



# Swansea

## CITY OF SANCTUARY

### NEWS

Issue 2

June 2010

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## Congratulations Swansea!



*Swansea becomes second officially recognised City of Sanctuary in the UK. Amel Chaoubi, Alan Thomas and Marilyn Thomas celebrating with national City of Sanctuary group in Coventry.*

## The City of Sanctuary Vision

A vision of Swansea as a place where we celebrate the contribution of people seeking sanctuary and welcome, support and include them wherever they go. To be part of a movement spreading across cities in the UK.

Organisations and individuals all over Swansea are working to make this vision a reality.



The editors would like to thank the inspiration and tireless work of the people who brought together individuals, voluntary groups and statutory organisations to work toward getting Swansea recognised as a City of Sanctuary. They would also like to thank the outgoing Mayor, people in local government departments, funding bodies, the people who have made pledges and taken action to welcome those who are seeking sanctuary; and all those who have supported the initiative. Another thanks must go to all those who have contributed to our first, and this, (our second) newsletter.

## What's been happening?

### Official "City of Sanctuary" status granted

The big news is that on May 17th Swansea was recognised as the second city in the UK to have reached the criteria for recognised City of Sanctuary status.

This is the culmination of work that has been growing in Swansea for many years – long before City of Sanctuary itself started two years ago. In 2001 people seeking sanctuary started to arrive in Swansea when the UK government named Swansea as a "dispersal area". Since then they have involved themselves in city life and many local organisations have been working hard to welcome and support them.

In making our bid for City of Sanctuary status we were able to report that:

- 105 organisations have signed a pledge of support for asylum seekers and refugees in Swansea
- At least 70 organisations are putting this support into practice. For example by:
  - ◇ Benefiting from the skills people have brought to this country by involving them as volunteers.
  - ◇ Bringing locals and people seeking sanctuary together through arts projects, special events etc
  - ◇ Fund-raising for local asylum charities
  - ◇ Inviting the refugee speakers team to give awareness raising workshops
- The City and County of Swansea actively supports the project and plans to do so in the future
- People seeking sanctuary are actively involved in the process
- There are a number of practical projects to support people seeking sanctuary (See our website for ways in which you can be involved in some of these)
- There are also various events and activities that bring people seeking sanctuary together with local people

# What else has been happening in the last few months

⇒ **Stories and Meeting Points** is the title of a new project for which City of Sanctuary has funding from the Department of International Development.

Displaced People in Action which already manages the current speakers team is employing Max Kpakio (photo) to work on the project, which is mainly about developing their **Refugee Speakers Team** in Swansea especially to give awareness-raising talks in organisations supporting City of Sanctuary.

There's an emphasis on showing the links between those seeking sanctuary in Swansea and the development problems of their countries of origin, including civil conflict, ethnic and religious division, resource scarcity and poverty.



⇒ **Residents in Penlan** met with local police and community organisations to discuss **community safety**. People seeking sanctuary were very much part of this day and it was organised jointly by Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council, City of Sanctuary and the Police p.6

⇒ **"We Welcome Asylum Seekers and Refugees"**



City of Sanctuary has had window stickers printed with this message in English and Welsh. They are already on display in several premises around the city. Please get in touch if you haven't yet got yours.

⇒ The **voluntary hosting project** has been given a further grant and is seeking a part time worker for the next phase of its work. When people seeking sanctuary are refused they are often still frightened to go back to situations of danger. They are often made destitute and the hosting project is a structured volunteer scheme to make it possible for local people to offer temporary accommodation and support. p.9

⇒ The former **Lord Mayor**, Councillor Alan **Lloyd** held a **welcome party** for people recently accepted as refugees and we hope that this will be an annual event p.7

## STOP PRESS:

**New refugee women's project including trauma counselling.** The African Community Centre has succeeded in getting a new grant from Comic Relief. So, as part of their refugee women's project, they will be able to offer one-to-one and group trauma counselling and daily therapeutic activities for women. The project will also provide childcare and money for bus fares. They hope to start the new project in August or September.



# City of Sanctuary recognition – **only the beginning**

This is only the beginning and there is a long way to go. We are still seeking pledges of support from organisations over Swansea, working towards our ultimate aim that there will be a welcome wherever people seeking sanctuary live and wherever they go.

We are actively seeking funding for a development worker who will help mobilise more people to make this happen and to support organisations to take practical action.

## In the meantime...

- If you belong to an organisation that might like to sign a simple resolution of support, contact [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org)
- Visit our website [www.cityofsanctuary.org](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org) for more information and for ideas on how you might translate your support into action
- Read the newsletter for information on what people in Swansea are doing to make “City of Sanctuary” a reality!



## Actions by organisations supporting City of Sanctuary

### Everybody’s doing it ...

... supporting and involving people seeking sanctuary, that is. This was the best surprise when we were putting together our ‘bid’ for City of Sanctuary status. We had a target of 25% of supporting organizations doing something to make a difference. In fact we could report practical, positive actions for at least 70 of our first 100 supporters.

Here is just the A to E part of our list. This gives a cross-section of the ways that different organizations help and involve people seeking sanctuary. We’ll try to cover the rest of the alphabet in the next two or three Newsletters. Please let us know if you find any mistakes – and if you have things going on that you think we may not know about.

