



Hay, Brecon & Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees

Registered charity no 1173570

Annual report 2021

Overview from another year greatly affected by the Pandemic.

The challenges of social distancing, essential travel only, charity shops closed so lots of donations in cities directed to clothes banks started by support groups and few opportunities to meet in person!

However throughout this year we have continued to maintain effective communications via email, telephone and monthly meetings via Zoom. The latter has had advantages in enabling our colleagues in Swansea to join with us.

** throughout this document we have used the term 'people seeking sanctuary' to describe people seeking refuge/ asylum/ safety. We try to avoid depersonalising terms such as 'Asylum seeker' or 'Refugee'.*

Abbreviations used SASS- Swansea Asylum Seekers Support. UID -Unity in Diversity , EYST- Ethnic Youth Support Team. DBS -disclosure and barring Service NRPf- no recourse to public funds, IELTS- International English Language Testing System. BSL- British Sign Language.

Welcome Days

Welcome days in our area		3
Small groups	The first meeting of our group in person for over 12 months was at Treberfydd on June 30th and was joined by a group from Newport Gap Sanctuary	
Holiday cottage stays	Since 23rd March 2020 a destitute asylum seeker from Swansea has been staying in Brecon. He spent spring and summer with Mac and Erica before returning to the cottage for the winter. Sharetawe may place others with him if evictions restart.	
Welcome days	2 visits to Craig Y Nos Country park with the Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority[BBNPA] staff and volunteers and people from both Swansea and Newport - July 19th and August 18th.	

Attendance at welcome days by people seeking sanctuary *

Many people benefit from these days out – not only people seeking sanctuary but also the host communities and the organisations who support them. There are benefits in working together for a common goal and providing activities that local people including children can access. Community cohesion and intergenerational working are immediate benefits that areas that have hosted have noted as well as new friendships.

In holding two days out in Craig Y Nos during the summer, we followed all Covid19 guidance- the events were outdoors, we minimised handing of foodstuffs, used disposable cutlery , crockery and bottles and encouraged social distancing. Service

buses were used initially, then we were helped by BBNPA to have a hired bus and we used service buses as well. Newport Gap Sanctuary attended using a minibus with well spaced seating.

It was lovely to see people so energised by venturing out and meeting friends [and that was not just us!] and whilst it left us all wanting more, it seems that the responsible way forward is small groups during unsettled cold weather [so shelter is less of an issue] or bigger groups again when the weather improves so outdoor space can be expected to provide a good day out! A bonus was seeing members of the public visiting the park being enthralled by our party, joining in and /or giving money.

We know that city based support groups are only starting to meet in person with restricted numbers and that also adds complexity to arranging days out.

‘On behalf of all , I would like to send you and all in ‘your teams’ our heartfelt thanks for such a wonderful away day at Craig Y Nos yesterday. It was seamless and generously given with such a warm welcome, I’m sure the day will provide many happy memories for years to come.

It was a great chance for all to meet new friends, and provided an excellent opportunity for strengthening the asylum network for all those involved. We look forward to our future work together.’

‘I do hope there are more people like yourselves out there bucking the trend of extremism and misunderstanding and using simple goodwill and friendship to make a difference.’

‘We don’t just do this because it makes us feel better about ourselves or for gratitude but because it is the right thing to do.’

Hardship fund

This was established soon after the start of HBTSR in order to meet urgent or one off needs and has been in demand again this year. Requests now come from Newport Gap Sanctuary and a number of support groups in Swansea. On most occasions they have a favourable response within 24 hours due to our devolved decision making Hardship group with all decisions subsequently discussed at monthly meetings . An application form on our website outlines the information needed but we respond to any request that is sent via a recognised support group and seek any necessary additional supportive information. Individual applicants are asked to apply via a support group so we can have a local weighing up of the need.

