

CASE STUDY

in partnership with:  Winchester
City Council

CommUNITY Skills (Employment Support)

a bridge to unity project

commUNITY skills



Overview

On the 24th of February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. With that Europe saw the mass-movement of Ukrainians fleeing for their safety. Since 2021 over 200,000 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with an estimated 1800 residing in Hampshire.

Ukrainians, as with other displaced people, face a number of challenges when it comes to resettling. Not only are they having to adapt to a new language and a new culture but they also face barriers when it comes to financial independence, often due to issues around recognition of qualifications and securing employment.

Specific data within Hampshire is limited but what we do know is that the number of Ukrainians in employment is less than the general population. What we also know from personal experiences as a Charity working with and representing this population is that they are driven, highly educated and keen to learn and adapt to enable them to secure employment within the UK workforce.

'Not only are [Ukrainians] having to adapt to a new language and a new culture but they also face barriers when it comes to financial independence'

Alexandra Kenchington
Co-founder & Director, Bridge to Unity

Our Experience

Bridge to Unity CIO is a Charity that works to support those with refugee status and those arriving in the UK as displaced people. Working primarily throughout Hampshire and West Sussex, its founders and volunteers have been working with refugees for over 3 years and during this time have built relationships and trust within this community.

Through the relationships the Charity has built, it has acquired a wealth of knowledge about the gaps in support available to this cohort and learnt about the services that are so desperately needed. Time and time again the need for support into meaningful employment is highlighted and it is here that the Charity focuses a large proportion of its work.



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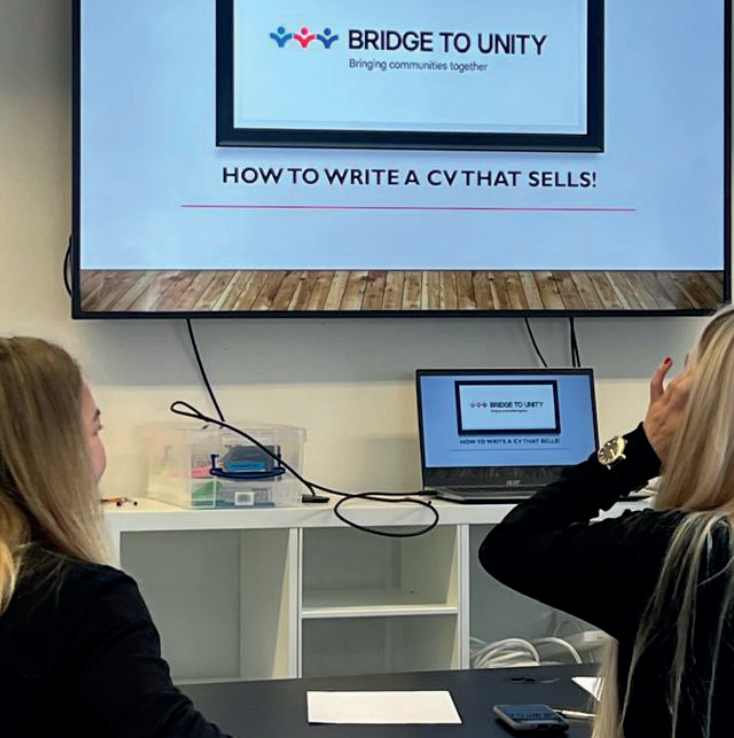
Oleksandr
Ukrainian CommUNITY Skills attendee

Alexandra Kenchington, Co-Founder and Director at Bridge to Unity CIO explains;

'We know that job satisfaction is integral to personal fulfilment and that those who find jobs they enjoy are more likely to integrate into the local community and will have better mental and physical health outcomes because of this. However, despite the financial independence employment offers, there are still many obstacles in the way of those arriving in the UK from other countries and this is why programmes, such as our CommUNITY Skills employability support are so important'

As you would expect individuals arriving from other countries face barriers when it comes to varying levels of English and recognition of qualifications gained abroad but for many simple things such as writing CVs and job applications tailored for the UK market can hold people back and this is where Bridge to Unity focuses its work and practical support.





Interventions

Matt Simmons, Co-founder & Director of Bridge to Unity explains;

'Things we take for granted like how to write a CV and cover letter in the standard format expected by employers in the UK can really hold people back, as can knowledge about the typical questions to expect at interview. Our courses and the 1-2-1 support we offer gives individuals the confidence to overcome these challenges and secure work.'

He adds;

'As well as this we have built meaningful and trusting relationships with local organisations and recruitment agencies meaning not only are we able to help individuals gain the skills they need to succeed but we can make introductions into the workforce as well.'

'Our courses and the 1-2-1 support we offer gives individuals the confidence to overcome these challenges and secure work'

Matt Simmons
Co-founder & Director, Bridge to Unity



Throughout June and July Bridge to Unity worked with Winchester City Council to deliver a series of six face to face workshops to 15 Ukrainians residing throughout the district.

