

Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration

Interim Evaluation Report

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ERS Bristol Office

48 Corn St
Bristol
BS1 1HQ

T: 0117 927 3401

E: bristol@ers.org.uk

www.ers.org.uk

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Rationale and design..... | 10 |
| 3. Progress | 16 |
| 4. Management and processes | 18 |
| 5. Delivery of support | 22 |
| 6. Outcomes and impacts | 34 |
| 7. Conclusions, key success factors and recommendations | 49 |

Executive Summary

Introduction

- E.1 The Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration (WW4RI) project is 90% funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) and 10% from local councils and CCGs supporting refugee resettlement; funding for this evaluation is provided by The Bell Foundation. WW4RI 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 ten project's partners are East of England Local Government Association Strategic Migration Partnership (lead partner), Essex Integration, the Refugee Council, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk Refugee Support, EPUT Health Outreach NHS, PARCA, GLADCA, MENTA and Concept Training. There are also two subcontracted partners, WEA and BRASS.
- E.2 ERS Ltd was commissioned in May 2021 to evaluate Phase 1 of the WW4RI project. This interim report summarises the progress on delivery to date, emerging outcomes, and recommendations. Primary research took place in mid-to-late 2021, this included consultations with 11 AMIF team members and partner organisation managers, six focus groups with 21 frontline workers (therapists and employment advisors), an e-survey of ESOL teachers, consultations with 32 project beneficiaries and consultations with five wider stakeholders.

Project rationale and context

- E.3 The WW4RI project was inspired by earlier initiatives to improve refugee integration by reducing the time needed to access the labour market and find appropriate work. 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 holistically tackle barriers to integration.
- E.4 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 signpost them to other forms of support. The project's 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 they offer work placements with local employers.
- E.5 Skills courses, where beneficiaries can improve their IT skills or learn driving theory, are also available. In addition, MENTA provides support for those wishing to start a business, including those who have previously run businesses in their country of origin. 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 expertise.

Progress

- E.6 WW4RI is performing very well against most of its AMIF reporting targets. The numbers of beneficiaries meeting an employment advisor (490), accessing wellbeing support (164), and registering for ESOL and Skills courses and/or the refugee entrepreneurship programme (298), are exceeding targets. However, the number of beneficiaries accessing work placements has adversely

been affected by delays with the project, due to COVID-19 and sector-specific courses not being able to start until Q5. Some 20 work placements have now been organised for those who have graduated from the project's sector-specific courses..

Management and processes

- E.7 The management of the WW4RI project is widely praised by consultees. 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 has been highlighted, with communication improving throughout the project's operation, as processes have been refined. However, at times it has been difficult for the project team to ensure consistently clear communication about eligibility and project aims, due to the large number of partners involved, staff having worked on similar projects previously with different aims, changes in personnel and the limitations on face to face to meetings because of COVID.
- E.8 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 may be more scope to encourage information sharing and collaboration between partners, to better promote understanding and cohesiveness across WW4RI.
- E.9 To date (Dec 2021) monitoring and reporting processes have worked well throughout the project and the team has a good understanding of what is needed. Internal referrals are a key element, 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.10 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, 97 per cent of the beneficiaries consulted stated that they are happy or very happy with the support received (n=32). 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 some budget for volunteers and could still explore offering support to cope with the cultural shock that many refugees may experience as new arrivals to the UK.
- E.11 Advisors within the employment strand were commended by clients for being approachable, caring, 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. Challenges to employment support include differing levels of client motivation, qualifications not 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.
- E.12 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 and Childcare.

- E.13 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. The enterprise support has been highlighted as an effective one-to-one approach of providing tailored business advice, though there have been some concerns from clients about slow rates of progress.
- E.14 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, though efforts are made consistently to address this sensitively. Other challenges have stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic, with online delivery impeding the building of relationships and trust between clients and therapists. The need for wellbeing support is clear; the strand is not available to adults in Bedfordshire, consultees noted the growing waiting list and clients in some counties must endure long waiting times because of limited staff capacity.
- E.15 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 beneficiaries looking for job opportunities or to start their own businesses, as well as affecting WW4RI staff looking for work placements.

Outcomes and impacts

- E.16 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', such as cultural understanding, digital skills, and financial stability and provided many beneficiaries with 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.
- E.17 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. Many reported improved English language skills and greater confidence when speaking to neighbours and healthcare professionals.
- E.18 Beyond employment support, 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

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

beyond the project. As much of the project support has been online and with IT skills forming part of the core curriculum, many clients also reported improved IT skills.

- E.19 Clients also highlighted improved health and wellbeing, a stronger sense of safety, better social inclusion and their ability to make informed choices. Many adult and child clients accessing wellbeing support reported the lessening of their mental health problems. Delivery staff and stakeholders have had opportunities to learn about other organisations in the region working with refugees, connecting, networking and strengthening working relationships.
- E.20 Many refugees would be adversely affected by the removal of the WW4RI support system. 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 to individual clients. 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.21 The WW4RI project is working well in providing 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. Successor projects will benefit from the learnings around best practice and challenges identified within this report. Emerging 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.

- E.22 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
- A centralised project database to share learning, resources and contact information
- The collection of more monitoring data in order to better evaluate outcomes
- 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.23 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
- Encouraging clients' independent learning through availability of resources outside of lessons
- ESOL courses focusing on a wider variety of sectors, as well as 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
- An increase in therapy provision across the region
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is the interim evaluation of the Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration (WW4RI) project, commissioned from ERS Ltd by the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership. 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

- 1.2 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 well enough to be economically active is the most significant step towards becoming integrated. It is managed by the East of England Local Government Association Strategic Migration Partnership (EELGA SMP), with nine other partners and two subcontractors delivering support. In total, WW4RI aims to support 600-650 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.
- 1.3 The project's rationale acknowledges that there are integration-related issues with the demand for labour. Its design takes account of the fact that employers may be apprehensive about recruiting refugees, due to employers' own lack of awareness and knowledge of refugees as well as limited understanding of their qualifications and permission to work. Ensuring employers are better informed and providing support, while also bridging the gap with the refugee community could help to overcome barriers to refugees' employment.
- 1.4 WW4RI is funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), with funding for this evaluation from The Bell Foundation. The budget for the project's delivery and other financial information is found in Appendix B.
- 1.5 WW4RI is delivered across six counties in the East of England, comprising Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Suffolk, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Alongside EELGA SMP, the other nine partners 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 two subcontracted organisations, WEA and BRASS.
- 1.6 Most of the partners and BRASS are caseworker agencies for the refugee resettlement programme. The caseworkers refer their clients for support from either an employment advisor who assesses their skills, referring them to additional support via the project's ESOL and Skills strands or to a well-being therapist. The Employment Advisers continue working and supporting clients on a one-to-one basis as they grow through completing project activities.

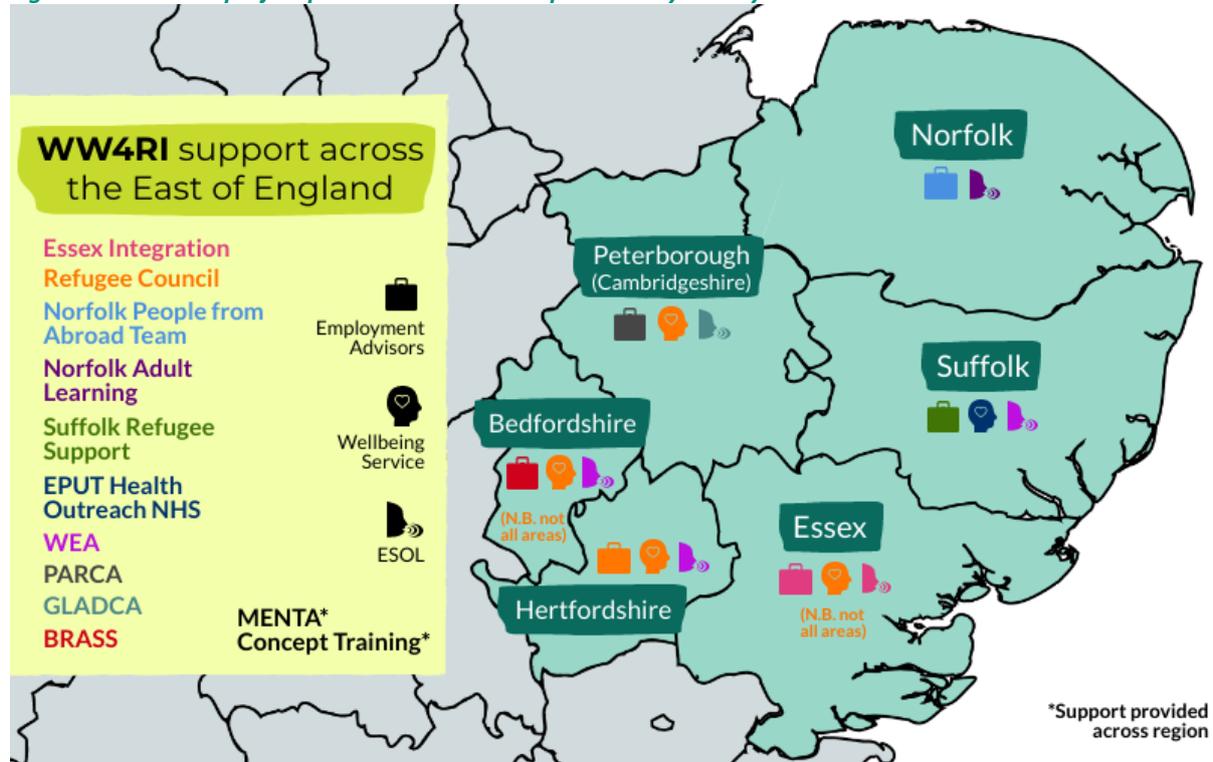
Project delivery and structure

- 1.7 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 well-being support.
- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 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 and benefit most. The language tuition is employment-focused, to improve language skills specifically in relation to work. 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).
 - 1.10 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 more information).
 - 1.11 Along with these sector-specific courses, there are also five core skills courses 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 can then be referred to the skills and sector-specific courses, creating a pipeline of project beneficiaries and allowing them to continue to make progress.
 - 1.12 There are opportunities to gain a Construction Skills Certification, commonly known as a Site Safety card or CSCS card for work in the construction industry, and 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.
 - 1.13 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 may have experienced. Therapists can help refugees to develop coping strategies for PTSD, anxiety, depression and 'survivor guilt'. They can also help beneficiaries adjust to their new surroundings and 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. Overall, the wellbeing strand has a target to support 280 beneficiaries across project delivery.
 - 1.14 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 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 on WW4RI.
 - 1.15 In practice, given the different partners and subcontractors involved in project delivery and their areas of operation in trying to build the network of support for refugees, the full range of WW4RI support

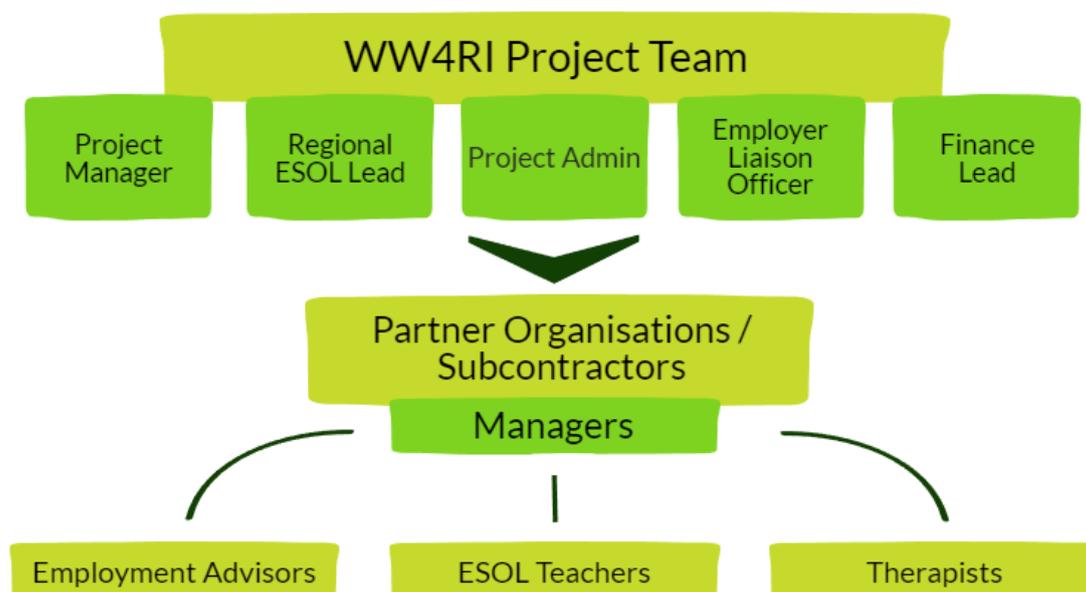
is not distributed evenly across the six East of England counties as present. For instance, in Norfolk, currently there is no wellbeing support available. Figure 1.1 below maps WW4RI support provision, showing the organisations working in each county and the types of support provided.

