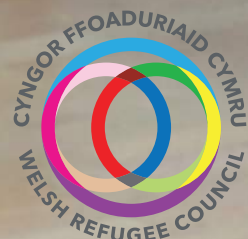


2017-2018 Annual Report



wrc.wales



Welcome

Welcome to the Welsh Refugee Council's Annual Report for 2017 - 2018.

In this report, you will learn more about the people who are in Wales due to displacement, how we help them and the changes we have undertaken to develop the quality of support provide to them.

At the forefront of this report are our accomplishments for the year.

We hope that you will get a good sense of the impact our work makes to asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.

Thank you.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees at Greenman Festival

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Foreword from our Chair



2017 -2018 has seen continued growth for the organisation as we work to cement our position as the leading organisation within the sector here in Wales and its future sustainability.

The Welsh Refugee Council led Asylum Rights Programme (ARP) is well on its way providing high-quality services to people seeking asylum and raising awareness of the issues of migration in Wales. We are happy to report that people new to Wales are now benefiting from a service that meets their needs and strengthens the sector's engagement with them. A Big Lottery funded grant has enabled the organisation to employ additional staff to improve our service provision and management capacity and modernised our IT and communications infrastructure.

An Arts Council of Wales grant provided opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to develop and showcase their creative skills, through a programme of artist-led workshops and training delivered in partnership with major arts institutions across Wales. The workshops will lead to the creation of performances and exhibitions at a variety of venues within and around Refugee Week Wales 2018.

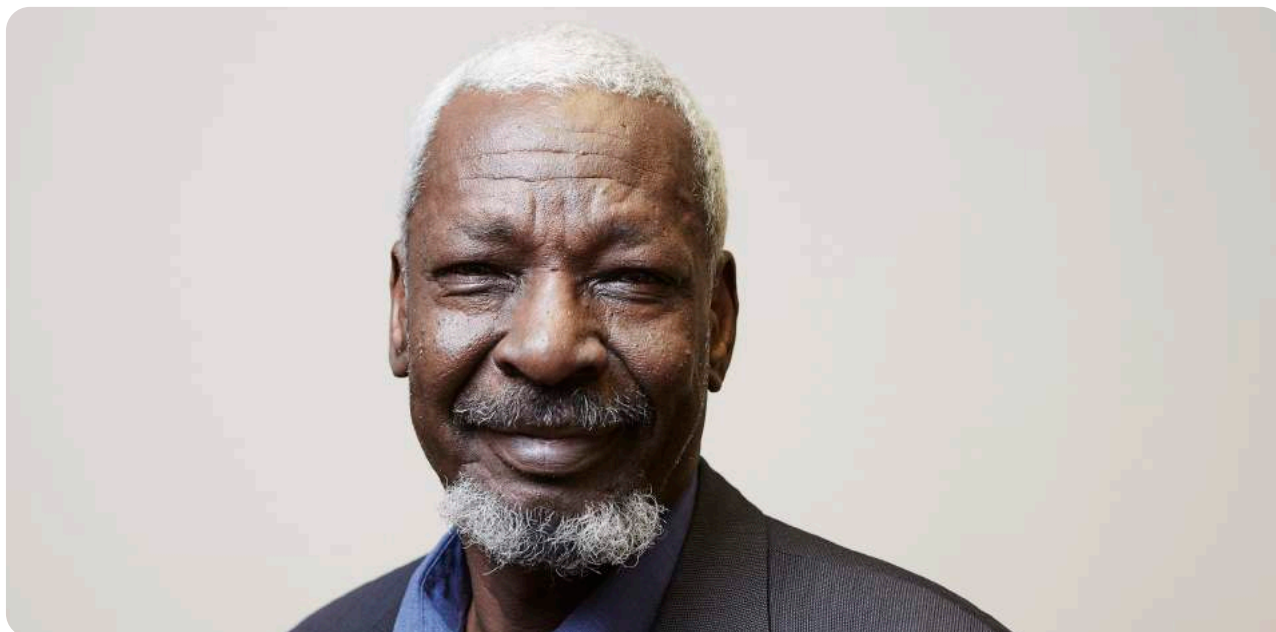
A highlight this year was witnessing the graduation ceremony of 54 asylum seekers and refugees from the Aspire Summer School Programme at Cardiff University. The innovative English Language and Developmental courses they studied brought them a step closer to achieving a higher education qualification. The joy and pride exhibited by the graduates and their families were tangible.

