Refugee Inclusion Strategy
Circular 014/2008

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Ministerial Foreword

Wales has a proud history of providing refuge to people fleeing persecution. Refugees from many countries over the centuries have been welcomed by people in Wales. As Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, I am committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all people living in Wales and to taking forward the refugee and asylum seeker agenda.

In November 2006, the then Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, Edwina Hart AM MBE, presented this strategy as a document for consultation.

The consultation document was based on findings from research commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, including the experiences and opinions of asylum seekers, refugees and their representative organisations. The document was widely circulated and the consultation process, which lasted for a total of four months, was extended to ensure the widest possible feedback.

The final strategy is a stronger document due to the responses received during the consultation process. In total, 30 written responses were received from organisations. The views of asylum seekers and refugees were gathered through focus groups. I am grateful to everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy and recognise the effort made by the refugee voluntary sector, refugee community organisations and organisations working within the sector during the consultation process. I particularly want to recognise the individual asylum seekers and refugees whose experiences and opinions were essential to informing this strategy. I also recognise the efforts of officials who have worked together to ensure the strategy delivers a co-ordinated response from Welsh Assembly Government Departments to refugee inclusion.

Respondents to the consultation urged us to clarify the distinctions between asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers including the distinct experiences, motivations, service needs and legal status. The strategy now includes a section which makes these distinctions clear.

In response to the consultation, the strategy acknowledges asylum seekers are not a homogeneous group. Respondents requested specific recommendations be developed for issues which have a particular gender dimension such as childcare provision, language support and domestic abuse. The strategy now highlights how women’s experiences may differ from the experiences of male asylum seekers and refugees.

Respondents also requested the strategy recognises the role of the receiving community in achieving refugee inclusion. The strategy now has a section dedicated to the role of the receiving community, which acknowledges the vital role minority ethnic communities play in facilitating refugee inclusion.
Whilst this strategy is concerned with refugee inclusion, the strategy now contains provisions specific to asylum seekers. One of the principles on which the strategy is based is that refugee inclusion begins on day one of arrival in the UK and successful inclusion is closely related to the standard of reception procedures and people’s experiences as asylum seekers. Prior to the Welsh Assembly Government elections in May 2007, candidates demonstrated their commitment to improving the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales by individually committing to the pledges within the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Manifesto, 2007. The commitments made in the manifesto are addressed in the strategy.

The aim of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy is to support and enable refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society. The strategy documents the progress the Welsh Assembly Government has made to date in achieving refugee inclusion in Wales.

At the same time, I recognise there are a number of barriers to refugee inclusion. Barriers to inclusion can include a lack of information about rights and responsibilities and misunderstandings between receiving communities and refugee/asylum seeking communities. This document addresses barriers to inclusion.

I recognise that refugee inclusion will not be achieved by working alone. The approach underpinning the strategy is, therefore, a partnership approach. The Welsh Assembly Government will work with partner organisations, including refugee and asylum seeker representative organisations, public sector organisations, refugee community organisations and the media to achieve refugee inclusion in Wales. Key to achieving inclusion is the participation of refugees in decisions about services and their delivery.
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Glossary

Glossary of terms

Refugee inclusion and integration

Refugee inclusion involves removing barriers which prevent refugees from becoming fully active members of society, who participate in, and contribute to, the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country. The objective of refugee inclusion is the establishment of mutual and responsible relationships between refugees and their communities, civil society and government.

Refugees will make individual choices about the degree to which they wish to integrate into Welsh society. Refugee integration takes place when individual refugees become active members of society.

Asylum seekers and refugees

An asylum seeker is a person who is fleeing persecution in his/her homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.

Under the 1951 United Nations 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…’ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951).

The UK Government recognises an asylum seeker as a refugee when s/he satisfies the above definition.

Within this policy, the term ‘refugee’ also refers to those who have not been recognised as refugees, but have been granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR), humanitarian protection (HP) or discretionary leave (DL) following their asylum claim.

Receiving communities

The communities into which refugees settle are called receiving communities. This term can refer to the range of different communities – whether the immediate local community, a community of interest or broader society.

The strategy recognises refugee inclusion and integration are two-way processes and that it is important for the receiving community to play an active role in its achievement, as it is for refugee communities.
Migration

Migration is the movement of people from one state or locality to another. International migration includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants. A distinction is often made between forced migration and voluntary migration.

Forced migration

Forced migration refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (people displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects.

Trafficking

Article 3(a) of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations, 2000) defines trafficking in persons, for the purpose of the protocol, as:

‘Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs’.

Migrants

The Commission on Human Rights considers the term 'migrant', in article 1.1 (a) of the Convention on Human Rights, should be understood as covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without intervention of an external compelling factor (UN Economic and Social Council, 1998).

From this definition, it follows the term migrant does not include refugees, displaced persons or others forced or compelled to leave their homes. Migrants make choices about when to leave and where to go, even though those choices are sometimes extremely constrained.
Migrant workers

The UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants defines a migrant worker as a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.

Glossary of acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACPO</td>
<td>Association of Chief Police Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>Black and Minority Ethnic</td>
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<td>CAMHS</td>
<td>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</td>
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<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
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<td>DPIA</td>
<td>Displaced People in Action</td>
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<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHB</td>
<td>Local Health Board</td>
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<td>NASS</td>
<td>National Asylum Support Services</td>
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<td>NICE</td>
<td>National Institute of Clinical Excellence</td>
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<td>MEAG</td>
<td>Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant</td>
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<td>SMG</td>
<td>All Wales Selected Minority Group</td>
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<td>RVW</td>
<td>Refugee Voice Wales</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>WARD</td>
<td>Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDA</td>
<td>Welsh Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSMP</td>
<td>Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (formerly the Welsh Consortium for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants)</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy sets out the Welsh Assembly Government’s vision of refugee inclusion in Wales.

Refugee inclusion takes place when a refugee becomes a fully active member of society, participating in and contributing to the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country.

The overall aim of the inclusion strategy is to support and enable refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society.

The specific objectives contained within this strategy focus on three areas:

- services and their delivery;
- fulfilling potential; and
- community cohesion.

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy is part of the strategic approach being taken by the Welsh Assembly Government to realise its broader vision of a prosperous future for Wales that is free from racism and discrimination, where everyone is enabled to fulfil their potential, to have fair and equal access to services and participate fully in the political and civil life of the country.

Refugee experience

Refugees arrive in Wales for different reasons and have different experiences in their countries of origin as well as on their journey to the UK. Many refugees will have experienced traumatic events and many will arrive in Wales with few, if any, family or social links. Many refugees will also lack knowledge of Welsh society/culture and have none, or limited, English/Welsh language skills. The impact of having to leave the country of origin and associated trauma, loss of home, possessions and status cannot be underestimated.

Refugee profile

It is not clear how many refugees are currently living in Wales due to the lack of reliable official data. Estimates of the refugee population in Wales have, however, been published. The Welsh Refugee Council, for example, estimates there are just over 10,000 refugees currently living in Wales, less than 0.4% of the Welsh population.

Prior to 2001, relatively low numbers of refugees decided to settle in Wales compared to some parts of the UK, with 3,565 refugees in Wales in 1997. When

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1 Based on the 2001 census.
Wales became an official reception area for asylum seekers in 2001, the numbers of refugees increased as a relatively high number of those given leave to remain choose to settle here. Most refugees have settled in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, with smaller numbers in Wrexham and smaller numbers again living outside these areas.

**Asylum seeker profile**

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises immigration and asylum matters are not devolved matters. There are, however, a wide range of ways in which asylum seekers come into contact with services which are devolved such as health, housing, social services and education. Some of these services make no practical distinction between asylum seekers and refugees in terms of delivery. The Welsh Assembly Government considers it appropriate, therefore, to consider issues relating to the interaction of asylum seekers with devolved services. Many of the actions set out in this strategy, and in the Implementation Action Plan, relate to both asylum seekers and refugees, while some are specific to one or other groups.

Figures from the Home Office (2007a) indicate there are 2,500 asylum seekers dispersed by National Asylum Support Service (NASS) in Wales, less than 0.1% of the population\(^2\). The asylum seeker population falls under two distinct sub-groups:

- people who receive National Asylum Support Service accommodation and support and have been dispersed to Wales on a no-choice basis; or
- people who receive subsistence only National Asylum Support Service support, have chosen to live in Wales and found their own accommodation.

In March 2004, 95% of people seeking asylum in Wales received National Asylum Support Service accommodation and support (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005a).

Asylum seekers living in Wales originate from over 60 countries and speak over 40 different languages\(^3\). Refugee movement is dependent on world events. The countries of origin of asylum seekers change over time. In April 2006, the top ten nations of origin of refugees in Wales were: Pakistan, Somalia, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Congo (Democratic Republic) Afghanistan, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Algeria (Welsh Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, 2007).

**Profile of receiving communities**

Asylum seekers are dispersed to National Asylum Support Service accommodation located in Cardiff (49%), Newport (17%), Swansea (33%) and Wrexham (1%) (see table one below).

\(^2\) Based on the 2001 census.

\(^3\) Based on WCRAS information on asylum seekers (June – November 2005). Includes people in NASS accommodation as well as on subsistence only support.
Table 1: Regional distribution of asylum seekers (including dependants) in dispersed accommodation by local authority, as at September 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispersal Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>1,225</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>415</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>820</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrexham</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,500</strong></td>
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Source: Home Office (September 2007).

Recent Home Office research (Anie et al, 2005) found local authorities in England with a high proportion of asylum seekers also have high proportions of vacant housing stock and residents who are not working, are dependent on state benefits or who are in low paid work. Hynes (2006) found a significant relationship between dispersal locations, the 88 most deprived local authority districts in England and areas with high levels of employment deprivation. At the outset of dispersal nearly 80%\(^4\) of dispersal locations were in areas of multiple deprivation. Three years later just over 70% of dispersal locations were in deprived districts (June 2004).

The context of dispersal in Wales, however, appears to differ from the English context. Of the 2,359 asylum seekers living in Wales in 2004, only 35% (n=826) live in Communities First areas\(^5\).

The dispersal of asylum seekers to areas of multiple deprivation impacts on the success of inclusion policy. Anie et al (2005), for example, found a significant association between characteristics related to greater levels of deprivation within receiving communities and an increased likelihood of poor relations with asylum seekers (see chapter 6 for further discussion).

**Policy and legislative context**

**International and European legislation**

The status and rights of refugees are set out under international laws, in particular the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Refugees and asylum seekers are also protected under other international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The **Welsh Assembly Government is committed to the principles set out in the 1951 Convention and to upholding its responsibilities under the Human Rights Act.**

\(^4\) Percentage as of June 2001.

\(^5\) Based on data collected by the National Asylum Support Service (includes the number of supported asylum seekers in Wales in receipt of subsistence only and accommodation support) aggregated by the Statistical Directorate (Welsh Assembly Government) from Lower Layer Super Output Areas to Communities First areas.
United Kingdom legislation and policy

Powers and responsibilities relating to immigration and asylum have not been devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government and, thus, remain the responsibility of the Home Office. Since 1999, the UK government has introduced policy and legislation which have brought about a number of changes.

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 introduced significant changes to the way asylum seekers are supported in the UK, including dispersal. Part VI of the act, provides for the dispersal of individuals who are seeking asylum and applying for accommodation and subsistence support to particular areas of the UK, on a no-choice basis. The provision does not apply to asylum applicants who are self-supporting or apply for subsistence only support.

Prior to the act coming into force, asylum seekers generally remained in the area where they arrived, the majority living in London and the south east of England.

Controlling our Borders: making migration work for Britain

In February 2005, the UK Government set out a five-year asylum and immigration strategy, Controlling our Borders: making migration work for Britain (Home Office, 2005a). The aim of the strategy is to build on previous reforms, which have strengthened border control, reduced the level of asylum applications and increased the numbers of removals (Home Office, 2005a).

The strategy is being implemented through the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and through policy initiatives, such as the New Asylum Model (NAM) and Managed Migration. A number of changes have taken place as a result of Controlling our Borders which include the terms on which refugee status is granted and the processes involved in assessing claims for asylum.

Leave to remain

Asylum seekers recognised as refugees are no longer granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK, rather they are granted limited leave to remain. Where there has been a significant and non-temporary change of conditions in the country they left within five years of being granted refugee status, individuals will be expected to return to that country.

The Welsh Assembly Government is concerned this could be a barrier for refugee inclusion, bringing uncertainty for refugees and others, including employers.

The New Asylum Model

A New Asylum model was introduced by the Home Office in May 2005. Since March 2007, the UK Border Agency (UKBA) have processed all new applications for
asylum using this model which aims to introduce a faster, more tightly managed process with an emphasis on rapid integration or removal.

Controlling our Borders builds on the Immigration and Nationality Directorate review, Fair, Effective, Transparent and Trusted: rebuilding confidence in our immigration system (Home Office, 2006a). The review outlines how asylum claims could be managed more closely under a New Asylum Model.

**Case Resolution**

In July 2006, the Home Secretary announced all asylum cases outside the New Asylum Model would be resolved within five years. The cases are being dealt with by the Case Resolution Directorate at the UK Border Agency. A subsequent target has been established to resolve older supported family cases by March 2008.

To date\(^6\), successful decisions have been issued to 90 older family cases in Wales who have all been successfully housed by the relevant local authority. The Case Resolution Directorate are looking to conclude a further 304 older family cases.

The Welsh Assembly Government welcomes moves to resolve outstanding asylum cases which will give much needed security and resolution to asylum seekers who have lived in a state of uncertainty for a considerable length of time.

**UK-wide programmes to support refugee inclusion**

**Integration Matters**

The UK Government refugee integration strategy, Integration Matters: a national strategy for refugee integration (Home Office, 2005d) aims to enable refugees to begin the process of integration swiftly and to support them in doing so. The strategy seeks to help as many refugees as possible to take up citizenship of the UK if they wish, while recognising that some will return to their countries of origin if circumstances change.