Figure 1.1: WW4RI project partners and services provided by county



1.16 The team from the SMP leading the WW4RI AMIF-funded project (referred to as the WW4RI project team throughout) provide oversight of the partner organisations and support strands across the region. Each partner and subcontractor has their own manager who leads teams working on WW4RI, ultimately reporting to the SMP team. 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.

Figure 1.2: WW4RI project team



Project evaluation

- 1.17 WW4RI aims to establish and understand best practice in providing support for refugees, as well as to inform and influence future delivery and policy. In May 2021, ERS was commissioned by EELGA SMP to undertake an independent evaluation of Phase 1 of the project. This interim evaluation report summarises progress on the delivery of WW4RI to date, including its impact on beneficiaries, and identifies learning and strengths and challenges of the project.
- 1.18 An initial review of project documents and data was undertaken, based on information provided by the WW4RI project team. This included:
- Monitoring and evaluation data
 - Funding application
 - Reports and policy briefings
 - Internal information documents
- 1.19 Following the project's 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.
- 1.20 Once the tools were developed, the following primary research was undertaken:
- Telephone interviews with 11 WW4RI project team members and managers of partner organisations
 - 6 focus groups covering 21 frontline workers – therapists and employment advisors
 - An e-survey of 10 ESOL teachers
 - Consultations with 32 beneficiaries (18 individual interviews and 3 focus groups² covering 14 beneficiaries)
 - Telephone interviews with 5 wider stakeholders

Limitations of the evaluation

- 1.21 The evaluation process included the identification of risks and limitations related to the complexity of project delivery. Fewer social distancing restrictions were in operation at the time of most evaluation activity; therefore, some consultations were able to take place in-person. However, in order to protect researchers, the study team and beneficiaries, online sessions and telephone interviews were carried out where face-to-face research was not possible.
- 1.22 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 between beneficiaries who did not require interpreters, which can affect the detail and quality of responses at times. 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.
- 1.23 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

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

different support that beneficiaries were accessing, in order to ensure feedback and attribution of outcomes pertained specifically to WW4RI support.

- 1.24 Additionally, given the nature of many of their experiences, interviewing refugees requires sensitivity to minimise the risk of revisiting past trauma. This can be challenging and ERS researchers have taken this into account at all times and sought to avoid such risk.

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
- Demand
- Rationale behind the project strands
- Rationale behind the WW4RI partnership
- Objectives of the project

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 STEP programme⁴, Tapping Potential UNHCR⁵, 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 sufficiently 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 regional infrastructure 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 for specific courses and interventions.
- 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 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 with their mental health and wellbeing. In addition, they can be signposted to assistance 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 in 2.2)^{10,11}, this type of comprehensive long-term integration support can result in refugees feeling more welcome in the UK encouraging 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).

¹⁰ [The ELAINE project](#), Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union (2016).

¹¹ [Supporting Syrian Refugees in the UK](#), World Jewish Relief.

in a holistic, cohesive way which is tailored to the individual. It is hoped that this will help beneficiaries to become more able to support themselves in the long run, allowing them to live full, 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 the project is a positive factor, allowing time for beneficiaries to progress and build rapport with advisors, teachers and therapists.
- 2.8 The project aims to support beneficiaries 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, by helping beneficiaries to achieve structure in their daily lives and to act independently. A stable routine in work and living circumstances increases the possibility of fostering engagement with employment and other services.¹² 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 sustained¹³ as well as promoting confidence and financial wellbeing.

Demand

- 2.9 Evidence of demand for the project was outlined in the funding bid to the AMIF funders, the 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 1000 had been resettled in the region.¹⁴
- 2.10 Furthermore, in January 2019 asylum accommodation statistics showed that the East of England had 710 asylum seekers. Some 400 asylum seekers are granted refugee status each year in the UK, 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 economically inactive.
- 2.11 In addition, in January 2019, councils in the East of England were looking after 513 16- and 17-year-old unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and there were a further 700 former UASC in the region.¹⁵ Many organisations involved with refugee resettlement have an age threshold of 24 years and older. This has led to a gap in the support available for younger refugees.
- 2.12 Since the project's development, the demand for specific 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 over 1100 by Q3 2021. In addition, the East of England has seen an increase in asylum seekers, with at least 1268 in September 2021.^{16,17} This significant increase also applies to UASC, of whom there were 655 in December 2021, alongside a total of 1100 former UASC.¹⁸ While many refugees display

¹² [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

¹³ [The Drivers of Employee Engagement](#), Institute for Employment Studies (2004).

¹⁴ [Asylum and Resettlement datasets](#), UK Home Office (2021).

¹⁵ *East of England Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Application for Funding* (2019).

¹⁶ [Immigration statistics year ending September 2021](#), UK Home Office (2021).

¹⁷ NB These figures only include asylum seekers in receipt of Section 95 support.

¹⁸ East of England Strategic Migration Partnership, 2022.

an eagerness to work¹⁹, 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'²⁰)²¹, further reinforcing the need for employment and language support tailored to refugees.

Rationale underpinning the project strands

Employment strand

- 2.13 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

- 2.14 The ESOL and Skills strand of the project responds to refugees' critical need for language support.²² The ESOL system in the UK is currently facing a range of pressing 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.²³
- 2.15 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 into 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 suited to their preferences and skills (rather than just 'any' job).

Developing courses to address gaps in provision

- 2.16 WW4RI ESOL support is designed to bridge the gap between basic ESOL (lower than entry 3) and higher level, accredited courses. The Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) placement scheme of the Department of 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. WW4RI therefore provides a steppingstone for refugees to progress to accredited courses.
- 2.17 Additionally, more transferable skills courses have been included as part of WW4RI's ESOL and Skills support. 'Study Skills', for instance, helps beneficiaries with life planning, which was a focus identified by the region's SMP as lacking in the ESOL system.²⁴ 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 licence, potentially improving their employment opportunities.

¹⁹ [Tapping Potential: Guidelines to Helping British Businesses Employ Refugees](#), UNHCR (2019).

²⁰ NB Reaching Entry level 3 (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).

²¹ National Findings from the Autumn 2020 Monitoring Data Collection, UK Home Office (2021).

²² [Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework](#), Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2008).

²³ [Big changes ahead for adult education funding?](#) Institute of Fiscal Studies (2021).

²⁴ [ESOL & skills courses for WW4RI project](#), EELGA SMP.

Developing courses in response to beneficiary needs and the job market

- 2.18 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 the aspiration to work with children, but also in 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, PTAs, classroom management, supporting different needs and the context of the UK’s school system and culture.
- 2.19 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 provision. The ‘Confident Women’ course was therefore adapted from the ‘Study Skills’ course and offered exclusively to women, taught by women.
- 2.20 Employment advisors also considered that a customer service-related course would be useful for beneficiaries, based both on clients’ interests and likely vacancies – this has also been developed into a sector-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 has been modified to become ‘Preparing to Work with Food’ since the COVID-19 lockdowns practically closed the hospitality industry, at least temporarily, so this course has not been offered.

Work placements

- 2.21 After clients have completed sector specific courses, the WW4RI employer liaison officer assists them in finding a relevant placement, in a sector which the beneficiary aspires to work in. These placements support supply and demand side needs, giving beneficiaries time to understand a sector and its ways of working, gain valuable experience resulting in a reference from a British employer, while also affording employers opportunities to gain insights into beneficiaries’ skills and potential contribution.

Enterprise support

- 2.22 Another gap in support for refugees is for those who are keen to set up their own businesses in the UK. Some refugees 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. MENTA worked on a previous pilot project providing enterprise support to refugees²⁵ and provides similar support as part of the WW4RI project. Their 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. They also aim to support individuals in building the confidence required to set up a business in a new country.
- 2.23 WW4RI has allowed refugees who were supported on the pilot project delivered prior to WW4RI to continue to receive support. The pilot covered half of the East of England (Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) and most of its participants were able to join WW4RI. Within WW4RI, MENTA has

²⁵ Refugee Entrepreneurship Pilot Project, which ended October 2020; [refugee entrepreneurship pilot - Centre for Entrepreneurs](#).

also been able to refer its clients to the other project strands. This has allowed MENTA to focus on delivering enterprise support with the assurance that beneficiaries receive appropriate support for other challenges that they are facing.

- 2.24 Lessons from the 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 require more nuanced help to understand the industry, market, or institutions in the UK.

Wellbeing strand

- 2.25 Mental health issues can prevent refugees from moving into work.²⁶ 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.
- 2.26 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.

Rationale behind the WW4RI partnership

- 2.27 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.
- 2.28 EELGA has missed out on funding opportunities in the past due to the lack of local 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.

Objectives of the project

- 2.29 WW4RI has 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.

²⁶ [Understanding Refugee Mental Health and Employment Issues](#), Journal of Social Work in the Global Community (2020).

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.²⁷

²⁷ This target will be revised in 2022.

3. PROGRESS

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

- Progress against targets
- Beneficiary participation data

Progress against targets

Table 3.1 Progress against AMIF reporting targets

| | Cumulative target to 15 Jan 2022 (Q7) | Cumulative achieved to 15 Jan 2021 (Q7) | Percentage of target achieved |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Number of skills assessments completed, and action plans created to direct each beneficiary to pathways to employment | 350 | 490 | 140% |
| Number of refugees accessing wellbeing service | 140 | 164 | 117% |
| Number of refugees register for an ESOL and Skills (E&S) 90 hours' class or high skills course (HSC) and / or refugee entrepreneurship programme (REP) | 235 | 298 | 127% |
| Number of refugees offered work placement opportunities | 120 | 20 | 17% |

3.2 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 numbers of clients the employment advisors have met with, those accessing the wellbeing service and those registering for the ESOL and Skills courses. However, it is important to note that these figures do not capture the number of refugees that maintain sustained engagement with the project. This is something that it could be useful for the project to report against.

3.3 Work placements have been affected by delays, largely COVID-19 related, and sector-specific courses not able to commence until late into Q5. This has meant that there were no course graduates until Q6 who could be offered work placements. Engagement with employers and finding opportunities has also been hampered by COVID-19.

