

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyflawnder Cymdeithasol ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad i Gydlyniant Cymdeithasol

This response was submitted to the Equality and Social justice Committee on the inquiry into Social Cohesion

SC 24

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Ffodduriad Cymru a Sanctuary Coalition Cymru

Response from: Welsh Refugee Council and Sanctuary Coalition Cymru

About the Welsh Refugee Council:

We have been **empowering asylum seekers and refugees** to build new futures in Wales for 32 years. We deliver direct specialist support to our clients from our offices in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham. We work with community, voluntary, and statutory sector partners to create a society where there is **respect and equality for all**.

We support asylum seekers and refugees at the most critical points of their lives. Our work enables people who have been forced to seek sanctuary to find their feet and begin **building a life in Wales**. Through our work, we help people to find a place to stay, to work to support themselves, to get access to English classes, legal advice, and community networks so they have what they need to begin again in their new homes.

About the Sanctuary Coalition Cymru:

Sanctuary Coalition Cymru is a collective of experts by experience—refugees and asylum seekers—and specialist organisations supporting individuals at every stage of the asylum journey, along with the communities in which they live. Together, we speak with a unified voice on policies and practices affecting those seeking safety in Wales.

At the heart of our work is the integration of the unique perspectives of those who have directly experienced seeking sanctuary, alongside the expertise of organisations. Our shared goal is to improve the lives of people seeking refuge, while fostering understanding, support, and sustainable solutions as we strive towards a Nation of Sanctuary.

Website: <https://wrc.wales/>

Response

We welcome the Equality and Social Justice Committee's consultation on social cohesion. We are proud of the Welsh Government's track record in this field since the introduction of the *Strategy to promote community cohesion* in 2009. Since then, updates have consolidated the Welsh Government's commitment to social cohesion.

We are encouraged by the note that "the Committee will also be considering the wider context for community cohesion following targeted attacks on refugees and asylum seekers in communities across the UK during the summer of 2024." The summer 2024 anti-migrant riots are just one of many incidents targeting the wider migrant community which have affected social cohesion in Wales. As the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and the Sanctuary Coalition Cymru (SCC), we have been especially affected by these incidents. The impact that they have had on our staff and ability to operate should not go unmentioned.

Our response to this consultation will be based around the experiences of sanctuary seekers and the services that support them. In line with the terminology used by the Welsh Government, we will use the term 'sanctuary seeker' to denote different groups, including asylum seekers and refugees throughout. Many of our arguments have been informed by the experiences of sanctuary seekers and the staff who support them. Their anonymised quotes will be used extensively.

1. The key issues which impact social cohesion in Wales and consider whether interventions need to target specific groups of people, geographical areas or particular key issues.

Sanctuary seekers and the organisations that support them have been at the forefront of the challenges of social cohesion and integration for the last three or four years. Whilst discriminatory, racist, anti-migrant sentiments have always existed, we worry these have been on the rise recently. We also feel that these views have sometimes gone unchallenged.

In Wales alone there have been four separate incidents affecting social cohesion in the last three years which we would like to draw special attention to. These are the protests in Llantwit Major, the protests and wider situation at the Stradey Park in Llanelli (spring and summer 2023), the August 2024 riots, and the social media attacks on the WRC in December 2023 and January 2025.

Llantwit Major

There was a major protest against a temporary scheme for Ukrainian refugees in the Vale of Glamorgan town of Llantwit Major in March 2023. The protestors were from the far-right group Patriotic Alternative (PA) and were outnumbered by locals and counter-protesters. Despite there being only one actual protest, the hate campaign was long-lasting.

PA's deliberate attempts to sow division created a false narrative, suggesting that asylum seekers would be housed in the temporary accommodation scheme. Until that point, Wales had shown overwhelming support for Ukrainian refugees, but PA sought to exploit a perceived hierarchy of 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' sanctuary seekers.

Media coverage of Llantwit Major often reflected Islamophobic sentiments from those opposing the scheme. Yet, thanks to the swift and determined action of anti-racist grassroots groups and the local community, the opposition never gained real momentum. South Wales stood firm, with counter-protests pushing back against PA and other far-right agitators.

