

Asylum Seekers & Refugees

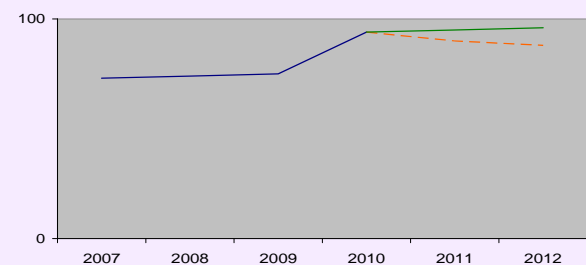
The journey of seeking asylum in the UK is complex with rights and entitlements differing from stage to stage. Rights and entitlements also vary where there are dependents under 18. The UK has signed the UN Convention for Refugees and asylum applications are assessed in accordance with the definitions given. An asylum seeker is a person who has applied for asylum and is waiting for the Home Office to make a decision about their case. A refugee is a person who has been recognised by the Home Office as in need of protection. In 2001 the UK Government designated specific areas throughout the country as dispersal areas for asylum seekers arriving in the UK. Although immigration issues are not devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government, it plays a key part in supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. The Refugee Inclusion Strategy sets out how the Assembly will support and enable refugees to rebuild their lives in Wales and make a full contribution to society. The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership is one of eleven regional consortia established across the UK since 2001 to facilitate the effective dispersal of asylum seekers across the UK. They facilitate and promote the effective contact, co-ordination and partnership working between UK Borders Agency (UKBA) and local authorities, police services, health boards, employment and career services (including Jobcentre Plus), Government Regional Offices, local and regional voluntary groups, and the private sector (principally the UKBA contracted accommodation providers) – working across localities and service providers.

Cardiff is one of four local authorities in Wales which are designated asylum seeker dispersal areas. At any given time approximately 1,450 asylum seekers are dispersed to Cardiff. This figure represents 57% of all asylum seekers dispersed to Wales, with 24% dispersed to Swansea, 15% dispersed to Newport and 4% dispersed to Wrexham. In January 2010 the family composition of asylum seekers dispersed to Cardiff was made up of 602 single males, 103 single females, 518 family members with female heads of household and 241 family members with male heads of household. The number of dependants was 495. The top ten nationalities from which asylum seekers were dispersed are: China, Iran, Iraq, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and Sri Lanka (Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, 2010). Cardiff Council has a five-year contract (2006-2011) with the UKBA to provide accommodation and support to asylum seekers as part of the government's dispersal scheme, having already provided these services on a previous contract (2001-2006). The Home Office is presently considering recommissioning of all accommodation and support services from 2011 onwards, which may lead to a change in service providers in future.

Headline Indicators and how are we doing?

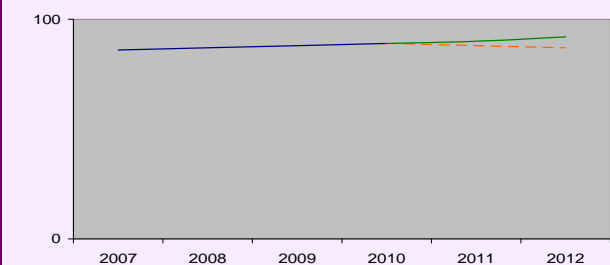
1. Uptake of Initial Public Health Screening

(Cardiff & Vale University Health Board)



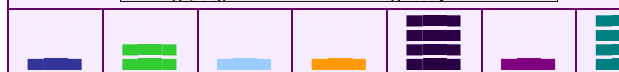
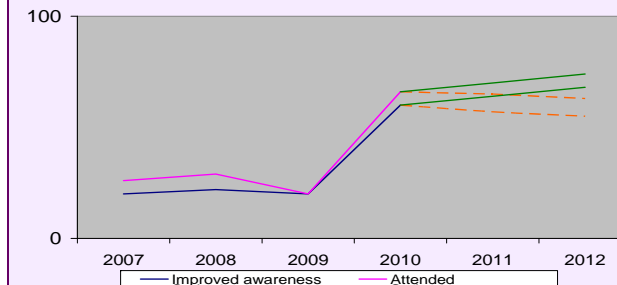
2. Percentage of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) attainment

(Parade ESOL Team)



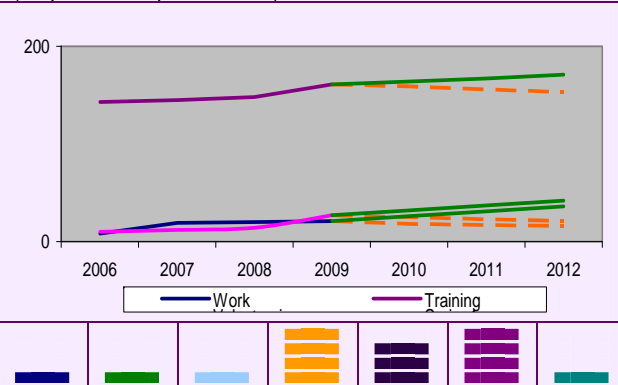
3. Frontline staff with improved refugee awareness following training

(Displaced People in Action)



