

2024

# STATIONS OF SANCTUARY

## RESOURCE PACK



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## What is City of Sanctuary?

City of Sanctuary is a network of grassroots community groups building a culture of welcome and inclusion in the UK. Originally launched in Sheffield in 2005, the movement started with a vision that the UK should be a welcoming place of safety for all, and be proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

From this start in a single location, the idea has spread to develop over 120 local groups in villages, towns, cities and regions across the UK, supported by the umbrella organisation City of Sanctuary UK who provide support and resources to the entire network of City of Sanctuary groups, and maintain close partnerships with all major refugee organisations.

City of Sanctuary seek to promote understanding, recognition and celebration of the ways in which people seeking sanctuary enrich society. They aim to develop and sustain a network of places that are proud to offer safety to people seeking sanctuary, with local groups including people seeking sanctuary, bringing together support groups and working to gain support from other organisations in their community.

## What are 'Streams of Sanctuary'?

City of Sanctuary UK believe that the sanctuary message of welcome and inclusion is vital in all spheres of society and in mainstream organisations. In addition to supporting the network of City of Sanctuary groups, they help all types of organisations learn about why people seek sanctuary and how to make their work and spaces more welcoming by becoming a place 'of sanctuary'.

There are currently a wide range of existing 'streams' for a range of institutions and shared community spaces including theatres, museums, health clinics and surgeries, gardens, maternity centres, schools, colleges and universities, shops and faith institutions. A key element of this work is also awareness-raising: giving a platform to the voices of asylum seekers and refugees, so that they can be heard by those who might otherwise never hear them in all types of public spaces.



# INTRODUCTION

## Who are South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership?

South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership aims to engage people with their railways, and to promote social inclusion and community cohesion, with a strong focus on arts related activities.

Established in June 2019, the CRP aims to build on the successful work of Bolton Station Community Partnership, particularly in the area of arts and social inclusion, with projects covering a range of themes including:

- Active and Integrated Transport
- Community Arts
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Community Cohesion and Inclusion

## Who are Bolton City of Sanctuary?

Bolton City of Sanctuary are a local group committed to building a culture of hospitality and welcome, especially for refugees seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

They have worked alongside South East Lancashire CRP and Bolton Station Community Partnership on a range of projects.

For many years Bolton has offered a home to people whose lives were in danger in their own countries. Many have lost their homes and families, but they have brought new skills, music, food and hard work to build up our town.

City of Sanctuary and supporting organisations promise to welcome and include people seeking sanctuary in their activities, with Bolton City of Sanctuary currently providing regular groups including sewing, creative writing and theatre.

These two organisations worked together to develop the ‘Stations of Sanctuary’ pilot project at Bolton Station and the accreditation scheme outlined in this document.





# STATIONS OF SANCTUARY

## What is a Station of Sanctuary?

'Stations of Sanctuary' aims to make Railway Stations more accessible and welcoming places for refugees and people seeking asylum, seeking to foster a culture of inclusivity and belonging.

The pilot for this project took place at Bolton Station, and was created in partnership between South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership and Bolton City of Sanctuary, with the help of funding from Community Rail Network, Northern and Transport for Greater Manchester.

The project aimed to develop a system of accreditation for all stations to consider the way in which they offer support for service users from a variety of backgrounds.

## Why Become One?

Railway stations are an important gateway for people arriving at a new place, and can be at the heart of a community where people can feel safe and welcome.

By becoming a Station of Sanctuary you can:

- Create a culture of welcome and belonging which is beneficial to everyone involved
- Provide learning opportunities about what it means to be seeking sanctuary and dispel some of the negative myths that exist
- Increase the diversity of people involved with your Station Adoption group or CRP and reach out to parts of the community you may not have reached before

# BECOMING A STATION OF SANCTUARY

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## Work in Partnership

Find your local City of Sanctuary group [here](#) and engage with them to assess and award the Station of Sanctuary accreditation.

## Three Key Elements

There are three key elements or processes that underpin the commitment to become a Station of Sanctuary:

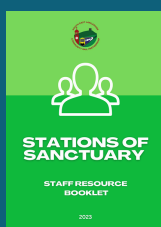
- ‘Learn’ – learning what it means to be seeking sanctuary and be actively involved in awareness raising
- ‘Embed’ – taking positive action to make welcome and inclusion part of the values of your organisation, to support people seeking sanctuary, and to include them in your activities
- ‘Share’ – sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned, and good practice with other community rail groups and stations adopters, the local community and beyond

## ‘Learn

Show evidence of how your organisations raises awareness among staff and volunteers about people seeking sanctuary, their needs, experiences and the challenges of living in the UK.

