Refugee doctors scheme proves to be a success

A scheme funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to assist refugee doctors in Wales to work in the NHS has proved to be a success, Social Justice Minister Edwina Hart said today.

The scheme called WARD (Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group) addresses the education and training needs of refugee and asylum seeker doctors in Wales by helping them pass the language tests required to work in the NHS. A drop-in centre is also provided in partnership with the charity DPIA (Displaced People in Action) which includes medical journals, access to the internet and other facilities.

Since the scheme began in 2002 those taking part in the scheme have achieved a 100 per cent pass rate in the tests. So far 14 doctors have been employed in the NHS in Wales as a result of the scheme.

Mrs Hart said: "The WARD programme has already proved to be a success. Every refugee doctor who has found employment in the NHS as a result of the programme shows that the support the Assembly Government has given has been a wise investment.

"Refugees have a long and very successful history of making an enormous economic and cultural contribution to the new communities where they settle. That is why I am committed to having policies to support refugees and asylum seekers which will enable them to integrate and contribute to Wales culturally and economically. The success of WARD shows that it is an investment well worth making."

Health Minister Dr Brian Gibbons said: "Finding employment in the NHS for refugee doctors can be a daunting prospect. If they are offered the assistance they need to pass the necessary tests and given the support needed to find work then they are much more likely to succeed.

"If we have people who are trained as doctors in Wales then we want them to work as doctors. That is what they want too. With this kind of scheme everyone benefits – the doctor who can use his skills, the NHS and patients."

The Reverend Aled Edwards, chair of DPIA, said: "We have been thrilled with the success of the Assembly sponsored WARD scheme and hope that Wales' refugee doctors will be able to make a significant long term contribution to the NHS in Wales."

Notes

- The WARD programme is run by the School of Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education at the Wales College of Medicine.
- The Project Leader is Professor Bim Bhowmick