The UK national strategy for refugee integration focuses on England. The strategy does, however, include UK-wide initiatives such as the Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services (Sunrise)\(^7\), the Gateway Protection Programme (Gateway) and the Time Together Project.

**Sunrise**

The key objective of the Sunrise scheme is to facilitate smoother and quicker integration of refugees into the UK enabling them to meet their full potential and contribute to the community as soon as possible. Under the scheme, each new refugee who chooses to participate works with a caseworker to manage the transition from asylum seeker to refugee and produce a Personal Integration Plan covering longer-term integration objectives.

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\(^6\) December, 2007.

\(^7\) See http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/lawandpolicy/refugeeintegration/sunrise/
Following a successful pilot, the Home Office has decided to roll out the provision of the Sunrise scheme on a UK-wide basis from April 2008. Refugee integration services will be procured from the voluntary sector by the Home Office in consultation with the devolved authorities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.\textsuperscript{8}

**Gateway**

Gateway is a resettlement programme that aims to bring modest numbers of refugees into the UK who would not otherwise have the means to make the journey. Resettlement is one of the three long-term solutions the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works for on behalf of refugees.

**Time Together**

The Time Together Project, run by the national charity TimeBank, pairs volunteer mentors with refugees, for five hours a month, to help them achieve their goals in education and employment and to integrate into the communities they live in.

Time Together has been running in Cardiff since April 2006. Cardiff is the only city in Wales covered by the project and there are no plans for the project to be expanded.

**Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES)**

The UK Border Agency is redirecting the available budget for refugee integration to make available a standard set of integration services for all new refugees through a regional asylum system.

In the past, the then Border and Immigration Agency funded numerous organisations and projects to carry out integration activities but there was little consistency in availability and not enough focus on key integration outcomes. The Sunrise pilots introduced in Integration Matters: a national strategy for refugee integration, provide a more consistent level of integration support but only to approximately 20% of new refugees.

The Refugee Integration and Employment Service will be available to all new refugees and will focus on employment as a key driver to successful integration outcomes. The service will also provide practical advice on issues such as housing and education.

The RIES will offer a 12 month service, made up of the following three elements:

- an advice and support service offering assistance to new refugees in addressing initial critical needs;
- an employment advice service helping refugees enter sustained employment at the earliest opportunity; and

\textsuperscript{8} See http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/lawandpolicy/refugeeintegration/Nationalrefugeenextsteps
• a mentoring service offering the opportunity for refugees to be matched with a mentor from the receiving community.

Unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum

The UK government is developing strategy with the aim of improving service delivery for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Planning Better Outcomes and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (Home Office, 2007b) explores the feasibility of delivering some services and care planning for unaccompanied asylum seeking children differently. The document, which went to public consultation in 2007, asks whether a system of placing young people with a limited number of authorities may help to ensure consistency of service provision and aid specialist services; and what factors need to be put in place to achieve improved delivery of services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The response to the public consultation, Planning Better Outcomes and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (2008) commits the UKBA to deliver:

• better procedures for identifying and supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are the victims of trafficking;
• specialist local authorities to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seeking children receive only the services they need;
• new procedures to assess age in order to ensure children and adults are not accommodated together; and
• speedier decisions on immigration status to ensure integration into the UK or fast return to a safe country of origin.

Migrant workers

A further change in the context within which the Refugee Inclusion Strategy will be implemented is the increasing numbers of migrant workers and their families who are choosing to live and work in Wales.

Despite the distinctions between refugees and migrant workers, they have some shared needs and face some of the same barriers to inclusion.

Changes to UK government migration policy will affect the nature of migration into Wales, particularly from non-European Union nations.

Managing migration

In 2006, the Home Secretary launched a consultation on a new points-based system designed to enable the UK to control migration more effectively, tackle abuse and identify the most talented workers (Home Office, 2006b).

The system aims to ensure only migrants who benefit the UK come to work in the UK. This includes highly-skilled individuals, such as surgeons or scientists, or
individuals who will fill gaps in the UK labour market that cannot be met from the domestic workforce, such as teachers and nurses.

The system will also introduce measures to ensure migrants comply with their leave to remain and return to their country of origin at the end of their stay. The first tier of the points-based system, which will apply to highly skilled migrants, is expected to come into operation during 2008.

The UK government is also introducing controlled access to the UK labour market for new European Union accession countries. The labour market, for example, is gradually being opened to Bulgarian and Romanian citizens following their entry into the European Union in January 2007.

The changes introduced to manage migration will change the profile of migrants coming to live in Wales in the future. It is likely, therefore, the demand for services in the longer-term will change in nature.

Policy in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government’s strategic agenda is set out in One Wales: a progressive agenda for the government of Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007a). The strategy outlines the agenda to achieve the Welsh Assembly Government’s vision of a fair and just Wales, in which all citizens are empowered to determine their own lives and to shape the communities in which they live.

The strategy is underpinned by the principles of social justice, sustainability and inclusivity for all people in Wales and recognises that if some individuals and groups are discriminated against arbitrarily, this damages their life chances. The strategy aims to foster cohesive, plural and just communities where people, regardless of physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, creed or language, can feel valued.

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy is one of the ways in which these principles will be implemented. The principles outlined in One Wales will also be implemented through the Single Equality Scheme (SES). The scheme, which is being developed in anticipation of the proposed Single Equality Bill, will encompass all six equality strands (age, disability, gender/gender identity, faith/religion, race and sexual orientation) and set the broad direction for equality, diversity and human rights in Wales.

What happens next?

To ensure the Welsh Assembly Government fulfils its responsibilities under International, European and UK legislation and to achieve the successful implementation of UK-wide and Welsh policy, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

1. Maintain close dialogue and work with its partners in Wales and the UK to ensure key UK and EU programmes relating to refugee inclusion are delivered appropriately in Wales.
2. Seek opportunities to engage in the European Commission’s programmes to promote the social and economic inclusion of refugees.

3. Encourage local authorities across Wales to consider the potential for introducing the Gateway programme.


5. Ensure the work of the Welsh Assembly Government is co-ordinated across departments.

6. Continue to maintain close dialogue with the UK government, the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on refugee inclusion, through bodies such as the National Asylum Support Forum, to share good practice and maximise impact and resources.
Chapter 2

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy is one of the ways in which the Welsh Assembly Government is working towards its vision of a prosperous future for Wales that is free from racism and discrimination, where everyone is enabled to fulfil their potential, to have fair and equal access to services and participate fully in the political and civil life of the country.

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy aims to support and enable refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society.

The strategy has been developed in consultation with refugees, asylum seekers and representative organisations. It provides information to refugees, asylum seekers and representative organisations on the work already undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government to realise refugee inclusion and the work which remains to be done.

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy outlines the strategic objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to refugee inclusion and states how the Welsh Assembly Government will work with service providers to realise the vision of refugee inclusion in Wales.

More detailed information can be found in the three year Implementation Action Plan developed to accompany this strategy.

Purpose of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy provides the strategic framework for realising the aim of ensuring refugees are able to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society. Specifically, the purpose of the strategy is to:

- provide a clear strategic framework for all those working towards refugee inclusion in Wales; and
- co-ordinate the work of the Welsh Assembly Government and its partner organisations to maximise impact and resources.

The three year Implementation Action Plan will:

- set out the actions the Welsh Assembly Government and its partner organisations will take over the coming three years to achieve the objectives outlined in the Refugee Inclusion Strategy; and
- provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating achievements against objectives.
Principles underpinning the Refugee Inclusion Strategy

The strategy is underpinned by a number of fundamental principles:

- The Welsh Assembly Government welcomes refugees/asylum seekers to Wales. Refugees make an enormous contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of Wales.

- Refugee inclusion begins on day one of arrival in the UK and successful inclusion is closely related to the standard of reception procedures and people’s experiences as asylum seekers.

- Refugees/asylum seekers are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances who have the right to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

- Refugee inclusion is about participation and partnership. The participation of refugees in decision-making, as well as monitoring and evaluating policy, is central to inclusion, as is the need to address concerns of non-refugee communities.

- Refugee inclusion does not imply assimilation. Assimilation suggests the abandonment of cultural difference and distinctiveness in favour of homogeneity. Inclusion, by contrast, implies a reciprocal and mutually respectful relationship, in which individuals with diverse backgrounds and histories are able to make distinctive contributions to society.

- Inclusion involves acknowledgement and respect for cultural differences with the objective of ensuring people can maintain aspects of their own cultural heritage while participating equitably in society. Inclusion, therefore, places responsibilities on refugees/asylum seekers and on established communities.

- There is enormous diversity amongst refugee/asylum seeker communities in Wales, in terms of gender, age, nationality, language, faith, culture and skills. The diversity refugees and asylum seekers bring to Wales is to be celebrated and the Welsh Assembly Government actively promotes equality of opportunity for all.

- The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the existence of racism, including institutional racism, and will challenge this and actively promote good relations between refugee and asylum seeker communities and receiving communities.

- For refugee inclusion to become a reality, it must be mainstreamed across the work of the Welsh Assembly Government and its partner organisations.
Legal basis underpinning the Refugee Inclusion Strategy

The legal powers underpinning the Refugee Inclusion Strategy include:

- Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended) which places a duty on Welsh Ministers (and other bodies specified in Schedule 1A of the Race Relations Act 1976) when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

- Section 77(1) of the Government of Wales Act (GOWA) 2006 places a duty on Welsh Ministers to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing their functions are exercised with due regard to the principle there should be equality of opportunity for all people.

- Section 70 of GOWA 2006 allows Welsh Ministers to give financial assistance (whether by way of grant, loan or guarantee) to any person engaged in any activity which Welsh Ministers consider will secure, or help to secure, the attainment of any objective which they aim to attain in the exercise of any of their functions.

- Section 71 of GOWA 2006 allows Welsh Ministers to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of any of their other functions.
Chapter 3

Refugee Inclusion: achievements and challenges

Refugee inclusion

Refugee inclusion and integration are long term, dynamic, two-way processes which place demands on individual refugees, refugee communities, receiving communities and wider society.

Refugee inclusion involves removing barriers which prevent refugees from becoming fully active members of society, who participate in, and contribute to, the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country. The objective of refugee inclusion is the establishment of mutual and responsible relationships between refugees and their communities, civil society and government.

Refugees will make individual choices about the degree to which they wish to integrate into Welsh society. Refugee integration takes places when individual refugees become active members of society.

The overall aim of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy is to ensure refugees are able to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society.

Where are we now?

A range of programmes across housing, employment, arts and sports and mentoring have had a positive impact on inclusion. Specific initiatives have been developed across key service areas:

- **Housing**: a Refugee Housing Action Plan has been issued, guidance has been issued on refugee/asylum seeker housing provision and funding has been provided for refugee housing support.

- **Health**: guidance has been issued for health practitioners, which provides targeted funding and a system of monitoring delivery through Local Health Boards. A database of refugee health professionals has been established.

- **Education**: targeted funding has been provided to Local Education Authorities to support refugee inclusion in schools. A whole school approach to inclusive education will also be promoted by new guidance on the principles of minority ethnic achievement and through a good practice teaching aid.

- **Voluntary and community organisation initiatives**: a range of voluntary sector initiatives specifically aimed at promoting refugee inclusion have been funded. Voluntary and community organisations working in this field are also eligible to apply for other Welsh Assembly Government grants.
Refugee inclusion has also been facilitated by Refugee Week Wales and several community initiatives, including those led by refugees.

**Work still required**

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises there is a long way to go before our vision of refugee inclusion is achieved:

- Poverty remains the most significant issue to inhibiting inclusion for refugees/asylum seekers and the receiving communities in which they live.
- Despite the commitment of many frontline staff, refugees/asylum seekers are often not accessing the level of core services they need and are entitled to.
- Refugees/asylum seekers still encounter institutional and other forms of racism and discrimination in all aspects of their daily lives. A significant number of people in Wales do not understand why refugees or asylum seekers have come here to live and some feel hostile towards them.
- Training is required to help service providers understand how their services can better meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Language barriers continue to be a problem in terms of proficiency in English and/or Welsh and the appropriate use of interpretation and translation services.
- The enormous potential many refugees bring to Wales is often wasted through unemployment, underemployment and through the lack of post-16 education initiatives.
- Funding of the voluntary and charitable sector can be unstable, making it difficult for organisations to sustain initiatives which have a positive impact on refugee inclusion.

The following chapters outline the barriers to refugee inclusion, the work the Welsh Assembly Government has undertaken to overcome these barriers and the work that will be undertaken to ensure the vision of refugee inclusion is realised.
Chapter 4

Working together to develop, deliver and evaluate strategy and policy

Central to achieving our vision is the objective of ensuring the participation of asylum seekers, refugees and their representative organisations in policy development, delivery and evaluation.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises it can not achieve refugee inclusion by working alone. We will work in partnership with others in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors as well as the media, faith communities and political parties to achieve our vision.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognise the enormous amount of work that has already been undertaken in this area and the energy and commitment given by individuals, groups, organisations and agencies in Wales, often with limited resources.

Developing policy through participation

The Welsh Assembly Government All Wales Refugee Policy Forum is the main mechanism for including refugee and asylum seeker representatives in decisions regarding asylum and refugee policy in Wales. The forum is chaired by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government and is a multi-agency group that brings together representatives from across Wales. Relevant officials from across the Welsh Assembly Government also attend the forum to ensure our work is effectively co-ordinated across departments.

The All Wales Refugee Policy Forum has a number of sub-groups which consider specific aspects of refugee inclusion policy. There is potential to establish task and finish groups where this is considered important to successfully implementing the Refugee Inclusion Strategy.

Building on what works regionally

The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership plays an important role in co-ordinating the work of relevant agencies in each of the dispersal areas in Wales.

