



Annual Review

2025/2026



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Welcome

Bradford City of Sanctuary works to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary.

We are part of a growing national movement of over 100 City of Sanctuary groups. We work through partnerships with statutory, voluntary, business and community groups to create, facilitate and support networks across the city.

Our work includes:



Supporting organisations from across Bradford to work towards achieving a [Sanctuary Award](#), ranging from Bradford Council and the University of Bradford, to schools and colleges, theatre companies, community gardens and even train stations.



Participating in forums around the city and working alongside our [Local Authority of Sanctuary](#) to make sure that the voices of people seeking sanctuary are represented.



Networking across the city, connecting organisations and promoting best practice.



Ensuring people seeking sanctuary have accessible information, for example helping create welcomebradford.org.



Advocating for people seeking sanctuary, informed by our Advisory Group of people with lived experience.

Our mission is simple: we want to build a culture of welcome and inclusion for people seeking sanctuary in our city.

We believe in a city where people seeking sanctuary are welcomed, included and recognised for the valuable contribution they make, and are able to participate fully in our community.



Chair's Report

As I stand down after 18 years as Chair, there is a huge amount to celebrate since a carload of volunteers from BEACON, BIASAN and Bradford Refugee Forum attended the first national CoS conference in Sheffield and returned inspired to start a group in Bradford.

It is a joy to be leaving the charity in the hands of an outstanding staff team, our wonderful Advisory Group and a very capable board of trustees led by our new Chair, Amanda. As CEO of local charity Abigail Housing, Amanda has many years' relevant leadership experience and is known and respected across Bradford, Leeds and in national networks.

12 months ago we were celebrating the appointment during the year of Tina, our first Director. This year she has brought not just professionalism, energy and dedication to our work but, in establishing the Voluntary Sector Migration Network and in her engagement with the Council, University and other bodies, she has greatly improved the coordination of and strengthened the voice of the local sector. Under Kate's leadership, the Schools and Colleges (SCoS) Project continues to develop far beyond our original limited vision and is having a profound impact on the lives not just of refugee children but their fellow pupils, staff, and the wider culture of each establishment. I hope that Tina and Kate's reports below will inspire you!

During the year Thomas, our very capable Administration & Communications Officer, left us. We were overwhelmed at the calibre of applicants when we advertised the post, but Anna stood out and is proving herself immensely capable and with a real flair for creative communication. When Tina sadly decided that she needed to reduce her hours at the end of 2025, Anna stepped up into the Coordinator role and is taking on a range of new responsibilities, not least overseeing real growth (numbers and impact) in the Advisory Group.





Chair's Report

Losing a very capable Treasurer at the start of the year was a big blow, but we remain very grateful to Geoff Hale for his years of expert management of our finances and many valuable contributions as a volunteer. Wonderfully, we were able to recruit in Amy a highly qualified, experienced and capable successor who is more familiar with handling figures with at least 5 more zeroes at the end! Zoe also joined the trustee board during the year, bringing fresh energy and creativity to our work.

Less positively, the context in which we work has become more difficult than ever. Government policy is massively impacting the chances of people fleeing conflict and persecution to successfully settle and make positive contributions to the UK. Equally disturbing has been the huge increase in misinformation about and deliberate misrepresentation of people seeking sanctuary. City of Sanctuary itself was the target of a malicious complaint by an MP to the Charity Commission about their work. Thankfully, the Commission has recently rejected the complaint and said the charity had been the victim of a baseless misinformation campaign. The impact however has been significant on CoS's work across the UK as staff received threats, and services had to be reduced; here in Bradford our SCoS project was targeted and parents in the schools we work with were encouraged to petition the schools to disengage.

As always, our experience locally paints a very different picture. Bradford continues to richly deserve its national recognition as a true 'city of sanctuary'. We are humbled by the integrity, bravery and resilience of people seeking sanctuary, not least members of our vitally important Advisory Group. We work in a sector of committed, selfless individuals (including large numbers of volunteers) and daily witness the compassion, kindness and generosity of the people of Bradford. The generosity of a number of committed individual donors is greatly appreciated as is the goodwill of the trusts that support our work.

There is much to celebrate and genuine cause for optimism as we begin our new year!

Will Sutcliffe

**Thank you Will from everyone at
Bradford City of Sanctuary**



Director's Report

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou

Sometimes it can feel difficult to explain what we do at Bradford City of Sanctuary, but this quote captures it perfectly: we want people to *feel* welcome in all of the everyday spaces of Bradford.

