

City of Sanctuary UK Charter 2022-2025



City of Sanctuary

**WELCOMES
REFUGEES**



Our Values

This charter describes what City of Sanctuary is and what it does. It forms the first section of our organisational strategy and can also be used as a stand-alone document.

We are committed to the following values:

Inclusive

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

Open

We are committed to a culture of working collaboratively across the City of Sanctuary networks and in partnership with others.

Participation

We work with people seeking sanctuary and value and recognise the contribution of all. We aspire to ensure people seeking sanctuary are involved in all decision making and are supported to become leaders in the organisation, networks, and the wider movement.

Inspire

We work with enthusiasm and positivity and are determined to surpass what has already been achieved. We act as a catalyst for change by being open to new and innovative ideas, sharing knowledge 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.



The movement

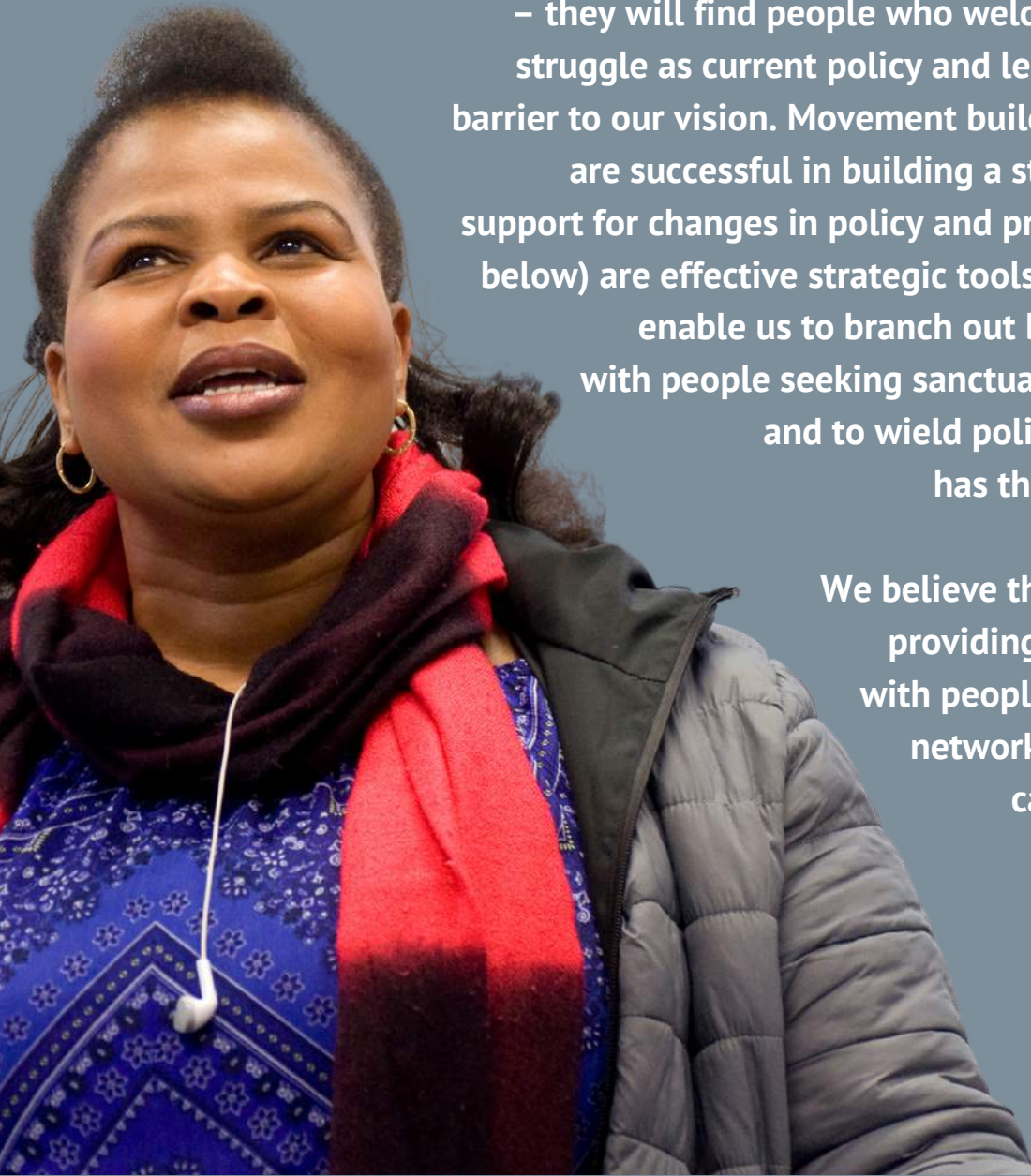
To achieve our vision we work with others to contribute to building an even broader social movement. City of Sanctuary's networks feed into this broader movement. Whilst City of Sanctuary can in itself be regarded as a sub-movement or mini-movement, we recognise that we are part of a much broader movement that is multi-sector and multi-dimensional.

