

# Impact Report

22/23





0808 196 7273



Welsh Refugee Council is the beginning of the end of the trauma.  
It is where the running stops and recovery and healing can start.

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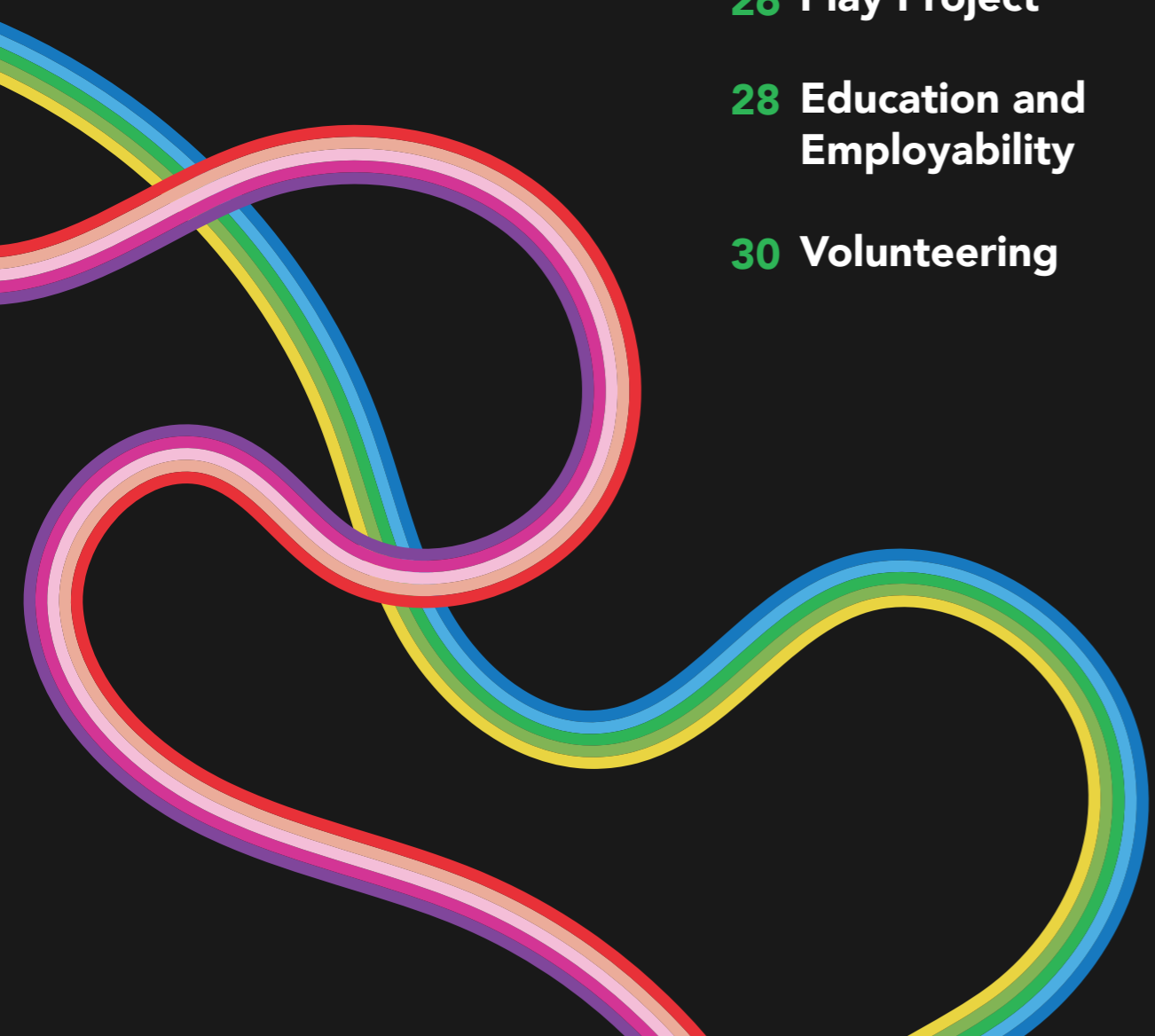
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# Croeso Welcome

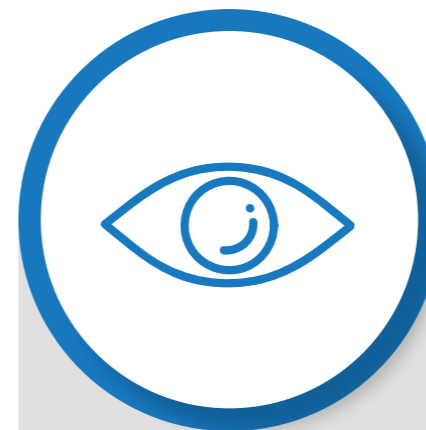
**Welsh Refugee Council is the beginning of the end of the trauma. It is where the running stops and recovery and healing can start.**

Since 1990, the Welsh Refugee Council has been providing sanctuary seekers and refugees in Wales with the support they need to build new futures in Wales. From our offices in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham, we serve sanctuary seekers and refugees throughout Wales with specialised services including:

*Housing and moving on support, English and Welsh language classes, Volunteering opportunities, Employment skills training, help navigating the migration system, access to healthcare and mental health intervention, referrals to legal advice, food banks, emergency financial aid, and play spaces for their children.*

We work in collaboration with a wide range of community, voluntary and statutory sector bodies to increase our impact and make our funding go further, whilst ensuring our clients can flourish.