I am especially proud of the contributions made by staff and volunteers, whose hard work and dedication effect change, influences political debate and ensures the financial stability and sustainability of the organisation, all overseen and coordinated by our CEO, Salah Mohamed.

As Chair, I would also like to acknowledge the work of our trustee board and I am grateful for their support to me and the organisation. Their knowledge, experience and expertise effectively steer the organisation in the right direction. As I step down from my role as Chair next year, I continue to be both awed and humbled by the effects of staff, volunteers and trustees. It is a privilege to work with all of you.

Maureen Gower – Chair

Message from the Chief Executive Officer



2017 – 2018 has been both challenging and exciting for the Welsh Refugee Council and I believe we met these challenges head on, despite the high levels of turbulence and change in the sector and external environment. Over the past year, the Welsh Refugee Council has been focusing on building its capacity, not just for the organisation but for asylum seekers and refugees who have seen reductions in the vital services they need to find sanctuary. As an organisation supporting people new to Wales, we are delighted to have acquired funding support for the new Asylum Rights Programme for Wales and the continued funding support for our Move On project for refugees by the Welsh Government. Investment from the Big Lottery saw a well needed plug in the gap for support staff and better accessibility to service users and stakeholders.

As you read through, you will get to know how our work helps by alleviating poverty amongst asylum seekers, ensuring that asylum support payments are quickly reinstated when withdrawn inappropriately, feeding into our anti-homelessness and destitution agenda by ensuring that people are appropriately housed post asylum, advocating and supporting campaigns that inform positively on the asylum issues in Wales and developing mutually beneficial relationships with supporters, partners and funders to help develop the organisation and the refugee sector in Wales in general.

I am always very grateful for the staff, volunteers, supporters and funders, who together are the driving force that enable support for asylum seekers and refugees in Wales, after all, the more we strive to make Wales welcoming to everyone, the greater the chance at having the best society we can have. Gratitude is also extended to the Board of Trustees who volunteered their time and efforts to keep the organisation well governed and work towards achieving the strategic goals of the charity.

Salah Mohamed



One Year at a Glance

2,956

Refugees
supported with
life after asylum

930

People supported
while they make
their asylum claim

60

Nationalities
supported

301

Children and their
family attended our
play group

54

Adults graduated
from a summer
school programme
at Cardiff University

223

Toy donations to
children

114

Rhyme Time Play
sessions for families

33

Refugee Week Wales
events with 1,000
people attending

239

Food parcels
distributed

7

Asylum seekers
and refugees
voices in the media

3,463

Twitter
followers

2,241

Facebook
likes

Asylum Rights Programme

3,001 Advice and Support Sessions
930 Adults Supported

The Asylum Rights Programme (ARP) is a partnership of seven organisations across Wales providing expert advice and support to people seeking asylum as they navigate the UK asylum system. The partnership is led by the Welsh Refugee Council and consists of Asylum Justice, BAWSO, City of Sanctuary, DPIA, EYST and TGP Cymru.

Funded by the Welsh Government, the programme started in April 2017, with work delivered from bases in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham. The project works to strengthen the skills and capacity of asylum seekers, give them a voice and raise awareness of migration issues in Wales to the general public.

Preventing Poverty

Khyaliben fled India and subsequently claimed asylum, because the man she fell in love with, in the UK was not welcomed by her family and community being from Pakistan and of a different nationality and faith. This meant that it would be dangerous for her to go back home and live life with family and friends in her home country. Married with a child and pregnant with another, she was refused a maternity grant from the Home Office on the grounds that she was late with submitting her application. She was not informed of the limitations on time to apply.

An ARP caseworker assessed her situation and successfully liaised with the Home Office to issue the grant. With this grant, Khyaliben was able to buy much-needed baby supplies to look after her child.

