

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ADDENDUM

4.00PM, TUESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2025

HOVE TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBER

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ADDENDUM

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Brighton & Hove City Council

Agenda Item

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 14th January 2025

Subject: Overview of work carried out by Brighton & Hove City Council in partnership with statutory and third sector organisations to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers to our city of sanctuary.

Report of: Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Human Rights

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Ward(s) affected: All

Key Decision: No

For general release

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1. Purpose of the report

1.1 The report provides a summary to the People, Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Brighton & Hove’s support to refugees and asylum seekers in the city arriving through a range of pathways during recent years. These include national government schemes: the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Programme, Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme, UK Resettlement Scheme and Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Welcome Programme. It also includes work to welcome asylum seekers placed by the Home Office in dispersed accommodation (houses) and/or initial contingency accommodation (a hotel) in the city. In addition, the report outlines the provision of holistic care to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and to care experienced young people who have been through the asylum system.

1.2 Since the declaration by the city council that Brighton & Hove was a city of sanctuary in 2015, a more formal and strengthened process has been developed by the national City of Sanctuary organisation to enable local authorities to apply for specific accreditation as a ‘Local Authority of Sanctuary’. The report explains the issues and action that the city council, with city partners, has been focused on to improve the welcome offered to refugees and migrants and how the integration of these communities is being promoted as the council works towards formal accreditation as a local authority of Sanctuary in 2025. The city of sanctuary work is intrinsically linked to the council’s commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation and supporting an anti-racist city, and its efforts to foster good relations as per the Public Sector equality Duty and commitment to community cohesion.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee notes the council and its partners' work related to refugees and asylum seekers and developments in central government policy and practice over this period.
- 2.2 That Committee notes the steps being undertaken by the city council to secure accreditation as a Local Authority of Sanctuary in 2025 in accordance with the Council Plan.

3. Background and Definitions

- 3.1 The legal definition of a refugee comes from the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. The Convention defines a refugee as 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 his country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country"
- 3.2 Refugees enter the UK through two main routes. They may be selected by the government for 'resettlement.' This is the process whereby refugees are brought to the UK and whereby on arrival they already have permission to remain indefinitely with the right to work and to claim welfare benefits. Their integration in local areas is funded through ringfenced grants to local authorities. Since 2021 most refugee resettlement resources and funding have gone towards resettling Afghan households recognised as needing protection from the Taliban government which came to power in Afghanistan in August 2021. There is a wider UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) receiving referrals from the United Nations for refugees from trouble spots across the world. However, in recent years routes to the UK through the UKRS have been extremely limited.
- 3.3 People also arrive in the UK without permission to seek protection (or 'asylum') under the UN Convention using irregular means such as crossing the channel on small boats. If they are unaccompanied minors under the age of 18, their care and support is the duty of local authority social services departments, and the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) distributes children to local authorities around the UK. For those who are adults or in family groups, the Home Office is responsible for housing and providing food and basic commodities while they are awaiting a decision on their claims. In the year ending September 2024, the top five countries of origin of people seeking asylum were Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Syria. If someone is recognised as a refugee under the UN 1951 Convention definition, they are given 5 years Leave to Remain, access to UK welfare systems and the right to work, alongside recognition of their formal status as a refugee.
- 3.4 In recognition of the problems caused by long stays in hotel accommodation (see below), the government is keen to find new ways of housing and supporting asylum seekers, alongside reducing the numbers arriving by small boats.
- 3.5 It is worth noting that the Ukrainians arriving in the UK on the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (see below) have not been formally recognised as refugees. Their stay in the UK is limited by the conditions of the specific visa

scheme created to offer them temporary admission to the UK to escape the war in Ukraine. Hong Kongers recently arriving in the UK have been able to avail themselves of their rights to live and work in the UK as British National (Overseas) and are not recognised as refugees.

3.6 However, these two recent groups of arrivals in the UK can be seen as ‘refugees’ in the wider sense of the word (i.e. seeking refuge from difficulties in their home countries). As a result, their support and integration is generally included in the wider work of local authorities to welcome and support refugees and those seeking asylum (also known as ‘sanctuary seekers’). This is the case in Brighton & Hove. This work is conducted locally in the wider context of the inclusion of all types of newcomers (or migrants) who may have arrived from outside the UK in our city to work, study or to join family here.

