

# **Refugee Inclusion Strategy Scoping Report**

A report on issues relevant to the development of the Welsh Assembly Government Refugee Inclusion Strategy.

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# Summary scoping report on interviews with officials

## Introduction

As part of the scoping exercise for the All Wales Refugee Inclusion Policy interviews were held with over 20 Assembly officials across a range of subject areas and a range of grades. Full notes from these meetings are available on request.

A lot of work has been undertaken in some Assembly divisions in order to understand issues relating to refugee inclusion and to address these, including through targeted guidance and funding. In other divisions, some work has been undertaken but in a less systematic way, in others work is beginning and in a few there has been no targeted work to date. To some extent the emphasis of the Assembly's work may reflect the areas assumed to be priorities for refugees and asylum seekers.

## Summary

### *Equality Policy Unit*

The Equality Policy Unit takes overall responsibility for co-ordinating issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers and encouraging these to be mainstreamed across the Assembly's work. The unit provides the secretariat for the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum (AWRPF) and its main policy initiative is the development of the All Wales Refugee Inclusion Policy. In addition, a number of funding streams have been initiated for refugee and asylum seeker related work this year and it is hoped this can be developed further next year.

### *Housing*

The Housing Division has undertaken the most comprehensive work on these issues. A key enabler for this was the establishment of the Housing Sub-Group of the AWRPF at an early stage (even before the AWRPF had met). As a result, the housing division has:

- developed, consulted on and issued guidance for refugee and asylum seeker housing provision;
- developed and is about to consult on an action plan to take forward issue relating to asylum seekers and refugees both directly relating to housing provision and more broadly;
- used the policy framework to deliver funding to support refugee and asylum seeker housing, including the Refugee Well Housing Project which funds the *Move On* services and another which has won a national housing award;
- commissioned research on the profile of refugee and asylum seekers in Wales and their housing needs in order to underpin the policy.

The division has many ideas on how the work around asylum seekers and refugees can now be taken forward, not least ensuring the action plan is implemented. It is very aware of the need to work with other divisions and members of the AWRPF. It has also produced draft guidance on interpretation and translation.

The work of the housing division and the Housing Sub-Group is a model of good practice and which other divisions and the AWRPF should consider adopting.

### *Health*

Work is also relatively well developed within health, although it focuses almost exclusively on asylum seekers. A multi-agency group has been established by the National Public Health Service to advise on Assembly Government health policies in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, but is not formally linked to the AWRPF. Working with the group the Assembly Government has:

- developed and issued guidance which is currently being revised and should shortly be issued for consultation;
- developed targeted funding streams, which takes into consideration the policy issues identified in the guidance;
- a system of monitoring delivery through Local Health Boards.

The Assembly Government has also developed a database of refugee health professionals

### *Education*

The work is less structured or well developed in education, but a multi-agency working group has been established relatively recently by the Assembly in order to address this. The Assembly Government has two funding streams for Local Education Authorities (LEA) in relating to this work:

- Asylum Seekers Education grant (based on actual numbers, retrospectively on the previous 6 months);
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (based on numbers of pupils learning English as an additional language).

There have been ongoing discussions with the LEAs on the funding formulas for both grants and an increase in the level of support has now been agreed. The Assembly is aware of some difficulties with the current structure of funding formulas and working with partners to consider other possibilities.

The Assembly is now developing a broad strategy towards education for all pupils for life within global society and a multi-ethnic community and raising minority ethnic achievement in schools. There hasn't been a specific policy on

this before. ACCAC is developing operational guidance to complement the strategy.

The Assembly has issued separate guidance on broader pupil inclusion in schools, *Inclusion and Pupil Support*, which has limited guidance on asylum seekers and refugees. There are many areas within wider education policy issues relating to these groups could be included from guidance on bullying and draft mental health and emotional well-being guidance, to Funky Dragon. However, this is not being done strategically at the moment.

### *Economic development*

The economic development division does not have a strategic programme to support refugee inclusion in the same way as outlined in the paragraphs above. However, The Welsh Development Agency's (WDA) *Potentia* programme has been developed to support minority groups, including ethnic minorities at the pre-business start stage. The *Ethnic Business Support Programme* has been established as part of this to bridge the gap between ethnic communities and mainstream business support agencies. It is not clear if refugees are accessing this support.

The WDA also runs *Cyfenter*, a development partnership including the Welsh Refugee Council, which aims to mainstream inclusive policies and practices within enterprise support in Wales. It has undertaken action-based research on groups which are under-represented in enterprise, including refugees. The first report will be launched end of September, but it is not clear how much detailed analysis will be available on refugees, partly because there is so little statistical information available on the profile of refugees in Wales.

### *Social services*

The Assembly Government has a clear strategic approach to children in need and children in need of protection. Asylum seeking children may fall into these categories. Social service is not a universal service in the same way as health and education. Not all families require a service and access to services is based on an assessment of need. The Assembly has issued clear guidance on how assessments should be undertaken. The assessments should be holistic, taking account of a wide range of factors that might impact on the child's individual needs from the family context to health and education development, to ethnicity and religion. The assessments should be conducted in partnership with other agencies as well as the child and the family.

There is therefore no separate strategic approach to refugee and asylum seekers within social services as such as all services are needs based. However, individual authorities have developed expertise which might be shared and officials have been involved in discussions as to how this might be done. The interaction of asylum law and entitlement under the Children Act is complex. The Assembly Government will now develop guidance to support

practitioners to understand the issues, the legal framework and current case law. Limited resources are an issue across social services and the Assembly believes it would not be appropriate to have separate funding for asylum seekers or refugees, but that each case should be considered on merit in line with all other assessments of children in need and vulnerable adults in Wales.

### *Community Safety*

There is no overall policy to take forward these issues within community safety. However, the importance of these issues are now being recognised and more emphasis is being placed on them. Better systems for sharing information with the police and NASS are now being developed. There is also an increasing recognition of the need to have dialogue with the different communities and to work with community and voluntary groups to share softer information in order to avert community tensions. Close links are now being established with the Equality Policy Unit (EPU) in order to address this. A multi-agency group, chaired by the Police, has recently been established and is represented on the AWRPF, but it is not clear that Community Safety Division is properly linked in to this.

Specific work has been undertaken in relation to Domestic Violence, where a leaflet has been adapted and translated into the main refugee community languages.

There is clear potential for work to be developed more strategically within this area.

### *Local Government; Culture; Training, skills and accessing employment; Communities and the Voluntary Sector*

Some programmes within these areas are already supporting refugee inclusion. For example, the Arts Council of Wales has supported a number of good practice projects and the Sports Council is supporting initiatives to encourage wider participation in the game. Community Strategies in the four dispersal areas provide a potentially powerful tool to address refugee inclusion. Similarly, training and employment are widely recognised as central to refugee inclusion. However, refugee inclusion is not currently being addressed strategically, despite huge potential for programmes undertaken within these areas to have a significant positive impact.

### *Research and statistics*

The Assembly does not have a research programme to support work on refugee inclusion. Research has been commissioned in relation to BME housing needs, which includes a chapter profiling refugee and asylum communities in Wales. This will be published shortly. This recognises the scarcity of information currently available and outlines a recommended

research programme. Gaining a better understanding of these communities will be crucial to enabling proper evaluation of the Refugee Inclusion Policy.

## **Barriers**

Possible barriers to taking the work forward within the Assembly were identified as resources for implementation, staff time and resources, training for staff around the issues, relevancy to specific area of work.

A key barrier is the lack of accurate information available on the refugee and asylum seeking communities. This makes it very difficult to develop policies and services to target refugee inclusion. There are also a lack of links between relevant Assembly divisions and NASS in order to share what information and statistics is available. More could be done to share information at an Assembly official level and across and within local authorities.

## **Taking the policy forward**

Across nearly all of the Assembly's work, refugees inclusion could be more effectively mainstreamed and there were many suggestions as to how this might be done. The decision-making structures across the Assembly, including the various local partnerships, need to reach out more effectively to ensure refugees and asylum seekers are able to participate. Refugee inclusion could be driven forward through existing funding programmes and more work should be done to encourage quality applications from these groups. Some funding streams which might be particularly relevant, such as Cymorth and Communities First. In some areas work is already well underway and there are good examples of how refugee inclusion might be addressed.

Depending on the outcomes of other areas of the scooping exercise, specific work might be targeted and driven forward in priority areas such as housing; health; education; training, skills and careers; community safety; community development and the voluntary sector and culture. In many of these areas, significant work has already been done. In the same way, there will be priority cross-cutting themes such as English as an Additional Language and poverty and social inclusion, which can be linked to work which is ongoing across other areas of the Assembly.

There is also a need for internal support for officials such as training and sharing information.

Working groups will be established in health, education, community safety, children and culture (where possible building on existing structures) in order to support the policy drafting and development of actions during the autumn. It is recommended that the Housing Sub-Group is also revived to support this work and ways are found to engage with officials and partners in other areas that the policy will focus on.

## **Summary report: devolution**

### **Background**

The Government of Wales Act 1998 established the National Assembly for Wales and enabled the transfer of devolved powers and responsibilities to the Assembly. These devolved powers allow the Assembly to make rules and regulations, set standards and issue guidance in areas such as health and education, within the basic framework of primary legislation that is made by the UK Parliament.

No powers or responsibilities relating to Immigration and Asylum were devolved to the National Assembly. These remain the responsibility of the Home Office.

### **The Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999 and dispersal**

The Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999 introduced significant changes to the way asylum seekers are supported in the UK. One of these changes was the introduction of dispersal whereby asylum seekers are dispersed to locations across Britain on a 'no-choice' basis in order to relieve pressure on London and Kent.

There are four dispersal areas in Wales - Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham and with between 2000 – 2500 asylum seekers living in Wales at any one time in recent months. There has been a subsequent increase in the number of refugees settling in Wales after status has been gained (although there is no reliable data around numbers or refugee profile). Professor Vaughan Williams from Swansea University Migration Unit demonstrates that Wales was not an area that many refugees and asylum seekers had decided to live pre-dispersal.

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 also introduced entirely new arrangements for supporting healthy and able bodied destitute asylum seekers. A new department called the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) was set up by the Home Office with responsibility for supporting destitute asylum seekers and providing them with financial support.

