

**WITH PASSION,
FOR PEOPLE,
IN PARTNERSHIP.**

ABOUT THE REPORT

Welcome to our 2015-2016 Annual Report. The report provides a snapshot of our organisation's activities for the year and highlights the key achievements of each area of work. It sets out the wide range of support offered by WRC, as diverse as ensuring access to welfare entitlements, health, education, housing and homelessness prevention and alleviation services, as well as the promotion of rights, sharing information, work in partnership and facilitating events. It also includes the positive changes we have made in the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. To demonstrate our working impact, this report provides case studies of services users' experiences when accessing Welsh Refugee Council services.

We thank you for taking the time to read the report.

*"I am not a tourist, I
came from war"*
Ziad from Syria



ABOUT US

At the Welsh Refugee Council, we support asylum seekers and refugees, offering a wide range of services as they navigate their way through the UK immigration system and transition into their new life in Wales. For over 25 years, we have been speaking out and providing practical support to those fleeing persecution, conflict, and various forms of injustice and abuse.

WE WORK TO:

- meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales,
- create the active participation of sanctuary seekers in all aspects of life in Wales,
- positively influence perceptions of asylum and migration in Wales and
- evidence our effectiveness to stakeholders.

WHAT WE DO



REFUGEE MOVE-ON SUPPORT

We deliver individual casework in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham to people who have been granted refugee status or other forms of leave to remain within the asylum system.



SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

We deliver paralegal advice and assistance to women seeking asylum.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES

We deliver play support activities for families with young children that help children deal with the trauma of fleeing from persecution.



SPEAKING OUT

We speak out to ensure that policy and practice meets the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, promotes their rights and challenges discrimination.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING SUPPORT

We deliver thrice-weekly interactive teaching sessions to asylum seekers and refugees, helping them build their skills and confidence in readiness for further education, employment or training.



MIGRATION

We provide up to date information about Migration in Wales and can help with the development of local strategic migration frameworks.



PARTNERSHIPS

All our work is undertaken in partnership with organisations across Wales, the UK and Europe to deliver the best outcomes for asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.



OTHER SERVICES

Our other support services include destitution and hardship support, partnership drop-in services, conversation groups, a photography project and referral to food banks in Wales.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

After another year of many opportunities and challenges, it gives me great pleasure to report on the significant achievements of the Welsh Refugee Council. We remain resolute in our efforts to support people who come to Wales for sanctuary and safety.

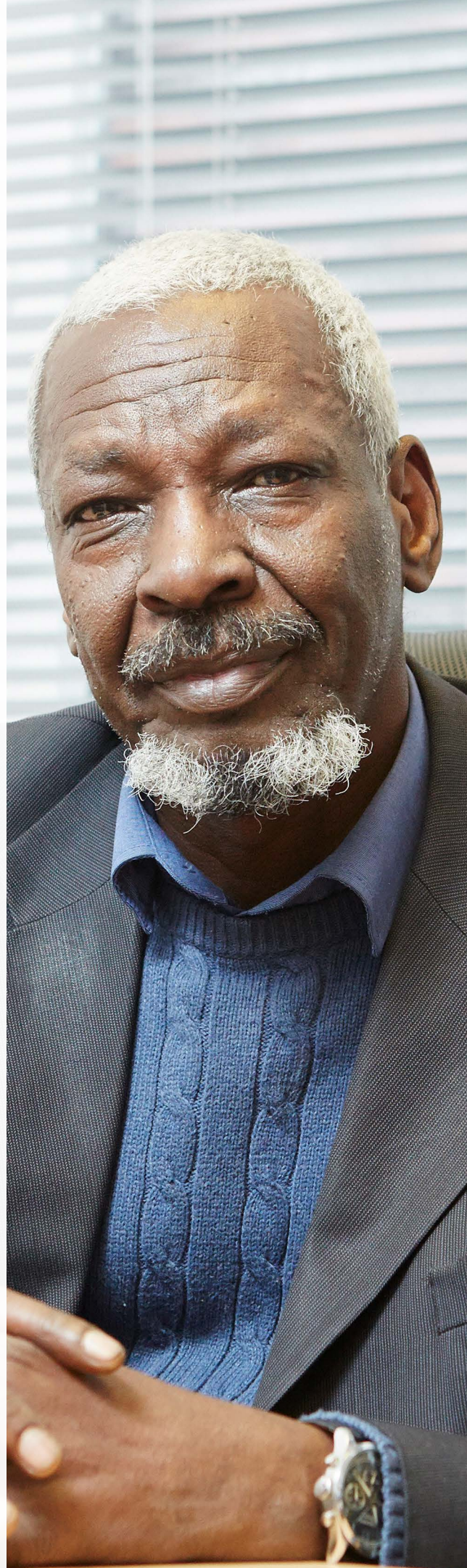
This year we work with over 6000 asylum seekers and refugees to ensure that they get the help they need to transition into their new lives in Wales. We added new projects to our scope of work to achieve this, including our Migration Service in partnership with COMPAS (Centre on Migration, Policy and Society), our Education and training project which helps prepare people for employment and our Women Get active project which encourages asylum seeking and refugee women get out and get active.