Thanks to your support, we can help people feel less isolated and more informed. We can give them agency over their futures and the confidence to speak publicly on matters that affect them. We can support them at a critical time in their lives, treat them with dignity and respect, show them welcome and appreciation, and make a tangible difference.



## **Our Vision**

To create a Wales where sanctuary seekers and refugees are welcomed, respected, and have access to protection, safety, and dignity.



## **Our Mission**

To improve the lives of sanctuary seekers and refugees by delivering specialist advice and practical support and speaking out to influence public perception in a positive way.



## **Our Values**

We champion human rights, equality, and diversity. We empower and promote the voices of sanctuary seekers and refugees. We provide a strong, independent voice, demonstrate leadership, build capacity, and work collaboratively. We exemplify excellence in service delivery, staff development, fiscal responsibility, and governance.



Refugees and Asylum seekers are at the heart of our mission. Everything we do is focused on empowering and supporting people who have sought sanctuary here, having survived persecution, war and forced displacement.

The Welsh Refugee Council is entrusted with the responsibility to meet this complex and demanding challenge, as we seek to realise the vision of making Wales a Nation of Sanctuary. Over this year, our charity has energetically responded to the conflict in Ukraine, we have campaigned against the Illegal Migration Bill and ensured that the voices of people of lived experience are heard by policy makers.

This report vividly shows the determination of our staff and volunteers to use all of their accumulated knowledge, reaching out to asylum seekers and refugees at every stage of their journey. Through play projects, help with housing, language and employment skills, advocacy and celebration, the Welsh Refugee Council has a single aim – to enable refugees to live a fulfilled and purposeful life, making their own valuable contributions to society.

On behalf of the Board of trustees, I would like to sincerely thank our funders, and pay tribute to everyone who has worked so hard throughout the year on the projects and initiatives detailed in this report. You have made a real difference – thank you.



Harry Iles  
**Chair of Trustees**



# Asylum Support

# Wales Sanctuary Service: Justice

**Partners: Welsh Government,  
Comic Relief.**

**Supported  
1,010 sanctuary seekers  
from 78 countries  
speaking 53 languages**

**5,709  
support sessions**

**319 dependents  
supported indirectly**

**5% of clients  
self-identified as  
differently abled**

The 2022-23 fiscal year was fraught with challenges for the Wales Sanctuary Service. From the impact of the Home Office's cessations policy, funding uncertainties, and increasingly hostile rhetoric surrounding migration culminating with the so-called "Illegal Migration Act" in March 2023, the journey was arduous and at times exhausting.

Despite these challenges, the Wales Sanctuary Service remained steadfast in its commitment to deliver crucial support. Our physical drop-in sessions and appointment services in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, and Wrexham ensured that sanctuary seekers could access free, independent, expert advice irrespective of their language needs, location, or digital connectivity.

The most formidable challenge for the WSS has been the ongoing UK legal aid crisis, which denies sanctuary seekers access to free or low-cost legal representation. The situation is particularly acute in North Wales, where only one

immigration legal aid solicitor operates. The WSS and its partners have stepped in to fill the gaps, offering a regulated immigration legal advice service for people ineligible for legal aid. Specialised advocacy support, including peer support and engagement with social services departments, is provided for young sanctuary seekers. A monthly advocacy forum has become a platform for sanctuary seekers to share experiences and raise concerns, fostering a sense of community and empowerment.

Our casework advice extends beyond legal matters, encompassing support in navigating the immigration and asylum system, ensuring access to healthcare, education, and language tuition. Regular advocacy with the Home Office and other agencies, amplifying the voices of sanctuary seekers, has become a cornerstone of our work. Particularly noteworthy is the support we provide to those facing homelessness after receiving a negative asylum claim decision.





## Ukraine Project: Adaptability

Partner: Welsh Government.

**Individuals supported:**  
**1,369**

Like millions of people across Wales and the UK, we watched the news reports about Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 with alarm and disbelief. In addition to feeling tremendous concern for the people of Ukraine, we also knew that this conflict would likely mean a large influx of people seeking sanctuary and safety in Wales. We quickly mobilised to receive them, setting up our Ukraine Project of designated caseworkers. By the beginning of April 2022, we had already begun supporting the Welsh Government in its aim to welcome 1,000 Ukrainian refugees.

The challenge, scale and significance of this project cannot be overstated. We had to address the immediate needs of Ukrainians arriving in Wales, such as housing placement access to healthcare, and in a way that empowered them, gave them a voice, and involved them in discussions that would shape their futures.

The scale, fluidity and urgency of the Ukraine situation meant we needed to adapt dynamically to the multifaceted challenges of supporting these new arrivals to Wales. As an example, due to their high levels of education and English-language skills, many Ukrainian refugees were able to swiftly transition into employment upon arrival, dispersing into the wider Ukrainian community that was already well established in Wales. This trend necessitated a shift in our approach, and we placed a renewed emphasis on community outreach.

