

Refugee Action

**Head of Experts by Experience and
Partnerships**

Recruitment information pack

October 2021



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Background

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in joining us!

Refugee Action is a national charity with over 40 years' experience of empowering people who've survived some of the world's worst regimes to secure the protection and support that they need to live with dignity and respect, and build a new life in the UK. We do this by providing expert advice and casework, building the capacity of partner organisations, and working with allies to change government policy.

It's a crucial time to be part of Refugee Action as we come to the end of our current strategy (2019-22), and embark on our next strategic period. We will do this through securing systemic change through our campaigns to change government policies, our direct services, and our work to strengthen and connect other service delivery organisations. You can [read more about what we do here](#).

In March 2021, we appointed a new Chief Executive who has been with the charity for 19 years. He has committed to making the following changes:

1. Significantly accelerate our organisational shift in power towards people with lived experience in partnership with our brilliant Experts by Experience network.
2. Deeply embed our anti-racism plan in all that we do, both internally and externally. We will become a part of the anti-racism movement, not just a supporter.
3. Transform the employment of refugees within Refugee Action, at all levels, by creating career support pathways. This must include the next Chief Executive.

To help us achieve these ambitious aims, we have created a new department: Experts by Experience & Partnerships and we are now looking for someone to lead this new department (the Head of Experts by Experience & Partnerships), an exciting new role on Refugee Action's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

This position will play a central role in the next stage of Refugee Action's fundamental shift of culture and power towards people with lived experience, embedding an anti-racist approach in all that we do internally and externally. It will include three areas of work that present a great opportunity to create transformative change. These are:

- **The Experts by Experience Programme**
- **The Good Practice & Partnerships team**
- **The Anti-Racism Plan**

Applications for this role are open to anyone who has lived experience of being a refugee (see our definition at [Appendix 1](#)) as well as insight into, and personal experience, of racism and structural racism (although we will not ask you to share your personal experiences of this as part of this recruitment process).

Experts by Experience Programme

Refugee Action does exist not to work for people but to work with them, to empower them to take control of their own lives and to influence the issues that matter to them. The insights of people with lived experience shape our decisions and our work. We set up our Experts by Experience (EBE) programme in 2018, with a dedicated manager appointed to lead it – Jonathan Kazembe. The original group that was part of this programme was RAS Voice, a campaigning group led by refugees and people seeking asylum, which runs its own campaigns and also influences Refugee Action’s campaigning work.

We then established groups in Bradford, Manchester and Birmingham to influence our service delivery in those areas; a group to steer our Early Action programme within our Good Practice & Partnerships team; and within our Fundraising team to influence our fundraising activity. These groups are all thriving and have been more active than ever since the Covid crisis (on Zoom).

In mid-2020 we also set up an over-arching EBE Steering Group, made up of representatives of the other EBE groups. This steering group meets with Refugee Action’s Board of Trustees and with the Senior Leadership Team. It was very influential in developing our overall plan for the charity for 2021/22. We are now exploring how to create a pathway for members of this group to move onto the Board of Trustees.

The EBE programme has also worked very closely with the Good Practice & Partnerships team (see below) to help other refugee and asylum charities across the UK to set up their own EBE programmes and increase meaningful lived experience representation on their Trustee Boards.

The **Experts by Experience programme** has been based in the Campaigns team since 2018. Campaigning continues to be a central part of its work, but its scope has now grown much bigger, covering all the other groups and activities described above. As a result, we would now like to see this programme based within a department dedicated to shifting power and anti-racism.

There are currently two members of staff in this team: Jonathan Kazembe, EBE Manager and Ana Asatiani, EBE Coordinator.

Good Practice & Partnerships team

The **Good Practice & Partnerships** team plays a central role in Refugee Action’s vision and is our mechanism for transformation and strengthening of the wider refugee, asylum and migrant sectors. Its aim is to strengthen the asylum and refugee sector across the UK to be able to provide the best possible services to meet the needs of people seeking asylum and refugees, working with more than 150 charities across the country. We do this through training to increase skills and knowledge, connecting charities with similar problems and challenges but operating in different parts of the

country, and through sharing innovative practice. Collaboration and partnership building are at the heart of everything we do.