We believe that, for people to receive the sanctuary they need, we must continue to inform and improve public attitudes towards them and our influencing activity does just that. We argue for better conditions for people, we support advocacy campaigns and took an active role in forming and leading the new Welsh Refugee Coalition, particularly in developing and promoting the Seven Steps to Sanctuary; which called for a more humane and better funded asylum system, an end to destitution, a strong Welsh response to UK legislation, the development of a migration strategy for Wales and a move forward with the idea of Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.

As an organisation, we continue to implement improvement activities that respond to the needs of people using our services. We strive to both build on our successes and diversify our activities to remain current and develop our position as the leading organisation supporting and amplifying the voices of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We are grateful to all our funders, supporters and well-wishers who play a pivotal role in our existence and future longevity. I wish to say a special thank you to the Welsh Government whose commitment to inclusion and equality in Wales is welcomed and aligns with the Welsh Refugee Council's ethos.

Our staff and volunteers are committed and passionate and without them, our vision would not be met nor our impact achieved. I thank them for their unwavering hard work and dedication and I look forward to another year of sanctuary provision with new horizons that ensure that we can achieve our vision of protection, safety and dignity for all.

Salah Mohamed
Chief Executive



FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR

This report marks Welsh Refugee Council activity during its 25th anniversary. It's clear that the work the organisation does to improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales is just as vital today as it was when it was founded. Given the current refugee crisis, in many ways, its role is more important now than ever.

Welsh Refugee Council continues to champion the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Last year, it again spoke out when people's rights had been undermined. This directly contributed to improved housing and ending of some clearly discriminatory practices. It campaigned for the UK to take its fair share of responsibility to provide safety to those fleeing conflict and persecution. Whilst the UK government's announcement in January 2016 that it would resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees is to be welcomed, we know that much more could and should be done.

As well as this campaigning and influencing role, the report sets out the work staff and volunteers continue to do, with partners, to provide a range of support services to people who have found sanctuary in Wales. This ranges from legal information and housing advice through to English language classes.

It's not just the services right at the sharp that matter. I'm hugely proud of the work Welsh Refugee Council does to engage refugees and asylum seekers and local communities in arts, sports and cultural activities. These provide vital opportunities for people to come together to do the things that make us all human; to express ourselves, to have fun and to learn from each other as equals. This is vital to help people in Wales understand the refugee experience and to enable refugees to rebuild their lives.

Central to the organisation's success are the skills and passion of our staff and volunteers. Similarly, we would only be able to do a fraction of the work we do without our diverse partners.

Welsh Refugee Council also benefits from a committed Trustee Board. It has been an immense privilege and pleasure to serve Welsh Refugee Council as a Trustee and Chair. This year I'll be standing down, but I'm delighted to see the considerable knowledge and experience that new Trustees are bringing.

I wish the organisation all the best for the future.