As the first year unfolded, we became more creative and proactive in our engagement. Our focus turned from seeing to immediate needs to building relationships and trust. Our presence at events and face-to-face engagements, such as at initial accommodation and community events across Wales, has helped us to bridge gaps and foster connections.

The Ukraine Project has been a bright beacon of achievement for the Welsh Refugee Council in the last year. It stands as a testament to the skill, adaptability and innovation of our staff and partners.

“We heard of your organisation from a friend who lives in Merthyr Tydfil and our local support workers emailed us your contact details. A great support has been received... we just want to express our gratitude for your professional support and service.”



# Asylum Guides: Wisdom

**14 asylum guides  
trained covering  
13 languages**

**70 sanctuary seekers  
referred to the  
programme**

**80 support sessions  
delivered**

The Asylum Guides project pairs new arrivals in Wales with trained peers who have already gone through the asylum process. The benefits are twofold: sanctuary seekers can talk to someone “just like them” who has successfully navigated the practical and emotional challenges of seeking asylum in Wales, while the guides feel useful by giving back to their communities.

We received referrals for the Asylum Guides project from partner organisations such as Oasis and several solicitors. Clearsprings Ready Homes added information about the Guides in welcome packs. Local authorities across Wales have also expressed their enthusiasm for the project.

The Asylum Guides project faced several obstacles. Almost all of the sessions were delivered online, which posed an issue for some clients without access to WiFi or data at their Home Office provided accommodation. Being able to offer more group or individual guidance sessions in person, together with better access to the internet, would mitigate this issue. There were also capacity and turnover challenges for the volunteer guides, who would often move on to new jobs and different locations in the UK once their refugee claims were successful.

The project has been such a success that other organisations across the UK have independently set up their own Asylum Guides, modelled on the Welsh Refugee Council. This has helped us to offer continued Guide support for clients who have been moved away from Wales.

“

This has been so useful, I now know what is happening for the first time, before this I just left it to other people and nodded my head.

**Asylum Guide  
programme  
referee**

”





# Resettlement

# Move On Project: Compassion

**Partners: Migrant Help, Oak Foundation, Welsh Government, and the National Lottery Community Fund.**

**Helped 1,546 newly granted applicants and their families.**

**3,763 face-to-face sessions and 2,672 telephone and email follow-ups providing advice and support.**

**406 service users referred to partner agencies.**

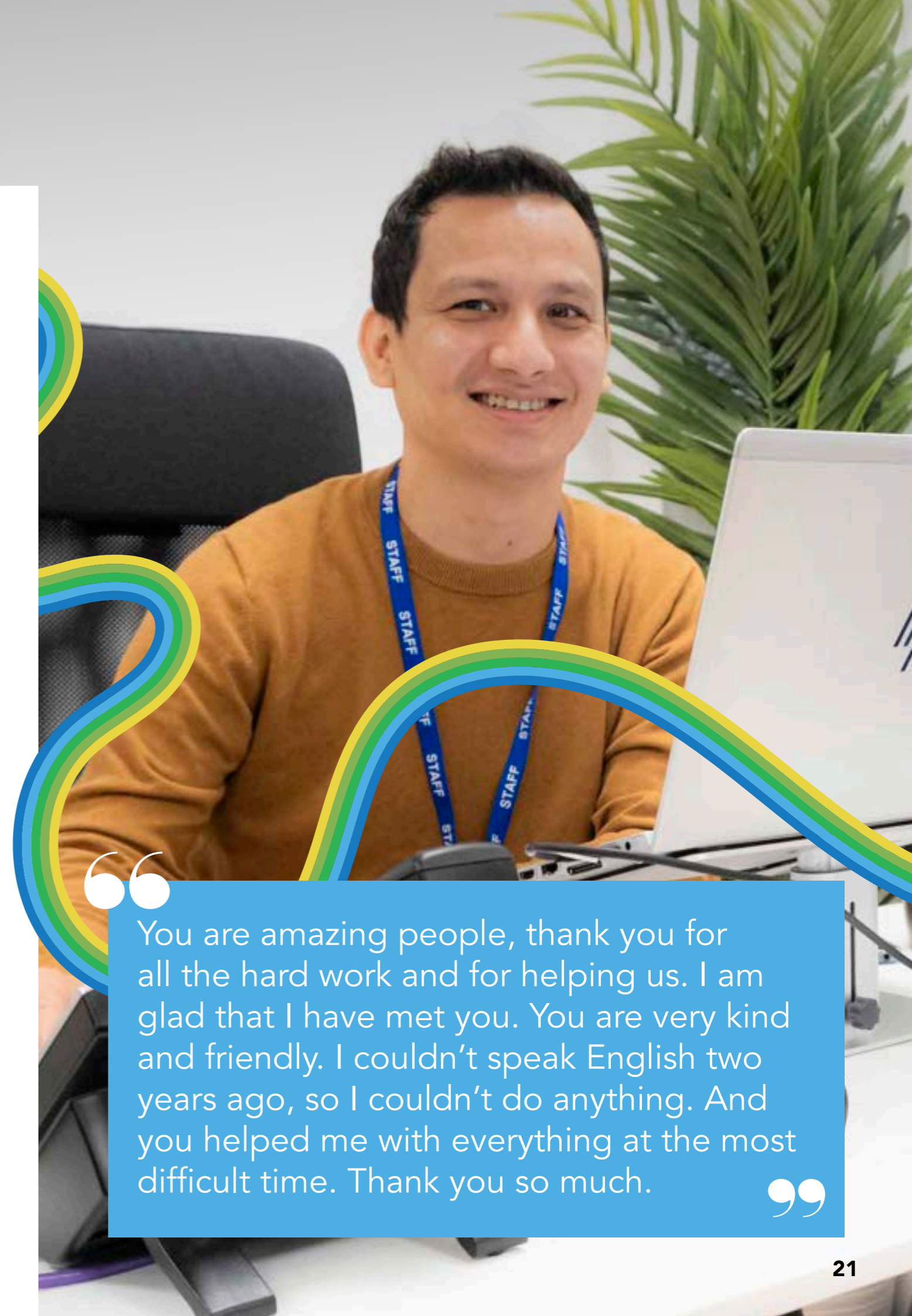
Empathy and compassion for the people we help lie at the heart of all our endeavours, and no project demonstrates these qualities better than the Move On initiative. Despite limited capacity, tight time constraints and an ever-growing need, this initiative has continuously yielded a profound impact.

