

RAS 28

Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru

Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales

Ymateb gan: Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Response from: City and County of Swansea

the National Assembly for Wales' Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee's consultation on the pace and effectiveness of the Welsh Government approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS); the effectiveness of the '[Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan](#)'; the support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Wales; and the role and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Welsh communities.

<http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/160310-community-cohesion-plan-en.pdf>

The City and County of Swansea (CCS) has reviewed the response from the WLGA which it supports but would like to add a few additional comments, bullet pointed below:

The pace and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

- Initially the WG took some time to recognise that LAs come from different starting points and one size doesn't fit all and different LAs need different levels of support. Some LAs will already have some things in place
- Education, as devolved in Wales, could be an area where the WG could offer greater meaningful support. English language support in schools is under more pressure with greater demand and less resources. In the long term this pressure on resources could have a negative effect on the educational development of all children regardless of language need.
- Supportive funding for migrant/refugee/asylum seekers is often offered on a strategic level including training or mapping whereas actual support services on the ground are still sparse
- More resources and focus on training/upskilling refugees is mentioned in the WLGA's response. To add to this, there is a lack of properly qualified interpreters in Wales, despite having a pool of multi-lingual residents. Financial support for training in this area could only be a long term asset for Wales and provide employment for many migrants and refugees

The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

- CCS is in agreement that the Plan is weak and has no substance/resources behind the actions or obligation by the WG to assist in delivery (some of which are already happening) /are vague or irrelevant.
- In addition to more funding in devolved areas such as English language support in statutory education as above, funding for English for Speakers of

Other Languages (ESOL) has also been cut which has resulted in insufficient English classes for asylum seekers and refugees (an essential skill for integration into life in Wales).

Health Services are also feeling the strain and more resources could be offered to GP Surgeries which support new migrants, who tend to have complex/high needs and require interpreters; and Health Access Teams who support asylum seekers when they first arrive and, in Swansea, are feeling the strain as numbers increase and the turnover is faster

The support and advocacy available to UASC in Wales

- As above in terms of need for more qualified interpreters

The role and effectiveness of WG's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Welsh communities

- In Swansea the Community Cohesion Coordinator has not been used directly on the asylum seeker and refugee programmes as there is already an officer in place who has been doing the work for some years. However, the community cohesion coordinator has linked with other related agendas such as hate crime and trafficking and thus has provided integrated support in this way.
- Because of the WG's Community Cohesion Plan, there has sometimes been confusion over responsibilities such as Social Services which has ultimate responsibility for safeguarding and in terms of asylum seeker and refugee resettlement/integration agendas. Clarity on overall responsibilities for these areas and the importance of safeguarding needs to be stressed in the Plan.

It is therefore the view in CCS that LAs could have more autonomy over where they feel the best focus for community cohesion would be in their area and that the message that LAs have the ultimate responsibility needs to be reinforced in the Plan.

Additional/Overall Comments

- The work that WSMP has carried out in relation to asylum seeker and refugee agendas in Wales is commendable. From this work, good partnership work has developed between local authorities across Wales.