3.4 However, the project has recently made good progress with organising work placements for graduates, with 20 placements confirmed across the six counties. Most of the graduates are from the childcare ESOL courses and so the employers are mostly schools. Schools have been greatly affected by COVID-19 and recent staff shortages due to isolation have meant that a number of placements have been postponed or do not have a confirmed start date yet. The numbers of placements offered to learners will increase in 2022 as more sector-specific classes finish. In addition, more bespoke placements will be offered, for example for graduates of the Concept construction course. The number of placements offered depends on those finishing a sector-specific course which is another limiting factor.

3.5 Table 3.2 overleaf shows the beneficiary participation data for each of the strands/combinations of the strands and across the six counties up until Q7 (15 January 2022). The data shows that engagement is relatively evenly spread across the WW4RI six counties. Some counties have higher levels of engagement in some strands over others; for example, Hertfordshire and Peterborough/Cambridgeshire have high engagement with the wellbeing strand, whereas Bedfordshire has

proportionally higher engagement with ESOL compared to other counties. This may be indicative of the success employment advisors have had in these areas related to getting beneficiaries signed up to ESOL courses. Understanding where strengths for referrals lie in the different counties could inform and facilitate further sharing of best practice.

Table 3.2 Total beneficiary participation up to Q7

| | Bedfordshire | Essex | Hertfordshire | Norfolk | Peterborough/ Cambridgeshire | Suffolk |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------|---------------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|
| EA support only | 9 | 41 | 52 | 48 | 75 | 28 |
| Wellbeing only | 12 | 11 | 72 | N/A | 44 | 26 |
| EA and MENTA | 4 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| EA, MENTA and ESOL | 5 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| EA, MENTA and Wellbeing | N/A | 1 | 0 | N/A | 0 | 0 |
| EA and ESOL | 52 | 38 | 36 | 15 | 23 | 23 |
| EA and Wellbeing | N/A | 0 | 3 | N/A | 2 | 1 |
| EA, ESOL and Wellbeing | N/A | 0 | 4 | N/A | 3 | 6 |
| TOTAL to Q7 | 82 | 103 | 169 | 73 | 156 | 86 |

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 from the partner organisations. They have been keen to build a team spirit and overcome any competition or misunderstandings between partners, understanding that individual and local circumstances vary. 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.
- 4.3 Generally, consultees praised the management of WW4RI with their feedback highlighting the learning and responsiveness that has occurred. Frontline staff reported that the project management team actively listen to any worries or queries during meetings, taking on board their 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 in the project. One staff consultee also highlighted how communication has improved throughout the lifetime of the project, as systems and processes have been refined.



There is a lot of support given by the WW4RI project team and all partners. I think there's excellent partnership and working methodology taking place
– 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 COVID19, it has sometimes been challenging 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 right balance between allowing partners to work flexibly, while also ensuring project fidelity and alignment with its original aims. Two partner consultees suggested that more could be done to help them feel better listened to and to offer 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 meet the project's eligibility criteria fully. 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 the 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. This may have led initially to some inconsistent messaging in relation to eligibility criteria.

- 4.6 Changes in personnel and the fact that some staff had worked previously on similar projects with different criteria, and the impact of COVID-19 have added to this difficulty. Subsequent efforts have been made to ensure that the eligibility criteria are fully understood by all, and that all teams understand that the project's goal is to move beneficiaries closer to suitable employment, though not necessarily into work at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.7 Since employment advisors are each embedded within their own organisation's team and county, they are currently managed within their own local teams with differing contracts (in the case of those who were employed under predecessor projects and funding), 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 help to build shared understanding and complementarity. A WW4RI project team consultee thought that the introduction of an employment advisor manager would be beneficial, acting as a single coordinating point of contact as 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 (this is discussed further in the referrals section below).
- 4.9 Regular meetings have been organised between the different partner organisations and strands involved on the project 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.
- 4.10 Strand meetings occur monthly, in which frontline workers and managers from each strand can 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 can also be a chance for attendees to discuss challenging cases and hear the perspectives of other professionals outside their own team.



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

Partnership and information sharing challenges

- 4.11 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. One frontline staff consultee suggested introducing a shared project database or online platform as a solution to this challenge. Such a platform could use the project map as a basis to access staff members' roles and contact details across WW4RI. Consultees felt this would also support smoother referrals.

- 4.12 One frontline staff consultee stated 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 effective practice with others and suggested a regular meeting specifically for partner managers to overcome this.
- 4.13 In addition, it is clear that 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, reportedly these are not well attended, possibly due to the many different pressures on employment advisors' time. One employment advisor reported turning up for a drop-in with a problem they wanted to discuss but finding no-one else present. One frontline staff consultee suggested producing a written learning log or newsletter for employment advisors to share positive stories and learning.

COVID-19 and partnership working

- 4.14 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 across the region 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.
- 4.15 When social distancing restrictions allowed, the in-person WW4RI project day for the WW4RI project team and partner managers in November 2021 was described by many attendees as a positive experience. Most consultees have reported missing the face-to-face aspect of partnership working during the pandemic, meaning the chance to sit down and talk to other professionals on the project was greatly appreciated.

Monitoring and reporting

- 4.16 WW4RI project team consultees commented that the monitoring and reporting processes have worked well. The team are 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 WW4RI project team responsive and supportive to queries.
- 4.17 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 that this could be more consistently collated across the project.

Referrals

Internal referral successes

- 4.18 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.

- 4.19 As mentioned previously, positive partnership working and effective communication between delivery strands have been essential to 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 are aware that wellbeing support is available.
- 4.20 Alongside meetings, a few frontline staff consultees have 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, to make several successful referrals to MENTA.

Internal referral challenges

- 4.21 However, as mentioned previously, promoting awareness of the work of different strands can sometimes be challenging and impact referrals. For example, some ESOL frontline staff reported that they did not know much about the project's other strands and that they were not aware if their clients were accessing support from other organisations. They acknowledged that greater understanding of the other strands would be valuable to their work and would ultimately facilitate the referral process.
- 4.22 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 work, to allow them to identify occasions when a referral to the wellbeing strand might be necessary.
- 4.23 In addition, accurately assessing clients' level of English before referring them to ESOL courses is a common challenge. Clients are often referred to the ESOL strand with entry one or two English and some have dropped out as a result of finding classes too challenging. To address this, ESOL teacher consultees felt that employment advisors could be provided with more support, guidance and resources to support referrals.

Referrals from external organisations

- 4.24 The project team has sought to ensure accessibility and promotion of project support by providing information leaflets in many languages. Leaflets have then been shared with local providers and accommodation facilities, to increase awareness of the service and the possibility of referrals. One frontline staff consultee felt that more people are becoming aware of the project thanks to this targeted publicity.
- 4.25 The WW4RI project team actively looks for opportunities to gain more external referrals to the project. Frontline staff consultees highlighted that the main referral sources can 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. Wider stakeholder consultees 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 valuable contacts to encourage referrals. However, one partner manager said that more capacity is needed within the team to ensure that employment advisors can seek out referrals, whilst continuing to provide support to clients.

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

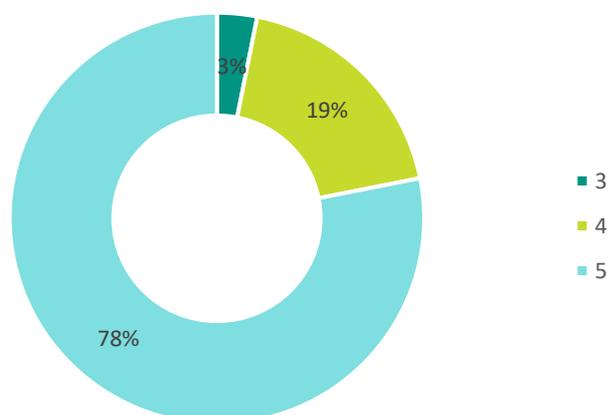
5.2 The overall model of support is generally praised. Many consultees commented that they see the strands of delivery working very well together, with synergistic value.



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, all client consultees (n=32) bar one (3 per cent) were happy with the 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: How happy clients are with the support they have received on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not very happy, 5 being very happy) n=32



5.4 The project pathway has changed slightly from what was anticipated. Initially 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.

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 migration meaning that for some periods of time only Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) were arriving in the UK. The demand and lack of alternative provision has meant that some individuals only do the therapy track but do not participate in the other strands. However, as one partner manager noted, this is still valuable in terms of early

- intervention and a longer-term outlook. For example, a 16- or 17-year-old may start with the wellbeing support then feel more ready and able to gain meaningful employment when 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 has acknowledged this and worked with the providers to schedule longer-term, less-intensive courses.
- 5.7 The most commonly reported overarching challenge to project delivery was personnel change, both within the project team and with external partners. Changes in external personnel have created challenges for EAs who rely on personal connections with partners to facilitate employment opportunities for clients. Another key challenge mentioned by several consultees was the overlap, and sometimes conflict, between the WW4RI project offer and external offers, for example ESOL courses provided by local colleges.
- 5.8 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 the 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 they have ended up playing a significant role.
 - More staff capacity could have been useful, particularly in terms of therapist provision as there are waiting lists in several counties.
 - Employment advisors' feel pressure from dealing with their caseloads, but this could in part be because there is no set "exit" point for a client. It could be helpful to have a timeframe and a way of exiting people, whilst being flexible and responsive to individual needs. This could also help to support the gathering of data at the end of a client's time on the project via an exit interview, forming part of a formal process.
 - A key aim of the project is not just to get refugees into work, but into meaningful, sustained 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. One suggestion could be more courses outside of working hours, in evenings or at weekends to enable clients who have a job to be able to attend.
- 5.9 In terms of the project's accessibility, the ESOL entry 3 (or entry 2 for summer schools) eligibility requirement for clients is discussed in further detail in the ESOL and Skills section (page 25 onwards). Further, while WW4RI is explicitly intended to help refugees gain employment, one partner manager raised the important point that refugees are affected by the benefit cap as soon as they arrive and will be impacted by it as long as they remain out of work. Often refugees need to start working for financial reasons, even if their level of English is not good enough. It could be useful for something to be provided for those who don't speak English very well but are already in work or needing to get a job immediately so that they can be made aware of their employment rights.
- 5.10 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 a bit more help with that"*. Another client consultee also commented that they lost some of their Universal Credit due to moving house and would have liked more support.

- 5.11 Further to this, one wider stakeholder also commented that many of the clients they work with have different cultural views about women, homosexuality, alcohol and boundaries and it is important to address and question these differences to better support integration. They suggested more could be done on these topics.
- 5.12 It is important to note that some clients did feel 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 due to the emphasis on getting clients “employment ready” – a possibility could be structured support on these wider areas to ensure that all clients benefit from an appreciation of cultural norms and expectations to facilitate integration.

Employment support strand

Employment support successes

- 5.13 Client feedback indicates that employment advisors offer a high-quality support service. When asked about the support from employment advisors, all client consultees stated that they were very satisfied. They liked that their employment advisors listened to them and took time to get to know them. Ten clients told us that they found their employment advisor caring, easy to contact, approachable and always willing to help; a further six felt that their employment advisor understood their needs.
- 5.14 Three clients praised how employment advisors tailored support to suit their particular needs, demonstrating careful thinking about what was most appropriate for each individual. One consultee highlighted how their employment advisor had spent over an hour getting to know them, their history, their childhood and their life before their arrival in the UK, and clearly appreciated that their employment advisor always remembered everything about their story.



