

Agenda – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: Thursday, 15 December
2016

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

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Informal pre-meeting (9.00 – 9.15)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

2 Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales: evidence session 4

(09.15 – 10.15)

(Pages 1 – 35)

Naomi Alleyne, Director, Social Services and Housing, Welsh Local Government Association

Anne Hubbard, Director, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership

3 Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales: evidence session 5

(10.15 – 11.15)

(Pages 36 – 49)

Catriona Williams OBE, Chief Executive, Children in Wales

Cheryl Martin, Development Officer, Child Poverty, Children in Wales

Rocio Cifuentes, Director, Ethnic Youth Support Team

Shehla Khan, Manager, Ethnic Youth Support Team



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Break (11.15 – 11.30)

4 Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales: evidence session 6

(11.30 – 12.30)

(Pages 50 – 61)

Professor Bill Yule, British Psychological Society

Dr Gill Richardson, Executive Director of Public Health, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Roisin O'Hare, Asylum Seeker Nurse, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

5 Paper(s) to note

Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales: note of visit to the Scottish Refugee Council

(Pages 62 – 65)

Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs in relation to Building Regulations Part L

(Pages 66 – 67)

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting

7 Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales – consideration of evidence under items 2, 3 and 4

(12.30 – 12.45)

8 Trade Union (Wales) Bill: Consideration of approach to scrutiny

(12.45 – 13.00)

(Pages 68 – 74)

9 Consideration of Legislative Consent Memorandum on Digital Economy Bill

(13.00 – 13.15)

(Pages 75 – 83)

Document is Restricted

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Wales

Submission on behalf of the Welsh Local Government Association

Introduction and Background

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and three fire and rescue authorities are associate members. The Association seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh local government and the communities they serve.
2. The current humanitarian crisis, and the displacement of millions of people from their homes as a consequence of conflicts in Syria and the surrounding areas, has led to an increase of asylum seekers and refugees arriving in the UK, including Wales. This Inquiry is therefore timely to review on-going work across Wales to support the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into local communities and relevant plans that aim to guide this work.
3. The Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and the settlement of 20,000 Syrian refugees is to be delivered over a 5-year period and it will be important to maintain the same level of commitment and coordination in continuing to successfully deliver the Programme in Wales. As such, there is a need to ensure we are developing a long-term approach to enabling integration and supporting refugees to rebuild their lives and ultimately to participate in and contribute to Welsh society.
4. It is important to recognise that the SRP is only one of a number of migration related schemes being addressed at this time. Delivery of the SRP is one of a number of Home Office schemes/objectives and local authorities are being asked for their involvement and support in other schemes, including:
 - Increasing the number of 'dispersal areas' to accommodate asylum seekers while their claims for asylum are determined
 - A National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children with the aim of sharing more equitably the care of UASC across the UK
 - The Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme which aims to resettle 3,000 children and families from the Middle East and North African region.
5. The focus that has been given to the SRP has led to some concerns being raised about the risk of developing a 'two tier' system of support available for refugees. Those refugees already in Wales that have or will receive refugee status following successful asylum claims while made in the UK do not in

general receive the same level of assistance to support their settlement and integration. It is important that any lessons learnt through the delivery of the SRP that leads to improved service delivery for refugees who arrived under this Programme also benefits all refugees in Wales.

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

6. Welsh local authorities have responded well to the request for help in accommodating refugees under the Syrian Resettlement Programme and all 22 authorities in Wales are committed to participation. It is expected that by the end of this year all authorities will have received refugee families into their local areas with over 300 refugees resettled in Wales in the first year of the Programme.
7. The majority of local authorities had limited, if any, previous experience of working with refugees and to ensure that the arrival of refugees would be well managed, effective planning was an important part of their approach. Each authority responded in a timescale that was appropriate for them and their partners and while some were able to move more quickly and contribute to the Prime Minister's commitment to resettle 1,000 refugees before the end of 2015, others have taken more time to put appropriate arrangements in place reflective of local context and circumstance.
8. Working in partnership has underpinned the approach to the SRP in Wales and while local authorities have led on this work locally, and regionally as appropriate, the active involvement of health, police, third sector and others has been critical in ensuring appropriate service delivery is provided on arrival or quickly after, e.g. registering with GPs, enrolling children in schools and registering for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.
9. While there has been some criticism of local authorities for not responding quickly enough, for those authorities with limited experience, making sure appropriate plans were in place to ensure a well-managed resettlement process was key. For example, this has required working and liaison with partners to ensure that any specific needs families proposed to be resettled may have could be met (e.g. any specific health or educational needs); identifying appropriate accommodation at the right cost close to schools; and engaging or commissioning third sector partners to provide wrap around services and support the settlement and integration of families. As such, we believe the criticism levelled has been unfair and in the main, the smooth way in which the arrival of refugees has been undertaken has borne out the benefit of effective planning.
10. Welsh Government has supported local authorities and partners in their response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and demonstrated leadership, through the First Minister, in bringing key stakeholders together in September 2015 to discuss and help coordinate the response from Wales. Since that time a Syrian Refugee Operations Board, facilitated by Welsh Government

has been meeting to oversee delivery of the Programme in Wales and more recently Welsh Government has established a Children's Sub Group to consider the National Transfer Scheme for UASC and the Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme. The Programme has been well managed by the Home Office, who worked in partnership with local authorities and devolved governments in developing the detail of the Programme. A good example of all stakeholders working well together is the agreement of a Health Framework for the SRP in Wales that sets out the role health services will provide in supporting local authorities' involvement in the SRP in ensuring access to appropriate healthcare services, as well as information on funding instructions to reclaim funding. The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership has also played a key coordination and supportive role in assisting authorities in developing their arrangements through the development of a SRP Toolkit and hosting a Local Authority Delivery Group to enable the sharing of information and good practice. The WSMP have also recently appointed a Refugee Resettlement Coordinator to act as a single point of contact for the SRP in Wales and to coordinate the arrival of families under the Programme.

The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

11. It is believed Welsh Government's Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan has limited profile or impact across local authorities. While those who work on relevant issues may be aware of its existence, and many of the issues included in the Plan are being addressed, there are no established mechanisms through which Welsh Government raises awareness of the Delivery Plan with authorities or specific departments, meaning that, to our knowledge, they may not made be aware of actions required of them.
12. The WLGA responded to the consultation exercise on the draft Delivery Plan and we support the 'Outcomes' to be achieved as set out in each chapter. However, there is no detail on ownership of the actions or timescales for delivery, nor how it will identify if and how the priority areas and actions are achieved. Some of the actions identified are not SMART so it will not be easy to identify an outcome or whether the intended impact has been achieved. Also, some of the actions are very broad and it is questionable as to their relevance for inclusion in this Plan - while successful implementation will assist refugees, the ensuing actions should be mainstreamed as basic practice or standards (e.g. landlords providing accommodation for refugees must ensure that it is fit for human habitation and is maintained).
13. It should be acknowledged that since the Delivery Plan was originally developed, there have been significant changes to the numbers of refugees arriving in Wales through the Syrian Resettlement Programme. The number of asylum seekers has also increased over recent years and with the introduction of a National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) by the Home Office, it is also likely that the number of UASC in Wales will increase over future years. These developments have changed the context of the current Delivery Plan and we would therefore suggest that there is a need to develop a more strategic and high level approach to the

integration of asylum seekers and refugees and to use the opportunity of the recent changes to influence its development.

14. Over the past few years, and as evidenced in both the General Election and EU Referendum this year, the issue of immigration was one of the priority concerns raised by a large number of voters. Fears have been heightened among some people about the number of people migrating to the UK, as well as concern about the impact on public services already under pressure, for example, the NHS and social housing. This has led in some areas to increased community tensions and reported hate crimes and demonstrations against the arrival of refugees in local areas. A revised Delivery Plan would enable its repositioning in the current context and challenges and could lead to a more integrated approach to the inclusion and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.
15. Building on and following the positive arrangements put in place for the arrival and settlement of refugees under the SRP, supporting refugees to rebuild their lives will be critical to supporting their settlement in local communities. Learning the language to be able to communicate and interact, registering children in schools and with GPs and health services, restarting adult education, refining skills or finding work are all key aspects of supporting and enabling integration. Any plan or strategy should acknowledge that responding to the need for integration, and the impact of increased numbers of people seeking asylum and refugees cannot be addressed in isolation but should also include the needs and impact of increased numbers of migrants. More emphasis should be placed on the 'assets' of refugees and migrants, e.g. (highly) skilled refugees and migrants who are eager to contribute to Welsh society, for example, the Certification and Qualification Framework Wales should be better promoted, coordinated and resourced to enable refugees to have their skills and qualifications recognised to Welsh/UK standards; this would have a significant impact on their level of employability and income, their health and sense of belonging. It would decrease the level of poverty experienced by many refugees. A revised strategic Delivery Plan could ensure these key issues are addressed across all parts of Wales, linked to Welsh Government's programme for government, *Taking Wales Forward* and identifying and maximising any opportunities over the course of this Assembly to support refugees to settle in Wales.

The support and advocacy available to UASC in Wales

16. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act underlines the importance of advocacy. Advocacy empowers entitled children and ensures their rights are respected and their views and wishes are fully reflected in decision making about what is happening in their lives. It is also an additional safeguard to protect from the risk of abuse and can ensure assistance and support is provided, enabling concerns to be listened to and dealt with effectively.
17. Every local authority across Wales has arrangements in place to provide statutory advocacy to children and young people and work is currently underway to implement a national approach to the provision of statutory

advocacy to help improve access and consistency. As with any other entitled child or young person an UASC should be entitled to advocacy. However, UASC often need specialist advocacy which takes account of their specific needs due to the complexities of their immigration status as well as specialist immigration legal advice and there is a need for advocates to have working knowledge of the asylum process in order to support children effectively. As such, it is likely that should there be increasing numbers of UASC arriving into Wales further demands will be placed on advocacy services, particularly as young people may wish to seek legal advice or challenge their immigration status and seek advocacy support to secure funding for legal representation. The question of whose responsibility it is to meet some of these additional requirements remains, as they may require specialist knowledge to be supported and in many circumstances the advocacy will be required in order to challenge what is essentially a Home Office decision.

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

18. Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Plan is highly ambitious in terms of its scope in supporting the development and sustainability of fair, resilient and cohesive communities across Wales. Supporting the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees is one of seven outcomes highlighted in the Delivery Plan but its significance over the recent period has increased as a consequence of the humanitarian crisis as more refugees have arrived in Europe in large numbers. This significance is not only in relation to supporting authorities prepare for the resettlement and integration of refugees in a way that maintain community cohesion, but also in responding to an increase in Hate Crimes following the EU Referendum. Many of the seven outcomes sought through the Delivery Plan are also complimentary of each other, for example, achieving successful integration will rely on people feeling safe and secure in their local communities, contributing to and participating in society, not living in poverty and being at risk of exploitation. Community Cohesion Coordinators are well placed to make these links across the specified outcomes. Reference to the links to be made between community cohesion and Wellbeing Plans, under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Strategic Equality Plans as cross cutting issues is helpful in embedding cohesion issues across other relevant plans and strategies.
19. The Community Cohesion Coordinators have played a crucial role in supporting local authorities in their planning and preparations for the arrival and resettlement of refugees under the SRP. Coordinators have been able to ensure that local authorities and regions are kept updated and informed as the detail of the Programme developed, feeding back any queries, concerns or suggestions for improving delivery; they have shared information across the region as to the different approaches for planning and readiness for involvement, including briefings and documents to avoid duplication and help create more consistent approaches; and providing hands on support in the arrangements for the initial arrival of refugees into local areas. Coordinators

have continued to monitor any community tensions that may exist, informing those relevant if any tensions increase, offering advice and support on engaging with local communities to prepare areas for the arrival of refugees, a role highly valued by local authorities and partners. More broadly, Community Cohesion Officers have carried out a full range of activities expected of them in the Delivery Plan, reflective of local circumstances and relevant issues and priorities. As an extension to the ongoing participation with the SRP, Coordinators are also supporting local authorities with regards to their future participation in the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Programme. This has involved promoting the links between the two schemes (SRP/VCRP) and liaising with partner agencies in readiness of future arrivals.

