



# **Aspire @ Cardiff University**

Collaborative Delivery and Holistic  
Transition into HE for Sanctuary Seekers

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Widening Participation Manager



# Today's talk

- What is Aspire?
- Aspire's reach and collaborative delivery
- Aspire Open Day overview
- Aspire Summer School overview
- Transition to Level 4+ and impact
- The value of holistic support
- Where do we go from here?

# What is Aspire?

- Aspire supports sanctuary seekers' journey to HE

**Open Day → Summer School  
→ Level 4 + UG/PG degree  
(Aspire Pathway Award  
+ Together at Cardiff)**

- Aligned with Cardiff University's strategy, civic role, and **University of Sanctuary** accreditation

# Collaboration

- **18 external partners** at Open Day, plus CU schools & departments
- **3 departments** collaborate to deliver the Summer School
- Multilingual student ambassadors





# Impact Summary

- 300+ Aspire engagements (2023–25)
- 43 Lifelong Learning Level 4 enrolments
- 32 degree enrolments (19 at CU)





# Aspire Open Day









- Roundtables about access to FE and HE
- Wide range of exhibitors
- Summer School applications open!
- Aspire Open Day 2025 welcomed 73 sanctuary seekers
  - +304% vs 2024
- 100% felt welcome, enjoyed day, and would recommend CU
- Quote: *“Cardiff University is an amazing place to be... a breath of fresh air!”*

# Aspire Summer School

- 8-day programme: English lessons, subject tasters
  - Human rights, Health and social care, Political system in Wales
- Transition support
- Graduation ceremony
  
- **95 graduates** from 28 countries across 3 years
- 37% of Summer School alumni in Level 4+
  - 59% in Level 3+
- Quote: *“Aspire is more than just an opportunity, it is a life-changing experience.”*

# Aspire Summer School

Aspire Timetable			
Date	Morning (10:00-12:00)		Afternoon (13:00-15:00)
Mon, 16 June	9:30 AM Welcome talk <b>Room 0.19</b>  10:30 AM <b>English lessons</b>	<b>Lunch at 12:00 by room 1.05</b>	Progression Plan workshop <b>Room 0.19</b>
Tues, 17 June	English lessons   <b>1.05</b>   <b>1.06</b>   <b>1.13</b>		Child's Play   <b>Room 0.19</b> Human Rights Law  <b>Room 0.20</b>
Weds, 18 June			Human Rights Law   <b>Room 0.19</b> Project Management  <b>Room 0.20</b>
Thurs, 19 June			Introduction to Criminology   <b>Room 0.19</b> Careers in the Legal Sector  <b>Room 0.20</b>
Fri, 20 June			Careers in the Legal Sector   <b>Room 0.19</b> Introduction to Criminology  <b>Room 0.20</b>

Aspire Timetable			
Date	Morning (10:00-12:00)		Afternoon (13:00-15:00)
Mon, 23 June	English lessons   <b>1.05</b>	Lunch at <b>12:00</b> by room 1.05	Health and Social Care   <b>Room 0.19</b> Political System in Wales  <b>Room 0.20</b>
Tues, 24 June	 <b>1.06</b>   <b>1.13</b>		Political System in Wales   <b>Room 0.19</b> Health and Social Care  <b>Room 0.20</b>
Weds, 25 June	Poetry Workshop Dr Lucy Jeffery  <b>NEW BUILDING</b> <b>Postgraduate</b> <b>Teaching Centre</b> Room 0.22/0.23	Get your hats & gowns! 	13:00 PM Graduation Ceremony <b>PGTC Room 0.16</b>  14:00 PM Celebration Lunch <b>PGTC Foyer</b>



