

Agenda – Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau

Lleoliad:	I gael rhagor o wybodaeth cysylltwch a:
Ystafell Bwyllgora 1 – y Senedd	Liz Wilkinson
Dyddiad: Dydd Mercher, 7 Rhagfyr 2016	Clerc y Pwyllgor 0300 200 6361
Amser: 09.00	SeneddCymunedau@cynulliad.cymru

Rhag-gyfarfod anffurfiol (9.00 – 9.15)

1 Cyflwyniad, ymddiheuriadau, dirprwyon a datgan buddiannau

2 Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru: sesiwn dystiolaeth 1

(09.15 – 10.15)

(Tudalennau 1 – 17)

Sian Summers-Rees, Prif Swyddog, Dinas Noddfa y DU ac Iwerddon a Chadeirydd
Asylum Justice

Yr Athro Helen Stalford, Prifysgol Lerpwl

Egwyl (10.15 – 10.30)

3 Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru: sesiwn dystiolaeth 2

(10.30 – 11.30)

(Tudalennau 18 – 39)

Hayley Richards, Swyddog Polisi ac Eiriolaeth, Oxfam
Galiya Idrisova



Neil McKittrick, Rheolwr Cymorth Gweithrediadau Ffoaduriaid, Y Groes Goch
Brydeinig

Elinor Harris, Rheolwr Gwasanaethau ar gyfer Orlhain Teulu a Chymorth i
Ffoaduriaid, Y Groes Goch Brydeinig.

Tracey Sherlock, Rheolwr Polisi a Chyfathrebu, Cyngor Ffoaduriaid Cymru
Salah Rasool, Gweithiwr Achos Cyngori, Cyngor Ffoaduriaid Cymru

4 Papurau i'w nodi

**Gohebiaeth gan Adam Price AC at Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus
ynghylch Cymdeithas Tai Cantref**

(Tudalennau 40 – 42)

**Gohebiaeth gan y Cadeirydd at Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus ynghylch
Cymdeithas Tai Cantref**

(Tudalen 43)

**Gohebiaeth gan Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus at y Cadeirydd ynghylch
Cymdeithas Tai Cantref**

(Tudalennau 44 – 45)

**Gohebiaeth gan Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a Llywodraeth Leol ynghylch
cyllideb ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2017–18**

(Tudalennau 46 – 49)

**Gohebiaeth gan Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant ynghylch
cyllideb ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2017–18**

(Tudalennau 50 – 56)

**Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru: nodyn ar yr ymweliad â
Chanolfan Gymunedol Affricanaidd Abertawe**

(Tudalennau 57 – 60)

**Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru: nodyn ar yr ymweliad
ag Oasis a Chanolfan y Drindod yng Nghaerdydd**

(Tudalennau 61 – 67)

5 Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i benderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod

6 Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru: sesiwn dystiolaeth 3

(11.30 – 11.45)

Cynrychiolydd Prosiect 'Lloches yng Nghymru' Oxfam Cymru

7 Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru: ystyried y dystiolaeth o dan eitemau 2 a 3

(11.45 – 12.00)

8 Trafod y flaenraglen waith

(12.00 – 12.20)

(Tudalennau 68 – 76)

- Cytuno cylch gorchwyl yr ymchwiliad i hawliau dynol
- Blaenraglen waith

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon



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Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
ELGC(5)-12-16 Papur 1 / Paper 1

22 November 2016

Asylum Justice Consultation Response: Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales

Responses by: 23 November 2016

Asylum Justice is a charity providing legal services to refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales. We are a registered charity and regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to provide Level 3 Immigration and Asylum Advice. Asylum Justice has a long history of working with asylum seekers and refugees in Wales over the last decade. We are part of the City of Sanctuary movement and are working with Welsh Refugee Coalition partners. We are members of the Welsh Refugee Coalition and endorse the recommendations made within their submission.

We hope this response offers the Committee a snapshot from an independent legal service provider and is illuminating in assisting the creation of a progressive, far-reaching, rights-based set of services for all refugees, asylum seekers and those whose claim has been refused. As a legal services provider, we are deeply concerned by the removal of legal aid for family reunion cases (which make up a large proportion of our caseload) and changes by the Immigration Act 2016 to limit further rights to appeal and removal of asylum support for those whose claim has been refused.

Whilst we are aware that immigration and asylum and legal services are not devolved to Wales, the impact of changes in these areas is directly felt by

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other support services (advice, social services, housing, health etc) which the Welsh Government does have competency for. Asylum Justice very much welcomes the Welsh Government's recognition that "*refugee inclusion begins on day one of arrival*"; we would therefore advocate that inclusion can only be realised if an asylum seeker is able to access the asylum system. Legal advice should be provided from 'day one' as it is a fundamental starting point for asylum seekers arriving in Wales, and is the point from which every other aspect of integration should follow. The provision of advice and paralegal services can and has been supported by the Welsh Government in the past. In view of the significant cuts to legal aid and asylum support over the last eight years since the Welsh Government's Refugee Inclusion Strategy (2008) was devised, as well as the removal of an accredited advice and advocacy service for all refugees and asylum seekers (Welsh Refugee Council all-Wales 'one stop shop' service which ceased April 2014), the need for services like ours is significantly outstripping supply.

1. The pace and effectiveness of the Welsh Government approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

Asylum Justice does not deal with refugees coming through this scheme and therefore cannot comment.

2. The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

There are a number of areas of this plan which remain areas of concern regarding service provision to refugees. Asylum Justice is aware of delays in providing 'move on' services to refugees.

Quality of housing to asylum seekers remains an issue of particular concern - Lynx House and the associated properties on Newport Road in Cardiff continue to offer an extremely poor standard of accommodation, and there is no independent advocacy support for asylum seekers in asylum support accommodation which leads to poor quality housing going unchecked as tenants fear reprisal from housing managers.

It is noted that the current All Wales Multi Agency Toolkit regarding unaccompanied minors is in the process of being re-drafted. This process has halted and it is currently uncertain when the new guidance will be



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published – it is vital that this guidance is made available as soon as possible.

Asylum Justice is aware of cases where asylum seekers and refugees have not been suitably assisted in education. In a recent case repeated requests by education providers had been made for the young person to be tested for special educational needs. These had been ignored and when, at the point of an immigration appeal, an Asylum Justice legal adviser questioned why he had not progressed further in English in his time in the UK the personal adviser responded that he had not been attending school and college. Asylum Justice are also concerned by the delays faced by unaccompanied asylum seeking young people aged 16 and above in accessing further education.

3. The support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Wales

Asylum Justice remains deeply concerned about the levels of support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Wales. The main provider of independent advocacy services – the ‘Fair and Square’ project run by Tros Gynnal Plant – closed in February 2016. Since then young people have been left in many cases without an independent advocate. This project was the main provider of independent adults for Local Authority age assessments, and without this service a variety of inappropriate persons have been used in their stead – including Home Office accommodation staff. It is vital that a source of independent adults for age assessment is found. Should Wales follow the Scottish model of providing guardians for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, this might alleviate this issue. The removal of any mention of a guardianship service from the more recent iteration of the Refugee & Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan, however, is a disturbing omission if symptomatic of an intention to ignore this need altogether.

The quality of age assessment services in Wales remains patchy. Asylum Justice is aware of a case where a lone male worker was sent to age assess a female victim of trafficking found in a brothel, who subsequently and unlawfully declined to undertake a full assessment. It is vital that training is made compulsory for any social worker carrying out an age assessment. The reinstatement of a Wales No Recourse to Public Funds Network would be a good start in ensuring the required training and current case law awareness is up to date, Wales currently being the only region of the UK without an NRPF Network in operation. Furthermore, it is noted that at present there is

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only one solicitor in Wales that specialises in advising on and challenging unlawful age assessments. It is therefore difficult for Local Authorities to be held to account when unlawful assessments are carried out. The Welsh Government must act to ensure lawful assessments are carried out in every case.

It is clear that the well-being of children is not being taken into account when decisions regarding their immigration cases are being made. As Asylum Justice does not charge for its services it appears that it has become the provider of choice for immigration advice for Local Authorities across South Wales – which impacts on the level of service that can be provided for clients who have no choice in where they go for legal advice. Asylum Justice has been asked to represent young people by a number of Local Authorities in Wales, where they have not been entitled to Legal Aid. Asylum Justice clients have been told incorrectly by Local Authorities that the Authority cannot pay for legal representation in cases where Legal Aid is not available – there appears to be no distinction between cases which are ‘out of scope’ for Legal Aid purposes, and cases where Legal Aid has had to be withdrawn due to the poor merits of a case. Asylum Justice is aware of a case where a Local Authority declined to lodge appeal papers for a young person where the legal representatives had withdrawn, without informing the young person or undertaking any consideration of whether doing so would promote the well-being of the young person. It is gravely concerning that case management decisions are being made by workers without appropriate training.

Asylum Justice has also recently been referred a ten year old child who has been placed with a family member for two years before advice was sought regarding how to regularise her immigration status. It is inappropriate for Local Authorities to be seeking to rely on the third sector for specialist advice in these cases. It is vital that Local Authority legal advisers are trained in immigration and asylum law so that appropriate advice can be obtained in a timely fashion without placing an undue burden on the third sector.

4. The role and effectiveness of the Welsh Government’s Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Welsh communities.

Asylum Justice is unable to comment on this aspect other than to say that refugees who arrive without their families will find it extremely difficult to integrate if they are unable to make an application for family reunion. The first and foremost concern will be for the safety of their family and they will be consumed by worry and fear until their family are arrive in the UK.

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Conclusion

Asylum Justice would like to conclude by highlighting the lack of good quality legal advice available for asylum seekers in Wales (and would also like it to be noted the lack of solicitors able to lodge judicial review applications in asylum related matters). This lack of provision coupled with the restrictions on legal aid (both in terms of the merits test and matters which fall out of scope) impacts the ability of asylum seekers to access justice. Asylum Justice recommends that the Welsh Government gives urgent consideration to funding legal advice provision in Wales to readdress this injustice and disparity compared to other parts of the UK.

Yours faithfully,

Siân Summers-Rees

Chair of Trustees
Asylum Justice

Sent to: SeneddCommunities@assembly.wales

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Oxfam Cymru submission to Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales

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Oxfam has a long history of working with asylum-seekers and refugees in the UK, particularly in Wales over the last decade, and we represent the Welsh Refugee Coalition on the Welsh Government's Syrian Resettlement Operations Board and are working with the Coalition to try to establish Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary. We fully support the evidence submission and recommendations presented to the Committee by the Welsh Refugee Coalition.

In May 2015, we completed a three year Sanctuary in Wales¹ project (funded by Big Lottery Fund) in the four asylum dispersal areas – Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham – alongside our partners [Oasis Cardiff](#), [African Community Centre](#), [Displaced People in Action](#), [BAWSO](#) and [Business in the Community](#). Over 450 women participated in this project sharing their experiences and identifying issues important to them. Some of these women reflected their experiences in this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F-8b72mBUU>.

The pace and effectiveness of the Welsh Government approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

1. The SVPRS² was launched in September 2015 and in response the Welsh Government set up a Syrian Refugee Taskforce and an Operations Board. Initially set up to oversee the effective implementation of the SVPRS, the remit of these bodies has been extended to include a Children's Task and Finish Group, which looks beyond the SVPRS to other Home Office schemes such as the Vulnerable Children Resettlement scheme³ and the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) National Transfer Scheme⁴. The Operations Board has not met since June 2016.
2. Oxfam was critical of the pace of resettlement at the beginning of the process, although there has now been an improvement. An announcement by WLGA in November 2016 stated that *'So far around 17 authorities have resettled refugee families and we anticipate families will have been resettled within all 22 council areas by the end of the year.'* By the end June 2016, Local Authorities in Wales had resettled 112 refugees from Syria through the SVPRS with updated Home Office statistics available on 1 December 2016⁵ providing official information up to the end of September.
3. Oxfam welcomed Welsh Government's aspiration to provide a coordination role for the SVPRS, however it is not clear what influence either the Taskforce or Operations Board has had or whether Welsh Government has been able to add value to the work of the WLGA, local authorities and civil society. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan, for example, does not mention the SVPRS or how Welsh Government is approaching the resettlement of refugees through this scheme. We believe Welsh Government has a role to play in offering greater strategic leadership in responding to humanitarian crises, providing a greater urgency and 'troubleshooting' to ensure local authorities, communities and service providers can respond quickly to such challenges. It is not clear to us that Welsh Government has played this role in responding to the SVPRS.
4. In responding to the SVPRS, there has been a risk of creating a 'two-tier' system, where those arriving through this scheme have received a different level of support to Syrians arriving via the asylum route or those of other nationalities. In assessing the Welsh response to the SVPRS, it is vital that we do not allow this two-tier structure to become permanent. Welsh Government should act to learn from what has and hasn't worked across all schemes in Wales – including through meaningful dialogues with people in Wales – with a clear view to improving provision for all refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales.

5. To that end, having a specific Taskforce and Operations Board focussing on this single scheme while in many ways welcome, risks giving the impression of endorsing a two-tier system. A new, permanent, structure should be created to co-ordinate services for all refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales, which would provide an improved starting point to act in response to urgent humanitarian crises.
6. For example, the Welsh Government has engaged with stakeholders interested in the Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants Inclusion Project specification and budget through a parallel process. Although this engagement has been welcomed, a more strategic approach could have utilised cross sector expertise from the Operations Board to inform and co-produce the specification. This would not only have saved time and resources but may also have enabled a better understanding of how Home Office, third sector and local authority provision could be delivered to provide a more seamless service for asylum-seekers and refugees across Wales. Working in this way could also have prevented delays in issuing this contract which would have allowed maximum opportunity to make effective transition arrangements for when the new contract is in place.

The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

7. Oxfam Cymru has welcomed Wales' positive humanitarian stance towards those seeking sanctuary, with asylum-seekers provided with free access to NHS healthcare and access to education. As a globally responsible nation, it is vital that Wales continues to play its part.
8. The Welsh Government Refugee Inclusion Strategy (2008)⁶ was seen as progressive: *'One of the principles on which the strategy is based is that refugee inclusion begins on day one of arrival in the UK and successful inclusion is closely related to the standard of reception procedures and people's experiences as asylum-seekers.'* This recognises that the asylum system itself and the support provided to asylum-seekers has a significant impact on the ability of people to integrate into the community and ultimately how well they will integrate once status has been granted. Immigration and asylum is a non-devolved area and successive UK governments have introduced restrictive legislation. The Welsh Government nevertheless has responsibility for many areas that have a key impact on the lives of people seeking sanctuary. This includes health, housing, education, transport and social services.
9. Oxfam Cymru was disappointed with the quality of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan which lacks concrete and accountable actions in areas of devolved responsibility and lacks any provision to mitigate impacts of UK Government legislation or policy on people living in Wales. At present, many of the actions listed under each priority are not delivery actions but focus on guidance and toolkits, which are unlikely to improve life significantly for refugees and asylum-seekers living in Wales. We would like to see much more detail in the actions that will be taken to achieve each priority. What will Welsh Government do? What will others do? How will the actions be resourced? What is the budget for this work? How will the impact of actions be monitored?
10. In addition to the above concerns, there are a number of significant omissions from the Delivery Plan, some of which are outlined below.

