing and ability to function without support. Contact from the therapist beyond that point is therefore avoided in case it conveys an impression of persistent need or dependency. However, inevitably this limits the scope for data gathering on the effectiveness of the wellbeing intervention. To mitigate this, the evaluation team undertook further consultations with relevant members of the WW4RI project team and with UASC leads to explore the perceived impacts of the wellbeing strand. Monitoring data from the Refugee Council was also analysed and is included.
- 1.20 When interviewing clients, it was apparent that most were not familiar with the WW4RI project name, instead understanding that their feedback was linked to the support received from their employment advisor, therapist and/or ESOL teacher. At times this made it difficult to distinguish between the different support that beneficiaries were accessing, in order to ensure feedback and attribution of outcomes appertained specifically to WW4RI support.

² Due to the level of English of participants, the format of one focus group was modified so that individual conversations could take place between researchers and interviewees.

2. RATIONALE AND DESIGN

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of the rationale and design of the WW4RI project as follows:

- Overall project rationale.
- Rationale behind the WW4RI partnership.
- Demand.
- Rationale behind the project strands.
- Project objectives.

Overall project rationale

- 2.2 By focusing on their wellbeing and progression into employment, the WW4RI project aims to support refugees in the East of England to resettle and integrate into UK society. The project has been influenced and informed by the European Local Authority Integration Network (ELAINE)³ project, the World Jewish Relief Specialist Training and Employment Programme (STEP)⁴, UNHCR's (United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees) Tapping Potential⁵, Alison Strang's Model of Integration⁶ and Sweden's Integration Policy.⁷ These initiatives all focus on ways to improve refugee integration, with the latter in Sweden aiming to reduce the time taken to integrate into the local labour market.⁸
- 2.3 WW4RI is founded on the principle that being mentally and physically healthy enough to be economically active is one of the most crucial steps towards becoming integrated into society.⁹ Given the lack of pre-existing infrastructure at a regional level in the East of England to support refugee integration, the project prioritises engagement through a range of local partners and stakeholders. This approach enables the project to achieve a "critical mass" of beneficiaries and support for specific courses and interventions, making it possible to secure funding that would not have been available for a local level service.
- 2.4 The purpose of bringing these partners together is threefold: to support individual refugee needs and skills development; to foster best practice exchanges and networks; and to create and support apprenticeships, work placements and better employment opportunities. Partners were chosen because of their experienced casework teams and knowledge of other topic areas, such as housing, transport, and healthcare provision. Links are made between refugees' skills and employers' needs, ultimately benefitting all involved.
- 2.5 The WW4RI project aims to establish a comprehensive support structure, considering multiple aspects of a refugee's life. As part of the project model, beneficiaries can receive support to develop employment-related language skills, as well as support for their mental health and wellbeing. In addition, they can be signposted to assistance from their resettlement colleagues with areas such as housing, registering with a GP, using local transport systems and gaining a general understanding of UK society and culture.
- 2.6 According to the models used to influence the project's design (mentioned above in 2.2), this type of comprehensive long-term integration support can result in refugees feeling more welcome in the UK and encourage recognition of the contribution that they can make to local communities. The combination of the project's strands aims to address the different challenges experienced by refugees

³ [The ELAINE project](#), Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union (2016).

⁴ [Supporting Syrian Refugees in the UK](#), World Jewish Relief.

⁵ [Tapping Potential: Guidelines to Helping British Businesses Employ Refugees](#), UNHCR (2019).

⁶ [Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework](#), Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2008).

⁷ [Swedish Integration Policy](#), Government Offices of Sweden (2009).

⁸ [Swedish Government strategy for integration](#), Swedish Government (2008).

⁹ [Labour-market integration of resettled refugees in the EU](#), International Organization for Migration (2021).

in a holistic, coherent way that is tailored to the individual. It is hoped that this in turn helps beneficiaries to become more able to support themselves in the longer term, allowing them to live fuller, independent lives.

- 2.7 The collaboration between support services is intended to build trust between refugees and those providing support. For instance, if a beneficiary is hesitant about accessing wellbeing support, an employment advisor with whom they are already familiar may introduce them to a colleague from a different service, providing reassurance and encouragement about taking up the offer. The length of project support is also a positive factor, allowing time for beneficiaries to progress and build rapport with advisors, teachers and therapists.

Rationale underlying the WW4RI partnership

- 2.8 An important benefit of having several partners working together across the East of England on the project is that these organisations can use their regional contacts and geographical knowledge to identify the most appropriate help and resources for beneficiaries. Project partners have been carefully selected by the project's central team as organisations already working on refugee settlement within each county. Building on their strengths and experience, partners have been able to 'hit the ground running' within WW4RI, increasing capacity and allowing each organisation to highlight its own strengths.
- 2.9 EELGA has missed out on funding opportunities in the past, due to the lack of regional infrastructure for refugees. In response to this, the project has brought together and is developing a network of partnership working which is much needed in the region.

Demand

- 2.10 The project aims to support refugees by encouraging them to aspire towards appropriate work that they are interested in and where some already have qualifications and experience. This can provide a sense of stability and agency, helping beneficiaries to achieve structure in their daily lives and to act independently, increasing the possibility of engagement with employment and other services.¹⁰ The WW4RI project focuses not only on supporting refugees to become work-ready, but on supporting them to find jobs of high quality, where conditions and rates of pay are not exploitative, making it more likely that employment will be sustained¹¹, as well as promoting confidence and financial wellbeing.
- 2.11 Evidence of demand for the project was outlined in the funding bid to the AMIF funders, the UK Responsible Authority (UKRA) (May 2019). The East of England has no regional refugee infrastructure and refugees are resettled over the six counties rather than in large cities. At the time of project development, 782 refugees had been resettled across the six counties by 2018 and by the end of 2019, over 1,000 had been resettled in the region.¹²
- 2.12 Furthermore, in January 2019, asylum accommodation statistics showed that the East of England had 710 asylum seekers. Based on national grant rates of asylum, some 400 asylum seekers would be granted refugee status each year in the East of England, including at least 200 adults. In Essex, there were also 70 'ex gratia' resettled Afghan and Iraqi interpreters with their families. The interpreters had not been able to secure regular employment and their spouses were not economically active.

¹⁰ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

¹¹ [The Drivers of Employee Engagement](#), Institute for Employment Studies (2004).

¹² [Asylum and Resettlement datasets](#), UK Home Office (2021).

- 2.13 Also in January 2019, councils in the East of England were looking after 513 16- and 17-year-old unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) with a further 700 former UASC in the region.¹³ Many organisations involved with refugee resettlement have an age threshold of 24 years and older. This results in a gap in the support available to younger refugees.
- 2.14 More generally, since the project's inception, the demand for support for refugees has continued to rise across the UK and the East of England more specifically, and targets have been reviewed in response to changes. The number of resettled refugees across the East of England has continued to rise, with around 2000 by Q3 2021. In addition, the East of England has seen an increase in asylum seekers, to at least 1,268 in September 2021.^{14,15} This significant increase also applies to UASC, of whom there were 655 in December 2021, alongside a total of 1,100 former UASC.¹⁶ These numbers have been eclipsed by arrivals under the Homes for Ukraine scheme which reached 6572 in the region in July 2022. While many refugees display eagerness to work¹⁷, unemployment levels tend to be high. Recent national data shows that only 4 per cent of resettled refugees of working-age are in paid employment and only 12 per cent are at ESOL entry three or higher ('job market ready'^{18,19}) further reinforcing the need for employment and language support tailored to refugees.

Rationale underpinning the project strands

Employment strand

- 2.15 The WW4RI employment advisor's role is to be the main, consistent point of contact for refugees, acting as a keyworker for clients. Employment advisors provide support to develop employability skills and assist beneficiaries' journeys into work. Employment advisors are also able to refer beneficiaries to the wellbeing or ESOL and skills strands as required, although there are also direct routes for beneficiaries to access the wellbeing strand.

ESOL and skills strand

- 2.16 The ESOL and skills strand of the project responds to refugees' critical need for language support.²⁰ The ESOL system in the UK is currently facing a range of challenges. The Adult Education Budget has been reduced by 50 per cent since 2010. This has reduced opportunities and prevented beneficiaries from making significant progress in a timely fashion with language proficiency or in ways which are employment, education and training related.²¹
- 2.17 Language can be a significant barrier to refugees moving into their desired employment field. WW4RI provides ESOL support focused specifically on employment-related language, as opposed to general language skills. This targeted support can help beneficiaries to understand the language relevant to particular types of employment and fast track them to roles of their choice. Therefore, WW4RI support can help to increase refugees' choices, enabling them to build the confidence to seek and secure higher quality employment better suited to their preferences, experience and skills (rather than just 'any' job). Placing people more appropriately also has the potential 'knock-on' benefit of leaving entry level jobs available for those for whom there are no other options.

¹³ East of England Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Application for Funding (2019).

¹⁴ [Immigration statistics year ending September 2021](#), UK Home Office (2021).

¹⁵ NB These figures only include asylum seekers in receipt of Section 95 support.

¹⁶ East of England Strategic Migration Partnership, 2022.

¹⁷ [Tapping Potential: Guidelines to Helping British Businesses Employ Refugees](#), UNHCR (2019).

¹⁸ Entry three (lower intermediate/roughly equivalent to Grade B in GCSE) is often set as a minimum standard by employers for hiring ([Learning and Work Institute](#), 2018).

¹⁹ National Findings from the Autumn 2020 Monitoring Data Collection, UK Home Office (2021).

²⁰ [Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework](#), Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2008).

²¹ [Big changes ahead for adult education funding?](#) Institute of Fiscal Studies (2021).

Developing courses to address gaps in provision

- 2.18 WW4RI ESOL support is designed to bridge the gap between basic ESOL (lower than entry three) and higher-level, accredited courses. The Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) placement scheme of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) aims to train people in specific career sectors. However, refugees often do not have the necessary level of English to participate in these standard projects and WW4RI provides an important stepping-stone for refugees to progress to accredited courses.
- 2.19 Additionally, more transferable skills courses have been included as part of WW4RI's ESOL and skills support. 'Study Skills', for example, helps beneficiaries with life planning, a focus identified as lacking in the ESOL system by the region's SMP.²² All language support, including the option to have an interpreter present or a voiceover in a preferred language, was removed from the driving theory test in 2014, yet the language involved is technical and requires a certain level of English. Driving theory support is therefore offered as part of WW4RI to help beneficiaries gain their driving licences, increasing their options and potentially improving both their lives and employment opportunities.

Developing courses in response to beneficiary needs and the job market

- 2.20 The curricula for the WW4RI ESOL courses aim to identify and address other gaps and obstacles in provision for refugees. For example, the 'Preparing to Work in Childcare' course not only aims to support beneficiaries with an aspiration to work with children, but also by developing the language skills needed to care for their own children. The course acknowledges that caring for children is an important aspect of many refugees' lives, especially since the pursuit of safety and opportunities for their children is often a key element of why beneficiaries left their countries of origin. Therefore, the course aims to support beneficiaries in obtaining childcare and/or understanding local school systems. It covers several aspects of education, including school governors, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), classroom management, supporting different needs and the context of the UK's school system and culture.
- 2.21 The project has been responsive in acknowledging identified needs, learning and adapting as it has proceeded. After analysing feedback from employment advisors and realising that many women refugees have never worked outside the home, the WW4RI project team concluded that a course designed specifically to build women's confidence and skills would fill another gap in refugee support. The 'Confident Women' course was adapted from the 'Study Skills' course and offered exclusively to women and taught by women.
- 2.22 Employment advisors also considered that a customer service-related course would be useful, based both on clients' interests and likely vacancies – this has also been developed into a specific course, 'Preparing to Work with Customers'. In response to vacancies that have been observed and that are predicted to arise, 'Preparing to Work in Logistics and Warehousing' was also developed. The original hospitality course was modified to become 'Preparing to Work with Food', owing to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns on the hospitality industry, meaning the course as originally designed has not been offered.

Work placements

- 2.23 After beneficiaries have completed a sector-specific course, the WW4RI Employer Liaison Officer assists them in finding a relevant placement, in the sector in which they aspire to work. These placements support supply- and demand-side needs, giving beneficiaries time to understand a sector

²² [ESOL & skills courses for WW4RI project](#), EELGA SMP.

and its ways of working. It offers them the opportunity to gain valuable experience and a reference from a British employer, while also affording employers opportunities to gain insights into refugees' skills and potential contribution.

Enterprise support

- 2.24 Another gap in support is for those refugees who are keen to set up their own business in the UK. Some have operated their own businesses previously, meaning that they have the necessary skills and experience to do so, given the right support and information to help them navigate the process in the UK. By creating their own job, it can also mean less pressure to navigate selection processes and ultimately may create employment opportunities for others. MENTA worked on a previous pilot project providing enterprise support to refugees²³ and has provided similar support as part of WW4RI. MENTA's role is to help beneficiaries with business coaching and planning, marketing and social media, sales training, laws, banking, taxation and guidance on how businesses function in the UK. MENTA advisors also aim to support individuals in building the confidence needed to set up a business in a new country.
- 2.25 WW4RI has allowed refugees who were supported on the pilot project MENTA delivered previously to continue to receive support. The pilot covered half of the East of England (Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) and most of its participants have been able to join WW4RI. Within WW4RI, MENTA has also been able to refer its clients to the other project strands. This has allowed MENTA to focus on delivering enterprise support, with assurance that beneficiaries receive appropriate support for other challenges they may be facing.
- 2.26 Lessons from the previous pilot were integrated into MENTA's work with WW4RI. Their typical delivery model utilises group work, however the pilot showed that refugees prefer one-to-one support, due to factors such as differing language ability. The one-to-one approach allows each beneficiary to learn and progress at their own speed. In addition, some refugees may already have the relevant skills due to having owned businesses previously, but now require more nuanced, individual help to understand the specifics of the industry, market and institutions in the UK.

Wellbeing strand

- 2.27 Mental health issues can prevent refugees from moving into work.²⁴ It is important for past trauma to be addressed so that beneficiaries can understand their experiences and progress to improving their wellbeing. The psychological strain of migration and the uncertainty of a new country can also cause mental health and wellbeing difficulties, with many refugees facing chronic anxiety and 'survivor guilt'. Furthermore, possible undiagnosed illnesses and the stigma of mental health may inhibit integration and resettlement.
- 2.28 Many refugees and UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) do not meet the criteria for mainstream wellbeing services. In addition, some services do not have the necessary expertise for issues facing refugees. There can also be long waits for services. Alongside employment advice, WW4RI offers wellbeing and mental health support to both adults and young people, helping them to overcome barriers and build confidence.

²³ Refugee Entrepreneurship Pilot Project, which ended October 2020; [refugee entrepreneurship pilot - Centre for Entrepreneurs](#).

²⁴ [Understanding Refugee Mental Health and Employment Issues](#), Journal of Social Work in the Global Community (2020).

3. PROGRESS

3.1 This chapter provides an overview of the progress of the WW4RI project as follows:

- Progress against targets.
- Beneficiary participation data.

Project objectives

3.2 WW4RI lays out four main objectives:

Objective 1: 590 skills assessments completed and action plans created to direct each beneficiary to pathways to employment.

Objective 2: 280 refugees access the wellbeing service.

Objective 3: 405 refugees register for an ESOL and skills (E&S) 90 hours' class or high skills course (HSC) and/or refugee entrepreneurship programme (REP).

Objective 4: Employers to be engaged across the four ESOL and skills sectors and to offer 216 or more work placement opportunities to refugees.²⁵

Objective 5: 47 refugees to access Health Literacy course, mobile ESOL and language cafe

Progress against project targets

Table 3.1 Progress against AMIF reporting targets

	Cumulative target to 15 July 2022 (Q9)	Cumulative achieved to 15 July 2022 (Q9)	Percentage of target achieved
Number of skills assessments completed and action plans created to direct each beneficiary to pathways to employment	530	686	129%
Number of refugees accessing wellbeing service	210	219	104%
Number of refugees registered for an ESOL and skills (E&S) 90 hours' class or high skills course (HSC) and / or refugee entrepreneurship programme (REP)	335	369	110%
Number of refugees offered work placement opportunities	180	54	30%
Number of refugees to access Health Literacy course, mobile ESOL and language cafe	47	17	36%

3.3 Table 3.1 above shows that the project is generally performing very well against most of the AMIF reporting targets, with good engagement in terms of the numbers of clients that employment advisors have met with, numbers accessing the wellbeing service and those registering for the ESOL and skills

²⁵ This target will be revised in 2022.

courses. However, it is important to note that these figures do not capture the number of refugees maintaining sustained engagement with the project. This is something that could be useful for the project to report against to give the project team a better insight into duration of involvement and flag any potential issues with particular elements.

- 3.4 Engagement with employers and finding opportunities has been constrained by COVID-19. Work placements have been affected by delays, largely COVID-19 related, and sector-specific courses were not able to commence until late into Q5 (April-June 2021). This has meant that there were no course graduates who could be offered work placements until Q6 (Jul-Sep 2021). Most graduates are from the childcare ESOL courses and so the employers are predominantly schools which in turn have been greatly affected by COVID-19 and recent staff shortages meant that many placements were delayed or difficult to organise. In addition, the number of placements offered depends on numbers completing a sector-specific course and that can be another limiting factor. As the proportion of highly skilled refugees has increased, the demand for the courses that lead to work placements in industries which offer secure entry level work has dwindled. Consequently, the project focus has moved to offering more bespoke support for higher skilled clients and away from securing work placements. However, during 2022, the project has made good progress with organising work placements for WW4RI graduates.
- 3.5 Achieving the targets for the additional funding for mobile ESOL teachers, a Health Literacy (“how to use the NHS”) course and language café for Afghan learners proved difficult as in some locations ESOL teacher recruitment was unsuccessful.

4. MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSES

4.1 This chapter provides an overview of the management and processes of the WW4RI project as follows:

- Management and communication.
- Partnership working and information sharing.
- Monitoring and reporting.
- Referrals.

Management and communication

Management and communication successes

- 4.2 Throughout the duration of the project, the WW4RI project team has worked hard to communicate effectively with staff members in partner organisations. The WW4RI project team organise regular team meetings and schedule regular course observations, communicating not only with partner managers, but also with the wider delivery teams. The project team has been keen to build team spirit and overcome any competition or misunderstandings between partners, very much aware that individual and local circumstances vary. For the longer term, this is coherent with the overall objective of building the infrastructure of refugee support in the East of England.
- 4.3 Generally, consultees praised the management of WW4RI, highlighting the learning, flexibility and responsiveness that has been demonstrated. Frontline staff report that the project management team actively listens to any worries or queries during meetings, taking on board concerns so that they can clarify issues as soon as possible and keep everyone up-to-date and informed. Partner managers praised the WW4RI project team for being supportive, willing to help with any challenges and nurturing positive working relationships. A wider stakeholder commented that the WW4RI project team is proactive in regularly asking about urgent referrals to ensure that these are prioritised. One staff consultee also highlighted how communication has improved throughout the lifetime of WW4RI, as systems and processes have been developed and refined.



However busy they are, they always find time to support us. They really go above and beyond. There is constant, clear information coming through and the way they have evolved and adapted to the changing circumstances is really impressive. – Frontline staff consultee

Management and communication challenges

- 4.4 With many different partners and subcontractors operating across the region and under the limitations imposed by COVID-19, it has been challenging at times for the central WW4RI project team to communicate their ideas and targets and ensure consistency. Both a WW4RI project team member and a partner consultee raised the complexity involved in getting the balance right, between allowing partners to work flexibly, while also ensuring project fidelity and alignment to the original aims. Two partner consultees suggested that more could still be done to help them feel better listened to, with more opportunities to raise concerns and express opinions. One consultee suggested that more regular meetings and transparency on targets would be helpful.
- 4.5 There have also been some challenges with employment advisors registering clients who do not fully meet the project's eligibility criteria. Although all the partners were involved in the planning and agreed the targets and criteria, the time lag between planning and project start was considerable, due to delays in funders' decision-making processes. Most partners had to recruit new members of staff at different points in time. This meant there was not scope for training to be centralised, so initial

training was conducted by partners and, on an ad-hoc basis, by the WW4RI project team and this may have led to some inconsistent messaging initially, in relation to eligibility criteria.

