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# Refugee Housing and Support Feasibility Study



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Report written by Joy Kent of Joy Unlimited on behalf of Tai Pawb.

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## 1. What is the purpose of this report?

The purpose of this report is to explore the feasibility of establishing temporary accommodation and support specifically for refugees in Wales based on models already established by specialist providers in England.

The objective of the proposed accommodation and support is to prevent homelessness by providing refugees with a stable base and assistance specifically designed to help them integrate and achieve their goals.

The feasibility study includes identifying models developed elsewhere, and considers their potential to be sustainable and contribute positively to the lives and integration of refugees within the Welsh context, specifically considering the issues and barriers identified by Welsh Government and partners and responded to by Welsh Government policy that is set out in the following section.

A mixed methods approach was taken to inform the study incorporating:

- A literature review focusing on:
  - Relevant academic research from within and outside Wales
  - Relevant UK data and statistics
  - Welsh policy development
- Interviews with key stakeholders:
  - Refugees
  - Service providers in Wales
  - Service providers in other parts of the UK
  - Local authority representatives in Wales from the local and national level
  - Specialists in relevant areas including Housing Benefit and Refugee/Asylum Seeker issues
- Focus Group with key stakeholders

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- Fuad Mahamed and Richard Thickpenny from ACH Housing which operates in Bristol and the West Midlands;
- Julian Prior and Vin Totton from the Action Foundation which operates in Newcastle, Sunderland and Gateshead;
- Bex Gingell, Jackie Amos, Kate Innes and Lynne Williams from Taff Housing, Cardiff
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## 2. What problem are we trying to solve?

There is a strong body of evidence that shows there are significant barriers experienced by refugees once they are granted leave to remain to finding appropriate accommodation and support that enables them to move on with their lives, integrate into society and avoid destitution. This is not just the case in Wales, it is an issue countries are tackling across the world and is reflected in an ever growing body of academic evidence (section 6 looks more closely at this).

In Wales the issues have been highlighted by the *Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee* inquiry in 2017 and captured in their report “I used to be someone; refugees and asylum seekers in Wales”. The report made 19 recommendations to improve how the needs of asylum seekers and refugees could better be met. This included recommending Wales takes the 7 steps to becoming the world’s first *Nation of Sanctuary*. Within these, step 5 focuses on ending destitution and step 6 on providing specialist advice, advocacy and support services. The report also included a specific recommendation for the Welsh Government:

*Recommendation 13. The Welsh Government should do more to help people awarded refugee status to find suitable accommodation in Wales.*

The report stated:

*If the person is granted refugee status, they have 28 days to move out of the asylum accommodation, find housing, get a National Insurance number and apply for benefits or find employment. The Committee was told that administrative delays during this period “often result in people becoming destitute”.*

It also heard evidence that:

*“people in priority need, such as new refugees, spend lengthy periods in temporary and often unsuitable or unsafe accommodation. People not deemed to be in priority need are generally unable to access private rented housing, due to the requirement to pay agency fees, one or two month’s rent in advance, the need for a guarantor and lengthy delays in integration loans being processed.”*

This year in January the Welsh Government launched its *Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan* [Nation of Sanctuary](#) . The plan makes specific mention to issues that the models this study explores would address both directly in relation to housing and through the provision of support that helps people access health and education:

- Ensure refugees are supported to transition from asylum accommodation to sustainable accommodation.

- Work with the four dispersal areas to ensure their Homelessness Prevention Strategies take account of the vulnerability of new refugees to homelessness.
- Explore opportunities to reduce refugee homelessness by working with Registered Social Landlords, local authorities, credit unions and others to identify clearer pathways into accommodation during the 'Move On' period.
- Work with local authorities and others to ensure the Supporting People programme, and the Housing Support Grant from 2019, supports those refugees who are eligible, to maintain their accommodation.
- Support the employability of refugees.
- Promote financial inclusion for refugees and asylum seekers to avoid destitution, reduce or mitigate the impacts of poverty and improve living conditions for those on low incomes.
- Ensure health needs are met and barriers reduced.
- Reduce the prevalence of mental health issues.
- Improve access to counselling services.
- Improve access to physical activity.
- Improve educational outcomes.
- Ensure access to essential skills is provided and improve employability prospects.