Teachers got in touch with my employment advisor and they spoke about me and my level and made sure that I got on the right courses and that they were at the right level for me and my understanding – Client consultee



With my employment advisor, the organisation is 5 stars. They are fighting to get something done for me. I even say to other Syrian refugees – please listen to them to get a better life. I learned a lot from them. I definitely recommend them – Client consultee

- 5.15 Four clients described how their employment advisors go above and beyond their roles to support them. One described how whenever they need anything the advisor is always happy to help, even when they are not working. Another reported that their employment advisor had involved their own family in providing support, as they had family members with experience in the sector that the beneficiary wanted to join.
- 5.16 Alongside finding and applying for work, employment advisors are helping beneficiaries integrate in the UK by supporting them in a range of aspects of daily life. Five clients described how their employment advisors supported them in aspects including transport and finances, referrals to other support and courses, booking medical appointments including vaccinations, arranging visas and English classes for family members, putting them in touch with other people locally and providing local knowledge such as the location of halal butchers. This appears to have been very valuable, but it is also likely to put a lot of pressure and time demands on the employment advisors, so is something that needs to be carefully balanced.

- 5.17 Employment advisors having the option to provide employment support online or face-to-face is working well for beneficiaries and allows employment advisors to reach more beneficiaries. Employment advisors and beneficiaries are flexible in their approach to one-to-one meetings – they can choose the option that suits them best which allows meetings to fit around other commitments. Some beneficiaries prefer face-to-face meetings to build better relationships, while others prefer online, due to childcare commitments as well as time and money saved from not travelling. One client with a baby said that receiving support over the phone works well as travelling to appointments would be difficult. A partner manager said that the option of face-to-face or remote support helps beneficiaries to move at their own pace.



For us now, we are doing some face-to-face, where we feel the need we do it. It really helps for those that are more fragile or people that want to talk. We use zoom from home and it does work, but it's about having the option
– Partner manager consultee

Employment support challenges

- 5.18 Several external challenges exist for beneficiaries, posing obstacles for employment advisors delivering support. Six client consultees mentioned such issues. One reported not having a bank account and home address when their employment advisor had found them a suitable position, which acted as a barrier to them starting work. Beneficiaries' health can also act as a barrier. One consultee said that due to the challenges they faced with their medical conditions, they were unable to work in non-sedentary roles and, despite having good employment experience and abilities, this posed a problem for finding suitable employment.
- 5.19 The quality of or gaps in external agency support have also posed challenges. One beneficiary stated that they had not received adequate support from their social worker, and this had caused them to face challenges in finding suitable housing. Although the client knew that this was not the employment advisor's fault, they were frustrated by the lack of support with these difficulties.
- 5.20 Frontline staff commented that, as project beneficiaries are refugees rather than economic migrants, they are not always motivated to find employment. Welfare benefits can occasionally act as a disincentive to finding work and some may prioritise and have expectations of staying at home with their families over seeking employment. Two frontline staff members reported on beneficiaries' concerns about receiving a lower income from employment versus welfare benefits (especially when factoring in travel costs and/or childcare costs), and that some clients are therefore understandably, reluctant to move into work. For some these concerns are not always accurate and one frontline staff consultee said that to try and counter these concerns, they have been completing 'into work' calculations with beneficiaries and have arranged training for clients with the DWP. However, they said that some beneficiaries continue to be 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 from participation in other projects or through friends or family members. An WW4RI project team consultee wondered if more could be done in terms of the team adopting a more motivational role to encourage beneficiaries to see the benefits of working.
- 5.21 Another challenge is that some beneficiaries are already highly skilled in a specific profession, such as mechanical engineering or dentistry, but often their qualifications are not recognised in the UK. This has meant clients are not interested in the ESOL and Skills courses, or placements in other sectors, but would just like support in how to gain accreditation for their qualifications so that they are valid in the UK. Employment advisors have tried to help in several cases, but this is not always an easy or readily affordable task; gaining recognition of dentistry qualifications for example can cost thousands of

pounds. One beneficiary felt dissatisfied that project support was not able to cater to their level of experience and an employment advisor acknowledged that this could impact on beneficiaries' motivations.



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

- 5.22 Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 has led to several challenges in the delivery of employment support. One frontline staff consultee 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 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 difficult online. Consultees at both partner manager and employment advisor levels also pointed out how beneficiaries' lack of IT skills has proved a barrier to providing employment support online.
- 5.23 COVID-19 has also reduced the ability of employment advisors to reach new clients. One 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 reported that, because of fewer in-person events, opportunities for beneficiaries to learn about life in the UK and to learn English are reduced.



We have to now 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

- 5.24 COVID-19 has also affected some clients' motivations to find work. A frontline worker described how COVID-19 has meant that some are less likely to want to leave home and that they had noticed that women beneficiaries in particular did not want to go out during the pandemic.
- 5.25 As mentioned in the Progress chapter (Chapter 3), work placements were slow to start due to delays in the rollout of sector specific courses and the courses being less intensive (that is over a longer period) than envisaged. However, 20 placements have now already been confirmed for 2022. The final evaluation report in July 2022 will explore the merits and experiences of work placements in greater depth, once more have been completed.
- 5.26 The data gathered so far has highlighted several challenges in engaging both beneficiaries and employers, particularly in light of the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions. Clearly employers have been preoccupied by other concerns and the number of work placements available for beneficiaries has declined during the pandemic and so, in some counties, it has been difficult to find sufficient placements to match client demand.
- 5.27 At the same time, in other counties, placements are available but there are not enough beneficiaries to fill places. Beneficiary commitments or circumstances can act as barriers to filling 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 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 – WW4RI project team consultee

5.28 There has been a particular challenge filling placements in the warehousing sector. A WW4RI project team consultee raised concern over whether employment advisors have sufficient information to promote these opportunities effectively, even as a steppingstone into more suitable employment. It is thought that more could be done to increase advisor understanding and beneficiary motivation. A WW4RI project team consultee reported that they are already running a session with a DWP representative, designed to raise awareness about the growing warehousing industry and the variety of employment opportunities on offer, for example, office and managerial work and forklift truck driving.

ESOL and Skills support

ESOL and Skills successes

- 5.29 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 online²⁸ 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.
- 5.30 Responses about the challenges and benefits of online learning during the pandemic were mixed. Some clients and ESOL teachers preferred online classes to face-to-face delivery for the improved sense of connection these provided and more informal opportunities to practice English and exchange information. Meanwhile online delivery was reported to have several benefits: again, opportunities for discussion between learners; use of creative online learning tools and improved familiarity with IT for learners; greater accessibility of classes without the need for childcare or reliable transport, in some cases leading to improved attendance and engagement. Online delivery has an additional benefit of allowing more clients to be reached without the need for more ESOL teachers.
- 5.31 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 and these have improved attendance and engagement. The breakout rooms have also provided opportunities for learners to communicate with each other.
- 5.32 Some ESOL teachers felt that online classes have improved attendance for learners across a range of circumstances, for example caring for young children and living remotely. This has been particularly beneficial for women, who generally have more household responsibilities, and for clients in rural areas where public transport is limited. 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.

²⁸ The WEA were contracted to provide 100% online and will continue to do so.

5.33 Ensuring that classes are accessible to the cohort 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 clients are also enrolled in, had supported a wider range of people to attend. The modular structure of courses is generally considered a positive as it enables clients to easily fit classes into their lives. For courses to succeed, ESOL teachers need to be aware of the complex nature of clients' lives and be flexible and adaptable when their circumstances change. One client suggested making resources such as vocabulary lists available between lessons to support more flexible learning.



Intensive [courses are] not better. A lot of things are happening in our students' lives – college, children. Even twice a week is a lot for them, sometimes even then they can't be there for the whole time – appointments, exams. So, they might just say they can be present for half an hour – ESOL teacher consultee



The online course is really helpful for me because I haven't got enough time to go out. At the same time, I can hold my baby and feed her and go to the online class – Client consultee

5.34 Alongside teachers, other consultees felt that a key downside of the summer school was that intensive courses during the school summer holidays are less accessible to refugees with childcare responsibilities. However, the offer of a summer school has been 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. For one client the summer school was effective in improving their English and confidence, allowing them to progress on to the project's ESOL classes. One frontline staff consultee also noted that communication between ESOL teachers and employment advisors had improved as a result of the summer school.



[The summer school] was helpful because for a long time I couldn't speak English with anyone because of COVID. I couldn't go to college when COVID started. I was pregnant and after that, I went to this course. It was really helpful because it helped me speak English – Client consultee

5.35 Client consultees provided positive feedback on the impact of the ESOL courses on their level of English, which is discussed further in the Outcomes and Impacts chapter (Chapter 6). Essential English courses were felt to be so useful by teachers and partner managers that one partner manager consultee suggested repeating them if it were possible to do so within the project's budget or creating a process for referring people to courses in different counties when no spaces are available locally.

5.36 In terms of skills courses, client consultees found the Driving Theory, IT Skills and Job Search Skills courses particularly useful and were hopeful that the skills learned on these courses would support them to secure employment. Two consultees felt positive that the Driving Theory course, for example, had contributed to them securing their driving licences and would support them finding work in future.

5.37 In terms of sector-specific courses, the Childcare course was praised by client consultees as equipping them with useful knowledge about children's development and the education system in the UK. This is discussed further in the Outcomes and Impacts chapter (Chapter 7). Other sector-specific courses, such as the Warehousing course, were not as popular with clients and therefore rarely scheduled. To mitigate attendance issues in future, a WW4RI project team consultee recommended promoting placement opportunities as an incentive to complete the sector-specific courses.

ESOL and Skills challenges

- 5.38 A key challenge for delivery of the ESOL strand has been the entry three language requirements. Some teachers felt that setting entry three English as the prerequisite excludes many of the local refugee population. At the same time, teachers felt that progressing those below entry three would make achieving project targets too challenging in the timeframe. Although there are government-provided ESOL courses to bring clients up to entry three, teachers agreed that there is a need for more courses, for learners with lower language proficiency, that offer the same high-quality teaching as WW4RI. Crucially, further funding would be needed to meet the needs of this cohort and it is not clear who could provide this support.
- 5.39 A further challenge of the entry three requirement is that clients with this level of language proficiency are often eligible to join accredited ESOL courses elsewhere, for example at colleges, which they might prefer to the non-accredited WW4RI offer. The team did look at whether they could incorporate accreditation, but it was complex and could not be done within the scope of the project.
- 5.40 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.
- 5.41 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. One teacher consultee 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.
- 5.42 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, such as hairdressing and beauty, or crafts and needlework, and that these might be offered in future.
- 5.43 Clients' responses to refugee-only ESOL courses have been mixed. According to ESOL teachers, some are more comfortable in classes with other refugees, that is 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 consultee commented that refugee-only ESOL classes were perhaps missing opportunities for integration. However, it is recognised that funding constraints does not allow for this to take place.
- 5.44 Although there were benefits to running ESOL courses online, for some clients a key barrier was the lack of appropriate equipment to enable participation. In some counties, there were issues with providing IT equipment and this had a significant impact on the delivery of ESOL courses. Teachers also found it challenging to teach when learners in the group were using computers in public libraries or phones from locations such as public transport to attend classes.



