



# Migrateful Impact Report

Oct 2024- Sep 2025



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## A Message From Our Founder Jess

When I started Migrateful over eight years ago, it was a deeply upsetting time, with a noticeable increase in anti-migration rhetoric in the media, culminating in the Brexit referendum.

The idea behind the Migrateful cookery classes was twofold: to support migrants and refugees to integrate, and to foster a more welcoming environment for migrants in the UK.

It is hard not to feel disheartened to see that the external environment appears to have only worsened since then, given the rise in anti-migration protests, the growing popularity of Reform, and a Labour government that continues to limit the rights of refugees in the UK through restrictive asylum policies, prolonged waiting times, and ongoing barriers to work and stability.

Whilst these developments have been deeply unsettling for our community, they have also made our work at Migrateful feel more important, and more needed, than ever. This has brought renewed energy and purpose to what we do.

Despite the hostility that refugees and asylum seekers are facing in the UK, what feels so powerful about Migrateful is our ability to offer our chefs a microcosm of a different kind of environment: one in which they feel loved, celebrated and welcomed.

As you will read in the pages of this impact report, Migrateful chefs speak about the life-changing nature of being given the opportunity to teach their cookery classes.





As Ada, a Migrateful chef from Turkey, put it, “The day I started at Migrateful, a big light turned on in my heart.”

Opportunities for people from different backgrounds to come together are becoming increasingly rare. Cuts to public funding over the last decade have led to a decline in community centres and shared spaces, meaning there are fewer places where people from different backgrounds naturally mix.

The Migrateful model offers a much-needed response to increasing polarisation around immigration by bringing people together to share food. Through this contact, empathy and understanding are fostered.

Over the reporting period Oct 24 - Sep 25 (hereafter referred to as FY 24/25), the team has worked incredibly hard to deliver more than 770 cookery classes, support 97 chefs, and welcome 9,257 participants into our classes.

We would not be where we are without the support of our volunteers, with over 900 people giving their time to support our classes, alongside the commitment of our trustees.

We now have two cookery schools to call our own: one in Farringdon, London, and one in Bedminster, Bristol. Opening our Bristol cookery school in November 2025 was a major milestone for Migrateful, made possible through a hugely successful fundraising campaign, which you can read more about below.

This report will take you through the impact our model has had on the lives of our chefs, participants and volunteers.

Thank you to everyone who has made this impact possible. We hope you enjoy reading more about what we have achieved.

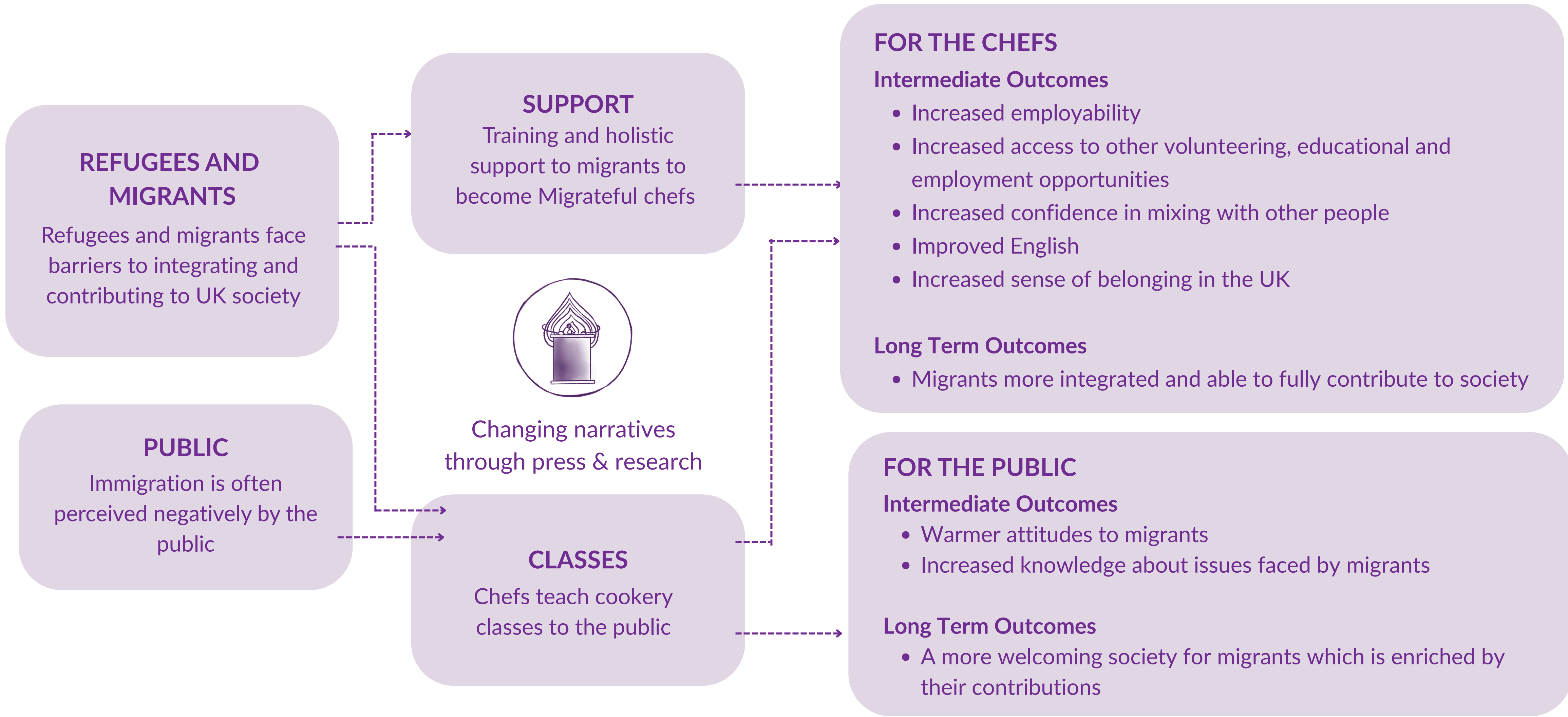
## Our Theory Of Change

Migrateful runs cookery classes in which migrant chefs teach their traditional cuisines to the public. Through our training programme and teaching classes, chefs gain valuable skills and work experience, build confidence, improve their English, and become part of a nurturing community.