Working seamlessly across all four offices, our Move On team provides advice and support on benefits, rights, entitlements, accommodation access, job support, and financial stability. The challenge of operating this service in the context of an extreme affordable


housing crisis across Wales cannot be overemphasised. The strict constraints of this project have meant our team have had to look for innovative ways to address the unique needs of our clients. This led to the expansion of our partnerships with local authorities, culminating in the support of more than 1,500 refugees.

Central to our mission is the commitment to increasing awareness about the 28-day grace period the Home Office affords to newly granted refugees. The Move On team carefully guides individuals through the complexities of this process. Recognising the stress associated with navigating this unfamiliar terrain, our team provides advice and guidance to ensure our clients can confidently face challenges, knowing that we are in their corner. We actively make representations on behalf of our clients, especially those facing imminent eviction, championing their rights and ensuring their voices are heard. Our advocacy extends to challenging decisions for clients with more defined vulnerabilities, such as LGBTQi+ individuals and people living with chronic illness, disabilities or mental health issues.

Weekly meetings facilitate the exchange of knowledge between our caseworkers and key external partners. This approach not only enhances our team's expertise, but also provides valuable learning opportunities for our partner agencies.



“You are amazing people, thank you for all the hard work and for helping us. I am glad that I have met you. You are very kind and friendly. I couldn't speak English two years ago, so I couldn't do anything. And you helped me with everything at the most difficult time. Thank you so much.”



# Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority Resettlement Project: Readiness

Partner: RCT Local Authority.

## 51 people from Syria and Afghanistan resettled

Growing global instability meant more people than ever needing our help. Our partnership with the Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority expanded substantially, growing from supporting just five Afghan families in 2021-22 to 36 people under the Afghan resettlement scheme and 15 individuals under the Syrian scheme. The challenges of delivering the project and supporting the people who rely on it can be daunting. Language can present a significant barrier to integration within the broader community, which is why our staff work so hard to encourage people to enrol and stay in English classes.

Clients can sometimes be disappointed with the size of their home and the extent of their benefits; therefore managing expectations and clear communication are ongoing priorities.

Despite these challenges, this programme has been both successful and rewarding. Most adults in the RCT project have been able to secure full-time or part-time work and become more self-sufficient. During the period covered by this report, our staff helped one individual obtain a Security Industry Authority licence, allowing them to work in private security.

We also succeeded in getting the Personal Independence Payment for two individuals with disabilities, vastly improving their well-being and ability to integrate into their new home. We are never prouder or happier than when our clients can leave the scheme because they no longer need our support: between May 2021 and September 2022, we wished a warm "good luck!" to seven families who obtained Indefinite Leave to Remain.

# Housing and Homelessness Project: Knowledge

Partner: Oak Foundation.

**104 clients attended 9 housing forums in Cardiff and online**

**11 monthly meetings with Cardiff Council Housing Options Team/Homelessness Prevention**

In Wales, the number of people presenting as homeless to local authorities, as well as those in temporary accommodation, hit record levels during this period. Meanwhile, the private rented sector has risen sharply in price and additional barriers, such as the requirement for guarantors, paying several months' rent in advance, and minimum income checks have made renting increasingly inaccessible for sanctuary seekers.

We identified an urgent need to share accurate, practical, trustworthy information on housing options with clients who were often confused due to the complexity of the issue and the prevalence of misinformation and rumours circulating in community networks. We also knew our advocacy efforts with the Welsh Government

would benefit from more targeted research and increased collaboration with other organisations working on this issue. Our partnership with the Oak Foundation addresses all these requirements.

Thanks to this project, we were able to deliver informative housing forums for the people we support, both in person and online, whilst also conducting research and surveys ensuring that our engagement on housing and homelessness issues with Welsh Government, the media and other important stakeholders can be backed up by facts and statistics.