- 4.6 This difficulty was compounded by changes in personnel, the fact that some staff had worked on similar projects previously but with different criteria, and the impact of COVID-19. This was taken on board, and the project team responded. Efforts were made to ensure that the eligibility criteria are understood fully by everyone, and that the project's goal to move beneficiaries closer to suitable employment, not necessarily into work at the earliest opportunity, is also understood.
- 4.7 Employment advisors are each embedded within their individual organisation's team and county, managed within their local team and operating under different contracts, working practices and expectations. Although they can seek advice from the WW4RI project team if needed, this is dependent upon being alert to potential differences. Events such as the WW4RI in-person day on 23 November 2021 helped to build shared understanding and complementarity. A WW4RI project team member suggested that an employment advisor manager across the project would be beneficial, helping to mitigate differences and acting as a single coordinating point of contact when challenges and queries arise.

Partnership working and information sharing

Partnership and information sharing successes

- 4.8 The involvement of multiple partners has allowed the WW4RI project to build a wide network and to create a sustainable legacy of refugee support for the East of England region. A WW4RI project team consultee commented that a key benefit of the partnership approach is partners' ability to share contacts, allowing staff to find the most appropriate work placements for beneficiaries. The three-strand model also reduces the need for referrals to external organisations – several consultees felt that this supported more successful referrals (discussed further in the referrals section below). Relationships between partners are also reported to have strengthened across the project's lifetime.
- 4.9 Regular meetings have been organised between the different partner organisations and project strands to facilitate positive partnership working. For example, initial meetings were held to provide each organisation with the opportunity to present and explain their contribution to the project. A partner manager commented that these were helpful in supporting partners and delivery teams to understand each other's roles and how the project was developed, based on learning from the refugee entrepreneurship pilot operated by MENTA.
- 4.10 Strand meetings occur monthly, where frontline workers and managers from each strand come together to share information and effective practice. These have been positive, providing opportunities for delivery teams to learn from colleagues in different organisations about their roles in the project. Strand meetings also provide an opportunity to discuss challenging cases across partners and hear the perspectives of similarly involved professionals beyond individual teams.
- 4.11 In 2022 some work shadowing took place between employment advisors in different counties and across partners which has helped to share best practice. This is also reported to have helped the advisors to better appreciate the project as a whole and the balance between the priorities of the project and those of their own organisations.



There's good communication between each other... we're always asking questions in meetings. In times of the pandemic, I felt part of a team and I know I can rely on them. – Frontline staff consultee

Partnership and information sharing challenges

- 4.12 Despite the regular meetings provided by the project team, some have found it challenging to understand each partner's role, due to the complexity of the project and the number of organisations involved, with the same organisation sometimes fulfilling a different role in each county. It appears that some staff may be unaware of the uses of SharePoint system that the management team set up for this purpose. Therefore perhaps increased promotion of this would help with increasing understanding and subsequently could help support smoother referrals.
- 4.13 One frontline staff member thought that the different working practices and organisational offers can inhibit the sharing of effective practice. Further, a partner manager reported that their organisation has mainly been working in isolation and therefore did not have the same communication with other partners. Apart from receiving the quarterly reports, this partner manager was not aware of other opportunities to find out more about project progress or to share information and good practice with others. They suggested a regular meeting specifically for partner managers to overcome this.
- 4.14 In addition, not all frontline delivery staff, and in particular ESOL teachers, were aware of the different opportunities to share or to learn about the work of the different strands and organisations. Furthermore, although employment advisors were aware of drop-in sessions, these are reportedly not well attended, possibly due to the many different pressures on employment advisors' time. An employment advisor reported turning up to a drop-in session with a problem they wanted to discuss but finding no-one else present. A member of frontline staff suggested producing an online learning log or newsletter for employment advisors for sharing positive stories and learning.

COVID-19 and partnership working

- 4.15 Due to the wide reach of the project across the East of England and the COVID-19 pandemic, regularly scheduled meetings between strands and partners have been held online. Partner organisations have also increased the number of internal meetings to share project progress. This increased frequency is preferred by partner managers and their teams as it provides more opportunities to share good practice and approaches that have worked well.
- 4.16 When social distancing restrictions allowed, the in-person WW4RI project day for the project team and partner managers in November 2021 was described by many as a very positive experience. Most consultees reported missing the face-to-face aspect of partnership working during the pandemic, they greatly valued the chance to sit down and talk to other professionals on the project and would appreciate more similar opportunities.

Monitoring and reporting

- 4.17 The WW4RI project team report that the monitoring and reporting processes have worked well. The team is aware of the UK Responsible Authority (UKRA) reporting procedures and have a good understanding of requirements. Meetings with the funders take place on a quarterly basis, providing a forum for issues to be addressed. Most partner managers felt that the monitoring and reporting processes are straightforward and effective and have found the project team responsive to queries and supportive.
- 4.18 They also described the WW4RI project team as organised and proactive in getting all necessary information from the various partner organisations involved. However, one partner organisation experienced challenges in their financial reporting after their finance lead left and felt that this transition could have been better supported by the project team. One ESOL teacher also mentioned that they would appreciate more support to record learners' progress and to complete course evaluations and felt that this could be collated more consistently across the project.

Referrals

Internal referral successes

- 4.19 Due to the three-strand model, internal referrals are a key part of how clients access project support. A partner manager commented that the partnership approach is crucial in supporting successful referrals, as the trust between a client and their main project contact can, in turn, facilitate the building of trust with other members of staff.
- 4.20 As mentioned previously, positive partnership working and effective communication between delivery strands have been essential to ensuring successful referrals. To promote referrals to the wellbeing support strand and to ensure that there is sufficient awareness of mental health issues across project partners, meetings were organised for therapists to present their work to employment advisors and explain how to recognise when a client might benefit from therapy, as well as how to support someone displaying distress. These meetings have allowed employment advisors and therapists to establish working relationships and employment advisors reportedly felt more able to refer beneficiaries to therapists as a result. Therapists have also attended some ESOL classes to make sure that learners who may not have considered it are aware that wellbeing support is available and what it can offer.
- 4.21 Alongside meetings, a few frontline staff members emphasised the benefits of sharing contact details and updating each other frequently via phone and email. Employment advisor assessments have also been used to highlight the entrepreneurial skills and the interests of beneficiaries, enabling several successful referrals to be made to MENTA.

Internal referral challenges

- 4.22 As mentioned already, promoting awareness of the work of different strands has sometimes proved challenging and can impact referrals. For example, some ESOL frontline staff reported that they did not know much about the project's other strands and were not aware whether their clients were accessing support from other organisations. They thought that better understanding of the other strands would be valuable to their own work, would facilitate the referral process and ultimately, provide more joined-up, holistic support for beneficiaries.
- 4.23 Wellbeing staff also highlighted that, although there is some understanding of internal referrals within their teams, it would be useful for other strands to integrate conversations about clients' mental health into their own work, helping them to identify occasions when a referral to the wellbeing strand might be necessary.
- 4.24 In addition, accurately assessing clients' level of English before referring them to ESOL courses is regarded as a common challenge. Clients are often referred to the ESOL strand with entry one or two English and some have dropped out due to finding classes too challenging. To address this, ESOL teachers felt that referrals would be better supported if employment advisors had more guidance and resources.

Referrals from external organisations

- 4.25 The WW4RI project team has consistently sought to ensure accessibility and inclusive promotion of project support by providing information leaflets in different languages. The leaflets have been shared with local support providers and refugee accommodation facilities, to increase awareness of the service and the potential for referrals. A frontline staff consultee felt that more people are becoming aware of the project thanks to this targeted publicity.
- 4.26 The WW4RI project team actively look for opportunities to attract more external referrals. Frontline staff commented that the main referral sources differ between counties. For one partner, most referrals come from Refugee Action Colchester, plus some from local authorities and mental health

coordinators in the county, and wider stakeholders stated that their primary involvement with the project was to provide referrals. Employment advisors also promote the project to external partners through their work and gain contacts to encourage referrals. There are also instances of employment advisors organising events bringing different elements of the project together, along with external organisations from across their counties. However, a partner manager commented that more capacity within the project team could help to ensure that employment advisors were able to seek out referrals, whilst continuing to provide support to clients.

- 4.27 Over the lifetime of the project, the different links with external bodies across the region have continued to strengthen and the team reports that there have been more approaches from different organisations. A project team member described how WW4RI is becoming more well-known and attracting interest. The head of UKRA has also been to talk to them about the project.

5. DELIVERY OF SUPPORT

5.1 This chapter provides an overview of the delivery of support of the WW4RI project as follows:

- Overall model of support.
- Employment support.
- ESOL and skills support.
- Enterprise support.
- Wellbeing support.
- Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery.

Overall model of support

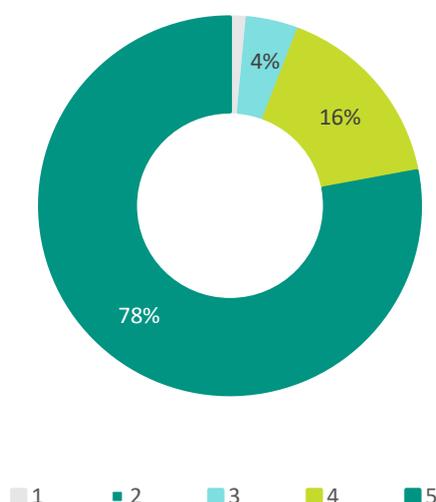
5.2 The overall model of support is generally praised. Many consultees observed that the project's delivery strands work together very well and provide synergistic value.



Wellbeing and skills complement each other as learning new skills improves wellbeing and improving wellbeing puts people in a better position to improve their skills and employability. – Wider stakeholder consultee

5.3 As can be seen in Figure 5.1 below, 94 per cent of client consultees were happy with project support and 78 per cent were very happy. All client consultees said that they would recommend others to the project, with one having already successfully encouraged someone to join the project.

Figure 5.1: WW4RI clients' happiness with support received (1 - not very happy, 5 - very happy), n=68



5.4 The project's pathways have changed slightly from what was initially anticipated. At the outset, the project team assumed that wellbeing referrals would come via employment advisors. However, given wellbeing services can be accessed on arrival in the UK and through referrals from a caseworker or social worker, the team subsequently developed direct access pathways to wellbeing, as well as the route via employment advisors.

5.5 In addition, the wellbeing strand has worked with more children than anticipated. This is largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on refugee resettlement, meaning that for some periods of time the only newly arrived beneficiaries that the project could work with were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Levels of need and the lack of alternative provision have meant that

- some individuals only take part in the therapy track and do not participate in the other strands. However, as a partner manager noted, this is still valuable in terms of early intervention and the longer-term outlook. For example, a 16- or 17-year-old may start with the wellbeing support then feel more ready and able to seek meaningful employment once they turn 18.
- 5.6 There have also been changes with regards to the pace at which clients are expected to move through the project. The team originally planned for more intensive ESOL courses and quicker progression, however this has proved difficult due to clients having other commitments, such as taking care of family and/or already working in insecure employment or attending ESOL through another provider. The project team acknowledged this and has worked with the providers to schedule longer-term, less-intensive courses.
 - 5.7 A key challenge faced by the project team has not only been the changing circumstances with COVID-19 and Brexit, but also the continually changing nature of refugee arrivals. The countries of origin for the refugee arrivals have changed significantly over the lifetime of the project, with further changes expected. In particular, there have been increasing numbers from Afghanistan and larger numbers from Ukraine are anticipated. Refugees arriving from different countries can vary enormously in terms of predominant gender, age cohorts, skills and qualifications, employment experience and language ability and therefore in terms of their support needs.
 - 5.8 Many of the arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine are more highly skilled, so sector-specific ESOL is less relevant and they require tailored support that is more focused on specific employment. This is reflected in adaptations to the project's approach, including a higher-level skills advisor (discussed in greater detail in the employment support section below). Clearly, key to the project's success has been the dynamic, responsive approach that the WW4RI team has taken, with a focus on continual learning and improvement.
 - 5.9 The most reported challenge to project delivery was personnel change, both within the project team and with external partners. Changes in external personnel have created challenges for employment advisors who rely on their personal connections with partners to facilitate employment opportunities for clients. Uncertainty with regards to future project funding has exacerbated this, as staff become concerned with their job security and start to look for work elsewhere. Another key challenge mentioned by several consultees was the overlap, and sometimes conflict, between the WW4RI project offer and other, external offers, for example with ESOL courses provided by local colleges.
 - 5.10 Several gaps were identified by two partner managers, two wider stakeholders and two clients:
 - Volunteers have been an important part of the project, but when partner organisations first put the project budget together, managing and providing support and expenses for volunteers was not included. This would have been very useful as volunteers have ended up playing a significant role. Subsequently funding was provided for a volunteer coordinator but recruitment was unsuccessful.
 - Additional staff capacity would have been helpful, particularly in terms of therapists, as there are waiting lists in several counties. The project has responded to this by recruiting two more therapists across the region.
 - Employment advisors report feeling pressure from dealing with their caseloads which could in part be due to there being no set "exit" point for clients. A suggested timeframe for support could be helpful and a way of exiting people, whilst remaining flexible and responsive to individual needs. It would also help to support the gathering of data and learning at the end of a client's time on the project if an exit interview formed part of a formal process. Since the interim evaluation, the project team has been more aware of this and several beneficiaries

have been ‘graduated’ from the project to allow employment advisors the capacity to take on new clients.

- A key aim of the project is not just to get refugees into work, but into meaningful, sustained, and appropriate employment. This means that the project works with refugees who are already in employment, but where the work is insecure or does not reflect their skills or aspirations. More courses delivered outside of working hours, in evenings or at weekends, would enable clients already in work to attend.

5.11 In terms of the project’s accessibility, issues associated with the ESOL entry three eligibility requirement (or one or two for summer schools) for clients are discussed in further detail in the ESOL and skills section (p25 onwards). However, while WW4RI is explicitly intended to help refugees gain employment, a partner manager also pointed out that refugees are affected by the benefit cap as soon as they arrive and are subject to it for as long as they remain out of work. Often refugees therefore need to start working for financial reasons, even if their level of English is not good enough. It would be useful for something to be provided for those who don’t speak English well but who are already in work or need to get a job immediately, in order that they can be made aware of their employment rights.

5.12 Two clients mentioned that they would like further support to learn about wider UK culture and systems. One highlighted how different life here was, with another commenting that *“the cultural shock was huge. I could have done with more help with that”*. Another client commented that they lost some of their Universal Credit due to moving house and would have benefitted from more support.

5.13 However, some clients reported feeling well supported in this area – one mentioned how their employment advisor *“supports me to know and understand English lifestyle. They’re fantastic.”* It is not evident how consistent this type of support is, possibly due to the emphasis on getting clients “employment ready” and the different pressures on employment advisors. Structured support on these wider areas, to ensure that all WW4RI clients benefit from better understanding of cultural norms and expectations could be considered. Since the interim evaluation period, the project team has already reflected on this and included more on these topics in plans for ESOL courses in future.

Employment support strand

Employment support successes

5.14 Client feedback strongly indicates that employment advisors offer a high-quality support service. When asked about the support from employment advisors, all client consultees reported positively. Many mentioned the helpfulness of employment advisors and their friendly and kind manner. Several also reported that they found their employment advisors approachable and consistently on hand to help with problems.



I can’t find the words to thank my employment advisor enough, they are so kind. I really appreciate the help they have given me. – Client consultee

5.15 Employment advisors get to know the requirements of their clients and tailor their support accordingly. Clients praised their employment advisors for spending the time to get to know them, listening and providing them with individualised support to suit their experience and requirements. Tailoring support to clients’ needs also often extends to employment advisors considering clients’

lifestyles and circumstances. For example, taking account of clients' capabilities in navigating training and employment alongside their childcare responsibilities. One client mentioned that their employment advisor was not too assertive and would try to choose the right moment and only recommend something when they knew the client was ready.



The support was very suitable – I have previous experience working with children. I received tailor fit support from my employment advisor, exactly what I was looking for. Help was very beneficial for this reason. – Client consultee



Before I didn't work, I did some volunteering. I was starting from scratch, but my employment advisor has really helped me get started in the right way. Like referring me to childcare courses as I have a son and it's something I know something about. – Client consultee

- 5.16 Employment advisors go above and beyond their roles to support clients and are flexible in their approach. Clients liked that their meetings and arrangements to organise them usually have a fairly casual structure. For example, one client described how their employment advisor gives them as much time as needed and that this may vary week to week. Another appreciated feeling that their employment advisor is always there and for as long as they need them.
- 5.17 The provision of IT equipment continues to be valued by project beneficiaries. Five clients stated that employment advisors had helped them to acquire tablets or laptops, enabling them to search for employment or training and helping in other areas of their lives.
- 5.18 Most of the clients consulted specifically mentioned how helpful they found the range of training and employment support offered by employment advisors. Along with referrals to training courses, this included practical support with job searching, CVs, job applications and interviews, which several clients mentioned as invaluable.

Employment support challenges

- 5.19 Unsurprisingly, external challenges for beneficiaries have persisted since the last reporting phase, and these often create barriers for refugees and their employment advisors in delivering support and achieving positive outcomes.
- 5.20 Challenges with aspects of daily life beyond training and employment, including finances, housing, schools and visas, plus gaps in the support available from external agencies, have all proved problematic. Employment advisors often step in to support with more urgent issues before they can progress to offering employment support. One beneficiary stated that they had not received adequate support from their social worker and this had caused challenges in finding suitable housing. Although the client knew that this was not the employment advisor's fault, they were frustrated more generally by the lack of support for these difficulties, which in turn inhibited efforts to seek employment.
- 5.21 There was some evidence that despite their best efforts, employment advisors are encountering challenges beyond their control in trying to support beneficiaries into work. For example, one client stated that their employment advisor referred them to MENTA which in turn contacted both the NHS and another company to enquire about positions, but which then failed to respond.
- 5.22 Beneficiaries' health can also act as a barrier. One consultee said that, due to the challenges with their medical conditions, they were unable to work in non-sedentary roles and, despite having good employment experience and abilities, this was a problem in finding suitable employment.

- 5.23 Meanwhile, frontline project staff commented that, because project beneficiaries have refugee status (rather than being economic migrants), they are not always motivated to find employment. Welfare benefits can act as a disincentive to finding work and some people may prioritise or have expectations of staying at home with their families over seeking employment. Two frontline staff members reported beneficiaries' concerns about receiving a lower income from work versus welfare benefits (especially when travel and/or childcare costs are factored in). As is often the case for those in receipt of benefits, the fear of being on less money can make clients reluctant to make the move into work.
- 5.24 In some cases, these concerns are not well founded; a frontline staff member said they have been completing 'into work' calculations with beneficiaries to counter misplaced perceptions and arranging sessions for clients with the DWP. However, some beneficiaries are reported to continue to feel apprehensive about taking the last step into employment. One frontline worker said that beneficiaries can also be deterred by knowledge of poor job quality and employment rights through their participation in other projects or the experiences of friends or family members. A WW4RI project team member suggested the need to adopt a (more) motivational approach to persuading clients of the benefits of working.