About the Welsh Refugee Council, she says

"The people here are so helpful, and the advisors are nice, they explain yes and no to me very well and they know and understand how to help me, and I like that"



Refugee Well Housing Project

2,956 Refugees

6,913 Advice sessions

The Refugee Well Housing Project (Move -On) delivers expert advice and support to people when they receive a positive decision on their asylum claim. Advice and support are available on a wide range of matters including housing, homelessness, finance, education, employment and family issues. This provision is necessary as when people receive a positive decision, they have 28 days in which to leave Home Office accommodation and subsistence support. The project's aim is to help reduce poverty and homelessness amongst refugees in Wales. From a wholistic assessment of people's needs to identify the right service for them, to accessing housing and entitlements, to addressing further needs, the project ensures that refugees needs are met to help them feel settled and welcomed in Wales.

Ishard's Story

Ishard arrived in the UK in 2012, after fleeing war in his home country. He applied for asylum and waited for a response from the Home Office. When he was sent to Wales, he was an enthusiastic and well minded man whose mental health quickly deteriorated after becoming a victim of fraud and having his identity and refugee status documents stolen. As a result of the fraud, he wrongfully incurred debts, began missing appointments, refused help, and developed mental health problems. His situation worsened after he was imprisoned but was subsequently found not guilty and was released.

Ishard received care and support from the Move On project which helped him find a home and to access the right health care he needed. He now lives independently and requires minimal support from our Move-On team



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Women's Paralegal Support

137 Women Supported with Advice and Practical Support

368 Casework Sessions

Women's Paralegal Support

Some women claim asylum due to gender specific issues such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation or human trafficking. Our Women's Paralegal project provides paralegal advice and support to build trust and encourage full disclosure by women of their experiences to enable them to get a just decision, access to support in the absence of legal aid, and help with the removal of unfair conditions of their leave to remain in the UK.

"Hi, my name is Hanifa, and I am an enthusiastic mother of four young children from Western Africa. The project helped me understand my situation and how it relates to my asylum claim. By accessing the project, I felt confident in sharing the details of my experiences to the authorities to help them better assess my situation."



Play Development for Families

376 Children participated
124 Play group Sessions
11 Cinema clubs
01 Holiday programme
223 Toys, Clothing and Baby Item deliveries

In its ninth year, the project provides play support to the hardest to reach children arriving in Cardiff and Newport. The project helps them deal with the trauma of fleeing persecution. In partnership with The Trinity Centre, children are given play opportunities, access to an out of school holiday programme and trips that allow them to learn, be creative and just be children.

Melissa and Michael's story

Melissa is six and her brother Michael is four and they attend the group session in Cardiff with their mother. Melissa is a huge support to her mum and regularly translates for her. The both were born in the UK but ended up in the asylum process when their mother claimed asylum in London. Being in asylum accommodation, they were not in school and were not always able to attend the play group session. They spent most of their days attending asylum appointments with their mother. At the group sessions they thrived, regularly helping to set up and playing well with the other children. Melissa and her brother have now been given a school place and are doing very well.

Mum says

"This is our special place. You know, no one really talks about their case here, it's just you and your baby having fun. Just like a home, playing and singing. I love it"

Refugees Working in Wales Project

580 ESOL Students
54 Summer School Graduates

People new to Wales can be disadvantaged in accessing education and employment, despite having overseas qualifications and experience. The project provides weekly interactive ESOL classes to people at all levels, as well as pathways to education, employment and training.

A highlight of the project has been the Aspire Summer School Programme, which saw 54 asylum seekers and refugees graduate from a summer school in partnership with Cardiff University, many of whom have secured places at master's level at various universities in the UK.

Speaking about the programme Mohamed said,

"The Aspire Summer School organised by WRC and Cardiff University puts me in the first step toward achieving my goals. I have improved my English language and got a high score on IELTS that facilitate my enrolment at the University of Bradford. I did not only benefit academically from the summer school, but I was also able to make new friends that I'm still in contact with. I am currently completing my master's degree and will graduate in December 2018"

As a result of the success of the summer school, the project secured further funding to investigate the barriers to education and employment for forced migrants in deprived areas in Wales from the European Social Fund under the KESS2 scheme, to be delivered in partnership with the University of South Wales.

