



# Swansea

## CITY OF SANCTUARY

### NEWS



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Issue 3 June 2011



*Drumming up friendship in Ammanford see p15*



*Community Safety workshops*



*Positive Action*

## The City of Sanctuary Vision

Our vision is of Swansea as a *real* "City of Sanctuary" – one of a network of cities which are welcoming to all, which are proud to offer sanctuary to those fleeing violence or persecution, and which celebrate the contribution of asylum seekers and refugees to city life.

In practical terms this would mean that wherever people seeking sanctuary go in the city, e.g. schools, services, voluntary groups, businesses, faith and community groups, their own neighbourhoods and streets - they will find people who welcome them, understand why they are here, and most important of all, include them actively as participants, volunteers and members.

## What's been happening?

Since getting official recognition for Swansea as a City of Sanctuary last year, it has been hectic both publicly and behind the scenes. We held a great celebration of the city's new status in the Brangwyn Hall last June and had the Certificate presented again in the full Council in September.



*Anna Mammedova and Keith Ross presenting the City of Sanctuary certificate to the Lord Mayor of Swansea at the Council Meeting on 19 September 2010. Photograph by Jason Rogers.*

In December 2010 we got the big news that our Lottery bid had been successful, so we now have our exciting new **Swansea City of Sanctuary, People and Places Project** beginning, with two full-time paid workers who will be able to support the on-going work of all involved in the City of Sanctuary movement in Swansea [see page 4].

Our series of local **Community Safety Workshops**, run with SBREC, DPIA and different Communities First partnerships, have been very successful in bringing together local people and those seeking sanctuary who live in the same area [see page 11].

The **Lord Mayor's Welcome Tea Party** for people who have gained refugee status during the year has become an annual event [see page 17]. And lots of our supporting organisations have been running fantastic initiatives and projects under the City of Sanctuary banner, which all helps to move Swansea nearer to the City of Sanctuary ideal.

At the same time, the context in which people are supporting us is badly affected by cuts at all levels. We were pleased to be invited to the Council's annual consultation on Swansea Community Strategy in September, but when the event took place it was all about how to cope with imposed cuts. People seeking sanctuary and those supporting them have been particularly badly hit. Between the time we heard about our successful Lottery grant and the start of the project, more than £1 million has been taken out of the 'refugee sector' in Wales. Several of our supporting organisations have much reduced budgets and have lost staff.

Behind the scenes we have been working on a **constitution** for Swansea City of Sanctuary. We now want to build up a stronger and more diverse group to oversee the whole City of Sanctuary initiative.

We will be holding our first **Annual General Meeting** on 3 October 2011 at which we will adopt our formal constitution and elect a Management Committee to replace the informal Steering Group which has been running things so far. We will be looking out for people with ideas and skills to help us push on to the next stage of getting closer to our vision of Swansea as a 'City of Sanctuary'.

# National City of Sanctuary News

by *Tiffany Allen, City of Sanctuary National Co-ordinator.*

The past twelve months have seen a lot of change and growth in the City of Sanctuary movement. From its humble beginnings in Sheffield in 2005, the movement has been expanding rapidly.

New initiatives have sprung up in various towns and cities such as Manchester, Lincoln and York and the number of officially recognised Cities of Sanctuary has risen to five, with Bradford becoming the third in November and both Bristol and Coventry receiving recognition in March.

Links with cities in USA, Estonia, Romania, Italy, Ireland and France are opening up the strong possibility that there will in future be an international expression of City of Sanctuary.

The film, now available on the website at [www.cityofsanctuary.org/film](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/film) has been a great source of inspiration and interest, and has been followed by several local groups producing films of their own, including Swansea. (see [www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea) )



The five Cities of Sanctuary share a history of welcoming people from other cultures and countries, and all had a big range of groups and organisations which have been supporting and celebrating those seeking sanctuary for some time, giving the new City of Sanctuary movement a great base to build on. They all have their particular strengths and focus on different things.

Bradford and Bristol have followed **Sheffield** in each developing a manifesto spelling out in simple language what the vision of being a City of Sanctuary should mean in practice for those seeking sanctuary in terms of access to services, inclusion and involvement.

**Bradford** supports a very good hosting programme and hosts several weekly events for the most vulnerable.

**Coventry** has an excellent programme for destitute asylum seekers and have set up a helpline for reporting hate crime which is staffed by volunteers who are people seeking sanctuary. They have also produced a video of a fantastic song about the physical and emotional struggles that refugees have to face.

**Bristol** has an excellent and very well attended drop-in four days a week, supported by all the main organisations in the city.



Other cities also have exciting new projects, including **Leeds** where an official schools of sanctuary programme is underway and **Leicester** which has hosted several interfaith initiatives. To get an idea of the huge variety of actions in different cities, visit [www.cityofsanctuary.org](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org)

## Meet Emily and Richard

*the workers for Swansea City of Sanctuary's new People and Places project*

Hello! We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves to the wider community of groups and associations that support the City of Sanctuary as we all begin the next phase of developing Swansea as a City of Sanctuary.

