

RAS 26

Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru

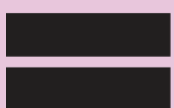
Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales

Ymateb gan: Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol

Response from: Equality and Human Rights Commission

Not just another statistic

Life in Wales for asylum seekers and
refugees



Comisiwn
Cydraddoldeb a
Hawliau Dynol

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

Contents

Who we are.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Participants.....	3
Experiences of asylum seekers and refugees	4
Asylum system.....	5
Length of process	5
Bullying and harassment	6
Fear of repercussions.....	7
Benefit payments and the card system	8
Transport.....	9
Housing	9
Education.....	10
Media portrayal and social stereotypes	11
The Community	12
Street level abuse.....	13
Shops.....	15
Banks and post office.....	15
The workplace.....	16
Access to justice	17
Practical measures and solutions	17
Next steps.....	18
Appendix 1.....	20
Appendix 2.....	22
Contact us.....	26

Who we are

The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

November 2010

©Equality and Human Rights Commission

Introduction

“We came here because of what we faced in our country and the only way to save ourselves and our families was to come here...we want to be a good part of this society, we want to serve this country, we don't want to just take and give nothing”

In October 2008 the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales published **Who do you see?** This was a report based on the first major survey of attitudes in Wales towards race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, transgender, age, disability and human rights.

The survey revealed a Wales that is largely comfortable with people from different backgrounds. But it also found significant pockets of negative attitudes and prejudice. The most persistent negative attitudes centred around four groups of people - one of these groups were asylum seekers and refugees.

In responding to this the Commission in Wales undertook qualitative research to explore the real life experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. This focused on the areas of life where asylum seekers and refugees experience being treated unequally and to understand the impact of both actual and anticipated discrimination.

These findings have provided a fascinating insight into the lived experiences of asylum seekers and refugees and how they are treated by society in a number of different settings.

Participants

Twenty asylum seekers and refugees participated in the research in total. Sixteen were seeking asylum at the time of interview and four were refugees who had been granted leave to remain in the UK.

All the respondents came to the UK from African nations including Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Algeria, Nigeria, Cameroon and Eritrea and one was from Eastern Europe. All interviews were conducted in pairs and of these, eight took place in Cardiff and two in Wrexham.

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the individual experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. Given the in-depth and qualitative nature of the research, the sample is not intended to be representative of the composition of the participant groups. Instead it is intended to be broadly reflective of the different circumstances faced by asylum seekers and refugees living in Wales.

Experiences of asylum seekers and refugees

This section explores in some depth, the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees and the impact of the discrimination they experience, often on a daily basis.

Many asylum seekers and refugees told us they have had positive experiences in their communities and described Wales as a very welcoming place. However, some asylum seekers and refugees described a sense of resentment from some people within Wales and Welsh society. Some told us they felt negative attitudes were often reinforced by media coverage depicting asylum seekers and refugees as living off benefits and taking up housing, health and education services.

All the asylum seekers and refugees interviewed, said they were frustrated by the rules preventing them from working, paying taxes and contributing to the society they now lived in.

Participants spoke of the harassment, bullying and abuse they sometimes experienced in their day-to-day lives and the devastating impact this has had on their self confidence and feelings of self worth. There was also a feeling of being trapped in poverty and having little power to do anything to improve the situation. This often had an impact on children who also experienced the poverty, suffered inequality in school, and had their own expectations and ambitions limited by their parents' experiences.

Public services

Asylum system

“And I felt like there was discrimination... when they say asylum seekers can't work because, why can't we work really? How are we supposed to eat? Because all they give us is like vouchers and you can't really live off Tesco's vouchers”

During the interviews, most passion was roused by the asylum system itself as asylum seekers and refugees felt angry and frustrated with the damaging impact of this on themselves and their family. Criticism centred on the treatment of children, how families could be split up, as well as instances of alleged bullying and aggressive behaviour by public officials.

The asylum-seeking process was described as having a devastating impact on children, as families are often forced to move from one area of the country to the other. Parents felt this caused huge disruption to their children's lives, leaving them unable to settle, make friends and enjoy the benefits of continuous education in the same school. Furthermore, there were reports of children being split up from their parents and placed apart in different areas of the country, causing a huge amount of anxiety and distress for the families involved.

