



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a
Chymunedau](#)

[The Equality, Local Government and
Communities Committee](#)

11/01/2017

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Public from the Remainder of the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w dystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Janet Finch–Saunders Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
John Griffiths Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Sian Gwenllian Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Bethan Jenkins Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Jenny Rathbone Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Dr Mike Chick	Prifysgol De Cymru University of South Wales
Aled Edwards	Alltudion ar Waith Displaced People in Action
Faruk Ogut	Cydgysylltydd y Prosiect Ailsefydlu, Alltudion ar Waith Resettlement Project Co-ordinator, Displaced People in Action
Alicja Zalesinska	Cyfarwyddwr, Tai Pawb Director, Tai Pawb

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Chloe Davies	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Hannah Johnson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Christopher Warner	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:15.

The meeting began at 09:15.

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **John Griffiths:** I welcome Members to this meeting of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee. Item 1 today—we have an apology from Gareth Bennett, who is not able to be with us today, and Rhianon Passmore is delayed but hopefully will join us later. Are there any declarations of interest? No.

**Ymchwiliad i Ffoaduriaid a Cheiswyr Lloches yng Nghymru:
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 7
Inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Wales: Evidence Session 7**

[2] **John Griffiths:** We will move on to item 2 on our agenda today, continuing our inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. This is evidence session 7 and we have Dr Mike Chick with us from the University of South Wales. Thank you for joining us this morning, Mike. If it's ok, we'll move straight into questions.

[3] **Dr Chick:** Yes, fine, of course.

[4] **John Griffiths:** We begin with English for speakers of other languages provision. Could you assist the committee, Mike, by providing an overview of the project that you co-ordinate at the University of South Wales, please?

[5] **Dr Chick:** Are you referring to the project with the Welsh Refugee Council or with Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Syrian resettlement programme?

[6] **John Griffiths:** With the Welsh Refugee Council, but an overview in general would be quite useful to begin with.

[7] **Dr Chick:** Yes, sure. With the Welsh Refugee Council, I train teachers as part of their university degree to become qualified ESOL teachers. Their training involves a teaching practice practicum. About three years ago, I got in touch with the Welsh Refugee Council, and we decided that we would attempt to do the teaching practicum—the actual live teaching practice—at the Welsh Refugee Council Splott offices. We started with one class to see if there was a demand, and 10 refugees and asylum seekers turned up. Three

years later now, this year, we've got over 100 refugees and asylum seekers attending classes at the refugee council each week. The classes are taught in part by learner teachers who are students at the University of South Wales, and in part by voluntary qualified ESOL teachers.

[8] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much.

[9] **Dr Chick:** Does that make sense?

[10] **John Griffiths:** It does indeed. Thanks very much for that, Mike. To follow up, again quite generally, could you tell the committee what you consider to be the biggest challenges facing asylum seekers and refugees in Wales, particularly in relation to language and integrating into our communities?

[11] **Dr Chick:** I think it's common knowledge—the Casey review last month stated that the biggest challenge, if our aim is to help refugees and asylum seekers to integrate successfully, or the biggest need, then, must be for them to be able to communicate, to have the language. So, from my perspective, language education is of course one of their greatest needs. As I said in the written report, there's much I think to commend with regard to ESOL provision in Wales, certainly in the cities—in Wrexham, Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, the FE colleges provide a comprehensive suite of ESOL classes, and yet, there is still—and I've seen this daily for the last three years—very long waiting lists, and outside of the cities, a far more patchy provision, far more ad hoc provision, because the FE colleges simply can't fund classes at each level if there aren't the students to fill up the courses.

[12] **John Griffiths:** And that's one of the ongoing and current issues at the moment, Mike, is it—that sort of demand equation?

[13] **Dr Chick:** Yes, no doubt. I'm an expert, really—knowledgeable, really, on the situation in Cardiff, and the reason that third sector organisations such as Oasis and the Welsh Refugee Council—the reason they're receiving so many, such large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers attending their ESOL courses is because there's an awful long waiting list at Cardiff and Vale College—the ESOL provision that they deliver there. It's up to a year because there's only one entry point per year, and that's September. So, if a refugee or asylum seeker arrives at any time after that, they'd have to wait up to 12 months. Hence, we have more and more students, or, sorry, language learners—refugees and asylum seekers—who need to learn the language,

turning up at the doors of the third sector providers.

[14] **John Griffiths:** Yes, I see. Okay, thanks for that, Mike. Joyce.

[15] **Jenny Rathbone:** Sorry, Chair, could I just follow up—?

[16] **John Griffiths:** On this point?

[17] **Jenny Rathbone:** On this point. Why does Cardiff and Vale only admit in September? Why can't they admit in September, January and—?

[18] **Dr Chick:** I think that's an excellent idea. I don't work for Cardiff and Vale College—

[19] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, but you've never had that conversation with them.

[20] **Dr Chick:** Yes, very much so, with colleagues at the University of South Wales and with the Welsh Refugee Council. I think there may be plans for there to be a greater number of entry points throughout the year. So, that may be something that changes. But, yes, it's a logical point, of course.

[21] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Joyce.

[22] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you. Good morning.

[23] **Dr Chick:** Good morning.

[24] **Joyce Watson:** We do have—the Welsh Government has, sorry, a refugee and asylum seeker delivery plan, and within that, there is an objective that clearly states that they want to improve the flexibility of English as a second or other language provision and that that should be realised in practice. So, you've given us what you think needs to change in one perspective, but is there anything else that you'd like to elaborate on that would improve beyond the entry point for accessing ESOL?

[25] **Dr Chick:** Yes. There's quite a lot, I'm afraid. Again, to be clear for everybody here, are we talking about the Syrian vulnerable person resettlement scheme or refugees and asylum seekers that arrive by any means?

[26] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we were talking about not particularly the Syrians, but if you have comments on both, they'd be useful.

[27] **Dr Chick:** Okay, fine. Let's see, if we take the Syrians first, I've been working with Rhondda Cynon Taf on a voluntary basis, because there's an excellent team of people working for Rhondda Cynon Taf who are responsible for the resettlement of the Syrian families. There are six families there at the moment. The majority of them, five of them, arrived in May. Part of the responsibility of Rhondda Cynon Taf, stipulated by the Home Office, is the provision of ESOL classes, for the obvious reasons of integration, access to employment and education and so on. However, the folk at Rhondda Cynon Taf aren't experienced in ESOL provision. Pontypridd doesn't have the suite of ESOL courses that Cardiff and Vale College are able to provide because of the population and history and so on. So, she, by chance, was put in touch with me, because of my experience with the Welsh Refugee Council, and was able to provide, for the last six months, a syllabus of survival ESOL classes, delivered by qualified volunteers, with no support whatsoever financially from anybody.

[28] So, with regard to the Syrians, in that respect—because I'm sure that situation was replicated in Caerphilly, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and elsewhere—I would say that funding needs to be made available for the people responsible in the local authorities to be able to access expert advice and funding to provide for teachers, so that they don't have to face that situation any longer.

[29] There was a Home Office guide, a recent Home Office report on commissioning ESOL, and it stated that there's going to be an ESOL co-ordinator for the resettled Syrian families who can work with the local authorities—the people in charge of resettling the families, who work for each local authority. I think that's a crucial—a crucial—appointment because Janine Thomas, who I worked with, didn't know where to turn and she was faced with six families.

[30] Coleg y Cymoedd in Treforest industrial estate, which has a very, very small ESOL department, just two teachers—excellent people, they're qualified and dedicated, but there was no funding for them to provide the language classes until this October. Classes have started now, but only, I think, for six hours, when the Home Office's stipulation is for at least 10. So, sorry to labour this point, but, with that, with regard to the Syrians, there needs to be a co-ordinator in place to help the local authorities and there needs to be

funding made available for those authorities that don't have large ESOL FE colleges that provide language classes at all the levels necessary. Does that make sense?

[31] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely.

[32] **Dr Chick:** That's with regard to the Syrians.

[33] **John Griffiths:** Joyce, are you pursuing this particular point further, because Janet wanted to come in?

[34] **Joyce Watson:** No, it's okay. Carry on.

[35] **John Griffiths:** Janet, do you want to come in at this point?

[36] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Thank you. Thank you, Joyce. Throughout the evidence session with us, one thing that's become really clear to me, and from evidence taken, is that there appears to be a two-tier system for the refugees.

[37] **Dr Chick:** Without a doubt.

[38] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Without a doubt.

[39] **Dr Chick:** Without a doubt, yes. Again, because of the circumstances, I've worked with both now—so, three years with the refugee council and, for the last six months, with Rhondda Cynon Taf. I assume that committee members know that the support given to the resettled Syrian families is fantastic. It really is gold standard with regard to housing and with regard to the casework provider such as the Welsh Refugee Council and Displaced People in Action. I see, day to day, the support given to them, and—.

[40] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Is there a huge disparity?

[41] **Dr Chick:** It contrasts so hugely with the folk who turn up at the Welsh Refugee Council each day, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, who are based, when they first arrive, in the Lynx Hotel—I don't know if you're familiar with the Lynx Hotel on Newport Rd—and the stories they tell and the absolute ignorance they have of who to turn to, where to go for help, the waiting lists.

[42] The ESOL provision with regard to the resettled Syrian families, I've said, is improving, especially if the Home Office commissioning guidance is followed through. Yet that's not available to the refugees and asylum seekers who aren't part of that resettlement scheme. I would like to take you down to meet some of these folk and there's interview evidence to back this up. They are desperate and, for up to 12 months, the only places they can go to access ESOL courses—English-language provision—are third sector drop-in, if you like, survival classes. Essential, but what we do—. I'm sad to say that what we have been doing with the Welsh Refugee Council is useful, it's helpful—quite possibly psychologically as much as educationally, to tell you the truth; they have somewhere to go, they have some sort of structure during their week—and yet it's not enough. It doesn't contain enough hours of language provision that, for example, we'd provide at the university, if there was a Chinese student or an Omani student who wished to begin their degree in September. Upon assessing their language levels, we would provide them with a 24-hour per week English-language course to get their linguistic competency up to speed.

[43] The refugees and asylum seekers who are based at Lynx House and who are then dispersed into Cardiff are getting perhaps four or six hours provision per week, not in a joined-up syllabus that leads to an accredited qualification, but rather in a sort of patchwork provision that deals on a survival basis rather than a professional basis. Does that make sense? I'm aware that I'm talking an awful lot about language teaching.

[44] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** You make sense to me and it just endorses what we keep hearing time and time again on access to different services and everything.

[45] **John Griffiths:** Thanks for that, Mike, and committee members have met with refugees and asylum seekers and visited third sector providers and it has been very instructive. Joyce.

[46] **Joyce Watson:** I just want to further ask where you see the responsibility lying for the provision that you've just talked about, because there is this, 'Is it UK or is it Welsh Government?'

[47] If you don't want to answer, that's fine.

[48] **Dr Chick:** As far as I understand it, education and ESOL is part of WAG's legislative power, so therefore, I guess it's the Welsh Assembly

Government's responsibility. But that's just my understanding.

09:30

[49] **Joyce Watson:** And I want to ask also about ESOL provision for those who might be even further isolated, like women and young children, and how you're managing that, because there could be real tensions within a family.

[50] **Dr Chick:** Again, it's a really good question, and it's something that—. It's an issue that we talk about both at the Welsh Refugee Council, and also with Rhondda Cynon Taf, especially women with young children—they are isolated. They are not able to access classes. If I give you a really brief example, I met with Janine Thomas, and a terrific lady called Beverley Humphries who works with the Uniting All Church in Pontypridd. We met this week because, of the six Syrian families who are living in Trefforest, Pontypridd and Tonypany, four of the ladies have children under five and haven't been attending the voluntary classes that we deliver at the church in Pontypridd. Neither have they been attending the classes at Coleg y Cymoedd on Mondays and Tuesdays, for the fact that there's nobody to look after their children. At the Welsh Refugee Council, I would say that 80 to 90 per cent of the people attending the classes are male, and it's for the same reasons—partly, I'm sure you're aware, because the majority of migrants are male, but the Welsh Refugee Council receives a lot of requests for classes for women, and we haven't been able to put these on in the past. But thanks to recent funding from the Waterloo Foundation, who have agreed to pay for a crèche, the Welsh Refugee Council is now beginning to deliver a couple of classes solely for women with children, because they're able to now pay for funding for the crèche. However, this is short term. This is only until August 2017.

[51] With regard to Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the meeting that I mentioned, the way we overcame this is simply putting out a call for more volunteer teachers who have transport. We're sending one once a week for two hours to Tonypany, and one to the house in Trefforest, and helping a third lady to attend the house with her children, in order that both ladies can receive some language instruction. I guess the picture I'm trying to paint is that it's pretty ad hoc and it's pretty desperate. An improvement to that situation would be local authorities such as Rhondda Cynon Taf—I'm sure the situation must exist in Caerphilly, Brecon, Port Talbot and elsewhere—for some sort of funding to be made available for crèche facilities, or to pay for people to take care of the children while the mothers are receiving language instruction, because, in the six months with RCT, the three years with the Welsh Refugee

Council, I've never seen the men stay at home looking after the children. I presume it's a cultural issue, but that's the way it is.

[52] **Joyce Watson:** Can I just ask a follow through, because it struck me when you were saying this? To your knowledge, do any of those authorities that you've named work together to put in maybe a joint bid to try and resolve the situation across the area, because it's a common problem you've identified? And I was just wondering whether they would work together, or whether you know that they're working together.

[53] **Dr Chick:** Again, this isn't my principal place of work, but, yes, we have spoken about this, and there are meetings, I presume organised by the Home Office, with regard to the resettlement scheme. And, again, I refer to Janine Thomas, who—. RCT are fortunate to have such a dedicated member of staff, I think. And she reports that, yes, they are facing similar issues, and yet there hasn't been any help until the recent commissioning guidelines, which suggest that she applies for funding, again, for a limited amount of time, on a first come, first served basis; this is the Home Office funding. And she, in the meeting on Monday at the university said, 'Mike, I've never completed a funding application form before'. So, again, I believe we should be helping them to a greater extent than we are at the moment.

[54] **Joyce Watson:** That's very useful, thank you.

[55] **John Griffiths:** Jenny, you wanted to come in at this stage.

[56] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to follow up on how we provide English language to people, particularly at the very basic levels. Crèche provision is really expensive, particularly if you've got very small children involved, so I just wondered why you haven't thought of—or, not you, but the people who deliver it generally—having a stay and play, where you give English language instruction to people whilst playing with their children, which benefits the children, benefits the parents, and provides those essential skills. Because you're not talking about getting to grips with the intricacies of English grammar, you're talking about knowing the English words for basic things like a toy.

[57] **Dr Chick:** Absolutely, and that's—

[58] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, I just wondered whether anybody's thought about that, because it seems to me a much more cost-effective way of dealing with

English language provision at the most basic level.