3.7 The co-ordination of the city’s responses to all these categories of migrants is conducted by a small refugee and migrant team within the newly created Community Cohesion Unit. However, the City of Sanctuary approach of ‘Learn, Embed and Share’ (see below) is designed to create a sustainable and joined-up response to new arrivals in the city which is the responsibility of all council departments and that of their partners.

4. Brighton & Hove: update on specific schemes and routes into the city for those seeking sanctuary.

4.1 Homes for Ukraine Programme

4.1.1 The UK government launched the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme on 14 March 2022. It is a unique government programme, relying on the accommodation of Ukrainian ‘guests’ in the homes of ‘hosts. Since it started, over 210,000 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in the UK.

4.1.2 703 Ukrainians arrived in Brighton & Hove on the Homes for Ukraine scheme since the start of the programme and 257 were still resident in the city, under the scheme, at the end of December 2024 including 47 children aged 1- 18 years. They comprised 123 households sponsored by the same number of local hosts. After the initial three months of high arrivals (April – June 2022), the numbers reduced progressively, mirroring the national picture. The current arrival rate is very low with only 4 arriving per month.

4.1.3 The city’s response has been coordinated by the Communities, Equality and Third Sector Team (prior to the recent Council redesign) within an agreed governance structure involving other statutory agencies and partners from the community and voluntary sector as well as community representatives. Ukrainians arriving on the programme were initially given three years right to remain, the right to work, study and access public funds, for example, a care assessment, statutory homeless duty, benefits, and a pension. On 19 February 2024, existing visa holders were granted an 18-month extension (Ukraine Permission Extension) to be applied for through a new e-visa process. All subsequent new visas have been granted for 18 months only.

4.1.4 When the programme started, local authorities received £10,500 per head to provide support to new arrivals (including the checking of hosts' properties). The government reduced the per head tariff to £5,900 for all new arrivals from 1st January 2023.

4.1.5 Central government also funded 'Thank you' payments of £350 for hosts with guests in year 1 and £500 for those with guests in years 2 and 3 of the Scheme. Brighton & Hove provided discretionary 'thank you' uplifts to help sustain existing sponsorships as well and attract new hosts. Most local authorities across the country did this. From 1st April 2025, all existing and new hosts will receive a thank you payment flat rate of £350 per month.

4.1.6 In addition to Homes for Ukraine arrivals, we are aware of a small number of arrivals through the Ukrainian Family Scheme and Ukraine Visa Extension scheme. The government does not provide funding for Ukrainians who are here under these schemes. However, most of the city's services are open to all Ukrainians. The council's response centres on the Community Hub (former Covid-19 Response Hub), acting as first point of contact for Ukrainian refugees and their hosts. The Hub has fulfilled a 'welcome' role and ensures that guests are safe through property checks and checks on prospective hosts. It also processes 'welcome' and 'thank you' payments for guests and hosts respectively and provides general advice and guidance on various welfare matters.

The refugee and migrant housing pathway (see below) provides advice on housing sustainment and move-on including to the Private Rented Sector.

4.1.7 Other council support funded by Homes for Ukraine programme has included:

- additional capacity in the Front Door for Families service to provide private fostering support,
- ESOL teacher training programme to increase the number of ESOL teachers in Brighton and Hove
- Additional capacity in Family Hubs with a family coaching service to support Ukrainian families.
- A refugee inclusion programme at Jubilee library.
- Additional capacity in our Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) which provide support to schools with bilingual children to support the increased number of Ukrainian children in schools.
- Home to Schools Transport costs for eligible Ukrainian refugee children
- A home inspector team recruited and trained to carry out the host property checks.