Over 100 people attended the nine housing forums we organised during the period covered by this report. We informed attendees about their housing rights, explained their options, and challenged and debunked myths. For those unable to attend our forums, we produced a wealth of informational material on housing in English, Arabic, Farsi, and Kurdish Sorani.

We expanded our outreach and collaboration with partners. For example, our meetings with Cardiff Council led to an important agreement on a new referrals process. We also negotiated referral agreements with Green Bridge Community Housing and Taff Housing and joined the Homes For All Cymru Coalition.

“

Thank you for sharing this information with me. I can now go out to try and find something for myself. Nobody has taken the time to explain things to me before, so I didn't know what to do or where to go. Now I do. It all makes sense to me now.

”

# Play Project: Joy

**357 children from  
207 families participated in  
136 play sessions**

**98 family visits**

**24 Welsh-language nursery  
sessions with Ti a Fi**

**Distributed 660 toys,  
42 activity/craft packs,  
97 Bookstart packs and  
46 bilingual storybooks in  
family languages**

**312 referrals to other  
agencies for extra support**

**Partner: Children in Need, Wales & West Housing Association.**

Imagine a scene of happy chaos: groups of toddlers scampering around a bright, colourful room, throwing puzzles and toys on the floor and chasing each other in fits of giggles. In a quieter corner, older children are reading books, learning songs or drawing while their mothers watch on with pride as they share a cup of coffee and a chat.

Our Play Project is all about giving children a safe place to play, make friends, have fun and engage in new, positive experiences. Over the past year, the program welcomed more than 350 children to our regular play sessions at the Trinity Centre in Cardiff. The children enjoyed regular playtime with a multitude of games and toys, as well as special activities such as cinema days, Rhyme Time, creative art workshops with Artes Mundi, baby massage sessions with Mudiad Meithrin Baby, and sessions with Ti A Fi using puppets, music, dance and crafts to teach Welsh to children and their parents.

We also took children and their families out and about on field trips to the National Museum in Cardiff, the Newport Wetlands, Art in Bute Park, the Forest School at Global Gardens, and

Cardiff Castle. They attended a concert at St David's Hall and we held Connect to Nature sessions and Games in the Park days during the school holidays.

Our Play Project participants love to embrace new experiences, from learning how to operate a microscope in the museum, to singing in Welsh, to becoming budding young directors through Artes Mundi's six-week filmmaking project. These opportunities can increase their confidence, help them overcome trauma, discover new talents, make new friends, and experience joy in their new home.

“

The best bit...  
is being with my  
friends

- B, 10 years old

”



# Education and Employability: Opportunity



The Welsh Refugee Council supported me in updating my CV, then helped me to prepare for a number of interviews until I succeeded in being offered the position of Teaching Technician in my area of expertise with Cardiff University.

- Lizan (Kurdistan)



**327 clients were directly supported during this period.**

**1,497 advice sessions by email, phone, video call or in person.**

**65 Employability Workshops**

**3 IKEA UPPNA Workshops resulting in 10 permanent employment contracts**

**91 referrals to Careers Wales for advice, employability support and funding**

**Partners: Welsh Government, IKEA, Cardiff and Vale College and others.**

A pivotal moment for our Education and Employability team was the “Work That Works for Everyone” event in October 2022, hosted by Cardiff Business School and opened by Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford. This gathering brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from local and national governments, refugee support services, private enterprise and higher education. Our Education and Employability team played a central role in organising the event.

The year brought a significant increase in sanctuary seekers accessing our services, particularly from Ukraine. We met this challenge head-on, almost doubling the number of employability workshops. We introduced a new system to provide tailored, sector-specific advice and to promote job vacancies, training courses, and volunteering opportunities for refugees. We also expanded the team, hiring a Ukrainian and Russian-language Employability Officer.

A continuing success was the UPPNA partnership with IKEA. This period, 24 refugees benefited from expert employability advice, with 10 securing

permanent employment with IKEA. Building on this, we formed new partnerships with Admiral, PwC, and SEWSCAP.

Our commitment to collaboration remained steadfast as we strengthened relationships with key organisations, including Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus, Cardiff Into Work, Cardiff and Vale College, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WLGA), and Welsh Government. Our efforts included participation in events like the Sanctuary in the Senedd, job fairs for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees across South Wales, and “Be Your Own Boss” self-employment and entrepreneurship workshops in Rhondda Cynon Taff, in collaboration with Purple Shoots. Additionally, through partnerships with the Adibi Training Funds and Cardiff University’s Fee Waiver scheme, we facilitated refugees’ access to vocational courses, creating pathways to economic independence.

We continued to help sanctuary seekers improve their English language skills through ESOL classes held at our offices as well as referrals to accredited courses at REACH colleges. We also shared information on informal study and online courses.

# Volunteering: Generosity

**55 volunteers**

**Since 2019, we have  
hired 23 former  
volunteers as staff**

Like many charitable organisations, it would be impossible for us to achieve all that we do without our wonderful volunteers, many of whom are current or former sanctuary seekers and refugees. It is a testament to their skills, and our relationship with them, that so many of our volunteers have been hired by our partners once they receive the right to work.