We have had requests from groups such as Swansea Asylum Seekers Support, The Gap Sanctuary, Swansea Asylum Seeking Women’s group, Welcome to Swansea group, EYST Covid Response Project and Sharetawe. It has been interesting to note that other groups have now established similar funds which has somewhat reduced demands coming to us. In addition, we have a separate fund for Nappies and Feminine Hygiene products and male toiletries administered by Maria Nicholas, a volunteer in Swansea- less used this year as that support group isn’t meeting in person.

Hardship fund payments

January	£300 towards safe accommodation for children of a recent refugee lady who were awaiting family reunion visas. Exceptional case as the application was supported by 2 Swansea based groups and involved Afghanistan.
February	Removal expenses.[£250] Eye test [£35]
March	Spectacles and eye test [£155] £440 included Destitute lady whilst awaiting support DBS check for a man who was allowed to work but was NRPF, had lost job due to Covid and had opportunity of another but needed DBS. Lady who was NRPF on a spousal visa whose husband died of Covid- to tide her over New expensive diet for man recently out of hospital A new heater for man afraid to put on central heating [additional support found to help explain bills]
April	Carpet for House move[£300] £300 for short term accommodation whilst flat found .Further safe house payment[£300]
May	Train fare to see solicitor to progress case [Successful outcome!]
June	School uniform and bus fares for new arrival in Newport Further safe House payment [£300]
July	3 Driving lessons and test for man seeking asylum who hopes this will help him to find work once his asylum claim is approved. [£200]
August	Travel to solicitor [£13]
September	4 week bus pass for school [£60]
October	Spectacles £120 Baking course£140
November	IELTS exam agreed £190, BSL course-,£350 Winter shoes for 2 children £100 [and additional items from store] £200 for safe house payment.
December	Contributions towards Funeral expenses and family support,£200 and contributions towards repatriation of body £200. Football boots £75

Other Monies used

Vitamin D supplements supply January and March 2021 [And 30 bottles of liquid paracetamol] Provided as many people had been unable to go out and were likely to be Vitamin D deficient. Also Vitamin D might help with immune response to infection. Info leaflet made available.

New fund established for 'Moving on'- March 2021 - report below

Donations for bike maintenance -bikes report below

Donations for Phone top ups -report below

Donation to independent film producer for a film about Arash[£100] - the first destitute asylum seeking man we had living locally who is to be featured in a film. It was agreed that the film was educational, and would be helpful to Arash's self esteem and wellbeing. We are acknowledged in end titles and can have access to a copy to use with schools.

Donation to Penally camp support groups [Bought headphones and wheeled suitcases amongst other things]

Small sums immediate needs fund administered in Swansea set up in March 2021 - see report below

Membership and Support

As at 27th December 2021

Email newsletter subscribers	499
Facebook followers	891
Twitter followers	1096
Instagram	

Fundraising/ Awareness raising activities

Our generous supporters have ensured that we have still been able to support people in need in south Wales. Several people gave their winter fuel payments and a generous donation from Elim church came with the message ' keep up your inspiring work'.

A number of donations have come from people carol singing or Christmas collections. Paintings were sold to raise money and Treberfydd had an open garden fortnight which also raised money and interest in HBTSR.

A donation from an anonymous person for gifts for Afghan children coming to Powys was match funded to allow us to welcome the resettled families as they arrive .

We managed to have some in-person fundraising activities in the summer and the run up to Christmas with donations being given at welcome days as well . Stalls in Hay Market and 2 street collections for Afghanistan [one with the Brecon Rotary group] were also good in raising our profile, interest in our group and the plight of people seeking sanctuary as well as over £1100 shared between International Rescue Committee, Welsh Refugee Council and Refugee Action [£640 was match funded by HBTSR] . A collection was made at the artisan market in Brecon on 19th December for Disasters Emergency committee for Afghanistan which was topped up by HBTSR to £450.

We have continued to sell handmade, washable **face masks** made by Rachel, Janet, Gaynor and Kumari.

We had our information display boards in Brecon Cathedral for many months.

