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Impact Report 10/11

About Us

The Welsh Refugee Council is an independent charity and the lead agency working for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

We provide frontline confidential and independent specialist advice, support and advocacy services in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham.

We are guided by the core principle that the right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right as stated in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, and it is our humanitarian duty to actively participate in saving the lives of people, who by force, have to flee their homeland in search of their basic human rights.

Helping Refugees and Asylum Seekers to rebuild their lives in Wales



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Welcome to our Impact Report



Aled Eirug, Chair

I am delighted that in the last year, we held a memorable event to celebrate the Welsh Refugee Council's 20th birthday. This was a great occasion, which included moving testimonies from founders of the Council, as well as contributors to the work of today's WRC. It brought together past and present members of staff, volunteers and trustees to mark the achievement of the WRC in providing valuable and much needed support services for asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. In a period where the rights of asylum seekers to fair treatment has been made more difficult, I am proud of our work in advocating for the rights of children subject to the asylum process, and especially in the case of unaccompanied children. We value the collaboration we have with other organisations with an interest in ensuring justice within the Asylum process, and we are keen to ensure that we continue to work closely with our partners to represent the needs and interests of asylum seekers and refugees.

I would like to thank the Chief Executive for his leadership, and the staff of the Welsh Refugee Council for responding so positively to this year's drastic funding cut in asylum services imposed by the UK Government. They have shown their dedication and commitment during a very tough year. We are fortunate in having the financial and moral support of the Welsh Government, and its enlightened approach towards asylum seekers and refugees in Wales puts the UK Government to shame.

It has been my honour and privilege to be chairman of the Welsh Refugee Council since December, 2006. I will be standing down in January, 2012, and I take this opportunity to thank all those staff, volunteers, trustees and our sister organisations for their help support during the past 5 years, and wish WRC the best for the next twenty years!

I am pleased to contribute to our Impact Report for 2010 - 2011

Over the last year, we have continued to see an increasing demand for our services whilst facing a reduced and diminishing budget. This has been, and continues to be a challenge that requires innovation, creativity, and hard work. We have and will continue to apply for additional resources to enable us to provide a holistic and humanitarian advice and advocacy service - to the lives of people seeking sanctuary in Wales. As always, I have to thank our Volunteers and Staff, Trustees and Partner agencies for their continued energy, skill, and support for our work.

We would not be able to provide all the services that we do without all of us working together, to make a positive difference in the lives of Asylum Seekers and Refugees. It continues to be a privilege to be the CEO of the Welsh Refugee Council and I look forward to working with you all in 2012.

With all my best wishes.



Mike Lewis, Chief Executive

LAST YEAR WE GAVE 36,390 ADVICE SESSIONS TO REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

WRC's One Stop Service; a holistic advice and support service from point of arrival to refugee status or refusal.

Here's "Charuni's" journey through our services



Charuni, a single parent from Sudan, was sent to Initial Accommodation (IA) in Wales with her daughters, so that UKBA could process her claim for asylum. On arrival to our onsite wrap-around IA service, she appeared confused and frightened. Step by step, our highly skilled and qualified caseworkers began to provide the support and advice necessary, to enable Charuni to understand the asylum process and meet her family's welfare needs. We aided her completion of an application for asylum support - (accommodation and subsistence living allowance), referred her to a registered immigration solicitor, arranged family health screening, and conveyed her preference for a female case owner and interpreter to UKBA, in preparation for her asylum interview.

After the asylum interview, (approximately 3 weeks from arrival in

Wales), Charuni was moved from IA to Asylum Support accommodation. She continued to receive ongoing support, advice and advocacy from our caseworkers, at our one stop advice service while she awaits a decision on her claim. We help her to register her children at school, assist with UKBA communications, accommodation and subsistence difficulties, welfare and health advice and referrals. She also attends WRC's free ESOL class.