Length of process

“Because you don't really know. They don't send you letters...and they can take you any time, just do anything really”

Where applications were refused the length of the appeal process was felt to be unnecessarily long and this increased the stress for individuals.

For some people it can take years to get a final decision. The majority of asylum seekers we spoke to had been living in the UK and pursuing asylum appeals for between four and six years. While there was an understanding of not expecting to be accorded full legal status immediately, it was certainly felt that the appeal process was unnecessarily lengthy. This prevented many respondents from making a full contribution to their new community and society.

Our findings show how not having a decision about status, and not knowing when the situation would be resolved had an inevitable impact on making plans for the future. This left many individuals with a sense of constant uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity.

Some participants felt this put their lives on hold, especially as the asylum process prevented them from working. Many described themselves as asylum seekers arriving in Wales with useful skills and qualifications but due to the lengthy asylum appeal process, were unable to use them for many years. For some people, this has resulted in loss of skills but also the UK losing out on the benefits individuals can offer.

“But it really matters... you know why? Because you don’t know your future...our life is in limbo”

“If you’ve got [refugee] status it will be better...we can work, we can pay tax, we can do everything, we can go to college, university, which is my wish...”

“Everyone is missing out”

Bullying and harassment

“...he will walk into my house without ringing my bell, without knocking on the door. I called him one day and I said ‘You are entering this house to check this house without knocking.’ I said ‘You don’t have that right’...”

Some people told us how the uncertain status of themselves or family going through the asylum-seeking process made them vulnerable to bullying and harassment by public officials.

One woman reported being repeatedly visited by an official from the housing department of the local authority, who had twice let himself into her house without her permission. She decided to challenge him and explain that he was not allowed to enter her house without her permission.

Although he had not threatened her, she was disturbed by his behaviour. She contacted the housing department about him and found out that on the second time he had admitted himself to her home, he had been on annual leave. This frightened her and made her feel vulnerable and unsafe in her own home. She complained to another member of the department and since then, he had not visited her again.

Another female asylum seeker felt she had been victimised by a social worker. She described having received donations of furniture from the church and yet she felt this official had singled her out because she had nice things in her home. He visited her repeatedly and made an inventory of her possessions. Ultimately, she said he rescinded her entitlement to accommodation from the local authority and she was left homeless until someone from the housing department offered to help.

Another participant told us a manager from her local council had subjected her to intimidating treatment. She said that he came to her home and sat on her sofa phoning the UK Borders Agency and telling them that her application had failed a long time ago and he did not understand why they had not deported her.

The woman said she had made queries and discovered the official was having family problems. She felt that he was looking for someone to take his frustrations out on and that he picked on her because she was a Black Zimbabwean.

The impact of the experiences described left people feeling lacking in confidence and afraid to challenge behaviour, particularly from officials and organisations.

“You know he had a spare key to my house and that is what he came. He didn’t come from the office, he left his house with the key to come to my house. I don’t know what he is coming to do, which is unfair”

“...He came to our house and was like ‘for asylum seekers you should not have all of these, I think you need to go back home because you’re living a really nice life here’...”

“He had nothing to do with the asylum team, he was a manager, but every time I went to the council he would make time to come and see me”

Fear of repercussions

“You wouldn’t complain to the police ... You don’t know where it might lead with your asylum claim”

Asylum seekers and refugees spoke of the complexity of the asylum and appeal system itself as a barrier. It was felt that complaining about unfair treatment could jeopardise their asylum claim and therefore most felt reluctant to do so.

Many participants reported a lack of confidence in the asylum system to be able to address their issues. There was also a sense of lacking the knowledge of their rights and the systems available to offer support.

“Once you are outspoken...many people would actually start attacking you ... probably your case would be decided ... the repercussions are huge. I have seen it personally. I think I’m very unlikely to speak out from now”

“Even if you go to the police what is going to happen? What are you going to expect from the police?”