20. With the critical role played by Community Cohesion Coordinators in supporting local authorities individually and regionally, not only in relation to asylum seekers and refugees but across all 7 outcomes identified, the WLGA welcomes the recent decision from Welsh Government of the continuation of the grant for these posts in 2017/18.

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Wales

Introduction

The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) is (one of 12 RSMPs) funded by the Home Office and is based at the Welsh Local Government Association. WSMP is a partnership organisation which has for 16 years provided an enabling function and a strategic leadership, advice and consultation on migration in Wales. The Partnership facilitates sharing of expertise, managing impacts and raising awareness of issues, risks and opportunities.

Submission on behalf of the WSMP

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

Background;

- a. The WSMP alongside all the UK Strategic Migration Partnerships, were tasked by the Home Office to take a lead role in coordinating the SVPRS, undertaking cross-government department liaison at UK level with the Syrian Programme Team and with Welsh Government, WLGA and local authorities and a wide range of partners to ensure that the programme is properly coordinated at a Wales level. In doing so we worked in tandem with structures established by Welsh Government – the Task Force and Operations Group and sub groups (mental health and communications).
- b. This builds upon previous work that WSMP have undertaken to support participation in the original Syrian and Afghan resettlement schemes, engaging and mobilizing partners on this agenda since 2013.
- c. The WSMP established a *Local Authority SVPRS Delivery Group* which has representation from all LAs and health, Police and DWP in Wales, which has proved key to delivery of the scheme in Wales in providing a mechanism for all LAs involved in resettlement to work collectively and learn from each other, and provide an interface with the Syrian Programme Team. To underpin this work and support operational planning, the WSMP developed a **SVPRS Toolkit** which was disseminated to all 22 LAs and has been widely used to assess their capacity to participate in the programme and organize local/regional multi agency partnerships to deliver the requirements of the scheme.
- d. Regarding the **pace**, Local authorities in Wales have been criticised in some quarters for not responding more quickly and taking greater numbers of refugees. However, we have always been clear that we want to deliver *sustainable* refugee resettlement in Wales; it is not just a question of numbers of refugees settled, and that careful thought and meticulous planning needed to go

into the implementation of such a wide ranging and complex scheme, keeping at its heart the very vulnerable refugees who have applied for resettlement.

- e. Given that in Wales we did not have the benefit of experience in previous UK Government protection programmes, and only Swansea, Newport, Cardiff and Wrexham are asylum dispersal areas, the remaining Local Authorities were largely new to refugee resettlement, and therefore more time was needed to put effective plans in place.
- f. RSMPs with a bigger staff complement are abler to provide the one-to-one engagement with LAs that supports engagement in the scheme, and in some areas this may have led to earlier engagement with the scheme and higher numbers resettled. Until October 2016 the WSMP Director has been leading on the coordination single-handedly on behalf of the WSMP, alongside delivery on other Home Office priorities; the SRP and associated Community Sponsorship Programme is only one of a number of UK Government schemes which are a high priority at the current time including:
 - Increasing the number of asylum dispersal areas in Wales
 - A National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children
 - The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme set to receive 3,000 children and families from the Middle East and North African region.
- g. However, after a relatively slow start for the reasons articulated above, the SRP team are now more than satisfied with the Wales response, and as we move into the second year of the programme, momentum has gathered and, according to recently published Gov.UK figures, we have resettled 294 refugees and two families from the VCRP (with another family due to arrive in January).
- h. The SRP have signalled the need to maintain momentum; the WSMP, like all regions in the UK have been tasked with moving to a **regional** approach to resettlement which will be coordinated centrally by a 'Refugee Resettlement Coordinator. This person will provide the interface between the HO and LAs in Wales, rather than the HO having to engage with all 22 LAs. It is proposed that this has a number of anticipated benefits for both central and local government:
 - *Undertaking a matching allocation and coordination role for Wales on behalf of participating LAs*
 - *The ability to work more collaboratively to share knowledge*
 - *The ability to rapidly deploy a range of resources locally and regionally*
 - *The ability to capitalise on existing mainstream capacity and partnership arrangements and build new arrangements*
 - *The ability to use the funding available to secure economies of scale and jointly commission services*
 - *Ability to identify solutions to a range of challenges*

2. Effectiveness of SRP Scheme delivery;

- a. The SRP is a cross-UK Government scheme implemented by local authorities-in which sense the WG ability to influence the pace and effectiveness has been

around strong political leadership and garnering senior level support and resolution of strategic/policy issues, to underpin the work of Welsh Local Authorities. All 22 authorities in Wales are committed to participation (*- note that Wales appears to be unique in this respect*).

- b. The leadership provided by Welsh Government in establishing a Task Force and Operations Board to ensure an all Wales approach, and senior level buy in of all relevant partners, and the WLGA in gaining political commitment has been key to the success of the scheme in Wales.
- c. In summary, the contribution of Local Authorities and their partners thus far in participating and receiving refugees during the first phase of Syrian refugee resettlement and in responding to a pressing humanitarian need has been acknowledged at all political levels. The compassionate and proactive, can-do approach to delivering resettlement by LAs in Wales should be recognised and celebrated, alongside the support offered by communities across Wales.
- d. However, there are a number of challenges going forward which may impact on the pace and effectiveness of the scheme, as follows;

e. **Key issues and risks;**

- Maintaining momentum and delivering sustainable resettlement across 22 local authorities, (alongside delivery on all the other HO migration priorities) will require the ongoing support and proactive engagement across WG to support and drive forward national solutions to strategic issues.
- The potential increase in complexity of the scheme; for example, aside from an increase in the number of complex and ‘mobility’ cases needing to be resettled, there may be an increase in Community Sponsorship applications across Wales, which will require LAs to consider, approve and monitor, and Local Authorities also now need to work out how to deliver the anticipated benefits of the extra ESOL monies being made available by UK Government. There will also be an increasing focus on integration aspects of the programme going forward.
- Maintaining momentum on the SRP scheme will be to a large extent dependent on the availability of housing, and reductions in the welfare benefit cap will have an immediate impact of SRP beneficiaries who tend to have larger family sizes. Therefore, **special attention and focus** should be given to overcoming these and other housing related issues.
- Identifying suitable housing of the right size in the right location has been the biggest challenge affecting the scale and pace of the programme, and will continue to be so going forward. This may slow down the pace if national solutions are not found.
- A lack of trained and qualified interpreters in some areas of Wales has been reported, alongside a reluctance to use interpreting services and language line

in some health settings. There has been a suggestion that WG consider funding a course for Arabic speaking interpreters.

- Access to culturally sensitive mental health services: there needs to be more concerted planning and consideration of issues around waiting lists through mainstream mental health service provision and consideration of how services best support the linguistic, religious and cultural needs of refugees. See mental health (below).
- There is an increasing disparity between the level of resource allocated to different categories of refugees, but starkest in comparison between Syrian Resettlement Programme beneficiaries and so-called ‘spontaneous’ arrivals of adults from Syria who sought asylum via the normal route. WG and partners will need to ensure that benefits and good practice re SRP are realised to the benefit of the wider asylum seeker and refugee population, where possible.
- Isolation - especially for refugees in areas without diaspora communities. Many refugees are very happy with their resettlement but some feel isolated and unsettled and this has the potential to undermine the reputation of the scheme. LAs have worked very hard to address these issues, and in areas which are less diverse, to promote refugees’ independence, making links with services and communities which will support their integration.
- As the scheme matures we will need to consider proactive work around identifying refugees’ skills and development of approaches to enhance employability.

f. Opportunities:

- Community Sponsorship, additional ESOL funding and the willingness and commitment of UK Government to ensure the success of the scheme offers opportunities to support broader work across the migration agenda. For example, LAs are beginning to develop capacity on resettlement which may make them more likely to participate in other asylum and resettlement schemes in the longer term.

3. The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

- a. The WSMP welcomes ongoing work and commitment by Welsh Government on Refugee Inclusion and responded to the consultation on the Delivery Plan in 2015. A summary of our key points, updated to reflect the new context, is as follows;
- b. Overall, the Delivery Plan needs revision due to the dramatically changed context for the work and following on from heightened profile around increased number of asylum seekers entering Europe (due to the ongoing situation in Syria, conflicts in the Middle East and several other areas which have reignited in the past five years). As a consequence, resettlement schemes are being implemented across the UK and Wales (albeit in small numbers). Thus WG Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan needs to address much greater complexity; broader

geographies, different resettlement programmes and inclusion issues, and different levels of expertise and infrastructure across the twenty-two LAs in Wales.

- c. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan should be reframed for the current context, and actions should be identified which prioritise and address risks and gaps flagged in this consultation, and which maximise opportunities and the development of infrastructures which may have benefits across the resettlement schemes.
- d. To support this work Welsh Government should consider a review of the established structures around migration (Syrian Operations Group and Task force, Refugee Children's, Communications and Mental health sub-groups), and consider convening an overarching high level **Refugee Policy Forum** to revise the Delivery Plan and drive forward strategic aims around integration of all asylum seekers and refugees in Wales – redefining the priorities in the current delivery plan given the dramatic change in scale and context for refugee and asylum seeker inclusion. This should be linked into the Programme for Government and all relevant Welsh and UK Government legislation and policy areas (including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Wellbeing Needs Assessment, the UK Government Immigration Act).
- e. **Mental Health**; we welcome the initiative in the Delivery Plan to reduce stigma around mental health in some asylum seeker and refugee communities, and the proposal to set out WG expectations on the range of physical and mental health services which should be provided, but we are unclear how this is being taken forward.
- f. However, we are mindful that refugees are now being resettled across Wales, many of whom have complex needs including PTSD, who lack access to services.
- g. We would like to see better provision of specialist support which is accessible to refugees or asylum seekers wherever they reside in Wales, as part of WG strategy to improve access to mental health services for asylum seekers and refugees.
- h. We are mindful that WG has engaged with UK Government on mental health services for refugees but are yet to see any outcomes around this. Meanwhile the number of refugees in Wales potentially requiring services is increasing. For example;
 - The UASC National Transfer Scheme may eventually see unaccompanied children in every region of Wales: statistics from Dover, Kent, show that of their population of UASC, 41% had psychological symptoms; PTSD, depression, sleep disorder, flashbacks (aside from a range of physical health problems) and that the trauma experienced means an increase in the need for mental health support.
 - In a recent ADCS report, local authorities highlighted the mental and physical health of UASCs arriving in the UK as a common concern; over a third of

young people displayed psychological symptoms upon arrival, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, flashbacks and depression.

