

“
We like this,
we are smiling
here - Bala ”



23 years of Support

The Welsh Refugee Council is an independent charity working with asylum seekers, refugees, and displaced people in Wales. For 23 years we have continued to provide essential support and advice to those who are forced to flee their homeland in search of their basic human rights. Our caseworkers support and advise people from the day they arrive in Wales to the day they move on.

We provide information, advice and practical support to people seeking asylum and those with refugee status within Wales. We listen to the experiences of our clients and increase our understanding of their needs. We influence policy and practice to ensure that it responds to the requirements of asylum seekers and refugees, often the most vulnerable people in our community. We challenge discrimination and change the perceptions of refugees in Wales.

Trustees

- Anna Nicholl - Chair
- Maureen Gower - Vice Chair
- Mohamed Field - Treasurer
- Adele Blakebrough - Resigned
- Aled Eirug - Resigned
- Ian Summers
- James Aylward
- Julie Barton
- Mick Antoniow
- Professor Terry Threadgold
- Themba Moyo



Our Mission

To help refugees and asylum seekers, rebuild their lives in Wales

Our core value

To promote the right to seek asylum as a fundamental human right as stated in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. We believe that it is our humanitarian duty to actively participate in saving the lives of people who are forced to flee their homeland in search of their basic human rights.

What we did:



Initial Accommodation Support

We provided case work to asylum seekers from the day that they arrive in Wales. Our case workers screened for vulnerabilities, administered Asylum Support Application Forms, and gave briefings on the asylum process, their rights and orientation to life in Wales.



One Stop Support

Our case workers offered follow up advice sessions for asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation and gave specialist support to deal with complex cases. We ensured that asylum seekers accessed their full entitlement to financial support, health care, housing and justice.



Move On Service

We worked with people who have been granted refugee status or other forms of leave to remain, to support their transition to life in Wales. This includes applications for mainstream benefits including housing support and entitlements, information on education, employment and volunteering opportunities.



Supporting Women

The women's worker offered specialist paralegal advice and emotional support to women asylum seekers. We worked with women who have experienced domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, FGM and forced marriage.



Supporting Families

Our play programme provided three weekly sessions and regular trips for families. We also worked in partnership to deliver parenting workshops and make relevant referrals.



Supporting Children

Our specialist advocacy and support worker supported unaccompanied asylum seeking children to claim asylum, access legal support and social care. We also worked with age disputed children.



Speaking out

The policy and communications team influenced policy and practice to ensure that it met the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. We also worked with partners to promote the rights of refugees and challenge discrimination.



Education and Training

We provided ESOL classes and a volunteering programme. This built the skills, confidence and job opportunities of asylum seekers and refugees. In 2012 we gained the Investors in Volunteering Quality mark.



Working in Partnership

We collaborated with partner organisation's to make relevant referrals, provided ESOL and launched Cardiff City of Sanctuary. Our collaborative approach to service delivery ensured we met the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

Chair's Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the annual report of the Welsh Refugee Council. This year, we continued to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Our advocacy and policy work also gave a voice to the many issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.

With conflicts ongoing across many parts of the world, Wales continues to have a responsibility to provide sanctuary to those who have been forced to flee their homes. This report demonstrates the important role that the Welsh Refugee Council is playing to help make this happen.

The organisation has faced many challenges over the year coupled with an increased demand for our services. Like most third sector organisations, cuts to funders' budgets have meant cuts to our budgets. As these resources reduce, the need for our services and for a strong voice to promote the fair and equal treatment of asylum seekers and refugees has increased. Worldwide the number of displaced people globally was at an 18 year high at end of 2012.

It has been impressive to see how staff, volunteers and trustees have responded to these challenges. There is a real commitment to the aims of the organisation and to the people we work with. This has driven creative solutions and a determination to secure the organisation's financial sustainability. I would like to thank them all.

Of course, the Welsh Refugee Council could not have achieved the outcomes set out in this report if it was not for others. It is thanks to our funders, supporters and the many partners that we work with within Wales and across the UK.

I look forward to the organisation continuing to develop these good relations and increase its impact in the coming year under the leadership of our new Chief Executive, Salah Mohamed.

Anna Nicholl
Chair



“ This year, we continued to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.



Chief Executive Statement

In October 2013 I became the Chief Executive of the Welsh Refugee Council. This is a time of significant structural and organisational changes. It is also an opportunity to regroup and focus to make the organisation sustainable and responsive to a changing and a challenging environment; putting the interests of our beneficiaries at the heart of all that we do.

