



Neighbours for Newcomers

Evaluation - Part 1

March 2022

Background

Reset Communities and Refugees launched the first Neighbours for Newcomers (N4N) programme in October 2021 as part of NHS England and NHS Improvement's programme to recruit refugee nurses. N4N was designed in partnership with Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) and funded by the Department of Health and Social Care to provide a community welcome to 25 refugee nurses arriving to work in the NHS. Candidates are recruited by TBB and travel with a Skilled Worker visa as part of a new pilot to welcome displaced talent. This new employment pathway opens opportunities for refugees and facilitates the acquisition and retention of skills that can help them attain a sustainable solution in the future.

Reset have been at the forefront of empowering communities to welcome refugees since 2018. Reset was initially set up to coordinate the growth of the [Community Sponsorship](#) movement across the UK. All groups who welcome refugees through the programme are trained by Reset, and over 3,000 people have been trained to provide welcome and integration support to refugee families.

The strength of N4N is to offer a friendly welcome and practical support through neighbour volunteers for these newly arrived workers. It is also an opportunity for individuals in their local communities to come together and be part of a collaborative initiative. There have been several positive reports in the press about the pilot. [BBC Look East](#) and [Islington Tribune](#).

N4N support includes offering a local orientation, support to ensure newcomers can access healthcare services, open bank accounts, navigate accommodation searches, practise conversational English and support for family members when they arrive. This support outside of the workplace is expected to increase the likelihood that relocation and integration will be successful.

Reset have drawn on their learnings from the Community Sponsorship experience to shape this new scheme. For the pilot evaluated here, seven local groups of volunteers were recruited and trained by Reset to provide a community integration service for the nurses. After a month of training on Merseyside at Liverpool John Moores University, the nurses moved to their hospital locations around the UK and were welcomed into their communities by these groups of Reset-trained volunteers called Neighbours for Newcomers.

This is an evaluation of the programme for the first cohort of people who were supported through Neighbours for Newcomers and future evaluations will be published.

Background

Key intended outcomes for recruits were that after six months support they feel:

- Oriented in their local neighbourhood
- Supported in navigating the initial challenges following arrival
- Able to access key services and local activities
- Welcomed to the UK by neighbours

The evaluation has taken the shape of interviews and surveys across all three groups of stakeholders: newcomer recruits, neighbour volunteers and specific NHS Trusts who recruited the nurses.



'They were like a family to me checking on me, asking me if I wanted to go out and do something with them, showing me around Great Yarmouth and Norwich. I wasn't expecting all of this kindness from them, I'm grateful.'

Khaled, Refugee Nurse Newcomer in Norfolk



Key figures at a glance

44 volunteers recruited to 7 regional hospital locations to support 25 nurses

100% of NHS Trusts who responded to our survey felt that the volunteers were welcoming of the newcomers and that N4N helped them to find their way round the local neighbourhood, navigate initial challenges on arrival, access key services and access local activities

90% of newcomers felt welcomed by neighbour volunteers and said that N4N helped them to navigate initial challenges, access key services and access local activities

94% of volunteers said they learned more about the challenges faced by people new to the UK and 81% of volunteers said they gained a sense of community through N4N

80% of NHS Trusts said that N4N helped the newcomers to feel more connected with the local community and would recommend N4N to other refugee nurse recruits

Key Learnings

1. There is enthusiasm for N4N in NHS Trusts, in local communities and with newcomers

All stakeholders involved in the pilot have expressed enthusiasm for the way that N4N supports the objective of recruiting and retaining displaced talent and of creating an additional sustainable pathway for refugees to relocate.

NHS Trusts

The principle itself of hiring refugee nurses appealed to NHS Trusts because the project offers opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to both the NHS and to the candidates themselves. However, no matter how much experience each trust had had with international recruitment, there was some nervousness about recruiting refugees because of their potential vulnerabilities. N4N gave NHS Trusts reassurance that nurses would be looked after outside work and successfully integrate with the community.

'For any organisation that recruits refugees it would be an absolute bonus to have an organisation like N4N, because unless you have that experience it's very easy to underestimate the need for supportive individuals and people who actually understand some of these cultures.'

Nathaniel de Villiers, International Recruitment Manager
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust

100% of NHS Trusts said that it was reassuring to know that newcomers would be welcome in the community

Local Communities

For volunteers, the concept of supporting refugee newcomers to help them settle in their neighbourhood has been well received. Within a few weeks of recruiting N4N volunteers, Reset received 78 expressions of interest. Of these, 61 volunteers were interviewed and 44 were recruited. Of those recruited, 82% have remained active as volunteers.