<p><b>African Community Centre</b></p>	<p>Daily drop in, involves people seeking sanctuary as volunteers; training opportunities – e.g. IT and Film making; wonderful events bringing people together, e.g. Swansea’s Got Talent; Refugee women’s group on Tuesday mornings 11am-1pm; Counselling for asylum seeking/refugee women and daily therapeutic activities.</p>
<p><b>Amnesty International Swansea Branch</b></p>	<p>Involves people seeking sanctuary in Swansea. For example editing newsletter, giving talks. They have campaigned for political prisoners known personally to refugees in Swansea who came seeking sanctuary from the same country and who are able to provide information for the campaign.</p>

<b>Asylum Justice</b>	Free legal support and advice for those who have no access to it including asylum seekers. Involves people seeking sanctuary as volunteers and interpreters.
<b>Bikeability Wales</b>	Recycles bikes. Encourages people seeking sanctuary to repair and take away a bike for their use.
<b>Bonymaen Communities First</b>	Supports UNISON Refugee and Employment Project by providing a work placement; future plan of working with City of Sanctuary and partners to hold a community safety workshop in the area, concentrating on safety issues experienced by refugees and asylum seekers; held a culturally diverse food and fashion event.
<b>British Red Cross</b>	Trains and involves people seeking sanctuary as volunteers – e.g. as first aid trainers, in their lost person tracing service, providing first aid for events.
<b>Capel Y Nant Congregational Church</b>	Voluntary work for SBASSSG drop in. Organised evening of music and poetry to bring people seeking sanctuary. Represented on Hosting Project steering group, and seek to involve other churches in City of Sanctuary.
<b>CMPR (Centre for Migration Policy Research, Swansea University)</b>	Research and seminars on wide range of topics relating to migration and asylum; has provided training in research skills for refugees and asylum seekers so that they can directly undertake research on the issues affecting them.
<b>Circus Eruption</b>	Has brought circus skills to Welcome to Play at SBASSG drop in.
<b>City Temple</b>	Gives practical and emotional support to the asylum seekers and refugees in their congregation
<b>Clydach Methodist Church</b>	Minister promotes City of Sanctuary throughout the circuit, Methodist circuit raised money for three local asylum charities this year.
<b>Cyrenians Cymru</b>	Talking with City of Sanctuary about multi cultural, multi faith sessions which they hope to put on in their premises.
<b>DACE (Department of Adult and Community Education, Swansea University)</b>	Swansea arrivals website, Parenting courses for locals and refugees together. New free singing class in venue well known to refugees and promoted by impromptu singing session at drop in. We are hoping for a performance at our celebration.
<b>Discovery</b>	Student volunteers help with informal language project at SBASSG drop in and organise participative activities for children focused on getting to know the Swansea community. Volunteers also run a swim club for women and children in a private pool with a female lifeguard.
<b>Displaced People in Action</b>	Wide range of services for asylum seekers and refugees – cultural, educational, vocational. Support refugee community organisations, runs refugee speakers team
<b>Dragon Arts</b>	Encourages asylum seekers and refugees to join their community arts and ESOL sessions.
<b>Exotica (St Helens Road)</b>	Friendly neighbour to Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group drop in – for example food bargains.
Fforwm Theatr Cymru to Pentrehafod Comprehensive School – see next time	

# Penlan Community Safety Workshop

Thursday 15th April 2010



The Penlan Community Safety Workshop brought Penlan residents together with people who are responsible for community safety in Penlan.

One emphasis was on highlighting the concerns of people seeking sanctuary (refugees and asylum seekers) who live in Penlan. The event was a partnership between City of Sanctuary, Displaced People in Action, Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council and Communities First. Seven people seeking sanctuary attended along with two long-term Penlan residents.

Also attending were 18 representatives from various agencies including South Wales Police, Housing Options, Swansea Council Community Regeneration unit, DPIA, African Community

Centre, Welsh Refugee Council, and Penlan Communities First.

The event began with a welcome by the Lord Mayor, followed by a film describing the goal of the City of Sanctuary movement. The heart of the event, however, was a one hour long workshop in which table participants engaged in two activities to discuss the issue of community safety and share their experiences relating to community safety in Penlan.

City of Sanctuary will continue working with our partners to advance community safety workshops in all of Swansea's Communities First areas over the next year. Please do attend when we come to your neighbourhood.

*Ginger Wiegand, Inclusion Officer,  
Displaced People in Action*

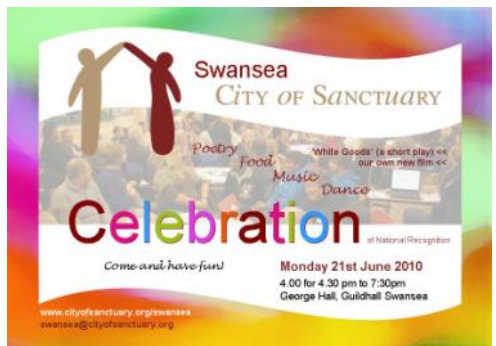
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## New Film

You can now see Swansea City of Sanctuary on film! OnePeople Productions have put together a 15 minute DVD. We took a rough-cut to the national City of Sanctuary meeting as part of our bid for City of Sanctuary Status and they said it was "inspirational".

The first full showing of the Swansea City of Sanctuary film will be at our **Celebration of City of Sanctuary Status** on 21st June in the George Hall.

If you want to see this film, please contact us [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org), for a copy of the DVD or ask someone to come and show it to your organisation or group.