[59] **Dr Chick:** Yes. Again, let's refer to the two separate areas. With regard to Pontypridd—Rhondda Cynon Taf—there hasn't been any funding for ESOL tuition at all. The teachers who have been teaching there are all volunteers.

[60] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but there must be stay and plays going on within the community in some places.

[61] **Dr Chick:** Yes, possibly; it's not something that I—

[62] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, I appreciate that wouldn't be your expertise, but, because of the lack of funding, you have to think, 'Well, what else is available in the community that might allow us to provide informal English instruction just by the contact they'd have with other members of the community?'

[63] **Dr Chick:** I agree. That sounds perfectly logical, and I think that the two organisations that are principally tasked with this gold-standard provision for the Syrian resettled families, the Welsh Refugee Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf, would be better placed to answer that.

[64] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. But the Welsh Refugee Council also must be thinking along those lines as well. They've got to tap into what else is available in our communities.

[65] **Dr Chick:** Yes, I agree. I think, again, over the last six months, what we've been doing with regard to trying to provide some exposure to the language for the families, in the church in Pontypridd, is to provide language tuition in one of the rooms, while we've found a volunteer childminder to look after the children in an adjoining room. With regard to stay and play, I don't know anything about stay-and-play schemes, but I can see the logic in that.

[66] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, broadening the question, though, even where you are able to provide language provision—and we saw what was provided at Oasis, which was about 40 people in one room with one teacher; I'm sure she was completely excellent—obviously that isn't the only need that people have. Formal instruction is one thing, but just using language in day-to-day scenarios is obviously the other way of embedding language. So, I just wondered what thought had been given to ensuring that people—. They get some provision but there have to be other situations where they can use

whatever they've learned in the last lesson.

[67] **Dr Chick:** Yes, of course, and, as language teachers, we are very, very aware that language competency is developed through use, not through studying verb tenses or conditional tenses. And, to that extent, language classes are very much communication based. Again, if we think about the resettlement scheme, there are all sorts of actions in place that encourage the Syrians to take part in community-based activities, that is, in activities where they can use the language. So, for example, there's now a football team, they have swimming passes, they join female boxing clubs, things like this. Yet that isn't the answer to language problems. It certainly is important, it gets people in the community, but if you imagine you or me suddenly finding ourselves in an Arabic-speaking country, really it's not so easy as to say, 'Well, we'll join the local boxing club and then we'll pick up Arabic; it won't be so difficult.' It's a real tough challenge. Yes, using the language is how it's developed, but that needs to be complemented—you know, the supplement to formal education, formal language classes.

[68] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. So, in your work with the Welsh Refugee Council in Rhondda Cynon Taf, is there any concept of, 'Well, we need to provide the language classes, but we also need to provide the opportunities to speak'?

[69] **Dr Chick:** Yes. You have to bear in mind that these are volunteers—volunteers in their spare time providing these language classes. Off the top of my head, because of their dedication, there have been many trips organised, and encouragement and trips to take to the library. We've brought refugees and asylum seekers on a number of occasions here, and that was an amazing experience for them, by the way. The person who does the tour of the Assembly is a fabulous chap, because they really felt Welsh after that. They felt they were part of the community. That was one of the highlights, for me, of the last couple of years, and we'll be bringing more this spring. Yet there's a limit to what these volunteer teachers—a mother of three, teaching on a Thursday evening—can do.

[70] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[71] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Mike. Sian.

[72] **Sian Gwenllian:** Yn dilyn **Sian Gwenllian:** Following on from ymlaen o hynny, mae'n hollol amlwg that it's clear that we need to

bod angen cynyddu'r ddarpariaeth increase the provision of ESOL. dysgu Saesneg. Cyfrifoldeb pwy ydy Whose responsibility is that? Is it the o? Ai cyfrifoldeb Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government's responsibility yn y pen draw ydy o, ynteu ultimately, or the responsibility of the gyfrifoldeb Llywodraeth y Deyrnas UK Government? Because we've heard Unedig? Achos rydym ni wedi clywed just last week about the interim wythnos diwethaf yr adroddiad report on the integration of migrants interim ynglŷn ag integreiddio and asylum seekers, calling for mewnfudwyr yn nodi y dylai migrants either to have learned mewnfudwyr fod wedi dysgu Saesneg English before arriving in the UK or cyn cyrraedd y Deyrnas Unedig, neu that they should be required to eu bod nhw yn gorfod mynd i undertake ESOL classes having ddosbarthiadau ESOL ar ôl cyrraedd arrived. According to what you've yma. Nid yw hynny, yn ôl beth rydych told us, that isn't necessarily chi wedi ei ddweud, yn realistig. Ond realistic. But who should be driving pwy a ddylai fod yn gyrru'r agenda this agenda? Because it is crucially yma? Achos mae o'n hanfodol, ac important and it appears to me that mae'n ymddangos i fi nad ydym yn we're not exactly sure who's supposed to be taking the lead, and hollol siŵr pwy sydd i fod yn cymryd where the funds are to come from for yr arweiniad, ac o le mae'r cyllid i fod i ddod ar gyfer darparu'r gwersi. this provision, in terms of ESOL.

[73] **Dr Chick:** Okay. Forgive me if I ramble on this answer, okay. That to me seems to be a political question, which isn't my area of expertise. However, correct me if I'm wrong here, folks, please, but ESOL education is part of the Welsh Government's legislative powers. That's correct, is it not?

[74] **Sian Gwenllian:** It is.

[75] **Dr Chick:** Okay, so I can't see how there's any debate about that. If that's the case, then that's the case.

[76] A second point is that I have gone through the Welsh Government's policy—the 2014 policy on ESOL for Wales—and there are a lot of fine aims in this that point up the importance of language provision if our aim is to have successful integration. Then if that's the case, then it's up to the Welsh Government, I would imagine, to fund these.

[77] One further point if I may: I did listen with interest to the arguments and the language of the Casey review, and I'd be alarmed if we forced migrants and refugees and asylum seekers to attend English classes, rather

than provided the means for them to do so and encouraged them to do so. That's a personal view.

[78] **Sian Gwenllian:** Okay. That's useful.

[79] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks very much for that, Mike. Any other questions on ESOL provision? We move on, then, to access to higher education, Mike, and the first question is from Bethan Jenkins.

[80] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thanks. Obviously, as you work in the sector you will know that it's more or less intrinsically linked with ESOL in relation to some of the issues with regard to access to higher education, notwithstanding, as you mentioned in your evidence, for refugees specifically getting funding for international foundation programmes.

09:45

[81] Obviously, it seems to me that having skills in the English language is a prerequisite for them being able to apply for those programmes. Could you just explain a little bit about that particular programme in itself, and also what the barriers are at the moment for refugees who are currently trying to get onto the higher education ladder, so to speak, here in Wales?

[82] **Dr Chick:** Sure. I think it's admirable that, in Wales, we give people with refugee status the same loans and grants and access to HE courses as home students. However, the refugees may have met the academic requirements—so, they may have the equivalent of A-levels or a foundation course that enables them to qualify to get onto a degree course—but very often, because of their country's background, they don't have the linguistic requirements. Forgive me if you know these things, but international students provide a great deal of income for universities across the UK, and what we do is, we have two stipulations: the academic requirements, but also, of course, the linguistic requirements. So, in each university—Swansea, Cardiff, Cardiff Met, USW—we have comprehensive foundation programmes and what are called 'pre-sessional language programmes'. These are the intensive programmes I mentioned earlier of 25 hours a week, because we want to improve the students' language in order that they get onto the courses, so that we have international students. What we're saying to the refugees is that if you've met the academic requirements, you then qualify for the same grants and loans and subsidies that home students get, but unfortunately, if you don't meet the linguistic requirements to get on the

course, then there's no funding for you at all, we won't help you. It's almost as if we're showing with one hand and taking away with the other.

[83] **Bethan Jenkins:** They can't currently then access that intensive 25-hour—

[84] **Dr Chick:** They can pay for it, but the fees are international student fees. I did check on the fees this week before I came here, and it's something like £4,000 for 10 weeks—those 10 weeks of intensive language. The refugees we meet in Splott have got £5 a day. So, there's that barrier, if you like. Asylum seekers—I presume you're aware—are treated slightly differently. They don't qualify for home status, and neither are they able to receive funding for what are called 'pre-sessional language courses'. These aren't necessarily year-long foundation courses, but rather, courses of 10 weeks and you can have 30 or 20 or 10—and, again, Cardiff, Cardiff Met, Swansea, we all run these—depending on the student's language competency when she or he applies. So if they're almost at the level required, they do 10 weeks; if they're a long, long way from being competent enough in English to study for a degree, they do 30 weeks.

[85] **Bethan Jenkins:** And have you raised this with—obviously, you're in the University of South Wales—the powers that be? Because, obviously, if they're going to give them the home status and everything that comes with that, it would seem logical, would it not, for them to have that language provision as a part a parcel of that, as opposed to, as you say, giving with one hand and taking with another?

[86] **Dr Chick:** Yes. I'm sure you can guess the answer to this, though.

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. Just for the record, you have raised it.

[88] **Dr Chick:** Yes, I have.

[89] **Bethan Jenkins:** Because I've met with some Syrian refugees in Swansea, and basically what they're doing is—one who has done an economics degree in Syria is having to wait 12 months for the ESOL and so, in that time period, having to volunteer because he can't access a university degree.

[90] **Dr Chick:** Sure.

[91] **Bethan Jenkins:** Are you finding instances where there is a backlog of Syrian or/and other refugees not being able to access education, and then feeling disenfranchised, or feeling isolated, or not being able to become part of the community because they're not able to access education?

[92] **Dr Chick:** Yes, of course. For clarity purposes I have to stress that I haven't done research on this on all the refugees and Syrians who are applying to attend universities in Wales—of course not. However, even within the Welsh Refugee Council, there are two cases of students: one who has been accepted at the University of South Wales did have the academic requirement, but failed the language test. That individual is now, as it happens, doing what you describe in Swansea: searching around for free language classes in order to try to improve his language so that he may take the language test again next year. He's been given from Cardiff Met, and from the University of South Wales, provisional acceptance, and the proviso is, of course, on his improving his language competency.

[93] **Bethan Jenkins:** Have you seen examples of good practice where—? I know that you've said that—. It doesn't seem to me as if there is a very comprehensive access system to language courses, but is there an example of where it's good and where, then, people are able to get onto their HE courses at a faster rate? Is there a university that you can say is doing well, or one that you would name and shame?

[94] **Dr Chick:** I'd rather not name and shame anybody, but again I've looked into this as much as I can. Two parts to answer the question: firstly, an awful lot of universities offer scholarships and subsidies to asylum seekers and refugees—usually, two or three places. I've got a list of more than 40 across the UK that do this. Scottish universities seem to be taking the lead, and some Scottish universities—Edinburgh, for example—as well as offering a limited number of scholarships and bursaries do, in the report that I have, offer language tuition in addition to that. In Wales, only Cardiff University offers scholarships at the moment to asylum seekers, and I think there are two scholarships.

[95] **Bethan Jenkins:** Does that always include the English-language provision, or is the scholarship different entirely?

[96] **Dr Chick:** It depends on the university.

[97] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay.

[98] **Dr Chick:** Yes, I don't know the situation in all universities. I have a sort of brief list in front of me here. With regard to the English-language provision on the courses that I mentioned, sadly very little. In the Home Office guidance on commissioning ESOL, it does mention that Aberystwyth University delivered conversational classes to refugees in that area. That's an example that I would honestly like all universities to be following. In universities we have an awful lot of qualified experienced language teachers; an awful lot of language teaching expertise because of the international student market; a lot of materials and a lot of know-how. It seems to me to be the obvious place where we should go to help folk in the situation that we're describing right now.

[99] There are also important quiet periods in university international language programmes. So, for example, from January until May there are very few international students studying on language programmes, and yet we have a large number of language teachers employed. So, with just a little lateral thinking, I'm sure that we could come up with a number of solutions or, at least, ways to help the situation in Wales.

[100] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thanks.

[101] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you. Jenny.

[102] **Jenny Rathbone:** Has anybody asked any of the universities that provide this intensive language course for foreign students whether they could include a limited number of refugees who meet the academic qualifications to join in those classes—for nothing, obviously?

[103] **Dr Chick:** Informally, I have asked people who work on these courses, and the answers that first come back are, 'Why should it be the universities' responsibility to fund this, as opposed to the Government's responsibility?' I'm not saying that these are my views, but they're the answers that I get.

[104] **Jenny Rathbone:** No. Okay. But, clearly, the people you're speaking to may not be people who have decision-making powers. So, it would be interesting to know if anybody has actually asked the vice-chancellors or the head of the college of languages.

[105] **Dr Chick:** These are issues that are discussed at directorate level, I'm sure. There have been meetings organised under that level that raise these

issues. So, I would certainly support the suggestion that it is taken further.

[106] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. So, it's something that could be pursued.

[107] **Dr Chick:** Yes.

[108] **Jenny Rathbone:** Because we're not talking about somebody laying on extra provision. We're talking about including one or two extra people in the provision that's already being offered.

[109] **Dr Chick:** And to be honest, that's precisely what I put to certain members of staff, because I know very well these courses—I've designed these courses—and I can't see how it would be such a problematic thing to do.

[110] **John Griffiths:** Before we finish our evidence-giving session, could I just ask about the NARIC—the national agency—in terms of recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills? Are the costs involved with NARIC a barrier to accessing higher education for refugees and asylum seekers, do you think?

[111] **Dr Chick:** I presume everyone knows what NARIC is.

[112] **John Griffiths:** I think so.

[113] **Dr Chick:** I think the costs for going through NARIC and having your qualifications—the equivalent qualifications from your country to the UK—I think it's not such a great cost, around £50 to £100. I'm not sure about that is the truth.

[114] **John Griffiths:** But in your experience it hasn't proved to be a barrier as far as you're aware.

[115] **Dr Chick:** What I do know is that, again, the Welsh Refugee Council has won some limited funding—limited with regard to time—to become a NARIC member, if you like. So, people who wish to have their qualifications have an equivalency to UK universities and UK employers can now go through the Welsh Refugee Council to do so. What may be the case is that they don't know that NARIC exists, or how to go through the process of having their qualifications. What I've seen is a real positive case study: one chap, a Syrian, but not on the Syrian resettlement scheme; he arrived here by other means.

He had a PhD in child autism—this only happened two months ago, I think it was. He went through NARIC—the Welsh Refugee Council put his qualifications to NARIC—it came back, and as a result of this, that chap now has a research assistant post in Cardiff University, and that can be documented. That’s one example, if you like. So I’d say it certainly is a valuable asset to offer refugees and asylum seekers. I don’t have any research evidence to suggest it’s a barrier to all refugees.