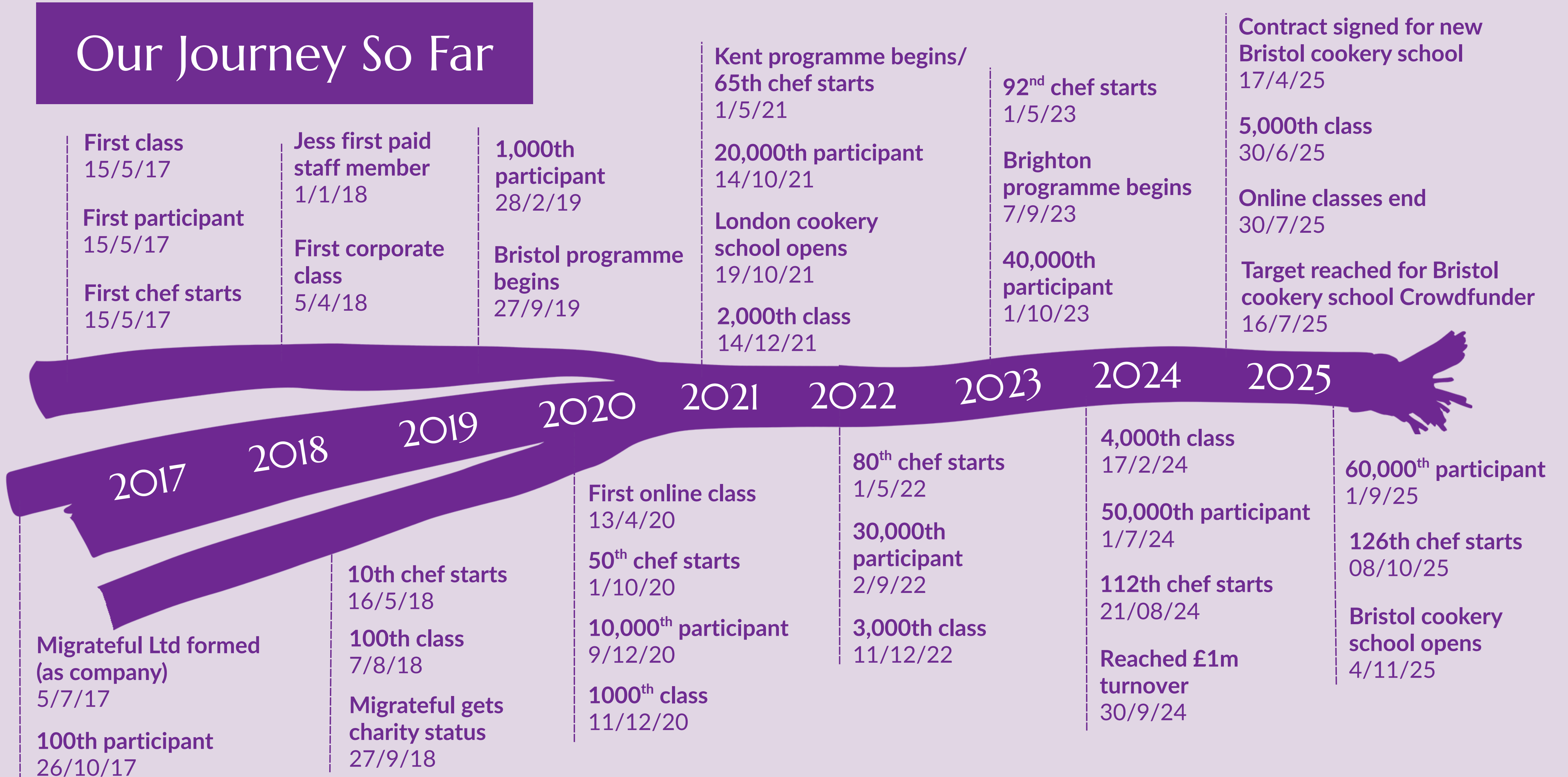
At the same time, members of the public are invited into a positive, shared space where they can learn, connect and engage with migrants as individuals, rather than through abstract or politicised narratives. In this way, our model operates on two levels at once: supporting migrants who face barriers to integration, and addressing the wider public narratives that shape how migration is understood.

Our Theory of Change is illustrated in the diagram on the next page, which shows how Migrateful's activities lead to impact for both migrants and the wider public.





# Our Journey So Far



# FY 24/25 In Numbers



# Who Are Our Chefs?





Our “chefs” are referred to us because they are struggling to integrate into UK society. Many are still processing trauma after becoming victims of modern-day slavery, torture, gender-based violence, persecution or fleeing war-torn countries.

Our programme is open to people seeking asylum, those who have been granted refugee status, and ‘unsettled’ migrants who experience intersecting forms of vulnerability related to their legal status, and/or their ability to integrate in the UK.

From over eight years of working closely with our chefs, we know that it is often difficult to place people neatly into immigration status categories. The UK immigration system creates complex and shifting situations, with individuals frequently moving between different legal statuses over time.

For this reason, we take a holistic approach when assessing suitability for the programme, considering people’s wider circumstances rather than focusing solely on a single legal category. This complexity includes people fleeing domestic violence who are unable to provide formal evidence for their asylum claims, survivors of trafficking and modern slavery who must navigate alternative legal routes under the Modern Slavery Act, and people who have built lives in the UK but later lose their legal status, placing them in a particularly vulnerable position when this intersects with other challenges such as social isolation and economic hardship.

Our data reflects this diversity. At the point of joining Migrateful, 35% of our chefs had refugee status, 35% were seeking asylum, and the remaining 30% fell into this ‘other’ category.

“People seeking asylum receive just **£49.18 per week** in asylum support and those awaiting the outcome of other immigration applications are **not eligible** to access public funds at all.”

(Gov UK)

In many cases, chefs who are seeking asylum or have a pending immigration claim are not permitted to work. People seeking asylum receive just £49.18 per week ([Gov UK, figures for 2025](#)) in asylum support and those awaiting the outcome of other immigration applications are not eligible to access public funds at all.