- i. Syrian Refugee Children: According to some research 79% will have experienced a death in the family. Almost half may display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - ten times the prevalence among children around the world. Syrian refugee children will likely need ongoing, targeted support to bridge the gaps in their education, attain fluency in the host-country language, and deal with trauma and other mental health symptoms.
<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/educational-and-mental-health-needs-syrian-refugee-children>
- j. Some LAs in Wales are also resettling families from the *Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Programme* which will support children (and their families) at risk or having experienced violence, abuse, torture, trafficking, forced labour and FGM.
- k. We are aware that many GPs and mainstream services are not trained in complex trauma and PTSD and would ask WG and Home Office to expedite work around this. While WG have developed a **Mental Health Pathway** for the SRP scheme, there are real concerns about how accessible complex trauma services are across Wales, and whether they are able to respond to the increasing needs of significant numbers of new arrivals. The qualifying vulnerability criteria of the programme means that defacto, refugees arriving in Wales are likely to require some form of mental health service.
- l. We believe the actions in relation to mental and physical health require partnership work and strategic leadership in understanding and addressing the complex health needs of asylum seekers and refugees and vulnerable migrants.
- m. Given that the *Wales Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Advisory Group* (WASRHAG), chaired by PHW, no longer meets, we would ask that WG considers how the specific and specialist needs and issues for refugee communities in this new, more complex environment will be identified and addressed and confirm whether the WG Mental Health Sub Group is able to take on a broader remit such as that previously undertaken by the WASRHAG.
- n. **Health screening of asylum seekers at Initial Accommodation**; we support the ambition for provision of appropriate and timely health screening at initial assessment for asylum seekers but are aware that this provision has been problematic in recent years. Greater transparency and engagement is required by the service provider, and the ability to feed the concerns of our partners to the providers and commissioners of the service, so that we can identify issues and risks, and support continued improvement to the service.
- o. In recommissioning the screening service at the CRI, there are opportunities for improvements, most critically consideration of how to ensure the service is able to respond to demand, which it has struggled to do in the past, and measures to address the high levels of DNA and 'close the gaps' in relation to health screening, which has knock on impact for asylum seekers and for health services.

- p. **Homelessness policy and strategy** will need to address potentially increased level of destitution and street homelessness for failed asylum seekers (and illegal migrants), in light of potential Immigration Act impacts - which could impact across Wales.
- q. **Advice networks** may require specialist knowledge around no recourse to public funds and the intersection between LA duties and Immigration legislation. There is very patchy provision of specialist advice for asylum seekers and refugees in the established dispersal areas, and there may be increased need and challenges for advice services in all 22 Local Authorities who have or who are likely to see increased asylum seekers and refugee populations.
- r. **Immigration Act;** as a result of the Home Office terminating support to people who do not demonstrate they are taking steps to return etc., and the right to rent measures in the Immigration Act 2016, there is likely to be an increase in illegal migrants and failed asylum seekers with/without children presenting to local authorities if they are unable to find accommodation elsewhere, with friends, or in the private rented sector – at the very least for advice and assistance in managing their homelessness. If the family contains a child or vulnerable adult, then they may need assistance from social services in the form of accommodation or support.
- s. It is likely that failed asylum seekers will refer themselves to one of the LA dispersal areas in Wales alongside other migrants in those areas. However, there could be an impact in any LA areas in Wales.
- t. If they do manage to find accommodation in the PRS, they are more likely to be living in overcrowded poor quality housing, and if there are substantial numbers of people seeking access to the PRS at the bottom end of the market there will be implications for environment health, housing, child protection/POVA resources.
- u. **Impact on Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence;** if families are made destitute they will be at increased risk of violence and exploitation as has been evidenced in [WSMP](#) and [Oxfam](#) research.
- v. The WSMP no longer has the capacity to administer and chair a NRPF network and engage effectively in this policy area, and although it is a non-devolved policy area, the impacts continue to be felt and may increase in Wales. There are calls from the voluntary sector for such a network to be re-established to help mitigate the worst impacts and develop strategies to address them. There needs to be a more thorough-going assessment of the full and potential scale of NRPF in Wales and due consideration by WG and other partners of recommendations on NRPF in [‘Uncharted Territory’](#) and [WSMP/WLGA NRPF report](#).
- w. To address the gaps in service provision for women with NPRP and their vulnerability to homelessness, destitution, violence and exploitation, we would like to see WG provide a **Destitution Fund** along the lines of the fund made available in Northern Ireland by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OFDPM). This is particularly important in the context of VAWGSADV context and would ensure that women and girls don’t become more vulnerable to violence and exploitation

through destitution. Evidence demonstrates that the fund has been most effective in addressing protection gaps related to domestic abuse and gender based violence.

- x. WSMP would welcome input from across WG on understanding and exploring the impact of the Immigration Act 2016 on individuals, devolved public service and local authorities in Wales, and identifying opportunities where devolved competencies could help mitigate any potential negative impacts.
- y. **Asylum accommodation;** Engagement and partnership work between Clearsprings and partners in Wales has been facilitated by WSMP and has resulted in improvements to the environment at the Initial Accommodation Centre, establishment of a Safeguarding Forum chaired by UKVI, and agreed processes for consultation on housing procurement and management of contingency arrangements, to an agreed process for accommodation of complex bail cases.
- z. Going forward, there is a need for Welsh Government to continue to actively engage with the UK Visa and Immigration Asylum Accommodation and Support Transformation (AAST) programme and help ensure that any new contract for asylum housing and support ensures lessons are learned from the COMPASS contracts, notably around safeguarding measures and standards, contingency arrangements, complaints processes and monitoring of accommodation standards

4. The support and advocacy available to UASC in Wales

- a. Advocacy support is especially important now that Wales is likely to see an increase in its UASC population due to the National Transfer Scheme. Recent world events have led to a significant increase of numbers in 2014-2016.
- b. The Home Office wants all local authorities to take part in a 'National UASC Transfer System' and there are altered expectations regarding pace, arrival and cohort. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act underlines the importance of advocacy. Advocacy is important for UASC in Wales for the following reasons (as set out in WG COP);
 - speaking up for and with individuals who are not being heard, helping them to express their views and make their own informed decisions and contributions, and
 - safeguards individuals who are vulnerable and discriminated against or whom services find difficult to serve
 - speaks up on behalf of individuals who are unable to do so for themselves
 - empowers individuals who need a stronger voice by enabling them to express their own needs and make their own informed decisions
 - enables individuals to gain access to information, explore and understand^{their} options, and to make their views, wishes and feelings known, and
 - actively supports people to make informed choices.
- c. Section 78 of the SSWB Act specifies that the local authority must have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and any other relevant person in

making decisions about them. This may be facilitated by an advocate, a foster carer or a key worker. The [All Wales Practice Guidance on Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Young People](#) published by the WSMP highlights the responsibility of social workers to appoint legal representatives for the looked after child, appoint an appropriate adult to attend all immigration interviews, arrange interpreters within Children's Services and refer children and young people to advocacy services so that this group of children are able to access appropriate support through the immigration process.

- d. The Practice Guidance advises that those working with separated migrant and asylum-seeking children have some working knowledge of the asylum and immigration processes in order to support the children effectively through the process. Advocates should be appropriately trained given that appropriate methods of ascertaining the child's wishes and feelings must include a consideration of the child's religious beliefs, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.
 - e. We are aware that there are issues around access to advocacy services for children and that work is underway to implement a national approach to statutory advocacy. We also know that there are also no specialised advocacy services for UASC. The little provision that existed, provided by *Tros Gynnal*, was highly localised (Newport and Cardiff) and this service ensured that the particular interests and needs of UASC were provided for. This project closed in 2016.
 - f. UASC in Wales do not have a system of *Guardianship* or support of the *Refugee Children's Panel* so it could be argued they are especially disadvantaged compared to UASC in other parts of the UK. It is therefore essential that UASC are informed about and able to access an advocate, and that the advocate uses interpretation where necessary, if UASC are to be afforded the same UNCRC rights as other looked after children in Wales.
 - g. The 2016 Concluding Observations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child also called for 'statutory independent guardians for all unaccompanied and separated children', raising their concerns over the lack of support for, and increased vulnerability of this group of children and young people.
 - h. Advocacy becomes even more important in the context of age disputes. The WSMP has developed and published an [All Wales Age Assessment Toolkit](#) and has delivered training to Social Workers in South Wales, to improve consistency and ensure adherence to best practice. In our experience, the issues surrounding age assessment which we identified and reported on (report available on request) remain to a large extent, unaddressed.
- 5. The role and effectiveness of WG's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Welsh communities**

We support the aims of the WG in its CCDP and acknowledge that the work is critical in the wake of Brexit and the increase in profile and significance of migration, and make the following observations;

- a. Funding for the Community Cohesion Co-ordinators for 2017-18 is welcomed. This has enabled a more co-ordinated approach to be taken in relation to the Syrian Relocation Scheme in north Wales.
- b. The role of the Community Cohesion Coordinators has been critical in underpinning a regional, coordinated approach to resettlement. Their work in monitoring and managing community tensions that have arisen has been really important, and given added momentum and support by the work of the WG SRP Communications sub group.
- c. It is clear to us that there is a growing need to raise awareness and share knowledge about the rise in profile and scale of migration – to put it into perspective and counter some of the very negative, inaccurate and sometimes hostile media reporting about migration.
- d. This work is increasingly important in the wake of Brexit and the insecurity and rise in hate crime being experienced by the migrant community, the extent of which is largely underreported and not understood. The WG will need to consider actions to address this new context.
- e. There needs to be a more developed understanding of the causes of community tensions in this new context and methods to address them; for example, evidence shows that, is ‘myth busting’ is not necessary an inadequate tool for increasing knowledge and understanding of immigration, that we require more sophisticated and evidence-based approaches, and greater engagement with communities, to inform actions to address cohesion issues related to migration, and development of a **communications strategy**.
- f. The WG should consider actions to address community tensions around migration, building on previous research which acknowledges that socio-economic and political exclusion, poverty and deprivation are drivers of hostility to migrants and cohesion issues.
- g. The proposals to reform asylum support, together with potential impacts of other measures in the Immigration Act, including those around right to evict (and the Right to Rent Pilot – if rolled out nationwide), will have significant and wide-ranging impacts, as they may increase levels of poverty in migrant communities and social exclusion, with concomitant impacts on community cohesion.

For further information, please contact Anne.Hubbard@wlga.gov.uk

Consultation Response - Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry into Refugee and Asylum Seekers in Wales

Children in Wales¹ is the national umbrella organisation in Wales for children and young people's issues, bringing organisations and individuals from all disciplines and sectors together. One of our core aims is to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) a reality in Wales. Children in Wales campaigns for sustainable quality services for all children and young people, with special attention for children in need and works to ensure children and young people have a voice in issues that affect them.

Children in Wales successfully developed and ran the Big Lottery Funded Including Families Project, producing resources to support professionals and community members - <http://www.includingfamilies.org.uk/en/> - and currently delivers training for professionals from a range of sectors on Cultural Awareness in Safeguarding Children - <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/our-training/> . Children in Wales are inaugural members of the Welsh Refugee Coalition.

1. Overarching Comments

1.1 In our response to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee's call for priorities², we expressed support for the Committee to conduct an inquiry into 'refugee and asylum seekers in Wales' during the Fifth Assembly Term. We are delighted that the Committee has recognised the need for such an inquiry, and for prioritising an inquiry early in the Assembly Term.

Asylum seeker and refugee children are children first and foremost.

1.2 Unaccompanied children, separated from parents and relatives, remain amongst the most vulnerable groups of children in Wales, often at greater risk of exploitation, abuse, gender based violence and trafficking. The safeguarding, non-discrimination and best interest of the child principles enshrined in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC) and applied through legislation is applicable to all children and young people, including refugee and asylum seeking children, regardless of their country of birth or their current circumstances. Governments have an obligation to protect all children from violence and exploitation, to the maximum extent possible, which would jeopardize a child's right to life, survival and development.