Charuni's claim was refused. However, as her trust in WRC had grown she shared further details about her fears for her daughters and herself, which appeared to present fresh evidence for her asylum claim, based on gender-specific persecution. The WRC caseworker referred Charuni to a solicitor who could make a fresh claim on her behalf.

Finally, Charuni and her family were

granted refugee status, as UKBA recognised that she had a 'well-founded fear of persecution' and was unable to rely on the protection of her homeland.

She was referred to our 'Move - On' Service, for help to manage her transition into mainstream services and Welsh life. She was given support with obtaining a National Insurance Number and mainstream benefits.

Following a stressful and difficult time in temporary accommodation, we finally managed to assist her in securing a family flat.

Whilst Charuni was relieved to receive refugee status, she was completely unprepared for her new life, and had no idea about things like bills that can be easily taken for granted. We gave her support with connecting her home utilities services and successfully applied for a community care grant,

which she used to pay for used furniture for somewhere she could finally call home.

Meanwhile, our volunteer coordinator secured her a volunteering opportunity with one of our partner agencies, so that she could gain the necessary skills and experience needed for work.

Charuni was a trained nurse in Sudan and hoped to return to nursing one day, so the 'Move on' worker referred her to DPIA for employment and retraining advice, , while she continued to attend ESOL classes and has now attained a Level 3 award.

Charuni is growing in confidence and says that our wrap around services, have "changed her life" as she is "now safe". She can now focus on creating a new life for her family in Wales.

Here's "Dalanda's" journey through our services



Dalanda is a single woman from Congo. She arrived in the UK in 2010 and claimed asylum because her political activism made her an enemy of the state and she had subsequently been violently abused by members of the ruling party.

Before she escaped, she suffered a brutal attack from a group of soldiers, who abandoned her body, believing her to be dead. She was, however alive and managed to be smuggled out of the country, which she says: "saved her life".

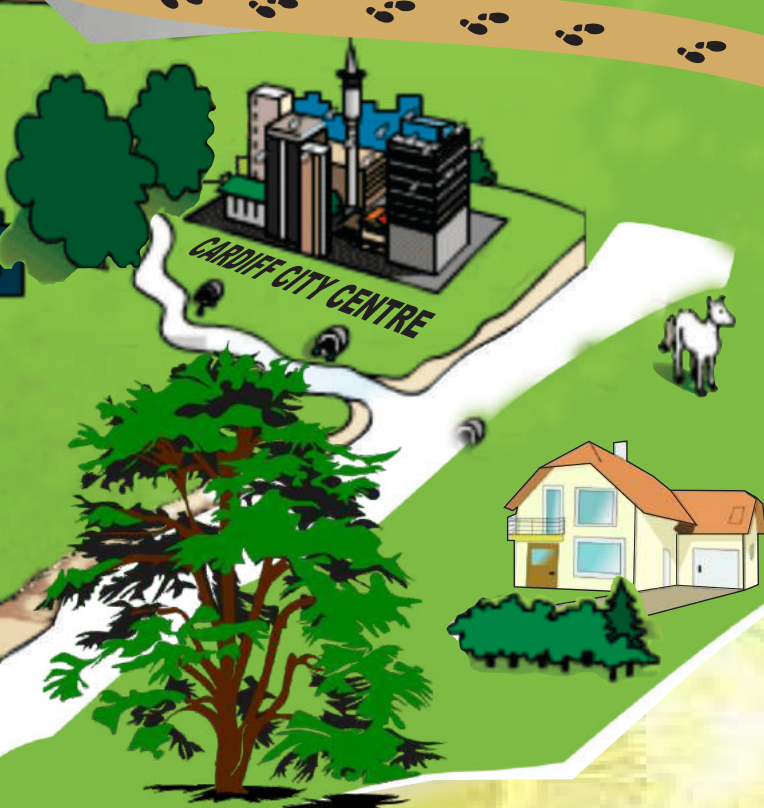
The attack has left Dalanda with a medical condition for which she awaits treatment. We referred her to a solicitor who took action to ensure that Dalanda was able to exercise her right to claim asylum.