As a result, these groups are at the highest risk of destitution, with no means to support themselves and very limited, or no, government assistance. For chefs in this situation, we provide a weekly financial solidarity support payment to help cover basic living costs.

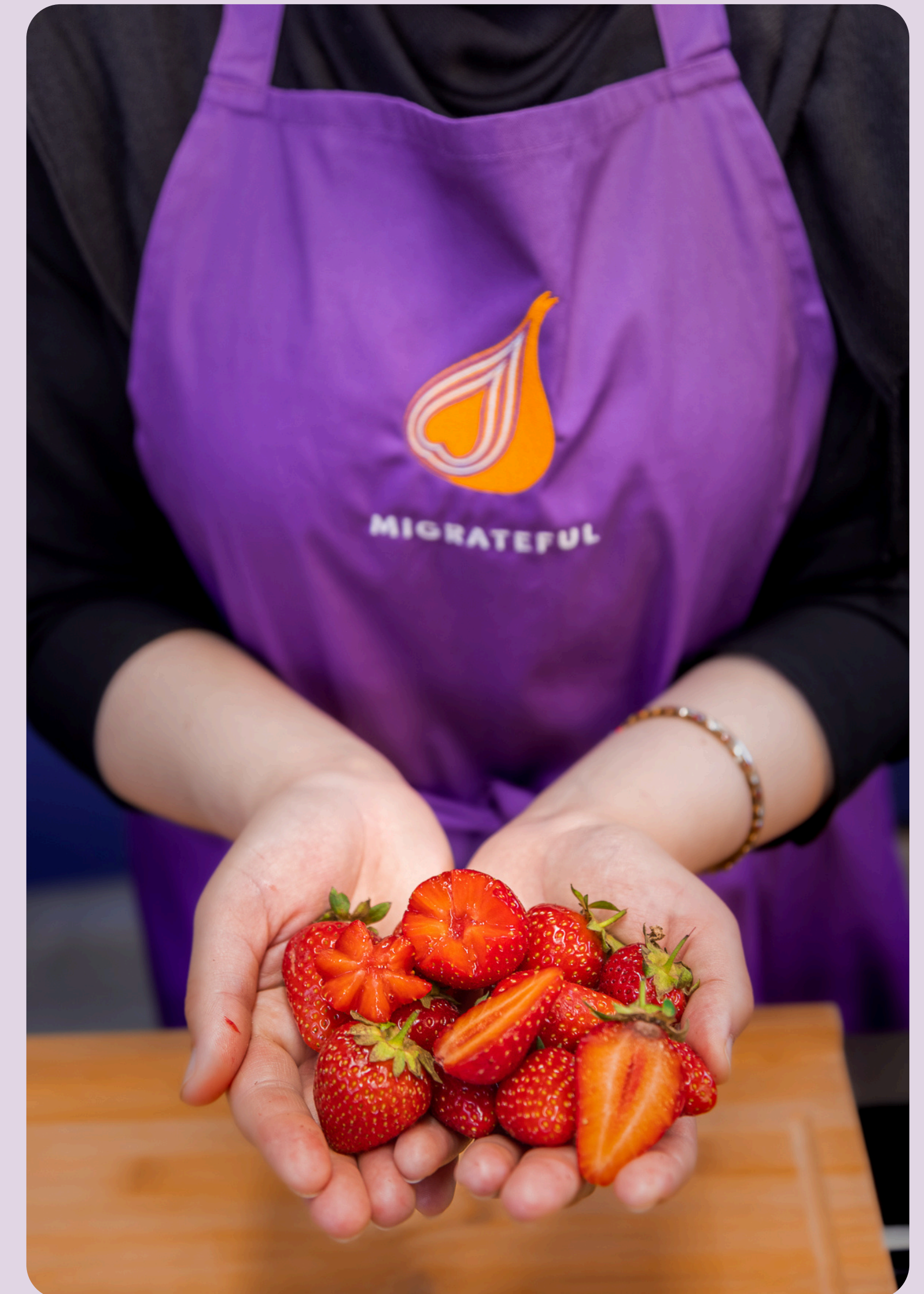
We also know that there are far fewer opportunities and sources of support available to these groups, and it is well documented that prolonged exclusion from the labour market has long-term negative effects on integration.

By offering training, work experience and a supportive pathway into paid employment,

Migrateful helps to lay the foundations for longer-term economic independence and social integration. However, gaining the right to work does not in itself remove all barriers to integration. Many of our chefs arrive in the UK with high levels of qualifications and substantial professional experience from their home countries, yet still face significant challenges accessing employment, sometimes even after many years.

Common barriers include difficulties having qualifications recognised, a lack of UK work references, gaps in employment caused by the asylum process, and slow or complex legal and bureaucratic systems that leave people waiting for essential documentation.

Alongside the experience of upheaval and displacement, these intersecting socio-economic barriers can continue to limit opportunities and delay meaningful integration.



# What We Offer Chefs



# Initial Intensive Training

Our initial 16-week programme prepares Migrateful chefs-in-training to teach Migrateful cookery classes to the general public. The training covers public speaking skills, storytelling and food safety, and chefs work with their mentors to test recipes and develop a script and plan for the class. During this time, chefs practice speaking English, enhance their culinary expertise, hone professional skills such as time management and leadership, and gain familiarity with the expectations in a British workplace.

Between May and September 2025, we trained 14 chefs across London and Bristol and developed 89 recipes with the support of 11 volunteer mentors (we've trained 147 chefs in total since 2017!). For our London cohort, we had over 60 applications, accepting 12 trainees onto the course to begin a two-to-three year journey of training, teaching, and ongoing support.

In London, we have been training a cohort of 12 chefs every year since 2021, before which we trained chefs on a rolling basis. In our regional sites, such as Bristol, we have adapted our model to suit the local context. For example, in FY24/25 in Bristol, we trained two chefs in a more condensed format rather than a full cohort to match the lower (but growing!) demand for classes in the city.