Dr Mike Chick – Lecturer says

"Over the last 25 years, I have taught English in 5 different countries, in both the state and the private sector. Teaching forced migrants in Wales, has, without any doubt, been the most satisfying, educational experience of my career. Their resilience, spirit and will to learn has made me stand back in awe on countless occasions"

Influencing



As part of our influencing work, we continued our work to support and grow the Welsh Refugee Coalition: sitting on a newly established Executive Board and promoting opportunities to secure commitments for Wales to become a Nation of Sanctuary.

We worked with the Welsh Refugee Coalition to influence the National Assembly for Wales' Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee to launch an inquiry into the experience of asylum seekers in Wales and provided a wealth of evidence to that inquiry. We subsequently worked with Welsh Government to further the recommendations from the committee's *I Used to Be Someone* report.

At the heart of our influencing work in 2017 - 2018 was our focus on highlighting and addressing destitution. We worked successfully with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and the Department for Work and Pensions to address poverty, hardship and the risk of destitution for refugees related to the issuing of National Insurance numbers. We worked with the British Red Cross to reinstate the Wales No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Forum, in order to provide the third and public sectors in Wales with a strategic forum in which to discuss and respond to destitution amongst people from abroad. We supported the development of local destitution networks in Cardiff and Swansea. We worked with Welsh Government to progress destitution related recommendations from *I Used to Be Someone*. With the Welsh Refugee Coalition, we co-hosted a destitution themed Sanctuary in the Senedd event in January 2018 and supported people with lived experience of destitution to share their experiences and call for change.



Volunteering

45 Volunteers
9 Languages Spoken

Volunteering

Our volunteers are valued members of the Welsh Refugee Council team and this year we were proud to work with 45 people who gave their valuable time and experience. We also said goodbye to 7 volunteers who we are sure will be a great asset to their new place of work.

Marieum volunteered at the Welsh Refugee Council during 2017 as a volunteer advice caseworker, support worker, receptionist and translator.

Speaking about volunteering Marieum said

"At first, I found it difficult as my English was not very good. With encouragement from the staff and managers, I started to really like volunteering and found the roles much easier. I liked communicating with and helping people. My English improved significantly, and translating from English to Arabic, help me develop my English words and learn new words. The Welsh Refugee Council was a great help and treated me very well. My customer service and speaking skills has improved and I feel like I can take it to another employer. I was very shy and now I have confidence to take to my next role."

Our Partnerships



80 Partners across Wales

We exist to improve the treatment of and the overall prospects of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. However, this would not be possible without our partners whose work helps create the wholistic approach to supporting sanctuary seekers in Wales. From amazing work done by the drop-in centres across Wales to help with hosting refugee related events that promote sanctuary in Wales and advocating to effect change on policy issues, our partners and collaborators are one the driving forces to helping making Wales a welcoming place for all.

They include:

Asylum Justice, BAWSO, British Red Cross, Cardiff University, Displaced People in Action, EYST, Just Across in Wrexham, Oasis Cardiff, Oxfam Cymru, South Wales University, Swansea Waterfront Museum, TGP Cymru, The Sanctuary Project, Trinity Centre, The Riverfront, Wales Millennium Centre, Welsh Government, Wales Migration Partnership and Welsh Refugee Coalition.

Thank you.

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme



68 People Within the Scheme

14 Syrian Families Given Support

The relocation scheme provides Syrian people, from refugee camps in the middle east, with leave to remain in the UK. Under the scheme people are welcomed by Local Authorities across the UK, including Wales. At Welsh Refugee Council, we have contracts with Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taff Councils to support the Syrian families in their homes, to help them integrate into Welsh society and become more independent.

The service starts with assistance on arrival at the airport and goes on to include registering with a GP, getting children into school, opening a bank account, understanding life in the UK, helping the family to look for work or apply for benefits, as well as making referrals to work ready agencies and employment providers.