# Lord Mayor extends a Swansea welcome to people granted Leave to Remain

On 21st April the then Lord Mayor, Councillor Alan Lloyd, laid on a handsome spread at the Guildhall to welcome people granted Leave to Remain in the UK during his term of office to their new home in Swansea.

20 families from across the world were treated to tea in the George Room as guests of the City and County of Swansea.

In his welcoming speech the Lord Mayor said, "I'm pleased that during my year as Lord Mayor there has been a group which decided to make Swansea a 'City of Sanctuary'.



"I've always believed there are three things which matter more than anything else: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I think if we lived by these three things the world would be a better place. That's really what 'City of Sanctuary' is. We're saying Swansea is a place where no one will be persecuted."



**"I hope this Lord Mayor's Welcome Tea Party becomes an annual event."**

Following the speech the Lord Mayor mingled with the crowd and chatted to families from Algeria, Azerbaijan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Zimbabwe who have all made Swansea their home after their asylum claims were accepted by the UK Government.

*Keith Ross*

## Make Love Not War

On 19th April City of Sanctuary made a presentation at an Amnesty Awareness event that had been organised by pupils of Bishop Gore School. The aim of the evening was to highlight the persecution and torture of people around the world and the work of Amnesty International in supporting individuals who are being detained, imprisoned or tortured.

The young people had a programme of speakers who outlined beliefs of different cultures. The aim was to show how misunderstandings can cause hate. They reflected on ideas of respect, love and peace.

The programme catered for different cultures and beliefs. There were Christian songs and time out for Muslim prayers.

Nur Najihah Muhaimin from the AMNESTY Bishop Gore School Club says "The aim was to promote tolerance, love, respect and humanity in our community. We addressed issues such as Guantanamo Bay, Palestine and Israel issue, headscarf rights, religious beliefs and community rights.

It gave people the chance to find out how religion, culture and language are humanity issues. We believe we can change the world by supporting Amnesty. "

The organisers provided supporting amnesty information and sold refreshments, to raise money for Amnesty and the event was supported by city-based takeaway Ararad and Brynny-Mor print house.

# A New Resource for Swansea

## A Visit to Swansea Drugs Project 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010

It was good to see the City of Sanctuary Welcome Notice in a prominent position in the reception area when we visited the new Swansea Drugs Project Resource Centre.

Funding of £1.5 million from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Big Lottery Fund was used to transform the former British Legion premises on Mansel Street into a state of the art Resource Centre for the Drugs Project.

Swansea Drugs Project was started in 1983 by a group of local residents and users and has developed into one of the leading drug and alcohol agencies in Wales. Director Ifor Glyn took us on a Grand Tour of the building which has a reception area, crisis rooms and a needle exchange unit on the ground floor and on upper floors there are counselling rooms, offices, a staff room, a training kitchen, a Healthy Living suite with a gym and a Computer Training suite. The Centre has a flourishing Service Users group and in this new building they have been allocated their own office so that they can participate actively in the day to day decision –making of the Centre and its services.



At the core of the Centre's strategies are a set of values and beliefs which underpin its Person Centred focus on harm reduction and individual empowerment. These include:

- A vision that everyone affected by problem substance use has a right to health, dignity and respect.
- An aim to enable individuals to reduce the harm that problem substance use causes.
- An aim always to recognise the potential of the individuals we work with.
- A belief in Rights and Responsibilities
- A belief in Partnership.
- An aim to take a wider role in Society.

In our conversation with Ifor and in the Annual Report 2008-9 he provided us with, he states:-

*“ Substance misuse continues to be one of the most damaging influences upon our society today, causing untold misery and harm to individuals, families, friends and communities. Every day we see children affected by parental drug/alcohol misuse, young people losing hope and ambition, individuals suffering ill health, more and more becoming enmeshed in the criminal justice system, families and relationships breaking down and, sadly, people dying.”*

These facts are the stark reality of life and serve to hit home the reason for and purpose of the Swansea Drugs Project. It has innovative, inclusive ways of working in partnership with other agencies to ensure that hope, commitment to change and active policies bring about positive actions.





## Voluntary Hosting Project – can you help?



Ifor explained that the Project was fully supportive of Swansea as a City of Sanctuary (indeed they were one of the first organisations within the city to sign our pledge) and although they are not actively working with Asylum Seekers and Refugees at the moment they hope to do so in the future. They do however work very closely with Swansea Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) and have links with the Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN) in Swansea who are based just over the road from the Project in Mansel Street.

A final comment from Ifor helps to underpin the ethos of the Project:

*"We aim to ensure that our services are accessible, user-friendly and non-judgemental to all those who need our help and support."*

This bodes well for the future and we left the Project with a real sense of positivity and purpose, feeling that the services, skills and resources of all who work towards Community cohesion in Swansea will benefit from this great new Centre.

*Hazel Hunter & Ada Garton*

The Voluntary Hosting Project (previously known as 'CARDS') aims to offer hospitality, in the form of accommodation, meals, welcome and solidarity, to destitute asylum seekers in Swansea. We estimate that between 100 and 200 people are in this position. They have been refused sanctuary by the Government and all financial and other forms of support have been withdrawn from them.

Some refused asylum seekers can apply for 'Hard Case' support, or Section 4, as it is known, but they are not always accepted. Section 4 means agreeing to return 'home' if the Government says it is 'safe'. So, many others do not apply because they are afraid of going back to countries where there is ongoing conflict, violence or human rights abuses. This means they remain here, on people's sofas or cold and hungry on our streets.