## Teaching Opportunities

In FY 24/25, we offered 4,638 hours of meaningful UK work experience, or paid work for those with the right to work. Teaching the cookery classes helps chefs to build their confidence, improve their English and decrease social isolation. For our chefs barred from working while awaiting a decision on their immigration case, the opportunity to teach classes offers structure, purpose and connection at a time when they are unable to fully participate in society due to the work ban.

## Community Events

During FY 24/25, we held six community socials (across London and Bristol), which are valuable occasions in the year for chefs to come together to cook and share food. These events offer a chance for chefs to reconnect with their cohort once the initial training period comes to an end and they start teaching their own classes, but also to meet and socialise with chefs from other cohorts, staff and volunteers. Many alumni chefs continue to join these events even several years after they graduate from the programme.

## 1:1 Support and Signposting

Throughout their journey with us, we provide chefs with holistic pastoral support to build social, professional and wider support networks. Our Chef Support Officer, Elizabeth, works one-to-one with each chef to connect them with relevant employment, training and educational opportunities and wellbeing resources, including legal advice and other support services.

In FY 24/25, as well as regular signposting to our wider chef community, we directly referred and connected 22 chefs to paid work opportunities, with organisations such as UBS, Our Second Home and OrganicLea, 14 to further training and 13 to mentoring, advice or other support services. Some highlights across these different areas include: two chefs securing training placements at Selfridges, four chefs enrolling at the Hotel School, four chefs accessing business mentoring schemes, three accessing British Red Cross services and one successfully applying for a Sanctuary Scholarship.



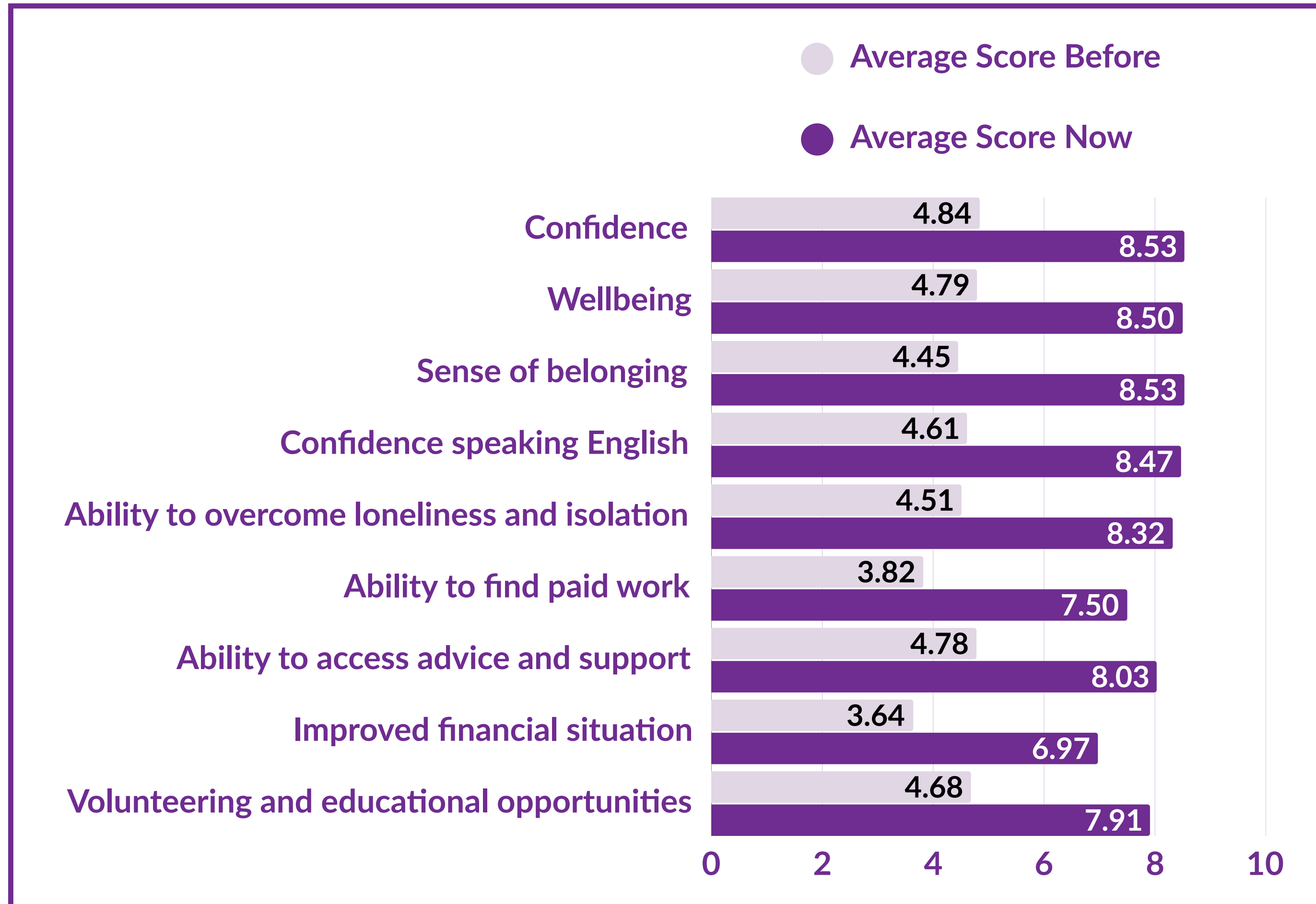
## What Our Chefs Gain

Our chefs bring different talents and strengths, and each has their own goals for self-development. Over the last 8 years, we have identified the key areas of impact that chefs are likely to experience in our programme, with each chef having different priority areas and rates of change.

We asked chefs about their experience on the programme using a survey that asked them to compare how they felt in each area before joining Migrateful and how they feel currently, by selecting a number on two scales 1-10. The survey was completed by 38 of the chefs that we supported during FY 24/25 (who are at varying stages of the programme). The table on the right shows the percentage of respondents who reported a positive change in the key impact areas (relevant to each chef). The number of respondents is indicated in brackets for each impact area.

