

South Wales Police Service

The Cardiff E.S.O.L / Police Project

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The Cardiff ESOL / Police Project

Summary

Despite the many cultural, religious and language differences, asylum seekers that arrive in the United Kingdom share one common goal, to learn the English Language. Communication is so important to assist with integration in this new community.

A *problem-solving* approach was used to holistically identify concerns associated with the introduction of asylum seekers to the communities of the United Kingdom. It was soon apparent that asylum seekers were categorised as both victim and offenders, due in many cases to their unique set of circumstances. The lack of knowledge of both cultural and legal information, their inherent fear of the police together with their limited understanding of the English language, make asylum seekers a 'vulnerable group' within society.

The *Cardiff ESOL Police Project* is essentially an educational training program designed by Constable Donovan, in partnership with the Cardiff County Council's ESOL Service (English for Speakers of Other Languages). The project is an ongoing strategy created to address the concerns experienced as a result of the arrival of asylum seekers to Cardiff. It is a simple training package that serves to educate asylum seekers about the role of the police and the criminal laws of the country. The package comprises of a number of training sessions each designed specifically to provide knowledge and understanding on how to live safely in the UK and remain within the law.

This innovative initiative has received interest from the Basic Skills Agency for England and Wales, who are in the process of securing funding to publish the program so that it may be used as a model of good practice, throughout the UK. Furthermore, this initiative is now being considered as a template for best practice from other sector agencies, including the health service, fire service and social services, to promote and further the education in the use of their services.

Project Aims:

The aims of the *Cardiff ESOL Police Project* are as follows;

- To increase awareness of the role of the police in the United Kingdom
- To increase confidence to report incidents to the police
- Improve personal safety
- Engage ESOL students with a view to improving life skills and social integration within the United Kingdom

After a successful pilot, the course is now being held at a number of resources centres across the City of Cardiff. Lessons are taught by ESOL staff with community beat officers and probationer staff providing support when available.

The Cardiff ESOL / Police Project

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Background

In recent years, the United Kingdom has received an increasingly large number of individuals and immigrant families seeking political asylum. Last year alone, the UK Government provided support for 80,120 new arrivals seeking political asylum and this figure includes a total of 10,830 who presented themselves to the authorities during the last quarter of the year. This figure was almost ten percent down on arrivals during the same period last year. (*Home Office figures*)

As a result of the increasing arrival of people to this country, particularly to London and the South East, the Government introduced the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to provide arrangements for the effective dispersal of asylum seekers to other parts of the United Kingdom. (Historically, London and the South East had been the focal point of entry to this country for people entering the country and seeking asylum). The National Asylum Support Services (NASS) was established to manage the dispersal program.

In April 2001, Cardiff became the first authority in Wales to receive asylum seekers. Since that time, Cardiff has received approximately 2000 individuals and family groups who are seeking political asylum. Approximately 1300 are presently undergoing the asylum process. Many individuals who have been successful in their asylum claim have chosen to remain in Cardiff. Many who have failed their applications still remain in the area, awaiting '*possible deportation*'.

A number of emerging issues have been identified by the police throughout the United Kingdom as a result of the arrival of asylum seekers over the past few years. Racial incidents, child trafficking, domestic violence, and the illegal use of motor vehicles are examples of problems that the police now find that they have to devote more time and resources to. These issues will continue to have an impact upon the way the police have to serve communities both now and in the future.

The Cardiff ESOL Police Project

Despite the many cultural, religious and language differences, asylum seekers that arrive in the United Kingdom share one common goal, to learn the English Language. Communication is so important to assist with integration in this new community.

The *Cardiff ESOL Police Project* is essentially an educational training program designed by Constable Donovan, in partnership with the Cardiff County Council's ESOL Service (English for Speakers of Other Languages). The project is an ongoing strategy created to address the concerns experienced as a result of the arrival of asylum seekers to Cardiff. It is a simple training package that serves to educate asylum seekers about the role of the police and the criminal laws of the country. The package comprises of a number of training sessions each designed specifically to provide knowledge and understanding on how to live safely in the UK and remain within the law (*Appendix 1*). As a result, this innovative initiative has received interest from the Basic Skills Agency for England and Wales, who are in the process of securing funding to publish the program so that it may be used as a model of good practice, throughout the UK. Furthermore, this initiative is now being considered as a template for best practice from other sector agencies, including the health service, fire service and social services, to promote and further the education in the use of their services. An article appeared in the Home Office guide, 'Building a Safe, Just and Tolerant Society' published by the Home Office Communications Directorate, September 2003. (P.63) (*Appendix 2*).