As part of our commitment to building a movement, City of Sanctuary UK aims to mobilise supporters and work with others to build a united voice to advocate for people seeking sanctuary across the UK. We are a member of the Together With Refugees coalition which is calling for a more effective, fair and humane approach to supporting people seeking sanctuary. The changes we specifically want to see are as follows:

- People can seek safety in the UK, no matter how they came here
- People can live in dignity while they wait to hear if they can stay
- A fairer, faster and more efficient system to decide whether people will be granted protection
- People seeking sanctuary and their local communities can build better futures together. Local councils that host refugees should be adequately supported



How can we achieve our vision?



We are working to embed welcome and compassion, so that wherever people seeking sanctuary go - schools, services, businesses, faith and community groups, their own neighbourhoods and streets – they will find people who welcome them and understand why they are here. This is an uphill struggle as current policy and legislation is actively creating a hostile environment, a very real barrier to our vision. Movement building is at the core of everything we do. We maintain that if we are successful in building a strong and widespread movement this will translate into public support for changes in policy and practice. The streams of sanctuary and awards programmes (see below) are effective strategic tools which support our movement building goal. The programmes enable us to branch out beyond organisations and projects with a specific role to work with people seeking sanctuary to inspire more people to become involved in campaigning and to wield political power locally. In the longer term, this local campaigning has the potential to force changes in practice, policy and legislation.

We believe the most effective way to motivate people to get involved is by providing opportunities for the receiving community members to meet with people from a sanctuary seeking background. The City of Sanctuary networks are uniquely positioned to facilitate social connections that can turn people's compassion into action i.e. organisations and people are mobilised behind campaigns for change.

See page 5 for our Theory of Change.

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR VISION: SOCIAL CONTACT → MOVEMENT BUILDING

To achieve our vision we contribute to building a strong and widespread movement of welcome

How do we create change at a micro level?

City of Sanctuary UK and its networks are building a culture of welcome and facilitating friendship and solidarity.

How do we create change at a macro level?

City of Sanctuary UK and its networks are working collaboratively with mainstream organisations and migration sector partnerships to build the movement.

We achieve this by practically applying our network principles *

Turning compassion into action:

Facilitating connections to build friendships, solidarity, inspiring people to take action.



Mobilising behind campaigns:

Facilitating and inspiring more people to become involved in promoting welcome, which builds public support for policy and practice changes.

Micro level example

Macro level example



When hundreds of people seeking asylum were housed in Penally barracks, Pembrokeshire, the community came together to offer support and friendship. The government wanted hostility, but this community made sure that love won.

In 2015 after much public pressure, the government agreed to implement a resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees. The Syrian conflict also led to a huge grassroots response across the UK, a 'revolution of generosity', that saw our networks grow considerably.



The Organisation

City of Sanctuary UK is the umbrella organisation, its mission is to provide coordination and development support for networks of community groups supporting people seeking sanctuary, local authorities, Sanctuary Ambassadors, mainstream organisations engaged in Streams of Sanctuary and Sanctuary Awards programmes that are working towards our vision. In addition we facilitate events, activities and initiatives in partnership at a UK level, ensure good communication and the sharing of best practice across the City of Sanctuary networks, and work to raise the profile of City of Sanctuary overall.