[116] **John Griffiths:** But it’s useful if that sort of assistance is provided as you demonstrated.

[117] **Dr Chick:** This chap, as is my understanding, wouldn’t have able to do this and wouldn’t have known about this, so it’s fantastic.

[118] **John Griffiths:** Well, Mike, thank you very much indeed. You will be sent a transcript of your evidence to check for factual accuracy. Thanks very much for attending.

[119] **Dr Chick:** Can I say thank you for letting me air my views? I’m really, really glad to have had this opportunity. Thank you.

[120] **John Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Mike. The committee will now break briefly and resume in 10 minutes’ time.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 09:58 a 10:11.
The meeting adjourned between 09:58 and 10:11.*

**Ymchwiliad i Ffoaduriaid a Cheiswyr Lloches yng Nghymru:
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 8
Inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Wales: Evidence Session 8**

[121] **John Griffiths:** The committee is back in session and we turn to item 3 on our agenda, which is a further evidence–giving session on the committee’s inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. We will be taking evidence from Tai Pawb. Would you like to introduce yourself for the record, please?

[122] **Ms Zalesinska:** My name is Alicja Zalesinska and I’m the director of Tai Pawb, an organisation that promotes equality and housing in Wales.

[123] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much for coming in to give evidence today. We will begin our questions with Bethan Jenkins.

[124] **Bethan Jenkins:** I read with interest your contribution on the housing issue, specifically on the conditions—and I think committee members are all well aware of some of the terrible conditions administered by Clearsprings in Wales—but I wanted to probe further on what you say about that the next asylum contract should be brought into Wales and preferably on a not-for-profit basis. As you may have seen before the Christmas break, it seems that the Home Office are minded to extend the contract with Clearsprings. I'm wondering what conversations you've had to try and make this suggestion a reality and how realistic that is considering that, at the moment, it's not a decision for the Welsh Government, but it's something that is in the hands of the Home Office in London. How then can we potentially help to carry forward that initiative also?

[125] **Ms Zalesinska:** A few good points there. I suppose the Welsh Government, understandably, can't just take over the contract. There are procurement rules in place and some areas are devolved and some aren't. I suppose there are areas where Welsh Government could take the role of influencing how that contract is awarded. As far as I understand, a few days ago, the Minister for immigration made an announcement that it has been extended for a further two years. But there is an ongoing consultation on what the next contract on provision of support for asylum seekers should look like. I think, from our perspective, and from the perspective of other partners that we've consulted, some of whom have provided evidence here, Welsh Government could take perhaps a little bit more of a proactive role in examining what the conditions are that asylum seekers are living in. Perhaps this inquiry—we fully appreciate that it can help with that and perhaps provide their view on how the contract should be handled. I understand the practicalities around just saying, 'We want to bring the contract into Wales', but perhaps there are some areas where the Government could try and influence.

[126] **Bethan Jenkins:** Would you go as far as to say—? Some other organisations agreed with me when I asked them whether that should be devolved to Wales in relation to administering and ownership of the contract. What's your view on that?

10:15

[127] **Ms Zalesinska:** My view is that it should be. I think you probably have seen from other evidence as well that the impacts of how asylum seekers live are quite extensive in Wales. There are huge impacts on Welsh services, be it housing later for refugees, homelessness, social services, health and so on. So, the impact of the cost is on the Welsh local authorities and other services. But also, you know, there is a bit of a disparity between how, for example, homelessness law is applied to general homelessness services versus, for example, the move-on period for refugees. I think I referred to the move-on period being 26 days—or 28 days, I think. The homelessness legislation—the new Housing (Wales) Act—provides 56 days for people who are threatened with homelessness to be able to access services. This is, at the moment, impossible for asylum seekers who have been granted the status because that period is shorter. So, there are a lot of, I think, areas where the legislation simply is different, and the practice is different because it's a non-devolved area—but it's based in Wales, isn't it?

[128] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is that your experience of the situation with the private landlords? Because I'm struggling, myself, for work that I'm doing on this locally, to find out the accountability between the private landlords who are Welsh and renting their properties to Clearsprings—and then who takes responsibility for that dire condition. Not to let Clearsprings off the hook, but I would assume that it's not just them. Are you aware that they are part of the landlord schemes here in Wales, or whether they would again be exempt from that?

[129] **Ms Zalesinska:** To be honest, I think this is a bit of a confusing area for ourselves at the moment as well. Rent Smart Wales is a new scheme. We know that not that many people have joined so far. Hopefully, they will. It's a positive scheme. I can't provide any sort of data on how many of those landlords that provide accommodation through Clearsprings are part of that—would they be required to be part of that? You know, how is the Welsh legislation on standards of housing applied? I'm getting confusing, I suppose, evidence from various sources. Anecdotally, I've spoken to one local authority—for example, the enforcement team—who said that they have come across cases where substandard accommodation was provided and later on they found out it was asylum seeker accommodation. I think the action that they took was to contact, first, Clearsprings and then the Home Office. But whether they have powers to enforce or not, I'm not sure, to be honest. I think it's a really important area to look at.

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm sure. That's something I'm keen to look at. My

other question was with regards to—

[131] **John Griffiths:** Bethan, just before we move on, I think Jenny wanted to come in on this particular point.

[132] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to stick with the Clearsprings contract for housing. Whose job is it to monitor this contract?

[133] **Ms Zalesinska:** It's the Home Office.

[134] **Jenny Rathbone:** Both in terms of the quality and cost.

[135] **Ms Zalesinska:** Yes.

[136] **Jenny Rathbone:** You think it's the Home Office.

[137] **Ms Zalesinska:** I think so.

[138] **Jenny Rathbone:** What role does the UK Parliament have? Because others see it as a UK Government contract. It may be taking place in Wales, but it's a UK Government contract. I represent Cardiff Central, so I'm aware that my fellow MP has also taken an interest in this. It seems to me that there's a wider interest. There is a lot of money involved—but you're not aware of any parliamentary interest in the quality of the Home Office contract.

[139] **Ms Zalesinska:** I'm aware that the Welsh Refugee Coalition has submitted evidence to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, I think, on this. So, obviously, Parliament would have oversight, as they have oversight over other contracts. We don't really want to duplicate other organisations' work. So, we left that to them. But there are, I suppose, things that could be done to influence that. I expect they would have the same powers as over any other contract.

[140] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but obviously, if the decision has been made to extend the Clearsprings contract, it seems to me we need to home in on—

[141] **Ms Zalesinska:** For another two years.

[142] **Jenny Rathbone:** —who is monitoring the quality and cost effectiveness.

[143] **Ms Zalesinska:** Yes. On the one hand it's probably not great, but on the other hand it could be seen as a positive because there are another two years to perhaps think through what the Welsh strategy could be for the next contract.

[144] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. In terms of Rent Smart Wales, if a private landlord's not registered with Rent Smart Wales, then they're not entitled to take the rent and they will be prosecuted.

[145] **Ms Zalesinska:** Yes.

[146] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, I think that's clear. It doesn't matter who they're renting to.

[147] **Ms Zalesinska:** That's true, but I suppose, on the other hand, it would be kind of good to think about whether—. At the moment, tenants can probably look at Rent Smart Wales and they can report. Landlords can. Asylum seekers do that through local authorities and through the same system. The system is different for them, as far as I understand. So, I suppose it's working out how the two work together, and should it be one system for everyone, really, so that we have the same standards of not only the quality of accommodation, but also complaints and so on.

[148] **Jenny Rathbone:** Indeed. I think, if they can't speak English, they're going to have difficulty contacting Rent Smart Wales. I think it's more about everybody, including yourselves, enforcing the law.

[149] **Ms Zalesinska:** Perhaps, yes.

[150] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Bethan.

[151] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I think it's the Home Affairs Select Committee that are doing an inquiry at the moment, so I think that's where we'll be looking to the parliamentary scrutiny, hopefully, for some sort of robust suggestions on change. But my question was following on from your comments about what you're saying now about how people complain and asylum seekers and refugees not feeling empowered to do that. Obviously, we've been told that the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership has had grants from the Home Office in relation to being that hub for discussion on issues with Clearsprings, and, allegedly, political leaders are supposed to be part of

that via Newport Council. Is this something that you're involved with, and, if not, do you understand who you would be able to get in touch with if you wanted to be involved?

[152] **Ms Zalesinska:** I suppose the Welsh strategic—. I understand that Anne Hubbard has provided evidence to this committee as well. So, I think their efforts to influence there, and to create groups that create fora for discussions around this, are commendable. On the other hand, I think we need to understand that they're very, very under resourced, especially with all the refugee crisis that is going on in the world, with the Syrian resettlement scheme, with new schemes around vulnerable children and so on. So, I can't really comment on the effectiveness of what they have done. I think their efforts are good, and, absolutely, we'd probably want to be involved in there. We're not an organisation that provides services to individuals, so I'm not sure whether we'd be the best placed organisation to do that. Perhaps other organisations like the Welsh Refugee Council and so on would be better. They have that direct contact with asylum seekers and refugees.

[153] **Bethan Jenkins:** My final question is on an independent advocacy service, which you mention, to raise concerns. Obviously, that comes into the question I asked earlier about being able to feel that they can make those complaints. You feel at the moment that they don't have—. You wouldn't say that the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, the Welsh Refugee Council, or other bodies, would be sufficient as is; there needs to be a separate organisation where they can raise their complaints.

[154] **Ms Zalesinska:** I'm not sure whether it would have to be a separate organisation. I think perhaps a separate service would be good, because, at the moment, I understand that all the different advocacy organisations do what they can, but if there are a lot of different organisations and people don't really know where to go, and also they're not resourced specifically just to provide that service, I think you need a lot of specialism to do that. So, I would advocate for a separate service really, perhaps overseen by a local authority, or—

[155] **Bethan Jenkins:** And where would that money come from for that separate service?

[156] **Ms Zalesinska:** Where—?

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** Where would that money come from for a separate service?

[158] **Ms Zalesinska:** That's a good question. [*Laughter.*] I think there is an argument for at least some of the money to come from the Welsh Government. As I mentioned before, and you will fully understand, there are impacts of not providing appropriate housing, accommodation and services to people. Perhaps other services could contribute to that as well, like health, mental health, and so on. But I think there is an argument to provide that money because it could be seen as a preventative service and it could be a kind of saving exercise, to save money on the potential cost of impacts on other services.

[159] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thanks.

[160] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny, do you have further questions?

[161] **Jenny Rathbone:** I was interested in the comments that you made about following up on Swansea's initiative to regard all new refugees as vulnerable groups and therefore to be placed on the priority housing list. I want to just probe that concept because, in the context of over 8,000 people being on the housing list in Cardiff, I think that would be a very difficult thing to persuade people, given that many people have waited years to be rehoused. So, I just wondered why you think that would be doable.

[162] **Ms Zalesinska:** This is something that is promoted also by the Nation of Sanctuary and City of Sanctuary movement, as you are aware. We are a housing organisation as well, so I'm fully aware of the pressures and the housing crisis and the pressures in some areas. I think perhaps it would be easier to do if the dispersal areas changed in Wales. We've got now new local authorities providing services through the Syrian scheme, so they're gaining that experience. So, in areas like Cardiff and Swansea, the pressures are obviously huge. In other areas, on a practical basis, they're not so big, and in some areas there are empty homes as well. So, perhaps that would help with that. On the other hand, from the rights perspective, and perhaps from a business and economic point of view, again, I think allowing that or introducing that as part of allocation schemes would be a spend-to-save exercise, similar to the laws that we perhaps had on ex-prisoners and so on—we used to have. So, it would probably relieve pressure on other services in the future—social services as well. It'll help.

[163] **Jenny Rathbone:** I mean, in an ideal world, we'd be building a lot more social housing, but we're not where we would like to be. So, I would challenge the viability of that in areas where there is already acute housing need. But I accept your argument that, in some areas, it may be perfectly possible to treat refugees as being priority for rehousing.

[164] **Ms Zalesinska:** Yes, and I think it's important also to remember that, under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the provisions under homelessness have changed as well. So, they can discharge the duty to the private rented sector, and, provided that the right tenancy support is there, that can work, and we have seen vulnerable people being placed in private rented sector accommodation, but with the right tenancy support, and it can work. So, if there is the right system in place to oversee that, it could work. Some organisations as well, some housing associations in Wales, have social lettings agencies where you'll be aware they provide housing to either vulnerable people or people who are economically disadvantaged in the private rented sector, but perhaps with an increased service there. So, there are, I suppose, ways and means to do that.

[165] **John Griffiths:** Okay.

[166] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just while we're at it, your concept of extending the 28-day move-on period to 56 days is presumably completely down to money and whether or not the Home Office is prepared to extend the period. Are you aware of any conversations with the Home Office to make this point?

[167] **Ms Zalesinska:** I think the conversations have been happening with refugee organisations for years now. I don't think there was a will to change that, and it does probably come down to money.

[168] **Jenny Rathbone:** I think it certainly comes down to money. Obviously, the Home Office is paying for this accommodation, so it's whether or not they're prepared to pay to extend it for a further period.

[169] **Ms Zalesinska:** And if not, then perhaps, coming down to the point, we should pay for increased advocacy or move-on services. If there is an impact from that on Welsh public services, perhaps some of the money should come from the Home Office. Money that would be provided for that extended period should come to Wales to deal with—

[170] **Jenny Rathbone:** That very tight timescale.

[171] **Ms Zalesinska:** —the impact. Also, I'm aware that there is a Homelessness Reduction Bill going through the UK Parliament at the moment, which proposes to extend the previous general homelessness—the 28-day period to 56. So, it follows the Welsh law, which is so positive. So, there is a clear case for parity of approach for UK citizens, or general members of the population and asylum seekers, who are clearly treated differently there.

10:30

[172] **John Griffiths:** Okay. I know Sian has questions on the 28-day period, to follow on with. Sian.

[173] **Sian Gwenllian:** Rydw i'n mynd i siarad yn Gymraeg. Yn amlwg, beth rydym ni'n trio ei wneud yn fan hyn ydy atal ffoaduriaid rhag mynd yn ddigartref. A ydych chi'n teimlo bod yr awdurdodau lleol yn cael digon o rybudd ynglŷn â faint o bobl i ddisgwyl sydd yn mynd i fod yn cyrraedd? A oes yna le i wella'r cyfathrebu rhwng y Swyddfa Gartref a'r awdurdodau lleol? A oes yna ryw faint o hynny'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd? Mi fyddai hynny, mae'n debyg, yn rhoi mwy o amser wedyn i awdurdodau lleol gynllunio ymlaen ar gyfer gwybod faint i ddarparu ar eu cyfer.

Sian Gwenllian: I will be asking my questions in Welsh. Now, clearly, what we're trying to do here is to prevent homelessness among refugees and asylum seekers. Do you feel that local authorities are provided with sufficient notice on the numbers of people that they should be expecting? Is there room to improve communication between the Home Office and the local authorities? Does that communication take place at all, at the moment? Because that, I assume, would provide greater time for local authorities to forward plan and know how much provision they need to make.