Anna Nicholl
Chair



ANOTHER YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS



25,000+

Website visits



8000

Visitors at Refugee
Week Wales events



6911

Face to face advice
and support
sessions



2438

Twitter followers



2258

Refugees
supported



1924

Facebook likes



1866

Job seekers
allowance support



1453

Housing support



1313

New refugees
supported



520

Families supported



503

ESOL learners



367

Bank accounts
opened

**361**

Referrals

**210**People supported
with health needs**184**Food parcels
to those facing
destitution**181**Hardship fund
support**92**Legal advice
support for women**87**Social Services
support**35**Partnerships and
collaborations**26**Positive media
stories**22**

Volunteers

**10**Legal and policy
briefings**3**Migration
trends reports**1**Political
hustings

SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKING WOMEN

Women claiming asylum experience specific issues that can make their asylum claim even more complex and difficult to assess. Welsh Refugee Council **supported 92 women and their families with paralegal advice** and support to help them better present their asylum claim to the Home Office and to ensure that the impact of experiences were heard and considered by those making decisions about their future.

ALIA'S STORY

Alia left her home country of Albania in 2014 and was brought to the UK by traffickers because of fleeing a forced marriage arranged by her father. Upon arrival, she was met by 2 men who locked her in a room and forced her to work as a prostitute. Later that year she was helped to escape, but fell pregnant and was eventually taken to the Home Office where she claimed asylum. After a negative decision by the Home Office which disbelieved she was a victim of trafficking, WRC supported Alia through a judicial review. We worked closely with Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors who facilitated the work of experts on the issue and developed the witness statement needed for the review; during which time, Alia was about to give birth to her first child.

An emergency application to the Home Office to reconsider the decision was made and the Home Office agreed that Alia had been a victim of trafficking and was in need of protection. Alia was granted leave to remain and is now being supported by the Move-on team at the Welsh Refugee Council.



FROM ASYLUM SEEKER TO REFUGEE

From support with housing, getting children into schools, to driving in the UK, **we gave 6911 people face to face support** and advice to people who gained refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave or indefinite leave to remain as part of our Move-On Service.

OKOT'S STORY

Okot is a 32-year-old Sudanese man and refugee living in Wrexham. He was a victim of trafficking and lives alone in Wrexham. He became homeless after losing his accommodation and was facing destitution. With support and advice from a WRC caseworker, Okot was able to secure temporary accommodation until a more permanent solution could be found. With further employment support and increased confidence, he is now exploring his employment options.

Okot says "I cannot imagine my life without the help of the Welsh Refugee Council, my accommodation is only temporary, but at least I am not on the street."

*"Your wake up
every morning and
your pray. Lord Let it
be today"*
Asylum seeker
from Somalia



SUPPORT THROUGH PLAY

Asylum-seeking and refugee children can often show signs of trauma and their families can experience poverty and destitution as they make their way through the asylum process. Our Play Support Service provided play **support to 229 children and their families** to help children manage the emotional impact of their experiences. This work is done in partnership with the Bethel Church in Newport and Trinity Centre in Cardiff.

JENNY'S STORY

Three-year Jenny and her family have been asylum seekers since 2010. She attends two groups each week and day trips since she was three months old. Since that time, Jenny has moved three times which has had a negative impact on her confidence and social skills. The group visits improved her confidence and she loves to help organise the activities, play chase and "cook" in the home corner for the other children.

A fourth house move far away from the group and the removal of support meant that Jenny was absent from the group and the family was made homeless and ended up in a hostel. A visit to them revealed a distressed mother and a family living in a room with one single bed. Despite this, Jenny seemed calm and was more interested in showing off her dressed-up doll than the situation the family was forced into. She sang to herself and her mum said she happily plays "group" and tidy up, mimicking the play group she attended.

This helped her forget Jenny unsuitable surroundings. Some weeks later, the family was given accommodation closer to the play group which she continues to attend. "Jenny" has remained as enthusiastic as ever and loves to organise the play sessions and make new friends.

PREPARING FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

A vital part of starting a life in a new country is the ability to speak the local language. Our creative teaching sessions offer ESOL classes and Education and Development opportunities to asylum seekers and refugees at various levels of learning. This year a total of **503 learners attended** one or more of our 8 ESOL (English for Second or Other Language) classes held each week in Cardiff.

ADNAN'S STORY

Adnan is a doctor and graduate from Syria and has extensive experience of working with autistic children. He attended our ESOL classes and was supported to apply for a place at Cardiff and Vale College to study Health and Social care. Through WRC's membership with UK NARIC, we obtained formal recognition of his qualifications and confirmed that his Ph.D. from Damascus University was equivalent to a Ph.D. at a UK higher education institution. We supported him to network with those working in the field of child autism in Cardiff and Adnan will soon start work at the Wales Autism Research Institute at Cardiff University as a Research Assistant. Adnan has also applied to be an Education Mentor through our READ scheme (Refugee Education Access Development).

