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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