[174] **Ms Zalesinska:** We can see much more communication on the Syrian scheme, and you have been provided with all the details of that as well, so clearly it's doable. It's a slightly different scheme, so people don't come spontaneously to the country and they get their status slightly differently, but there is definitely room for more communication. The Home Office, when they go through their cases, obviously they follow a process, so allowing perhaps an extra 28 days while they go through their cases to start talking to the local authorities, if it's doable, obviously, within the legislation, would be

great and I think it would have a really, really positive impact. At the same time, I think there is a case for, perhaps, more partnership working between organisations like the Department for Work and Pensions and local authorities and organisations that provide advocacy—Welsh Government as well. So, in the Syrian scheme—and, again, people mention that, and I would support a call for parity of approach between the Syrian scheme and the general refugee schemes where, say, the national insurance number applications are expedited, benefits applications are expedited. So, clearly there is a way to start talking and organising earlier. I think, yes, it needs to be looked at.

[175] **Sian Gwenllian:** Ac a oes gan Lywodraeth Cymru rôl yn hyn o beth, yn gwella'r cyfathrebu rhwng y Swyddfa Gartref a'r awdurdodau lleol? A ydyn nhw mewn sefyllfa, efallai, i fod yn dal y wybodaeth a chynllunio'n fwy strategol, wedyn, lle mae pobl yn mynd?

Sian Gwenllian: And does the Welsh Government have a role in all of this, in improving that communication between the Home Office and the local authorities? Are they, perhaps, in a position to hold that information and to plan more strategically where those people go?

[176] **Ms Zalesinska:** Absolutely. I think that they obviously play an important role—Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership as well—in the Syrian scheme. So there is a clear argument to—. There is an operations board, and so on, so there is a clear argument for those structures to, perhaps, start talking to the Home Office and influencing to perhaps have a little bit more partnership work and notice on when the move-on is happening, as well.

[177] **Sian Gwenllian:** Iawn. Rydych chi wedi sôn yn barod am y gwrthdaro yma sydd rhwng y 28 diwrnod gan y Swyddfa Gartref ynglŷn â symud pobl ymlaen a'r 56, rwy'n meddwl, sydd yn y Ddeddf yng Nghymru. Mae hynny'n creu gwrthdaro mawr yn y sefyllfa. Ac wedyn rydych chi'n sôn hefyd am y rhestr flaenoriaethol fel un ffordd, efallai, o ddelio efo'r broblem yna, ond petai'r cyfnod hirach yn bodoli, efallai na fyddai'n rhaid mynd ar ôl

Sian Gwenllian: You've already mentioned this conflict between the 28-day move-on period from the Home Office and the 56 days, I believe it is, which is noted in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Now, that does create conflict in that situation, doesn't it? And you've also mentioned the prioritisation list as one way, perhaps, of dealing with that problem. But, if that longer period were in existence, perhaps you wouldn't need to pursue that

gosod y flaenoriaeth, oherwydd mae hynny'n gallu bod yn densiwn, fel y mae Jenny'n ei ddweud, mewn rhai cymunedau. Mae'n gallu creu mwy o densiwn nag sydd yna'n barod. Ac mae problem tai cymdeithasol yn broblem ar draws Cymru. Mae gan Wynedd, er enghraifft, sy'n ardal wledig, 2,000 o bobl yn disgwyl am dai cymdeithasol. Felly, nid wyf yn siŵr os ydy o'n wir i ddweud bod yna ardaloedd o Gymru a fyddai'n haws i dderbyn y sefyllfa. Beth yw eich sylwadau chi ar hynny?

issue of prioritisation, because that certainly can be a tension, as Jenny's already said, within certain communities. It can actually exacerbate tensions. And the problem of social housing is a problem across Wales. Gwynedd, for example, which is a rural area, has 2,000 people on waiting lists for social housing. So, I'm not sure if it's true to say that there are areas of Wales that would be easier to deal with. What are your comments on that?

[178] **Ms Zalesinska:** Well, I suppose, you know, in some areas, the pressures are not—. I understand that it doesn't necessarily mean that there is less pressure on more rural areas, but there are areas where those pressures are not so high, and there are types of housing as well that, perhaps, are not as used or utilised as we would like them to be. There are a lot of empty homes as well, and there's been quite a lot of movement from the Welsh Government to support reusing empty homes and letting them. I suppose, once people are granted refugee status, they're treated by the law in the same way as any other person who would approach homelessness services. I think there is a clear argument, if they cannot be prioritised just on the basis of being a refugee, for perhaps more training and specialism in what these people have gone through, especially when there are language barriers, and cultural barriers—so, perhaps people won't always provide all the details of the circumstances that they have been through. There are issues with mental health services, people might have conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions that they simply don't know how to name, or they haven't accessed those services yet. So, yes, I think there is a clear case for, perhaps, increasing those numbers, at least.

[179] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Sian. Thanks very much for that. We'll move on then to the Immigration Act 2016, and I think, Joyce, you have some questions.

[180] **Joyce Watson:** I do. Good morning. I want to examine, really, the possibility that the UK Government could extend the Immigration Act's right-to-rent checks to Wales, and your view about the impact if that happens.

[181] **Ms Zalesinska:** In terms of the possibility, we have been in touch with the Home Office, and they said that they want to and they're working with the Welsh Government to see how that can be done. So, there is a clear intention from UK Government to do that.

[182] In terms of the impact in Wales, I think I've outlined quite a lot of different impacts. There is a lot of research coming from England at the moment, and there will be new research coming out on 1 February as well, on the first anniversary of the introduction of the first Act, which shows that, on the one hand, landlords are more likely to discriminate, and they do discriminate in some cases, because people don't have passports, because they might be more likely to be the people who then become the illegal immigrants.

[183] There is recent research from the Residential Landlords Association, which shows that 43 per cent, I think, of the landlords that they have surveyed would be less willing to let to people who they deem as likely not to have the permission to stay and the right to rent in the UK. You can kind of see the logic behind that, and in Wales there are many more 'accidental landlords', as we call them, quite often, with, say, one or two properties or small businesses, who, perhaps, might not have the resources and the same awareness as larger property businesses of what the law requires them to do. So, I think the impact would be greater.

[184] In terms of impacts on tenants or prospective tenants, refugees would be one of the clear, vulnerable groups here and prone to, probably, abuse. So, on the one hand, they probably have a lower awareness of their rights than your general population because of the well-known factors. On the other hand, you know, a lot of people—and I know that people provided evidence on that as well—are going through appeals and their status isn't clear. There are victims of trafficking, there are people who might not have their documents because they're appealing or they're renewing their cases and so on. So, there are a lot of situations where people's status is not that clear. We know that public services often struggle to determine the eligibility of some of the refugees who approach them. So, requiring that from a private landlord is a big ask, despite the helpline that is available. There is also research from England showing that the helpline is not probably used as often as it should be.

[185] We called for perhaps Wales-specific research on possible impact to

be carried out, especially taking into consideration the fact that it might lead to more people with no recourse to public funds approaching local authorities and social services, especially families and so on. There could be an impact there, especially taking into consideration the immigration changes related to social services as well. So, yes, we would really want to see research done in Wales, or a pilot, at least, to determine what would be the impact in Wales. A pilot was carried out in England before they introduced it.

[186] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. I think all the questions were answered.

[187] **John Griffiths:** You're happy with that, Joyce, are you? Any follow-up questions on that?

[188] **Joyce Watson:** I think the only thing that I would follow through is how—. At the moment, we've got our Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and there are rights underneath that, and it seems to me that that whole debate, so far, is about rights—your right as, in this case, an asylum seeker or a failed applicant. So, it all seems to stem from and lead back to that. So, in terms of—. Would it have any effect? Does it change their status and their rights—the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act?

[189] **Ms Zalesinska:** I suppose the provisions that relate to social services—. This is not our area of expertise, but I'm aware that families, I suppose, with children, who previously had the right to be housed will not be now. So, there's obviously a clear impact on social services. If or when the right-to-rent checks come into Wales I think there might be an impact there, because people who either have unclear status and are still going through their cases, or who might have no recourse to public funds but simply have not been removed from the country, will have nowhere to go. I think it's really important to think about the children in those families as well. Children have rights of their own as well, which—.

[190] **Joyce Watson:** Can I just follow through? I'm a bit confused by that answer, because, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which we are a signatory, does that not alter the status of the children? Or am I misunderstanding the right of the child in this circumstance? So, the right of the child would be then to the basics, and housing, obviously, is a basic.

[191] **Ms Zalesinska:** Yes. I suppose what I'm trying to say is that the private

landlord doesn't necessarily know that children have rights and they have to be housed and so on. If they're evicted or about to be evicted, then they would approach local authorities and there would be a clear impact on that, but there is—. Clearly, the legislation around right-to-rent checks hasn't really assessed that impact, or that impact hasn't been assessed before it was introduced in England.

[192] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. Fine.

[193] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[194] **Jenny Rathbone:** We've already spoken to people who are sofa surfing or rough sleeping as a result of being refused asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds. What have you heard from your colleagues in other organisations in England about what impact the right-to-rent legislation's had? What happens to these people?

[195] **Ms Zalesinska:** I suppose I could—. The research that was carried out in England was fairly early days in the legislation, and, as I said, there's going to be new research launched soon. I could try to find out more information about that to see whether they have detailed information in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. But I can't provide you with an answer at the moment.

[196] **Jenny Rathbone:** Do you envisage that children—? Obviously, children do have overarching rights to be protected. Do you envisage that families who've been refused refugee status, and therefore have no recourse to public funds—do envisage that those children will then be housed separately, and their parents, goodness knows what will happen to them?

[197] **Ms Zalesinska:** At the moment, it does not really happen all that often, from what I'm aware of, because of the obvious impacts on children of being separated from their families, and their rights as children and also the human rights of families. Is that going to happen more often? I can't really say. I suppose, at the moment, the legislation that is being used to make sure that families are not separated—. As far as I'm aware, there's the Human Rights Act; there are human rights assessments being carried out, so, if that is eroded as well, then there is a real risk, I think, that—

[198] **Jenny Rathbone:** But we have a perfect storm here. We won't have—. A refused asylum seeker with no recourse to public funds will not be allowed to

rent privately, even if they could find the money through a benefactor, and therefore what is going to happen to these people? Are we going to see Calais-style camps emerging?

[199] **Ms Zalesinska:** It could be a possible impact. It's really hard to predict. I would expect that these people—and people with families, especially—will approach local authorities, and services will be provided with a huge financial impact, obviously. But the people who, perhaps, are not that aware of what they can get—. I think we might see more rough sleepers, yes.

[200] **Jenny Rathbone:** What makes you think that local authorities will be allowed to provide a service to such families? Because we're talking about people who've been labelled as having no recourse to public funds.

[201] **Ms Zalesinska:** Under the law at the moment, they're required to provide something to children, so—

[202] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay.

[203] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that. Just one or two further questions from me on destitution and homelessness: we understand that refused asylum seekers have been evicted in greater numbers in recent years, would you have any views as to why that's taken place? Is it just about the overall numbers increasing, or is it a trend that's separate to that?

[204] **Ms Zalesinska:** I suppose I can only—. I don't really have any evidence on that, but I could only assume that, perhaps, a greater push from the Home Office to go through their cases quicker, and to go through some of the legacy cases from years ago, might have caused greater numbers of asylum seekers being refused status. But, other than that, I don't really know.

[205] **John Griffiths:** Okay. So, that's one reason that might offer a partial explanation, but you're not aware as to whether that has happened or not?

[206] **Ms Zalesinska:** Not really. I'm not sure whether any of our partners would have that information. It is possible that they will. I can try and find out.

[207] **John Griffiths:** Certainly, any further information you could provide to the committee on that point, or any of the other matters you mentioned

where you might be able to provide further information, would be useful.

[208] A final question from me, at least, is on your view as to whether the Welsh Government would be able to provide assistance to people with no recourse to public funds from the discretionary assistance fund. Do you think that would be legally possible?

[209] **Ms Zalesinska:** I think it would be if—. Again, I'd probably refer to the Convention on the Rights of the child, perhaps disabled people, vulnerable people and the Human Rights Act 1988. If that legislation allows for providing that assistance, or requires for that assistance to be provided, then it should be. I suppose we are going to compare how the discretionary funds have been used to deal with the effects of the spare-room subsidy. Again, it's UK-wide legislation, but the effects and impacts were felt in Wales. So, I suppose it could be done in the same way, and I would encourage that. I think, legally, it would be possible, yes.

[210] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks very much for that. Well, if there are no further questions from committee members, may I thank you very much for coming in to give evidence today. You will be provided with a transcript of your evidence to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much indeed.

[211] **Ms Zalesinska:** Okay. Thank you very much.

10:53

**Ymchwiliad i Ffoaduriaid a Cheiswyr Lloches yng Nghymru:
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 9**

Inquiry into Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Wales: Evidence Session 9

[212] **John Griffiths:** Good morning, both. We've reached item 4 on our agenda today, and our final evidence-taking session today with regard to the committee's inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. We have before us representatives of Displaced People in Action. Would you like to introduce yourselves, please, perhaps starting with Aled?

[213] **Mr Edwards:** Grêt. Diolch yn fawr. **Mr Edwards:** Great. Thank you very much.

[214] Thank you for your invitation.

[215] Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi am eich gwahoddiad. Mi wnafl y cyflwyniad yma ar y cychwyn yn Gymraeg, os caf i. Fel elusen, fel y gwelwch chi yn y papurau, rydym wedi bod mewn bodolaeth ers y flwyddyn 2000, ac rydym wedi darparu gwasanaethau, mae'n debyg, i'r bobl fwyaf bregus yn nhermau ceiswyr lloches a ffoaduriaid, a hefyd i bobl broffesiynol fel meddygon ac arbenigwyr yn y maes, i ddatblygu eu gyrfaedd nhw. Fe wnawn ein gorau i fod yn rhugl efo chi y bore yma. Mae'n rhaid inni, fel y gwyddoch chi, Gadeirydd, fod yn ofalus. Rydym o dan gytundebau efo awdurdodau lleol, ac weithiau mae'n rhaid inni ddiogelu preifatrwydd y bobl rydym ni'n eu gwasanaethu, ond fe wnawn ni'n gorau i fod mor huawdl ag y gallwn ni. Mae'n bleser gen i fod yng nghwmni Faruk, sydd yn un o'n gweithwyr allweddol ni. Fo sy'n cydlynu ein gwaith ni efo prosiect Syria, a hefyd mae ganddo brofiad helaeth o ymwneud â chleientiaid. Felly, efallai y byddai Faruk yn licio cyflwyno'i hun.