Many of you will know Emily from her previous work at the African Community Centre. After obtaining a degree in International Development and International Relations from Swansea University, Emily spent 6 months volunteering in Paris with migrant communities.



Since returning to Swansea in 2005, Emily has worked across Swansea with a variety of community organisations, most recently spending the past three years with the African Community Centre, where she set up a variety of projects - including a refugee and asylum-seeking women's counselling and therapeutic project. She has been a volunteer with Asylum Justice and Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group and is very much looking forward to the collaborative work which will underpin Swansea as a City of Sanctuary.

Richard has been appointed as the project administrator. He has a degree in Geography from the University of Durham and has spent the past couple of years working abroad - although most recently he managed SUSSED, a Fairtrade, ethical, green and people-friendly cooperative in Porthcawl, and coordinated Bridgend County's successful bid to be certified "Fairtrade."

The City of Sanctuary People and Places project has received funding for three years from the Big Lottery Fund to focus on making Swansea a more welcoming place for people seeking sanctuary, with much of the project work involving and working through partner organisations and wider, multi-agency organisations in Swansea that do not traditionally focus on issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

There are also more practical activities that the project will support on the ground, including workshops and the setting up of working groups to look at the issues that people seeking sanctuary face. Emily will be also going into organisations that have pledged their support to Swansea City of Sanctuary to look at how they can change the way they do things to be more welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers.

Another of the project's aims will be the development of a volunteering scheme which aims to place refugees and asylum seekers who wish to volunteer into a variety of different volunteering locations to improve their English- language and employability skills, and to demonstrate their commitment to Swansea its different communities, challenging the widely-held myths and stereotypes held about refugees and asylum seekers.

Discovery has become involved with the project as it will be administering the Big Lottery Fund's grant and will provide support for the project workers. As it does not limit its volunteering opportunities just to students, but encourages anyone to volunteer, it has the opportunity to offer different voluntary opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers within its own projects that it runs around the city.



# Actions by supporting Organisations

We are holding our first **PLEDGEREE** event this June for organisations who have pledged support, to find out how others are welcoming people seeking sanctuary and to share ideas for the future. Several organisations are featured in the following pages but for the full updated list of supporting organisations and their actions please visit our website [www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea).

## A taste of Farm life

Swansea Community Farm is a small urban oasis situated in Fforestfach. With a 3.5 acre site, the Farm, as it is known amongst its regular visitors, provides unique opportunities for people to learn about the environment, animal care, healthy living and sustainability whilst taking an active role in their local community.

For those who are yet to visit, you may wonder, 'what is a community farm?' Kari Lucas, Community Development Manager explains, 'City farms offer a space for people to learn about where their food comes from by encouraging them to take an active role in growing communal fruit and vegetables, rearing farm animals, and of course, enjoying the harvest' 'In an era of mass food production and mega-sized supermarkets, more and more people are being brought up in a society where we have no connection with the food we consume, and in many cases, little or no awareness of how it has been grown, reared or prepared before it lands on our dinner plate.'

Swansea Community Farm offers a range of stimulating child and youth activities, unique volunteer opportunities for adults and those with disabilities, inspirational educational visits for schools and disengaged children and environmentally sustainable projects to enhance the local biodiversity. Like an outdoor community



centre, the Farm prides itself on bringing people together regardless of their age, gender, background or ability.

Kari continues 'After 12 years of carving a Farm landscape into what was once derelict waste land, we are now a small yet functioning Farm with more than 50 rare breed and Welsh farm animals, allotments brimming with organically grown vegetables, 6 apiaries with more than 400,000 honey producing bees in the height of summer and a growing orchard with a variety of Welsh and traditional fruit trees'.

Why not discover the Farm for yourself anytime from Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm. There is no entrance fee and everyone is welcome.

**Sign up to the Farm's Facebook page 'Swannie Farmer' and keep up to date with what is going on. Or visit us at [www.swanseacommunityfarm.org.uk](http://www.swanseacommunityfarm.org.uk)**

For more information please contact Kari on 01792 578384. You can find us at 2 Pontarddulais Road, Fforestfach, SA5 4BA in between Cadle Primary and the Walkers Crisps Factory, just off the A483.

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# African Community Centre

## *Projects working with people seeking sanctuary*

The ACC strives to improve the lives of all Africans by bridging social, educational and cultural gaps through training and participation and is committed to breaking down barriers, promoting participation and community cohesion and facilitating a better understanding of African culture within local communities. The ACC welcomes all people and has approximately 537 people accessing its services annually.

The Centre is located at No: 2 Humphrey Street and is a Drop-In Centre for both Asylum seekers and Refugees.

The projects that are currently running at the centre include:

### **Amani Project**

This project offers free one-to-one and group counselling and a 3-day a week therapeutic session for women asylum seekers and women with Refugee status in Swansea.

These counselling sessions are there to assist the women who have experienced trauma in their home countries to integrate them into their new community.