Supporting people faced with destitution or with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

11. Wales is the only region within the UK not to have a forum or specific staff dedicated to supporting people with NRPF and there is currently no NRPF Network in Wales⁷. This risks leaving an extremely vulnerable group of people without co-ordinated support or ongoing monitoring of practice. Action is needed to ensure people faced with destitution and with NRPF are effectively supported across Wales and that health and social services have expertise and oversight built in. We would recommend the reforming of the NRPF Network.
12. There is clear evidence that the lack of institutional, social and economic resources faced by people living in destitution or with NRPF denies them a sustainable livelihood, and results in a life that is robbed of dignity and unacceptable by human rights standards⁸. Oxfam research documented the humiliating and degrading strategies adopted by destitute asylum-seekers to survive and avoid deportation. This is not acceptable in Welsh society. Oxfam believes that no one should have to live in poverty. The poverty experienced by asylum-

seekers is a consequence of policy that is designed to force them into destitution and encourage their voluntary return to their country of origin. As research shows, not only is current policy deeply inhumane, it simply does not work.

13. We welcome the possible inclusion of practical advice and support for 'those at risk of destitution' in the draft specification the Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants Inclusion Project, but recommend the eligibility criteria for the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) should be expanded to include those with NRPF.

Access to justice/ legal support / cuts to legal aid

14. With the loss of advocacy support as part of the Welsh Refugee Council's (WRC) 'one-stop-shop' service in April 2014, access to justice on areas relating to and outside of the asylum claim has become much more difficult to obtain. The loss of this service, coupled with a lack of accessible [legal] advice services or any advocacy support to replace it, makes it increasingly difficult to ensure asylum-seekers and those with NRPF have access to legal support in the event of errors and failure to support them. With the Home Office looking to increase the number of dispersal areas, monitoring provision across Wales will be of great importance. It should not be the case that asylum-seekers have significantly different access to legal support depending on where they are located.
15. The lack of legal aid provision has an even greater impact on women and girls, including those who have experienced violence or sexual abuse, including victims of trafficking. In Wrexham, asylum seekers must now pay a fee for lawyers who travel from Manchester. Fresh asylum claims (from those already in Wales) now have to be made in person in Liverpool at the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) office – a recent change made by the Home Office. The Welsh Government should urgently explore whether such claims could once again be made in Wales to reduce costs for asylum-seekers.
16. This is especially important in the field of family reunion. Long term separation causes costs to Welsh public services (in particular around mental health provision). Yet the issues are complex and require legal support for an application to be successfully filed. Even if a family reunion application is successful, very limited support is available to ensure practicalities such as flights are covered to enable the reunion to take place.

Impact of UK Government legislation and policy

17. The UK Government Immigration Act 2016 is of serious concern. In response to the UK Government Welfare Reform Act, the Welsh Government set up a Ministerial Task and Finish Group that commissioned extensive research⁹ into the impacts of welfare reforms on people living in Wales. This evidence base was used to inform mitigating action across a range of devolved policy areas¹⁰. The Immigration Act introduces new sanctions on illegal working, changes to financial asylum support, aims to prevent undocumented migrants from accessing housing, driving licences and bank accounts, and introduces additional measures to enforce existing immigration laws.
18. Certain aspects of the Immigration Act impact upon areas of devolved competence including residential tenancies, availability of local authority support and transfer of responsibility for relevant children, which affords the Welsh Government an opportunity to influence and challenge how these provisions are implemented in Wales. Welsh Government should assess this legislation in the same way it has assessed the impact of Welfare Reform, commissioning extra research where necessary and introducing new policies to mitigate negative impacts.
19. In addition to the above, we have some comments on existing sections of the Delivery Plan including:

Language Services – English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

20. Welsh Government has a positive policy to provide free ESOL courses. Improvements are required in the local availability of and access to ESOL classes. This is essential as the ability to speak English has an enormous impact on an ability to integrate, social outcomes and community cohesion. Barriers prevent people – particularly women – accessing formal ESOL classes including a lack of childcare and transport as well as issues around the timings of classes.

21. With class intakes often commencing annually, individuals who arrive at other times in the year are often forced to wait many months before accessing formal provision. The provision of more advanced ESOL Level 2+ classes is incredibly limited and not adequate to support the need identified. Gender analysis of need and provision is required because of the additional barriers facing women (e.g. caring responsibilities, cultural barriers).
22. Welsh Government must work with initial accommodation providers (e.g. Clearsprings) or the Home Office or Migrant Help to ensure we have an understanding of the level of ESOL supply versus demand.

Health services – Interpretation & Language Line

23. Welsh Government policy providing primary and secondary health services to asylum-seekers is particularly welcome. This is not the case in England and is something we should be proud of providing.
24. There is a particular challenge, however, around language and interpretation, which can lead at worst to misdiagnosis and errors in prescribing – both of which were reported by women we worked with. We have evidence from women who have had to rely on their children to interpret for them about health conditions. Clearly this is not appropriate and has occurred at GP surgeries and at hospitals. For example, some Wrexham GPs were found not to be using Language Line despite the fact that health visitors in the area do so.
25. Welsh Government needs to work with health colleagues to ensure all health services in Wales fully integrate Language Line into local health provision. Any guidance needs to make clear that Language Line is not an optional extra. There is also a need for retention of in-person interpretation and not an overreliance on Language Line where particular vulnerabilities are identified and in all complex cases.
26. There could be a role for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to ensure that complaints procedures are accessible and there is clarity about the separation of health and immigration services for any patient. At the moment, there is no ability for refugees and asylum-seekers to complain, and as a group they are much less likely to do so due to vulnerability because of their immigration status.

Housing

27. It is unacceptable that asylum housing in Wales, particularly ‘Initial Accommodation’, is not subject to any independent scrutiny on standards and that provision is not subject to any independent means of complaint. The result is that people are forced to endure housing which would not be of an acceptable standard for any other publically funded accommodation. Historically, the advocacy service provided by the WRC assisted with such complaints, as well as collecting data on issues of concern and problem areas for asylum-seekers and refugees. An independent advocacy service must be re-established which enables refugees and asylum-seekers to raise issues of concern without fear of the consequences.
28. The quality of the Home Office contracted housing provider Clearsprings’ housing management also differs considerably. A project participant we worked with had reportedly been threatened with eviction by her housing manager, having complained following a conflict with a house mate. There is legal right to do this.
29. The Welsh Government should prioritise finding ways of using its devolved powers to improve asylum accommodation in Wales by engaging actively with the UKVI Asylum Accommodation and Support Transformation (AAST) stakeholder consultation on new contracts for asylum housing; insisting that the quality of asylum housing is scrutinised by Welsh Government or local authorities; and bringing the next asylum accommodation contract into Wales by supporting a bid from one or more Welsh housing associations, other third sector organisations or Local Authorities, or negotiating with the Home Office to undertake the contracting process itself.

Employment

30. Further action is needed to ensure employers in Wales are as accessible and open as possible to employing people from all backgrounds including refugees. Evidence from our programme experience in Wales suggests:

- The public and third sectors should be actively enabling asylum-seekers and refugees to volunteer in their organisations to build up language skills, social/professional networks, and gain valuable UK work experience.
- The Business Wales service was inaccessible for all the women we worked with during our three year Big Lottery funded project and this area of enterprise was the most challenging to develop. The generic advice and courses available on the website and even on the phone are not adequate in providing the holistic support which refugees often require to get a sound grounding in the UK economy, local markets and opportunities, and the requirements in terms of HMRC and employment law which will likely be very different to the set-up in countries of origin.
- Involving businesses and employee volunteers is a key way of getting employers to value and seek out the contributions of a diverse workforce, including refugees.
- Cuts to Voluntary Community Service (Cymru) in Cardiff, for example, and other volunteering services are further stymieing asylum-seekers' opportunities to volunteer as the competition for voluntary places increases. There needs to be a dedicated training programme for volunteer bureaux across Wales so that the involvement of asylum-seekers and refugees and the positive contributions they can bring are able to be realised.
- There is continued demand for the preparation for volunteering and work via employability training and job coaching – something which Displaced People in Action did in the past, the recent project we ran delivered, and which now is a significant gap in ensuring equality of opportunity.
- One-to-one support is vital in determining individual requirements and providing a safe and secure environment contributing to wellbeing for refugee women and their families - a personalised approach to the delivery of support with flexibility in the allocation of funding for travel, childcare and/or training courses according to individual needs works best.

The support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in Wales

31. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan states that UASC will have access to independent advocacy in respect of the duties owed to them under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. In this regard, UASC have a statutory right to advocacy the same as any other looked after child in Wales. However, UASC all have specific vulnerabilities and need access to dedicated services. To our knowledge no such support exists for asylum seeking children in Wales despite previous commitments from Welsh Government to explore '*the need for a Guardianship model¹¹ for Wales*'.
32. Appointed Guardians will support young people by helping them to navigate immigration and welfare processes, feel supported and empowered throughout the asylum process and assist them to access the help they need when they need it and help them make informed decisions about their future.
33. Advice and support for children now appears to be included with the specification of Welsh Government's Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants Inclusion Project, which is not recommending this model. Oxfam also has concerns about the age assessment process and safeguarding issues for young people going through this process. It is totally unacceptable, for example, for young people in age dispute cases to be housed in initial accommodation at Lynx House, a practice that has occurred. In accepting UASC from Calais, this was at risk of occurring again, however Cardiff Council acted fast to find alternative accommodation.

The role and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Welsh communities

Stigma and Media Portrayal

34. Research into the portrayal of asylum in the media, undertaken by Oxfam Scotland¹² over a decade ago, found that at the time of study, press coverage was negative to the point of being hostile. The research concluded that government policy was no longer subject to independent scrutiny: the press reflects the government's line that making conditions less welcoming and more hostile for asylum-seekers will deter them from travelling to Britain.
35. Nothing has changed today in 2016 – indeed the situation has worsened, with a recent UN report pointing to the prevalence of "divisive, anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric"¹³. Welsh Government cannot change

editorial policy, but it and local authorities should understand the importance of its communications on community cohesion. Indeed negative comments, and even no comment, can maintain hostile press coverage.

Safeguarding

36. Safeguarding is extremely important and we also agree with protecting the privacy of resettled families. However, a balance has to be struck to enable resettled families to establish a much needed support network of friends and neighbours within their communities. Without such a network people can become isolated which not only impacts on health but can also put people at risk and ultimately affect the success or failure of resettlement schemes.
37. We are also concerned by perceptions and understanding among people resettled via the SVPRS in terms of their rights and responsibilities and their ability to speak out on issues that are important to them. Having experienced so little control over their lives immediately prior to resettlement, people need to be empowered to make decisions on behalf of themselves and their families. Government limiting the voice or freedom of choice of residents, however well intentioned, infringes on basic human rights and has potentially damaging consequences for individuals and society as a whole.

Participation

38. Action needs to be taken to ensure active participation by asylum-seekers and refugees within national and local policy development, including the involvement of asylum-seekers and refugees in policy forums and the co-production of services in Wales. We are concerned, for example, that although asylum-seekers and refugees were consulted about the drafting of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan, there has been no feedback from Welsh Government on how this input was used or what was changed in the drafting of the Delivery Plan as a result.

Education for Global Citizenship

39. We would like to see support for Education for Global Citizenship as a useful way of making schools more welcoming to asylum-seeking and refugee children and to help mitigate and minimise instances of discrimination/racism on the part of children, teachers and parents. There are also specific resources available like the Schools of Sanctuary resource¹⁴ that could be useful for schools to promote community cohesion (especially in non-dispersal areas).
40. The development of the new curriculum in Wales offers an excellent opportunity to ensure that all our children and young people are ethical, informed citizens who 'respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society', and are healthy, confident individuals who 'form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect'.

Conclusion

While there are examples of good practice across Wales and Welsh Government's rhetoric has remained welcoming, there are a number of clear areas for improvement within Wales to support the refugee and asylum-seeking communities living here.

We believe that following the recommendations in our report would have a significant impact in supporting some of the most vulnerable individuals within Wales. Importantly, they would also set us on the way to becoming a Nation of Sanctuary, along the lines of the Seven Steps to Sanctuary set out by the Welsh Refugee Coalition.¹⁵

¹ Arad Research (2015), Sanctuary in Wales Final Evaluation & Executive Summary <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/final-evaluation-sanctuary-in-wales-project-581107>

² Home Office (2015), Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (SVPRP), Guidance for Local Authorities and Partners https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf

³ Press release: Home Office (2016), New Scheme Launched to Tackle Children at risk <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-scheme-launched-to-resettle-children-at-risk>

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- ⁴ Home Office (2016), Interim National Transfer Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children 2016-17 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-interim-national-transfer-scheme>
- ⁵ Home Office (2016), Immigration Statistics (quarterly releases) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>
- ⁶ Welsh Government (2008), Welsh Government Refugee Inclusion Strategy <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/publications/refugeeinclusion/?lang=en>
- ⁷ No Recourse to Public Funds Network <http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/regionalnetworks/Pages/default.aspx#wales>
- ⁸ Crawley, Hemmings and Price (2011), Oxfam GB, Coping with Destitution: Survival and livelihoods strategies of refugees asylum seekers living in the UK <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/coping-with-destitution-survival-and-livelihood-strategies-of-refused-asylum-se-121667>
- ⁹ Welsh Government (2015), Analysing the impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/welfare-reform-in-wales/analysing-reforms/?lang=en>
- ¹⁰ Welsh Government (2015), Mitigating the Impact of the UK Government's Welfare Reforms <http://gov.wales/docs/dsijg/publications/151019-mitigating-impact-welfare-reform-en.pdf>
- ¹¹ Scottish Refugee Council http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/how_we_can_help/advice_services/the_scottish_guardianship_service
- ¹² Mollard, C (2001), Oxfam GB, Asylum: The Truth Behind the Headlines <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/asylum-the-truth-behind-the-headlines-111959>
- ¹³ UN Periodic Review, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - CERD/C/GBR/CO/21-23 – 26 August 2016, p.4. http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/GBR/CERD_C_GBR_CO_21-23_24985_E.pdf
- ¹⁴ Oxfam, Schools of Sanctuary: Giving a warm welcome <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/schools-of-sanctuary>
- ¹⁵ Welsh Refugee Coalition (2016), Seven Steps to Sanctuary <https://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org/sites/default/files/news/files/Welsh%20Refugee%20Coalition%20Manifesto%20CYM%2016%20English.pdf>

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Response from the British Red Cross in Wales

(Contact: Cathrin Manning cmanning@redcross.org.uk / 01745 828232)

About us:

The British Red Cross helps millions of people in the UK and around the world to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, disasters and conflicts. We are part of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent humanitarian network and we refuse to ignore people in crisis. We support more than 90.000 people every year in Wales.

We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry on Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

General comment about the plan:

Overall the plan lacks SMART actions. Many of the actions are activities which have already been delivered and are coming to an end or are very geographically specific and not available in all dispersal areas.

Recommendation: The intended outcomes of the plan, priorities and actions need to be clearly linked with specific, target driven and timed activities, with clear accountability and evaluation.

Housing and Advice Services

1) Context: The plan fails to address destitution amongst asylum seekers. The British Red Cross defines someone who is destitute as:

“ A person who is not accessing public funds, is living in extreme poverty and is unable to meet basic needs, e.g. income, food, shelter, healthcare, and who is forced to rely on irregular support from family, friends, charities or illegal working to survive.”

The Immigration Act 1999 further applies to future scenarios whereby an individual is also considered destitute if they are likely to become destitute within the next 14 days (or 56 days if they are already receiving support).

We provide support to asylum seekers in Wales, many of whom are families, who find themselves destitute for a range of reasons and often experience multiple complex issues including physical and mental ill health, trafficking, domestic servitude, and exploitative relationships. Destitution can occur at any stage in the asylum process. Asylum seekers do not have permission to work and although they are entitled to limited state support this amounts to only 50 per cent of standard income support and is subject to frequent delays due to administrative errors or changes of address. This also affects those who have made a successful asylum claim and whose asylum support is withdrawn while they transfer to mainstream welfare support. They are often left waiting weeks or months for benefits such as child tax credit. Even when a refugee is successfully accessing welfare support, they and their families can face destitution at the point at which they exercise their legal right to be reunited with their children and spouse due to delays in receiving further support, forced to live of one person's entitlement and in overcrowded accommodation.

Even those who are considered refused and appeals rights exhausted can then go on to get some form of leave to remain in the UK.

Many of those who have had their claim rejected and are eligible for Section 4 support experience delays in receiving it or difficulty accessing it leaving them with nothing (see British Red Cross Report¹). Others feel unable to apply for Section 4 support as they fear for their safety if they return to their country of origin. There are then those who have had their asylum claim rejected and have not returned home or are too frightened to return home. Many failed asylum seekers choose to remain in the UK living a life of destitution over returning to their home country, living with no or very limited access to support from the UK Government.

Refused destitute asylum seekers have nowhere to live and no right to public housing; no money but no access to public funds or benefits and no legal right to work.

This destitution is the result of a failure of UK asylum and immigration policy to provide a safety net for some of the most vulnerable people in our society, including for those who have an entitlement to state support as well as those who are at the end of the asylum process

Destitution has a disproportionate effect on refused asylum seekers, newly granted refugees and women with insecure immigration status experiencing domestic violence. The enforced destitution of vulnerable displaced people has no place in Wales and the Welsh Government must prioritise the prevention of destitution.

We operate four destitution clinics in the dispersal areas of Wrexham, Newport, Swansea and Cardiff, where we provide small amounts of money and clothing to asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers who are destitute, a maximum of £10 a week per individual for a maximum of 12 weeks. The number of people referred to us for destitution support in Newport and Cardiff alone since 2013 has doubled (564 cases in 2013, 1027 in 2015). We fear these numbers will increase further as a result of Home Office intentions to broaden dispersal areas and the impact of the Immigration Act 2016 which introduces changes to financial support for asylum seekers and criminalises illegal working.

In Northern Ireland the Executive Office has established a crisis fund for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The fund provides a small amount of money for those who have issues with benefits, unemployment, have suffered family breakdown or domestic violence. The fund follows the success of a short pilot project, which supported 1,252 people, in 2012 and looked at whether small amounts of money could provide a significant bridge to allow people to get back on their feet. The fund also provides detailed evidence on the scale and cause of destitution to facilitate policy discussion.

The eligibility criteria include those who currently have no recourse to public funds, such as asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, and other vulnerable migrants including destitute refugees. The Executive Office has continued to provide a further £100,000 until March 2017 which is being managed and administered by the British Red Cross.

Recent key findings of the OFMDFM destitution fund are:

- That benefit issues, domestic violence and outstanding and refused asylum claims are the most common causes of destitution amongst the 'client' group.
- Additional checks, administrative errors and a lack of understanding of benefit entitlements within statutory agencies are some of the primary reasons for delays in people receiving state support, (including section 95 and section 4 support) they are entitled to
- Statutory agencies such as Social Services, require support and guidance on what their duties are towards families and children in need and in particular their human rights duties.
- There is a tangible cost of not helping people in destitution.

The key recommendations following the recent evaluation of the Crisis Fund are:

- The Northern Ireland (NI) Executive should address the cause of destitution by introducing a range of policy and practical initiatives such as a dedicated point of expertise on the benefit entitlements of non-UK nationals within the Department for Communities.
- The NI Executive should plan for the impacts of the Immigration Act 2016 and UK's exit from the European Union.
- There should be a permanent commitment to making the Crisis Fund available.

Recommendation: Welsh Government expands the eligibility criteria for the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) to include those who currently have no recourse to public funds, such as refused asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants including temporarily destitute refugees. This should include clear guidelines for the administration and monitoring of funds and expectations of the short-term impact on individuals.

Recommendation: The administration and monitoring of the expanded Discretionary Assistance Fund (as recommended above) to support the gathering of evidence on the scale and cause of destitution to facilitate policy discussion.

Recommendation: The delivery plan fails to consider the impact of the Home Office intention to broaden dispersal areas and the Immigration Act 2016 in Wales and the consequential risk to an increasing number of individuals and families left homeless and destitute. The Welsh Government should commit to exploring the impact of changes to dispersal areas and the Immigration Act 2016 on individuals in Wales, on devolved public service in Wales and on local authorities in Wales, commissioning additional research where necessary and plan to mitigate any negative impacts.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should limit the impact of destitution by introducing a range of policy and practical initiatives such as a dedicated point of expertise on the benefit entitlements of non-UK nationals within the Department for People and Communities.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should share the knowledge and expertise harnessed in Wales by the Wales Migration Partnership to feed into the future of COMPASS contracts.

2) Context: Our Supported People funded refugee tenancy support service in Swansea works with refugees during the move-on period after they have been granted refugee status by the Home Office. Once a person seeking asylum is given refugee status their National Asylum Support Service support will cease after 28 days, 21 days if they were in receipt of Section 4 support. This includes the cash allowance (usually £36.95 per week) and they will need to leave their asylum accommodation. Within this time a refugee needs to secure alternative accommodation and access mainstream support. In England and Wales, asylum accommodation is counted as a local connection. This limits the rights of refugees should they choose to move to another local authority and also places greater pressure on dispersal areas where consequently people choose to remain. Refugees who do move may become homeless because of the requirement that they have a 'local connection' with the area in which they are living in order to be entitled to homelessness services.

Refugees, particularly those with limited to no English language find it very difficult to navigate the associated systems and processes to establish their new lives during the 'move-on' period. This is exasperated by inadequate translation support which is only provided at the initial appointment at Job Centre Plus. Many refugees experience delays receiving their national insurance number (NINO) which impedes their ability to access mainstream benefits, despite there being no need to have a NINO to apply for benefits.

At the end of the move-on period many young refugee men become homeless as a result of not being considered a priority case by local authorities and are unable to afford private accommodation. Local authorities are encouraged to provide housing and support to refugees under the Welsh Government Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness. However, the approaches across Wales are inconsistent as to the classification of certain groups of refugees, particularly young male refugees, as non-priority which subsequently leads to homelessness. Despite the Welsh Government's

action within the delivery plan to promote access to the private rented sector to reduce homelessness if local authority housing is not available, the Immigration Act 2016 is likely to undermine this.

The Act empowers the UK government to extend the 'right to rent' scheme to Wales. Private landlords will be required to carry out 'right to rent' checks on potential tenants and introduces a financial penalty if they rent to anyone excluded from renting as a result of their immigration status. Despite the Welsh Government's action within the delivery plan to promote access to the private rented sector to reduce homelessness, the Immigration Act will likely result in an increase of homelessness amongst refused asylum seekers and those with status as landlords may be deterred from renting to ethnic minority tenants for fear of inadvertently renting to someone who does not have the correct status.

The varying application of the guidance by local authorities and the lack of actions to mitigate the negative impact of the Immigration Act will likely impede the achievement of the intended outcome of the plan to ensure refugees do not experience homelessness.

Recommendation: Welsh Government undertakes an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of Right to Rent Checks in Wales and monitors the impact of this legislation.

Recommendation: Welsh Government works with private landlords to raise awareness of different types of migration status to mitigate any impacts of Right to Rent Checks in Wales.

Health, well-being and social care

3) Context: Frequently our service users report that they are not offered interpretation support whilst accessing primary healthcare services which has impeded their ability to communicate their symptoms and understand the medical advice.

The delivery plan recognises the need to work with Public Health Wales to revise current guidance on language provision but despite sector advice that this action be incorporated under the section of physical health for all refugees and asylum seekers it was retained within the section for maternity and children. It is therefore confusing as to who exactly will be offered translation and who will not. All asylum seekers and refugees should be able to communicate their symptoms and medical history which, due to the nature of their arrival in the UK, is often inaccessible or missing. This would support diagnosis and treatment and reduce anxiety.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government to strengthen the guidance for health services to ensure that the availability of quality interpreting services is effectively communicated to target groups and consistently provided wherever required.

Education

4) Context: Supported by Welsh Government funding, we provide contextualised basic to improver ESOL classes for refugee and asylum seeker women living in Newport alongside a free crèche facility to develop language skills and an understanding of living in Wales to improve integration. The demand for this type of tailored ESOL provision outstrips the availability, with classes constantly operating at capacity and waiting list a common occurrence.

Transport costs are a big barrier, especially for asylum seekers on very limited funds, impeding access to necessary ESOL classes, which, unlike many other community services, are often not available locally and require significant travel costs, especially for those on such a limited budget.

Recommendation: More formal provision at different levels (accredited and appropriate to qualifications and access to employment), starting at different times throughout the academic year, so that no asylum seeker need wait longer than a month for ESOL.

Recommendation: For the Welsh Government to increase the availability of provision which caters for gender based needs (e.g. childcare provision) and where necessary single-sex provision. This needs to include very low level community based provision with opportunities to practise in a social context.

Community based provision would allow for a more flexible and responsive approach to the needs of the learners.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government to work with local authorities to address barriers to access especially for those living outside urban areas, e.g. subsidised transport and more community based outreach courses in neighbourhoods where asylum seekers are dispersed.

Community Cohesion

5) Context: Community cohesion can be severely hampered by forced family separation which reduces the coping mechanisms of the individuals affected and is compounded by a lack of social connectedness. We offer a means tested travel assistance programme, in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration, that can help pay the travel costs for the family members of refugees who remain overseas but have been granted a refugee family reunion visa to come to the UK.

Adult refugees have a legal right, under UK and international law, to be reunited with their children and spouse if they are still overseas, but since April 2013 legal aid funding has not been available for family reunion in England and Wales. Many refugees cannot afford to exercise their right to family reunion because they can't afford the legal representation needed. The UK Government withdrew legal aid for family reunification as it deemed it a straightforward process. However, our research report² shows that family reunion can be very complex and people face huge difficulties obtaining essential documentation, such as marriage certificates and birth certificates, when they have fled their home country. Without expert advice, difficult issues can stop or delay the reunion from progressing. This lack of legal support also leaves women and children, who are commonly the family members remaining overseas, extremely vulnerable, stranded in dangerous situations and at risk of exploitation and harm.

For many refugees, family reunion is another crisis point – when refugees are at a higher risk of destitution, homelessness or severe overcrowding at homeⁱⁱⁱ. These risks place extra strain on families at a critical time, as they attempt to build a home together after what may be years of separation and disrupted family life.

Case study:

Mousa Al Sharki, his wife Rajaa and their four children lived in Aleppo, Syria. As fighting escalated they realised it was no longer safe and decided to leave. Aleppo has seen some of the conflict's most devastating bombing and fighting – often in residential areas.

Earlier this year, Mousa travelled to the UK, while a heavily pregnant Rajaa and their children went to Lebanon. It was here that she gave birth to baby Omar. Mousa sought refuge in the UK and managed to get a family reunion visa to bring his wife and children to Cardiff. But an error on baby Omar's passport meant it didn't match his birth certificate. He wasn't allowed to board the flight and Rajaa felt she was given no option by authorities but to go on ahead without him.

Distraught, Rajaa boarded the flight, leaving her eight-month-old son with her sister-in-law.

Omar's passport stated he was born in Damascus, rather than in Lebanon. That meant he couldn't re-join his family until the passport was changed. But the family couldn't afford to pay for the change. They turned to the British Red Cross for help.

We asked our colleagues in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) tracing unit in Beirut to help. They made sure baby Omar got the exit visa he needed to come to the UK.

The Al Sharki family is now happily reunited and living in Wales.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government to look at ways to mitigate the adverse impacts of UK policy in Wales by enabling refugees to access the legal advice required for complex family reunion cases.

Recommendation: Often support focusses on the individual and the time between claiming asylum to receiving status. The Welsh Government Delivery Plan also needs to incorporate outcomes across departments, such as health, education and housing, that go beyond the 28 day move-on period with a wider focus on the well-being of the whole family by creating an integration pathway which adopts an early intervention and prevention response to family reunion.

The Reunited Family Support Service in Scotland is a service delivered by the British Red Cross. It is part of a wider refugee project that is run in partnership with Scottish Refugee Council and other organisations. It helps the families of refugees settle into Scotland after they have been reunited with their loved ones following the complex process of family reunion.

The service helps support and orientate people by providing practical help and assistance. It assists with applications for benefits, enrolling in English classes, accessing education, health and social care, and building social connections through lifeskills classes and group work activities.

It addresses social isolation, and provides people with opportunities to become active members of their communities and meet other families.

The pace and effectiveness of the Welsh Government approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

6) Context: By the end of June 2016, Local Authorities in Wales had resettled 112 refugees from Syria through the SVPRS. By the end October 2016, 17 out of 22 Local Authorities had welcomed Syrian refugees through the scheme, with all others preparing to do so by December 2016.

The Red Cross is working alongside local authorities and partners to support the families who have been and are being resettled in Wales. This has involved preparing for their arrival, welcoming the families and working with them individually to rebuild their lives and facilitate integration into their new homes and communities.

We have welcomed the proactive approach of local authorities to prepare for and support families from the point at which they arrive in the UK to ensure they are familiarised and settled into their new home and community.

However, this does contrast to the experience of people who have travelled independently of managed migration routes to seek sanctuary. They also face trauma which is compounded by the asylum system in the UK which is often subject to delays in decision-making, negative decisions resulting in prolonged appeals, and adverse implications of the 28 day move-on period once they receive their refugee status.

The bespoke support available to Syrian refugees arriving under SRVPS combined with the fast-tracking of administrative support is contributing to an emerging two-tier system of support for people in Wales at a vulnerable point in their lives. This has the potential to lead to tensions amongst Syrians and the wider asylum seeking and refugee communities.

Recommendation: Those areas taking part in the SVPRS provide an opportunity to explore best practice and learning from the first year of the project across Wales.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government to address the two-tier system by evaluating and replicating elements of the good practice delivered via SVPRS and extend to all people seeking asylum to ensure integrated, end-to-end support.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should apply aspects of the support provided under the SRVPS to help refugee families integrate and get to know their new communities. Refugees need to

understand their rights, entitlements and responsibilities. They also need advocacy support to access complex services such as housing, benefits systems and schools.

Recommendation: Seek a commitment from Welsh Government to fund the refugee move on service on a long-term basis.

Recommendation: Requiring Welsh Government to extend the remit of the Taskforce and Operations Board to include all asylum seekers and refugees.

Recommendation: Ensuring Jobcentre Plus staff in Wales are required to increase their understanding, possibly through dedicated training, of the particular barriers faced by refugees in job seeking and supported on an ongoing basis to give specialist assistance to them.

Recommendation: Urging Welsh Government to vocalise the impacts of UK policy on people in Wales and actively seek to influence Home Office policy and practice:

- The Home Office should ensure that relevant documentation is received by refugees at the same time as they are informed of their status.
- Where an application has been made for welfare benefits within the 28 days move on period, the Home Office should not cease asylum support until the first payment has been made, including where that payment is a short-term benefit advance.
- The target time for processing an application for an Integration Loan must be less than the length of the move on period. When a newly recognised refugee has applied for an Integration Loan and has not yet received it, they should be allowed to remain in their asylum accommodation.
- UK Government guidance to banks should advise them what documents are issued to refugees and others with leave to remain in the country so that they are encouraged to recognise them as evidence of identity. Bank staff should also be familiarised with the types of ID refugees will carry.

7) Context: Welsh Government have been vocal about their support for the SVPRS in Wales. In line with our concerns about the development of a two-tier system for refugee welcome and support, we also have concerns that poor public understanding of the need for international refugee protection is being further eroded with an almost exclusive emphasis on SVPRS.

Recommendation: We would like to see Welsh Government demonstrate leadership and proactively promote positive public messages about all refugees being welcome in Wales, as well as the benefits of migration.

i <http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/What%20we%20do/UK%20services/Greater%20Manchester%20destitution%20report.pdf>

ii <http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/About%20us/Not%20so%20straightforward%20refugee%20family%20reunion%20report%202015.pdf>

iii <http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/About%20us/British%20Red%20Cross%20-%20Integration%20Experiences%20Report.pdf>



Welsh Refugee Council

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Submission of evidence to the National Assembly for Wales' Equality, Local Government & Communities Committee inquiry into Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Wales (November 2016).

