



Welsh Refugee Coalition
c/o Ethnic Youth Support Team
Units B & C
11 St Helen Road
Swansea, SA1 4AB
01792 466790

John Griffiths AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

18 August 2017

Dear Mr Griffiths

I am writing as chair of the Welsh Refugee Coalition in follow up to the ELGC Committee's 'I used to be someone' report. The Coalition is delighted that your Committee focused on so many of the important issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees and recommended concrete steps to make Wales a 'Nation of Sanctuary'.

Following an all-Wales conference in April we have formed a Nation of Sanctuary Steering Group, chaired by Rebecca Scott, to make that idea a reality, working with the voluntary sector, Welsh and local Government, local health boards and other service providers, communities and the private sector. Following your recommendation 12, and as one of the 'seven steps' to sanctuary, the Coalition are also formulating proposals for practical steps to tackle destitution in Wales.

Finance is obviously critical in any re-invigorated approach and we welcome your assurance at the Report's launch that your committee would be scrutinising the relevant spending lines throughout the forthcoming Welsh Government budget negotiations.

Some of the key costs arising from your committee's recommendations include support to expand ESOL provision, fund university fees, expand the role of community cohesion co-ordinators, address needs in mental health, of the destitute and of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and ensuring (the re-named) Asylum Rights programme has sufficient provision of legal advice and mental health support.

We would like the next Welsh Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan to be co-produced with those involved, especially refugees and asylum seekers themselves, and welcome Mark Drakeford's support for co-production as one of the most exciting opportunities we have to bring together the knowledge, experience and contributions of those who work in our public services and those who use them. The level of engagement required would affect the speed with which the plan could be developed, but we believe that if genuine partnership can be achieved this will yield substantial benefits in terms of long-term impact and buy-in from a wide range of partners in Wales. I am pleased to report there is positive engagement between civil servants working on the Delivery Plan revision and Coalition members to further this ambition.

Your continuing support on the above issues is clearly critical. Can I suggest a meeting to discuss how your Committee will be following up your report over the Summer and Autumn and any suggestions you may have on how the Coalition and its project teams could work with you to best effect?

Yours sincerely

Rocio Cifuentes

Rocio Cifuentes
Chair, Welsh Refugee Coalition