Crucially, the local church and football team, bedrocks of the community, played a key role in resisting division. It is important that we learn lessons from this and fully understand the role these pillars can play in maintaining social cohesion.

Recommendation 1. Set up an inquiry into anti-migrant sentiment in Wales which explores what factors led to the rejection of the far-right anti migrant efforts in Llantwit Major.

Stradey Park

The events surrounding the Stradey Park Hotel in Llanelli during the spring and summer of 2023 echoed a now-familiar pattern. With almost no warning, the Home Office announced that the hotel, an important community hub hosting weddings, celebrations, and local events, would be repurposed as emergency accommodation for asylum seekers. This abrupt decision meant all bookings were cancelled, fuelling frustration and uncertainty among locals.

Resistance to the plan was immediate. Makeshift barricades sprang up on the hotel's driveway, and community groups quickly formed to oppose the decision. A town meeting was called, mirroring the mobilisations seen in Northop Hall (Flintshire) when a similar proposal emerged.

However, what began as local opposition in Llanelli soon turned toxic. Far-right activists seized the moment, infiltrating the protests and drowning out those with genuine concerns. Organisers who initially opposed the plan were pushed aside, while extremists from as far away as Peterborough and Cleveland (Yorkshire) arrived to stoke division. Of those arrested during the unrest, out-of-town agitators outnumbered locals.

The protests escalated into violence. Arson attempts and property damage targeted the hotel, while the local MP and Senedd Member faced an alarming surge in threats. Misinformation fuelled the fury, with opponents spreading Islamophobic and racist narratives claiming that 400 single men would be housed at the hotel, when in reality, just over 200 people from family groups were due to be accommodated.

In the end, the Stradey Park Hotel never took in sanctuary seekers. Not because of the protests, nor a shift in Home Office policy, but due to fire safety concerns. Yet the dominant narrative remained that local mobilisation had “won.” Had the plan proceeded, the safety of sanctuary seekers would have been a serious concern.

The Home Office shoulders much of the blame for this failure in social cohesion. Its policy of giving minimal notice leaves no time for communities to adjust or prepare, fostering division instead of integration. Not only does it fail to support social cohesion—it actively undermines it.

Recommendation 2. Set up an inquiry into anti-migrant sentiment in Wales to explore why some opposition to Home Office accommodation turned violent (Stradey Park) and others did not (Northop Hall).

Summer 2024 riots

Although there was no rioting in Wales in summer 2024, events across the border still had an impact. The riots had a notable racist, Islamophobic, and anti-migrant sentiment. In England, services providing support for sanctuary seekers were targeted.

The far-right called for mobilisations in Wales, including Cardiff, Swansea, and Wrexham. These never gathered momentum and were always met with a larger counterprotest. The reasons for the lack of success are varied and difficult to pin down. It is possible that Wales has done a better job at social cohesion, but also that the far-right is less organised and/or that the anti-racist opposition is well-cemented within Wales.

We asked our colleagues to share some of their experience of and feelings about the riots:

“Feeling I am not a local person and a migrant (someone else) who may not be welcomed to the country.”

“I was devastated to realise that so many people in the UK joined the anti-migrant riots. Many of them lacked compassion. At the same time, I was proud that there were more people in the UK who opposed the riots and supported sanctuary seekers.”

“More careful [about] where to go, more phone calls to check on the kids, not to go out unless it was necessary.”

“Uneasy, but they didn't happen in Wales.”

“Scared, fearing for my safety since we do not know what our neighbours think about us as we have seen things being escalated in a bad way with people we have been living with for years who have shown their real face through social media. For example, one of the children of [one of] my community members who came to the UK in 2002 when she was two years old, who has had only British friends since her childhood, was astonished to read her best friend writing on her Facebook page

‘Please send back these monkeys to the forests’. When she tried to call her friend to warn her on what she was writing, her friend stated ‘FO’. This increased her fear as could not believe that she has been living with someone who has never liked her. Very dangerous!’

