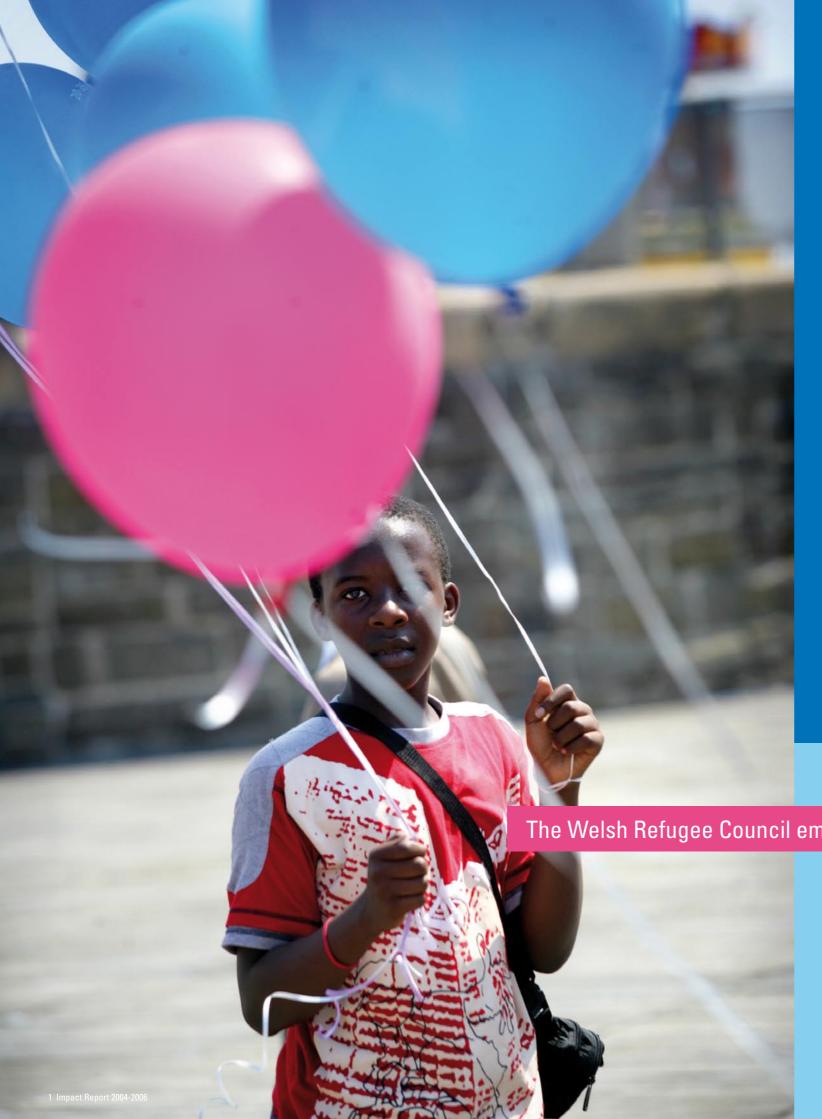


Impact Report 2004-2006

Empowering refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales





Introduction

On behalf of the trustees, I am proud to present this Impact Report, which demonstrates the work done by the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) over the past two years.

Inside these pages, you will find examples of the volume and diversity of work carried out by our dedicated team of staff, trustees and volunteers. It is inspiring to read about the organisation's commitment to its mission: empowering refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives.

The past two years have been a challenging time for those working with refugees and asylum seekers. Hysteria generated by the tabloid press has created an environment of hostility and fear, and the issues surrounding asylum have been increasingly confused with other frequently-covered issues such terrorism and economic migrants.

WRC has taken huge steps in educating people about the reality of life for refugees living in Wales today. Asylum seekers and refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in our communities — they have escaped oppression and persecution, leaving their homes, friends and families to find themselves in an often unwelcoming environment, having to deal with a foreign language and culture.

The grass roots work of WRC sorts the myths from the facts and empowers refugees to create new lives in Wales. Since 2004, our team of staff has grown significantly, as have the services that we provide. We continue to develop and improve our range of support services and lobby the UK and Welsh Assembly governments to consider the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

We will build on these successes in 2007 and beyond to achieve our mission: empowering refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales. Working with our partner organisations, voluntary and community groups, we will campaign for a better deal for refugees, so that everyone who comes to Wales seeking asylum can live in safety, security and freedom.

