

The Race Equality Centre: Enterprising New Arrivals

The Race Equality Centre (TREC) in Leicester and Leicestershire works towards the elimination of racial discrimination; promotes equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups; and advances education and relieves poverty amongst immigrants and refugees through the provision of legal and other advice services.

In 2012 TREC was successful in its application for ERDF funding to the support the entrepreneurial needs of new arrivals and refugee communities in Leicester through the Enterprising New Arrivals (ENA) programme. Running from April 2012 to March 2014, the total programme value was £224,859, with 20 percent match-funded by TREC.

The programme surpassed its target of supporting 100 people, providing over 12 hours and more support to 155 people over the two year period. From the support received through the programme and as an unexpected outcome, 30 new businesses were established, which included retail, e-commerce, care and recruitment services.

The aim of the ENA programme was to support and enable new arrivals communities to engage in the economic regeneration of their communities; support the development of successful entrepreneurs in these communities and ensure that post-recession these communities were in a position to thrive and survive.

Developed from the work of TREC's New Arrivals Integration Team, which supports the integration of individuals that have been given leave to remain in the UK, it was found that some of the individuals had their own businesses in their previous country but now had no access to support to explore self-employment as a progression route. The ENA



programme provided that route for those individuals.

Once a client was identified, ENA initially provided one-to-one support for individuals via a team of three Enterprise Development Officers with administration support. The Officers provided the appropriate research, training, business planning, processes, financial forecasting and the understanding of the legal and financial requirements of starting new businesses. A wrap around service was developed to encourage entrepreneurship for new arrival communities.

To further support the participants 20 business mentors were recruiting, some of whom had been new arrivals and had now successfully set up their own businesses in Leicester. The mentors were trained and supported by TREC to work with participants. The mentors used their skills, abilities and experience to work on issues, such as legalities, sales and marketing, either on a one-to-one or group basis. The majority of the programme's participants received some form of mentoring.

In another part of the project, TREC carried out three scoping exercises focusing on the entrepreneurial activities of new arrival and migrant communities in four disadvantaged areas of Leicester; Westcotes Ward, Highfields, Belgrave and St. Matthews Ward. The aim was to assess the current level of entrepreneurial activity, highlight the different levels of support available and the barriers faced in accessing the support. The study helped to complete a formal dissemination report, "Entrepreneurial Activity of New Arrival Communities in four areas of Leicester", which provided solutions to overcome these barriers and enhance help available to establish new enterprises in the City of Leicester.

ENA also ran outreach sessions in the community with the purpose of recruiting potential participants and raising awareness of business start-up support mechanisms. This was achieved by building contacts with the community leaders, taking part in joint community events and running sessions at suitable times for people to attend e.g. during evenings and weekends.

Feedback showed that the clients felt inspired to think about the product or service they wanted to offer and access a service that would support them to develop an objective business plan. Individuals whom the programme could not support were signposted to other services both within TREC and where available, externally. TREC never refused assistance to individuals applying for help, even if they fell outside the eligibility criteria of the programme. Staff worked under their own volition to support and guide the individual.

As part of the outputs for ENA "A Business Advisors Toolkit" was developed to support professionals and other advice services to support the complex needs of new arrival communities when seeking advice and support on developing their entrepreneurial skills.

Although the application process took longer than expected and furthermore the parameters of the initial application had changed due to the demise of Business Link, TREC was able to re-profile the offer without altering the spirit and essence of the application.

The main learning for TREC during the programme was to adapt to accommodate the needs of the individuals it supported. TREC want to share this learning and models of good practice with other organisations to move entrepreneurial support for new arrivals forward.

Since the programme finished in March 2014, TREC has continued to work with clients from new arrival and migrant communities to ensure the project's work continues. TREC has further partnered with the "Leicester for Business" consortium to deliver the "Enterprise Development Service" and is also looking to apply for further ERDF funding in the 2014-20 programme.

For further information on TREC visit www.theraceequitycentre.org.uk.