“It’s about knowing who to approach because if you know your rights you can in some way enforce them”

Benefit payments and the card system

“We are among the poorest families living on that small amount of money. And the government says in their manifesto ‘every child matters’ regardless of status or appearance. I am sure that we are not on the list”

None of those who were still seeking asylum were eligible to work in the UK and most were receiving benefits. Each week respondents received £35 which was topped up directly onto their debit card. Many of the stories articulated the poverty and disadvantage resulting from this low level of benefit, but most complaints centred on the budget top-up card system itself.

The top-up mechanism was seen as very unfair. Participants described how they would not get their full £35 each week if they had not spent all the money received the week before. This meant that it was impossible to save even a small amount each week to pay for larger items and a number of people explained how the range of shops at which the card could be used was extremely limited.

“...for my friends, sisters, neighbours who are single the balance on the top-up card is not carried over. So when they take your vouchers... thirty five pounds per week, if you are single you must spend everything, all the money, before the next week...”

“...why do I have to buy maybe a pushchair in Tesco when it is fifty pounds and they might have it in the charity shop for ten pounds?”

“I am from Africa and what I eat I don’t always get in Tesco; I get them in the small shops in the street but they don’t take budget top-up card from me... sometimes I do cry...”

Transport

“People don’t want to sit near you”

Some participants described discrimination when using public transport by drivers and passengers. One asylum seeker living in Cardiff had been racially abused by a bus driver but did not report it. Others described how some bus drivers ignored them if they asked a question, but spoke to other passengers.

One woman felt that she had been negatively treated because of her head scarf. She described an incident of standing inside a very crowded bus. When another woman got onto the bus and was not wearing a scarf and a man moved to offer his seat.

“That’s why some people have a bad opinion about Muslims. They think that every woman that is scarved or a boy with a long beard, they are bad...”

Housing

“I was literally left almost destitute, living in one room with two children for months”

Some asylum seekers and refugees we spoke to were critical of how they were housed, very often the accommodation was too small or of inadequate quality. There was lack of clarity about how decisions are made about where to house asylum seekers and refugees.

Single men described the impact of living in shared accommodation with other single men from different cultures. With cramped conditions and very little privacy, one group described how they had converted a dining room into a bedroom themselves, in order to give themselves some sort of privacy and space.

Others gave examples of where some regulations and standards of social housing were not being followed.

The system of dispersal for asylum seekers was seen as intimidating and gave the lives of participants an added sense of uncertainty. Asylum seekers could be taken from the place where they lived (and may have lived for a number of years) and transported to another area of Great Britain.

One mother from Zimbabwe described how she had been housed in the Midlands for two years before moved to Southern England. Her teenage daughters joined her but she was then moved to Cardiff and forced to leave them behind. Although reunited, this experience was described as destabilising the family and causing them much distress and anxiety over several years.

“The rules you know that say we are over five people here, then we should have two bathrooms. But that’s never going to happen is it?”

“I find my area very interesting because I think it’s the council’s little ghetto to be honest. It’s a whole load of council estates and council housing which they have decided to allocate to BME people and in itself I think it’s discriminatory”

Education

“Because you don’t have status, you can’t do anything. I’ve tried with many universities but I failed”

Most of the asylum seekers and refugees included in the research were not in education but many of them expressed a desire to study and do well.

It was felt that asylum seekers and refugees were being excluded from having access to educational opportunities because of costs. Asylum seekers are not entitled to free university education and as they are not allowed to work they have very little money to pay for fees, let alone the everyday cost of living. This lack of access to education increased the feeling of isolation and reduced opportunities for active social engagement.

Being unable to study at university or college meant that asylum seekers felt they were unable to achieve their ambitions to join higher education and obtain qualifications that could increase their life chances.

A few noted that positive steps had been made by some Welsh universities in agreeing to admit asylum seekers, though none were attending these.

Others of those we spoke to had been to school in Wales and their experiences were generally positive. One woman had children who were currently at school in Wales and she was happy with the way here children were treated.

However, another participant told us she had received racist abuse from a boy at her school. On reporting this, the school supported her and took action to ensure this did not happen again.