However, Dalanda has been refused asylum on the grounds that it is safe for her to return to her country of origin; as she could relocate to another region within her country.

Due to the merits test - a balance of probabilities, as to the success or failure of an asylum appeal. Dalanda's then solicitor declined to take her case to appeal. However, Dalanda's caseworker at WRC managed to source a new solicitor to handle her case, who made an application to appeal the decision.

Dalanda's appeal application was declined, which means that she could be facing removal to a country that she states: "is unsafe". The solicitor has made a further application to challenge the appeal decision, leaving Dalanda waiting for a decision about whether or not she will even be allowed to make an appeal regarding the decision of her asylum claim.

Dalanda currently volunteers at the WRC where she provides administrative assistance and a warm welcome for service users and staff alike. She says that: "Volunteering at WRC offers me a routine and sense of purpose. I feel like WRC is my family and I don't know what I would do without WRC's services".





Bronia Conway
Play Development Worker

Our Play Development Worker is funded by Children in Need to provide play, fun and positive learning experiences for young children and their families in the asylum process. Somewhere that families can experience support and non-judgemental acceptance and allow their children to experience what we consider to be every child's birth right - 'the right to play'.

The project provides a holistic service to the diverse needs of families by working alongside, and in partnership with key agencies and other voluntary groups within the community such as; Gwent Association for Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Displaced People in Action and Valley and Vale Arts. Regular drop-in play sessions are available at the Welsh Refugee Council in Cardiff, Newport and the Space 4 U project at the Trinity Methodist Church.

Weekly activities include:

- ♦ Language and Play - learning rhymes, making resources, and having fun!
- ♦ Dance - taking time to relax and enjoy.
- ♦ English - for families to access essential services, such as health.
- ♦ Music - drum workshops and making instruments.
- ♦ Story time - introducing library services.
- ♦ Midwife and Health Visitor sessions.
- ♦ Swap Sessions to provide much needed baby equipment and children's clothes.
- ♦ Walks and Trips, Family Fun Days, Soft Play Sessions.
- ♦ Toy Bags for all children on arrival to initial accommodation in Wales

Who we see:

This year, 1200 asylum seeking children have enjoyed the drop in and play session. This equates to 25 children a week, and represents an overall increase of 700 children who came to play.

We also distributed 169 toy bags to children staying at the Initial Accommodation Centre and over £2,000 of toys at our Christmas parties, thanks to a generous donation from Hasbro Toys.

The true impact of our work however, is much more than these facts and figures... it is about the child that finally steps forward and agrees to join in a song at Rhyme Time, or the mother who arrives to tell us that she has been to another playgroup in the area and made a friend. This is alongside the discovery of joy and innocence in the face of the unknown and challenging circumstances.

"If my work has taught me anything it is that play does not take place in isolation. My work is about more than providing a space for play; it's about trying to make sense of the complex world in which children find themselves"



Our Women's Advice Worker



Patrycja Pinkowska
Women's Advice Worker

My role as the Women's Advice Worker is a recent post funded by Lloyds TSB Foundation which began in February 2011. It was developed to provide a sensitive and gender based response to the specific vulnerabilities faced by women seeking asylum.

I provide one-to-one advice and support to women, which includes: referral to solicitors, help with accessing basic support and eligibility for support, providing links with social services and specialist support agencies such as BAWSO.

The Women's Advice Worker also coordinates the Welsh Refugee Council's Women group, a social, relaxed and informative weekly session held at our Cardiff office, where they can engage in craft and/or educational activities, such as painting, knitting, decorating and IT. The group provides a much-needed nurturing environment for women to connect with others and reduce the isolation and social stigma of seeking asylum.

The Women's Advice Worker has made significant and life changing differences to the lives of many women, One such woman was "Angie".