Despite the challenges we face, I am proud to report on the many achievements which gave much needed support to asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. This report highlights how we delivered support services to over 30,000 people who came through our doors during 2012- 2013 and our strong belief in effective collaborative partnerships.

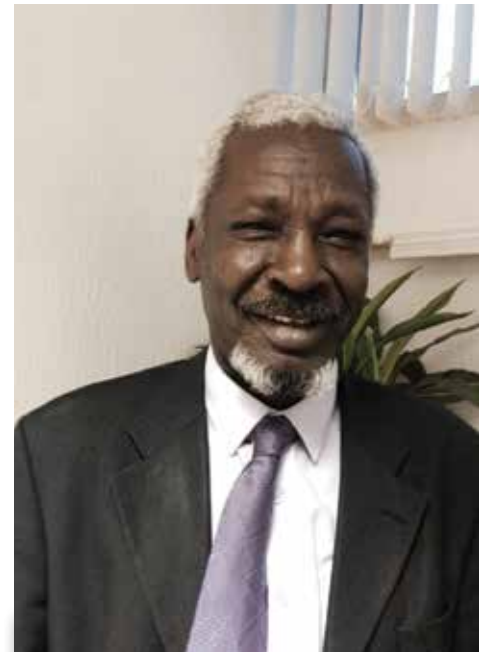
Our Initial Accommodation, One Stop and Move on services continued to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees in Wales felt safe, included and respected and able to receive their entitlements and fulfil their potential. I am always proud to see the appreciation and the impact of our services on the faces of our services users whatever their origin or background is.

Our policy and communications work continued to listen to the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales and speak out to protect their rights.

Thank you to all of the organisations across Wales who partnered with us to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees specific needs are met. That their voices are heard and that we actively collaborate to include refugees in Wales.

It gives me great pleasure to say a huge thank you to the hard working and dedicated trustees, staff and volunteers. Their enthusiasm and passion put the provision of protecting the rights of asylum seekers and refugees at heartbeat of the organisation.