1.3 The UN CRC General Comment No 6 (2005)³ on the 'Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin' provides timely guidance to support Governments in meeting their obligations under the UNCRC and to draw attention to the particularly vulnerable situation of unaccompanied and separated children.

1.4 The **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child** in June 2016 issued a series of Recommendations (Concluding Observations)⁴ in respect of asylum seeking, refugee and migrant children (pp20-21). These recommendations reflected a number of concerns put forward by non-government coalitions⁵ as part of the monitoring process, and included the

- lack of reliable data on asylum seeking children
- lack of access to independent guardians
- problematic nature of the 'age assessment' process
- the lack of access to basic services, and the

¹ For further information on the work of Children in Wales, please see www.childreninwales.org.uk and www.youngwales.wales

² <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s52695/SP%2033%20-%20Children%20in%20Wales.pdf>

³ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>

⁴ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsllg/publications/cyp/160727-final-concluding-observations-2016-en.pdf>

⁵ All documents submitted to the UN Committee can be accessed via the website of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner - http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=987&Lang=en

- high risk of destitution.

1.5 Whilst it is accepted that immigration policy itself is a reserved matter, the provision of the majority of services that refugee and asylum seeker children receive in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Government and other public bodies. There are a number of significant barriers to inclusion that exist here in Wales that we would wish to draw the Committee's attention to in line with the Committee's areas of inquiry.

2. The Support & Advocacy available to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The Call for Change

2.1 The Welsh Government's vision for refugee inclusion was set out in the Refugee Inclusion Strategy which was published in 2008⁶. The Strategy, and subsequent action plan, recognised the need for a specialist independent service for separated children and committed to work with partners to develop such a service. The need for a 'specialist' service was underpinned by a recognition that supporting and speaking up for asylum seeking children going through the asylum process was a task which required expert and specialist knowledge and understanding

2.2 This recognition followed the comprehensive and ground breaking report 'Uncertain Futures' in 2005⁷, which advised Welsh Government to consider how best it can provide accessible, and well-funded independent advocacy support for UASC in Wales, in addition to establishing a specialist system of guardianship for separated children.

The report, published by Save the Children (Wales), recommended that:

'The Welsh Assembly Government....should consider how best it can ensure the provision and availability of accessible, specialist and well-funded independent advocacy support for separated (unaccompanied) children living in Wales (rec 4.2, pp 70)

'The Welsh Assembly Government should also explore the possibility of establishing a system of guardianship to ensure that the best interest principle is maintained and that separated children are supported through the asylum process' (rec 4.3, pp 70)

2.3 This report was significant in that it also recognised the clear distinction between '**advocacy**' and the role of an 'advocate', to that of a '**guardian**' or 'system of guardianship'. The role of an independent professional advocate is issue based and helps an individual to speak up for themselves, to access their rights and entitlements and get something stopped, started or changed⁸. Advocates will ensure that an individual's views are accurately conveyed irrespective of the views of the advocate or others as to what is in their best interests⁹. The role of a Guardian would include providing advice, support, assistance and information, working within the guiding principles of what is in the best interest of the child.

2.4 The Welsh Government's initial response and commitment to develop a specialist service was welcomed, and some initial time limited funding was provided to the Welsh Refugee Council to appoint a part-time Child Advocacy Officer (a post which has long since come to an end)

2.5 The Refugee Inclusion Strategy and action plan made a commitment to put in place sustainable advocacy provision to support UASC 0-25, which we were advised, through the bi-annual update in June 2013, was 'on schedule'. The consultation document released in 2015 for the current Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan, noted that the '**Welsh Government will explore the need for a Guardianship model for Wales**'. However, the final revised Delivery Plan¹⁰ issued in March 2016 makes no reference to any 'exploration' or commitment to an independent specialist service for vulnerable and at risk separated asylum seeking children.

2.6 On the 3rd June 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a new set of Concluding Observations to the UK and devolved Governments setting out ways in which they can better meet their obligations to children and young people in respect of implementing their rights. The UN Committee were concerned to learn that

'Not all unaccompanied children have access to an independent guardian or legal advice in the course of immigration and asylum procedures'.

They recommended that all Governments:

⁶ <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/publications/refugeeinclusion/?lang=en>

⁷ Summary Report - https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/uncertain_futures_summary_1.pdf

⁸ Welsh Assembly Government (2009) A Guide to the Model for Delivering Advocacy Services to Children and Young People <http://prp.gov.wales/docs/prp/socialcare/sc130724modelfordeliveringadvocacyservices.pdf>

⁹ Welsh Government: Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 10 Code of Practice (Advocacy) <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/151218part10en.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/160316-refugee-asylum-seeker-delivery-plan-en.pdf>

'Establish statutory independent guardians for all unaccompanied and separated children throughout the state party' [Section I, 76(b)]¹¹

2.7 Worryingly, despite almost identical recommendations being made by the UN Committee in their earlier Concluding Observations of **2002** and **2008**, Wales still remains without a statutory specialist national independent guardianship service for some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Current provision (advocacy)

2.8 UASC under local authority care are entitled to care and support as outlined in the Children Act 1989, now restated in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act, and entitled to advocacy alongside other eligible children and young people subject to care and support arrangements. Statutory advocacy services for children and young people in Wales are provided by NYAS Cymru¹² and Tros Gynnal Plant¹³ through commissioning arrangements with local authorities.

2.9 Both organisations provide advocacy support for UASC who have been accepted as 'children' by the local authority and eligible as having care and support status. For age disputed 'young people' however, there are gaps in the provision of advocacy services. Some services often play an important role within the age assessment process, despite the additional costs to consider, such as interpreters, and work with young people on a range of issues such as education, housing and legal matters including asylum claims, reunification with family and representation at LAC reviews.

2.10 It is recognised that there is a need for expert advice and training to support UASC which some current advocacy services and practitioners do not routinely have access to. More training should be made routinely available, and this training should be made available in Wales and tailored to the devolved policy context, to enable existing advocacy services and practitioners to access it.

The Case for Change (towards a complementary Guardianship Model)

2.11 Due to the circumstances within their country of origin and their often traumatic journey to Wales, asylum seeking children seeking a place of safety present with specific challenges on their arrival, which include identifiable significant physical, mental and emotional health needs¹⁴. Children who are separated from their parents are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and they will require extra levels of care and protection due to trauma. They often face periods of uncertainty, isolation with little or no knowledge of their rights and entitlements.

2.12 Unaccompanied children in Wales have additional needs which can only be delivered by specialist intervention which would help to ensure that they receive accurate information, advice and support, and are properly safeguarded and not at risk of exploitation, trafficking or destitution.

2.13 It is evident that separated children cannot be treated as though their needs and interests are the same as other children who are entitled to care and support arrangements under Part 10 of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014.

2.14 The NAFW Children and Young People Committee, in their 2008 inquiry into 'Advocacy Services for Children and Young People in Wales' recognised this and considered there to be a need for **'commissioning (of) specialist advocacy services, for low incidence groups, such as children and young people seeking asylum, in addition to generic advocacy services'**

2.15 Until March 2016, Tros Gynnal Plant, ran the Fair and Square Project to create sustainable change in the approach to work with refugee and asylum seeking children and young people up to age 25¹⁵. The project, funded by the Big Lottery, served the Cardiff and Newport areas, and provided an independent service for a range of issues including helping asylum seeking young people to access legal services, help with age disputes, welfare advice, education and training, to challenge decisions and help in understanding the asylum process. The End of Project Report considered that through continued individual and collective advocacy and engagement, children had been able to develop their confidence, self-esteem and an understanding of their rights and entitlement as asylum seeking young people. The service helped provide asylum seeking children with an understanding of the systems, broke down barriers and empowered them to represent themselves. Subsequently, children were able to highlight issues important to them to key decision-makers and instigate change.

To our knowledge, there are no longer any services akin to this in Wales.

¹¹ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/160727-final-concluding-observations-2016-en.pdf>

¹² <https://www.nyas.net/nyas-cymru>

¹³ <http://www.trosgynnal.org.uk/>

¹⁴ <http://welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk/resources/research/young-lives-in-limbo>

¹⁵ <http://www.trosgynnal.org.uk/page.php?Plv=2&P1=2&P2=19&P3=&id=>

2.16 Effective guardianship systems are key in helping to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation and in protecting child victims of trafficking. Separated children should therefore have access to specialist guardians who can work with them as a key part of their journey to ensure they have fair access to the asylum process and are linked in with other appropriate services.

This has been recognised in **Scotland**, and has been acted upon.

2.17 The Scottish Guardianship Service¹⁶, is an award winning service run by the Scottish Refugee Council and Aberlour children charity, working with children and young people who arrive in Scotland unaccompanied and separated from their families¹⁷. Each child is allocated a 'Guardian' who provides dedicated and specialist help and support, empowering them to navigate their way through the asylum process. A guardian will speak up for the child, help them to address their immediate needs and situation, and help them make informed decisions about their future. The service was part funded by the Scottish Government and began as an initial 30 month pilot and subject to independent evaluation¹⁸. In 2015, it has been reported that the service was placed into legislation (Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act with a duty placed on public bodies to refer to the scheme¹⁹.

2.18 The Scottish Guardianship scheme is in place to help and support local authorities with the specific issues that separated children present with. If a similar service was adopted in Wales, such a service would play an important **complimentary role** to the more holistic functions currently provided by or commissioned by local authorities and other public bodies. The service should be at a pan-Wales level to help ensure there is consistency of provision and would help ensure that any children dispersed to other parts of Wales have continuity of service and engagement. Finally, whilst we recognise the problematic nature of accessing reliable data on asylum seeking children and age-disputed children, there is a consensus that the numbers will be relatively small. The cost therefore of meeting the UN Committee's recommendation and in providing an effective independent guardianship service to improve the outcomes for all unaccompanied asylum seeking children throughout Wales should not be too great.

Our Recommendation: Children in Wales call upon the Welsh Government to urgently implement the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendation and provide dedicated and sufficient funding which secures a specialist independent guardianship service with statutory guardians provided for all asylum seeking children and young people on a pan-Wales basis.

Our Recommendation: Once established, for all unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people to be automatically referred to the specialist independent guardianship service at the point of arrival in Wales, or as early as possible upon becoming known.

3. **The Pace & Effectiveness of the Welsh Government Approach to Resettling Refugees Through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)**

3.1 We welcome the commitment to resettle Syrian refugees in Wales through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, and the progress made to date in resettling 112 refugees by the end of June 2016. We understand that by October 2016, 17 local authorities had resettled Syrian refugees through the scheme. Children in Wales have been an active member of the Children's Task and Finish Group, supporting and providing advice on the effective integration of children and their families.

3.2 Whilst we welcome the leadership shown by Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales in responding to change, these developments will have significant implications for our communities and services, including health, education, housing, social services as well as in the successful delivery of overarching policy frameworks such as community cohesion. It is essential that the infrastructure is in place to aid integration given the expectation that Syrian refugees will be dispersed across all 22 local authorities, some of whom will be better placed and have more experience than others of resettling new arrivals. Earlier research has highlighted significant differences in knowledge and understanding between practitioners in dispersal and non-dispersal areas²⁰. Long term planning and community cohesion has to be suitably considered and properly managed as more refugees arrive and are dispersed throughout

¹⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/protecting/lac/guardianship>

¹⁷ http://www.aberlour.org.uk/news/596_herald_society_award_for_aberlours_scottish_guardianship_service

¹⁸ The pilot phase ended on 31 March 2013 and was evaluated independently by Profs Ravi Kohli and Heaven Crawley, both highly respected in the field of immigration issues surrounding children

¹⁹ http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/how_we_can_help/advice_services/the_scottish_guardianship_service

²⁰ Save the Children, Agenda for Action

<http://www.wsmg.org.uk/documents/wsmg/Asylum%20Seeking%20Children/Reports/Agenda%20for%20Action.eng.Dec.08.pdf>

Wales. Integration has to work effectively for the receiving community as well as for the arriving children, young people and their families.

