



Breaking Barriers Impact Report for 2019 to 2020

Financial Year: 29th May 2019 to 28th May 2020

Our work

Breaking Barriers was founded in 2015 by our CEO Matthew Powell in response to the extremely high unemployment rate of people of refugee background, which is over four times that of the national average. Our mission is to help refugees acquire the knowledge, confidence, and experience they need to gain sustainable, fulfilling employment.



The Challenge

The UK offered asylum protection to 20,703 people in 2019, an increase of 30% from 2018¹. It is estimated that 374,000 people of refugee background are living in the UK, and approximately 50% of these are in London.² Refugees face great hardship in fleeing war, violence and persecution, but upon arriving in the UK they face additional setbacks in the form of marginalisation, racial discrimination, lack of language support and other significant barriers to integration. We know that refugees can and do make valuable contributions to society, and that employment can be a crucial factor in helping them integrate into their new home. However, the UK currently has no national strategy to aid the transition of refugees into the labour market.



Our Work and Impact

Breaking Barriers' employment service is comprehensive, flexible, and bespoke. Our services support any refugee, whether they are looking for their first ever job, a professional in need of UK work experience to restart their career, or anywhere in between.

Our Employment programme offers our clients one-to-one employment advice and guidance. The support is tailored to each individual's needs, often covering topics such as CV and cover letter writing, identifying jobs that a client is eligible for and interested in, and interview practice and techniques.

One of the biggest barriers to employment for people of refugee background is education – particularly English language and IT ability. Our Education programme offers our clients English courses at varying levels, ranging from Pre-Beginner, for those new to the Roman alphabet, through to Business English. Our courses in IT, Numeracy and Customer Service also provide training essential for success in the modern job market.

Finally, we give a central role to businesses and the skills they can offer to our clients. We partnered with 22 businesses in FY20

(including IKEA, Mayer Brown, Big Yellow and Gucci) who offer our clients sector-specific opportunities in the form of workshops, mentoring, paid work placements and permanent job opportunities, as well as funding.

We have been working to expand and adapt our programmes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, so that our clients can access our support remotely. With the introduction of 'Digital Access' training, we are looking to support our clients' digital knowledge including using Zoom, online security and safeguarding, and a 'Digital Skills' training in advanced IT literacy - such as managing a LinkedIn account. ■

Since we started in 2015

1,045

clients have accessed our services

50%

have entered **employment, education, training, or volunteering**

1. Gov. uk Home Office
 2. Compass Report: Zovanga Kone, Isabel Ruiz and Carlos Vargas-Silva, 'Refugees and the UK labour market', (2019).

Highlights of the year

The year has been a challenging one – with Covid-19 forcing us to suspend our delivery for the final quarter.

However, we still had plenty of impact and highlights:

- 1 **Our 1,000th client accessed our services.** Since our inception we have supported 1,045 people of refugee background - 50% of whom have achieved their goal of entering employment, education, training, or volunteering
- 2 **In FY20 alone 474 people accessed our services,** and 355 actively engaged³ in them
- 3 **We are now providing more in depth employment support than ever before.** At 11.8 hours the average amount of employment support received is higher than previous years
- 4 **191 of our clients went into employment, education, training, or volunteering.** 254 outcomes were achieved overall as 10% of clients achieved multiple employment goals within the year
- 5 **We achieved this with the support of 277 volunteers,** who contributed a record breaking 3,145 hours of support to our clients
- 6 **We launched two new programmes - BB Grants and Aspire -** to improve the quality and access of our support. The BB Grants programme provides small grants for clients who want to upskill themselves but do not have the funds. The Aspire programme helps those already in work



3. A client is considered to have actively engaged if they have accessed over 6 hours of employment support, 12 hours of education support or achieved an outcome

Our clients

They are incredibly diverse:

49 countries of origin

42% are female

Ages range from 18-68 years old



Our support in numbers

474 people of refugee background accessed our services



All have skills to bring to UK economy:

39% have completed higher education

44% have good to advanced English

58% have 4+ years of work experience

Employment status at the point of enrolment:

78% unemployed

22% employed

However, they also face many barriers to integration

51% have no UK work experience

47% have no immediate family in the UK

1 in 5 suffer from mental health problems

29% are homeless⁴

68% have been unemployed for over a year⁵

128

accessed our Education Programme

75%

actively engaged in our services

107

accessed one or more of our 23 corporate partner workshops

4. Broad government definition

5. Excludes clients who received their refugee status within a year prior to enrolment as unemployment time is not counted beyond the date status is received. Nearly all clients were unemployed for a significant period of time before receiving their refugee status in the UK as asylum seekers cannot work in the UK and many refugee camps and host communities do not allow refugees to work.

