

City of Sanctuary Charter 2017

Purpose of the charter

This charter describes what City of Sanctuary is and what it does¹. It will form the first section of our organisational strategy and can also be used as a stand-alone document to build internal cohesion and external profile.

Our vision

We hold the vision that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

Values

The organisation and network will be guided and informed by commitment to the following values:-

Inclusiveness – *We welcome and respect people from all backgrounds, place the highest value on diversity and are committed to equality.*

Openness - *We are committed to a culture of working collaboratively within the network and in partnership with others.*

Participation – *Those who support our vision work together with people seeking sanctuary. We value and recognise the contribution of all involved. We aspire to ensure people seeking sanctuary are fully involved in decision making processes and supported to become leaders within the City of Sanctuary organisation and network as well as within the wider movement.*

Inspiring – *We work with enthusiasm and positivity and are determined to surpass what has already been achieved to welcome refugees and people seeking sanctuary. We act as a catalyst for change by being open to new and innovative ideas and through sharing knowledge gained with others and working in partnership.*

Integrity – *We aspire to high standards of honesty and behaviour, and always to act in the interests of people seeking sanctuary.*



City of Sanctuary

¹We reserve the right to change, modify or amend this document.



Definitions

The Movement

A movement is a loose collection of independent groups and individuals united by a common purpose but with no one leader.

City of Sanctuary contributes to building an ever broader social movement to ensure that all people seeking sanctuary within the UK are made welcome in our countries and that the aspirations of the Birmingham Declaration become a reality². The Birmingham Declaration³ was launched at the first Sanctuary Summit in 2014 and has since been endorsed by more than 320 organisations. The core principles in the Declaration are:

1. All asylum seekers, refugees and migrants should be treated with dignity and respect.
2. A fair and effective process to decide whether people need protection should be in place.
3. No one should be locked up indefinitely.
4. No one should be left sick or destitute in our society.
5. We should welcome the stranger and help them to integrate.

The Organisation

City of Sanctuary UK is an organisation that provides a focus for coordination and development of the network. This contributes to building a wider refugee and sanctuary seeker movement. In addition to undertaking City of Sanctuary activities and initiatives at a UK level, the role of the organisation is to ensure that there is good communication across the network, to coordinate decision-making and to help raise the profile of City of Sanctuary overall.

²Our network of groups could be regarded as a sub-movement or mini-movement. However we recognise that we are part of a much broader movement that is multi-sector and multi-dimensional. Thus, in this charter we consider it clearer to use the term network for our groups

³For full text go to <https://sanctuarysummit2014.wordpress.com/the-birmingham-declaration/>

The Network

Our network includes groups, and others engaged in Streams of Sanctuary work, that are focused on bringing about both local and national social change. Groups, and others engaged in streams of sanctuary work who are aligned with the network principles, have flexibility to develop local, regional and national responses to local, regional and national challenges (e.g. developing Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary). Together such networks affirm and achieve our overarching vision.

Network principles

The City of Sanctuary network is part of a mainstream, grassroots movement working towards achieving the overall vision. Whilst there is flexibility in determining how best to work towards the vision, the following principles apply to all groups, networks and streams operating under the name of City of Sanctuary:-

- ◇ Offer a positive vision of a culture of welcome and hospitality to all;
- ◇ Create opportunities for relationships of friendship and solidarity between local people and those seeking sanctuary;
- ◇ Recognise and encourage partnership working and network development across localities;
- ◇ Identify opportunities for working on common cause issues within and across communities;
- ◇ Celebrate and promote the welcome and contribution of people seeking sanctuary;
- ◇ Engage people seeking sanctuary in decision making processes at all levels and in all activities;
- ◇ Promote understanding of asylum and refugee issues, especially by enabling refugee voices to be heard directly.

City of Sanctuary Groups

When a group first registers with City of Sanctuary UK they agree to:-

- ◇ Work towards making their city, town or area into a City, Town, Region or Area of Sanctuary by creating a culture of welcome and hospitality for people seeking safety.
- ◇ Work to connect people seeking sanctuary with other local people and to celebrate their contribution to our communities, towns and cities.
- ◇ Seek to be inclusive in generating a culture of welcome, involving different sectors such as education, local government, health, sports and arts, as well as refugee organisations.
- ◇ Work as an alliance between local people and sanctuary seekers to run the group wherever possible and appropriate.
- ◇ Be prepared to share successes, ideas and learning with other groups and the network.
- ◇ Join in regional events where possible.
- ◇ Avoid bringing the name of City of Sanctuary into disrepute, in particular by not engaging in abusive, racist, discriminatory, exclusionary, offensive or dangerous behaviour.
- ◇ Identify between three and five contacts to enable the City of Sanctuary to keep in touch and keep the team updated when changes to these contact details occur, providing full name, telephone and email details for each contact where possible.



