

## Cylchlythyr | Circular

# Supporting asylum seekers and refugees in higher education in Wales: HEFCW audit including practice case studies

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This circular provides a summary of, and examples of practice about, how universities in Wales support asylum seekers and refugees.

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## Introduction

1. This information circular provides an audit of support for asylum seekers and refugees in higher education (HE) in Wales, including examples of practice.
2. This publication responds to the Welsh Government's [Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan](#) (2019) action point that it will: '*work with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Universities and their partners to audit and publish practice on supporting refugees and asylum seekers.*' (p26)
3. The aims of the *Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan (Nation of Sanctuary Plan)* include ensuring '*refugees and asylum seekers can access educational opportunities, including language skills, to help them rebuild their lives and fulfil their potential*'.
4. In this information circular we use the terms 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' as they relate to the immigration status of individuals. We use the definitions set out in Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary Plan. These definitions align with the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.<sup>1</sup>
5. In December 2019, HEFCW published consultation circular ([W19/44HE](#)) and invited case studies from universities about their support for asylum seekers and refugees. We received nine responses and sixteen case studies. These case studies are included in this circular. The practice case studies illustrate a range of support available in HE and should not be read as implying that similar provision is not available at other universities.
6. Universities' support for asylum seeker and refugee staff and students contributes to a range of Welsh Government, HEFCW and institutional priorities, including but not limited to:
  - a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities, in line with the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) and the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(2011\)](#);
  - the goals of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), in particular 'a more equal Wales', 'a Wales of cohesive communities' and 'a globally responsible Wales';
  - equality of opportunity and the promotion of HE: the fee and access plan pillars, as set out in the [Higher Education \(Wales\) Act \(2015\)](#);
  - civic mission priorities, including as they relate to active citizenship;
  - promoting fair admissions and fair recruitment practices;
  - widening access to, through and beyond HE;
  - enhancing the student experience;
  - supporting well-being and health in higher education for students and staff;

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<sup>1</sup> [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/nation-of-sanctuary-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/nation-of-sanctuary-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan_0.pdf) (p.5).

- tackling violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence against women; and
  - tackling identity-based violence and harassment.
7. In addition to responding to the Welsh Government's *Nation of Sanctuary Plan* commitments, the information and practice in this circular will contribute to further developing universities' strategic equality planning and delivery plans, widening access strategies, well-being and health strategies and fee and access plans which prioritise equality of opportunity and the promotion of HE.

## Background

8. In the United Kingdom, Wales is the only nation that has developed a strategy that includes measures to support asylum seekers and refugees in higher education. In 2018, the Welsh Government also consulted on a revised refugee and asylum seeker plan which continues to include the priority of increasing opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to access further and higher education. The outcomes have informed the [Nation of Sanctuary Plan](#). The Nation of Sanctuary Plan aligns with the four [Welsh Government's Taking Wales Forward 2016-21](#) priorities: prosperous and secure; healthy and active; ambitious and learning; united and connected.
9. The UK and Wales legislation related to asylum seekers and refugees is attached at **Annex A**.
10. The *Nation of Sanctuary Plan* sets out the following Welsh Government actions to increase opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to access further and higher education:
- i. ensure further education and higher education institutions provide information, advice and guidance to facilitate the application process and financial support available;
  - ii. work towards changes to the Education Maintenance Allowance and Financial Contingency Fund to enable asylum seekers to be eligible from the September 2020<sup>2</sup>;
  - iii. ensure refugees continue to be eligible for student support funding as 'home students' through Student Finance Wales, as well as exploring potential eligibility for asylum seekers<sup>3</sup>;
  - iv. work with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Universities and their partners to audit and publish practice on supporting refugees and asylum seekers; and

<sup>2</sup> Developments are ongoing to enable this action.

<sup>3</sup> [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/practitioners/undergraduate-students/part-time/eligibility](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/practitioners/undergraduate-students/part-time/eligibility)

- v. work with the Sanctuary in Higher Education Group (Higher Education 'Widening Access' teams) to identify opportunities to increase participation.

11. To support these aims:

- universities continue to provide information, advice and guidance, through various networks, facilities and supporting mechanisms, to widen access to higher education;
- HEFCW is working with universities to support refugees and asylum seekers as an under-represented group in higher education, including through this audit and collation of practice studies and its inclusion of these students in its fee and access planning [guidance](#);
- several institutions make reference to refugees (and asylum seekers) as part of the [Fee and Access Plans](#), as an under-represented group with a key focus on supporting equality of opportunity and promoting HE, including through providing access to student funding support.