The Good Practice & Partnership team runs a number of programmes, from the Frontline project, which supports charities to develop their OISC-registered immigration legal advice services (including becoming registered with the OISC for the first time) whilst also training their staff and volunteers to prepare for OISC assessments, to the Covid Response project which supported charities to adapt their services when lockdown started including developing digital skills and capability for these organisations. The team also puts on regular webinars on key issues and common challenges, runs an online community where information and problems are shared and discussed and has set up a website to provide good practice resources (ragp.org.uk). A full description of the team's programmes and activities can be found at Appendix 2.

The Good Practice & Partnerships team has also worked closely with the EBE Programme to help charities set up their own EBE programmes. In addition, we have also carried out an anti-racism survey of charities that we work with and will be using this to develop a programme of anti-racism training but also to provide the basis for a much more ambitious anti-racism programme in the future.

Including this team within the new Transformation department, also gives us a great opportunity to act on one of the earliest bits of feedback on our anti-racism plan last summer, that emphasised the need for us to be a catalyst for anti-racist change in the wider refugee and asylum support sector.

The Manager of this team is Carolina Albuerne and the team also includes approximately 6-8 other staff roles.

Refugee Action's Anti-Racism Plan

We have developed, and are now delivering, **a charity-wide anti-racism plan**. This work covers:

- our employment and recruitment practises;
- the way we report and deal with incidents;
- training around anti-racism to build understanding, raise the profile of the issue within the organisation and increase familiarity with discussing race and racism openly;
- greater emphasis on the racist structures of the asylum system in our campaigning messaging;
- a clearer connection between our service delivery and tackling structural racism;
- support charities in the sector to develop anti-racism plans;
- and ensuring an anti-racist approach runs through our fundraising.

We will continue to ensure that each department and team has responsibility for these areas of work. But we now want to ensure that the overall anti-racism plan has a lead person who can drive it forwards, strengthen its vision and support each department as it develops its part of it.

The role: Head of Experts by Experience and Partnerships

We are recruiting one person to lead this new **Experts by Experience and Partnerships** team as the **Head of Experts by Experience & Partnerships**. Sitting as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), this role will have great influence on extremely important strategic decisions within the organisation. Initially this role will have two direct reports which will be reviewed over time:

Structure of the new Experts by Experience and Partnerships Team



Purpose of the role

Play a central role in the next stage of Refugee Action’s fundamental shift of culture and power towards people with lived experience, embedding an anti-racist approach in all that we do internally and also externally in our work with the wider sector.

The successful candidate will be expected to lead on the development of Refugee Action’s Expert by Experience programme, including maximising the engagement of people with lived experience and identifying the ways in which Refugee Action needs to change to ensure maximum influence of people with lived experience. Additionally, they are required to lead the Good Practice & Partnerships team, working to create a refugee and asylum support sector that is strong, sustainable, adaptable, anti-racist and with a significant shift in power towards people with lived experience. Finally, the person selected will be the lead on Refugee Action’s overall Anti-Racism strategy and plan, supporting and challenging individual departments, teams, SLT and the Board to create transformative change so that anti-racism is central to everything that the charity does.

Overall duties for the Head of Experts by Experience and Partnerships

Team leadership

- Build and create a sense of team and shared purpose across this new department.
- Promote the department across the charity and work with SLT colleagues to ensure that it has a high profile and is influential internally.
- Identify ways in which the department’s work, scope, resources and impact can grow and develop to create even more transformational change.
- Be outward facing, developing connections and collaborations with other organisations in the sector and beyond.

- Develop strong external relationships as needed.
- Be proactive in meeting and engaging with funders (with the support of the Fundraising team) to ensure that resources can be secured for the department's work.
- Ensure that information on the impact of the Department's work is provided to the Fundraising team for reporting to funders and donors.
- Ensure that key aspects of intersectionality are included in the anti-racism strategy, including working with the lead SLT member for gender.
- Provide high quality management and leadership to line reports and to the department as a whole.