The Assembly Government therefore has few responsibilities for supporting asylum seekers. However, under dispersal local authorities still have a duty to provide basic health and social care services and education to children and young people under 16. As the Assembly Government provides funding for local authorities in Wales it has a responsibility to provide funding to support these services. This can be seen through its funding streams in education and health for asylum seekers.

There are also wider initiatives to promote refugee inclusion that the Assembly Government can undertake which could engage and impact on asylum seekers. An example would be community preparation initiatives.



## Refugees

When a person gains leave to remain in the country, the Assembly Government has the same powers and responsibilities to support them as UK citizens. This is still limited to the powers that it has been devolved, which include the following areas:

- culture;
- economic development;
- education and training;
- health and health services;
- housing;
- industry and business;
- local government;
- social services;
- sport and leisure;

Within this are responsibilities for social justice and community regeneration, the voluntary sector and the Welsh language.

In the same way that the Assembly Government does not have powers in relation to Immigration and Asylum, it does not have powers outside these areas. For example, issues around employment and community safety are reserved matters, whether in relation to refugees or British citizens. Work is being taken forward at a UK level on these issues through the Home Office and its national integration strategy, *Integration Matters*. It is not clear how Wales can engage in the development of these non-devolved issues.

The Home Office is also taking forward initiatives directly relating to refugee inclusion that are non-devolved. These include significant initiatives such as SUNRISE and the Gateway programme. It also provides funding for voluntary and community organisations working towards refugee integration.

## Working together

The Assembly Government established the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum (AWRPF) in November 2003 to ensure a strategic approach to taking forward issues relating to refugees in Wales. This is the main forum for formal dialogue between the Assembly Government and its various stakeholders and partners.

In England, the Home Office has established the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF). Until September 2005, NRIF had been a UK forum, but a decision was taken by the Home Office to restrict this to England only issues. NRIF is the Home Office's main forum for partners and stakeholders to advise the government on its national strategy, *Integration Matters*. However, whilst *Integration Matters* refers largely to England, it also relates to issues that have not been devolved to the Assembly Government and so also directly relate to Wales.

There is now no forum where stakeholders and partners in Wales can advise the Home Office on its refugee integration programme as it relates to Wales. The Assembly Government is an observer on the National Refugee Integration Forum and will be able to put forward representatives from Wales to sit on relevant sub-groups.

## **Conclusion**

Although the Assembly Government has not been devolved powers in relation to Immigration and Asylum, it has clear responsibility for providing services and setting a strategic agenda around many areas of refugee inclusion in Wales. The UK Government also has powers and responsibilities relating to refugee inclusion/ integration programmes in Wales. There is a need to ensure clarity by the Assembly, UK Government and their partners on what issues are being taken forward by whom, how this work inter-relates and how the voices of stakeholders and partners are heard at these different levels.

# **Summary scoping report from meetings with networks**

## **Introduction**

As part of the scoping exercise for the All Wales Refugee Inclusion Policy the project co-ordinator gave a presentation and invited comments at meetings of 9 different networks whose work relates directly to refugee inclusion across different subject areas and regions in Wales. Written comments were invited at a further 3 network meetings. Notes of the meetings with each network are available on request.

## **Summary**

There are a number of networks working in different regions and on different subject areas across Wales which are performing very important functions. They have been initiated by different groups, been established for different amounts of times and for different purposes. Some are formally linked to the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum (AWRPF), others informally and some not at all. In most cases the networks are not aware of each other's existence.

Discussions with the networks identified several common overarching issues that act as barriers to or positively promote refugee inclusion. Members of the networks also had detailed knowledge and expertise on specific issues within the relevant subject area or region and were able to identify good and bad practice as well as specific proposals for the policy and action plan.

## **The key networks**

A map of the key networks relating to refugee inclusion in Wales is available at Annex A. The main Assembly Government forum for taking forward strategic issues is the AWRPF. The forum has a Housing Sub-Group which has been meeting since before the AWRPF was established and will shortly be issuing a draft action plan for consultation. Jane Hutt, Business Minister with responsibility for Children, recently established a Children's Stakeholder Group which also links formally to the AWRPF.

The Assembly Government takes a lead on two strategic multi-agency groups whose remit includes refugees and asylum seekers. These are the All Wales Disadvantaged Group which relates to health and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Strategy steering group relating to education. Officials working in these areas sit on the AWRPF, but there is no formal link.

The All Wales Police Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers defines itself as an AWRPF sub-group and its Chair sits on the main forum. However, it is not generally understood to be an AWRPF sub-group. It's a multi-agency group chaired by the police.

The Welsh Local Authority Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (the Consortium) is a National Asylum Support Service funded body operating at an all Wales level. It is responsible for coordinating service provision by local authorities to asylum seekers and it plays a lead role in developing strategic

policies and initiatives for asylum support and refugee integration. It has an Executive Steering Group and an All Wales stakeholder group. Multi-agency stakeholder groups meet in each dispersal area and relate directly to the Consortium. The Consortium is represented on the AWRPF.

The National Public Health Service has established a Wales Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Advisory Group (WASRHAG) which has played a key role in drafting guidance. An All Wales Asylum Seekers Nurses Group has been established by nurses and is represented on WASRHAG. A practitioners' network is facilitated by Children in Wales and Cardiff University chair a Refugee Media Group. Whilst members of these groups now sit on the AWRPF, there are no formal links or reporting structures. Refugee Voice Wales is an umbrella body for Refugee Community Organisations. It meets regularly but is entirely voluntary at the moment and it has no direct relationship with the AWRPF

Members of some of these groups sit on sub-groups of the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF), the main UK government forum. It is not clear whether members of NRIF sub-groups are representing groups in Wales or attending as individuals. The Welsh Assembly Government is represented on the main NRIF.

It is clear that whilst many different forums exist, there is potential for the AWRPF to develop clearer relationships with these and share information across networks, to examine whether they could be strengthened and whether there are some areas where further sub-groups or networks could usefully be developed. There is also potential to clarify relationships between the AWRPF, the different groups in Wales and NRIF.

## **Overarching issues**

The networks raised a huge number of issues and it is not possible to include all these here. Key issues raised across several networks are outlined below.

### *Language, translation and interpretation*

A key barrier that nearly all networks identified was language, translation and interpretation. It is an important issue for individuals, practitioners, agencies and statutory service providers which could be taken up through the policy and action plan. Concerns included the availability of good quality, appropriate and accessible language teaching; good quality, appropriate and affordable interpretation and translation services; and, funding for provision of language classes as well as translation and interpretation services. There were examples of bad practice including by essential services providers, such as children being asked to translate for family members, as well as good practice. There were also examples where service providers might consider a good service is being provided despite it not meeting the needs of individuals.

## *Diversity*

Many networks underlined the need to recognise the diversity of asylum seekers and refugees. There were examples where not doing this had led to many people not being able to access services or participate in activities. For example, midwifery was not initially included within a package of services for asylum seekers because the health service had been told that they would be predominantly single men. Issues around diversity went beyond gender, including nationality, religion and age.

## *Funding*

Several networks raised difficulties around funding including the need for longer term funding linked to strategic objectives. Funding for services and support relating to refugee inclusion is often unstable with many best practice projects having folded and experienced staff lost. This is true in the statutory as well voluntary sector. A number of networks called for the funding formulas of some statutory providers to be reviewed. In some cases, this reflected the lack of longer term strategic vision to promote refugee inclusion.

## *Attitudes, awareness and understanding*

Negative public attitudes were raised regularly, as was the general lack of awareness and understanding by professionals responsible for providing services and support to asylum seekers and refugees, including GPs, teachers and police. Several different approaches were proposed to tackle this, reflecting the range of people that need to be targeted and the reasons for doing this. For example, these included training programmes and information for public service providers; developing better communications and dialogue with refugee and receiving communities; undertaking a positive image campaign aimed at the wider public, linking with wider anti-racist initiatives.

## *Wider policy context and practical implementation*

There were significant concerns about the detrimental impact of much (mostly non-devolved) policy and legislation itself. In some cases this was because of difficulties in practical implementation, for example, bureaucratic mismanagement of NASS housing allocation for asylum seekers which is a matter of contract between NASS and accommodation providers. There were concerns that immigration and asylum legislation is not consistent with and may take precedence over other legislation, particularly in relation to children. There were several examples of practical ways in which the asylum system works against inclusion, such as forcing people to publicly identify as asylum seekers and to live in relative poverty, with all its ramifications. The regular movement of individuals, regardless of many medical and emotional needs and the removal of any support for those not granted status had created very

distressing situations for individuals and those supporting them. The fast changing policy context was an issue in itself.

### **Other common issues**

Other issues raised by several networks, albeit less frequently were: housing; the lack of services in some areas; poverty; practical barriers (such transport, opening bank accounts); lack of strategic direction. Significant issues were raised but not included in the list above because they were only discussed by a couple of networks. These include employment, relationships with wider migration, the decline of some highly valued specialist services, availability of information, isolation and practitioner demoralization.

### **How inclusion is being promoted**

The commitment of the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration was widely welcomed as was the role of the AWRPF. The importance of the multi-agency work that has developed was recognised, in particular through the Consortium and the regional stakeholder groups. The joint work that had been established through all of the networks was welcomed. Alongside this was a concern that strategic leadership had been lacking in some areas, leaving practitioners or voluntary groups to take the initiative. A more co-ordinated approach between the Assembly Government and local government was also called for as were greater links between those working in specific fields across the 4 regions.

Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) were seen as playing (or having the potential to play) a key role in supporting refugee inclusion and providing an important vehicle for participation. The challenges that RCOs face in terms of representation, openness and accountability were also raised and there were some concerns that RCOs could prove a barrier for inclusion in some cases. RCOs themselves were mostly unrepresented in the networks.

Many networks highlighted the positive role of volunteering and mentoring, whether by refugees or non-refugees, and the practical and emotional support provided by smaller voluntary groups. However, in one area there was concern that too much reliance was placed on the voluntary work of small groups.

A range of one-off initiatives were identified as examples of good practice, from welcome packs to language and life skills courses. However, some best practice projects had folded due to lack of funding and many projects were the result of huge efforts by a group or individual which could have been co-ordinated strategically across Wales.

The important role that specialist services, along side mainstreaming, play was also raised. The commitment of those working in this area, despite very difficult and sometimes demoralizing circumstances, was also highlighted.