Our Impact

Employment, education, training and volunteering outcomes:

40%

of all clients entered employment, education, training or volunteering

54%

of clients that actively engaged achieved one of these outcomes

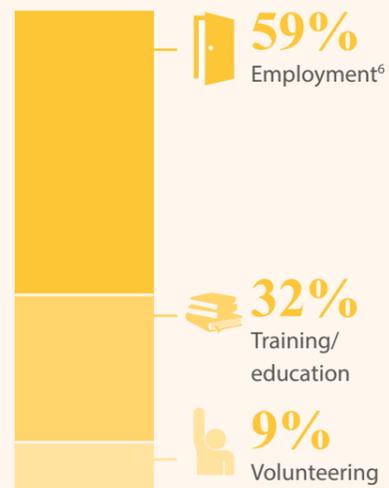
10%

achieved multiple employment goals in FY 20 with 254 employment, education, training, and volunteering outcomes being achieved overall

16

job starts with one or more of our corporate partners

Outcomes by type:



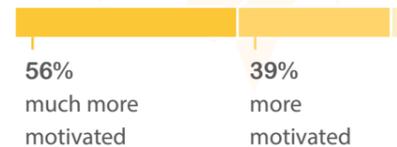
People at all stages of their employment journey access our services. For both those further away from the job market and those already in employment, the biggest impact we can have is often on self-perceptions and

knowledge of life in the UK. These impacts have the potential to benefit people throughout their lives - lasting way beyond achieving that first employment goal - and help them build the foundation for lifelong success.

Through our employment programme:

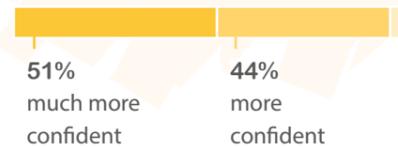
95%

are more or much more motivated to reach their goals as a result of Breaking Barriers



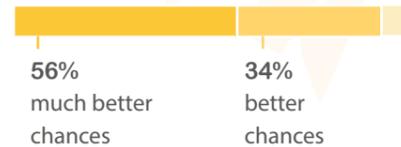
95%

are more or much more confident that they will reach their goals as a result of Breaking Barriers' support



92%

rate their chances of finding a job as a result of Breaking Barriers as better or much better



6. Includes apprenticeships, paid internships/work placements, new employment, changing employment and promotions.

What our clients have said



“

Before I contacted Breaking Barriers I felt lost and didn't have any self-confidence. But the caseworkers worked with me step-by-step from CV writing to my IELTS exam. They supported me a lot and gave me hope to start a new life again and achieve my goals.

— Anonymous, Breaking Barriers client



— Elizabeth, Breaking Barriers client

“

Before I joined Breaking Barriers' IT class, I didn't know how to turn on a computer. In the class, I learnt how to send emails, use word, send photos and make PowerPoint presentations. It has given me the confidence and skills to be able to volunteer for a charity and work in the community. I now know how to find a job by searching online. Breaking Barriers were like a family. They welcomed me and have given me so much confidence. I am over 60 but the class made me feel 17! I have a lot more to learn but I am really pleased with my progress.