The Homes for Ukraine £1,278,898 funding also supported the community and voluntary sector through a grants programme most of which is now complete: examples include:

Organisation	Project Title
The Trust for Developing Communities (TDC)	ESOL for Ukrainian refugees (non-accredited)
	Multicultural Employability Support Hub - Ukraine
	Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Ukrainian refugees
	Summer Youth Activities

University of Sussex	English Language Scheme for refugees (IELTS 4 – 6.5)
The Launchpad Collective	Start-up support for entrepreneurs, Tailored work and careers support, community & corporate outreach
Network of International Women	Weekly drop-in sessions at a multi-purpose space for the Ukrainian community at All Saints Church in Hove
Sussex Interpreting Services & Together Co.	Social Prescribing, Translation and Pathways for Ukrainian refugees
Conversation Over Borders CIC	Integrated wellbeing support and conversational English
Phoenix Therapy Practice	1-2-1 Therapy & Counselling (adults & children)
Refugee Radio (with Ukrainian Voices, Best Foot Music and Brighton Therapy Centre)	Music, Events, Therapy, Advice and Guidance
Brighton Swimming Centre	Integration through Pool to Pier swimming
	Language and culture classes for Ukrainian refugee children
	Swimming and water safety sessions for Ukrainian refugee children
	Cash Flow for Children
Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard	Help & Support for LGBT Ukrainian refugees
Stand for Ukraine (with TDC as accountable body)	Integration through arts and cultural events, family educational outings, drop-ins and online spaces
	Organisational capacity building for Stand for Ukraine by TDC's Community Development Team
Brighton and Hove Chamber of Commerce	Job matching, engagement with employers
The Hummingbird Project	Global Youth Club
Brighton Table Tennis Club	Integration through Sport

4.2 Afghan Resettlement Scheme – formerly the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

4.2.1 In the months following the withdrawal of Western powers from Afghanistan in August 2021, and the subsequent air evacuation of 15,000 Afghans from Kabul under Operation Pitting, the government set up two resettlement programmes for Afghan citizens – the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which resettles Afghans who were working with British forces in Afghanistan and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) which provides protection to others at risk in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

4.2.2 Given the speed and volume of arrivals, the ARAP and ACRS Afghan households were accommodated by central government in 'bridging' hotels around the UK, pending their resettlement in self-contained properties to be provided within the private rented sector through local authorities. The bridging hotel arrangements

ended on 31st August 2023. Thousands more Afghans entitled to evacuation from the region are still waiting to come to the UK from Pakistan.

4.2.3 There were no bridging hotels in Brighton & Hove. Brighton & Hove City Council's involvement in this programme has been to provide settled accommodation for 37 households comprising 168 individuals, many of whom came from bridging hotels elsewhere in the UK. Of these, 87 were children under the age of eighteen on arrival. The national and local Afghan resettlement programmes have evolved over time. Earlier Afghan arrivals moved into properties acquired in the private rented sector, sometimes from sympathetic landlords who contacted the council wanting to assist.

4.2.4 More recently, national government has provided funding to councils under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to enable the part purchase of properties specifically for this cohort. Brighton & Hove City Council has received three tranches of funding, totalling £5,760,554 and this has allowed the purchase of up to forty-three properties by the end of this financial year. The remaining costs of purchasing these properties is funded through council borrowing, paid for from the rental income stream. Ten of these flats and houses are now homes for Afghan families on the government resettlement programme with a further six families due to move into LAHF funded properties in the early part of 2025. The remaining properties purchased through this scheme have already or will become part of the general stock of Temporary Accommodation in the city.

4.2.5 Integration funding of £20,520 has been provided to local authorities on a per head basis every time a resettled refugee is welcomed to an area. There have been other housing-specific payments to local authorities in certain circumstances, recognising the difficulties in finding appropriate and affordable accommodation. The funding arrangements have recently been simplified with a new single per head tariff of £24,110. This is paid over a three-year period. A portion of these funds and Homes for Ukraine grant pays for the refugee and migrant team, a dedicated housing pathway for refugees and migrants and the acquisition of new properties in the private rented sector for Ukrainians, Afghans, and former asylum seekers. This funding also pays for the casework, ESOL and integration support provided by Voices in Exile.

4.2.6 There is additional funding for children's education (e.g. £4500 per head for children of school age) and for health care (to date £2600 per head)

4.3 UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

4.3.1 The UK Resettlement Scheme, launched in April 2021 has had a slow start nationally and locally due to the urgency of the need to accommodate those arriving on the ACRS and ARAP. Under this scheme, properties are sourced by local authorities and submitted to central government for allocation from a large pool of exceptionally vulnerable households with a resettlement need from across the world. Brighton & Hove city council remains committed to participating in the UKRS. So far three Syrian families and one household from Iraq have arrived in the city on this scheme. The per head funding for beneficiaries of the UKRS is broadly similar to that of those arriving on the Afghan programmes (see above), though to date it has been

spread over a five-year period, in line with the original Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme which ran from 2015 to 2021.