"Angie is a cancer sufferer and is undergoing chemotherapy treatment. The Women's Advice Worker gave her support in successfully applying for a grant from the McMillan Trust to support her throughout her therapy. "Angie" is now accessing much needed treatment and can focus on getting better without the hassle of worrying about cancer and the hidden costs of treatment".

Achievements by March 2011:

- ♦ The group has quickly become a safe space for women to socialise and learn, discuss ongoing problems or to book appointments with the Women's Advice Worker.
- ♦ The Women's Group has become a hub for women seeking information on Cardiff based organisations and initiatives and we regularly referred women to other organisations including, 'Women Connect First', BAWSO, English in Pregnancy course and BVS NW courses, etc. This has enabled us to work with others to reduce the isolation faced by women seeking asylum and raise awareness on gender related topics such as, domestic and physical violence, sexual violence and female genital mutilation (FGM).
- ♦ The Women's Advice Worker has provided sensitive support and advocacy to a total of 5 women who have disclosed sexual abuse,

rape, trafficking, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

- ♦ She has also provided support to a child victim of torture who was suffering from severe trauma, enabling her to receive support from the Helen Bamber Foundation.



Our Child Advocacy Worker

Child Advocacy Officer

Our Child Advocate is the only specialist advocate for separated children and young people undergoing age disputes in Wales.

'Separated children', is a term used to describe children who arrive in the UK alone, with no parents, or adults to care, protect and guide them.

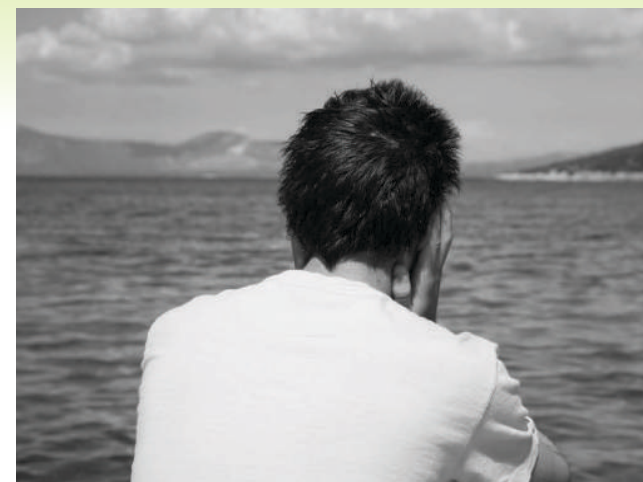
They may have fled war, conflict, and often dangerous situations, to find a place of safety and refuge in the UK.

They live with the loss and pain of separation from families, friends, and home; in a strange land, with different food, language, and laws. Some may be joining families here, others are seeking asylum in their own right, the UK government refer to these children as un-accompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). However, many of these children will arrive without any identification and may find that the UKBA or Social Services, or both, may refuse to accept the age that a young asylum seeker claims to be.

Thus, while separated children are recognised as some of the most vulnerable children in Wales, age disputed young people continue to be treated as adults, and remain outside of the protection and safeguards of Local Authority care. WRC's Child Advocate works with age disputed young asylum seekers to assist them in accessing their rights to a transparent and fair age assessment, which may help them to be officially identified as a child. In the past year, the Child Advocate has worked with 59 young

asylum seekers, 51 of whom were age disputed- over 50% of these have now been recognised as children by Local Authorities.

This advocacy has not only protected and ensured that these children are safe but has also helped them to regain their trust, human dignity, and self-worth.



If you would like to see further details about how WRC's Child Advocate, has helped change the lives of young asylum seekers why not read our report: Young Lives in Limbo: the protection of age disputed children in Wales In August 2011.