Refugee Week Wales

124 Workshops

300 Asylum Seekers and Refugee Participants

300 Partner Organisations

Funded by the Arts Council of Wales, the Gwneud Noddfa programme of workshops and events ran from June 2017 to August 2018 in Abergavenny, Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham with arts and community partners. There were 124 workshops, half of which were led by artists from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds and were attended by over 300 asylum seeker and refugee participants. They included creative writing, dance, illustration, painting, photography, singing, storytelling and theatre. The work created at the workshops was shared with Refugee Week Wales 2018 audiences of over 500 people.

A highlight of the programme was the ballet dance classes for children in the asylum process. Their parents said

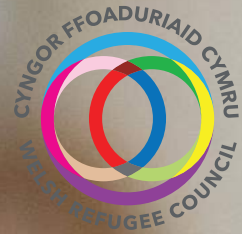
"This is an amazing opportunity for asylum seeker children. The teachers are really good. Please continue these classes in the longer run as we don't want our little ones to stop after the performances."

"My daughter enjoys the dance classes. She is not shy anymore."



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales

Working with Welsh Media



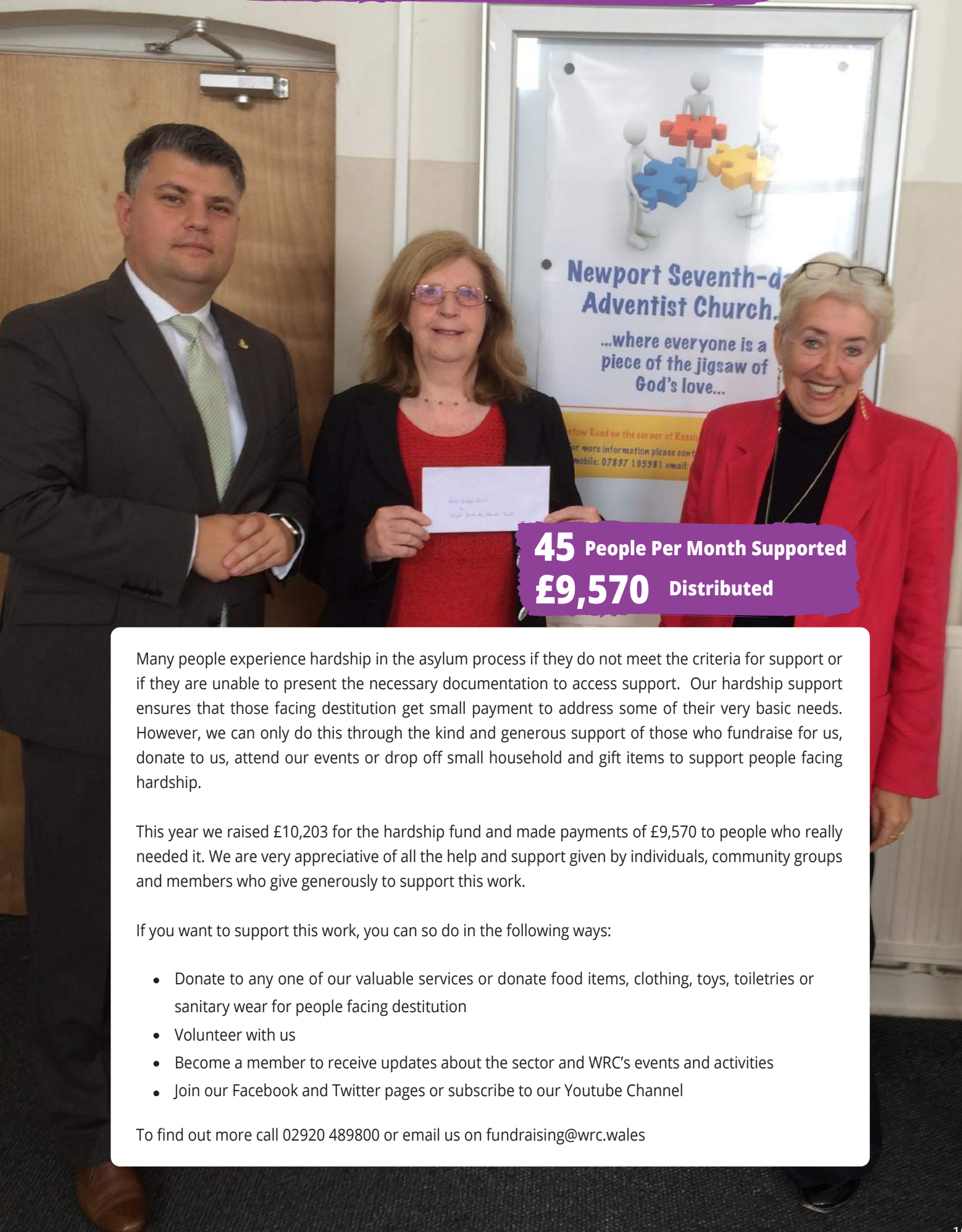
7 Media Representations



In Wales, we appreciate that the Welsh Media are positive about the messaging on asylum seekers and refugee issues. Some of our media work included:

- We highlighted the benefits of migration on a live BBC Radio Wales Programme and provide key resource and qualitative information, including personal testimonies, to inform on the development of the programme.
- We shared our media guide to working with asylum seekers and refugees with media outlets and student journalists to provide qualitative information on best practice when making media representation with sanctuary seekers in Wales.
- We called for more to be done to support people facing destitution on Wales Online.

Hardship Support and Donations



45 People Per Month Supported
£9,570 Distributed