4.4 Community Sponsorship programmes

4.4.1 Central government has been keen to capitalise on the goodwill of civil society, churches and community groups who want to help refugees. There are two sponsorship programmes which rely upon local people forming groups which take responsibility for sourcing and preparing properties for refugees and then for welcoming and supporting the new arrivals to find their feet in the local area. In Brighton & Hove there have been three such groups of which two continue to support Afghan families. Education funding (of £4500 per head) is provided for children arriving on the sponsorship schemes. The most recently launched *Communities for Afghans* Programme has a hybrid funding model which combines some elements of the Homes for Ukraine programme and some from the Afghan resettlement programmes.

4.5 Commissioned Support Services for Resettled Refugees

4.5.1 Local charity Voices in Exile (ViE) has been providing a bespoke service for resettled refugees since the first Syrian arrivals at the end of 2015. Most recently, after a competitive tender process during 2024, Voices in Exile was awarded the [contract](#) to provide the service until at least 2027. The service provided is holistic, starting with preparing properties for arrival and welcoming refugees into their new homes, followed by two years of casework support including help towards employment.

4.5.2 The English language levels of all adults are assessed, and refugees are registered with one of the city's providers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at the appropriate level. Voices in Exile provide ESOL if there is a gap before provision is available from a mainstream college or ESOL provider and they also complement provision with 'top up' classes to ensure that all refugees have access to 8 hours of ESOL if they can take this up. Many of the Afghan households are large families, some with young children so supporting mothers to learn English has been a challenge but a key priority for ViE during the early days of the new contract.

4.6 Hong Kong Welcome Scheme

4.6.1 A new immigration route opened on 31 January 2021, providing British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders from Hong Kong and their dependants with the opportunity to come to the UK to live, study and work, on a pathway to citizenship. This is not a refugee resettlement programme as such, though local authorities have received some government funding to assist the newly arriving Hong Kongers. This is referred to as the Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme.

4.6.2 The council is working closely with the community group formed from the Hong Kong diaspora, 'Hong Konger in Brighton.' Over 900 Hong Kong BN(O)s are currently estimated to live in Brighton & Hove. These households are permitted to

work and study in the UK but do not have access to benefits. There is additional funding from English Language tuition (ESOL) and to cover costs of accommodating and supporting those who may become destitute. To date research into the Hong Kongers arriving in the UK indicates that the newest arrivals have financial resources and can rent or purchase properties.

4.6.3 The city council has used Hong Kong Welcome funds over the past three years to support the development of the local diaspora Hong Konger in Brighton group, to fund English Conversation clubs and resilience training, as well as workshops on employability and starting and growing a business (delivered in the Business and IP Centre in Jubilee Library).

4.7 Responses to other crises

4.7.1 Between 25th April and 2nd May 2023, the British government evacuated around 2200 British nationals and people with permission to live in the UK from Khartoum in response to the deteriorating security situation in Sudan. Brighton & Hove has a large Sudanese community, so it is not surprising that several of the evacuated households (the council estimates around ten households) made their way to join this community here in the city. Most of these had nowhere to live and came without resources. In this case the cross-council response to supporting these newcomers including placements in emergency housing, and the issuing of emergency vouchers and items through the Local Discretionary Social Fund. Officers also liaised closely with the Sudanese community group and attended a welcome event for the new arrivals.

4.7.2 It is important that our future planning around international migration considers the possibility of unexpected and non-programmed arrivals of vulnerable people from overseas such as that described above. In this case the arrivals were largely British nationals or their dependents (rather than refugees as such) but this still raised challenges with regard to access to benefits and the disorientation and trauma of people being forced to flee a dangerous and traumatic situation.