The pilot phase of the project is just finishing and we have a small grant from a Quaker fund to continue. Shelter Cymru has agreed to employ a part-time coordinator for the project.

### **We are looking for people who will:**

Offer a room in their home to a destitute asylum seeker for a Night, a Weekend, 2 Weeks, or longer.

**OR**

If you are going away on holiday, offer your home for that time.

**OR**

Support a Host by inviting their Guest to Dinner, once a week, once a month or take a Guest on a trip.

**OR**

Buy a Mobile Phone Top-up Card or a Bus Pass for a Guest. (You can set up a Standing Order for these options)

### **To find out more >>**

e-mail [cards@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:cards@cityofsanctuary.org) to get hold of our helpful leaflets for both **Guests** and **Hosts**, or ask any other questions.

**We are happy to come and do a Talk and show a Short Film to any Group which wants to know more about the Project.**

## Amel goes to Coventry

Amel Chaoubi went to Coventry with Alan and Marilyn Thomas as part of Swansea's delegation to the City of Sanctuary National Network meeting on 17 May at which Swansea was awarded 'City of Sanctuary' status.

Amel came to UK seeking sanctuary from Algeria and has been in Swansea for six years. She now has 'leave to remain', together with her husband and five children.

Amel says: "At the moment I am a stay-at-home mum. I can't work because my youngest isn't in school yet but I am studying for a Health Studies degree with the Open University, so I will be able to get a good job in the future. I want to feel useful so I do a lot of voluntary work. I'm in the Refugee Speakers' Team [run by Displaced People in Action] and enjoy explaining to people about what is an asylum seeker or a refugee. I am one of the organisers of the Swansea Women's Asylum Support Group. I also volunteer with SBASSG [Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers support Group] and Peace Mala and have just started with the Welsh Refugee Council. It feels great because it's useful to the community and it's a way of giving back something."

"I enjoyed the trip to Coventry very much, especially meeting people from other City of Sanctuary groups and listening to what they are doing and intend to do. It's a really good thing for Swansea to become a City of Sanctuary – I am very proud. And Swansea deserves this recognition because people are so friendly and welcoming here."

*Photo shows Amel and Marilyn outside the Coventry Peace House, where the meeting was held, with Clint Takudzwa Chikosha (Coventry City of Sanctuary Group)*



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### Photos of Refugee Week Launch, National Waterfront Museum 12th June



# Social Groups

**Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group**

Where else in Swansea can you, **eat** Sri-Lankan Cake, Algerian couscous, Iranian Salad, **play** table-tennis, Russian card games, musical chairs, **dance** Strip the Willow, to Kurdish music, **make** a card at a craft table, a play, **learn** how to greet someone in Arabic, a song from Zimbabwe, a different alphabet, **hear** about life in Somalia, about the weather in Iran, stories from Iraq, **meet** poets who write in Welsh, Spanish, French or Arabic, **help** someone with their English, **discuss** international politics, **meet someone** from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia, Brazil, Burma, Chile, Egypt, England, Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Liberia, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri-Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Ukraine, Wales, Zambia or Zimbabwe?

**Friday Drop-in 5-7pm**

Brunswick Church Hall, St Helen's road

**Saturday Drop-in 2-5 pm**

St Phillips Community Centre

## FAN Group Meetings

(Friends and Neighbours)

Every Tuesday 10.00 to 11.15am

Quaker Meeting House, Page St.

*Make New Friends & Practice your English*

[www.thefancharity.org](http://www.thefancharity.org)

## Café Convo

### Internet and Art Café

Monday afternoons 1-3pm

- Arts & Crafts
- Children's corner
- Language support
- Internet Access

### Parklands, Maes y Gollen, Sketty Park

*If you want to meet people, make friends, practise English or access the internet... then this is the café for you!*



## Widening Access Wales

Alair Cristina Monteiro–Mudresh is a Development Officer for the South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership, which is managed in the Department of Continuing and Adult Education (DACE), Swansea University. The project's aim is to widen access and increase participation in Higher Education by under-represented groups.

The project is open to people of different races and religions, those who live in a Communities First area, people who have a learning or physical disability, people in care or leaving care, people whose parents have not had experience of higher education and those studying through

Her vision is to reach out to people who may not have the same opportunities as their fellow students.

Cristina has lived and worked in Britain for many years, the last few in Wales. She was born in Brazil and so has the experience of being a 'foreigner' which has given her insight into the difficulties and prejudices people from other countries face in Britain. She has personal and professional experience dealing with immigration and asylum seeker issues and assists individual families.

Her enthusiasm to ensure social inclusion along with her understanding of the issues facing young black and ethnic minority people has motivated many from various cultures to take part in the programmes that have been offered through the project.

Cristina is keen to celebrate and embrace different cultures and to involve people who are refugees or asylum seekers; the project offers support and help with learning English.



the medium of Welsh.

During an interview Cristina outlined the project and talked about her role and how she reached out to the wider community. As part of the Widening Access Wales strand of the project, she aims to encourage participation in higher education for black and ethnic minority students and their families by engaging them in educational programmes that will enhance their future study and employment prospects.

In order to assess the needs of minority groups Cristina had talked with community leaders and visited voluntary and statutory organisations.

Widening Access Wales works in collaboration with higher education institutions to offer workshops, courses, study clubs and an opportunity to take part on a residential Summer University scheme. There are a wide variety of subjects covered in the project.