Thank you very much for your invitation. I will open in Welsh, if I may. As a charity, as you will see from our papers, we have been in existence since the year 2000, and we have provided services to the most vulnerable people in terms of asylum seekers and refugees, and also support for professionals such as doctors and experts in the field, so that they can develop their careers. We will do our best to be as succinct as possible with you this morning. As you know, Chair, we do have to be careful. We do have agreements with local authorities, and on occasion we will have to safeguard the confidentiality of those people whom we serve, but we will be as open as possible with you this morning. It's my pleasure to be joined by Faruk, who is one of our key workers. He co-ordinates our work with the Syrian project, and he also has extensive experience in dealing with clients. Perhaps Faruk would like to introduce himself.

[216] **Mr Ogut:** Thank you, Aled. My name is Faruk Ogut. I work with DPIA—Displaced People in Action. My role is refugee resettlement co-ordinator in the DPIA. I'm mainly responsible for the Afghan resettlement scheme, as well as the Syrian vulnerable person scheme. I co-ordinate those two projects. Thank you for inviting me.

[217] **John Griffiths:** Thank you, both, very much for attending. Okay, we will begin our questions then with some questions from Sian Gwenllian.

[218] **Sian Gwenllian:** Bore da. Diolch yn fawr am ddod i mewn atom ni.

Sian Gwenllian: A very good morning to you and thank you for joining us

Cwestiwn cyffredinol iawn i ddydd ym 11 Ionawr 2017. The first question is a very general one, in a way: what do you see as the main challenges for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales?

[219] **Mr Edwards:** Yng Nghymru, fe ddywedwn mai'r prif faich, yn nhermau darparu gwasanaethau, a chyfiawnder hefyd, ymysg y mwyafrif o geiswyr lloches sy'n dod yma drwy'r broses ddi-doli—*dispersal system* y Swyddfa Gartref—. Ar unrhyw gyfnod, fe fyddwn ni'n meddwl darparu ar gyfer efallai rhywbeth rhwng 2,500 a 3,000 o bobl yng Nghymru—yng Nghasnewydd, Caerdydd, Abertawe a Wrecsam. Maen nhw'n gorfod mynd drwy'r broses o gael statws fel ceiswyr lloches fel eu bod yn troi'n ffoaduriaid a symud ymlaen o hynny.

Mr Edwards: In Wales, I would say that the main challenge, in terms of providing services, and ensuring justice as well, for the majority of asylum seekers who come through the dispersal system of the Home Office—. At any one time, we would be providing for something in the region of 2,500 to 3,000 people in Wales—in Newport, Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham. They have to go through a process of getting their status confirmed as asylum seekers so that they become refugees and move on from there.

[220] Mae'r sefyllfa yn anodd iawn pan mae gennych chi bobl sydd yn aflwyddiannus yn y broses honno ond sy'n methu cael eu dychwelyd. Mae yna achosion dyngarol eithaf dwys yn hynny o beth. Mae'r system o dderbyn pobl Syria yn gweithio, rwy'n credu, yn eithaf llyfn. Mae'r broses honno wedi cael ei hariannu yn weddol dda. Mae yna gynllunio eithaf gofalus wedi bod iddo fo ac mae awdurdodau lleol wedi bod yn weithgar iddo fo.

The situation is very difficult where you have people who are unsuccessful in that process but can't be returned to their countries of origin. There are some great humanitarian challenges involved there. The system of receiving people from Syria is, I think, working relatively well. I think that process has been funded relatively well. Some careful planning has been put in place and local authorities have been very active in it.

[221] Felly, fe fyddwn i'n dweud mai'r brif her ydy gofalu bod y mwyafrif bregus yn cael cyfiawnder a'u bod yn cael y gwasanaethau allweddol yn

So, I would say that the main challenge is ensuring that the most vulnerable people receive justice and that they get those crucial services in

nhermau iechyd ac addysg. Wedyn, fe ddywedwn ein bod ni'n gorfod buddsoddi'n sylweddol efo ffoaduriaid, beth bynnag ydy eu llwybr nhw—eu bod nhw'n cael eu hannog i fynd i waith, eu bod yn ymgartrefu yma, ac yn benodol yn fan hyn, wrth gwrs, eu bod nhw'n ymgartrefu yng Nghymru.

terms of health and education. Then, I would say that we need to invest significantly with refugees, whatever route they have taken—that they are encouraged to access work, that they do make their homes here, and, specifically, that they make their homes here in Wales.

[222] **Sian Gwenllian:** Rydych wedi sôn yn fan yna am y gwasanaeth iechyd ac, o'ch tystiolaeth chi, rwy'n meddwl bod gennych chi bryderon penodol am y gofal o fewn y gwasanaeth iechyd.

Sian Gwenllian: You've mentioned the health service there and I see from your evidence that you do have some specific concerns about care within the health service.

[223] **Mr Edwards:** Oes. Ac efallai y gallaf gyfeirio at Faruk yn fan hyn—mae ganddo fo brofiad mwy uniongyrchol o ddarpariaeth iechyd.

Mr Edwards: Yes. And perhaps I could refer this to Faruk—he has more direct experience of healthcare provision.

[224] **Mr Ogut:** I think I am going to talk a little bit more generally, not specifically, for refugees, but I will be drawing on my experiences when I was working with asylum seekers and refugees as an advocacy worker. Some issues in relation to the health service—. The main thing is that they're not aware of the structure that the NHS has in place. So, for example, waiting times—they don't understand why they need to wait for three months or six months to see a consultant. They are not used to it. This process hasn't been explained to them properly. So, they need to actually educate them, to explain the structure the NHS has, so they will be more confident in health professionals.

[225] The way that they perceive it at the moment—. They think that the health professionals are not actually doing their job properly. That's their perception. That's how they put it in their own words. They don't think that their issues have been dealt with effectively because the system in their country of origin is completely different to the system we have in the UK. So, possibly, in their country of origin, if they want to go to the general practitioner, they can go anytime and they can be referred to the secondary health services, whereas in the UK, the system is completely different. So, it

needs to be explained that there is a priority—the people are seen and their health issues are considered based on their priority. They should be able to wait to see a consultant. So, these issues need to be explained to them so the refugees and asylum seekers feel confident in the NHS and the services they deliver.

[226] Also, asylum seekers and refugees told us that the information that's available is not accessible, because they want the information in their own languages—for example, some information around care services, especially social services and what type of services they provide. So, they are not aware of all those services available to them. So, the information should be made accessible and it should be interpreted and translated into their own language, so that this information can be passed on effectively.

11:00

[227] And the other issue in relation to the health system—asylum seekers, when they come to the UK, for example, and they come to Cardiff as a dispersal area, not all of them go through a screening process. So, people are dispersed without going through the screening process in Cardiff. This has been an issue for a long, long time, and this issue should be dealt with effectively, because some people with really long-term illnesses are dispersed, or pregnant women are dispersed, without going through the screening with the Cardiff Health Access Practice. So, I think this issue needs to be prioritised and resources should be put in place to make sure that the screening process works effectively and efficiently.

[228] **John Griffiths:** Sian, before you move on, I think Jenny wants to come in on this point.

[229] **Jenny Rathbone:** Could you just explain how it happens that people are not going for the public health screening? Because, you know, they are dispersed initially to a Lynx House—under what circumstances do they not go to their CHAPs appointment?

[230] **Mr Ogut:** This issue is very complex. Actually, there is no one particular reason, and it needs to be investigated to find out why this is not happening effectively. I know that there are some issues, there are some problems, that they are facing, maybe to do with the resources that are not in place, or maybe things need to be done a little bit differently from how they're already been done. So, this issue needs to be investigated to find out

what actually is not working and what can be improved. So, I am not actually putting blame on any organisation or anyone, any services; we are just looking into the issue to find a solution to this problem, because I know how important it is for refugees and asylum seekers. If they are not going through the health screening, if they are not receiving any information on how they can get registered with a GP in their new dispersal areas, obviously, these people are disadvantaged.

[231] **Jenny Rathbone:** Well, there's also a public health issue. So, what numbers are we talking about?

[232] **Mr Ogut:** To be honest with you, I don't know. I don't know the percentage of it. It's not, I think, my place to say that. But these issues, I think, need to be investigated, to find out the percentage. Sorry.

[233] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. Aled.

[234] **Mr Edwards:** Could I just say that, in one way, the narrative there is something that we were picking up about a year or two ago? I think there have been some changes since then, in terms of funding, which have been pressed, but I think it's really difficult, as Faruk was saying—it's very difficult for us to have a sense of the numbers. A while ago, there would have been particular tensions when high numbers would come in very, very quickly, and I think we've raised those issues in the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, and I think the service suppliers have been very much aware of it. And I think it would be interesting to have a check on the way things now are with it, but—

[235] **Mr Ogut:** Yes, we need to investigate it and find out where the issues are at the moment.

[236] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, so, it's an area that needs investigation, but you're not able to put any numbers on it. Thank you.

[237] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Sian.

[238] **Sian Gwenllian:** Yn amlwg, mae Sian Gwenllian: Clearly, the Welsh gan Lywodraeth Cymru ddyletswydd i Government has a duty to support gefnogi ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr refugees and asylum seekers, lloches, er, wrth gwrs, nad ydy although, of course, immigration is mewnfudo yn fater wedi'i ddatganoli, not devolved to Wales, and I assume

ac rwy'n cymryd mai o safbwynt hawliau dynol y byddech chi'n dadlau hynny. A ydych chi'n meddwl bod y Llywodraeth yn gwneud digon o safbwynt hawliau dynol, a hefyd, efallai yn eich ateb, a fedrwch chi sôn am gynllun gweithredu Llywodraeth Cymru? A ydy hwnnw erbyn hyn yn effeithiol os ydy hi'n bryd adolygu'r cynllun gweithredu?

[239] **Mr Edwards:** Fe fyddwn i'n dweud mai'r peth mwyaf gwerthfawr am ymarweddiad y Cynulliad a Llywodraeth Cymru ydy bod ein gwneud ni â'r systemau yma wedi'i seilio ar hawliau dynol. Mae hynny yn greiddiol, fel y gwyddom ni, i'r sefydliad datganoli. Ac mae hynny'n gyson yno ac yn rhoi gwerthoedd arbennig i ni, efallai sydd ddim mor amlwg, os caf i ddweud, pryd bynnag yr ydym ni'n trafod hyn yn San Steffan.

[240] Yn nhermau ein perthynas ni â Llywodraeth Cymru, mae'r berthynas yno'n eithaf huawdl—rydym ni yno bron yn wythnosol efo swyddogion ac yn pwysu ynglŷn â materion, ac mae hynny'n beth da, yn arbennig, os caf i ddweud, yn nhermau'r tasglu a gafodd ei sefydlu efo'r cynllun Syria. Mae hynny wedi bod yn eithriadol o effeithiol.

[241] Rwy'n credu, fel yr oedd Faruk yn ei awgrymu yn gynharach, glo mân y peth ydy yn nhermau gwasanaethau i'r ceiswyr lloches pan

that you would make the case from a human rights perspective. Do you think that the Welsh Government is doing enough in terms of human rights, and also, perhaps in your response, could you mention the Welsh Government's delivery plan? Is that now working effectively, or does it need to be reviewed?

Mr Edwards: I would say that the most valuable thing about the approach of the Assembly and the Welsh Government is that we are dealing with a system that is based on human rights. That is at the heart of our devolved institutions, and that is consistently there and puts particular values in place that aren't as prominent, perhaps, whenever we discuss this in Westminster, if I may say.

In terms of our relationship with the Welsh Government, that relationship is quite open—we are there almost on a weekly basis, speaking to officials and putting pressure on in terms of issues, and that's a positive thing, particularly, if I may say, in terms of the taskforce established in relation to the Syrian resettlement scheme. That's been exceptionally effective.

As Faruk suggested earlier, I believe that the nitty-gritty here relates to the services for asylum seekers when they are here, and I think we would

fyddan nhw yma. Rwy'n siŵr y all say that that could be improved.
 buasem ni i gyd yn dweud y gallai
 hynny gael ei wella.

[242] Fel asiantaeth, nid ydym ni, os As an agency, we, if you like, aren't
 mynnwch chi, yn gwneud ein gwaith necessarily working to the Welsh
 yn ymwybodol o gynllun gwaith Government's work programme, but
 Llywodraeth Cymru, ond rydym ni, we do come into contact with it
 wrth gwrs, yn taro i mewn iddo fo yn relatively regularly. The one area
 eithaf aml. Mae'n debyg mai'r un where we have been working with the
 maes lle rydym ni wedi bod yn same objectives is with the City of
 gweithio gyda'r un amcanion ydy efo Sanctuary scheme that we have.
 cynllun Dinas Noddfa sydd gennym We're taking that forward with the
 ni. Rydym yn cymryd y blaen efo Big Lottery Fund. The scheme, if I
 hwnnw gyda'r Gronfa Loteri Fawr. In Swansea, last year, for example,
 Mae hwnnw, os caf i ddweud, yn we were in contact with around 500
 gweithio'n eithaf da. Yn Abertawe, y people to try to create a climate
 llynedd, er enghraifft, roeddem where people are welcomed in our
 mewn cysylltiad efo oddeutu 500 o City of Sanctuary programme. On the
 bobl i geisio creu hinsawdd lle mae whole, the Welsh Government and
 pobl yn cael eu croesawu. Ar y cyfan, Welsh Government officials have
 mae'n rhaid i mi ddweud, mae been very happy to promote that, as
 Llywodraeth Cymru a swyddogion has the National Assembly itself.
 Llywodraeth Cymru wedi bod yn There was a major event here before
 barod iawn i hyrwyddo hynny, fel, os Christmas and I think that that is very
 caf i ddweud, y mae'r Cynulliad striking.
 Cenedlaethol ei hun. Roedd yna
 ddigwyddiad mawr yma cyn y
 Nadolig, ac mae hynny, rydw i'n
 credu, yn drawiadol iawn.

[243] Yn nhermau cynlluniau In terms of particular programmes, I
 arbennig, buaswn i'n atgoffa'r would remind the committee that we
 pwyllgor fod gennym ni yma yng in Wales do have some of the most
 Nghymru rai o'r cynlluniau mwyaf innovative programmes in the world
 arloesol yn y byd yn nhermau trin in terms of dealing with refugees, in
 ffoaduriaid, yn arbennig. Mae ein particular. I am told that our
 cynllun ni efo hyfforddi meddygon, programme in terms of doctor
 mae'n debyg, ymysg y goreuon yn y training is among the best in the
 byd. Yr adroddiad a oedd gennym world. The report that we produced
 ni'r llynedd oedd ein bod ni, last year noted that, because of

oherwydd nawdd a chefnogaeth Lywodraeth Cymru a'n hymwneud ni â deoniaeth Prifysgol Caerdydd, erbyn hyn, wedi darparu, mae'n debyg, 67 o feddygon ar gyfer ysbytai. Rwy'n credu fod yna ddau neu dri o ymgynghorwyr a thua 12 o GPs wedi'u noddi. Mae yna gynlluniau fel yna, buaswn i'n dweud, sydd ymysg y gorau yn y byd, ac mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi bod yn allweddol yn nhermau hyrwyddo'r cynlluniau hynny.