## **Taking the policy forward**

The commitment by the Assembly Government to develop an overall strategic framework for refugee inclusion in Wales was welcomed. There was a strong call across the networks for the policy to be put in context of other Assembly Government and UK initiatives, particularly in relation to social justice and social inclusion, equality and human rights (notably race equality), social cohesion and promoting good community relations and community development. The need to join up with existing programmes that could more effectively promote refugee inclusion was highlighted as was the need to mainstream the issue across the Assembly Government and form stronger links with relevant local governments.

The networks wanted to see taken a number of issues taken forward in the policy and in some cases there were practical suggestions as to how this might be done. These included:

- Language, interpretation and translation;
- Funding;
- Promoting better awareness, providing accurate information, training professionals and promoting positive images to the wider public;
- Advocacy and mentoring;
- Communications with and between communities, including refugee and non-refugee communities;
- Maintaining separate services as well as mainstreaming service provision;
- Refugee Community Organisations.

The issues that had been raised as key barriers and enablers are obviously all areas that the networks identified as being important to the policy.

## **Conclusion**

The discussions with networks raised a number of issues that might be taken up through the policy and action plan, sometimes with more detail and examples. It has not been possible to highlight all the issues that were raised.

There is an enormous amount of expertise and knowledge contained within the different networks and there is huge potential for engaging them effectively in the policy development process. There is also potential for the policy to identify gaps where there are opportunities for further sharing of information and ideas through networking and advising the Assembly Government. The policy also provides an opportunity to bring the networks together within an overall framework, to ensure they are aware of each other's work and the overall strategic direction being taken at an all Wales level. Consideration could also be given as to whether some networks might be linked more formally to the AWRPF.

It will be important for the Refugee Inclusion Policy and action plan to bring together the different strands of work so that there is a record of who is doing

what and so that implementation can be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.



## Summary scoping report: learning from others in the UK

### Introduction

The project co-ordinator visited colleagues in the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Refugee Council, the Home Office and the Refugee Council to learn from their experience of developing and delivering integration strategies and where possible to identify examples of good practice that might be possible to adapt in Wales. In addition, three meetings of the National Refugee Integration Forum have been attended.

### Summary

The Scottish Executive established a Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF) in January 2002 and published a SRIF Action Plan, following consultation, in February 2003. A number of actions have been taken through this and since 2001 the Scottish Executive has invested over £9 million in projects and resources to aid integration. A 3-year progress report has recently been published, outlining work undertaken by a range of partners in Scotland to promote refugee integration. It is clear that the SRIF is not a Scottish Executive group but is serviced by them. Delivering the action plan is the responsibility of all.

The Home Office established a National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) in 2000 to take forward implementation of its refugee integration strategy, *Full and Equal Citizens*, and now *Integration Matters*, published in 2005. NRIF and the integration strategy mainly focus on England, but also have a UK remit. Asylum seekers are dispersed to 9 regions in England and each has different examples of promoting integration and inclusion. Yorkshire and Humberside have recently published a refugee integration strategy and strategies are currently being developed in each region.

The experience of both underline the need to be clear about what we are actually aiming for and whether each project, however successful in some ways it seems to be, is actually getting closer to the aim.

## UK

### *Sunrise and Gateway*

The Home Office runs two key programmes that are non-devolved and which the All Wales Refugee Inclusion Policy will therefore need to inter-relate with; Gateway and SUNRISE.

The Gateway programme brings refugees who already have status from developing countries to settle in specific areas within the UK. The programme has recently completed its pilot stage with positive evaluations from those who have engaged with it. There is potential for a programme to be established in Wales and the Home Office is currently looking for partners to deliver.

The SUNRISE programme provides support refugees immediately after they gain status. There are currently no pilots in Wales. The Assembly Government already funds similar initiatives through its Housing Division.

### *Dedicated funding streams*

The Home Office has two dedicated funding streams to promote refugee integration. It provides £6 million **core funding** to a number of voluntary organisations to promote refugee well-being (including the Welsh Refugee Council). The Assembly Government also funds a number of voluntary organisations to support refugee integration in Wales and could establish a separate budget line with core funding.

The Home Office also has 3 other funding streams. The **Refugee Community Development Fund** provides capacity building funding for small refugee community organisations. A similar fund could be developed in Wales, possibly as part of the Disadvantaged Groups Fund that is currently being developed. In addition, the Home Office might consider that the small grants would be administrated better through the Assembly Government, supplemented by its own funding.

The Home Office also run a European Refugee Fund for organisations supporting refugees in providing appropriate reception conditions; encouraging social and economic integration; and enabling refugees to return home if they wish to do so. It runs a Challenge Fund for innovative projects that address specific social needs among refugee communities and a Purposeful Activities for Asylum Seekers Fund.

### *Employability*

The Employability Sub-Group of the NRIF, chaired by the Employability Forum has been one of the most active sub-groups. It has worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to develop *Working to Rebuild Lives*,

A Refugee Employment Strategy published by the Department of Work and Pensions. The Jobcentre Plus has recently published *Working together to help rebuild lives: a framework for partnership working to help refugees fulfil their potential* which forms part of Jobcentre Plus' 'refugee operational framework'.

A conference was held recently by The Employability Forum in Cardiff to consider how the work might be taken forward in Wales.

### *Research, monitoring and evaluation*

The Home Office has an Immigration Research and Statistics Service (IRSS) with a considerable research programme. Particular initiatives that might be of interest to Wales include:

*Longitudinal research with refugees and other migrants:* a programme of work has been established by IRSS which seeks to examine the long-term integration experiences of refugees and other migrants living in the UK.

*Longitudinal Survey of refugees:* a cross-departmental funded, Home Office led, project to examine the integration experiences of refugees arriving in the UK. The survey will provide information on some of the key outcomes of integration, such as progress with gaining employment, learning English language, and accessing health and education services. Identifying how these outcomes are achieved – i.e. what works in terms of policy and service provision – is an additional key aim of the survey. The survey will also examine attitudes, expectations and aspirations of refugees settling in the UK towards wider, longstanding UK population and other minority groups, providing important new information on the dynamics of community relations.

As this work is at a UK level it is likely that research will be conducted in Wales, but not with a sufficient sample to disaggregate findings for Wales. There is potential to consider how Wales might maximise from this research.

The Home Office commissioned Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh to undertake an '*Indicators of Integration*' to investigate understandings of integration as a concept and establish a framework that can be used for planning and evaluation of services for refugees. The report provides a robust framework that the Assembly Government could use to develop its indicators for evaluation. It includes 10 key domains, grouped in 4 themes:

1. Mean markers: Employment; Housing; Education; Health
2. Social connections: Social bridges; social bonds; social links
3. Facilitators: Language & cultural knowledge; Safety & stability
4. Foundation: Rights & Citizenship

## **England**

### *Use of websites to provide information to professionals*

The Education Sub-Group has been given funding to develop a website that promotes the integration of refugee children and families, in and through educational settings. The website provides information, guidance and examples of effective practice for the range of practitioners working with refugee children and other educational settings. This will include examples of good practice from Wales, and there's potential to have a link to Wales with appropriate guide for practitioners in Wales.

Similarly, the Health sub-group has established a 'health for asylum seekers and refugees portal – HARP' with a wide range of information and advice.

There is potential for sharing information, website models and links to provide easily accessible information to professionals in Wales.

## **Scotland**

### *Framework for Dialogue*

Perhaps the most innovative project within the SRIF action plan is Framework for Dialogue. This works with local communities and builds bridges between refugee and non-refugee communities and engages local networks. This includes supporting more formal structures such as RCOs and much looser dialogue within and across communities.

The project provides the opportunity to address the concerns of non-refugee communities and to answer their questions and understand their concerns. This is important to the two-way process of inclusion that the Assembly Government promotes.

Progress has been slow and the language barriers were underestimated, but the project has been awarded beacon status in an independent evaluation carried out for the Home Office. The SRIF progress report 2005 states that "Reports show that the Framework for Dialogue project is successfully laying the foundations of dialogue and establishing the lines of communication necessary to support refugees into host communities and achieve integration." A similar initiative in Wales might link with Communities First programmes.

### *Community Preparation*

The importance of community preparation is recognised and significant funds put into projects which address these issues. The importance of local

networks in particular has been highlighted. The Assembly Government might introduce funding for similar community preparation work in each cluster area.

### *One Scotland, Many Nations*

A Refugee Media Programme has also been run with Oxfam in Scotland and the Scottish Refugee Council, but the main campaign by the Scottish Executive has been a general anti-racist campaign, *One Scotland, Many Nations*. Refugee and asylum issues were built into this. A benchmark study was done before the campaign and an evaluation will be carried out.

### *Training*

ATLAS, funded through the EQUAL programme and Glasgow City Council, has provided support for 29 projects around the integration and training of asylum seekers thereby enabling those who become refugees to gain more rapid transition into work. This has received positive evaluation and some of the projects are being identified as best practice on a European level.

### *Linking with other ethnic minority communities and other diversity issues*

Colleagues in Scotland highlighted the importance of linking with longer standing BME communities. Refugees and asylum seekers have significantly changed the ethnic profile of Scotland and are in many ways the 'new black communities'. Much can be learnt from experiences of longer standing communities. The importance of linking to Race Equality Schemes and mainstreaming asylum-seeker and refugee issues was also raised. Similarly, much can be learnt from other areas of equality and diversity.

### *Information sharing and gathering*

There is a similar lack of statistical and tracking information about asylum seekers and refugee communities in Scotland which has proved a hindrance.

### *Enterprise, Lifelong Learning, Employment and Training*

EC's first Annual Report on Immigration and Integration highlighted employability as one of the key crucial aspects of integration among non-EU nationals. Scottish Executive's refugee fund 2005-6 will focus on projects with an employability theme.

Scottish Executive commissioned a research exercise mapping ESOL provision and a steering group to make recommendations on ESOL provision;

also provided additional funding for ESOL provision in FE colleges. Additional funding to be embedded in baseline funding.

Further Education Funding Council agreed that FE colleges should have discretion to accept asylum seekers as funded students on part-time HN courses and they are eligible to claim a fee-waiver grant for them.

There are also projects to support professionally qualified refugees into the labour market, including teachers, nurses and tradespersons. There is also a work shadowing scheme.

However, it is not clear how many refugees have actually gained employment at their skill level as a result of these projects.

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

Scottish Executive has also made use of the Ager and Strang indicators. The Equality Unit were responsible for monitoring the implementation. It might be that this could be done better by spreading the burden and including more divisions. Perhaps in Wales this can be done by engaging the AWRPF, including the relevant divisions attending.