*\*Of the respondents that are not included in this data as their immigration status does not permit work, 5 out of 6 told us they would feel more ready and able to find work once they are granted the right to work.*

Impact area	% chefs who reported change
Increased confidence	95% (38)
Increased wellbeing	95% (38)
Increased sense of belonging in the UK	95% (38)
Increased confidence speaking English	94% (36)
Increased ability to overcome loneliness and isolation	92% (37)
Increased ability to find paid work (only respondents with the right to work*)	86% (28)
Increased ability to access advice and support	83% (36)
Improved overall financial situation	83% (36)
Increased ability to find volunteering or educational opportunities	76% (34)



“Migrateful reminded me that **if one dream ends you can always build a new one.**

If one door closes life does open a new path.”

**Aisha [alias], South Asia**

The graph on the left compares the average scores (1-10) for chefs in each key impact area before they joined Migrateful and how they feel currently, since being part of the programme.

## Chef Impact In Words

“When I speak in public, it has given me the confidence to express myself. I can now share my ideas with people who live here, and I can tell them that I have a dream – to create something in the world of food.”

**Judith, Migrateful chef from Ecuador**

“Before joining Migrateful, I sometimes felt isolated despite my professional experience as a restaurant owner and team leader, because I was not fully connected to the local community. Since joining Migrateful, I have had many opportunities to socialise, meet other chefs, volunteers, and participants, and share my culture and skills. These interactions have greatly reduced feelings of isolation and made me feel more included, supported, and part of a community.”

**Hani, Migrateful chef from Oman**

“I feel valued and capable when I'm at Migrateful, I feel like I'm among family and that I truly live in the United Kingdom.”

**Amal, Migrateful chef from Egypt**

“After joining Migrateful, I don't only have more confidence in looking for a paid job but it also helped to build solid local working experience which helps me to find work.”

**Celia, Migrateful Graduate from Hong Kong**

Describe in 3 words how you were feeling before your joined Migrateful	Describe in 3 words how you are feeling now
Isolated, uncertain, cautious	Confident, connected, hopeful
Lost, shattered, lack of confidence	Confident, independent, can see a path
Hopeless, unsafe and lonely	Optimistic, safe and settled
I'm not enough, my ability is useless	Hundreds of people know me. If I want to, there is a way
Losing control, lacking interest, lost	Hopeful, optimistic, joy
Hopeless, depressed and unsure	Empowered, supported, inspired

# What We Offer Class Participants



Members of the public who join our cookery classes get the chance to learn authentic recipes from around the world. In FY 24/25 alone, we have offered 32 diverse cuisines. Our classes offer a unique collaborative and social cooking experience making them perfect for team building and company social activities as well as celebrations such as birthdays and hen parties.

Our model is based on psychologist Gordon Allport's well-validated contact theory (set out in his book 'The Nature of Prejudice', 1954), which sets out the conditions under which intergroup contact between marginalised and host communities can successfully reduce prejudice. Migrateful's classes are designed to meet these conditions and promote positive contact. People from different backgrounds come together, ostensibly to learn to cook, but in doing so, stereotypes are challenged: the migrant is leading the class, participants cooperate by sharing tasks in preparing the meal, and the intimate setting enables personal stories to emerge.

Independent research ([Patel, 2022](#)) tested these assumptions within Migrateful classes and found that the opportunity to have direct, personal contact with migrants through the cookery classes has a deeply humanising effect, and importantly leads to measurable shifts in attitudes and behaviour.



In FY 24/25, we ran **773** classes, bringing us to a total of **5,207** from July 2017 to September 2025

# Participant Surveys

In FY 24/25, we welcomed 9,257 participants to our cookery classes, reaching a total of 60,786 people between Migrateful starting in July 2017 and September 2025.

After each class, we ask participants to complete feedback surveys, which include questions on how their experience may have changed their knowledge about migrants' situations and attitudes towards migration. The table on the right shows survey responses from 488 participants who attended a class during the reporting year.

Type of participant	Corporate class participants	Public class participants	Av. for all participant types combined
% of respondents reporting increased knowledge about migrants' situation after the class	48%	40%	42%
% of respondents reporting warmer attitudes to migrants after the class	24%	18%	20%

## What This Data Tells Us

In the field of behavioral psychology, an intervention would be considered “highly successful” if it changed behaviour in the target group by 5–7% ([Benton et al., 2018](#)). While this may appear small, when delivered at scale, such interventions can bring about significant social change.

Taking the average from this year, 20% of participants report a positive change in their attitudes towards migrants after attending a cookery class. Based on behavioural science standards, this represents a very strong outcome. In real terms, this equates to around 12,000 people (20% of approximately 60,000 participants) reporting warmer attitudes towards migrants as a direct result of their experience.

Importantly, the impact of Migrateful classes is likely to extend beyond those who attend the classes themselves.

Research ([Schmid et al., 2012](#)) on contact theory suggests that attitude change can spread to friends and family through social networks. Applying this multiplier effect (x by 3), the positive impact of Migrateful classes in the reporting period could plausibly extend to around 36,000 people through participants’ wider social networks, demonstrating how relatively small shifts at an individual level can contribute to wider societal change.



“The chef had a wonderful energy about her, she played her music and danced in the class. She spoke so confidently about her culture and the food. Although I wasn't there at the start of her journey, **I felt like I could see her growth.**”

**Class Participant**

## Who Are Our Participants?

In social cohesion policy terms, Migrateful classes are well suited to reaching the “balancer middle” ([Rolfe et al., 2022](#)).

The balancer middle makes up around 50% of the British public; they are not completely against migration but want fair rules which do not simply let everyone in. They sit between migration sceptics, who are strongly against migration, and migration liberals, who are broadly pro-migration.

After attending a Migrateful cookery class and experiencing positive contact with a migrant, participants from the balancer middle are expected to feel less worried about the idea of migrants coming to the UK, and therefore less supportive of hostile policies towards migrants. This is because the balancer middle is open to negotiation about what a fair approach to migration consists of, and is therefore more receptive to new positive information about migrants which can dispel former misconceptions.



“The chef was an excellent host. **I admired her bravery** in sharing her personal circumstances and we were all deeply affected by this. [The conversation in the class] reinforced how the chef must feel as a refugee in England and **how inspirational she is in her positivity and faith** that she will settle here, as well as look after family [back home].”