[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

- 5.45 Despite IT skills forming part of the core curriculum, some clients did not feel confident to participate in online courses and dropped out before they could develop these skills. 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 during classes frustrating and felt that personal relationships with other refugees were hampered by not being able to meet in-person. In addition to the practical challenges associated with remote delivery, some consultees also felt that virtual classes negatively impacted the teacher-learner relationship as well as social connections between clients and teachers. This was felt to have impacted outcomes, although this is difficult to assess given that the project has only been delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enterprise support

Enterprise support successes

- 5.46 Feedback from frontline staff and manager consultees indicates that the enterprise support is well regarded and allows for tailored career support for beneficiaries. However, some client consultees were less positive about the service, highlighting areas for improvement.
- 5.47 One frontline staff consultee highlighted the importance of the one-to-one model of delivery, which has proved the most effective way of providing tailored business advice to suit different beneficiaries. 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. This aspect meant that some beneficiaries were employed on a part-time basis while also working to create an alternative career plan focussed on starting a business – consequently 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

- 5.48 As well as helping clients to create business plans and work towards them, the project's design allowed frontline staff to give honest and realistic advice to beneficiaries. A MENTA manager commented that because there is no target for creation of start-ups (as is often the case with business support programmes), frontline staff are able to be up-front about whether starting a business could be ill-advised for a particular beneficiary.
- 5.49 Positively, this strand was able to continue its delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, with one MENTA manager mentioning that 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, allowing issues to be dealt in a timely fashion.

Enterprise support challenges

- 5.50 Some difficulties were highlighted by client consultees, most centring around a lack of progress. During project delivery, there was a period when no appointments took place due to the resignation of an advisor and the time needed to appoint a replacement. This led to disengagement and meant that by the time the new advisor started, some clients had already enrolled in other training, or were no longer interested.
- 5.51 Two MENTA client consultees reflected on the pace of progress following successive meetings and feeling there was no clear plan of action after several meetings with MENTA over six months. There seemed to be high levels of motivation, clear aspirations and appropriate language skills and qualifications. The clients were keen to make a start and wanted help to secure finance, register their

businesses and begin advertising and promotional activity. Subsequently (January 2022), progress has been made and there is positive feedback on support. This issue is worthy of further consideration; it may be related to client expectations and concerns could be allayed by establishing what these are at an early stage and providing information about how long things are likely to take.



No real structure or clear plan – not sure what’s going to happen next or how things will be achieved – Client consultee

- 5.52 As elsewhere, there were 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. One client mentioned that the level of English of the MENTA staff member they were working with was too advanced for them, meaning that delivery was strained and that their employment advisor had to be present in sessions to provide support.

Wellbeing support

Wellbeing support successes

- 5.53 Several client consultees who had participated in the wellbeing strand commended the supportive and understanding nature of their therapists, noting that they felt listened to and understood by their respective therapists. Many client consultees highlighted feeling able to trust their therapists, which helped them to share their experiences and traumas and subsequently work through these.
- 5.54 Overall, client consultees’ views on online delivery due to COVID-19 were mixed, with some preferring face-to-face interactions, while others were comfortable with virtual consultations, particularly if they were able to meet their therapist in-person at least once.
- 5.55 One wider stakeholder noted that the availability of therapy during the pandemic has been impressive, and that the quality of the service has been maintained despite the circumstances. A partner manager mentioned the wider access to therapy provided by online delivery, noting that client consultees in rural areas were struggling before to access support. A frontline staff consultee also highlighted that those who previously had to travel more than an hour to attend sessions (or who were less comfortable with travelling) were now more likely to attend. Another positive adaptation mentioned by frontline staff was the increased use of creative tools, such as collaborative online collages and therapeutic music creation.
- 5.56 In terms of best practice and added value highlighted by frontline staff, a key aspect was regular training for therapists to aid understanding of different cultures. A demonstration of how this has impacted delivery is in the purposeful avoidance of the term ‘mental health’, being sensitive towards the stigma surrounding mental health in many refugees’ cultures. In addition, offering reassurance that issues such as difficulty sleeping affect many people, has proved helpful. 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.



[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

5.57 A partner manager outlined how delivery of the project’s wellbeing strand is consistently evaluated and improved in line with clients’ demands and what proves most beneficial for them. An example given was the psychosocial workshops which are still being established and learnt from. Another important aspect of the wellbeing support is its longer-term nature. One stakeholder mentioned how this has enabled frontline staff to become involved more meaningfully in supporting beneficiaries.

Wellbeing support challenges

5.58 A commonly noted challenge of the wellbeing strand, raised by project staff and wider stakeholder consultees, was attracting refugees to the service. This was thought to largely be the result of the cultural stigma around mental health support. Mental health and wellbeing remain difficult topics for many, with wider stakeholders in particular raising the fact that many clients require reassurance that they are not being encouraged to consider therapy because they are “crazy”.

5.59 A small number of consultees mentioned that when stigmatisation was an issue, the experience of others could be useful in convincing clients of the potential advantages of therapy and wellbeing support. Specifically, the psychoeducational workshops delivered in groups were mentioned by a frontline staff consultee as helping to reduce shame among clients and build connections with others.



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 be clear they are not meaning to cause offence to the refugee – Frontline staff consultee

5.60 Similarly, a partner manager consultee highlighted the importance of interactive workshops in creating reassurance for beneficiaries to see that therapists are not someone “in a white coat with lots of medication coming out of their pockets”, as well as facilitating access to wellbeing resources.

5.61 The lack of availability of support in some areas appears to be an issue, with Bedfordshire specifically mentioned as an area where no mental health support is available for adults as part of WW4RI. A wider stakeholder consultee explicitly raised there not being enough therapists available, and a frontline staff member noted the growing waiting list. A WW4RI project team consultee highlighted a similar issue. All confirmed that when a beneficiary was referred to access therapy, there could be long waiting times in certain areas, due to slots being occupied by others and a lack of resources to increase provision.



Each strand works, but Mental Health was late for us in Suffolk...they are now at capacity and this needs to be looked at – Partner manager consultee

5.62 Other specific difficulties mentioned by frontline staff included having to turn down potential clients due to limits on eligibility with regards to their immigration status. This is also indicative of the lack of alternative provision elsewhere.



I know there are so many people in need of therapy but because of their status they can’t get anything...It’s heart-breaking – Frontline staff consultee

5.63 Finally, as mentioned in 5.55, experiences with online delivery were mixed. For instance, a partner manager consultee discussed the difficulty of establishing trust and building rapport when meetings

are virtual rather than face-to-face. One client consultee also talked about difficulties with the interpreter not translating correctly and having to arrange for a new one.



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

Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

- 5.64 As discussed previously, the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns led to challenges for project strands as delivery was moved online. However, there were also some common challenges that affected the project as a whole. Several frontline staff and partner manager consultees felt that better communication between partners and a greater sense of identity would have been created if not for the pandemic.
- 5.65 Another key challenge was the change that occurred 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. Furthermore, COVID-19 changed the way clients felt about certain sectors, for example clients have been less inclined to go into work in the health and social care sector.
- 5.66 COVID-19 also had significant impact on beneficiaries, in terms of their personal lives and their participation in each project strand. Several clients reported that lockdowns had increased the isolation they were already experiencing due to being in an unfamiliar country and worsened anxiety about family abroad.
- 5.67 In terms of employment opportunities, some clients attributed the challenges they have experienced in finding jobs or starting a business directly to the pandemic. As discussed previously, remote delivery was sometimes challenging for clients, as well as for teachers and therapists, as delivering therapy sessions and language classes via video calls created challenges in establishing meaningful connections.



[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 and stakeholders
- 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.²⁹

Figure 6.1: The intersecting domains of the 2019 Integration Framework



Securing employment

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



6.4 Client consultees reported that they have secured employment in various sectors including retail, warehousing, administration, hairdressing and customer service. One client reported that they started paid employment for the first time ever with the help of their WW4RI employment advisor.

6.5 Monitoring data collected by the project team after beneficiaries have received project support shows that 9 per cent of beneficiaries (n=99) have gained employment, having previously been unemployed or a student, whilst 2 per cent have increased their hours of employment. Meanwhile MENTA has supported nine refugees to start their own businesses to date. This is promising, given the relatively short time the project has been running, the delays that have inevitably been experienced, and that employment outcomes often take a long time to be realised.

²⁹ [Indicators of Integration Framework](#), UK Home Office (2019).

Increasing employability and moving towards employment



(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 have 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

6.6 Even where beneficiaries have not yet secured formal employment, the project has helped many to **move towards employment**. In interviews, seven client consultees described how the employment support and ESOL courses had helped them to gain employment skills and the confidence to prepare for work.



6.7 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. Of the 31 clients consulted, 27 felt that they had experienced an improvement.³⁰ The mean was then calculated from all 31 client responses for before and after receiving support. Both averages are compared in Figure 6.2 below, with clients rating 2.23 and 4.15 out of 5 for before and after respectively, equating to an increase of 86 per cent. This indicates that most clients believe they have **greatly improved their employment skills** while being on the project and that they have greatly benefitted from the support they have accessed.

Figure 6.2: How clients have rated their employment skills on average, before and after receiving support, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor, 5 = good) (n=31)



6.8 Beneficiaries have also acquired independent job search skills: 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.



I am not yet (ready to begin working), but I'm so much better prepared and I know what to do. I've had to start all over again from what I had before... – Client consultee

6.9 It is worth noting that other outcomes of WW4RI support also contributed to beneficiaries moving towards employment. For example, two client consultees mentioned that their IT skills had improved as a result of participation and that this had helped them to complete job applications. One said that not only has their new knowledge from the ESOL courses helped them in searching for jobs, but they

³⁰ The remaining four rated themselves the same before and after. Of these four, three gave a rating of 4 before and after (indicating less scope for improvement) and one gave a rating of 3 before and after. They stated that this was because they were early in their journey and more focused on improving their wellbeing.

now also have a better understanding of working in the UK thanks to the course. Another said that they appreciated working with their employment advisor to set employment goals, as these provided motivation and something to aim towards.

- 6.10 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**. For example, one client said that the driving theory course helped them obtain their driving licence which will dramatically improve their employability. Another reported that they are now more valuable to their current employer due to their improved level of English and ability to communicate with customers.
- 6.11 Sector-specific ESOL courses have been explicitly linked by some beneficiaries to their success in finding paid employment or work experience and have supported clients with experience in the sector to transfer their knowledge to the UK context, giving them the confidence to pursue careers in their area of expertise.
- 6.12 As well as referrals to internal ESOL sector-specific courses, employment advisors have used their knowledge and professional expertise to make beneficiaries aware of **external training courses** matched to their interests and experience. Frequently mentioned in interviews with client consultees, these have ranged from full-time formal college and university courses to informal short part-time courses with different training providers.



My advisor is trying a lot, looking for jobs and letting me know about what they've seen – they say, “I thought it might be suitable for you, we can have a look together if you want to book an appointment”. If there's anything that the agency is offering, any course, they will tell me about it –
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

Improved levels of English and secondary outcomes

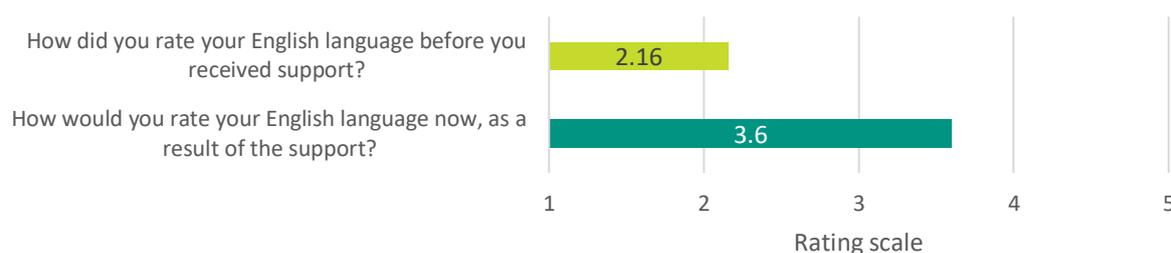
- 6.13 Beneficiaries have clearly improved their levels of English as a result of the WW4RI project, with this finding being widely reported by client and staff consultees. Figure 6.3 below, shows the results from



a question asked of all client consultees about their English language skills. Of the 31 clients 28 felt that their language proficiency had improved.³¹ The 31 clients gave an average rating 2.16 (poor) of how they considered their language skills prior to support and an average of 3.60 (average - good) following support. This equates to a **67 per cent increase in the average ratings, indicating that that most clients experienced a marked improvement in their English language skills.**

³¹ The three remaining consultees rated their skills the same before and after, and they all gave a high score of 4, indicating that they did not have as much scope for improvement.