They are often qualified or completed the process to have a particular job in their country of origin and then they are starting from scratch, its hard (for them) to do this. – Employment advisor consultee

- 5.25 Several clients mentioned barriers to attending sessions with their employment advisors. One reported not having enough time due to the Job Centre pressuring them to take work before they were ready. They then needed to work to earn enough money to support their family and did not have the time to engage with WW4RI, despite wishing to do so.

Higher-level skills advice

- 5.26 Some refugees are already highly skilled in a specific profession, such as engineering or nursing, but their qualifications are not always recognised in the UK. The needs of such clients are not easily matched by the ESOL and skills courses WW4RI has to offer. Some clients sign up for courses anyway, in order to start their journey into work, but what they need most is support to gain accreditation for their qualifications in the UK. Employment advisors have only been able to offer limited help, due to issues relating to time, complexity and cost; gaining recognition for dentistry qualifications, for example, costs several thousands of pounds.
- 5.27 WW4RI responded to this need; the issue was raised at the in-person day in November 2021 and the project team shared a plan to employ a higher-level skills advisor with specialist knowledge to help such clients. A higher-level skills advisor joined the project in early 2022 on secondment from DWP, to provide tailored support to clients to convert their qualifications and help to apply for higher skilled jobs. Unfortunately, the higher-skills advisor had to return to DWP sooner than expected which slowed progress, but another person was recruited to the role in June 2022.
- 5.28 In terms of advice, the intention is to increase the project's capacity to support skilled clients by developing a bank of mentors with experience and knowledge across a range of sectors. Although there is a budget to support qualification accreditation, the project was unable to fund further courses if additional study was required. It is hoped that prospective employers in search of higher skills will pick up the costs if links to appropriate candidates can be made. This would meet skills gaps for employers and save them recruitment and training costs.

- 5.29 Work is taking place on building links with large employers such as the NHS, where the needs for specialist skills are acute and there may be scope for the organisation to take on appropriately skilled WW4RI clients and sponsor their accreditation. The new higher-level skills advisor has considerable health sector experience and many refugee clients have health-related skills or other skills that could be helpful to the NHS, for instance in IT and facilities management. The aim is for the higher-level skills advisor to adopt a brokerage role with these key large employers, fostering relationships and introducing suitable WW4RI candidates. It is too early to judge the impact of this approach and there are plans to review and assess its success in the coming months.
- 5.30 Overall, based on client interviews, it appears that support for those with higher skills has improved since the last reporting phase with instances of employment advisors making significant efforts to provide appropriate help and support. Two clients reported that their employment advisors went beyond expectations to get their qualifications converted. Another client reported that they benefitted from their employment advisor's expertise, knowledge and contacts within a specific sector and another that their employment advisor was helping them to apply to their home country to obtain relevant paperwork. All said that none of this would have been possible without the support of their employment advisors.

Online vs. face-to-face

- 5.31 Support is offered by employment advisors via online, phone and face-to-face meetings. Having these options continues to work well for beneficiaries, while also allowing employment advisors to reach more people. The flexibility means employment advisors and beneficiaries can choose the option that suits them best and fits around other commitments, therefore helping to ensure that progress and engagement with the project can be maintained.
- 5.32 Most clients reported that they prefer face-to-face meetings with their employment advisors and that this was because they were able to understand more when meeting in person, were able to ask more questions and share information more freely. This also applied to clients with a good level of English. However, having a range of ways of keeping in touch works well. Some clients reported preferring face-to-face meetings as they were able to spend more time with their employment advisor, while others reported problems getting connected online. By contrast, three consultees preferred online or phone meetings so that they didn't have to travel or arrange childcare.



I found meeting face-to-face with my employment advisor very helpful, and I liked having them there in front of me and we could talk more about things such as applications, we could go through forms together. It's definitely better as my English isn't good and online or on phone it's much, much harder to communicate. – Client consultee



It depends, some issues we can't discuss on the phone and take longer so we ask him if we can come in person and he is usually happy to see us. For example, we wanted to translate our qualifications from Afghanistan, and then he helped you to do this but wanted to do so in person. – Client consultee

Work placements

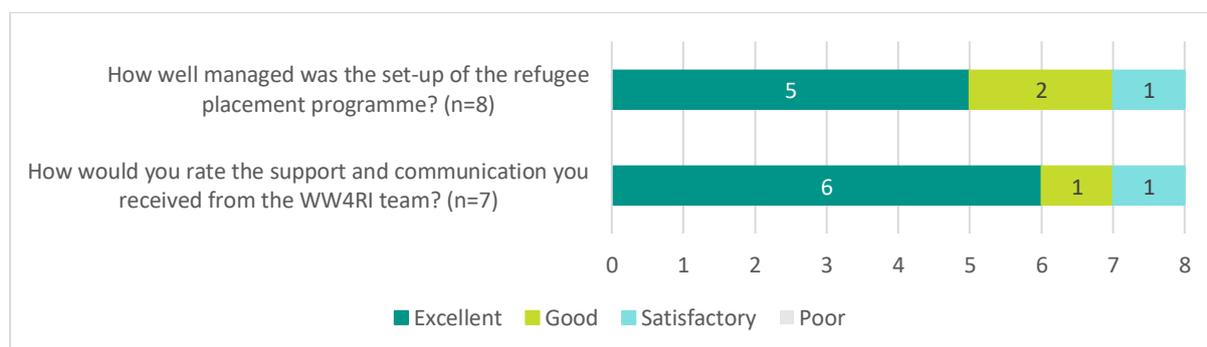
- 5.33 As mentioned in the Progress chapter (Chapter 3), the project has been more successful since the last reporting period in supporting beneficiaries into placements. Project team members and beneficiaries commented on the success and challenges of work placements in interviews. Employers who had

provided a work placement as part of the project, which was complete or close to completion, were sent a survey (eight responses were received). The findings are presented below.

Work placement successes

- 5.34 A project team member explained that good communication with employment advisors, based on the advisors’ communication with participants on sector-specific ESOL courses, has been key to securing placements successfully. In terms of good practice, one employment advisor has encouraged a large number of work placements to take place by going along to ESOL classes to share information about placement opportunities and explore what clients’ interests are, then feeding this back to the project team.
- 5.35 A project team member reported that the ‘Working with Customers’ ESOL course offers benefits from its more generic content, applicable for a broad range of sectors, meaning a wider selection of employers is able to offer work placements to project beneficiaries.
- 5.36 Employers hosting refugee work placements generally had a good experience of working with WW4RI. There is also evidence that the curriculum and materials provided by the project to employers work well, with one employer providing excellent feedback to the project team. As shown in Figure 5.2 below, almost all employers responding to the placement survey reported that management of the set-up was excellent or good. Similarly, respondents felt that the communication they received from the project team was predominantly excellent or good. The majority of employer survey respondents also said that there was nothing that the project team could do differently to improve the work placement experience for employers (five out of eight respondents, with two selecting ‘don’t know’).

Figure 5.2: Placement hosts’ views of project team’s management and communication



It was good for all parties, informed all the way through and easily arranged. – Work placement host

- 5.37 Asked what worked to support the positive implementation of work placements, employers highlighted the accurate client information they received from the project team as a key enabler of success. One employer mentioned valuing having been sent several CVs that matched their organisation’s needs.

Work placement challenges

Internal challenges

- 5.38 There have been several internal challenges to managing work placements and the process of getting beneficiaries into placements continues to be complicated. It is a pre-requisite for clients to complete a sector-specific ESOL course before taking part in a work placement. This restricts the number of

clients who can undertake work placements and the sectors in which placements can be sought. A project team member stated that this constrains clients' ability to undertake placements in sectors that match their career aspirations. To overcome this, a project team member recommended that beneficiaries completing a job skills course should also be able to go into a work placement. A project team member also noted that some clients may benefit from a practical work placement, but struggle with undertaking courses and therefore it could be useful to have an option for placements without needing to undertake a course. The project team's rationale behind clients having to do a course before a placement is to prove commitment and responsibility, which are important traits for undertaking a successful placement. It matters that the project has a sense of this from clients as they do not want employers to be discouraged from taking on further placements. However, perhaps there could be a way of demonstrating or proving this aside from the ESOL courses.

- 5.39 In addition, the variation in clients' pre-existing levels of skills and the need to match these with employers' requirements has proved a challenge. For example, there have been difficulties getting clients to take part in warehousing placements as many of those with entry three or above language skills are not seeking careers in this sector. The situation has been exacerbated by a greater number of refugees arriving recently with higher-level skills than previously, as the sectors covered by WW4RI's ESOL courses tend to be more suited to those with lower-level skills.
- 5.40 A project team member suggested employment advisors may not have sufficient information to promote work placement opportunities effectively, impacting both advisor understanding and beneficiary motivation and uptake. Responding to challenges filling placements in the warehouse/logistics sector, a joint session has been run with DWP to raise awareness about the growth in warehousing and the range of employment opportunities on offer, for example, office and managerial work and forklift truck driving.
- 5.41 Another challenge to managing work placements has been communication between employment advisors and the project team; project team consultees noted that it is essential for the team and employment advisors to work together closely to secure work placements. The high workloads of employment advisors and challenges associated with remote working have created difficulties of which the project team is aware.

Employer challenges

- 5.42 There have also been challenges in engaging employers to provide placements; a project team member even stated that securing work placements can prove more difficult than finding employment positions. A project team member highlighted that many organisations do not have the HR procedures or resources to support work placements and that it has proved challenging to encourage employers to see work placements as the first step in taking on a new employee. However, this is an opportunity, with support, to take a closer look and really see what placement holders can do, and project team feedback suggested that more could probably be done to sell the benefits of work placements to employers.



We had many meetings with (one employer), they said they didn't have the resource to manage a placement programme, but they were doing a big recruitment drive for jobs for refugees! They aren't seeing placements as a perfect way to recruit refugees. – Project team member

- 5.43 Most employers responding to the work placements survey mentioned that the time commitment involved has significant implications for taking part; the following issues were highlighted as important but resource-intensive:

- interviewing clients for placements;
- obtaining the necessary paperwork (waiting times for DBS checks, especially for schools);
- inductions (including health and safety training for some organisations); and
- ongoing in-work support for placements (for example, allocating a ‘buddy’ to support the client in their placement).

5.44 Engaging employers has also been difficult due to the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions. Employers have understandably been preoccupied with other concerns and the number of work placements declined during the pandemic. In some counties it became difficult to find sufficient placements to meet levels of client demand.

Beneficiary challenges

5.45 By contrast, in some instances there are placements available but not enough beneficiaries to fill them. For some beneficiaries, ill health or other personal issues have meant that they have been unable to go through with work placements. A frontline worker reported that three clients had been offered placements aligned with their requirements but were unable to commit due to childcare responsibilities and the working hours. In addition, in some cases, placements are lined up for a beneficiary following course completion, but they drop out of the course for a variety of reasons and therefore cannot go on to fulfil the work placement.



I struggle to find placements sometimes. In Bedford, I found loads of schools willing to take placements, but in Hertfordshire, I’m really struggling. In Bedford, none of the beneficiaries want to go into the school placements, we aren’t sure why. – Project team member

ESOL and skills support

ESOL and skills successes

5.46 Ensuring that classes are accessible has been a key success of the project. For example, client and teacher consultees agreed that scheduling classes around local college ESOL support, which many WW4RI clients are also enrolled in, has supported a wider range of people to attend. The modular structure of courses is generally considered a positive, enabling clients to fit classes into their lives more easily. For courses to succeed, ESOL teachers need to be aware of the complex nature of their clients’ lives and be flexible and adaptable when their circumstances change.

5.47 ESOL teachers have found a range of online learning tools useful, such as polls, quizzes, presentations, videos and interactive whiteboards. Although using technology has been challenging for some clients, ‘warm-up’ sessions have worked well to guide them through the online learning tools, so that they feel confident when classes begin. Additionally, some teachers have used breakout rooms staffed with volunteers to address the challenges of mixed ability classes by offering additional support, and these have improved attendance and engagement. The breakout rooms provide opportunities for learners to communicate with each other, allowing clients to exchange information, ask how each other is doing and talk about the tasks.

5.48 Many of these points have been picked up on by WW4RI beneficiaries. Several clients commented on their ESOL teachers’ style of teaching, noting that they encouraged students to speak, gave praise when appropriate, allowed time for questions and organised group tasks. Clients who attended the Driving Theory focus group thought their teacher was understanding and patient in explaining concepts or language terms multiple times. They also noted that they had completed both individual

tasks and group activities and that their teacher used a variety of resources to help the class learn and retain information.

- 5.49 Clients attending a Job Search ESOL course appreciated the interactive nature within breakout rooms and having volunteers to help with pronunciation and with difficult vocabulary. Four clients thought having people with different levels of English together was advantageous to the group, as individuals could both help each other and make friends at the same time. Another thought they personally had the lowest level of English in the class and although they found learning the language difficult, they were able to learn a lot from the others because of the different levels of ability. They also felt comfortable enough to contact others on the course and discuss their experiences and any issues they were having. One client also suggested making resources such as vocabulary lists available between lessons to support more flexible learning.



When I attended the class, there were other students as well, from other nations, so I could speak to those with different accents and we helped each other to learn new words. – Client consultee



We were all helping each other to speak. It was helpful because I could then speak more, and it felt nice to help others too. – Client consultee

- 5.50 Clients also provided positive feedback on the impact of the ESOL courses on their level of English (discussed further in Outcomes and Impacts, Chapter 6). In terms of skills courses, clients reported finding the Driving Theory, IT Skills and Job Search Skills courses particularly useful and were hopeful that the skills learnt on these courses would support them in securing employment. One client stated that the IT Skills sessions were well structured, that they had learned how to use search engines and now understood email etiquette.



[The teacher] gives us a lot of respect and teaches us how to send good emails that are formal or informal. I've learnt how to find online jobs and use Google. – Client consultee



I liked the childcare course. I have my son and I don't have anyone else to look after him. [Because it is online], it has helped me to look after him. – Client consultee

- 5.51 In terms of sector-specific courses, the childcare course was praised by clients as equipping them with useful knowledge about children's development and the UK education system (discussed further in Outcomes and Impacts, Chapter 6). Other sector-specific courses, such as warehousing, were not as popular with clients and therefore were rarely scheduled or mentioned by consultees. The importance of providing good information is clear, as suggested by the project team for warehousing, and highlighted by a client who obtained their Construction Site Safety Card, helped by a teacher who explained the course's content and structured sessions well.

5.52 Some employers offering work placements were also complimentary about the ESOL courses and how they have prepared the refugees appropriately for work.

ESOL and skills challenges

5.53 A key challenge for delivery of the ESOL strand has been the entry level language requirement. Some teachers felt that setting this at entry three excludes many local refugees. At the same time, teachers felt that progressing those below entry three prematurely would make achieving targets too challenging within the project's timeframe. By contrast, a project team member described how those with higher levels of English were likely to be more aspirational for their careers and less interested in some sectors covered by the ESOL courses, such as warehousing.

5.54 Although there are government-provided ESOL courses to bring clients up to entry three, teachers agreed there is a need for more courses for learners with lower levels of language proficiency but offering the same high-quality teaching as WW4RI. The 2021 summer school was positive in improving the accessibility of the ESOL strand for refugees with a lower starting level of English, particularly given the reduced opportunities for clients to practise their English in-person since the outbreak of COVID-19.

5.55 A further challenge, is that clients with entry three language proficiency are often eligible to join accredited ESOL courses elsewhere, for example at colleges, which they may prefer to the non-accredited WW4RI offer. The project team did look at whether WW4RI could incorporate accreditation, but it was complex and could not be done within the scope of the project.

5.56 At times, it has been challenging to balance the sector-specific content of courses with general language skills. Teachers felt that, given the starting level of most clients, general language skills were an essential starting point; however, course structures and resources do not always allow for this, and teachers must develop and find the right moments to incorporate this content themselves.

5.57 It has also been difficult to balance clients' aspirations with the curriculum and some consultees felt that the courses and materials could be more flexible. A teacher reported that *"the curriculum is designed to guide the learners through what is required of them, rather than what they might actually want"*. There is also an indication that some clients are participating in sector-specific courses despite not being interested in that sector, due to a lack of course availability for the sector that they are interested in. In essence, they compromise on content to prioritise language learning.

5.58 There is also concern about whether the sector-specific courses on offer meet demand. For example, the Warehouse and Logistics course has not been as popular as anticipated, and some clients had hopes of a wider range of more specific courses and that these might be offered in future.

5.59 Clients' responses to refugee-only ESOL courses have been mixed. According to ESOL teachers, some are more comfortable in classes with other refugees, with a group of people with a similar range of experiences, whereas others would have appreciated being able to mix with other groups. As language classes can be a good opportunity to meet others and build social connections, one partner manager commented that refugee-only ESOL classes were perhaps missing opportunities for integration. However, it is recognised that funding constraints do not allow this to take place.



[There is] certainly a need for refugee-specific support. It misses a trick with integration, putting refugees on separate courses to the general population. [Refugees] get so much more out of meeting natives that aren't professionals or employers. – ESOL teacher consultee

Online vs face-to-face

- 5.60 Although all ESOL courses were moved online during the multiple COVID-19 lockdowns, providers have taken different approaches to delivery since the easing of restrictions, with some continuing either entirely face-to-face or online²⁶ and others taking a blended approach. During the pandemic, budget was allocated to enable ESOL partners to provide tablets for clients lacking access to appropriate IT equipment and generally, online ESOL classes have been more effective when clients have been provided with tablets. However, some ESOL teachers reported that courses could have progressed more smoothly if learners were provided with laptops rather than tablets, to reduce connection and usability issues.
- 5.61 Responses about the challenges and benefits of online learning during the pandemic were mixed. Of the client consultees who reported a preference for online or face-to-face delivery, 24 preferred face-to-face for the improved sense of connection and informal opportunities to practise their English and exchange information, while two respondents preferred online delivery for convenience reasons. Face-to-face delivery also helped when beneficiaries didn't understand something, as they thought that the teacher was more likely to pick up on their facial expressions and provide help. Some students also mentioned that they were more likely to ask questions in person than during an online session. Teachers also commented how it could be easier to run face-to-face sessions effectively, due to the challenges of online sessions when learners in the group were using computers in public libraries, or phones from locations such as public transport or in busy home environments.
- 5.62 Despite IT skills forming part of the project's core curriculum, some clients did not feel confident to participate in online courses and dropped out before they could develop these skills properly. Most clients also do not have access to office equipment such as printers, therefore online courses can exclude those with different learning needs, for example, those who prefer printed materials. Some clients also found connection problems (including internet connection and blurry images) during classes frustrating and felt that personal relationships with other refugees were hampered by not being able to meet in-person.
- 5.63 However, online delivery was reported to have several benefits: use of creative online learning tools and improved familiarity with IT for learners; reduced concerns about COVID-19; greater accessibility of classes without the need for childcare or reliable transport, in some cases leading to improved attendance and engagement. Online classes can also be more accessible to clients struggling with their wellbeing or confidence, as virtual platforms allow them to participate in a more relaxed way, for example by turning their camera off or asking questions via chat functions that they might be too nervous to ask face-to-face. Online delivery has an additional benefit of allowing more clients to be reached without the need for more ESOL teachers.



I prefer face-to-face. Last year, it was not possible due to lockdown. Not everyone joined in. Sometimes it was noisy and hard to connect with others. The connection didn't always work. We had to repeat ourselves a number of times to communicate what we were trying to say. – Client consultee



I don't like online but that's the thing with COVID-19, it's 100% better than nothing! – Client consultee

²⁶ The WEA was contracted to provide 100% online and will continue to do so.