“Unsafe and anxious to go into the office or work events. Concerned about my colleagues with lived experience’s safety outside of work. Disheartened to see such hate-filled scenes across the country and the way it was affecting my incredible colleagues and family and friends.”

“Anxious about the safety of service users and colleagues. Unsure how the disruption and fear would impact our ability to deliver services. With hindsight, we know those events lasted a matter of days and the threat did not materialise into riots in Wales, but at the time, neither of these things felt guaranteed. At points, it felt like anything could have been possible.”

“I was anxious for the community I work with, and I could see first-hand how scared they were to leave their homes/accommodation. Even the counter protest/anti-far right gatherings, in the city centre, made them nervous and avoid the centre all together. At the time, I felt strongly that we should be continuing to offer safe spaces for them to come to, if they wanted to. Even if only a few attended, it’s important to show we are still there, and they shouldn’t be forced to hide away - my concern was by intimidating them to limit their movements and become invisible, it is exactly what the far-right wanted.”

Whilst it is true that we did not see anti-migrant riots in Wales, we cannot be idle, as anti-migrant rhetoric ramps up.

Recommendation 3. Set up an inquiry into anti-migrant sentiment in Wales which explores why, unlike in England, there was no rioting in Wales.

Social media targeting

The WRC has faced relentless targeted attacks on social media, exposing the dangerous reach of far-right disinformation.

In November 2023, we were invited to Brynteg Secondary School in Bridgend to give a talk on sanctuary seekers. As part of their project, students created short videos embracing the values of the Nation of Sanctuary—a positive, educational initiative. However, these videos were soon deliberately misrepresented by GB News, leading to their removal from social media.

Even after they were taken down, far-right accounts on X (formerly Twitter) recirculated them in late December 2023, directing a wave of hate toward WRC staff. Our office locations were shared online, and calls for harm were made against us. While the intensity of the abuse faded within days, it was serious enough for the then First Minister to address it in the Senedd upon its return from recess.

The situation escalated even further in January 2025 when one of the videos resurfaced online, amplified by Elon Musk, shared with his 212 million followers. What followed was an unprecedented surge in online abuse and threats. The risk was so severe that we made the difficult decision to close our offices for three days to ensure staff safety.

In the face of this onslaught, we were heartened by the overwhelming support from Welsh civil society and the cross-party backing we received in the Senedd. However, we were deeply disappointed by the actions of Andrew RT Davies MS, who not only engaged with hateful content but actively fuelled the hostility with his own damaging comments.

The attacks we faced were not just digital, as they had real-world consequences. This incident underscores the urgent need for accountability in political discourse and the responsibility of public figures to challenge, rather than propagate, dangerous narratives. We asked our staff to share their experiences of receiving online hate and RT Davies' well-publicised involvement.

“I wish Mr Davies would stop spreading lies about us. We work hard to help people in need and now I am scared for my safety because people believe this misinformation.”

“Everyone is feeling disappointed and scared. We've been working so hard to support vulnerable people, and the awful comments made by this politician to push their own agenda have really let me down.”

“For 23 years I have worked hard to build a fulfilling life in Wales. I was fortunate enough to find love and marry into a wonderful Welsh family, raise two fantastic children and even have the opportunity to become a Welsh speaker. I have spent my 23 years here doing everything in my power to be a role model for other refugees, working at the WRC for 20 of them. Seeing people with such power abuse their public platform to target us, breaks my heart. When will the trauma end?”

“Deeply disappointed that an elected official has promoted messages of division and hate. His actions have left me concerned for the personal safety of colleagues and myself, as well as extremely vulnerable service users.”

“I am deeply concerned about the far-reaching consequences of RT Davies's misinformation, shared to so many over the weekend. There is a strong possibility it will directly affect the lives of the babies, children, and vulnerable women I work with, some of whom have already been victims of hate crime in the UK. It makes me feel physically sick to hear that my colleagues have been abused online and had their lives threatened because of this misinformation.”