*Dancers at the Waterfront Museum*

An example of one beneficiary of this session is a survivor of the Sierra Leone war. The sessions have helped her deal with the traumatic experience she suffered while in her home country.

The therapeutic activities which the 13 women who access the centre engage in include arts and crafts workshop, digital story telling, cooking, and sewing sessions.

### **Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA)**

The SLA project works with men and women to use practical tools to explore the assets in their lives that enable them to achieve a sustainable livelihood. Different activities are held every week that enable participation by the members.

### **The 'I Can' Children and Young Peoples Project**

This project has 18 young people who attend the meetings weekly to discuss issues that affect them. The Drop-In-Centre also hosts speaker sessions with young people by encouraging them on how they can attain their full potential in life. The Centre runs a home-work club for the children who have difficulties in certain subjects and also a hip hop dance class for the youths.



*Swansea Got Talent organised by the ACC Youth Forum Nov 2010*

## Women Seeking Sanctuary Project

This project works with women seeking sanctuary in the UK as well as refugee women living in and around Swansea. The participants come from a wide variety of countries and cultures such as Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Kenya, Iraq, Nigeria, Congo and Sierra Leone. This richness in diversity provides the group with great opportunity to learn about the different cultures and people through regular interaction.

There are different activities organized for the women each week and they include, healthy eating demonstration (which is in partnership with LEANA project), First Aid training, Fair Trade awareness workshop, Beauty Sessions, Consultation exercises among others.

These are just few of the activities run by the ACC for the empowerment of Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

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## Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Swansea Citizens Advice Bureau has been available for advice and support for the people of Swansea for 70+ years. From humble beginnings in the downstairs room of a house in the suburbs to the current location in the City Centre.

The service is totally free of charge and independent of any influence. The Bureau embraces diversity and supports people of all cultures who find themselves in need of advice and support. All client contact and advice sessions are confidential. No details of clients will be passed to another agency without permission of the client and with their full knowledge.

Clients come to the Bureau for advice and support for all sorts of problems, Debt, Housing, Benefits, Employment and almost anything else.

For those clients whose first language is not English and may be experiencing difficulty speaking or understanding the English language there is a facility called language line. This allows the advisors to carry out advice sessions using interpreters via a telephone line

When Asylum Seekers get Refugee status i.e. leave to remain, they need to know what benefits they might be entitled to and how to apply for them. Also they need to apply for a National Insurance number so that they get into the system. Our advisers can help them with all this and to understand how the systems work.



Although the Bureau receives grants and support it is an organisation that relies on volunteers. The Bureau always needs to recruit and train volunteers to maintain its service to the people of Swansea. The Bureau welcomes everyone who would like to give some of their time to helping others, irrespective of culture religion or gender. The Bureau in exchange offers a various opportunities to gain skills not just in advice roles, but also in telephone, clerical, administration, reception, fundraising and IT support. The Bureau offers valued and respected training and a chance to make a difference to people's lives.

Our advisers and other staff are friendly and caring. It's a good place to come to as a client and also to work as a volunteer. Some of the volunteers like working for Swansea Bureau so much they have been here for over 11 years.

# The MOre Green Project

This is the simple version of what the MOre Green Project does :

Dedicated to keeping anything and everything out of Landfill, Mo and John sit in their big green shop in Sandfields waiting for the phone to ring with someone saying "You'll never guess what's in that skip in High Street" or "We've got to get out of our flat by one o'clock today. Do you want the furniture?"

Like some great Green Batmobile, the big white van with the MOre Green logo springs into action, and by the end of the day a bed destined for landfill has provided a good night's sleep for someone who'd slept on a hard floor the night before.

- That's the simple version. The reality is more complex, but with the same basic aims and objectives; keeping stuff out of Landfill and helping people.

A lot of what the Project does is about bringing people together; making links, finding people who can help each other out. Not in some vague "networking" kind of way, but in direct, practical ways.

Person A wants a sofa. Person B wants to get rid of a sofa. The Project provides the van to move the sofa.

Person C wants to learn how to sew. Person D knows how to sew but can't afford a sewing machine. So they come together at one of the Project's sewing workshops.

Person E is a gardener who wants to learn English. Person F can speak English but can't get carrots to grow. They meet on the Project's allotment, and learn from each other.

... And so on through the whole alphabet of people!



It sounds simple, and it works because it is simple. But, as she sits down to more paperwork doing green audits for grant applications or more paperwork generated by their recent move to charitable status, Mo is probably thinking it is not all that simple!

And she would surely prefer to be sitting on the Project's community allotment by Oystermouth Castle listening to the birds singing, watching the fruit and veg grow (or maybe get eaten by slugs?!) and

seeing people she has brought together working together to make one little strip of the world a nicer place to be.

The "simple version" of the Project at the start mentioned just Mo and John. The reality requires a lot more help from partner organisations and volunteers. If you would like to volunteer with the Project, or would like to know more about the sewing workshops, community allotment, or any of MOre Green's other projects, contact Mo on 01792 466102 or 07967421662.



*John weaving a fence at the MOre Green community allotment*



## Positive Action



Positive Action is a group set up by members of **Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group**.