The training program begins with an introduction of the police by identifying basic vocabulary through the use of pictures. Pictures include a police office, a police car, a police helmet etc. The topic continues with regard to the way officers are appointed and an explanation of their various roles and responsibilities in this country. A number of specialist departments are also introduced to captivate interest; the dog and mounted section and the aerial support section. The program continues by identifying the key areas of concern including domestic violence, racial harassment and driving in the UK.

The training package has been designed specifically to assist asylum seekers who have little or no understanding of the English language. The training pack also extends to those individuals who may have an intermediate understanding of English. Activities range from basic word searches, comprehension exercises and the application of information technology to gain knowledge of the key concerns. ESOL teachers currently deliver the programme to

asylum seekers at a number of the English language outreach classes held at centres throughout the City of Cardiff.

At a recent publicity launch in January 2004, Superintendent Farrar, Cardiff Basic Command Unit, gave his support and his commitment by encouraging police officers to call at the community centres to promote the project and to make inroads into reducing the fears and perceptions of the police.

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The Policing Concerns

Racial Incidents

It is clear from both local and national research that many people from visible minority ethnic communities live in fear of harassment, abuse and attack based on nothing other than their ethnic origin or the colour of their skin. The current conflicts around the world have served to add to this problem. South Wales Police are committed to taking all steps within its power, which lead to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and the promotion of good relationships among different racial groups. *'Racism will not be tolerated in any form in South Wales.'* (Former Chief Constable, Sir Anthony Burden, South Wales Police)

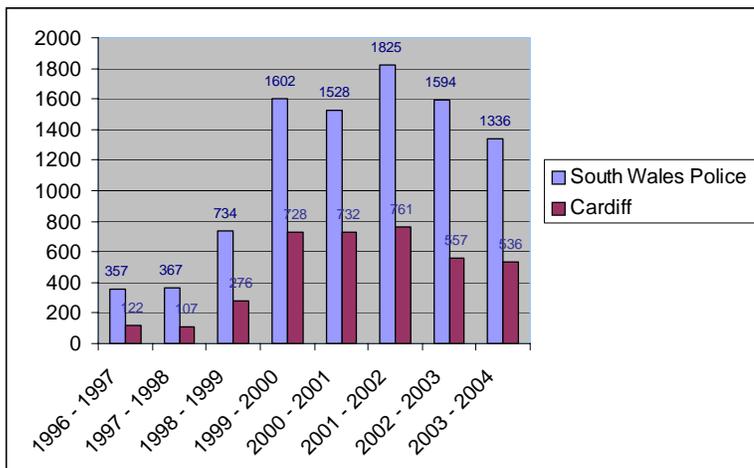
Statistically, racist incidents have seen a marked increase over the period, April 1996 to January 2004. Racial incidents have increased in the Cardiff area by approximately 439 percent. This dramatic increase has arisen mainly as a result the McPherson Report. *'Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person' – (definition adopted from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report recommendation 12)* and the positive steps that the authorities have made to encourage reporting. South Wales Police do not have an

incident recording facility, which seeks to identify individuals as asylum seekers. Statistical data serves to identify all racist incidents with no special consideration for individual groups.

Asylum seekers may well be targeted and subjected to many forms of racial abuse by certain members of the community. Many asylum seekers are extremely reluctant to report incidents to the police, due to their inherent fear of the police in their countries of origin. The fear may be well founded as a result of personal or family experience, or through the accounts of others from their communities. Police can be viewed as violent and corrupt, with reports suggesting that the police are responsible for many 'beatings', 'tortures' and 'murders'. As a result of these preconceived views and beliefs, individuals will not identify themselves, preferring to maintain a low profile within our community.

The racist incident statistics below (Fig. 1), suggest that there has been no significant increase in the reports of racist incidents, since the arrival of asylum seekers to Cardiff.

Racial Incidents reported to the Police in South Wales



(Fig. 1)

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is defined as *'any incident of violence or aggression, wherever and whenever it occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse of an individual by a family member, partner, or ex-partner in an existing or previous*

relationship, regardless of gender, culture or sexual orientation'. (South Wales Police Service Force Information System, 'Domestic Violence' Policy and Procedures).

Support staff and other key workers involved with asylum seekers in Cardiff estimate that approximately eighty percent of women, who arrive in this country with their partners, experience varying levels of domestic violence. (Men too may also be victims in a few isolated cases). Incidents appear to range from verbal abuse, mental incarceration and actual physical assault. In spite of the high levels of incidents, once again, there is a real reluctance for victims to report these matters to the police.