## **Summary scoping report: questionnaires**

### **Introduction**

A brief questionnaire was circulated to a wide range of public bodies, civil society organisations and individuals informing them of the policy development and inviting them to identify the key issues they believe need to be addressed; what work is already being undertaken and what action they consider the Assembly Government and its partners should take to promote inclusion. People were invited to respond in writing, by email or by telephone.

44 responses were received from civil society organisations, universities and public bodies across Wales (see Annex B). These ranged from detailed responses with pieces of additional research attached to a single sentence. Some were received in writing and others in interviews/ discussions. All the responses provided important and useful information which should inform the policy. The report does attempts to indicate where issues were raised predominantly by one organisation, but also attempts to capture all the responses received rather than be limited to the common issues.

### **Summary**

Respondents welcomed the initiative by the Assembly Government to develop a strategic and co-ordinated approach to refugee inclusion. There is a need for service providers to find a common view on the priority issues and commit resources.

Many of the responses indicated that organisations had not currently addressed issues around refugee inclusion but of these, most indicated that they were interested in changing this and wanted more information and support. A couple had researched the need to address refugee inclusion and found that there wasn't sufficient information to target work in this way. For example, Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations submitted a detailed response but underlined that there is no information available to indicate that any refugees live in the county and those organisations that might work with refugees were unwilling to categorising clients in that way.

Some civil society organisations provided information on detailed work that they had carried out, aspirations to undertake more work in Wales and clear recommendations for inclusion in the policy. A number of public bodies responded to outline specific work they had done in relation to refugee inclusion, ranging from research programmes to targeted support services.

Some respondents were notable by their absence!

### **Who are refugees?**

In its response, the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) set out a definition of who refugees and a very basic profile. Under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees a refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of

being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...".

WRC defined 'refugee' as a person who has been recognised by the UK government as meeting the definition of a refugee set out in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR), as well as those who have not been recognised as refugees but have been granted ILR, humanitarian protection (HP) or discretionary leave (DL) following their asylum claim. However, it stated the term refugee can also be used as a generic term to include all those who have fled their countries for reasons of persecution. One group queried how long a person remains a 'refugee', with all the associated stigma.

All refugees will have experienced traumatic events and arrived in Wales with few if any family or social links. Many have little if any knowledge of the English language or how many of the systems work in Wales. The impact of having to leave your country of origin, trauma from reasons for having to leave, loss of home, possessions and status cannot be underestimated.

WRC provided a 'guesstimate' that there are approximately 10,000 refugees living in Wales. Most are settled in Cardiff, followed by Newport then Swansea and then Wrexham. Cardiff Council population statistics suggest approximately 6,000 refugees live in Cardiff and WRC estimates that refugees and asylum seekers make up approximately 30% of Cardiff's ethnic minority population. WRC is currently reviewing refugee numbers and contact details in Wrexham. Small numbers of refugees also live in other areas across Wales. Under current policies, the number refugees living in Wales is likely to increase annually.

## **Other migrants**

Refugee movements are a distinct form of international migration. Asylum seekers and refugees sometimes share common issues with other migrants into the UK, such as language barriers and there is potential to link with activities to support other newcomers. However, it is important not to confuse refugees with other people who have migrated to Wales.

## **'Refugee inclusion'**

There was little discussion of the definition of refugee inclusion. However, stated that it supports the definition of refugee 'integration' set out by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)<sup>1</sup> and welcomes the definition of refugee inclusion set out in the questionnaire. Members Cymru Refugee and Asylum Seekers Academic Council questioned why 'inclusion' is being used rather than 'integration' and is planning to hold an event later in the year to consider this further.

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<sup>1</sup> *Position on the integration of refugees in Europe*, ECRE, December, 2002



## Principles

A number of principles which organisations (notably WRC) thought should underpin the Assembly Government Policy and Action plan were set out. These included:

- *Refugee inclusion should begin on day one of arrival into the UK/ Wales* as successful inclusion is closely related to asylum procedures. This view is shared by leading refugee organisations across the UK and Europe.
- *Refugees are people*: While refugees may face extraordinary circumstances, in other respects they are ordinary people making rational decisions about their lives. Refugees and asylum seekers, as with all people, have a right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- *Diversity of refugees*: Refugees and asylum seekers are an extremely diverse group of people, and include different genders, ages, nationalities, languages, religions, cultures and skill levels. Services should be delivered appropriately to ensure they are accessible to all refugees. The voices of all refugees, including women and children need to be heard.
- *Refugees are part of the solution*: Refugees make a huge contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of Wales, which should be welcomed and celebrated through the policy. Participation in decision making structures is central to refugee inclusion and refugees should be represented and participate in the conception, development, organisation and evaluation of services and policies that affect them at all levels in Wales.
- *Receiving communities' concerns must be addressed*: Refugee inclusion is a two-way process and the views, perceptions and actions of the receiving communities are vital to its success. Efforts should be made to actively engage receiving communities to promote cohesive communities.
- *Partnership working*: Working in multi-agency partnerships at national and local levels and across all sectors is key to setting a framework for inclusion.
- *Joined up policies*: A policy framework for successful inclusion will need to be joined up effectively and all agencies should accept responsibility for refugee inclusion. The Assembly Government's commitments to equality and diversity, human rights and social justice should be upheld across all policy areas.

- *Political Leadership:* Government and decision-makers play a key role in providing political leadership and setting the tone in public debate on non-discrimination and equal opportunities and particularly in counteracting misinformation that is intended to lead to mistrust of refugees.
- *Regional differences:* There are regional differences across Wales, from the number of refugees to the way that mainstream services are structured and the policy should be flexible enough to allow for this.

## **Policy context**

The Welsh Refugee Inclusion Policy is being developed in the wider context of EU and UK policy initiatives. There was general concern about the overall direction of policy at this level which is perceived to be driven by a desire to drive down numbers of applicants, rather than to protect them. The regularly pace at which UK legislation has changed and the complexity is considered a problem and there were numerous concerns at the current asylum process, from the creation of forced destitution to the withdrawal of the right to work and access training. The UK Government five-year plan for asylum and immigration is seen as raising a number of threats to refugee's lives, including the possible revocation of individuals' refugee status after five years leaving them in limbo with out the necessary security to rebuild their lives. This will cause barriers to inclusion and real fears and anxieties for individuals as to whether they will be sent back to countries where they really will be 'safe'.

Since 1999, the EU has been working towards a harmonisation of asylum policies, negotiating a number of regulations and directives for member states. With the enlargement of the EU, the question of EU cooperation to strengthen borders and 'manage migration' has been given renewed attention. There is concern that harmonisation might result in Member States lowering their national policies to the minimum standards of the new Directives. There is also a real fear that the 'international dimension' in the new EU 5 year plan on Asylum and Immigration, will shift responsibilities onto poor countries and disregard the human rights of refugees.

## **Discrimination: Racism (and xenophobia)**

Several responses highlighted racism and xenophobia as a significant problem for inclusion. Issues around racism and xenophobia as well as discrimination targeted more specifically at 'asylum seekers' and/or 'refugees' were raised in a number of different areas from service provision and finding a job to making friends.

A couple of responses also raised the fact that there are people in Wales who participate in far right political activities in Wales and there was concern about the perceived and potential growth of BNP activities.

## **Poverty**

Some responses also highlighted poverty as a key issue which creates barriers to inclusion across all areas. In its response WRC stated that UK government policies have resulted in poverty among asylum seeking and refugee communities, including destitution. Research by Oxfam and the Refugee Council indicates that the asylum system institutionalises poverty. The report compiled findings from 40 organisations that work directly with asylum seekers and demonstrated that basic needs are not being met adequately by state provision. For example, 85% of organisations reported that their clients experience hunger; 95% of organisations reported that their clients cannot afford to buy clothes or shoes and 80% of organisations reported that their clients are not able to maintain good health. This has significant impact on inclusion after status has been granted.

## **Language, interpretation and translation**

Many respondents saw tackling language barriers as key to successful inclusion. Different initiatives have been established to tackle these, however, there is clearly a need for a strategic approach and the Assembly Government's commitment to work with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to take forward an interpretation and translation strategy was welcomed. Focus groups run on behalf of the Refugee Media Group in 2005 highlighted a series of issues for refugees and asylum seekers around language, interpretation and translation, which need to be considered in developing the strategy. The CRE has also provided a report to the AWRPF on issues relating to language, interpretation and translation.

WRC stated that English (and Welsh) language teaching is key to inclusion. Current ESOL provision was considered to be insufficient and needing to be increased. WRC also proposed that asylum seekers should have access to English classes and vocational training from day one of arrival and all refugees should be entitled to a minimum number of hours of free language tuition. To be effective, English language classes need to be provided at the appropriate level (including higher levels) and to be accessible to all refugees and asylum seeker, whether by providing transport, crèches, women only lessons or increasing ESOL teaching via CD ROM/electronically and made available widely at libraries and in voluntary and community groups.

Translation and interpretation were also considered key, but there were many concerns from refugees and asylum seekers, voluntary groups and services providers about the availability and quality of translation. Some existing solutions, including language line, were not considered to be working effectively.

The British Medical Association recently published the results of an extensive survey carried out with GPs around the healthcare needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Access to good quality, professional translators and interpreters was reported by GPs as being the most important factor in the effective treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, but something not

available at the moment. GPs also recognised that introducing interpreters into regular use requires changes in administration procedures, training to make effective use of them and adjustments to the practice.

There is a shortage of qualified professional translators and interpreters, particularly where specialist vocabulary is needed, such as in health. WRC is currently working with universities in Wales to provide professional training to translators and interpreters. Organisational budgets need to factor in translation and interpretation costs. There was a call for a database of translators in minority languages.

### **‘Cultural’ differences**

Issues around cultural differences and understanding cultural differences were raised in a number of responses, but it is not always clear what mean by this. These may relate to different religious beliefs, or may refer to unfamiliarity with some accepted social codes in the UK, such as queuing for different services, or may refer to an unfamiliarity with where to go for support and how basic services operate in the UK, for example, when to go to the GP and when to go to the hospital. It can refer to different societal values and structures in the country of origin or it can also refer to differing cultures in the form of different music, different languages, different literature and stories, different art and different history of ideas.