Each dispersal area has a different history of receiving refugees and asylum seekers and a different local context. It is essential to understand the needs of diverse communities and to identify, and build on, good practice developed by each region.

Refugee inclusion needs to be built into the overall planning for each dispersal area. It is important refugee inclusion is mainstreamed within relevant local government Community Strategies and the Wales Spatial Plan. This should include support for, and participation by, voluntary groups, faith communities and refugee community organisations in activities to promote refugee inclusion.
Working together to deliver policy

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises those best placed to deliver many policy commitments will come from the public, voluntary and private sector and will include a range of bodies such as academic institutions and the media.

What happens next?

To achieve the objective of ensuring refugees, asylum seekers and organisations participate in the development, delivery and evaluation of strategy and policy, the Welsh Assembly Government will undertake the following:

7. Review the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum terms of reference and membership, including its sub-groups in light of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy objectives.

8. Promote the key objectives of the strategy across all of our work and encourage all partners to promote them across their work.

9. Identify key strategic partners to ensure the successful implementation of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy.

10. Continue to ensure work across the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to asylum seekers and refugees is co-ordinated.

11. Work with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership to build on existing regional structures designed to co-ordinate refugee inclusion services across Wales.
Chapter 5

Language, communication and information

Language, communication and information are central to the Welsh Assembly Government vision of refugee inclusion in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to realising the following objectives:

- **Language**: refugees and asylum seekers have the opportunity to develop their English and Welsh language skills.
- **Communication**: good communication exists between refugee/asylum seeking communities and their receiving communities, service providers and government.
- **Information**: refugees/asylum seekers are able to access relevant information easily.

Refugees and asylum seekers bring a rich diversity of languages to Wales. To participate fully in Welsh society, however, refugees and asylum seekers also need English or Welsh language skills.

Good communication needs to be developed between receiving communities and refugee/asylum seeking communities. The availability of reliable information is essential to facilitate refugee inclusion.

Interpretation and translation services have to be responsive to the diverse needs of refugee and asylum seeking communities. Service providers need to listen to, and respond to, the issues asylum seekers and refugees face.

1. **Language: interpretation, translation and language skills**

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to:

- ensuring public bodies communicate effectively in English, Welsh and other languages of the communities they serve; and
- promoting English and Welsh language across all people living in Wales including asylum seekers and refugees.

Good language skills provide firm foundations from which asylum seekers and refugees in Wales can achieve their potential. As well as being the means through which individuals within a community communicate and learn about each other, language carries important cultural and historical signals which can facilitate inclusion.
Asylum seekers often come to Wales with little, if any, English or Welsh Language skills. Refugees with limited English or Welsh language skills have to rely on translation services to access advice and services. It is important, therefore, key agencies and public sector organisations, such as health and the police, provide translation services.

Service providers should ensure they can communicate effectively with their clients. One of the principles underpinning Making the Connections (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004) is the provision of services in community languages. To provide accessible and appropriate services, service providers need to listen to refugees and asylum seekers and have accurate and accessible information about their needs (see chapter eight).

Whilst the provision of translation is essential in the short-term, access to language skills training is more important for the longer-term aim of achieving refugee inclusion (see chapter seven). Sharing a common language is an essential aspect of community.

Where are we now?

Welsh language

The Welsh Assembly Government Welsh Language scheme (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006a) requires services to be offered in English and Welsh. It is the responsibility of individual departments to mainstream the Welsh language across the work of the Welsh Assembly Government, including work related to asylum seekers and refugees.

Welsh language education is available to all children in Wales and Welsh language classes are available for adults, especially where they move to Welsh-speaking areas (see chapter seven for English language skills education and classes).

Translation

The Welsh Assembly Government has made a commitment to develop an Interpretation and Translation Strategy for Wales. The strategy will:

- address the need for well trained and accredited interpreters and translators, including specialist training for areas such as health;
- provide guidance on the appropriate use of interpreters;
- consider ways of developing capacity and sharing resources effectively to improve service levels; and
- outline the methods used to monitor and evaluate interpretation services.

The Refugee Inclusion Strategy Implementation Action Plan will provide details of the individuals, resources and specific actions required to implement the Interpretation and Translation Strategy.
The Welsh Assembly Government, through the Communities First Programme, has made a commitment to fund an interpretation course at Cardiff University to train refugees to provide support to their communities. Cardiff University are in the process of undertaking research to inform the development of the course and a marketing strategy.

Public service providers have put in place their own provisions for interpretation and translation services, including Language Line, but the use of these facilities can be patchy. Interpretation has also been provided by individuals not accredited to interpret, such as family members. Whilst individuals may wish to use family members as interpreters in some circumstances, for reasons such as trust, service providers should note, it is not appropriate to use family members in some contexts such as the disclosure of domestic abuse.

There is significant scope to share resources more effectively across public bodies to improve the quality of interpretation and translation services.

What happens next?

To achieve the objectives of promoting the Welsh language across all people living in Wales the Welsh Assembly Government will:

12. Continue to promote the Welsh language across all areas of our work.

To achieve the objective of ensuring public bodies communicate effectively in languages of the communities they serve, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

13. Develop and implement a translation and interpretation strategy.

2. Communication: promoting better understanding between communities

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring a better understanding between communities exists across Wales.

What needs to be done?

Research undertaken by the Wales Media Forum (Spears, 2001) found, whilst attitudes in Wales are less hostile than most other parts of the UK, a considerable degree of hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees still exists. Knowledge and understanding of refugees and asylum seekers in receiving communities is generally low and basic misunderstandings are prevalent (see Lewis, 2005).

Spears (2001) concludes communication processes need to be improved to provide residents, journalists, local government officials and Welsh Assembly Government Members with correct information concerning the dispersal of asylum seekers to Wales. Research undertaken by the Institute for Public Policy Research
(Lewis, 2005) concluded there is a need to improve the way information is shared with local people about asylum issues.

Robinson and Reeve (2006) found media portrayals of new immigrants can fuel local tensions and foster hostility towards immigrant households. Spears (2001) found the Welsh Press cover the issue of asylum seekers without the hostility and exaggeration seen in the UK-wide national media. The report also found the media in Wales relied on official sources for information, with little opportunity given to asylum seekers to voice their own views or to tell their histories. Reporting concentrated on how government are ‘managing’ asylum seekers, the numbers of asylum seekers coming to Wales and associated costs, with little or no attention given to the experiences of asylum seekers in their nation of origin or of the contribution they can make to Welsh society.

Lewis (2005) suggests communication between asylum seekers and receiving communities could be improved by supporting asylum seekers to work on community projects or undertake voluntary work while their cases are being heard.

Many refugees and asylum seekers lack information about Welsh society and culture, as well as their rights and responsibilities, which can lead to misunderstandings.

Where are we now?

The Welsh Assembly Government has already taken steps to address negative attitudes and has provided strong leadership on refugee inclusion. The Welsh Assembly Government has also:

- supported Refugee Week Wales;
- funded the CROESO campaign, which is run by the Commission for Human Rights and Equalities. CROESO celebrates the diverse people and cultures of Wales and works with a broad range of organisations to promote understanding of language, faith, community and inclusion; and
- developed the Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme (see chapter seven).

What happens next?

To achieve the objective of tackling widespread misunderstanding about asylum seekers and refugees the Welsh Assembly Government will:

14. Continue existing initiatives, which aim to promote better understanding, and work with partners in local government, political parties, the voluntary sector, faith groups and higher and further education bodies to achieve the following objectives:
   a. Increase public understanding of issues relating to refugee inclusion through promoting positive images, providing consistent and positive messages as well as accessible and accurate information.
b. Increase refugee and asylum seeker knowledge and understanding of life in the UK, including rights and responsibilities.

c. Encourage greater opportunities for dialogue and consultation with, and between, receiving and refugee/asylum seeking communities.

3. Information and communication between service providers and refugees

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to encouraging service providers to communicate accurate information and advice, which meets the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

Many asylum seekers experience difficulty accessing accurate information, particularly in the early days and when Leave to Remain is granted.

The introduction of the New Asylum Model has added to the need for accurate and relevant information, which can be accessed quickly.

Research undertaken by the Institute for Public Policy Research (Lewis, 2005) concludes inaccurate perceptions about refugees and asylum seekers could be decreased by ensuring front line staff in delivery agencies such as housing offices, social services and customer service centres have correct information about asylum seekers.

Where are we now?

The Welsh Refugee Council provides a one-stop-shop service, funded by the Home Office, to provide information, advice and support to asylum seekers, especially those who have newly arrived in Wales.

Refugees and asylum seekers can also access mainstream information and advice services for general advice and information.

The Welsh Assembly Government and the Legal Services Commission (2007b) produced a joint policy document, Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales. The document sets out the direction for Community Legal Services in Wales over the next five years to provide good access to quality assured, citizen-centred, value for money advice services.

Welcome packs, providing basic information, are made available to asylum seekers by their accommodation providers. Service providers, such as the Welsh Refugee Council, are also working on information they can provide to refugees on the services they provide. It is important such information is updated regularly.

Some work has been undertaken to develop a standardised welcome pack for asylum seekers but capacity and resources have prevented the pack from being finalised. The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership is currently reviewing the information provided to asylum seekers.
The Welsh Assembly Government Refugee Well Housing Project funds targeted advice and information for refugees, particularly those who have recently gained refugee status, through advice workers based in the Welsh Refugee Council in each dispersal area. Voluntary groups provide basic support and information. The British Red Cross has developed successful orientation and integration programmes in Swansea and Newport.

The Welsh Assembly Government is developing a National Strategy on Financial Inclusion. The strategy will build upon the Review of Overindebtedness (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005b). The strategy will address a wide range of concerns such as access to financial and debt advice, efforts to enhance the financial capability and literacy of both children and adults, work on maximising welfare and benefit take-up and specific action to encourage saving, challenge illegal money-lending and bolster the credit union movement. Furthermore, the strategy will account for the needs of specific groups including older people, children and young people living in poverty, people living in Communities First areas, ex-offenders and their families, young people not in education, enterprise and training, lone parents and people who are homeless. The strategy will also target minority ethnic communities and marginalised groups such as Gypsies, Travellers, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers.

Public consultation on the draft framework will take place early in 2008.

What needs to be done?

Whilst a number of initiatives have been set up to ensure refugees and asylum seekers are able to access information and advice about core services, responses to the public consultation highlighted the need to continue with this work to improve the communication process between service providers and refugees/asylum seekers.

There is a need, for example, to ensure welcome packs are available to all asylum seekers and that the information within the packs is regularly updated.

What happens next?

To ensure refugees and asylum seekers are able to access information and advice about core services, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners to ensure:

15. All asylum seekers arriving in Wales receive a welcome pack with accessible and up-to-date information on key services and support available.

16. Targeted and up-to-date advice and information is available for people who have recently been given leave to remain.
Refugee Well Housing Project

The Refugee Well Housing Project is an all-Wales scheme which aims to prevent homelessness amongst refugees by providing specialist housing advice. The project focuses on supporting and enabling refugees to ‘move on’ from NASS accommodation to mainstream accommodation within the time limit of 28 days following a successful decision on their claim. As well as housing, it advises and supports clients on finance, benefits, employment and education options as well as advice relevant to the status obtained (e.g. family reunion). The team works with some 300 clients, has over 1500 client contacts a quarter and signposts and refers clients to other agencies for support. The Refugee Well Housing Project is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and delivered in each dispersal area by the Welsh Refugee Council. The project works closely with appropriate partners in each dispersal area.
Chapter 6

Building safe and strong communities

Building strong and safe communities is central to our vision of achieving refugee inclusion in Wales.

1. Safe communities

Safe, secure and stable communities are essential for refugee inclusion. Experiences of insecurity, victimisation or mistrust can make it virtually impossible for people to play an active part in the community.

Community Safety Partnerships

The twenty-two Community Safety Partnerships in Wales have a statutory duty to formulate and implement a community safety strategy. The partnerships are required to consult minority groups and address issues of race hate crime in their audits and strategies. This will include consultation relating to refugees and asylum seekers.

The Police

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has published a guide to identifying and combating hate crime called Breaking the Power of Fear and Hate (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2002). This guide draws together the lessons learned from previous investigations and provides practical advice from front-line officers on how to deal with this form of crime.

The Association of Chief Police Officers has also produced an Operational Guide for the Management of Inter-Ethnic Conflict (The Association of Chief Police Officers, 2003). This document aims to encourage the formation of strong links between the police and minority communities, affirming the importance of building up community intelligence and providing a platform for two-way communication between the police and the community.

Guidance on tackling racist anti-social behaviour was issued by the Home Office in June 2001 to crime reduction partnerships and a Racist Crime and Harassment Toolkit (Home Office, nd) has been published on the Home Office Crime Reduction website, offering further advice to practitioners.

In Wales, this work is being driven forward by the All Wales Police Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, a sub-group of the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum. It is a multi-agency group chaired by the police. Initiatives are being developed to train the police on liaising with refugee and other Black and Minority Ethnic communities including third party reporting of racist incidents. The Welsh Assembly Government works closely with Community Safety Partnerships to promote the particular needs of refugee groups within their local strategies to tackle crime and disorder.
What needs to be done?

A recent Welsh Assembly Government scoping exercise suggests, whilst refugees feel safe in Wales, racism on the grounds of immigration status and faith are still common experiences. There have been incidents of physical attacks on property and people, including one racially motivated killing, since dispersal began. A number of refugees and asylum seekers do not report incidents of prejudice, violence or harassment despite the considerable efforts made by the four Welsh police forces and their partner agencies to encourage reporting.

Where are we now?

The past few years has seen a significant commitment by the police to work with refugees and asylum seekers in all local communities. This will continue as part of the All Wales Community Cohesion Project, a joint project between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers.

The All Wales Community Cohesion Project aims to promote more cohesive communities, one with shared values and with equal opportunities in all areas of Welsh society. The project will seek to raise awareness of community cohesion issues in Wales, increase knowledge of good practice in relation to improving cohesion in communities across Wales and provide advice on mapping the changing make up of communities in Wales to allow the Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities and partners to respond to changing needs.