3.3 Successful integration demands that new arrivals receive the welcome, support and quality services they deserve and are entitled to, which will enable them to be safe and to flourish, and to have their human rights secured. Local authorities and public bodies will need sufficient time to plan and prepare for new arrivals, to ensure that children and their families are properly safeguarded and receive access to essential health, housing, education, support and advice services to aid the transition and further the journey towards positive integration. There is also a need to ensure that those working in the public sector, including frontline professionals such as teachers, are properly equipped and have a full understanding of the care and protection issues as they relate to asylum seeking children and are able to access training and other professional development opportunities.

3.4 We recognise the investment and support that is being made available to new arrivals through the SVPRS and would welcome the learning from this response to be shared so as to inform any future crises. This should also include on-going engagement with new arrivals (including children), to help capture their thoughts and experiences of the process, as part of an inclusive participatory framework.

'Key to achieving inclusion is the participation of refugees in decisions about services and their delivery'²¹

3.5 We do however recognise the concerns raised by the professional community in respect of the contrast between the response to this group of arrivals to that of other asylum seeking children and families travelling independently, which is believed to be creating a 'two-tier system'. Asylum seeking children and families experience a number of barriers, often reliant on third and community sector projects who work tirelessly in supporting very vulnerable and traumatised families with legal, welfare, accommodation, health and financial matters. Separated and unaccompanied children seeking asylum are especially vulnerable and at risk of exploitation, abuse and trafficking. The Committee may wish to seek commitments from the Welsh Government to respond to the claims that a 'two-tier system' has emerged and seek assurances that all children and families seeking asylum, regardless of their country of origin, have access to advice, support and essential services, and for this to be available in all parts of Wales.

4. The Effectiveness of the Refugee & Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan.

4.1 Children in Wales welcomed the opportunity to inform and respond to the consultation on the revised Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan in December 2015 and its subsequent release in March 2016. The timing of this consultation was unfortunate given its publication on the same day as the First Minister's Summit in response to the refugee crisis hitting Europe. We called for the Delivery Plan to take account of this and to ensure that there was reference to the actions which Welsh Government and public bodies as partners would be delivering as a consequence of these unprecedented developments. The SVPRS and the actions undertaken were not included in the published Delivery Plan, thus reinforcing a sense of a two-tier response to supporting and integrating Syrian refugees from that of other refugees and asylum seekers.

4.2 We expressed hope that the Delivery Plan, if effectively implemented and supported by adequate resources with sufficient capacity within existing services at an operational level led to an improvement in the lives of asylum seekers and refugees throughout Wales. However, we are yet to be reassured that there is indeed sufficient capacity and resources in place at a national level to ensure that the Plan is delivered equitably and consistently across Wales to a standard that we would all expect and which is required. Whilst we welcome the Welsh Government proposed budget for priorities they would wish to see undertaken through the Refugee, Asylum Seeker & Migrant component of the Inclusion Fund from April 2017, the sufficiency of funding being made available to deliver the objectives, continue to cause some concern amongst the professional community. We are unclear if a Child Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this budget in line with existing duties placed on Ministers²².

4.3 Whilst there are some excellent services being delivered locally by dedicated, passionate and specialist individuals and agencies, the picture across Wales is patchy with there being a danger that vulnerable groups will continue to fall through gaps in service provision or become wholly reliant on grassroots services where demand outstrips supply. The financial climate suggests that Wales may well continue to lose many vital face to face services in the immediate future. There is a requirement to meet the UN Committee's recommendation that Welsh Government 'provide sufficient support to migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children to access basic services' [I(f)]²³, and that there is fair and equitable access to services²⁴.

²¹ Ministerial Forward - <http://gov.wales/dsjlg/publications/communityregendevelop/refugeeinclusionstrategy/strategye.pdf?lang=en>

²² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/2/contents>

²³ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/160727-final-concluding-observations-2016-en.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.wsmg.org.uk/documents/wsmg/Asylum%20Seekers/Manifesto%20eng.pdf>

4.4 We noted the absence of any performance measures, milestones or timescales for completion of actions and suggested that an Outcome Measurement Framework was produced alongside Performance Indicators to help provide the necessary evidence base for Welsh Government to be able to determine if lives and well-being outcomes have improved and the impact this Plan has had in achieving this. Unlike previous action plans and recent Welsh Government delivery plans in other policy areas, there is no end date for the Plan or commitment to report progress on an annual or bi-annual basis. We are unclear how the Plan is being monitored and actions evaluated. Whilst there is reference in the Ministerial Forward to the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, it is not apparent how the actions in the Plan map across to the wellbeing goals of the Act.

4.5 Our preference would be for the Delivery Plan to be reviewed and brought in line with more recent legislation and refreshed to take account of the points made above and to ensure full compliance with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations. The revised Delivery Plan should be forward looking and set out a programme of action for the next 5 years, with clear actions, timescales, outcomes, monitoring framework and appropriately resourced.

Other issues to raise

- There is a lack of reliable data on separated children (UASC and age-disputed children) living in Wales.
- There is a lack of access to legal support from solicitors and legal representation in respect of the age assessment process for children and young people. There are also calls for a thorough review of the age assessment process in Wales, which leads to actions and positive outcomes for young people going through the process.
- The All Wales Child Protection Procedures are presently being reviewed to take account of recent legislative changes and to ensure they are aligned to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. There will be a requirement for Welsh Government to ensure that as part of the review, that Safeguarding Childrens Boards include a refresh of the All Wales Protocol on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- Whilst asylum accommodation is a non-devolved matter, concerns have previously and repeatedly been raised, most recently by MPs, in respect of the quality and standard of initial accommodation services. What is the role of Welsh Government and local authorities in helping to ensure that new arrivals are safe, secure and living in accommodation which is in line with expected housing quality standards?
- Good access to free, quality ESOL provision in aiding the learning of a new language is essential to drive forward integration, progression and help improve education and employability outcomes. We are aware that there continues to be barriers which can frustrate take up of provision where this exists, including transport and childcare availability. We need to ensure that existing provision is in the right place, at the right time and is sufficient to meet current and future need. Given the importance of ESOL to enable asylum seekers and refugees to access FE, employment or training, this should continue to be a priority area for Welsh Government
- Mental health support, tailored for the specific challenges and additional needs often presented by asylum seeking children, has to be in place as a matter of priority across all parts of Wales. The Welsh Government has recently issued their 'Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2016-19', and significant attention is being invested in this policy area which children and young people, including those we work with through our Young Wales project, repeatedly identify as a key priority. It has been reported that waiting lists are too long, and access to more specialist provision being particular problematic.
- Echoing the concerns raised in the response of the Wales Refugee Coalition, we would wish the Committee to consider the implications and potential impact of the **Immigration Act 2016** in Wales.

5. The Role & Effectiveness of the Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the Integration of Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Welsh communities.

5.1 Further consideration should be given to how Wales responds to incidences of hate crime as they impact on children, young people and their families in Wales. We were particularly concerned to learn from our member organisations of a rise in incidences of hate crime on children and young people following the outcome of the EU Referendum in June this year. Solutions should focus on helping people to recognise and report hate crime, ensuring that all professionals, particularly teachers and other school based staff who work with vulnerable children, including asylum seekers and refugees, have the necessary knowledge and tools to properly listen, hear and respond appropriately, taking into account the wishes and feelings of the child and their right to be safeguarded and protected.

Hate crime is a crime and should always be recognised as such.

‘Breaking the cycle of disadvantage and inequality will continue to underpin everything we do, so that the way we govern has the most effective impact on making society fairer and more inclusive’ Welsh Government – November 2016 – Taking Wales Forward (2.7)

Children in Wales would wish to acknowledge the contribution of NYAS Cymru and Tros Gynnal Plant in informing our response to existing provision of advocacy services for UASC.

We would also wish to draw the Committee’s attention to the submission of the **Welsh Refugee Coalition**.

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

ELGC(5)-01-17 Papur 4/ Paper 4

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales

Evidence submission from Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST)

December 2016

Prepared by: Rocio Cifuentes director@eyst.org.uk

Introduction

Ethnic Youth Support Team welcomes the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into refugees and asylum-seekers and its call for evidence submissions. We very much hope that the inquiry will:

- Recognise the value of locally-based grassroots and community initiatives in supporting refugees and asylum-seekers and the importance of financially and strategically supporting these.
- Enable a shift towards a more pro-active, prevention and education-based approach to supporting the effective integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales, rather than one which focuses on refugees and asylum-seekers in isolation and treats them as a problem to be solved.
- Develop a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of ‘community cohesion’, considering economic factors and competition over resources as primary factors behind racialized social divisions, rather than using the term as a euphemism for race relations, and moving towards an understanding of it as a challenge for ‘us’ not about ‘them’.

Background

Ethnic Youth Support Team is an award-winning BME organisation based in Swansea, which aims to support ethnic minority young people, families and individuals across Wales, including refugees and asylum-seekers. Established for nearly 12 years, we have developed a range of successful programmes to support the BME, refugees and asylum-seekers population in Wales, as well as working more widely to promote integration and community cohesion through a better understanding and more positive view of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity amongst the wider public.

EYST provision for refugee and asylum-seekers

With a staff team of nearly 30, and over 100 volunteers, we have a full-time youth and community centre and offices in Swansea, with workers based in Cardiff, Swansea, Llanelli, Ystradgynlais and Newtown. Our core work includes youth work support and family support to BME young people and families, which includes refugees and asylum-seekers. In Swansea we deliver a full-time refugee and asylum-seeker advice service funded by Henry Smith Foundation which supported over 900 individuals last year via over 2000 advice sessions. We also deliver an innovative volunteering programme funded by Lloyds Foundation targeting and encouraging refugees and asylum-seekers to volunteer, which since July 2016 has supported 32 refugees and asylum-seekers in Swansea to volunteer 2298 hours helping other clients who access EYST. We also work extensively with schools and youth groups delivering educational awareness sessions to increase young people's understanding of asylum, refugee and migration issues, including for example our Refugee Awareness Workshops which was delivered to over 400 young people in Cardiff, funded by Pears foundation.

Since January 2016, EYST has been delivering the Orientation Service for Syrian Refugee Families resettled in Swansea under the Home Office Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). We also have the contract to deliver this same service in Carmarthenshire as well as Ystradgynlais and Newtown in Powys.

We will now respond to each of the key issues identified by the inquiry

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

We are aware of criticism in relation to the initial pace of the SVPRS resettlement process in Wales. However, in our experience the local authorities with whom we have worked (Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Powys) have worked as quickly as realistically possible to take the necessary steps firstly to procure Orientation Service deliverers in a fair and transparent way and also to identify housing, school spaces, and health provision. They have allocated significant resources to making sure the process of resettlement has gone as smoothly as possible, including convening multi-agency working groups as well as coordinating community-based groups to manage the significant voluntary and community response to Syrian refugee arrivals. So far, 10 families have been safely re-homed with our support in Swansea, 4 in Carmarthenshire, 6 in Ystradgynlais and 2 in Newtown.