It was felt that cultural differences and understanding can make it difficult for some refugees to feel included and that some organisations lacked the expertise and resources to be flexible enough to adapt to cultural needs (eg religious observation). There was a call for citizenship classes to be available to refugees free of charge.

There was one example where ‘cultural’ differences had created a barrier for some women to access a service, despite attempts by providers to adapt to needs. Female only classes in the early evening were set up with the aim of helping women to feel socially included but for some Muslim women, these were not suitable as the husband cannot accompany her and in some cases other men are present at the locations.

### **Accessing services**

Many common issues were identified in accessing services in general. These included issues identified elsewhere in the report, notably language barriers and low levels of understanding by mainstream services providers. Sensitive guidance for professionals in key services areas, such as health professionals, LEAS, schools and housing providers as well as information and training were called for. Specialist advisors with an all-Wales remit in some key service areas to support professionals delivering services were seen as a way of taking this forward. There was also a call for specialist workers across a range of divisions and government offices.

The need important role that front line staff of service providers play and the enormous stresses often placed upon them was also highlighted. Despite difficult situations individuals had worked hard and successfully to get provide additional support to clients beyond their immediate role.

The development of advocacy and self-advocacy to support those refugees and asylum seekers who are particularly vulnerable in accessing mainstream services was also seen as important.

## **Information**

### *Information about Refugees*

A number of respondents highlighted the lack of basic information about refugees in Wales as a key issue. There is no accurate information on the number of refugees living in Wales or a system in place for capturing this information<sup>2</sup>. Neither is there accurate information on the geographical spread of refugees or where people decide to live when they have refugee status. Many will decide to move to other areas in the UK where they have wider family or friendship networks and vice versa.

The lack of information makes service planning for refugees difficult, especially in areas such as Powys and Carmarthen where there is no evidence that refugees live in the county and so little justification for providing specifically tailored programmes.

Despite this, there were also a number of concerns around whether it was appropriate to identify people on the basis of their immigration status.

A number of responses called for systems to collecting this data including by enhancing ethnic monitoring and information sharing. Professor Vaughan Robinson in Swansea University Migration Unit proposes a programme of basic research to provide an evidence-base for policy formulation and monitoring. He recommends core funding for a 3 year agenda of research on Welsh asylum/ refugee issues with agreed deliverables, potentially delivered by 'Assembly Post-doctoral Research fellows in Migration Studies' working within the Migration Unit. This would build up a Wales-specific evidence base and a critical mass of Welsh expertise that could be called on by the Assembly/WRC/local authorities/media whenever needed. He believes that funding an integrated research agenda would give better returns - and ultimately value - than putting a series of uncoordinated and one-off projects out to tender to (English) contractors.

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<sup>2</sup> Vaughan Robinson, *Refugees in Wales: an 'invisible minority'*, Welsh Refugee Council, 1997

### *Information about the asylum process and refugee status*

Responses reported low levels of knowledge and understanding about asylum seekers and refugees among the public and by local authorities and other mainstream service providers. Research by ippr reveals basic misunderstandings including grossly inflated numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and a presumption that all non-white people in the UK are asylum seekers and refugees. Respondents highlighted a general lack of understanding of what is meant by the terms asylum seeker and refugee and frequent confusion with migrant workers. Focus group research by the Refugee Media Group also highlights the lack of understanding about international issues, and connection between international issues and the presence of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.

There was a call for accurate information and statistics to be available to all service providers, as well as the general public, in an easy to access format. WRC felt it was well placed to provide this information and is developing targeted, easy to read and accurate information which will be disseminated via its website, e-bulletins and newsletter. WRC also generates 'myth busting' literature<sup>3</sup> which has the potential to be circulated much more widely, working with partners and with additional resources. Basic information could also be available on web sites of the Welsh Assembly and local government and other relevant public bodies.

### *Information for refugees*

There was a call for all asylum seekers and refugees to have orientation or awareness raising programmes, including key and soft skills, either before or after a decision. Basic information and orientation should be provided in a welcome pack to all asylum seekers arriving in Wales.

Accessible, easy to understand information on entitlements and key services in community languages was called for. This could prevent misinformation and rumours amongst asylum seekers that can cause difficulties. Voluntary organisations whose work is not directly focussed on refugee inclusion reported that refugees and asylum seekers are not accessing services that are available to support them. It was suggested this could be tackled by providing accurate information and training on refugee entitlements and specialist services available to those providing direct advice and support. It was also suggested that the Assembly Government and Home Office could do more to encourage refugees to contact services providers where they had a need.

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<sup>3</sup> For example 'Tell it like it is: The truth about asylum' which was published in partnership with the four other key agencies working across the UK in the run up to the 2005 general election.

## **Advice**

The Welsh Refugee Council considered the availability of good quality timely advice to refugees and asylum seekers is a central issue. The most pressing issue is provision of legal advice to people as they go through the process of claiming asylum.

General advice is also needed to guide refugees to mainstream services, support and opportunities – especially in the immediate period after status has been gained. WRC welcomes the Assembly Government funded Refugee Well Housing programme which funds much of WRC *Move On* advice work. Refugees are entitled to the same services and support as others living in Wales but often need more orientation to access these. It is very important to 'front resource' in this period by, for example, paying dividends in the medium to long term to enable people to become full and active citizens. It's important to provide bridges to mainstream services.

Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) play an important role in providing advice and information about mainstream services, especially as a first point of contact. This is outlined further later in the paper.

## **Public perception**

Negative public attitudes were raised by a number of respondents as a key barrier to successful inclusion. Research recently conducted by ippr<sup>4</sup> shows an increasingly negative public attitude to asylum seekers and refugees. It highlights government policy and leadership, media portrayals, racism and a general lack of knowledge and understanding about the issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers as some of the main causes. Responses stated that asylum seekers feel that anything that identifies them as an asylum seeker causes negative reactions in others and leads to humiliation and tensions. Some refugees feel that to experience the benefits of inclusion it is better not to always be identified as a refugee with the stigma it can bring.

A number of initiatives have been developed or are planned to challenge these negative attitudes.

The positive political leadership that has been shown by the Welsh Assembly Government in challenging negative stereotyping was welcomed. However, one response called for all Assembly Government divisions and programmes to give a consistent message regarding support for refugees. WRC proposed opportunities to work with political leaders at all levels in Wales to take forward the example set by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration and her staff.

The work that the Refugee Media Group has done through focus group research in 2005 demonstrates that the asylum system is problematic in forcing asylum seekers to publicly identify as such, whether at the doctors, the

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post office, and the chemists and the policy should aim to avoid any further problems in this area.

The Refugee Media Group is a network of voluntary groups that works with refugees, NGOs and the media to challenge the negative and stereotypical portrayal of refugees and to promote refugee voices in the media. Previous work has included media monitoring, developing a pool of sympathetic journalists who are well connected, building a network of refugees and asylum seekers who received media training; getting refugee and asylum stories heard; getting women as well as men's stories into the media; producing a practical guide for Refugee Community Organisations and refugee practitioners working with the media. Evaluations of the project demonstrates its effectiveness. However, funding has recently come to an end.

Refugee Week Wales, an annual positive image campaign, brings together work undertaken throughout the year into a week long series of events. This campaign engages refugee communities and receiving communities and it was suggested that the policy build on this existing work. The Assembly Government's commitment to undertake a positive image campaign was also welcomed.

Small World Theatre has done work with host communities in Wales raising awareness of refugee issues, including working with children and young people in the Diogel?/ Safe? Project. The evaluation showed it had a positive effect in the communities involved.

Other positive projects include video-diary BBC programmes with refugees telling viewers about their experiences. Cymru Refugee and Asylum Seeker Academic Council highlighted conferences and events on international issues in Wales where its members had been invited to speak as good practice as well as its events its members where discussions are held on issues such as the History of Wales, and a planned event on the terminology to be used the Assembly Government policy (ie inclusion/ integration).

The 'public' includes those who are developing and delivering key public services. All service deliverers should be given training in issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers (possibly through the race equality schemes) and given the skills to deal with negative stereotyping. This includes teachers, GPs, housing providers, benefit offices, Job Centre Plus staff, police and employers.

### *Voluntary Sector, Volunteering and Community Development*

The current and potential role of the voluntary and community sector and the importance of volunteering were highlighted in a number of responses. Responses underlined the wide range of services and support that voluntary and community organisations provide. Some voluntary and community groups' work focuses specifically on refugees and asylum seekers. Examples include the range of different Refugee Community Organisations, the Support



Groups in dispersal areas, community level work by national support groups such as Displaced People in Action and the direct advice and support as well as developmental and policy work undertaken by the Welsh Refugee Council. In addition, there were examples of groups with a wider remit providing support for refugees and asylum seekers, whether at the community level through groups such as the Ta'aleem Alynysa Women's Group in Newport to national groups such as Save the Children. However, funding is an issue for voluntary organisations and a number of good projects have come to an end when funding has been discontinued. Difficulties in knowing where to access funding for such projects was also highlighted.

Some voluntary organisations that don't focus on refugee and asylum seekers were keen to work more with this client group. They provide services which are open to refugees and asylum seekers but which are not currently being accessed. Examples included NCH children's services and support services for mental health needs and homelessness run by group in Swansea called Caer Las. Many groups are keen to develop services to better support refugee inclusion, but called for more information about the issues, training and support to do this, as well as additional funding. WCVA and CVCs may be able to support wider awareness within the sector. ASART has also produced a Resource Directory for practitioners outlining the many voluntary and charitable organisations and community groups that could help clients with social inclusion and access to other services such as advocacy, language and assistance.

Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) play a vital role in successful inclusion. They are an important form of self-expression for refugees and provide trusted advice and services for many refugees. WRC is providing training to RCOs to support them to provide accurate advice and information to refugees in housing and this could be expanded to other areas. RCOs also provide an important bridge between refugee communities and the wider community, including decision makers and other service providers. A number of groups called for RCOs clear mechanisms for involving refugees and their representatives in identifying needs and public service planning and delivery. Participation in this way might be especially important as not all refugees have a right to vote in (UK) elections.

However, RCOs have very little capacity. Many operate with little or no funding, no paid staff, little access to or ability to attend training, and few links with key agencies that could provide support to them. This is exasperated in Wrexham where there are particularly small numbers of asylum seekers and refugees and a lack of settled ethnic minorities causing isolation for refugees. It is recommended that addressing the capacity of RCOs is one of the key priorities of the policy. WCVA highlighted services that it and CVCs could provide to support voluntary groups and grants that had been given to date. One response noted that some people can become over reliant on their support giving less motivation to learn English or to understand the systems within Wales themselves.