“I am profoundly saddened that a Member of the Senedd, entrusted with the responsibility to uphold truth and integrity, has chosen to retweet this misleading post. His actions go against the Nation of Sanctuary principles we have committed to uphold. As a result, we have been forced to suspend vital support for some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society—many of whom depend on us just to

navigate each day. This action has not only jeopardised their well-being, but also put both them and our dedicated staff at risk. The consequences of this action are grave, and the harm it has caused cannot be overstated.”

“I would like to start off by saying that I am deeply disappointed that an elected member of the Welsh Parliament has decided to spread misinformation without taking even a moment to consider the deep and lasting impact it has on the organisation. More importantly, he did not consider that the WRC is made up of individuals just like him. Many of our staff, including myself, have lived experiences of being refugees and sanctuary seekers. We have lived through instances of persecution which have forced us to leave everything we know behind and instances like this are incredibly triggering for us because they force us to relive those painful moments. Many of us have received death threats before but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t impact us. In fact, it is worse to know that despite having left behind our lives in the hope of safety, we cannot find that even here in Wales. Today, many of my colleagues and I feel unsafe in our neighbourhoods. Today, we will yet again have to dread leaving our homes and mentally prepare ourselves to know anything could happen. Many of us will be forced to isolate ourselves in our homes because we feel unsafe going out. We will suffer panic attacks, depressive episodes, and other adverse mental health caused by the re-traumatisation that has occurred. Would you be able to work and live your life normally under these conditions? Members of the Senedd are here to represent everyone who lives in Wales and that includes us sanctuary seekers and refugees. Spreading misinformation puts us at risk. It can ruin and, at worst, cost people their lives.”

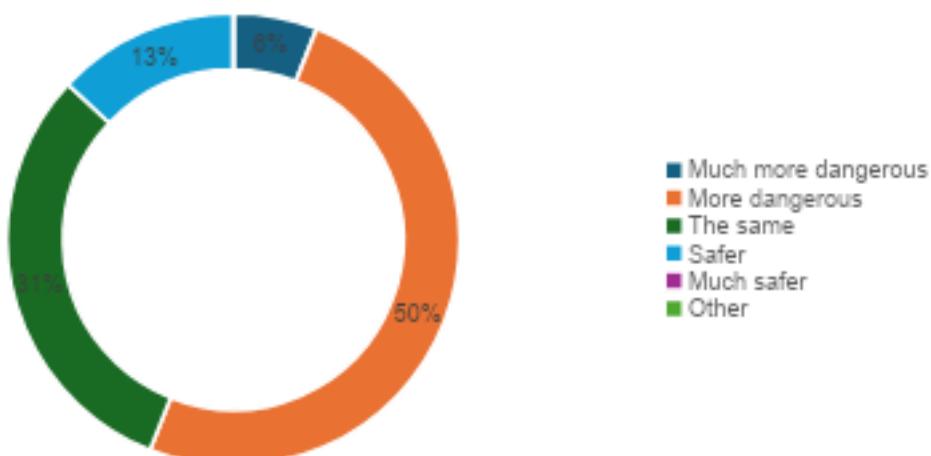
Recommendation 4. A cross-party Senedd recommitment to the principles of Nation of Sanctuary.

Recommendation 5. The Senedd to organise and promote sanctuary seeker training to elected officials and staff.

Perceptions

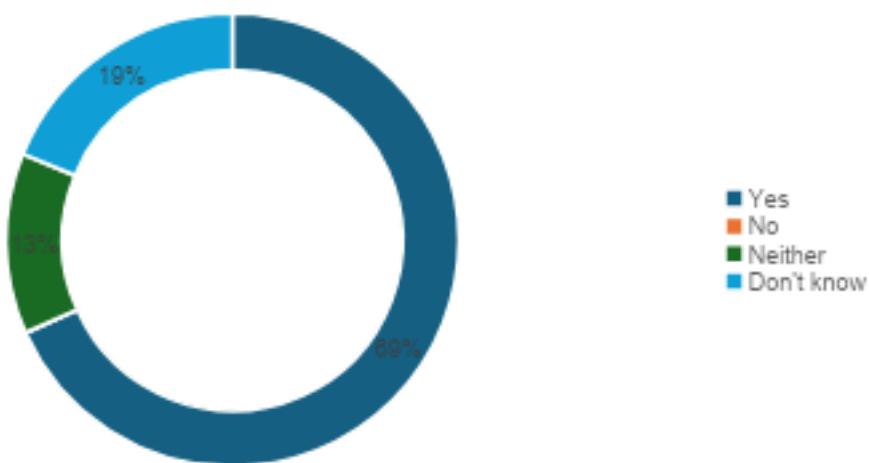
Overall, these events have made many in Wales feel less safe. When consulting with our staff, we found that 56% felt that Wales had become a less safe place to live.