### Current position

12. HEFCW's audit has taken account of the findings in [the \*Integrating Asylum Seekers and Refugees Education and Training Eurydice report National Policies and Measures into Higher Education in Europe report 2019\*](#). The report highlighted that a substantial proportion of first-time asylum seekers were between the ages of 18 -34, that is, the age-closely associated with studying in HE for the first time. These data indicate that many adult refugee and asylum seekers are of an age where they may consider HE.
13. HEFCW's Fee and Access Plan [guidance](#) encourages universities to consider attracting and retaining groups under-represented in HE that face barriers in accessing, progressing and succeeding in HE. Refugees and asylum seekers are under-represented in HE.
14. This audit of universities' support for asylum seekers and refugees has identified the following types of activity:
- understanding the learner voice and environment;
  - taking a whole system approach to working with asylum seekers and refugees;
  - providing specific welcome and introductory programmes;
  - operating recognition of prior learning processes;
  - supporting English language programmes;
  - providing bridging programmes;
  - offering guidance and counselling services;
  - making available financial support;
  - supporting employability following graduation; and
  - supporting staff.

15. The practice studies included in this publication, although provided under one heading, may contribute to more than one heading.

#### Understanding the learner voice and environment

16. Widening access teams were often identified by universities as a first point of contact or main source of support for refugees and asylum seekers. The range of services provided included promoting higher education, providing information, advice and guidance, including about the applications and admissions processes, working collaboratively with local communities and third sector organisations and networks, and engaging with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and asylum seeker and refugee communities.

#### **Aberystwyth University**

The University supports asylum seekers and refugees through community-based and collaborative work. Since 2016, the institution has run a Coffee and Conversation group. The group serves two purposes. It facilitates community integration by bringing together refugees and non-refugees from the local community over coffee and provides an opportunity for refugees to meet with Red Cross workers in an informal setting to discuss any issues they may have. As well as being social occasions, the group provide a setting for informal English conversation practice and the University provides prepared worksheets of varying complexity, covering basic language and conversational English. The Red Cross has rolled out the Coffee and Conversation model across the UK as a helpful way to promote community integration and meet the needs of refugee populations.

17. Universities have been creating networks of practice to inform their support for asylum seekers and refugees. The University of South Wales' Students' Union was also exploring its role in supporting inclusivity across campuses and ensuring it represented its diverse student populations.

#### **University of South Wales (USW)**

In 2019, the then recently formed USW Student Action for Refugees (STAR) society at USW began a weekly conversation club. The conversation club not only provides a safe, undemanding space for migrants to practice English, but enables refugees to meet with students (both international and UK based). Through these classes, university students get to know people from their wider community from different backgrounds. What is more, the USW students are learning valuable communication, presentation and organisational skills.

## Taking a whole system approach to working with asylum seekers and refugees

18. Two Welsh universities, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of South Wales are [Universities of Sanctuary](#), and a further four universities are considering applying to become Universities of Sanctuary to strengthen their commitment to asylum seekers and refugees<sup>4</sup>. *Universities of Sanctuary* commit to creating a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary within, and beyond their campuses. As part of the pledge to becoming Universities of Sanctuary, these universities have committed to contributing towards the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) goal of 15% of refugees having access to higher education worldwide by 2030.
19. Third sector and other organisations, including the [Welsh Refugee Council](#), [Displaced People in Action](#), the [Welsh Refugee Coalition](#) and [BAWSO](#) (providing specialist services for BME communities), have worked with universities to promote opportunities in higher education for asylum seekers and refugees. The University of South Wales has established 'refugee champions', to discuss refugee-related issues and work with 'sanctuary seekers' to support and promote issues surrounding forced migrant access to HE. The Vice-Chancellor, along with other members of staff, have also confirmed support for this work during the [launch](#) of these roles.

### **University of South Wales**

A number of staff interested in, and working with, forced migrants, came together as an informal working group. In 2017, the group began working together to facilitate two sanctuary schemes to support asylum seekers and refugees in HE. Staff from across the University:

- identified ways to improve the university's engagement with asylum seekers and refugees;
- explored new ways to promote higher education study;
- supported refugee applicants during the application and admissions process;
- assessed applicants' linguistic needs;
- provided information about available financial support.