The organisation's aim is the realisation of the City of Sanctuary vision – the creation of a culture of welcome, compassion and inclusion across every sphere and sector of society to ensure that wherever sanctuary seekers go they will find people who welcome them and understand why they are here. Our work is directed and influenced by the Experts by Experience Operational Advisory Group.

Our strategic objectives are as follows:

- 1: Provide network coordination and support to the City of Sanctuary network of groups in order to increase the number of groups, bring about an expansion in the activities undertaken and improve the engagement and participation of people seeking sanctuary;
- 2: Facilitate communications across City of Sanctuary networks to share information, promote a positive message of welcome for people seeking sanctuary and enable the voices of people seeking sanctuary to be heard directly;
- 3: Develop and promote Streams of Sanctuary and awards work in order to embed welcome within mainstream spheres of society and ensure that people seeking sanctuary are engaged, and can participate, in streams and awards initiatives;
- 4: Contribute towards movement building through building partnerships, ensuring the participation of people seeking sanctuary and mobilising support for advocacy and campaigning initiatives.

City of Sanctuary Networks

Our networks include community groups, local authorities, Sanctuary Ambassadors and Streams of Sanctuary networks e.g. Universities of Sanctuary. These networks are working towards our vision and values and are committed to embedding the City of Sanctuary network principles but also have the flexibility to develop responses to the challenges within their specific context.

Whilst the networks have the flexibility to determine how best to work towards the vision, the following principles apply to all who are committed to working towards the City of Sanctuary vision:-

1. Create opportunities for relationships of friendship and solidarity between people living in receiving communities and people seeking sanctuary;
2. Communicate a positive vision of welcome by promoting the counter-narrative to negative rhetoric and celebrating the contribution of people seeking sanctuary;
3. Work with people seeking sanctuary, ensuring that they are not just active participants but are empowered to be part of decision making processes at all levels and in all activities;
4. Promote understanding of asylum and refugee issues, especially by enabling the voices of people seeking to be heard directly;
5. When possible (if your context allows) mobilise support for campaigns which aim to make a difference to the lives of people seeking sanctuary;
6. Facilitate partnership working and network development across places of sanctuary and support collaboration on common cause issues.



Yorkshire and Humber Regional Sanctuary meeting, 2020

City of Sanctuary Groups



City of Sanctuary groups are committed to working towards making their city, town, borough, village, region or community a welcoming place of sanctuary. Groups go beyond what they themselves can do to help people seeking sanctuary. They act as a rallying cry to other organisations and individuals in an area to offer welcome. A group does not have to take on a specific structure and there are lots of different ways to set up a group. All City of Sanctuary groups are expected to register as a network member and in doing so they agree to work towards our vision and in a way which aligns with our values, network principles, and our Theory of Change. For further information on how to set up a group, the steps to take and the things to consider before setting up a group please see our website.

There is no single formula for working towards becoming a welcoming place of sanctuary, or indeed for developing a successful and effective City of Sanctuary local group. We expect groups to set their own targets and criteria and no longer have a national recognition process. Local circumstances vary and solutions which work in one area may not be appropriate or feasible in another. While progress on developing a culture of welcome can only be achieved by working collaboratively, each local area is faced with a different mix and has to adapt accordingly. This flexibility is necessary for grassroots movement building to flourish, although we do have some general guidelines which explain some of the approaches taken by groups that have proven to be successful. For example we would encourage groups to develop a strategy in partnership with main supporting organisations, to gather pledges of support and engage with their local authority.

Experts by Experience Advisory Group

People who are seeking sanctuary are at the heart of what City of Sanctuary is all about and their voices and experiences are central to shaping the work of City of Sanctuary. The purpose of the Advisory Group is to provide a mechanism for people seeking sanctuary to inform and influence City of Sanctuary work at an operational level. The objectives are as follows:

- Ensuring work at an operational level is informed and influenced by people with lived experience;
- Providing guidance on proposals for new pieces of work by drawing on people's own lived experiences;
- Review and support the development of resources and publications
- Assist in monitoring and evaluation of the work (including the engagement and participation of people seeking sanctuary)
- Enable City of Sanctuary UK to provide further opportunities for sanctuary seekers to learn and to lead at all levels of City of Sanctuary



Together With Refugees Rally, October 2021

Sanctuary Ambassador Network

The Sanctuary Ambassador network is a vibrant, inclusive and creative team of advocates passionate about building a culture of welcome and encouraging others to join the movement for a fair, effective and humane asylum system. Sanctuary Ambassadors share and advocate City of Sanctuary's vision. Ambassadors participate in streams and awards work, social media, sharing of stories through the media, awareness raising opportunities and support for sector wide campaigns. They also contribute by shaping how the City of Sanctuary operates, for example through feeding into the Experts by Experience Operational Advisory Group and being part of the streams steering groups.