Figure 6.3: How clients have rated their English language on average, before and after receiving support, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor, 5 = good) (n=31)



- 6.14 As a result of taking part in the project, beneficiaries have built their confidence in speaking to others and are more likely to communicate more with professionals and English-speaking people from other backgrounds. There is limited evidence of beneficiaries building ‘social bridges’³² with their local community. One client consultee said that thanks to attending an ESOL course, they are now able to talk freely with their neighbours and when they go shopping. However, the lack of data for this is unsurprising due to reduced opportunities for making connections within local communities during the pandemic.
- 6.15 Another client consultee reported that their improved English has helped them communicate with their doctor and with other professionals, demonstrating how the project has supported refugees to start to create links with institutions, part of what is described in the Integration Framework as ‘social links’. One client consultee reported that the ESOL courses helped them to speak with new people online and in their voluntary position.



(The) course has helped me improve my English, some things I didn’t know before – this is very important to me. Because we have learnt new words, I can speak to more people now, I wouldn’t be able to speak like I am now –
Client consultee

Meeting basic needs

- 6.16 In addition to providing direct support to increase wellbeing, gain employment and improve language skills through the project different strands, WW4RI has also supported refugees to be able to meet their basic needs, including **obtaining housing, healthcare, education, welfare and achieving financial stability**.
- 6.17 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 other agencies and provided advocacy support when necessary to improve their circumstances. All these support activities are key to refugee integration. Not only have beneficiaries’ basic needs been met, but they have also started to build social links to UK institutions and achieved greater financial stability. This is essential for sustainable engagement with employment or education and with other services.
- 6.18 The WW4RI project has also led to improved access to healthcare for some beneficiaries. Client consultees frequently reported that they can now navigate the healthcare system better, and that they have registered with GPs and booked healthcare appointments, including antenatal clinics.

³² [Indicators of Integration Framework](#), UK Home Office (2019).



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

6.19 Employment advisors have also helped to reduce homelessness amongst beneficiaries, find suitable housing and improve living conditions. Since engaging with the project, beneficiaries have been able to receive financial support with paying rent, access social housing and 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

6.20 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, and that the childcare course in particular had helped those with children to better understand the UK education system (discussed further below). For example, one client stated that the course had equipped them with the skills to support their child more effectively in education, as they had learned about dyslexia.



Every week, I meet with my daughter's teachers and talk to them about how they are doing, especially their English. Because I have got confidence and English help, I am more confident to do these things now in my life – Client consultee

6.21 Employment advisors have supported beneficiaries to become more financially secure, reducing the likelihood of destitution amongst beneficiaries. Beneficiaries have been supported to open bank accounts, apply for welfare benefits and increase their income through paid employment. One client consultee, who had no income when first meeting with their employment advisor, was helped to open a bank account and apply for Universal Credit, and as a result feels more financially secure and confident.



(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 can go out and spend money. Before I couldn't – Client consultee

6.22 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. Two client consultees mentioned that the support provided by their employment advisor made the biggest difference to their independence, such as feeling able to 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

Increased knowledge about the UK

- 6.23 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**. Sector specific courses in particular have been beneficial to some beneficiaries in improving their knowledge of the UK. For example, when speaking about the difference that the childcare ESOL course had made, four client consultees reported that they are now able to navigate the UK schooling system and better care for their own family.



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

- 6.24 Some beneficiaries have made **friends and connections with people** with whom they share a sense of identity (bonds) and with those from different backgrounds (bridges). Particularly within ESOL course group work, beneficiaries were observed to have made connections with other refugees, and in some cases, friends within their group. Beneficiaries have also made connections elsewhere as a result of the project. For example, one client consultee reported they have met new people at the accommodation that their employment advisor helped them to find. Another said that in their new job, which they were supported to find by their employment advisor, they had made new friends both from their home country and people from the UK.



[I'm now] maybe a little bit better at talking to people and my neighbours on my own – Client consultee



I've made some English and Pakistani friends at work – Client consultee

Improved IT skills

- 6.25 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 and will be able to keep the equipment. This has provided beneficiaries with significant opportunities to facilitate social connections and in accessing rights and services.³³ These outcomes were especially prevalent for those attending online classes, 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 as a *'course within a course'* thanks to the IT skills that were being taught through online delivery, such as turning cameras off and on, changing video call backgrounds and, importantly, staying safe online.
- 6.26 Two beneficiaries reported how their improved IT skills have helped them to become more independent. One stated that this has enabled them to register with the GP and in completing forms,



³³ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

while another reported that they no longer rely on their daughter for help and can use a computer alone. This can help reinstate a parent’s position and status within their family, which can be important for their self-esteem.



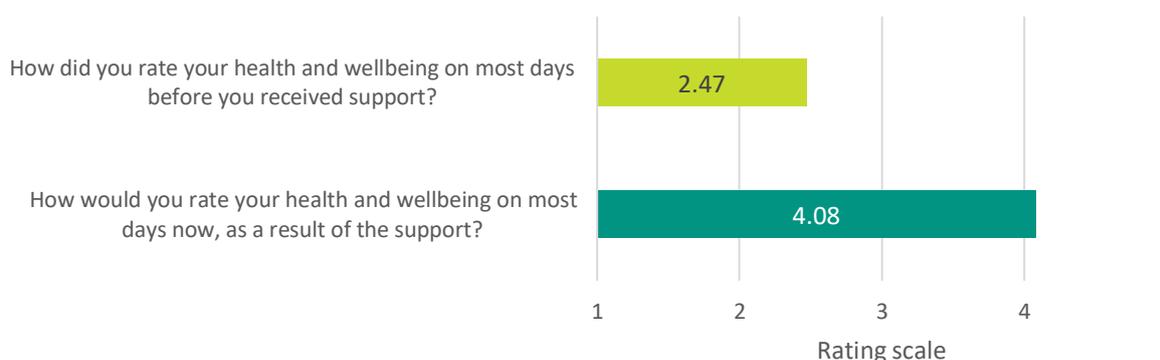
(The) brilliant side of the provision is a lot of ESOL [services] don’t have necessary machines for learning, no accessibility. Giving them this option for tablets also helps their IT skills and their confidence of online learning. Not having to rely on phones. So, I think that’s been generally a good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

Improved health and wellbeing

6.27 Clients of all three project strands reported **improvements in health and wellbeing**. This is a key outcome given that good (mental and physical) health enables integration through social participation and engagement in employment and education activities.³⁴



Figure 6.4: Average client ratings for their health and wellbeing on most days, before and after receiving support, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor, 5 = good) (n=30)



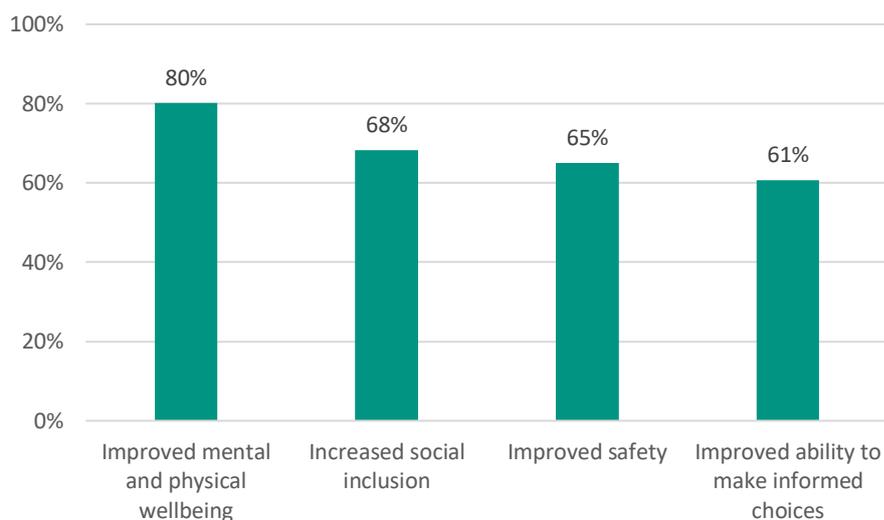
6.28 Some 30 client consultees were asked how they would have rated their health and wellbeing on most days, reflecting on how they felt before and since receiving support and as a result of project support. Of the 30, 27 stated that they had experienced improvement in their health and wellbeing³⁵. The average scores, calculated from all 30 client responses both before and after receiving support, were 2.47 and 4.08 respectively. This equates to a **65 per cent increase in the average ratings, indicating that most clients have experienced an important improvement in their health and wellbeing**.

6.29 The initial part of this section outlines health and wellbeing outcomes and impacts reported by beneficiaries who received wellbeing support through the project, while the latter part outlines impacts raised by clients in their feedback on the employment advice and ESOL strands. This directly demonstrates the interconnected nature of the project’s offering and the extensive, comprehensive support provided by many frontline staff to WW4RI clients.

³⁴ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

³⁵ The remaining three consultees gave the same rating before and after, and their ‘before’ ratings were all high – two gave themselves a rating of 4 and one gave a rating 5, indicating that there was not as much scope for improvement.

Figure 6.5: Improvements reported by client consultees with one or more identified needs



6.30 Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) data collected by frontline staff on the project shows that of the client consultees for whom a need for wellbeing support was identified by their therapist, the majority showed improvements between April and November 2021.³⁶ Figure 6.5 shows these improvements in percentage terms.

6.31 As shown by Figure 6.5, the mental and physical wellbeing of 80 per cent of client consultees improved. This was measured through questions around feelings of tension and anxiety, to issues with sleep, unwanted images and/or memories. Although improvements in other areas were made by relatively fewer client consultees, these were still the majority, a very promising sign.

6.32 In terms of **social connection**, measured through the ability to talk to others and ask for help when needed, 68 per cent of client consultees reported improvements. Creating **bridges** between clients and those from other backgrounds (either in a professional or personal supportive capacity) aids social cohesion, which can in turn facilitate a broadening of cultural understanding, as well as educational and economic opportunities.



6.33 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, 65 per cent of client consultees reported improvements. In addition to personal safety, a related outcome mentioned by one client consultee was the feeling of being **safe** and “in a safe country”. This progress attests to the strength of the project’s wellbeing strand, given that a sense of safety provides a foundation for forming social connections and eventually enabling progress in areas including education and employment.³⁷



6.34 Finally, an improved ability to make informed choices was reported by 61 per cent of client consultees – measured by aspects such as feeling able to cope when things go wrong (resilience).

6.35 When asked about the impact that the wellbeing support and therapy sessions have had on their daily lives, client consultees gave responses that ranged from the ability to undertake day-to-day tasks to an improved mental state. **Social links** were another key reported



³⁶ 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 client consultees who agreed to and completed measurement.