### 3. What is the situation now?

As the Committee heard, when an asylum seeker is granted leave to remain they have 28 days to find alternative accommodation and establish themselves within the community. Often, for a range of reasons both personal and structural, the time available to organise the transition is much less.

There is statistical evidence that shows that black and minority populations (BAME) are more likely to experience homelessness in Wales. The 2011 Census estimated that around 4 per cent of Wales' population was BAME but homelessness applications stood at 6 per cent in 2017-18 and the proportion of applicants who were BAME where the local authority positively discharged its duty under Section 75 in the same period stood at 14 per cent. Tai Pawb consulted with local authority colleagues in Swansea who told them that in their area, all of the households in this category were refugees and colleagues in Newport told us that it was a significant proportion. This would suggest that the current arrangements for moving on from asylum seeker to refugee status is resulting in significant levels of homelessness.

If a person approaches the local authority, their housing needs will be assessed as part of the authority's general housing and homelessness responsibilities and depending on their circumstances they may be referred to temporary accommodation within mainstream homelessness provision. However, as the Inquiry heard, there are issues with the appropriateness of this provision which has not been developed to specifically meet the needs of refugees. In addition, priority need requirements often mean that single refugees or couples without children who are not considered vulnerable will not be entitled or owed the homelessness duty and will not be entitled to temporary accommodation.

Support available from the LA to find private rented sector accommodation is limited, often due to lack of availability of affordable PRS accommodation, letting agencies/landlords refusing to house people accessing some benefits, and lack of funds for bonds or arrangements for references.

This study focused mainly, though not entirely, on the situation in Cardiff as this is where the greatest demand is likely to exist because of the higher number of people dispersed to Cardiff. Government statistics for December 2018 [Parliament UK asylum statistics](#) show the number of supported asylum seekers living in dispersed accommodation in Wales at that point as:

- Cardiff – 1293
- Swansea – 843
- Newport – 504
- Wrexham – 140



If we compare this to the locations where we have consulted with organisations who are meeting a demand for the kind of housing and support we are exploring, it suggests that there is likely to be demand in Wales as the numbers are on the whole larger – significantly so when comparing these cities to Cardiff:

- Bristol – 241
- Newcastle – 1056
- Gateshead – 737
- Sunderland – 381

One of the key barriers to understanding the current situation fully however, is that we have been told by contributors that no one knows how many people are given leave to remain and required to vacate the NASS accommodation each month.

The support organisations we spoke to were able to provide us with information on the numbers they work with but without knowing how many are given leave to remain, it is impossible to accurately quantify total potential demand.

The importance of addressing this lack of crucial data is picked up in the WG's [\*\*Nation of Sanctuary - Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan\*\*](#). The views of participants who contributed to this piece of work mirrored those given to the Committee Inquiry and responded to in the above plan. There is an opportunity with the re-tendering of this service to address this issue which would facilitate better strategic planning and a more seamless transition from asylum seeker to refugee status.

The Wales Refugee Council (WRC) is funded by WG to provide the Move-On Service which provides assistance to refugees to help them access mainstream benefits and support and advice around housing, education, health and employment. The WRC operates in the 4 dispersal cities and works with the relevant local authority and other third sector organisations where appropriate. In the last quarter the WRC provided advice and support to 142 new refugees (including dependents):

- 93 in Cardiff
- 15 in Newport
- 29 in Swansea, and
- 5 in Wrexham

The WRC has built up some positive relationships with private landlords and is able to help some refugees access accommodation through this route. As committed and knowledgeable as the organisation is, the project is overstretched and when we compare what refugees are

offered in Wales to some of the models in England, it is clear that a much more comprehensive and holistic service is possible and desirable.

In Cardiff, if the refugee approaching the Council is single and considered vulnerable, they may be referred to either Taff Housing Association or the YMCA. We are grateful to both organisations for their contribution to this study.

Taff HA manages the only specialist RSL provided accommodation that we are aware of in Cardiff through two shared accommodation schemes with 11 bed spaces in total for single male refugees. Again, as welcome as this is, it seems a very small number compared to the likely demand when over 1000 people are currently living in NASS accommodation in the city. It is also narrow in focus which raises questions about why we don't have similar provision for single women refugees.