1. Welsh Refugee Council.

1.1 For over 25 years, Welsh Refugee Council has been working people who are fleeing persecution, conflict & oppression. We deliver direct specialist support services to refugees in Cardiff, Wrexham, Newport & Swansea & work to empower asylum seekers & refugees to build new futures in Wales. We work extensively with a range of community, voluntary & statutory sector partners & strive to contribute to the creation of a society where respect & equality for all are paramount & where human rights are enjoyed. We are an active member of both the Welsh Refugee Coalition¹ & City of Sanctuary² movement in Wales. We welcome the opportunity to submit written evidence as part of this inquiry & outline our responses to each of the inquiry's 4 points below.

2. The pace & effectiveness of the Welsh Government approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS).

2.1 By the end June 2016, Local Authorities in Wales had resettled 112 refugees from Syria through the SVPRS. By October 2016, 17 of 22 Local Authorities had welcomed Syrian refugees through the scheme, with all others preparing to do so by December 2016. For many of these Local Authorities, refugee resettlement is a new area of work & great care has been taken to ensure it works for both the resettled families & the communities that receive them. The Home Office leads on the scheme, with the Welsh Government facilitating a Taskforce & an Operation's Board to co-ordinate the arrival & effective integration of people. Membership of the Taskforce & Board includes representatives from health, local government, education, the third & private sectors, the Home Office & police. Initially set up to oversee the effective implementation of the SVPRS, the remit of these bodies has been extended to include a Children's Task & Finish Group, which looks beyond the SVPRS to other Home Office schemes such as the Vulnerable Children Resettlement scheme & the UASC National Transfer Scheme.

2.2 We welcome Welsh Government's coordination role re the SVPRS, though also seek reassurances that:

Recommendation 1: Welsh Government are facilitating an evaluation of SVPRS in Wales & developing mechanisms to promote the sharing & expansion of good integration practice across public services and local authorities. This is especially important in areas where people are resettled in areas without diaspora communities.

1 A coalition of organisations working in Wales with asylum seekers & refugees at all stages of their journey, & with the communities in which they live. We work together in the interests of asylum seekers & refugees, to ensure that our limited resources can be used to best effect & to speak with one voice on policies & practices affecting people seeking safety in Wales.

2 <https://cityofsanctuary.org/>

Newport

125 Lower Dock Street
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NP20 1EG
Tel: 01633 266420

Swansea

49 Walter Road
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Tel: 01792 630181

Wrexham

33 Grosvenor Road
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LL11 1BT
Tel: 01978 355818



UK Registered Charity No: 1102449

Company Number: 4818136



Recommendation 2: Welsh Government ensure such learning is ongoing & used to inform responses to future refugee crises, in order that these responses can be rapid, as well as effective for refugees & the communities that receive them.

Recommendation 3: Welsh Government to require responses to refugee crises be incorporated into the remit of the Wales Resilience Forum & into Local Authority resilience & civil contingency planning.

2.3 In terms of the support available to people, we recognise the SVPRS as a gold standard in many ways: people are welcomed at their arrival point, taken to their housing, supported with cash until benefits start, are accompanied to health & education related appointments & supported to find employment. This contrasts to the support available to people who secure status in the UK after travelling independently of managed migration routes (often referred to as 'spontaneous' refugees). Welsh Government have funded Welsh Refugee Council on an annual basis since 2004 to provide advocacy support for these people gaining status³ whilst living in Wales or choosing to move to Wales following a grant of status through its move-on service. This service is in high demand & operates from offices in the 4 dispersal cities of Swansea, Cardiff, Newport & Wrexham. Over the quarter July – September 2016, this service supported 734 main applicants (196 of them were newly recognised refugees), with issues as varied as obtaining status documents, obtaining National Insurance numbers, opening bank accounts, applying for integration loans & benefits, seeking employment & accessing homelessness, housing & health services. Through this advocacy provision, we know that people, immediately after being recognised as in need of international protection, are highly likely to experience financial hardship, homelessness & destitution (see also Refugee Council's 'England's Forgotten Refugees'⁴ and Red Cross's 'The Move-On Period: An Ordeal for New Refugees'⁵). People moving through the SVPRS are not as vulnerable to these experiences as, arriving with status, they do not face a 28 day move on period, as administrative procedures (particularly around obtaining National Insurance numbers) that contribute to such problems are addressed earlier. We are concerned that the level of investment & focus on Syrian refugees moving through the SVPRS compared with the investment & interest in spontaneous refugees has created a two-tier system. This impacts directly on refugees in Wales at a vulnerable time in their lives, creating tensions between members of the Syrian community & negatively influencing personal perceptions of welcome. It encourages public misunderstanding around the need for international protection & contributes to the damaging rhetoric of the 'deserving' versus 'undeserving' migrant.

2.4 We urge the committee to acknowledge & address this two-tier system by seeking commitments from Welsh Government to:

Recommendation 4: demonstrate leadership & proactively promote positive messages & narratives about *all* refugees being welcome in Wales, as well as the benefits of migration to Wales.

Recommendation 5: fund the refugee move-on service on a long-term & sustainable basis.

Recommendation 6: extend the remit of the Syrian Taskforce & Operations Board to include *all* asylum seekers & refugees.

Recommendation 7: vocalise the impacts of UK policy (e.g. homelessness, destitution & an associated pressure & demand on public & third sector services) on people in Wales & actively seek to influence Home Office policy & practice in the following ways:

- The Home Office should ensure that relevant documentation (e.g. NINO & Biometric Residence Permits) is received by refugees at the same time as they are informed of their status.
- Where an application has been made for welfare benefits within the 28 day move-on period, the Home Office not cease asylum support until the first payment has been made, including where that payment is a short-term benefit advance

³ <http://welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk/what-help-do-you-need/i-have-been-granted-status>

⁴ http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/7935/England_s_Forgotten_Refugees_final.pdf

⁵ <http://www.redcross.org.uk/en/About-us/Advocacy/Refugees/Ending-destitution/The-move-on-period>



- The target time for processing an application for an Integration Loan must be less than the length of the move on period. When a newly recognised refugee has applied for an Integration Loan & has not yet received it, they should be allowed to remain in their asylum accommodation
- UK Government guidance to banks to advise them what documents are issued to refugees & others with leave to remain in the country so that they are encouraged to recognise them as evidence of identity. Bank staff should also be familiarised with the types of ID refugees have available to them.

3. The effectiveness of the Refugee & Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan.

3.1 Whilst this plan was welcome, Welsh Refugee Council had concerns that it would neither address critical issues for people seeking sanctuary in Wales, nor create the conditions needed to ensure that people are safe, able to contribute & integrate into communities or enjoy their human rights. Since the committee's consultation in August, Welsh Government have proposed a budget & an outline specification for work they would like to see delivered under the Refugee, Asylum Seeker & Migrant strand of their Inclusion Fund from April 2017. This proposal has been through a number of iterations, with the most recent including areas of work which are missing from the Delivery Plan, though fundamental to recognising & securing the rights of asylum seekers & refugees in Wales: legal advice, advocacy for children & young people & destitution. The latest iteration of the proposal additionally included an uplift in the level of funding available to deliver the work. These developments are very much welcomed. Concerns remain however:

3.2 Ambition

The plan provided missed an opportunity to champion Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary, with clear commitments to improving equality of opportunity, rights based approaches & humane practices. It missed an opportunity to reiterate previous Welsh Government⁶ messaging that integration begins on day one of arrival (rather than upon receipt of status or approaching the point at which people are eligible to apply for citizenship or naturalisation) & the opportunity to contextualise & celebrate Wales' response to often restrictive UK/Home Office legislation & policy, as well as to challenging international humanitarian crises. Scotland's Refugee Integration Strategy, *New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities*⁷ offers such ambition, whilst remaining pragmatic.

Recommendation 8: Future updates of the plan to promote Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary, re-assert Wales' commitment to integration beginning on day 1 & to acknowledge & celebrate Wales' response to the UK & international context in which the plan is contextualised.

3.3 Accountability

The plan lack clear actions, indicators, benchmarks, lead responsibilities, timeframes or a monitoring & evaluation framework.

3.4 Housing & advice services

a. *Move-on:* As outlined above (section 2.3), Welsh Government fund Welsh Refugee Council to deliver advice & advocacy services to newly recognised refugees (as well as to people with humanitarian protection & discretionary leave). This service is over-subscribed & works with, on average, 700 people a quarter. Evidence from this service highlights that people in priority need spend lengthy periods in temporary & often unsuitable/unsafe accommodation. People not deemed to be in priority need are generally unable to access private rented housing, due to the requirement to pay agency fees, one or two month's rent in advance, the need for a guarantor and lengthy delays in integration loans being processed. When people are able to secure private rented housing, there are concerns about the quality & cost. Where dedicated housing officers exist, with experience & understanding of refugee needs (e.g. in Swansea), evidence suggest that housing outcomes are much improved for refugees.

⁶ <http://gov.wales/dsjlg/publications/communityregendevelop/refugeeinclusionstrategy/strategye.pdf?lang=en>, page 22

⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00439604.pdf>



Housing is one of the areas likely to be impacted by the Immigration Act 2016. The Act provides for 'Right to Rent Checks', making it compulsory for landlords to check the immigration status of all new adult tenants. This places additional pressure on landlords, especially small-scale landlords who are private individuals and will exacerbate concerns of renting to anybody without clear immigration status or documentation and thus potentially increasing unintended discrimination. These checks could lead to destitution and an increase in homelessness, putting more pressures and costs on already stretched local authorities.

Recommendation 9: The Welsh Government should act to offset discrimination against refugees in housing, both as new refugees and later. For example:

- Issue guidance to Local Authorities classifying all new refugees as vulnerable so that they are regarded as in priority need for housing; alternatively, provide adequate funding to local authorities and accompanying guidance to enable newly recognised refugees who are not considered in priority housing need to benefit from rent deposit schemes.
- Consider ring-fencing a proportion of the 'Supporting People' fund for refugees (this fund helps people maintain tenancies, with a view to preventing homelessness).
- Ensure Local Authorities in dispersal areas have dedicated housing resettlement officers with an active role in assessing priority need for individual refugees.
- Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of Right to Rent Checks⁸ in Wales and monitor the impact of this legislation.
- Work with private landlords to raise awareness of different types of migration status to mitigate any impacts of Right to Rent Checks in Wales.

b. Asylum housing: Despite housing being devolved to Wales, asylum housing is an exception to this. This is problematic as housing is a major issue for many asylum seekers with reports that the housing provided is often inadequate and unhygienic. Evidence collated by Welsh Refugee Coalition⁹ members highlighted failings with Initial Accommodation housing, failings which are often reported as issues in dispersal accommodation: overcrowding; poor states of repair; broken appliances, boilers & furniture; lack of maintenance; damp conditions & harassment and anti-social behaviour from other tenants and members of staff. Standards of service provision were reported as a serious concern, with a general feeling that the service provider had little appreciation of the difficulties faced by asylum seekers and their reasons for seeking asylum in the UK. This was accompanied with a perception that the service provider is more concerned with internal targets and profit generation than on providing a service that protects and supports vulnerable people. Asylum accommodation is a source of worry and anxiety for people living in it, aggravating pre-existing experiences of trauma, rather than providing a place of sanctuary. It is unacceptable that asylum housing in Wales is not subject to any independent scrutiny on standards nor subject to any independent means of complaint. This lack of accountability, coupled with the fact that asylum seekers are unlikely to complain because of a fear of retribution (from either the Home Office or from the housing provider) mean that people are forced to endure housing which would not be of an acceptable standard for any other publicly funded accommodation.

Recommendation 10: Welsh Government actively engages with the UK Visa & Immigration Asylum Accommodation & Support Transformation (AAST) stakeholder consultation to ensure that any new contract for asylum housing in Wales brings housing quality standards, complaints procedures, monitoring & enforcement in line with Welsh Quality Housing standards.

Recommendation 11: Welsh Government insist that the quality of asylum housing in Wales is scrutinised by either Welsh Government or local authorities

⁸ <http://www.taipawb.org/policy-influencing/immigration-right-rent-checks/>

⁹ Welsh Refugee Coalition Briefing for Welsh Affairs Select Committee, 29th February 2016



- c. Homelessness: Welsh Refugee Council, working in partnership with agencies like the Red Cross, see on average of 20 to 25 people who are destitute & homeless each week. People tend to be refused asylum seekers, newly granted refugees or women with insecure immigration status experiencing domestic violence. With the exception of refugees, people have no right to public housing, no money, no right to benefits & no legal right to work. As a result, this group of people are characterised by vulnerability, inability to satisfy essential living needs and poor health and wellbeing¹⁰. At Welsh Refugee Council, people are provided with small payments of between £5-£10 per week, items of clothing & occasionally food, as well as being advised where they can access community & faith based support (e.g. Sharedydd¹¹, Oasis¹² & Nightshelter¹³). Destitution is a breach of the rights of individuals & a community cohesion issue. It is also a resource issue, as the practice places significant & unpredictable demand & on Local Authority & third sector services.

Recommendation 12: In line with the Wales Refugee Coalition recommendation, Welsh Government expand the eligibility criteria for the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) to include people who currently have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

- d. *Advice Services:* Specialist advice & advocacy services for *refugees* have been funded by Welsh Government since 2004. Specialist advice & advocacy services for *asylum seekers* were funded by the Home Office in Wales until March 2014. The later ensured that asylum seekers were informed about their rights & entitlements & had a voice when faced with issues relating to their welfare. Advocacy for asylum seekers is likely to be offered again in Wales from April 2017, via Welsh Government Inclusion funding, though with the level of funding available, it is unlikely that provision will meet need.

3.5 Education

- a. *ESOL:* Gaining proficiency in English as soon as possible is one of the most important pillars enabling inclusion & integration & is identified time & time again in focus of asylum seekers & refugees as a key need. Welsh Refugee Council, in partnership with South Wales University, offer free ESOL in Cardiff to approximately 270 students per quarter. Their feedback on accessing ESOL informs our understanding of what is needed. We welcome commitments in the Delivery Plan to improve the flexibility of ESOL provision & for it to have parity with basic skills. We welcome the commitment to providing more contextualised ESOL provision in order that people are able to work towards updating their existing qualifications to those recognisable in the UK & to offer provision which meets the variety of leaner needs. Whilst these commitments and outcomes are welcome, for them to have the desired impact,

Recommendation 13: Welsh Government must ensure that provision:

- responds to gender based needs (e.g. women are often carers for children or other family members & so are more able to access provision outside of the school run or which has crèche facilities).
- continues to be available on a no-cost basis and irrespective of immigration status (mirroring the recognition that integration begins on day one).
- is accessible throughout the academic year

3.6 Employment

- a. *Employment, Volunteering and Training:* With access to the labour market the most critical aspect of migrant integration¹⁴, efforts to ensure refugees are empowered to utilise their skills and knowledge

¹⁰<http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/About%20us/South%20Yorkshire%20destitution%20report.pdf>

¹¹<https://cardiffdestitutionnetwork.wordpress.com/sharedydd/>

¹²<http://oasiscardiff.org/about-us/>

¹³<http://newportnightshelter.org/>

¹⁴ Hagendoorn, Louk, Justus Veenman, and Wilma Volleburch, eds. (2003). *Integrating Immigrants in the Netherlands: Cultural versus Socioeconomic Integration*, Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate.



and to achieve their full potential as members of Welsh society, as detailed in the Delivery Plan, are applauded.