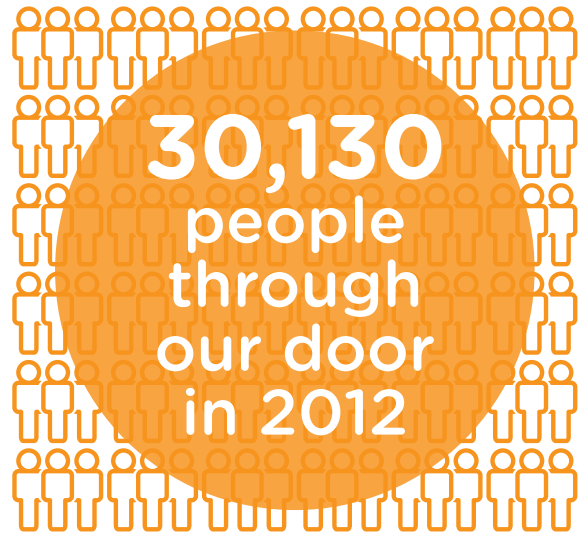
Salah Mohamed
Chief Executive



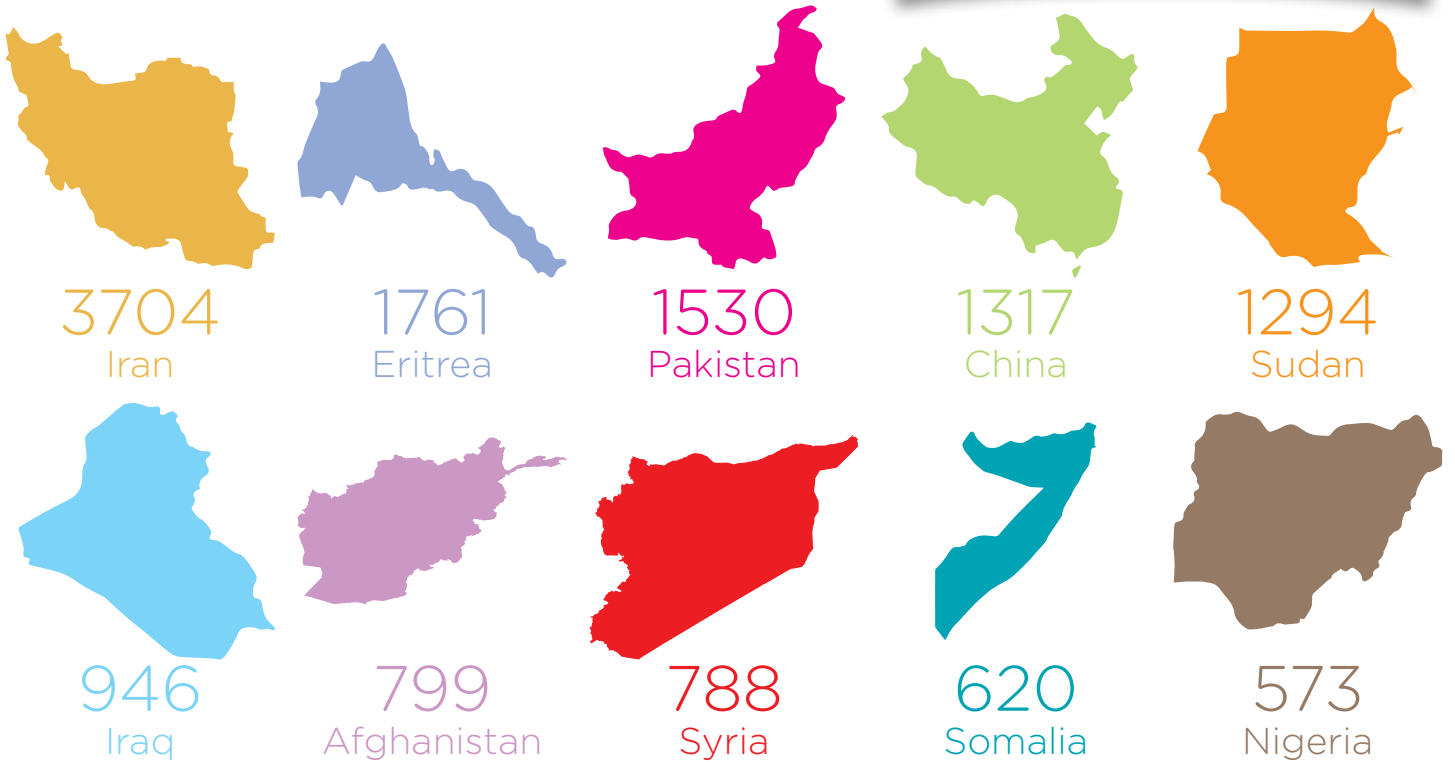
“Asylum seekers and refugees bring a sense of humility and determination with them, and in many cases they leave it with us.”



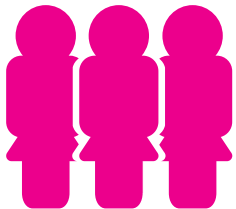
Supporting Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Wales