The YMCA has hostel accommodation for single homeless people and after a time in the hostel where an assessment takes place, the refugees who access this service are often helped to move into the private rented sector through the YMCA's move-on scheme. In 2018 the project helped a total of 35 people move from the hostel into the PRS of which 15 were refugees. This year the numbers are already looking higher. In the first four months of 2019, the scheme helped 31 people into the PRS and 16 of them were refugees.

There are also many other organisations that offer help to both asylum seekers and refugees such as the Red Cross, DPIA, Oasis and various churches and mosques. This tends to be in the form of advice, support and sometimes small payments for people who are destitute. There is one other accommodation-based support we are aware of – Homes 4 U – which is a church-based charity that offers support and some accommodation to destitute asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees within people's homes, and also a limited supply of properties with private landlords. At the time of drafting this report however, we understand that this latter route may not be able to continue.

In Swansea, EYST delivers a refugee and asylum seeker advice service which provides half hour slots on an appointment basis between 10.30am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.

This analysis of current provision alongside the findings of the Inquiry suggest there is likely to be unmet need for temporary accommodation although it isn't possible to precisely quantify what that is because of gaps in the data available. This report now goes on to look at what the refugees told us and how the evidence outlined so far compares with what the academic research suggests.

#### 4. What did the refugees we spoke to tell us?

The interviews with refugees supported the findings of the Inquiry and what research tells us. Their input can be summarised as:

- They value the support that local authorities and WRC provide but they see that services are under pressure and struggle to meet demand;
- Accessing accommodation in the private rented sector is problematic – they find that landlords don't want to house refugees nor people who are not in employment; and
- Access to employment is a challenge as their qualifications are not recognised and it takes time to find employment

The comments below summarise the wider input and demonstrate how help with housing and employment – issues that would be addressed through the kind of housing and support scheme developed specifically for refugees in other parts of the UK – would be of most benefit:

- *“I've been to Housing Options, they advised me to start looking for a private rented property – I've already looked online at Rightmove, Zoopla and Gumtree but when I follow properties up they say they will not accept me because I'm currently unemployed and on benefits.”*
- *“In my opinion, more help and support to access employment would be the ideal situation – I had a good job before I came here so I am finding this difficult – if I had more support to find employment it would then be easier for me to access housing”*

## 5. What did people working in this area in Wales tell us?

As with the input of the refugees consulted to contribute to this project, the input of people who are involved in delivering the current provision reflected similar concerns and experiences that previous research has identified:

- People working in general homelessness provision recognise that refugees have different support needs to other people they are working with
- Those needs are exacerbated by the short 28 day move-on period
- Demand for housing and support outstrips supply and they are aware of refugees who have become homeless – often “sofa surfing” and periods of rough sleeping. One respondent told us that every refugee he worked with had experienced homelessness at some point.
- All people coming through the homelessness route have challenges accessing the PRS because of Local Housing Allowance rates being so low and landlords not wanting to rent to people in receipt of benefits.
- Added to the above, refugees have to work out how the system operates and have relevant paperwork in place, including a National Insurance Number etc. They agree that 28 days is not a realistic timescale for these issues to be dealt with.
- Refugees are unlikely to have funds for bonds and administrative fees connected to renting as they receive a very minimal allowance whilst in asylum accommodation.
- Single refugees who apply for their family members to join them through the Family Reunion programme struggle to find flexible enough accommodation options – minimum tenancy agreements are often 6 months, but families can sometimes arrive earlier.
- Services helping refugees to access PRS accommodation find that they generally succeed at a higher rate than the other clients and as a result, many landlords that they work with are now positive about taking refugees when they have the safety net of working through a support provider.
- Services like the Red Cross, which provide specific support, including small allowances for destitute sanctuary seekers, report that not all the people accessing their support are refused asylum seekers - some are refugees facing destitution and experiencing homelessness during the move-on period.
- Although all the services that contributed to this report were able to provide accurate numbers for the people they were supporting, no one knew how many people were actually given leave to remain each month consequently we can only guess at the need based on the numbers of people asking for help with accommodation issues and assume it is higher.