Over the last twelve months, do you feel Wales has become a more dangerous or safer place to live in?



Interestingly, our staff's opinion on support given by the Welsh public and political establishment was divided. Positively, 69% felt that the people of Wales are making Wales more welcoming to sanctuary seekers. In contrast, the figure drops to 49% for politicians and decision-makers.

Do you feel the people of Wales are making Wales a more welcoming place for sanctuary seekers?



Do you feel politicians and other decision-makers in Wales are making Wales a more welcoming place for sanctuary seekers?



Widening of dispersal

The UK Government's *Nationality and Borders Act 2022* has ushered in some of the most significant changes to UK immigration in decades. One of the most urgent shifts is the expansion of asylum dispersal, moving from concentrated placement in key cities to dispersing sanctuary seekers across all of Wales.

Until now, sanctuary seekers in Wales have primarily been placed in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham, communities with established support networks to help them integrate. With the widening of dispersal, every local authority in Wales will now be expected to provide for asylum seekers, requiring a major rethink of funding, service provision, and community cohesion strategies.

This change will pose particular challenges for rural areas with little to no prior experience in supporting asylum seekers. By the end of 2023, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Powys, and Ynys Môn—largely rural regions—were set to receive 60, 96, 105, and 55 asylum seekers, respectively. Other areas will also face difficulties in meeting the needs of new arrivals without proper investment.

Recommendation 6. Fund training for local authorities so frontline staff understand the complexities of asylum seeker needs and their rights in a Welsh environment.

The same applies to when they are granted refugee status. In the absence of adequate support services and without community support, refugees risk falling through the cracks, especially during the move on period. Without increases to the Move On budget, to enable adaptation in line with widening of dispersal, a newly granted refugee's ability to integrate will be severely limited.

Recommendation 7. Increase funding to Move On service providers to ensure refugees can find alternative accommodation, access bank accounts, and work/social security, as quickly as possible, avoiding destitution and homelessness, but also crucially integrate into their new communities. This should be consistent with inflation and with the widening of dispersal.

Communities within widening of dispersal may not be prepared to welcome sanctuary seekers and feel as though their concerns are not being listened to. Integration and social cohesion relies on community buy-in, and additional support is needed throughout all dispersal areas to prepare communities to welcome asylum seekers.

Lived experience experts across the City of Sanctuary network shared that schools are often a hostile environment. Sanctuary seekers told us that bullying is rife in schools, with children not wanting to attend. In addition, parents recounted that when they wear their 'hijab or religious clothing', other parents refuse to talk to them. Sanctuary seekers in these networks emphasised that social spaces are vital for integration. However, resource-limited regions in Wales do not have the infrastructure to support this and therefore, community groups and volunteers are providing this on an ad hoc basis. This is unsustainable, and results in a postcode lottery of support for integration.

Recommendation 8. Fund specialist sanctuary seeker support organisations to operate across all local authorities. Funding to be used to run community information events in community hubs, such as schools, libraries, and community sites to dispel myths about sanctuary seekers and co-produce solutions with community members to support integration.

2. Examples of best practice and other interventions/needed to support social cohesion and overcome tensions. This includes understanding the role the third sector plays in supporting social cohesion and what barriers it faces, including funding.

Sanctuary

Ensuring that sanctuary seekers feel welcome and supported requires a strategic, multi-layered approach at both local and national levels. Across Wales, City of Sanctuary groups have been instrumental in fostering social connections by organising community events, training sessions, and myth-busting initiatives to counter misinformation and promote inclusion. Myth-busting sessions are key to building stronger connections, reinforcing the importance of public education in dismantling harmful narratives.