In January 2023, we were proud to be re-accredited with the Investors in Volunteering program, with very few recommended areas for improvement or development. However, we do not sit on our laurels, and are always looking for ways to improve the efficiency of our operations and enrich our volunteers' experiences as much as they enrich us.

All our volunteers receive regular Support and Supervision meetings, which is especially useful for our sanctuary-seeking volunteers as it prepares them for similar practices

once they enter the workforce. We show our appreciation for our volunteers through a program of rewards, gifts, printed certificates of recognition, and social events such as parties, rugby matches and holiday light displays. As an additional incentive, volunteers are invited to attend all WRC training, and we provide access to some training and accreditation from outside bodies, such as Cardiff University's regarded Public Service Interpretation course. These types of activities not only make volunteers feel special, but they also give them valuable skills for future employment whilst allowing them to connect with their peers on the volunteer team and network with potential employers. We are never happier than when a volunteer tells us they have found a paid job!

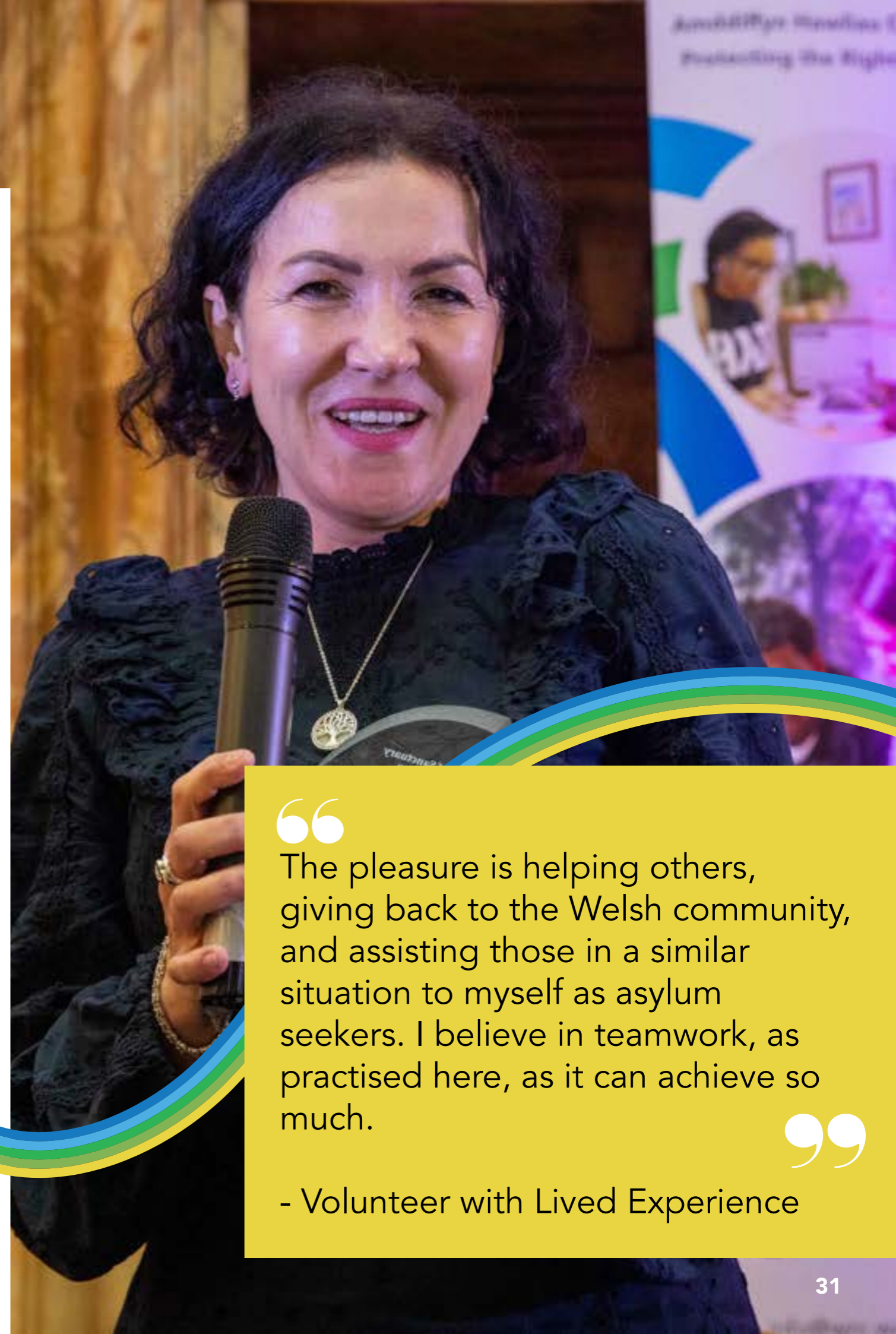


“

The pleasure is helping others, giving back to the Welsh community, and assisting those in a similar situation to myself as asylum seekers. I believe in teamwork, as practised here, as it can achieve so much.

”

- Volunteer with Lived Experience







# Engagement and Influencing



## Refugee Week Wales: Connection

Refugee Week Wales 2022 took place from June 20-26 under the theme of Healing. To commemorate Refugee Week and ensure its legacy, we produced a video, which is now embedded on the Homepage of our website. All footage was shot during Refugee Week 2022.