Ali Juma, one of the organisers speaks passionately about the reasons behind the group's formation.

"It's about people being together, it doesn't matter about their race, colour or religion. We want to show everyone that we can unite and do something good for the community. We aren't here just to sit around, we want to give something back."

In March, Positive Action organised a beach litter pick with support from Discovery and Keep Wales Tidy. They are now planning other ways to act in the community such as gardening for the elderly. Ali says "If you are interested in giving us a hand you are most welcome".

## Swansea Mind

Swansea Mind is a free service open to the public to support adults with mental health problems. We open seven days a week, and support a variety of people from all over Swansea. Although we are a small staff force of three, we rely heavily on volunteers to support us and help our service users.

Our wellbeing sessions have an open door policy, we welcome everyone and encourage people to grab a cuppa and a biscuit and have a chat. We can offer one to one support to our service users and their families when they need someone to talk to. Our centre is very friendly and we pride ourselves on our diverse range of people and activities. We run regular trips to all over the UK, past trips have included Bristol zoo, Bath, Folly Farm, Tenby and the beach.

The self-help support groups give people a platform to discuss their lives in greater depth, our specially trained volunteers are there to guide the groups to support one another in the specific areas of their lives.

Swansea Mind is passionate about campaigning and lobbying for better mental health and a more general acceptance and understanding of mental health issues. We have many event days raising awareness and helping to educate people. We often find once you start talking about



mental health issues, everyone has had experience in one way or another.

We are always looking out for volunteers, to help us run smoothly and promote what we do, and we have many roles. Whether it's volunteering at our wellbeing sessions, self help support groups, lobbying, fundraising or volunteering as a member of our executive committee, if you are interested in helping out, or in any of our services then please feel free to call the centre worker on 01792 642999 or email [laura@swanseamind.org.uk](mailto:laura@swanseamind.org.uk)

# Dragon Arts and Learning Centre

Dragon Arts is a special place – its classes are open to and attended by a whole range of people from different backgrounds. People seeking sanctuary are very welcome as part of this diverse mixture, which includes locals and other newcomers to Swansea. Studying here is about learning, but by mixing with the other students you'll inevitably learn about much more than just the subject you've chosen.



*Dragon Arts Centre at 54, Morfa Road*

Michelle Blease the ESOL co-ordinator shows me around the corridor of colourful, inviting classrooms, each geared to one of the different subjects available such as Music, IT, Photography, Art, Ceramics and English.

She introduces me to tutor Naomi Dalton and her ESOL class, which has 4 students today, from Poland, Egypt, Kurdistan and DRC. The newest student has been attending for just 2 weeks and the oldest for over a year. They are all extremely enthusiastic about the class. "We learn a lot of things; writing, listening, talking, grammar and vocabulary."

Naomi says the classes are not just about learning English. They are important for building students' self esteem and helping them gain experience and the confidence to communicate. Some people may have become withdrawn after suffering traumatic experiences so attending a class can be enormous step in their personal development and give them a purpose. People can find it hard to see the good in life and focussing on a course can help them have an aim and distract them from their worries.



Seida from DRC agrees. He says life is very difficult with many problems – "If you stay at home all the time you might get depressed. I go to college everyday and this helps me a lot."

Michelle explains that the ESOL classes here work on a rolling basis so students can join them when they need to, rather than having to wait until the start of the next year to enrol. "Please come to our ESOL courses" she says.

Dragon Arts and Learning Centre is part of Cyrenians Employment and Training, an organisation which works towards helping people into sustainable employment. Here at Dragon Arts we offer a fantastic timetable which includes both open sessions and accredited classes. We offer Music classes, Online Basics, ESOL, Basic Skills, Art Craft and Design, Photography, Mixed Media, Ceramics and Textiles. Swansea residents not in full time work or education are welcome to attend. Please call us to arrange a visit and enrol on 01792 467940 or check out our website [www.cetwales.co.uk](http://www.cetwales.co.uk).

# Cyrenians Community Centre

Asylum seekers and refugees are also welcome to attend drop-in sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, facilitated by the Cyrenians charity at the Cyrenians Community Centre, to the rear of St Matthews Church on High Street. These are every Tuesday and Thursday 5pm-8pm providing friendship, English classes and free hot food.

One asylum seeker who regularly attends the Cyrenians drop-in told me:

*“People come here to socialise and make friends. It’s good to have company – it makes you feel better to see people smiling.*

*It’s not Somalia or England - it’s for everyone – you can feel at home. There are people from Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, Somalia, Wales, Sudan, China, the Philippines...*

*You can use the computers, have English lessons and enjoy food from different countries. In this country a lot of refugees and asylum seekers feel lonely because they don’t have anybody close to them. If you don’t know people it’s the only place you can go to make friends and talk to them and your stress goes. When you laugh and talk with people you can forget and it helps to know you are not the only one who is stressed.”*

## Community Safety Workshops

Swansea City of Sanctuary received funding from the WAG Community Cohesion Fund to run 4 Community Safety Workshops during 2010/11.