What happens next?

To achieve the objective of building strong and safe communities, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with the All Wales Police Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers to:

17. Reflect the needs of new communities in crime and disorder partnerships.
18. Work with refugee, asylum seeking and faith communities to encourage reporting of racist incidents affecting these communities to the police.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with the Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers and a steering group consisting of other key stakeholders to:

19. Conduct and promote the All Wales Community Cohesion Project.

2. Strong communities

Individuals live within different types of communities, all of which are unique, whether grouped around common interests or geographical areas. Successful inclusion demands strong and vibrant receiving and refugee communities, bridges between receiving and refugee communities and strong links between both of these
communities and government and non-government services as well as democratic and political processes.

Robinson and Reeve (2006) note, whilst there has been heated debate in recent years surrounding the issues of immigration and asylum, little attention has been paid to the neighbourhood effects of migration and little information exists about the experiences of new immigrants. Robinson and Reeve (2006) found, whilst there is little hard evidence regarding the experiences of new immigrants or receiving populations (in England), six general assertions are substantiated by the limited evidence available:

- new immigrant households typically live in poor quality, inappropriate accommodation;
- the neighbourhoods where many new immigrants settle provide a poor living environment;
- new immigrants often struggle to access the services, care, support and assistance they require;
- the arrival of new immigrant households can reinforce and increase levels of neighbourhood deprivation and disadvantage;
- new immigrants can serve as an engine for regeneration; and
- community tensions can arise but are not an inevitable consequence of new immigration.

**Receiving communities**

The receiving community has a vital role to play in realising the vision of refugee inclusion. Evidence suggests there are, however, a number of barriers which work against the receiving community being able to support refugee inclusion (see for example Robinson and Reeve, 2006).

**Local socio-economic conditions**

The local socio-economic conditions are important factors in determining relations between asylum seekers and refugees and receiving communities. The arrival of asylum seekers and refugees into deprived communities can increase competition for scarce resources and fuel animosity among existing residents.

Communities experiencing high levels of deprivation are also more likely to be lacking the ‘material well-being and social worth that can help in reducing jealousy and aggression towards others seen to be competing for the same resources’ (Amin, 2002: 962 cited Robinson and Reeve, 2006).

A number of communities in Wales, in which asylum seekers are dispersed or in which refugees choose to live, are deprived communities often being amongst the designated Communities First areas. Receiving communities, particularly

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9 See for example, Boswell, 2001; Amin, 2002; Casey et al, 2004; Robinson and Reeve, 2006.
Communities First areas, have had limited capacity to engage with service providers to negotiate the delivery of services which meet the needs of their community. The introduction of asylum seekers, therefore, can place stress on limited services which will work against strong communities.

**Minority ethnic population**

Research has found tensions between new and existing populations are less apparent where immigrant households settle within, or adjacent to, neighbourhoods of established minority ethnic settlement\(^{10}\).

The minority ethnic population within receiving communities are a vital resource for refugees and asylum seekers faced with a number of problems and challenges in meeting their material needs, integrating into a society, coping with hostility and exclusion, engaging with key agencies and service providers, satisfying their cultural requirements and asserting their own identity (Robinson and Reeve, 2006).

**Lack of knowledge about refugees and asylum seekers**

The receiving community often lacks knowledge about refugees and asylum seekers, the issues they face in seeking to rebuild their lives in Wales and have limited opportunity to meet with, and communicate with, asylum seekers and refugees.

**Where are we now?**

Communities First Partnerships are required by the Welsh Assembly Government to be representative of all interests in the local community and are useful vehicles for taking forward work to promote inclusion and understanding between different groups. Communities First funding is provided to help communities engage with service providers on a range of issues. This could be, for example, on issues around refugees and asylum seekers. The role of Communities First Partnerships in outlining community priorities will be key in feeding into the Local Service Board agenda which is currently being piloted.

**What happens next?**

To ensure receiving communities are strong communities, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

20. Continue its work with deprived communities through the Communities First Programme (and the transition to Communities Next) with the aim of encouraging the development of strong communities.

21. Explore opportunities to increase the involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in the development of work undertaken by Communities First Partnerships.

\(^{10}\) See for example, Forrest and Kearns, 1999; Boswell, 2001; Casey et al, 2004.
22. Develop an ‘All Wales Community Cohesion Strategy’ to promote more cohesive communities within Wales, with shared values and equal opportunities in all areas of societies.

**Asylum seeker and refugee communities**

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to supporting refugee and asylum seeker communities in Wales to develop into strong and vibrant communities.

Refugees arrive in the UK often with no or few family, friends or social connections. A sense of belonging to a particular group or community, with which you share a common identity, is significant to inclusion and well-being.

**Refugee community organisations**

Refugee community organisations are important forms of self-expression and provide trusted information, advice and services to many refugees and asylum seekers. They provide forums for collective action to address shared needs, challenge exclusion and champion refugee rights.

Refugee community organisations are a foundation for building bridges with receiving communities, service providers and decision-makers. The Welsh Assembly Government will work with established refugee community organisations to learn from their experiences and share good practice.

Not all refugees want to participate in refugee community organisations but a diverse and inclusive refugee community sector can facilitate participation and support refugees and asylum seekers to access services.

Many refugees and asylum seekers also share a sense of belonging with, and seek advice and support from, faith and ethnic minority groups in Wales.

**Where are we now?**

There is a range of formal and informal refugee community organisations in Wales, which are actively engaged in partnerships bringing services and opportunities to their communities. Refugee community organisations have established an umbrella organisation called Refugee Voice Wales (RVW).

**What needs to be done?**

Refugee community organisations currently have limited resources to develop their organisational practices and processes. Few have access to training, information or advice to support the development of inclusive and representative practices or access to training to support the development of skills within the organisation. Many are not aware of the support available. Many are embryonic, with no refugee community organisations currently in Wrexham. Not all the diverse groups of
refugees and asylum seekers currently participate actively in refugee community organisations for a number of reasons.

Some voluntary groups, notably the Welsh Refugee Council and Displaced People in Action (DPiA) have initiatives to support refugee community development and these could be developed further.

What happens next?

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners to:

23. Support the development of a strong, active and inclusive refugee community organisation sector in Wales. This will include establishing a dedicated funding stream.

Refugee Voice Wales

In 2004, a group of Refugee Community Organisation leaders came together to discuss how the voice of refugees and asylum seekers might be more effectively heard in Wales. Out of these discussions, Refugee Voice Wales was established to:

- Create an umbrella organisation for different refugee community organisations to come together and share experiences.
- Collectively raise issues with key policy makers and service providers through, for example, representation.
- Campaign and advocate on issues that affect refugees and asylum seekers.
- Work in partnership to build the capacity of refugee community organisations.

Refugee Voice Wales has now begun to represent and co-ordinate refugee community organisation issues and activities. It meets regularly and is committed to being membership driven. Working with Oxfam and the Welsh Refugee Council, it has undertaken a mapping exercise and facilitated workshops to identify the needs, and expectations of, refugee community organisations in relation to the work of Refugee Voice Wales. Refugee Voice Wales currently has a database of 31 organisations and 30 individuals.

3. Building bridges between refugee/asylum seeking communities and receiving communities

The Welsh Assembly Government will work to promote positive relationships between refugee/asylum seeking communities and receiving communities.

Establishing good relationships with people from other national, ethnic and faith groups should be an active process between refugee/asylum seeking communities
and receiving communities. Such relationships support cohesion and enrich communities culturally, socially and economically.

The role of the arts, culture and sports in establishing bridges between communities

Refugees and asylum seekers come from diverse cultural backgrounds and can make a rich contribution to our understanding and identity, as well as our cultural and sporting sectors. Arts, sports and culture provide routes for establishing bridges between communities and can enable different groups to value and understand each other. Arts, sports and culture, therefore, have an important role in promoting inclusion, combating racism and building strong communities.

Arts, sports and culture can play a key role in personal development. For many, engagement in these activities can offer forms of expression to deal with difficult situations from both the past and present.

Where are we now?

The First Minister chairs a Faith Communities Forum which is an important vehicle for promoting good interfaith relations and understanding.

The Welsh Assembly Government’s culture and sport policies are delivered through a range of public bodies, including sponsored bodies such as the Arts Council of Wales, the National Library of Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales) and the Sports Council for Wales.

All public bodies, including local authorities, have a duty to promote good race relations and race equality. How this duty will be achieved is documented in the Race Equality Schemes published by public bodies. The schemes address inclusion for minority ethnic groups, including refugees/asylum seekers, and are an important mechanism for delivering this strategy.

The Arts Council of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru have initiated or supported projects that promote refugee inclusion. An enormous range of arts, sports and cultural events promoting refugee inclusion have been led by voluntary and community groups.
What needs to be done?

There are a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers who do not participate in the arts, culture or sport. This can be because of:

- barriers created by poverty which makes access to transport, ability to pay for equipment, membership and other fees difficult;
- stresses of the asylum claim; and
- lack of information about opportunities, knowledge of how to access support and funding and institutional barriers created through the funding application process.

What happens next?

To achieve the objective of promoting positive relationships between asylum seeking/refugee communities and receiving communities, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with arts, sports and cultural public bodies, local government and voluntary groups to achieve the following objectives:

24. Increase the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to participate in arts, sports, cultural and leisure activities by addressing practical barriers to participation, training funding organisations and service providers and through providing accessible information and advice to refugees and asylum seekers.

Refugees Writing in Wales

Swansea Bay Asylum Seeker Support Group, run by locals and refugees, provides regular drop-ins, holds occasional social events and runs a football team. In 2003, they set up a publication house (Hafan Books) to raise funds for the group and the Welsh Refugee Council hardship fund. The group publishes annual books which contain poems, fiction, testimony and opinion by refugees and asylum seekers, alongside work by established Wales-based writers. The series gives refugees and asylum seekers an opportunity to make themselves heard, in the company of well-known Welsh writers, and helps readers appreciate the diversity of experiences and talents which refugees bring to Wales. Some refugees are established writers in their own countries, while others have taken up writing since coming to Wales. For many refugees, writing has therapeutic value, helping them deal with traumas. To be published is also an important affirmation of dignity. The work is selected on the basis of literary interest and variety. The editors work with the writers individually, and with translators, to get the best version of each person's work. About thirty refugee writers have been published, from as many countries.

The books have received much positive feedback and have been so successful that some titles have sold out. The latest title in the series, Fragments from the Dark: women writing home and self in Wales, will be published in June 2008. For more information see http://www.hafan.org
25. Promote arts, sports and cultural activities across Wales that encourage asylum seeker and refugee inclusion.

Support groups

The asylum seekers and refugee support groups in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham provide valuable opportunities for refugee/asylum seeking and receiving communities to come together for support and friendship. They have initiated a range of innovative projects, from maintaining an allotment to publishing collections of poetry.

Newport & District Refugee Support Group

Newport & District Refugee Support Group is a multi-agency group that seeks to give practical support to refugees and asylum seekers as well as raise awareness and promote understanding. It provides a weekly drop-in for refugees and asylum seekers to meet and to access information, a weekly art and craft group for asylum seeking and refugee families, an allotment project and parties and outings throughout the year. The group also puts on a range of activities and events aimed at raising awareness and understanding.

The group’s activities enable refugees, asylum seekers and local volunteers, whether alone or with their families, to come together and meet each other in a safe and friendly atmosphere. For more information see http://www.newport-refugees.org.uk.

What happens next?

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners in local government, the Volunteer Bureaux and the voluntary sector to:

26. Foster strong links between refugee/asylum seeking communities and receiving communities through:
   a. supporting local activities that aim to develop good relationships between refugee/asylum seeking and receiving communities;
   b. promoting volunteering initiatives across different communities;
   c. supporting mentoring and befriending schemes for refugee and asylum seekers; and
   d. encouraging mainstream statutory and voluntary groups to actively engage refugees and asylum seekers in local services and activities.
4. Creating links between refugee/asylum seeking communities, service providers and decision-makers

To achieve the objective of mainstreaming refugee and asylum seeker services, service providers and decision-makers need to link with refugee and asylum seeking communities to ensure they design and deliver effective policies and services that meet the needs of all individuals in Wales.

Refugees and asylum seekers will not be fully included in Welsh society until they have an equal voice in the way government and voluntary organisations plan and deliver services. This includes refugees and asylum seekers being actively involved in governance within the voluntary and statutory sectors.

One Wrexham and One Wrexham Charter of Belonging

One Wrexham is a new initiative being led by Wrexham Council to promote good relationships between everyone who resides or works in the County Borough. The aim is to create a common sense of belonging across all communities and cultures to ensure Wrexham is a welcoming, inclusive and tolerant place to be. To progress towards this aim, Wrexham Council created the One Wrexham Charter of Belonging, a one page document setting out a statement of values and commitments. Wrexham Council is encouraging public bodies, voluntary and community organisations and businesses to sign up to the Charter to make a positive and meaningful statement about equalities and respect for diversity.

Where are we now?

The Welsh Assembly Government encourages the voices of all citizens, including children and young people, to be heard when making key decisions and when planning and delivering services. We have a number of programmes that aim to achieve this, including the Voluntary Sector Scheme, Communities First and Making the Connections.

What needs to be done?

Service providers should ensure that mechanisms put in place to enable citizens to participate in making decisions about planning and delivering services, enable refugees and asylum seekers to participate.

What happens next?

To achieve the objective of mainstreaming refugee and asylum seeker services, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with local government, political parties, faith groups, refugee community organisations, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, and other voluntary sector groups to:
27. Support people in refugee and asylum seeking communities, alongside receiving communities, to engage in effective dialogue with decision-makers and participate in key policy and service delivery decisions that affect their lives. We will explore and learn from models of good practice.
Chapter 7

Fulfilling potential: employment, training and volunteering

During the public consultation, refugees and asylum seekers identified fulfilling potential as the priority area for the Refugee Inclusion Strategy to address.