Volunteers report gaining much from their involvement:

75% of volunteers said they gained satisfaction, a sense of purpose and new friends through N4N

Newcomers

The overwhelming response from newcomer nurses is that they feel welcomed by their neighbours and have found their feet quickly in their new hometown.

90% of newcomers felt welcomed by neighbour volunteers

'N4N has been most helpful to me by giving me a feeling that I am welcomed.' N4N newcomer



Key Learnings

2. The pilot has achieved the key intended outcomes for newcomer nurses

Key intended outcomes for recruits were that, after six months support they feel:

- Oriented in their local neighbourhood
- Supported in navigating the initial challenges following arrival
- Able to access key services and local activities
- Welcomed to the UK by neighbours

At the time of evaluation, newcomers and NHS Trusts reported to Reset that the above outcomes have been achieved in the majority of cases:

100% of NHS Trusts felt that the volunteers were welcoming of the newcomers and that N4N helped them to find their way round the local neighbourhood, navigate initial challenges on arrival, access key services and access local activities

90% of newcomers felt welcomed by neighbour volunteers and said that N4N helped them to navigate initial challenges, access key services and access local activities

100% of NHS Trusts felt that N4N helped newcomers to find their way round the local neighbourhood

Initial orientation has been a shared activity with N4N volunteers actively supporting the process of familiarisation in new surroundings.

'N4N has been most helpful to us by showing us around and introducing us to food shops we could go to.' N4N newcomer

Other newcomers have found the support of N4N most helpful when they have needed to complete specific registrations. For example, on arrival in their new regions, nurses from Lebanon on skilled worker visas are required to register with the police.

'N4N has been most helpful to me in police registration.' N4N newcomer

When newcomers first arrived, NHS Trusts provided accommodation for them for the first 3 months. Newcomers have needed to find follow-on accommodation and N4N volunteers have supported their search for a new place to live. N4N volunteers are trained by Reset to provide local information on housing options available to the newcomers.

N4N volunteers have also supported newcomers to be able to access other local services, for example, their local GP.

Key Learnings

3. Engaging newcomers with volunteers as part of N4N creates strong multilateral community integration

80% of NHS Trusts said that N4N helped the newcomers to feel more connected with the local community and would recommend N4N to other refugee nurse recruits

N4N volunteers and newcomers have engaged socially in different ways. Several groups meet up for coffee or to have a meal together, while others visit local attractions together. One group of neighbours and newcomers have a weekly badminton fixture at the local leisure centre.

'N4N has been most helpful to me by introducing me to the culture including food.' N4N newcomer

In addition to the benefits felt by newcomers, it is evident from the evaluation that N4N delivers benefits for the volunteers and the community itself.

94% of volunteers said they learned more about the challenges faced by people new to the UK

When asked what they gained from being involved in N4N, one volunteer said:

'Understanding of the great challenges facing refugees. Such a privilege to get to know these amazing nurses.' N4N volunteer

75% of volunteers said they gained satisfaction, a sense of purpose and new friends through N4N

As well as learning more about challenges faced by refugees and gaining a sense of satisfaction by helping the newcomers to resettle, volunteers have reported making new friends with other volunteers.

'The other volunteers are great people to have spent time with as well. I am glad I could.' N4N volunteer

Interaction between members of the same locality has the benefit of building a sense of community within those involved with the programme.

81% of volunteers said they gained a sense of community through N4N

The feedback received suggests that multilateral community integration would have been even more successful without the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

'I feel that Covid has hampered our ability to socialise with the nurses, which is a shame. But I hope this will improve as the year goes on.' N4N volunteer

Key Learnings

4. Managing expectations is key

Expectation management, for everyone involved, is key. The evaluation surveys particularly pointed to the importance of expectation management in two areas; for volunteers around the independence of the nurses, and whether they wish to engage with support and; for refugees the reality of living life in the UK in areas such as the cost of living and availability of housing.

Managing volunteer expectations

Surveys have shown that most groups have created real momentum with their interaction and have exchanged hundreds of messages in their WhatsApp groups. These groups have also engaged in role-playing between volunteers and nurses to support English language improvements for their OETs (Occupational English Tests).

However, some newcomers and volunteers have not engaged with each other as expected:

'I think some nurses want to engage, while others don't. This is perfectly understandable; we are just there as a help if needed.' N4N volunteer

Some groups of nurses formed strong friendships during their first month in the UK while they were in Liverpool and before arriving in their regions. When they did move to their regional hospitals, they explored the local area as a group rather than with the support of the volunteers. In other cases, newcomers have connected with family members already living in the UK.