Where people flee from



Who we work with



39%
women

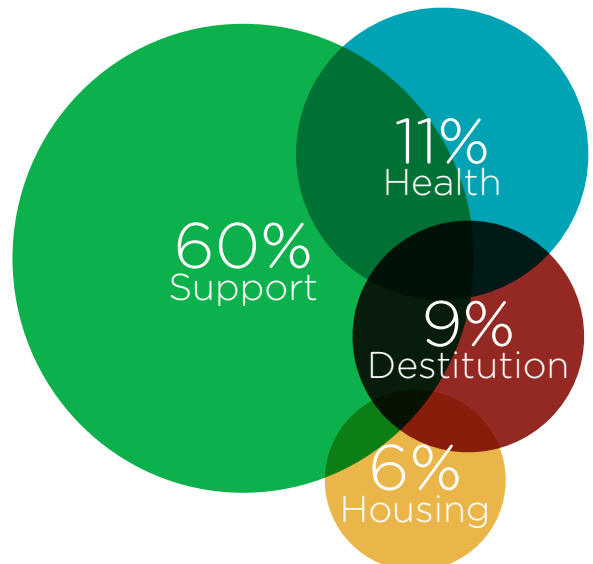


61%
men



27%
children

Issues raised in our sessions



Working with Asylum Seekers

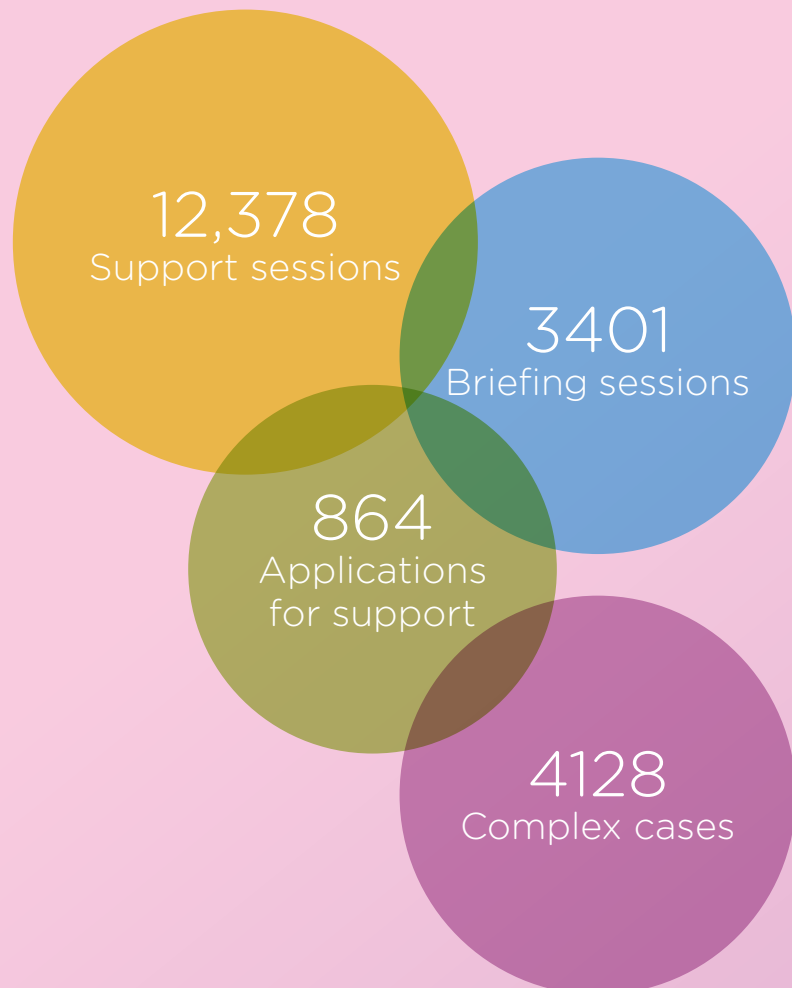


What we did:

Our Home Office funded Initial Accommodation Service provided support to people who were dispersed to Wales. They are sent here by the Home Office to wait for their asylum claim to be processed. We provided face to face and telephone advice sessions with a team of case workers and interpreters. We gave every asylum seeker an initial briefing on the asylum process and their rights to legal representation, health care, financial support and housing. We helped complete asylum support applications.

Our One Stop Service continued to provide support throughout their application for asylum. We guided people through their application liaising with the Home Office to ensure the right information is provided, making referrals to an immigration solicitor, booking health appointments, and signposting to local services. We provided complex case work which offered specialist advice with an innovative approach.

Our services aimed to ensure that asylum seekers felt confident of a fair and equal asylum process; and that their specific needs were identified.



Houda's Story

Houda was tortured and brutally raped in her country due to her sexuality as a lesbian. She arrived in Wales traumatised, tearful, scared and isolated.

It took our caseworkers a long time to build trust and help her to feel safe to talk about her situation. We provided longer than usual appointments; and reiterated her options in order to help her retain information.

Eventually she started opening up and trusting our caseworkers. We referred her to doctors who confirmed her evidence of torture and rape and to partner organisation BAWSO for counselling. She is now receiving the support she needs, feels safe and confident and understands her rights.

Supporting Refugees



Our Welsh Government funded Move-On project worked with people who had been granted refugee status. At this transition point, there is a high risk of destitution as they are given 28 days to move out of asylum support housing. Additional support needs are also often identified at this time.

Move on case workers offered face to face and telephone advice sessions. Our Move-On project included help with applying for social care benefits, how to access education for both the adults and children, how to apply for housing support, access to volunteering opportunities to help with developing skills and emotional support.

Chanda Moving On

In 2009 Chanda was dispersed to Wales and in April 2013 she and her family were granted Refugee status. She accessed the Move-On process straight away, where a case worker explained her rights and responsibilities, and the different housing options and benefits available. We assisted her in making an application for Jobseekers Allowance but had to wait to make a claim for her partner because of the late arrival of his Residence Permit. By then she was at high risk of becoming homeless as she had been given 28 days notification of when the support would end. We wrote to the local authority on behalf of the family and ensured that the family were deemed to be in priority need and therefore placed in Temporary Accommodation.

