

Education and Employment Fair for Resettlers and Refugees 28th November 2023

What was the event?

Building upon the first Careers Fair held for Refugees and Asylum Seekers which was supported in July 2023, the Lancashire Refugee Integration Team, Future U and its partners supported a further event in November 2023 for Resettlers and Refugees. Drawing upon evaluation feedback, the event sought to engage a wider range of education providers, and include more training and employer type organisations in order to widen the range of advice and the potential education, training and employment opportunities that might be available to participants. The event also included a CPD session for exhibitors, which provided an opportunity to explore key issues and factors in being able to effectively support Resettlers and Refugees.

Exhibitors

All higher education and further education providers supporting students within the Lancashire region were invited to exhibit at the event. Contact was also made with career services from major local employers such as health, the police and social care to invite attendance. In addition, information & guidance organisations, independent adult training organisations, and specialist community charities were invited to participate. In total there were 22 exhibitors consisting, amongst others, of 3 higher education providers, 3 further education colleges, 4 adult training providers, 3 specialist refugee advice organisations and 3 employers.

Participants

90 participants attended the event, with 67 of the participants providing key personal details and completing all or some of the evaluation items. Based upon recorded personal details collected, 63% of the participants were male. Participants with an Asian ethnicity made up 54% of the participants attending, with 31% of participants being from a white (non-British) background. The youngest participant attending was aged 16, with the oldest being recorded as 64. The average age for participants was 32. All participants attending had varying ESOL needs.

What impact did the event have?

Participants

Attendees were invited to complete a short paper based evaluation questionnaire on leaving the event. Figures 1-6 identify the responses given by the participants to each of the question items.