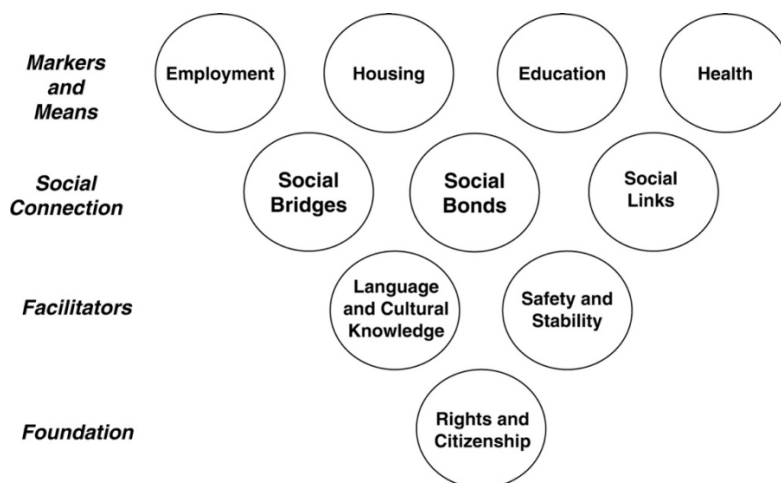
## 6. How does this compare with the academic evidence?

In 2006, Professor Vaughan Robinson produced a report, “Mapping the field: refugee housing in Wales”. His opening statement on housing holds true;

*“There is a good deal of agreement in the literature that housing is the cornerstone of successful refugee integration. Refugees, like all human beings, have a basic need for shelter. But housing is much more than physical shelter: it offers a space to practice and maintain your own culture and customs; it should offer physical and emotional security; it contributes to the formation of personal and group identities; it might facilitate the future migration of other family members; and the location of housing can profoundly influence access to services and opportunities.”(p.11)*

He goes on to point out that although the importance of housing is relevant for everyone, it is particularly important for refugees as they are likely to spend proportionately more time within their home and the immediate neighbourhood (Carey-Wood, 1997) as a result of language issues, limited incomes, childcare commitments, and potentially the hostility of some members of the established community (Carter and El-Hassan, 2003).

The seminal conceptual framework for understanding refugee integration produced by Ager and Strang in 2004 highlights the importance of housing as one of the ten key components to integration:



They argue that successfully accessing housing – alongside education, employment and health, are “critical factors in the integration process” (p3). They go on to suggest that the key aims in relation to refugee housing should be ensuring access to suitable accommodation after the granting of refugee status and sustaining households in their

homes in the longer term. In addition, Robinson (2006) makes the case for refugees being seen by housing providers as a distinct group of customers with particular needs different to other groups. His comprehensive report on the challenges experienced and the map of services that were responding in Wales at the time of the research led to 35 recommendations. The following recommendations appear to still be relevant if we consider them within the context of the Welsh Government's plans to become a Nation of Sanctuary. They are also areas that the models we have looked at would usefully address (the numbering reflects the original order in Robinson's report):

1. The need for more affordable housing
2. The need to extend the duration of the move-on period
3. The need to communicate better during move-on
4. The need to improve transitional arrangements
11. The provision of pre-tenancy support
12. Wider diffusion of the practice of medium-term floating support
13. Exploring the potential of half-way houses (temporary supported accommodation)
19. Quicker referral mechanisms
22. Further development work with private landlords
23. Further development work with RSLs

Another Wales-specific report, "Refugees Living in Wales: a survey of skills, experiences and barriers to inclusion" (2009) affirms housing's position as the cornerstone of successful refugee integration. The survey found that 4 out of 5 refugees experienced a range of problems with accommodation and there was evidence of a negative impact of these experiences on mental health.

Also relevant to this study, in terms of the potential need for improved housing and support provision specifically for refugees, only 1 in 5 of those surveyed expressed a desire to move away from Wales; this again suggests that there is demand for good quality housing and support that would help people transition to a permanent place in the community.

The researchers recommend that the priorities for improving how the needs of refugees should be met are:

- tackling sub-standard accommodation and ensuring that refugees are not effectively homeless;
- dealing with the specific barriers to accessing appropriate English language training courses;

- removing barriers to education and training;
- increasing access to volunteering, especially outside the refugee sector;
- reducing racism and discrimination in finding employment and in the workplace; and
- improving reporting of, and responses to, racist incidents.