'There were differing needs. Some have used our help, some haven't. All have been pretty self-sufficient .' N4N volunteer

Reset is gathering and providing more information to volunteers prior to arrival and building their training to ensure that volunteers are prepared to identify the level of engagement a newcomer wishes to have on arrival. This will avoid disappointment if volunteers are unable to support the newcomers as much as they would have liked.

Whilst recognising the elective nature of N4N support, Reset is also adapting its approach to ensure that volunteer groups act promptly to offer opportunities for engagement.

Key Learnings

4. Managing expectations is key (cont'd)

Helping volunteers manage refugee expectations

The volunteer surveys also picked up some concerns from volunteers around the expectations of the nurses.

One volunteer stated that they would have liked to know in advance that:

'the newcomers were made aware of how little they would earn and how difficult it would therefore be to find accommodation.' N4N volunteer

And that,

'the situation with bringing over families is not always straightforward and spouses have no recourse to public funds on relocation to the UK- a big issue for one of our nurses who has a large family to support.' N4N volunteer

Reset has now introduced a Volunteer Toolkit which acts both as a framework for the training and a reference guide for volunteers. This ensures that volunteers are clear about what to expect at different stages of welcoming newcomers.

Reset is working with partners to ensure that the informed decision-making process in advance of arrival reflects the cost of living challenges faced by many low-paid workers in the UK.

Next Steps

Reset are supporting two further NHS Trust cohorts with N4N

Reset are currently supporting NHS England and NHS Improvement with a further cohort of 27 refugee nurses. These recruits arrived in the UK in January 2022 and have now been introduced to Reset's team of N4N volunteers in seven new regions. An evaluation of the experiences of the nurses, volunteers and NHS Trusts in this cohort is also planned, and will form part two of this evaluation.

Another cohort of 40-50 nurses will be arriving in the UK in March 2022 ready to move to a further 11 NHS Trusts in April. Reset will be supporting them with volunteers trained and ready to welcome them in these new local communities.

Recruitment and training of volunteers

Reset have adapted their approach to recruiting and training volunteers to manage expectations as described above. More time and experience is now being brought to building great volunteer teams, who are equipped and able to manage a variety of circumstances once the nurses arrive.

Reset have introduced a Volunteer Toolkit which acts both as a framework for the training and a reference guide for volunteers.

Improving interaction between neighbours and newcomers

Reset are introducing newcomers to volunteers as part of facilitated online sessions earlier than in the pilot programme. This will create a stronger group dynamic between neighbours and newcomers and allows Reset to facilitate the first interaction between neighbours and newcomers.

Volunteer groups will also meet in advance to get to know each other before the nurses arrive in their region. Volunteers will be encouraged to adopt a more proactive approach to supporting the newcomers, inviting nurses to take part in specific, low cost activities rather than waiting for nurses to ask for help.

Volunteers are trained in understanding the power imbalance that will initially exist between volunteer and newcomer and are given tools to redress this. For example, on arrival, newcomers will not know which activities or services are available locally, Reset's training encourages volunteers to offer options of things to do together, whilst giving the newcomer an opportunity to say 'no' to getting involved. Regular reviews of what is working and what is not will be conducted.

Appendix

Partners include Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB), NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I), Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

The NHS Trust partners include, Mid Yorkshire Hospitals, Central and North West London NHS FT, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS FT, Northern Care Alliance NHS FT and Portsmouth Hospital NHS Trust.

The partnership was originally founded by Steven Colfar, Director of Nursing & AHP Workforce, North West NHSE&I and referred to as the Merseyside refugee nurse pilot programme. The programme is now directed by Kim Doherty, Associate Director of Nursing & AHP Workforce, North West NHSE&I.

Volunteer statistics taken from Reset Communities and Refugees records.

Retention is being measured by LJMU and TBB as part of an ongoing evaluation comparing this cohort of out-of-country nurses to other in-country refugee recruitment cohorts.

Details of pilot evaluation

All participants in the Neighbours for Newcomers pilot programme were invited to give their feedback. Participants were invited to take part in the survey online. Interviews with two NHS Trusts were completed by telephone.

Survey responses

- NHS Trusts – representatives from all five NHS Trusts completed the survey
- Newcomers – 10 newcomers (40%) completed the survey
- Neighbours – 16 volunteers (36%) completed the survey

All participants were asked for their views on the outcomes of the pilot, how helpful they found the programme and how it might be improved.