



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-(P)/CS/0492/17

John Griffiths AM
Chair
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee,
National Assembly for Wales

9 February 2017

Dear John,

During my attendance at the Equality, Local Government, and Communities Committee on 19 January I committed to providing the Committee with further information on the work carried out with the media by the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and contact details for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, following the inspection that was carried out as part of a review of the Syrian Resettlement Programme.

The WRC currently receives Welsh Government funding via the Equality and Inclusion Grant for its Refugee Inclusion in Wales project. One of the tasks in its work plan is to 'Work with the Media to produce media programmes to promote good practice to challenge a culture of fear and discrimination against asylum seekers and refugees'. Full details have been provided by WRC and are attached as Annex A to this letter.

The main aim of this work is to create change in public perceptions, specifically relating to the reasons people seek sanctuary and the contributions they make to Wales and the UK. Greater understanding can help foster the development of asylum seekers and refugees in many areas of life and improve community cohesion.

Many journalists are not fully aware of the facts about asylum and migration and the WRC has worked with high profile media presenters, student journalists and small media houses, providing a wide range of information regarding asylum seekers to ensure accurate reporting.

Another strand is the participation of asylum seekers and refugees in media stories; the WRC provides support and coaching, where needed, to people who wish to speak to the media. This includes helping them understand their rights and responsibilities when making representations, translation support, and an understanding of the risks of using their identity for a story. This provides an opportunity for them to tell their stories in the way they wish.

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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.

The contact details for Gonzalo Vargas Llosa from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees are as follows:

UNHCR
10 Furnival Street
London
EC4A 1AB
0203 761 9500

Further to the commitments I made during the Committee session, I would like to clarify the position regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Wales. In my evidence, I stated a figure of 27 unaccompanied asylum seeking children having been resettled in Wales. This figure was derived from a number of sources and relates to the period following the closure of the Calais 'Jungle' camp. It is, therefore, very much a snapshot in time. These children have been received into Wales through the various UK Government schemes (Dubs, Dublin III and the National Transfer Scheme) for children and some of the spontaneous arrivals. Not all of these children have settled or will settle in Wales, as some will move on to other parts of the UK to be reunited with families.

It is important to note that the number of UASC in Wales changes constantly, largely due to 'spontaneous' arrivals. Work is underway to establish and maintain a data collection and reporting system to provide numbers of planned arrivals through the national schemes as well as such spontaneous arrivals. I would be happy to provide a more up to date figure, bearing in mind the continuing fluctuations, in the coming weeks.

Spontaneous arrivals of children impact significantly on some local authorities' capacity and ability to participate in the formal transfer schemes. Numerous offers of additional placements have been made, particularly in the wake of the Calais camp closure, but the Home Office has not always been able to respond quickly enough to take up these offers.

In relation to future arrivals, I cannot place a figure on expected numbers as the situation has always been and will remain fluid. Wales is dependent both on the information about arriving children being communicated in a timely fashion, and on the capacity of local authorities to provide placements at the time they are needed. As was stated in Committee, local authorities can only hold places for so long before they have to be freed up for other children in need.

In addition, I also stated that I would provide you with an update on the Welsh Government's Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant (RASM) Inclusion Service procurement. My officials have issued the award notification letters and, following a 10 day standstill period, the contract award notice will be issued. I will write a further letter to you providing the details of the successful bidder once this notice has been issued.



Carl Sargeant AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Impact of Media Activities

The Welsh Refugee Council regularly conducts activities with media houses across Wales to promote positive messages and images of asylum seekers and refugees. The main aim of this work is to create positive perceptions about people new to Wales seeking sanctuary, that can foster the development of asylum seekers and refugees in many areas of life and improved community cohesion amongst diverse groups of people in Wales.

In recent years, the Welsh Refugee Council has seen its media activities increase with the following impact:

1. Increase accurate reporting about asylum seekers and refugees in Wales

Many journalists are not fully aware of the facts about asylum and migration until they must do a media piece about the issue. In collaboration with the previous Welsh Government's marketing group for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, we produced a guide to making media representations with asylum seekers and refugees in Wales which is shared with the media upon request and is linked. We have also conducted one to one and telephone sessions with high profile media presenters, student journalists and small media houses providing them with a wide range of information about sanctuary seekers. During these sessions, we share statistics data, social issues and up to date stories about asylum seekers and refugees in Wales, with a wide range of information about asylum and migration in Wales; to ensure accurate reporting about sanctuary seekers. This has also included sharing information about the numbers of people in Wales, key issues affecting people, where to access the right people who can provide evidence for a specific topic, the asylum and refugee process, WRC's key positions on specific topic and information about how the Welsh Government supports the inclusion of people in Wales. The media outlets we have worked with include the BBC, ITV, Wales Online, the Guardian, Sky News, Cardiff Radio, the Cardiffian and Newport City Radio.