Refugee communities in Wales often rely on 'word of mouth' within their own networks to find employment, rather than finding job opportunities through other means such as online search due to limited digital access & language barriers. This has led to a concentration of refugees in some low-skilled areas of the labour market. In 2015, about 19% of non-UK born residents in Wales worked in elementary occupations compared to 12% of those born in the UK¹⁵. Through our move-on service and our links with refugee communities, we know of many highly qualified individuals employed in low paid jobs in factories, even years after gaining status. Agencies such as Job Centre Plus, with their emphasis on moving people into work regardless of experience or qualifications, can exacerbate this situation by not looking beyond English language skills, as well as overlooking skills, experience & qualifications gained overseas.

Recommendation 14: Welsh Government to support Jobcentre Plus staff in Wales to increase their understanding of the barriers faced by refugees in job seeking to provide a person-centred service with improved longer term outcomes (e.g. refugees being employed in industries they are qualified for).

Recommendation 15: Welsh Government invest in systemic support for the transfer & recognition of qualifications: an education and employment advisor in each of Wales' dispersal areas and NARIC¹⁶ (national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills) membership for lead agencies.

Recommendation 16: Welsh Government, under its 'Prosperity for All'¹⁷ agenda, to work with business and industry to create training and internship programmes which maximise the use of refugees' skills & minimise time spent outside the labour market. This could include supporting employers to deliver tailored programmes to promote smooth access to the labour market complimented by specialist language provision where appropriate or intensive and flexible ESOL provision to fit around working hours – this would both enhance the skills of their workforce and promote the welfare and retention of employees.

4. The support & advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

4.1 Whilst Welsh Government's Delivery Plan acknowledges the need to 'ensure the UNCRC derived principles underpin children's policies & programme in Wales in the field of asylum & immigration', this is far from a robust commitment to protect asylum seeking children's rights in Wales. The plan's sole outcome to ensure 'UASCs are safe & supported in order to prevent isolation & social exclusion' similarly lacks fortitude. The Delivery Plan identifies a number of briefings & toolkits which can be used by service providers, though contains only one action to directly support the promotion of rights amongst children as rights holders themselves: that UASCs have access to independent advocacy in respect of the duties owed to them under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014. Advocacy is very much needed as UASCs – before and after being formally recognised as such - have particularly complex needs which demand specialist knowledge & advocacy¹⁸. Currently, there is no such advocacy in Wales following the closure of Tros Gynnal Plant's specialist provision in 2014. There is a possibility that some advocacy provision for UASCs will be resurrected from April 2017 as part of Welsh Government's Inclusion funding – though again, concerns around levels of funding and competing priorities for this funding apply. This concern is heightened in light of plans to expand resettlement schemes with further Home Office initiatives for asylum seeking & refugee children.

Recommendation 17: Welsh Government reconsider their allocation of funding for work with UASCs and seek to provide dedicated, ringfenced funding (i.e. in addition to the Inclusion funding) in order to

¹⁵ Welsh Refugee Council, *Migrants in the Welsh Labour Market*, 2016, <https://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org/migration-information/migration-trends/migrants-in-the-welsh-labour-market>

¹⁶ <http://naric.org.uk/naric/>

¹⁷ <http://gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk/resources/research/young-lives-in-limbo>



ensure compliance with recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child¹⁹ to 'provide sufficient support to migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children to access basic services'.

Recommendation 18: Welsh Government to ensure that advocacy provision exists for all age disputed asylum seeking children and young people, not just those who have been recognised as UASCs and who are looked after.

5. The role & effectiveness of the Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees & asylum seekers in Welsh communities.

5.1 *Departments, organisations and people understand hate crime, victims make reports and get appropriate support (Outcome 1):* Welsh Refugee Council's focus groups with people around hate crime suggest that experiences of hate crime are common amongst asylum seekers and refugees and that much more work needs to be done to ensure that people to recognise hate crime and develop the confidence and trust in services to report it²⁰. This is especially pressing given the rise in hate crime reported following the Brexit vote.

Recommendation 19: Welsh Government, as part of their Framework for Action on Tackling Hate Crimes & Incidents, to require real or perceived migration status to be recognised & recorded as a reason for Hate Crime.

5.2 *Increased evidence and awareness on immigration and supporting the inclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants (Outcome 4):* Funded by Welsh Government, Welsh Refugee Council, in partnership with the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, lead the Migration Services in Wales project. This project provides up-to-date information on migration policy and practice & facilitates the development of a strategic approach to migration in Wales. As part of this project we produce Legal and Policy Briefings²¹, have provided specialist training²², support the development of local strategic frameworks on migration²³ and provide a migration enquiry service²⁴. All aspects of this project contribute directly and significantly to this outcome, an outcome that will be jeopardised when this work ceases in March 2017 due to the cessation of Welsh Government funding.

Recommendation 20: Welsh Government invest in continuing and building on the work of the Migration Services project to ensure that practitioners and policy makers in Wales have access to up-to-date, Welsh specific, information on migration trends and migrant rights.

Recommendation 21: Welsh Government develop a comprehensive National Migration Strategy to address poverty, the labour force and economic renewal of Wales, alongside commitments to equality and human rights and clear messages on the role of migration in Wales' future and the status of migrants in Welsh society²⁵. Scotland's Strategic Migration Partnership Policy Toolkit provides a good example²⁶.

5.3 Whilst a national strategy is needed to ensure that legislation and policy facilitate integration, it is Local Authorities that, with their partners, have the greatest capacity to build an inclusive culture and practice that touches on everyday lives. Local migration strategies (rather than ad hoc responses by

¹⁹ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/160727-final-concluding-observations-2016-en.pdf> (76.f)

²⁰ <https://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org/news/07102016-1554/hate-crime-report-it>

²¹ <https://wrc.wales/migration-information/legal-briefings>

²² <https://wrc.wales/migration-information/training>

²³ <https://wrc.wales/migration-information/strategic-frameworks>

²⁴ <https://wrc.wales/migration-information/migration-enquiries>

²⁵ The conference report is available on the Migration Services in Wales webpage on Local Strategic Frameworks on Migration:

<https://wrc.wales/sites/default/files/Resource%20-%20Strategic%20Frameworks%20on%20Integration%20-%20Conference%20Report.pdf>

²⁶ http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/uploads/files/documents/csmp_policy_toolkit_v2.0_0.pdf



individual services) harness shared goal across the authority, ensure consistency of approach and in communicating a common narrative, and to deliver joined up services. It ensures that full account is taken of the demographic context, that partner agencies can be engaged in considering the options and their role in delivery, and that measurable deliverables are identified.

Recommendation 22: Welsh Government to build on the work that it has funded since April 2015²⁷ and compel local authorities to develop local migration strategies.

5.4 *Key policies and programmes are supporting and evidencing delivery against the national goal on more cohesive communities through the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (Outcome 6):* The establishment of a 'buddy' programme or mentor system, with clear guidelines and safeguarding measures, which, with sufficient resource, could be coordinated by civil society at the local level and would establish early contact between new migrants and their local community. Throughout Europe, volunteering programmes for refugees promoted contact and understanding across diverse groups²⁸.

Recommendation 23: Welsh Government invest resource into harnessing the enthusiasm of the many people who have signed up to support refugees across Wales in recent months, including support for the development of established networks such as the City of Sanctuary movement. Additional resource for the voluntary sector would do much to support such efforts.

Recommendation 24: Welsh Government compel public service boards to include the needs of migrants, to ensure that the duties owed to different types of migrants are well understood by both front-line practitioners and policy makers and to encourage clear, positive messages on migrant integration. This should recognise the specific needs of vulnerable migrants as well as those of refugees and asylum seekers and demonstrate sensitivity towards the human rights challenges facing those with irregular immigration status.

6. Immigration Act 2016

In line with concerns raised by the Wales Refugee Coalition, Welsh Refugee Council urge the committee to consider the constitutional implications and potential impact of the Immigration Act 2016 in Wales.

Recommendation 25: Welsh Government should keep a close watch on UK policy on asylum and immigration and where there are adverse effects either lobby for changes or seek ways within its competence to mitigate these. In particular, Welsh Government should explore the impacts of the Immigration Act on individuals, devolved public services and on local authorities in Wales, commissioning additional research where necessary and putting in place policies to mitigate any negative impacts.

Tracey Sherlock
07817 333511
22 November 2016

²⁷

<https://wrc.wales/sites/default/files/Developing%20a%20Strategic%20Approach%20to%20Integration%20in%20Wales%20A%20practical%20resource%20for%20local%20authorities%20and%20their%20partners%20in%20Wales.pdf>

²⁸ Two examples from the UK can be found on the Cities of Migration website, Birmingham- [Meeting, Mediating and Mentoring: The Power of Peer Mentoring](#), London- [Time Together: Mentoring for Daily Life](#)

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
ELGC(5)-12-16 Papur 5a / Paper 5a

Mr John Griffiths AM
Chair – Equality, Local Government & Communities Committee
7th Floor
Clarence House
Clarence Place
Newport
NP19 7AA

Our ref: CED/CJH

15th September 2016

Andy Johns

Request for an Inquiry by the Equality, Local Government & Communities Committee

I write to you with regard to the takeover of Tai Cantref Housing Association by Wales and West Housing Association, to kindly ask that you consider the need for an inquiry by the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee of which, of course, you are the Chair.

A recurrent and salient issue throughout my conversations with Tai Cantref tenants, members of staff and shareholders was the role of the Welsh Government, both as a regulator of Tai Cantref - a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) - and as an effective catalyst to the takeover following the launch of the Welsh Government's statutory inquiry into Tai Cantref.

I sincerely believe that an inquiry would not only allow for scrutiny of the process which led to the takeover, but of equal importance, an inquiry could consider the different housing legislation which exists for local authorities and RSLs, and ensure that RSL tenants are fully and properly consulted in future, noting that this was a repeated concern of tenants throughout the takeover.

As I am sure you are aware, Tai Cantref's situation as a viable RSL deteriorated dramatically in the lead-up to the takeover by Wales and West Housing Association. On the 16th July 2015 at Tai Cantref's Annual General Meeting, the board announced a surplus of funds of £978,000, increasing the total funds available to the company to nearly £6.6 million. However, following the conclusion of the Welsh Government's unprecedented statutory investigation on August 15th, the result of which has never been released publicly, a chain of events were set in motion that meant that by April 2016, Tai Cantref's board accepted the need to merge with Wales and West Housing Association. In several conversations with shareholders, I have been led to believe that Tai Cantref, as a consequence of the statutory investigation which discouraged Tai Cantref's investors, faced insolvency unless the takeover was approved.

This chain of events raises several questions which I believe can only be answered by an appropriate inquiry into the matter. Several issues must be addressed to ensure RSL tenants' security and rights.

These include:

- To investigate how a RSL was allowed to deteriorate into the position that it did, necessitating a review of the financial state of Tai Cantref and its relationship with its lenders;





Adam Price

Aelod Cynulliad dros Ddwyrain Caerfyddin a Dinefwr
Assembly Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

- The standards and nature of Welsh Government monitoring of RSLs, including an investigation into why Tai Cantref was allowed to fail Welsh Housing Quality Standards set in 2012 and which will now only be achieved by 2024 following the takeover, four years later than the Welsh Government revised guidelines;
- The justification given by the Welsh Government to launch an unprecedented statutory inquiry into Tai Cantref rather an investigation of another kind. This is of critical importance considering that it was the statutory inquiry that precipitated the financial crisis between Tai Cantref and its lenders, perceived by some shareholders to have all but forced Tai Cantref shareholders to vote in favour of the takeover;
- Review the consultation process held between Tai Cantref and its tenants throughout the takeover process to ensure that Tai Cantref tenants were fully informed about developments, with a view as to what measures could be implemented to further protect RSL tenants to provide enhanced security where such organisations merge. As it my understanding that Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 remains applicable, an enquiry could assess whether effective consultation with tenants detailed by Section 105 has been fully adhered to;
- To consider whether existing legislation offers the greatest level of security to the provision of social housing and its tenants in Wales, noting that existing legislation prevents Local Authorities and RSLs from merging as RSLs are only able to merge with other similar organisations. This is given particular relevance in this case given the strength of the application put forward by Carmarthenshire County Council which guaranteed no forced redundancies, a continued focus on Welsh language provision and the use of local contractors in Tai Cantref operations.
- An enquiry could further examine whether existing legislation clearly determines the role and responsibility of RSLs to consult with tenants, focusing on whether existing provisions for Local Authority tenants where they are afforded the right to ballot when a Local Authority transfers housing stock to an alternative company should be afforded to RSL tenants.

By investigating these issues the inquiry could also deliver the crucial publication of the findings of the Welsh Government's statutory inquiry into Tai Cantref, which set in motion the takeover between Tai Cantref and Wales and West Housing Association.

Finally, I must draw your attention to the clear conflict of interest which existed during this process.

An individual working for the company which was engaged by the Welsh Government to undertake the statutory inquiry was, during the time of the inquiry, co-opted onto the Board of Wales and West Housing Association. Whilst I do not for one minute suggest any inappropriate behaviour on the part of this individual, to have a Board Member conduct an inquiry into the company it later merged with completely undermines the legitimacy and integrity of the Welsh Government's statutory inquiry into Tai Cantref.

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

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Plaid
Cymru | Party of
Wales



Adam Price

Aelod Cynulliad dros Ddwyrain Caerfyrddin a Dinefwr
Assembly Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

An inquiry by your committee I believe would deliver the answers that Tai Cantref tenants and shareholders so desperately need, and help ensure that the rights of RSL tenants are fully protected.

An inquiry would deliver answers, transparency and ensure that effective provisions are made for any future mergers. I sincerely hope that you will look upon this case favourably.

Thank you in advance of your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Yours,
Adam Price*

Adam Price AC/AM

Dwyrain Caerfyrddin a Dinefwr / Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

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Plaid Cymru | Party of Wales

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
ELGC(5)-12-16 Papur 5b / Paper 5b

Nick Ramsay AC
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd
CF99 1NA

15 Medi 2016

Annwyl Nick

Gweler yn atodedig ohebiaeth ar 1 Medi 2016 gan Adam Price AC yn mynegi ei bryderon ynghylch uniad Tai Cantref a Thai Wales & West. Mae fy ymateb innau ar 14 Medi hefyd wedi'i atodi.

Rwy'n deall y bydd y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus yn trafod ymchwiliadau posibl i'w cynnal yn y dyfodol yn ei gyfarfod nesaf. Gan fod hwn yn fater o fewn cylch gorchwyl y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus, teimlwn y byddai'n addas rhannu hyn gyda chi.

Rhowch wybod i mi os yw'r pwyllgor yn penderfynu ymchwilio i'r mater hwn.

Edrychaf ymlaen at glywed gennych.

Cofion cynnes



John Griffiths AC
Cadeirydd



John Griffiths AC
Cadeirydd, Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol
a Chymunedau
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

16 Tachwedd 2016

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus– Ymchwiliad i Gymdeithasau Tai

Annwyl John,

Diolch am eich llythyr dyddiedig 15 Medi, 2016 a oedd yn cynnwys gohebiaeth a anfonwyd atoch gan Adam Price AC, dyddiedig 1 Medi, 2016. Roedd yr ohebiaeth yn tynnu sylw at bryderon ynghylch y bwriad i uno Tai Cantref a Wales and West Housing.