These were held in Townhill, Blaenymaes, Sketty Park and Dyfatty. They were organised by the Community Regeneration Unit (City and County of Swansea), Displaced People in Action, Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council and the Welsh Refugee Council working with Community First Partnerships, under the umbrella of Swansea City of Sanctuary.

The events brought together neighbourhood residents including people seeking sanctuary and relevant organisations working in the areas.

The workshops offered a unique opportunity for Swansea residents and service providers of multiple ethnicities to compare and discuss views and experiences relating to community safety in their areas. People seeking sanctuary, along with other residents, were able to have a voice and as a result, attendees learnt about specific issues facing asylum seekers and refugees.



The issues emerging from the workshops will be taken forward by the Communities First teams. For example Blaenymaes and Portmead Development Trust has included elements in its 2011-12 work plan, whereas in Dyfatty, the Co-ordinator of the Communities First Targeted Intervention and Community Safety Project will link with the residents who attended on that day.

Mike Durke of The Hill Community Development Trust said that the community safety workshop was the first time that white working class and BME Townhill residents sat down together to discuss the future of the community they share. As such, he views it as a good start to an emerging dialogue.

# Brian Marijena

My name is Brian Marijena, I came to the United Kingdom on April 2005. I was a mobile Disc Jockey. I provided my services at parties, weddings and private functions for a fee. I was not formally employed and that was my main source of income.

I was approached by a man from the country's main opposition party and told me that he had a tender from the party's Publicity Board to supply disco equipment and the DJ at least twice a month for their fundraising functions and any other party functions.

Over the next months that followed I did play in various places in my home town in mostly fund-raising activities for the opposition. Because I was always present at most of the opposition gatherings I immediately became a target of the Ruling militia who labelled me an opposition supporter. That is when my life took an about turn for the worse. The ruling party thugs started threatening me with assault and gave me an ultimatum to stop attending the opposition gatherings.

Because that was my line of business, I did not heed their threats and continued with my work. It was when the assault threats turned into death threats that I realised my life was in real danger as the ruling party thugs have always been known for their violent nature and would easily carry out their threats.

There was supposed to be a gathering to mark World Refugee Commemoration Day. The meeting did not take place as it was called off by Police following a clash between the ruling party and the main opposition party supporters. I packed my equipment and left for home.

It did not end there. Around 2am the next morning, four men came to my house and forced their way in after I did not respond to their knocks. They immediately started assaulting me with what seemed to be a steel pipe and with clenched fists and boots. They kept reminding me that I had not heeded their calls to stop associating with the opposition party and I was now paying for it.

My wife tried to call out for help but was told to



hush else she would meet the same fate. The assailants went on to damage my disco equipment and took with them some parts of my machine which included the mixer and the amplifier. I could not remember much of what later transpired because I fell unconscious and they fled probably because they thought I was dead. I was taken to hospital by a neighbour and my wife reported to the Police.

At hospital I was treated for bruises, cuts and swellings to the face and body. I was admitted for two days and when I was discharged I went to live with a friend for a few months, because I was still scared of going back to the house. I spoke to my brother regularly on the phone and he told me that some men dressed in suits had been coming to the house asking about my whereabouts.

That is when I realized that my life was still in danger and had to get out of the country. I left the country for Botswana, again to live with friends. Somehow they managed to track me in Botswana and I received a message where I used to stay, that some people had been asking about a foreign national from Zimbabwe who fitted my description. They also had a picture of me and they claimed that I had come to Botswana to be trained by the opposition party to help overthrow the Government. All this, of course, was blatant lies.

In March 2005, I got a Visa to go to the United Kingdom, I knew this would be my only way of



escaping with my dear life. I could not even tell my family that I was leaving for the UK because I felt that if I spoke to them on the phone, the phone might be tapped.

As soon as I got into the United Kingdom I felt safe and went to live with my cousin in Stevenage. I left her house after my visitor's Visa had expired, she told me to go back home, but due to my situation back home I could not go back. I then went to live in Birmingham with friends.

Back home the ruling militia did not rest and continued their quest to bring me to book. This time they started pestering my wife, as they were convinced that she knew where I was. By then when I left my wife was pregnant. They then assaulted her for not telling them where I was and unfortunately through the beatings she went into hospital and lost the baby, a police report was made. I was left in a state of shock and very depressed. After she recovered she had to find a way out of the country as well. With the help of her father she managed to leave the country for the UK.

I claimed asylum in 2009 and have been refused despite all the evidence that I had, including my wife losing our baby. I have gone through all the appeal process to no avail. I now have two children that were born in the UK, but was told by the judge that we had come with them from my native country, despite him having the UK birth certificate in front of him. It has been a long and terrifying road being told that we can be deported at any time. It's the wait that really gets to you - not knowing if you will be here today or tomorrow, and if taken back with the situation deteriorating by the day back home, it's just hell on earth.

The rest of my family is here in the UK and have been granted leave to remain, so if we're taken back we have nowhere to go. It's been a long time since I left.