Pupils from schools and sixth form colleges have attended workshops, Diversity Fairs and Taste of University days. Cristina said that many had benefited from these and were enthused to pursue further studies.

Information about the Reaching Wider Project can be obtained from Libraries and the Department of Adult Continuing Education, Swansea [www.swansea.ac.uk/dace](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/dace)  
Tel: 01792 602128 or 01792 602042. Email: [reachingwider@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:reachingwider@swansea.ac.uk)

**South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership** is made of members from Careers Wales West, City and County of Swansea, Coleg Sir Gâr, Gower College Swansea, Neath Port Talbot College, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Open University in Wales, Pembrokehire College, Pembrokeshire County Council, Schools in the South West Wales area, Swansea Metropolitan University, Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity St David.



# A Day in the life of ... a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Volunteer Adviser

## Monday morning

**9.45 a.m.** I've just come into Swansea Citizens Advice Bureau in Pleasant Street. There's a queue of clients already, but they will have to wait until our receptionist opens up at 10.00 a.m.

**10.00 a.m.** I call out a number in the waiting area. A man stands up and we go into an interview room. I have no idea what he will want to ask about and this is what makes the work so interesting. I explain about the short, Gateway interview. He has mobile phone company problems. I give him the contacts for Consumer Direct as they are specialists in consumer problems. With his permission, after he leaves, I type up his case record on my computer. I'll have to do this for all the clients I see.



The next Gateway interview is more complicated. The client doesn't speak much English, so I use Language Line. This means we can use an interpreter over the phone. Through the interpreter I'm told that the client is having benefit problems. I make her a longer appointment for Thursday and ask if she could bring a friend to interpret for her. If not, we'll use Language Line again.



**10.50 a.m.** I've finished typing up my Gateway interview and now need a little time to look at my 11.00 a.m. appointment's case record. Her partner has left her and their children and now she is in debt. She's also worried about her housing situation. When she arrives, I do a benefits check for her and we talk about maximising her income. I use the Adviser-Net information system to research her housing rights. Then we prepare a budget sheet and letters to send to her creditors so they know how much she can offer to pay them.

**12.00.** The supervisor asks me to work on the phone. Swansea CAB shares this phone service with other bureaux in Wales. I speak to three more clients with queries about employment, housing and immigration problems. One client lives out of our area, so I need to find his nearest CAB on my computer to get an appointment made.

**1.00 p.m.** I've finished quite promptly today. That's the advantage of working on the phone! I'll go home now and come back to do my second advice session later in the week.

*Joan Darbyshire*



# If you tell the truth you'll never be believed

**How many people come to the UK in search of freedom and democracy, to be met by hostility, humiliation and abuse? And how many other people in this country would feel ashamed if they knew about it?**

That's my feeling after hearing a bit about M and H— no names, because people still fear that what they say may be used against them. This young middle class couple arrived in Britain by container lorry in 2003, with their two children, a girl aged five and boy aged three.

M had served six months in an Iranian prison for publishing a satirical poetry book. For that he got picked up on the way to work, blindfolded, beaten and locked up for six months. Most of that time was in solitary confinement with his wife and family unable to find or contact him.

His wife, H, stayed at work in her job, but subject to questioning and surveillance. Not long after M's release, his time commuted to fine, they were in trouble again. This time, she too was involved, and – perhaps for that reason – M was reluctant to speak about it.

Rather than face more punishment, they arranged their escape, paying 'guides' to smooth the way. M went on foot and horseback over the mountains and across the border to Turkey. Wife and children travelled by coach to rejoin him there. Then a container lorry, the four of them packed between cargo, on a six day jour-

ney to the UK. Their compartment might be opened at night, but most of the time they were locked in, with no idea where they were. From about this time, the boy, aged three, stopped talking, and stayed silent for a year.

Somewhere near London they were let out early one morning, handed £50 and told by their driver to report to a 'Home Office.' With their minimal English and help from a policeman and bus drivers, they found their way there by 8 a.m. From then until nearly midnight they spent waiting in corridors and answering questions, no food but crisps from a slot machine. M had hoped for some recognition, respect for the freedom and democracy he imagined we believed in too. Instead what they faced was hostile questioning and disbelief. Their interpreter said 'If you tell the truth you'll never be believed.'

From the Home Office to a 'hotel' at Crystal Palace, packed with evacuees from an immigrant camp at Calais. Uneatable food, one washing machine between 1,000. M by now had ulcers. He was treated in hospital but, with no fixed address, was unable to register with a GP for regular prescriptions. After two months, they were to be moved to Scotland, but an epidemic intervened: everyone had to strip, cover themselves with ointment and stand with arms and legs apart.

Another move was arranged, at the request of a sympathetic Health Visitor, but this clashed with an immigration interview in Croydon. A few more weeks, and the destination switched to Swansea. By coach, with half a dozen others, to the Phoenix Centre in Townhill. The problem here was not the housing but the neighbours.

Attacks and abuse, sticks and stones, petty theft, wilful damage and dirty nappies over the fence. When they complained, there was disbelief again, until another Health Visitor caught the neighbours tipping rubbish at their door, setting a dog on their son.

Two more moves, Townhill, then Mayhill, with more of the same. 'So many problems, throwing





When he showed his own transcript of the evidence to the Refugee Legal Centre in London, the case was referred to a tribunal which found in favour of the family. But it took another year before the court decision was reversed and permanent status granted.

