



Supporting  
people seeking  
sanctuary in  
*Wales*

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# Welcome

## Croeso



Wales has a long and proud history of offering refuge to people fleeing conflict.

As a country that prides itself on the notion of Croeso (our welcome), it's deeply embedded in us through our sense of community to take in and support those that need a bit of help in their time of need.

The idea for the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund started a while back when it was identified that people fleeing the war in Afghanistan and arriving in Wales needed a lot more support than was being provided. We were in the process of setting up this fund when war broke out in Ukraine and it became clear that the support needed was going to be much more than originally envisaged.

Rather than establishing a fund addressing just the immediate need, Community Foundation Wales always aims to take a longer term view in establishing funding solutions for Welsh communities.

So the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund was set up as an endowment fund, supporting the needs of people seeking sanctuary today whilst ensuring that this support continues to be available in the future.

The fund was established after a thorough listening process and has been shaped by the views of the charities working in this sector and the people who they support.

We are very grateful to all the supporters of the fund – our donors who have made this happen, and the partners who are supporting people on the ground and making change happen.

Diolch,

*Richard Williams*

**Chief Executive**

# A Nation of Sanctuary



Wales has a long history of supporting refugees and asylum seekers, including most recently those from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Syria.

In 2019, the Welsh Government declared that Wales would become the world's first 'Nation of Sanctuary'. The City of Sanctuary Movement prefers to use the term 'people seeking sanctuary' in place of refugees and asylum seekers in most contexts, as this focusses on people first as opposed to their immigration status.

It emphasises that people are seeking sanctuary (safety and protection), not specifically asylum and so has a broader application. The term was vital when referring to those fleeing from the most recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine, when safety and protection was the number one priority of those arriving in the UK.

## Refugee

A person outside of their country, who has a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. They are unable or unwilling to return there, for fear of persecution.

## Asylum seeker

A person who has crossed an international border in search of protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been decided. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker.

As the news of the conflict in Afghanistan broke in August 2021, the Welsh Government's Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt, issued a statement outlining "a distinctive Welsh response to the Afghanistan evacuation", with Welsh public authorities working "flat out to ensure we play a full part" in the UK response.

Within seven months, the Russian attack on Ukraine has caused the displacement of many tens of thousands of Ukrainian people from their homes. Sophie Howe, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales at the time, said: "We are all devastated by the tragic events unfolding in Ukraine and it's imperative we do everything we possibly can to help those that have been put in such a perilous and heart-breaking situation."

# Launching the appeal



The incursion in Afghanistan and the news of Russian forces invading Ukraine, are just two examples from recent times when people from across the world have been forced to flee at short notice, without their possessions and with no idea what faces them on their journey ahead.

In response to the urgent needs of people displaced by these conflicts and arriving in Wales, alongside those already here, Community Foundation Wales set up the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund.

In March 2022, we launched an appeal for donations from the public as well as from the private and third sector, to support organisations working with those seeking sanctuary in Wales, both now and in the future.

Jane Hutt, Minister for Social Justice at Welsh Government, very quickly recognised the immediate and escalating need and, on behalf of Welsh Government, made a gift of £1m to the fund.

Talking about the impact of the fund, Jane Hutt said:

“

When we launched our Nation of Sanctuary vision in 2019, we hoped to inspire many others to join us on the journey towards a more inclusive society. The establishment of the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund and the grants awarded demonstrate this collaborative vision. These projects will greatly benefit people seeking sanctuary and their host communities across Wales.

”

The appeal saw an outpouring of generosity across all parts of Wales, from both individuals and organisations.

The fund received generous donations from Moondance Foundation, the LNB Fund, British Red Cross, Masonic Charitable Fund and Gwendoline and Margaret Davies Charity.



“ The Gwendoline and Margaret Davies Charity strongly endorses the aims of the Croeso Fund, and believes that Wales should continue in its long tradition of offering sanctuary to those fleeing conflict around the world. ”

Support was also received from churches across Wales, including Saint Peters Church in Pontardawe, Knighton and District Refugee Support Group, and the Village and Community of Llantrisant Fawr.



Staff from the Senedd and Welsh Government held a fundraising football match and raised £1,105 for the fund.

# Shaping the fund

A proportion of the money raised for the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund was given in grants to charities, community groups and organisations working with people displaced by conflict who have recently arrived in Wales.

The rest of the funding has been allocated to the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Endowment Fund to enable us to respond with immediacy in the aftermath of a disaster like a war, but also to ensure those affected by future conflicts can receive assistance.

To ensure the funding immediately available to organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers went where it was really needed, we set up a survey to consult with Welsh organisations directly supporting people displaced by conflict and seeking sanctuary to assess their immediate and ongoing needs.

## Consulting the sector

The learning from the survey was incredibly valuable and highlighted the need for increased capacity within established organisations, already embedded in work with people seeking sanctuary, who were experiencing a massive increase in demand on their service.

It also highlighted the importance of supporting groups that understand the needs of people who had had traumatic experiences, who may have left loved ones and who may need the support of interpreters and specialist therapeutic care to help them settle into their new life and begin their journeys of recovery.

## Shaping the criteria

It was important that this fund was able to add value to other funding available so it was critical to avoid duplication and to direct funding to where there was evidence of gaps in provision, or insufficient funding available to meet an increasing need.