This chapter outlines the actions which will be taken to ensure the skills and ideas refugees and asylum seekers bring to Wales are used to their full potential for the benefit of both individual refugees/asylum seekers and for the benefit of the country as a whole.

Central to this aim is reducing refugee unemployment and underemployment.

1. Employment

Refugees come to Wales to seek safety, rather than for economic reasons. They bring with them a variety of skills and ideas. Many are highly skilled and experienced professionals and entrepreneurs, whilst others are relatively low skilled. Refugees have the same rights to work and train as UK citizens. Refugees have much to contribute to the Welsh economy.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) estimates unemployment among refugees is about six times the national average, despite refugees having, on average, higher levels of qualifications. Home Office research suggests conditions of refugee employment are poor and notably worse than those experienced by other ethnic minorities with 11% earning less than minimum wage (Home Office, 2004: 26).

Other than English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), most adults seeking asylum in the UK are not allowed to work, receive publicly-funded education or training.

Where are we now?

Employment policy is the responsibility of the UK Government and sits within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Department for Work and Pensions published Working to Rebuild Lives: a refugee employment strategy (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005) and Jobcentre Plus published Working together to Help Rebuild Lives (Jobcentre Plus, nd) to help refugees fulfil their potential. Jobcentre Plus Wales has developed outreach projects that are models of good practice.

In August 2007, the delivery team of advisors from the Welsh Assembly Government Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Equality Project carried out specific training and development, looking at the requirements of small and medium enterprises. The training and development focused on the issues faced by refugees in gaining employment and the requirements placed on businesses in employing refugees.
Since then, the delivery team has incorporated this good practice when working with small and medium enterprises.

The Welsh Assembly Government has funded initiatives to support refugees with a professional background to retrain and increase recognition of their qualifications. The Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors programme for refugee doctors, delivered by Displaced People in Action, has been particularly successful.

### The Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group (WARD)\(^1\)

In 2002, the Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group received funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to set up and manage an in-house study programme in Cardiff for asylum seeking and refugee doctors in Wales. The programme is run by the School of Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education and consists of ongoing IELTS courses as well as PLAB 1 and 2 lectures delivered by qualified medical doctors. WARD members have access to medical textbooks, journals, practice materials and the internet. As well as offering a drop-in facility, WARD provides funding for refugee doctors to take their exams. WARD has a total of 57 members. Thirty-one members have revalidated their medical diplomas, and of these 27 are employed (18 were allocated within the Wales Foundation Programme F1/F2). There are a further 20 refugee and asylum seeking doctors, currently re-training with the help of WARD.

The Welsh Assembly Government is funding the Welsh Silver Lining Refugee Project which aims to facilitate refugee nurses to achieve UK Nursing and Midwifery Council registration and employment in the NHS as registered nurses. The project is based at the University of Glamorgan and is the result of a partnership with Gwent NHS Trust, the Royal College of Nursing, the Welsh Refugee Council and the Employability Forum.

The Welsh Assembly Government has also developed a database of refugee healthcare professionals.

Careers Wales provides impartial advice and guidance on learning, training and career opportunities to young people and adults in Wales free of charge. The service is available in schools, colleges, careers centres and shops. Careers Wales offers services at community outreach venues, including a part-time careers advisor based at the Wales Refugee Council in Cardiff, to provide direct support to refugees and asylum seekers. A project worker with ethnic minority language skills provides advice and guidance to ethnic minority communities in Cardiff and is working with the Welsh Refugee Council and the Parade in Cardiff to track the progress of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners and to evaluate the impact of the project.
The Ethnic Business Support Programme\textsuperscript{11} was established in 2001 with contract funding from the former Welsh Development Agency (WDA) to bridge the gap between ethnic minority communities, including refugee entrepreneurs, and mainstream business support agencies.

A number of refugee community organisations and other voluntary organisations are providing valued advice and information as well as mutual support. Displaced People in Action run a project promoting employability which provides practical advice on a range of employment-related issues such as writing a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and developing interview skills.

The EQUAL partnership in Wales aimed to improve the employment prospects of refugees and for individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. The project objectives, in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, have been delivered by the Welsh Refugee Council. The project has undertaken capacity building, supported people into training and work, facilitated volunteer placements, published the first skills audit of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales and disseminated information through events across Wales. The EQUAL project came to an end in December 2007.

At a UK level, the National Recognition Information Centre offers advice on how overseas qualifications relate to UK qualifications.

Research into the skills and qualifications of refugees is limited. In an analysis of UK data, Kirk (2004) found:

- Diversity within the refugee community with marked differences between nationalities in levels of language skills, qualifications and experiences of employment. Amongst some nationalities, there appeared to be significant differences in the skills and employment profiles of men and women.
- Half of the respondents who were economically active prior to coming to the UK were self-employed. This suggests the refugee population is an enterprising one and that promoting self-employment might be considered as one way of engaging them in the labour market (Kirk, 2004).

There has been limited research into the levels of skills and qualifications held by asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. The Welsh Refugee Council (nd) refugee skills audit, for example, found:

- 60% of refugees have a further or higher education qualification;
- 78% of refugees were working for employers, were self-employed or working in a family business before they were forced to flee their country of origin; and
- 64% of refugees are currently unemployed.

\textsuperscript{11}http://www.ebsp.org/
The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and Swansea University have developed a questionnaire which will be given to all new refugees in Wales. The questionnaire aims to capture information about refugee skills and qualifications. Officials from the Welsh Assembly Government will work with the partnership, the UK Border Agency and Swansea University to facilitate the research and its dissemination.

**What remains to be done?**

There is a need to co-ordinate the work already taking place to:

- share information on how Working to Rebuild Lives: a refugee employment strategy and Working together to Help Rebuild Lives are being implemented in Wales;
- develop structured routes for refugees with professional or practical skills to access re-training, work experience and recognition of qualifications and experience;
- help refugees access suitable work-based training, work-shadowing, work-experience and volunteering opportunities;
- provide appropriate advice, information and practical guidance for refugees on the UK labour market and routes to employment, retraining, recognition of qualifications and business start-up;
- provide accessible and user-friendly information on the services and support available to refugees;
- provide accessible information and advice to employers and encourage employers to take proactive steps to remove barriers refugees face to accessing work;
- combat and confront discrimination in employment; and
- spread existing good practice across Wales.

**2. Adult education and training**

Refugees and asylum seekers have a range of training and skills needs. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring everyone in Wales has the skills needed to fulfil their potential and has the necessary skills to contribute effectively to the labour market.

**Where are we now?**

Refugees and their dependents who meet the funding criteria are able to access a wide range of learning provision, including vocational learning routes and higher education.

All asylum seekers and refugees should have access to ‘Life in the UK’ training from day one. Many refugees lack work experience in the UK and we will explore how they can make more use of our work-based training routes.
Access to further and higher education can further develop refugee and asylum seeker skills, whether learning new skills or retraining in a profession. Access to further and higher education is particularly important for the progression of high achieving school-leavers.

Learning Insight: asylum seekers and refugees (Ci Research, 2005) documents the key issues around refugee and asylum seeker access to post-16 education and training and makes recommendations for improving uptake through making education more accessible for asylum seekers and refugees. The recommendations have informed the overarching strategy for improving access to education for asylum seekers and refugees (see, for example, discussion outlining the Principles Paper, page 56).

What remains to be done?

Barriers faced by refugees in accessing education and training include the lack of ability to pay tuition fees and access childcare and transport. More accessible provision and clarity for providers on eligibility criteria is needed.

What happens next?

To achieve the objective of reducing refugee unemployment and underemployment and to ensure refugees have equality of opportunity to fulfil their potential and develop the skills to contribute effectively in the labour market, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

28. Establish a multi-agency Employment and Training sub-group of the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum to co-ordinate efforts and resources and develop a Refugee Employment and Skills Action Plan for Wales.

3. Improving English and Welsh language skills

Where are we?

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision is available across Wales. Demand has been increasing rapidly and most centres have waiting lists. ESOL provision is funded from a wide range of sources with the majority of provision funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and is delivered by a range of providers, principally further education colleges and local authorities. The Welsh Assembly Government expenditure on post-16 ESOL provision delivered through the FE sector and franchised arrangements with LEAs is estimated at £5 million. The current research activity undertaken by GHK will help to provide a more accurate indication of current levels of ESOL expenditure across all sectors in Wales. The Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning & Skills (DCELLS) funds learners categorised as ‘home’ learners (which includes refugees and most asylum seekers) who pay no fees for their ESOL classes.
The Wales Basic Skills Strategy, Words Talk Numbers Count (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005c) supports a range of initiatives that may benefit refugees. This includes early years and family programmes, programmes for young people who arrive in Wales towards the end of statutory schooling and teacher training to help deliver the ESOL curriculum for adults. New materials have been developed to support these activities. The Basic Skills Cymru team, in the Welsh Assembly Government, works with ESOL providers to help them achieve the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Providers have been developing good practice across Wales. Yale College in Wrexham, for example, has developed Improve Your English using Computers with the aim of increasing access for individuals who work long hours. To support the new Citizenship test, citizenship for ESOL learners is being embedded into all English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes across the UK and specific materials are available for Wales.

### Cardiff Parade English for Speakers of Other Languages Service

The Parade Centre, Cardiff, has a large outreach provision, working in twenty-two locations across Cardiff. The service helps over 2000 adult learners, between 400 and 500 of these learners are asylum seekers and refugees. Courses are provided at fourteen different levels of English with slow and fast track provision. ‘Contextualised ESOL’ recognises the different needs of learners in terms of progression and type of language needed. ‘Life in the UK’ helps with day-to-day issues such as opening bank accounts and dealing with schools. ESOL Hairdressing and Beauty and An Introduction to Childcare help learners before they enrol on further education vocational courses. The ESOL programme, in partnership with the police, developed the POLICESOL resource which won a Fforwm award in 2005. The Parade service is now developing Workplace ESOL provision with funding from the Welsh Assembly Government Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning & Skills to help non-English speakers working in the hospitality and catering sector in Cardiff.

### What remains to be done

ESOL provision is currently insufficient to meet demand. Demand has increased and is set to increase further with requirements to demonstrate English language skills at ESOL Entry Level 3 or higher to gain citizenship and as a result of increasing numbers of migrant workers, particularly from the European Union countries, entering Wales.

ESOL provision is currently constrained by funding limits on post-16 learning, although there has been some growth in provision sometimes at the expense of other basic skills provision. There is also a shortage of qualified ESOL tutors available to support increased provision.

Providers have begun to respond to the diversity of refugee needs through flexible ESOL provision and a greater emphasis on this is needed. There is much diversity within refugee groups in terms of age, gender, social class and educational background which impacts on their ability to access ESOL. More targeted provision
is needed, for example, English for professional or vocational development and specialist support for those who are new to formal education.

There are many practical barriers to attending classes. The main reason women state for not attending ESOL classes is lack of access to childcare. One of the main reasons both men and women state for not attending ESOL classes is the cost of transport. Many refugees work long, anti-social hours. Attending classes at predetermined times is, therefore, difficult. Education is not necessarily the first priority for those asylum seekers who do not have their basic needs fulfilled.

What happens next?

Estyn is currently undertaking a review of the impact of the recent increase in the number of ESOL learners in Wales on the quality of their learning. The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned GHK Consulting to undertake research to evaluate ESOL provision in Wales in terms of capacity and the strengths/weaknesses of existing provision. The researchers will also identify good practice and make recommendations, as appropriate, to support policy development. The Welsh Assembly Government will consider the implications of the research findings to inform future planning and development of ESOL provision during 2008.

To achieve the objective of ensuring refugees are able to gain English Language skills the Welsh Assembly Government will:

29. Review the funding policy for ESOL provision in light of the findings from Welsh Assembly Government commissioned research, due to report in June 2008, and work actively to ensure increased ESOL provision. This will include exploring opportunities to support additional ESOL provision through EU funding programmes.

4. Further and higher education

‘Life in the UK’ skills are increasingly being taught as part of English for Speakers of Other Languages provision. The development of other basic skills can also be supported through English for Speakers of Other Languages. Refugees who have high English language skills also need to be able to access training on areas covered through ‘Life in the UK’ courses.

Where are we?

Examples of specific projects to increase refugee and asylum seeker participation in further and higher education include the University of Glamorgan Race Ethnicity and Access to Learning (REAL) project and its current programme to support re-training and re-accreditation of refugee health professionals. One college in Cardiff provides subsidised courses for asylum seekers and refugees.
What remains to be done?

Hard data on the number of refugees and asylum seekers enrolling on higher or further education courses is not available but it appears numbers are low. The main barrier is ability to pay for or to access financial support to fund courses. Refugees and asylum seekers have access to further and higher education as long as they meet the entrance requirements for the course, can pay the fees and support themselves financially. Asylum seekers are not eligible for Student Support, Access Funds or Hardship Loans and have to pay overseas student fees (with some exceptions). This causes severe difficulties in participating in further and higher education and is particularly problematic for high achieving young people.

Other barriers include lack of accessible information and advice on the appropriate education and training available, as well as practical barriers associated with poverty such as inability to access transport, childcare or attend courses at prescribed times.

What happens next?

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with voluntary sector refugee agencies, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, further and higher education institutions and Careers Wales to:

30. Ensure higher and further education institutions are fully aware of refugee and asylum seeker entitlements as well as best practice on overcoming barriers to access.

31. Provide accessible information, advice and guidance as well as direct financial and other support to increase access to further and higher education by refugees and asylum seekers.

5. Volunteering

Volunteering can be a route into employment and an opportunity for refugees to gain work experience in the UK, acquire or develop skills and obtain UK references. Mentoring and work shadowing can be pivotal in helping refugees make the transition to employment.