EBE Programme

- Set the overall direction for the development of Refugee Action's Experts by Experience programme, taking on and engaging with Refugee Action's structures of power to maximise its impact and influence
- Identify, with the support of the EBE programme team and the EBE network, changes that Refugee Action needs to make in order to maximise the shift in power to people with lived experience
- Oversee Refugee Action's EBE employment work to create much stronger career pathways for people with lived experience. Work with the HR team to set targets for EBE employment and development at Refugee Action
- Ensure that all Refugee Action departments develop their own plans for shifting power to people with lived experience and provide support and challenge as needed
- Build a strong relationship with the EBE National Steering Group and support its development and increase its possibilities for real power and influence within the charity

Good Practice & Partnerships programme

- Develop and deliver a plan to support and challenge the refugee and asylum charity sector to shift power to people with lived experience and embed anti-racism in its all its activity
- Lead the development and implementation of Refugee Action's strategy to strengthen the services provided by other organisations
- Develop strong relationships with external organisations in the refugee support sector and beyond, taking a highly collaborative and capacity-building approach
- Ensure that anti-racism and a shift in power to people with lived experience is built into all the team's programmes
- Ensure that the team's work in building and strengthening local and regional "ecosystems of support" is based in shifting power to people with lived experience
- Ensure that the team's work continues to be based on shared working between organisations to solve common problems, the principles of early action and prevention, and design of services with people who have lived experience
- Build and sustain strong high-level relationships with refugee and asylum support charities that are part of the Good Practice & Partnerships programmes
- Maintain systems, discussions and feedback mechanisms to ensure that the role and the wider department understands the needs of charities in the refugee and asylum sector

Anti-Racism Strategy and Plan

- Working with the Chief Executive to oversee the development of Refugee Action's Anti-Racism strategy and plans to be a truly anti-racist organisation.
- Work with and support each Refugee Action department to develop their current anti-racism plans, setting overall targets for ambition and transformation, and ways of measuring change. Identify where practices in specific departments and teams need to change to be truly anti-racist.
- Monitor organisational and department progress towards change.
- Provide challenge, guidance, insight and support across the charity to transform Refugee Action's employment support and development pathways for people with lived experience and people from ethnic and cultural minority backgrounds.
- Identify blind spots around race, racism and structural racism at all levels of the charity and make recommendations as to how to tackle these.
- Understand the experiences of staff and volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds and promote / recommend changes to address these experiences.
- Work closely with the Structural Racism Working Group to ensure they are listened to, empowered and supported.

As part of Refugee Action's Senior Leadership Team

- Contribute to the overall strategy and management of the charity through membership of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Represent the interests of our staff on the Senior Leadership Team.
- Set and manage budgets and report against them.

Person Specification

We are looking to recruit for this role with a focus on potential. This means that the Person Specification will be a mixture of current skills and experience, and potential skills. It also means that we will build in training and support, so that we are able to properly invest in the new recruit's development into the role. This training package is outlined further down.

Essential Experience, skills, understanding and knowledge

You will be expected to demonstrate potential to deliver a programme of transformative change focussed on shifting power to people with lived experience and anti-racism both within Refugee Action and the wider refugee and asylum support sector. This will require the following key skills and experience:

- Experience of managing, supporting and developing staff and teams effectively.
- The insight, creativity and courage to challenging the 'status quo' and bring about transformational change.
- Understanding of the many barriers that people with lived experience face to have real power and influence with experience of ensuring they feel empowered to create positive change.

- Strong communication skills and the ability to build trusting relationships with a wide range of people (internal and external): including members of the EBE network, staff members of the Structural Racism Working Group, staff and trustees in partner organisations etc.
- Understanding of how anti-racism work has to be intersectional.
- Understanding of how smaller charities work, their challenges, how they connect with each other to create systems of support and how to work with them in an empowering and transformative way.
- Ability to support other/external organisations to adapt, with an aim of them becoming more resilient, sustainable and able to support the communities they serve.
- Understanding of the responsibilities involved in senior management of a charity with the potential to develop and deliver strategic plans and budgets

Other essential things (you will not be required to evidence these points)

- Lived experience of being a refugee and/or person seeking asylum.
- Insight into, and lived experience of, racism and structural racism.

