



STATIONS OF SANCTUARY

**STAFF RESOURCE
BOOKLET**

2023

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INTRODUCTION

The 'Stations of Sanctuary' project aims to make Bolton Station a more accessible and welcoming place for refugees and people seeking asylum, and to develop a system of accreditation for other stations to consider the way in which they offer support for service users from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The project has been created in partnership between South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership (SELCRP) and City of Sanctuary Bolton (CoSB). During the last few years these two groups have worked together and have discovered some mutual areas that can help address common issues.

Bolton is a town that has a large population of asylum seekers and refugees and an active City of Sanctuary group that has been established since 2016, who currently offer “Of Sanctuary” status to a range of institutions including libraries, museums, schools and theatres. In order for an institution to be able to claim that it is “of Sanctuary” it must get assessed and meet set criteria within its category. These will determine that it makes special efforts in order to help asylum seekers and refugees feel welcome and able to make use of their facilities. The 'Stations of Sanctuary' project aims to develop an appropriate framework for this to be applied to railway stations.

This 'Staff Resource Handbook' has been produced to help contribute to this overall goal by offering information for all station staff and volunteers.

Stations of Sanctuary has been endorsed by the national body, City of Sanctuary UK, and supported by a range of funders including Community Rail Network & The Department for Transport, Northern Rail and Transport for Greater Manchester



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

A refugee is a person who has applied for asylum and been determined as someone needing sanctuary

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

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.

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

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

SOURCES

·UK Home Office Statistics, Refugee Action, Refugee Council, The UN Refugee Agency (2023)



THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

City of Sanctuary work with a wide range of individuals and families in Bolton, and some of them told us about their experiences on the railway



'We didn't know who to ask for help'

'The tickets were confusing and the staff went through the process too fast for us to understand'

'I didn't know where to stand or which platform I needed to go to'

'We were abused by other passengers and nobody said anything'

'I was confused by the wording – I didn't know "calling at" meant the train would be stopping there'

'We felt very vulnerable and unsure where to go'

'I would never travel at certain times in the evening as I would feel unsafe'

'I couldn't find any staff to help me'

'It was difficult for us to understand how to use the ticket machines and where to go'



HOW YOU CAN HELP

We've put together a few practical suggestions for staff at stations who may want to help...

LOOK for individuals or families travelling with a large amount of luggage – especially those that appear lost or unsure of where they are going

OFFER to help – people may need extra assistance in areas including buying tickets, finding the right platform, using facilities etc.

LISTEN to find out what they may be struggling with – e.g. they may not understand which train they need to get to reach a particular destination

SIGNPOST people to other places or services they might need - direct them to leaflets or other information that may be available

ASK other members of staff for support if you think someone else may be better suited to help - e.g. if they speak multiple languages and may be able to assist with communication

BE VISIBLE and approachable – some people may not know who they should ask for help at the station

SMILE - something as simple as a smile can make people feel more at ease in a new or challenging environment

SHARE - It's important that all staff are aware of the different needs of people using the station, so please pass on these tips to your colleagues!

OUR ORGANISATIONS



SOUTH EAST LANCASHIRE CRP

www.southeastlancscrp.org

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

Established in June 2019, the CRP aims to build on the successful work of the Bolton Station Community Development 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
- Equality and Diversity
- Community Cohesion



CITY OF SANCTUARY BOLTON

bolton.cityofsanctuary.org

City of Sanctuary is a national movement committed to building a culture of hospitality and welcome, especially for refugees seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

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 City of Sanctuary Bolton currently providing regular groups including sewing, creative writing and theatre.



STATIONS OF SANCTUARY

**WITH THANKS TO
CITY OF SANCTUARY BOLTON
& OUR PROJECT FUNDERS**