Many people experience hardship in the asylum process if they do not meet the criteria for support or if they are unable to present the necessary documentation to access support. Our hardship support ensures that those facing destitution get small payment to address some of their very basic needs. However, we can only do this through the kind and generous support of those who fundraise for us, donate to us, attend our events or drop off small household and gift items to support people facing hardship.

This year we raised £10,203 for the hardship fund and made payments of £9,570 to people who really needed it. We are very appreciative of all the help and support given by individuals, community groups and members who give generously to support this work.

If you want to support this work, you can so do in the following ways:

- 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
- Become a member to receive updates about the sector and WRC's events and activities
- Join our Facebook and Twitter pages or subscribe to our Youtube Channel

To find out more call 02920 489800 or email us on fundraising@wrc.wales

How We Spend Our Money

The Welsh Refugee Council works to ensure that it has the necessary financial resources to continue its business for the foreseeable future. In this year, 91% of our income went towards directly supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.

A great big thank you to all our funders who continue to support asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. We are grateful for the generosity of our donors and fundraiser, individuals, groups and organisations, who work tirelessly with us to ensure that Wales is a welcoming place for sanctuary seekers.

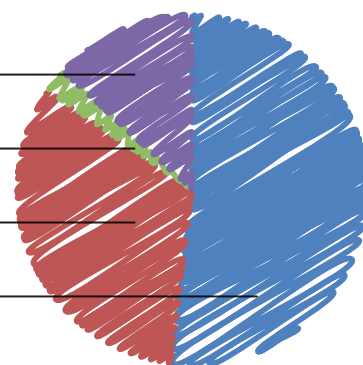
Income

13% Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme

02% Donations and Subscriptions

33% Grants and Trusts

52% Welsh Government



Expenditure

14% Increasing capacity of service provision

3% Changing perceptions and celebrating the contribution of asylum seekers and refugees

1% Empowering people to speak up about hate crime

9% Operating Cost

15% Reducing homelessness and integration

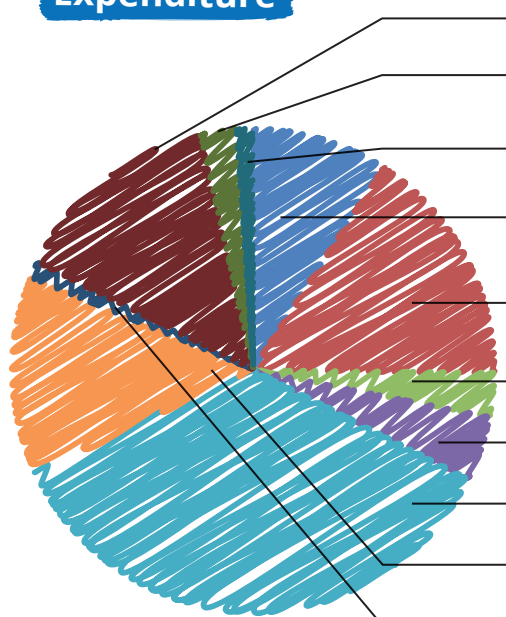
3% Enabling learning and and reducing the effect of trauma through play

