

Gweithgor | Working Group

Cenedl Noddfa | Nation of Sanctuary

12 March 2026

Mynychwyr | Attendees

Welsh Government officials

- Social Justice – Cohesive Communities; Equality & Human Rights
- Community Safety
- Economy – Employability; Business
- Housing
- Education – Tertiary Education; Early Years, Childcare & Play
- Health
- Cymraeg 2050
- Culture

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

Ymddiheuriadau | Apologies

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees and encouraging new participants to introduce themselves in the chat. The chair acknowledged the presence of AI transcription tools but clarified that the meeting would be transcribed and recorded for minute-taking purposes only.

The chair extended Ramadan Kareem wishes to those observing Ramadan.

Apologies were noted from some Welsh Government Health colleagues, who were unable to attend. A summary paper from Health was circulated with the agenda and will be included in the meeting minutes.

The chair apologised for not sharing papers further in advance and confirmed that all relevant documents would be distributed post-meeting.

From the previous meeting, concerns about the “move on” period for asylum seekers were discussed. It was noted that the UK Government has now updated and published their policy: the move on period is set at 42 days after an asylum decision, effective from 09/03/2026. The Welsh Government is reviewing the impact of these changes in Wales and welcomes further discussion or feedback from attendees.

The Welsh Government had previously agreed to organise an in-person Working Group event, but due to resource constraints and the pre-election period, this has been postponed. The intention is to revisit the idea post-Senedd election.

2. ESOL Updates

2.1 Policy and Delivery

The REDACTED – SEC 40(2), Welsh Government provided an overview of ESOL policy, highlighting its role in supporting migrants and refugees, equating ESOL with other essential skills. The policy, last revised in 2019, has focused on equitable access, but recent years have seen rising demand, complex learner needs, and a shift to blended and digital provision, especially for rural areas.

A 2023 review produced 40 recommendations spanning funding, infrastructure, access, delivery, curriculum, and workforce, now being implemented by MEDR.

2.2 Reach Hubs and Learner Trends

Four Reach Hubs (Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Wrexham) continue to standardise ESOL access and assessment, with increased demand, particularly among women for community-based learning. REDACTED – SEC 38(1) is expanding online provision for rural areas. Notable growth in 16–18 year-olds accessing vocational ESOL courses was reported, with positive impacts on confidence and safeguarding.

2.3 Medr Delivery and ESOL Network

The REDACTED – SEC 40(2) described Medr's funding and regulatory role in post-16 education. The ESOL Network, delivered via REDACTED – SEC38(1), meets three times a year to share practice and address challenges, focusing on curriculum review, effective pathways, and progression to mainstream education. 'ESOL Plus' programmes offer subject diversity and study skills to support transitions.

Trauma-informed practice in ESOL and assessment focus were discussed. The annual ESOL Development Day will be held in Cardiff on 16/04/2026. Work is underway on a co-produced self-evaluation framework for ESOL delivery, aligned with regulatory changes from August.

2.4 Questions and Further Discussion

No plans for additional hubs; data collection improvements are ongoing, particularly around equality of opportunity and protected characteristics. The impact of policy changes on ESOL uptake is being monitored.

3. REDACTED – SEC 38(1) Scheme – Refugee Doctors

The REDACTED – SEC 38(1) lead from REDACTED – SEC 38(1), explained the support provided to refugee and asylum-seeker doctors to achieve GMC registration and NHS employment through exam support, tuition, and paid placements. Challenges include increased demand for placements, funding constraints, and potential impacts from the Medical Training Prioritisation Bill, which may disadvantage refugee doctors unless exceptions are made. The scheme is funded by HEIW (part of NHS Wales), with placements arranged across Wales. Lack of funding to support placements is an issue and the chair committed to discussing this further with WG health colleagues. Support for other allied health professionals, such as nurses, is currently limited, with referrals made to REDACTED – SEC 38(1).

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

4. REDACTED – SEC 38(1) Language & Reaccreditation Programme

REDACTED – SEC 38(1) presented their work in Wales, supporting forcibly displaced professionals into employment via language and reaccreditation programmes. Welsh Government funding enabled expansion, new partnerships, and increased outreach, particularly in North and mid Wales. The programme has supported REDACTED – SEC 40(2) clients in Wales, across diverse professions and regions, with case studies demonstrating successful pathways back to employment. Plans to continue growing client numbers in Wales were confirmed. The presentation slides and a flyer are attached to the email with these minutes.

REDACTED – SEC 38(1)

5. REDACTED – SEC 38(1) – Employability Research

The REDACTED – SEC 38(1) lead summarised the REDACTED – SEC 38(1) programme, a partnership between the Welsh Government, REDACTED – SEC 38(1), and REDACTED – SEC 38(1) to advise on the Nation of Sanctuary policy area. Research with employability focus groups (Cardiff, Aberdare, Swansea, Newport, Wrexham) identified gaps in awareness of support programmes, barriers to employment (qualification transfer, childcare, transport, technology), and issues of inequality and discrimination.

Three REDACTED – SEC 38(1) presented recommendations from their findings, which included centralised employment portals, multilingual guidance, private sector partnerships, increased volunteering opportunities, and more flexible, accessible employability support. The importance of employer awareness and simple guidance on employment law for sanctuary seekers was stressed. Calls were made for a Wales-specific volunteering policy for sanctuary seekers.

Presentation slides are attached to the email with these minutes.

The Welsh Government REDACTED – SEC 40(2) reflected on the co-production approach with REDACTED – SEC 38(1), highlighting the value of collaborative focus groups and the integration of findings into procurement and impact assessments for future programmes.

6. Welsh Government Updates and Closing Remarks

Updates on the Sanctuary website and future work, including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, are forthcoming post-election (Senedd election on 07/05/2026, pre-election period starts 08/04/2026). Attendees were thanked for their contributions and ongoing collaboration.

Actions and Next Steps

- Minutes and papers to be circulated post-meeting.
- Information about the ESOL Development Day to be sent by Medr to interested parties.
- Welsh Government: Cohesive Communities team to discuss REDACTED – SEC 38(1) challenges with officials in Health.
- Welsh Government to investigate a list of equality-supporting legislation for circulation.
- Next meeting is anticipated for late May or early June. Dates will be communicated as soon as possible.