4.8 Asylum Seekers – Single Adults and Families

4.8.1 Many thousands of asylum seekers are housed in hotels across the UK by government contractors as a form of ‘contingency’ or emergency accommodation because there is not enough longer-term accommodation (known as ‘dispersal accommodation’). Clearsprings ReadyHomes (CRH) is the accommodation provider contracted by the Home Office for the Southeast of England. Stay Belvedere Hotels Limited (SBHL) is sub-contracted by CRH to manage the one contingency hotel currently operational in the city.

4.8.2 CRH provides around 100 bedspaces of dispersal accommodation in Brighton and Hove, mostly in Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) for adult men.

4.8.3 There is one contingency hotel which opened in October 2021 that accommodates families and single women. At the time of writing there were 82

residents of whom 16 are children under the age of 18. Full board meals are supplied, and the asylum seekers receive £9 per head per week. The children are enrolled in school and all the hotel residents are registered with a GP. The key challenge is the length of time that the asylum seekers are having to live in the hotel with little agency over their own lives. Food is brought into the hotel from an outside catering company, and this has proved to be particularly testing for the residents as they have no choice over what they eat.

4.8.4 Council officers chair monthly asylum hotel meetings with all the stakeholders, including the Home Office, Clearsprings, Migrant Help and other statutory services, as well as Sanctuary on Sea who represent the wider community and voluntary sector at the meetings to raise and resolve issues faced by the residents.

4.8.5 The Home Office has been seeking to increase the estate of self-contained accommodation available for asylum seekers in the Southeast, thereby reducing the need for hotel accommodation as well as spreading the accommodation more equitably around the UK. However, the shortage of affordable housing in Brighton and Hove has led to CRH being unable to find more than a handful of new properties in the city over the past 12 months.

4.8.6 A one off payment of £3,500 is made to local authorities by the Home Office for each new bedspace acquired by CRH. In addition to this, a one-off payment of £750 is made for every asylum seeker placed in the area. This funding has been used to fund specific items and services requested by the local migrant support groups who provide help to the hotel residents, for example: hire of storage units for donations, room hire at All Saints church in Hove for 'Sanctuary' sessions and English language classes for hotel residents, school uniforms and sun cream which is not provided by the Home Office nor their contractors. Funding has also been allocated to assist the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service's work in schools to settle and support the children who live at the hotels.

4.8.7 CVS groups are well networked through regular meetings (chaired by Sanctuary on Sea) which have continued since they were originally set up to co-ordinate the migrant sector response to Covid. National charity Migrant Help provide remote advice to asylum seekers in dispersal and hotel accommodation via a multilingual helpline and website, under a national Home Office contract.

4.8.8 Those who have been granted asylum are eligible to work, claim benefits and to homelessness assistance under the same rules as any other resident. The notice period between the Home Office notifying a person of its decision and the cessation of Home Office accommodation and support has very recently been increased from 28 to 56 days. This change has been welcomed by all those working with newly granted refugees and will hopefully reduce the instances of homelessness caused by eviction from the asylum system. Staff from the dedicated refugee and migrant pathway (see 4.2.5 above) work with this cohort and have access to an additional small fund for short term emergency placements in hostels and for basic household items to set up home.

4.8.9 There is another small population of asylum seekers in the city housed in 'safe houses' through the National Referral Mechanism for victims of human trafficking.

4.9 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and Care Leavers

4.9.1 When someone under the age of 18 arrives and seeks asylum in the UK when separated from their parents or caregiver, they do not enter the Home Office asylum support system. They become the responsibility of local authority children's services and are generally Looked After under Section 20 of the Children Act. To relieve the burden that would otherwise fall on Kent County Council and other local authority areas with ports of entry, the government-run National Transfer Scheme (NTS) distributes children to social services departments around the UK. Brighton & Hove currently Looks After 47 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, some of whom have been transferred to the city under the NTS and the rest of whom were Accommodated following their spontaneous arrival and presentation to authorities in Brighton & Hove.

4.9.2 Between 2021 and 2023, Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) were placed in hotels as emergency accommodation due to a lack of placements. One of these hotels was in Hove. After a successful legal challenge by Brighton & Hove City Council, the use of hotels to house children seeking asylum was declared unlawful and they are no longer in use.

4.9.3 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are typically boys of 16 and 17 though some young women arrive alone too. Those under 16 are placed in foster care but the majority of UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation which may be in the city or out of area. The holistic accommodation, support and education services provided to young people are led by a dedicated team within the Children, Families and Wellbeing Directorate.