Hay Winter festival gave us donations from their 'cup returns'.

Llangorse church had a festival of Christmas trees which HBTSR participated in and Llangorse Community Centre has several times hosted stalls for HBTSR as well as allowing an exhibition and sale of paintings.

We have issued press releases about concerns about Penally camp, the New Plans for immigration and the Nationality and Borders Bill [many] , a Friendship Quilt facilitated by Emily Hedges and 2 volunteers in Swansea, Refugee week and our visit to Treberfydd with Newport Gap Sanctuary, the 2 visits to Craig Y Nos, Market stalls and street

collections, Our Together With Refugees Rally and Hay street market and Christmas giving. .

Schools of Sanctuary

No new awards were made although several schools have expressed interest in the Schools of Sanctuary Activity Packs and continued work with HBTSR as Covid19 permitted. Franksbridge school gave donations of tooth paste in the summer and they , Hay, Llangynidr and Llangorse schools donated many Christmas presents that were shared with children in Swansea. Indeed so many presents that 2 separate journey were made to take these gifts down for onward delivery.

Hay Festival of Sanctuary

No in person festival was possible in May but the winter festival was a hybrid affair offering free tickets and opportunities for people seeking sanctuary to volunteer. Our Orange heart campaign was highlighted by bunting on site and photos of the box-office manager and the CEO with orange hearts. Donations for HBTSR were encouraged at the cup return desk.

Other Activities

Holiday Cottage

For a number of years Rowland Jepson has allowed his holiday cottage to be used for short stays by people seeking asylum when it was not otherwise booked. At the start of Lockdown, Sharetawe asked if we could accommodate a man who would otherwise be homeless or placed in a hostel/ dormitory. Rowland agreed to this use and we have been able to befriend, help with subsistence and ensure that he had housing last summer with Ruth Gibbs and this summer with Mac and Erica McCarthy.

During the time that this man has been in Brecon he has been assisted by the Food bank as well as by HBTSR. He volunteers with Credu and is exploring other avenues to help as well as taking photos of our activities.

Bicycles

Drover Cycles , Sean and Lawrence have continued to collect bicycles which have been shared with Re- Cycle in Swansea and the Gap Sanctuary Project in Newport. We are very grateful to everyone who has donated bicycles, given storage and transport which has allowed so many people freedom to travel. We have assisted with purchase of bike parts, helmets, lights and locks.

Over 50 bikes have been donated this year to Newport Sanctuary or Re-Cycle Swansea.

Newport has a regular bike maintenance session and is due to move to city centre premises to offer a secure bike park and space to refurbish and maintain bikes. . They credit our support for helping to start and maintain this popular activity .

We are grateful for the support of Oliver Greenow of Tailored imports and Tailored Plumbing for the use of his transport for the bikes on several occasions.

English Language Tuition

Mac regularly visited Unity in Diversity[UID] to teach an IELTS course and to take donated goods from our store. This was stopped by the pandemic but he continues with some informal online support.

Courts support group

People seeking sanctuary are understandably very anxious about attending hearings and we have been able to offer moral support by attending with individuals. Requests for this had increased but ceased during the pandemic. We have a leaflet on the website explaining our role. We also hold some money that was donated to help with legal cases. This money is ring fenced with decisions on use made by a small group including

expertise from city support group volunteers to draw upon. A policy to support decision making is available on the website.

Friendships and support

Many of our group have kept in touch with individuals throughout the pandemic and we have maintained contact with support groups. We have been told that this is greatly appreciated.

Phone top ups

Kelly Wearing of SASS helps to buy phone top ups for people seeking asylum who needed these to help them to continue with studies or other urgent needs. This started in May 2020 and has been well utilised with EYST and SASS also paying for Top ups as well as Hubbub/O2 supplying free reconditioned phones with data. Wifi has started to be installed in asylum accommodation.

Kelly reports that Phone top ups remain very useful for people seeking asylum, enabling: Access to bus passes; Forms to be filled and submitted online; Access to online translation and English classes; Access to online information and communication while out of the home.