[244] **Sian Gwenllian:** Yn eich barn chi, felly, mae'r cyfeiriad strategol a'r meddylfryd strategol yn gweithio ar hyn o bryd.

[245] **Mr Edwards:** Mae'n gweithio mewn tameidiau ac mae'r awydd yno, ac mae hynny'n beth allweddol. Mae'r awydd yno i ofalu ei fod o'n gweithio. Wrth gwrs, beth fuaswn i'n ei ddweud hefyd ydy, yn nhermau eiriolaeth, er enghraifft, efo plant, mae deddfwriaeth unigryw Gymreig wedi bod yn ddefnyddiol iawn i ni. Felly, byddai rôl, er enghraifft, swyddfa'r comisiynydd plant yn y gorffennol wedi bod yn eithaf allweddol. Mae hynny, fe dybiwn i, yn rhoi gwell darpariaeth efallai yma yng Nghymru i nifer o bobl yn y byd yma na fydddech yn ei gael yr ochr draw i'r ffin.

[246] **Sian Gwenllian:** A oes gennych chi farn ar yr hyn sydd wedi cael ei ddweud yn ddiweddar o dan adolygiad Casey ynglŷn â dysgu

funding from the Welsh Government and our work with the deanery at Cardiff University, we have now provided, I believe, 67 doctors for hospitals. I think there are two or three consultants and some 12 GPs who have been sponsored through that programme. I would say that such programmes are among the best in the world, and the Welsh Government has been a key player in promoting those programmes.

Sian Gwenllian: In your view, therefore, the strategic direction and the strategic thinking are working at the moment.

Mr Edwards: It's working in a piecemeal way and the desire is there, which is crucial, of course. The desire is there to ensure that it does work. What I would also say is that in terms of advocacy, for example, with children, then uniquely Welsh legislation has been very useful to us. Therefore, the role of the children's commissioner's office in the past would have been quite crucial. I would have thought that that would provide better provision here in Wales for very many people than you would get the other side of the border.

Sian Gwenllian: Do you have a view on what's been said recently in the Casey review in terms of the learning of English in particular?

Saesneg yn arbennig, felly?

[247] **Mr Edwards:** Rydym ni'n teimlo—a barn bersonol ydy hon—fod elfennau yn adroddiad Casey sy'n eithriadol o anffodus. Mae yna orddweud yno ynglŷn â phegynnu pobl, a'r gwirionedd y mae'n rhaid inni ymwneud â fo ydy: nid trafferth sydd yn y fan hyn i berswadio ceiswyr lloches a ffoaduriaid i ddysgu Saesneg—y prif drafferth ydy nad oes modd iddyn nhw wneud hynny. Mae hynny'n her. Rwy'n ymwneud, fel y mae Faruk ac eraill, efo pobl eithriadol o ffyddlon a dewr. Rydych chi'n meddwl am rai o'n meddygon ni sydd wedi cynnig darpariaeth i bobl ar strydoedd Syria tra'u bod nhw'n cael eu saethu. Rydym yn meddwl am feddygon sydd wedi cael eu gorfodi gan gyfundrefnau i wella pobl nid gyda'r golwg o'u gwneud yn well, ond ar gyfer eu harteithio nhw'n waeth. Pan fyddaf i'n meddwl am y math o ansawdd o bobl sydd gennym ni yma yn ein plith ni, rydw i'n meddwl bod y syniad, er enghraifft, o'u gorfodi nhw i dyngu llw o ffyddlondeb bron a bod yn chwerrthinllyd, oherwydd mae'r bobl yma'n ffyddlon i ddynoliaeth ac i le bynnag y maen nhw, beth bynnag. Efallai byddai Faruk yn medru sôn yn benodol am ddysgu Saesneg oherwydd mae ganddo gwell profiad na fi.

Mr Edwards: This is a personal view, but I believe that there are elements of the Casey review that are extremely unfortunate. There is some overstatement there in terms of polarisation and the reality that we have to deal with is not a difficulty in persuading asylum seekers and refugees to learn English, but that the main difficulty is that there is no means for them to do that. That is a challenge. I work with people who are incredibly loyal and brave, as does Faruk and others. You think of some of our doctors who have made provision for the people on the streets of Syria while they're being fired at. We think of doctors who have been forced by certain regimes to treat people, not with a view to recovery, but for them to be tortured even more. When I think of the quality of the people who we have working here, I think this idea of forcing people to take a pledge of loyalty is almost laughable because these people are loyal to humanity and to wherever they are, in any case. Faruk could perhaps specifically cover the issue of ESOL because he has more experience than I do.

[248] **Mr Ogut:** Thank you very much. The provision of ESOL should be available to all asylum seekers and refugees. Currently, there is a long waiting list. Acquiring English obviously is very important for asylum seekers

and refugees. They want to learn English. They want to give something back to the communities that are the receiving communities. However, there is not sufficient ESOL provision, and this area needs to be improved, because when they come to the UK, they have to wait possibly one year, or two years possibly, some of them, to be able to go to college to learn English. But this issue should be dealt with, I think, as soon as possible because of integration. The English language is the one barrier towards integration. If they learn English, they will be able to communicate with the public, they will be able to make friends. They will be able to find jobs and they will be able to live their life more independently. So, this is very important towards community integration. And, also, learning English, they could actually make friends, and that will reduce their feeling of isolation as well. It's crucially important. This is the main thing that asylum seekers and refugees ask each time. Even before their basic needs, they say 'Can I have an ESOL class please?' 'Can you find me an ESOL class?' Before asking about accommodation, before asking something else, the ESOL class is a main issue for them.

[249] **Sian Gwenllian:** And, in your experience, is it a particular issue amongst women? Amongst the women refugees and asylum seekers, is it a particular problem, because, if they've got children, it's very difficult for them anyway even if there is a class available?

[250] **Mr Ogut:** You are right there, definitely. That's the main issue. Actually, in my current experience, particularly women, they want to go to college, but because they don't have any free childcare available, they are not able to pay privately as well, using their own income—very limited income—so they are particularly disadvantaged. And if we are talking about refugees and asylum seekers, especially some refugees from certain countries, there are strong views about men and women's roles. Obviously, they are in a new country. They are going through a culturalisation process and they are learning new roles. They are learning that people are equal here—men and women are equal—and we are supporting that. We are encouraging that, to actually take this view. And, therefore, we are saying, 'Okay, possibly, you could actually look after the children and your wife could go and get some English lessons.' So, we are actively encouraging them to take this equality and making sure that they are not discriminated within their family group. So, yes, as you said, rightly, childcare is a huge issue. If we make childcare available to the families, I think it will be really appreciated.

[251] **Sian Gwenllian:** Rydych wedi **Sian Gwenllian:** You mentioned the

sôn fanna am y gwahaniaethau diwylliannol rhwng y gwledydd lle roedden nhw wedi cael eu magu â'r Deyrnas Unedig. Ond, wrth gwrs, yng Nghymru, mae yna wahaniaeth diwylliannol pellach, yn nhermau bod gyda ni ein iaith a'n hunaniaeth ein hunain. Mae gen i ddiddordeb clywed—. Rydych chi wedi bod yn gwneud pecynnau 'Croeso i Gymru'. A ydych chi hefyd o'r farn bod cynnig gwersi Cymraeg yn bwysig hefyd, yn ogystal â'r gwersi Saesneg? Rwy'n gwybod ei fod yn her anferth i ffeindio digon o wersi Saesneg, heb sôn am rai Cymraeg, ond, mewn rhai ardaloedd penodol, gall hynny fod yn bwysig hefyd.

[252] **Mr Edwards:** Rydym ni'n gwneud ein gorau i wneud y cleientiaid yna yn gyfarwydd â Chymru, ac mae'r pecyn yn ddefnyddiol. Beth sy'n fwy defnyddiol ydy perthynas a chyfeillgarwch a derbyn. Ac mae hynny'n gwneud i bobl deimlo eu bod nhw'n perthyn i'n sefyllfa Gymreig ni. Ac nid yw'n beth anghyffredin i ffoaduriaid yn arbennig i ddathlu mynegiant y ffaith eu bod nhw'n ffoaduriaid Cymreig, ac mae hynny'n beth da.

[253] Un o'r pethau rydym ni wedi edrych arno, er ei fod o efallai yn fregus iawn ar hyn o bryd, ydy'r modd, er enghraifft, yng Nghaerdydd a Chasnewydd, y mae'r ysgolion Cymraeg diweddaraf yn cynnwys nifer eithaf da o bobl o leiafrifoedd ethnig ynddyn nhw. Nid yw'n beth

cultural differences between their countries of origin and the UK. But, of course, in Wales, there is a further cultural difference, in that we have our own language and identity. So, I'd be interested to hear—. You've been producing these 'Welcome to Wales' packs. Are you also of the view that providing Welsh lessons is also available, as well as these English lessons? I know that it's a huge challenge to find enough English lessons, never mind Welsh lessons, but, in certain areas, that could also be important.

Mr Edwards: We do our best to make sure our clients are familiar with Wales, and the packs are useful. What's more useful is relationships, friendships and acceptance. And that makes people feel that they belong to the Welsh context. And it's not unusual for refugees particularly to celebrate the expression of the fact that they are specifically Welsh refugees, and that's a very positive thing.

One of the things that we have looked at, although perhaps it's not well-established at the moment, is the way, in Cardiff and Newport, that Welsh schools do include a relatively high number of people from ethnic minorities. So, it's not unfamiliar now to have Welsh-speaking Muslims,

anghyfarwydd bellach i ni gael and I think that's a growing dynamic
Mwslimiaid Cymraeg, ac mae hynny'n in our communities.
ddeinameg, rydw i'n credu, sydd yn
tyfu yn ein plith ni.

11:15

[254] Ac mae yna enghreifftiau And there are examples now, if you
erbyn hyn, os ydych yn mynd yn ôl, go back when the current wave
pan ddechreuodd y don bresennol, started, back in 2001, we do have
dywedwch, i 2001, mae gennym ni some examples now of refugees who
enghreifftiau erbyn hyn o ffoaduriaid have made their homes here, have
sydd wedi ymgartrefi yma, wedi married into Welsh families and are
priodi i mewn i deulu Cymraeg, yn sending their children to Welsh
anfon eu plant i ysgolion Cymraeg, ac schools. And there's an interesting
mae yna ddeinameg yn fanna, dynamic there, very often. The
weithiau, sy'n ddi-ddorol iawn i'w homes, very often, use three or four
weld. Mae'r cartrefi, yn aml iawn, yn languages. But, I would have thought
dair neu'n bedair-ieithog. Ond, mae there was a need to encourage
yna angen, ddywedwn i, i annog pobl people to learn a language.
felly i ddysgu iaith.

[255] Beth mae'n rhaid inni gofio, yn What we must bear in mind very
aml iawn, efo pobl broffesiynol o fyd often with professionals from among
y ffoaduriaid ydy eu bod nhw'n dod o refugees is that they come from
ddiwylliannau lle mae tair neu bedair cultures where there are three or four
iaith beth bynnag. Rhyw obsesiwn languages in any case.
Prydeinig ydy un iaith. Felly, mae. Monolingualism is a UK obsession,
efallai, cynnig iaith arall yn opsiwn. and providing another language may
Ond mae yna her ieithyddol. Rydym be an option. But, there is a linguistic
ni'n dal i gyfarfod, ddywedwn i, bobl challenge. We still meet with older
hŷn, os caf i ddweud, yn y gymuned people, if I may say so, in the refugee
ffoaduriaid sy'n dibynnu'n helaeth community who are very reliant on
iawn ar eu plant nhw i roi mynegiant their children to express their views
iddyn nhw i'r byd allanol, ac efallai to the outside world, and perhaps
fod gofyn i bobl a theluedd felly i asking such families to learn Welsh
ddysgu Cymraeg hefyd yn her ar hyn also would be a major challenge. But
o bryd, ond nid yw'n anghredadwy na it's not inconceivable or beyond hope
thu hwnt i obeithion y byddai eu that their children and their
plant nhw a'u hwyrion nhw yn grandchildren would be familiar with
gyfarwydd â'r Gymraeg ac yn ei the Welsh language and would use it.

harddel hi.

[256] **Sian Gwenllian:** Mi fuasai gen i ddi-ddordeb mewn gweld beth mae'r pecyn 'Croeso i Gymru' yn ei ddweud. A fedrwch chi roi rhyw fath o fraslun i ni o beth sydd yn y pecyn?

Sian Gwenllian: I would be interested in seeing what the 'Welcome to Wales' pack says. Can you give us some overview of what's included in the pack?

[257] **Mr Edwards:** Wel, mae wedi ei seilio ar y math o bethau rydych chi eisiau eu gwybod yn nhermau darpariaeth, er enghraifft. Un o'r pethau ddaru inni sylwi beth amser yn ôl oedd bod y Swyddfa Gartref, mewn termau cwestiynu ceiswyr lloches a ffoaduriaid, wedi gofyn iddyn nhw a oedden nhw'n gwybod faint y byddai presgripsiwn yn ei gostio, ac roedd yn rhaid inni ddweud wrthyn nhw, 'Wel, yng Nghymru, nid yw presgripsiwn yn costio dim byd ichi'. Felly mae'r math yna o ddarpariaeth yn cael ei gynnig, a gwybodaeth o fodolaeth y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol, yr iaith Gymraeg, a'r etifeddiaeth Gymreig. Ond, rydym ni'n gorfod bod yn ofalus—mae'n becyn eithaf sylweddol, ac fe dybiwn i, pan fyddwch chi'n cyrraedd Aberystwyth neu Gaernarfon, neu Gasnewydd, y byddai'n cymryd amser ichi gynefino â'r pethau yna i gyd. Ond, o'n safbwynt ni, rydw i'n credu mai integreiddio, cyfeillgarwch a chynnwys ydy'r pethau mwyaf effeithiol er mwyn i geiswyr lloches fod yn ymwybodol o Gymru.

Mr Edwards: Well, it's based on the kind of things that you need to know in terms of provision, for example. One of the things that we realised some time ago was that the Home Office, in surveying asylum seekers and refugees were asking them how much a prescription would cost and, of course, we had to tell that, in Wales, it wouldn't cost them anything. So, that kind of information is provided. There's also information about the existence of the National Assembly, the Welsh language, Welsh culture and heritage, but we do have to be careful—it is quite a substantial pack, and I would have thought that, when you get to Aberystwyth or Caernarfon or Newport, it would take some time for you to get used to all of those issues. But, from our point of view, I think integration, friendship and inclusion are the most effective things in making asylum seekers and refugees aware of Wales.