By working alongside schools, councils, and businesses, these groups ensure that those seeking sanctuary are met with understanding, opportunity, and dignity. At the heart of this movement is embedding best practices across sectors. Initiatives such as cities/towns, schools, and universities of sanctuary networks encourage organisations to commit to a culture of welcome, with award schemes supporting them to learn, embed, and share inclusive policies. More importantly, refugees and asylum seekers are actively involved in leadership programmes, such as Sanctuary in Politics, ensuring that their voices shape policies and narratives. These kinds of initiatives are key for inclusion and social cohesion. One survey respondent emphasised that "having people in positions of power such as MSs who are from migrant backgrounds" could significantly contribute to social cohesion.

Regrettably though, these crucial sanctuary networks that are fundamental for integration and social cohesion receive no government funding. Despite its impact, the third sector faces severe funding constraints. Rising costs, including the Real Living Wage and National Insurance increases, are placing additional strain on already limited resources. Currently, community cohesion efforts in Wales are underfunded, with the largest organisation in this space receiving no core funding outside of Swansea. Successful initiatives are often funded at only a pilot level, with no resources for scaling up.

All SCC members have seen how social cohesion strengthens communities and enhances individual well-being. Funding gaps and short-term responses remain major challenges, often hindering long-term community cohesion efforts. Sustainable investment in training, partnerships, and grassroots initiatives is essential to ensuring resilient, inclusive communities. However, many respondents noted that "social cohesion is not a funded priority", leaving successful initiatives without the resources to expand or sustain their impact.

Recommendation 9. Fund third sector partners that work towards social cohesion to be funded to deliver this important service.

Integration

A place-based approach is key to fostering meaningful interactions between sanctuary seekers and host communities. In Splott, Cardiff, Oasis collaborates with local organisations to bring communities together through sports, arts, and cultural initiatives, from football tournaments uniting local residents and refugees to shared cooking workshops that celebrate diverse cuisines. These initiatives provide shared spaces for connection and learning, breaking down barriers and strengthening community ties.

Nonetheless, widening dispersal policies have led to asylum seekers being placed in areas with little infrastructure or existing support networks, exacerbating isolation.

We have heard from sanctuary seekers who have been placed in areas such as RCT, Caerphilly, and Gwynedd at short notice that they have experienced loneliness and a lack of services. Individuals with lived experience emphasised that the "Welsh Government should be the lead to connect services and make integration easier," reflecting a broader call for more proactive coordination between government and local support organisations.

'Shaping Nations' is an exciting WRC pan-Wales project which seeks to celebrate the rich migration history of our nation and highlight the valuable contribution migrants and sanctuary seekers have made to Wales whilst also empowering them to tell their unique and inspiring stories.

'Shaping Nations' seeks to change the negative narrative around migrants and sanctuary seekers, promote understanding and empathy, preserve cultural heritage, and promote community cohesion.

So far, we have done this via a variety of workshops, such as arts and crafts, cooking, storytelling, poetry, and textiles, as a way to share Welsh and external traditions. We are also collecting the stories of 80 lived experience people through a documentary and book. Our travelling exhibition will showcase the rich and varied history of migration to here and exhibits from all our workshops exploring themes such as 'What does migration mean to you?"

Through these workshops local people are connected to another culture, develop better understanding and empathy towards lived experienced people, and community cohesion is built.

While sharing their stories through film and book empowers them and gives them a voice to tell their powerful stories as well as helping local people to understand the realities lived experience people face.

Recommendation 10. Highlight and promote these social cohesion and integration initiatives for their continued success.

Social cohesion is not a one-time event, yet many initiatives, including [Refugee Week](#), remain time-limited and underfunded, reducing their potential to create lasting change. As one participant put it, "Refugee Week often feels like a tokenistic echo chamber rather than what it was intended to be – a space for social cohesion activities that are long lasting."