Wrth ystyried ei flaenraglen waith yn ddiweddar, cytunodd y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus i gynnal ymchwiliad i Drefn Reoleiddio Cymdeithasau Tai Cymru. Cytunodd y Pwyllgor ar y cylch gorchwyl a ganlyn ar gyfer ei ymchwiliad:

- Archwilio pa mor effeithiol yw'r Fframwaith Rheoleiddiol presennol ar gyfer cymdeithasau tai sydd wedi'u cofrestru yng Nghymru;
- Asesu effeithiolrwydd ac ansawdd y trefniadau llywodraethu;
- Penderfynu a yw'r drefn reoleiddio bresennol yn ddull effeithiol o reoli a lliniaru risgiau drwy'r sector cyfan;
- Ystyried a yw'r trefniadau cyd-reoleiddio yn effeithiol yn ymarferol;
- Lefelau tâl yr uwch-swyddogion sy'n gweithio i gymdeithasau tai.

Bydd y Pwyllgor yn lansio ei ymgynghoriad ar 21 Tachwedd 2016 ac os ydych yn dymuno cyflwyno ymateb i'r ymgynghoriad, y dyddiad cau yw 6 Ionawr 2017.



Edrychaf ymlaen at glywed gennych.

Yn gywir

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Ramsay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Nick Ramsay AC
Cadeirydd





Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
ELGC(5)-12-16 Papur 6 / Paper 6

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA(P)/MD/7106/16

John Griffiths AC /AM
Cadeirydd
Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol
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Bae Caerdydd
CF99 1NA

22 Tachwedd 2016

Annwyl John

Yn dilyn fy mhresenoldeb yn y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol ar 3 Tachwedd, bu ichi ysgrifennu ataf ar 10 Tachwedd yn gofyn am wybodaeth ychwanegol. Ymdrinnir â'r materion a godwyd gan y Pwyllgor yn eu tro isod.

Cyllid Refeniw Cyffredinol yr Heddlu

Darperir y cyllid refeniw cyffredinol ar gyfer plismona yng Nghymru fel Cyllid Allanol Cyfun (RSG) sy'n cynnwys grant cynnal refeniw (RSG) ac ardrethi annomestig wedi'u hailddosbarthu (NDR). Ar ôl i NDR gael eu datganoli'n ariannol, mae'r ffigurau hyn bellach yn cael eu dangos ar wahân yn y Gyllideb Gymreig. Roddent yn cael eu dangos, yn y gorffennol, fel un ffigur. Mae'r Grant cynnal Refeniw yn perthyn i DEL refeniw ac Ardrethi Annomestig yn perthyn i AME Refeniw.

Er bod y Gyllideb Ddrafft yn dangos gostyngiad yng Nghyllid Refeniw Cyffredinol yr Heddlu (DEL Refeniw) ar gyfer 2017-18, mae cyllid cyffredinol Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr heddlu wedi cynyddu. Bydd cyfraniad Llywodraeth Cymru at gyllid refeniw cyffredinol ar gyfer plismona yn codi £1.9 miliwn yn 2017-18. Newidiadau cyflwyniadol yn unig yw'r newidiadau yn y Gyllideb Ddrafft. Dangosodd cyllideb 2016-17 y cyllid ar gyfer plismona fel grant cynnal refeniw. Mewn gwirionedd, darparwyd rhan o'r cyllid o ardrethi annomestig, fel sydd wedi bod yn wir erioed.

Mae Tabl 1 yn rhoi dadansoddiad o NDR rhwng yr awdurdodau unedol a'r heddlu a'r gwahaniaethau rhwng y cyflwyniad yng nghyllideb 2016-17 a'r ffordd y mae adnoddau'n cael eu dosbarthu. Mae'r golofn olaf yn cadarnhau bod y symudiadau canslo ei gilydd allan wrth edrych ar y setliadau cyffredinol (AEF) ar gyfer awdurdodau a'r heddlu.

Tabl 1: Cysoni Dosbarthiad Gwirioneddol RSG ac NDR ar gyfer 2016-17 a'r hyn a gyhoeddir yng nghyllideb 2016-17

		<i>£ miliwn</i>		
		Cyhoeddi 2016-17	Gwirioneddol 2016-17	Gwahaniaeth
Awdurdod lleol	Grant Cynnal Refeniw (DEL)	3,122	3,171	49
Awdurdod lleol	Ardrethi Annomestig wedi'u Hailddosbarthu (AME)	977	928	-49
Awdurdod lleol	Cyfanswm Cyllid Allanol Cyfun	4,099	4,099	0
Heddlu	Cymorth Refeniw (DEL)	137	88	-49
Heddlu	Ardrethi Annomestig wedi'u Hailddosbarthu (AME)	0	49	49
Heddlu	Cyfanswm Cyllid Allanol Cyfun	137	137	0

Gwariant a Reolir Bob Blwyddyn - Ardrethi Annomestig (NDR)

Y ffigur yn y Gyllideb Ddrafft ar gyfer ardrethi annomestig o £1.059 miliwn yw ein hamcangyfrif o'r swm a fydd ar gael i'w ailddosbarthu yn 2017-18. Nid yr un swm yw hwn â'r swm a gaiff ei gasglu yn y pen draw yn ystod, neu mewn perthynas â 2017-18. Mae'r ffigur yn cymryd i ystyriaeth ein hamcangyfrif diweddaraf o'r alldro ar gyfer 2015-16 ac asesiad wedi'i ddiweddarau o swm y refeniw a gynhyrchir yn y flwyddyn ariannol gyfredol (2016-17), yn ogystal â'n hamcangyfrif cychwynnol o dderbyniadau ar gyfer 2017-18 yn dilyn ailbrisiad 2017.

Mae holl refeniw a godir o NDR yn cael ei roi mewn cronfa gyfun. Rheolir y pwll er mwyn sicrhau bod yr holl refeniw, dros y tymor hir, yn cael ei ailddosbarthu i ariannu gwasanaethau lleol. Er hynny, o gofio nifer y ffactorau sydd ynghlwm wrth reoli cronfa mor fawr, mae'n anochel bod gwarged neu ddiffyg ar y balans ar ddechrau pob blwyddyn. Ceir llawer o newidiadau sy'n digwydd yn ystod pob blwyddyn sy'n effeithio ar yr incwm a gynhyrchir. Mae'r rhain yn cynnwys, er enghraifft, newidiadau yn nifer a natur y busnesau a'r eiddo annomestig eraill, newidiadau o ran defnydd, cyfraddau casglu, ailbrisiad, apelau, chwyddiant, pwy sy'n gymwys ar gyfer rhyddhad ac ati. Mae'r cyfrif NDR archwiliedig gyfer 2015-16 wedi cael ei osod gerbron y Cynulliad.

Trefniadau cyllid gwaelodol o fewn setliad dros dro llywodraeth leol

Mae nifer o ffactorau i'w hystyried wrth benderfynu ar drefniadau cyllid gwaelodol, gan gynnwys gwerth cyffredinol y setliad, yr ystod o setliadau awdurdod unigol a'r gost sy'n gysylltiedig â rhoi cyllid gwaelodol ar waith. Mae'r ffactorau hynny'n newid bob blwyddyn ac, o ganlyniad, rhaid i unrhyw benderfyniad ynghylch a yw cyllid gwaelodol yn angenrheidiol neu'n ddymunol gael ei gymryd bob blwyddyn gan gymryd amgylchiadau'r flwyddyn honno i ystyriaeth. Mae hyn, ynghyd â'r ffaith nad oes unrhyw ffigurau ar gyfer cyllideb neu setliad wedi'u cyhoeddi ar gyfer y blynyddoedd y tu hwnt i 2017-18, yn golygu na fyddai'n briodol ar hyn o bryd ystyried yr angen am ddarparu cyllid gwaelodol y tu hwnt i 2017-18.

Cyllid o fewn setliad dros dro llywodraeth leol

Mae pob awdurdod lleol yn gorff annibynnol ac atebol yn ddemocrataidd ac yn gyfrifol yn statudol am reoli ei faterion ariannol ei hun.

Mae'r setliad cyffredinol o £4.1 biliwn heb ei neilltuo. Mater i bob awdurdod yw penderfynu sut y mae'n defnyddio'r arian hwn ar y cyd â'r adnoddau eraill sydd ar gael iddo – er enghraifft o'r dreth gyngor, grantiau, a ffioedd a thaliadau – i ddiwallu anghenion a blaenoriaethau lleol.

Mae'n hanfodol bod pob awdurdod yn sicrhau bod ganddo drefniadau cadarn ar gyfer gwaith craffu doeth ar ei gynlluniau gwariant gan aelodau etholedig lleol ac ar gyfer monitro perfformiad yn erbyn y cynlluniau hyn yn barhaus. Rwyf wedi ymrwymo o hyd i weithio gyda llywodraeth leol i gynllunio trefniadau ariannu sy'n cefnogi cyflawni ein canlyniadau a rennir yn y ffordd orau.

Mae gwariant ar wahanol wasanaethau yn cael ei monitro drwy'r wybodaeth am y cyfrif refeniw blynyddol a'r ffurflenni alldro refeniw sy'n cael eu casglu gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Cyhoeddir y data am wariant ar wefan Llywodraeth Cymru.

Mae'r swm ychwanegol o £25 miliwn yn y setliad ar gyfer gofal cymdeithasol yn cydnabod y pwysau neilltuol a wynebir gan y sector. Fel yr ydych yn cydnabod yn eich llythyr, mater i bob awdurdod unigol fydd penderfynu ar y ffordd orau o wario ei gyfran o'r £25 miliwn yn ychwanegol gan gymryd ei amgylchiadau penodol ei hun i ystyriaeth. Mater i'r Gweinidog Iechyd y Cyhoedd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol yw ystyried canlyniadau gofal cymdeithasol.

Arian ychwanegol ar gyfer parcio yng nghanol trefi

Mater i'm cyd-aelodau yn y Cabinet fydd datblygu'r cynllun peilot. Byddwn yn dymuno trafod ein cynigion ar gyfer sut y bwriedir defnyddio'r arian hwn yn cael ei gyda'r awdurdodau lleol a byddwn yn gwneud datganiadau pellach maes o law.

Arian ychwanegol ar gyfer cludiant i'r ysgol

Mae'r cyllid yn cael ei darparu trwy setliad llywodraeth leol er mwyn rhoi cymaint o hyblygrwydd â phosibl i'r awdurdodau i ddefnyddio adnoddau ychwanegol i ddarparu cludiant ysgol.

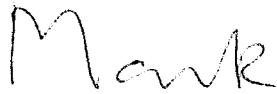
Diwygio Llywodraeth Leol

Rwyf yn hyderus y bydd y £5 miliwn yn BEL Trawsnewid a Deddfwriaeth yn ddigon i gefnogi'r awdurdodau lleol i fwrw ymlaen ag unrhyw waith paratoi sy'n gysylltiedig â diwygio Llywodraeth Leol yn 2017-18 yn ogystal â chefnogi unrhyw awdurdodau sy'n ceisio uno'n wirfoddol. Mae'n bwysig cydnabod, fel pob newid sylweddol, y bydd y broses ddiwygio'n digwydd dros nifer o flynyddoedd. Mae'n hanfodol bod y cyllid yn cael ei ddefnyddio'n effeithiol i gyflwyno'r math o weithgareddau trawsnewidiol y mae eu

hangen ennill eu plwyf a sicrhau ffyrdd newydd o weithio sy'n galluogi Llywodraeth Leol i ddod yn fwy cadarn a chynaliadwy. Mae'r cyllid ar gyfer 2017-18 yn ddigonol i'n galluogi i ddechrau gwneud y newidiadau hynny.

Yn olaf, nodaf eich cais am dystiolaeth fanylach mewn perthynas â lles cenedlaethau'r dyfodol i helpu i graffu ar gyllidebau yn y dyfodol. Mae'r dull sydd wedi'u nodi yn ein Rhaglen Lywodraethu'n braenaru'r ffordd i'r Ddeddf ddod yn rhan annatod o gyllideb a chynlluniau busnes Llywodraeth Cymru.

Yn gywir



Mark Drakeford AC / AC

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid Local Government
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government

Eitem 4.5

Carl Sargeant AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
ELGC(5)-12-16 Papur 7 / Paper 7

John Griffiths AC

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Bae Caerdydd



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

30 Tachwedd 2016

Annwyl John

Diolch ichi am eich llythyr dyddiedig 17 Tachwedd yn gofyn am eglurhad pellach o rai materion yn dilyn cyfarfod y Pwyllgor ar 9 Tachwedd.

Cymunedau yn Gyntaf

Yn fy natganiad ar gymunedau cryf ar 11 Hydref, nodais fy mod yn bwriadu dirwyn Cymunedau yn Gyntaf i ben. Ers hynny rydym wedi dechrau ar raglen eang o ymgysylltu ar y dull newydd o greu cymunedau cryf, gan gynnwys ystyriaeth fanwl o'r effaith ar bobl, cymunedau, adeiladau cymunedol a sefydliadau eraill. Fel rhan o'n proses ymgysylltu, rydym yn gweithio'n agos gyda phartneriaid cyflenwi i feithrin dealltwriaeth o oblygiadau unrhyw benderfyniad.

Bydd y rhaglen ymgysylltu yn darparu tystiolaeth eang i lywio fy mhenderfyniad. Cafwyd cryn ymateb eisoes i "Trafod Cymunedau", ein harolwg ar-lein, ac rydym yn manteisio ar arbenigedd Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru er mwyn sicrhau ein bod yn deall sut y gallai unrhyw newidiadau posibl i'r rhaglen Cymunedau yn Gyntaf effeithio ar sefydliadau'r Trydydd Sector ac unigolion.

Ni allaf ragfynegi canlyniadau'r rhaglen ymgysylltu felly ni allaf roi cyllidebau a chynlluniau cadarn ichi ar hyn o bryd. Byddaf yn gwneud datganiad pellach ym mis Ionawr, neu Chwefror fan bellaf, ar ôl i'r cam ymgysylltu cyntaf ddod i ben yn y Flwyddyn Newydd.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Tudalen y pecyn 50

O fewn fy nghynlluniau ar gyfer 2017-18, mae £34.9m ar gael at ddibenion cymunedol, fel rhan o'r Llinell Wariant yn y Gyllideb (BEL) ar Atal ac Ymyrryd yn Gynnar. Mae'r gyllideb dibenion cymunedol yn cwmpasu Cymunedau yn Gyntaf, Cymunedau am Waith, Esgyn a gweithgareddau eraill sy'n gysylltiedig â chymunedau.

Cymunedau am Waith ac Esgyn

Mae cefnogi ffyniant drwy gynyddu cyflogadwyedd ymysg y rhai sydd bellaf o'r farchnad lafur yn y cymunedau â'r amddifadedd mwyaf yn flaenoriaeth. Cefnogir hyn drwy gyfrwng Rhaglenni Gwaith Esgyn a Cymunedau am Waith. Gyda'i gilydd mae'r rhaglenni hyn yn cefnogi pobl sy'n wynebu rhwystrau sylweddol, ac yn aml rwystrau niferus sy'n eu hatal rhag manteisio ar gyfleoedd hyfforddi neu gyflogaeth; maent yn canolbwyntio'n benodol ar aelwydydd di-waith, y rhai sy'n ddi-waith yn y tymor hir neu'r rhai sy'n economaidd anweithgar. Mae Esgyn yn cael ei chyflwyno mewn 12 o Glystyrau Cymunedau yn Gyntaf ac mae Cymunedau am Waith yn cael ei chyflwyno ym mhob un o'r 52 Clwstwr. Rwyf wedi nodi'n glir fy ymrwymiad i barhau â'r rhaglenni hyn.

Erbyn 31 Hydref, roedd y Rhaglen Esgyn wedi darparu 3,919 o gyfleoedd hyfforddiant a chyflogaeth i bobl o aelwydydd di-waith, gan gynorthwyo 800 o bobl i ddod o hyd i waith. Mae Esgyn yn rhagori ar y disgwyliadau ar hyn o bryd ac ar y trywydd iawn i gyrraedd ei tharged cyffredinol o ddarparu 5,000 o gyfleoedd erbyn diwedd mis Rhagfyr 2017. O fewn y BEL Atal ac Ymyrryd yn Gynnar, mae gennyf gyllid o £1.3 miliwn ar gael yn 2017-18 ar gyfer parhau â'r Rhaglen.