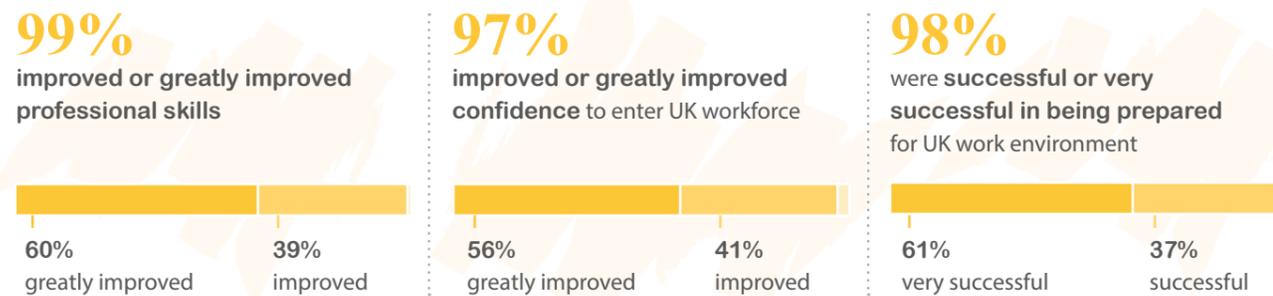


Impact of our corporate partnerships

22 corporate partners directly supported Breaking Barriers clients. Overall, there were 186 workshop attendees⁷ and 16 clients starting work placements with one of our Corporate Partners. 18 corporate partners supported our clients through work opportunities and training, including:



Utilising the skills of our corporate partners through employability workshops had a huge impact on our clients:



We also aim to raise awareness of the barriers facing refugees and overall engagement with the sector through our corporate partnerships and workshops.

86% of our corporate partner volunteers surveyed said that volunteering with Breaking Barriers improved or greatly improved their understanding of the needs of people from a refugee background.

In addition, Breaking Barriers volunteering opportunities improved employee satisfaction for participating businesses:

50% report that volunteering in a **Breaking Barriers workshop greatly increased their pride** in working for their organisation, and **40%** said it increased it

100% said they would **recommend volunteering** with Breaking Barriers to a friend



“ We have had a great experience working with Breaking Barriers. Firstly it is an excellent recruitment route. The process is simple and transparent. All the candidates that were put forward were suitable and interviewed well and we were able to find the perfect person to fill the role. We have had continued support from BB throughout the whole process and the regular check ins are useful and beneficial to both parties. Our candidate is an asset to the team and we are very happy to have them in the company.

— **Sophie Streeting**
Hospitality and Operations Manager, U+i

“ Breaking Barriers plays a key role in supporting refugees in London, providing vital experience, training and access to career guidance through their mentorship programme, work placements and skills sessions. As a former refugee, I know first-hand how isolating the experience can be so this motivated me to help and participate as a mentor. This is also why the work that Breaking Barriers does to empower and integrate refugees into the world of work, nurture their talent and build confidence is so crucial towards helping them to achieve a meaningful milestone in rebuilding their lives.

— **Milos Starovic - Senior Sales Director,**
Bank of America

“ Ipsos has made a commitment globally to employ refugees and has been working in partnership with Breaking Barriers since early 2019. Breaking Barriers are a compassionate and forward thinking charity, they are responsive and dedicated to ensuring the best outcomes for clients and partners. So far in 2019, we have offered placements to 3 of their clients in Project Management, Coding and in our Client Organisation, and we are continuing to seek more. All of the refugees in the placements are a real asset to our business and they are now performing valuable roles and are very popular members of the team. We look forward to continuing our fruitful relationship with Breaking Barriers and welcoming their clients into our business.

— **Louise Maycock - Head of Talent**
Ipsos MORI

7. Some clients attended multiple workshops with 107 unique clients attending workshops

How we supported our clients

We deliver in:

- East London (South Hackney)
- West London (Hammersmith)
- South London (Clapham Junction)
- Three satellite centres

Average of **11.8 hours** of employment support for clients in one or more employment programme

 **358 hours** of education classes

2,676 hours of one-to-one employment support

71 hours of corporate workshops

97%

of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the support we provided to them

We did this with the support of **293 highly skilled volunteers** who delivered **2,584 hours of support**



At the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, I have been referring the young refugees on our Unaccompanied Minors Project to Breaking Barriers for many months now. These young people have received a whole range of support from Breaking Barriers' responsive, patient, and flexible team. For the young people we support, who live in the UK without their families and who live in incredibly vulnerable and precarious circumstances, Breaking Barriers have ensured they've felt supported as they consider how to start their careers and get the work experience they need.

Leyla - JCORE (Jewish Council for Racial Equality)



Having attended many volunteering opportunities, I found this to be one of the most impactful ones where I could directly see the result of my efforts translating into something tangible. The expressions on students' faces when they learn something new made me work harder and more passionately into the activity. Thank you for this opportunity.