I would like to thank all the people who are involved in our work – staff, volunteers, trustees and partners – and congratulate everyone on the developments and achievements of the past two years.



Rev Aled Edwards
Chair of Trustees, 2005-2006

Mission and Values

The Welsh Refugee Council empowers refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives in Wales.

The Welsh Refugee Council wi

- Remain independent and accountable
- Treat everyone with equality, respect and empath
- Ensure that the voices of refugees and asylum seekers are heard throughout our organisation
- Work in partnerships which are beneficial to refugees and asylum seekers
- Promote the rich diversity that refugees and asylum seekers bring to the UK, and campaigr to uphold their rights
- Continually strive to improve and always a with honesty, transparency and integrity

Trustees

Amira Bakhiet
Rev Aled Edwards (Ch
Aled Eirug
Anne Hubbard
Taha Idris (2004-2005)
Mike Lewis
Ian Milton
Farida Mohamed
Themba Moyo
Prof Terry Threadgold
Eleanor White

Help and Advice

Our teams of caseworkers in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham provide practical advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees.

Through the one stop service, we provide comprehensive advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees in the four dispersal areas in Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. With local knowledge and links with other organisations in the areas, each office gives advice that is specific to the needs of clients in those cities.

Over the past two years, our one stop service has been expanded in all four offices. We have more staff, and are able to deal with more clients about more issues, offering an effective service to asylum seekers and refugees across Wales.

Three of our four offices now have a dedicated 'Move On' caseworker, specifically to help refugees whose applications for asylum have been approved. The caseworkers can offer practical help and advice to these clients after their NASS support has been withdrawn.

As staff and client numbers have grown, our building space has increased too. Our Newport, Swansea and Wrexham teams have all relocated to bigger premises.

WRC negotiates with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) on behalf of asylum seekers and gives advice on the support that is available to them.

until they have been assessed by NASS. For those who have just

arrived in Wales, we provide full advice sessions to help them understand the asylum process, health care, housing, social care and rights to education, training and employment.

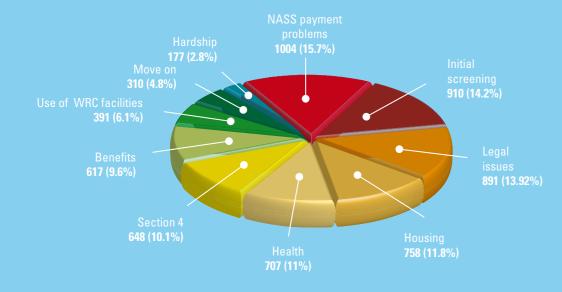
We also help when people are facing problems, such as racial harassment, domestic violence and destitution. Established in 2003, the Hardship Fund relies on charitable donations. In total, we have raised over £20,000 for the fund since it was established, giving cash payments to people in need. With support from local churches and other organisations, we are also able to provide food parcels to destitute asylum seekers.

Although we do not provide legal advice, we can refer clients to solicitors and other organisations that can help them with their asylum claim and legal issues.

We try to ensure that everyone gets access to our services. For refugees with limited or no English language skills, we provide a face-to-face interpreter service. On the occasions where this is not possible, we use the telephone interpretation service Language Line, so everyone is able to get the advice that they need.

A review of Inter-Agency Partnership One-Stop Services from April to June 2006 found that Wales (solely served by WRC) provided We provide initial accommodation for newly-arrived asylum seekers 6,482 general advice sessions, 2,619 move on advice sessions and 2,223 volunteering opportunities.

Top 10 areas that we advise clients on





Building a New Life

Finding asylum is just the first step in the long process that refugees face in rebuilding their lives. WRC works to empower asylum seekers and refugees to build their new lives in Wales, with access to housing, health care, training and employment.

Finding a home

Everyone should have a home where they feel safe and secure. The Refugee Housing Development Project is funded by the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT).

The Housing Development Officer provides a link between Refugee Community groups and housing providers. We work in partnership with providers - such as homelessness units, local authority housing departments, Shelter and Housing Associations - to ensure that refugees have access to mainstream housing services within the limit of 28 days following the approval of their asylum application. We run awareness-raising sessions about asylum seekers and refugees for housing providers in the dispersal areas.

We also work with refugee communities to provide advice and training on housing issues. With funding from HACT and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, WRC organised a six-day course for representatives from 19 refugee community groups in Wales. The course, which ran in January 2006, covered issues such as housing benefit, housing associations, private sector accommodation and domestic violence.