Support and access

For sanctuary seekers, integration is significantly hindered when basic needs, such as healthcare, food, housing, mental health support, legal aid, transport, and digital access, are not met. Without these essentials, meaningful participation in education, employment, and community engagement remains out of reach. We are accountable

to sanctuary seekers and hear their frustration regarding the lack of focus on social cohesion and the direct consequence of this including social isolation.

A lack of social cohesion can have profound mental health impacts, leaving individuals feeling disconnected and struggling to rebuild their lives. Without strong community ties, people face greater challenges in accessing support, developing confidence, and engaging in essential activities such as language learning, employment, and social participation. Mental health support is not just about emotional well-being, it is a critical foundation for integration and resilience.

One programme addressing this issue is Mindspring, delivered by Oasis, a preventative mental health and well-being initiative conducted in participants' mother tongue. Since 2021, 313 individuals have graduated from the programme, with some experiencing up to a 96% improvement in their well-being scores, as measured by the WHO-5 scale. The impact is clear, as highlighted by Natalie from Ukraine: "I have lost my home, but I have found warmth and comfort in this group where we are heard and understood. Sharing our struggles makes them lighter. Step by step, I have become calmer and stronger."

The lack of affordable transport and digital access prevents people from attending classes, training, and community events, further isolating them. The delayed rollout of the Welcome Ticket's second phase, which would provide free bus transport for asylum seekers, continues to create frustration and limit integration opportunities. In its previous iterations, the Welcome Ticket was a proud beacon of integration and the merits of the Nation of Sanctuary. Members of our team were repeatedly approached by organisations in other locations of the UK to share our experience of the programme.

Recommendation 11. Clarity over the release of the Welcome Ticket's second phase and funding made available for its delivery.

Language

The Welsh Government has led the way by not using divisive and stigmatising language. Someone claiming asylum will never be illegal. The method of their entry into the UK does not determine any right or lack thereof. We hope this remains. Outside of Wales, we warmly welcome the new title of Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, leaving behind any mention of 'illegal' and instead focusing on 'irregular'. WRC and SCC have long advocated for a more humane language.

Recommendation 12. Continue the use of destigmatised language.

Social cohesion is essential for fostering inclusive, resilient communities. While Wales has made significant strides in building a culture of welcome, challenges persist. By investing in sustainable community cohesion efforts, removing systemic

barriers, and strengthening partnerships, we can create a more inclusive future where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and belong.

3. What support the Welsh Government provides to community groups and organisations and identify whether there are any opportunities to provide additional support. This includes examining the limitations and barriers which exist given some aspects of support for social cohesion are reserved to the UK Government (for example policing, media and internet regulation), and what action could be taken to overcome these challenges.

Funding

The Welsh Government plays an essential role in fostering community cohesion and supporting organisations that work with sanctuary seekers, migrants, and other vulnerable groups. However, the level of direct support available remains fragmented, with little to no dedicated funding for social cohesion initiatives.

Existing funding streams are often small-scale and short-term, limiting their impact and sustainability. While the Welsh Government has expressed a commitment to making Wales a Nation of Sanctuary, greater investment is required to translate this vision into effective, long-lasting support structures. Strengthening partnerships between community cohesion teams and the City of Sanctuary network could be one way to enhance sustainability and create more comprehensive support mechanisms.

While the Welsh Government has made progress, there are significant opportunities to expand and improve its support for community groups and organisations.

Team Wales and the Home Office

A strategic, well-funded, and collaborative "Team Wales" approach is needed to effectively counter the rise of the far-right and ensure Wales truly becomes a Nation of Sanctuary. Increased funding for grassroots organisations would empower those directly engaged with sanctuary seekers, providing them with the resources necessary to deliver meaningful and sustained support. Simplifying the application process for funding would also ensure that smaller organisations can access vital resources without administrative barriers.

Another key area of concern is the rapid decision-making processes of the Home Office, which frequently impact local communities without sufficient communication or consultation. Recent incidents, such as the Stradey Park case, highlight the risks

of failing to engage with communities adequately. The lack of transparency and consultation allows hostile narratives to dominate, undermining efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive society. This approach is inconsistent with the Well-being of [Future Generations Act's principles](#) and runs counter to Wales' commitment to inclusivity and cohesion.