Now, after more than three years, M could work and the family move freely without reporting to police. Although M already had a job lined up he had to go through the motions of the New Deal, signing on and applying for jobs. Around their house in Mayhill, nothing changed, when they bought a car it got smashed up

eggs, the children not able to go out to play.' Meanwhile M himself was accosted 'Why don't you go back where you came from?' followed by a blow on the side of the head. Another hospital. Six months later – after the intervention of an ex-policeman friend – a young man was brought to trial and fined £100.

They moved again, off the estate to a private house. 'Like heaven from hell,' he said, no problems with neighbours at last. His work progressed, his wife found a place at the university, and the family began to settle down. An end to routine hostility and uncertainty... What's a nightmare, stomach ache or migraine here or there?

Small compensation, but equivalent to nearly a week's benefits. 'Of course, not everyone was bad to us,' M said 'Just a few people, but they made life a misery, for other people too.' As immigrants, this family was an easy target. 'Scroungers'? 'I wanted to work, even voluntary work,' M said, 'but it wasn't allowed.' At home he had been an accountant, now he took courses in plumbing and electrics, while his wife made contacts in the University.

*Interview by Greg Wilkinson*

After a year in Swansea, their request for permanent refugee status came to court. An unhelpful solicitor, a sceptical judge, and their application for refugee status was refused. By now M's English was good enough to spot the discrepancies in the translated evidence; he also suspected that the Farsi interpreter was reporting back to Teheran.



## Legal Advice

Asylum Justice is a charity that gives free legal advice to asylum seekers if they do not have legal representation. It runs drop-in advice sessions in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. In Swansea, Asylum Justice meets at the Quaker Meeting House, opposite the YMCA, on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 3.00 -5pm. Contact 078 76636673 for more details.

*Asylum Justice is a registered charity (Reg No 1112026) and an exempt body (No 20080025) approved by the OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner)*



# Swansea's welcoming smile

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What I like about the various initiatives in Swansea set up by local people to help welcome and support asylum seekers in the city is the air of positivity around it all.

This is not an anti-racist (though obviously it is!) or an anti-government (though sometimes it might be) campaign of dogma and depressed backs-to-the-wall resistance. This is a pro-active and positive statement of beliefs. It is not a political statement (though it can be) ; it is a simple message of welcome and friendship.

In this movement there are not "Local Campaigners and Asylum Seekers". There are just friends and neighbours working together to improve their community.

Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group have been at the forefront of this, with their regular Drop-In centres on a Friday evening and Saturday afternoon. As you walk in to these Drop-Ins, there are often small pockets of people asking for advice on their asylum case, but mainly it's just a centre where in one room children play while in another room their parents chat.

SBASSG also organise fantastic social events and opportunities for people to mix, often with the magic ingredient of foods from around the world.

Academics have spent a long time working out strategies to enable greater community cohesion... but all it really takes in all walks of life is the opportunity to have good food and interesting conversation... or just the chance to play together.

The simple idea of welcome and friendship is what lies behind the City Of Sanctuary initiative, which states : "City of Sanctuary is a national movement of local people, community groups,

businesses and institutions united in a common wish to turn their city into a welcoming place for people seeking sanctuary from war or persecution. Swansea has offered a home to people who have lost their homes and families and we wish to celebrate the welcoming attitudes of Swansea people and organisations."

It is not just about offering welcome and friendship; it is about celebrating that welcome and friendship, and saying : "This is the way life should be". We are a community. There is, very much, a thing called community, and we want it to thrive.

I don't want to paint too rosy a picture of a perfect paradise of Love and Welcome in Swansea. Undoubtedly there is a small section of the population which is vocal in its opposition to asylum seekers (and others who are less vocal). But, as the city's mayor, Alan Lloyd said at the launch of the CARDS project : "We need to rise above those exceptions".

The CARDS project (Co-ordinated Action for the Relief of Destitution in Swansea) is a sub-group of the City of Sanctuary. The idea of CARDS is that people can offer destitute asylum seekers a room for the night, or pay for a week's bus pass, or give them a meal, or a day out. This would seem to be the most obviously "charitable" of the Swansea initiatives, and it is dealing with truly destitute individuals who are in need of charitable support. But again, all it's really about is offering the hand of friendship.

I went to the official launch of CARDS in Swansea in the same week as I went to STREIC 25, a community play in Ammanford about the role of the Womens' Support Groups in the Miners' Strike. The similarities were clear; that sense of community I was talking about, and also the aspect of charity, but trying to get past the



## Union Jack Debt



“embarrassing” (on both sides) aspect of charity by seeing it just as friendship offered, in the interests of the community as a whole.

It was interesting to hear one person say at the CARDS launch that she had originally got involved with SBASSG and Asylum Justice (a free legal advice service for asylum seekers) as a political gesture; a way of saying that she would not be complicit in the way destitute asylum seekers are treated in the UK. But now she sees how she herself has gained on a personal level from the offers of friendship she has given out.

Another woman spoke with incredulity about how a friend of hers from church was there one Sunday and gone the next, returned to the country from which she had fled. (“We never even had a chance to say goodbye.”)

Whether your inspiration begins as political or personal, supporting initiatives such as these is still about the very basic, and often laughed at, principles of peace, love and understanding.

These people in Swansea understand: Offering welcome and friendship to those in need helps build a community which is better for us all to live in.