For asylum seekers, volunteering can provide a purposeful activity, opportunities to contribute to their new communities, maintain self-esteem and motivation as well as gaining experience, knowledge and skills.

Volunteering and mentoring also provide important opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to interact with the wider community, create friendships and promote good relations.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving access to volunteering for people from all sections of society and to take special measures to include those who are vulnerable to social exclusion.
Where are we?

The Welsh Assembly Government has recently launched its Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). The strategy contains a number of recommendations that are particularly relevant to groups which have not traditionally been involved in volunteering.

The Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme contains an action point to design and run a media campaign, based on the findings of commissioned research which identified the factors that motivate and prevent people from volunteering. The Welsh Assembly Government will fully involve the third sector in the design of the media campaign to ensure the campaign engages marginalised groups which have not, in the past, been involved in volunteering.

The Welsh Assembly Government will also develop an Action Plan which aims to remove barriers to volunteering for groups who have previously not been active in volunteering by improving the quality, quantity and relevance of volunteering opportunities to those groups.

What happens next?

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with refugee community organisations, Displaced People in Action, the Welsh Refugee Council, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Volunteer Bureaux and Community Service Volunteers to achieve the following objective:

32. Provide targeted information, advice and support for refugees and asylum seekers to access the wide range of volunteering opportunities available in Wales.
Chapter 8

Accessing core services

Fair and equal access to housing, health and social care, and education services is fundamental to the quality of life of refugees and asylum seekers and their ability to be part of their community. Service providers need to understand individual and community needs, and to maintain regular dialogue with refugee and asylum seeker service users, in order to deliver services effectively.

This strategy aims to ensure asylum seekers and refugees have fair and equal access to housing, education and health and social care.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving public services for people of all communities through making them more responsive and accessible. Making the Connections (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004) sets out the Welsh Assembly Government’s vision and Delivering the Connections (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005d) sets out how this will be achieved. The Making the Connections agenda is an important mechanism for delivering improved services and access for refugees and asylum seekers.

Whilst each service area needs to respond to the specific issues that arise for their service users, there are some common issues that need to be addressed across all service areas.

Shared aims across all service areas

In order to provide high quality and effective services that are accessible to refugees and asylum seekers, all service providers should work with partners to:

- promote effective partnership working across agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors, including refugee community organisations, to drive improvements in policy and practice;
- develop flexible service delivery to respond to barriers faced by service users because of poverty, such as access to transport, childcare and ability to pay for additional goods;
- make basic and accessible information readily available for refugees and asylum seekers in community languages on the range of services available, how to access them and their rights and entitlements to those services as service users;
- support independent advocacy and advice services as well as mentoring programmes to support individual access;
- provide high quality, professional and appropriate translation and interpretation services to all clients who need them (see chapter five);
- ensure service planners and providers are aware of refugee needs and their rights to access services through providing specialist guidance as
well as training, advice and support to all those involved in service delivery and inspection;

- develop clear mechanisms for dialogue with service users to ensure services are effective and delivered appropriately;
- collect and make accessible baseline data on refugee and asylum seeker profiles, needs and use of services and, where appropriate, commission research in order to plan, monitor and evaluate services; and
- develop funding agreements, which can be adapted to respond to changes in circumstances over time.

Where are we now?

In each service area, a Welsh Assembly Government-led multi-agency group has identified ways of working together to provide effective services to refugees and asylum seekers. The objective now is to ensure the proposals made by the working groups are implemented in ways which deliver effective services for refugees and asylum seekers living in Wales.

To achieve the objective of ensuring asylum seekers and refugees have fair and equal access to housing, education and health and social care, the Welsh Assembly Government, the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum and its sub-groups will:

33. Deliver the shared aims for service delivery across core services areas.

Meeting refugee housing needs

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring everyone in Wales has the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable, housing; to be able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families (National Assembly for Wales, 2001).

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises where individuals have stable accommodation other key services are easier to access.

Where are we now?

Better Homes for People in Wales: a national housing strategy for Wales (National Assembly for Wales, 2001) contains a section ‘Asylum Seekers and Refugees’ which aims to implement government policy and encourage good practice in the resettlement of refugees\(^\text{12}\).

Better Homes for People in Wales: a national housing strategy for Wales, Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006b) details progress against the action ‘We will develop, consult on and issue good practice on the provision of

\(^{12}\) The Welsh Assembly Government is reviewing whether a new National Housing Strategy should be published.
housing services to asylum seekers and refugees’. The Action Plan details the following progress towards achieving the action point:

- Housing Sub-Group of the All-Wales Refugee Policy Forum established summer 2003;
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees: guidance for housing and related service providers in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005e);
- the Refugee Housing Action Plan published July 2005; and
- funding for the refugee integration partnership programme ‘Accommodate’ awarded August 2006.

**The Refugee Housing Action Plan**

In 2003, a multi-agency Housing Sub-Group of the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum was established. The group considered the need for support, which refugees may need due to the trauma and isolation they may have experienced, and identified the main barriers to refugee inclusion. The findings of the group are addressed in the Refugee Housing Action Plan (Housing Sub-Group of the all Wales Refugee Policy Forum, 2006), which sets out measures to overcome barriers, to raise awareness of issues and develop effective dialogue for service improvements between providers and users. The Action Plan went out to consultation in late 2005 and was launched in 2006. A review will take place in 2008 to consider the progress against the Action Plan.

When the plan reaches the end of its three-year cycle in 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government will work towards mainstreaming refugee housing issues within our existing housing and equality strategies and agendas to deliver further progress.

**Asylum Seekers and Refugees: guidance for housing and related service providers in Wales**

Poor quality housing continues to be a key barrier to refugee inclusion. In response, the Welsh Assembly Government issued guidance on asylum seeker and refugee housing in March 2005 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005e), which gives detailed information to help existing and potential service providers to develop and deliver responsive housing services to asylum seekers and refugees.

The Welsh Assembly Government is reviewing whether the guidance should be updated in accordance with the action contained within the Draft Minority Ethnic Housing Action Plan 2008-11 (2007c) consultation document. The consultation document commits the Welsh Assembly Government to producing new guidance following an evaluation of the usefulness and effectiveness of the current guidance.

**Minority Ethnic Action Plan**


The Black and Minority Ethnic National Housing Review Group, which monitors the Black, Minority Ethnic Housing Action Plan for Wales recommended, in March 2006, a working group be established to look at proposals for a new plan, which would reflect current housing issues for the minority ethnic community.

The working group produced the current consultation draft taking into account the changed environment, the availability of new guidance documents and the recommendations made to the Welsh Assembly Government in the Review of Social Landlords Implementation of the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Action Plan for Wales (Duncan and Mortimer, 2005).

The actions contained within the plan include refugee issues. Specific links are drawn to the Welsh Assembly Government’s work on refugee issues. The action plan commits the Welsh Assembly Government to review Asylum Seekers and Refugees: guidance for housing and related service providers in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005e). The review will include consideration of the usefulness of the guidance.

**The Accommodate Project**

Accommodate\(^{13}\), the Refugee Housing Partnership Project, launched in May 2004, aims to improve refugee access to housing by supporting the work of local partnerships made up of refugee community organisations, housing associations, local authorities and other voluntary and statutory agencies.

A partnership established in Newport is in receipt of matched funding from the Welsh Assembly Government for a three year period. The funding was awarded due to difficulties experienced by Newport Council in housing its refugee population. A key problem was the reluctance of landlords to rent to new immigrants which meant they had severely limited options for finding homes. To resolve the problem, Newport City Council, together with local refugee agencies and housing associations, formed a partnership with the aim of accessing the private rental sector and, thus, easing the pressure on social housing.

**Funding**

In addition to funding provided for the Accommodate Project, grants are also provided to fund refugee accommodation projects in Wales. This includes core funding of Tai Pawb, the Black Minority Ethnic housing organisation, which seeks to promote race equality and social justice in housing.

The Welsh Assembly Government provides over £150,000 per year to support the Welsh Refugee Council’s work with refugees to resolve their housing problems. This includes the Well Housing Project which provides housing advice to refugees who have recently gained refugee status. The project aims to ensure refugees do not

become homeless and are properly settled into suitable accommodation. Funding is also provided to the Welsh Refugee Council to employ a Housing Development Officer. The main purpose of the post is to develop appropriate services, support and infrastructure to meet the housing needs of refugees in Wales.

Refugee Resettlement Service, City and County of Swansea Council

The City and County of Swansea Council Refugee Resettlement Service, part funded by the Welsh Assembly Government BME Housing Grant Scheme, helps those who have recently received refugee status to settle in Swansea through providing advice and help in finding a home, information on other key services and signposting to key organisations. It works closely with the Welsh Refugee Council Move-on worker and British Red Cross tenant support service to ensure clients receive a well rounded service and to avoid duplication.

Since it began in November 2004, the service has been successful in housing refugees in a range of council, private and housing association accommodation, with clients also receiving advice and information on Move-on.

The inter-agency approach has worked very well. The referral system and efficient lines of communication have helped clients to secure permanent accommodation, maximise their benefits and receive information and advocacy in the all important 28 day period once status is received. All agencies are content with the improved communication between support services and Housing Options and agree the Refugee Resettlement Service has greatly improved the service provided to applicants.

To achieve the objective of ensuring everyone in Wales has the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable, housing, are able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

34. Deliver the All Wales Refugee Housing Action Plan and report annually to the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum.

Meeting the health and social care needs of asylum seekers and refugees

Meeting the social care needs of refugees and asylum seekers is essential to their inclusion in society. People with social care needs are the most vulnerable members within refugee communities, yet their voices are often not heard and their needs are frequently misunderstood and overlooked.

Where are we now?

In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government established a multi-agency task and finish group, the All Wales Selected Minority Group (SMG), to identify and provide guidelines on health issues common to a number of different minority groups
including homeless people, Gypsies and Travellers, the minority ethnic community and asylum seekers & refugees.

The All Wales Selected Minority Group (National Public Health Service for Wales, 2006) published Guidance on Commissioning and Service Delivery for Selected Minority Groups for Local Health Boards (LHBs) and Hospital Trusts on good practice in addressing the health needs of the selected minority groups. Follow-up visits found most Local Health Boards are not aware of the guidance. In response, the Welsh Assembly Government reissued the guidance in August 2007.

The Welsh Assembly Government has established the Welsh Asylum Seeker & Refugee Health Advisory Group (WASRHAG). The group is chaired by the National Public Health Service for Wales and has representation from statutory and voluntary sector organisations, including the All Wales Asylum Seeker Nursing Group.

The Welsh Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Advisory Group have updated the Asylum Seekers Healthcare Guidance and produced Meeting the Healthcare Needs of Asylum Seekers to inform stakeholders of the current health care issues for asylum seekers. It contains a series of recommendations for Local Health Boards to improve:

- access to primary care;
- culturally sensitive services; and
- communication and information and information sharing.

The Welsh Assembly Government provides additional funding to Local Health Boards in dispersal areas to support basic medical costs including health needs assessments, a contribution to primary care and access to Language Line. The Welsh Assembly Government also funds a Health Development and Advocacy Officer in the Welsh Refugee Council.

The Welsh Assembly Government is currently considering the provision of healthcare for asylum seekers who have been refused refugee status. In 2004, charging for secondary care (other than that provided by Accident and Emergency) was tightened for asylum seekers refused refugee status. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Manifesto (Amnesty International and Welsh Refugee Council, 2007) notes the impact these charges are having on vulnerable failed asylum seekers such as those who have severe mental health problems, the elderly and children and young people. In the 2007 National Assembly for Wales election, candidates and parties pledged support to the manifesto commitment to give asylum seekers, whose claims have been refused, exemption from charges for treatment by National Health Service Trusts. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to implementing this manifesto pledge, and officials are looking at practical ways of taking this pledge forward.
Mental Health

Psychological distress affects the ability of a person to actively engage socially, economically, culturally and politically in their new community. The Welsh Assembly Government sets the strategic and policy framework for mental health service delivery. It also funds mental health services through Local Health Board discretionary allocations and grant funding schemes. Local authorities are also responsible for providing mental health social care services.

Refugee and asylum seeking communities may have differing concepts and knowledge of mental health, differing expectations of services and differing mental health needs (Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum and CVS Consultants, 2002). Some refugees and asylum seekers have mental health issues arising from their experiences. Social isolation, poverty, racism and hostility from the receiving community in the UK can also affect mental health.

Mental illness may be treated within primary care or depending on the severity of the illness may need a referral to secondary care. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) referral guidelines have been developed for GPs and there are locally agreed referral pathways. More support is needed for GPs in dealing with issues of mental health and psychological problems of asylum seekers and refugees (British Medical Association Board of Science and Education, 2002).

Newport Local Health Board and Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust have appointed a Specialist Mental Health Nurse to work solely with refugees and asylum seekers.

Voluntary organisations provide mental health support services, including specialised outreach services for minority ethnic communities. Unlike some other parts of the UK, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture does not currently have an office in Wales.

Psychological distress may not require medical intervention, but may be alleviated by non-medical support such as reducing isolation and dependence, having suitable accommodation and spending time more creatively through education, work and other meaningful activities.

To achieve the objective of ensuring the health and social care needs of asylum seekers and refugees are met, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with Local Health Boards, local authorities and the voluntary sector to:

35. Implement the recommendations in Meeting the Healthcare Needs of Asylum Seekers and take steps to encourage compliance with Service Development and Commissioning Guidance for Selected Minority Groups, including through Local Needs Assessments and Health Social Care and Well Being Strategies.

36. Set out a strategic vision for the provision of mental health services to asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.
The Welsh Assembly Government will also work with local mental health services to:

37. provide a service to the refugee population in their area. Services should consider if this is best provided by a dedicated professional for this population.

Meeting refugee children and young people’s education needs

Unlocking every child’s potential is at the heart of the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategy for education, which is based on the premise that all children and young people, including asylum seekers and refugees, should be encouraged to achieve their potential, whatever their ethnic or cultural background.