The Home Office's persistent lack of transparency and communication continues to fuel division, leaving both sanctuary seekers and local communities in turmoil. Time and again, key decisions are made behind closed doors, shutting out the very people they affect. The Stradey Park incident is a stark example. By failing to engage local stakeholders from the outset, the Home Office allowed a hostile narrative to take hold, deepening divisions rather than fostering understanding. The Welsh Government must push for a greater role in these decisions, ensuring that communities are involved early and meaningfully in discussions that shape their future. When transparency is prioritised, misinformation loses its grip, and communities have the chance to build solutions rather than react to crises.

Online

The rise of online misinformation and targeted attacks against the asylum and refugee sector is another urgent challenge that cannot be ignored. From the Elon Musk incident to recent defamation cases, we have seen how quickly disinformation spreads, escalating hostility and putting lives at risk. While social media regulation remains largely under UK Government control, Wales must take proactive steps to counter harmful narratives. By working with UK-wide regulatory bodies, engaging directly with social media platforms, and increasing positive media representation of migration and integration, Wales can challenge the spread of hate and misinformation. A stronger, more visible commitment to accurate storytelling is essential in reinforcing the nation's identity as a place of sanctuary and inclusion.

Recommendation 13. Engaging with the UK Government to advocate for more devolved powers related to social cohesion, hate crime prevention, and digital media regulation would enable Wales to implement policies that better reflect its inclusive vision.

Recommendation 14. Collaborating with Welsh-based media outlets to counter misinformation and promote positive narratives around migration and integration would help challenge the negative rhetoric surrounding asylum seekers.

The increasing hostility and targeted attacks on staff working within this sector and the people they support have led to heightened concerns about personal safety. Organisations working in the field are bracing for potential backlash, anticipating shifts in how they use social media and advertise opportunities for sanctuary seekers

and refugees. Many are preparing for the worst, worried that the growing hostility could impact their work and visibility.

Organisations working to support sanctuary seekers and refugees are increasingly vulnerable to defamation and targeted attacks, yet they lack the resources to defend themselves. Without urgent intervention, fewer people will feel safe participating in this vital work, weakening the sector's ability to provide essential support. The Welsh Government must take a proactive stance in strengthening social cohesion, moving beyond reactive measures to prevent these incidents before they escalate. Ensuring that grassroots organisations, activists, and frontline workers feel protected is not just about safeguarding individuals—it is about preserving the integrity of Wales' commitment to being a Nation of Sanctuary.

Short-termism

Too often, local community cohesion teams engage with third-sector groups only in moments of crisis, rather than fostering ongoing, meaningful partnerships. This short-term, reactive approach leaves communities vulnerable to division and misinformation, preventing a long-term strategy for tackling tensions. A stronger, year-round commitment to engagement is needed, with the Welsh Government playing a leading role in ensuring that social cohesion remains a priority.

Encouraging Welsh police forces to work closely with community groups would also help mitigate some of the challenges posed by broader UK policing policies, fostering trust and ensuring that enforcement strategies align with the needs of Welsh communities.

The *Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan* presents a bold vision for an anti-racist nation by 2030, but concerns are growing over the lack of dedicated funding to turn its ambitions into reality. Without sustained investment, grassroots organisations and community-led initiatives will struggle to implement meaningful change, increasing the risk of division and deepening existing inequalities. A well-resourced approach is essential to ensure that the plan leads to tangible, long-term progress rather than becoming an unfulfilled aspiration. While the Welsh Government has taken significant steps to support community groups, more must be done to provide sustainable funding, strengthen partnerships, and advocate for policy changes at the UK level. Addressing harmful social media narratives, increasing transparency in decision-making, and ensuring that frontline workers feel safe and supported must be key priorities.

As budget constraints and policy challenges persist, a collective and strategic approach—uniting government, local authorities, and the third sector—will be essential in safeguarding Wales' vision of inclusivity and sanctuary. Without this, the progress made risks being undone, and the ideals of a welcoming, anti-racist Wales will remain out of reach.