The developments have become part of the University's ways of working and take a 'whole system' approach to supporting refugees to access and succeed in higher education.

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of publication.

### Providing specific welcome and introductory programmes

20. Free taster sessions have also been identified as a helpful introduction to HE study, along with specific widening access activity such as creative writing workshops and photography which provides opportunities for self-expression. Taster sessions that relate to extra-curricular activities, hobbies and employment have proved successful as they focus on activities already familiar to learners.

#### **University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

The University offered a Creative Portfolio Workshop for a group of local women asylum seekers. The workshop included printmaking, crafts-based jewelry-making and photography opportunities. The women developed and disseminated the skills they learnt by running a pop-up shop at a 'Creative Bubble' space, around Christmas 2019, selling handmade items and running a pop-up card making workshop to raise funds for their project.

The University's College of Art has continued to work with the local Women's Asylum Group by providing workshop support for the Group's fashion show and accompanying exhibition at the Grand Theatre, Swansea. The women worked in the photography studios to produce images for the exhibition and collaborated with an illustration graduate to design and produce posters and invitations for the event.

### Operating recognition of prior learning processes

21. Some asylum seekers might not have the appropriate documentation to support their higher education application.
22. The [UK National Recognition Information Centre](#) (UK NARIC) is the National Agency responsible for providing information and advice on academic qualifications from all over the world. The UK NARIC can provide comparison statements for people with international qualifications planning to study in the UK. The statements can be used to support an application to higher education.



### **Cardiff University**

Sayid is a refugee who fled to the UK from the Syrian war, took part in the [‘Live Local, Learn Local’](#) enterprise module and the [Enactus national competition](#) in London. Sayid wanted to pursue a Master’s level qualification, but did not have the required English Language qualifications. The Live Local, Learn Local team helped Sayid to submit a request to the University to fund an English foundation course to allow him to continue his studies. Sayid progressed to an MSc in Strategic Marketing and Entrepreneurship and has since completed his studies with Distinction.

Sayid says: ‘it [the experience of being on the course] was brilliant, excellent to work with inspiring young students. They were very, very kind with us and they were listening to me when I was talking. I think they respect us and that’s really amazing ... [the course] was a really enjoyable experience.’

23. In 2002, [Health Education and Improvement Wales](#) established the [Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors and Dentists Group](#) (WARD) in order to address education and training needs of refugee/ asylum seeker doctors in Wales and to meet the needs the needs of labour market.
24. The Welsh Government has identified that facilitating doctors seeking sanctuary to gain General Medical Council accreditation can mutually benefit both the refugee doctors and assist in maintaining future doctors numbers in Wales.

### **Supporting English language programmes**

25. Several universities delivered English language summer schools to improve academic English prior to enrolment on higher education courses for asylum seekers and refugees. The [Welsh Refugee Council](#) has collaborated with the University of South Wales to form an award-winning programme to design and deliver English language classes for forced migrants at the Welsh Refugee Council’s offices in Cardiff.
26. Students on relevant teacher training courses at Cardiff Metropolitan University are encouraged to work collaboratively with local communities to deliver English language courses for asylum seekers and refugees.



### **University of South Wales**

In summer 2019, the [First Campus, the HEFCW-funded Reaching Wider Partnership](#) ran its largest ever summer school for asylum seekers and refugees. “Aspire”, the summer school, looks to help forced migrants improve their language competency, as well as academic skills such as creative writing or translation. The summer school received extremely positive feedback. Staff from the University of South Wales’ Sanctuary group – in collaboration with the Welsh Refugee Council and the Welsh Refugee Coalition, plan to will work with First Campus in designing and publicising future summer schools. The summer school provided an opportunity for forced migrants to learn about access to higher education in the UK and more locally, to learn about the process of applying to university in Wales and the higher education support available to asylum seekers and refugees.

### **Cardiff University**

Khalid, a 23 year old civil engineer from Khartoum, Sudan, previously worked as a teaching assistant and site engineer before coming to the UK. With aspirations to become a professional designer, Khalid enrolled on the university’s Aspire summer school to improving his academic English and his chances of a university place. His ambition was to become a professional designer. Having successfully completed the summer school, Khalid received offers of a place on several MSc Structural Engineering programmes. Speaking ahead of the graduation ceremony, Khalid said: “The Aspire Summer School has been an enormous help in allowing me to improve my English, and a huge boost to my confidence. Thanks to the friendly and accommodating tutors, I now feel comfortable working with academic material through the English language. I’m now looking forward to taking the next steps in my career as a designer and in building a new future for myself.”