Enterprise support

Enterprise support successes

- 5.64 Throughout the evaluation, consultations with frontline staff and manager consultees have shown that the project's support for enterprise is well regarded and allows for tailored career support for beneficiaries. Positive sentiments around MENTA services were expressed by some beneficiaries, although overall views have been more mixed.
- 5.65 In terms of best practice, one project team member mentioned that they had tried to include MENTA in all employment advisor meetings, to create wider awareness of enterprise possibilities among employment advisors. A frontline staff consultee highlighted learning about the importance of using a one-to-one delivery model with WW4RI clients. This has proved the most effective way of providing appropriate business advice to project beneficiaries and is a change to how MENTA usually delivers support (in groups).
- 5.66 Another example of best practice mentioned by a MENTA manager consultee was the flexibility in terms of number of hours of support provided and when. Some beneficiaries were already employed on a part-time basis and seeking to taper this with starting a business. MENTA's flexibility has allowed them to continue in employment while also working on a business plan, ensuring they are still able to earn an income and retain a safety net, while also making progress and gaining confidence.



...because people were coming from such different backgrounds, we've gone to a one-to-one approach instead. Works very well for individuals...Not too many barriers – just as long as we keep relationships going. – Frontline staff consultee

- 5.67 As well as helping clients to create business plans and work towards them, the WW4RI project's design allows frontline staff to give honest and realistic advice to beneficiaries. This is unusual as with most business support programmes funders only pay support organisations based on the number of enterprises started, not on advice given and time spent with clients. This can skew support towards starting up, even where it may not be in the client's best interests and the risk is too great.
- 5.68 A MENTA manager explained that because there is no target for business creation, business support staff are able to be up-front about whether starting a business would be ill-advised, though it may take some time to tease this out. The work with the client is rarely wasted and often helps with job search skills, by clarifying ideas and strengths, plus it helps prevent avoidable business failure. A client consultee reinforced this, describing how their MENTA advisor listened carefully to their ideas before pointing out that the funding available would not be suitable for realising the client's ambitions. Helpfully, the advisor made suggestions about what could be done in the interim.
- 5.69 Another beneficiary highlighted the practicality of the support from MENTA; that the service had been useful in helping them to assess their options when considering starting a business. They described how advisors they spoke to at a workshop had run through how to set up their business in a very practical way.
- 5.70 As outlined in the last reporting phase, this strand was able to continue its delivery during COVID-19, with a MENTA manager stating it was likely that they would "move to a blended delivery model permanently". This consultee highlighted how virtual appointments meant that support could be tailored to individuals' needs and abilities without requiring extensive travelling and time on both sides, meaning that issues could be dealt with in a timely fashion.

Enterprise support challenges

5.71 Some difficulties were highlighted by client consultees in both reporting phases of the evaluation; most centred around a lack of progress, and a perceived lack of proactivity from MENTA advisors. Two clients were disappointed about the pace of progress following successive meetings, feeling there was no clear plan of action after several meetings over six months. There seemed to be high levels of motivation, aspirations and appropriate language skills and qualifications, though it is not clear what expectations of support were at the outset and what was done to shape these.



Lots of signposting but it doesn't go anywhere. – Client consultee

5.72 A project team member highlighted that MENTA have had a very high caseload, which may have contributed to this difficulty. Also, in the earlier phase of project delivery, there was a period when no MENTA appointments could take place due to an advisor's resignation and the time needed to appoint a replacement. This led to some disengagement and by the time the new advisor started, some clients had been lost or had enrolled in other training.

5.73 Some issues may relate to the need to provide information to ensure that expectations are managed about what can be achieved in refugees' different circumstances and with different business ideas, adjusted for the UK context. In one instance, a client interviewed in late 2021 was frustrated by the pace of progress and unclear about next steps. Recently, however, things that were planned have come together, several issues have been addressed and the client is now more than happy with progress and the support he has received from MENTA.

5.74 As elsewhere, there are challenges related to the language proficiency of some beneficiaries. Language as a barrier was raised by a frontline staff consultee, who noted that MENTA's language requirements, as compared to what clients are accustomed to for employment advice, mean that some have been unable to access business support. A client mentioned that the level of English of the MENTA staff member they were working with was too advanced, meaning that delivery was strained, and their employment advisor had to attend sessions to provide support.

Wellbeing support

The value of WW4RI's wellbeing support

5.75 WW4RI's wellbeing delivery strand has made a significant difference in the counties where it is available. The need for the service is clear, as highlighted by the partner managers, frontline delivery staff and local authority UASC leads who were consulted. Most beneficiaries they have contact with (particularly unaccompanied children) have some level of PTSD, often undiagnosed. Wellbeing support is essential for many refugees in understanding how past traumas affect their day-to-day lives and constrain their ability to progress. The project's support helps to develop their critical understanding and introduces appropriate coping strategies.

5.76 The wellbeing support's obvious value is its ability to complement publicly available services. UASC lead consultees reported that across EELGA counties (as elsewhere) the demand for wellbeing and mental health support significantly exceeds statutory provision, especially for CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) which is already extremely stretched with long waiting lists. This

reinforces the importance of ensuring sufficient therapist provision, as well as the usefulness of the project having its own dedicated psychotherapists, offering lower-level support.

- 5.77 Beyond providing more capacity, consultees remarked on the value of WW4RI's delivery team's own diversity and range of experience, alongside the frequent absence of "diversity and connection" within local authority mental health teams. While other routes to mental health support exist, a WW4RI employment advisor highlighted those other services can fall short in terms of suitability, due to longer waiting times, greater detachment between service providers and the project team and a lack of therapists' refugee-specific experience. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the varied demographics of refugees, making the diversity of WW4RI's delivery team critical – people with whom beneficiaries can identify and with deeper knowledge and understanding of their situation and experiences.
- 5.78 Providing information about the wellbeing strand effectively has also been important. UASC lead consultees noted that the information provided about the role of WW4RI therapists and where support responsibilities revert to CAMHS or similar services has been helpful. Pitching support to delivery staff working on different project strands, such as the ESOL teachers, has also been helpful. Beneficiaries are not always prepared for or open to accepting wellbeing support in the early stages of intervention, so spreading information and recruiting wellbeing advocates via other means has been constructive.
- 5.79 An employment advisor commented that the project's wellbeing strand is highly regarded by other organisations which refer beneficiaries to WW4RI. This aligns with feedback from the UASC leads, who highlighted the gap filled by WW4RI's wellbeing support and that the ways in which information about it is shared with relevant parties work particularly well.

Wellbeing support successes

- 5.80 The wellbeing strand of the project's support covers a wide range of areas, including discussions around past trauma and experiences, as well as present issues such as day-to-day distress and trouble sleeping. Therapists make various suggestions to support beneficiaries, including trying different forms of exercise.
- 5.81 Several clients who had participated in the wellbeing strand commended the supportive and understanding nature of their therapists, noting that they felt listened to and understood. Many clients stressed feeling able to trust their therapists, which helped them to share their experiences and traumas effectively and subsequently to find appropriate ways to work through these.
- 5.82 In terms of best practice and added value, frontline staff highlighted that a key aspect has been regular training for therapists to promote the understanding of different cultures. This is demonstrated in support delivery by the purposeful avoidance of terms like 'mental health' and being sensitive towards the stigma this has in many refugees' cultures. In addition, offering reassurance that issues such as difficulties sleeping affect many people has proved helpful.
- 5.83 Another example of best practice, mentioned by a frontline staff consultee, was training for interpreters to "be present" in conversations with client consultees. The value of this support was reflected in client feedback. Efforts to overcome the language barrier were also mentioned by two client consultees, describing the patience their therapists displayed.



My English was not good... But I didn't want a translator. When talking to her [wellbeing therapist], she understands everything I say. She was patient with me. I was using my hands and she said, 'do you mean this?'...I picked up on words. – Client consultee

5.84 A partner manager commended the organisation of community events in some areas for certain groups (e.g. Afghans). A positive adaptation frontline staff mentioned was the therapists' use of creative tools, such as collaborative online collages and creating music together.



[Our therapists have] a wide variety of skills – lots of creative methods, which are important as words are often not the easiest way to communicate... Art, drama and music play mediums are all really helpful.
– Partner manager consultee

5.85 A partner manager noted that therapists often visit Afghan bridging hotels to assess beneficiaries' needs and that this works well, helping to establish a single point of contact in each area. The consultee also mentioned that maintaining one-to-one assessments (for individuals and families) prior to intervention, facilitates maintenance of the project's tailored, "client-led" approach. Assessments also create opportunities to gauge whether a beneficiary might benefit from group therapy, which may be more appropriate for those who do not feel able or ready to delve deeper but would still benefit from learning strategies and skills to cope.

5.86 The continued availability of therapy during the pandemic, facilitated by online delivery, was noted by a wider stakeholder and described as impressive, with the quality of WW4RI services maintained throughout despite the circumstances. Client views on the online delivery of wellbeing support were mixed, with some preferring face-to-face interaction and others comfortable with virtual consultations.

5.87 Overall, online therapy worked surprisingly well, particularly if clients were able to meet their therapist in-person at least once. It was particularly appreciated by beneficiaries where it meant less travel or impact on their caring responsibilities. Online delivery facilitated wider access to therapy provided in rural areas. A frontline staff member pointed out that those who had to travel more than an hour to attend sessions previously (or who were less comfortable with travelling) were now more likely to attend. A hybrid delivery model worked well, with one client reporting very positively on using both online and face-to-face communication, especially as they had still had access to an interpreter for both telephone and in-person contact.



[The therapy service] provided me with [an] interpreter so we could communicate properly and she did understand me fully and made me feel safe and comfortable. – Client consultee

5.88 The wellbeing strand has been learning consistently too: a partner manager praised how delivery of support is evaluated consistently and improved and modified in line with clients' demands and what proves most beneficial for them. Psychoeducational workshops are still being established and learnt from, providing beneficiaries with a "toolbox" they can use to better understand their feelings, as well as normalising their symptoms. An important aspect of the wellbeing support is also its longer-term nature, enabling frontline staff to become meaningfully involved in supporting beneficiaries.

Wellbeing support challenges

5.89 Since the interim report, the context within which WW4RI operates has shifted significantly. Humanitarian and political crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine have resulted in significantly increased demand for refugee support in the UK and the project has had to increase its capacity and modify delivery. At the same time, challenges have been faced as therapists have looked to move on, due to uncertainty about the project's future funding.

- 5.90 UASC leads stated that local authorities across the areas where WW4RI is operational tend to act distinctively in relation to wellbeing support, UASC and other services. Consultees noted that levels of provision were very different across the region and that more coordination would be helpful to facilitating collaborative working and learning.
- 5.91 The lack of available support in some areas can be an issue, with Bedfordshire specifically mentioned where no mental health support is available for adults as part of WW4RI. A wider stakeholder stated that not enough therapists are available, and a member of frontline staff and of the WW4RI project team noted the growing waiting list. All confirmed that when a beneficiary is referred to therapy, there could be long waiting times in certain areas, due to slots being occupied by others and the lack of resources to increase provision.
- 5.92 Early inconsistencies were mentioned by an employment advisor, noting that referral criteria were initially unclear and were not disseminated well in the project's initial stages. Over time, however, employment advisors have developed close working relationships with therapists and a much better understanding of their roles. Their relationships are beneficial for both parties, allowing employment advisors to receive guidance from therapists about how best to support beneficiaries' wellbeing and making employment advisors better aware of beneficiaries' circumstances and needs, thereby protecting valuable therapy time.
- 5.93 A commonly noted challenge for the project's wellbeing strand is engaging refugees with the service. Consultees highlighted several potential reasons: often mental wellbeing is not a primary concern for refugees, given the prominence of practical issues such as schooling, housing and healthcare on arrival to the UK. Another key factor is the cultural stigma around mental health support; mental health and wellbeing remain difficult topics, with wider stakeholders in particular suggesting that many clients require reassurance that therapy is not being suggested because they are "crazy".



For some people and their cultures, the term mental health does not exist, so interpreters have to use different words. They also need to be careful and clear that they are not meaning to cause offence to the refugee. – Frontline staff consultee

- 5.94 Several consultees mentioned that when stigmatisation about mental health is an issue 'modelling' behaviour' may offer a solution - foregrounding the similar experiences of others to normalise how clients are feeling and help to convince them of the potential advantages of therapy and wellbeing support. In a similar way, the delivery of psychoeducational workshops in groups was mentioned as both helping to alleviate any shame amongst clients and for building connections with other people.
- 5.95 As well as facilitating access to wellbeing resources, a partner manager highlighted the importance of interactive workshops in providing reassurance for beneficiaries to see that therapists are not someone "in a white coat with lots of medication coming out of their pockets".
- 5.96 Other specific difficulties reported included having to turn down potential clients due to eligibility limits related to their immigration status. This also highlighted the lack of alternative provision; a partner manager commented how time-consuming and difficult it is to find appropriate services for beneficiaries who need further support. In response, the Refugee Council's WW4RI Well-being team has developed a directory of alternative services, which is helpful in easing the process of passing clients on to other services, rather than leaving them unsupported.
- 5.97 As mentioned already, experiences of online wellbeing support have been mixed, indicating the difficulty of establishing trust and building rapport with vulnerable clients when dependent on virtual meetings rather than face-to-face.



It was difficult to establish talking over potentially dodgy internet connections. And the trauma people have gone through – in-person is definitely better and needed for this. – Partner manager consultee

5.98 Finally, not having an established office was described by a partner manager as an opportunity for providing further flexibility for beneficiaries. Given budget flexibility, the consultee suggested hiring temporary meeting spaces in a range of places as a preferable way of spending project resources.

Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

5.99 As discussed previously, the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns led to challenges for project strands as delivery moved online. There were also some common challenges affecting the project as a whole. Several frontline staff and partner manager consultees felt that better communication between partners and a greater sense of identity could have been created had it not been for the pandemic.

5.100 Another key challenge was changes in the labour market as a result of COVID-19 since the design of the project. This created difficulties in matching the project offer, that is the ESOL and skills courses, with potential employment opportunities and placements for clients, for instance the difficulties created by the widespread closure of hospitality and its lack of appeal during COVID. Furthermore, COVID-19 changed the way clients felt about certain sectors, for example they have been less inclined to go into work in health and social care. There is also some evidence suggesting COVID-19 has affected some clients' motivation to find work. A frontline worker described how COVID-19 has meant that some beneficiaries are less likely to want to leave home, and that they had noticed that women in particular did not want to go out during the pandemic.

5.101 COVID-19 also had a significant impact on beneficiaries, both in terms of their personal lives and their participation in each project strand. Several clients reported that lockdowns increased the isolation they and their households were already experiencing, due to being in an unfamiliar country and worsened their anxiety about family members still abroad. Several clients also reported that their confidence had been impacted by COVID-19, setting them back on their journey towards better integration and moving into or towards employment.



Since COVID, I am not as confident as before. I stepped back with learning English. I would be in work by now probably. – Client consultee

5.102 However, since the last reporting period, more client consultees felt that they had not been impacted by COVID-19. Possibly this is due to society adapting to the pandemic and fewer restrictions on beneficiaries, as well as many beneficiaries arriving during COVID-19 and therefore being unacquainted with pre-pandemic life in the UK.

5.103 Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 has led to several challenges in the delivery of employment support. First, it limited the ability of employment advisors to reach new clients. One employment advisor reported that they have not been able to be as proactive as they would like, due to not running drop-in sessions and events during the pandemic. Another stated that, because of fewer in-person events, opportunities for beneficiaries to learn about life in the UK and to learn English were reduced.

5.104 One frontline staff member said that the lack of face-to-face contact with beneficiaries has meant that although employment advisors have built positive relationships with beneficiaries, these were not as

strong as they could have been. The consultee also stated that employment advisors have found it difficult to explain things to beneficiaries online, and another frontline worker found that asking beneficiaries potentially sensitive or personal questions such as ‘are you having trouble sleeping?’ is more difficult online. Both partner managers and employment advisors pointed out how some beneficiaries’ lack of IT skills has proved a barrier to providing employment support online.



We now have to work hard to find more clients, previously we would [as an organisation] have seen 100 clients a day on a busy day. –

Employment advisor consultee

- 5.105 In terms of employment opportunities, some clients, particularly in the last reporting phase, attributed the challenges they have experienced in finding jobs or starting a business directly to the pandemic. As discussed previously, remote delivery was sometimes difficult for clients, as well as for teachers and therapists, as delivering therapy sessions and language classes via video calls made establishing meaningful connections more difficult.
- 5.106 Planning in-person activities has continued to present difficulties for the central project team, with absences from planned events higher than pre-covid. While restrictions have been lifted, the disease continues to circulate leading to lower numbers of people able to participate. This is why the project team has continued to rely on virtual meetings as a fail-safe option.



[The pandemic] stopped me starting up my business and slowed down everything. It’s affected everyone but I think without COVID, I would have started my business a year ago. – **Client consultee**

6. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

6.1 This chapter provides an overview of the delivery of outcomes and impacts of the WW4RI project as follows:

- Outcomes for beneficiaries.
- Outcomes for project partners, stakeholders and employers.
- The counterfactual: what would have happened without the project.

Emerging outcomes for beneficiaries

6.2 Client consultees were asked which outcomes or impacts they had experienced as a result of WW4RI support. At the start of each of the sections below is a key, representing how each outcome links to the specific domains identified by the Indicators of Integration Framework (2019) shown below.²⁷

Figure 6.1: The intersecting domains of the 2019 Integration Framework



Securing employment

6.3 A core part of the WW4RI project, supporting refugees into secure employment, is recognised as a key marker and means to achieving integration within the Indicators to Integration Framework. It was widely accepted by different groups of consultees that beneficiaries have **moved into employment** as a result of the project.



6.4 Clients reported that they have secured employment in various sectors including retail, construction, warehousing, administration, hairdressing and customer service. Four clients stated that they have started in paid employment since the last reporting phase. One client reported that they started paid employment for the first time ever, with the help of their WW4RI employment advisor.



(My employment advisor) introduced me to Ikea. It made the biggest difference to my life... My life changed. I have learnt so many things in Ikea. I started as a worker and now have done forklift training, and this week – process training. I’m developing myself in Ikea. Next week, I might do different training. – Client consultee

²⁷ [Indicators of Integration Framework](#), UK Home Office (2019).

6.5 Monitoring data collected by the project team after beneficiaries have received project support, shows that nine beneficiaries who were previously unemployed or a student have gained employed, whilst two have increased their hours of employment. However, there are some gaps in the data and it is likely there are other examples that have not been recorded. It is likely that greater numbers will be recorded as the project progresses, especially as this type of outcome takes a long time to be realised. However, it is clear that more of this data could be captured through a more formal exit process. In addition, there is interview and anecdotal evidence that some beneficiaries have changed employment to a role that is more suited to their interests and expertise.

6.6 Meanwhile, MENTA has supported eleven refugees to start their own businesses to date and supported four with pre-existing businesses. Others have been helped to progress towards starting their own businesses, through support with obtaining grants and writing business plans. This is promising, given the relatively short time the project has been running, the delays that have inevitably been experienced and that business outcomes often take a long time to be realised.

