



Immigration

Immigration, in terms of who is allowed to live and work in Wales, is not devolved to the Welsh Government. However, distinctive Welsh policies shape the ways in which international migrants are attracted to study, work, develop the economy and deliver public services in Wales. Such devolved policies have a considerable impact:

- International students at Welsh universities, together with the expenditure of visitors connected to those students, generated £530 million of export earnings, equivalent to 4% of all Welsh exports in 2014¹.
- Inward investment programmes in Wales during 2014-15 were at the highest levels ever recorded².
- The NHS in Wales is heavily dependent on international medical staff³.

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

At the last census in 2011, the total usual resident population of Wales stood at 3,063,456. About 5.5% of those residents (167,871) were born outside the UK. This represented an increase of 82% in the non-UK born population since 2001⁴. Wales has a history of adapting to significant levels of inward migration. During the industrial revolution, the South Wales valleys experienced levels of *per capita* inward migration surpassed only by countries such as the United States of America. Many of those incomers arrived from outside the UK.

Around 22,300 migrants from central and eastern Europe joined the Welsh labour market between May 2004 and March 2008, following the expansion of the EU in 2004. The Wales Migration Partnership underlined in 2013 that there were few (if any) signs of negative impacts of migration on the Welsh labour market. On the contrary, there was some evidence that recent high levels of inward migration had, on balance, been an advantage for the UK economy⁵.

The Wales Migration Partnership in July 2013 set out the recent history of how Wales had received and welcomed asylum seekers⁶. The number of those claiming asylum in Wales varies according to UK Government policy and what is happening in the

world. Currently, due to events such as the civil war in Syria, Wales may have over 2,500 asylum seekers. Wales has experienced such peaks before. Asylum seekers awaiting decisions on their claims are not allowed to work.

Welsh local authorities have also agreed to participate in the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) Programme which aims to receive some 20,000 refugees over a five year period. It is not known how many refugees, who have been granted UK protection, live and work in Wales.

Trafficking and exploitation

The Equality and Human Rights Commission recently recorded that the number of adults, children and young people in Wales reported to be victims of trafficking more than doubled between 2012 and 2014, up from 34 to 70 reported cases. In 2015, South Wales Police's Operation Fulcrum identified 13 suspected victims of forced labour⁷.

Distinctive Welsh approach

Cytûn has been active in the asylum seeking and refugee arena, providing the current Chair for the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and assisting the Welsh Government and others in formulating policy initiatives such as the 2008 Refugee Inclusion Strategy⁸. Distinctive Welsh policy initiatives have covered pioneering schemes such as the WARD (Wales Asylum-seeking and Refugee Doctors) project, which has retrained some 90 medical professionals to work in the NHS since 2002. In 2008, the Welsh Government decided to provide free health care for asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected⁹. Working with third sector organisations, the Welsh Government recently published a highly informative Welcome to Wales Guide for Refugees¹⁰. The document also underlines the significance of faith in Wales.

Migration and the Christian faith

Research published in 2012 indicated that Christians far outnumber Muslims as migrants around the world, including in the European Union, where debate has nonetheless focused on new Muslim arrivals¹¹. Recently, Wales has experienced a growth in a rich diversity of Christian ethnic minority congregations.

Questions for candidates

1. What steps would your party take to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are treated fairly in Wales?
2. Would you support strategies by Welsh academic institutions, public bodies and businesses to recruit students or employees from abroad? If not, why not?
3. How would you ensure that the public conversation concerning immigration is fair and evidence based?



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