

Afghanistan Refugee Toolkit

How your church can welcome Afghan refugees



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INTRODUCTION

Wales has had a rich history of welcoming migrants and refugees to these shores - from students across the Celtic world attending Llanilltud in the 6th century, to the industrial migrations of the 19th and 20th centuries. The Irish Famine of the 1840s saw Wales welcoming 30,000 Irish migrants fleeing starvation. In Llandaff our industrial valleys have played host to workers from across the world, and Tiger Bay and Butetown transformed Cardiff into one of the most wonderfully multicultural cities on these islands.

Yet in Wales, and across the United Kingdom, we haven't always got it right, we haven't always given the welcome those arriving at our shores have deserved. And now, as thousands of families who have worked with and supported British and Welsh troops, diplomats, and civil servants in Afghanistan flee from the Taliban, we as a nation face the challenge of welcoming them and helping them to build new lives in a foreign land.

Jesus' challenged to us on refugees and migrants is abundantly clear. In the Judgement of the Nations in Matthew 25, those at Jesus' left hand are condemned because, as Jesus says, "I was a

stranger and you did not welcome me.” In frustration those being condemned challenge Jesus saying “when was it that we saw you...and did not take care of you?” Jesus replies “just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”

We must respond to that challenge, as individuals, as churches, and as a nation, not just now in the immediate crisis, but for the long haul, and for all those who seek a safe home here in Wales.

I pray that, through the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, this pack helps us all to step-up and do all that we can to make a real difference.

The Right Reverend June Osborne, Bishop of Llandaff

THE SITUATION IN WALES

Many areas of policy are not currently devolved to the Welsh Government or the Senedd. One of these policy areas is immigration and asylum, and the UK Government is therefore responsible for policy in this area, including application decision making, provision of support and accommodation, and the operation of resettlement schemes.

Though the Welsh Government must comply with the immigration laws stipulated by the UK Government, it is also committed to making Wales a nation of sanctuary, and therefore seeks to do all it can to ensure Afghan interpreters, refugees and their families are able to reach safety here in Wales – a policy which the Diocese of Llandaff fully supports.

KEY FACTS ON AFGHAN REFUGEES IN WALES

The UK Government is currently operating two separate schemes across the whole of the United Kingdom which aim to help with the specific situation in Afghanistan.

The **Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)** scheme aims to resettle the roughly 5,000 Afghan interpreters or other staff who have supported the British mission in Afghanistan, as well as their families. These individuals have been assessed as being at serious threat from retaliation for their support of British forces. You can view the ARAP factsheet from the Home Office here: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/16/factsheet-uk-support-to-resettle-afghan-nationals/>

This scheme is now operational and Wales has started settling around 50 families, with more to follow. It is being supported by Urdd Gobaith Cymru alongside the Welsh Government, the Home Office, local authorities and Cytûn, as well as refugee organizations in Wales.

The **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme** is a new scheme that will support refugees to resettle in the UK. No date has yet been given for when this scheme will come into operation, but once it does it will seek to welcome just 5,000 Afghan citizens in its first year, with up to a total of 20,000 in the

long term. Further details about how the scheme will operate have yet to be published, including eligibility requirements, but it is likely to include those who face a particular risk from the Taliban because of their gender, sexuality or religion, or their role in civil society, for example. You can view more information on the Resettlement routes for Afghan nationals factsheet here:

<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/19/factsheet-resettlement-routes-for-afghan-nationals/>

It is highly likely, however, that due to the extremely volatile situation in Afghanistan, and the extreme risk that many find themselves in, more people from Afghanistan will attempt to arrive in the UK via irregular means, such as crossing the channel by boat. These individuals become legally classed as asylum seekers. Once in the UK they can apply for refugee status.

A report published by The Refugee Council in July 2021 said the average waiting time for an initial decision when seeking asylum in the UK was between one and three years.

STATE SUPPORT TO REFUGEES

Anyone who arrives via the **ARAP** or Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will have been subject to security checks and have been granted full refugee status. They will have access to mainstream benefits and services, such as healthcare. They are also eligible to receive support into and with employment from the Department for Work and Pensions.

Those arriving by other means will be classed as asylum seekers and will only be eligible for some basic support, significantly less than they would receive as refugees.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Donations

A number of organizations have launched emergency appeals to help support work both in Afghanistan and here in Wales. Consider donating to support their work.

- Welsh Refugee Council - <https://wrc.wales/make-a-donation/>
- AfghanWelcome - <https://afghanwelcome.org/support>
- Christian Aid - <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/afghanistan-hunger-appeal>
- UN Refugee Agency - <https://www.unrefugees.org.uk/where-help-is-needed/afghanistan-situation/>
- UNICEF - <https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/donate-and-help-protect-children-in-afghanistan/>
- British Red Cross - <https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/afghanistan-crisis-appeal>

Brand New Items

AfghanWelcome is working with Baby Basics to provide essential items and equipment to Afghan refugee mothers and families here in the UK. Working with the Home Office, they are conducting basic needs assessment direct with Afghan families and have produced wish lists with Amazon and Common Good for items they desperately need. Could you or your church consider buying something from these lists?

Amazon - https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/333FVEMF7TEH4?ref=wl_share

Common Good - <https://www.forcommongood.co.uk/apps/giftregistry/registry/149941>

Second-hand Items

Care4Calais and The Salvation Army are looking for second hand items to support a number of different high needs groups, including refugees from Afghanistan and those coming as asylum seekers.