2. Development of asylum seeker and refugees' representation in media stories that affect their lives

We regularly invite [asylum seekers and refugees](#) to participate in media stories and when given permission we provide support and coaching where needed to people who wish to speak to the media. This includes helping them understand their rights and responsibilities when making representations, translation support, and better understand the risks of using their identify for a story. They are given an opportunity to tell their stories in the way they wish them to be told and in turn become the agents of the changes they would like to see when represented in the media. It also helps them better understand the expectations of the journalists, how they are being represented in the media and make the right considerations when agreeing or disagreeing to participate in the media story

This also helps with isolation and inclusion issues as people feel empowered to act and participate in the campaigning of changing perceptions about a demographic group they belong to.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-34281988> - Assma Alfashtaki's Story

3. First point of contact about sanctuary seekers by media representatives

The Welsh Refugee Council is currently the first point of contact by many journalists, student journalists and community type media houses about issues relation to migration, asylum seekers and refugees. We also used these contacts to conduct media scanning of the issues of the day to provide the programme producers with options for news topics and influence media position on specific topics relating to asylum seekers and refugees.

Cases:

- We have held meeting with Channel 4 [Andy Davies](#) providing them with a wide range of information and facts to inform on their stories relating to asylum seekers in Wales.
- We have held talks with BBC anchor [Sian Lloyd](#) discussing the issues relation age accessed asylum-seeking children and their issues and hope to develop a story around this. We are currently in the process of identifying a case study for this.
- We are currently in talks with ITV journalist [Lorna Pritchard](#) to explore developing news articles relating to issues of migration and asylum in Wales and are looking create a piece relating to inclusion in Cardiff and rest of Wales.

4. Raising awareness and changing public perceptions

The overall outcomes of this work create change in perceptions from the public specifically relating to the reasons people seek sanctuary and the contributions they make to Wales and the UK. We do this through media work, as well as by attending and giving talks at public events and functions. We gave a presentation about the refugee crisis and the impact of refugee resettlement in England and Wales to MSc Globalisation student at the University of South Wales.

We also work closely with higher education providers in Wales to offer talks on asylum and migration issues and follow up these talks with bespoke support for individual students. The impact of this work is that individuals not only increase their understanding of relevant issues but gain access to people with have lived experience of asylum seeking in Wales and ensure their interest and commitment to social inclusion is supported and encouraged.

One measure of this was our contribution to BBC Radio Wales programme which was applauded by the in-house audience dispelling myths that asylum seekers tend not to have a high level of education. Given that many refugees accessing our services have some form of qualifications up to doctorate level, we refuted these comments to a Wales-wide audience of over 400,000 and an international world service audience in the tens of millions.

Our media work during Refugee Week Wales (RWW) have created positive comments from the public at a RWW event in Cardiff citing *“Until I saw the programme about Refugee Week Wales I did not know much about asylum seekers in Wales” – member of the public at a RWW event*

5. Increase profile of the Welsh Refugee Council

The activities of our media work have created an increase in profile for the Welsh Refugee Council and this is measured through weekly and sometimes daily media request by many of the main media houses to participate in or provide information for specific programmes. We have also had increased social media engagement from members of the public as they view programmes that featured WRC. Our top Facebook post reached over 6000 people with over 200 people commenting, liking or sharing the post. We recently reach our 2K milestone with our top tweet making 4000 impressions (the number of time our tweet have been seen)

We are regularly being contacted by high-profile journalists who have interests in our work and they include the BBC Television Anchor and Radio presenter Jason Mohamed, and journalist Jenny Rees, Channel 4 news’ reported Andy Davies and ITV Wales new presenter Lorna Pritchard. Our increased profile is important not only to raise awareness of those issues important to asylum seekers and refugees but also to attract volunteers and practical support (for example, to raise funds for our hardship fund).