Our Partnerships

We remain committed to working in partnership with others to promote and ensure the safety and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

This commitment, not only helps us to find innovative solutions to improve our services, at a time of restricted expenditure, but also enables us to raise awareness and continue to advocate on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

The ability to create and maintain partnerships is a key factor of our success. The Welsh Refugee Council would therefore like to thank each and every group and individuals who we have had the privilege of working with over the past year. Your support came in many packages and forms and was always welcomed. It included: advice, clothes, food, funding, guidance, information exchange, hardship donations, referrals, support implementation of projects and events, networking volunteering, time, toys, trust and recognition of our common humanity.

Thank you

Amnesty International. Asylum Justice. Barnardos. Big Lottery. British Red Cross. Cardiff and Vale. Cardiff City Council. Cardiff Ethnic Minority Community First. Cardiff University. Children Commissioner for Wales. Children in Need Children in Wales. Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Trust Fund. Discovery Swansea. Displaced People in Action. Lloyds TSB. Mind Cymru. National Museum of Wales. Newport City Council. NSPCC. Oasis. Oxfam. Persian Welsh Society. Refugee Community Organisations. Refugee Voice Wales. Space 4U. Student Action for Refugees. Supporting Others through Voluntary Action. Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group. Swansea City of Sanctuary. Trinity Church. Tros Gynnal. United Kingdom Border Agency. UWIC. Voluntary Action Cardiff. Victim Support. Wales Council for Voluntary Action. Wales Strategic Migration Partnership. Welsh Government. Women Making a Difference. Women Seeking Sanctuary Advocacy Group. Wrexham Refugee and Asylum Support Group. Young People Speak Out.

What our partners say about us

"Women Making a Difference are delighted to have partnered with the Welsh Refugee Council in delivering a programme of personal development and skills training that gives women seeking sanctuary and refuge in Wales the skills, ability and confidence to become leaders in their own communities".- Paula Manley, WMAD

"On behalf of the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service, (WITS), I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance in the development of interpreting services for all of the public services in Wales. Chief Inspector Tony Wilcox, Gwent Police"

"The members and management committee of Kurdi Cymru are proud to work shoulder to shoulder with the Welsh Refugee Council in order to assist and create opportunities for Refugees and Asylum seekers to integrate into the Welsh society"- Salah Rasool, Kudi Cymru

"We have worked collaboratively on a project to enhance knowledge of child protection procedures and practice as well as jointly lobbying decision makers to strengthen national policies, and to end the detention of children and other rights violations. As a valued member of Children in Wales, we look forward to continuing to work closely with the WRC"- Sean O'Neil, Children in Wales.

"Working in partnership with the Welsh Refugee Council has proved to be an essential part of providing children with a wide range of support and services. With the significant cuts experienced by both our organisations, continued effective partnership working has never been more important"- Sian Summers and Louise Kalicinski, DPIA

Our Partnerships this year

- 👍 Asylum Justice to provide free legal advice to Asylum Seekers.
- 👍 ESOL classes to our clients in partnerships with Cardiff Community Learning Network-UWIC
- 👍 Electronic Appointments for clients with Legal Service Commission.
- 👍 Refugee Integration Employment Service with Displaced People in Action.
- 👍 Refugee Week Wales Partnership with National Waterfront Museum.



Our Advocacy Work

are based on the experiences of our frontline caseworkers. From 2010 – 2011 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including the Welsh and UK Governments in order to improve the lives of our service users, raise awareness on refugee and asylum issues and celebrate the contributions of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. **This is how:**

Apr - Jun 2010 - 10,620 Advice Sessions

Plus....we celebrated our 20th Anniversary with a grand birthday party with Lord Dyfed Ellis Thomas as our guest speaker alongside speakers from UKBA and Refugee Community Organisations.

- ♦ The Family Drop-in at WRC and Trinity Methodist Church continues to grow - over 42 new children attend sessions.
- ♦ We successfully coordinated Refugee Week Wales 2010 throughout Wales.

Jul - Sept 2010 - 9,622 Advice Sessions

Plus... we hosted a refugee and asylum awareness and myth-busting stand at the National Eisteddfod in Ebbw Vale.