## Learn' Examples:

- Training and learning opportunities provided for station staff and group volunteers/committee on refugee, asylum and sanctuary issues (e.g. distribution of a ‘staff resource booklet’ or other training materials)
- Keeping up-to date with knowledge about local communities, with particular reference to people seeking sanctuary, including countries of origin, language skills, religious affiliations and other cultural characteristics
- Ensuring station staff and group volunteers are aware of the additional needs that people seeking sanctuary may have on the railway (e.g. issues with signage, ticketing, luggage, etc.)



# BECOMING A STATION OF SANCTUARY

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## Embed

Show evidence of embedding concepts of welcome and inclusion in your organisation's policies and procedures, and taking positive action to embed, monitor and evaluate good practice

### 'Embed' Examples:

- Include refugee and asylum issues in volunteer inductions / staff training
- Add a commitment or pledge of support to your organisations policies/procedures
- Actively create a welcoming and safe environment for people arriving at your stations (e.g. display artwork representing other cultures or a 'welcome' sign)
- Display signposting information to help direct people seeking sanctuary to local services
- Ensure station activities are open to everyone, including people seeking sanctuary

## Share

Show evidence of sharing your efforts and activities with the wider community, and contribute to developing a culture of welcome across community rail

### 'Share' Examples:

- Share your experiences and activities on your website or social media
- Display information about your involvement with the 'Stations of Sanctuary' scheme on your noticeboard
- Plan an event to celebrate and share your achievements
- Share your knowledge and resources with another community rail partnership or station adoption group
- Support or participate in national initiatives and awareness raising campaigns such as 'Refugee Week'

### Minimum Criteria

To receive your award as a 'Station of Sanctuary' you must demonstrate that you have addressed each of the three key elements (learn, embed, share) with supporting evidence of two activities under each category. This does not need to be from the examples listed, creative and original approaches are encouraged!





**JUST THE FACTS**

# SEEKING SANCTUARY

## Learn the Facts

There are a lot of myths and misinformation about refugees and people seeking asylum, so we have put together some key facts and figures drawing on the most recent data available:

- An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and asked for sanctuary in another country
- Sanctuary refers to a place of safety where they are no longer persecuted or at risk
- People may be forced to leave for many reasons including religious/political beliefs, sexuality or war
- In 2022 there were 74,751 asylum applications to the UK (during the same period Germany received 217,735 asylum claims and France received 137,505)
- In terms of the number of asylum applications per head of population, according to the most recent statistics the UK currently ranks as the 19th highest in Europe
- Across the world 72% of refugees are living in countries neighbouring their country of origin, often in developing countries – the UK is home to approx. 1% of the 27.1 million refugees who have been forcibly displaced
- 41% of displaced people across the world are children
- The Home Office can take months or even years to make a decision on an asylum case, and there is a growing backlog of cases





- People seeking asylum are not allowed to claim mainstream welfare benefits in the UK – they are banned from working, and can only access support through the Home Office known as ‘asylum support’ or ‘section 4 support’ depending on their circumstances and status of their asylum claim
- The majority of people seeking asylum in the UK end up living on less than £7 per day to cover almost all their needs, including food, clothing, transport and medicine. Housing is provided but people have no choice in where it is, and are often housed in ‘hard to let’ properties with problems such as damp, vermin infestations and unsanitary conditions
- Since 2005 most people recognised as refugees are only given permission to stay in the UK for 5 years. This makes it difficult for them to make decisions about their future, to find work and make definite plans for their life in the UK

## Definitions

Asylum Seeker - A person who has requested asylum in the UK, and who is waiting for the Home Office to make a decision on that application. They may be waiting to receive an initial decision on their claim, or they may have had their claim refused but they are appealing the decision. There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker; everyone has the right to have their claim to asylum considered.

People Seeking Sanctuary - This is the term preferred by City of Sanctuary in recognition of the dehumanising rhetoric which can occur when referring to people by their immigration status and to be more inclusive of all those who are forced to migrate and seek safety and welcome, including - but not limited to - those who are refugees and seeking asylum.



Refugee - A person who is in the UK legally, having either received a positive decision on their asylum application or been resettled in the UK via a United Nations Resettlement Programme. In international law a refugee is someone who, 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of their country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside of the country of their former habitual residence is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.'