Erbyn 21 Tachwedd, roedd Cymunedau am Waith wedi ymgysylltu â 4,607 o gyfranogwyr, gydag 809 ohonynt wedi cael gwaith. Cafwyd peth oedi i ddechrau o ran gweithredu Cymunedau am Waith ond mae'r anawsterau hyn bellach wedi'u goresgyn. Yn 2017-18 rydym yn disgwyl ymgysylltu ag 11,613 o gyfranogwyr a chefnogi 2,692 i gael gwaith. O fewn y BEL Atal ac Ymyrryd yn Gynnar, mae gennyf gyllid o £5.925 miliwn ar gael yn 2017-18 ar gyfer parhau â'r Rhaglen, a chyllid ychwanegol o £9.847 miliwn o'r UE.

Fe wnaethoch ofyn am ragor o fanylion ar Ardaloedd Plant wrth iddynt ddod i'r amlwg ac rwy'n fodlon darparu rhain wrth i'r cynlluniau ddatblygu.

Adfywio

Mae adfywio'n parhau i fod yn bwysig i'r Llywodraeth hon ac yn ategu gwaith arall gan gynnwys Bargeinion Dinesig, Ardaloedd Twf a Menter, Metros a Thasglu'r Cymoedd. Er bod y gyllideb ddangosol wedi lleihau, rwy'n hyderus y bydd rhaglen adfywio sylweddol yn cael ei chadw. Rydym yn gweithio i sicrhau y bydd yr arian sydd yng Nghronfa Buddsoddi Cymru mewn Adfywio yn cael ei ryddhau cyn gynted ag y bo modd er mwyn cyfrannu tuag at raglen adfywio newydd. Rwyf hefyd yn edrych ar gyfleoedd eraill i ychwanegu at y gyllideb hon cyn cam terfynol y gyllideb.

Diwygio Llesiant

Cyhoeddodd Llywodraeth y DU ym mis Rhagfyr 2015 y byddai'n ystyried rhoi mwy o gyfrifoldeb i awdurdodau lleol yn Lloegr, ac i Lywodraeth Cymru, i gefnogi pobl hŷn ag anghenion gofal - gan gynnwys yn y dyfodol y rhai a fyddai fel arall yn cael eu cefnogi gan y Lwfans Gweini. Mae Llywodraeth y DU wedi ymgynghori ar weithredu ymrwymadau sy'n ymwneud â chynghorau yn Lloegr yn cadw 100% o drethi busnes. Gofynnodd yr ymgynghoriad, a gyhoeddwyd ar 5 Gorffennaf 2016, farn ar amrywiaeth o opsiynau ar gyfer datganoli cyfrifoldebau newydd i lywodraeth leol yn Lloegr, gan gynnwys mwy o gyfrifoldeb am ofalu am bobl hŷn. Daeth yr ymgynghoriad i ben ar 26 Mehefin 2016.

Mae Llywodraeth y DU wedi ymrwymo i weithio'n agos gyda Llywodraeth Cymru i sicrhau bod goblygiadau unrhyw ddiwygiadau i wasanaethau neu gyllidebau gweinyddiaeth ddatganoledig yn cael eu deall yn iawn ac mae wedi datgan y bydd yn ymgynghori ymhellach, mewn da bryd, os bwriedir gwneud newidiadau yn y maes hwn. Rwy'n aros am ohebiaeth bellach gan Lywodraeth y DU ar y mater hwn ar ôl i'r ymgynghoriad ddod i ben.

Cynhwysiant Ariannol

Nid oes unrhyw ddyraniad penodol i gefnogi'r Cynllun Cyflawni gan y bydd ffrydiau cyllido gwahanol yn cyfrannu at ei gyflawni. Bydd y £13.927m cyfan a ddyrannwyd i weithgareddau cynhwysiant ariannol mewn perthynas â Gwasanaethau Cynghori, Cronfa Cymorth Dewisol ac Undebau Credyd yn helpu i gefnogi gweithrediad y Cynllun Cyflawni ar Gynhwysiant Ariannol.

Rhaglen Cyfleusterau Cymunedol

Mae'r Rhaglen Cyfleusterau Cymunedol wedi cyllido prosiectau ledled Cymru; mewn 21 o'r 22 ardal awdurdod lleol. Mae'r Rhaglen wedi dyfarnu grantiau i brosiectau bach a mawr. Ymysg y prosiectau bach mae £31,996 i Gyfeillion Llyfrgell Llanfairfechan yng Nghonwy i helpu'r gymuned i ymgmryd â'r gwaith o redeg y llyfrgell a diogelu ei gwasanaethau a £52,800 i Undeb Credyd Casnewydd tuag at gostau symud i safle gwell gan ei alluogi i ehangu ei wasanaethau hanfodol i fwy o bobl. Ymysg y prosiectau mwy mae £500,000 tuag at adnewyddu ac ymestyn Canolfan Ask y Rhyl sy'n gartref i Gyngor Ar Bopeth Sir Ddinbych, gan sefydlu banc bwyd cymunedol ac ystafell TG sydd â'r nod o wella canlyniadau economaidd i ddefnyddwyr. Dyfarnwyd grant arall o £500,000 i Emmaus De Cymru, elusen o Ben-y-bont ar Ogwr sy'n darparu llety cymunedol, hyfforddiant a lleoliadau gwaith i bobl a arferai fod yn ddigartref er mwyn eu helpu i ailintegreiddio i'w cymunedau.

Nid oes gwerthusiad o'r Rhaglen Cyfleusterau Cymunedol wedi'i gynnal eto gan ei bod yn dal i fod yn eithaf cynnar yn hanes y rhaglen. Fodd bynnag, dangosodd ymweliadau â phrosiectau a gwblhawyd fod y cyfleusterau yn cael defnydd da ac yn gynaliadwy ar gyfer y dyfodol.

O ran effaith y gostyngiad yn y dyraniad cyllid, mae hyn yn syml; bydd y cynllun yn gallu cyllido llai o brosiectau newydd yn y dyfodol. Rwyf eisoes wedi dweud y bydd angen gwneud dewisiadau anodd ac mae hwn yn un ohonynt. Dim ond y ceisiadau gorau a all ddisgwyl cael cyllid gan y Rhaglen Cyfleusterau Cymunedol yn y dyfodol.

Diogelwch Cymunedol

Cyfarfu'r Grŵp Cynghori ar Drais yn erbyn Menywod, Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol ar 9 Tachwedd ac rwyf wedi gofyn i'r aelodau ffurfio grŵp i ymgymryd â gwaith i ddatblygu model cyllido cynaliadwy ar gyfer Cymru. Fel rhan o'r gwaith hwn mae grŵp Trawslywodraethol Llywodraeth Cymru yn cynnal ymarfer i benderfynu ar y lefelau cyllido ar draws meysydd polisi sy'n cyfrannu at gyflawni ymrwymadau'r Ddeddf.

Bydd Rhian Bowen-Davies, y Cynghorydd Cenedlaethol yn arwain y gwaith ar ddatblygu model cyllido cynaliadwy ar gyfer Cymru a fydd yn ystyried y cyllid sy'n dod i Gymru drwy sianelau eraill. Bydd hyn yn cynnwys asesiad o gyllid y Swyddfa Gartref yn ogystal ag arian a ddyrennir drwy Gomisiynwyr yr Heddlu a'r Weinyddiaeth Gyfiawnder.

Mae fy swyddogion yn gweithio i nodi'r ffrydiau cyllido presennol ar gyfer gweithgarwch yng Nghymru. Bydd hyn yn ein helpu i ddeall sut y mae cyllid yn cael ei ddyrannu a lle y gall Llywodraeth Cymru ddylanwadu ar benderfyniadau cyllido yn y DU er mwyn sicrhau bod Cymru yn elwa ar unrhyw fentrau ar gyfer Cymru a Lloegr i gefnogi'r agenda hon.

Rhagwelaf y bydd y gwaith ar y model cyllido cynaliadwy yn cymryd rhai misoedd i'w gwblhau, ac felly rwyf wedi cytuno y gall Awdurdodau Lleol a Byrddau Iechyd yng Nghymru symud i strwythur rhanbarthol o 1 Ebrill 2018 ymlaen. Bydd hyn yn sicrhau y gallwn greu model cyllido ar gyfer Cymru sy'n cyfeirio'r cyllid i'r lle y mae ei angen fwyaf, sy'n cefnogi gwasanaethau i sicrhau eu bod yn gallu darparu gwasanaethau i ddiodefwyr a goroeswyr ac sy'n galluogi gwaith i symud ymlaen mewn perthynas â gweithgarwch atal a gweithio gyda chyflawnwyr i ddechrau torri'r cylch ymddygiad camdriniol. Efen allweddol o hyn fydd darparu addysg perthnasoedd iach mewn ysgolion ac i bobl ifanc a dysgu sut y gallwn gael effaith gadarnhaol i liniaru effaith profiadau niweidiol yn ystod plentyndod.

Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi dadlau ers tro y dylid datganoli cyfiawnder ieuenctid i Gymru. Y system cyfiawnder ieuenctid yw un o'r ychydig feysydd polisi allweddol sy'n ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc sydd heb ei ddatganoli i Gymru. Mae adolygiad Charlie Taylor yn gwneud nifer o argymhellion; ymysg y rhai allweddol mae diddymu'r Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuenctid, gweithredu deddfwriaeth i ddileu'r gofyniad i awdurdodau lleol sefydlu Timau Troseddau Ieuenctid a throsglwyddo dyletswyddau statudol i Awdurdodau Lleol a chreu ysgolion diogel.

Mae gennym eisoes nifer o Dimau Troseddau Ieuencid yng Nghymru sydd wedi'u hintegreiddio â'r Gwasanaeth Ieuencid ac rydym yn cydnabod gwerth a rôl o ddarpariaeth gwaith ieuencid yng Nghymru. Mae gan ddull gweithredu mwy cydgysylltiedig y potensial i gyflwyno effeithlonrwydd a manteision ar draws Awdurdodau Lleol.

Daw cyllid i atal a rhwystro pobl ifanc rhag troseddu ac aildroseddu o'r Is-adran Diogelwch Cymunedol drwy'r llinell gyllido Hyrwyddo Ymgysylltu Cadarnhaol ar gyfer pobl ifanc sydd mewn perygl o droseddu. Cychwynnodd y cyllid hwn yn 2003 (yr enw gwreiddiol arno oedd Cronfa Cymunedau Diogelach ac yna yn 2013 y Gronfa Atal Troseddau Ieuencid) a chytunwyd ar gyllid dangosol ar gyfer 2017-18 yn amodol ar gadarnhau'r dyraniadau cyllideb terfynol ar gyfer 2017-18.

Rhoddir ystyriaeth bellach i'r defnydd o'r llinell gyllido Hyrwyddo Ymgysylltu Cadarnhaol ynghyd â ffrydiau cyllido eraill o fewn Llywodraeth Cymru pan fydd manylion canlyniadau Adolygiad Charlie Taylor ac ymateb Llywodraeth y DU iddo yn hysbys.

Tai Gwledig

Gallaf gadarnhau y bydd dyraniad i gefnogi gwaith Hwyluswyr Tai Gwledig wedi'i gynnwys yn y gyllideb ddrafft drwy'r cyllid refeniw Cartrefi a Lleoedd.

Tai Cynaliadwy

Rwyf hefyd yn ymrwymedig i gefnogi modelau tai cynaliadwy. Mae gwaith ymchwil diweddar a gomisiynwyd gan Ysgol Bensaernïaeth Cymru wedi tynnu sylw at ystod o arferion arloesol yn y maes hwn yr wyf am inni adeiladu arnynt. Ein bwriad yw y dylai 1000 o'r cartrefi fforddiadwy ychwanegol yr ydym wedi'u cynllunio fod yn seiliedig ar dechnegau a modelau newydd.

Mae'r manylion yn dal i gael eu datblygu, ond rwyf am inni annog arloesi ac rwyf am weld mwy fyth o ymroddiad i ddatblygu cartrefi sy'n rhatach i'w rhedeg. Mae dull newydd o ddiwallu anghenion y rhai dan 35 oed, gweithwyr allweddol a'r digartref hefyd yn uchel ar fy agenda.

Bydd cynhadledd yn gynnar y flwyddyn nesaf ar gyfer pawb sy'n ymwneud â datblygu a darparu cartrefi lle byddant yn clywed gan y rhai sydd eisoes yn adeiladu modelau newydd. Bydd fy swyddogion yn gweithio gyda'r sector ar y manylion, ond rwy'n benderfynol y bydd yr arfer presennol yn newid. Mae hwn yn faes lle mae angen inni gymryd golwg llawer mwy hirdymor a herio syniadau ceidwadol a hen ffasiwn.

Cymorth i Brynu

Roedd y rhan fwyaf o'r trafodion yng Nghronfa I y cynllun Cymorth i Brynu - Cymru o dan y pris o £225,000 gyda gweithgaredd y 5 prif ddatblygwr yn 42% yn y categori £125,000 - £175,000 a 30% yn y categori £175,000 - £225,000.

Awgrymodd data a gasglwyd oddi wrth yr un datblygwyr yn ystod y cam dylunio ar gyfer Cronfa II y cynllun, ar sail rhagolygon o weithgaredd, mai dim ond 6% a fyddai'n disgyn y tu allan i'r cap pris presennol o £300,000. Mae'r ystadegau swyddogol diweddaraf a gyhoeddwyd yn parhau i ddangos bod y galw mwyaf yn y categori £150,000 - £175,000, sef 23.1% o'r holl werthiannau.

Nodir cyfanswm y pryniannau a gwblhawyd isod.

Cyfanswm Nifer y Pryniannau a Gwblhawyd hyd 31 Hydref 2016, yn ôl Eiddo

Pris Prynu	Rhifau/Canran	
	Nifer cronus y pryniannau a gwblhawyd yn gyfreithiol	Canran cyfanswm y pryniannau a gwblhawyd yn gyfreithiol
£50,000 - £100,000	61	1.5
£100,001 - £125,000	340	8.1
£125,001 - £150,000	714	17.1
£150,001 - £175,000	966	23.1
£175,001 - £200,000	853	20.4
£200,001 - £225,000	446	10.7
£225,001 - £250,000	422	10.1
£250,001 - £300,000	378	9.0
Cyfanswm	4,180	100.0

Ffynhonnell: Help to Buy (Wales) Cyf

Mae cap o £300,000 yn caniatáu prynu eiddo uwchlaw'r pris prynu cyfartalog diweddaraf (2015) ar gyfer tŷ newydd o £201,000. Mae hyn yn rhoi hyblygrwydd i'r cynllun barhau i adlewyrchu unrhyw gynnydd ym mhris prynu cyfartalog tŷ newydd. Mae ganddo ddigon o botensial i ddarparu'r ysgogiad economaidd sy'n ofynnol, mae'n bodloni'r amcanion strategol o gynyddu'r cyflenwad (heb ystumio'r farchnad), a bydd yn helpu i sicrhau bod y farchnad dai yng Nghymru yn parhau i fod yn gystadleuol. Mae'r cap wedi cael ei ddefnyddio'n llwyddiannus hyd yma ac mae ein rhanddeiliaid allweddol yn credu mai dyma'r lefel fwyaf priodol ar gyfer y farchnad yng Nghymru.

Ar hyn o bryd rwy'n fodlon bod y trothwy hwn yn adlewyrchu amcanion cynllun Cymorth i Brynu - Cymru ac yn cefnogi pobl sy'n ceisio prynu eiddo yn unol â'r bwriad gwreiddiol.

