



**BREAKING
BARRIERS**

Integrating refugees through employment.

Breaking Barriers | An Introduction



Our Mission

Breaking Barriers was founded in 2015 by Matthew Powell after recognising a lack of effective and comprehensive employment support for refugees.

Our mission is to empower refugees to acquire the knowledge, confidence and experience they need to secure stable and fulfilling employment

We give a central role to businesses, involving them directly in finding employment solutions and providing support that get refugees into work.



The challenge

Refugees flee war, violence, and persecution, but once in the UK, face further challenges to start their new life.

Countries like the USA, Sweden and Germany provide a state sponsored refugee integration programme helping refugees seek employment. The UK does not have this system, so there is no national strategy to support refugee integration or steps into employment. That's where Breaking Barriers comes in.

We know refugees can and do make valuable contributions to society, and that securing employment is the single most important factor in helping rebuild their lives. Yet, they face a multitude of barriers excluding them from society and from the job market.



Refugees globally & in the UK

Globally there are

26 Million

Refugees, half of which are children.



There are over

374,000

people living in the UK who came here as refugees¹ and of those approximately 126,700 currently hold refugee status²



53%

of individuals of refugee background in the UK live in London³



In the UK there are

109,000

outstanding asylum cases.



47%

of Breaking Barriers clients spent over a year waiting for their status to be granted



With a lack of system and support, the UK refugee unemployment rate is over

4x

higher than the national average.



Refugees face many barriers to employment



Lack of English proficiency

Gaps on CV created by lengthy asylum process

Lack of networks within the job market

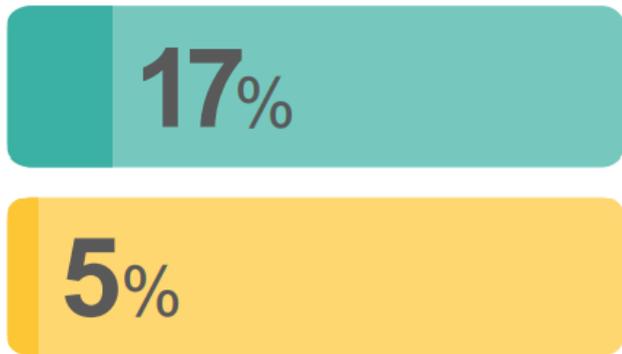
Lack of UK work experience/education

Limited knowledge of the UK job market

Non-recognition of overseas work experience or education

Impact of Covid-19

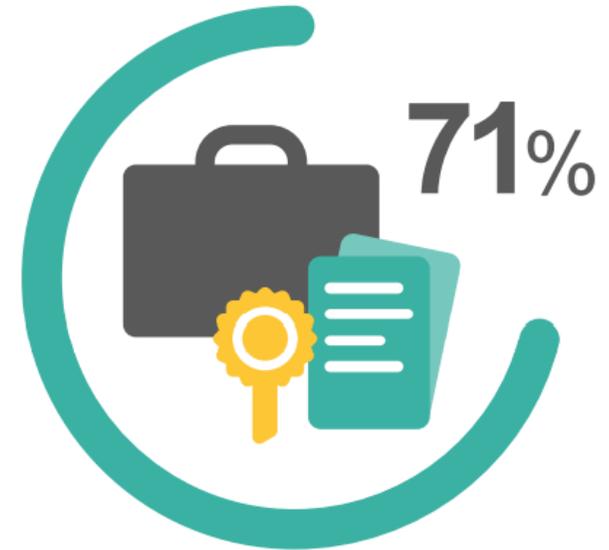
Covid-19 has exacerbated the barriers faced by people of a refugee background, including loss of work due to a challenging labour market and lack of digital skills and access. Breaking Barriers' research conducted in March 2021, highlighted that people from a refugee background have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic intensifying these barriers:



17% of respondents who were in work prior to the pandemic lost employment, significantly higher than 5% of people in the UK overall.



58% of respondents had access to a laptop compared to the 88% of UK households that have access to a home computer.



71% of respondents cited support with employment, higher education, or training as one of their three most important needs.³



Breaking Barriers support

We enable refugees in the UK to acquire the knowledge, confidence, and experience they need to secure stable and fulfilling employment. We offer each of our refugee clients bespoke, intensive and flexible support to assist their individual employment journeys and education needs. This support was delivered face to face but in response to Covid-19 our programmes have been adapted online.



**Employment, Integration
Advice and Guidance**



Education
English, IT & Digital Skills



**Opportunities
with businesses**



Breaking Barriers' refugee clients

We are proud to have supported over 1,300 refugees in London with their employment journeys and education needs. They represent some of the most marginalised people in the UK, but all share the motivation and determination to work, belong and succeed.

39%



Have completed higher education



44%



Have good to advanced English



58%



Have 4+ years of work experience



68%



Have been unemployed for over a year



Our Impact



95% of our clients are more motivated to reach their goals as a result of Breaking Barriers support.



95% are more confident that they will reach their goals as a result of BB's support.



92% rate their chances of finding a job as a result of BB as better or much better.