Deutsche Bank volunteer

Andrew's story



I did my first degree in Urban and International Planning in Nigeria and came to the UK to study my master's in International Planning. After my degree I went home but faced difficulty with the police after the Nigerian government introduced a law making homosexuality illegal.

I was threatened with arrest and was scared for my life. When I returned to London for my graduation ceremony I applied for asylum and was lucky to be granted refugee status within around 7 months.

Whilst I waited for my status I was unable to work so when I was finally able to apply for jobs I was lacking in confidence. I also faced a significant barrier because I had no experience of interviewing for professional roles.

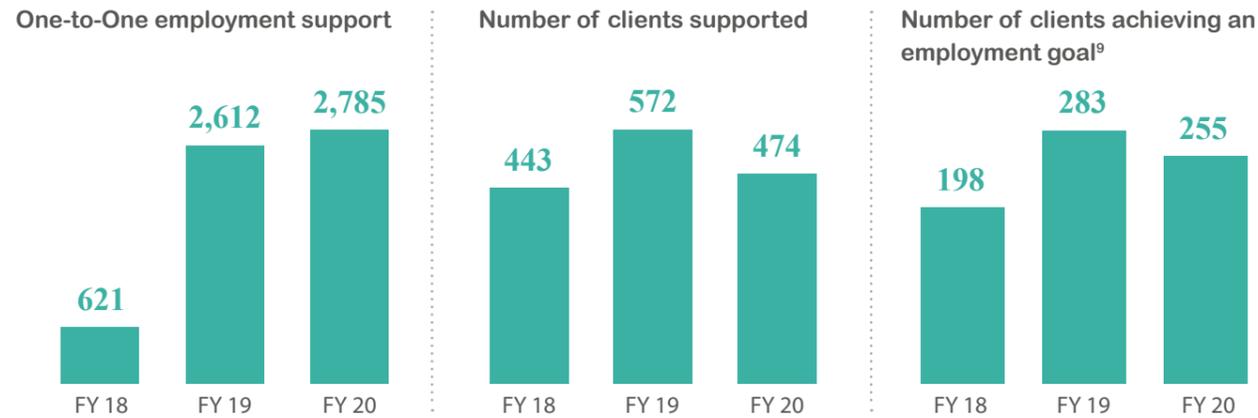
When I joined Breaking Barriers in Hammersmith the first thing I was asked was 'What are your long-term goals?'. I told them I wanted to become a project manager and, together with my Employment and Integration Adviser, I worked towards this goal. My Adviser helped me to focus on the kind of roles that I needed to apply for, as well as helping me with mock interviews, and improving my cover letter and CV. I live in West London so it made a big difference for me to attend Hammersmith as it wasn't too far to travel from my home.

My Adviser helped me to access workshops to improve my interview technique and also told me about a 6-month placement opportunity with Ipsos Mori. We looked at the role and job description together, and the kind of skills and knowledge I would acquire, and I realised it would be a big help in achieving my long-term goal. After the 6-months my confidence was much greater, my IT skills had improved and my communication skills are also much stronger. I was lucky enough to be offered a permanent position after my placement.