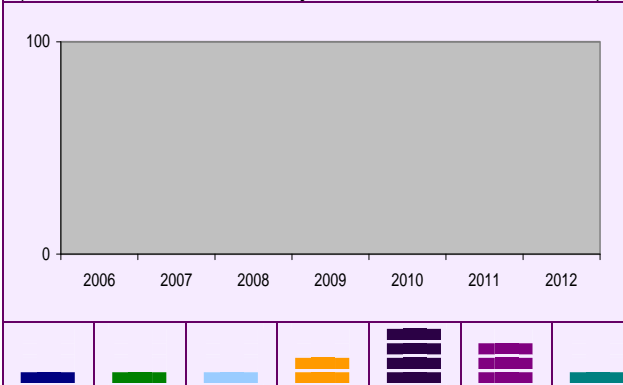
4. Asylum seekers and refugees engaging in volunteering, training or employment

(Displaced People in Action)



5. GCSE results for asylum seekers children

(Cardiff Council Ethnic Minority Achievement Service - EMAS)



Data Development:

- Numbers of asylum seekers and refugees who are homeless
- Number of people on housing waiting lists to include refugee status
- Numbers of non-priority single men signposted/ go to Council Housing Advice Unit (Marland House) for advice
- Job Centre records to introduce a 'refugee' marker

Key:

— — — The route we will take if we do nothing — The curve we want to turn

The bars under each graph represent how the indicator impacts on the seven Cardiff outcomes for the city as seen below:

Healthy	Environment	Safe	Thriving & Prosperous	Full Potential	Live, Work & Play	Fair, Just, & Inclusive
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Story behind the baselines

These findings were taken from the document *Refugees Living in Wales: A survey of skills, experiences and barriers to inclusion*.

Housing: Housing is widely considered to be a cornerstone for successful refugee integration. A significant majority (89.4%) of refugees who participated in the survey live in rented accommodation, with social housing accounting for two thirds. Although one in five refugees said that they do not have any problems with their accommodation, the vast majority described significant housing problems including a lack of permanency (36.6%), poor condition of their accommodation (28.5%), insufficient rooms/overcrowding (20.3%), problems with neighbours/community (14.6%), and cost (13%).

Education / Training: The findings of the survey are broadly consistent with previous studies which have generally found refugees to be more highly qualified than their UK citizen counterparts. Three quarters of respondents held a secondary school certificate of education and a further 43.9% had a diploma. More than a quarter had obtained a University degree, with a further 8.9% holding a postgraduate qualification from their country of origin. A third of those surveyed have gained an English language qualification and 13.8% have obtained a University degree or postgraduate qualification (8.1% and 5.7% respectively) in the UK.

English Language: Both the Home Office and Welsh Assembly place emphasis on the provision of English language training ("English for Speakers of Other Languages" - ESOL). Previous research has found that on arrival, self-reported English language skills among refugees are generally poor but that these skills improve considerably over time. Around a third of respondents described their English language skills as 'very poor' prior to their arrival with less than one in ten (9.8%) considering their skills to be 'very good'.

Employment & Volunteering: Existing research indicates that refugees experience high levels of unemployment and under-employment, in spite of the fact that many arrive in the UK with good qualifications and previous work experience in their countries of origin. Although nearly two thirds of respondents were employed in a variety of professions before coming to the UK, less than a third (31.7%) had a job at the time of the survey.

Health & Well Being: Nearly all the descriptions of decline in mental and physical health since arrival in the UK are related to anxiety, stress, depression and isolation associated with being a refugee, the asylum process and separation from home and family. A third of respondents were receiving medical treatment at the time of the survey, most notably treatment for depression in the form of anti-depressants and/or counselling. Nearly a quarter described difficulties in accessing medical treatment including difficulties and delays in securing appointments with GPs, dentists and hospital consultants, and the length of waiting times for appointments, especially with consultants.

Racism & Discrimination: Half of all refugees participating in the survey have experienced negative public attitudes and racism whilst living in Wales. A significant number of incidents were described as involving verbal and physical abuse, often by teenagers and youths. Damage to property was also widely reported. It appears that many racist incidents are not reported due to concerns about the consequences. Many also feel that incidents which are reported are not well dealt with by police, housing providers and the UKBA.

Partners with a role to play

- UK Border Agency (UKBA)
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Welsh Assembly Government
- Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP)
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- Welsh Refugee Council (WRC)
- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- Cardiff Health Access Practice
- Community Health Council (CHC)
- Cardiff Council
 - Adult Services
 - Children Services
 - Housing, Advice & Benefits
 - Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Providers
- Colleges and Universities
- Jobcentre Plus
- South Wales Police
- Cardiff Health Alliance
- Children and Young Peoples Partnership
- Community Safety Partnership
- BME Communities First
- Displaced People in Action (DPIA)
- Refugee Voice Wales
- Voluntary Action Cardiff (VAC)
- Supporting Others Through Volunteer Action (SOVA)
- Red Cross
- service users

What are we going to do?

- Multi-agency partnership working including training and awareness raising for partners and services providers
- Providing Refugee Homefinder Services, to facilitate access to homeless services for priority need cases
- Improve information/communication with Childrens Services
- Consider recommendations from CHC survey with WRC regarding access to health services
- Adequate resourcing of Cardiff Health Access Practice (CHAP) to provide services to asylum seekers and refugees
- Partnerships with universities e.g. UWIC, University of Wales etc. i.e. training ESOL teachers, up-skilling asylum seekers and refugees
- Refugee community engagement and service user involvement including fun days and social networking to improve refugee community participation
- Strengthening community based groups e.g. Refugee Voice Wales
- Improved user participation in delivery of services e.g. volunteers attending viewings at private tenancies
- All services to mainstream diversity and equality issues