27. Free Welsh language courses have also been made available through the [National Centre for Learning Welsh](#), to provide opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to engage with Welsh culture and foster close ties with communities.

## Providing bridging programmes

28. Some universities highlighted the significant benefits of distance learning for some refugees given that they might be required to move location during the asylum process. Some universities provide freely available educational resources specifically for asylum seekers and refugees to help students continue their studies wherever they are base. The Open University's [Open Learn resources](#) are one online learning resource. However, universities recognised that the costs of, and access to, broadband and/or hardware sometimes presented barriers to study.

### **The Open University**

The Open University recognised the need to improve further its online learning for refugees and asylum seekers. The Open University's Refugees' Educational Resources (REfER) project gathered data from 26 organisations supporting refugees across the UK, including the Welsh Refugee Council. One of the outcomes of the project was a resource, with brief descriptions of, and links to, over 500 relevant free, online resources. These online materials include topics such as English language skills, digital literacy skills and study skills. Open University staff were given an understanding of the migration legislation as it relates to the different nations of the UK, guidelines for working in the voluntary sector, and resources on inclusion and equality.

The project found that the main challenges for asylum seekers and refugees in accessing and using existing resources include the cost of getting online, lack of experience in learning online, lack of trust in the internet, linguistic, cultural and technical barriers and scepticism about the value of online learning. The report suggested the following ways of overcoming these barriers:

- involving refugees and asylum seekers in decision-making and planning of their future;
- developing the Resources Audit further in a format that is easily accessible by smartphone;
- curating themed collections of relevance to these communities on the University's OpenLearn Create platform; and
- providing recognition of skills in the form of badges and certificates.

## Offering guidance and counselling services

29. Promoting higher education to asylum seekers and refugees has been integrated into several universities' civic mission activities around information, advice and engaging with the wider communities.

30. By providing opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees in higher education, universities have identified challenges, including adverse childhood experiences and other trauma, experienced by these students and staff, which enabled them to take steps to providing support and minimise barriers to HE, where possible. This understanding of the needs of staff and students has informed universities' practices, including as they relate to providing relevant information, advice and guidance.
31. Universities provided information about studying in higher education through a mix of open days, websites and student support for asylum seekers and refugees. Several universities provided applicants and students with bespoke guidance, advice and information on topics including immigration, settlement process applications, financial support, resources and accommodation. In some cases, this information was provided in different languages. The general support packages available varied by university.

### **Bangor University**

The University's mental health advisers supported a student who was an asylum seeker who had experienced of trauma in their home country and had ongoing concerns about their family still in their home country. The student was supported to consider options available to them and the student chose to suspend their studies for the time being to focus on their well-being and mental health.

### **One University**

One of the University's international students needed support because personal information about the student's sexuality had been reported to the family in their home country where homosexuality is not socially accepted and criminalised. The family stopped the students' funding and cut off all ties as well as making death threats if the student returned home. The University's support services supported the student with advice on the practicalities of continuing to study, fee payment and immigration advice. The student was also provided with support from the Hardship Fund to help with living costs. Following this support, the student decided to temporarily withdraw from studies and apply for asylum. The University helped with the process and the application was successful. The student has now settled in the UK, with refugee immigration status, and intends to return to higher education study.

### **Wrexham Glyndŵr University**

The University provided support for a student during an appeal where their specific funding ended due to their change in status as a refugee. The support provided ensured that all regulations were clear and fully understood by the student, resulting in a positive outcome.

## Making available financial support

32. Universities take account of the eligibility criteria set out by [Student Finance Wales](#) for Welsh Government student fees. Those eligible include: a refugee, or relative of one; under Humanitarian Protection, or a relative of someone under Humanitarian Protection. Therefore, universities recognise those listed as 'home students' as not being subject to the same fee levels as 'international students'.
33. Bursaries and other financial support are a widespread form of support for asylum seekers and refugees in higher education. These range from support for their tuition fees, free travel and food on campus, pastoral support, discounted accommodation and resources such as laptops. Universities consider that these incentives support retention as they recognise the financial challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees.