# 100% of days rated 'good'

- Specialist staff & student ambassador training





# Aspire Graduation

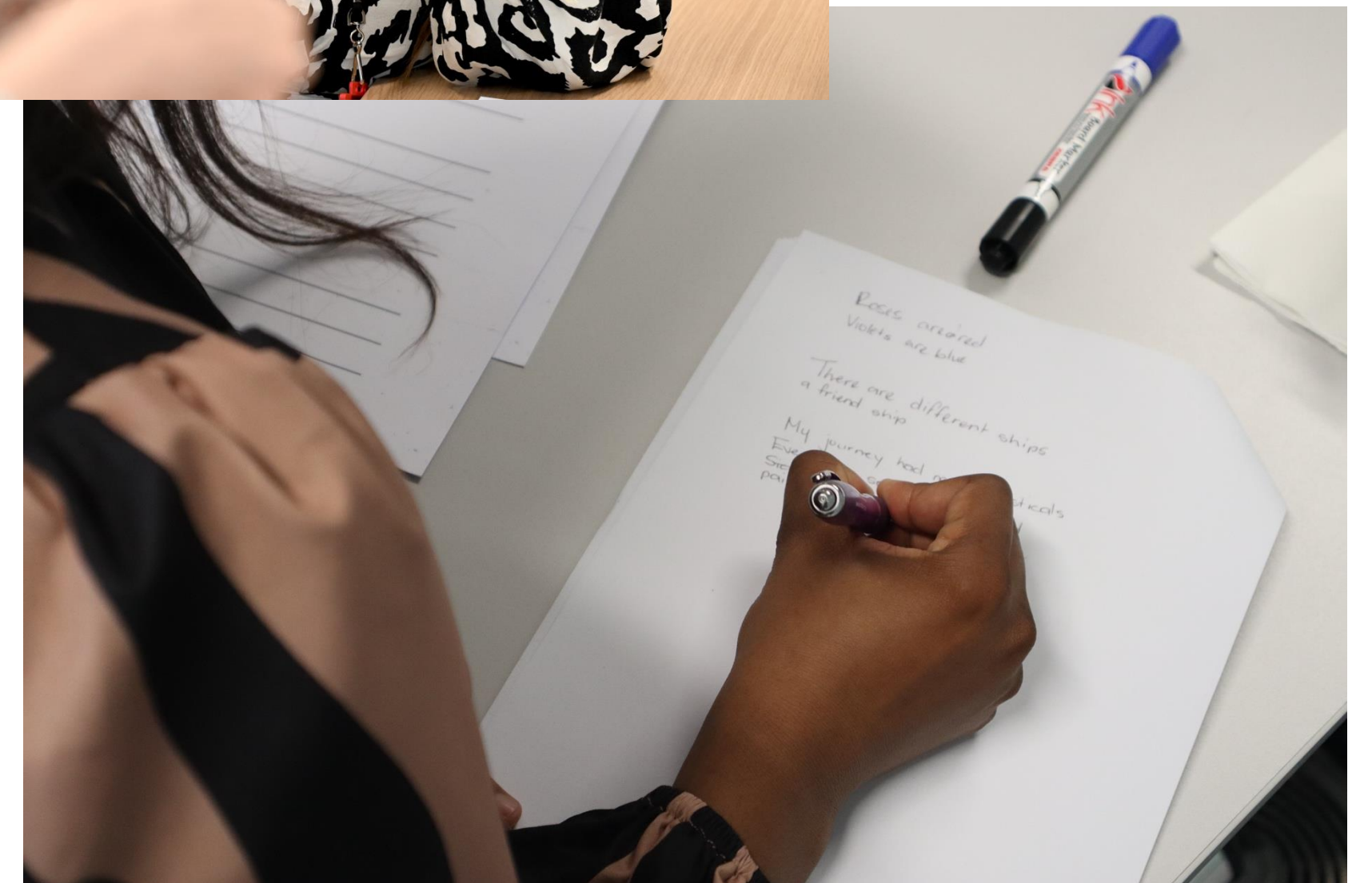
- Caps & gowns from Marston Events





# Transition and Impact

- Open Day: 94% understood next steps to study in UK
- Summer School:
  - +28% knew available courses
  - +30% knew how to apply to chosen course
  - +29% confidence in presentations
- Pathway Award: 77% progressed onto degree



# The 'Aspire path'

**Open Day → Summer School → Level 4 or UG/PG**

- 25 individuals have completed a full 'Aspire path'
- **42% more likely** to enrol at Level 4+ if completing both Open Day & Summer School
- **19% more likely** to enrol at CU vs. other HEIs



# Student Experience

*"These are the best eight days – university days, summer days, unforgettable days. Full of learning and light."*

*"My favourite part for sure was the respect which staff have provided us."*

*"Cardiff University is an amazing place to be. No matter what you are going through, the Cardiff team has a unique way of making you feel at home while pursuing your academic dreams."*



## Sharing experiences and empowering each other

5 September 2024



A group of women who met through a Cardiff University summer school initiative say it has opened new doors to higher education.

## Sanctuary seekers celebrate academic success

17 September 2025



Mike, Tjimbi-Tjamuvangua and Moses

Three sanctuary seekers from Namibia say their passion to pursue higher education in the UK has been reignited thanks to Cardiff University's Aspire Summer School.



# Future investment

- **Year-round impact:** free library membership & alumni conversation clubs
- **Long-term funding:** request to University Executive Board
- **Warm welcome:** recruit more ambassadors with lived experience and/or additional language skills
- **Partnerships:** continue to maintain strong relationships with colleagues, external orgs, etc. to uphold the standards of provision



*I escaped from a devastating war  
But it was just the beginning.  
My dreams were much bigger  
And nothing could stop me.*

*I saw how big our world is  
And learned how small I was.  
With every step my dreams grew bigger  
And the sunlight enveloped me with its tenderness.*

*In Wales, I found my lost self  
And rose for a brighter future.*

*– Aspire Participant*







Widening  
Participation

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Cyfranogiad

**Diolch yn  
fawr!**  
**Thank you!**