We continued to work with Chanda and her family until they found a permanent home in Wrexham. We successfully negotiated with the Home Office regarding errors in their status documents and biometric letters. This is a complex process and required our in-depth knowledge of the biometric system. We assisted with applications for child benefit and child tax credit as well as helping with their Job Seekers Allowance. This resulted in the family getting permanent tenancy with Wrexham Council and obtaining furniture for their new home. We continue to support the family to feel confident and included in Wales.

11651
Advice sessions

2910
Accessed move on

Supporting Women



Refugee and Asylum seeking women came to us with very specific needs including rape, trauma, domestic violence, torture, FGM issues, forced marriage or trafficking. Our specialist advice and support women's worker carefully helped women to cope and access the support they needed. We provided legal advice and advocacy making representations to mainstream service providers on their behalf. We built a close rapport with women enabling them to disclose their experiences access support services and enhanced their asylum claim.



Over
100
cases



Radia's Story

Radia is a 32 year old woman from Pakistan who came to the UK as a student. She entered into a relationship with a young man she met in the UK and soon got pregnant. Her partner did not want the responsibility of a child and left her alone to have her child. Radia thought about returning to Pakistan but death threats were made against her if she were to return as a single mother. She subsequently claimed asylum because of this. Our women's worker saw her throughout her asylum claim. During this time she was so frightened that she refused to be referred to other agencies. Within a month of her asylum interview, she was granted status.

She has since given birth to a daughter and is very happy to know that she and her daughter are safe and supported in Wales.

Supporting Families



Over 60% of the children who attended our play scheme are from families with an asylum claim in dispute or refused. This resulted in families living on approximately 70% of income support. Due to inappropriate housing many children were isolated, marginalised and living in poor quality, cramped conditions. During schools holiday, parents were fearful of their area and did not allow their children to play outside.

Our play worker provided three play sessions per week for asylum seeking families in Newport and Cardiff. We also worked in partnership with DPiA, Children in Wales and GAVO to provide trips and visits in and around the city during the school holidays. We included older children, ran a craft group and held seasonal parties. We arranged family home visits through a referral system with Save the Children to provide toys and baby equipment to the most disadvantaged.

We worked with Children in Wales to run regular parenting workshops to promote keeping safe.

67% of the children have been directly involved with planning sessions over the year. This year we added sand and water play to our weekly routines and included quiet space for stories.

141
children in play
sessions

13
trips

160
children
on trips



Bala and Keran's story

In April Bala and her son Keran aged 3 had been travelling for a year to claim asylum in the UK. They did not speak English and spoke an unfamiliar dialect which made interpreting more difficult and created isolation and a failure to engage. They both showed signs of anxiety and gave little eye contact.

They attended the play group but at each session they continued to sit quietly, not fully engaging with the group, keeping their coats on and leaving early. As time went by, they engaged more and more. Eventually Bala starting participating in serving the food at meal times and Keran was confident enough to get his own chair.

Over the next weeks they attended every session, taking their coats off each time and gradually joining in a few more activities and even the Hokey-Cokey - the group's favourite. Eventually, as their confidence grew, they joined a very basic English class. Keran now plays with the other children, and is happy to play out of sight of his mum.

Bala and Keran continue to have difficulties to deal with while their case is being heard, however, we provide the respite through they need our regular sessions.

Supporting Children



Unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK are considered one of the most vulnerable people. These children are faced with the loss of care and support of their parents and families, being away from home in a strange place and having to navigate a complex and discriminatory asylum system that demands proof of age. We continued to work with children whose age is disputed by the Home Office.