We are also working towards influencing housing policy in Wales. WRC is represented on the Welsh Assembly Government's Refugee Housing Group and BME Action Plan, as well as playing an active role in the all-Wales lobby group, Housing Forum Cymru. We regularly attend multi-agency forums in Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham.

Working alongside Professor Vaughan Robinson from University of Wales Swansea, we coordinated a research project into good practice in refugee housing (called Mapping the Field), which will be launched at the end of 2006.

Keeping healthy

The Refugee Good Health Project, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, ran for four years and ended in June 2006. Its aim was needs of the groups, plus the support services that are currently to tackle personal and structural barriers to healthcare and foster good practice in health for refugees and asylum seekers.

It helped healthcare professionals to understand refugees and their needs, and refugees to understand the healthcare system. The project led to multi-agency work in Wales and nationally, leading to the first health care conference dedicated to refugees and

As well as providing an advocacy service between clients and healthcare professionals, the Health Development and Advocacy Officer also worked on policy and development as a member of the Women's National Commission, and the Welsh Asylum Seeker & Refugee Health Advisory Group (WASRHAG).

The Health Development and Advocacy Officer received training from the Family Planning Clinic, and a monthly sexual health session was established at the Cardiff and Newport offices. Two days of health awareness took place at the Cardiff office, in conjunction with Terrence Higgins Trust and MEWN Cymru.

We have also worked with the Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales (BVSNW) to provide information on FGM to refugee community groups.

Along with All Wales Black & Minority Ethnic Mental Health Group (AWETU), we have been engaged with the Sainsbury Centre for research into mental health for BME groups and are working together to raise awareness on the lack of provision and to improve A new project, Healthy Minds at Work, will look at the mental health of refugees and members of BME communities working in Wales. The project aims to identify and assess the mental health available. Its aim is to identify 'best practice' and the findings will be fed into a larger, consultant-led future project. The leading agency of the project

Getting into work

We work in close partnership with Careers

Wales to provide information and advice on education, training and employment for people at all stages in the asylum process. A secondee from Careers Wales (Cardiff and the Vale) is based in WRC's Cardiff office for three days a week, providing an advice and advocacy service to clients.

WRC is one of 15 core partners that form the Curiad Calon Cymru Development Partnership. Part-funded by the European Social Fund's Community Initiative Equal Project, the project aims to improve job prospects for BME and European economic migrants by supporting employment, training and enterprise.

As well as tackling commonly-cited barriers, such as language, racism and xenophobia, our Equal project team are taking innovative approaches to tackle problems relating specifically

Elements of the project will include getting recognition for overseas qualifications, providing accreditation courses for volunteers, 'upskilling' those with existing skills or qualifications, and helping refugees get experience of British work ethics through placements.



Developing Communities

We help refugees to develop their own groups and integrate into the wider community – a vital part of the integration process.

> There are currently an estimated 8,000-10,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Wales, represented by approximately 31 Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)

There are many barriers and challenges to the effective inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We believe in addressing these barriers by empowering RCOs to be part of the solution.

We provide office space and facilities for RCOs, enabling groups to spend time on community development work without having to struggle for resources. There is also a conference room and drop-in centre available to RCOs.

Using expertise from within WRC, we continue to support and advise existing and emerging RCOs on issues such as governance and management, business and strategic planning, financial management, fundraising and partnerships.

If we can't help an RCO with something, we refer them to relevant training sessions provided by other agencies such as Voluntary Action Cardiff, CEMVO, WCVA, Ethnic Minority Business Programme and Cardiff University's Lifelong Learning Department.

Alongside Refugee Voice Wales, we have organised a series of information and induction sessions on financial and project management, delivered by CAP Research and Consulting Ltd. From November 2006, RCOs will be trained on public finance and project management on a distance leaning basis.

Refugee Voice Wales is an umbrella group of RCOs. We have actively supported its development, alongside other agencies such as Displaced People in Action (DPIA), Oxfam and the Welsh Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (WCRAS)

Membership of Refugee Voice Wales is driven by refugee-led community organisations. It plays an active role in promoting the integration of refugees in Wales by enabling the collective voice of RCOs to influence policy, decision making and delivery of mainstream services. Refugee Voice Wales is leading the consultation process of the Welsh Assembly Government's draft Refugee Inclusion Strategy for the refugee community, and aims to be represented on various sub-groups of the forum such as housing, health, employment and education. It is also planning to deliver a proactive and innovative consultation exercise with refugees during this consultation period.