# Launching the fund

Responses to the survey informed us that funding was needed for groups that were providing services to:

## Increase the capacity

of organisations supporting people seeking sanctuary to integrate within their local communities to build a stronger sense of belonging.

## Address the trauma

faced by people seeking sanctuary by providing emotional support to improve mental health and well-being.



## The application process

All applications were assessed by our experienced grants officers with due diligence checks undertaken on all applicants as well as assessment visits to applicants applying for three year funding.

## A panel of experts

A grant panel of people with lived experience, experience of working in the Welsh voluntary sector and first-hand knowledge and understand of the needs of with people seeking sanctuary, were recruited to help with making recommendations to fund applications that were then ratified by the trustees of Community Foundation Wales.





# Connecting through song

The Oasis One World Choir (OOWC) connects people seeking sanctuary in Cardiff through song.

The OOWC has provided a lifeline for a diverse group of refugees and asylum seekers representing over 30 nationalities, many of whom are faced with restarting their lives in a new country and language.

OOWC received funding towards their Sanctuary Voices and Grooves project to increase opportunities for more people to take part in their singing, songwriting, dance and movement workshops; allowing them to make new friends and build a community together.

“ You can feel the magic as you walk into the room, a pocket-sized battery of songs and rhythms from around the world. Different languages and cultures – it's electric. The world coming closer.



# Creating a sense of *belonging*

“

We have a place to come now to be with other people and feel part of something.

”

UARE UK provide practical and emotional support to help asylum seekers and refugees to feel welcome, supported and safe.

They received a grant from the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund to help fund a number of new initiatives to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers in the Wrexham area.

As well as providing practical help such as English lessons, food and clothing, their new 'Home' hub also provides a place for refugees and asylum seekers to come together over food and music to reduce isolation, help with integration, learn about each other's cultural heritage and make new friends in a safe space.

UARE UK also set up a No More Missing Out Fund to provide opportunities for children of asylum-seeking families to have the same experiences as their peers, helping them to fit in and feel a sense of belonging.

It has already helped to fund trips to the seaside, zoo and cinema for families who would otherwise not have the opportunity to visit these places.



# Schools of *sanctuary*

City of Sanctuary has a network of 13 volunteer led community groups across Wales, supporting people seeking sanctuary to integrate into their local community and foster a sense of belonging.

They received funding towards employing a Coordinator to support collaboration across the network of groups. One of the aims of this role was to support the Schools of Sanctuary programme.

Pembroke Dock Community School's journey to becoming a School of Sanctuary was driven by the arrival of a Ukrainian family who joined their school and the small number of students who had fled war.

They became the first School of Sanctuary in Pembrokeshire by prioritising and investing in staff training to ensure refugee students' needs are effectively supported.

The whole staff team at Pembroke Dock engaged in training, ranging from trauma-informed practice and supporting students with English as an Additional Language, to understanding military conflict and its impact on children. The school also reviewed the admissions process and EAL provision to better support sanctuary seeking families.

“ The school staff have helped me to feel supported and safe arriving in Wales as a single parent. ”



# Providing a safe space

Oasis Cardiff received funding from the Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund to bolster their capacity and ensure that visitors to their centre have access to both practical and emotional support.

Adding to their Triage team has enabled them to continue to offer a warm welcome to the increasing number of visitors to their centre such as Annie (not her real name). Annie, along with her young son, was placed in accommodation in Cardiff but due to her anxiety found it very difficult to leave her room.

When Annie arrived at Oasis, she felt lonely and overwhelmed and her son was quiet and withdrawn. A Triage Officer at Oasis spent time with Annie, listening to her and reassuring her that she was in a safe place.

The Triage Officer offered practical advice on schools for her son and helped her to set up a solicitor appointment. She was also added to the Oasis WhatsApp groups to receive information on social outings and activities. She was given a pack of women's toiletries and some food for her son, and encouraged to return the next day.

Annie left Oasis feeling much calmer, and grateful for the empathy she received. She was happy to see, that when they arrived the next day, her son felt comfortable enough to play and interact with other children.

“ I am so grateful for all of the support I have received; I feel more relaxed and happier and now have hope for a more positive future for my son and myself. ”



# The story of the fund so far in numbers



Received donations of

**£1,255,265**



**£700,000**

put into endowment to support future needs of people seeking sanctuary in Wales



Grants totalling

**£1,549,300**

applied for from 17 groups across Wales



**£455,869**

awarded in grants



**7** groups

**3** multiyear grants



Supported

**2,615**

people seeking sanctuary in Wales



**272**

volunteers, many of whom are people seeking sanctuary

# There is still so much more to do



What this report makes clear is that, whilst we have received a huge amount of donations already to support displaced people, the demand for funding is still very high.

We were unable to support a number of projects that are also doing great work in supporting people seeking sanctuary and trying to build a new life in Wales.

It's our sincere hope that this report will encourage other supporters to consider how they can play a part in ensuring displaced people who arrive in Wales receive the help they need to recover, rebuild and, in the case of the many Ukrainians forced to flee due to war, return to their home.

Your support is needed now, more than ever.

To find out how you can further support the Nation of Sanctuary fund, please get in touch.

Diolch,

*Katy Hales*

**Director of Philanthropy**



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