Our impact can be hard to quantify, as it often sits in the quiet, steady, invisible work of joining the dots and bringing people together. An example of this is the Bradford VCS Migration Network, a new partnership that we chair. This network emerged through a series of careful and sensitive conversations across the sector, recognising that existing spaces were not fully meeting needs and were at times duplicating efforts. By listening and working collectively, we supported the development of a more purposeful space where organisations can share good practice, explore challenges and strengthen the voice of the sector. The network continues to grow, with new organisations joining and strong attendance creating a space that is rich, representative and grounded in shared learning.

Another example of this was a bespoke, collaborative volunteering project for people seeking sanctuary, which we led and co-designed. Although our funding bid was unsuccessful, the strength of the proposal led to Bradford Council allocating funding to bring this project to life. We are delighted that this has resulted in someone with lived experience taking up a role supporting others into volunteering.

We have also been pleased to strengthen partnerships and create new conversations across the city:

- During 2025, we facilitated Bradford Community Learning Together, a series of monthly information sessions for sector staff and volunteers delivered in partnership with the Red Cross, Refugee Action, BEACON and Bradford Children and Families Trust. Sessions reflected needs identified by participants and covered a range of key topics, including preparing for the labour market, support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, trauma-informed service models and an introduction to the asylum journey.
- We delivered presentations and training to a range of audiences including Mears Housing Officers, Churches Together, East Riddlesden Hall, and the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children team at Bradford Children and Families Trust.
- We contributed to a panel discussion at the Rosa Parks Symposium at the University of Bradford on the theme "Does my belonging threaten your belonging?".
- In July we facilitated a National City of Sanctuary thematic event on refugee employment, bringing together over 50 participants from across the country.
- With Migration Yorkshire we co-facilitated a Lunch and Learn session for Bradford employers: "An introduction to employing refugee & individuals seeking asylum".
- Together with Race Equality Network, Refugee Action and BEACON we facilitated a collaborative event to launch a 'Lift the Ban' campaign in Bradford. We heard powerful stories from people with immense skill and talent yet denied the opportunity to work and were very grateful to Naz Shah MP for generously giving her time to hear people's voices.



Director's Report

- I have been privileged to speak on BCB radio several times this year - in our monthly Sanctuary slot and also to respond to the government's proposed policy changes.
- It was inspiring to attend the National CoS conference in London and connect with passionate CoS groups from across the country.

Sanctuary Awards continue to be a key platform for embedding welcome and belonging in everyday spaces. We have been delighted to work closely with the University of Bradford over the past year to establish a new Sanctuary partnership, bringing together colleagues across the institution working on migration and supporting sanctuary scholars. We look forward to building on this work and realizing some exciting plans for the year ahead. We are also really happy that Bradford Local Authority has recently been reaccredited with Sanctuary Award status. Our partnership has strengthened significantly over the year and we are excited to pursue ambitious shared goals in the year ahead. We are so appreciative of all the hard work that the University and the Council commit to this work and fully recognise staff's dedication to making the Award and our relationships as meaningful as they are.

I have been privileged to have had 3 trips volunteering in Calais since October 2025. The first visit marked 10 years since I went there in 2015; it was heartening and inspiring to witness the continued commitment of organisations and volunteers determined to bring humanity, compassion and solidarity to people experiencing violence, persecution and discrimination. It has always been important to me to share the reality behind the 'small boat crisis' headlines and I remain committed to giving this a voice and extending welcome and kindness beyond our shores.



Making people feel welcome has also been an internal process, as we have welcomed two new amazing Trustees, Amy and Zoe; our new Admin and Communications Officer (now Coordinator) Anna, and most recently Amanda, our new Chair. We are heading into an exciting new chapter.

However, this is only possible because of the strong and solid foundations laid by those who came before - not least Will, our founder and recently retired Chair. He has given years of time, care, enthusiasm and energy to building spaces in Bradford that are compassionate and kind; I often think that if you cut Will in half, he would have "welcome" running right through him like a stick of rock.

Will leaves a legacy of people who have felt welcomed, valued and included and we are so proud to carry that torch forward. Thankyou Will, for all you have done, everything you have given and all that you have made possible. Thank you to everyone who has partnered with us, funded us and supported us, to our fantastic Advisory group and our dedicated Trustees. We never forget the difference you all make, and we simply could not do this work without you.



Schools & Colleges of Sanctuary Report

As another year draws to a close, I've been reflecting on the different ways we've supported schools and colleges across the Bradford District to build inclusive, welcoming and supportive environments for children, young people and their families who are seeking sanctuary. 2025 was a year marked by riots and a rise in harmful narratives about migration; we have seen these filter through into classrooms. A huge part of our work has been to support schools to have courageous conversations and healthier dialogue about forced migration, to encourage critical thinking, and to share the stories of those with lived experience of seeking sanctuary. Our aim is always to shift perspectives from suspicion and hostility towards empathy and solidarity.