Adnan says:

"Personally, I have received a significant amount of support from the Welsh Refugee Council and because of this help I can develop in my area of work and live the life I want in this country. Thank you, Welsh Refugee Council".

The education and employment would not be possible without the hard work of the student teachers who volunteer every week to deliver the ESOL classes.



SPEAKING OUT

Our influencing work is far reaching and engages all stakeholders in conversations and actions about migration in Wales. A key activity this year include, taking a **lead role in developing the new Welsh Refugee Coalition**, a group of over 20 organisations working together in the collective interest of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We also hosted a **political hustling in Wrexham** with representatives from all the major parties in Wales committing to take actions to **help make Wales a Nation of Sanctuary**. We also collected and distributed **evidence of hate crimes and incidences in Wales** to stakeholders and joined a successful nationwide campaign which resulted in the **banning of red wristbands being worn** by asylum seekers to access meals at the initial accommodation housing. "It is humiliating and shameful" said one person.

Through the stories of two asylum seekers and refugees, we shared with a **BBC audience of over 427,000, the challenges of being in the asylum process** and why people should be given an opportunity to have new futures in Wales. Our media work also included promoting and making media representations at BBC Radio Wales, ITV Wales, Cardiff Radio, Made in Cardiff TV, Alt Cardiff and other major online print media, about our work, as well as about Refugee Week celebrations, delivering messages of welcome and positive perceptions of people new to Wales. We join friends and stood up against racism at a Cardiff March joined with asylum seekers and refugee volunteers.

We held **in-classroom presentations and awareness raising sessions** with secondary and primary schools across Wales to increase awareness about asylum and migration to students in collaboration with asylum seekers and refugees who shared their stories and experiences about life in their country and their new life in Wales. We **asked the Welsh Government to do more** to increase the number of people being relocated to Wales through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme (SVPRP) and broaden the response to support people who are already in Wales. We held consultations with **80 asylum seekers, refugees and migrants** gathering their views to inform the **Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan objectives**.

WORK ON MIGRATION

In partnership with the Oxford Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), our Migration Service seeks to increase access to information about migration in Wales. The project started late in 2015 and has produced significant results.

The project has published **10 Legal and Policy Briefings** and **3 Migration Trend Reports** and has delivered **8 training courses** and a migration enquiry email service, all of which are designed to promote an understanding of migration in Wales. The service has also **supported 2 local authorities in South Wales** to identify good practice in migrant integration and develop a strategic framework on migration to improve the wellbeing of communities, keep children and adults safe from harm and harness the economic benefits of migration.

WOMEN GET ACTIVE

We piloted a 12-month fitness programme for asylum seeking women in partnership with **YMCA Cardiff** and sponsored by **Sports Wales**. The women meet weekly to participate in dance, fitness classes and a basketball session with crèche support for women with children. During 2015, **100 women participated** in the project and benefited from reduced isolation, improved fitness levels, increased confidence and meeting new people.

MABEL'S STORY

"Living on £36 a week, I find it very hard to manage with 2 children and finding money for necessities. In the summer, I often have to walk the 8 miles to and from my home to attend the sessions which can be helpful as well. The classes enabled me not just to exercise and keep physically fit but remove the isolation that I felt and helped me make friends with other women".

fitness health children crèche month
confident help session support
participate amongst develop WOMEN weekly
isolation resulted sports project YMCA
seeking increase programme
partnerships basketball making
classes

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership working is at the forefront of our work and without it, we would not be able to deliver many of the services which greatly help to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We currently **partner and collaborate with over 35 organisations** to support and maintain our services provision and provide valuable and much-needed work in areas that are outside our scope of work.