With our partners, we were involved in several successful events, including the following:

**Hafan Books'** poetry and literature event had a fantastic turnout, attracting **more than 90** attendees.

**Kurdish All Wales Association**, in collaboration with WRC, received **over 300 guests** at an event that featured dancing, song, poetry, food and other celebratory activities. Jenny Rathbone, Member of the Senedd for Cardiff Central, attended. Languages represented at the event included Kurdish, Iranian, Arab, Turkish, Welsh, Special efforts were made to include guests with mobility impediments and make them feel welcome and involved.

**Cardiff Open Air Theatre Festival's** performance drew **more than 200** people. Special guests included Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford, High Sheriff of South Glamorgan Rosaleen Moriarty-Simmonds, Lady Mayoress of Cardiff Anne Hinchey, Councillor Graham Hinchey, and Senedd Member Julie Morgan.

**Iberian Latin Association's** events attracted **157 people** from **10 different nationalities**, including sanctuary seekers and refugees from Latin America.

**Cardiff Central Library** welcomed sanctuary seekers and refugees to the library world. Special outreach efforts were made to engage the Afghan and Ukrainian communities, with local community members on hand to welcome and integrate both groups.

# Nation of Sanctuary Awards: The Voice Within

**Partners: PwC, Welsh Government, Cardiff Council, S4C, National Lottery Community Fund, Cardiff University, Bad Wolf Productions, Welsh Rugby Union and others.**

**Winners and three runners-up in eight Sponsored categories**

**More than 100 attendees**

**Media coverage by S4C**

On March 29, 2023, we held the second Nation of Sanctuary Awards at Cardiff City Hall. Held under the theme of "The Voice Within", and supported by headline sponsor PwC and 15 other event or award sponsors, this glittering, smile-filled evening recognised the extraordinary achievements of sanctuary seekers and refugees in eight sponsored categories: Woman of the Year, Contribution to the Arts,

English and Welsh Language Learner, Volunteer of the Year, Entrepreneurial Spirit, Leader of the Future and the Nation of Sanctuary Award. Each of the winners and runners-up received an engraved plaque, and the awards were covered by media partner S4C.

These annual awards play an important part in reinforcing Wales' position as a Nation of Sanctuary and highlight the challenges faced by refugees and sanctuary seekers. Using the awards as a platform, we advocate for policies and practices that uphold the rights and dignity of sanctuary seekers in Wales and change the public conversation around sanctuary-seekers, which too often centers on negative, dehumanising stereotypes.

By showcasing successful initiatives and stories, we hope to inspire everyone to get involved and work together to make Wales a more welcoming and inclusive place for displaced individuals.





## Myth-Busting: Truth

**Partner: Moondance Foundation.**

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**370+ people  
in total attended  
7 Myth-Busting  
workshops**

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Our myth-busting workshops target misinformation and negative stereotypes about refugees and sanctuary seekers by correcting the record, answering questions, and sharing facts and data. In 2022-23, we presented myth-busting workshops to secondary and university students, members of political parties, and members of small-town women's institutes and men's club. We believe in the power of changing even one person's point of view and getting them to question what they are hearing in their circles and reading on social media.

# Influencing Key Stakeholders: Visibility

**16 media interviews given**

**10 dedicated meetings with elected officials**

Talking to key stakeholders, elected officials, decision-makers and the media is an important part of our work. We use these opportunities to raise awareness about the real-life impact of government policies, and to discuss solutions. Wherever possible, we involve people with lived experience as sanctuary-seekers in these meetings and conversations, as they are better placed than anyone else to explain how decisions affect them.

During this period, we responded to more than 30 media requests, including granting or facilitating 16 interviews on migration-related topics with major media outlets including the BBC, ITV, S4C and Wales Online. We also met with the following officials:

**Ruth Jones, MP**  
**Julie Morgan, MS**  
**Natasha Asghar, MS**  
**Lord Mayor and Mayoress of Cardiff**  
**Sarah Murphy, MS**  
**Luke Fletcher, MS**  
**Julie Sangani, Cardiff Council**  
**Joel James, MS**  
**Huw Thomas, Cardiff Council**  
**Jamie Green, Cardiff Council**  
**Stephen Kinnock, MP**





# Finance and Income



## Fundraising: Sustainability

In 2022-2023, our income grew from £1,627,719 to **£1,649,580**.

## Our Grants:

Welsh Government	729,113
The National Lottery Community Fund	96,622
Arts Council of Wales	10,780
CAF Project	38,068
Oak Foundation	128,631
WCVA Third Sector Partnership Scheme	3,501
WCVA Volunteer Project	18,750
WCVA TSRF	26,129
Community Foundation in Wales	49,792
BBC Children in Need	31,693
The National Lottery Awards for All	5,388
*Anonymous*	50,000
Refugee Action	8,897
Admiral	45,936
Comic Relief	37,167
Wales & West Housing Association	7,816
National Grid	9,958
Land Aid	5,000
DWP Kickstart	4,341
Race Council Cymru	2,667
Gwent TNLCF	65,328
Garfield Weston	33,000
IKEA	47,630



# Special Projects:

## Global Majority Fund

Partners: BAWSO, Race Council Cymru

**(£254,400 distributed to BAME-led community organisations in Wales.)**

The third sector in Wales has seen a massive decline in funding and income generation has become even more difficult under the additional pressures caused by the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

In 2022 we had the amazing opportunity to partner with Race Council Cymru and Bawso to launch the Global Majority Fund which delivered funds through a new grants programme on behalf of Comic Relief (co funded by the Clothworker's Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation) and National Emergencies Trust.