Os bydd prisiau tai yn parhau i godi, gallai'r cap hwn ddechrau eithrio rhan fawr o'r farchnad tai newydd yng Nghymru, heb ystyried y math o dŷ. Fel arall os defnyddir y cyllid sydd ar gael drwy Gam II y cynllun yn gyflymach nag a ragwelwyd gellid lleihau'r cap er mwyn rheoli neu gyfyngu buddsoddiad. Felly, nid wyf yn cynnig unrhyw newidiadau i'r cap ar hyn o bryd. Fodd bynnag, mae fy swyddogion yn gyfrifol am fonitro perfformiad y cynllun yn barhaus a byddaf yn adolygu'r cap pris yn flynyddol i sicrhau bod y cynllun yn parhau i fod yn berthnasol wrth i amodau'r farchnad newid.

Rhentu i Brynu

Bydd Grŵp Llywio yn cael ei sefydlu yn gynnar yn 2017 i oruchwylio datblygiad y Cynllun Rhentu i Brynu. Bydd y cynllun ar gael i bobl sy'n anelu at brynu cartref ond heb flaendal ar y cychwyn. Byddwn yn ymgysylltu'n helaeth â rhanddeiliaid ar fanylion y cynllun hwn a byddai'n bleser gennyf roi rhagor o wybodaeth i'r Pwyllgor maes o law.

Byw'n Annibynnol

Rydym wedi gweithio'n agos gyda phartneriaid cyflawni, gan gynnwys awdurdodau lleol, cymdeithasau tai ac asiantaethau Gofal a Thrwsio, i wella'r ffordd y caiff addasiadau eu cyflawni a'u monitro. Rydym wedi datblygu ac yn bwriadu cyflwyno dull safonol o fonitro ac adrodd ar yr holl addasiadau, nid dim ond y Grantiau Cyfleusterau i'r Anabl yn unig. Mae offeryn casglu data wedi cael ei dreialu yn ystod y broses ddatblygu. Rydym wedi cytuno gyda phartneriaid i ba raddau y gall data gael ei gasglu a'i gyflwyno eleni (2016-17). Bydd hyn yn sail i waith monitro llawn yn ystod 2017-18. Byddwn yn defnyddio'r data a gasglwyd eleni i asesu a oes angen rhagor o fireinio yn ystod 2017-18, gan gynnwys a ddylid pennu amserlenni targed penodol ar gyfer cyflwyno'r tri dosbarth o addasiadau - bach, canolig a mawr.

Yn gywir



Carl Sargeant AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Visit to the African Community Centre, Swansea

17 November 2016

*Please note the participants were service users from the African Community Centre in Swansea and also Swansea City of Sanctuary

- Joyce Watson AM and Bethan Jenkins AM were present from the Committee
- There were approximately 25 service users present along with their children
- There were also staff representatives from the African Community Centre and Swansea City of Sanctuary

The main problems for refugees and asylum seekers

- **Application forms** not being passed on correctly between areas – one participant within the group said that his case started in Croydon, he is now in Swansea and information has been lost with the move. There is also a **lack of Communication between departments**.
- Many participants noted the need to **encourage** more refugees and asylum seekers to **learn English** to a good standard in order to be able to work in different places, when visiting the doctor, when opening a bank account (to be able to read the terms and conditions for example)
- Home Office **do not accept email applications** – they must be in paper form so need to be posted or faxed over. Asylum seekers find this expensive as they have to pay for the postage. If they used email format there would be no problem.
- If an asylum seeker is starting an application from scratch they have to go to the office in Liverpool. When living in Swansea its far to travel and also expensive – they are reimbursed, but still pointed out that it is expensive and why can they not go to an office closer to Swansea.
- **Transportation** – a lot of asylum seekers are housed on the outskirts of Swansea therefore need to use public transport to enter the city to do things

like shopping and visit the doctor. This becomes expensive especially when a whole family needs to use public transport more than once a week.

- Some reiterated that transport is one of the **biggest problems**.
- Hospitals will reimburse asylum seekers their travel expenses if they are attending a check-up or an appointment which has been arranged beforehand. They will not reimburse if you attend the hospital in an emergency.
- It was pointed out that this was not a known piece of information – lack of communication and information sharing meaning that they were not aware of this, resulting in them not being able to plan financially around this.
- It becomes more expensive when a child reaches 16 years of age as they then have to pay adult prices.
- **Post office** – asylum seekers must go to the post office to receive their money, it has to be the post office in the middle of Swansea, they cannot do this in sub post offices which is causing a problem as they then have to spend money on public transport to get into Swansea.
- Some noted that post office staff are not very friendly and are quite judgemental.
- **Section 4** – if an asylum seeker is placed on section 4 then they can only pay for goods with an Azure payment card, they cannot withdraw cash – cannot pay for the barbers (they only take cash) cannot pay for bus tickets as they also want cash.
- Asylum seekers in section 4 find themselves having to ask friends and neighbours for cash to see them through.
- Can't shop in cheaper stores such as Aldi or Lidl as they won't take their cards, which means they have to shop for food in the more expensive supermarkets.
- Section 4 also means they cannot get medical or dental treatment.
- **Housing** – a lot of asylum seekers are housed by Clear Springs Housing which is controlled by the Home Office.
- They have housing managers that they can call if they have a problem with their housing – these are not very helpful and can be judgemental. Asylum seekers do not know who else they can turn to for help.



- Many of the participants said that they are lucky as they access advice and help in community centres such as the African Community Centre and through Swansea City of Sanctuary, they also have friends and good neighbours, but there were concerns for those who do not know these services exist. Where do they go for help?
- A lot of issues around cleanliness and state of carpets and sofas in these houses.
- Some saying that they were frightened to put their children down on the carpets.
- Others say that their children have had health problems because of the state of sofas and carpets.
- Having to wait a long time for the smallest of problems to be sorted by housing managers/home office.
- Mention of TV licensing being expensive for them – £24 a month.
- Heating – some houses have heating set with automatic timers that they cannot change.
- **Interpreters** – are very costly for organisations who help to arrange these. They find they don't really have the funding to help with this.
- In schools, schools help to provide this for children.
- **Children's extra-curricular activities** – some participants noted that they don't get help from school to pay for things like school trips, Xmas dinner and school uniforms. Others noted that their schools let them pay for things in instalments.
- An issue with activities being in the middle of Swansea, nothing available for families on the outskirts where they live – the transport issue is then risen again.

Access to information and advice

- As already explained the participants said that they were very grateful for the information and advice they receive from the African Community Centre and Swansea City of Sanctuary.
- There was also a representative who volunteers in a drop in centre on Fridays and Saturdays where they primarily welcome asylum seekers and provide them with information and advice.



- The Welsh Refugee Council / The Red Cross used to do this but they had their funding taken away from them – following this the asylum seekers were given a helpline telephone number for Migrant Help in Cardiff but often the telephone number doesn't work or no one answers.
- Provided us with a list of issues that asylum seekers need signposting to.

Integrating into new communities

- General feeling that the people of Swansea are very welcoming and very helpful. Some said they don't experience discrimination as they did in other places in the UK.
- Mention of one discriminatory incident following Brexit vote.
- Some people can be judgemental, for instance in the post office or in the supermarket, but all in all, general individuals are very helpful and welcoming.

Finding work

- Is not easy for those who are able to work to get work.
- Some companies treat those that are able to work, better than others.
- There's not a lot of help available to help them find work, other than the support they get from the African Community Centre and Swansea City of Sanctuary.

Final word from the group was that they are very grateful to the African Community Centre and Swansea City of Sanctuary for their help and support. They also noted that they would like more refugees and asylum seekers to move to Swansea because of the help and support available and because so many people are nice to them.



Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Visits to the Oasis Centre and Trinity Centre, Cardiff

17 November 2016

Members:

Gareth Bennett AM

Siân Gwenllian AM

Rhianon Passmore AM

Jenny Rathbone AM

Participants:

Oasis project workers/officers

Migrant Help UK officers

Space4U workers

Social work student

Trinity Centre co-ordinator

Welsh Refugee Council

Oasis

The Oasis Centre is a registered charity and has a mixture of volunteer and paid workers. Its service users are refugees and asylum seekers.

Challenges facing service users

- Project workers emphasised that refugees and asylum seekers face several barriers to successful integration into the community. One of the main perceived barriers is a **lack of advocacy** from when an asylum seeker or refugee first arrives at the dispersal centre.
- Interpretation is often unavailable making it difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to go through **necessary processes and paperwork** such as applying for job seekers' allowance, joining a GP surgery, attending appointments and applying for housing.



- Project workers noted that another barrier to the successful integration of asylum seekers and refugees are the **cultural differences** between their country of origin and Wales, meaning that they misunderstand everyday systems and services such as GP surgeries, job centres, police, refuse and recycling.
- These barriers can result in **sanctions** (e.g. for not providing the correct paperwork or for littering in the street) which can then be **detrimental to the individual's confidence and lessen the likelihood of successful integration into the community**.
- The project workers noted that service users often have **mental health problems** as a result of traumas experienced in their countries of origin. The problems **often go untreated** due to failure to integrate into the community, and their needs tend to increase as time goes on.
- It was noted that an additional main issue for asylum seekers and refugees is **housing and accommodation**. The project workers told Members that the majority of their service users have been **homeless** at one point during their time in the UK, usually after they have been moved from their initial accommodation upon arrival.
- Single male asylum seekers and refugees are often placed in hostels alongside individuals suffering with substance abuse problems. Project workers noted that **hostel staff are not trained or equipped to assist individuals who have suffered the type of trauma that refugees and asylum seekers have experienced**. It was noted that few private renting landlords will accept tenants who receive Job Seekers' Allowance, meaning there are very limited options for accommodation for Oasis' service users.

Services provided by Oasis:

- The majority of service users find Oasis via word of mouth or from signposting by other charities. One example was given of the project being



found on Twitter. It was noted that other charities use the facilities at Oasis as part of their work, such as Migrant Help UK.

- Both charities emphasised that they are **constrained by capacity and funding**. Oasis' capacity means that workers often only have direct access to newly arrived refugee and asylum seekers. Access to individuals who are settled in the community relies on referrals from other services.
- In response to a Member, workers noted that **the project is unable to support all service users** with processes and paperwork **due to the volume of people who drop in to the centre** on a daily basis. One Member queried whether service users who have lived in Cardiff for a longer period could assist with advocating newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers, and although project workers noted that properly structured "befriending" schemes can be beneficial, all service users could be vulnerable, regardless of the length of time they have been living in Cardiff, and so they are not a straightforward solution.
- Volunteers at the project work with newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers, undertaking volunteer activities such as painting and decorating at not for profit and third sector organisations. The aim of such activities is to assist with English language skills and integration. The project workers emphasised the **importance of giving service users the opportunity to practice the English language in an informal, practical setting, to help build confidence**.
- The project runs voluntary, drop-in English classes every day, which are of a mixed ability-level and age group. Lessons are structured by key themes including cultural topics in order to assist with service users' knowledge of/access to everyday services and information, but otherwise they are predominantly student-lead. It was noted that service users are given the opportunity to ask questions, to ensure lessons appear **accessible, interesting and exciting, whilst providing a safe environment**. The classes



also encourage peer-to-peer learning for the service users to share their knowledge and skills with others.

- The classes aim to assist with refugees and asylum seekers' integration into their communities, as the **main barrier for employment is language**. The project workers noted that there is a shortage of English language class provisions in Cardiff, and that it is only possible to apply for colleges such as Cardiff and the Vale ahead of the new term in September, meaning that refugee and asylum seekers could have stayed in Cardiff for up to a year before being able to apply.

Young service users

- The project's service users include unaccompanied minors who are usually placed with foster families after arrival. The project **encourages a family atmosphere** so that children begin to feel accountable to the staff, who are then more able to encourage them into education or to attend the centre's English classes.
- It was noted that child service users are often wary of social services and reluctant to attend school, and **project workers have been successful in encouraging them** to attend school and further education.

Recent resettlement of Syrian refugees

- Project workers do not have direct experience of the recent funded resettlement scheme, in which Syrians arrived with refugee status and were provided with a "family development package" including a support worker, specific programmes and classes.
- Project workers suggested that the resettlement scheme has **demonstrated good practice** and that the services available to the refugees on the scheme should be accessible to all refugees and asylum seekers in the community. They also suggested that all refugees and asylum seekers, including those recently arrived from Syria, should be integrated together in the community, to provide a common ground.



The Trinity Centre

Services provided at the centre

- Charities such as Space4U have their base at the centre. Space4U provides a **safe environment with recreational activities, English classes, and meeting basic needs for people in the community to access**. They run on a voluntary basis and are open two afternoons a week, with up to 200 drop in's per afternoon. They provide support to asylum seekers and refugees at different stages, for example letter reading, making appointments. They also provide a mum and toddler group.
- Space4U's service users include refugees and asylum seekers who are homeless, and whom have very few other places that they can be referred to.

Housing and homelessness

- Similar to Oasis, workers at the Trinity Centre find that **housing is one of the main barriers to refugee and asylum seekers' successful integration in the community**. It was noted that once refugee status has been granted, individuals have 21 days to find somewhere to stay, which can be delayed by waiting for National Insurance numbers, having to find money for a deposit and agency fees, as well as landlords' refusal to accept tenants claiming JSA.

Applications for refugee status

- If Asylum Seekers' applications for refugee status are unsuccessful, they will then have **no access to public funds and become destitute** whilst waiting to re-apply. It was noted that many individuals are in this situation, at which point the ways in which the charities based at the centre can help is limited. It was noted that the timeframe for addressing asylum seeker claims has reduced, from approximately four years to 12-18 months.
- If an application is successful and refugee status is granted, it was noted that some individuals will face further difficulties as they no longer have the initial accommodation provided following dispersal. The centre's workers estimated that **once refugee status is granted, it takes between three and six months**



for individuals to go through the basic processes such as housing applications and job centres.

Difficulties facing the service providers

- It was noted that the “consortium bid” for services to refugees and asylum seekers which is funded by the Welsh Government **could be making it difficult for smaller organisations** (such as those running out of the Trinity Centre) to tender for such bids.
- The co-ordinator for the Trinity Centre noted that the framework of services that are within the criteria means that **locally generated initiatives can be overlooked**, but it is often these organisations who the service users have become accustomed to.
- It was suggested that it would be useful for the Welsh Government to carry out an **audit of the volunteers** who work with refugees and asylum seekers, to map the pattern of all services that are available and establish which organisations are actually working with refugees and asylum seekers on the ground.

Longer term integration of refugees and asylum seekers

- The centre’s workers expressed concern around the longer term integration of refugees and asylum seekers in communities, and suggested that a **change of perception within the local people is needed**. It was noted that the majority of jobs for asylum seekers and refugees tend to be stereotypical roles such as working in restaurants, car washes and as taxi drivers. It was noted that these roles do not make the most of the skills held by many refugees and asylum seekers, but there are no affordable conversion courses available to help continue professions from their countries of origin.
- It was noted that of the asylum seekers who are dispersed to Wales and then granted refugee status, only a small number stay long term. The majority move to larger cities due to more perceived opportunities for jobs.



- The **cuts to local government services are affecting the most vulnerable including asylum seekers and refugees**, as they affect access to services they need such as libraries and Citizen's Advice Bureau representatives. It was suggested that strengthening local government services and increasing funding to the third sector could improve this.
- It was noted that centre workers have noticed an **increase in incidences of racial abuse** reported by their service users. One centre worker noted that it appears as if racial prejudice has become more acceptable in communities in recent months. It was suggested that one issue is ratios of contact, as only a small number of people in communities have regular contact with a large number of refugees and asylum seekers.



Eitem 8

Yn rhinwedd paragraff(au) vi o Reol Sefydlog 17.42

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon

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