### **Swansea University**

A student attended a [Money@CampusLife](#) drop-in session at the start of term with a request for information about the Hardship Fund. He explained that he was a refugee and had only recently secured new, unfurnished accommodation. The student confirmed that he was receiving support through the British Red Cross to buy second-hand furniture but he needed basic household items such as pots and pans, towels, bedding, etc. The student said that he was beginning to feel increasingly isolated and that this was having a detrimental effect on his ability to concentrate on his studies. The lack of family support in the UK made living and studying much more difficult.

The student was given funding to buy essential household items and referred for additional support which included: academic support through the Centre for Academic Success; Wellbeing Services support to discuss counselling opportunities; referral to his college student experience team and a personal tutor to discuss student experience opportunities and the availability of day-to-day pastoral support; and the support of the Students' Union to discuss opportunities to join societies of interest. All referrals were made personally to avoid the student having to navigate the campus and the student reported a sense of relief that the University reached out to him in the way it did.

## Supporting employability following graduation

34. Work placement opportunities through [GO Wales: Achieve through Work Experience](#), prioritises employability support for refugees. The programme supports the employability of young students on higher education courses in Wales who face barriers in accessing work experience and who are most at risk of not securing employment, education or training when leaving their higher education course.
35. Some case studies provided examples of how universities had enabled refugees to gain employment in Wales.

### **Cardiff Metropolitan University**

A student at the University was born in 1964 in Zimbabwe where she received primary and secondary education.

When she came to England she was determined that her children would have a good education. She was very proud when her children graduated, especially as two of them graduated with first class Masters Degrees from a Welsh university.

Her children inspired Student B to return to learning. Once they were settled, she decided to complete her education despite her family and friends telling her she was too old. With a little help, she managed to overcome barriers that had previously prevented her from achieving her goals.

One of her tutors said “Student B was committed and engaged in her efforts and receptive to feedback which she incorporated into submitting a fantastic portfolio for assessment. On top of that, she supported her fellow students with their work and encouraged them to work hard and submit [their assignments]”.

Now working hard on her studies, Student B is planning to volunteer in a youth and community setting. When she qualifies, she is planning to secure employment as a youth and community worker to inspire and empower others.

## Supporting staff

36. Several universities explicitly provide support for refugees with an academic background through their human resource departments on an individual basis and through the Council for At Risk Academics.

### **University of South Wales (USW)**

The university has been an institutional supporter of [Council for At Risk Academics](#) (CARA) for many years and has contributed to its Syrian programme that directly supports Syrian academics in exile. This programme has a number of different strands of activity including; offering Cara Fellows targeted English Language support; opportunities to develop research and teaching skills; incubation visits to the UK; and facilitation of collaborative research activities with UK based academics. USW staff have actively contributed to this programme. Staff from the Centre for International English work within the English Academic team supporting Syrians on a 1-2-1 basis honing their oral and written English language skills. In 2019/20, five academics were supported with weekly, hour-long sessions.

37. Staff at some institutions volunteer at asylum seeker and refugee charities and support groups. One institution regularly shares current staff vacancies with the [Race Council Cymru](#) to diversify its applicant pool. Another institution had employed an alumni student who was previously a refugee and student at the university.

## **Assessing the impact of our policies**

38. HEFCW undertakes impact assessment screening to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We consider the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision, within the HE sector in Wales and the potential impacts related to the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals, including our [Well-Being Objectives](#). Contact [equality@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:equality@hefcw.ac.uk) for more information about our impact assessment processes.
39. We consider that this guidance, which promotes higher education opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees in Wales will have a positive impact. We recognise that increasing the diversity of staff and students at HE providers contributes to fair and equitable places to live and study. A diverse student and staff higher education population should also facilitate economic and health and wellbeing benefits to individuals and to Wales.

40. This publication provides examples about how higher education contributes to supporting asylum seekers and refugees to play their full part as active citizens in Welsh communities. Higher education's support for asylum seekers and refugees contributes to a more equal Wales, a globally responsible Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. Further opportunities to engage diverse groups of the population with the Welsh language will benefit Welsh Government's "Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers" initiative.