Some of the most positive experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales are of education provision. Parents, children and young people have expressed satisfaction with mainstream education provision and refugee/asylum seeking children and young people have enriched the life of their schools. These children and young people are often highly motivated and keen to ensure that they achieve to the limit of their abilities.

We recognise there are still many areas where we need to improve. Racist and other bullying is relatively widespread (Threadgold and Clifford, 2005). Participation in extracurricular activities can be hindered by a number of factors, including poverty. Some teachers have demonstrated low expectations for refugee/asylum seeking children and young people and are not challenging racism effectively. Some schools, where numbers of minority ethnic pupils are low, are less aware of their responsibilities or how to respond to particular issues refugee/asylum seeking children and young people can face.

A particular barrier around inclusion of asylum seeking children in the school community is that asylum seeking families sometimes live in the area for a relatively short amount of time.

As the numbers and specific situation of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in an area is dependent on external events, Local Education Authorities and schools face difficulties in forward planning. Whilst the numbers of asylum seeking children may remain relatively constant, the individual children behind those numbers change, with the need to support inclusion remaining a constant challenge. However, when a child (or his/her family is granted refugee status) a high proportion choose to remain in the area where they have established a local connection.
Where are we now?

The Welsh Assembly Government is developing a paper on the principles involved in raising minority ethnic achievement in education. It will guide local education authorities and schools on how best to provide services for all their minority ethnic pupils including asylum seekers and refugees.

To complement the principles paper, good practice guidance, in the form of a DVD, is being developed to assist teachers and other school staff. This will further raise awareness of the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups and how they can be accommodated. It will illustrate ways in which schools can value cultural diversity and prevent racism through the curriculum and will provide examples of effective inclusive practice.

The Welsh Assembly Government has taken a lead in addressing the problem of bullying in school through Respecting Others (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003). Unevenness in standards remains an issue and better monitoring is needed. This is partly being addressed by the development of guidance to support class teachers. The Welsh Assembly Government will produce additional guidance specifically on racist bullying.

The special needs of asylum seeker children in terms of education are recognised and local education authorities receive significant funding to offset the additional costs involved in providing for this group of learners. The funding comes from the Welsh Assembly Government Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG)14.

The objective of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant is: to improve educational opportunity for all minority ethnic learners, particularly those for whom English is an additional language; to offer asylum seeker pupils the special support they need and; to improve minority ethnic pupils’ standards of achievement across the board. The current level of funding for the grant for 2007-2008 is £8.1 million, in 2008-2009 that will go up to £9.1, increasing to £9.6 million for 2009-2010 and to £10.1 million in 2010-2011.

The vast majority of the funding is used to cover the cost of specialist teachers of English as an additional language and their support assistants. MEAG covers school children from age 3 (nursery) to age 19 (Year 13). The grant is shared amongst all twenty two local education authorities. A funding formula is applied to details of the numbers of minority ethnic pupils provided by the local education authorities; their Key Stages and their levels of language acquisition. The weightings within the formula aim to ensure the funding is allocated according to the greatest need. Asylum seeking children attract the highest weighting in recognition of their particular needs.

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14 The Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant is the result of a merger of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) and the Specific Grant for Asylum Seeker Education.
**Our World – Our Journeys, St Willows High School**

A new educational resource pack initiated by the British Council Wales was launched in March 2006 to assist teachers to meet the challenge of integrating asylum seeker and refugee children and young people into the school community. A key aspect of the resource pack is the video ‘Our World – Our Journey’ produced by Valley and Vale Community Arts and the Willows High School in Tremorfa, Cardiff. It is a moving story created by local children and young asylum seekers about their lives in Wales and how they see each other. The Welsh Assembly Government provided financial support to implement the project and the resource pack has now been distributed to 150 schools and other interested bodies.

To ensure asylum seeking and refugee children and young people achieve their full potential, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with Estyn, Local Education Authorities, local multi-agency Young People’s Partnerships and other partners to:

38. Deliver the Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy.
39. Develop measures to address current barriers to participation in extra-curricular activities.
40. Promote good race relations and respect for others regardless of race or religion through the school curriculum.
41. Develop additional training materials, giving examples of best practice, suitable for incorporation into teacher training, continuing professional development and governor and inspector training to address the question of racist bullying.
Chapter 9

Understanding diversity and supporting the most vulnerable

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises and welcomes the diversity of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. Whilst all refugees share a common experience of having fled persecution, they are far from an homogenous group. There is enormous diversity in terms of gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, language, faith and sexual orientation. There are also many disabled refugees and asylum seekers.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to developing policies and practices that are adaptable and flexible to enable all refugees and asylum seekers to be included. We are committed to supporting those who are particularly vulnerable.

The Home Office National Strategy for Refugee Integration (Home Office, 2005c) contains consultation responses from the Refugee Council and the British Red Cross, which highlight the specific issues refugee women and older refugees face.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Refugee Council and the British Red Cross consultation response to the National Strategy for Refugee Integration</th>
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<tr>
<td>“The experience and needs of refugee women are often distinct and frequently overlooked by policy makers and practitioners. As women, refugees may have faced persecution related to their gender, such as sexual violence and exploitation, but have been left to grapple with reception arrangements that are not sensitive to these experiences. Socially, refugee women are more likely than men to experience isolation and poor access to employment and services.”</td>
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<td>“For many refugees […] waiting for determination of their case exacerbates the already significant stress of their histories and the experience of an unfamiliar society and its rules. This stress can result in deterioration of mental health, which can manifest itself once the determination process is over. […] There are dangers in stereotyping refugees as either victims or survivors. However, acceptance of refugees and the provision of humanitarian protection carry the obligation to understand mental health needs in this population, and the commitment to assist individuals to regain full health.”</td>
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<td>“Older refugees report feeling isolated and lonely. They report having limited knowledge about entitlements to services. They are more dependent on family members and so risk losing all independence. They are not expected to get into jobs and so find it harder to integrate, whilst limited English means that older refugees are unable to get their views across effectively.”</td>
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Where are we now?

Research has been undertaken to explore the experiences of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people in Wales. The research findings have been used to inform Welsh Assembly Government policies. More information does, however, need to be gathered about other groups of refugees and asylum seekers to gain a better understanding of the diversity of refugee/asylum seeking communities and the different issues these communities face.

The special needs of ethnic minority communities have not always been adequately considered in the domestic violence context. The Welsh Assembly Government has mainstreamed diversity issues into the ‘All Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005f). The Welsh Assembly Government has also produced a multi-lingual leaflet for refugees and asylum seekers. More recently, in March 2007, the Welsh Assembly Government agreed to fund a domestic abuse outreach service for minority ethnic women in Wrexham.


The Welsh Assembly Government will carry out further work into the implications of child poverty, including refugee and asylum seeking children and young people.

In particular, refugee children experience real problems in respect of housing, health and education and the problems of exclusion can be heightened by language and cultural differences.

The Welsh Assembly Government’s continuing work on child poverty will recognise that refugee children are children first and foremost and that they should enjoy the same protection and support as any other children.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises NASS supported asylum seekers whose application for refugee status has not been recognised are vulnerable due to destitution.

Inclusion for all

Where are we now?

Under the Government of Wales Act 2006, the National Assembly for Wales has a duty to promote equality of opportunity in all that it does. UK legislation outlaws discrimination on the grounds of gender, race and disability within goods and services and employment and on the grounds of age, sexual orientation and faith within employment. Public bodies have a duty, enshrined in legislation, to promote good race relations and to promote disability and gender equality. The principles of equality and diversity underpin all the work of the Welsh Assembly Government.
Apart from children and young people, we have very little knowledge or data about the diversity of refugees and asylum seekers and their experiences. We do know, despite common perceptions, most asylum seekers are living within families in Wales and the majority of these are headed by women. Only 14% of asylum seekers are single males. The Welsh Assembly Government is also aware of the need to respond to the specific issues faced by women refugees and asylum seekers including access to care during pregnancy, sensitivity of maternity services, opportunities to socialise with women in a similar situation and eradicating the practice of Female Genital Mutilation which exists in a small number of communities.

Whilst we do not have a profile of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) refugees and asylum seekers in Wales, and only limited information of their experiences (de Jong, 2003), the information we have shows a need to respond. LGBT refugees and asylum seekers can face high levels of isolation both from ethnic minority, faith and refugee communities as well as LGBT communities in the UK. There is a lack of awareness of the issues that LGBT refugees and asylum seekers can face and many suffer multiple-discrimination by both service providers and refugee communities. There is a lack of accessible information for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers on their rights and where to access support.

We are also aware that other groups of refugees and asylum seekers including women, older people and disabled people have different experiences and needs. We suspect some are particularly isolated and vulnerable and we are committed to finding out what their needs are.

To realise the objective of ensuring the diverse needs asylum seekers and refugees are included in policy and practices, the Welsh Assembly Government, working with partners in the voluntary sector and refugee communities, will:

42. Promote training, information and awareness-raising amongst organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers to increase their understanding of the diversity of needs and the availability of specialist support.

43. Encourage equality and diversity bodies to respond to the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

**Children and Young People**

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that asylum seeker and refugee children are children first and foremost and, due to their circumstances, are among the most vulnerable children in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which inform all of its work in respect of children. This includes an aspirational commitment to Article 22, which requires that such children receive
appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the exercise of their rights under the convention\textsuperscript{15}.

Although immigration and asylum are non-devolved the provision of the majority of services that refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales receive is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities and other public bodies. The circumstances of many refugee/asylum seeking children and young people are exceptionally complex. By virtue of their experiences on their journeys to Wales and in their countries of origin as well as their financial, cultural and social circumstances, refugee/asylum seeking children and young people are more likely to be regarded as ‘children in need’.

Refugee/asylum seeking children and young people have diverse health needs. Key remedial measures are needed to protect and promote the health of some asylum seeking and refugee children and young people.

Children and young people’s mental health can be substantially affected by personal trauma or by having been witness to trauma in others, something which many refugee/asylum seeking children and young people have experienced.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to effective, multi-agency assessment across health, education and social care with effective access to language services. A holistic assessment as close to the point of entry into Wales as possible is required. Arrangements for dealing with asylum claims (especially in relation to age assessments) should be managed effectively and delivered with adequate access to support, including legal advice.

\textbf{Where are we now?}

Asylum seeking children and young people in Wales are subject to two different systems of support depending on their family circumstances. Accompanied children, living within a family unit, are mainly supported by NASS. Separated (unaccompanied) children, those under the age of 18 who do not have an adult relative or guardian in the UK, remain the responsibility of the local authority in which they seek help. These two groups of asylum seeking children have common and distinct needs. Refugee children should be able to access the same service and support as UK citizens.

Relatively small numbers of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people live in Wales compared to other parts of the UK. These are concentrated in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. Data on the precise numbers of such children and young people are incomplete. Qualitative data are more readily available but there is no systematic or structured data collection mechanism in place in Wales that could

\textsuperscript{15} The 2002 UN Committee Report on the implementation of the UNCRC in the UK includes a recommendation that the state party ‘ensure that refugee and asylum seeker children have access to basic services, such as education and health’ and that there is no discrimination in benefit entitlements for asylum seeking families which could affect children’. The formal position of the UK Government, in respect of Article 22, is that it reserves the right to exert the primacy of immigration legislation in order to preserve the integrity of such legislation.
be used to inform policy and to direct resources. The implementation of the National Register for Unaccompanied Children could be improved.

The Welsh Assembly Government’s policy commitments for children and young people in Wales apply equally strongly in the case of asylum and immigration as in any other part of public policy in Wales.

Rapid changes in immigration policy and legislation together with the relatively small numbers and uneven distribution of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people in Wales has made it difficult to develop sufficient knowledge and expertise, combining subject specialist knowledge (e.g. children’s health) and the particular needs of asylum seeking and refugee children and young people. This is true within the Welsh Assembly Government and the statutory and voluntary sector.

There is a premium on effective, multi-agency assessment across the various dimensions of health, education and social care. The Welsh Assembly Government is developing a Common Assessment Framework which builds on the ‘Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families’ (Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment and Home Office, 2002) to ensure all children in need receive appropriate services. Unaccompanied refugee/asylum seeking children and young people may have particular difficulty accessing services and negotiating the asylum process without the services of a specialist advocate. The Welsh Assembly Government is considering how specialist advocacy services can be provided, especially for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

The Welsh Assembly Government consulted on proposals to extend access to and reform the delivery of advocacy services for children and young people. The proposed model included the development of specialist-integrated advocacy for vulnerable groups (including children in need seeking asylum and unaccompanied asylum seeking children) to be commissioned locally or regionally through the Children and Young People Partnerships. The Welsh Assembly Government announced in March 2008 plans to put in place a New Service Framework for the Future Provision of Advocacy Services in Wales. The new framework will be implemented over the next two years. At the heart of the new framework will be a new National Independent Advocacy Board. The Board will take an independent, strategic overview of the development and delivery of advocacy services in Wales and will make recommendations to the National Assembly for Wales and to the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Welsh Assembly Government will establish an Advocacy Development and Performance Unit to support the National Independent Advocacy Board and the unit’s key function will be to commission, manage and monitor an all Wales Advocacy and Advice Service. This service will provide a single point of contact via telephone or text, 7 days a week for all children and young people, including refugee and asylum seeking children, in Wales.

16 Consultation on a New Service Model for Delivering Services for Children and Young People (WAG, 2007)
We are also working with the Welsh Refugee Council to support the setting up of a national resource support service to work in partnership with the UK Children’s Panel of the Refugee Council to link to advocacy services currently available to asylum seeking and refugee children who are in need, to provide specialist advice and support while going through the asylum process.