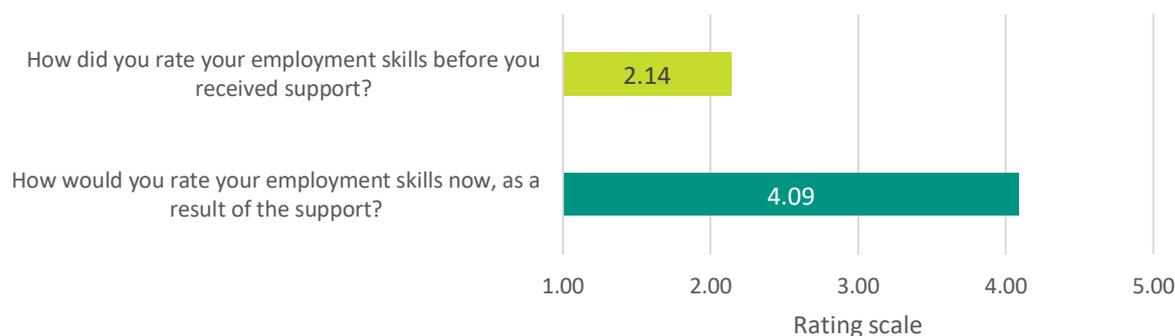
Increasing employability and moving towards employment

6.7 Even where beneficiaries have not yet secured formal employment, the project has helped many to **move towards employment**. In interviews conducted in the final reporting phase, 20 client consultees described how the employment support and ESOL courses had helped them to gain employment skills and the confidence to prepare for work. Significantly more client consultees reported this during the final phase, suggesting the project is achieving progress in supporting more beneficiaries towards work.

6.8 During individual interviews and focus groups, all clients were asked to rate their employment skills on a scale of one to five, both currently and before they received support from WW4RI. In total, 88 per cent of respondents felt that they had experienced an improvement (n=61).²⁸ Figure 6.2 below shows the mean of client responses before and after receiving support. Both averages are compared, with clients rating 2.14 and 4.09 out of 5 for before and after respectively, equating to an increase of 91 per cent. This indicates that most clients believe they have **greatly improved their employment skills** while working with the project and that they have greatly benefitted from the support they received.



Figure 6.2: Clients' rating of their employment skills, pre & post support (1 = poor, 5 = good) (n=61)



²⁸ Of the remaining 20 responses, seven rated themselves the same before and after, and 12 were unable to respond to the question due to difficulty understanding the rating scale concept. Of the seven that maintained the same rating, two were consultees spoken to within a driving theory focus group (n=8), suggesting that the scope for improvement in employment skills may be smaller than for others. One consultee who expressed no change gave themselves a rating of 5 before and after, noting that they already felt very active and motivated in the job market.

6.9 There is clear evidence that beneficiaries' participation in work placements has helped them move towards paid employment. Five clients mentioned how their work placements provided them with the necessary skills and experience needed to enter paid employment, allowed them to practise and improve their English language and made them more attractive to employers. From interviews with clients, it is clear that work placements have been a positive and rewarding experience for beneficiaries and some expressed how grateful they were to their employment advisors for arranging the placements.



My employment advisor helped me to get on a work placement in the college, I support the teachers as an ESOL assistant. I do this two days a week. It's great, I love it. All thanks to my employment advisor for this. – Client consultee

6.10 Employers also highlighted positive outcomes for beneficiaries who they had offered placements to in the employers' feedback survey. Employers reported that ten of their placement holders had achieved better social connections and improved their language and communication skills, nine were reported to have improved in confidence and seven in their sector-based skills and general work-based skills.

6.11 Positively, four of the eight employers who responded to the survey have plans to offer the client further employment after the placement ends. Of the four employers who did not have plans to offer the client further employment, two said they may have continued to work with the client if not for questions associated with recruitment within their organisations. However, two respondents did not feel that the client they hosted had the appropriate skills, either for the role or for the organisation.



The employee is now a paid member of our team and is an asset to us and the children. – Work placement host

6.12 Project beneficiaries also acquired independent job search skills, including how to search for jobs, create and improve their CVs, write job applications, and prepare for interviews. It is clear from consultations with staff and with clients that this support has been vital as a stepping-stone for those who are not yet ready to start work. Six clients mentioned this in interviews, and in particular, that the initial one-on-one support offered by employment advisors has been fundamental in promoting their ability to develop these skills independently.



Not only did my employment advisor guide me in the paperwork and what information I need to give, but more than that, they told me about how and who to approach the places for jobs. Help with my CV and a lot of things that without them I wouldn't know where to start. – Client consultee

6.13 Other outcomes of WW4RI support also continue to contribute in the longer term to beneficiaries moving towards employment. For example, several clients mentioned that their IT skills had improved and that they now have access to IT equipment thanks to the project. This in turn has helped them to search for jobs and to complete job applications. More specifically, three clients reported that the increased knowledge they developed through participating in the project has helped them to search for the right courses and jobs for them. This included learning about living and working in the UK. One

client mentioned that they had learnt about working in healthcare from their employment advisor who had specialist knowledge of the sector. Two other clients said that they appreciated working with their employment advisor to set employment goals, as these provided motivation and something to aim towards.

- 6.14 Client consultees also felt that the combination of their improved English language, employment, sector-specific and practical skills has made them **more attractive to employers and more employable**. For example, some client consultees said that they were supported to get DBS checks, CSCS cards and driving licences to help them to apply for certain positions that they would not have been eligible for previously. One client in work reported that they are now more valuable to their current employer, due to their improved level of English and ability to communicate with customers. Continued evidence like this strongly suggests that beneficiaries are more likely to retain jobs as a result of their participation in WW4RI.
- 6.15 Sector-specific ESOL courses have been expressly linked by some beneficiaries to their success in finding paid employment or work experience. The courses have supported clients with existing experience in a sector to transfer their knowledge to the UK context, giving them the confidence to pursue careers in their area of expertise. For some, this has meant that not only are they able to enter paid jobs which suit their skills and experience, but which also better reflect their interests.



I wouldn't have been able to do this on my own, it was integral to allow me to get onto the English course and I wouldn't have been able to start the work placement in an area which I have experience in and want to be in – working with children. – Client consultee

- 6.16 As well as referrals to internal ESOL sector-specific courses, employment advisors have used their knowledge and professional expertise to make beneficiaries aware of and help them to apply for **external training courses**, matched to their interests and experience. Client consultees frequently mentioned that opportunities have ranged from full-time formal college and university courses to informal short part-time courses with different training providers. For some, this has involved undertaking courses in order to convert their existing qualifications, enabling them to work in professions in the UK, such as nursing.



My employment advisor has provided me with information I needed to attend an English course. He knows I'm a nurse, and he knows the pathway to become one here in the UK. He has sent a lot of emails to employers in Norwich for me. I wish to continue with my nursing profession, so he is helping me with this. – Client consultee



(Without the project) I wouldn't have been able to do the business course this year. Because of my employment advisor I did extra courses and they have helped me get into the right courses for me, (they gave me) lots of support. – Client consultee

- 6.17 In interviews, clients were asked whether their employment advisors had helped them to understand factors related to good and bad employment, including zero-hour contracts and temporary employment, pay and conditions and workers' rights. Although many responded that they hadn't covered this during sessions with their employment advisors, eight beneficiaries mentioned that their employment advisors had taught them about topics such as legal rights and employment contracts, fair pay, and health and safety in the workplace. Notably, during the last reporting period, client

consultees did not mention that their employment advisors had helped them to understand this. This might indicate that there have been improved outcomes for beneficiaries in understanding their rights in the UK.

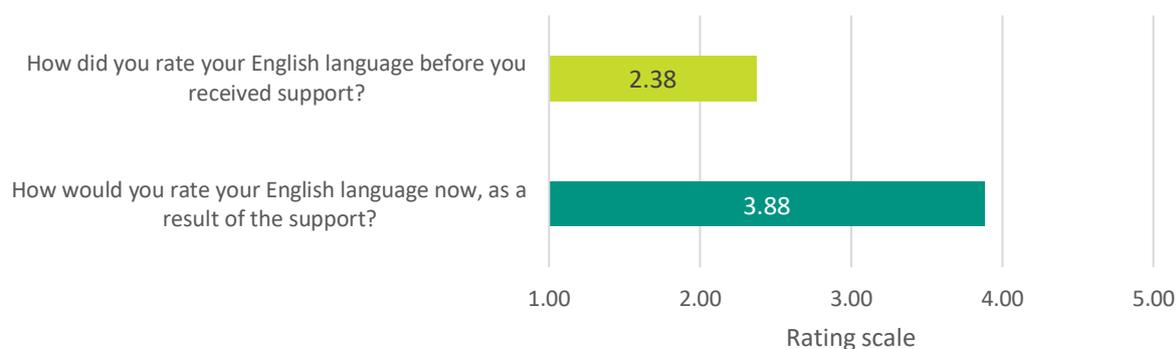
Improved levels of English and secondary outcomes

6.18 Beneficiaries have clearly improved their levels of English as a result of the WW4RI project, with this finding being widely reported by client and staff consultees. Figure 6.3 below shows the results from



a question asked of all client consultees about their English language skills. It was reported by 72 per cent of client consultees that their language proficiency had improved (n=64).²⁹ These clients gave an average rating 2.38 (poor to neither poor nor good) for how they considered their language skills prior to support and an average of 3.88 (neither poor nor good to good) following support. This equates to a **63 per cent increase in the average ratings, indicating that most clients experienced a marked improvement in their English language skills.**

Figure 6.3: Clients' ratings of their English language skills, pre & post support (1 = poor, 5 = good) (n=64)



6.19 As a result of taking part in the project, beneficiaries have built their confidence in speaking to others and are more likely to ask for help and communicate with professionals and English-speaking people from other backgrounds. During this reporting phase, more evidence was found of beneficiaries building 'social bridges'³⁰ with their local communities. Five more clients reported that they are now able to talk freely with their neighbours and when they go shopping, compared with just one during the last reporting phase. This may also be indicative of the fact that there are now more opportunities for beneficiaries to link in with local communities, as the pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

6.20 Since the last reporting phase, a greater number of clients reported being more independent because of their increased English language skills, mainly due to the ESOL courses. It is also clear that the project has supported refugees to create links with institutions, described within the Integration Framework as 'social links'. Four clients reported that engaging with dentists, GPs and the healthcare system has become easier. Two clients explained that, as a result of their improved English, they are now able to correspond with schools and other professionals and therefore to provide better care for their children in the UK. One client also reported that the ESOL courses have helped them to speak with new people online and in their voluntary role.

²⁹ Of the 17 remaining consultees, 8 rated their skills the same before and after. One consultee explained a reported lack of change due to feeling that they needed further help with their presentation skills. Nine consultees were unable to respond to the question due to difficulty understanding the rating scale concept.

³⁰ [Indicators of Integration Framework](#), UK Home Office (2019).



Speaking English has really helped. I can now communicate fully with others and do things on my own. I can go shopping. I am more confident and do whatever I need to do. – Client consultee

Meeting basic needs



- 6.21 In addition to providing direct support to increase wellbeing, gain employment and improve language skills through the project's different strands, WW4RI, by supporting people towards and into work, has also supported refugees to be able to meet their basic needs, including **obtaining housing, education, welfare and achieving financial stability**.
- 6.22 Some beneficiaries entering the WW4RI project have insecure or inappropriate housing and little or no access to financial support or healthcare. Employment advisors have successfully assessed the needs of beneficiaries, signposted them to their own casework team, other agencies and provided advocacy support as necessary to improve their circumstances. All these support activities are key to refugee integration: meeting basic needs, building social links to UK institutions, and achieving greater financial stability. All are essential for sustainable engagement with employment or education and with other services.
- 6.23 The WW4RI project continues to improve access to healthcare for some beneficiaries. Clients frequently reported that they are now better able to navigate the healthcare system, and that they have registered with GPs and booked healthcare appointments for themselves and their families.



(The project) has already (helped) with my English with the doctors and just in everyday life, including schools and nurseries for my baby. Also with hospitals and doctors when I was pregnant, and the childcare course has helped with looking after my baby. – Client consultee

- 6.24 The project has also helped to reduce homelessness amongst beneficiaries, find them suitable housing and improved living conditions. Thanks to the support provided by employment advisors, beneficiaries have been able to receive financial support with paying rent, to access social housing and to move into higher quality, stable and longer-term accommodation.



(Because of the support) I'm not homeless anymore, I have housing in a hostel now. And I have a bank account. Better than before, I didn't have anything sorted out before. – Client consultee

- 6.25 Employment advisors have supported beneficiaries to become more financially secure, reducing the risk of destitution. Aside from being supported to find paid employment to increase their income, beneficiaries have been supported with budgeting, opening bank accounts, and applying for financial support. One client, who had no income when meeting with their employment advisor for the first time, was helped to open a bank account and apply for Universal Credit and, as a result, feels more financially secure and confident – and therefore able to progress.
- 6.26 However, a small number of the beneficiaries consulted are clearly struggling with their finances. During this reporting phase, two clients reported that they need more financial support to feel secure. One said that they do not feel secure around money and suggested they may need more support with

navigating the welfare benefits system. However, some of the uncertainty is beyond the scope of the project unless better-paid employment can be secured: one client consultee felt that the level of their welfare benefit entitlement is not sufficient to provide financial stability.



(My employment advisor) helped with (finances). I don't like benefits and having to wait for money every month. Now I have a job, I can do all this myself. I feel more secure because I can go out and spend money. Before I couldn't. – Client consultee

6.27 Some beneficiaries and their families have gained access to and progressed within the education system, a key marker of integration. This has made a clear difference to beneficiaries in settling into life in the UK. Frontline staff and client consultees reported that the project had helped beneficiaries to access formal educational courses. The childcare course in particular has reportedly helped those with children to better understand the UK education system.

6.28 Four clients stated that the childcare course had equipped them with skills to better care for their children. Two said that they now understand their child's needs and perspectives better, including one with dyslexia and how it impacts on their education.



I am now more sensible as a parent and more caring for my son. (I can) see more how children see things. I understand why my son might behave in a certain way, I ask him how he is feeling more. I now talk to friends about how to look after their children better, for example in dealing with bad behaviour. – Client consultee

6.29 The WW4RI project has enabled refugees to **live more independently**. It was clear from consultations with beneficiaries that many are now acting without support, including filling out forms for GPs, making telephone calls, attending appointments alone and meeting new people. Both the ESOL courses and the support provided by employment advisors help to increase independence, including feeling able to travel to new places and navigate the local area alone.



I can do so much more things on my own now. Before, it was difficult because of what I went through with domestic violence. But (with my employment advisor's) help and (them) helping me with this job – yes it helped me feel I can do this. – Client consultee



It has really helped with my confidence, I can now go somewhere alone and do my official things alone. It has been very good for me. – Client consultee

Increased knowledge about the UK

6.30 As discussed previously, it was widely accepted by client consultees that the project had supported them to **better understand the UK, its culture and systems**. Evidence was found that the childcare sector-specific course in particular, makes a difference to some beneficiaries in improving their knowledge of the UK. Six clients reported that they are now able to navigate the UK schooling system more effectively and better care for their family as a result.





We learnt about how we should respect and our manners with baby and toddlers and about their minds. We learn about their education and levels in the UK. Really helpful for me because I haven't any idea about the education in the UK. It makes everything for me clear, because I have a baby and I worry about her future. – Client consultee

Social connections

- 6.31 Beneficiaries have made **friends and connections with others as a result of WW4RI**. This is both true of those with whom they share a sense of identity (bonds) and with those from different backgrounds (bridges). In fact, since the previous reporting phase, it is clear that more beneficiaries have made friends from different backgrounds, particularly those with a higher level of English (as mentioned above). Client consultees were most likely to say that they had made friends with others whilst attending ESOL sector-specific courses.
- 6.32 Three clients reported that the project gave them enough confidence to speak in front of others, leading to more social connections with people from other backgrounds. One said that they were able to do a speech at church, leading to them meeting many others in their local community, while another said that their increased confidence meant that they have now bonded with their neighbours.
- 6.33 Beneficiaries have also made connections elsewhere because of the project. These included one stating they had made friends through their college course and another saying the same about their new job, whilst one beneficiary said that they have met friends in the school during their work placement and another reported they have met new people at their new accommodation. All of these circumstances had been arranged with the help of their employment advisors.
- 6.34 Some beneficiaries have also been able to engage in hobbies in the UK as a result of the project. During this reporting period, five client consultees said that they have started new hobbies where they connect with others from different backgrounds, including football, chess and social clubs and groups.



(In our ESOL class) we are all friends, we are now very comfortable with each other, it's the same people every week. It's really nice. – Client consultee



I have been making friends from the course, with two or three people from Afghanistan. I now attend a football club, so I make many friends there from all backgrounds, the (ESOL) courses also helped me with this. – Client consultee

Improved IT skills

- 6.35 Many clients have improved their **IT literacy and confidence** as a result of the online classes. As part of the project, many beneficiaries have been provided with tablets giving them significant opportunities to facilitate social connections and access information about rights and services.³¹ These IT-related outcomes were especially true of those attending online classes during the pandemic, with one frontline staff consultee reporting that, while some had few or no IT skills prior to joining the ESOL courses, beneficiaries had learnt valuable skills that will provide opportunities in the future. One ESOL teacher described classes



³¹ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

as a ‘course within a course’ thanks to the IT skills being taught through online delivery and, importantly, learning how to stay safe online.

- 6.36 Two beneficiaries reported how their improved IT skills have helped them to become more independent. One stated that they have been able to register with the GP and to complete forms, while another reported that they no longer rely on their daughter for help and can use a computer alone. This can also help to reinstate a parent’s position and status within their family, which can be important for their self-esteem.



(The) brilliant side of the provision is a lot of ESOL [services] don’t have the necessary machines for learning, no accessibility. Giving them this option for tablets helps their IT skills and their confidence of online learning. Not having to rely on phones. So, I think that’s generally been a good side of the project. – ESOL teacher consultee

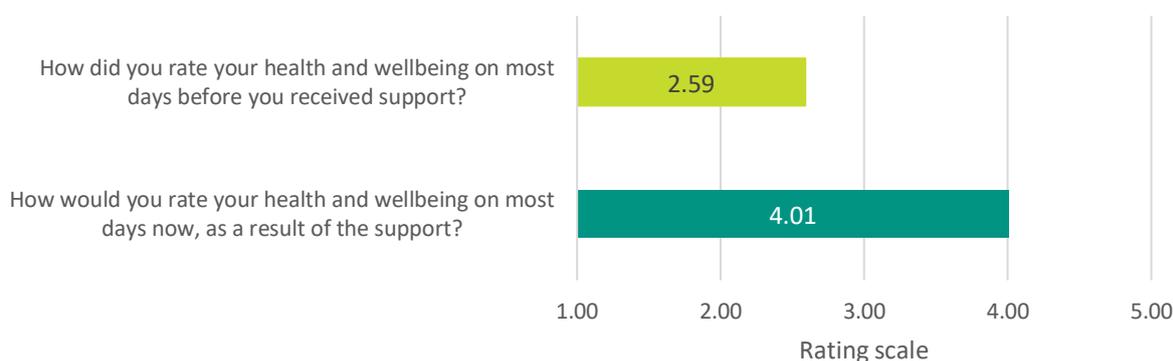
Improved health and wellbeing

- 6.37 Clients of all three project strands reported **improvements to their health and wellbeing**. This is a key outcome given that good (mental and physical) health is essential to integration through social participation and engagement in employment and education activities.³²



- 6.38 Clients were asked how they would have rated their health and wellbeing on most days, reflecting on how they felt before receiving support and how they feel after, as a result of the support they received. The results can be seen in Figure 6.4 below. Of these client consultees, 82 per cent stated that they had experienced improvement in their health and wellbeing (n=61)³³. The average scores, calculated from all client responses both before and after receiving support, were 2.59 and 4.01 respectively. This equates to a **55 per cent increase in the average ratings, indicating that most clients have experienced an important improvement in their health and wellbeing**.