4.9.4 Once a young person reaches the age of 18 and they have been in care for a minimum of 13 weeks, the local authority's duty towards them continues under the provisions of the Leaving Care Act. There are currently 133 former UASC care experienced young people supported by Brighton & Hove, the vast majority being young men. Top countries of origin for UASC and former UASC care leavers in Brighton & Hove are Kurdish and Sudanese.

5. Local Authority of Sanctuary Accreditation and Action Plan

5.1 The Council Plan 2023 – 2027 includes Brighton & Hove's reaccreditation as a City of Sanctuary. To fulfil this ambition, the local authority is working towards accreditation as a Local Authority of Sanctuary. The accreditation process provides a useful [framework](#) by which the local authority's work in this area can be assessed and supported by peers. Brighton & Hove Libraries have already been accredited as

a [Library Service of Sanctuary](#) but now it is time to roll out that approach across the whole council.

5.2 The University of Sussex and Sanctuary on Sea ran a small research project during 2024 to map the effectiveness of the city's culture of welcome in four key areas: Health, Housing, Immigration Legal Advice and Education. This resulted in the report [What does it mean to be a City of Sanctuary?](#) Which was launched at an event in Sussex County Cricket Club in October 2024. The recommendations from the report have contributed to the costed Sanctuary Action Plan (see below).

5.3 A Sanctuary Oversight Group (SOG) of officers from across the council has met through the latter part of 2024 to support the refugee and migrant team in its submission of the application to the national city of sanctuary organisation. It is expected that the application will be submitted by the end of March 2025. The application will need to demonstrate how the council is meeting the accreditation criteria of having a Learn, Embed and Share approach to its welcoming those seeking sanctuary, and how it works collaboratively with the local City of Sanctuary group (Sanctuary on Sea).

5.4 The key development is the creation of a costed Sanctuary Action Plan which takes learning from the work described in this report as well as priorities agreed by committees in 2022 and 2023. 100% of the funding allocated to seeing through the implementation of the plan comes from government grants for resettlement programmes and asylum seekers which is yet unallocated. The plan offers a cross council, strategic approach to working with sanctuary seekers and includes a proposal for a grants programme for the community and voluntary sector. It will facilitate the council moving towards a more holistic approach to all newcomers regardless of their route to the city and begin to create more equitable access and offer of support to newcomers.

5.5 The action plan has twelve outcomes and objectives with 48 actions which have been costed with costs to be covered from projections of unallocated income from the resettlement and asylum grants. The action plan prioritises the following areas of work:

5.6 The plan is scheduled for presentation at Cabinet in March 2025 for approval, following discussion with the local community and voluntary sector as well as consideration of any feedback provided by the Council's People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

6. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

No specific alternative options are proposed in this scrutiny report. The purpose of the report is to give the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee information on the routes by which people experiencing forced migration are arriving in the city, and the work that the council and its partners are carrying out to welcome and settle people into the city.

7. Community engagement and consultation

None specifically for this scrutiny report. However, key stakeholders and people with lived experience of forced displacement are involved in the council's programmes of activity in this area.

8. Financial implications

No direct financial implications arise from this report.

The council receives grant through the government schemes as outlined in paragraph 1.1 in order to administrate the schemes discussed in this report. The expenditure against the grant allocations is monitored and reported via returns to the government and through the council's Target Budget Management process.

Name of finance officer consulted: Haley Woollard Date consulted: 07/01/25

9. Legal implications

No direct legal implications have been identified as arising from this report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 06.01.25:

10. Equalities implications

No equality implications arise directly from this report. Work with people who have experienced forced displacement is closely linked to the council's work to delivery its Anti-racism Strategy.

The report outlines the holistic approach taken across the city to advance equality of opportunity for newcomers. The primary focus of the City of Sanctuary approach is the promotion of good relations between sanctuary seekers and longstanding communities.

The council continues to promote a nuanced and intersectional understanding of the needs of newcomers who may have protected characteristics alongside their country of birth, nationality or first language.

11. Sustainability implications

None specifically for this scrutiny report.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implications

None specifically for this scrutiny report.