The Welsh Assembly Government has developed guidance on safeguarding children under the Children’s Act (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006c). Safeguarding principles apply to all children including refugee and asylum seeking children. The guidance states that asylum seeking children should be provided with the same quality of individual assessment and related services as any other children presenting as being ‘in need’. This guidance also sets out the role and responsibilities of Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards for vulnerable children including those associated with child trafficking. The Welsh Assembly Government will build on the existing examples of good practice in dispersal areas.

The appointment of specialist nurses working with asylum seeking and refugee families in the dispersal areas has improved healthcare provision. The Welsh Assembly Government (2006d) has included specific reference to asylum seeking and refugee children in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales where they are recognised as children in special circumstances. Monitoring the progress of the National Service Framework will be vital to meeting the needs and entitlements of these children. We are committed to improving Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) throughout Wales and the particular needs of asylum seeking and refugee children and young people will feature substantially in these developments.

Child trafficking and unaccompanied asylum seeking children

The Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorates published a consultation document ‘Planning Better Outcomes and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children’ in February, 2007. Proposals within the consultation include:

- establishing specialist assessment centres across the UK to divert unaccompanied asylum seeking children away from London and the South East;
- quicker claims processing;
- more effective processing of returns at 18 for unsuccessful claims; and
- medical age assessments (Home Office, 2007b).

The consultation ended in May 2007. The Home Office response to the consultation was delayed until January 2008 to enable links with child trafficking to be strengthened in the document (see chapter one).

To ensure the needs of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people are met, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners in local
government, local health boards, social services, the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Clic Online, DeNIAS and the voluntary sector to:

44. Establish a specialist all Wales resource that can supply information and advice to those providing services to refugee/asylum seeking children and young people.

45. Put in place arrangements to collate and share existing administrative data and derive new data on the population of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people in order to better inform future policy and to direct resources.

46. Establish a dedicated resource within the Welsh Assembly Government who will act as a point of reference for the development of refugee and asylum seeking children and young people’s policy.

47. Develop a Welsh Assembly Government protocol setting out standards and expectations for the assessment of asylum seeking and refugee children and young people, paying particular attention to language issues and the circumstances of unaccompanied children.

48. Develop specialist, independent advocacy for asylum seeker and refugee children as part of the current Welsh Assembly Government review of advocacy provision across Wales.

49. Develop a programme of targeted health protection and health promotion measures to meet the needs of asylum seeking and refugee children, linked to improved assessment practice.

The Welsh Assembly Government will also:

50. Continue to work with the UK government to ensure UNCRC derived principles underpin children’s policies and programmes in Wales in the field of asylum and immigration.
Chapter 10

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to evidence-based policy-making and to monitoring and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of its policies.

There is currently a shortage of research and data relating to refugees and asylum seekers. Limited baseline data will make it difficult to monitor progress in implementing the Refugee Inclusion Strategy and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy.

Where are we now?

The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned Cardiff University to undertake a literature review and hold focus groups with refugees across Wales as part of its commitment to establish a clear evidence base for the Refugee Inclusion Strategy.

Research has been undertaken to assess the qualifications of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales and further research in the area is planned (see chapter seven).

Information on the skills and qualifications of refugees is currently being collected in a Home Office survey to evaluate the pilot phase of SUNRISE (Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services) and also in research into the Gateway Protection Programme. The Welsh Refugee Council has recently published an audit of refugee skills.

The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned a review of the funding policy for English for Speakers of Other Languages provision (see chapter eight).

What needs to happen?

To monitor progress towards achieving the objectives outlined above and to evaluate the impact of the strategy, there is a need to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework. The monitoring and evaluation framework will involve the collection and analysis of data such as:

- racial incidents affecting refugees and asylum seekers in Wales;
- the number of refugees and asylum seekers accessing English as a Second or Other Language classes across Wales;
- refugee and asylum seeker uptake of higher and further education courses; and
- the health of selected minority populations to help make systematic comparisons with the general population and inform future service delivery.
The research and evaluation framework will also consider issues such as:

- the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

**What happens next?**

To achieve the objective of monitoring and evaluating the Refugee Inclusion Strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

51. Set out a clear monitoring and evaluation plan to accompany the Refugee Inclusion Strategy and Implementation Action Plan.
Chapter 11

Summary of Action points

Legislation and policy

To ensure the Welsh Assembly Government fulfils its responsibilities under International, European and UK legislation and to achieve the successful implementation of UK-wide and Welsh policy, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

1. Maintain close dialogue and work with its partners in Wales and the UK to ensure key UK and EU programmes relating to refugee inclusion are delivered appropriately in Wales.
2. Seek opportunities to engage in the European Commission’s programmes to promote the social and economic inclusion of refugees.
3. Encourage local authorities across Wales to consider the potential for introducing the Gateway programme.
5. Ensure the work of the Welsh Assembly Government is co-ordinated across departments.
6. Continue to maintain close dialogue with the Home Office and the Scottish Government on refugee inclusion, through bodies such as the National Asylum Support Forum, to share good practice and maximise impact and resources.

Working Together to develop, deliver and evaluate strategy and policy

To achieve the participation of refugees, asylum seekers and organisations in the development, delivery and evaluation of strategy and policy, the Welsh Assembly Government will undertake the following:

7. Review the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum terms of reference and membership, including its sub-groups in light of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy objectives.
8. Promote the key objectives of the strategy across all of our work and encourage all partners to promote them across their work.
9. Identify key strategic partners to ensure the successful implementation of the Refugee Inclusion Strategy.
10. Continue to ensure work across the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to asylum seekers and refugees is co-ordinated.
11. Work with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership to build on existing regional structures designed to co-ordinate refugee inclusion services across Wales.

Language, communication and information

To achieve the objectives of promoting the Welsh language across all people living in Wales and to ensure public bodies communicate effectively in languages of the communities they serve, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

12. Continue to promote the Welsh language across all areas of our work.
13. Develop and implement a translation and interpretation strategy.

To achieve the objective of tackling the widespread misunderstanding about asylum seekers and refugees the Welsh Assembly Government will:

14. Continue existing initiatives, which aim to promote better understanding, and work with partners in local government, political parties, the voluntary sector, faith groups and higher and further education bodies to achieve the following objectives:
   a. Increase public understanding of issues relating to refugee inclusion through promoting positive images, providing consistent and positive messages as well as accessible and accurate information.
   b. Increase refugee and asylum seeker knowledge and understanding of life in the UK, including rights and responsibilities.
   c. Encourage greater opportunities for dialogue and consultation with and between receiving and refugee/asylum seeking communities.

To ensure refugees and asylum seekers are able to access information and advice about core services, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners to ensure:

15. All asylum seekers arriving in Wales receive a welcome pack with accessible and up-to-date information on key services and support available.
16. Targeted and up-to-date advice and information is available for people who have recently been given leave to remain.

Building strong and safe communities

To achieve the objective of building strong and safe communities, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with the All Wales Police Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers to:

17. Reflect the needs of new communities in crime and disorder partnerships.
18. Work with refugee, asylum seeking and faith communities to encourage reporting of racist incidents affecting these communities to the police.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with the Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers and a steering group consisting of other key stakeholders to:

19. Conduct and promote the All Wales Community Cohesion Project.

To ensure receiving communities are strong communities, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

20. Continue its work with deprived communities through the Communities First Programme (and the transition to Communities Next) with the aim of encouraging the development of strong communities.

21. Explore opportunities to increase the involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in the development of work undertaken by Communities First Partnerships.

22. Develop an ‘All Wales Community Cohesion Strategy’ to promote more cohesive communities within Wales, with shared values and equal opportunities in all areas of societies.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners to:

23. Support the development of a strong, active and inclusive refugee community organisation sector in Wales. This will include establishing a dedicated funding stream.

To achieve the objective of promoting positive relationships between asylum seeking/refugee communities and receiving communities, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with arts, sports and cultural public bodies, local government and voluntary groups to achieve the following objectives:

24. Increase the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to participate in arts, sports, cultural and leisure activities by addressing practical barriers to participation, training funding organisations and service providers and through providing accessible information and advice to refugees and asylum seekers.

25. Promote arts, sports and cultural activities across Wales that encourage asylum seeker and refugee inclusion.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners in local government, the Volunteer Bureaux and the voluntary sector to:

26. Foster strong links between refugee/asylum seeking communities and receiving communities through:
a. supporting local activities that aim to develop good relationships between refugee/asylum seeking and receiving communities;
b. promoting volunteering initiatives across different communities;
c. supporting mentoring and befriending schemes for refugee and asylum seekers; and
d. encouraging mainstream statutory and voluntary groups to actively engage refugees and asylum seekers in local services and activities.

To achieve the objective of mainstreaming refugee and asylum seeker services, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with local government, political parties, faith groups, refugee community organisations, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, and other voluntary sector groups to:

27. Support people in refugee and asylum seeking communities, alongside receiving communities, to engage in effective dialogue with decision-makers and participate in key policy and service delivery decisions that affect their lives. We will explore and learn from models of good practice.

Fulfilling potential: employment, training and volunteering

To achieve the objective of reducing refugee unemployment and underemployment and to ensure refugees have equality of opportunity to fulfil their potential and develop the skills to contribute effectively in the labour market, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

28. Establish a multi-agency Employment and Training sub-group of the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum to co-ordinate efforts and resources and develop a Refugee Employment and Skills Action Plan for Wales.

To achieve the objective of ensuring refugees are able to gain English Language skills the Welsh Assembly Government will:

29. Review the funding policy for ESOL provision in light of the findings from Welsh Assembly Government commissioned research, due to report in June 2008, and explore opportunities to support additional ESOL provision through EU funding programmes.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with voluntary sector refugee agencies, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, further and higher education institutions and Careers Wales to:

30. Ensure higher and further education institutions are fully aware of refugee and asylum seeker entitlements as well as best practice on overcoming barriers to access.

31. Provide accessible information, advice and guidance as well as direct financial and other support to increase access to further and higher education by refugees and asylum seekers.
The Welsh Assembly Government will work with refugee community organisations, Displaced People in Action, the Welsh Refugee Council, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Volunteer Bureaux and Community Service Volunteers to achieve the following objective:

32. Provide targeted information, advice and support for refugees and asylum seekers to access the wide range of volunteering opportunities available in Wales.

Accessing core services

To achieve the objective of ensuring asylum seekers and refugees have fair and equal access to housing, education and health and social care, the Welsh Assembly Government, the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum and its sub-groups will:

33. Deliver the shared aims for service delivery across core services areas.

To achieve the objective of ensuring everyone in Wales has the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable, housing, are able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

34. Deliver the ‘All Wales Refugee Housing Action Plan’ and report annually to the All Wales Refugee Policy Forum.

To achieve the objective of ensuring the health and social care needs of asylum seekers and refugees are met, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with Local Health Boards, local authorities and the voluntary sector to:

35. Implement the recommendations in ‘Meeting the Healthcare Needs of Asylum Seekers’ and take steps to encourage compliance with ‘Service Development and Commissioning Guidance for Selected Minority Groups’, including through Local Needs Assessments and Health Social Care and Well Being Strategies.

36. Set out a strategic vision for the provision of mental health services to asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government will also work with local mental health services to:

37. provide a service to the refugee population in their area. Services should consider if this is best provided by a dedicated professional for this population.

To ensure asylum seeking and refugee children and young people achieve their full potential, the Welsh Assembly Government will work with Estyn,
Local Education Authorities, local multi-agency Young People’s Partnerships and other partners to:

38. Deliver the Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy.
39. Develop measures to address current barriers to participation in extra-curricular activities.
40. Promote good race relations and respect for others regardless of race or religion through the school curriculum.
41. Develop additional training materials, giving examples of best practice, suitable for incorporation into teacher training, continuing professional development and governor and inspector training to address the question of racist bullying.

Understanding diversity and supporting the most vulnerable

To realise the objective of ensuring the diverse needs asylum seekers and refugees are included in policy and practices, the Welsh Assembly Government, working with partners in the voluntary sector and refugee communities, will:

42. Promote training, information and awareness-raising amongst organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers to increase their understanding of the diversity of needs and the availability of specialist support.
43. Encourage equality and diversity bodies to respond to the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

To ensure the needs of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people are met, Welsh Assembly Government will work with partners in local government, local health boards, social services, the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Clic Online, DeNIAS and the voluntary sector to:

44. Establish a specialist all Wales resource that can supply information and advice to those providing services to refugee/asylum seeking children and young people.
45. Put in place arrangements to collate and share existing administrative data and derive new data on the population of refugee/asylum seeking children and young people in order to better inform future policy and to direct resources.
46. Establish a dedicated resource within the Welsh Assembly Government who will act as a point of reference for the development of refugee and asylum seeking children and young people’s policy.
47. Develop a Welsh Assembly Government protocol setting out standards and expectations for the assessment of asylum seeking and refugee children and young people, paying particular attention to language issues and the circumstances of unaccompanied children.
48. Develop specialist, independent advocacy for asylum seeker and refugee children as part of the current Welsh Assembly Government review of advocacy provision across Wales.

49. Develop a programme of targeted health protection and health promotion measures to meet the needs of asylum seeking and refugee children, linked to improved assessment practice.

The Welsh Assembly Government will also:

50. Continue to work with the UK government to ensure UNCRC derived principles underpin children’s policies and programmes in Wales in the field of asylum and immigration.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To achieve the objective of monitoring and evaluating the Refugee Inclusion Strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government will:

51. Set out a clear monitoring and evaluation plan to accompany the Refugee Inclusion Strategy and Implementation Action Plan.
Chapter 12

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Further information

Further information is available from the following sources:

Careers Wales – www.careerswales.com

Civis Trust - www.cvsconsultants.com/


Employability Forum – www.employabilityforum.co.uk

European Commission – www.europa.eu

ICAR – www.icar.org.uk

Immigration and Nationality Department, Home Office - www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/

Welsh Refugee Council – www.welshrefugeecouncil.org

Wales Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers - wcras.info@newport.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus - www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Refugee Voice Wales – www.welshrefugeecouncil.org (currently)

UNHCR – www.unhcr.org