A welcoming smile is a powerful tool in creating a better world!

*Phil Broadhurst*

*(Shop Manager, Oxfam, Castle Street, Swansea)*

This article was originally written for the Welsh Assembly's Cross Party Committee on Human Rights.

My homeland was like my mother  
Its sand, water and mountains were a fairytale  
I believed it will remain for ever  
But it was my dream  
Events started to happen against my wishes and plans  
My blood went against me  
My friends became my enemies  
Grief and fears covered me like black thunderous clouds

MY LORD

I prayed in the nights and you blessed with a way out  
It was the land of the UNION JACK  
Which received me with a smile and took care  
Embraced me in its arms and gave me warmth as a mother would  
I got comfort and shelter with no fear or tears in my eyes  
And I started respecting it as my second mother land

MY LORD

I feel all this like a debt on my shoulders  
Which I have to repay  
Not in form of cash or coin  
In the form of COMMITMENT  
Nothing else but LOYALTY  
LOYALTY to this land and QUEEN



MY LORD

Bless me a long life  
I promise to accomplish this commitment  
As a proud daughter of this land  
I will never let this flag down  
Which helped me in my difficult times  
Held my hand when I needed  
I will hold it with my both hands to keep it high and fly  
Till my last breath

MY LORD

Bless me a long life  
To honour my words and to repay this debt  
The debt to the UNION JACK

*Nelofar*

*Asylum Seeker (Swansea, Wales)*

*English translation by Zain*

# Puzzle Page

## Match the countries and cities

Answers at bottom of page

- |                |              |            |              |
|----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 1. Afghanistan | 6. Nigeria   | a. Abuja   | f. Harare    |
| 2. China       | 7. Pakistan  | b. Asmara  | g. Islamabad |
| 3. Eritrea     | 8. Somalia   | c. Baghdad | h. Kabul     |
| 4. Iraq        | 9. Sri Lanka | d. Beijing | i. Mogadishu |
| 5. Iran        | 10. Zimbabwe | e. Colombo | j. Tehran    |

## Jokes

### from Zimbabwe

**Question:** What did Zimbabweans use for light before candles? **Answer:** Electricity.

### from Afghanistan

A neighbour came to the gate of Mulla Nasreddin's yard. The Mulla went to meet him outside. "Would you mind, Mulla," the neighbour asked, "lending me your donkey today? I have some goods to transport to the next town."

The Mulla didn't feel inclined to lend out the animal to that particular man, however. So, not to seem rude, he answered:

"I'm sorry, but I've already lent him to somebody else."

All of a sudden the donkey could be heard braying loudly behind the wall of the yard.

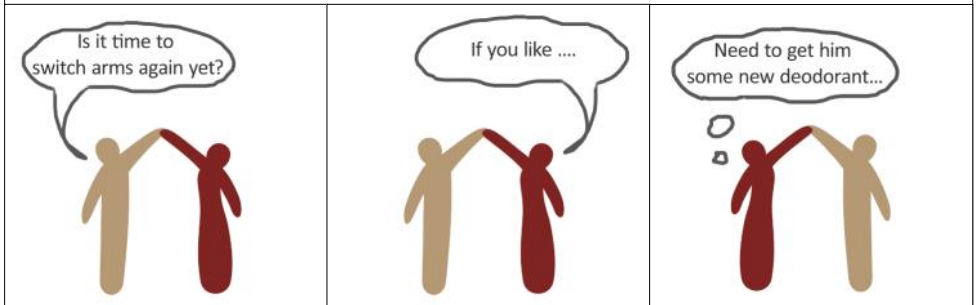
"But Mulla," the neighbour exclaimed. "I can hear it behind that wall!"

"Who do you believe," the Mulla replied indignantly. "The donkey or your Mulla?"

### from Iran

There is a man who keeps having dreams about playing football with mules.

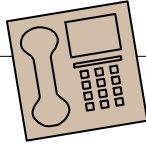
He goes to the doctor one day and tells him that he keeps having dreams about playing football with mules. The doctor gives him some medicine and says "take this and your dreams will go away". The man asks him if he can save the medicine until the next day. The doctor asks why and the man replies "because tonight is the final!" .



Answers to Match the countries and cities: 1=h, 2=d, 3=b, 4=c, 5=j, 6=a, 7=g, 8=i, 9=e, 10=f



## Useful Numbers



**POLICE** (01792) 456999

Non emergencies: 101

Emergencies only: 999

**Hate Crime Officers** (against racial abuse):

Pat Nolan: 07980 221 910

pat.nolan@south-wales.pnn.police.uk

**Police Minorities Support Unit.**

Phil Bryant: Tel: 01639 889122

phil.bryant@south-wales.pnn.police.uk

### HOSPITALS

Singleton 01792 205666

Morrison 01792 702222

**African Community Centre** 60 Walter Road,  
Swansea SA1 5PZ  
01792 470298

**BAWSO** - Black Association of Women Step Out  
Ltd - a specialist service for BME women and  
children made homeless due to domestic violence.