“When I applied for university I got the place... but then a few weeks before I could start I was told that I couldn’t go because of the tuition fees”

“There was this day when I was in school and this boy just came to me, he said ‘you n**r’. I was really, really upset, so I cried”**

“I went and told the teacher... I told my friends, of which they were white, they were all very upset, they were on my side... the racist boy got disciplined and then the school told him to say sorry to me and not to do it again...”

Media portrayal and social stereotypes

“The media has contributed a lot I think. That is what I understand, especially the likes of the Daily Express and the Daily Mail...”

Asylum seekers and refugees all spoke of negative media portrayals being unhelpful. It was felt that the media focused on stories about asylum seekers and refugees ‘jumping’ social housing queues and receiving preferential welfare treatment over British people.

Participants felt that because the media portrayal is hostile towards asylum seekers and refugees, it is often difficult to get their voices heard. Those interviewed said this made them feel unsure of their rights and how to exercise them, increasing their feelings of powerlessness.

Asylum seekers and refugees also told us of the lack of awareness amongst the public. In particular it was felt that there was very little understanding of why someone might need to leave their home country to come to Wales. There were also strong feelings that the media did not attempt to provide this information to clarify the situation. For some these attitudes increased feelings of isolation and lack of belonging. Others felt that political rhetoric and campaigning heightened misunderstandings.

“We believe that there is bad press”

“People don’t realise the risk you put yourself when you come to this country... and for them to be like you’re nothing... and we don’t want you in this country, it’s like, where am I supposed to go?”

“We are here only to save ourselves from our country, dangerous or something else. Some of them, they take it and some of them don’t believe”

“Most of the Welsh they thought that asylum seekers are taking things from them... we want to save our life... that is the reason they don’t like us, that we are coming to get benefit only”

“They are like, those people should go back home... they shouldn’t be here.....and they’re scrounging off our tax money. And you feel so bad because you can’t help being like that”

“You feel left out... like you’re an outsider and nobody wants to know you. Or you’re not a person”

“Sometimes they wouldn’t invite us to things just because they knew we didn’t have money... so you’ll feel left out...”

“How does that make you feel? Illegal - that’s the word I can find... you feel like just being you is something wrong. And you have no right to be... like you’re on a lower level than anybody else. That’s how I feel”

“...because you can’t help the situation. You can’t expect other people to understand because they don’t go through the same things as you do. So even if they go like ‘oh I understand what you’re going through’- they don’t”

“...when there is elections coming they should actually be sensitive enough... when they raise issues like immigration. They should be sensitive you know because... when you are on the media, when you are on the TV screen you are speaking with millions. You are speaking to millions... but make sure you know it was the most vulnerable people”

The Community

“I like the people here, they are very friendly”

Many asylum seekers and refugees have positive experiences in their communities and describe Wales as a very welcoming place to be.

Some spoke of confusion about their religion, beliefs and culture which sometimes led to misunderstanding, resentment and disadvantage.

“I think the Welsh people really are fantastic people”

“There is a freedom here and they accept other cultures and religions”

“...sometimes people, when they talk to me, they don’t think I’m Muslim because most people here think that Muslim people, it means scarved...”

“I think the public has the idea that to be a Muslim means to appear a certain way for both women and men”

“The good Muslims are different, the main point in our religion is peace with everybody and I think that we are not different than the Christian people, everybody wants peace...”

Street level abuse

“...they’ll be shouting out like ‘Go back to your country, we don’t want you here’ and start cheering ‘BNP’ and it makes you feel really unsecure”

There was a wide range of street-level abuse and violence reported during the interviews which asylum seekers and refugees said made them feel unwanted and inhuman.

One woman told us of having an egg thrown at her as she walked to her home in Cardiff. She believed it was racially motivated but was unable to identify the culprit so did not report it to the police.

Another family living in Cardiff described having the windows of their home broken and sensed that this was racially motivated. In describing the impact of this treatment participants described feeling ashamed about sharing their experiences.

Two younger women described experiencing a number of threatening and intimidating incidents when out and about in their local neighbourhood. These two women also told us of intimidation from men following them along the street and racist name-calling from children in the local area.

Another women told us of two or three women in her area who had been moved simply because they had worn headscarves and suffered abuse from the local community.