5% Paralegal

35% Asylum Seeker support awareness raising

14% Syrian integration in Wales

1% Enabling access to the labour market



About the Welsh Refugee Council

Welsh Refugee Council started in 1990 by a small group of refugees, volunteers, politicians, service providers and community organisations at a time when there was no specialist services available in Wales for sanctuary seekers.

Since then, the charity has grown to 28 staff members, 45 volunteers and 10 trustees, all committed to protecting the rights of people seeking asylum and refugees in Wales and improving the treatment of and prospects for them.

Many of our staff and volunteers are from a migrant or sanctuary seeker background and many of our staff were themselves volunteers. Together they speak 15 different languages and have lived experiences of the asylum process.

We are the Welsh Government's lead national support service agency for people seeking asylum and refugees in Wales. For almost 30 years, we have been working with and empowering people seeking asylum and refugees who are here in Wales seeking safety and the development of new lives post asylum.

As well as providing practical specialist advice and support to people who have experienced persecution, conflict, and various forms of injustice and abuse, we also provide opportunities for people to share their experiences, have their voices heard and influence policy and practice.

Our Mission

To improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales through the delivery of specialist support and influence on policy and practice.

Our Vision

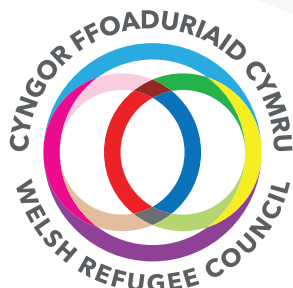
To create a Wales where refugees are welcomed and have access to protection, safety and dignity.

Board of Trustees

Maureen Gower - Chair
Harry Iles – Vice Chair
Naveeda Morgan – Treasurer
Alison Dunnett
Andrea Clarke
Brian Gibbons
Catherine McKeag
Nicholas Webb
Mohamed Field
Gaynor Jones
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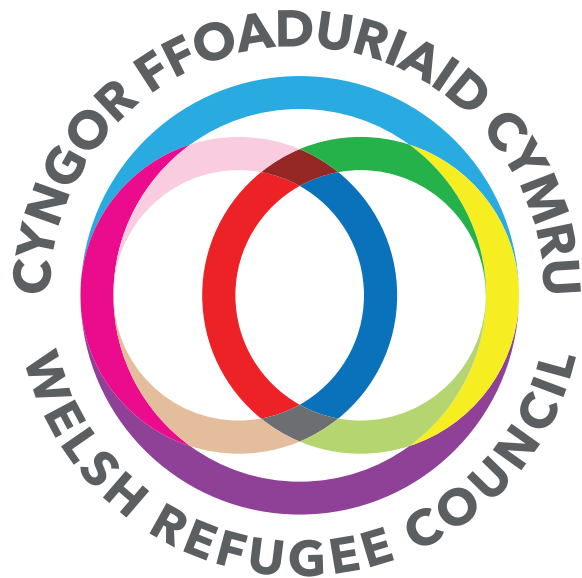
Resigned

Antoine Azangisa
Claire Cunliffe
Nicole Williams



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Cardiff

120 - 122 Broadway
Cardiff
CF24 1NJ

02920 489 800

Newport

66 Lower Dock Street
Newport
NP20 1EF

01633 266 420

Swansea

Swansea YMCA
1 Kingsway
SA1 5JQ

01792 630 180

Wrexham

33 Grosvenor Road
Wrexham
LL11 1BT

01978 355 818



@Welshrefcouncil



Welsh Refugee Council



Thank You



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED



Prisoners of
Conscience
Appeal Fund



thewaterloofoundation*



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales

Ysgoliantrethau Sgiliau Economi Gwybodaeth
Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships

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