The model being explored has the potential to provide a positive response to all of the above issues.

## 7. What conclusions can we draw from the above?

If we consider the insights from the:

- academic research
- UK Government statistics
- The National Assembly Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry
- The Welsh Government policy position and intentions
- Our interviews with refugees
- Our interviews with people working in this area in Wales and England

There is a clear need to radically improve how we help refugees become established and integrate into Welsh society through the provision of specialist supported housing that not only provides a safe, good quality home but links them into the services and networks that will help them move on to achieve their goals.

Moreover, we would not be starting with a blank sheet. There are well established models in other parts of the UK that already do this and are keen to share their learning. The question then is not whether it is feasible to develop specialist housing and support provision for refugees but rather – why haven't we and how do we make it happen? It would seem impossible to become the first Nation of Sanctuary when our provision in this area appears to compare so unfavourably with other parts of the UK.



## 8. What models have been developed elsewhere?

The key aim of this study was to explore the feasibility of establishing a model of specialist housing and support for refugees learning from organisations that have already done this in other parts of the UK. This section provides information on the organisations we have engaged with and can learn from.

### ACH

We are very grateful for the considerable amount of time we have spent with Richard Thickpenny from ACH (formerly Ashley Community Housing) who has helped us understand the model they have developed in Bristol and the West Midlands. The model has 5 key elements:

- Accommodation
- Support
- Work skills
- Enterprising skills
- Move on

ACH was founded in 2008, became a registered social landlord in 2012 and set up a training arm in 2014. ACH describes itself as a “social enterprise working to resettle refugees through labour market and social integration”. It currently has 65 staff and works with around 2500 people a year.

ACH's primary aim is to house single vulnerable adults with support needs, and it specialises in supporting newly arrived refugees. It provides a network of safe, high-quality and well-managed supported accommodation across Bristol, Birmingham and Wolverhampton, which focus on helping tenants to overcome their difficulties, learn new skills and prepare for independent living. They stress the importance of their model being based on lived experience and cultural understanding of the clients which enables them to support their resettlement and integration needs by helping to develop key skills and build the social bridges that are necessary for them to sustain tenancies and move on with their lives. The support they provide focuses on:

- Finance and benefits
- Health issues
- Education, training and employment
- Cultural integration and social inclusion
- Legal and immigration assistance

- Moving on - Council and social housing applications
- Family reunions

In terms of the accommodation element to their work, ACH has been gifted some properties, has others on a long-term lease with a peppercorn rent from the local authority and also has leasing arrangements with private landlords. It provides temporary accommodation in single gender shared housing for 4 to 6 people (with one larger scheme) to single refugees. As the refugees accessing this accommodation are considered vulnerable, the accommodation meets the criteria for exempt accommodation under Housing Benefit rules. This enables the organisation to meet the tenants' needs by providing appropriate support and advice.

In addition to accommodation, the organisation provides training through its subsidiary – Himilo – which enables tenants to access career advice and short, vocational training courses, particularly around English, Maths and digital skills. It also delivers Property Maintenance Apprenticeships and works directly with a number of employers to source staff from the refugee and BAME communities.

### **Action Foundation**

We are grateful too to Heather Petch for putting us in touch with Julian Prior who set up the Action Foundation in 2006 and his colleague Vin Totton who leads on their housing services. Both Julian and Vin have been very supportive of this project, sharing information on what they do and how its funded.

Action Foundation is a charity which aims to empower vulnerable asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in overcoming exclusion and poverty by creating opportunities for them to lead safe, independent and fulfilled lives.

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne the organisation provides support to disadvantaged refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants across Tyne and Wear. It operates a range of services including three supported housing projects and an English language school.

The Foundation started in 2006 as a response to the needs of the local community identified by City Church in Newcastle. Following research into the greatest needs in Newcastle and an assessment of how the church might be able to help meet those needs, it started by helping asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds.

The housing element of their work began initially through securing a property from a philanthropic landlord to provide supported accommodation to 4 destitute asylum seekers.