For the past two years, most of Refugee Voice Wales' work has been done by volunteers from RCOs. Since December 2005, the organisation has employed a part-time Coordinator, part-funded by WRC (with Oxfam to June 2006 and with WCRAS from July 2006) The Coordinator is managed and mentored by WRC, and is based in a dedicated space in our Cardiff office. Refugee Voice Wales is scheduled to officially launch its activities at the end of 2006.

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Working Together

Working with colleagues from other organisations is essential to the work that we do.

Throughout this report, there are examples of the work that we do in collaboration with other agencies and organisations. Establishing, building and maintaining these partnerships are vital to our ability to deliver better services to asylum seekers and refugees.

We work with the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), a pan-European network of refugee NGOs that promotes a humane and generous asylum policy.

On a UK-level, we are an active member of the Inter-Agency Partnership (IAP). The IAP consists of six agencies: Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Migrant Helpline, Refugee Arrivals Project, Scottish Refugee Council and Welsh Refugee Council. By working in partnership and sharing ideas, information and best practice, the IAP aims to achieve the best support for clients.

In Wales, we are part of the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum, chaired by the Assembly's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, Edwina Hart AM. An important vehicle for policy change in Wales, it aims to ensure that devolved policy takes full account of refugees in our communities. We are also part of the

multi-agency Welsh Local Authorities Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

As well as partnerships on a Wales and UK level, local networks and groups are essential to our work. In Cardiff, we have established close working links with the Welsh branches of charities such as Oxfam, Amnesty and Save the Children.

In Newport, we work with the police, the health authority's asylum nurse and the council's Community Development Officer. We also work in partnership with other voluntary organisations, such as Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) and the South East Wales Racial Equality Council (SEWREC).

In Swansea, our staff attend multi-agency meetings with the local authority. They also work closely with the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group and Asylum Justice, a newly-established voluntary organisation that gives legal advice to asylum seekers.

The Wrexham office are actively involved in the Wrexham Refugee Asylum Seekers Support Group (WRASSG), and work alongside voluntary organisations and statutory bodies such as the Red Cross, MIND and the Community Drugs and Alcohol Service (CDAS).

Including Refugees

Our work is about refugees, but refugees also play a vital role in our organisation too.

Refugees play an important part in our work at all levels. Our team has increased significantly over the past two years and we now have many members of staff from refugee backgrounds, adding cultural diversity to the organisation and representing the communities that we work with.

Getting refugees involved at board level ensures that refugees have input into the strategic direction and governance of Welsh Refugee Council.

We also run a successful volunteering project, placing volunteers within WRC and other organisations. Within our offices, refugee volunteers help with everything from reception duties to translation and interpretation. The time and expertise given by volunteers of all ages, nationalities and backgrounds is an enormous asset to our work. Their first-hand knowledge and experience is invaluable to our service provision.

Volunteering provides vital work experience, enhancing the employability of refugees and often leading to full-time work. Those who have recently arrived in Wales can feel isolated and unsure of their role within the community. Volunteering as part of a team gives individuals a sense of purpose and belonging.

A volunteering information day took place in October 2006, explaining the benefits, opportunities and support that we offer to volunteers. We also recruited 36 refugee volunteers to take part in an accredited training course in conjunction with Lampeter University. The first cohort of volunteers will start the course at the end of the year.

Celebrating Diversity

We are committed to celebrating the rich cultural diversity that refugees bring to our communities in Wales.

We have collaborated with artists and arts organisations on a variety of projects that promote positive images of asylum seekers and refugees. A Social and Cultural Support Worker post was created in 2004 to develop this work.

We worked with Artworks Wales/Cywaith Cymru (www. cywaithcymru.org) on a project to create visual art by asylum seekers and refugees, and with photojournalist Lottie Davies (www.lottiedavies.com) on her series of portraits of asylum

WRC was involved in STAR Radio (www.starradio.org.uk), a broadcasting project in the area in which our Cardiff office is based. We did a live broadcast with the Cardiff Kurdish Association and worked with artist Stefhan Caddick on his programme, A Rose and Fields and the Birds, which featured letters being read by members

We worked with refugees to produce a series of two-minute digital photo stories for The Scarman Trust's Digital Storytelling project (www.thescarmantrust.org).