The voluntary sector is also represented on a number of forums and partnerships at both national and local level which could influence policy development and service planning. There is potential for refugee focused voluntary organisations, such as the Welsh Refugee Council, and Refugee Community Organisations to make greater use of these opportunities. For example, WCVA is represented on the Assembly Government's All Wales Selected Minorities Group, which is developing guidance to address the needs of disadvantaged groups, including the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

## **Community development**

The Assembly Government's commitment to strong and safe communities was welcomed. The dispersal system presents a number of challenges for inclusion in communities (as well as to service providers) and can result in the sudden arrival of people to an area, which can put strains on services and relationships between the existing community and newcomers. The importance of inclusion at the community level was also highlighted.

There were examples of successful inclusion work at a community level, notably the work of Small World Theatre with 'host' communities in Swansea, as well as in Caia Park, Wrexham (post conflict) and Cardiff. Work by Tan Dans was also highlighted as successful community development work with the specific aim of integration.

WRC recommends a programme for community preparation in advance of the arrival of asylum seekers into a community. It also recommends a programme to encourage dialogue and interaction between refugees and asylum seekers and the receiving community. A programme similar to 'A framework for dialogue' in Scotland should be considered.

There is a significant overlap between areas where asylum seekers are dispersed and refugees settle with community first areas. In these areas, the Communities First partnerships and Communities First Support Network should consider supporting initiatives that benefit both refugees and the receiving communities and promote community cohesion.

## **Volunteering**

Volunteering is recognised as a route into employment and an opportunity for refugees to gain UK employment experience, acquire or develop skills and obtain UK references. For asylum seekers, without permission to work, volunteering can provide them with a purposeful activity, give them the opportunity to contribute to their new communities, maintain their self-esteem and motivation as well as gaining experience knowledge and skills. Mentoring and work shadowing are also key to helping refugees and asylum seekers to make the transition to employment.

Volunteering and mentoring are not only an opportunity to gain skills and routes into employment. They provide important opportunities for refugees

and asylum seekers to interact with the wider community, create friendships and promote good relations.

The Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to improve access to volunteering for people from all sectors of society and to take special measures to include those who are vulnerable to social exclusion was welcomed and specific measures to increase volunteering opportunities for refugees were called for. Any examples where asylum seekers or refugees have been prevented from volunteering should be challenged.

## **Employment and Training**

Employment and training emerged as one of the key issues with several responses highlighting this and a significant amount of information, not least by the Employability Forum. Information included examples of good practice in Wales as well as elsewhere in the UK. (See above for specific employment in health services).

### *Employment*

Some of the barriers that have been identified above were also important for employment, including insufficient ESOL provision, poverty, discrimination, not understanding the system and bureaucracy (as well as sometimes a fear of this), lack of information, lack of good advice and guidance, lack of specialist advisors in statutory sector.

There were also issues specific to employment including non-recognition of current qualifications gained in the country of origin, the difficulty in gaining relevant work experience and proving work experience gained in country of origin, lack of appropriate references. The shortage of BME staff in many services was seen as a problem in itself, as it can lead to mistrust by some communities.

A number of groups underlined difficulties that the withdrawal of the right to work had caused. This is clearly a barrier to employment but was also seen as a clear barrier to wider inclusion in Wales. Other barriers within the legislation include reduced benefits when accessing training after gaining status.

Responses also outlined the UK context as the Department for Work and Pensions has published a strategy on refugee employment, 'Working to Rebuild Lives'. It outlines the plan to tackle the high rate of unemployment within refugee communities, and explains how Jobcentre Plus will work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other training providers to give practical help to refugee jobseekers. The 'Framework for partnership working to help refugees fulfil their potential' was released by Jobcentre Plus in June 2005. This stresses the importance of different agencies working together.

#### Recommendations included

- Information should be available for refugees, employers and other relevant bodies, including baseline data on refugees in Wales so that progress can be measured;
- Partnerships need to be built and strengthened, Sustainable networks should be cultivated between all interested parties – from Government level to the individual refugee, via voluntary organisations and RCOs. This will limit the duplication of services, allowing for more effective action.
- The process of refugee integration must be sustainable. This only comes with appropriate long-term funding. The Assembly will need to secure resources to implement the overall Refugee Inclusion Strategy.
- There are positive examples of projects in Wales on refugee employment and the new strategy should build on these. Refugees who have found appropriate work could act as ‘champions’.
- The advantages of employing refugees must be ‘sold’ to employers. This can be done directly by organisations such as the Welsh Refugee Council and the Parade ESOL service which is already pioneering links with local employers. Help can also come from Jobcentre Plus, Business in the Community and the local media.
- Trade Unions can play an important role in promoting the employment strategy.
- It would be beneficial to create a subgroup within the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum focused on the training and employment of refugees.
- There is a need to develop a ‘one-stop shop’ as a source of information and help. This could exist as a regularly-updated website, hosting contributions from interested organisations and individuals.
- Working closely with professional associations (such as the BMA, RCN) and unions to support refugees to access employment, understand and exercise their rights at work and gain professional development.
- Joint work with the CRE and other relevant bodies to address issues of discrimination in the labour market.

#### On a more local level:

- More refugee programmes based on specific occupations should be developed. The ‘Refugee Doctors’ programme is a positive example and could be built upon with programmes for Teachers and other professions.
- ESOL services need to be more widely available, as language is the key to gaining employment and to integration. More ESOL should be workplace-based.
- More opportunities must be created for work experience programmes with local employers. These should be developed with appropriate consideration given to the large numbers of small businesses in Wales.

A number of good practice examples were highlighted including the Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group (WARD), which is Assembly funded. Among its activities, WARD provides funding for refugee doctors to take their exams and re-qualify and finds them placements to gain experience. Respondents wanted similar models to be used for other professions.

Another example is the Race and Ethnicity Access to Learning (REAL) project at Glamorgan University. This research project examines ways to improve progression and success in higher education amongst minority ethnic groups and has worked with refugees and asylum seekers to identify their needs with regard to higher education.

Another example of good practice put forward was the shadowing for refugees with politicians and civil servants at the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Assembly Government. Refugees involved believed it had a positive impact on breaking down barriers between politicians, civil servants and refugees.

### *Entrepreneurship*

The Welsh Development Agency have undertaken an action research project called 'Cyfenter' which actively sought the views of people setting up in business. This included holding 2 focus groups with 25 refugees over the last year to identify the range of issues that have affected them. It is now hoping to use the research to work with mainstream providers to ensure a more inclusive enterprise support system.

### *Training and skills*

A general need for life skills training for newly granted refugees was identified to support inclusion. This would address issues around understanding UK social norms such as paying the TV licence, putting the bin out for collection and such minor issues have created real problems. Life skills/ education could inform asylum seekers and refugees about national and local systems, advisory agencies, legislation and rights for work and day-to-day living. An example of good practice is the Parade courses which link English language courses with life skills courses. In Wrexham, WRC has contributed to proposals for 'Life Skills' courses for asylum seekers but in particular refugees. The T&G Union proposed that the Assembly increase its support for Union learning funds to provide languages and basic skills training for migrant workers.

As discussed above, respondents highlighted the need to train up statutory and voluntary service providers. Many are keen to make services better able to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers but need supported to do so.

### *Career advice and development*

Careers advice and development were also seen as important and more personal development work with service users was proposed in terms of accessing relevant training, voluntary work experience, careers advice and guidance and employment/ interview preparation and support.

Two good practice examples were put forward. The first was in the Swansea ASART team where attempts are being made to link with existing support available in communities and support workers have worked with refugees to explain the labour market and work place practices. The second was a partnership between the Welsh Refugee Council and Careers Wales Cardiff and the Vale in which a Careers Adviser is based at WRC for 3 days a week. With additional resources, this could be expanded to other areas in Wales. Careers Wales also delivers support in 'outreach' venues.

### **Health and social care**

Access to health care was seen as necessary for long-term health and inclusion prospects and there were a significant number of responses relating to health and social care. Refugees, asylum seekers and their dependents are entitled to health services but are not always able to access these due to barriers such as language and a poor awareness of entitlements. There was concern that access to healthcare should not be limited to emergency healthcare only in any circumstances.

WRC called on the Assembly Government and NHS Wales to take a lead on developing a strategic response to the health needs of refugees and welcomed the intention of the Minority Support Group to take this forward. Again, it underlined the importance of refugees being involved in the planning and delivery of health programmes at all levels.

### **Health care needs of asylum seekers**

There barriers to health care were seen to include many of the issues raised above as well as a lack of health documentation, the priority of the asylum claim and the fact that the Health Service is stretched. Many asylum seekers have specific health needs having suffered the effects of war, torture or witnessing horrors which need to be recognised. However, health care in the UK also often fails asylum seekers. Research has shown that asylum seekers may arrive in the UK in good health but that it deteriorates over 2 years due to lack of access to general medical and mental health care and a lack of interpreters.

The Cardiff Health Access Team outlined how they had worked to respond to these needs. This includes the establishment of the team itself, protocols around child trafficking and Female Genital Mutilation, joint health and educational assessment clinics, catch-up medical by a paediatrician to promote equity with the local population, awareness raising training for health professionals and translating health related materials. Hand held records are

being developed on an all Wales basis. The response also highlighted the important role of voluntary sector support such as drop in sessions and befriending schemes in health promotion and mental health. It also recognised the role of Refugee Community Organisations in self-advocacy and providing friendships. However, it considered that a key challenge to health provision to be a lack of secure funding streams making service planning difficult and current provision insecure.

The BMA recently published the results of an extensive survey carried out with GPs around the healthcare needs of both refugees and asylum seekers. As many as one in six Welsh GPs stated that they treat refugees and asylum seekers. It found that GPs encounter many difficulties in treating asylum seekers and refugees. A lack of common languages (and available translators), not enough information about previous medical history, unfamiliarity with cultural sensitivities as well as a lack of information regarding their eligibility for local services were all considered major problems. Access to good quality, professional translators and interpreters was reported by respondents as being the most important factor in the effective treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

It recognised that administration procedures needed to adapt for example, in order to be aware of and provide better language support. It called for information to be provided in appropriate languages including about how the NHS works. It also stated that appropriate assessment, treatment and support was needed at the point of arrival with all new arrivals to the UK given health checks at the point of entry. It recommended GPs offering permanent registration to refugees and asylum seekers, rather than temporary registration, wherever possible. In offering permanent registration, they are more likely to be able to offer ongoing care and to obtain previous medical records, where they exist. It also reported that GPs wanted more training and support around these issues.