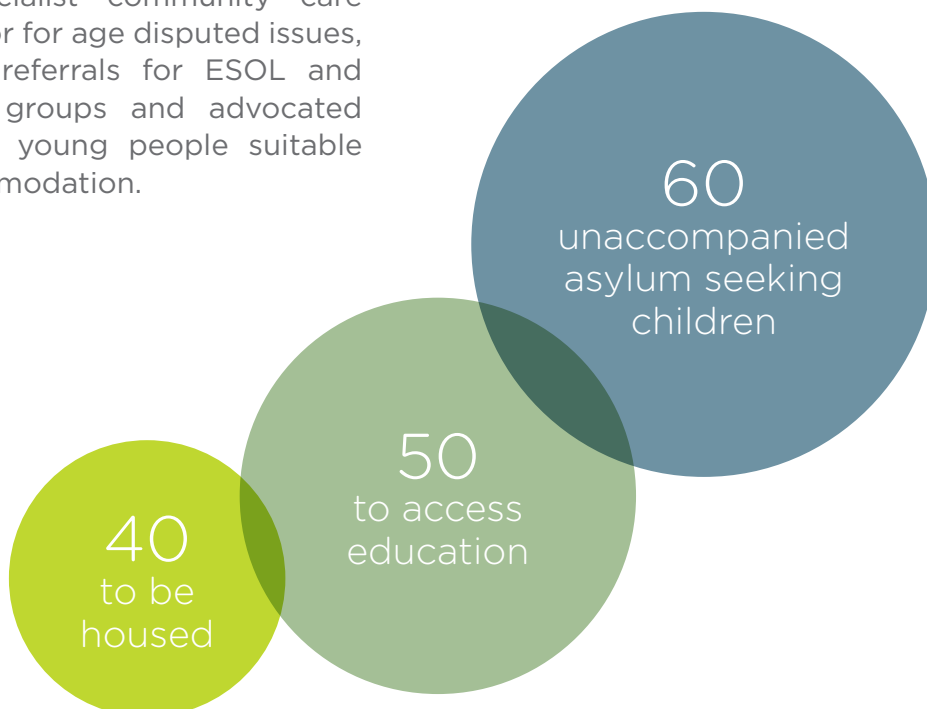
This year, our specialist advocacy and support worker has helped unaccompanied asylum seeking children navigate through the very complex UK asylum process. We helped children claim asylum, get the right immigration solicitor, including a specialist community care solicitor for age disputed issues, made referrals for ESOL and youth groups and advocated to get young people suitable accommodation.

Shafaz's story

Shafaz is a boy from Afghanistan who arrived in Wales feeling confused and neglected. His claim for asylum was being considered but his age was being disputed by the Home Office. We immediately supported him to get the right solicitor and accommodation, attended all appointments with him to ensure that he was treated fairly and negotiated on his behalf each step of the way.

Shafaz was refused asylum and sent to a detention centre but we continued to support him and advocated for his release. When he was released, we helped him into accommodation, liaising with local authorities and social services regarding his case. We contacted his brother and arranged a family reunion.

Eventually Shafaz was granted refugee status and was placed with a foster family. He quickly learnt to speak English and now lives with his adult brother under the care of social services. He thrived in secondary school achieving 4A stars in GCSEs and is now an undergraduate at Bristol University doing a degree in Aeronautical Engineering.



Education and Employment



Asylum seekers and refugees benefit from our English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) provision offered free at the Welsh Refugee Council. The classes are a much needed support to help people with little or no English skills. Participants are provided with the initial reading and writing, listening and speaking skills to move into level 1 English class offered by other providers.

We offered classes that are tailored to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. Our ESOL teachers delivered interactive sessions that are accessible from the day a person arrives in Wales. This gave people the opportunity to access further education and employment.

We recruited, trained and supported Asylum Seekers and Refugees through our volunteering programme. This provided opportunities for people to access employment and develop their careers.



