

A group of diverse women are gathered for a party, celebrating. They are holding up colorful confetti and streamers. The background is decorated with warm white string lights. One woman in the foreground is wearing a white tote bag with the Routes logo and the word 'Routes' printed on it.

Routes

ROUTES ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2023/24 OVERVIEW &
REPORT

WWW.ROUTESCOLLECTIVE.COM

OVERVIEW

Our vision is for refugee and asylum seeking women to have access to the opportunities and resources they need to build meaningful and fulfilling lives, and for employers to be equipped with the knowledge they need to lead with inclusivity and compassion.

The oppressive asylum system in the UK denies people who seek safety the opportunity to build meaningful lives. By reducing autonomy, limiting access to opportunities and keeping people in poverty for extended periods, the asylum system erodes confidence and limits aspirations. These factors disproportionately impact women, who are often caregivers or held back from participating in mixed gender spaces due to cultural barriers.

While the majority of these women wish to find work, existing circumstances make it difficult for them to navigate the job market to apply for suitable roles, despite many having transferable experience that could help solve the skills gap across various UK sectors. On top of legal barriers, bias is also a key factor contributing to refugee women being employed at half the rate of those born in the UK.

Routes supports these women with meaningful programmes, cross-sector partnerships, and individualised support that prioritises autonomy. We seek to help refugee and asylum seeking women build confidence, learn new skills and tackle obstacles to reach their goals. Our vision is of a future where people seeking safety in the UK are afforded access to opportunities and networks that they need to build meaningful and fulfilling lives, the ability to choose their future path, and the resources they need to reach their full potential.



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

88

women engaged in our work this year. This is a mix of women joining new programmes for the first time, continuing development through our bursary programme and participating in Routes to Employment

516

hours of 1:1 mentoring, delivered all over London and online. This time was spent supporting mentees to find jobs, apply to universities and scholarships, build confidence and future aspirations and improve communication skills

2

new programmes launches to compliment our ongoing work of the mentoring programme; Alumni support and Routes to Employment

43

mentees successfully graduated from our mentoring programme

MENTORING PROGRAMME

43 women successfully completed the programme this year



proximity to goal moved from 3.5 to 7.5 over the duration of the programme



70% of people started a job or a course within six months of their mentoring



100% of people increased skills and knowledge during the programme

We understand that our programme has a deep impact on the women we support and to ensure that this is the case we measure the depth of impact that we have on each individual. Our aim is that as many women as possible sit in the enhance or transform categories, as that is where we hope our impact lies. As you can see, in 23/24 84% of participants sit in the enhance and transform categories.

Improve

16%

those who improved their self confidence, but did not move 3 points towards their goal or start a job or a course

Enhance

14%

those who moved at least 3 points closer to their goal on a scale of 1 to 10, but did not start a course or a job

Transform

70%

those who have started a job or a course during, or within 6 months after graduating from the programme

MENTORING PROGRAMME



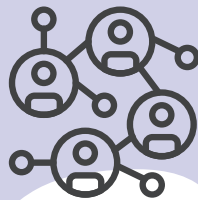
94% of people improved their self confidence across the programme



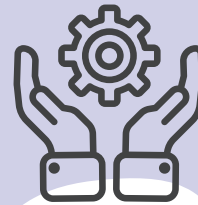
97% of people now feel prepared to apply for opportunities



50% of people feel more confident in the future at the end of the programme



91% of people expanded their networks as a result of the programme



88% of people felt supported practically by the programme



QUOTES



“ An eye opener programme. That it might take time to integrate in a new country, new everything but one should remain resilient and hopeful for a better future. ”

“ Before meeting Routes I was not self-confident, I was down, I was feeling unwanted, not human. I thought life here would be impossible but with the programme I gained confidence in myself. It is nice when people do care. I now know I can make it reality. ”

“ The undivided practical and educational support has been a great opportunity. ”

“ Routes programme has changed my mindset about so many things. Previously I was so focused on the things I can't do because of my asylum status but being on the program made me realise that even with my status I can still empower myself with knowledge and skills. ”

Now I feel like I have no limitations. ”

“ Routes Mentoring programme is a great way to empower women to have confidence and believe in themselves no matter what we have been through or still facing there is still bright future for us. ”



PARTNERS

Routes supports women with experience of the UK asylum system to access fulfilling work and education opportunities, whilst simultaneously training professionals across sectors to become inclusive leaders through increased understanding of different realities.

Thank you to all the organisations who supported their employees to mentor with us this year. As a mutually beneficial programme for both mentor and mentee, the impact we have on our mentors taking part in the programme is also important to us.



Coaching skills improved in 84% of mentors



Cultural awareness improved in 65% of mentors



Communication and relationship building skills improved in 81% of mentors

74% of mentors reported feeling more reflective, 55% reported feeling more patient and 74% reported feeling more open minded, We think that all these skills and personal attributes are important for creating more inclusive and compassionate leaders across sectors.



MENTEE ALUMNI

Our mentoring programme runs for 4 months, but we know that for our mentees, that's not the end of the journey. We've been piloting and expanding our alumni support this year, to support continued progress after mentoring finishes

Based on the impact data collected six months after the mentoring programme, we saw that the big leaps that people make in the four months of mentoring are often not continued into the six months after. Whilst the mentoring programme does a fantastic job at being a springboard for people to make significant progress towards their goals, we also want to be able to support people to continue that progress.

This year we started to pilot some new ways of supporting our alumni.

- Access to bursaries with the City and Guilds Foundation. This was previously available for mentees on the programme, but we have decided to offer it out to our wider community. To enable this we've designed Bursary application support days with volunteer support from UBS.
- Career talks on a range of subjects; returning to work after a career break, squiggly careers, different routes to work and much more.
- The Routes jobs list, a mailing list where we advertise jobs that may be of interest to our community. Any alumni who are job seeking can sign up to the list and any organisations wishing to recruit refugee talent can post their job.

We are continuing to design, test and evaluate this work, and hope to have a thriving community of active support for mentee alumni to join.



ROUTES TO EMPLOYMENT

In May 2023 we launched a research project into the unemployment rate for refugee women in London with the aim of designing a project that would lead to systemic change

The research included co-design and problem tree workshops with women with lived experience of the asylum system; surveying a large group of refugee and asylum seeking women with different legal statuses; literature review; meetings with organisations already doing work in this area.

As a result of this we have designed a work plan for the next two years, expanding our research and piloting projects that we feel have potential. This includes:

- Pre-employment training for refugee and asylum seeking women
- Engaging and informing employers through a 'working with refugees' learning programme
- Matching women and employers for engagement relevant to their legal status e.g. volunteering opportunities, full time and part time employment, internship/trainee jobs
- Investigating apprenticeships for refugee women
- Creating a physical space with childcare on site where asylum seekers can volunteer and gain experience



This research project was funded by Propel and City Bridge Trust



CITY BRIDGE
FOUNDATION



Photo from our End of Programme celebration with our cohort of mentors and mentees in 2024

Huge thanks to all our supporters and funders this year!

**EQUALLY
OURS**



UBS

**The Hilden
Charitable
Fund**



**CITY BRIDGE
FOUNDATION**