**Class Participant**

Independent research conducted in 2021 ([Patel, 2022](#)) found that Migrateful classes naturally appeal to those from the balancer middle, reaching beyond groups who are primarily interested in supporting migrants. Classes are often attended by people who simply wish to learn about new cuisines, or who were gifted a class voucher by a friend or family member. Gift vouchers are frequently given intergenerationally, for example, by young people purchasing them for parents helping to bring a broader and more diverse demographic into our classes. In the reporting year, over a quarter of public class participants were attending using a gift voucher.

Our corporate classes also bring in participants who have not actively chosen to attend themselves but are required to do so as part of a work event. Notably, the potential for attitude shift appears higher among corporate participants, who made up approximately a third of all participants attending a class this

year, as demonstrated by larger proportions reporting a change in attitudes (24% versus 18%) and increased knowledge (48% versus 40%) after their class compared with those attending public classes.

Taken together, this evidence shows that Migrateful's cookery classes are not only effective at shifting attitudes, but are doing so among audiences where change matters most. By reaching the balancer middle, attracting participants who do not self-select on the basis of pro-migration views, and leveraging social networks through a multiplier effect, our model is generating impact at scale and contributing to meaningful shifts in public narratives around migration.



# Our Volunteers



Migrateful also engages members of the public through volunteering opportunities. Our cookery classes would not be possible without the incredible support of volunteers, who play a vital role in community-building and in creating the inclusive, respectful and celebratory atmosphere of each class. Chefs consistently report that their connections and interactions with volunteers contribute to stronger feelings of belonging in the UK.

Our cookery classes in FY 24/25 were supported by 919 volunteers, completing over 12,000 hours of volunteering. Between July 2017 and Sept 2025, we have worked with 2,794 volunteers.

Our volunteers offer their time for many different reasons, including wanting to support our mission, to meet new people from different backgrounds or to learn about different cultures and cuisines.

Some are motivated by personal experiences of migration or displacement.

*“I started volunteering when I was not working. This gave me something productive and meaningful but also an opportunity to support migrants and refugees. I really enjoy meeting the chefs and participants from different cultures and eating different foods.”*

As well as supporting our classes, volunteers also contribute to our Chef Training Programme as mentors, working one-to-one with chefs, during the initial three-month training period, to test and write recipes and help capture their stories.



“It was a fabulous and worthwhile learning experience for me, especially to witness the **growth in confidence** and ownership of the classes by the trainees over three months.”

**Volunteer Mentor**

## Volunteer Impact

Volunteers make a vital contribution to our mission, but we often hear how much they also gain from the experience themselves. This year, we wanted to try to build a better understanding of how our work may impact volunteers, developing a survey to share with a sample of volunteers. We hope to use these insights to design ways to measure impact for our volunteers in future.

For the survey, we selected a group of 239 volunteers who met the following criteria: volunteered at a cookery class during the reporting period but had also joined 5 or more classes, assuming that the measurable impact of volunteering might not occur from participating in a single session. We received 35 responses. The most commonly reported changes experienced were:

- 89% Felt happier or reported improved wellbeing
- 83% Better understanding of different cultures
- 74% Increased contact with people from different backgrounds





*“Volunteering in classes has been a great way to give me regular exposure to a wide variety of (often very nice) people, which has helped me feel less isolated, reduce my social anxiety and be more confident interacting with others in general. I also love cooking and have greatly appreciated learning more about food from under-represented cuisines and expanding my repertoire of recipes. And of course, meeting chefs from a very wide variety of backgrounds I'd otherwise probably never be exposed to, learning about their lives, culture and food.”*

Not only do volunteers help to make our cookery classes possible but there is also the potential for our volunteers to experience change in their perceptions about migration through positive contact with chefs. In the survey, 83% of volunteers reported that they gained knowledge about migration and 37% reported that they developed warmer attitudes to refugees and migrants through their involvement at Migrateful classes.

*“The chef was describing the mountains and landscapes of her home in Iran and became emotional. Everyone in the room could feel it – the sense of grief, the weight of what she had left behind. It was incredibly moving. And that’s the beauty of Migrateful: it offers a space for chefs to be seen not just as migrants, but as people – full of memories, strength, and generosity.”*

# Life After Migrateful



In FY 24/25, we held two graduation ceremonies in London and Bristol, where 22 chefs graduated into our alumni community. These events are a very significant milestone, celebrating chefs' achievements on the programme and thanking them for their contributions to Migrateful. Once chefs become alumni, they remain part of the Migrateful family by attending our community socials, and we continue to share relevant employment, training and support opportunities with them.

Of chefs that have graduated from the programme in the reporting year (and have the right to work), 86% have gone onto employment or education after leaving Migrateful. Those not currently in work or education are caring for dependents or dealing with long-term health issues.

Migrateful is a stepping stone in each chef's journey to fuller integration, and so we are

delighted when our chefs go on to achieve amazing things. This year has seen various successes with several members of graduating chefs securing employment and further training in diverse fields, including two chefs going on to study Nursing degrees and another graduating from a Social Work Masters, one starting a job as a Teaching Assistant and another as a carer.

Many of our chefs gain employment in the food and hospitality sector or go on to set up their own businesses, which we are so happy to see going from strength to strength. These achievements demonstrate the valuable and meaningful contributions that our chefs can, and want to make to UK society once they are able to regularise their status.

Hear from four of our chefs about their experience of the programme.



## Meet Migrateful Chef Tamika

Tamika, a chef from Jamaica, joined Migrateful in 2022 following over 20 years of insecure immigration status and an extremely difficult time of uncertainty.

“I was going through a depression, the lowest point in my life. I had lost hope. I wasn’t allowed to work or study and couldn't access any financial support. I had too much time to think, negativity takes over, there was no fulfilment. I felt empty. My support worker was looking for activities and found Migrateful as she knew I liked cooking and baking.”

Joining the training programme felt like a “safe space”. “It helped to relate to others in a similar situation, we could go through it together, and I felt comfortable expressing how I was feeling.”