1st Floor, 63 Mansel Street, Swansea, SA1 5TN  
01792 642003 [www.bawso.org.uk](http://www.bawso.org.uk)  
[swansea@bawso.org.uk](mailto:swansea@bawso.org.uk)

**Citizens Advice Swansea** - Free welfare rights  
and other advice and assistance.

The Old Police station, Swansea  
01792 652902 [www.swanseaacab.org.uk](http://www.swanseaacab.org.uk)  
[enquiries@swanseaacab.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@swanseaacab.org.uk)

**Community Legal Services** - information on  
local legal and advice services  
0845 3454345 [www.clsdirect.org.uk](http://www.clsdirect.org.uk)

**Commission for Racial Equality** - (now Equality  
& Human Rights Commission) 3rd Floor, Capital  
Tower, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, CF10 3AG  
02920 663710 [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

**Cyrenians Cymru** - Youth and homelessness  
support group  
124 Walter Road, Swansea  
01792 467926 [www.cyrenians.co.uk](http://www.cyrenians.co.uk)  
[cyrenians@cyrenians.co.uk](mailto:cyrenians@cyrenians.co.uk)

**DPIA** (Displaced People in Action) 'The relief of  
those seeking asylum and those granted refugee

status who are in conditions of need, hardship  
and distress'.

CSV House, Williams Way, Cardiff, CF10 5DY  
029 2038 8389

**Info-Nation** - Information, support and advice  
for young people aged 11-25

47 The Kingsway, Swansea

01792 484010

[info-nation@swansea-edunet.gov.uk](mailto:info-nation@swansea-edunet.gov.uk)

**MEWN** - Minority Ethnic Women's Network

24 Mansel Street, Swansea

01792 467222 [www.mewnswansea.org.uk](http://www.mewnswansea.org.uk)

[mewn@mewnswansea.org.uk](mailto:mewn@mewnswansea.org.uk)

**Samaritans** - Confidential, emotional support  
17 St Johns Road, Swansea

01792 655999

(National helpline) 08457 909090

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk) [Jo@samaritans.org](mailto:Jo@samaritans.org)

**Swansea City and County Council**

Main switchboard 01792 636 000

Library (central) 01792 516750

**Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council**

Grove House, Grove Place, Swansea

01792 457035 [www.sbrec.org.uk](http://www.sbrec.org.uk)

[sb.rec@virgin.net](mailto:sb.rec@virgin.net)

**Swansea College**

Kingsway 01792 470611

Tycoch 01792 284000

**SCVS** - Swansea Council for Voluntary Ser-

VICES 7 Walter Road, Swansea

01792 544000 [www.scvs.org.uk](http://www.scvs.org.uk)

**Victim Support** - Local support for victims of  
crime

81 Mansel Street, Swansea 01792 543653

**Welsh Refugee Council** Third Floor, Grove

House, Grove Place, Swansea SA1 5DF

01792 630180

[info@welshrefugeecouncil.org](mailto:info@welshrefugeecouncil.org)

**Women's Aid Swansea** - for women who are  
experiencing domestic violence and abuse

01792 644683 [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

[web@womensaid.org.uk](http://web@womensaid.org.uk)

# Swansea

now has

## City of Sanctuary Status

African Community Centre, African Friendship Association, Amnesty International (Swansea), Asia Market (Jamil Ali) St Helen's road, Asylum Justice, Bikeability Wales, British Red Cross, Caer las, Capel y Nant, CEMVO Wales, Centre for Migration Policy Research, Circus Eruption, City and County of Swansea, City Counselling Services, City Temple, Clydach Methodist Church, Communication Workers Union Welsh Valleys, Communities First Bonymaen, Communities First Clase and Caemawr, Communities First Morriston, Congo Support Project in Wales, Cornerstone Church, Cyrenians Cymru, Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales) Clydach Area, Department of Continuing and Adult Education, DESI Foods St Helen's road, Dhar-mavajra Kadampa Buddhist Centre, Action, Dragon Arts, Ethnic Minority Support Team, Exemplary Training, School, Gofal Cymru, Green Art tion Partnership, Gwalia, Hafan Action Group, Humbrella Commu-Helen's road, Jimmy Juggle, Linden Women's Network, Mission Gallery, terfront Museum, Older Feminist Oxfam Castle Street Film and book St Shop, Oyster Education, Pales-Church, Peace Mala, Pentrehafoed Cymru, Red Café, Refugee Voice Wales, Sandfields Community Association, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Shelter Cymru, Sketty Parish Parochial Church Council, Small World Theatre, Snap Cymru, South Wales Evening Post, South Wales Police (Community Engagement Team), SOVA (Mentoring Service), St. Helen's Primary School, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers and Refugees Support Group, Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council, Swansea Citizens Advice Bureau, Swansea Community Farm, Swansea Council of Voluntary Service, Swansea County Labour Party, Swansea Drugs Project, Swansea Green Party, Swansea Inter-faith, Swansea Metropolitan University, Swansea Mosque & Islamic Community Centre, Swansea Palestine Community Link, Swansea Quakers, Swansea Women's Asylum Support Group, Swansea Women's Centre, Swansea YMCA, Sylfaen Cynefin, TAN Dance, The Environment Centre, The Josef Herman Art Foundation Cymru, The Union of Congolese People, Theatr Fforum Cymru, Transition Swansea, Undercurrents, Unison, UNITE Swansea Branch, Volcano Theatre Company, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Waterfront Church, Welsh Refugee Council, Wise Up Home Education Group, Workers Educational Association.



## Contact Us

[swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org)

[www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea)

Swansea City of Sanctuary c/o YMCA, 1 The Kingsway, Swansea SA1 5JQ

### WANTED:

Letters, reports, stories, recipes, photos or other ideas for our next issue. If you have time to help edit and design the newsletter please get in touch.