

Language skills help Helisa get on...

When Helisa Bagheri moved to Stretford from Iran almost one year ago she didn't expect the language barrier to cause her such difficulties. Qualified to degree level in Iran – with a degree in Grammatical Literature – Helisa was confident that with some English skills she would learn the language as she worked.

However, on arriving in the UK Helisa realised that competition for jobs was high and that she would need to improve her English if she was to succeed and find work. Helisa was searching the internet, looking for courses to help her improve her English, when she came across Next Step – the adult careers service – which offers free and impartial careers information and is available online, over the telephone and with a local adviser face-to-face.

Exploring further, Helisa soon realised that there is a dedicated element of the Next Step service to help individuals from ethnic cultures to access learning and careers advice. The Next Step Language Lines Service, which consists of a team of dedicated bi-lingual advisers, offers free and impartial support over the telephone in Farsi, French, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Sylheti and Urdu.

Helisa made contact with Next Step and was immediately put through to their Language Lines Service. She was quickly supported in finding a course at her local college to improve her spoken English. Over the next three months, Helisa studied hard and completed the course, and immediately felt more positive about her future.

Helisa said:

“The Next Step service helped me to find the right learning opportunity – a course to help me improve my English at a college not too far from home. The course took three months to complete, but in that time my ability to not only speak, but to understand and write in English improved significantly. It was a great benefit to me.”

Helisa decided to get back in touch with Next Step's Language Lines Service once she had completed the course, as she felt more confident in her ability and as she looked towards securing employment. Helisa underwent sessions with a Next Step adviser to improve her CV writing skills and to help her prepare for interviews. This was done over the telephone, and Helisa was supported with the tools available online too.

Once she had her CV ready, Helisa began to look for work, and she soon found a receptionist's position advertised in the college where she studied. Helisa was quickly called for interview and she secured the job.

Helisa continued:

“Although I had the skills to write a CV after my course, I really didn't know how to format one or what information to include. Next Step supported me in preparing a very good CV that clearly shows my abilities and qualifications. Speaking to someone in my own language made things so much easier for me. I know that had I not sought help with CV writing there is no way I would have been fortunate enough to get an interview. The role of receptionist is varied and I deal with people at all levels – from students to lecturers, to business men and women who use our facilities and I am using my language skills to the full in all aspects of what I do.”

Next Step's Language Lines Service can support individuals whose first language is not English. Next Step advisers offer a brokerage service to support clients in these situations, transferring them through to colleges and other providers and staying on the line to act as an interpreter to ensure the customer fully understands the enrolment process.

Advisers are able to offer a full level of support in the enrolment process as an interpreter and ensure clients do not leave the enrolment process confused, unsure or with any unanswered questions.

The service also provides a three way conference call facility with Next Step advisers acting as an interpreter for people looking for careers information and advice or help with their CV, researching local or national job markets or interview techniques.

Helisa, who lives with her husband, an accountant with the Bank of New York in Manchester, accredits his support to much of her success. She has a long-term goal of studying Psychology and eventually working in a children's nursery. Currently, Helisa is training for a half marathon as she is a great believer in keeping fit, whilst she is also learning to drive, which has other challenges.

She concluded:

“I did have a driving licence in Iran but I have to re-take my test in England. The driving element of the test is fine but I have to pass a theory test! Yet again, my skills are being called into action to help me understand and evaluate each question and my response.”

Bahareh Kaveh, Next Step adviser added:

“Next Step gives advice to help people achieve their ambitions and move forward in work and life, and for many people this isn't always straightforward as language barriers can prevent people from achieving what they want to. Helisa is a great example of someone who has overcome a language barrier by contacting Next Step and utilising its Language Lines Service to enable her to get on in her life. She is far more confident now, is in work and has plans to study further – things she couldn't have dreamt of realising last year when her English language skills were poor. She is a fantastic example of what can be achieved when there is support available.”

Ends

Notes for Editors

Next Step, soon to become the National Careers Service, is available to all adults in England, aged 19 and over (or 18 and over if a Jobcentre Plus customer or those in custody), whatever their qualification, skill level or employment status, fuelling the potential of millions of adults, through three integrated service channels:

- Online: direct.gov.uk/nextstep
- Telephone: 0800 100 900, 8am – 10pm, 7 days a week
- Face-to-face: Call 0800 100 900 to arrange an appointment in your area

The Next Step service is free and impartial and includes Language Lines Services that can be accessed for free by telephone when calling from a land line. For each language, there is a dedicated free telephone number so that anyone choosing to use the Language Lines Service can make contact with and talk to one of our advisors. Advisors are bi-lingual and are happy to speak in either their native language or in English, if preferred. The service is available over the telephone, with bi-lingual advisers in the following languages:

Punjabi	0800 093 1333**
Sylheti	0800 093 1444
Somali	0800 093 1555
Urdu	0800 093 1118**
Gujarati	0800 093 1119
Polish	0800 093 1114
French	0800 093 1115
Farsi	0800 093 1116

Lines are open Monday to Friday, between 9am – 5pm. **Urdu and Punjabi lines are open 9am – 8pm

The Contact Us section of the Next Step website includes a link to the Language Lines Service page which contains an interactive task around cultures and also has a related links section that includes useful information about, for example working in the UK or choosing a career. Careers services in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the devolved Administrations. The average number of calls to the Language Lines Service is around 250 a month

Skills Funding Agency

The Skills Funding Agency, an agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, funds and regulates adult further education and skills in England. It is responsible for channelling funding swiftly, efficiently and securely to further education colleges and other providers, primarily in response to customer (employer and learner) choice on programmes. It operates through customer focused services: National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and Next Step.

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This press release and others can be downloaded from the Next Step media room [here](#)