

# Case study

## Community Languages in London

### The language of diplomacy: at home and away



The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is famous for its involvement in international relations, particularly in diplomacy and trade. What is less well known is the huge role that foreign languages and cultures play in this.

Understanding the different ways people communicate is so important for the FCO that every member of its 16,000 staff, whether based in the UK or throughout its overseas network of 200 offices, receives diversity training.

The FCO has produced a list which prioritises over 60 languages for use by its staff – with French at the top of the list and Montenegrin the newest addition. Languages widely spoken in London – such as Panjabi, Hindi and Urdu – are very important in international relations. Applications from people with these, and other languages skills including Farsi, Pashto, Korean, Dari, Mandarin and Japanese are strongly encouraged.

#### Campaign to recruit for new languages



A base in London – where over 300 languages are spoken – helps their recruitment drive. In addition, applicants can apply from all over the UK in response to advertisements in the national press and on the FCO website. A recent recruitment campaign targeted applicants with Arabic and Russian language skills.



Although employees of the FCO must be British citizens, the FCO actively seeks applications from all sectors of society, including women, people with disabilities and those of minority ethnic origin.

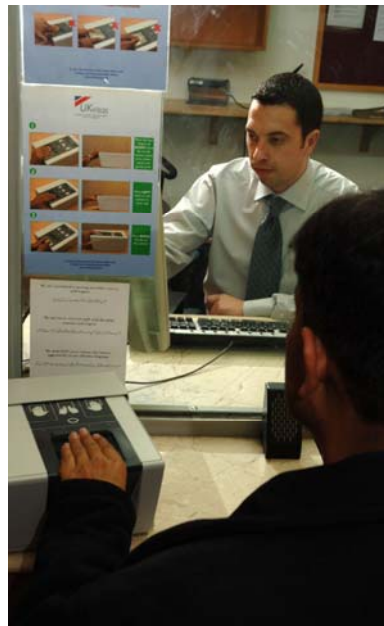
The FCO is finding that there is a shortage of some languages. Where this is the case, the development and learning of new languages is supported by an in-house Language Policy and Standards team. Following intensive language training, a stay in the target country immerses them in the language and culture. Spoken skills are of most use for FCO personnel, as very often the local embassy will help with any written communications.

Language skills are not only needed by those involved in field work. Translators and interpreters based in London, working for the FCO and other Government departments, provide specialist language services between English and any Sovereign State language.

### Opportunities to use Community Language skills

Edina Kulenovic of the Language Policy and Standards Team, said, "We welcome people from diverse backgrounds. Knowledge of the languages spoken in our communities is extremely relevant to our work, and there are opportunities to use and develop these skills at our London offices or working on behalf of the UK overseas."

Jane Collis, Director of RLN London, commented, "The FCO provides exciting opportunities for residents of London and elsewhere to use their varied language skills. This is a great chance for people to develop their career."



## Useful links



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

To see more case studies and information on  
Community Languages in London, visit  
[www.rln-london.com/multilinguallondon](http://www.rln-london.com/multilinguallondon)