My son just started Nursery school and he is enjoying it as he is meeting new friends which is helping him a lot with his development. Only time will tell. We only live once in life and people should not play around with other people's lives.

*Brian Marijena*

## Seeking Sanctuary in Swansea

### *Stories & Meeting Points*

This Swansea City of Sanctuary Project which was managed by **Displaced People in Action** aimed to assist more asylum seekers and refugees to find ways of telling and contextualising personal stories in order to provide background information on development issues in particular origin countries and explain the reasons people flee. The project was funded by DfID.

The project included the following activities in 2010:

- Educational refugee awareness sessions at organisations who have signed the City of Sanctuary Pledge, including Amnesty International, Swansea Mind, Citizens Advice Bureau, City Temple and Cyrenians Employment;
- Recruited new members to DPIAs Refugee Awareness Speakers' Team and encouraged them to attend speakers' team meetings;
- Facilitated a newspaper article in the Swansea Evening Post which allowed a refugee and asylum seeker in Swansea to each tell their personal stories of seeking safety in Swansea ;
- A speaker from Sierra Leone addressed the need to stop all current genocide and apartheid at a Swansea Council Holocaust Memorial Day event;
- Two women read their poems about seeking safety in Swansea at "I Love Sketty Park," a neighbourhood diversity celebration;
- We created educational leaflets to inform the public about current conditions in Zimbabwe, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Eritrea, which are some top origin countries of asylum applicants in Wales.

Eleven volunteer speakers from ten different countries of origin worked to educate people in Swansea about issues facing refugees here and around the world.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this project!

*Ginger Wiegand, Inclusion Officer, DPIA*

# SHARE Tawe

*Supporting Homeless Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Swansea*

## Do you have a **spare room**?

SHARE Tawe is a voluntary hosting project set up by Swansea City of Sanctuary to support homeless asylum seekers and refugees. Our aim is to offer hospitality, in the form of accommodation, meals, welcome and solidarity, to destitute asylum seekers in Swansea.



Many people are made destitute at some time or another during their attempt to claim asylum. This means they have no money, no food and nowhere to stay. We estimate that up to around 100 people are in this position in Swansea.

Some volunteers provide accommodation for anything from a night to a few weeks or longer, some may invite an asylum seeker to their home for meals, while others help out financially.

### We are looking for people who will:

- Offer a room in their home to a destitute asylum seeker for a short while or longer.
- Offer friendship - come and meet people at our community drop-ins.
- Invite someone to dinner, once a week, once a month...
- Help publicise the project.
- Support the project financially so we can buy people mobile phone top-ups or bus-passes.

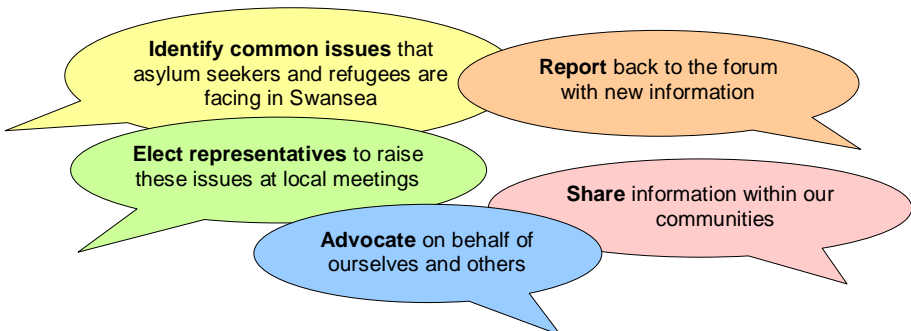
To find out more please visit [www.sharetawe.org.uk](http://www.sharetawe.org.uk) or contact [info@sharetawe.org.uk](mailto:info@sharetawe.org.uk)  
*We are happy to come and give a talk or show a short film to any Group which wants to know more.*

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## Swansea Refugee and Asylum Seekers Advocacy Forum

The Forum was setup in 2010 with support from DPIA. It is a place for refugees and asylum seekers to meet monthly and talk about common issues we face in Swansea. It is a place where we can find solutions together and realise we are not alone.

### The aims of the Forum are to:



The Forum is about advocating for equal rights, good treatment and fair access to services for refugees, asylum seekers and minority groups.  
Please contact Brian Marijena on 07861772516 for more information.

# Music, Poetry and Friendship in Ammanford



The ACT group meets monthly in Ammanford's Gellimanwydd Chapel Hall. ACT is a group of young people, although there is no set age limit and we do have some 50 year olds joining us!

We recently had a superb night in the Hall when we were joined by a group of asylum seekers and refugees from Swansea, with Max Kpakio, who are working hard in establishing and maintaining Swansea as a City of Sanctuary.

Our former Minister Dewi Myrddin Hughes had created the link and it was a pleasure to welcome Dewi back with friends from Swansea.

Dewi had previously organised a similar night at Capel y Nant in Clydach which had been well attended and enjoyed by all. He talked about how, in a practical way, the night had demonstrated that refugees are not a burden to be tolerated but a resource to enrich communities with their cultural contributions. We were keen to host a similar event featuring what Dewi summed up as a most worthwhile night, full of "fellowship and camaraderie."