As colleges start to return to in-person teaching, we may wish to revisit this expenditure.

Moving on fund

This was set up in March 2021 to help people newly granted refugee status with the expenses of setting up a new home- up to £200 per Family/Person that they can spend as needed. This fund was to help people that we might previously have found household goods for but are now unable to help due to the pandemic . Applications are made via volunteers and the usual agencies.

Small sums immediate need fund

Set up in March 2021 and administered by Thanu/Sophie of EYST and Hannah of Welcome to Swansea. It was designed to save these workers the considerable work involved in trying to raise/find small sums of money that may be critical to individuals. eg prior to the fund 10 emails were sent between groups trying to find £8 for cheap footwear.

Our first payment of £200 was spent as follows Mr A – New arrival Swansea (no money on Aspen card) - £20, Mr HH- New arrival Swansea (no money on Aspen card) - £20 ,Mr SA - hardship req £20 ,Mr AR NRPF hardship req £30 ,Mr SH New shoes £20, family of five- no money on Aspen card- Ika family - £60 for food , Mr Aw – No money on his Aspen card- £15 ,Mr M - no money on Aspen card- £15.

This fund has allowed immediate help for people who have arrived in Swansea with no money and no way to obtain money until the Home Office start their payments. These small sums have meant that the people did not go to bed hungry or have to manage without footwear. *'It may only be a small amount but it means so much'*. It has also meant that staff are not either giving their own money or having to make many calls to find help [it makes their job easier and more pleasant]. This fund was used greatly during the changeover of Aspen cards in June/July/August when many people found themselves with no money, no food and often new to the area. *'The most vulnerable people with no other source of support.'*

'I just want to say a big THANK YOU for all your help and genuine kindness.'

*You have kept people from going hungry and raised spirits. You are all so kind and I can't thank you enough for all your support this year.
Please share my personal thanks to the group. Have a wonderful and bright Christmas.x '*

Sewing Machines

In September 2020 Newport Gap Sanctuary asked for our help in finding some sewing machines and materials to start a sewing group. Tools for Self Reliance were kindly able to let us have machines that were not suitable to be sent to Africa and other kind people also donated machines. Janet and Gaynor visited to refresh people's knowledge of how to use a sewing machine and by November there were 3 separate groups visiting the centre to use the machines. This activity has continued to flourish and is a source of informal English conversation and teaching. Several further donations of machines have been made and a similar group is also envisaged in Swansea.

Goods

Until the start of lockdown March 2020 we continued to be given large amounts of clothing, bedding, toys, household and kitchen items that were of use to people seeking sanctuary both here and abroad. Drop off points [the Liberal Democrats office in Brecon, St Marys Church in Hay and Hay Vets in Talgarth] took in our donations for which we were extremely grateful.

Since March 2020 we stopped collecting goods as none of the support groups were open and so we had nowhere to send items. We have had some household goods donated that we have been able to take occasionally [when restrictions on travel permitted] to the small clothing and household goods store in Swansea run by UID. We have given clothing to Homeless Hope and also sold some to help raise money to allow us to help people in the cities.

We had a superb offer from Dial a ride Charity shop who agreed to collect specific items that people in the cities need. This is a great resource.

We also had a very successful collection in October of toiletries for People in Motion who arranged delivery to people in hotels seeking refuge from Afghanistan.

Ty Mawr Lime continue to provide us with a warm, secure storage area where we have been able to keep things and gradually disperse them as lockdown restrictions ease.

During the Autumn we have been able to both source and accept certain household items and deliver them to individuals with the help of Thanu and the Women's group.

An example of this was when we were asked for a desk that was found by Rev Liz of the Beacons' Benefice of churches . One of the parishioners offered to pay for this and several other items and they were delivered by one of our supporters to a volunteer in Swansea who delivered to the recipient.