We have also worked with two theatre companies. We supported Theatre lolo on their production of Warrior Square, a play about a brother and sister seeking asylum in Britain, which toured schools in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan in 2006.

We were also involved in Small World Theatre's Diogel?/Safe? (www.smallworld.org.uk), another drama-based production that was toured around schools across Wales and was performed at the Welsh Assembly during Refugee Week in 2005.



Refugee Week Wales

Refugee Week Wales has continued to grow and develop every year, with arts, cultural and educational activities taking place throughout the country.

Refugee Week Wales is supported by the Refugee Week Wales Coordinator, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and based at WRC, plus a Steering Group of representatives from other agencies. Events are organised and hosted by refugee community groups, voluntary and statutory organisations, schools and universities, and

Activities have ranged from Wales' first Africando club night in Newport to free public theatre performances in Wrexham and a two-day spectacular of seminars, art and music at the newly-opened Wales, and attracted over 1000 entries this year National Waterfront Museum in Swansea.

Highlights from 2005 and 2006 included Celebrating Sanctuary, a one-day festival in Cardiff Bay to launch Refugee Week, featuring everything from live performances by refugee bands to drumming and dance workshops. Approximately 5000 people attended the

An annual Refugee World Cup has also been established, with over 130 players in teams from Cardiff, Newport and Swansea battling it out to win the coveted Refugee Week Wales Trophy. The success and popularity of the event mean that plans are now underway to develop a long-term football project.

An artwork competition for schools was also a huge success in both 2005 and 2006. Funded by Save the Children, the competition to design a poster for Refugee Week was open to every school in



Speaking Out

Promoting refugee rights and empowering refugees and asylum seekers to speak out directly is one of our key objectives.

In the last two years, we have engaged in numerous projects relating to policy, campaigning and communications. In 2006, the Policy and Communications team was established. There are now three members of staff dedicated to work in this area, reflecting the important role that it has within the organisation.

Campaigning

Asylum was a major campaign issue for all the main political parties during the 2005 General Election, with many sensational or fictitious statements being aired during the campaign. To clarify the facts from the fiction, we produced a 'Myths and Facts' booklet about asylum, which was distributed to politicians, the media and the public.

We worked alongside the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Scottish Refugee Council, Refugee Arrivals Project and Migrant Helpline on a report into the impact of Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This enables the Home Office to deny support to asylum seekers who fail to claim asylum within three days of arriving in the UK and leaves many without food and shelter. The Inter-Agency Partnership (IAP) recommended that the Government repeal Section 55, citing evidence from the report that showed the policy was causing unnecessary distress to newly-arrived asylum seekers.

We were also part of the national No Place for a Child campaign, which urged the UK Government to stop detaining children as part of the immigration process.

Influencing policy

We have continued to work in partnership with a variety of organisations to advocate for our clients at key decision-making forums on refugee and asylum issues at local, all-Wales and IIK levels

In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government announced it would develop a Refugee Inclusion Strategy for Wales. We have advised the Assembly Government on the development of the strategy, highlighting the need for the input of refugees and asylum seekers to be at the heart of the strategy's development. We also co-ordinated input from staff, volunteers, members, partner organisations and stakeholders to provide an evidence base.

We are now working with Refugee Voice Wales to support refugees and asylum seekers to get their voices heard through the consultation process for the draft inclusion strategy, which was published in November 2006. We will continue to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to push for effective delivery of the strategy.

Working with the media

The media plays an important role in shaping our attitudes. Negative images of asylum seekers and refugees in the press have influenced public opinion towards these vulnerable groups.

We challenge such coverage by promoting positive images of refugees through the media and helping refugees and asylum seekers to get their voices heard in the press.

We played an active role in the Refugee Media Group in Wales, a multi-agency group that worked collaboratively with the media to improve asylum reporting in Wales. The group produced 'Let's talk to the media', a printed practical guide to working with the media for Refugee Community Organisations and refugee practitioners.



Looking Forward

This report is a testament to people: the courageous people we are privileged to work with following their flight from persecution; the extraordinary commitment of staff, volunteers, and trustees who are at the core of our work; and our partners, stakeholders, and friends who provide the networks and support for us to achieve impact.

As an organisation we are continuing to move forward. An intensive strategic planning process took place during 2006 and will continue into 2007. This process will develop our staff, our funding and our organisation to provide strategic leadership and high quality services for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

The key campaign issue for the sector in 2007 will be destitution. We will be working – as part of the All Wales Destitution Taskforce and alongside colleagues from other agencies throughout the UK – on influencing policy and raising awareness of the desperate situation faced by those who are depied asylum in the UK

Partnership working is vital to our organisation, and we are continually building and developing relationships with other agencies in Wales, the UK and in Europe. While the work that we do here in Wales is important, it is equally important to be part of the bigger picture. We have taken forward our partnership working with colleagues at the British Refugee Council and the Scottish Refugee Council. We have also formed links with ECRE, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles

For 2007, and beyond, our work as a values-based organisation will centre around three things: passion, people an partnerships. We will continue to be passionate about the work that we do, keeping people at the heart of our wo and working in partnerships for maximum impact.

The past two years have not seen policy become more benign. The rhetoric of fear has been peddled by some and beople claiming asylum have continued to face unimaginable challenges. The debate about asylum and immigration is becoming increasingly mixed up with issues of migrant workers, security and terrorism. Accessing asylum in Europe is becoming more difficult and dangerous, with thousands of people dying en route and others risking being returned to face persecution because of inadequate asylum procedures.

There are challenges ahead for the sector, but with the help of our supporters, staff, volunteers and trustees we will continue with our mission: empowering refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives.



David Farnsworth

Financial Statements

Summarised Statements: Financial Year Ending 31st March 2005

Income

NASS OSS Grant
NASS Emergency Accommodation Grant
Home Office Social Policy Unit
HACT (Housing Officer)
Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund
Hardship funding
Cardiff County Council
Welsh Assembly Government – Health Development Project
Welsh Assembly Government – Housing Project
Welsh Assembly Government – Policy and Campaigns
Welsh Assembly Government – Social and Cultural
Welsh Assembly Government – CEO/PA
Career Path Project
Swansea Multi-Agency Project – ERF
Refugee Week
Subscriptions. £330
Donations
Interest received
Social Services
Asylum Seeker travel reimbursement
Sundry income
Total income
Expenditure
Direct charitable expenditure
Establishment costs
Administration and general £237,361

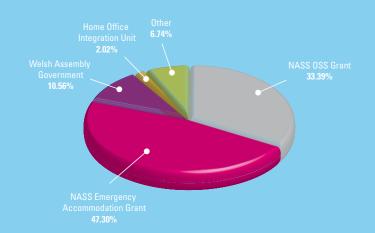
Summarised Statements: Financial Year Ending 31st March 2006

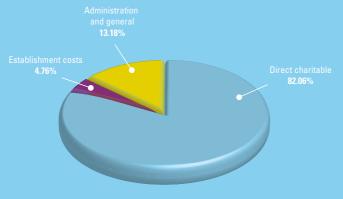
Income

NASS OSS Grant
NASS Emergency Accommodation Grant
Home Office Social Policy Unit
HACT (Housing Officer)
Lloyds TSB Foundation
Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund
Hardship funding
Cardiff County Council
Welsh Assembly Government – Health Development Project
Welsh Assembly Government – Housing Project
Welsh Assembly Government – Policy and Campaigns
Welsh Assembly Government – Social and Cultural
Welsh Assembly Government – CEO/PA
Curiad Calon Cymru – ESF Equal
Career Path Project
Oxfam – Refugee Voice Wales
Swansea Multi-Agency Project – ERF
Wrexham Borough Council – Grant
Awards All Wales £2,862
Refugee Week
Subscriptions
Donations
Interest received
Social Services
Asylum Seeker travel reimbursement
Sundry income
Total income

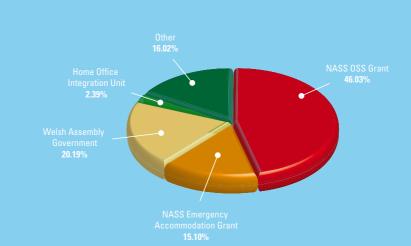
Expenditure

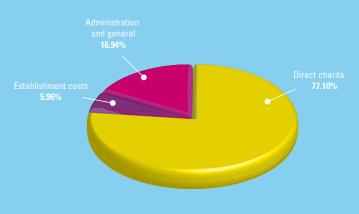
Direct charitable expenditure	£1,215,19
Establishment costs	£93,93
Administration and general	£267,08
Total expenditure	£1 576 20





from





www.welshrefugeecouncil.org

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Charity No:1044885

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