For asylum seekers and refugees these experiences had an onward impact on their families. One woman felt unable to wear her scarf and so wore a hat or hood to hide the fact she was a Muslim. As a mother, she was particularly concerned that her son would suffer teasing at school unless their religion was hidden.

The findings revealed that the impact of these experiences meant that asylum seekers and refugees anticipated abuse on a regular basis. This was not only because of their actual experiences but fear of an unprovoked attack at any time. As a result a number of participants feared going out, especially at night. They said they felt powerless and unable to challenge people over their behaviour for fear of reprisal.

“You just feel like being you is something wrong. And you have no right to be”

“I think it’s the colour [of our skin] because most of them wouldn’t even know our status here”

“...my window was smashed... I just reported it to the council and nobody acted. Just took the council more than a year to ask, to move me somewhere else”

“And I just feel ashamed, even when I walk through the streets of Cardiff, because you know... I didn't think things would go that way, I thought it was important to share our own experiences”

“When I first came here...we were walking to my house...this car started slowing down and then they chucked alcohol on us and then they just drove off and were laughing”

“The other day I was walking from my house to town and there were boys walking and they just started swearing at me for nothing, I didn't do anything. I was just walking...it's not acceptable”

“Where I live there are loads of little kids and when they see me around they are like ‘n**, n****’ and it doesn't really get me upset because they are still young. But then it gets me thinking where did they hear this from and it's obvious that it's coming from their parents, and I live around these people”**

“You're just scared because you don't want to make the situation any worse than it is. Like if you were to confront them they'll think ‘Oh, she's putting up a challenge’ and most of them like a challenge... if they decide to attack you and you're on your own then that's a really stupid thing to do. It's better to walk away and leave it”

“I think I was with my mum and these two lads were walking really, really close to us. My mum was like ‘walk faster, walk faster’ and I thought ‘why should I walk faster?’ Then we got to the traffic lights and they got really, really close and I turned around, and as I turned around he was like ‘what are you looking at’ and I said ‘well, you're walking close to me so I'm getting worried’ and he's just like ‘well, you shouldn't be in this place anyway’...”

“They had the BNP supporters come here so we just had to stay away, the whole weekend... and you do come across them, especially at night-time. Like if you're walking around they'll just start shouting out things at you and you just feel really, really, really unsafe because there's loads of them and there's only two of you, and they're male and you're female”

Shops

“They really don’t explain these things to you [promotions] and I get the feeling it is because of the colour of your skin”

For some asylum seekers and refugees simply using their local stores and supermarkets presented problems. Many described negative attitudes such as being followed by security or staff for no apparent reason.

One woman explained how cashiers at the checkout tended not to offer any help or tell her the amount she owed for her shopping. Instead they expected her to read the amount on the till herself. These attitudes were seen to be more prevalent in smaller stores.

Many asylum seekers had no choice about where they shopped and were only able to buy food at large supermarkets, such as Asda and Tesco because of the credit card benefit system. For those not living near a big store, buying food required a long journey across town with the bus fare paid from very limited resources.

“I would rather go into big supermarkets rather than risk going into smaller ones to be discriminated against, which I feel happens a lot”

“I need to go to Tesco far away because ... you will not find a Tesco in the cities... so it took me almost one hour to walk, come back with the milk just to feed the children ... put these children at risk just for thirty five pounds”

Banks and post office

Banks and post offices also seen as difficult places to access advice and services. One woman told us how staff would suddenly go on their breaks or the close the counters when she reached the front of the queue. She described a recent experience of talking to a man behind her in a queue about the slow service. She explained this was because she was Black, so she left him go first. The man didn’t believe her until he was waved over to a cashier desk straight away. This was described as being a very common occurrence among our participants.

The workplace

“I did not understand why with Cambridge qualifications and a degree, I would be signposted ... for a job in a factory”

Many of those who had made successful applications for asylum were now officially resident in the UK and in work. While not everyone felt they had faced any discrimination in the workplace, some did. One woman had successfully claimed asylum but when she first looked for work, the Jobcentre had signposted her to low paid jobs in factories, requiring no qualifications. In Wales the qualifications which she had worked hard for and received in her own country were worthless and did not account for anything.