Figure 6.4: Average client ratings of their health and wellbeing on most days, pre & post support (1 = poor, 5 = good) (n=61)



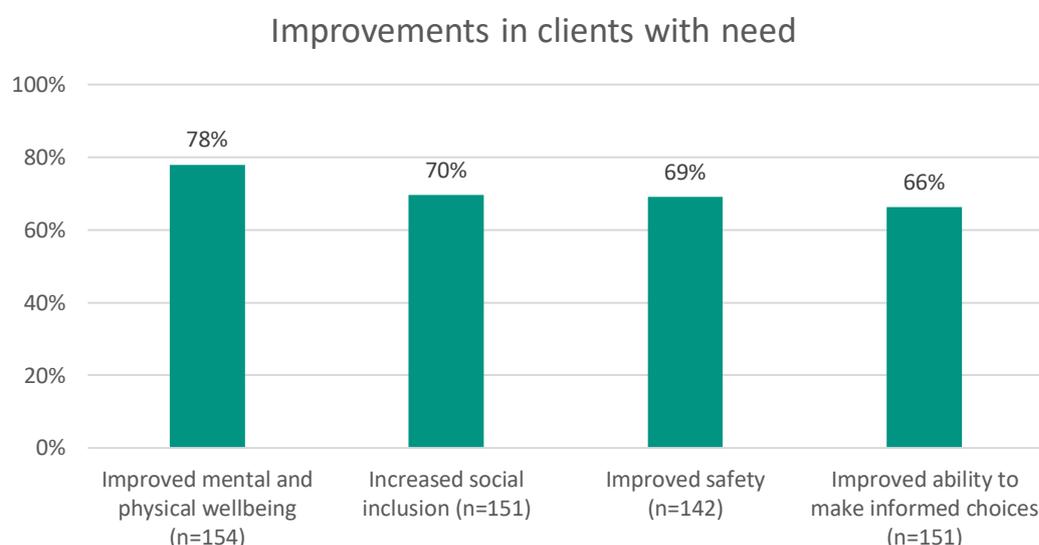
- 6.39 The remainder of this section discusses monitoring data from the wellbeing strand, supplemented with interview data from clients across the project’s delivery strands. It is clear that even for those

³² [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

³³ Of the remaining 23 consultees, 11 gave the same rating before and after, with eight stating that their ‘before’ ratings were good or very good, and 3 rating themselves as neither poor nor good, suggesting that these clients had good levels of health and wellbeing before receiving support from the project. The remaining 12 were unable to respond to the question due to difficulty understanding the rating scale concept.

who did not take part in the wellbeing strand, the project has had a clear positive impact on the mental health of beneficiaries. This demonstrates directly the interconnected nature of the project’s offering and the extensive, comprehensive support provided by many frontline staff to WW4RI clients.

Figure 6.5: Percentage of clients with one or more identified needs reporting improvement



6.40 Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) data collected by frontline staff on the wellbeing strand shows that, of clients with a need for wellbeing support as identified by their therapist, the majority showed improvements between April 2020 and May 2022.³⁴ Figure 6.5 shows these improvements in percentage terms, with almost 80 per cent of client consultees with identified needs reporting that their mental and physical wellbeing improved. This was measured through questions around feelings of tension and anxiety, to issues with sleep, unwanted images and/or memories. In terms of **social connection**, measured through the ability to talk to others and ask for help when needed, 70 per cent of clients reported improvements.

6.41 With regard to the individual safety aspect of health and social care, measured by progress away from thoughts of suicide and/or self-harm, alongside feelings of despair and hopelessness, 69 per cent of client consultees reported improvements.



6.42 Fearfulness is a key challenge for refugees, due to some beneficiaries having come from dangerous circumstances and being subject to various types of trauma. One client reported difficulty with socialising and tending to their finances, due to their experience of domestic violence. Another shared fears associated with their home country’s government, even after arriving in the UK. However, in addition to personal safety, a project-related outcome mentioned by one client was the feeling of being **safe**. Two other clients said that they had gained a sense of **safety** through the project’s support. This is indicative of the strength of WW4RI’s wellbeing strand, helping to provide a foundation for forming social connections and enabling progress in areas such as education and employment.³⁵



³⁴ NB Therapists were not always able to obtain outcome measures for all client consultees, due to disengagement mid-intervention or reluctance to complete assessment forms. Therefore, data here represents those clients who agreed to and completed measurement.

³⁵ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).



I can do so much more things on my own now. Before, it was difficult because of what I went through with domestic violence. But Thomas' help and him helping me with this job – yes helped me feel I can do this.

– Client consultee



Main challenge was I was scared. I did not feel safe. Thought Iranian government were going to catch me and kill me, but Sarah and Liz helped me. Said they can't get me here now.

– Client consultee

6.43 Finally, an improved ability to make informed choices was reported by 66 per cent of client consultees – measured by aspects such as feeling able to cope when things go wrong (resilience). When asked about the impact of wellbeing support and therapy sessions on their daily lives, clients' responses ranged from the ability to undertake day-to-day tasks to an improved mental state.

6.44 **Social links** were another key reported improvement, with several client consultees feeling more able to engage with and understand the institutions around them, a further dimension of social connection. Relating specifically to health and social care, several client consultees mentioned that therapy sessions have helped them to face or address the traumas that they experienced before arriving in the UK, as well as the lasting effects on them – for instance, nightmares, fear and an inability to interact in social situations. Two client consultees mentioned that they now feel less fearful in their day-to-day lives.



Figure 6.6: Percentage of adult clients with identified needs reporting improvements by outcome

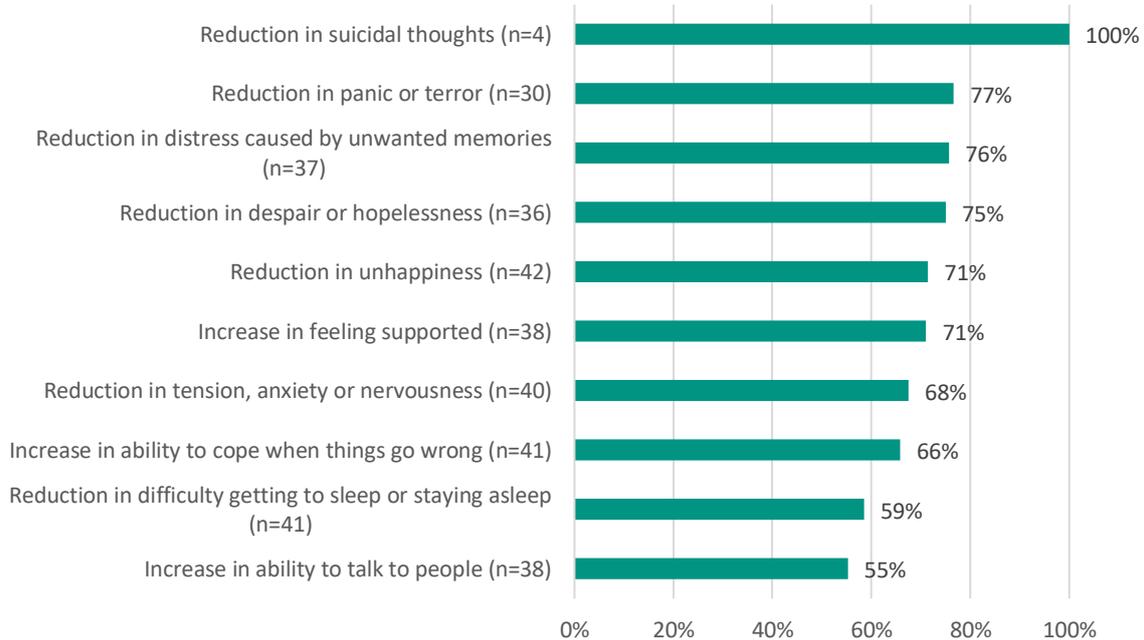
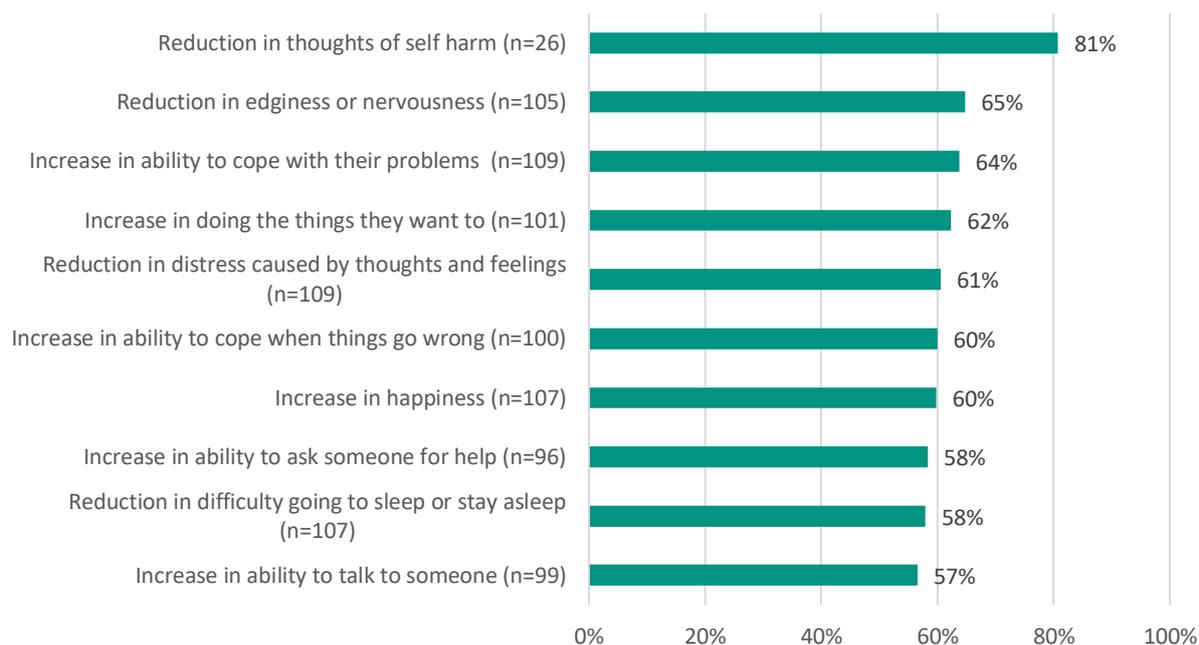


Figure 6.7: Percentage of child clients with identified needs reporting improvements by outcome



6.45 Looking at CORE data for adults and children (Figures 6.6 and 6.7 above), all aspects of mental and physical wellbeing improved for at least half of client consultees. This is a highly positive outcome, showing that many of the challenges faced by clients around distress, anxiety, unwanted memories, self-harm and socialising declined over the measurement period.

6.46 One client consultee mentioned feeling calmer since receiving therapy. Several client consultees expressed a positive outlook on life thanks to their therapist, as well as experiencing a reduced sense of stress and anger, related to what they had faced previously. Two client consultees specifically discussed issues that they had had with stress before receiving therapy, particularly with regard to how to manage their feelings in order to be able to go about their daily lives.



I would say the most important thing I needed help with is stress because [of] ...what I went through in Sierra Leone...I could explain to [my therapist] how I feel and she used to understand a lot. – Client consultee

6.47 General **confidence** was a key theme among beneficiaries across the project, with three client consultees mentioning that their confidence had been raised through the classes or sessions that they had attended, helping them with their lives in the UK. One client consultee said that their employment advisor offered them reassurance that they are ‘good enough’ and noted the positive impacts that this had on them.



When someone supports you and tells you that you are good enough and you can have a plan for your future, everything helped me to get better. And I’m happy now. Because I have time for myself now too. I feel free, I feel happy. – Client consultee

6.48 Another positive impact for some clients was reduced isolation and a greater ability to take part in activities such as shopping or socialising. As previously mentioned, establishing **social connections** through two-way interactions is a central factor for integration, allowing individuals to establish a sense of belonging and confidence. One client mentioned that their therapist helped them to overcome their fear of new people, especially of trusting new people. Another highlighted greater awareness of institutions, specifically in relation to hospitals. Being knowledgeable about and comfortable with institutions means that beneficiaries are better able to make use of services (for example, **health and social care**) and to become independent and economically active as a consequence.³⁶



Outcomes for project partners and stakeholders

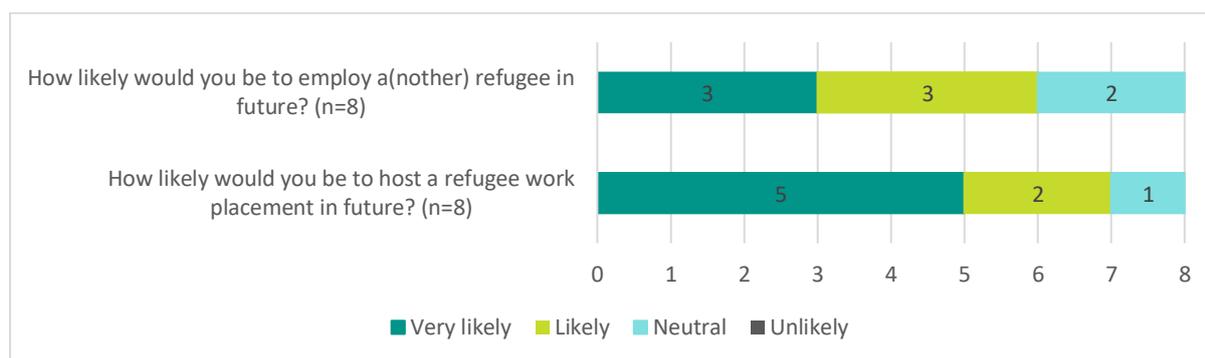
- 6.49 Project team consultees reported several different outcomes for their organisations, as a result of taking part in WW4RI. First, some reported building a positive reputation in their local areas for providing integration support for refugees, likely to support them to continue this work in future. They also reported developing skills, learning about other organisations, and strengthening their working relationships, leading to improved partnership working outside of WW4RI and together contributing to a project aim of improving the region’s infrastructure for refugee support.
- 6.50 A consultee noted that their organisation has improved its own infrastructure in response to the increased demand for support that the project has demonstrated. Another felt that partners have been able to learn more about the challenges and opportunities that result from working with refugees. One consultee felt that partner organisations had changed their perceptions of refugees as a result of working with WW4RI and that they are now more open to continuing to work with refugees in future. The wellbeing strand was considered to have lessened the burden on the local health system.

Outcomes for organisations hosting work placements

- 6.51 Engaging new employers to host refugees in work placements has been a clear positive outcome of the project. Seven of the eight employers who responded to the work placement survey had not employed refugees previously and six stated they were unlikely to have done so without the project’s support. There was also evidence of the project achieving its aims in demonstrating to employers what refugees are able to offer; several survey respondents praised the work and skills of the individual clients they had hosted, with one organisation (a school) highlighting the usefulness of the client’s Arabic language skills, stating that without the placement client *“[the school’s] Arabic students would not be so well supported.”*
- 6.52 The evidence gathered suggests that the project has encouraged employers to consider recruiting refugees in the future. When the eight employers were asked how likely they would be to employ another refugee in future, six reported that they would be very likely or likely to. When asked how likely they would be to host a refugee placement in future, seven said that they would be very likely or likely to. This data is shown in Figure 6.8 below.

³⁶ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

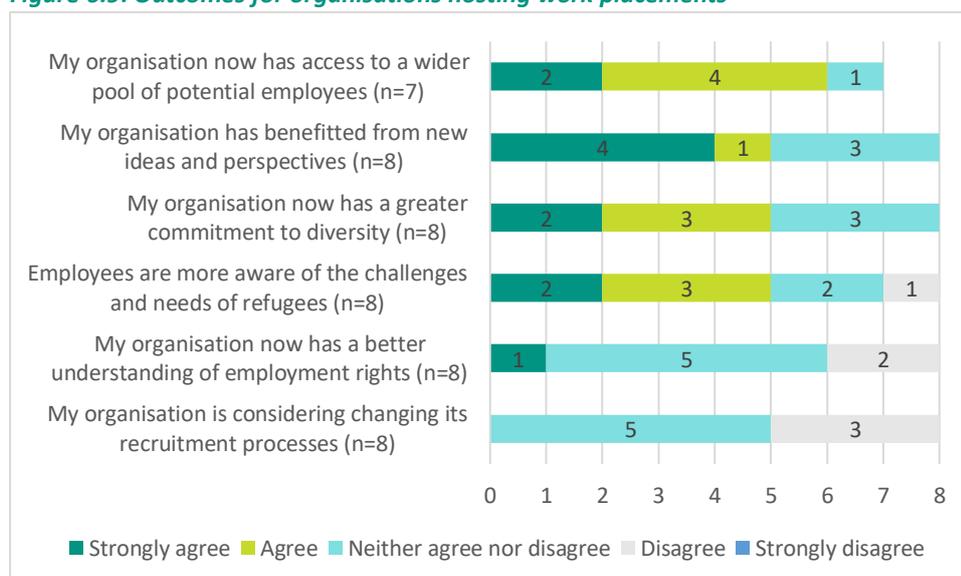
Figure 6.8: Likelihood of employer hosts providing another refugee placement or employing a(nother) refugee (n=8)



6.53 A key outcome for host organisations was that they are now able to access a wider pool of potential employees. As shown below in Figure 6.9, six respondents to the work placement feedback survey agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Five also agreed or strongly agreed that their organisation has benefitted from new ideas and perspectives as a result of participating in WW4RI.

6.54 In addition, five employers stated that they are now more aware of the challenges and needs of refugees and that they now have a greater commitment to diversity. One organisation highlighted that hosting a placement had been particularly useful to them in helping staff to understand the challenges that refugees face, specifically with converting qualifications in order to look for jobs in education.

Figure 6.9: Outcomes for organisations hosting work placements



6.55 Three of the eight employers responding to the survey felt that these outcomes could lead to improved staff retention, productivity or growth for their organisations in future.



Taking part in the project backs up the ethos of an inclusive and welcoming school. – Work placement host

Counterfactual: what would have happened without the project?

- 6.56 Although refugees may still have been able to access employment, language and wellbeing support elsewhere, consultees felt that this support would have been far more fragmented in the absence of WW4RI. Employment or ESOL support accessed by beneficiaries elsewhere would have been more generic and less tailored to their specific needs or those of different employment sectors.

Counterfactual for beneficiaries

- 6.57 Clients generally felt that the absence of the project from their lives would have led to negative consequences, in terms of their skills and employment prospects, as well as their general wellbeing.
- 6.58 In terms of skills developed and knowledge gained, consultees felt that their proficiency in English and their knowledge about UK systems would have been worse (or non-existent) without WW4RI. One did not believe that they would have been able to access free language courses without the project. Another stated that they would not have acquired the knowledge to set up a bank account or learn how to deal with money in the UK.



If these guys were not supporting me, I could not do anything. I did not know anything at all about this country. It's totally different than our country. – Client consultee

- 6.59 In terms of employment outcomes, several consultees reported that they would not have had the confidence or knowledge to even apply for jobs without the support the project has provided, noting that WW4RI has helped them to search for jobs, complete application forms and prepare for interviews. Some stated that they would not have even known which careers to pursue without the project, referencing support from both the employment and ESOL strands. One client, for example, said that they would have been unable to access the sector-specific training course without support from their employment advisor, as well as not making plans to start their own business. As a result, some felt that they would not be in employment at all without having taken part in WW4RI, whereas others felt that they may have found work on their own but that any roles they may have been able to secure would have been less suited to their skill level and future ambitions.
- 6.60 Various consultees also commented that their mental health and wellbeing would be in a much poorer state without WW4RI. In fact, this was the most common theme mentioned by clients when asked how things would be different if they had not participated in WW4RI. For some, this was as direct result of their wellbeing support, while others felt that their anxiety would be worse if not for the support and knowledge of their employment advisors, guiding them through the stress of navigating the UK job market.



When [the therapist] appeared to me, I was at the bottom of the well. I was so unhappy, lonely, isolated. The timing – it was a blessing. – Client consultee



If help wasn't given, I would be still having problems, nightmares, not sleeping, would be tired all the time and tired of life. – Client consultee



[Without the project] I wouldn't have applied for a job, I wouldn't be volunteering, I wouldn't have been able to do a placement or feel confident, or fill out forms, anything. I wouldn't have tried. I would have given up; it would be too difficult to do on my own. [The project] made me confident.