[258] Ac mae rhai ohonyn nhw, ddywedwn i, yn nhermau, dywedwch, y meddygon rydym ni wedi eu

And in terms of the doctors that we have trained, for example, many of them, because they are consultants

hyfforddi, erbyn hyn, gan eu bod within the health service in Wales, nhw'n ymgynghorwyr yn y have become familiar with our ways gwasanaeth iechyd yma yng and our culture. I was particularly Nghymru, yn dod yn gyfarwydd efo pleased to hear this week that one of ni. Roeddwn i'n eithriadol o falch yr the doctors that we trained some 10 wythnos yma i glywed bod un o'r or 12 years ago has now been meddygon roeddem ni wedi ei appointed a consultant in a Welsh hyfforddi, efallai 10 neu 12 mlynedd hospital. And those people obviously yn ôl, wedi ei benodi'n become aware of our systems, our ymgynghorydd mewn ysbyty culture and our public provision. It is Cymreig. Ac mae'r bobl yna'n dod yn available online and I'm sure we gyfarwydd iawn â'n systemau ni, ein could provide that to you. diwylliant ni a'n darpariaeth gyhoeddus ni. Mae o ar gael ar y we, ac rydw i'n siŵr y gallwn ni ei ddarparu fo i chi.

[259] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much. Diolch yn fawr. And now Jenny on UK Government policy.

[260] **Jenny Rathbone:** I think I'd like to focus on the relationship between the UK Government and the Welsh Government in the decision to disperse people to Wales, because they're not just popping up from nowhere, these people; a decision has been made by the immigration service that these 1,000, 3,000 people will be dispersed to the four dispersal centres. So, are you familiar with what's in the contract, the dispersal contract? Clearsprings is the current provider of the initial accommodation; what else does the contract say? Are you aware of exactly what they're being asked to provide?

[261] **Mr Edwards:** We have a sense of it, but, obviously, I think, for commercial reasons, we wouldn't, possibly, get all the access to the contracts. Observing this journey, for us, has been interesting, because when we first came into being and when the wave, say in 2001, 2005–6 came in, what we found extremely useful is that the service providers tended to be local authorities. So, when you had an issue in a given case—education, health, social services—the individuals concerned were never far away in the room from other service provision. Now, the Home Office have decided to take the route that they have in asking Clearsprings to provide a service and, in fairness to them, they will seek to provide what they're asked to provide. What, I think, we've noticed, of course, is that then the third sector organisations like ours will have to tend to come in and fill the gaps that

local authorities perhaps would have filled in the initial wave. But that's a policy for the Home Office to articulate.

[262] Our main conversation piece now with that would be through the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership. So, when we pick up gaps, issues or any sense of concern, we have an opportunity there to talk to Clearsprings, and they will try their best to explain to us what they would provide. I think Faruk possibly would be in a better position to explain to you. One of the things that we observed a while ago was the huge debate over the red armbands. Perhaps Faruk can tell the story of that from our point of view, which will tell you a little about how those things work.

[263] **Mr Ogut:** It had come to my attention that they were using armbands and I raised the issue with the management of the initial accommodation, and also with the Welsh migration partnership, and also with Aled, because some of the services—they were concerned that it was as if they were in prison. It would remind them of really bad memories—of being like inmates.

[264] Anyway, I spoke to the initial accommodation manager, and he explained to me the reason why they had actually been doing this. They said that they provide food for asylum seekers who stay in initial accommodation at Lynx House. So, to prevent other asylum seekers who are in other dispersal accommodation from coming and eating the food in the initial accommodation, they put a wristband for their services—for those who were staying in the initial accommodation. So, if they show their band, they will identify they are from initial accommodation; people who actually stay in Lynx House, and not the other people. Then I said that, possibly, this is a way of identifying who stays here and who doesn't stay here: 'That's possible; yes, you can do that, but the way you have done it is not appropriate. You could find another way of identifying who stays in initial accommodation and who does not'. I said, 'We can understand that you have a limited budget for food to provide for asylum seekers staying in initial accommodation, but the way you actually resolved the issue is not appropriate'. They said they would look into it, but then all of a sudden it was on the news. They didn't give us a chance to address the issues properly.

[265] **Jenny Rathbone:** Obviously, they are only obliged to feed the people who are in the initial accommodation, but I was trying to tease out of you whether the contract—I appreciate you won't have seen the contract, for commercial reasons—but are they expected to provide ESOL, for example?

They are receiving these people who don't speak a word of English in some cases. Why is the UK Government silent on this matter, given that Faruk has told us that it seems to be their No. 1 priority in many cases?

[266] **Mr Ogut:** But because they're staying in initial accommodation for a limited period of time, like 21 or 28 days, in this period they are very busy sorting out, for example, the allocation of a solicitor and preparing for the interview with the Home Office. So, they go through quite a lot of work. Also, they are applying for asylum support during this initial period. So, they are particularly busy in this period, but they should be able to give some opportunities. Some people might be able to attend ESOL classes in initial accommodation. Yes, this opportunity should be made available for some.

[267] **Mr Edwards:** We won't be aware of the contractual arrangements with Clearsprings. Our relationship with them is quite good. If we have a concern we raise it with them and they endeavour to the best of their ability to meet whatever concerns we've raised with them. But I think the point that you are making around ESOL provision is right. I think in the sector it is extremely frustrating for us when we get endless newspaper headlines about people not wanting to learn English when they have no means of doing it. I think that would be the priority from the UK Government—that if they wish people to integrate well, particularly the women and other vulnerable groups, then I think there needs to be a more generous and a more effective ESOL provision. But that needs to be a broad principle, possibly for Clearsprings.

[268] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. Obviously the debate is: whose obligation is it to provide it? Is it the UK Government, who've made the decision to disperse people to Wales, or is it the Welsh Government? Presumably there is discussion between Welsh Government and UK Government around who does what. Given that you're on the strategic partnership, whose responsibility is it to provide ESOL in your opinion?

[269] **Mr Evans:** These things are a constant point of conversation, and I think the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership now is working more effectively, in the sense that, particularly when you go to the taskforce for the Syrians, you will get the Home Office in the room with Welsh Government, and they're trying their best to sort these issues out. I think it's always been a constant debate about at what stage the devolved package comes in, and there have been instances in the past, if my memory serves me right, when ESOL provision in Wales was slightly more generous than it was in England. But, I think the overall responsibility, as far as I can see, is to

make sure that the Home Office and the UK Government, since you're talking about people who have dispersed here, should be cared for well. It then becomes an interesting conversation when you take people into education and into health, and you begin to touch on the devolved areas—how then the devolved institutions make sure that people are supported in English provision.

[270] **Jenny Rathbone:** But, clearly, there seems to be a grey area as to whose obligation it is, in the first instance, when people are recently arrived. Clearly, they need English from the beginning—not necessarily on day one, but from the beginning. We've had a lot of witnesses talk about the two-tier system that exists between Syrians who already have refugee status and other asylum seekers who are awaiting determination of their status, and I wondered, within the strategic partnership, what discussions you've had about ensuring that there is parity of provision.

[271] **Mr Edwards:** It's something that we raised as a key priority once we knew that the Syrian resettlement programme was coming in, because those of us working the arena saw instantly that there were two parallel spaces here. I've had conversations with colleagues in the Home Office, and those have been good conversations, in the partnership. I think, for me, there are two issues here that are problematic: one is that you've got a more numerous, difficult pathway to being a refugee here through the dispersal system. That's hard and it's difficult, and the resources are not as generous as for the Syrian scheme. I would say that the Syrian scheme, of itself, is a good thing; it helps very vulnerable people. The skill set involved with the two are also different because, frequently, with the Syrian scheme, what we find is that people will come from professional backgrounds and their expectations of what the host community is will be very different to people, shall we say, who have been very, very ingenious and come here on their own initiative. I think that the service provision is the one big question.

[272] The other big question is that—the way that I put it figuratively is that we occupy the same space in Wales with these things, but in mutually excluding bubbles, and that has been the task for us, to make sure that there is some connectivity between the two pathways. So, for example, one of our staff members would have come through the dispersal system and now he works to help the Syrian resettlement programme. It's that disconnect that, I think, is difficult.

[273] The crucial one in terms of strategy for the future is: we would be

concerned if the Syrian resettlement method became the norm and we began to close our borders to the spontaneous arrivals, because in terms of the human crisis and the human need, it tends to be the spontaneous arrivals who are most needy and most numerous. We just have to try and bridge those gaps between the communities.

[274] The key question strategically is: the responsibility on Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham has been quite considerable, and one would like to think that, possibly, if the spontaneous end grows—I think questions need to be asked about how you then broaden that load. I advise, for example, Cardiff, because we're part of the group there that advises Cardiff and the Vale. I think Cardiff, for example, were quite wise to wait until the second tier to accept the Syrian resettlement programme, because they had very, very considerable responsibilities with the spontaneous arrivals. It's an uneasy, complicated package. We're trying our best. But I think there are dangers, if the public in particular think that the only people on the block now are the Syrians. I think that's a thing that we found particularly problematic in faith communities and lobbying groups and general support structures. Everybody was saying 'We want to give the Syrians things' and we said, 'Well, they don't need them'. The real need is in Trinity or in Oasis or in all these other centres where you have huge, huge numbers—hundreds of very vulnerable individuals asking for advice and for support, and particularly, if I may say so, the women who might have not been successful in their claims. They are particularly vulnerable. So, there are challenges with those two excluding bubbles.

11:30

[275] **Jenny Rathbone:** So your decision to recommend that the limited number of Syrians would be brought here under the Syrian resettlement programme—that was in order to ensure that there continued to be a focus on all the other refugees.

[276] **Mr Edwards:** Yes. Part of it also is in terms of public perception; good people, principled people, were saying we should receive more, without fully realising that probably we were receiving more already but through a different route, and they had to be catered for and looked after. I think, for those of us inside the machine of this process, we'll want to provide everyone who comes to Wales with a good quality service, and I think we just have to be mindful that we don't get caught in the politics and the perceptions of the issue, rather than the quality of the care. That's why I

would say that, when we look at the numbers of the Syrian settlement coming in, we've coped with it very, very well. We could cope with more, but I think we've got to be careful when we ask and call for many more that we have the means to provide for them.

[277] **Joyce Watson:** In terms of introducing asylum seekers and refugees to other parts of Wales, how much work do you think needs to be done to ensure that other local authorities are able to deal with the challenge?

[278] **Mr Edwards:** My experience of it has been, I must say, an overwhelmingly good one. I look at authorities like Ceredigion, for example, who have mastered the art of doing this very, very well. They've been really sensitive in terms of looking after the people who have come there. I can only imagine that if you're in Turkey one minute, or in Lebanon, and you think you're coming to the UK, and you think of the UK as being a little bit like London, and you arrive in Aberystwyth—you know, there's a steep learning curve there. My view is that the local authority there have done all that they can, they've been very good at it, and the local community has been very active as well in creating a local support group. It's very interesting from my point of view; in my day job for the churches we did this crazy 140-mile walk from Bethlehem outside of Carmarthen to Aifft just outside of Bodfari. It took us 12 days. What I think overwhelmed us, particularly as we went through counties like Carmarthenshire, Cardigan, Meirionnydd and Gwynedd, and also Denbigh, is the huge public desire there to be helpful and to be welcoming. That's a very indigenous Welsh thing that may run counter to what you might get in the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Express* or *The Sun* on an average day. That has an impact on policy, and I think it's quite significant. We picked up yesterday, for example—we didn't set out to raise money—but £29,000 had been given out of that effort. I think that goes to show that there's a desire there in the rest of Wales to be helpful. Personally I work very well with Dyfed in Gwynedd and he's taking a lead on it. We could do more, we could do many things better, but my overwhelming impression in terms of the breadth of the local authority experience in Wales is that we've done this really well.

[279] **Jenny Rathbone:** Very good. You mentioned earlier that there was a cultural shock of moving from Lebanon or Syria to a rural area like Ceredigion, but equally, a significant proportion of asylum seekers are from rural areas so there's a culture shock in being involved in a very noisy city like Cardiff. How much attempt is made to match people up with the type of lifestyle that they're comfortable with, in terms of what skills they're bringing

with them and what their aspirations are?

[280] **Mr Ogut:** To be honest with you, you know, based on my experience working with refugees, not much work has been done to identify those who actually could be happy where they are at the moment. Because of the services that we have, they're used to living in big cities and they are used to the hustle and bustle of big cities, and now they are somewhere very, kind of, not isolated, but it's far from the city centre. So, they are finding it difficult, you know. But now, at the moment, they've all got their own cars so they are able to go to the city and go to the town, and come back. They go to do their shopping. So, they've got their own cars at the moment. So, these difficulties gradually are becoming less and less.

[281] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much. We have to move on but before we do, I think Bethan has a brief further question.

[282] **Bethan Jenkins:** Jest cwestiwn clou ynglŷn â'r hyn oedd yn cael ei grybwyll ynglŷn â'r sefyllfa dai. Rwy'n falch o glywed eich bod chi'n cael perthynas dda gyda Clearsprings. Os gallech chi rannu'r gyfrinach yn hynny o beth, byddai hynny yn beth da i'w glywed. Ond roedd e'n benodol ynglŷn â'r bartneriaeth ymfudo strategol, achos pan wnaethom ni gael gwybodaeth ganddyn nhw cyn y Nadolig, roeddwn i wedi tynnu sylw at y ffaith nad oedd lot o bobl, yn enwedig yn fy ardal i, efallai'n ymwybodol o'r ffaith eu bod nhw'n cael y cyfarfodydd strategol yma yn ymwneud â thai lle mae yna broblemau yn cael eu trafod. Ac fe fyddwn i efallai yn gofyn i chi: sut felly ydych chi fel mudiad yn gallu hybu ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches mewn ardaloedd ar draws Cymru i roi pŵer iddyn nhw i roi gwybodaeth ger bron y bartneriaeth yma, er mwyn bod eu llais nhw yn cael ei glywed?

Bethan Jenkins: Just a brief question on what was mentioned about the housing situation. I'm pleased to hear that you have a good relationship with Clearsprings. If you could share your secret in that regard, that would be excellent. But it was specifically on the strategic migration partnership, because when we received information from them before Christmas, I had highlighted the fact that many people, particularly in my area, weren't aware of the fact that they were having these strategic meetings related to housing, where problems are discussed. And I would perhaps ask you how you as an organisation can encourage refugees and asylum seekers in areas across Wales to empower them to actually bring information forward to this partnership, so that their voice can be heard? Because at the moment, many of them feel that nobody is

Achos ar hyn o bryd, mae lot ohonyn nhw yn teimlo nad oes neb yn gwrandio arnynt nhw, er y ffaith bod lot o bobl, er enghraifft, yn Abertawe yn eu helpu nhw, ond wrth iddyn nhw gwyno maen nhw'n teimlo ei bod hi'n anodd iddyn nhw wneud hynny ar ben eu hunain oherwydd y rhwystredigaethau gwleidyddol ac ieithyddol sydd yn eu hwynebu nhw.

