



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government Integrated Impact Assessment Summary

Title of proposal:

Title

Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan

Department:

Department

Communities and Tackling Poverty

Cabinet Secretary/Minister responsible:

Cab Sec

Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt AM

Start Date:

Start Date

10 December 2018

Contact e-mail address:

Email address

EqualityBranch@gov.wales

What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

The Nation of Sanctuary plan seeks to challenge discrimination faced by refugees and asylum seekers, ensure equality of opportunity (where this is possible within UK immigration law) and promote good relations between these groups and others in society. These objectives will be achieved through a range of actions which seek to address both the underlying causes of inequality and mitigate some of the effects.

Responsibility for asylum and immigration rests with the UK Government rather than the Welsh Government. This means that some of the key levers to prevent harmful outcomes, such as timely and good asylum case decision-making, the quality of asylum accommodation and provision of legal aid, are out of our control. However, the successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers will require concerted effort on the part of the Welsh Government, Welsh public services and Welsh communities.

Each of the actions in the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary plan aligns to the themes and priorities of Prosperity for All: the National Strategy for Wales and, in turn the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, in particular 'a more equal Wales', 'a Wales of cohesive communities' and 'a globally responsible Wales'. The actions are also closely linked to our Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20. The plan is categorised under the four key themes of Prosperity for All and includes a column to link each action with relevant objectives under the Strategic Equality Plan and Well-being of Future Generations.

The five ways of working set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 underpin our approach to tackling inequality and ensuring a fairer Wales. We are working alongside, and listening to the voices of, those who have the lived experience of inequality and disadvantage and doing things with them rather than to them and for them. That includes involving the people who will be affected by our plans in every stage of their development. This is an important example of how we are implementing the Act.

This plan has been developed through the close involvement of refugees and asylum seekers themselves, organisations which support them, and a range of key public bodies whose work directly impacts on our aim for individuals to rebuild their lives and reach their full potential in Wales.

The Welsh Government firmly believes that the integration of refugees and asylum seekers should begin on day one of their arrival. This approach is key to ensuring we support the best possible outcomes for individuals and communities.

The actions in this plan are intended to provide holistic support to individuals and communities in Wales. For example, supporting refugee volunteering schemes would contribute to Welsh society, whilst also supporting language acquisition, mental health and the employability of individuals. As such, actions in this plan will be mutually reinforcing.

In developing these actions we have sought to prevent the most harmful problems experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. These include homelessness, mental health conditions, poor accommodation and the risk of destitution. We have already made some encouraging progress in some of these areas but there is much work still to be done to improve outcomes.

This plan seeks to set Welsh Government policy direction relating to these communities until the end of this Assembly term. Therefore, it forms an important part of a long-term aim for Wales to be a true Nation of Sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers.

This aim is reflected in the new name for this plan and we encourage other organisations (Public or Private) to also consider what actions they can take and work collaboratively with the Welsh

Government to support the concept of Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.

Refugees and asylum seekers often experience similar issues upon arrival in Wales but they are drawn from many different cultures and countries of origin. The Welsh Government promotes a person-centred approach which ensures that individuals are supported to achieve integration, regardless of their background or circumstances.

The actions in this plan are expected to have a positive and mutually reinforcing impact on refugees and asylum seekers.

Conclusion

1. How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

The plan development has been developed following a National Assembly for Wales Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry, which sought the views of refugees and asylum seekers in establishing a set of recommendations for the Welsh Government to follow. Recommendation 1 was to re-develop the refugee and asylum seeker plan.

Following this recommendation being accepted, we engaged with over 120 refugees and asylum seekers in Wales' four asylum dispersal areas and co-produced a draft plan with refugee support organisations and other key stakeholders. In the summer, we engaged extensively on the draft plan, including with refugees and asylum seekers via the Welsh Government-funded Asylum Rights Programme. Views of children and young people were also incorporated from parallel work being undertaken by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and through a consultation response from TGP Cymru.

2. What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The entirety of the plan is dedicated to improving outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers through challenging discrimination, ensuring equality of opportunity (where this is possible within UK Immigration law) and promoting good relations between groups. No negative impacts of these proposals have been identified.

Most significantly, the plan seeks to remove barriers to asylum seekers accessing services, improve employability support for refugees, improve integration and knowledge of rights for refugees and asylum seekers and mitigate destitution, mental ill health and homelessness.

The plan adopts a person-centred approach which seeks to utilise the assets which refugees and asylum seekers bring with them. This will provide Wales with additional skills and help to promote community cohesion.

3. In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,
- avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

The five ways of working set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 underpin our approach to tackling inequality and ensuring a fairer Wales. We are working alongside, and listening to the voices of, those who have the lived experience of inequality and disadvantage and doing things with them rather than to them and for them. That includes involving the people who will be affected by our plans in every stage of their development. This is an important example of how we are implementing the Act.

This plan has been developed through the close involvement of refugees and asylum seekers themselves, organisations which support them, and a range of key public bodies whose work directly impacts on our aim for individuals to rebuild their lives and reach their full potential in Wales.

The Welsh Government firmly believes that the integration of refugees and asylum seekers should begin on day one of their arrival. This approach is key to ensuring we support the best possible outcomes for individuals and communities.

The actions in this plan are intended to provide holistic support to individuals and communities in Wales. For example, supporting refugee volunteering schemes would contribute to Welsh society, whilst also supporting language acquisition, mental health and the employability of individuals. As such, actions in this plan will be mutually reinforcing.

In developing these actions we have sought to prevent the most harmful problems experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. These include homelessness, mental health conditions, poor accommodation and the risk of destitution. We have already made some encouraging progress in some of these areas but there is much work still to be done to improve outcomes.

This plan seeks to set Welsh Government policy direction relating to these communities until the end of this Assembly term. Therefore, it forms an important part of a long-term aim for Wales to be a true Nation of Sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers.

This aim is reflected in the new name for this plan and we encourage other organisations (Public or Private) to also consider what actions they can take and work collaboratively with the Welsh Government to support the concept of Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.

Refugees and asylum seekers often experience similar issues upon arrival in Wales but they are drawn from many different cultures and countries of origin. The Welsh Government promotes a person-centred approach which ensures that individuals are supported to achieve integration, regardless of their background or circumstances.

The actions in this plan are expected to have a positive and mutually reinforcing impact on refugees and asylum seekers.

4. How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

The plan will be monitored internally on an annual basis in May of each year, prior to the usual Ministerial statement for refugee week in June. The Equality team will informally monitor progress on an ongoing basis throughout the year and will look for opportunities to align updates with other cross-Government commissions.

A refugee and asylum seeker evidence group will be created to help us to better identify the impact of our proposals over time.