The English language work began in 2007 with a summer school and they launched Action Letting in 2012. Action Letting provides accommodation and support to new refugees and helps prevent homelessness as they transition from the support of the asylum process to living independently. To date they have supported 147 beneficiaries through this project.

In 2015/2016 Action Letting, Action Housing and Action Language projects were expanded into Sunderland in response to a recognised need and demand for these services. They also launched their second social enterprise, [Action Language PRO](#), which provides fee-paying professional English courses. This contributes financially towards the delivery of their free classes.

### **Praxis**

Praxis was founded in 1983 by the Robert Kemble Trust to respond to the marginalisation of refugees and migrants. It provides holistic services including advice and supported housing. From 2015 to 2018 it partnered with Commonweal Housing on a pilot project which aimed to seek solutions for destitute migrants with uncertain immigration status by developing a model where income raised from supporting one group – refugee families supported by local authorities under Section 17 of the Children Act – would enable the provision of a service including free bedspaces for destitute single people. Although the focus is not the same as this study, there is interesting learning which is captured in the excellent project report, *“Housing destitute migrants: lessons from a pilot project 2015 – 2018”* [Praxis pilot project](#). The report includes comprehensive information on how the project was funded and delivered. It also provides summary information on projects set up by other organisations including those outlined below.

### **Nottingham Arimathea Trust**

The Trust operates in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and Derby and provides supported housing for destitute asylum seekers, newly recognised refugees, and migrants that are victims of trafficking or modern slavery. They have 8 shared houses, of which 6 are shared between refugees and asylum seekers and 2 that are entirely for destitute asylum seekers. They also have 2 family homes for refugees and 9 one bedroomed flats which house singles, couples and small families. HB income is at the higher rate based on exempt status and properties are leased below market rent:

- 4 from HAs
- 2 from the Anglican Diocese
- 5 from the PRS
- 9 flats from Christian social investor Green Pastures, and
- 1 free bungalow

### **Open Door North East (ODNE)**

ODNE operates in Middlesbrough and Stockton providing a range of services that support the wellbeing, livelihoods and integration of those seeking sanctuary in

the UK. The organisation began housing refugees in order to cross subsidise accommodation for Asylum Seekers with no recourse to public funds. They have 35 houses:

- 3 owned;
- 2 privately owned & rent free;
- 1 rent free from an RSL; and
- 29 privately owned & managed by ODNE as a social lettings' agent

They house 96 refugees, 16 asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds & 2 EU migrants.

### **Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing Migration Foundation (MTVH)**

The Foundation is a large, recently merged housing group which works in London, the South East & Midlands which incorporates a supported housing arm. It has a Fund – the Migrant Foundation – which is restricted to meet the needs of migrant beneficiaries and is funding innovation in service provision for migrants with a specific interest in vulnerable and destitute migrants.

It has 1 ten bedroomed house for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds in an area of high need in Derby. The property is owned by the Association and the support is funded by the Migration Foundation.

### **Boaz Trust**

The Trust operates in Greater Manchester. It exists to support people who have become homeless at some point in the asylum system with an emphasis on

helping asylum seekers out of destitution. It developed a refugee housing project to support its mission with 14 houses donated by sympathetic individual donors for peppercorn rents. Other houses are rented including 3 from Green Pastures (a Christian Social Investor) and 2 from Arawak Walton Housing Association. 20% of Boaz's income comes from refugee housing and support. The income from renting 28 rooms (in total) to 15 male refugees & 13 female refugees covers approx. 56% of the cost of spaces for 43 destitute asylum seekers (24 male, 19 female). They currently have 19 houses – 17 in Manchester and 2 in Salford. Some properties are treated as HMOs/licenced.

## **Hope Projects**

The organisation operates in Birmingham and the West Midlands. It exists to overturn flawed refusals of asylum by providing housing, financial support and legal advice.

Most of its 12 properties were secured from housing associations and individuals at ground/peppercorn rent levels. Support is mainly grant funded. The organisation supports 60 people in total of which 38 are destitute.