Newport Council says *"we value the contributions of the work undertaken by the Welsh Refugee Council, it demonstrates a high degree of partnership working and contributes effectively to the services provided by the Council. Welsh Refugee Council is a key strategic partner in the prevention of homelessness in the City".*

REFUGEE WEEK WALES

Refugee Week Wales takes place each in June and 2015 was no exception. The 2015 event was funded by the **Arts Council of Wales** and **hosted 15 art and community events across Wales**. It included a launch at Oasis Cardiff hosted by the then Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths Assembly Member and stalls, workshops, exhibition, drama, children's' activities and music from across the globe at the Riverfront in Newport, a play by refugees and asylum seekers, performances, a map of the world feature capturing the diversity of the audience at the **Wales Millennium Centre**, a celebratory event with a joint impromptu performance by Lutnia Polish Choir, a Welsh traditional choir and Zimbabwe choir - Zim Voices in partnership with Oriel Wrecsam Gallery. Over 7,000 people from diverse backgrounds attended the events in June 2015.



"I have never done anything like this before, the audience was amazing. I learned not to judge people, all sorts of people walking in and out".

Audience member

VOLUNTEERING

A total of 29 volunteers help run our reception service, deliver casework support to asylum seekers and refugees, teach at our ESOL classes and support staff to undertaking our finance and influencing activities. Our volunteers play a vital role in helping to build the capacity of the organisation and meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Alongside our caseworkers, they offer support to our service users, manage our reception facility, participate in events and are great advocates for WRC and its work.



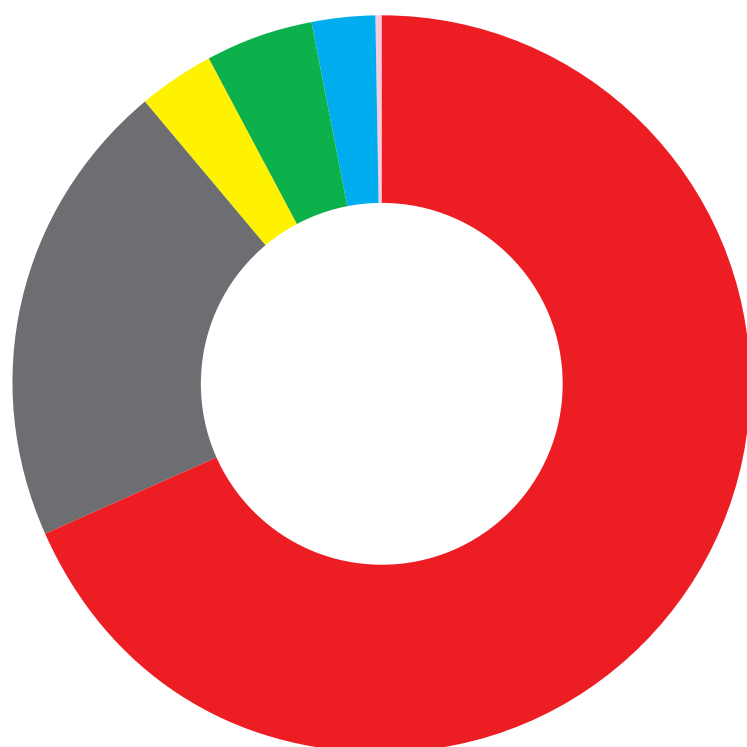
"Volunteering at the Welsh Refugee Council is very fulfilling, to go home knowing that you have put someone's mind at ease or help them is very satisfying, meeting them and hearing their different stories is very inspiring, it is hard work but knowing that you have made a difference to someone makes it worthwhile".

Davina from Pakistan

"Volunteering at the Welsh Refugee Council made me feel respected and valued"