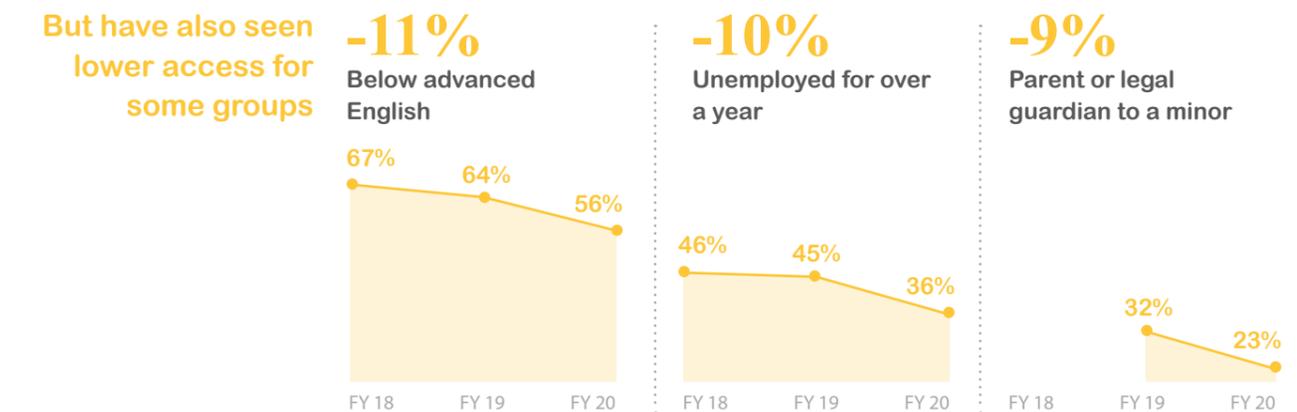
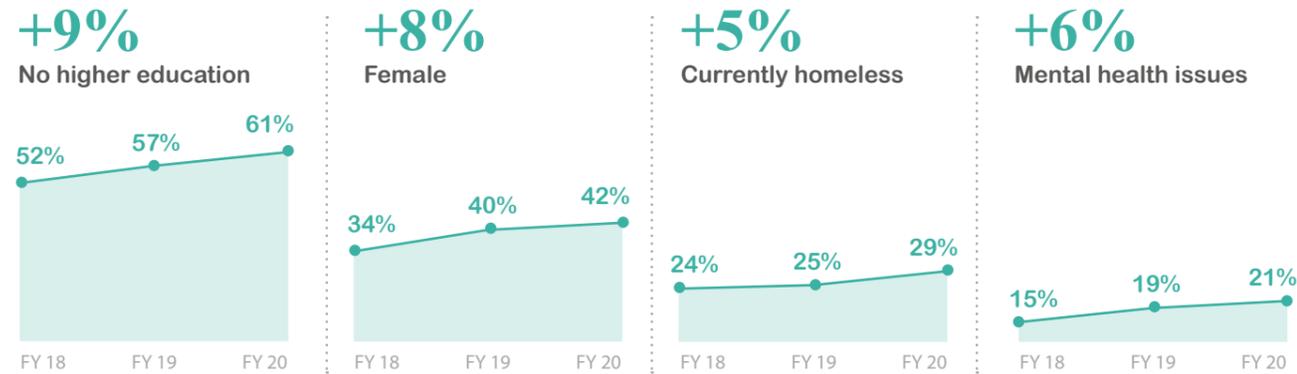
I owe a great deal of gratitude to Breaking Barriers for the tremendous support they provided me with. The help I received from my Adviser and through workshops really helped me regain confidence in my ability to build a career. It was also great to have a one-to-one relationship with my Adviser in Hammersmith. I always knew there was someone I could talk to, who understood my background and my goals, and who could direct me onto the right path. I am really happy with Breaking Barriers follow-through system which I experienced during my placement. The system ensures clients goals are met in the process of entering employment. Thanks to Breaking Barriers I now work in a company I love and in a role within which I will gain valuable experience to achieve my long term goal as a Project Manager. I hope their work continues as there are many more like me seeking opportunities to help them reach their goals. ■

How we have developed

Grown in size



Increased access to some groups of greater need



9. An employment goal includes paid work, training, education, or volunteering

Impact of Covid-19 on our Clients

In response to the crisis we will not reinvent Breaking Barriers but rather adapt our approach to better meet the shift in our clients' needs and to the changes induced by the government's Covid-19 response as well as the reduced labour market opportunities. We will expand our support offering to enable clients to access our existing services remotely and meet other needs of theirs which we do not believe are being adequately met by the sector.

Disproportionately affected employment levels

% of workers who reported being furloughed

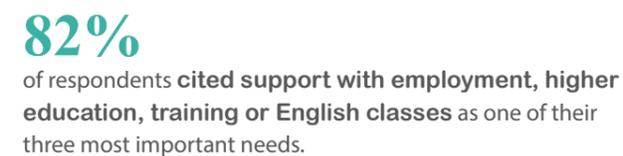


Limited access to a remote, digitalised, workplace and service provision

% of workers with access to a laptop



88% of UK workers also have access to a PC



The priority of needs were:

- Employment information, advice and guidance;
- Financial support
- English classes
- Information provision
- Support with digital access
- Relief of social isolation

Respondents showed an increase in prioritisation of training courses and housing support when asked about future needs.

Young people have the lowest levels of digital access