Professional organisations could provide more information to its members about issues affecting asylum seeking and refugee patients and spread best practice through training.

The Assembly Government funded Refugee Good Health Project, which employs a Health Development and Advocacy Officer in WRC, was welcomed.

## **Mental Health**

Asylum seekers and refugees have been identified as suffering from high rates of mental problems resulting from traumatic experiences in countries of origin, from the process of flight and often the stresses and strains of the post-migration environment. Experiences of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are common but mental health and social care services were seen to often be ill equipped to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. GPs reported that they had difficulty in dealing with issues of mental health and psychological problems of asylum seekers and refugees and

practitioners complained that GPs tended to refer all asylum seekers with mental health needs to specialist services, rather than treating them with the services that are available to other patients with similar needs, such as depression.

The structures for mental health services differ in each cluster area. It was suggested that Cardiff is a good practice model where links are made between agencies and community mental health teams. Previously, the model had been to employ a specialist mental health nurse for asylum seekers but this had not worked because a single person cannot be expected to know all the issues and the clients become ghettoised. This model might be considered by other Local Health Boards. Torfaen LHB have recently appointed a Community Psychiatric Nurse with a specific remit for refugees and asylum seekers and has worked with the NHS Centre for Equality and Human Rights to ensure that its social dimensions information now asks for this detail.

Again, voluntary sector services people with mental health problems, including refugees and asylum seekers, are not always being tapped into.

### **Social care**

Many households are not familiar with their legal rights or obligations under the law. Some multilingual leaflets are available on these issues, but they do not cater for those who are illiterate and do not convey the contextual understanding.

### **Employment in the health sector**

The health service is a significant employer in Wales and has staff shortages in a number of areas including nursing. There are many refugees who already have health qualifications or who could gain them. Responses highlighted a number of initiatives that are underway to support better access to the labour market within health professions, as well as suggestions of how these might be expanded.

The Royal College of Nursing has launched a taskforce for getting refugee nurses into work called the Employability Forum in 2003. The NACPDE gives advice to overseas qualified dentists on clinical training, postgraduate degree and diploma opportunities and working in the UK. This is available to all overseas dentists including refugees. It also manage Dental Attachment posts in the Hospital Services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and has set up a number of Dental Attachment and Observer posts in hospitals in Wales over the last 12 months. It is currently conducting a Pilot Study for the General Dental Council (GDC), into extending Temporary Registration in the form of Dental Attachments into the Primary Care Setting. This Pilot Study has been set up in England and has also been funded by the Department of Health in England. The NACPDE is entirely funded by the Department of Health in England and has not received any funding from the Welsh Assembly to date.



It was suggested that the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Health Professions Council, along with the General Medical Council could also play an important role in supporting refugees to gain employment in the health services. Bodies such as the Royal College of Nursing can support refugees when they have gained employment, including identifying and challenging discrimination in the workplace and supporting professional development.

The CEHR Wales identifies the need for better information for employers on refugees and the need to find ways of identifying the skills of refugees and creating pathways to employment, particularly in shortage professions like nursing. It also calls for Assembly funded projects to improve access to health care careers and to support the integration of refugee healthcare professionals.

The WARD project for refugee doctors (funded by the Welsh Assembly Government) has been successful in supporting refugee doctors to gain the necessary qualifications to work in the NHS in the UK. Similar projects could be run in other healthcare professions such as nursing. However, the project has also shown evidence of difficulties in accessing employment after gaining qualifications which needs to be addressed.

### **Arts, Sports, Culture**

Positive examples of arts programmes that have been used to promote refugee inclusion in Wales were provided. These include Small World Theatre, and 'Incredible Journeys' and 'Who Cares' in Swansea and two projects run by Tan Dance/ Dawns Tan, which appeared excellent examples of how arts based projects can be tools for integration at a community level. However, initiatives had also had to stop through lack of funding.

The Arts Council can support this and its schemes can priorities disadvantaged groups such as refugees. The Arts Council Lottery funded schemes are aimed at promoting projects within Wales that involve removing barriers to participation and inclusion. The Arts Council Community Touring Unit operates a scheme known as 'Night Out' which seeks to make the performing arts available to people who are not likely to visit the established art centres. The scheme operates in partnership with Local Authorities in most parts of Wales and helps local community groups to host live professional performances without incurring the normal financial risks.

The Arts Council of Wales has published a Cultural Diversity Strategy that aims to address the artistic needs and aspirations of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The 'Compact' between the Arts Council of Wales and the Voluntary Cultural Sector in Wales also acknowledges that opportunities to taking part in the arts are essential to promote social inclusion and community development and that those organising arts activities which are funded using public money have a duty to offer equal opportunities for everyone to take part.

The WRC underlined the potential role that arts, sports and leisure activities can play and welcomed funding it had received from the Assembly Government for a Social and Cultural Support worker. It recommended that the policy consider how receiving and refugee communities can engage in arts and cultural work which promotes community cohesion and challenge conflict. Cultural events and projects can provide a platform for refugees and Refugee Community Organisations to advocate and they can also inform an expanding Welsh cultural vision.

## **Education**

Schools play an essential part in the inclusion process. Schools are not only places to learn knowledge but also places of formal and informal preparation for children to live in a new society. Schools are also important places for parents/ carers in the inclusion process and it was felt they should be empowered to participate in the education of their children and in managing school affairs.

A detailed discussion was held with representatives from LEAs in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport, which highlighted a number of key issues. The cross-cutting issues identified above apply equally to the school environment, but are played out in different ways in this setting. These include language, information, racism, funding and multi-agency working.

Many refugees arrive in Wales with high qualifications and many refugee children are high achievers in school. They bring a range of positive benefits and additional skills to schools, but these are not always recognised. Schools need to be flexible enough to build positively on these children's skills and encourage them to gain qualifications that will benefit them (and the school) such as GCSEs in their own languages. Estyn should also be geared up to recognise these skills. There is evidence that some refugee communities are not performing as well as their counter parts through the school system. WRC is working with partners to develop programmes to address low educational achievement. The Assembly Government was called on to take a strategic approach to promote the educational achievement of refugees in Wales.

However, it is important to note that focus groups carried out by the Refugee Media Group suggests that school was a really positive area of refugee and asylum seekers lives – children fit in relatively easily, learn English quickly and are well supported by teachers and support staff. The women in one of the focus groups all reported that their children are doing really well. The report also highlighted views that there needs to be more global education on the schools curriculum to avoid the misconceptions about Africa and the resultant stereotypical images and beliefs.

The need for training and increasing awareness and understanding by teachers, pupils and inspectors was highlighted in a number of areas. This should be an area covered within Teacher Training. The need for better understanding by Local Education Authorities was also highlighted. Estyn play an important role in monitoring the performance of schools and it is crucial

that inspectors are aware of issues around refugee inclusion so that they are able to report accurately around these issues. ACCAC is currently reviewing the curriculum and will seek to address these issues across the curriculum and through PSE and global citizenship. It is also currently producing guidance for teachers of ethnic minority pupils that will give advice:

- to senior managers on school responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendments Act – including the need for a policy and action plan;
- on planning a relevant curriculum for all pupils;
- on welcoming new arrivals and including pupils that do not have English or Welsh as a first language; and
- on working with parents and the community.

This work will act in parallel to the work being undertaken by the Assembly Government to develop an All Wales Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy.

The particular role that schools can play as a link with the wider community was also highlighted and is an area that needs to be developed. However, there was concern around post-16 education and the support that young people received in educational settings outside of schools.

### **Children and young people**

There were a number of responses from organisations working with children, not least Save the Children which has done a significant piece of research on issues affecting asylum seeking children in *Uncertain Futures*. This has been considered within the literature review. NCH reported it had provided services to asylum seeking children, but underlined that many more of its services were open to and probably appropriate for asylum seeking and refugee children but weren't currently being accessed.

The Save the Children *Uncertain Future* report includes a section on implications for policy and practice and 26 recommendations including on statistical information on asylum-seeking children; a review of funding and provision for Assembly-controlled services such as health and education; and issues relating to child trafficking, separated (unaccompanied) children, health, education, youth and leisure services, housing, poverty and staff capacity. These recommendations must be considered in detail in addressing issues relating to children refugee inclusion.

Good practice examples are also highlighted in the report and include provision of mental health services for children by the Haven Project, examples within schools education and specialist peer youth provision such as the SOVA project. Unfortunately, the funding for these services is very uncertain and has resulted in temporary ending of services and also other services being constantly under threat of closure. It emphasises that there are very few examples of statutory funded work targeted at this group of children and young people leaving them isolated and with little chance of being included in mainstream society.

Save the Children highlight the need for the Assembly Government to take a strategic approach across all divisions with a commitment to delivering a

funded action plan to address the basic needs of asylum seeker and refugee children. The WAG also need to ensure that the issues affecting children in Wales are flagged up to the relevant Home Office Departments and NASS to ensure that what changes can be made to procedures as they affected children in Wales are made as a matter of urgency. This in turn would ease the process of integration and inclusion by removing unnecessary hurdles and difficulties.

Save the Children identified another key barrier as the lack of information and understanding by some frontline professionals across Wales in the light of ever changing legislation and practice. It recommends WAG fund an information post related to asylum seeker children, possibly located at the Wales Refugee and Asylum Seekers Consortium to ensure that frontline providers have full access to the relevant and up to date information and guidance. This was supported by the NCH response.

Another key issue highlighted by Save the Children is racist bullying and harassment. Young people interviewed as part of the Uncertain Futures report highlighted this as a key issue and follow up work with young people has further identified their concerns that in some instances schools are perceived to 'brush it under the carpet'. Schools need to be resourced and supported to address these issues.

Save the Children expressed concern that there are very few examples of services being provided to this specific group of children. This was supported by evidence from the ASART team in Swansea and the Wales Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers lottery bid for increased support in this area.