Gradually, week by week of the training, things started to change. “I struggled to get out of bed, feeling unmotivated, but something was pulling me to go, encouraging me”.



“I really enjoy my classes, the atmosphere and the chemistry between people who have never met before - it feels like family and always a good energy. *I feel happy and proud of myself* after each class, that’s why I always show up, no matter what else is going on in my life - it’s my happy place.”

**Tamika**

Tamika found the training transformative, getting to learn all about cultures from different countries and build connections: “I connected with everyone in the group, and all the staff made me feel comfortable and showed they care. I found enjoyment again. My wellbeing and mental health improved immensely, and I started to feel more open and comfortable around people”.

One of the biggest changes she noticed was her public speaking, “I used to feel awkward meeting strangers, but now when I meet new people I feel much more confident”.

Outside of classes, Tamika describes the impact of the holistic support provided by Migrateful’s Chef Support Officer: “Elizabeth has always been there supporting me, checking in, encouraging me and motivating me to feel hopeful in every aspect of my life. It made such a difference.” Migrateful also connected Tamika with work experience in a bakery.

While she was waiting for her right to work to be granted, Tamika taught regular cookery classes, gaining work experience.





In 2023, the Home Office granted her leave to remain but immediately retracted saying it was a mistake and she was never given her documents. It took almost another two years to challenge this retraction, an error made by the Home Office with devastating real life consequences.

During this time, she described how “Migrateful gives you hope - you see the other chefs that came before, and their success and stories, like opening their own business”.

Finally, in 2025, she was granted her immigration status and with it the right to work. She applied for a job at a restaurant in her local area and using the experience and food hygiene qualification gained at Migrateful, secured a full-time position. Tamika took part in a graduation ceremony with her fellow cohort in July 2025, but is also continuing to teach classes with Migrateful (we offer chefs the opportunity to be paid to teach cookery classes for up to one year after they are granted the right to work.)

Describing how she feels about life in the UK now, “I feel hopeful and like I finally have opportunities. I am currently saving money so that I can open my own restaurant one day!”

## Meet Migrateful Graduate Halima

Halima, a Nigerian chef, joined Migrateful's Chef Training Programme in 2022 at a time of being stuck in limbo, waiting for the outcome of her asylum application. "I was living with my son, and we felt very isolated without any other family or support network in the UK or opportunities to socialise". Without the right to work, she was unable to access employment, despite a strong professional background in Human Resources. She describes feeling "Hopeless, depressed and unsure".

"Migrateful offered me an opportunity to join a community and to no longer feel alone in what I was going through. I looked forward to training days as the only social contact I was having and an environment where you can make connections that are hard to make in everyday life."

Through Migrateful's initial training programme, Halima felt a "deep support" and built "confidence, motivation and a sense of belonging" along with teaching, leadership and public speaking skills. She then taught regular cookery classes gaining UK work experience and positive contact with members of the public.



“The experience of being a  
Migrateful chef, **it built me.**”

**Halima**

Migrateful also supported Halima to access volunteering opportunities in London, including Oxfam and the Tower Hamlets Carers Centre, allowing her to further develop skills, confidence and networks.

She was granted asylum in late 2023. “The first class I taught after being granted my refugee status, I went in with so much confidence and happiness and a big smile, thinking, now I can change the story I share in my classes! The participants were so happy for me, and they wanted to understand my experience. It felt reassuring to know that members of the public that come to the classes care about what I had been through. I had tears of joy.”

“I was then transferred to local authority emergency accommodation in a completely different part of the city, which was another time of upheaval, so I paused teaching until I was settled, but meanwhile I started to look for work.”

At first, she was discouraged by some unsuccessful applications, but she then applied for a vacancy at Migrateful. Recognising the professional experience she had built before having to leave her country and the talent she had already demonstrated in the chef training programme, Migrateful supported her to find the most suitable role within the organisation, starting in one position in July 2024 and then encouraging her to apply for a different role in the corporate bookings team.

Migrateful was delighted to offer her this role in early 2025. Halima feels very optimistic about her future in the UK: “Being part of Migrateful has not only given me meaningful paid work but also a sense of purpose and connection to a community I truly value. I feel respected and validated - and like the sky is my limit!”



## Meet Migrateful Graduate Kule

Kule, a Sri Lankan chef, joined the Migrateful chef programme in Bristol in autumn 2021 following 18 years' struggle within the immigration system to secure his leave to remain, which had made integration extremely challenging. He had always been a highly motivated person working as a marketing professional in his country, but after a long and difficult period of uncertainty in the UK, he had begun to lose hope.

“Ever since I joined Migrateful, after a long period of isolation, I found a renewed sense of purpose. I started reconnecting with what I love most: cooking, teaching, and connecting with people.”

Through the training, Kule explains: “I rediscovered my confidence, skills, experience and passion. Migrateful shaped me from an intuitive cook to an organised chef. It became the platform where my expertise was recognised. It helped me realise that my culture, my food stories, and my recipes are valuable and worth sharing. It also gave me a way to reconnect with an important part of my life that I had lost and deeply missed here in the UK.”



*Pictured: Kule's Katharikai Puli Curry (aubergine curry)*

“I'm **extremely proud of myself**. I was given plenty of opportunities to share my knowledge. I felt so supported, and each time my confidence grows. Migrateful changed my life, it was a positive and beautiful journey of growth.”

**Kule**

After completing Migrateful training, Kule taught regular cookery classes with Migrateful. He also secured a role as a Kitchen Coordinator at a local charity, Bristol Hospitality Network, where he could apply the skills he had gained from the training, such as planning events, managing and training volunteers, developing and scaling up recipes, delivering food safety inductions, problem-solving and teamwork.

One of the most significant transformations for Kule was developing his public speaking skills. Through the training, a workshop on practical techniques, and regular teaching, he gained confidence speaking to diverse audiences. “It’s been a huge transformation,” he says, leading to Migrateful recommending him to speak and represent the organisation on a panel. These skills have extended beyond Migrateful, including presenting at meetings and speaking at several fundraising events attended by hundreds of people.

“I’ve made many connections through Migrateful, including freelance opportunities and cooking demonstrations for local charities. When I receive positive feedback and emails full of praise, I know this was only possible because of Migrateful.”