Mustapha from the Gambia

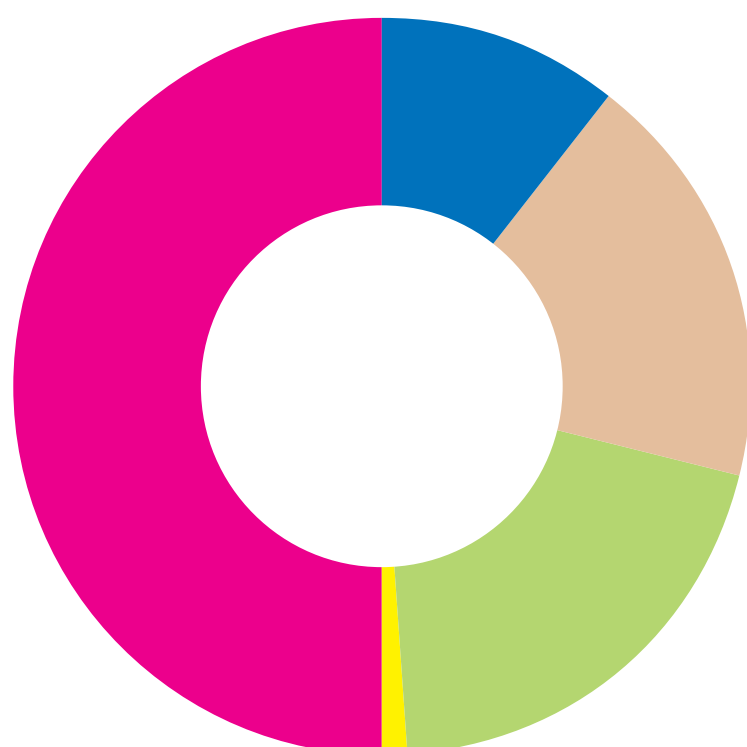
HOW WE SPEND OUR MONEY



INCOME

- Welsh Government
£441,913.00
- Other Grant Funders
£132,045.00
- Subscriptions & Donations
£20,219.00
- Interest Received
£159.00
- Income from Grant Exit
£31,108.00
- Management Fees
£17,420.00
- Sundry Income
£1,310.00

TOTAL
£644,174.00



EXPENDITURE

- Asylum Seekers Services
£141,132.00
- Refugee Services
£242,093.00
- Influencing Policy and Campaigning
£268,816.00
- Governance
£11,095.00

● **TOTAL**
£663,136.00

NET
-£18,982.00

RESERVE FOR 2014
£245,421.00

RESERVE FOR 2015
£226,458.00

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all our funders for their support for sanctuary provision in Wales and continued investment in it's development. A very special thank you to our loyal supporters, individual and community groups who give so much to support people seeking sanctuary. We remain grateful for all your efforts and hopeful for your continued support in the future.



Dinas Noddfa Caerdydd
Cardiff City of Sanctuary



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Would you like to get involved in our work to support sanctuary seekers in Wales? Here are a few ways you can do so:

- donate to any one of our valuable services or donate food items, clothing, toys, toiletries or sanitary wear for people facing destitution,
- volunteer with us or join a campaign that supports asylum seekers and refugees in Wales,
- or become a member of the Welsh Refugee Council to receive updates on what is happening in the sector and the WRC or join our facebook or twitter pages.

To contact us Tel: **02920 489800** or email us on **fundraising@wrc.wales**

OUR OFFICES

Cardiff

120 - 122 Broadway
Cardiff CF24 1NJ

Tel: 02920 489 800

Mondays, Tuesdays,
Wednesday, Thursdays
and Fridays:
9:30am - 5:00pm

Closed for lunch:
12:30pm - 2:00pm

Newport

125 Lower Dock Street
Newport NP20 1EG

Tel: 01633 266 420

Mondays, Tuesdays
and Thursdays:
9:30am - 4:00pm

Closed for lunch:
12:30pm - 2:00pm

Wednesdays
and Fridays:
9:30am - 12:30pm only

Swansea

49 Walter Road
Swansea SA1 5PW

Tel: 01792 630 180

Mondays and Tuesdays
and Thursday:
9:30am - 4:00pm

Wednesdays:
9:30am - 1:00pm

Fridays:
9:30am - 4:00pm.

Closed for lunch:
Mondays, Tuesdays
and Thursdays:
1:00pm - 2:00pm

Wrexham

33 Grosvenor Road
Wrexham LL11 1BT

Tel: 01978 355 818

Mondays and Tuesdays:
9:00am - 4:00pm

Closed for lunch:
1:00pm - 2:00pm

OUR TRUSTEES FOR 2015

Anna Nicholl - Chair

Maureen Gower - Vice Chair

Mohamed Field - Treasurer

Antoine Azangisa

Caron Jennings

Claire Cunliffe

Denebo Wario

Nicolas Webb

Phillip Cole

Themba Moyo

info@wrc.wales

www.wrc.wales



@Welshrefcouncil



Welshrefcouncil