During the evening we were treated to an informal concert with our guests taking part by reading out their own poetry, giving us a little of the history of the setting up of the City of Sanctuary movement, and playing African drums.

A particular highlight was when one of the poets, Alhadji, read out a poem he had only just composed on the way to Ammanford from Swansea.



*Alhaji Kamara*

We had stopped at the viewpoint on Betws Mountain looking down on Ammanford, and Alhadji was inspired to compose a poem on the spot.

After the poetry, members of Gellimanwydd Chapel sang traditional folk songs and we had a recital on the piano.

Another highlight of the evening for us was when children from Gellimanwydd Chapel joined our guests and had a go at playing the African drums.

Following the entertainment we shared a buffet prepared by members of the chapel.

It was a lovely evening with a strong message for us all. We followed it up a couple of weeks later with a morning service, using the visit of the asylum seekers and refugees as the theme for the service. It was great seeing so many people in the Hall and we were led through prayers, songs, recitation and sketches about the need for Sanctuary for us all.

Thanks to everyone who made the visit and the service such a success.

*Edwyn Williams*



# Oxwich Beach Camping

Last year, we had a very nice time camping in Oxwich on a trip organized by Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group. All the family enjoyed camping there. My wife and my children got excited when we arrived there, especially my children, who hadn't been camping before .

I asked my children what they enjoyed the most and they said swimming and playing football on the campsite and cricket on the beach. In addition, they enjoyed sleeping in the tent. My wife said one of the best things was the Barbeque and another was sitting around the fire on the beach looking at the moon while it was coming up. They were my favourite memories of the trip too. The fire, the moon, and the barbeque on the beach, tasting all the different dishes. The team work involved was good too, such as the putting up and organising of the tents. Further more, all the family enjoyed having lunch and breakfast in the tent and lighting the lantern in the tent.

Putting up and living in the tent reminded me of

when I was soldier, but that camping was for fighting and this was for peace and love.

There were lots of good things about the trip. The only bad thing was that we didn't have enough blankets and food. We will now be experienced for the next time! Also, it would be good if we could always be sure that it will be a sunny day for the trip!

Overall, this camping trip was excellent and everyone enjoyed it and no one will forget it.

I would like to thank the people who arranged and organised the trip. It would have been very difficult for the families who went on the trip to arrange and afford the transport and the campsite themselves. It is also much more fun going with other families than it would have been on our own. We really hope more trips will be organised.

Thanks.

*Zabiullah Khorsand*





# The Lord Mayor's Welcome Tea Party

This year the annual event to welcome people who have been granted Leave to Remain was held in the Lord Mayor's Reception Room at the Guildhall on Wednesday 20th April.

About 60 people attended, including children, from 15 countries (Afghanistan, China, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria and Zimbabwe).

The photo shows Zola Gidi, from South Africa, with the then Lord Mayor, Councillor Richard Lewis.



# Naseem and Naheed's Helpful Samosas



*Naseem with fellow Oxfam volunteer Dan enjoying one of Naheed's samosas!*

Oxfam's shop in Castle Street, Swansea regularly have fairtrade coffee mornings to raise money for the charity's work around the world, and also held one recently to raise funds for City of Sanctuary and Share Tawe (see p13). Since Naseem Ahmed has been volunteering in the shop they have become more popular as he has been bringing in refreshments cooked by his wife Naheed Rani.

Naseem writes: "After working for Oxfam for three years I am very aware of the good work that Oxfam does in helping people who are poor and who are suffering hardship through disasters and emergencies. I help by working in the shop, and my wife helps by making the samosas and biryani and other foods to help raise money. We are only helping in a very small way, but it is good to help, and to help humanity and mankind. Also, we know that we have been helped. When we came here we had nothing. This country has been good to us allowing us to stay. Oxfam has been good to us too. So we think it is good that we help, like we are giving something back. It makes us happy to help."

The shop will be producing a leaflet with Naheed's recipes, but in the meantime, here is a tasty sampler:

## Vegetable Samosas

*You will need :*

- 2 tablespoons of oil
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 cup of mixed cooked vegetables
- 2 tablespoons of Mixed Spices/Curry Powder
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 bunch of coriander leaves
- 2 tablespoons of Zera (whole cumin seeds)
- 1 tablespoon of dry coriander
- 1 tablespoon of chilli powder
- Pack of Ready Made Pastry Sheets



Cook in a pan; add two tablespoons of oil and fry gently for two minutes. Add all ingredients then cover and cook for ten minutes stirring frequently.

Remove from heat and leave to cool.

Cut pastry sheet in half lengthwise and fold at right angles to make a triangle and continue folding in this way to form a neat triangle and fill with ingredients.

Make 10 samosas and deep fry until light brown and crispy. (maximum 5 minutes).

# Puzzle Page

Who is the Odd One Out?