Kule graduated from Migrateful in 2025. He now works full-time as a chef in a hotel alongside his role at Bristol Hospitality Network. He also plans to expand his freelance work and establish his own catering company.



*Pictured: Class participants eating Kule's Sri Lankan food*

## Meet Migrateful Chef Ada

As a queer activist and journalist, Ada was not safe in Turkey and was forced to leave behind their family, support networks and life they had built there. Arriving in the UK, they faced uncertainty and isolation: "Before joining Migrateful, I was going through a deep depression and felt completely lost. The day I started at Migrateful, a big light turned on in my heart. Migrateful is not just a place where people cook; it's a lighthouse for those who have lost their way in the dark. For me, it's home".

Before finding the programme in 2024, they felt anxious about their future. However, through the training and teaching classes, their well-being has changed completely. The training transformed Ada's confidence: "I now feel capable of taking on challenges and speaking publicly. Cooking had always been something that brought me comfort, but I didn't have the confidence to share it with others - I used to think standing and speaking in front of a group was impossible, but now it brings me joy and energy. I've learned to express myself, to connect with people from many different backgrounds, and to celebrate my culture with pride."



**“I feel grounded, supported, and surrounded by community. Migrateful gave me purpose when I needed it most, and it continues to remind me that healing can begin with something as simple as cooking and sharing food together.”**

**Ada**

They also valued the opportunity to practice English in a safe space without judgement: “I used to be very nervous about speaking English, worried about making mistakes or not being understood, so I stayed quiet even when I wanted to say something. But during the training and cookery classes, speaking with volunteers, guests, and other chefs, slowly, it got easier, as the Migrateful team was always patient and kind. Migrateful helped me find my voice in English, and that has opened many doors in my personal and professional life. I now even enjoy writing my own menus, emails, and workshop descriptions in English.”

Before joining the programme, they had been unable to find paid work. “I had the passion and creativity but lacked professional connections, or UK work experience.” Through Migrateful, “everything started to change.” Ada was able to develop and strengthen communication, leadership skills and teaching skills but also found “the confidence to apply for real jobs, build my CV and present myself professionally

in interviews. After completing the training, I got my first paid position as a kitchen assistant at Age UK. From there, I went on to work with Made in Hackney, Luminary Bakery, and Wolves Lane Centre. Now I’m working as a community chef at Pulse and Pickle, a vegan café and cultural space in East London and also curating community dinners for my queer community. Thanks to Migrateful, I now have a meaningful career that combines food, community, and creativity – something I once thought was just a dream.”

Ada will graduate with the rest of their cohort in 2027 and is focusing on building their career. “Migrateful completely transformed the way I see myself and my future. Before, I was struggling with confidence and direction – I didn’t believe in myself or my abilities. But through Migrateful, I found community and a space where I was seen, valued, and encouraged to grow - it helped me rebuild my life with purpose and joy.”



# Changing Narratives



## Migrateful In The Media

Outside of their classes, we amplify the voices and experiences of Migrateful chefs through press and media opportunities, which offer a valuable counter-narrative to the negative portrayals of migration often found in the mainstream media.

Between October 2024 and September 2025, Migrateful classes received national coverage, including an interview with Founder Jess and Iranian chef Ladan on the [BBC's The Happy Podcast](#) and a mention in a [Guardian feature on how to support charities at Christmas](#). Our gift vouchers were spotlighted in [Dua Lipa's Service95 gift guide](#) and [The Guardian's The Filter](#). We were delighted to be featured in [Refugee Week's 2025 trailer](#), which was showcased at Glastonbury music festival in the summer. We are also incredibly grateful to have been endorsed by several famous faces over the years, most recently by Hollywood actor Will Poulter, who collaborated with us on an [Instagram post during Refugee Week](#).



# Growing Our Impact in Bristol



Following the success of Migrateful in London, replicating our model in other locations has been central to our strategy for growing our impact. We started training chefs and running cookery classes in Bristol in 2019, through partnerships with local community venues Coexist Community Kitchen, St Werburgh's Community Centre and the Mazi Project. As demand for our classes outgrew availability in pop-up spaces, the next step in expanding our model was opening a dedicated Migrateful Cookery School.

In April 2025, we signed a contract with Windmill Hill City Farm to host our new Cookery School site. Thanks to pro bono support from the architect firm AHMM, who also developed our London Cookery School, and the generosity of supporters through our crowdfunding campaign — which surpassed its target, raising £22,715 from 275 supporters — alongside contributions from funders including The Clothworkers' Foundation and The John James Foundation, we were able to bring the project to life. The result is a new home for our Bristol Migrateful family and a powerful symbol of hope and belonging in a city that has faced challenging moments in recent times, including anti-migration protests, highlighting why this initiative is needed more than ever. The grand opening of the school in November 2025 generated significant local publicity, and with a permanent cookery school now in place, we are excited to see our operations and impact continue to grow in Bristol in the years ahead.



# The Future



What shines through in this report is the depth of impact Migrateful has on our chefs and how truly life-changing this journey can be.

At the same time, Migrateful's impact extends far beyond our chefs. The positive impact on our participants and volunteers is deeply encouraging, demonstrating the power of meaningful contact to challenge perceptions and build solidarity.

Despite a challenging external environment – including rising costs and reduced consumer spending – demand for Migrateful classes has continued to grow, with tickets selling faster than ever. This has been especially reassuring to see. In a [recent article by Yotam Ottolenghi](#), Migrateful was referenced as an example of innovation within a food sector facing real challenges. He noted that food businesses thriving in these difficult times are not simply raising prices, but offering something more.

Migrateful was cited as an example of this approach, where guests not only enjoy a delicious five-dish meal but also learn new cooking skills and experience our chefs' cultures.

Looking ahead, we are exploring new ways to leverage our proven model for even greater impact. This includes piloting cookery classes with school children, helping young people learn about refugees' stories through shared experiences of food, culture and connection.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has made this impact possible – our chefs, participants, volunteers, trustees, funders and staff team.

We could not do this work without your commitment, belief and support.

