



Welsh Refugee Coalition
c/o EYST
11 St Helen's Road
Swansea
SA1 4AB

Home Office

6th May 2021

New Plan for Immigration: Consultation Response

Dear Sir or Madam, ,

I am writing, as Chair of the Welsh Refugee Coalition, to respond to your 'New Plan for Immigration'.

The Welsh Refugee Coalition, established in 2015, is an alliance of 47 organisations working in Wales with asylum seekers and refugees at all stages of their journey, and with the communities in which they live. We work together in the interests of asylum seekers and refugees and the communities that welcome them, to ensure that our resources are used to best effect and to speak with a coherent and strong voice on policies and practices affecting people seeking sanctuary in Wales. Through collaborative work, the Coalition contributes to a more equal, globally responsible Wales with cohesive communities to make a Wales welcoming place of safety where rights are enjoyed and asylum seekers and refugees can thrive.

Like many, we are deeply concerned about the proposed sweeping changes to the asylum system, which we believe will make things more difficult for asylum seekers, especially those who do not arrive through specific pre-arranged routes. We strongly contest the characterisation of such arrivals as "illegal" and remind the Government that under the 1951 Refugee Convention, no person seeking asylum is illegal, regardless of their route to arrive in the UK. We are further concerned that the proposed changes will impact most severely on precisely those people whose lives are under the greatest threat in their home countries, who cannot simply obtain a passport and buy a plane ticket to safety.

Furthermore, we are dismayed at the very short time for which the consultation was running, which was less than 6 weeks, and thus in contravention of the government's own guidelines on public consultations. We also found the consultation to be highly inaccessible, in particular the online questionnaire presented significant barriers to many stakeholders responding.

Our Concerns:

- The most dangerous part of the proposals are that someone's means of arrival will determine how worthy they are of protection in the UK – this is in contravention of the 1951 Refugee Convention and contrary to UNHCR definition.

- Asylum seekers arriving through anything other than resettlement will receive a lesser form of protection, including temporary status, no access to financial support, and limited rights to family reunion. Recognised refugees will live in constant fear of return to persecution or death at any moment.
- It appears that even in the face of strong opposition, there is a movement towards exporting people to offshore prison-like facilities while they wait for a decision on their asylum claim – this is morally inhumane and similar facilities in other countries have been widely condemned for their human rights transgressions.
- The proposals have faced criticism, including from UNHCR, for containing inaccuracies, for misrepresenting the UK's obligations under international law and for weakening the protection available for people fleeing torture and persecution.

Therefore we as a Coalition **strongly oppose** the changes proposed in the 'New Plan for Immigration' and hereby seek to register that view.

Yours sincerely

Rocio Cifuentes
Chair of the Welsh Refugee Coalition