[283] **Mr Edwards:** Un profiad corfforaethol DPIA ydy hwn. Un o'r pethau rydym ni'n hyderus ynddo fo ein bod ni'n gwneud ein gwaith yn iawn ydy pan mae pobl yn teimlo'r gallu i gwyno, oherwydd mae cwyno yn hanfodol i'r broses ddynol. Ac rwy'n credu ein bod ni yn fwy ansicr pan nad ydy cwynion yn cael eu gwrandio arnynt. Mae o'n waith cyson, rwy'n credu, i ni wrando ar yr un llaw ar ddarparwyr gwasanaethau sy'n dweud eu bod nhw'n trio eu gorau a'u bod nhw yn gwneud pethau arbennig, a dirnad beth ydy profiad yr unigolion sydd y pen arall i'r drafodaeth. Mae hynny yn sgil rydym ni'n gyson yn gorfod ei ddiwygio a chadw golwg arno fo. Weithiau, mi allwn ni fod yn optimistaidd pan ddylem ni fod yn besimistaidd, ac weithiau rydym ni'n canmol pan ddylem ni fod yn feirniadol. Deialog cyson, rwy'n credu, ydy'r her yn y fan hyn.

[284] Rwy'n credu ei fod o'n waith hirdymor i alluogi y ceiswyr lloches a'r ffoaduriaid i gael yr hyder roedd ganddyn nhw o'r blaen. Un term

really listening to them, despite the fact that many people in Swansea are helping them, but as they complain they feel it's difficult for them to get their voices heard because of the frustrations and barriers, both politically and linguistically, that face them.

Mr Edwards: This is the DPIA's corporate experience. One of the things that we are confident of that we are working effectively is when people feel that they are able to complain, because being able to complain is crucial. And we are very dissatisfied when complaints aren't listened to. It is our role consistently, I think, to listen to service providers who say that they are doing their best, and then to understand the experience of individuals who are at the other end of the discussion. That is a skill that we are constantly having to monitor. On occasion, we can be optimistic when we should be pessimistic, and on occasion we applaud when we should be critical. I think having a constant dialogue is the challenge here.

I do think that it's a long-term task to enable refugees and asylum seekers to regain the confidence that they have had in the past. One term

rwy'n ei glywed yn gyfarwydd iawn that I hear regularly is, 'I used to be someone'. And it takes a great deal of work, then, to build on that and to give people confidence. I don't know if Faruk has any particular ideas, because he is closer to the clients than I am, perhaps.

rwy'n ei glywed yn gyfarwydd iawn efo rhai ohonyn nhw ydy, '*I used to be someone*'—roeddwn i'n arfer bod yn rhywun. Ac mae'n cymryd gwaith sylweddol, rwy'n credu, i adeiladu ar hynny. Ond nid wyf yn gwybod a oes Faruk syniadau penodol, achos mae o'n fwy agos at wrando ar y cleient na fi.

[285] **Bethan Jenkins:** A oes angen, er enghraifft, sefydliad gwahanol ar gyfer cwynion i geiswyr lloches a ffoaduriaid, fel oedd wedi cael ei grybwyll yn ein tystiolaeth flaenorol, yn lle bod yna arian yn mynd i wasanaeth penodol?

Bethan Jenkins: For example, do we need another organisation to deal with complaints of asylum seekers and refugees, as was suggested in previous evidence—that funding is being provided to a certain service when it perhaps isn't appropriate?

[286] **Mr Ogut:** As I said previously, I was in Cardiff—my previous role was as a refugee and asylum seekers' advocacy forum worker. And this forum, you know, enabled asylum seekers and refugees to be able to articulate their health and well-being needs, and also the difficulties they are facing throughout the asylum process. So, we identified many issues and raised them with the Welsh migration partnership and relevant organisations, and this model worked really, really well, and I'm really passionate that we actually replicate it in other areas as well.

[287] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, it doesn't exist anywhere but Cardiff.

[288] **Mr Ogut:** No, unfortunately not, because it was Big Lottery funded. I was very upset that I left that role, because I was really passionate about hearing their experiences and advocating on behalf of them. Unfortunately, the funding ended. It was part of the Big Lottery Fund. I think you are right—that's the crucial thing that we need to focus on, because they need to be able to tell us how they feel about what's actually happening around them and they feel that they are listened to. Because I asked them to give me some feedback at the end of each session; I asked them to draw a picture or to write some feedback. One person actually drew an eye, saying that 'You are our eyes'. I felt really, really happy about that—that we are making a difference and we are enabling them to actually have their say. So, obviously, that eye—we need to actually get people to be able to say what they are

happy with and what they are not happy with and how can we help them, really.

[289] **Mr Edwards:** Os caf i, Gadeirydd, un o'r pethau rydym ni wedi eu codi yn y tasglu ydy—yn arbennig os ydym ni'n dechrau trafod, rŵan, pobl ifanc di-riant yn dŵad i'n plith ni, ac maen nhw, wrth gwrs, yn mynd i fod yn eithriadol o fregus—. Un o'r pethau rydym ni wedi pwysu arno fo ydy, unwaith rydych chi wedi mynd trwy dai, gwaith, iechyd, addysg a'ch bod chi'n dechrau cartrefu, un o'r profiadau byddem ni'n dymuno inni weithio allan yn strategol ydy mentro. Mi oedd yna gorff o'r enw SOVA yn gwneud gwaith eithriadol o dda o gael pobl yn gyfochrog â cheiswyr lloches ifanc yn arbennig, fel eu bod nhw'n medru dweud eu stori mewn awyrgylch ddiogel a hefyd yn lle bod oedolion gwyn yn dweud pethau wrthyn nhw, eu bod nhw, ar daith anodd iawn yn ddiwylliannol ac yn bersonol, yn cael pobl i siarad hefo nhw, a bod y rheini wedyn yn eu galluogi nhw i fod yn fwy huawdl ynglŷn â chwynion a champau dilys. Rydw i'n credu efallai bod hynny'n un flaenoriaeth strategol y byddwn i'n ei rhoi yn nhermau'r hirdymor—ein bod ni yn sefydlu cynlluniau mentro.

Mr Edwards: If I may, Chair, one of the things that we have raised within the taskforce is that—particularly if we are discussing young people who come here without parents, and they, of course, are going to be particularly vulnerable—. One of the things we have focused on is that, once you've gone through housing, health, education and you start to settle, one of the things that I would want us to look at then is innovation. There was a body called SOVA that did extremely good work in getting people to work alongside young refugees and asylum seekers so that they could tell their story in a safe environment, where white adults weren't telling them things, but that they were on a very difficult cultural and personal journey, and that they had people whom they could talk to, and those people then enabled them to be more open about complaints that they had and how to deal with those. I think that's one strategic priority that I would like to see put in place in the long term—that we do establish those mentoring schemes.

[290] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Perhaps you could give us some information on that particular project, if you could, Aled. I'm afraid we have to move on now to community cohesion, and I think Joyce has some questions.

[291] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Could you give a very brief overview of the 'Seven Steps to Sanctuary' manifesto?

[292] **Mr Edwards:** Could you say that again, sorry, for me?

[293] **Joyce Watson:** Could you give us a brief overview of the ‘Seven Steps to Sanctuary’ manifesto?

[294] **Mr Edwards:** Yes, we’ve been part of that process in terms of initiating and being with partners. I think, generally speaking, what we are trying to do, particularly in the City of Sanctuary movement, is to create a kitemark of quality of provision, and that is broad in terms of enabling the asylum seekers themselves, making sure that there is public support for them and that that is actually clocked or registered. But, above all, I think what we are looking at are meaningful indicators of progress, and I think that’s what you would find in those seven principles, so the thing becomes real rather than aspirational or presentational.

[295] **Joyce Watson:** How likely do you think it is that the Welsh Government will commit to that?

[296] **Mr Edwards:** There was an early indication, a while back, from the Welsh Government through the faith communities forum, that there would be, in principle, a commitment to establishing Wales as a nation of sanctuary. The modelling that we had there was something akin to the dynamics of the fair-trade movement, where Wales became a fair-trade nation. So, I think the conversation pieces for us are that we have to establish, with the City of Sanctuary movement, understandable, coherent, meaningful thresholds that Wales would have to cover. My guess is that we are making better progress than any other part of the UK in terms of developing those skills.

[297] **Joyce Watson:** Great. My final question is if you have any views on the effectiveness of the community cohesion delivery plans and if they are effective.

11:45

[298] **Mr Edwards:** In my experience of coming across the key personnel there, yes, they are. They’re a valuable bridge for us, and they’re a contact point for us in terms of any issues in terms of difficulties of settling in. I wonder whether Faruk has got any experience—because you would be in contact with the police and so on in some of the schemes that we do. Do you have any views on that?

[299] **Mr Ogut:** In general with community cohesion?

[300] **Mr Edwards:** Yes.

[301] **Mr Ogut:** I only can based on my experience working with asylum seekers and refugees. They are generally really happy with Cardiff people, because they say they smile, they are very kind people. So, they're very positive experiences, to be honest with you. That's what I've heard. A couple of hate crimes, obviously—I've come across a couple of issues in relation to hate crime. I was going to suggest that we educate asylum seekers and refugees to report any type of hate crime they've experienced, because sometimes we say, 'Why didn't you call the police?' They say, 'Oh, well, you know—this is their country', as if that's okay that they can actually experience this crime. Because in their experience in their country of origin, it possibly was acceptable for somebody to actually call them names, and then say, 'Why are you here?'—those kinds of comments. They are used to it, so it's just letting them know that it is not acceptable and enabling them to be able to call the police, or say something to somebody who is actually working with them.

[302] **Mr Edwards:** Can I just say about what's in my mind? The place we find it most useful, without going into specifics of particular officers or co-ordinators, is when we confront—and Faruk and I have been in these situations—intensely difficult moral decisions about breaches of confidence when we suspect, for example, that people may be trafficked or are about to be abused. We will talk with each other, but we will talk with these officers, seek their advice and act on it. And from the point of view of an organisation, where we are extremely vulnerable at the rock face of the issues, having those key staff members there is immensely useful to us.

[303] **Joyce Watson:** So, they really do—. Community cohesion co-ordinators really come into their own in those situations.

[304] **Mr Edwards:** Yes.

[305] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[306] **Mr Ogut:** And also just to say something else, families of refugees—Syrian families—are really happy, because they have friends now. They have friends in the community, their children have friends, they go to each other's

homes. So, there are really positive examples around, so it's working really, really well in general.

[307] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny.

[308] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just one question I hope to ask, around the relationship with the UK: in the strategic partnership, have you discussed the difference between the 28 days that new status refugees get to move out of their asylum seeker accommodation, as opposed to the 56 days that is the norm for all other people who are at risk of being homeless?

[309] **Mr Edwards:** I'll just try to recall it from memory. I think—. I could provide you with—

[310] **Jenny Rathbone:** Because obviously it's a UK Government provision for asylum seekers, so has there been any discussion about normalising the 56 days, because 28 days, given the difficulties of getting a national insurance number, and all that is—? We've heard lots of evidence that that is a very, very challenging short period.

[311] **Mr Ogut:** Well, as far as I know, it's still 28 days—

[312] **Jenny Rathbone:** It is still 28 days.

[313] **Mr Ogut:** —and it's still challenging for families; some people become homeless. Basically, local authorities are paying more money putting people in homeless hostel accommodation, and paying huge amounts of housing benefit and Supporting People money. I think it would be sensible to actually extend this period, giving people some chance to be able to find an accommodation, and get all the benefits updated. I think that would be a sensible thing to actually put all the resources in.

[314] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. Is this something that the strategic partnership has discussed?

[315] **Mr Edwards:** I will check it, rather than take it from memory. I can provide you with that information.

[316] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, thank you.

[317] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you both very much, Faruk and Aled, for

coming in to give evidence today. You will be sent a transcript of your evidence to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much indeed.

[318] **Mr Edwards:** Thank you. Diolch yn fawr.

[319] **Mr Ogut:** Thank you for giving us this opportunity.

11:49

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[320] **John Griffiths:** On to item 5, then: papers to note. There are several. Paper 4 is correspondence from the Public Services Ombudsman in relation to scrutiny of the annual report. Paper 5 is correspondence from the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee in relation to human rights. Paper 6 is additional information from Oxfam on their inquiry. Paper 7 is correspondence from myself to the Secretary of State for the Home Department in relation to refugees and asylum seekers, and paper 8 is a response from the UK Government Minister. Papers 9a, 9b and 9c are additional information from the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership in relation to this inquiry. Paper 10 is additional information from the British Psychological Society on this inquiry, and paper 11 is correspondence from Cytûn in relation to the Welsh Government's consultation on Communities First. Any comments, views, questions on any of those papers, or are you happy to note them all? Jenny.

[321] **Jenny Rathbone:** I'm happy to note them all. I think that the paper from Cytûn about Communities First is entirely relevant. I do feel we need to do a proper scrutiny of Communities First and the things that have worked well and that are maybe not working so well, which—. Perhaps we could—you know, we could have a proper discussion about that.

[322] **John Griffiths:** Yes, well, the Minister, Carl Sargeant—the Cabinet Secretary, Carl Sargeant—is coming in to give evidence to us, or rather to face scrutiny as it were, on the eighth of next month, 8 February.

[323] **Jenny Rathbone:** To talk about the refugee and asylum seekers or about—.

[324] **John Griffiths:** No, to face scrutiny generally, at which we can raise the

decision on Communities First, which we anticipate will have been made by then. So, I would suggest that we deal with issues and, indeed, Cytûn's views, on that occasion but, thereafter, obviously the committee can decide what follow-up scrutiny it might wish to do at that stage.

[325] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. The other thing I think is worth noting is that I think the Gateway Protection Programme is a useful setting out of how things used to work well, and that it might be a way of enabling us to see—you know, to provide a sort of bench mark of what we aspire to for the current group of asylum seekers and refugees, because this is talking about things that were in place in 2008, I think. I think it's well written and it's honest about the challenges that can occur, but it tells you that things were much better organised in the past than the slightly chaotic situation we have now.

[326] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that, Jenny. Okay. I am grateful for the committee's noting of those papers.

11:53

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(vi) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y
Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(vi) to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of the Meeting**

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(vi).

Standing Order 17.42(vi).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[327] **John Griffiths:** We'll move on to item 6, then, which is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting, which will enable us to consider the evidence that we've heard this morning. Is the committee—? Thank you very much. I close the public meeting and we move into private session.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:53.

The public part of the meeting ended at 11:53.