Finding work herself inside the customer contact centre of a major national bank this woman experienced further discrimination both inside and outside the organisation. Although, she described being grateful to the bank for taking her on and for offering her additional training, she faced prejudice from some of her colleagues. She told us they didn't believe or recognise her skills or qualifications because of her background and accent.

Her performance was identified as very good, she received monthly bonuses and was ranked within the top three members of staff for processing customer applications quickly. But despite this, she said she faced a number of complaints from customers who believed she was based in a foreign call centre because of her accent.

She also felt unable to challenge the behaviour of either her former colleagues or customers as she felt this might impede her progress within the organisation. It also had a negative effect on self esteem and confidence.

This made it difficult for her to progress at the bank and she has since left to work for a charity.

“There were different individuals...customers...you had to speak to who found it very unnerving to speak to someone with a foreign accent and in that sense they were very discriminatory”

“I think probably they think you don't have the skills. They underestimate you...”

Access to justice

“And I just feel ashamed even when I walk through the streets of Cardiff ... you know, I didn’t think things would go that way. I thought that it was important to share our own experiences. If we don’t speak it out, who is going to speak it out? That was my expectation was ...but I think I was wrong”

Asylum seekers did not appear well informed of their rights or how to challenge behaviour, either on the street or at a more official level.

Many of them spoke of being scared of increased violence or victimisation if they took action, feeding further isolation, disempowerment and feelings of shame and disappointment.

Asylum seekers and refugees also spoke of the complexity of the asylum system itself as a barrier, and were afraid that their asylum claims might be jeopardised should they take action.

“There are people you know ... the few who shout a lot will shout. Being in the right does not mean you have the power. They still dominate the majority”

“As soon as I sought sanctuary things totally changed...things totally changed... mind you I am lucky to come to the United Kingdom, but I always regret coming here, you know”

“So the expectation was a lot, getting the recognition, integrating into the society you know and the way of life there and then living a decent life. That was the expectation but years have gone and everything is ruined and no, I just have no future I could say, I foresee nothing, nothing positive”

“You wouldn’t complain to the police ... You don’t know where it might lead with your claim”

Practical measures and solutions

“Yes, like if they strength their law...like for discrimination and everything...that might help”

As the people we talked to described the prejudice they encountered on a daily basis, solutions also emerged. Significantly the ideas on what needs to change match closely with priorities identified by many other groups the Commission has engaged with over the past three years.

Clear, simple information was seen as a critical first step in increasing awareness and improving relationships between people. Participants described the need for awareness raising to change attitudes and behaviours towards asylum seekers and refugees. One individual suggested using programmes on the television to educate people, for example through soap storylines.

Overall, people wanted there to be large scale and high impact awareness campaigns. Such campaigns would change attitudes and behaviours and this was seen as the key to better lives for everyone in the future.

Several solutions were suggested for helping people to have better access to justice. This included the government telling people clearly where to turn for advice and who to approach for help in accessing rights but also having a better understanding of rights. Others suggested strengthening the law to prevent discrimination happening and enforcing discrimination law with more and bigger fines or sanctions.

“It’s about knowing who to approach because if you know your rights you can in some way enforce them”

“It’s how they’ve been brought up...Because when you get to know them they’re just the same as you”

Next steps

The evidence gathered in this research gives a voice to people who are seldom heard and paints a vivid picture of life for those experiencing prejudice and negative attitudes on a daily basis.

Despite the challenges everyone we spoke to suggested improvements that could be made, how attitudes could be changed and what steps could be taken to make lives better.

As a top priority everyone highlights the need to change attitudes and behaviours through awareness-raising and through education. People feel that changing public perceptions of the issues is a task for a wide range of players.

These include the media, government, public service providers and employers. Making a concerted effort to promote positive images in all of these areas would transform lives.

People spoke about the good stories that could be told about the contributions they make to society and how these are rarely promoted. They spoke about the media and the workplace as key areas where this could make a difference.

Personal contact is seen as the key to building understanding, trust and better relations within communities.