## Resources

### Statistics, Tools and Useful Guides:

- City of Sanctuary's resources section has a wide range of information, tools and templates available: <https://cityofsanctuary.org/resources/>
- UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has detailed information and statistics on asylum in the UK: <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/asylum-in-the-uk.html>
- Refugee Council publishes regular briefings on UK asylum statistics: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/stats>

### Key Organisations:

- Asylum Aid: Legal advice and representation for asylum seekers and refugees
- British Red Cross: Legal advice and orientation support in their centres around the UK
- British Refugee Council: Support for resettlement and integration including therapeutic support
- Migrant Helpline: Offer advice and guidance to asylum seekers and refugees
- Refugee Acton: Support and advice for asylum seekers including legal advice and integration

# CASE STUDY: BOLTON STATION PILOT PROJECT

## Introduction

South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership (SELCRP) worked with Bolton City of Sanctuary (BCoS) to develop a 'Stations of Sanctuary' pilot project, producing a number of key outputs and developing an official accreditation scheme. Some of these outputs are listed below as a case study for becoming a 'Station of Sanctuary'.

## Learn

- SELCRP looked for current information and local statistics regarding diverse communities in the area, and consulted with BCoS to discuss recent trends in their service users
- SELCRP and BCoS worked with a research student from the University of Bolton to gather qualitative data about the experiences of people seeking asylum/diverse cultures using the railway
- SELCRP produced a research report highlighting the additional needs of people seeking asylum using the railway to be presented to train operating companies
- SELCRP developed a 'Staff Resource Booklet' to be handed out to all staff and volunteers at the station. The booklet contained information including up-to date facts and statistics, experiences of people seeking asylum using the railway, and suggested ways in which staff can help. (See Appendix)

## Embed

- SELCRP amended their induction process and policies to include reference to refugee and asylum issues
- SELCRP organised workshops with BCoS groups and contacted other local artists and community groups to produce artwork that represents diverse cultures to be displayed at the station
- SELCRP commissioned a local artist to produce a 'Welcome to Bolton' mural that included the word 'Welcome' in all the languages spoken in Bolton recorded in the latest census data



# CASE STUDY: BOLTON STATION PILOT PROJECT

## Embed Continued

- SELCRP created a large signposting information poster to be displayed outside their community room on Platform 5
- SELCRP ensured that all station activities are open to everyone, and a number of projects at the station including 'Platform Planters' and 'Station Walks' have recently included people seeking sanctuary

## Share

- SELCRP have included updates about the 'Stations of Sanctuary' project on their website and social media
- SELCRP display information about Stations of Sanctuary in their community room
- SELCRP will share the 'Stations of Sanctuary' scheme with Community Rail Network to raise awareness of the scheme to other CRPs and station adoption groups
- SELCRP will host a celebration event to launch the first officially accredited 'Station of Sanctuary'

## A Station of Sanctuary

The development of these specific outputs related to the three key elements of 'Learn, 'Embed', 'Share' resulted in the accreditation of the first 'Station of Sanctuary' and provided an official template for others to follow, with the creation of this resource pack.



# CASE STUDY: BRADFORD INTERCHANGE

## Introduction

Bradford Interchange is a transport interchange in Bradford, West Yorkshire, which consists of a rail station and adjacent bus station.

It was presented with a Station of Sanctuary Award in May 2022, having worked towards the award with support from Bradford's City of Sanctuary group.

## The Process

During 2021-22 the team at the station committed to creating a more welcoming environment, which included:

- Creating a quiet room / prayer room onsite, and welcome signs in a range of languages
- A commitment to advocating for cheaper travel for people seeking asylum
- Staff training to help support people seeking asylum arriving in Bradford

The institution was able to demonstrate that they understand, embed and share the principles of the City of Sanctuary.

Their comprehensive application was wholeheartedly endorsed by an appraisal panel, which included representation from the national City of Sanctuary movement.

## The Big Issues

For many sanctuary seekers the cost of public transport means they are unable to use it.

Bradford City of Sanctuary, Bradford Interchange, and transport providers are continuing to work on this important issue, to find ways to make travel accessible for sanctuary seekers.



# STATIONS OF SANCTUARY

A PROJECT BY:

SOUTH EAST LANCASHIRE  
COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP  
AND BOLTON CITY OF SANCTUARY

WITH THANKS TO OUR PROJECT FUNDERS:

