



Wales Strategic
Migration Partnership
Partneriaeth Mewnfudo
Strategol Cymru

**Strategic leadership, advisory and
coordination function on migration.**

Wales Strategic Migration Partnership – Aims

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- Advisory service on migration in Wales
- Influencing and shaping of policy and process
- Working with Home Office, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Welsh Government and other participating organisations

Governance

- Funded by Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing
- Hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association
- Executive Board-chaired by Cllr. Susan Elsmore



Work streams

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- Refugee Resettlement
- Asylum dispersal
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Hong Kong BN(O) Visa Scheme
- English /Welsh language acquisition
- Other cross cutting migration issues

Cross-cutting work

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- No Recourse to Public Funds
- Mental Health - (with Traumatic Stress Wales)
- VAWG
- Safeguarding
- Cohesion

What is an asylum seeker?

The definition of an asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in a country and asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK, this means they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen would. For example, people seeking asylum aren't allowed to work (unless a decision on their claim is delayed for over 12 months).

There is a legal right to claim asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention-

Global Context - mid 2020

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- 26million people displaced (UNHCR)
- 67% from
- Syrian Arab Republic 6.6 million
- Venezuela 3.7 million
- Afghanistan 2.7 million
- South Sudan 2.3 million
- Myanmar 1.0 million

2020 : Pandemic, and pressures in the system



Pandemic pressures

- COVID-19 = reduction in asylum-seekers due to **movement restrictions** and border **closures**
- The ‘outflow’ of people - less than the ‘inflow’ particularly those arriving by small boat.
- Rapid increase in use of **contingency accommodation** – to fulfil Home Office statutory duty to accommodate

Penally: Sept20-March21

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Napier: Sept 2020-

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WSMP role at Penally: partnership ethos

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- Building and sustaining **partnership approach**
- Provide **transparency and understanding** of Government and other services that asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to access
- To provide a **solution-based forum** to resolve operational issues and challenges arising from the mobilisation of the site-including **COVID 19 CHALLENGES**
- Identifying **impacts on public services and community cohesion**, escalating issues as appropriate
- **Lessons Learned** exercise – request Home Office response

Penally and Napier: ICBI inspection (Feb 2020)

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- Failure by the Home Office to consult local stakeholders or allow sufficient lead in time
- Inadequate assessments of the physical / mental health
- Poor communication with the camp residents
- Lack of information on the site for local partners and community

Community tensions

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Prospect of camp housing asylum seekers ‘sickening’

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Far Right targeting asylum hotels

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Penally Camp Protest group

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"I am concerned for the safety of our family and our children."

- a. There were significant challenges in reorganising elements of the force and responding
- b. **Significant public order policing challenges** not least in managing regular protests and heightened tensions in the community.
- c. Police faced a **significant escalation of public order**. Responses were proportionate and responsible.

"An unusual battle rages in a tourist town riven by the arrival of an asylum seeker camp"

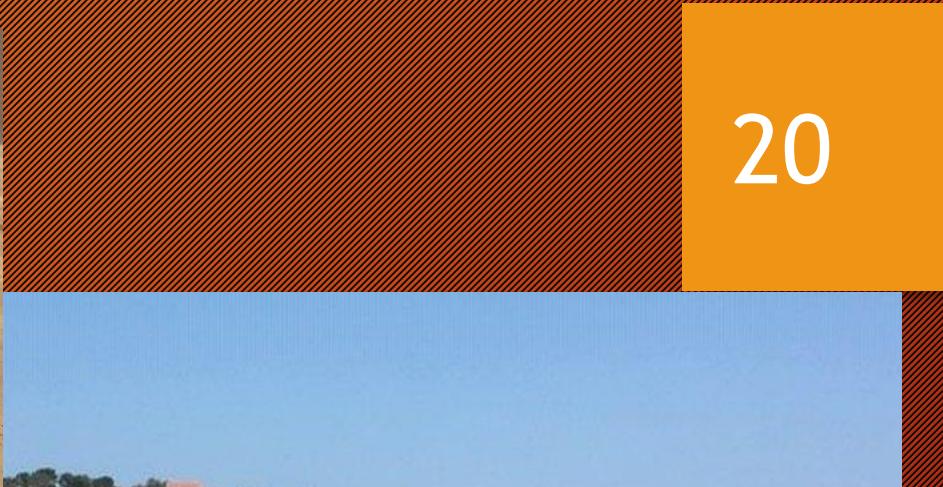
"Penally asylum camp 'horrendous' cost to council"

"Angry scenes as police clash with protesters over asylum seekers in Penally"

"Home Office records 70 racist incidents by far right at asylum accommodation"



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What worked

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- **Effective coordination, third sector response**
- **Extreme commitment and partnership working**, a real momentum between partners and ‘no-nonsense’ conversations. (Police)
- The **Cohesion Cell** set up by Pembrokeshire County Council - strong knowledge of the groups that were protesting. (LA)
- The online **public event** with the Home Office, Police and Crime Commissioners and local MP - calmed some community tensions.
- Police, Council and LHB produced FAQ

Legacy

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- a. **Lessons Learned Report** embedded into HO operating procedures
- b. **Very significant event** for the local community
 - more work required
- c. **Exposed very strong opinions** (aka Brexit).
- d. Some positive legacies- **increased awareness of diversity**
- e. Capitalise on **community goodwill?**

Questions?

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Reading/references

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- An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation: HMIP report on Penally Camp and Napier Barracks - November 2020-March 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Response to an inspection of contingency asylum accommodation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- [5fc504d44.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/5fc504d44.pdf) ([unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org))
- 'Extremist' protests at Pembrokeshire asylum army base criticised - [BBC News](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56131100)
- Far-right activist Tommy Robinson dubs Penally asylum seeker plans as 'sickening' amid social media storms | [Western Telegraph](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/wales/1440337/Far-right-activist-Tommy-Robinson-dubs-Penally-asylum-seeker-plans-as-sickening-amid-social-media-storms.html)
- An unusual battle rages in a tourist town riven by the arrival of an asylum seeker camp - [Wales Online](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/1440337/An-unusual-battle-rages-in-a-tourist-town-riven-by-the-arrival-of-an-asylum-seeker-camp.html)
- [Penally FAQs 221020 Final.pdf](https://www.wales.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Penally%20FAQs%20221020%20Final.pdf)
- Written Statement: Penally asylum accommodation February update (4 February 2021) | [GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/WrittenStatementPenallyasylumaccommodationFebruaryupdate4February2021)
- Far-right activist Tommy Robinson dubs Penally asylum seeker plans as 'sickening' amid social media storms | [Western Telegraph](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/wales/1440337/Far-right-activist-Tommy-Robinson-dubs-Penally-asylum-seeker-plans-as-sickening-amid-social-media-storms.html)
- Award Success For The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership - [NEWS.WALES](https://news.wales/award-success-for-the-wales-strategic-migration-partnership)

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