- ♦ Our ESOL classes continue to flourish with over 10 refugee and asylum students per class.
- ♦ We held a Settlement Protection workshop for Refugee Community Organisations on the issues relating to refugees with 5-year status.

Oct - Dec 2010 - 8,525 - Advice Sessions

Plus... a campaign begins to build the hardship fund ready for Winter's bite.

- ♦ We organised a poetry workshop for staff and clients.
- ♦ WRC's Hardship Fund continues to receive donor support to help destitute asylum seekers and refugees from generous donors across Wales.
- ♦ Our Newport Service Manager reaches her personal goal of raising £7000 before Christmas.
- ♦ Five members of WRC staff ran the Cardiff Half Marathon in aid of the Hardship fund and raised £3000.
- ♦ Our cupcakes and cast off events raise £615 towards the Hardship Fund.
- ♦ The then Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Carl Sargeant visited our Cardiff Office to find out more about our services.



Our Advocacy Work

Jan - Mar 2011 - 7,623 Advice Sessions

Plus... a tasty cookbook, and a visit from Santa.

- ♦ We continue to raise money for WRC's Hardship Fund through:
- ♦ The launch of our new 'Taste of Home' recipe book, featuring recipes from different cultures around the world.
- ♦ The production of a WRC Christmas Card.
- ♦ Via the Refugee Rhythms Night hosted by Students for Asylum Seekers (STAR) raised £78.00.
- ♦ Santa also visited asylum seeking children who attend our Newport, Play Sessions and thanks to Hasbro, Children in Need and GAVO was able to provide toys and fun!
- ♦ We created a trafficking toolkit for our caseworkers to identify suspected victims of trafficking.
- ♦ With the support of Cardiff Council we were able to buy 10 push bikes for service users and staff as part of our pledge to initiate sustainable working practices.
- ♦ We initiated in-house research about the situation facing age-disputed children in Wales.
- ♦ We underwent structural changes to ensure continued delivery of our wrap around services on a reduced budget and created the new "Team WRC".



Training

We continue to provide ongoing development opportunities and training for our diverse and multilingual staff. In the past year this has included Organisation of Immigration Service Commissioner (OISC), child protection training, identifying vulnerable service users such as age disputed children, victims of torture, trafficking, and gender specific violations. Other staff members have completed a professional qualification in interpretation and translation services - DPSI.

We also sat on the Welsh Government's Expert Group on Child Trafficking and provided input based on our frontline experience into the All Wales Child Protection Procedures - UASC protocol.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

For year ending 2011

INCOME	2011 £	2010 £
Restricted Grant Income		
UKBA Home Office Grants	1,312,599	1,344,807
Welsh Government	438,477	433,097
Hardship Donations	14,578	16,673
Wrexham Borough Council Grant	6,000	6,000
Community Foundation Wales Fairshare Project	41,249	47,886
Diana Princess Of Wales Memorial Fund	49,652	57,172
BBC Children In Need	23,724	30,146
Refugee Week	18,560	38,860
Lloyds TSB	25,000	0
Cardiff County Council Keep Cardiff Moving	5,149	0
YMCA	250	0
UNRESTRICTED GRANT INCOME		
Grant WCVA	8,000	0
UNRESTRICTED FUND (OTHER)		
Subscriptions, Donations & Small Grants	13,767	7,794
Interest Received	47	164
Management Fees	60,341	58,723
Sundry Income	8,006	4,579
UK RIES Service Contract	456,752	530,833
TOTAL INCOME	2,482,151	2,576,734
ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE		
Pre Status Expenditure	1,375,675	
Refugee Status	647,435	
Policy Advocacy	261,063	
Governance	45,883	
TOTAL	2,330,056	
Net Movement In Funds	152,095	
Funds Brought Forward	188,805	
Funds Carried Forward	340,900	



With All Our Thanks



Company number: 4818136

Charity number: 1102443

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