Save the Children also submitted a briefing paper on children seeking asylum in Wales on asylum procedures and legal issues. The issues raised relate mainly to non-devolved policy, but Save the Children believe that although immigration policy is reserved to Westminster, limited changes to the process and adherence to good practice has the scope to significantly improve the lives of children seeking asylum in Wales. The briefing paper includes processes for screening, access to specialist legal advice and removal and in each of these areas identifies the issues and how these could be addressed. The key recommendations for change are:

- a written commitment for IND screenings to be undertaken in Cardiff for new arrivals;
- Increased awareness of how young people are impacted by the asylum system (receiving less favourable asylum status than adults do) and measures in place to try and ensure families and young people in Wales access specialist legal advice;
- Removals are an integral part of current Asylum Policy. Increased awareness is needed of the impact of the issues surrounding removal on children and young people living in Wales and the required sensitivities in managing the negative impact in children and young people.

## **Housing**

WRC underlined the importance of housing policy and welcomed the work that the Welsh Assembly Government has undertaken around this issue to date. WRC places considerable emphasis on housing and has 5 Assembly Government funded staff who provide advice, information and support to people who have recently gained refugee status to settle in Wales and a Housing Development worker, funded by HACT and Lloyds TSB. The Home Office Sunrise programme should also play a significant role in supporting people immediately after they have been granted status.

WRC outlined the issues for refugees accessing housing in the period after refugee status has been granted and the resultant problem in destitution. There are examples of projects that aim to overcome these difficulties in each cluster area and it was suggested that these now be assessed to determine their success. There was a call consideration as to whether any further measures are needed, such as providing advocacy for through the homelessness application and whether those who have recently received refugee status should be included within priority need.

A lack of awareness amongst some housing providers in the four cluster areas of the issues that refugees face was reported and WRC has been holding workshops with providers and refugees to combat this. Hact have commissioned a piece of research into good practice with refugee housing in Wales to be launched at a conference in November after a week's training for Refugee Community Leaders.

The availability of housing varies across the cluster areas. Sensitive housing policies are needed to prevent isolation and segregation and to promote community cohesion. The difficulty in accessing housing after status has been granted also results in destitution causing obvious distress for refugees and can cause tension with the receiving communities.

## **Community Safety**

A few responses highlighted issues around community safety. There was no indication of the level of violent incidents, but one response noted a number of violent incidents involving ethnic minorities and anecdotal evidence of local people being hostile to foreign workers who are perceived to be causing a nuisance in their communities (eg for failure to put out rubbish bags at the right time).

Issues were seen to include levels of understanding around different cultural practices by the Police and that the police are under-resourced. Similarly, some refugees and asylum seekers have been more frightened of events than other residents because they have misunderstood a social or cultural norm in this country. It was also suggested that many refugee and asylum seeking families do not report racial harassment.

One response described how the racially motivated killing of Kalan Kawa Karim, a Kurdish refugee, in Swansea in 2004 had resulted in a broad coalition of ethnic and faith groups, together with trade unionists and cross party politicians was set up to oppose the activities of the BNP in Swansea and to expose the myths of asylum seekers.

### **Non-dispersal areas**

It is not clear how many refugees might be living in non-dispersal and rural areas. There may be issues such as isolation for such people. There may also experience 'rural racism'.

In these areas it was suggested that it might be most effective to link with existing strategies with a similar remit, for example, with the work undertaken through the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy in Carmarthen.

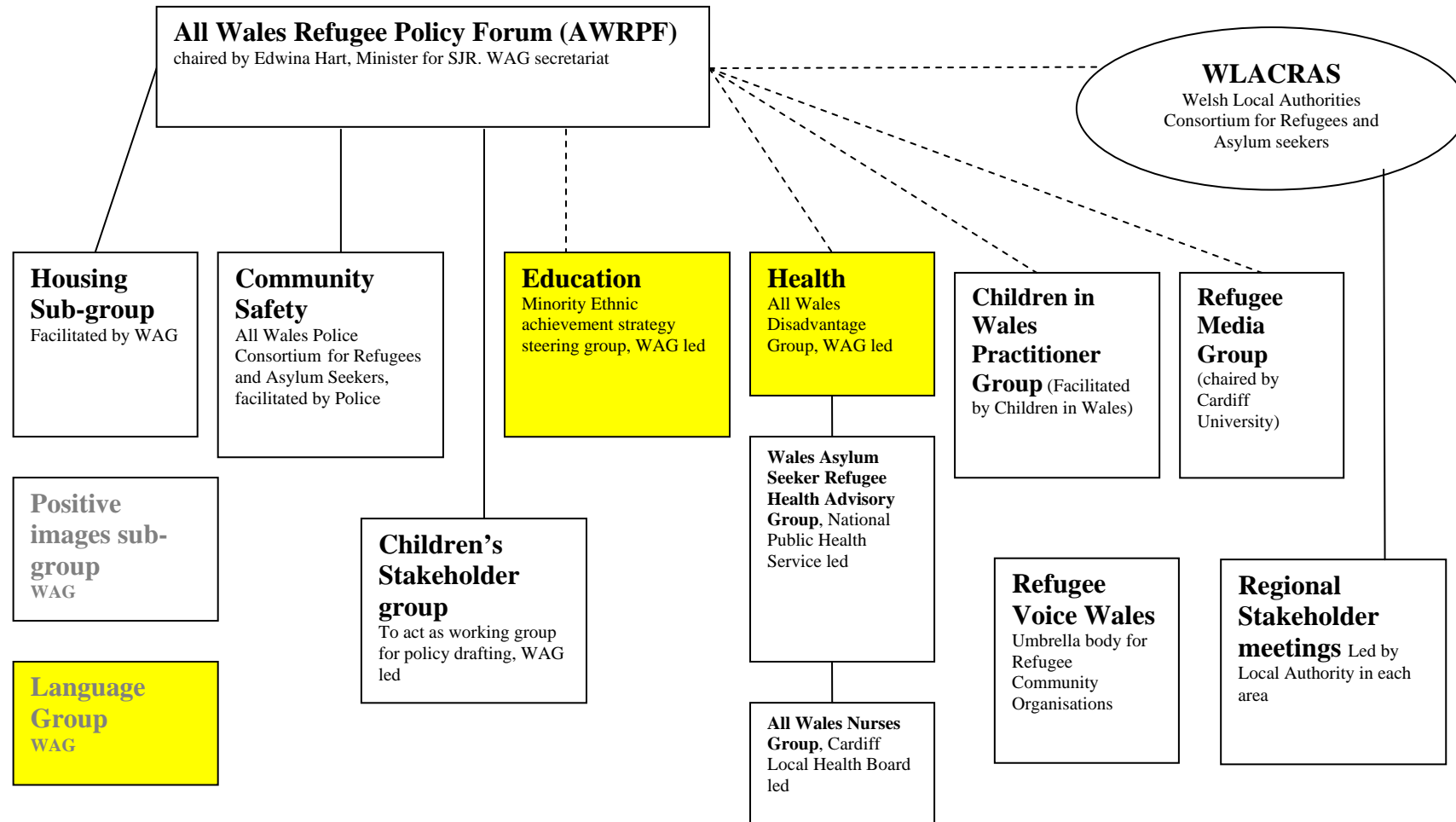
### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Respondents called for robust systems of recording the effectiveness and the impact of the work with asylum seekers and refugees, funded by the Assembly Government. As discussed above, Professor Vaughan Robinson proposes a programme of basic research to provide an evidence-base for monitoring and evaluating the policy.

### **Conclusions**

Information has been provided on a wide range of areas and suggests a wide range of action that could be undertaken by the Assembly Government and its partners through a Refugee Inclusion Policy and Action Plan. There are a number of similar issues across different areas of service provision that can be addressed effectively in an over-arching Assembly Government strategy.

## Annex A: Map of existing groups



- Grey type - group agreed, but not yet established
- Solid line – formal link between groups;
- Dotted line – informal link
- Fill – asylum seekers and refugees are part of the broader remit of the group

## Annex B: Organisations that responded to the questionnaire

Organisation	Region	Issue	Sector
ACCAC	Wales	education	statutory
Bahá'I Council for Wales	Wales	general	cs-faith
BMA Cymru/Wales	Wales	Health	cs-prof ass
Bridgend County Borough Council	Bridgend	children	statutory
Caer Las Cymru	Swansea	Mental Health	cs-voluntary
Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust	Cardiff	mental health	statutory
Cardiff Health Access Team	Cardiff	Health	statutory
Careers Wales	Wales	employment	statutory
Carmarthenshire County Council	Carmarthenshire	general	statutory
City & Council of Swansea Asylum Seekers and Refugee Team (ASART)	Swansea	general	statutory
Cymru Refugee and Asylum Seekers Academic Council	Wales	general	cs-vol
Flintshire LHB	Flintshire	Health	statutory
Gofal Cymru	Wales	Mental Health	cs-voluntary
Gwent Police	Gwent	community safety	statutory
Health Professions Wales	Wales	Health	statutory
LEAs	Cardiff, Newport, Swansea	Education	statutory
MAMS Group	South/ West and Mid Wales	illegal killing	cs-voluntary
NACPDE	England	Health	academic
NCH Cymru	Wales	children	cs-vol
NHS CEHR	Wales	Health	statutory
PAVO	Powys	general	cs-vol
Powys Centre for Culture Diversity	Powys	general	cs-vol
Powys Local Health Board	Powys	Health	statutory
RESOLVE	North Wales	drug abuse	cs-voluntary
Royal College of Nursing	Wales	Health	Cs-voluntary
Save the Children Fund	Wales	children	cs-vol
Small World Theatre	Wales	Arts	cs-voluntary
Swansea LEA 2	Swansea	education	statutory
Swansea University	Wales	research	academic
T&G Cymru/ Wales	Wales	employment	cs-tu
Ta'aleem Alynssa Women's Group (Bahá'í)	Newport	general	cs-faith



Tan Dance	Swansea & NPT	arts	cs-vol?
Torfaen LHB	Torfaen	Health	statutory
Victim Support			
WCVA	Wales	general	cs-vol
WDA	Wales	economic	statutory
Welsh Assembly Government	Wales	housing	statutory
Welsh Assembly Government	Wales	housing	statutory
Welsh Refugee Council	Cardiff		cs-voluntary
WRC	Wales	general	cs-vol
WRC	Wales	general	cs-vol
WRSSG	Wrexham		cs-voluntary
Oxfam Cymru	Wales	general	cs-vol