There is no single formula for developing a successful and effective City of Sanctuary group. In general terms groups should work towards undertaking the following actions:-

1. Develop a strategy, agreed by the main supporting organisations, for how the city, town or area is to continue working towards greater inclusion and equality for refugees and people seeking sanctuary, as well as greater public awareness, through a range of initiatives, projects and activities;
2. Gather resolutions of support from a significant and representative proportion of groups and organisations;
3. Encourage supporting organisations (whether formally pledged or not) to turn their commitment into actions;
4. Engage with other groups across the network, in the expectation that such a conversation will lead to a mutually beneficial sharing of good practice;
5. Support and work alongside refugees and people seeking sanctuary in the City of Sanctuary group, including representation on its steering group or committee;
6. Wherever possible sustain engagement with the local authority or other relevant authorities.

Groups may, if they wish, apply to City of Sanctuary UK for sanctuary recognition for their city, town or region by submitting an application for appraisal.

Streams of Sanctuary

A Stream of Sanctuary encourages professionals within 'communities of practices or interests' to come together to embed the concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion within their professions, sectors and organisations, together with other interested individuals (including people seeking sanctuary), groups and organisations.

Any individual or organisation working within a Stream of Sanctuary must be committed to the vision and values of City of Sanctuary. The development of new activities, projects and initiatives within a Stream must be aligned with City of Sanctuary network principles. A Stream will also enable the sharing of best practice, resources and ideas. Organisations that fall within a Stream of Sanctuary may wish to apply for a Sanctuary Award (see below) following specific criteria which have been developed by City of Sanctuary UK.



City of Sanctuary

Sanctuary Awards

Sanctuary Awards are used to recognise exemplary work in this field. These can be organisations which fall within a Stream of Sanctuary, or not.

A Sanctuary Award is given to an organisation that is able to demonstrate commitment to our values and vision of welcome, and that has applied our network principles within the organisation and its projects or activities.

An appraisal committee is nominated to undertake the process either locally, regionally or nationally (depending on the circumstances). At least one person on the committee must be a sanctuary seeker. We encourage groups to actively review awards every three years.

Asylum Matters

City of Sanctuary UK hosts the advocacy and campaigns project, Asylum Matters. Asylum Matters is a project that works in partnership locally, regionally and nationally across the UK to improve the lives of people seeking sanctuary through social and political change. It incorporates and builds on the work of the Still Human Still Here coalition and the Regional Asylum Activism (RAA) Project. It provides opportunities to increase collective impact. Whilst Asylum Matters is independent in setting its objectives and remit, City of Sanctuary UK is responsible for its delivery and, through the project, demonstrates its commitment to movement building.

The mandate of the project is to drive forward and secure the eight goals identified at the Sanctuary Summit in November 2014, which were endorsed by more than 320 organisations as part of the Birmingham Declaration.

The project works very closely with the City of Sanctuary network, as well as working across the UK on a collaborative basis. Through engagement with Asylum Matters staff, City of Sanctuary groups can access additional opportunities to engage in advocacy activities. The kinds of initiatives groups can take part in vary depending on the influencing opportunity and can include things like collecting case studies and evidence to inform policy-making, lobbying MP's, AM's and local councillors on our issues, or supporting people seeking sanctuary to ensure their voices are heard on a range of public platforms.



City of Sanctuary UK

Mission

City of Sanctuary UK's mission is to support the network of groups and Streams of Sanctuary and to contribute towards building a refugee movement. In practical terms, we work to build a culture of welcome, hospitality and inclusiveness right across every sphere and sector of society, so that wherever people seeking sanctuary go they will feel safe, find people who welcome them and understand why they are here, and have opportunities to be included in all activities.

Organisational aims

- To support the creation of a culture of welcome and inclusion across every sphere and sector of society to ensure that wherever sanctuary seekers go they will find places of safety
- To promote the voices and celebrate the contributions of people seeking sanctuary across every sphere and sector of society
- To increase understanding of why people seek sanctuary and the difficulties they experience whilst here
- To express the collective voice of the network, advocating for and alongside sanctuary seekers