Other items have been offered , photos shared with members of the Womens group by Thanu and recipients identified and one of our supporters has delivered the items.

Stores Group

Sue, Erica and Carola have continued to visit the store to check that items are in date and sort any suitable items to be transported. Ty Mawr Lime offered a move into a new store room in November which was managed with help from Sue, Carola, Ailsa and Michael.

Christmas presents.

Sue, Erica and Carola packed over 125 presents for UID, given by individuals and groups such as the Llangynidr knitters and Glasbury Crafters which were delivered by Tim and Val to the UID store and taken out by UID in the run up to Christmas. We also gave £500 for Christmas food vouchers [or gifts] to UID and to Newport.

Franksbridge, Hay, Llangorse and Llangynidr Primary Schools gave over 300 presents for children that were taken by Adil and Lawrence in 2 separate deliveries to Sandra for SASS and also the Women's Group. These were then sorted and delivered by SASS volunteers. Llyn Safaddan Group of Churches donated Christmas foods and 15 food hamper bags that were also distributed by SASS volunteers.

A Newport based supporter delivered some men's gifts directly to The Gap Sanctuary who were able to share them out.

Morrison's Supermarket in Brecon donated 7 Children's Christmas presents to the Rotary and these were taken by Adil to share with refugee children at the newly established Mosque in Abergavenny.

In addition to all the Christmas presents we were able to donate £1000 to the Swansea Women's group so they could take families to the Winter Wonderland Fair.

Vitamin D

Primrose Pharmacy allowed us to buy Vitamin D supplements at cost price and we were able to distribute them to the cities with the help of Tailored imports where they were given out by volunteers in support groups. We wrote a short information leaflet to accompany the supplies. It seemed especially necessary to ensure people were not Vitamin D deficient after a year in which outdoor activity had been constrained and when Vitamin D might help in boosting immunity.

Lobbying, Awareness raising and Education.

Throughout the year we have continued to highlight important petitions and causes. We have been helped in this by the fortnightly briefing of Asylum Matters and the weekly updates for Lift The Ban Coalition. We have regular correspondence with our MP and MS. We have drawn attention many times to the Nationality and Borders bill in conjunction with the 'Together with Refugees' coalition including by a rally on 20th October in which we formed a circle around St Mary's Church in Brecon and subsequently also on stalls in Brecon and Hay.

We were planning on visiting the schools that donated presents to answer questions about seeking asylum but were prevented by Covid restrictions.

Wales aspires to be a Nation of Sanctuary and will have a pilot of free transport for people seeking asylum in the New Year. The cost of transport is something that we have highlighted in the past as a major obstacle to people attending college, school, support groups, day trips or even reporting for asylum purposes.

Website and social media

The website is maintained by City of Sanctuary and Ailsa with help from Mike and Paul. This has all our newsletters, write ups, policies and links to other groups.

Facebook remains a public group with posts approved by Steve and Ailsa

Twitter is run by Maria and continues as an active campaigning force.

Instagram is run by Alex.

Neil and Cate continue to help with design of our leaflets and posters to ensure that we have a consistent, recognisable and effective visual presence.

Expenditure

Detail is provided in the Finance annual report. We have helped many individuals to buy items including food, bus passes and phone top ups and have made donations to other charities that help people seeking sanctuary.

Administration.

All policies are on our website and are reviewed annually by the Chair and trustees. We have added a Covid Policy, Users guide to the legal fund and the Moving on fund. We have nearly 500 people on our mailing list who receive a regular mailing with details of activities, updates, petitions and details of meetings. All are welcome to attend our Zoom meetings .

We have met monthly via Zoom and report upon activities, income, expenditure, any issues, plans and seek views and aim for consensus about future work.

Officers and Trustees are appointed at the AGM with Trustees able to co-opt additional Trustees between AGMs as needed. Two new Trustees were co-opted in November. Trustees have met once this year but have kept in touch regularly.

Please do let us know if you'd like to take on or assist with any of the roles listed below.