Therefore, from our experience, at the Local Authority level, the pace and effectiveness has been good. However, it appears that Local Authorities liaise directly with Home Office rather than with Welsh Government to agree family composition and arrival dates. So, we are unclear what influence and role the Welsh Government has played in this process. We are

aware that the Welsh Government set up a Syrian Refugee Taskforce and an Operations Board, in response to the initial announcement of the SVPRS scheme in September 2015. So far, EYST has not been invited to be part of either of these groups, although we are members of the Welsh Refugee Coalition which is currently represented via Oxfam Cymru.

The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

In our view the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan provided an aspirational but insufficiently defined vision of how Welsh Government would like to see refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. This lack of definition makes it difficult to measure to what extent it has succeeded.

The plan is also very much of its time, having been published in 2014, when refugees and asylum-seekers were a somewhat niche preoccupation in the eyes of the wider Welsh public. This changed dramatically over the summer of 2015 with the media spotlight on tragic toddler Aylan Kurdi leading to an outpouring of public compassion, with the UK government pressured into its pledge to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees – which then became the SVPRS scheme. By early 2016, following terrorist incidents across Europe, public perception of refugees had become significantly more negative and the issue continued to split public opinion, most clearly manifested in the Brexit vote of June 2016.

In hindsight, the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan did not focus sufficiently on preparing the ground for the successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales as it did not focus sufficiently on delivering an effective media and communications strategy, nor an effective awareness campaign for key frontline workers. The plan also made too much reference to Welsh Government funded delivery for refugee and asylum seekers which was almost exclusively in Cardiff and Newport, and did not give sufficient recognition to wider work being delivered across Wales, although not necessarily Welsh Government funded. Overall, the plan focused exclusively on the refugees and asylum-seekers without taking into account the wider context and growing challenge of how the issue and group is perceived and understood by people in Wales. In terms of the key areas highlighted by the plan, it is our understanding that there still remain key gaps in terms of:

- The understanding of refugee and asylum-seeker issues of public sector workers, including teachers, police, social workers, health-care workers. There should be renewed efforts to improve training on this topic for those public sector professionals.
- There is a huge gap in provision for refugees accessing employment. There are particular issues with the current capacity and disposition of JobCentrePlus staff to effectively support refugees seeking employment. There is also inconsistency in use of interpreters and language line which adversely impacts benefits claims, etc.
- Within health care while it is welcomed that Wales offers more services to asylum seekers than England, there is patchy knowledge amongst health care providers

about the rights of asylum-seeker and refugees to healthcare provision, and inconsistent use of interpreters and Language line.

- ESOL provision remains insufficient to meet demand. This should be increased as language is a key barrier to integration for refugees and asylum seeker.
- Destitution is not adequately addressed by the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan, and remains a huge gap in public policy in Wales.

The support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Wales

In EYST's experience, there is no service which is available to support or advocate for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Wales. The responsibility for supporting these children has in practice fallen on already over-stretched social services departments within Local authorities, who lack culturally specific knowledge and expertise. Local authorities in Swansea, Neath port Talbot and Carmarthenshire have often contacted EYST youth workers to provide support alongside their own social workers, and this approach has been welcomed and has proved effective in helping the child feel more culturally supported and comfortable. However, we recognise that our own team lack the immigration-specific knowledge which would enable them to perform the advocacy role more effectively. We are aware that Tros Gynal previously provided a similar service in some parts of Wales, however this is a current gap. We also have experienced public sector workers lacking knowledge of and understanding about the rights of unaccompanied asylum seeker children and in some cases displaying lack of empathy bordering on hostility. This is reflective of the wider social climate and public attitudes towards refugees and immigration which we see today.

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

Overall, the Community Cohesion Delivery Plan was overly focused on tackling hate crime and insufficiently focused on prevention of hate crime and challenging attitudes of hate – which is akin to closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. The plan also risked pandering to and increasing racial stereotypes by focusing on specific issues such as modern slavery and gypsy traveller communities, rather than the wider and overarching issue of racism. The challenge of Community Cohesion should not confine itself to the realm of reactive policing, rather it should have embraced a more proactive preventative and educational approach aiming to reach out widely to all those living in Wales. EYST has delivered pioneering work in this field in Wales:

Promoting Awareness & Tackling Negative Attitudes through Education: EYST's work in Schools

Given that one of the key issues facing BME Young people is racism, lack of understanding and racial stereotyping, rather than just offering a victim-focused approach, which many BME organisations tend to do, we have pro-actively sought to address this problem in a solution-focused manner. EYST have developed strong relationships with local schools,

including primary and secondary schools and deliver regular educational awareness-raising sessions to pupils, on a range of diversity-based topics, as requested by the schools, usually via assemblies, PSE lessons or RE lessons. In the last year we have delivered 54 such sessions to over 2000 children across Swansea. Schools very much appreciate our input, particularly as they recognise that teachers lack both the expertise and the confidence to tackle such sensitive subjects. Our input can diffuse and reduce racial tensions and bullying within schools particularly following international terrorist events.

For example, following the Paris attacks, we contacted schools and offered to come in and talk to children about what Islam is, what ISIS is, and the difference between them. What makes these sessions effective is that they are delivered by local BME and Muslim Youth Workers who are skilled in engaging with children and young people, and as well as giving pupils much needed facts and information, they also give them an opportunity to get to know and like a Muslim and Welsh/ British person. Never underestimate the power of a cool and funny person to cut through and challenge racial and cultural stereotypes! Feedback from the young participants in the sessions included:

“I’ve learnt that not all Muslims are terrorists” “Helal is a legend!”



However this work is not publicly funded, neither is it strategically embedded in any Schools’ Local Authority or Welsh Government plans – we would like to see both happen. We would also like our example to be used as best practice in order for it to be replicated across the UK.

Preventing Islamist Extremism through Youth Engagement and Support: the Positive Street Project

From 2009 to 2012, EYST was funded by the Welsh Government via their Community Cohesion Fund to deliver the ‘Positive Street Project’ (PSP) – a project engaging with young Muslim males in Swansea to prevent Islamist extremism and radicalisation. The project was highly successful, working with over 250 young males across the project life-time through a

youth-engagement and information model. Under the project Muslim youth workers set out to develop meaningful relationships with young Muslim males, offering support via street-based outreach, community outreach and a regular youth club provision. The project gave the young people information and understanding of 'authentic Islam' using approved and respected Imams and other credible speakers on Islam. Importantly, the project was fundamentally supported by Local Police who respected the freedom and best judgement of EYST to deliver the project, while at the same time offering support and input when needed. The project revealed that one of the key grievances of Muslim young males was the perceived inequality in how they were treated when suspected of Islamist extremism, compared to how racist white males were treated when espousing apparently far right extremist views. The project provided an important communication link between Muslim young people and the Police, and Local Authority leads, where they could voice these grievances and concerns. This project ended in 2012, and has not received any continuation funding. We would also like to see it used as best practice and replicated across the UK.

Challenging Racism and Far-Right Extremism through Education and Contact theory: the 'Think' Project www.thinkproject.org.uk

In response to the growing racism, Islamophobia and Xenophobia being experienced by our young BME clients, EYST devised the 'Think' Project – an educational programme designed to challenge racism and far-right extremism – especially in disadvantaged, vulnerable young white people - through an intensive 3 day educational programme. The project was funded over 3 years from 2012 – 2015 by the Big Lottery Innovation Fund and delivered to over 400 young people across South Wales. Formally externally evaluated, it proved to be an innovative and effective way of increasing young people's understanding of diversity and immigration issues and increasing their resilience to far-right extremism.

To begin with, the majority of participants had strong and largely negative views about immigration, asylum and diversity. These views had changed significantly for the vast majority of participants by the end of programme:

- At the start of the programme 62% agreed with the statement *'It's not fair that a lot of jobs in Swansea and Wales are taken by people from other countries'*, By the end of the programme these figures had dropped to only 11% agreeing.
- At the start of the programme 46% agreed with the statement *'Asylum Seekers come to the UK to get Benefits'*, By the end of programme only 2% agreed with the statement
- At the start of the programme, young people vastly overestimated the scale of ethnic diversity in Wales. When asked to estimate the percentage of people in Wales from ethnic groups different to their own, over half of the young people thought the figure was 50% or more. By the end of the programme, 89% correctly put the figure at less than 10%.

The Think Project was found to be unique in the UK and even across Europe, in terms of its practical education-based approach to tackling racism and far-right extremism, in terms of its targeted approach with disadvantaged, disaffected white young people (potentially most vulnerable to far-right extremism), and in terms of its unique methodology based on open dialogue, contact theory and experiential learning. Unlike 'zero-tolerance' approaches to racism, this approach encourages open discussion of young people's feelings and views towards immigration, asylum, Muslims and so on. Only then, once out in the open can such views be effectively challenged. Professors Ted Cantle and Paul Thomas wrote a report on the project, which can be read here <http://eyst.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Think-project-report-web.pdf> , and the project was also invited to share its learning at the conferences in Stockholm and Brussels. While highly successful, the project does not receive public or continuation funding, and we are left trying to sell the training at a time of increasingly restricted public funding. Again, we have here an example of best practice, which could easily be rolled out and replicated to meet a growing need in Wales and the UK.

www.eyst.org.uk



John Griffiths AM

Chair Equality, Local Government & Communities Committee

National Assembly for Wales

Pierhead Street

Cardiff

CF99 1NA

21 November 2016

Dear John Griffiths AM,

Wales and the World: Supporting refugees and asylum seekers

We welcome the decision by the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee to look at the support available for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales and how well Wales is responding to the large-scale displacement of Syrians because of the country's civil war.

We appreciate that this is largely in relation to the Welsh Government's 'Refugee and Asylum Delivery Plan' and how those services are provided through local authorities.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) would like to take this opportunity to share its views on the support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Earlier this month, the BPS's Presidential Taskforce on Refugees and Asylum seekers issued a statement on the need for the prompt, effective and human treatment of minors from Calais. We believe that the committee may want to consider the principles outlined in this statement as part of their inquiry along with how they apply to unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive in Wales.

Statement by the British Psychological Society's Presidential Taskforce on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The British Psychological Society recognises work already undertaken to support and care for unaccompanied minors by the French and British Government. However, we would stress that there are important and additional considerations which need to be made.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) recognises the efforts of the British government to share responsibilities with France in protecting unaccompanied children and young people. In addition to those recently arriving, there are thousands of children and young persons in the UK as asylum seekers and refugees, with similar and urgent needs and large numbers still in Calais with an uncertain future.

Whilst efforts are being made by the Home Office in collaboration with the British Red Cross and others to provide support to recently arrived minors in the UK from the 'Calais Jungle' the BPS emphasises that there are important and additional considerations which need to be made in any measures taken with these minors. In particular prompt, effective and humane action is vital as many will have multiple and complex needs.

1. Prompt, holistic assessment of their overall wellbeing and medical, psychological, welfare and educational needs. This requires a coordinated response from a multidisciplinary team, which should include practitioner psychologists.
2. Psychological assessments of vulnerability (including to risk of further harm or exploitation) and of the impact of a range of experiences including loss (including of parents or other family members), violence, abuse or exploitation. Such assessments should be gender-appropriate, culturally-appropriate and in the relevant language of the individual using professional interpreters. Psychological assessments can take into account socioeconomic and other context factors which impact on the well-being, development and learning of a children and young persons. Such assessments can contribute to a prompt multidisciplinary response to ensure minors are able to access appropriate health and social care services, and that they are able to access education swiftly and that they can be adequately supported in the educational system; and placed in culturally-appropriate, safe foster care where necessary.