Most people talked about how important staff attitudes are in relationships with public services. They said that simpler systems acknowledging one size doesn't fit all would be a big step forward.

Many people spoke about the role of advice and advocacy as a life-line in coping with everyday tasks and in understanding rights.

Finances are very stretched for everyone. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for a broad range of individuals and organisations to take actions and make significant progress in achieving the positive next steps highlighted by those who participated in our survey.

The Commission's priorities are evidence based and outcome focused. The Triennial Review, 'How Fair is Britain' will underpin all of our future work and the findings from this research add to our evidence in Wales and will contribute to shaping our priorities.

We will use our regulatory powers under equality and human rights law and this includes promoting understanding and effective practice.

We will be sharing the findings from this research with a wider audience. We are organising conferences and events with specific audiences, such as the media, to promote change.

But the solutions that emerge do not necessarily lie in the Commission's hands. In many areas it is for other organisations and individuals to make the small changes necessary to tackle these issues. Together these will enable us all to make progress towards a fairer Wales – a Wales where everyone is confident and treated with dignity and respect.

Appendix 1

Methodology

GfK NOP conducted individual interviews with 20 asylum seekers and refugees.

Interviews took place between 7 January and 10 February 2010 in various locations across Wales. All interviews were conducted face-to-face. Where it was appropriate, a paired interview approach was used. The interview approach encouraged open and honest responses and was best suited to the hard-to-reach nature of the sample.

Interviewees were recruited via organisations working with the different participant groups in Wales. Some of these organisations were activist in nature and some were support groups. Researchers made contact with these organisations and set up interviews with the participants through them.

Given the in-depth and qualitative nature of the research, the sample was not intended to be representative of the composition of the participant groups. Neither was it intended to reflect their geographic dispersal. Rather, it was intended to be broadly reflective of the different circumstances faced by people from each of the participant groups.

Participant Group	Location		No. interviews
Asylum seekers and refugees	South	Cardiff	8 paired
	North	Wrexham	2 paired

Given this method of recruitment, researchers were limited in the quotas they could set on the sample, 12 male and 8 female.

All of the asylum seekers and refugees had arrived in the UK from African countries including Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Algeria and Eritrea, except one participant who was from Eastern Europe. A good spread of ages was achieved across the sample, as shown in the following table.

Participant Group	TOTAL	Age				
		16-21	22-34	34-49	50-64	65+
Asylum seekers & refugees	20	4	5	6	3	2

A discussion guide was used in all interviews to direct the conversation and ensure key questions and areas for discussion were covered. This guide was developed by GfK NOP and the Commission and is included in appendix 2.

All participants were provided with a £35 incentive for taking part in the research. This was intended to thank them for their time and to cover any travel costs incurred in attending the interview. During the interviews, all participants were provided with an information sheet directing them to support services should they require these. This is also included in the appendix 2.

GfK NOP and the Commission would like to thank the following organisations for their interest in this project and the support they offered throughout it:

- **Welsh Refugee Council**
- **Swansea University**
- **Refugee Voice in Wales**
- **Displaced People in Action**
- **Wales Strategic Migration Partnership**

Appendix 2

Discussion guide

1. CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES **10mins**

(Aim: to introduce the subject and find out about the respondent)

Moderator

- Thank respondents for taking part in the research, introduce self and GfK NOP
- Interview will last 1 hour, explain purpose of research:
 - > *GfK NOP are carrying out research for the Equalities and Human Rights Commission Wales to explore your real life experiences of discrimination and prejudice as well as your thoughts on solutions.*
- Reassure re: confidentiality, recording and MRS Code of Conduct
- Explain importance of being able to say what they think, no right or wrong answers, need for honesty, validity of opinions, any questions?
- Reassure that it's OK to say if they don't understand a question and to ask for it to be said differently.
- Provide recognition that this is a sensitive area and if you want to stop interview / need to take a break, this is absolutely fine.

Respondent

- Name, are you working or not working at the moment, what are your main activities during the day (if not working) , interests, where do you live?
- Tell me about living in this area – what do you like/not like about living here?
- Tell me about the things that are important to you at the moment?