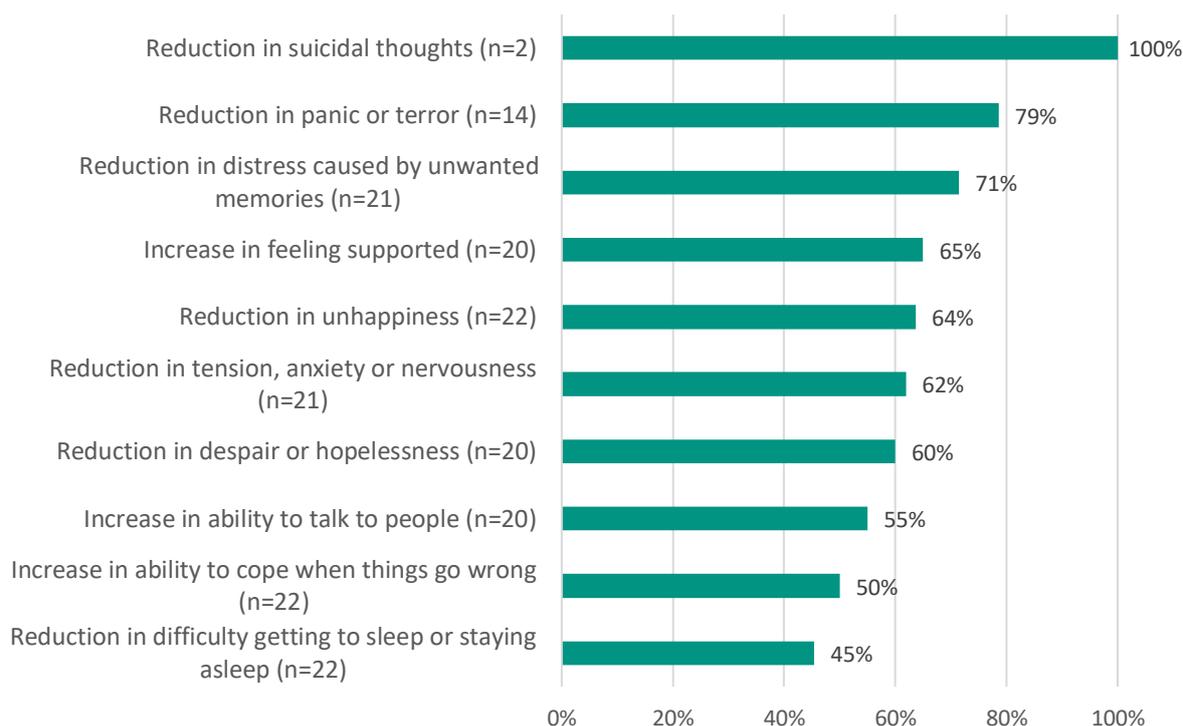
³⁷ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

improvement, with several client consultees feeling more able to engage with and understand the institutions around them, a further dimension of social connection.

- 6.36 Relating specifically to health and social care, several client consultees mentioned that therapy sessions helped them to face or address the traumas that they had experienced prior to arriving in the UK, as well as the lasting effects that these had had 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 client consultees with identified needs reporting improvements across each outcome



- 6.37 Looking at CORE data for adults (Figure 6.6), the only aspect of mental and physical wellbeing that did not improve for many client consultees in the measurement period was difficulty sleeping. On the whole, this is very positive, showing that many of the challenges faced by clients around distress, anxiety, unwanted memories, self-harm and socialising, declined over the measurement period.

- 6.38 Nonetheless, three of the four client consultees who mentioned trauma recovery in interviews also noted that they do not “feel 100%” and expressed concern over whether they were able to continue on their positive trajectories without the support of a therapist.



To be honest, I’ve had 3 years of counselling when I was in Halifax, it stopped when we moved to Cambridge. For one year, I had no mental support and I felt like I [slid] back to where I was – Client consultee

- 6.39 One client consultee mentioned feeling calmer since receiving therapy. Several others expressed a positive outlook on life thanks to their therapist, as well as a reduced sense of stress and anger that they had been experiencing, due 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.

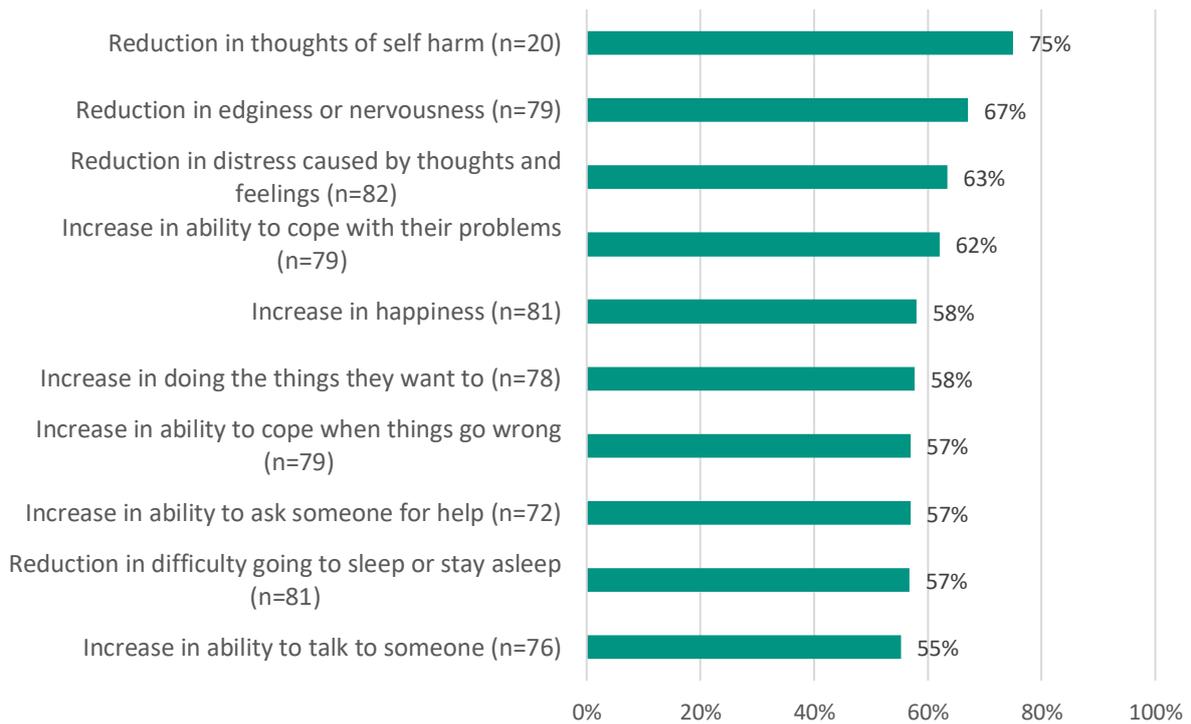


I would say the most important thing I needed help with is stress because [of] ...what I went through in Sierra Leone... I could explain to [my therapist] how I feel and she used to understand a lot – Client consultee

- 6.40 Another positive impact for some client consultees was reduced isolation and a greater ability to take part in activities such as shopping or socialising. 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 consultee highlighted how improved confidence has allowed them to go out shopping, though this is still something they do with their family, not alone. Another client described feeling comfortable interacting with classmates and making friends, which had previously been a significant issue.
- 6.41 In a similar vein, one client consultee mentioned that their therapist helped them to overcome their fear of new people, especially of trusting new people. It is worth noting that, despite their progress, the client highlighted that their fear of authorities persisted and that they still actively avoided going out by themselves as a result.



Figure 6.7: Percentage of child client consultees with identified needs that reported improvements across each outcome



- 6.42 A persistent struggle with socialising and social interactions is echoed by CORE data, both for adults (Figure 6.6) and young people (Figure 6.7). When outlining sentiments around talking to others, 45 per cent of both adults and young people who were struggling with this at the beginning of the measurement period were still struggling at the end, highlighting this as a consistent issue across both groups.³⁸

³⁸ NB Base numbers differed between the groups, with 20 adult client consultees being identified as being ‘with need’ in relation to talking to others (91 per cent of which underwent their CORE review), while this number was 76 for client consultees classed as young people (88 per cent of which underwent their CORE review).

6.43 One client consultee also 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 the benefits (for example, **health and social care**) and to become economically active as a consequence.³⁹



Health and Social Care



Links



Culture

6.44 Another key outcome highlighted by two client consultees was **stability** in the form of financial responsibility that their therapists instilled in them and supported them with. This is encouraging, since stability is a facilitator of ‘sustainable engagement’ with employment.⁴⁰ While they were not previously saving, client consultees mentioned understanding money management and saving now.



Stability



I didn't save before but now I do. It's not a lot... but better than before – Client consultee

6.45 Health and wellbeing outcomes were also reported by beneficiaries of the employment advice and ESOL strands of the project. For instance, three client consultees spoke about how they did not feel ready to consider working, as their mental health was too poor, and that their employment advisor understood and did not try to rush them. One client consultee reported being referred to therapy by their employment advisor before looking for employment, and a further two stated that their mental health had improved since they started receiving support.



Yes, at beginning I was sick because of my mental health and this needed sorting before I thought about getting into work. Sarah then helped me with CVs etc when the time was right – Client consultee

6.46 Confidence was a key theme among beneficiaries of these strands, 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

6.47 Several client consultees discussed the increased sense of independence they had experienced as a result of the support that they had received, and that this has manifested itself in various forms of **social connection**, such as going to the bank, seeing a doctor and conversing with neighbours. Interacting with institutions was raised by two client consultees as resulting from the support. One client



Bridges



Links

³⁹ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

⁴⁰ [Indicators of Integration framework third edition](#), Home Office (2019).

mentioned no longer being reliant on their children to understand everything happening around them, while another discussed this in relation to her husband.



I can speak to GP properly without having my husband with me. I can do shopping and speak to my neighbours... Especially after the online course, it was brilliant for me – Client consultee

- 6.48 Finally, two client consultees echoed feedback around gaining a sense of **safety** through the support. Fearfulness is a key challenge, due to some beneficiaries having come from dangerous circumstances. One client consultee described their difficulty with aspects such as socialising and tending to their finances, due to their experience of domestic violence, and another shared fear associated with their home country's government even after arriving in the UK:



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

Outcomes for project partners and stakeholders

- 6.49 An outcome of the project for partner organisations has been establishing a positive reputation in their local areas for providing integration support for refugees. In addition, being part of the WW4RI project has allowed partner organisations to develop skills, learn about other partner organisations and strengthen their working relationships, which is also reported to have led to additionality through improved partnership working outside of WW4RI. Although consultees were uncertain of the impact of the project on the wider landscape of support for refugees at this stage, the wellbeing strand in particular was felt to have lessened the burden on the local health system.

Counterfactual: What would have happened without the project?