- **Care4Calais**
 - Items Requested - <https://care4calais.org/documents/Priority-Items.pdf>
 - Drop-off Locations - <https://care4calais.org/thedropoffmap/>
 - Become a collection point - <https://care4calais.org/get-involved/collect-donate/become-a-collection-point/>
- **The Salvation Army**
 - Items Requested - <https://www.salvationarmytrading.org.uk/donating/what-can-you-donate>
 - Drop-off Locations - <https://www.salvationarmytrading.org.uk/banks/finder>

Housing

The Welsh Government is actively seeking properties to be made available to rent for those arriving in Wales via either the **ARAP** or **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme**. These will need to be at least three bedrooms or larger.

The Diocese of Llandaff will be conducting a review of all our owned buildings to see if any are suitable, but if you have a property which can be considered please contact the Welsh Government at refugees@gov.wales or your local authority's housing department.

LONG-TERM SUPPORT

Welcome Churches

As part of the Diocese of Llandaff's Mission and Outreach Strategy, it is our ambition to have at least one church in each Ministry Area registered as a Welcome church. These are churches that are committed to actively welcoming refugees, meaning that as refugees and asylum seekers move around the UK and into Wales, they can easily find a church to welcome them into the community. These churches can also participate in the Welcome Box scheme. These are boxes filled with small



gifts as well as information about local groups and services, that are delivered to the homes of those who have recently arrived in the area.

For more information regarding Welcome Churches <https://welcomechurches.org/>

Please contact Christoph Auckland, the Diocesan Senior Outreach Officer, to talk about your church or ministry area getting involved in Welcome Churches:

christopherauckland@churchinwales.org.uk

07949 567 047

Community Sponsorship

Community Sponsorship is a UK wide refugee resettlement programme, where ordinary people gather together to sponsor and welcome refugee families to your neighbourhood, supporting them after their arrival and helping them settle faster into their new lives.

As part of the Diocese of Llandaff's Mission and Outreach Strategy, it is our ambition to bring together churches and ministry areas to run at least one Community Sponsorship programme in each of the local authority areas of the diocese – Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, the Vale of Glamorgan, and Cardiff.

We're delighted that St Mary the Virgin, Butetown (part of the South Cardiff Ministry Area) and the Parish of Pontyclun, Talygarn and Llanharry (part of the Llantrisant Ministry Area) are blazing the trail with Community Sponsorship already.

For more information regarding Community Sponsorship visit <https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/>

Please contact Christoph Auckland, the Diocesan Senior Outreach Officer, if you're interested in exploring Community Sponsorship in your area:

christopherauckland@churchinwales.org.uk

07949 567 047

PRAYER AND THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Prayer for Refugees

This prayer has been composed by the Mission and Outreach team at the Diocese of Llandaff.

It is based on the ancient Celtic tradition of Lorica prayers, prayers of protection inspired by the example of St. Paul in Ephesians 6.14 (lorica deriving from the Latin for armour).

It also uses traditional Anglo-Catholic and contemporary evangelical language to bring the whole diocese together in a single prayer for refugees.

Lord God, be with those who flee from danger,
and who embark on the great journey to a new home.

May the guiding hands of the Father be on their shoulders,
making smooth the paths before them,
and may the shield of Christ the unconquerable guardian surround them,
defending them on every side.

Lord God, soften our hearts to the plight of migrants and refugees,
through the example of the Blessed Mary, Mother of Mercy,
who sought refuge in Egypt to protect her son, our saviour.

May the love of Christ be in our own hearts,
calling us to compassion and generosity,
and may the voice of the Holy Spirit be in our mouths,
as we speak up against the ambivalence of the world.

Lord God, help us to confess our faith in Christ through our actions to those in need,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with refugees and migrants today and always.

Amen

Theological Resources

What does the Bible say about refugees?

Bible Society and theologian Doctor Paul Gooder have produced a series of videos and small group resources on the theme of refugees in the Bible
<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/bible-articles/what-does-the-bible-say-about-refugees/>

God With Us – Worship Resources

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have created a resource pack for worship and study groups on the theme of refugees, migration and sanctuary
<https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/3507-CS-SFAR-Migration-Worship-A5-BOOKLET.pdf>

WRITE TO YOUR MP/MS

We believe that when we speak together, we can use our voice bring about real change at a political level – whether over devolved matters in the Senedd or UK-wide at Westminster.

The UK Government's commitment to welcoming 20,000 Afghan refugees in the coming years is good news, but many Afghans are in danger right now. Not only that, but the UK Government is



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currently introducing legislation in the form of the Nationality and Borders Bill that will discriminate against those who are forced to flee danger. Refugees arriving in the UK not via one of the approved schemes (such as those who, in desperation, may have travelled here across Europe) will not enter the asylum system, and instead face having their case treated as inadmissible and be deported. Many believe this to be a breach of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and is a policy the UNHCR has said will "damage lives, be hard to implement, and undermine international cooperation on refugee issues."

Write to your MP/MS

Write to your Member of Parliament and your Member of the Senedd/Aelodau o'r Senedd, urging them to pressure the UK Government to act with more urgency on Afghan refugees, and to change the discriminatory elements of the Nationality and Borders Bill. You can find the contact details of your MP and MS/AS here: <https://www.writetothem.com/>

Christian Aid Petition

Christian Aid have launched a petition calling on the UK Government to do more to support people in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, and those seeking refuge in the UK. You can sign the petition here: www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/stand-afghanistan

Further support

If you'd like some advice and support on advocacy in the Diocese of Llandaff, or support in writing to your Member of Parliament or Member of the Senedd/Aelodau o'r Senedd, please contact Christoph Auckland, the Diocesan Senior Outreach Officer at christopherauckland@churchinwales.org.uk