– Client consultee

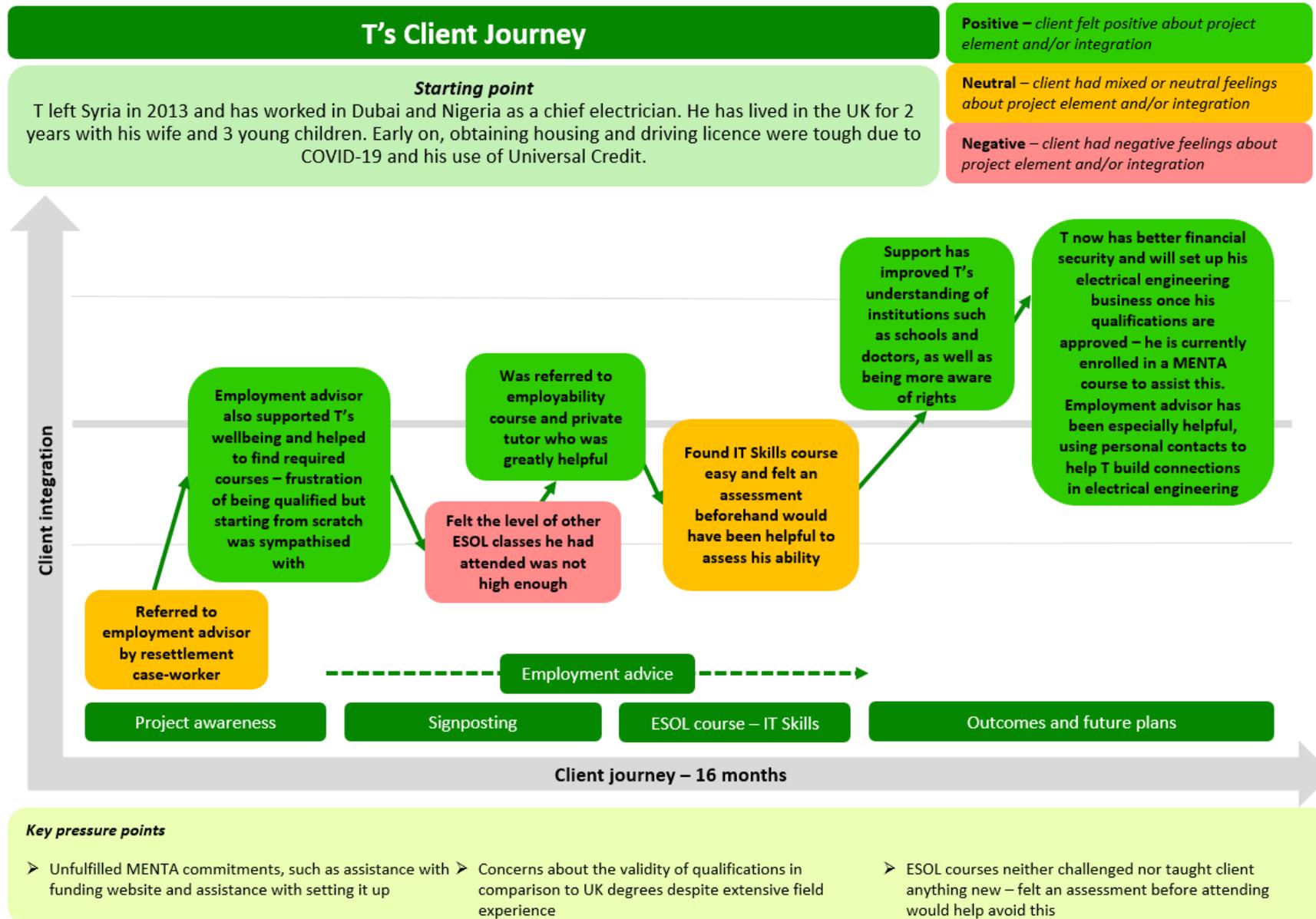
Counterfactual for organisations

- 6.61 Project consultees reported that, without WW4RI, partner organisations would not have understood the demand for, and importance of, wellbeing support for refugees. Organisations may also not have understood the value of work experience and volunteering without having taken part in WW4RI. Project consultees noted that organisations from different regions have improved their partnership working, which they felt would not have happened in the absence of WW4RI. One consultee also felt that tailored courses for refugees would not exist without the project, therefore many of the outcomes experienced by clients may not have been achieved.
- 6.62 In addition, project consultees reported that many of the organisations hosting placements for clients had not had contact with refugees previously and therefore may not have acquired this experience without the project.

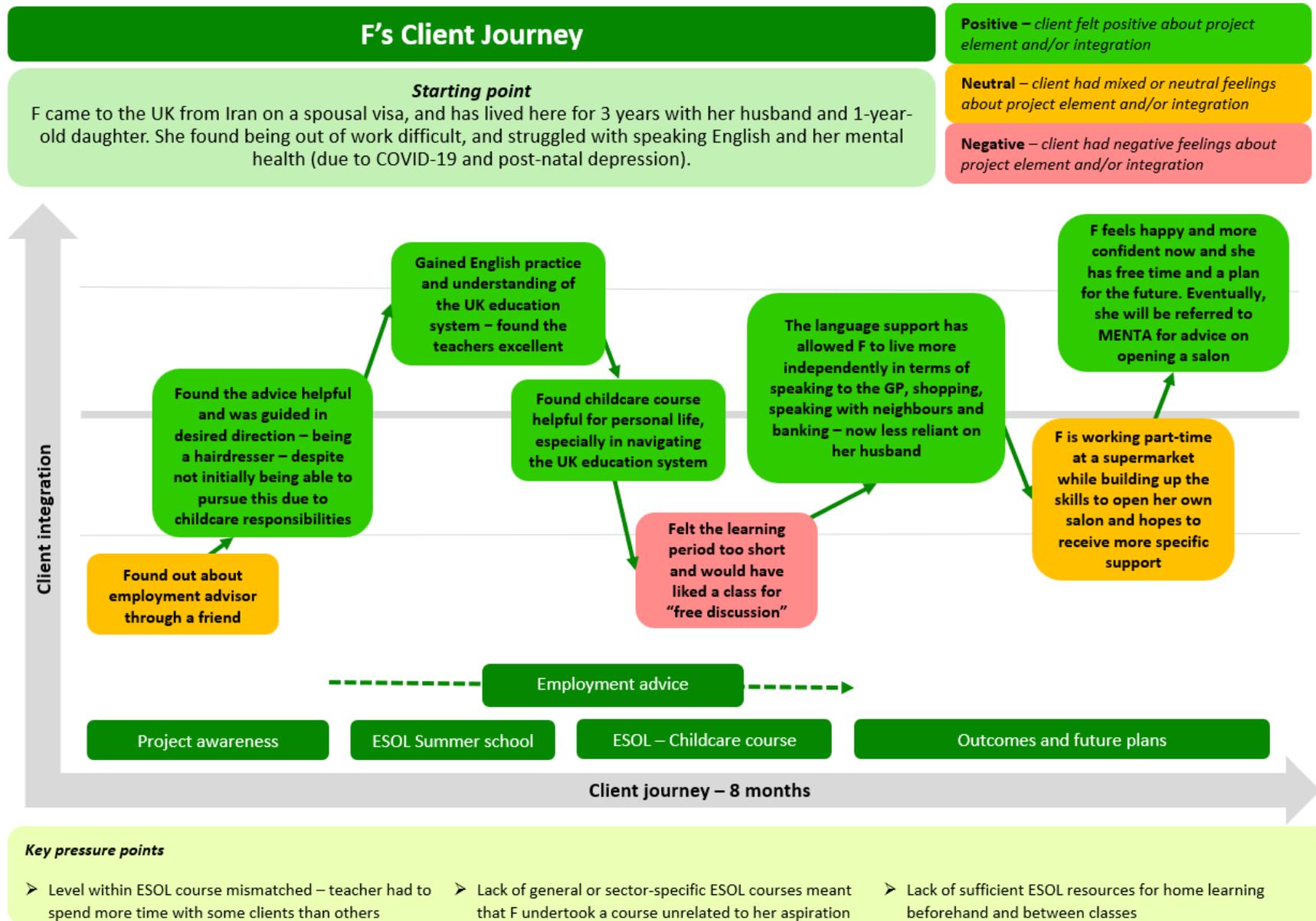
Example client journeys

- 6.63 Overleaf are six case studies that show the journeys of six refugees who participated in the WW4RI project. They originate from Iran, Albania, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Syria. These clients were chosen as case studies to represent a range of different clients; those with different backgrounds, cultures, aspirations, ages, genders and who had participated in different activities, meaning they have all had unique experiences with the project.
- 6.64 All six have faced challenges throughout their time on the project, from the COVID-19 pandemic to housing and financial issues. Despite these barriers, guidance from their employment advisors and taking part in courses have helped them progress and achieve notable outcomes, including improving their employment skills, English language, and health and wellbeing. All six have moved closer to employment and integration in the UK.

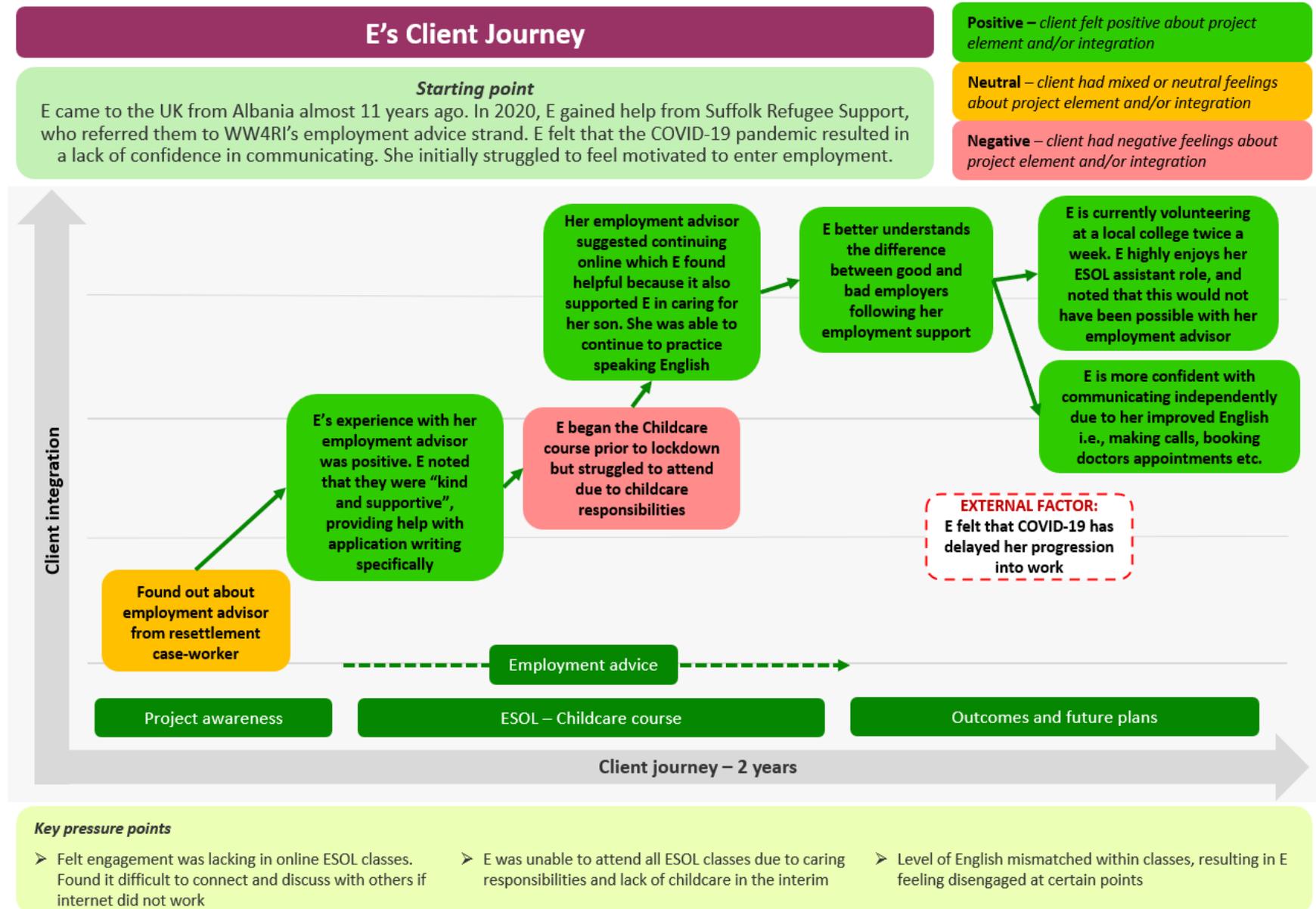
Outcomes and impacts – client journeys



Outcomes and impacts – client journeys



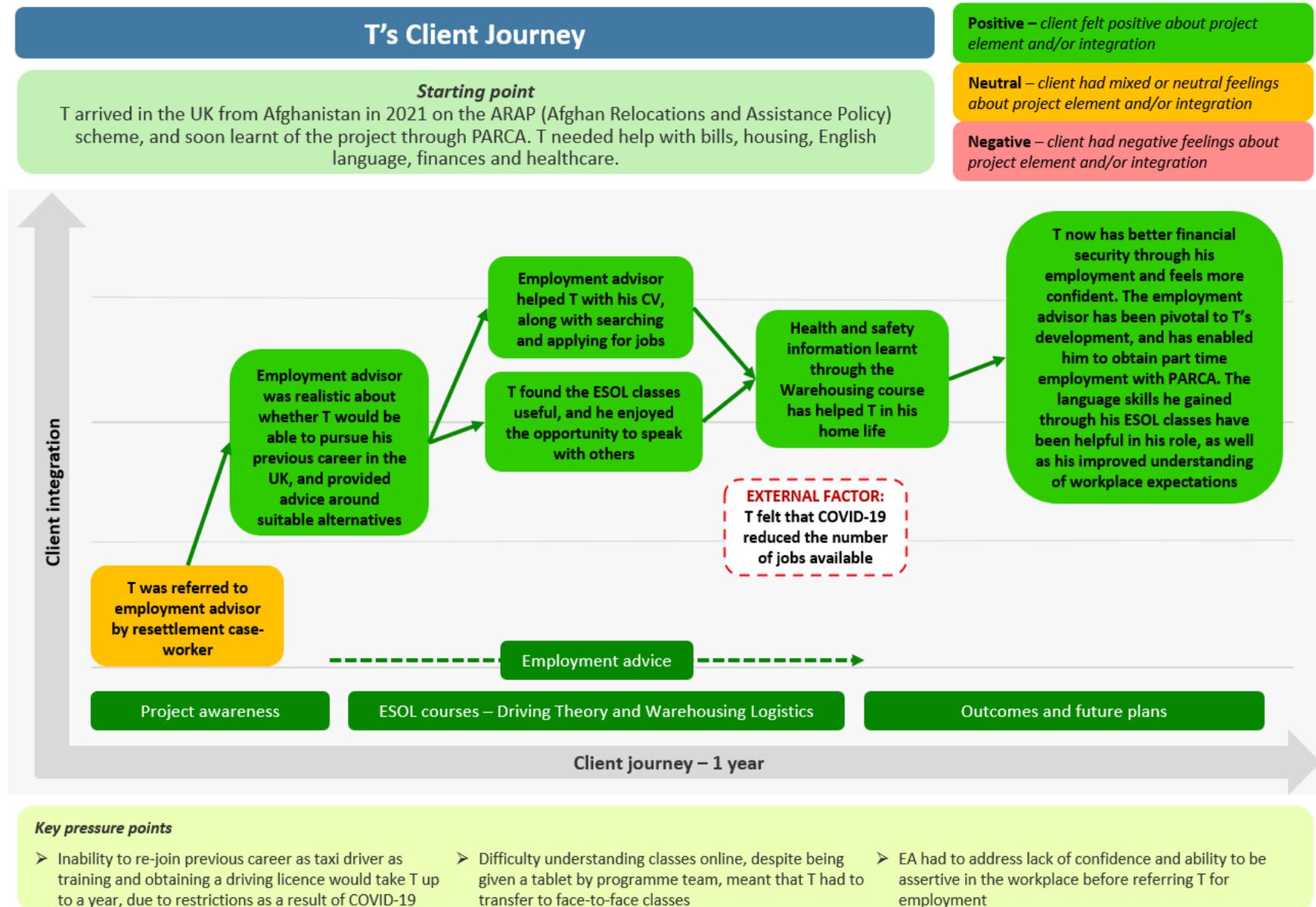
Outcomes and impacts – client journeys



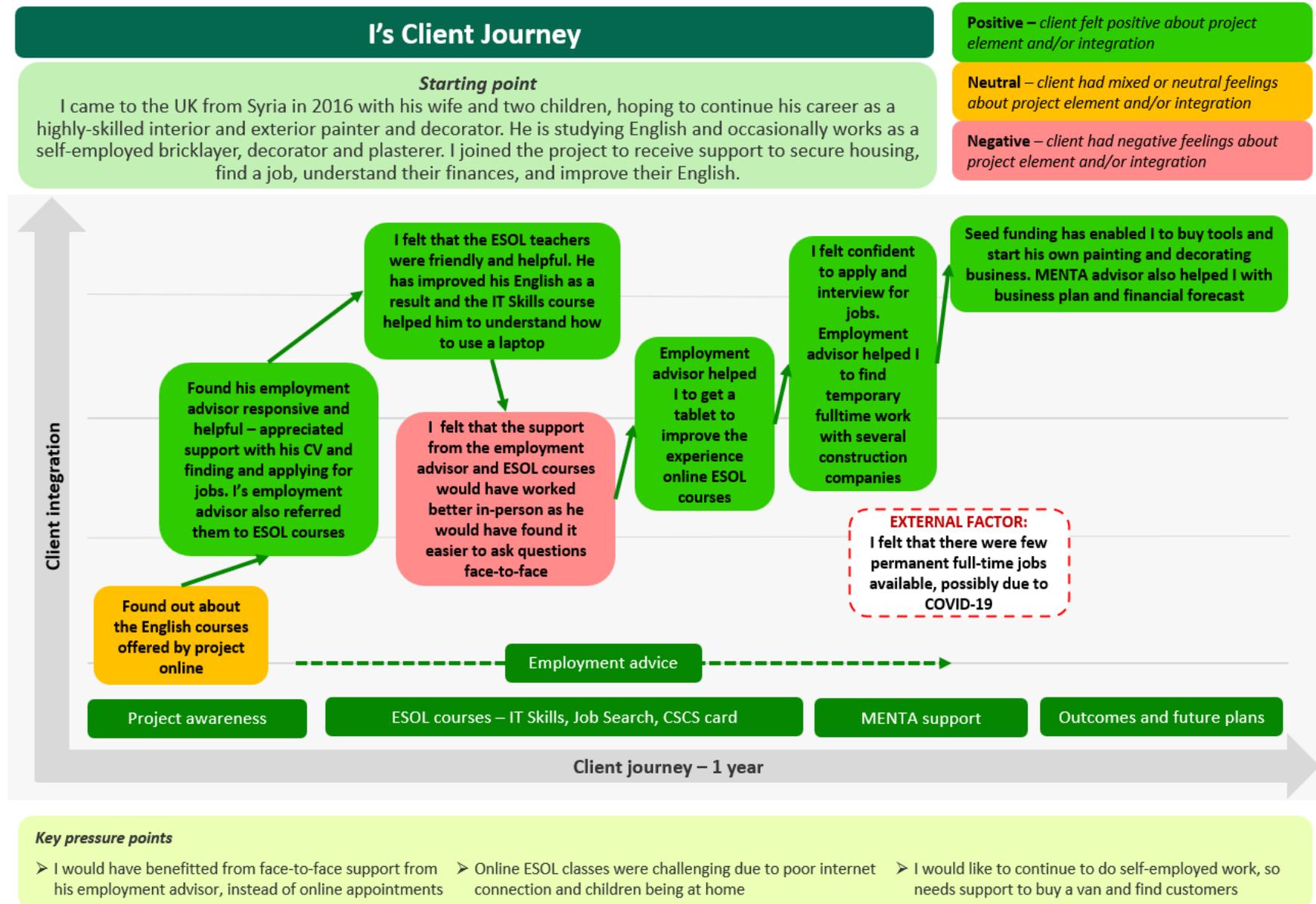
Key pressure points

- Felt engagement was lacking in online ESOL classes. Found it difficult to connect and discuss with others if internet did not work
- E was unable to attend all ESOL classes due to caring responsibilities and lack of childcare in the interim
- Level of English mismatched within classes, resulting in E feeling disengaged at certain points