22
asylum seekers
and refugees
ESOL graduates

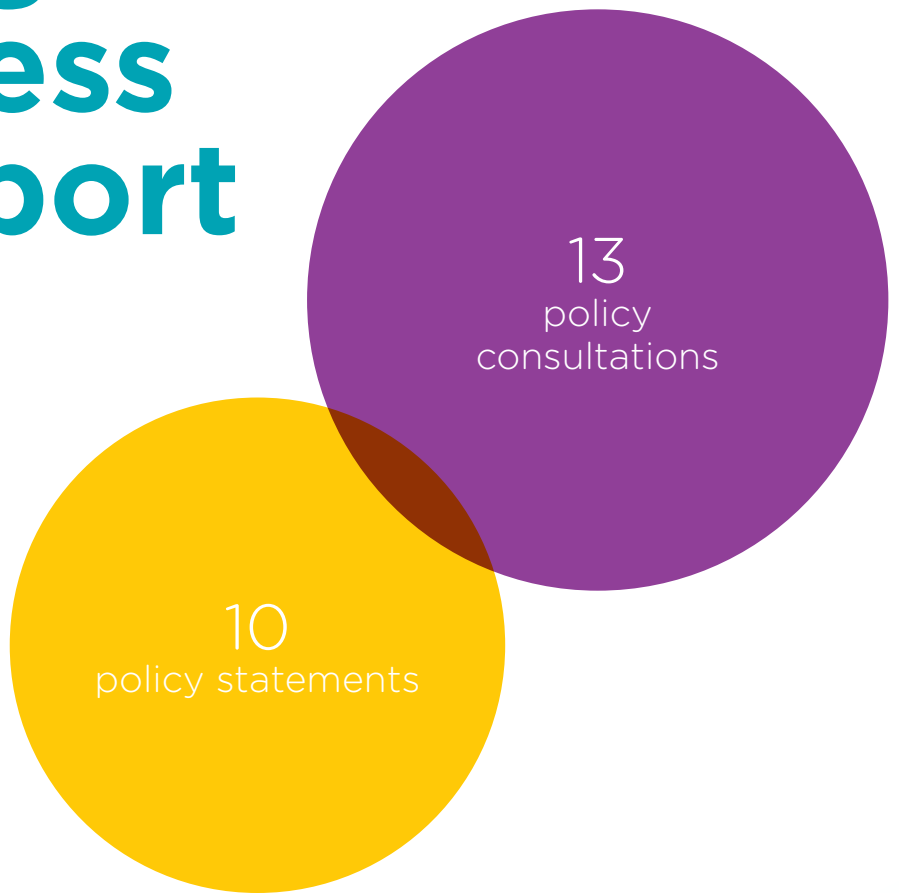
16
onto further
education

7
went onto
employment

Speaking out for fairness and support



We continued to bring a ground level view of the impact of policy and practice on asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We listened to our service user's experiences, collecting evidence to inform our communications and policy positions. We identified trends and spoke out to call for the safety and dignity of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.



- ✓ We challenged the BBC to reinforce a higher quality factual programming that depicts asylum seekers and refugees fairly and accurately.
- ✓ We urged the UK Government to consider the needs of children seeking asylum in the definition of child poverty and develop appropriate actions.
- ✓ We asked for a simpler and more coherent system of qualification for children and young people to utilise their prior learning towards recognised qualifications.
- ✓ In partnerships with other organisations, we successfully hosted the 'Children in the Asylum Process' event to ensure that asylum seeking children are given the same safeguards as other children. We engaged children to feed into policy positions from the event.
- ✓ In collaboration with DPIA, we researched and produced a leaflet on how asylum seekers and refugees can find recognition and comparison for any qualifications obtained from their home country. We also facilitated training across Wales. This work helped inform the current Welsh Government CQFW framework for Wales and will further support our services users.
- ✓ We called for the Welsh Government to ensure that the Right to be Safe Strategy, which looks at tackling violence against women, addressed the needs of asylum seeking, migrant and trafficked women in Wales. Particularly, those experiencing forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Crimes based on honour, and human trafficking.

Celebrating Asylum Seekers and Refugees Contributions

In 2012, Refugee Week Wales created awareness throughout Wales working collaboratively with over 15 organisations. We paraded throughout the streets of Cardiff to celebrate and promote refugees contributions and inclusion in Wales. The then Minister for Equalities, Jane Hutt officiated the main ceremony. We held our schools art competition with an 11 year old refugee being one of the winners. We partnered with Cardiff Central Library hosting a cultural event. We engaged with non BME communities in Newport, Swansea and Wrexham and worked with Literature Wales to host a Welsh poetry reading and workshops in Cardiff.

We showcased and promoted the issues of asylum seekers and refugees in collaboration with the Bevan Foundation at their equalities festival engaging with over 300 people in non dispersal areas. We raised awareness of asylum seekers and refugees health issues to over 15 faith based groups in Newport. We collaborated with Barrow Cadbury Trust to host a workshop on statelessness in the UK to organisations working with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

3075
people at
Refugee Week
Wales

22
events

140
paraded for
inclusion in
Wales

300
information
leaflets in non
dispersal area



Thanks to our Volunteers



Our volunteers form a pivotal part of our ability to provide advice and support to our service users. They work side by side with us from shadowing caseworkers, to office administration, policy and communications support as well as providing security support at our reception offices.

In 2012, we received our Investor in Volunteering Quality Mark for the contribution of our work with volunteers. We were committed to supporting and ensuring that all resources were available to involve volunteers in our work and develop their confidence and skills.

Thanks to our volunteers for helping us to provide high quality services to asylum seekers and refugees.

What our volunteers say:

Deekqo Dahir - Volunteer

I have been volunteering for 4 years, doing a range of duties within the asylum support team as well as providing interpretation support in French, Somali and Arabic. My role here has made me feel like an important part of the team. I have developed my IT and administrative skills. What I really appreciated is the help and support I received from the managers and staff who continue to help me to develop.

I have now completed a degree in teaching modern foreign languages at UWIC and I am a qualified secondary school teacher. I really believe that my ability to successfully complete my degree was based on my experiences at the Welsh Refugee Council and working on a one-to-one basis with asylum seekers and refugees.