13. Other Implications

14. Procurement implications

None specifically for this scrutiny report.

15. Crime & disorder implications

None specifically for this scrutiny report.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

- Presentation summarising the information in this report.

Brighton & Hove City of Sanctuary:

Our welcome and support for
refugees and asylum seekers

Presenter
Date

Councillor Pumm
14 January 2025



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Pathways into the city for those seeking sanctuary

'Safe and Legal routes'

- Homes for Ukraine
- Afghan resettlement
- UK Resettlement scheme
- Hong Kong Welcome

Asylum seekers

- Full board hotel for single women and families
- Self-catering 'dispersed' accommodation for single men and some smaller families
- Other asylum seekers living in the community
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- USCA Care Leavers
- People granted refugee status - employment rights follow along with Recourse to Public Funds

Examples of Recent Key Achievement for Brighton & Hove City of Sanctuary

Numbers of arrivals

- 703 Ukrainians in total arrived on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme of whom 257 remain in hosting arrangements. Circa 100 households have been helped into their own tenancies.
- 37 Afghan Households/168 people welcomed to the city on Afghan resettlement programmes, including many large families. This includes 87 children. 10 of these are in council owned properties, purchased with govt. grant for this purpose
- The council supports local Hong Kong community group which is serving potentially 902 Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) across B&H.
- 47 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children accommodated and 133 care - experienced young people supported who have been through the asylum system

Enabling Successful Welcome and Integration

- Ongoing and close multi-agency co-ordination to promote the wellbeing of asylum seekers in the contingency hotel and dispersal accommodation
- £3.5 million 3+2 year contract with local charity Voices in Exile for casework support, English language and employment support
- Refugee and Migrant housing pathway comprising homelessness prevention and private rented sector scheme.
- Support for the community and voluntary sector through convening quarterly Refugee & Migrant Forum meetings in person in town hall (since mid 1990s) and funding Sanctuary on Sea group and others.
- Ukraine Impact Day attended by circa 90 delegates

Key Challenges and Opportunities for Brighton & Hove City of Sanctuary

- Rapidly changing, complex policy and funding environment, with different funding rules for different migration programmes
- Shortage of affordable accommodation for move on from asylum system, Homes for Ukraine guests, and for new Afghan households
- Long stays in contingency hotels for asylum seekers (including children)
- Lack of immigration legal advice
- Historically low numbers of asylum seekers dispersed to the city mean there is no physical presence of larger national refugee agencies in the local area

However

- Local community and voluntary sector made up of small local organisations is dedicated, agile, inventive and expert in their field
- This includes local community groups run by refugees who support own communities e.g. Hong Kongers, Ukrainians, Syrians, Sudanese
- National academic migration expertise on our doorstep in our local universities

Draft Sanctuary Action Plan has four key areas of focus

Draft comprehensive strategic Sanctuary Action Plan is evidence based, place based and holistic, aligned with national COS methodology and co-designed with cross council officer group, CVS and people with lived experience. Significant ring-fenced resources now available - £1 million from resettlement and asylum seeker government grant funding

1. Housing and Basic Needs

- Secure housing pathways
- Clear support for those with No Recourse to Public Funds
- Improved access to health services
- Accessible legal advice

2. Community Integration

- Enhanced English language learning opportunities
- Mental health and wellbeing support
- Educational support for children and young people

3. Economic Empowerment

- Employment pathway development
- Business support initiatives
- Skills training programs

4. Organisational Excellence

- Migration-aware council services
- Strong voluntary sector partnerships

Accreditation as a Local Authority of Sanctuary

Partnership Approach:

- Collaboration with CVS including Sanctuary on Sea (SOS)
- Report from SOS in collaboration with University of Sussex: launched October 2024
- Engagement with lived experience representatives
- People, Overview and Scrutiny committee 14th January

Decision:

- Cabinet approval of action plan and allocation of funding 20th March
- Submit application in March 2025
- Accreditation panel meeting summer 2025 (tbc by national City of Sanctuary)

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Clear outcomes framework
- Regular reporting to an oversight group
- Continuous improvement approach
- Risk assessment to be undertaken

Resource Implications:

- Fully funded from government migration programme
- Continuation/exit plan for 2 years time to be developed