3. Multidisciplinary assessments in cases where the ages of minors is disputed in the legal asylum determination process. No single discipline has the expertise to provide a definitive or even a best approach to age determination and any such assessment requires more than a one-off assessment, which can provide an approximate age. Practitioner psychologists can contribute to multidisciplinary age-range assessments by assessing development and maturity, the range of psychological and social factors which may impact on such development. They can help by providing a psychological opinion on the implications of such an assessment for the individual's functioning and their protection, emotional, social and educational needs.
4. Effective support of any families who are supporting the minors, particularly in understanding the needs of the child or young person, providing a safe and supportive environment as best as possible to facilitate their development and adjustment to life in the UK and to the educational system. Psychological support should also foster any existing peer relationships, such as those formed in Calais, and existing relationships and communication with family members outside the UK.
5. Adequate training and ongoing support for foster carers and staff in residential settings hosting unaccompanied minors. This will ensure carers are prepared for the range and complexity of psychological, medical, educational and welfare needs as well as personal, emotional or other resources that unaccompanied minors may have to manage the challenges of adjusting to life in the UK.
6. Adequate and prompt training for health and social care staff and teachers receiving unaccompanied minors, to consider the psychological aspects of their needs and development to help ensure that every individual is supported in reaching their full potential.
7. Adequate training health service commissioners and local authorities to ensure adequate systems are in place to allow prompt access to social, health and educational systems to promote well-being and social inclusion of unaccompanied minors

The British Psychological Society urges the government, all psychologists and other health, social care and educational professionals to work together to uphold our legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and our humanitarian obligations to ensure the protection, safety and best interests of each and every unaccompanied minor arriving in the UK.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Hutchings', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Paul Hutchings

Chair Welsh Branch, British Psychological Society

The British Psychological Society – Cardiff House – Cardiff Road – Vale of Glamorgan – CG36 2AW

Tel: 01446 704414 – Web: www.bps.org.uk

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments with regard to the Committee's inquiry into the above. I should be grateful if you would find below the Health Board's response to the key questions which form the Committee's enquiry, which are outlined below.

- The pace and effectiveness of the Welsh Government approach to resettling refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS);
- The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan;
- The support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Wales;
- The role and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Delivery Plan in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Welsh communities.

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The Health Board would like to make the following comments:

- It is considered that the organisation of the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) in Wales has been well supported by the National Delivery Group and Wales Strategic Migration Partnership.
- In relation to the SRP we would like to suggest an amendment to the Home Office Statement of Requirements, which would require local authorities to routinely notify health boards of any referrals. This would ensure that health boards are able to clinically review the Medical

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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is the operational name of Aneurin Bevan University Local Health Board

Assessment Forms received from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to ensure that the specialist healthcare needs of refugees can be met. It would also facilitate appropriate and timely registration and assessment of refugees within primary care on arrival to Wales.

- There appears to be a difference between the post arrival support offered to Syrian refugees arriving through the SRP and the support offered to other refugees and asylum seekers. As part of the Home Office Statement of Requirements local authorities are required provide suitably furnished accommodation and a case worker service for Syrian refugees arriving through the SRP. The case workers ensures that families receive timely advice and assistance with registering for mainstream benefits and services (e.g. GPs, schools, Job Centre Plus, etc.) and signposting to other advice and information giving agencies. It is suggested that this case worker support approach would also be valuable to asylum seekers.
- There is a need to ensure that specialist mental health services are available for asylum seekers that have experienced torture or organised violence. We welcome the inclusion of this as a specific action within the *Together for Mental Health: Delivery Plan* (2016), indicating that Welsh Government (Health and Social Services) will issue a care pathway, to ensure access for refugee and asylum seekers to general mental health and specialist Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) provision by January 2017.

We are aware that the charity *Freedom from Torture* have regional centres in Glasgow, London, Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle, which provides individual and group support for mental health professionals and other practitioners who work with asylum seekers and refugees that have survived torture and organised violence. We would like to suggest that consideration is given to establishing an equivalent regional centre for Wales. It would also be helpful for a review to be undertaken to ensure that appropriate access to interpreters and translation services is

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available to asylum seekers and refugees accessing psychological therapies in Wales. This review should also consider the psychological well-being and support available to interpreters as part of de-briefing process.

- Following the implementation of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 the Home Office designated four areas within Wales as dispersal areas for asylum seekers: Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham, although asylum seekers are located in other parts of Wales. As part of the GMS Contract in Wales 2008-09 an Enhanced Service for Asylum Seekers and

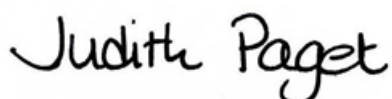
Refugees Specification was developed for health boards to assist them when commissioning primary medical services for asylum seekers and refugees in their area. This Enhanced Service aims to ensure equitable access to general medical services by overcoming barriers such as language and allowing extended consultation time to address complex issues. The Welsh Government *Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan* (2016) highlights the need for training in a number of areas. This includes the provision of training for medical students and standardised, accredited units on a variety of issues, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Honour Based Violence (HBV) and Forced Marriage. It also highlights the need for generic training for all frontline services about how to 'ask and act' appropriately, along with specific training for maternity services and first responders. We would therefore welcome the development of a national training framework for NHS staff to cover the diverse and complex needs of asylum seekers and refugees. This could include the training required by primary care staff providing the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Enhanced Service, the healthcare response to routine recommendations from the Asylum Seeker Key Worker Nursing Service (e.g. patients with unknown or incomplete vaccination status, blood borne viral hepatitis, tuberculosis) as well as for those providing more specialist services (e.g. patients that have experienced sexual violence, FGM or survivors of torture).

- The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) has produced an *Age Assessment of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children: All Wales Multi-Agency Toolkit* (2015) which was commissioned by UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) and financially supported by Welsh Government. The toolkit includes a section on multiagency working and the consideration of medical reports (including paediatric assessments) as part of the assessment process. However, it is unclear whether there has been paediatric contribution to the age-assessment process and/or formulation of the toolkit. If there has not been paediatric involvement, we would suggest that this is considered in future iterations. We note that the WSMP welcomes comments and feedback on the toolkit, which will be updated annually.

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I hope these comments are helpful. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Judith Paget
Chief Executive/Prif Weithredwr

Pack Page 57



Written Response to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Wales

Date: 08 December 2016

Version: 1

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in response to the National Assembly for Wales Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales.

Public Health Wales welcomes this opportunity to contribute to this important subject, which has clear links to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act goals, particularly 'a Globally Responsible Wales', 'a More Equal Wales' and 'a Wales of Cohesive Communities'.

Please find below our response to the specific points raised by the inquiry.

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

1. Public Health Wales wishes to highlight that the sooner refugees and asylum seekers are settled in a country with appropriate support, the

better their health and well-being outcomes are likely to be. In addition, we would like to highlight two pieces of work that could support those working in this field:

2. In November 2015, Public Health Wales produced a brief guide for service providers in Wales regarding [Screening of New Entrants arriving via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme \(VPRS\)](#). This document provides brief guidance for health boards, local authorities, service providers and clinicians involved with the provision of health care to new entrants to Wales arriving via the Syrian VPRS programme. This guidance provides an overview of the health care needs of new entrants to Wales, but concentrates on those aspects of new entrant health care relating to screening for infectious diseases and the provision of vaccinations.
3. In January 2016, Public Health Wales' Primary Care Quality department produced a [guide for General Medical Practices \(GMPs\)](#), which provides advice about access to GMP services from potential patients wishing to register and who are also seeking asylum, or are failed asylum seekers or refugees. It looks at their rights and responsibilities and the medical and social issues that need to be addressed at, and preceding, the point of registration.

The effectiveness of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan

4. The [Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan](#) refers to the need to ensure relevant training is delivered to professionals in order to better support refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. Training requirements identified cover a number of aspects including barriers, challenging discriminatory practices, female genital mutilation, honour-based violence and forced marriage. It is reassuring to note from the delivery plan that training for key professionals will be funded in order to help them understand particular issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees. We would welcome the development of a national approach to the delivery of this training for NHS staff to cover the diverse and complex needs of asylum seekers and refugees so that professionals are able to identify any issues and support individuals as required.
5. Under '*Action Area 2: Health, Wellbeing and Social Care*', the plan refers to the development of the 'Guidance on healthcare provision for asylum seekers and refugees'. This guidance will be aimed at service providers and will raise awareness amongst NHS Wales and other public service staff of the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees to access mental health services. When

considering this, services should be fully equipped to deal with individuals who have experienced significant trauma. They will need to consider how they will support the linguistic, cultural and religious beliefs/needs of people. Service providers will also need to consider how they are able to provide services in a timely manner, especially for those individuals who have experienced trauma and require specialist counselling or other therapies or for those whose mental health has deteriorated due to other factors, for examples those individuals under significant stress when going through the complex and lengthy asylum process. We believe that refugee and asylum seekers should be able to access general mental health and specialist Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) services and that those who have experienced torture or organised violence should be able to access specialist mental health services.

6. We believe that it is important that refugees and asylum seekers are provided with accessible information about the healthcare system in Wales, as well as more general healthcare and support information. There is also a need for this information to be shared with partner agencies that are supporting refugees and asylum seekers so that they are fully informed of available services.
7. Under Action Area 6: Employment, the documents states that refugees and asylum seekers are:
 - empowered to utilise their skills and knowledge to achieve their full potential as members of Welsh society;
 - have more prospects to engage with volunteering and employment opportunities; experience less unemployment

It may be opportune to consider how public sector bodies can create openings and opportunities to proactively support people in terms of volunteering opportunities, work experience, apprenticeships etc so that individuals can gain the necessary experience and confidence which may enhance their knowledge, life skills and employability.

The support and advocacy available to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Wales.

8. The Looked After Children (LAC) Steering Group, which links in to the NHS Safeguarding Network, is developing guidance for health professionals regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) <http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/document/388106> to aid health professionals undertaking health assessments.
9. We are aware of the Scottish Guardianship Service as an example of good practice. The service works to help young asylum seekers feel supported and empowered throughout their journey whilst their

claim is assessed and their status determined. It enables them to access the assistance they need, when they need it and helps them to make informed decisions about their future. On referral, the young person is appointed a guardian, who will represent a point of contact and continuity through their progress through the asylum and immigration system. The guardian is there to make the young person aware of their rights, explain aspects of the asylum and welfare system to them, introduce them to social opportunities and to begin to integrate them into community life.

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

10. Whilst the Welsh Local Government Association, together with Local Authority and Health Board dispersal areas, and Community Cohesion Co-ordinators are well placed to respond to this point, we note that Community Cohesion Delivery Plan activities appear to be centred around Cardiff. This may be where larger numbers of refugees and asylum seekers are resettled, but it will also be important to ensure that integration of refugees and asylum seekers resettled elsewhere in more remote, rural areas across Wales is similarly facilitated.

Other comments

11. In addition to the specific points raised by the inquiry, we would like to highlight a briefing produced by Public Health Wales, through its International Health Coordination Centre (IHCC). The IHCC's briefing on '[Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Public Health implications for Wales](#)', published in November 2015 at the height of the European Union's refugee crisis, provided a focus on the impact the crisis has had in the UK and Wales.
12. We wish to highlight the important links between community cohesion and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act Wellbeing Plans and also the Strategic Equality Plans, which present opportunities to embed community cohesion issues across key plans and strategies.