The workshops, which were delivered out of Winchester Library, covered topics including;

- **How to write a CV and cover letter for the UK job market**
- **Interview dos and don'ts**
- **Transferable skills and how to access the UK job market**



The interactive workshops also provided an opportunity to practice interview skills in a role play format and provided a supportive and interactive environment for Ukrainians to come together and learn new skills whilst also making new friends.

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Oleksandr
Ukrainian CommUNITY Skills attendee

Alexandra Kenchington adds;

'It was lovely to see so much enthusiasm and dedication from those who participated in our employability workshops. Their engagement was inspiring, and it was a privilege to watch them grow in confidence as they developed new skills and explored potential career paths as the programme progressed.'

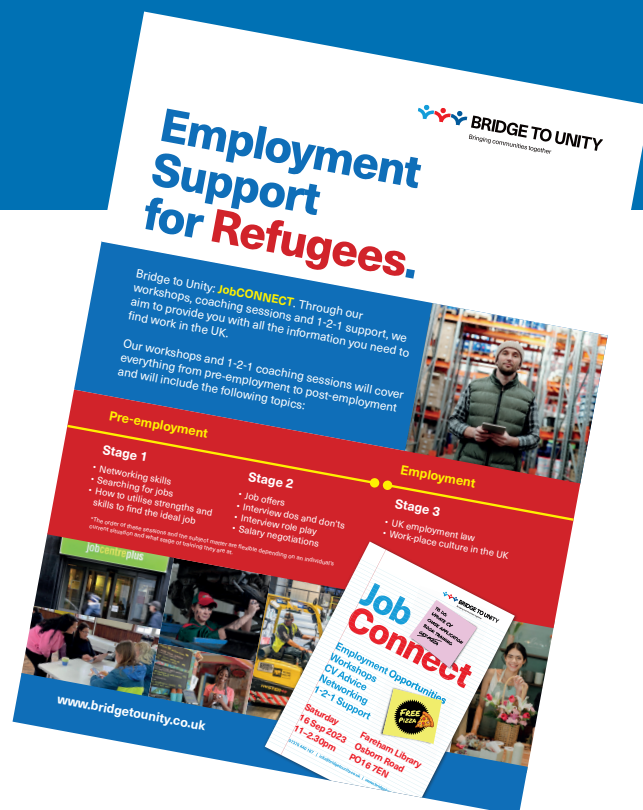
As well as the series of group workshops, each individual had personalised 1-2-1 support with an Employment Specialist, providing an opportunity for each individual to really focus on their specific needs, as well as the skills needed to allow success within their chosen fields. Each individual also had access to additional 1-2-1 support to perfect their CVs and cover letters.

Outcomes

Participants in the programme felt it empowered them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed within the UK job market and throughout the programme each individual's understanding of the UK job market went from strength to strength.

Oleksandr, who arrived in the UK in 2023 explained;

'It was very useful for me to learn more about the UK job market and renew and upgrade my CV and cover letter. It was also helpful to understand what can make you feel more confident during an interview such as small talk, elevator pitch, using the three P's (Pitch, Pace, Pause), and so on. I'm very pleased to have taken part in the workshops and look forward to attending more workshops from Bridge to Unity.'



The individualised support offered through 1-2-1s was also praised and individuals such as Antonina found the practical help the programme offered about CVs and cover letters to be a great help;

'Bridge to Unity helped me create a CV that matches the job positions I am applying for and the course allowed me to analyse and reflect my transferable skills in my CV. After completing the course I feel more confident and believe that I can get the job I want.'



'After completing the course I feel more confident and believe that I can get the job I want'

Antonina
Ukrainian CommUNITY Skills attendee

'Winchester City Council is committed to providing support to our Ukrainian guests, these workshops, the 1-2-1 employment support and the additional help this programme offers has made a difference to those who have attended

Melissa Fletcher, Town Centre & Communities Manager at Winchester City Council

By 8 weeks:

5/15

attendees secured interviews, new jobs or educational opportunities to develop their careers

100%

found the workshops useful

90%

felt they had developed the confidence to succeed in the UK job market



All fifteen attendees also have a focused and professional CV, an adaptable cover letter and the interview skills needed to thrive at interview and in the UK workforce.

As part of its CommUNITY Skills employability support Bridge to Unity also offers phone calls prior to interviews to recap key pointers and likely questions a candidate will face, as well as mentoring support after individuals secure employment to not only offer a listening ear but to ensure better retention within the workforce.

Matt Simmons adds;

'Support does not end when the programme does. All those that attended our workshops know that we are here for them now and in the future, whether that's as references or to support with job applications and advice.'

For more information about our CommUNITY Skills Programme or any other aspect of our work, please visit our website

www.bridgetounity.co.uk | info@bridgetounity.co.uk | 01329 600414 | CIO-1205400