“

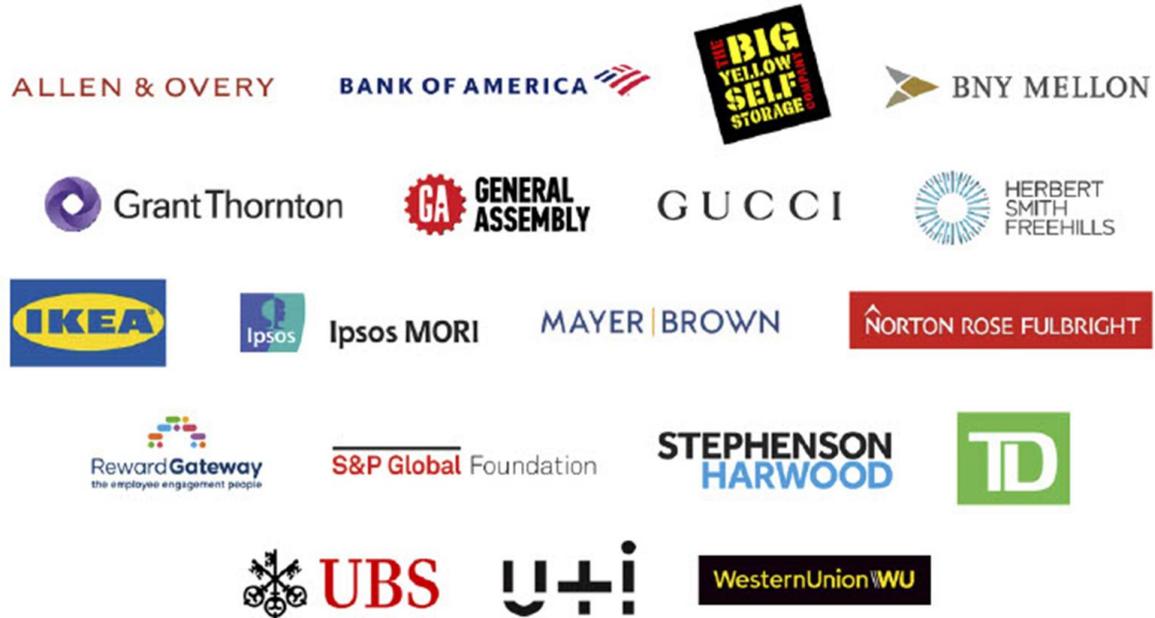
I cannot describe how getting my first paid job in London changed me. I felt like I am a new person, Breaking Barriers helped me to regain my confidence and showed me that I am capable of success in London and restored the trust in people and charities' work.

”

Mayada | Paralegal



Our corporate partners



How our corporate partners & their volunteers have supported our refugee clients in 2019/20:

212 

Volunteers have supported employability workshops

783 

Volunteer hours have been contributed

127 

Refugee clients attended employability workshops

49 

Work placements have been completed

We are passionate about the role the private sector can play in supporting refugees into meaningful employment.

Key to our success and growth are the partnerships we have built with more than 20 businesses across a variety of sectors from IKEA to Bank of America.

Partners offer funding, expertise and opportunities for our clients in the form of employability workshops, mentoring, paid work placements and permanent jobs.

We work with companies of all sizes to develop bespoke shared-value partnerships and activities that work towards the goals of your organisation, employees, customers and community.

The benefits

We work with partners to transform a social challenge into a business opportunity and create a lasting impact for our clients and your employees, customers and community.

A partnership with Breaking Barriers can strengthen your company's approach to Corporate Social Responsibility, Diversity & Inclusion, purpose driven marketing and staff engagement. It's not just a moral responsibility, it's economic - supporting refugees is good for business.



DIVERSITY

improved diversity and inclusion measures



UNITY

improved team morale and employee engagement



DEVELOPMENT

personal and professional development of their employees



86% of our corporate partner volunteers said that volunteering had improved their understanding of the needs of people from a refugee background.

90% of corporate volunteers reported that volunteering in a Breaking Barriers workshop increased their pride in working for their organisation.



Case study

“

Grant Thornton hosted our first ever refugee work placement helping someone who hadn't worked in over ten years to adapt to a fast-paced business environment and stand a greater chance of finding meaningful employment.

We will offer further placements and heartily encourage other companies to do the same.

Working with Breaking Barriers has allowed our people to develop their coaching skills to support others, and it has been hugely rewarding to see people leaving us with increased confidence and skills ready for the next stage of their employment journey.

**Karen Higgins, Head of Sustainability
Grant Thornton UK LLP**

”

Resources and links

Thank you for your interest in Breaking Barriers. For more information and to explore how your business could get involved, please contact:

Jessica Ridgewell | j.ridgewell@breaking-barriers.co.uk | 07824 785 115

- **Meet our Founder**: Matthew Powell set up Breaking Barriers in 2015 after realising how little support was available to help refugees integrate into society once they had been granted asylum.
- **Breaking Barriers Impact Report** (May 2019 – May 2020)
- **One year later - The Impact of Covid-19 on refugees**: Our latest report assessing the impact and changing needs for people from a refugee background in London following the pandemic.
- **Awais' story**: from refugee to Grant Thornton employee
- **Samer's Story**: Breaking Barriers and IKEA, an award-winning partnership
- Our annual photography exhibition: **Leave Home Save Lives**



[@BB_UK1](https://twitter.com/BB_UK1)



[Breaking Barriers](https://www.linkedin.com/company/breaking-barriers)



www.breaking-barriers.co.uk



 **BREAKING
BARRIERS**
Integrating refugees through employment.

**Together we can empower refugees
to fulfil their potential**