Sanctuary in Politics Course, Durham, 2019

Local Authority Network

In June 2020, following an extensive period of consultation, the City of Sanctuary membership voted at its AGM to dispense with the City-wide recognition process and to establish a local authority network. The City of Sanctuary Local Authority network was launched in December 2020. A steering group, made up of civil servants, local group representatives, councillors and people with lived experience, provide support to staff and the network in an advisory capacity to assist the strategic and operational development of the network. Any local authority (to include county councils, districts, boroughs or city councils, unitary councils, London boroughs, combined authorities, metropolitan boroughs as well as parish and town councils) can apply to become a member of the network and in doing so are committing to working towards the 'Council of Sanctuary' Award.

The network aims are:

- To support the development of a non-partisan network of local authorities that are working towards the City of Sanctuary vision
- To promote the embedding of a culture and practice of welcome in local authorities to support the City of Sanctuary theory of change



Streams of Sanctuary

We are building a movement of welcome by supporting and encouraging mainstream sectors of society to embed welcome, solidarity, compassion and inclusion within their work.

We call each sector that we work within a 'stream'. These Streams of Sanctuary encourage professionals or practitioners within a sector to come together and collaborate with other interested parties including people seeking sanctuary.

Through active learning about issues faced by people in the asylum system, the promotion of an inclusive and compassionate approach and the sharing of ideas and resources, the members of the Stream work together to make welcome widespread within their sector.

There are many streams of sanctuary networks at UK, devolved nations, regional and local level. Any organisation, individual or network working on a stream of sanctuary programme must ensure their work is aligned with the City of Sanctuary vision, values and network principles. The networks at a UK level are supported by City of Sanctuary UK staff and steering groups e.g. Universities of Sanctuary; Schools of Sanctuary. Organisations that fall within a Stream of Sanctuary may wish to apply for a Sanctuary Award.



Sanctuary Awards

We all have a part to play in building a more welcoming, inclusive and compassionate society. To celebrate the organisations who go above and beyond to welcome people seeking sanctuary, we have our Sanctuary Award programme. Any community group, private organisation, public sector service or other bodies which contribute towards the vision of welcome can apply for the award.

Any community group, private organisation, public sector service or other bodies which contribute towards the vision of welcome can apply for the award. Appraised by a panel including someone with lived experience of seeking sanctuary and an expert in the field, this formal awards process recognises and rewards good practice and progress within a sector, whilst encouraging other organisations to do the same.

For all awards, applicants must demonstrate that they have done the following:

Learn: find out what it means to be seeking sanctuary; and be actively involved in awareness raising.

Embed: take positive action to make welcome and inclusion part of the values of your organisation or community, to support people seeking sanctuary, and to include them in your activities.

Share your vision and achievements: let others know about the positive contribution people seeking sanctuary make to our society and the benefits of a welcoming culture to everyone.

This process is to be interpreted as appropriate and implemented within the specific context by the organisation seeking the award. There is also a generic minimum criteria requirement, and for some streams of sanctuary there is a specific minimum criteria requirement (with lots of supporting resources). An awards application is renewed every three years.



A group of approximately ten women are standing in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. They are all facing away from the camera, with their arms raised high in the air, palms facing forward. They are dressed in a variety of casual clothing, including hoodies, t-shirts, and dresses. Some women are wearing headscarves. In the background, there is a dense line of green trees under a bright, slightly overcast sky. The overall atmosphere is one of a communal outdoor activity or ceremony.

City of Sanctuary UK
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City of Sanctuary UK is a registered charity, no. 1184613