Answers below



Match the Proverbs with the missing words

(Thanks to Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group)

**camel cow mouse chicken fool lion peacock cat**

1. If you want a \_\_\_\_\_ you have to travel to India. (Iran)
2. Trust in Allah but keep a tight leash on your \_\_\_\_\_. (Iraq)
3. You can't clap with one hand. (Kurdistan)
4. If you want to keep camels, have a big enough door. (Afghanistan)
5. Only a \_\_\_\_\_ tests the depth of the water with both feet. (Africa)
6. When spider webs unite they can tie up a \_\_\_\_\_. (Ethiopia)
7. When the \_\_\_\_\_ laughs at the \_\_\_\_\_ there is a hole nearby (Nigeria)
8. When it's brown it's done and when it's black it's done-for. (of toast - British)
9. You can't cook half of a \_\_\_\_\_ and expect the other half to lay eggs. (Sanskrit)
10. When you are shopping for a \_\_\_\_\_, make sure the tail is included in the price. (Tamil)

Answers: Odd One Out = c King Ethelbert of Kent made the first laws regulating sanctuary in about 600 AD. The others are all refugees. a=Omid Djallil; b=Mika; d=Albert Einstein.  
Missing words: 1=peacock; 2=camel; 3=chicken; 4=lion; 5=fool; 6=fool; 7=lion; 8=cow; 9=chicken; 10=cow.

## Legal Advice

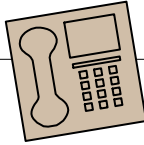
Asylum Justice is a charity that gives free legal advice to asylum seekers if they do not have legal representation. It runs drop-in advice sessions in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. Asylum Justice is completely independent, funded entirely by donations and run entirely by volunteers. In Swansea, Asylum Justice meets at the Quaker Meeting House at the bottom of Page Street, opposite the YMCA, on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 3.00 -5pm.

*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)*



Postal address: Asylum Justice c/o YMCA  
1 the Kingsway Swansea SA1 5JQ.

# Useful Numbers



## **POLICE**

NON EMERGENCY 101 or  
01792 456999 (*for non urgent  
matters when not in fear or danger*)

EMERGENCY 999  
(*When there is violence or fear of violence*)

**HATE CRIME – Andrea Griffiths**  
101 or 01792456999 EX 52700 or 07584770944  
(*for help and advice not to report incidents*)

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – Julie Upcott**  
01639 889198 or 07779517935.  
(*for help and advice not to report incidents*)

## **HOSPITALS**

Singleton 01792 205666  
Morriston 01792 702222

## **African Community Centre**

2 Humphrey Street, Swansea SA1 6BG  
01792 470298

**BAWSO** - 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, other advice and assistance.  
The Old Police station, Swansea 01792 652902  
[www.swanseacab.org.uk](http://www.swanseacab.org.uk)  
[enquiries@swanseacab.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@swanseacab.org.uk)

## **Community Legal Services**

Information on local legal and advice services  
0845 3454345 [www.clsdirect.org.uk](http://www.clsdirect.org.uk)

## **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

## **Equality & Human Rights Commission**

3rd Floor, Capital Tower, Greyfriars Road, Car-  
diff, CF10 3AG  
02920 663710 [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

**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)

## **Gower College**

Kingsway 01792 470611  
Tycoc 01792 284000

## **SCVS Swansea Council for Voluntary Services**

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](mailto:web@womensaid.org.uk)

# Swansea City of Sanctuary

swansea@cityofsanctuary.org

www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea

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

Swansea City of Sanctuary supporting organisations are: 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 Ias, 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 dampa Buddhist Centre, Discovery, Arts, Ethnic Minority Congregations Exemplary Training, Exotica St Cymru, Green Art Studio, GSP ship, Gwalia, Hafan Books, Hafan Umbrella Community Singing Jimmy Juggle, Linden Church, Network, Mission Gallery, MORE Museum, Older Feminist Network, Castle Street Film, Book and Music St Shop, Oyster Education, Pales-Church, Peace Mala, Pentrehafof 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 Digital Storytelling, Swansea Drugs Project, Swansea Green Party, Swansea Interfaith, Swansea Metropolitan University, Swansea Mind, 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 Doves Youth Group Swansea, 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, Wesley Club Sketty Methodist Church, Wise Up Home Education Group, Workers Educational Association.... **STOP PRESS - new supporter, First Cymru Ltd.**



St Helen's road, Dharmavajra Ka-Displaced People in Action, Dragon Wales, Ethnic Youth Support Team, Helen's road, Forest School, Gofal Community Regeneration Partner-Cymru, Hafod Youth Action Group, Group, Jasmin St Helen's road, Local Aid, Minority Ethnic Women's Green Project, National Waterfront OnePeople Productions, Oxfam shop, Oxfam Cymru, Oxfam Unioninian Society of Wales, Parklands Comprehensive School, Plaid

*This newsletter has been edited and produced by volunteers.*

*We need letters, reports, stories, recipes, photos or other ideas for our next issue.*

*If you have time to help edit and design the next newsletter please get in touch.*



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI  
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