

Community action reaps rewards

A dedicated service helping individuals from ethnic cultures to access learning and careers advice is increasing in popularity thanks to community outreach activity.

The Next Step Language Lines Service, which consists of a team of dedicated and committed bi-lingual advisers, offers free and impartial support over the telephone in Farsi, French, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Sylheti and Urdu.

Next Step's Community Liaison Officer Siraj Yusuf works to develop and maintain relationships with key organisations within the ethnic and eastern European communities in order to raise awareness of the service.

Since August last year, he has been reaching out into the heart of these communities to better contact those who would benefit from the service, targeting community centres, places of worship and local libraries within the multi-cultural communities.

And as a result of this activity, the service saw a 20% increase in call volumes from August to October 2011 compared to the previous three months.

This approach, which was piloted in Leicester, is now being used in other parts of the country, in large towns and cities, to increase awareness of the service within multi-cultural communities.

If a person's first language is not English, they can encounter barriers, especially if they are trying to enrol onto a course. 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 having any unanswered questions.

The service also provides a three way conference call facility with Next Step qualified careers 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.

Community Liaison Officer Siraj Yusuf said:

“The Next Step Language Lines Service reaches out to people from ethnic and eastern European cultures in order to ensure those within these communities have full access to learning and careers advice.

“We really want to reach out and inform these communities that language should never be a barrier and that we have a team of dedicated and committed bi-lingual advisers within Next Step available and ready to support people in their own language.

“There are many people who are not meeting their full potential as they are unable to speak or understand English. Increasing awareness about our service in local communities encourages people to come forward and seek help with their learning and skills.

“We know from speaking to our customers that they really value the service we provide. Our advisers are able to help people integrate into the communities in which they live through helping them speak English and update their learning and skills. This in turn enables them to play an active role in their communities and contribute to the local economy.

“Whatever the reason people want to improve their English skills, whether it be to speak English for the first time, improve their English for communicating in everyday situations or to feel more confident when looking for work, Next Step can help.”

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 Line 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 Line 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 Line 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](#)