Prompt: events, relationships, activities, interests, housing, education, money, work, etc

2. EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE

15mins

Understanding

As you know, this research is to explore your real life experiences of discrimination and prejudice. Thinking about this:

- What do you understand by discrimination and prejudice?
 - > How would you describe discrimination and prejudice?
 - > Where does discrimination and prejudice happen?
 - > When does it happen?
 - > What type of people face discrimination?
- *Moderator: Show Card B*
 - > What do you think of these definitions?
 - > How would you change them?
- Do you believe you have ever experienced discrimination and/or prejudice?
 - > Tell me about these situations – what happened, where did they take place?
 - > How often does this happen?
 - > Why do you think this happened?
 - > How did this situation affect you?
 - > What impact did it have on your life?
 - > *Moderator: Show Card A*
 - Have you experienced discrimination and/or prejudice in any of these areas of life?
 - Question as above...

Impact

- Thinking about the impact of discrimination and prejudice, how has being discriminated against and/or experiencing prejudice made you feel?
 - > How has it affected you?
 - > In what ways does the worry of being discriminated against and or facing prejudice stop you from doing things you want to do?
 - > In what ways does it make you do things differently?
 - > To what extent has this ever made you:
 - Do things you would otherwise not have done?
 - Not do things you would otherwise have done?
- Does the thought of being discriminated against and/or experiencing prejudice worry you?
 - > If yes, in what situations / which areas of your life?
 - *Prompt using Show Card A if necessary*

- > If no, in what situations might being discriminated against and/or experiencing prejudice worry you?
 - *Prompt using dartboard / Show Card A if necessary*

3. OUTCOMES OF DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE 20mins

- Thinking about the situations where you experienced discrimination and prejudice:
 - > Did you tell anyone?
 - If yes: Who did you tell? Why them? What happened?
 - If no: Why didn't you tell anyone? What made it difficult to tell someone? What would make it easier?
 - > What action did you take? (What action did the person you told take on your behalf?)
 - If took action:
 - What prompted you to take action?
 - What was the result of this?
 - How happy were you with this result?
 - What result would you have wanted?
 - How could you have got this result?
 - If did not take action:
 - What prevented you from taking action?
 - What could have helped you take action?
 -
- How can people who are treated unfairly because of who they are get the result they want?
 - > What would have been the result you wanted?
 - > How could you have got the result you wanted?
 - > How confident would you have been in being able to get the result you wanted in that situation? What would have stopped you?
 - > If you were in the same situation again, what would now prompt you / prevent you from trying to get the result you wanted?
 - > What would prompt you to take action in future? What might prevent you from taking action in future?

4. PRACTICAL MEASURES & SOLUTIONS 15mins

- Thinking about the situations where you experienced discrimination and/or prejudice :
 - > What could have been done to prevent these arising in the first place?

- In each situation, what could have helped you to challenge the discrimination and/or prejudice?
- How could it have been made easier for you to challenge the discrimination and/or prejudice and got the outcomes/result you wanted?
- *Moderator: read out Show Card C:*
 - > What action would you advise this person to take?
 - > How would you advise them to get the result they want?
 - > What should the result of this situation be?
 - > What do you think you would have done?
- Why might people not challenge the discrimination and/or prejudice they experience?
 - > What might prevent them from doing this?
 - > What concerns might they have?
- What action could the following people have taken:
 - > Those behaving/treating you unfairly
 - > You (the one being treated unfairly because of who you are)
 - > The law / courts
 - > The government
 - > Any other individuals / organisations involved
 - > Citizens Advice Bureau
 - > Employer
 - > School, college etc
 - > Shop
 - > Other

6. **SUMMARY**

5mins

- Overall, how fairly do you think people in Wales are treated today?
- Overall, how fairly do you feel you are treated at the moment?
- Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?
- Check whether respondent would like details of local support organisations. Leave card with details in case they want to add anything or get in touch

THANK & CLOSE

Contact us

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website:

www.equalityhumanrights.com

or by contacting our helpline:

Telephone: 0845 604 8810

Textphone: 0845 604 8820

Fax: 0845 604 8830

waleshelpline@equalityhumanrights.com