Figure 1

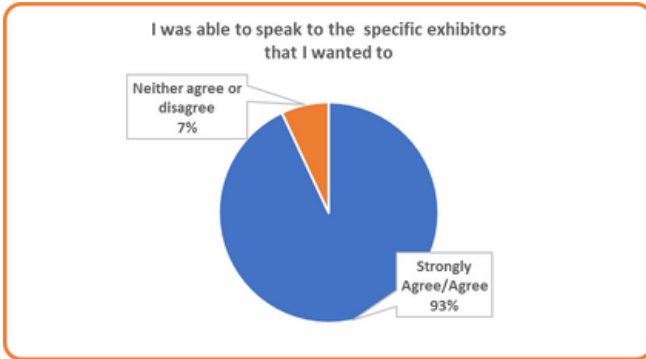


Figure 2

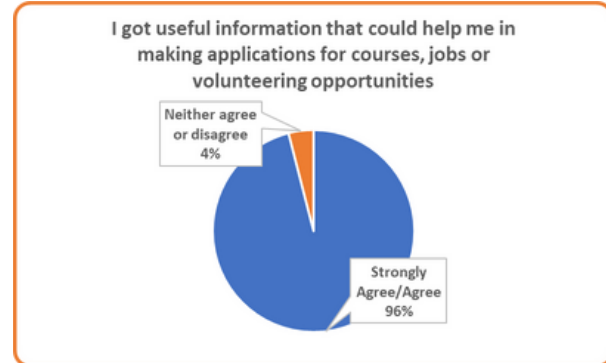


Figure 3

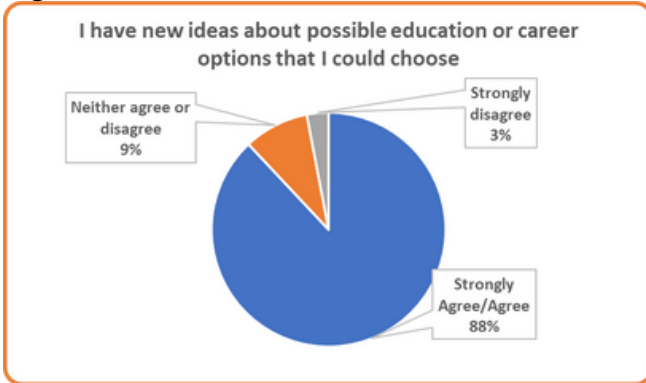


Figure 4

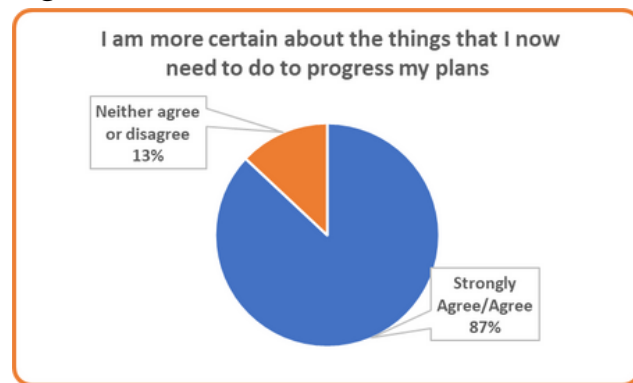


Figure 5

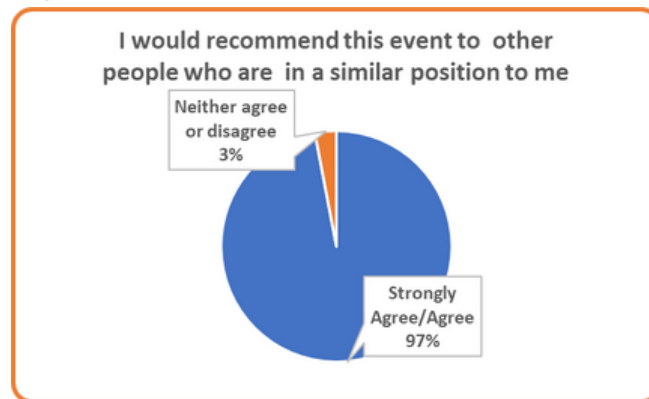
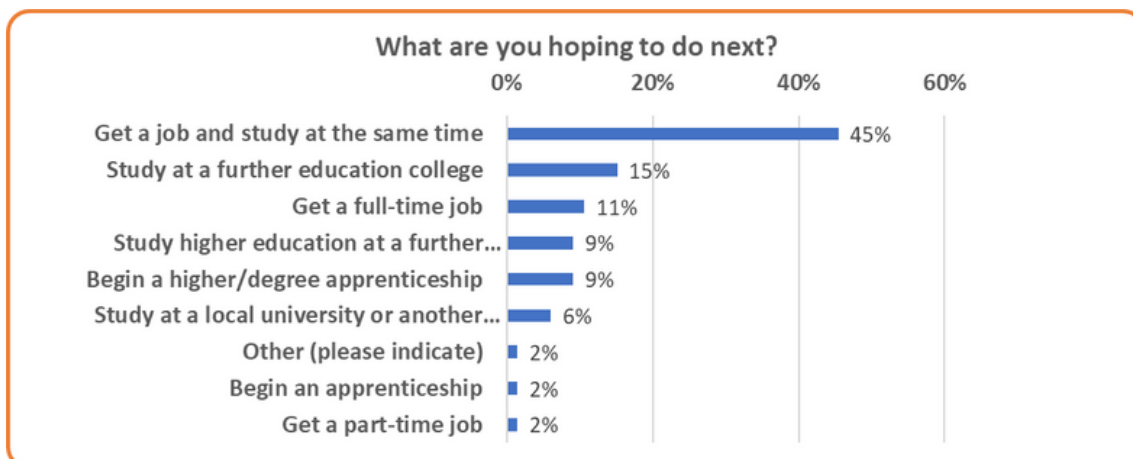


Figure 6



Overall participants indicated strong levels of agreement that the event had been useful in providing access to a range of exhibitors, helped them gain new information and/ or advice, provided insights that they would be able to act upon, and would also recommend this type of event for people in similar circumstances to themselves. The majority of attendees were seeking opportunities whereby they might combine employment and studying, this included options for attending either higher and/ or further education. A small number of participants did not agree that the event had stimulated any new potential options or helped in planning their next steps. This might indicate that these participants, perhaps given their personal experience and qualifications, had clear ideas about the type of information/ or opportunities that they thought might available and could pursue. This might point to the need for more specialist advisors who might be able to discuss in more detailed options relevant to the experience of participants.

What impact did the event have?

Exhibitors

13 of the exhibitors responded to the invitation to complete evaluation forms to share their feedback of the event. Based upon their feedback, the indications are that on average 16 participants, visited their stands (range 6-50), most of whom the exhibitors were then able to have more detailed conversations and/ or respond to any expressed needs by the participants (range 3-.50). Exhibitors were invited to identify the top 3 issues raised and/ or discussed with the participant's. These included:

- Functional skills and addressing ESOL needs
- General careers advice
- Higher education progression
- Housing issues
- Online resources and basic skills courses
- Recognition of prior learning or qualification equivalence
- Right to work requirements
- Specific education programmes leading to job roles
- Work experience or volunteering opportunities.

Many of the exhibitors found the CPD session very helpful, with this type of activity being encouraged when designing for other similar activities. One of the University representatives indicated she was going to share what she had learned with colleagues to inform their future guidance and approach.

In respects of potential enhancements in the planning of any future similar events Exhibitors thought the following would be useful.

- Some indication of the potential number of anticipated attendees
- Better signage outside of the venue
- Some guidance on potential qualification equivalence so that they could better advise and direct participants.

Any other feedback?

While the majority of the attendees had ESOL needs, several verbally noted how helpful the event had been. One participant recalled that he was well educated in his home country and to see the different education providers and speak to all the different organisations to day 'was like oxygen'. He went on to say that he felt blessed to be here and was thankful for the opportunity to attend. He indicated how he would go back and share the information he had gained from his participation with his friends and family.

Several of the exhibitors remarked that more of this type of event would be helpful. They noted that many of the participants were highly motivated and it was rewarding in trying to offer support.

Recommendations for future events

Process Considerations

- Offer exhibitors some further detail on the background profile and the anticipated numbers of participants to aid their planning.
- Review the adequacy of signage requirements.
- Include more language support to aid participants understanding. This might include booking some dedicated translator services, the printing of materials in a range of languages relevant to the expected audience, incorporate the use of technology aids such as Google Translate. See <https://www.educatorstechnology.com/2023/03/translation-apps-for-teachers.html> for more information.

Development

Search and bring together in a consolidated resource all key sources of information and guidance that might be useful to aid Resettlers and Refugee participants consider issues of qualification equivalence and where best to find help.

Best Practice

- Continue to offer a CPD element in any future similar events being supported, to support exhibitors knowledge and understanding of key issues in relation to the needs of the target audience.