26
volunteers

3200
hours worked

Thanks to our Partners



We are very grateful and committed to our partnerships and the impact they make in enhancing our services to asylum seekers and refugees.

Over the past year we have worked within 20 partnership and collaborative initiatives. We provided referral services for child protection, victims of hate crime and additional legal advice. We signposted people to the relevant education and training providers. We worked in partnership to deliver support services with destitution, mental health, violence against women and HIV.

During this year, we eagerly joined with other organisations to take a leading role in the development of Cardiff City of Sanctuary. A movement to make Cardiff a place of welcome and safety to all new arrivals particularly people seeking sanctuary.

We continued to engage with Refugee Community Organisations. We collaborated on events at Refugee Week Wales, through facilitating media requests and providing training when necessary.

Thank you to Displaced People in Action (DPIA), British Red Cross, Terrence Higgins Trust, Wales Migration Partnership, Oxfam, Children in Wales, SOVA, Gwent Association for Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Victim Support, Asylum Justice and Cardiff Storehouse, BAWSO and Newport, Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham Local Authority and police units.

What our partners say:

“Throughout the year we have developed a close partnership with WRC to ensure we provide a comprehensive service which continues to promote Children and Young People’s best interest”
Tros Gynal Plant

“Through the WRC we have been able to promote HIV/sexual health services to asylum seekers and refugees in Cardiff. Without their support, I feel it would be a lot harder to reach our core groups. Partnership work is vital for our continuing work to reach those communities whom I feel are most isolated from services such as ours”
Terrence Higgins Trust

Get involved



Firstly, we would like to say thank you to everyone who has supported our work in 2012. Every penny we receive is always a welcome addition to supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We encourage you to support our work in the future.

Donate Money

Make a single donation of any amount or simply set up a monthly direct debit to make regular payments to the Welsh Refugee Council.

To donate or for more information contact us at info@welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk or telephone 02920489800

Support the Hardship Fund

Refugees, asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers face challenges to access basic support. Many are not able to return home and are at risk of exploitation on a daily basis. Our hardship fund provides small emergency payments to destitute asylum seekers and refugees. You can help make sure that no one goes without their basic needs. Please give any amount to the Welsh Refugee Council's Hardship Fund.

£12,914
of emergency
payments made

£15,855
raised for
destitution

Donate Items

We frequently need food, clothing, toys and prams, toiletries and sanitary wear for our services users who are facing destitution. If you can help in this way, we would be glad to hear from you.

Volunteer with Us

If you really want to get involved, come and volunteer with us. We currently need support across the organisation. We will give you training and support to help you in your role.

Become a Member

Partner with us and become a member of the Welsh Refugee Council. We will send you relevant updates and information.

Join Online

Join our social media groups on:

www.facebook.com/Welshrefcouncil

www.twitter.com/Welshrefcouncil



Zélie donated to the Hardship Fund

"I decided to run the Cardiff Half Marathon 2012 to raise money for the Hardship Fund and raise awareness of the work of the Welsh Refugee Council in general. Many people living in Cardiff are not aware of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in their own city, nor of the ways in which they can help; not just through cash donations but also through volunteering time and donating food, goods and toys.

I'd encourage others to set themselves the goal; it's a greater achievement knowing you've done something positive for a cause that's close to your heart"

Over
1000
food parcels
distributed

Money Matters

Income & Expenditure

Year ending March 31, 2013

INCOME	2012/2013
RESTRICTED GRANT INCOME	
UKBA Home Office Grants	£515,248
Welsh Government	£619,054
Refugee Week Wales	£1,268
BBB Children In Need	£18,800
Comic Relief	£18,810
Hardship Fund Donations	£11,530
UNRESTRICTED GRANT INCOME	
Grant WCVA	£4,000
UNRESTRICTED FUND (OTHER)	
Subscriptions & Donations	£3,209
Interest Received	£131
Management Fees	£53,216
Sundry Income	£15,317
JRF Research	£3,180
TOTAL INCOME	£1,263,763
ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE	
Pre Status Expenditure	£618,469
Refugee Status Expenditure	£356,224
Influencing Policy & Campaign	£274,674
Governance	£10,265
	£1,259,632
Net Movement In Funds	£4,131
Funds Brought Forward	£207,592
Funds Carried Forward	£211,723



Thanks to our Funders and Donors

Home Office

Comic Relief

Welsh Government

BBC Children in Need

WCVA

All our Donors throughout the year.

Contact us

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Welshrefcouncil