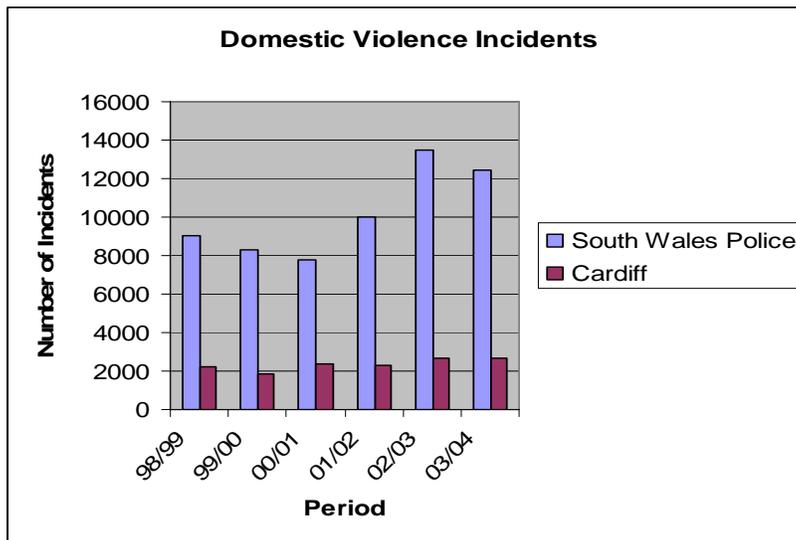
Women undergoing the asylum process, fail to report domestic violence for a number of reasons.

- They do not wish to have *any* contact with the police
- Their partner in many cases is the only person that they know in this country (they have no family or friends to turn to for support)
- They fear that by reporting the matter, they will have to undergo a judicial process of which they have no understanding. Compared to own country where perhaps women have a lower status legally within the judicial system, i.e. not accepted as credible witnesses, no recourse to divorce, not legal guardian of own children since it is always nearest male relative.
- The male is often the *lead applicant* in the asylum process. The women may feel that his decision will have an influence in the *granting of her asylum claim* in the UK.
- On occasions where women have considered making formal complaints to the police, pressure can be placed upon her from elders of existing communities for her to withdraw the complaint.

It appears that *men* are more likely to become confrontational as a result of feeling disempowered. They may feel frustrated because they are not caring for and providing for their families in the way they are expected to as the responsible 'head of the family'. They may share small, poor quality homes with other families. They are legally denied the

opportunity of obtaining work and may stay within the walls of the home all day long. They are generally bored and have little to do with the time on their hands. In addition, they may also have little understanding of the English language. In addition to this lack of linguistic ability, they may see a possible cultural shift in the position of their partners and children in this country and perceive this shift to be a threat to their own status. Women learn to become more independent and they may slowly decide to adopt western clothing and other western influences. If children are present in relationships where domestic violence is present they will undoubtedly be affected mentally and sometimes physically. This will have immense implications for social services.

Domestic incidents reported to the police in South Wales.



(Fig. 2)

Child Trafficking / Children left unattended in their homes

There have been a number of cases of suspected 'child trafficking' incidents identified in Cardiff over the past two years. It would appear to be a national problem with incidents occurring all around the country. Incidents may well present additional concerns in respect of child sexual exploitation. This involves *the provision of sexual services in exchange for some form of payment, such as money, drink, drugs, or other consumer goods or even a bed and a roof over one's head for a night.* (Green 1992)

The Asylum support team have raised concerns about a number of families now living in Cardiff, where children are not believed to be in the care of their natural parents. This has caused a great deal of concern for the key agencies that have responsibilities in this area.

Child trafficking may occur as a result of the following reasons;

- Asylum seekers may believe that they are more likely to be given a positive decision to remain in the country if children accompany them.
- Families receive additional financial and social support when children are present.
- Men and women may well bring children into the country for friends and relatives who may already be here.
- Agents can earn a great deal of money 'trafficking' children
- Under Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, if an asylum seeker fails in his or her asylum application, all support and accommodation is withdrawn. If a child is present within the family, then emergency support may be provided.

Additional concerns:

- The cultural norms and values associated with individuals from certain countries differ greatly than the values associated with the cultural norms and values of this country. In some African countries for example, if the natural father of a child dies, then the mother may be forced to pass the child on to the eldest brother-in-law. This also emanates from the fact that the male would be the only source of income within the family. In his absence the family may not be able to cope.
- Attitudes towards life itself vary considerably. In some countries, it is not uncommon for men and women who have extremely large families to pass children on to other families.
- Life itself may appear to be more expendable. (If a child dies, they will have others etc).