## 9. What can we learn from these models?

There are some common features to the models that have been developed in England:

- Their housing stock is generally made up of a mixture of properties that are gifted, provided on a peppercorn or ground rent and include some PRS but again with lower than market rents agreed as part of long-term leasing arrangements.
- They quite often access other funding to provide the more holistic support – accessed through Supporting People, grant funding from charitable trusts, central government funding for specific elements, paid for services and personal donations.
- Through this mixed economy, they not only house refugees, they also provide accommodation and support to refused asylum seekers.
- Projects meet the criteria for Exempt Housing Benefit which enables them to provide intensive housing management specifically designed to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

There is also other relevant learning:

- Many have a history that starts with philanthropic giving and/or the church and these connections and philanthropic element have enabled them to begin working in this area. In a number of cases, their work began with a property being gifted to the organisation.
- Most, but not all, are specialist providers working with refugees and asylum seekers and a strength of this approach is the cultural understanding that this brings.
- They manage to operate across England in locations with different housing market contexts, although the Commonweal/Praxis report suggests that the specific conditions of the London housing market makes it more difficult.
- Many appear to operate financially sound social lettings agencies that work with the PRS through leasing arrangements which provide accommodation and support to refugees and create a sufficient surplus to also provide accommodation to people with no recourse to public funds.

## 10. What should we do next?

As part of the research for this project, an initial analysis of a potential model has been undertaken with advice and support from housing benefit and housing finance experts. We considered whether a successful project could be established using the model of a 4 bed shared house for individual refugees which met the criteria for exempt accommodation under HB rules using a property from the private rented sector where the accommodation was on a long term lease with intensive housing management provided by a housing association. Our initial analysis suggests that this wouldn't be financially viable and looking at the models developed elsewhere, it appears that a successful model needs to:

- Be based on a portfolio of accommodation with a mixed economy of houses made up of:
  - a portion that are gifted to the organisation rent-free, (many projects start with rent free or peppercorn rent accommodation obtained by the provider)
  - some that are leased on a ground or peppercorn rent, and
  - a proportion that are leased from the PRS, preferably on or lower than market rates.
- Legitimately meet the criteria for exempt accommodation within the Housing Benefit regime so that specialised intensive housing management can be provided.
- Provide a holistic approach which brings together housing with other support specifically designed to meet the needs of refugees and tackling barriers to permanent housing and employment including the promotion of health and well-being.
- Be based on successful partnerships between relevant agencies from across the public, private and third sectors in housing, advice, health and education/training sectors.

It is therefore recommended that:

- Further exploratory work is carried out, led by Tai Pawb but involving the partners who have already contributed to this report as well as representatives from other sectors and organisations who could usefully contribute. We suggest the group includes:
  - organisations that have already contributed – Wales Refugee Council, Taff Housing, YMCA Cardiff, The Red Cross, Cardiff Council, the WLGA;

As well as new partners such as:

- the Residential Landlord Association,
- religious organisations working in this area,

- Interested philanthropic organisations such as Community Foundation in Wales
- Cymorth Cymru, and
- Other interested RSLs from the dispersal cities.
- This group continues to work with organisations in England and potentially beyond who have developed successful housing and support provision in comparable operating environments.
- Explore with philanthropic organisations, RSLs, and local authorities the possibility to secure rent-free or low rent properties.
- Explore the potential offered by the recent focus on empty properties and consider whether properties could be identified that could be brought back in to use by refugee-led organisations working in partnership with local authorities and RSLs and used on a long-term lease to provide supported accommodation for refugees.
- Establish with Supporting People colleagues nationally and regionally the potential for funding a refugee project.
- Discuss with Welsh Government and local government how such a scheme or schemes would contribute to the achievement of Wales becoming a Nation of Sanctuary.

In conclusion, it appears from this research and the input of specialist providers in England that Wales is lagging behind in how it meets the housing and support needs of refugees as well as refused asylum seekers. If Wales is to become the first Nation of Sanctuary we need to address this. The organisations in England that are providing specialist housing and support are willing to help us develop our services, and there is clearly a demand that Welsh politicians and Welsh Government is aware of and keen to address. This report suggests the next steps that will lead us to reaching our shared goals and we hope the Welsh Government will endorse the approach.



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Information on the hact Accommodate project is available from <http://www.hact.org.uk/downloads.asp?PageId=89>

Information on the joint hact/CIH Opening Doors project, is available from <http://www.hact.org.uk/downloads.asp?PageId=173>