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# Creating opportunities for independence through new skills and connections

## Summary

- **Delivery Area:** Inclusive Integration
- **Partner:** Connecting Opportunities
- **Course:** ESOL
- **Values:** We are Committed, We Care

Halifax Opportunities Trust works with migrants and refugees so they settle in their host community and adapt to their new life in the UK. Each year, the Inclusive Integration team works with over 200 individuals from more than ten countries, speaking a range of languages from Ukraine to Urdu, Czech to Kurdish. For many newcomers to the UK, language is not the only barrier preventing them from integrating within the community, British culture and access to finances are also challenging.

We work with individuals and their families, like Nadeem, so they can establish connections and build their skills for a fulfilling life in the UK.

## Nadeem's Story

Nadeem\* migrated to the UK from Pakistan in February 2022 on a spousal visa to join his wife. Nadeem felt emotional leaving his family, making his departure difficult. He faced further challenges upon his arrival to the UK as his visa constrained his access to finances; the visa condition of 'no recourse to public funds' was placed. This meant that Nadeem was reliant on his wife, who was supporting him financially. Nadeem had the 'right to work' in any employment field and was keen to find work as soon as possible, but lack of English language skills meant that he found it difficult.



In Pakistan, Nadeem's education history was completed to secondary level and he had no records of previous employment in any field. Not only did this mean he was limited to the type of work he applied for, but the language barrier also presented an obstacle, as he struggled to understand English and required interpretation for all interactions. Furthermore, Nadeem lacked understanding of British values and culture and was not aware of the integration opportunities available to him. This was a huge culture shock to Nadeem.

## Taking Action

Through his initial experience and difficulty finding work, Nadeem often felt lonely and isolated, which had an impact on his emotional wellbeing. His wife contacted Halifax Opportunities Trust on behalf of Nadeem to enquire about ESOL and through this he was introduced to the Connecting Opportunities (CO) programme.

Nadeem was assigned an integration keyworker, who helped him develop an action plan that broke down his barriers to employment for successful

integration in the UK. He expressed an interest in working as a chef or kitchen assistant, however he was aware that improving his English language, undertaking vocational training and improving his knowledge about life in the UK would increase his prospects of employment.

## Gaining Skills

Whilst on the CO Programme Nadeem was signposted to the Highfield Level 2 Award in Food Safety for Catering (RQF), which he completed and gained an accredited qualification.

Following an ESOL diagnostic assessment, Nadeem was signposted to take an Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (Entry 1), which he also completed and gained accreditation.

## Immersed in Culture

Gaining a better understanding of English language helped Nadeem to successfully integrate into Calderdale and increase his understanding of British culture. This was enhanced through a number of planned trips

*“Now I understand English and can communicate better, I have been able to talk to people and I feel like I am part of the community”*

and activities, such as a visit to Chatsworth House alongside other participants. Nadeem’s integration into British life has given him a better understanding of British heritage and history, while also benefiting from building new social connections with others on the CO programme.

Now, Nadeem no longer feels isolated and lonely and has a support network that has assisted him with building his first CV, with further help of the Educational Development Trust Career’s Service.



## Employment Success

Once Nadeem’s skills and confidence had grown, he was ready to seek employment. His Keyworker engaged with some local employers, contacting fast food restaurants. As a result of this he was introduced to prospective employers. Following a successful work placement, Nadeem was offered a full-time position working as a Chef at a local takeaway.

Nadeem now feels more confident as he has his financial independence and has built social connections with other peers on the CO programme, as well as through his recent employment, which has improved his emotional wellbeing.



inclusive integration