Problems associated with police investigating:

- Language barriers
- Integrity of interpreters
- Lack of cultural knowledge

- No prior intelligence in respect of individuals and associates
- Identification evidence, no DNA etc.
- Liaison with Interpol, when children have apparently returned to other countries
- Multi agency partners understanding of the Data Protection Act

Using motor vehicles without documentation

Some asylum seekers may use motor vehicles on public roads without the required driving documentation. This is the cultural norm in some countries. Upon arrival to Cardiff, individuals are extremely keen to obtain driving documents to enable them to drive in this country. Asylum support staff are questioned time and time again in respect of this subject.

There is a great deal of ignorance as to how asylum seekers can legally obtain driving documents. Some individuals identify a car as an apparent status symbol and a means of establishing themselves with different peer groups within the community. Generally, the ability to drive and identify road traffic signs by some is extremely poor. A number of accidents have occurred across the country where children have in fact been killed by asylum seeker drivers, who did not possess and driving documents; in Lancashire a collision resulted in a young girl being killed by Aso Mohammed Ibrahim a failed Iraqi Kurd asylum seeker. On New Years day, 2004, a nine year old boy was killed by an Algerian asylum seeker, Kamel Kadri

Concerns have been expressed by communities that asylum seekers are 'flouting the law' in respect of driving. They present a danger to themselves, pedestrians and other motorists. Additionally, questions are asked as to how asylum seekers are able to have the funds to use motor vehicles legally, when apparently on little financial support.

Previous Police Strategies

The inability to communicate with individuals has been a major factor that has prevented information being made available to asylum seekers. Various methods have been explored to provide information;

- A welcome information pack was designed by all the key agencies. This information pack is provided to all new asylum seekers (unfortunately, not all languages are catered for).
- With the assistance of interpreters, meetings have been held with large groups of asylum seekers to address certain areas of concern.
- Signs have been developed and distributed by Constable Donovan, incorporating pictures to address some of the concerns. *Parents were leaving children unattended for*

long periods of time at the Adams Court residential unit and the Bronte Reception centre in Cardiff. A sign was developed to inform parents that they could not leave their children alone and unsupervised (Fig 3.)



(Fig 3.)

Problem Solving Techniques

A *problem-solving* approach was used to holistically identify the concerns associated with the introduction of asylum seekers to the community. It was soon apparent that asylum seekers were categorised as both victim and offenders, due in many cases to their unique set of circumstances. The lack of knowledge of both cultural and legal information, their inherent fear of the police together with their limited understanding of the English language, make asylum seekers a 'vulnerable group' within society.

The 'SARA' (Scanning Analysis Response and Assessment) model was used in an attempt to establish the existing known statistical data associated with the various concerns. Unfortunately, due to reasons previously identified, asylum seekers share a reluctance or simply choose not to report incidents to the police. Current recording procedures too, prevent accurate scanning and analysis, as individuals are not categorised in terms of asylum status.

It was evident that in order to respond to issues, there had to be a dramatic shift in the fears and perceptions of the police in the United Kingdom to encourage individuals to have the confidence to 'come forward'. This could only be achieved through education and positive interaction with the police.

Constable Donovan consulted with The Cardiff County Council, Leisure and Life Long Learning, ESOL Service (English for Speakers of other Languages). The department provides teaching aimed specifically at members of the community where English is not the first language. As a result of many discussions with Ms. Susan Morris, Community Education Officer, a partnership approach was soon established in an attempt to address the concerns raised by the police in a clear and effective manner.

Response

- As a result of the introduction of the training program all asylum seekers will have the opportunity of receiving education in respect of policing in this country.
- Asylum seekers will have a greater awareness and understanding of the role of the police, which may serve to reduce fears resulting in confidence to report areas such as racial incidents and domestic violence.
- Families will be aware that it is a criminal offence to leave young children unsupervised in the home and the health and safety implications of such action.
- Asylum seekers will understand that they must have certain driving documents in order to use motor cars in this country
- Asylum seekers may well feel safer as a result of their knowledge of the police and will know what is expected of them should they ever use the 999 emergency services, in the event of a problem.
- Asylum seekers will have an understanding of the cultural values associated with this country.

Partner Contributions**Ms. Susan Morris, Cardiff County Council's ESOL Service**

ESOL teachers as a group were initially very nervous about teaching the topic of the police since they are very aware of the perception of the police in other countries and may have had their own experiences abroad.

When the topic of the police was first introduced through English language and pictures, students became noticeably quieter, more tense and seemingly uncertain. Slowly the ESOL teacher's apparent openness, confidence and clear explanatory manner enabled students to sit back and enjoy the learning experience. From the very beginning it was vital that the ESOL teacher emphasised the overall aim of helping the students to live comfortably and easily within the UK. It was also equally important that the ESOL teacher emphasised that the aim was NOT to compare police forces in different countries or to draw criticism.