In addition to the above, you will be asked about the following aspects of the person specification in your interview. You do not need to write about them in your application form.

- Experience of, and commitment to understanding the importance of cultural diversity, anti-racism and equality and inclusion;
- Experience of developing and project managing complex programmes of work;
- Excellent organisation skills with the ability to plan and manage a varied workload;
- Open and reflective attitude to own work and experience;
- Ability to use Information Technology to the required standard;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, accuracy and attention to detail, and ability to produce high quality reports.

Training and support

Refugee Action is committed to providing training and development support and this role will have an enhanced package of support. This includes:

- Additional funds for a leadership development programme: we will work with the successful candidate to identify the most appropriate training and development solutions.
- We will offer regular contact with a professional outside Refugee Action. This may be a coach, a clinical supervisor, or some other role, and it may be a mixture of all these and may change over time. We plan to book in a few months of coaching / mentoring sessions so that the postholder can access this from the day they start in the role; but then the successful candidate would be involved in selecting their own coach / mentor for the longer term.
- We also plan to provide another SLT member as a 'buddy' to provide additional support, especially over the first year or so.

- There would also be additional training resources for specific learning and development needs, to be identified once the successful candidate is in place.
- We will also be flexible with the induction plan to allow responsibilities in the role to be taken on gradually if needed and give additional space and time to meet with other people internally and externally.
- Finally, there would be a great focus on wellbeing, ensuring that workload pressures are manageable and sustainable and also that any risks around re-traumatisation are carefully managed and supported.

Information Sessions

- We are running information sessions on Friday 22nd October, 2pm-3pm and Wednesday 27th October, 3pm-4pm. This will be an opportunity to learn more and ask questions about this role or about any aspect of the recruitment process. Please do attend if you'd like to know more.

How to apply

Prospectus recruitment agency are supporting Refugee Action with this role. Applications should be made via the Prospectus website following this [link](#). The closing date for this vacancy is Wednesday 17th November 2021 at 10am. You will be asked to provide a CV and a covering letter. Your covering letter must outline:

- why you are interested in this role at Refugee Action,
- how you believe you are suited to the role. This must include details of how you meet the skills, knowledge and experience listed on page 8 of this pack.

If you would like to have an informal conversation about the role or register for one of the Refugee Action Information Sessions (above), please contact Stephanie Browne on StephanieB@refugee-action.org.uk who will arrange for you to speak with someone.

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process or need additional information, please contact Alex Williams at Prospectus on 020 7691 1920, or email: alex.williams@prospect-us.co.uk

Successful applicants must be eligible to work in the UK and will be asked to provide 2 references. Interviews will take place over Zoom or Teams on Monday 6th December 2021 and Tuesday 7th December 2021 as part of a two-stage interview process.

Appendix 1 - Key Definitions

Lived experience of seeking asylum or being a refugee

Our definition includes anyone who has experienced displacement and exile. This may include going through the UK asylum system, arriving through a formal refugee resettlement programme or reuniting with a family member who is a refugee. It may also be that you have experienced displacement but have not been a person seeking asylum or a refugee in the UK – this would still be included in our definition of lived experience.

Please do contact us if you're not sure if you fit into this definition as there may be examples we have not included but that we would still see as 'lived experience'.

We will not be asking to see any documentation as evidence of this definition; the important thing is whether you define yourself as having lived experience.

Shifting power

Below is a working definition of 'shifting power', based on our approach so far. This definition will be reviewed, and this Head of Experts by Experience & Partnerships post will have a central role in that review:

We know that power is not distributed evenly, nor is it wielded equitably. This is the case in wider society but also within charities – and Refugee Action is no exception. This creates and sustains systems of oppression and injustice. It creates feelings of isolation, being under-valued and having no voice.

Refugees and people seeking asylum are also systematically stripped of power when they are forced to flee their home, forced to undertake dangerous journeys and forced to enter the hostile environment that is the UK asylum and refugee system.

Racism and white supremacy are belief systems and power structures that underpin this experience of disempowerment.