Through this partnership, funds were made available to Black Asian and Minority Ethnic community organisations in Wales that are supporting higher risk individuals negatively affected by COVID-19 and the accompanying restrictions.

## IKEA Office Refurbishment project

Partner: IKEA

**(A more pleasant, energy-efficient and welcoming office space for staff and clients.)**

The demand for our services grew exponentially in 2022-23, especially with the Ukraine crisis, and staff and clients fed back that the office was not fit for purpose. The building was drafty, the kitchen and toilet were cramped and dark, and the walls lacked any colour or decoration. Our office furniture was a variety of tired items donated to us over the previous 30 years, including mismatched desks, broken chairs, and wobbly tables. It was not a professional-looking environment, and it did nothing to inspire or promote wellbeing among staff or clients. We were in desperate need of a more versatile space, one that would make sanctuary seekers, staff and volunteers feel comfortable while conveying a more professional image to partners and donors.

Our collaboration with IKEA revitalised our Cardiff office, creating a more inviting, comfortable and spacious environment. The project's

improvements, from expanded reception and casework areas to the modern kitchen and better lighting, created a safer, healthier and more vibrant workspace. Generous support from Screwfix and Migration Exchange enabled vital upgrades like energy-efficient double glazing, aligning with our sustainability goals.

This transformation embodies our commitment to creating an inclusive, welcoming space for our team and clients. We extend gratitude to our dedicated staff and volunteers whose extra efforts facilitated the transition, from moving furniture around to managing services during the renovations. Their commitment ensured minimal disruption, allowing us to continue supporting our community while enhancing our workspace.

“Thank you for providing this duvet to my child and myself. You and your team have always been a great support for me.”

**Ruc Thi (Vietnam)**

## Warmth and Home Project

Partner: National Grid Community Matters Fund

**(150 clients helped to save money and survive winter 100+ warm packs distributed)**

The UK cost of living crisis has had a detrimental effect on sanctuary seekers, who struggle to make ends meet even in warm weather. In December 2022, we launched our first Home and Warmth/Cartref a Chynheswydd project. This initiative supported over 150 sanctuary seekers giving them access to warm packs, energy-saving advice, and signposting to other organisations providing help during the winter cold.

The project was coordinated by our experienced casework and triage team, who helped identify and assist our most vulnerable and isolated clients. Our team distributed more than 100 physical warm packs to grateful clients, many of them families with young children. In addition, we provided fuel poverty advice and signposting to other services in five of our most common community languages: Ukrainian, Arabic, Kurdish, Sorani, and Farsi.



# Message from our CEO

Throughout an eventful year, the Welsh Refugee Council has faced challenges head-on and achieved remarkable milestones. From aiding Ukrainian refugees following the Russian invasion to hosting impactful events like the Nation of Sanctuary Awards and Sanctuary in the Senedd, our efforts have been truly rewarding.

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine continued, we swiftly advocated for urgent support, culminating in the launch of our Wales-wide Ukraine project, aiding 1,369 individuals by year-end. Crucially, Welsh Government funding filled a vital service gap during a traumatic period for many displaced individuals.

Diversity and growth marked our internal progress, with over 39% of our staff having lived experiences and 50% having migrant heritage.

Our team engaged in diverse training, expanding our skills to better serve the community. Post-Covid, we celebrated our unity with a memorable team-building day at Taff Valley Adventure.

We embraced change in governance, welcoming new trustees while committing to enhancing board diversity. Advocacy remained pivotal as we highlighted the impact of policies like the Rwanda Plan through media engagements, including impactful interviews on BBC and ITV.

Collaborations flourished, exemplified by our successful Global Majority Grant Programme, dispersing £250K to Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority Groups. We also spearheaded events like Sanctuary in the Senedd, convening over 70 participants for discussions on destitution.

Securing substantial funding for a Refugee Coalition Coordinator position in partnership with the Community Foundation in Wales marked a pivotal moment, reinforcing our commitment to collective advocacy. Our adoption of a comprehensive Strategic Plan, informed by stakeholder input, fortified our organizational direction.

Infrastructure improvements, achievements like the Trusted Charity Quality Mark, successful fundraising endeavours, and recognition at the Charity Film Awards for our impactful film, "Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary," capped off a momentous year.

The pinnacle was our Nation of Sanctuary Awards, honouring 12 outstanding individuals embodying our values. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the unwavering support of our community—our funders, donors,

volunteers, staff, stakeholders, and supporters. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for embracing refugees alongside us.



**Andrea Cleaver,**  
**CEO**



# Thank you



**0808 196 7273**