Gradually, ESOL students became more confident and were seen to share with the ESOL teacher more sensitive aspects at their own discretion. On these occasions, the aim became a form of counselling, with the student speaking and the ESOL teacher listening. Slowly, it became possible to ask the students what they would like to ask a police officer in person.

In order to take the self-perceived onus of responsibility from the ESOL teacher, students were told that the Community Education Officer (i.e. the teacher's line manager) would invite the police officer to visit the class. The Community Education Officer has also attended many sessions and all students have taken the trouble to say "Thank you."

Success from the ESOL perspective is measurable in terms of the changing attitude(s) of the ESOL students. The initial reaction was that of fear and nervousness but the final reaction has been real pleasure and gratitude. Interestingly enough, the attitude of the ESOL tutors has changed from the fear of perhaps offending the asylum seekers by discussing the police subject, to an appreciation of the importance of the issue and the self-confidence and respect for the police it generates.

It is so rewarding to see the satisfied smiles. Why? Because they know that they have learnt:-

- English language
- UK culture
- to have an understanding of the Law in the UK
- to welcome the opportunity to communicate fully with a 'real' UK police officer - something you never do in many country/countries
- that the classroom is a place and the UK is a place where they, the students, can be empowered, through teaching and learning, to ask the questions they want to ask according to their own agenda and not the teacher's.

What next?

- With the support of the Basic Skills Agency it is anticipated that there is suitable funding to further develop the material into a complete 'ESOL and the Police' course with teacher's notes and that that can then be used by other institutions and police forces through out the country.
- The Police are obviously an important aspect of citizenship and while the details are as yet unknown, it is possible that such a course could be part of the citizenship programme leading to a British passport.
- The BBC is producing a CD alongside the website www.citizen-skills.org.uk. This citizenship CD is aimed at Asylum Seekers and will include English language and culture relating to UK police and other important issues highlighted by the police, e.g. leaving children alone, driving without documents...etc.

It is hoped that the fully developed 'ESOL and the Police' course from South Wales can be used to accompany or to form an integral part of citizenship programmes both aimed at asylum seekers and at those with permanent residence or refugee status who are working towards acquiring a UK passport.

Police Contributions

The continuing police investment into this project will involve probationary police officers attending the various outreach classes held throughout Cardiff. Officers will be encouraged to actively engage in the sessions to promote the aims of the project. It is hoped that these officers in the infancy of their careers will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity issues. Community Beat officers too will be very welcome at the centres, assisting in identifying community concerns and acquiring community intelligence.

Assessment

The program will always be difficult to assess in respect of a quantitative perspective, this is as a direct result of the way that crime and information's are currently recorded. Successes however, can be measured by the numbers of individuals actually receiving the ESOL / Police Project input. The qualitative impact of the training can be assessed through the use of questioners that can be provided to asylum seekers on completion of the course. These can be monitored and also serve to assist with the evaluation of the course.

Media Launch

A media Launch was held at the Cardiff County Council Buzz Café, Penarth Road, Cardiff, on 1st December 2003. Dignitaries from Cardiff County Council, the Lady Mayoress for Cardiff, and Superintendent Farrar, attended to promote the project. The venue was chosen, as this was a location that was hosting the project.

Appendix

(Appendix 1) The ESOL Cardiff Police Project training manual

(Appendix 2) Home Office guide, 'Building a Safe, Just and Tolerant Society'
published by the Home Office Communications Directorate, September 2003. (P.63)

(Appendix 3) Photographs of Constable Donovan and Ms. Susan Morris at the Adams
Court training venue in Cardiff

(Appendix 4) Powerpoint presented to the former Chief Constable Sir Anthony
Burden, South Wales Police

(Appendix 5) Photographs of the Press Launch, at The Buzz Café, Penarth Road,
Cardiff

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<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/asylumq403.pdf>

(Accessed: 10 March 2004)

http://swp-fis/procedures/current_procedures/index/a-z_index.htm

(Accessed: 15 March 2004)

The Cardiff ESOL / Police Project

Adams Court, Cardiff (June 2003)



Constable Donovan, South Wales Police and Ms. Susan Morris ESOL Services, with the men and women's' groups at Adams Court Cardiff

Press Launch
The Buzz Café, Penarth Road, Cardiff

1st December 2003



Superintendent Farrar, Lady Mayoress Thorne and Police Constable Donovan at the ESOL / Cardiff Police Project press launch