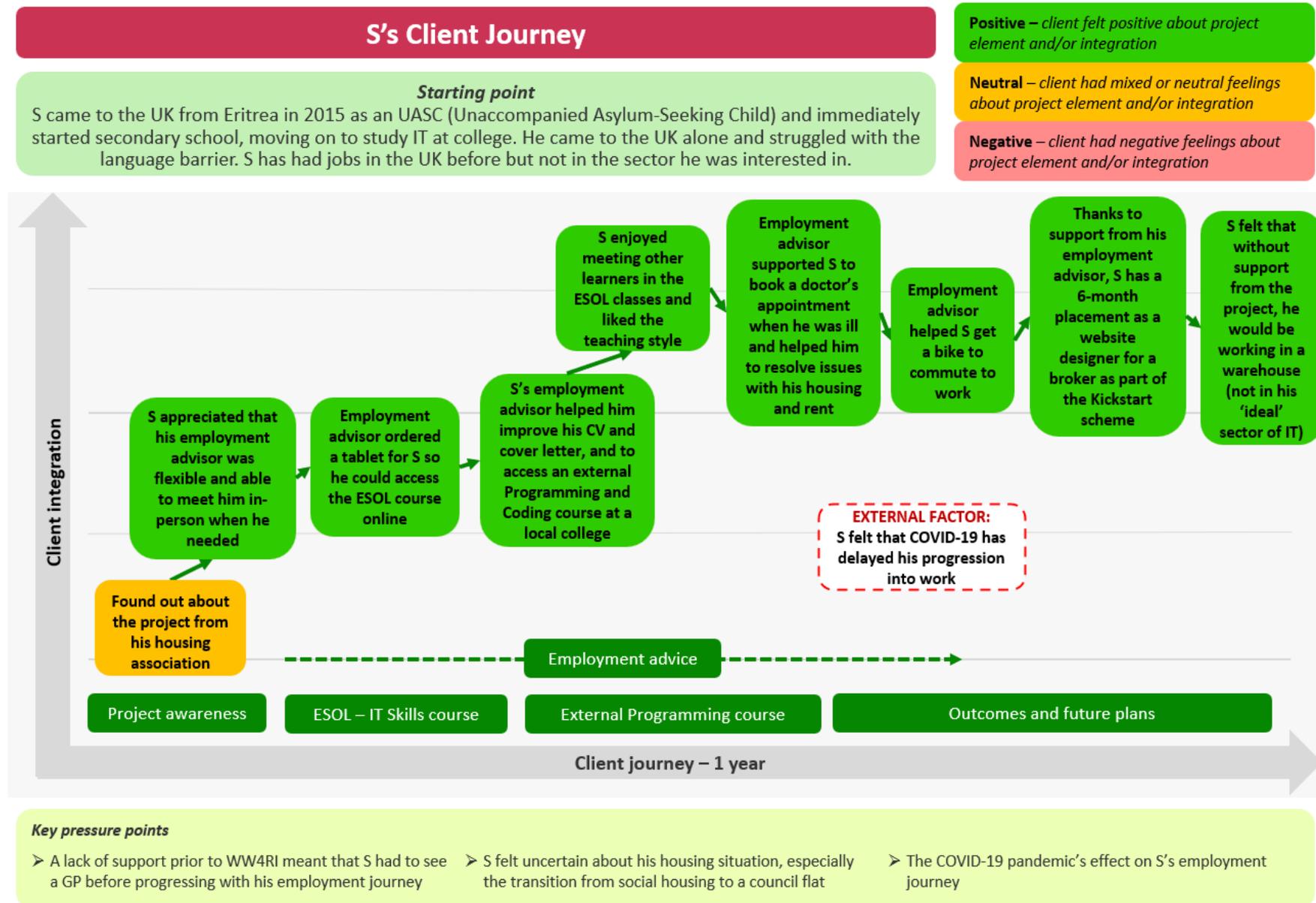
Outcomes and impacts – client journeys



Outcomes and impacts – client journeys



Outcomes and impacts – client journeys



7. CONCLUSIONS, KEY SUCCESS FACTORS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 This chapter is structured as follows:

- Conclusions.
- Key success factors.
- Recommendations.

Conclusions

- 7.2 The WW4RI project is working cohesively and supporting improved holistic support for refugees across the East of England. The project's offer is a good one and the East of England SMP has brought together an impressive group of partners across the six counties to deliver it. WW4RI is seeing excellent engagement across the three strands of delivery and is regarded positively, both by those working in the sector, by project beneficiaries and by participating employers. The evidence indicates that the project is achieving many of the outcomes and impacts set out in its logic model and, overall, is clearly supporting the successful integration of refugees in the East of England.
- 7.3 Potentially there is more that could be done, building on work so far, through strengthening the consistency and depth of partnership working, supporting the strands to become more cohesive, underpinned and informed by more use of project-wide data gathering and collation as well as extending the availability of wellbeing support across all six participating counties. Reflecting on the successes and challenges of the current model is clearly important in shaping the work of partners moving forwards and in building the framework of best practice for those working in refugee integration.
- 7.4 WW4RI is widely regarded as a valuable project and a great amount of learning, expertise and constructive relationships have developed, creating firm foundations for a wider infrastructure of refugee support across the EELGA area. Hopefully the learning and the progress it represents can now be built upon further, especially in light of the increasing need for refugee support. It is also hoped that the project will be successful in receiving successor funding so that this important work can continue to develop.

Key success factors

- 7.5 Consultees identified various factors underpinning the project delivery which contribute to its success in achieving outcomes, many of which are discussed throughout the report. Although different key success factors contributed to the different delivery strands, there were some general factors which can be identified which allowed the partners to work effectively together. For example, consultees felt that **positive relationships between partners** are a critical aspect of successful referrals, as strong communication between staff members is essential, due to the complexity of clients' needs. Furthermore, consultees reported that **a shared sense of purpose** and **the clear common goal of moving refugees towards work** has been critical to the development of positive partnership working. **Flexibility and a dynamic approach to project delivery** are also key, due to the changing nature of refugee arrivals. .

Employment support strand key success factors

- 7.6 The **commitment and passion of employment advisors** are key factors in the project's success in achieving employment outcomes for clients, as well as the positive relationships they are able to establish with clients. Employment advisors felt that a **patient and sensitive approach** is essential to

supporting refugees towards work and highlighted the importance of taking the time to build trusting relationships with clients, in order to understand their needs and any specific barriers they face in gaining employment and to build their confidence.

- 7.7 In addition, that **trusting relationship between client and employment advisor** is considered essential in allowing employment advisors to challenge perspectives clients might have which create obstacles to finding work, such as a fear of risk leading to a preference to stay on benefits or reluctance to access wellbeing support. It is also important that advisors have the knowledge (or know who to refer to) to be able to support clients in other areas of their lives, such as with debt and finances.
- 7.8 Employment advisors also noted the benefits of **connecting new clients with those a few steps ahead, who have already or are close to securing employment**, as this ‘modelling of behaviour’³⁷ from someone similar to themselves can be a motivating factor for clients and help to curb levels of dropout.
- 7.9 Employment advisors’ focus on **flexibility in their offer to beneficiaries** continues to be a strong success factor. They perform well in tailoring their advice on courses, work placements and employment opportunities. They provide flexible support in moving towards work, by providing help with CVs, job applications as well as with other aspects of refugees’ lives such as healthcare and housing. Essentially, they offer or signpost to whatever an individual client needs most in order to be able to integrate into life in the UK. They also offer a flexible, informal style to meeting with their clients, through a combination of short or more in-depth meetings and are open to phone, online or face-to-face appointments, based on the needs of the individual.
- 7.10 It is clear that **close communication** between the management team, employment advisors and clients on the ESOL courses is vital to ensuring the uptake of work placements. There is evidence to suggest that in-person ESOL classes may support a greater uptake of work placements, where employment advisors are able to visit and **speak directly to clients about placement opportunities**.

ESOL strand key success factors

- 7.11 Several consultees highlighted the **recruitment of volunteers** as a key success factor of the project’s ESOL strand. Both ESOL teacher and partner manager consultees felt that volunteers had been crucial to achieving outcomes, allowing teachers to deliver lessons more tailored to the needs and goals of different learners. **Breakout rooms** facilitated by volunteers not only present each learner with more opportunities to speak and ask questions in an interactive way but also provide less confident learners with a safe space in which to practice their skills.
- 7.12 **Offering flexibility to clients** in terms of the courses they can enrol in and different timeslots for classes was also considered important, due to the many demands on clients’ time, including childcare responsibilities and college ESOL classes. Clients have also provided positive feedback on the **structure of ESOL courses** and how the differences in levels of English amongst participants enables students to learn from each other.

Wellbeing strand key success factors

- 7.13 **Training for both therapists and interpreters** was identified as a key factor underpinning the success of the wellbeing strand. Ongoing training and development for therapists has been particularly important to improving their knowledge of the project’s clients. Several consultees highlighted the benefits experienced by beneficiaries thanks to the **“client-led” approach**, which allows beneficiaries to receive tailored support for themselves and/or their families. Consultees felt that it has been

³⁷ Behaviour Change Wheel, Michie S., Atkins L. & West R. (2014)

particularly important to **understand the mental health stigma** that exists in some refugee communities and to package wellbeing support in different ways so as not to alienate clients, for example by asking clients about their sleep as opposed to direct questions about their mental health.

- 7.14 As well as this, providing support that was differentiated to NHS mental health provision allowed WW4RI therapists to fill a specific gap that exists where refugees are either unable or not yet ready to undergo in-depth therapy.
- 7.15 Finally, the use of interpreters, and translating workshops and course materials into different languages, has been important in **building clients' independence and agency to improve their own wellbeing** and have autonomy in their lives.

Recommendations

Project level recommendations

- 7.16 Overall, the evidence indicates that each of the strands makes a positive difference to refugees' wellbeing, employment opportunities and integration. We believe that, taken together, their cumulative impact is greater than the sum of the parts. We would suggest that project staff continue to **actively promote all strands to refugees to maximise project benefits**, underpinned by centralised training and other measures, to build shared understanding.
- 7.17 The in-person project day in November 2021 was a very positive event for celebrating successes, sharing information about the project's different strands and for staff across the various partners to better understand each other's roles, develop trust and make valuable connections. It is recommended that **more events and activities across all project strands and geographies** take place, to encourage and support greater knowledge and use of the full range of project activities. This would all contribute towards creating a more joined-up network of refugee support across the EELGA area.
- 7.18 In the spirit of reinforcing the sense of shared purpose between partners, several mechanisms have been suggested to improve partnership working. **Opportunities to connect with other partner organisations and members of staff** are valued and these should continue. A regular meeting for partner managers would help to make sure that all organisations can share learning and feel part of the wider project. Feedback indicates that **space on agendas** at meetings is critical, for staff to raise issues and feel listened to, to share approaches and learning. The open and supported sharing of challenges and identifying solutions across organisations and strands helps to ensure project fidelity and guards against 'mission drift'.
- 7.19 A common challenge mentioned across all delivery strands was the need for frontline staff to understand the particular needs and challenges of refugees to the UK. Both employment advisors and ESOL teachers suggested further training to better understand the client cohort(s) and the need for **centralised training for all frontline staff**. As well as supporting staff's development in their roles, centralised training could provide a further platform for team members from different organisations and delivery strands to connect, creating a greater sense of shared purpose and ways of working.
- 7.20 Better understanding and use of the **centralised project database** would allow staff working on the same delivery strands but with different partner organisations to share learning and resources, for example effective teaching resources for the ESOL strand. The existing database could be used as a central point for sharing details about partners' roles and activities and the contact details of project staff – helping to underpin sharing and the pooling of expertise. The use of a project database to share contact details would be subject to meeting GDPR regulations. This could support improved partnership working and more successful referrals; employment advisors already report greater effectiveness when they are able to be in direct contact with therapists and teachers.

- 7.21 It would be beneficial to collect and share more **monitoring data** across the project, principally **key outcome measures** that could be collated from all clients. These includes: numbers proceeding beyond initial employment advisor session; assessed ESOL level on completing the project and/or a rating of language skills before and after support; information on whether clients who are already employed gain a better job or one more suited to their skills and interests; and ratings of employability skills (and potentially other transferrable skills) before and after the project, and wellbeing before and after the project. It would also be useful to track the overall length of client engagement, as duration, as well as intensity, can affect outcomes.
- 7.22 Feedback indicated that there was a lack of **clarity at the outset about client eligibility** for the project and how to **identify and mark the end of participation**. We understand that the issue has been reviewed and there has been a move towards ‘graduating’ clients from the project to allow more space for new clients. Using the ‘graduation’ as a point to collect data from clients would be useful moving forwards. Improvements in this area will support consistency and ultimately enable deeper assessment of the difference WW4RI is making, which, in turn, will help to support the securing of future funding.
- 7.23 Given the benefits of word-of-mouth in recommending the project to others and the trust that this can build with new clients, the project should consider **action to ensure that clients are more aware of the WW4RI brand**. This has the potential to reinforce the project’s publicity efforts and to broaden awareness and reach, potentially increasing referrals. The team are aware of this and want to have more focus on marketing, awareness and branding in future. They have included this element in the bid for the successor project.

Delivery strand recommendations

Employment strand

- 7.24 To help overcome challenges to achieving consistency across partners, consideration should be given to the **appointment of an employment advisor manager**. This role would sit within the project team and be responsible for coordinating advisors, managing caseloads, advising on and overseeing referrals as well as coordinating training and development. This would support the employment delivery strand to establish greater consistency and help the project to identify and collect learning more systematically.
- 7.25 Allowing **sufficient time at the beginning** of clients’ engagement with the project is critical and needs to be protected since it provides the time and space for employment advisors to understand the whole person and the particularity of each refugee’s story. This allows people to feel understood and builds trust, providing a firm foundation from which to make progress on the journey towards work and integration. In a similar vein, the value of **face-to-face meetings**, particularly at the beginning of engagement, should be emphasised whenever possible to help build relationships and trust.
- 7.26 A key challenge for the employment strand is the pressure felt by the employment advisors due to their caseload, who provide in-depth, bespoke support to refugees, which is often very time-consuming. A factor in these high caseloads is that there is no set “exit” for clients. **Creating a policy on client endings**, for example a tool to identify when a client is ready to move on from the project, could support employment advisors to feel more confident closing client cases and ensuring that clients are ending the project at the right moment. At this stage an **exit interview** should be used to collect data on the difference WW4RI is making to individuals and provide feedback on project delivery to underpin learning and development.

7.27 It would also be valuable to try more **promotion of placement opportunities** to encourage participation, leading to course completion. Promotion to project staff and clients could help, providing more information to both. We suggest a modelling or social-proofing approach is taken – *‘if you can see it, you can be it’* – sharing good news stories about a range of refugees whom clients can identify with and who have successfully completed placements and moved on.

ESOL and skills strand

7.28 A key challenge for the delivery of the ESOL and skills strand is the starting level of language of some clients, which is often too low for learners to keep up with or benefit from course content. To overcome this, a **common ESOL assessment tool** could be used by employment advisors when referring clients to the ESOL strand. This would support employment advisors to feel more confident in their ESOL referrals and potentially reduce the rate of dropout from ESOL and skills courses. It would also provide an opportunity to identify more appropriate language courses for clients to improve their level of English before joining one of WW4RI’s courses. This suggestion has been taken on board by the team and scoping is taking place to find an appropriate ESOL screening tool.

7.29 Given the increased flexibility provided by online learning, the ESOL providers should ensure clients are aware they can access **ESOL and skills resources in between lessons**. This would empower clients to continue their learning independently, supporting learners with a higher starting level to gain more from courses. However, where clients are still struggling with virtual lessons, efforts should be made to ensure that they are not excluded by the sharing of resources online.

7.30 Clearly the use of volunteers in increasing the capacity of teachers and engagement with those in classes has proven successful. Therefore, potentially more could be done moving forwards to **build in resource for supporting and developing volunteers**, including the provision of training for volunteers, and exploring the best model for integrating volunteering roles into the project. This could also apply to the project outside of ESOL to further support integration, via a ‘buddy’ scheme for example.

7.31 There is a recognised gap in the provision for refugees with a lower starting level of English. Many refugees need to seek work or are keen to work as soon as they arrive in the UK, regardless of their level of English, so it would be helpful for them to be aware of their employment rights. There is a noticeable need for **language courses for refugees with lower levels of English**; these would support refugees’ journeys into work and integration into the UK. These suggestions have been incorporated into the project’s future plans for lower level ‘integration’ ESOL courses and the 2022 summer schools.

7.32 There is a balance to be achieved between the demand and supply of sector-specific courses and considering value for money and efficiencies across the project. It seems there is appetite for **further ESOL courses focusing on different sectors**, although it will be important to take a balanced approach to this and to consider the extent of the demand alongside efficiencies and ensuring value for money. This is particularly true given the characteristics of more recently arrived refugees and those who are expected to be arriving shortly, many of whom are more likely to be interested in higher-level, tailored support. The project team is aware of this and wishes to dedicate more resource towards **higher-level skills support** in the successor project.

7.33 In addition to skills and sector-specific courses, there is a potential need for **an ESOL course focused on UK culture, employment and systems more generally**. This would particularly benefit refugees newly arrived in the UK who may be struggling with “culture shock”, which needs to be overcome before they can start to look for work with confidence and interact with others in the community. It would also support those who wish to go into a ‘niche’ sector, who are already highly qualified in a specific sector and/or wish to start their own business, to further improve their English.

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- 7.34 As the project focus is not just to get refugees into work but also to help those in precarious or less-suitable employment to secure a job that better reflects their skills and interests, one suggestion is that this could be via **more courses outside of working hours**, namely at evenings or weekends to enable these clients to attend.

Wellbeing strand

- 7.35 Further wellbeing training for employment advisors could support them to feel more confident to integrate conversations about mental health into work with clients and to identify appropriate referrals effectively. Additional training could help advisors to identify signs of trauma and anxiety and to ensure that they are referring correctly and in a timely way. The team have offered this to all EAs and ESOL teachers, however attendance was poor so did not represent good value for money. It would be interesting to **explore the reasons for low attendance** and how the value of this training could be further communicated to the delivery staff.
- 7.36 It would also be useful for the employment advisors to have greater understanding of the type of therapy delivered by the wellbeing strand and clarity about who it works for. **Workshops run by therapists** to explain the mental health needs and challenges of the client group have already proved helpful. Nevertheless, there are issues associated with capacity and **greater therapist provision** if available, would help to reduce waiting lists and allow clients to make progress.