Our guiding vision across all of our work internally and externally should therefore be "nothing about us, without us", where "us" includes people who are in or have been through the UK asylum and refugee system (see our separate definition of 'lived experience' above).

Our approach to shifting power at Refugee Action has two elements:

1. Ensuring that people with lived experience are in positions with real decision-making power. This includes management and leadership roles at all levels of the charity and also includes the Trustee Board as the ultimate place where power is located within a charity. It also needs to be intersectional.

2. Ensuring that those who have the formal power outlined above use it in ways that are deeply equitable. This means creating as many ways as possible for those who do not have formal power to be able to ensure their voice is heard and acted on; to create as many ways as possible for those who feel they cannot express their real feelings and views to become able to do so; ensuring that there are sufficient and appropriate levels of transparency on the part of those with formal power for those with less formal power to be able to meaningfully influence decision-making; and to create formal accountability mechanisms (eg. trade unions etc).

This approach refers to Refugee Action's own structures of power but is also our vision across the refugee and asylum support sector.

Appendix 2: Good Practice & Partnerships team – programmes and activities

Programmes

The [Frontline Immigration Advice Project](#) (FIAP) helps organisations to provide immigration advice, and in doing so improve access to justice for vulnerable people. We do this by training advisers through our courses, supporting advice model development, and helping organisations become Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) registered. You can request to become a FIAP partner organisation by filling in this short eligibility [survey](#).

[The Asylum Guides National Programme](#) helps local organisations to support people seeking asylum to increase their legal literacy and knowledge of their rights and entitlements. Asylum Guides are volunteers who meet people seeking asylum to prepare them and increase their knowledge for their asylum journey. We have [toolkits](#) for both Asylum Guide Volunteers and Coordinators who wish to set up and deliver the Asylum Guides programme, [resources](#) and [videos](#). Asylum Guides is currently being delivered by nine organisations across the UK through our Navigating Asylum Partnership and the Early Action partnership.

The [Early Action Programme](#) is a partnership between eight organisations across England. We use the [Early Action Principles](#) to develop services that prevent and de-escalate crisis. We share good practice and learning with sector organisations across the early action practitioner network.

In April 2020 we launched our Covid Response project. After interviewing partners and seeing how quickly organisations were adapting, we produced the [Coronavirus Asylum Handbook](#). This paved the way for more collaboration and connection through a series of design sprints. We co-produced [guidance and resources](#) on adapting services for the asylum and refugee sector. Wanting to provide deeper support around adaptation, we focused on piloting a programme called [Explore](#) - a digital design exploration with 12 organisations to support adapting services or improving websites. We also worked with our Expert by Experience Action group to co-produce [guidance](#) to support facilitating EBE groups and diversifying trustee boards and ran two pilot projects to support 15 organisations set up or develop Expert by Experience [groups](#) in their organisations.

Through the Data Hub we identify gaps and inform responses by practitioners, funders, campaigners, and capacity builders; provide organisations and funders with detailed needs analysis to help build a case for support; distribute information on practical tools for organisations on issues like staff wellbeing, communications and leadership; and help build connections and an active community of people and organisations working in the field. Visit our [Data Hub](#) to read the latest bulletins, and [subscribe to the Information and Data Hub](#) to receive survey updates and call-outs.

The Greater Manchester Refugee Step Change Consortium (Step Change) is an initiative by nine charities and Experts by Experience (EBE) to transform into a joined-up and collaborative ecosystem of support for refugees and people seeking asylum. Step Change is a programme of work designed to strengthen and coordinate the refugee and migrant support sector in Greater Manchester, seeking to centralise the voices of those with lived experience in service design, delivery and objectives, and ensure that all those in need of support have access to an equitable and consistent support structure regardless of location within the Greater Manchester area.

Other activities

We host [events](#) such as meet-ups, show & tell, and training. We publish a regular newsletter so that charities in the sector can stay informed and have the latest news, resources and guidance at their fingertips. And we also run a Good Practice Community Slack, an online space where people can share learning, ideas, updates or ask for support. We are starting with the themes of experts by experience and website improvements.