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
ELGC(5)–13–16 Papur 7/ Paper 7

Equality, Local Government and Communities

Committee visit to Scotland

Key findings:

- **Media, terminology and political leadership** are key drivers in public attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. Scottish Refugee Council work with newspaper editors and hold media awards for accurate reporting. Positive stories about migrants are communicated through events such as the Refugee Festival Scotland.
- **The Guardianship Service** in Scotland is proven to have a positive impact on the recognition of UASC. It costs £200,000 a year and supports 200 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- Scottish Government's strategy, 'New Scots' focuses on '**integration from day one**', and sees integration as a two-way process. Draws on academic research into the 'indicators of integration'.
- Phase 2 of 'New Scots' is being developed. It's anticipated to introduce **standards for service provision**, which is particularly useful for areas that have not historically had refugees and asylum seekers. There has also been discussion of a '**Refugee Integration Bill**', which would entitle people to an integration adviser and support, similar to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act.
- Refugees are **being dispersed to rural areas with no history of immigration**. Local authorities need guidance on how best to integrate new refugees, utilise skills and ensure community cohesion.
- **Employment and skills** are a big issue. Qualifications recognition and support to understand the UK employment and recruitment processes are key.
- UK Government legislation is **reaching into devolved areas more and more**. There are questions about whether asylum support should be devolved, especially around asylum accommodation.
- Scottish Government's approach is to '**provide an enabling statutory environment**' for local authorities to resettle refugees.

Morning session 1: Scottish Refugee Council and University of Glasgow panel discussion Scottish Government approach

- Scottish Refugee Council is **funded by the Scottish Government to run a number of specific services** including the Guardianship Service, integration projects and destitution projects.

- The Scottish Government's strategy focuses on '**integration from day one**' – alienation happens when integration doesn't work.
- Scottish Government **provides healthcare during the asylum process**, like Wales.
- Impact of **Guardianship Service** is demonstrated by results – 55% of UASC recognised, compared to 22% previously.
- **Phase 2 of 'New Scots'** (Scottish Government refugee strategy) is anticipated to introduce a set of standards for services in Scotland, which are particularly useful for local authorities with little previous experience of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Possibility of a '**Refugee Integration Bill**' – entitlement to integration adviser and support, based on Human Trafficking Act.
- Scottish **Legal Aid** is different to England and Wales – more widely available for immigration cases.
- Scottish Government's strategy aims to project **integration as a two-way process**.

Public attitudes/ media

- Most recent community cohesion campaign is called '**Fancy a cup of tea with a refugee?**'
- Language is an important part of the debate – 'New Scots' is a deliberate term. Some **terminology** has been 'debased' by media discourse – e.g. 'asylum-seeker'.
- **Media and political leadership** are major players in determining attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees. Immigration debate has focused on humanitarian aspects.
- **Refugee Festival Scotland** is an annual Scotland-wide programme of arts, cultural, educational, heritage and sports events, coordinated by Scottish Refugee Council.

Rural/ urban experiences

- Scotland is similar to Wales in terms of geography – fewer **urban centres**.
- With SVPRS, people are moving to **areas with no history of immigration or refugees**.
- Universities of Glasgow and Swansea are conducting joint research into how refugees experience small towns and rural areas.
- Migration in rural agricultural areas has been focused on seasonal work. **Finding employment that is appropriate to previous experience and qualifications** is more difficult in rural areas, so people move to the cities.
- University of Glasgow has conducted participant-led **pop-up language cafes**, which are not formal classes, but a chance to socialise and practice English.
- **Sharing good practice at regional and local level** is fundamental.

Skills/ employment

- Scotland has a historical, **economic necessity to attract migrants** for labour.
- The Scottish Parliament's **Devolution (Further Powers) Committee** took evidence on post study work visas in January 2016.
- **Skilled potential of refugees is generally not being exploited**. The 'bridges' programme aims to help professionals find appropriate work through language training, cross-checking skills etc.
- **Qualification recognition** is still a big issue.
- The asylum process in itself is a **barrier to skills exploitation**, as skills and knowledge atrophy and degrade over time.
- There are specific programme for particular areas of work, e.g. doctors. Medicine is more straightforward because medical training is most likely to be undertaken in English around the world.
- As well as professionals, need support for **unskilled refugees**.
- Biggest problems relate to **understanding of the UK jobs market** as people have a different cultural understanding of employment and recruitment. Support with CV writing, applying for job, etc.

UK Government policy



- Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016 ‘**reaching into devolved areas** more and more’.
- There is a perception that the **UK Government is disinterested in integration**.
- SRC pushing for **devolution of asylum support**.
- Questions over what **EU rights will be integrated into domestic law** – detention, qualifications, etc
- Prof Nick Gill at Exeter University is conducting research into asylum seekers moving between detention centres. More info in the parliamentary Inquiry into immigration detention.
- The **driver of the SVPRS is to hit 20,000 target**, not necessarily the quality of resettlement. Matching people to rural/urban areas is not a priority, which means that people often move straight away.

Morning session 2: round table discussions

Good practice

- Maryhill Integration Network provides a vast range of integration activities including: choirs, dancing, family support, CAB advice surgeries, ESOL etc. The vast majority are volunteer-run. Received direct funding from Scottish Government and Glasgow Council.
- Refugee Women’s Strategy Group works together to represent the views of refugee and asylum seeking women to key decision makers and service providers in order to influence the policy and practices that affect their lives.
- The Geneva-based Oak Foundation is a key resource for funding.

Scottish Government approach

- The **process of creating phase 2 of the New Scots strategy** is really important – over 200 people at a conference recently.
- Use of **Alison Strang’s ‘Indicators of integration’ report** from 2008 aimed to:
 - investigate different **understandings of ‘integration’** as a concept;
 - establish a framework for a **common understanding of ‘integration’** that can be used by those working in the field of refugee integration in the UK; and
 - **design the framework for use by local projects and policy makers** to assist them with the planning and evaluation of services for refugees.
- Some criticism of the New Scots strategy that its actions are ‘too detailed’.
- **Asylum accommodation** is a big issue in Scotland too – housing providers are big companies with little interest in quality.
- Devolved administrations need to ‘**vocalise the shared responsibility for dispersal**’.
- Housing options need to be **presented early during/prior to the 28 day ‘move on’ period** so that homelessness is averted.
- **Housing and employment are closely linked** – people move where there are jobs, and this affects the availability of housing.

Destitution

- It’s **difficult to know how big the destitution problem** is, because people are ‘off grid’.
- There needs to be more understanding about ‘**no recourse to public funds**’ and what this means in terms of human rights – does it mean that SG can’t provide funding for destitution?
- **Preventing destitution** takes pressure off health and social services.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

- Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act ensures that all children who arrive in Scotland alone and separated from their families **have the right to an independent ‘Guardian’ to advise and assist them**.
- Most UASC are in **supported care rather the foster care**.



- **Social services are in charge of age assessments.** Under/over 18 determines level of Home Office responsibility. Wrong age assessments damage credibility. If they are deemed over 18 they are still eligible for asylum support, accommodation.

Skills/ employment

- ESOL provision needs to be tailored for women.

UK Government policy

- There is now a **‘two-tier’ asylum process** with the SVPRS.
- Overall feeling that there’s a **need to align the different schemes and routes** in asylum process.
- **Funding for SVPRS not a concern for Scottish local authorities** – provided by the Home Office.

Afternoon session 1: Third sector organisations (One Refugee Support, City of Sanctuary, Re-Act and The Welcoming)

- One Refugee Support **works with schools to challenge negative attitudes** about refugees.
- City of Sanctuary is undertaking a **mapping exercise to share information** about different services around Edinburgh.
- The Welcoming **provides tailored ESOL (such as ‘English for driving lessons’, ‘English for computing’ etc)** and home energy efficiency advice.
- Utilising **settled communities of refugees** to volunteer.
- **Consistency is important to newly-arrived refugees** – sustainable, regular and long term services.
- There are **transport** issues for people settled outside the city.
- The refugee issue is not being **discussed in schools as standard**, even with the current crisis.
- One Refugee Support is **preparing a booklet for children to take home**.

Afternoon session 2: Alexandra Devoy, Policy Manager- Corporate Parenting, Scottish Government

- SG’s role is to provide the **‘enabling statutory environment’** for COSLA and local authorities to coordinate the resettlement of refugees. Home Office runs SVPRS directly with LAs but SG has role in ensuring that everything is legal and people are supported.
- Guardianship Service started in 2010 as a pilot scheme. Independent review found positive impact. It **costs £200,000 a year to support 200 children** – Scottish Government are **under a duty to provide a guardian** who is qualified to level 2 UISC.
- UASC in Scotland cared for under **kinship model**.
- SG are investigating **how cost burden can be reduced while level of care is maintained**.
- SG **revisiting Children (Scotland) Act** to look at what defines a **‘looked after child’** in terms of UASC.
- There is **tailored training for foster families** with UASC.
- UK **Immigration Act** needs **Scottish regulations** to put National Transfer Programme on statutory footing from next year – same in Wales?

Afternoon session 3: Christina McKelvie MSP, Chair of the Scottish Parliament’s Equalities and Human Rights Committee

- Private discussion on committee work programmes and the potential for future collaboration.



Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
ELGC(5)-13-16 Papur 8/ Paper 8

John Griffiths AC / AM

Chair

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

December 2016

Dear John

Your letter of 30 September addressed to Carl Sargeant AM, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, regarding the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee meeting on 21 September, has been passed to me to reply to in relation to the Building Regulations Part L query, which falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

The commitment to a further review of Part L was made in 2013 under the last administration. It is my intention, once the current building regulations sustainability review is complete, to turn my attention to Part L building on the changes introduced in 2014. I anticipate this work will start towards the middle of 2017.

Our Part L activities currently centre on the EU Energy Performance in Buildings Directive 2010 (Recast) and the requirement to set standards at a cost optimal level or better. The European Commission report into the cost optimality of member state standards (based on 2010 standards) was published in Parliament 10 October 2016. At the time of assessment (2012), it indicated the UK standards, taken as a whole, were at cost optimal levels or better.

Analysis of our current energy efficiency standards (Part L 2014) is currently being prepared for the second report on cost optimality. This will inform how our standards may have to change if required to meet the EU Directive requirement for 'nearly zero energy' new buildings by 2020 (2018 for the public sector). At this point in time, the Directive requirement to ensure new buildings occupied and owned by public authorities are nearly zero energy' by the end of 2018 remains binding.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Looking at energy and emissions more broadly, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets a legal target of reducing emissions by a minimum of 80% of baseline levels by 2050 and places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to set a series of interim targets (for 2020, 2030 and 2040) and carbon budgets. A report must be published for each budgetary period setting out the proposals and policies for meeting the carbon budget for every period.

The built environment sector is an area where I want to see further decarbonisation, however, in doing this we need to also recognise the economic importance of providing additional homes in Wales. Raising standards must be done in a cost effective way, and we will work with the industry to ensure we balance the need to reduce energy use in new housing with the need to meet new housing demand.

Whilst progressively raising required standards of performance is important, efforts also need to be directed at ensuring what is built matches what is designed. Work by the Zero Carbon Hub has identified a gap between design and as-built energy performance. (Further information can be found on the following weblink: <http://www.zerocarbonhub.org/current-projects/performance-gap>). We will continue to engage with the house building industry over efforts to reduce such gaps.

Regards

Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

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Agenda Item 9

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