- 6.50 Although refugees may still have been able to access some employment, language and wellbeing support elsewhere, consultees felt that this support would have been far more fragmented in the absence of the project. Any employment or ESOL support that would have been accessed elsewhere by beneficiaries would have been more generic and less tailored to their specific needs and those of different employment sectors.
- 6.51 Some clients reported that they would not have known which careers to pursue without the project's support, referencing support from both the employment and ESOL strands. One client, for example, stated that they would have been unable to access their sector-specific training course without support from their employment advisor, as well as not making plans to start their own business.
- 6.52 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 client consultees when asked how things would be different if they had not participated in the project. For some, this was as

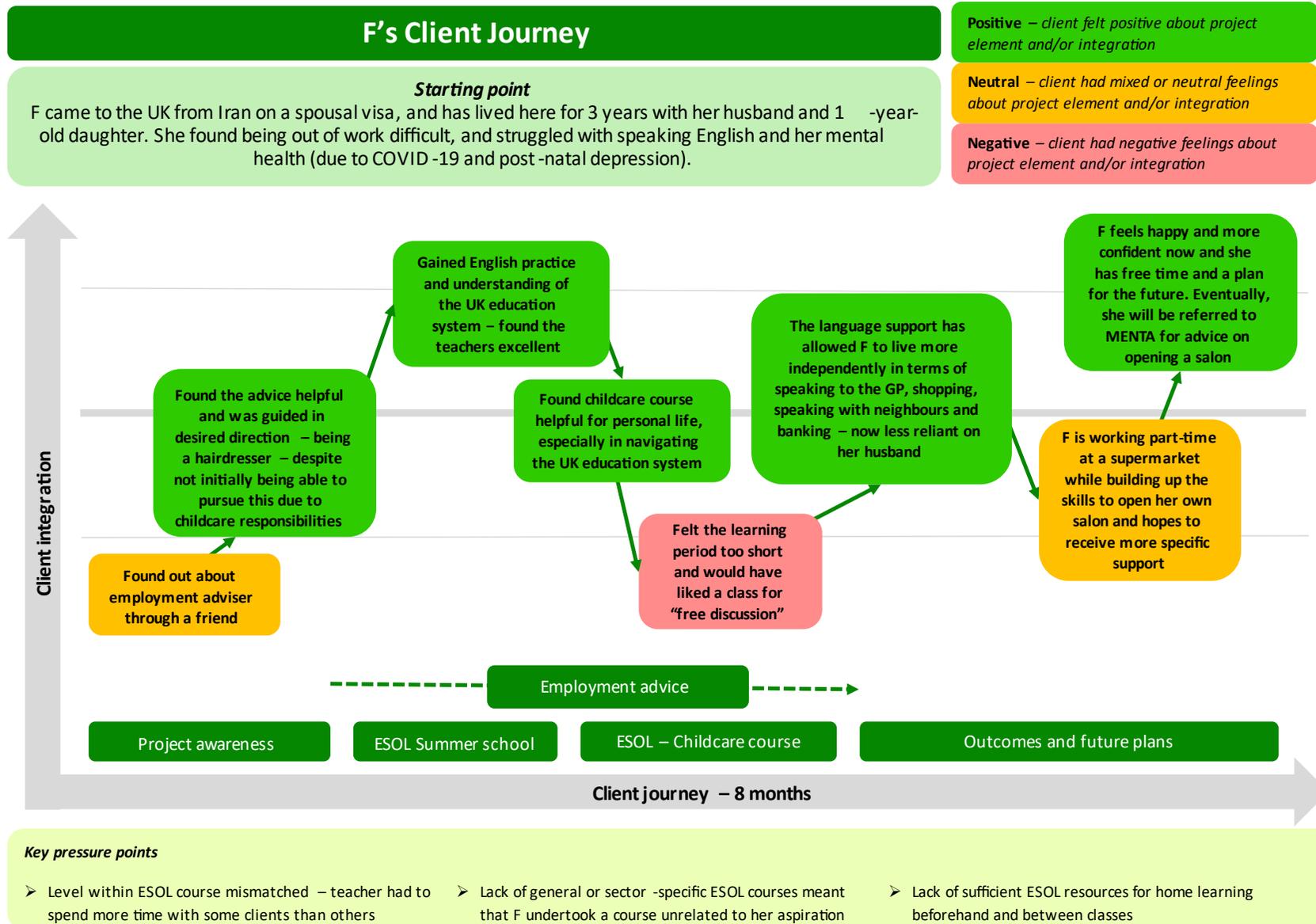
direct result of their wellbeing support, however others felt that their anxiety would be worse if not for the support and knowledge of their employment advisors guiding them through the stress of navigating the UK job market.



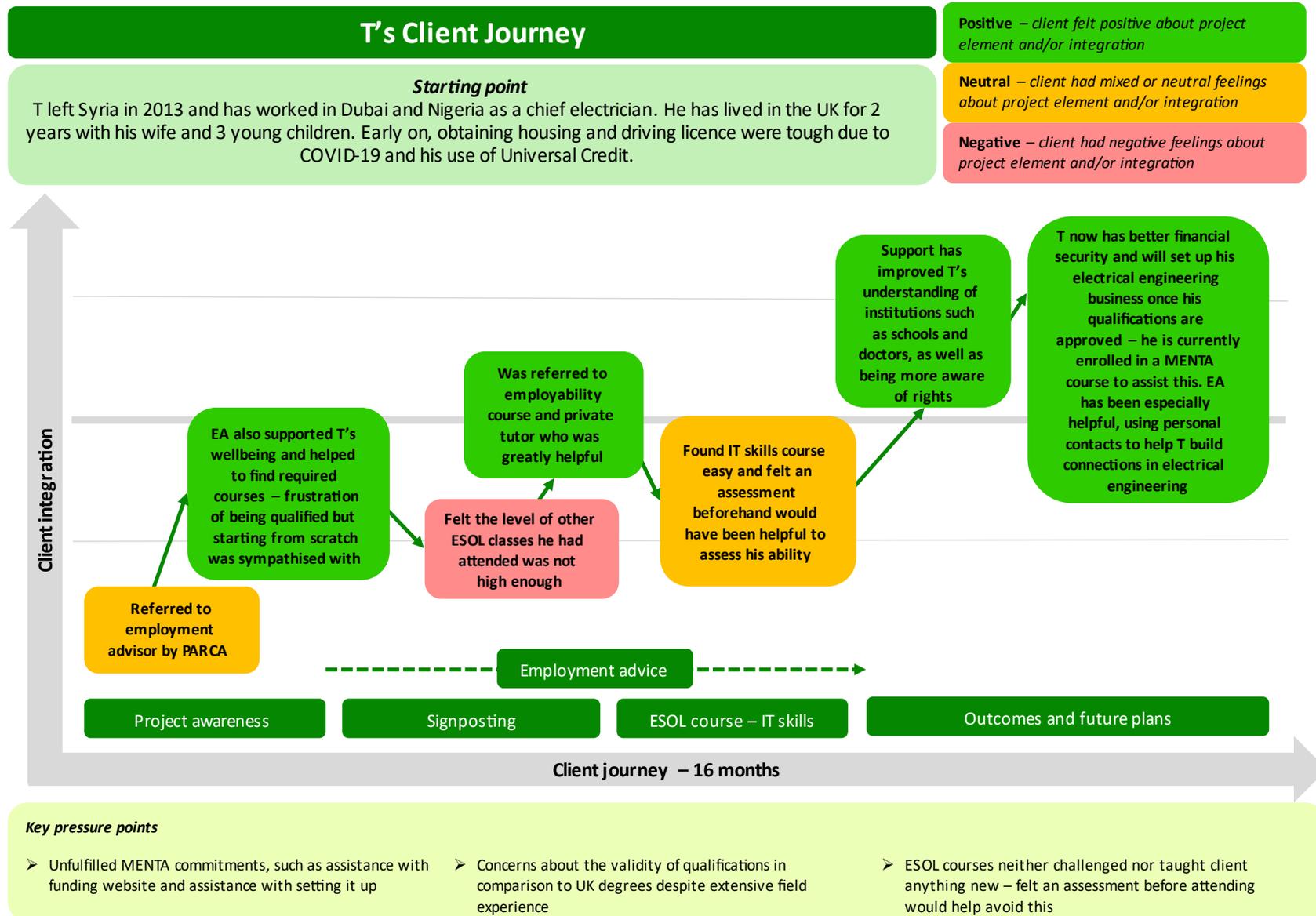
When [the therapist] appeared to me, I was at the bottom of the well. I was so unhappy, lonely, isolated. The timing – it was a blessing – **Client consultee**

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

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 and project beneficiaries. The emerging evidence indicates that the project is already 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 project-wide data gathering and collation. Reflecting on the successes and challenges of the current model will clearly be important in shaping the work of partners moving forwards and in building the framework of best practice for those working in refugee integration.

Key success factors

- 7.4 Consultees identified various factors underpinning the project delivery which contribute to success in achieving outcomes, many of which are discussed throughout the report. Although different key success factors supported the different delivery strands, there were some general factors which allowed the partners to work effectively together. For example, consultees felt that **positive relationships between partners** are a crucial aspect of successful referrals, as strong communication between staff members is essential, due to the complexity of clients' needs. Further, 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.

Employment support strand key success factors

- 7.5 The **commitment and passion of the 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** was 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 may face in gaining employment and to build their confidence.
- 7.6 In addition, a **trusting relationship between client and the employment advisor** was considered essential in allowing employment advisors to challenge perspectives clients might have which create issues in finding work, such as a preference to remain on benefits or reluctance to access wellbeing support. It is also important that advisors have knowledge (or know who to refer clients to) to be able to support clients in other areas of their lives, such as with debt and finances. Employment advisors

noted the benefits of **connecting new clients with those who have or are close to progressing towards employment**, as this can be a motivating factor for clients and curb levels of dropout.

ESOL strand key success factors

- 7.7 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. Small groups facilitated by volunteers not only present each learner with more opportunities to speak and ask questions but also provide less confident learners with a safe space in which to practice their skills. **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.

Wellbeing strand key success factors

- 7.8 **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 client group. Consultees felt that it has been 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. In addition, 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

- 7.9 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 could be greater than the sum of the parts. We would suggest that project staff actively promote all strands to refugees to maximise project benefits, underpinned by centralised training and other measures to build shared understanding.
- 7.10 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 like this take place, to encourage and support greater use of the full range of project activities for clients, whose integration would benefit from access to each element of WW4RI's offer.
- 7.11 In the spirit of reinforcing the sense of shared purpose between all partners, several mechanisms have been suggested to improve partnership working. **Opportunities to connect with other partner organisations and members of staff** are valued, such as delivery strand meetings and the Project Day, 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 together would help to ensure project fidelity and guard against 'mission drift'.

- 7.12 A common challenge mentioned across all delivery strands was the need for frontline staff to understand the particular needs and challenges of refugees in the UK. Both employment advisors and ESOL teachers suggested further training to better understand the client cohort 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.
- 7.13 A **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 database, potentially an online platform, could be used a central point for sharing details about partners' role and activities and the contact details of project staff. 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.
- 7.14 It would be beneficial to collect more **monitoring data** across the project, principally **key outcome measures** that could be collated. These could include: numbers completing ESOL and wellbeing support sessions; numbers proceeding beyond initial employment advisor session; assessed ESOL level on completing ESOL and/or when completing the project; 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. It would also be useful to track the length of engagement as duration as well as intensity can affect outcomes.
- 7.15 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 wish to emphasise the importance of this. Improvements in this area will support consistency and ultimately enable deeper assessment of the difference the project is making, which, in turn, will support in securing future funding.
- 7.16 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.

Delivery strand recommendations

Employment strand

- 7.17 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 and 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.
- 7.18 Allowing **sufficient time at the beginning** of clients' engagement with the project is critical and needs to be protected; 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.

- 7.19 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 with 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 feedback on project delivery to underpin learning and development.
- 7.20 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

- 7.21 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.
- 7.22 Given the increased flexibility provided by online learning, the project could consider **making ESOL and Skills resources available to learners 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.
- 7.23 There is a balance to be achieved between the demand and supply of sector-specific courses and it seems there is appetite for **further ESOL courses focusing on different sectors**. It will be important to seek consistent feedback from different employment sectors and from clients about the courses they would like to see. The Working with Customers course was specifically requested by clients and has run a couple of times. The Preparing to Work in Childcare has been particularly popular, successful and received positive feedback.
- 7.24 In addition to skills and sector-specific course, 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, and who are already highly qualified in a ‘niche’ sector or wish to start their own business, to further improve their English.
- 7.25 There is a gap in 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, and 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.

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- 7.26 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

- 7.27 Measures could be taken to improve the process of making referrals to wellbeing support. **Further wellbeing training for employment advisors** would 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.
- 7.28 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 **more therapist provision** if available, would help to reduce waiting lists and allow clients to make progress.