## UK and Wales-specific legislation and policy development

1. The [Equality Act](#) was introduced in April 2010 and the specific public sector equality duties (Wales) in April 2011. The Wales specific duties require HEFCW, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, to publish a strategic equality plan every four years and to publish an annual equality report to evidence progress. [HEFCW's strategic equality plan 2020 to 2024](#) will continue to take account of the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.
2. [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act \(2015\)](#) ('the Act') seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act's sustainability principle is underpinned by five ways of working which require public bodies to: think long-term; work better with people and communities and each other; look to prevent problems; and take a more joined-up approach. The Act's seven well-being goals aim to, amongst other things; make Wales healthier, more equal, globally responsible and more resilient and of cohesive communities. HE work to supporting asylum seekers and refugees in HE respond to the goals and ways of working of the Act.

## Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act (2015)

3. Asylum seekers and refugees may have experienced torture and/or organised violence such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage that required them to leave their homes.<sup>5</sup> Such experiences impact on asylum seekers' and refugees' education and/or employment in HE. The Welsh Government policy developments include:
  - revisiting the recommendations of the '[Uncharted Territory: Violence against migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women in Wales](#)' report to ascertain the actions it could take with regards to HE;
  - working with stakeholders to develop a sustainable model for the provision of funding to specialist VAWDASV services, including those working with asylum seekers and refugees to ensure reliable support;
  - ensuring the needs of asylum seekers and refugees are considered within the national VAWDASV communications framework (The overarching theme for its campaign during 2018-20 is control and includes those from diverse communities such as asylum seekers and refugees);
  - directly engaging with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME<sup>6</sup>) survivors of VAWDASV, including asylum seekers and refugees, via the development

<sup>5</sup> [www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11012/cr-ld11012-e.pdf](http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11012/cr-ld11012-e.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For our data and guidance to be relevant and useful, we adopt 'BME' (Black and Minority Ethnic) as a commonly used term to ensure consistency with other public bodies and to benchmark against their data. However, we are aware of the limitations of this term and try wherever possible to put information in context, or disaggregate the data where relevant.

of [National Survivor Engagement Mechanisms](#) in 2019 which ensures the needs and experiences of survivors of acts included in VAWDASV are understood;

- taking forward a pilot in 2019 for a national survivor engagement panel, which will be developed following further engagement with survivors of VAWDASV including BME and asylum seekers and refugees;
- giving further consideration to whether the [VAWDASV National Training Framework](#) sufficiently addresses the circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees;
- rolling out VAWDASV 'Ask and Act' training to front-line professionals. This training includes information on difficulties faced by BME communities, including asylum seekers and refugees;
- providing advice and support through the 24 hour, 365 days a year [Live Fear Free Helpline](#), which incorporates 'Language Line' support.

### **Welsh Government strategies and plans**

4. [Taking Wales Forward \(2016-2021\)](#) is the Welsh Government's five year plan to drive improvement in the Welsh economy and public services, delivering a Wales which is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, united and connected. This plan takes account of Welsh Government's progress towards a Fair Society which aims to continue working with all protected groups to counter discrimination and ensure opportunities for all.
5. In August 2019, the Welsh Government published [The Education \(Student Finance\) \(Amendments to Student Eligibility\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2019](#). These regulations widen the definition of "person with leave to enter and remain". The definition now includes people granted leave to remain on the grounds of family life, in addition to those already covered, it includes:
  - people granted humanitarian protection;
  - discretionary leave; and
  - leave to remain on the grounds of private life and those granted leave outside the Rules after having been refused leave on the grounds of private life.
6. Wales, as the first 'Nation of Sanctuary', has built on the success of [City of Sanctuary](#) groups across Wales. The groups have enabled partnership working between different sectors including universities, health services and Welsh Government in order to support asylum seekers and refugees.
7. In April 2017, the National Assembly for Wales Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, published "[I used to be someone](#)", the results of its inquiry into the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. Among other things the report made recommendations that the Welsh Government should do more to help asylum seekers and refugees access education and employment.

8. Full details of any additional requirements to access student financial support is available on the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website at:
- [Wales: 'Persons with leave to enter or remain' \(humanitarian protection or discretionary leave or private life\), and family](#) [for student finance] see Category 10; and
  - ['Persons with leave to enter or remain' \(humanitarian protection or discretionary leave or private life\), and family](#) [for home fee status].<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/Government-Student-Support?q=student+finance+eligibility&ExactMatch=True#layer-6205](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/Government-Student-Support?q=student+finance+eligibility&ExactMatch=True#layer-6205)