Post Holders as of December 2021		Holder
Chair		Margaret Blake
Vice Chair		Sally McColl
Treasurer		Lawrence Duffy with support from Virginia Brown
Secretary		Ailsa Dunn
Trustees		Margaret Blake* Lawrence Duffy* Ailsa Dunn* Melrose East appointed 12/2017 Sally McColl appointed 12/2017 Val Fraser co-opted 11/2021 Adil Gatrad co-opted 11/2021 *appointed 06/2017 when the Charity was registered
Safeguarding Lead		Dr Aideen Naughton
Hardship fund group		Mike Gatehouse, Lynne Rogers and Lawrence Duffy. Appointed annually
Fundraising coordinators		Rachel Giaccone and Jane Dodds
Welcomer/ information officer and group		Philip Oliver and Lynne Rogers, Lawrence Duffy, Ailsa Dunn, Adil Gatrad, Margaret and Pat Blake, Sue and Gez Richards, Penny and Andrew Leonard, Sally and Colin McColl, Ellen McCombe, Mac McCarthy, Mike Gatehouse, Melrose East.

Post Holders as of December 2021	Holder
Supermarket liaison	Virginia Brown
Store user group	Sue Richards, Carola Tipton, Erica McCarthy, Ailsa Dunn
Webmaster	Paul Funnell
Facebook administrator	Steve Buzza
Twitter lead	Maria Duggan
Instagram Lead	Alex Benfield
Schools Liaison/ educator	Sue Richards,
Holiday stays coordinators	Lynne Rogers, Thanu Hettiarchchi, Rowland Jepson
Risk Management	Melrose East
Courts Support Group	Claire Armstrong, Margaret Blake, Pauline Paterson, Sarah Andrews, Sue Richards, Rowland Jepson, Barbara Price, Reg Price, Philip Oliver, Lynne Rogers, Melrose East, Lawrence Duffy, Ailsa Dunn, Lis Lifford, Corinne Harris, Clare Shirtcliff, Ellie Lonsdale, Hilary Bright, Ellen and Roger McCombe, Adil Gatrad, Rowland Jepson, Janet Bodily, Neil Stone, Maria Duggan, Jonnie and Tina Hill, Allie Exton, Virginia Brown, Gillian Hall, Maureen Douglas, Angharad Kuck, John Anderson, Kirsty Morgan, Virginia Brown
Policies	Mike Gatehouse
Transport group	Lawrence Duffy, Tim Butler, Val Fraser, Adil Gatrad, John Anderson, Jim and Claire Milner, Gaynor and Jim Hooper, Trish Fretten, Hilary Bright, Trina Lodge, Tina and Jonnie Hill.

Some standout highlights

1 great act of kindness from Facefit4Wales. HBTSR had been approached to see if we could help with funding a FFP3 face mask for a young A level student who wants to study dentistry and had managed to find some work experience to help with his applications next September. For the work he needed a face mask fitting and to be trained on how to apply. He had found a course for £250 and was resigning himself to being unable to take up the placement unless help could be found to pay. Ailsa approached Face fit 4 Wales who responded within minutes offering to sponsor him for the fitting and mask supply and arranged to meet him at his college so that he had a mask and could take up the work experience. The two people who run this company were impressed by what we do and very impressed with the asylum seeker's commitment and drive. An extremely heartwarming moment.

2 Z was selected as Hair, Beauty and Holistic student of the year at Gower College 20/21. *'She is so proud and certainly deserves this recognition. Thanks to HBTSR for the support they have given Z, without which she would have been unable attend.'* We paid for travel passes for her for 2 years and some equipment.

3 The amazing response from 4 schools and the Llyn Safaddan group of churches to our Christmas presents appeal!

4 Surrounding St Mary's Church Brecon with orange hearts.

Thanks to all our supporters and friends for all that you have done this year to help raise the profile and help people seeking sanctuary.

Ailsa Dunn 31st December 2021