Last October, I spent some time in Calais and saw first-hand the realities facing people forced to flee (including many children). You can read about my experiences [here](#). The visit continues to provide huge motivation for our work in Bradford and has strengthened our connections with organisations like [Project Play](#) and [Kaleidoscope](#), who work directly with children and young people in Calais. These relationships are helping us to bring more informed perspectives into our work in schools and colleges in Bradford.



Our Network

The network of schools and colleges we have contact with has grown to over sixty this year, with increasing engagement from secondary schools. In 2025, four schools achieved the Sanctuary Award and six more are working towards accreditation this year. We celebrated these awards at our annual Bradford Sanctuary Seekers Awards event, in collaboration with Bradford Council's Access Team and Bradford 2025 – you can watch a wonderful video of highlights [here](#)!

We also have five schools and colleges currently in the process of renewing their award (this happens every three years), reflecting a sustained commitment to welcome and inclusion.

Strengthening Practice

We have continued to support educators with high-quality training, resources and opportunities to collaborate. This year, 425 staff accessed training and we ran termly Communities of Practice meetings, bringing together schools and partners to share ideas and best practices. We also developed new curriculum resources on teaching about forced migration and have contributed to regional and national conversations on education and migration. Our newsletters, digests, and sharing of practical resources, new research and examples of effective practice have continued to inform and equip our network.



Schools & Colleges of Sanctuary

In 2025, we were proud to work with Bradford 2025's Cultural Learning Team, who have been developing [learning resources](#) for schools based on local Bradford histories. [A Bradford Sanctuary Story](#) brings to life the experiences of the Rohingya community in Bradford, while [A Spoonful of Sugar](#) offers engaging, creative ways for pupils to explore how migration has shaped Bradford over time. We wrote a guide to [teaching about forced migration](#) and delivered some of these workshops in schools.



Inspiring Young People

Supporting young people to understand the realities of forced migration and to challenge misinformation remains central to our work. This year, individuals with lived experience of seeking sanctuary contributed to assemblies and workshops in schools, creative and educational projects, and award appraisal processes. Over 3,000 pupils took part in these assemblies and workshops and around 9,000 engaged in [Refugee Week activities](#) (highlights included our Refugee Week [art exhibition](#) and [awards event](#)). Three of our schools were involved in the ["You're Welcome" project](#) with Word Up North and the BBC. We also worked with [Freedom Speakers International](#) who brought speakers who had fled North Korea to speak to students in six of our secondary schools in Bradford. One teacher fed-back – "we are all blown away! What a phenomenal hour... students and staff all feel very privileged to have been able to hear their stories."

And Finally...

This has been a year of both growth and challenge. We have continued to develop new partnerships and programmes, while working to secure funding in a difficult climate. We are incredibly grateful to the schools and colleges who have supported us through fundraising activities this year, including: Carlton Bolling; Shipley College; St Cuthbert and the First Martyrs' Catholic Primary and Heaton St Barnabas' CE Primary. Their efforts, from bake sales to sponsored events, have made a real difference in sustaining this work!

We are always delighted when our funders really believe in the work we do. Sally Cornish, from the Evan Cornish Foundation, recently commented: "it is a great and much needed project... we need our young people to grow up into informed, welcoming and compassionate adults."

A huge thank you to all our supporters, partners, schools and colleges! To find out more about our work, you can read our latest [Impact Report 2025](#), [newsletters](#), or visit our [website](#). You can contact us at schools@bradford.cityofsanctuary.org or follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) to stay up to date with our latest activities.



Coordinator's Report

My first day at Bradford City of Sanctuary was our annual 'Away Day' in September 2025, and I was quickly welcomed into the organisation. Kate started the day with a quotation by Raymond Williams: *'to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing'*, a sentiment that encapsulates what we do at BCoS. We strive to find points of connection, build communities, and create pathways to integration for people new to Bradford, and our work is profoundly hopeful.

After starting as Administration and Communication Officer, in February I moved to a Coordinator role, taking on more hours and greater responsibility. My role includes a mixture of behind the scenes work - managing our website, social media, and newsletters - as well as working with our Advisory Group, developing our outreach, organising events, and supporting Tina in our partnership work.



Advisory Group

Since October 2025, we have welcomed two fantastic new members to our Advisory Group, Heba and Hamza. Both Heba and Hamza already commit a huge amount of time and energy volunteering with community projects, and we are so grateful to have their insight. We are also immensely grateful for our long-term Advisory Group members, Kaffa, Kamil, Danelle*, and Zan* for their hard work over the years. In particular, over the last year the Advisory Group members have been instrumental in our project to hold social services to account.

Outreach and Events

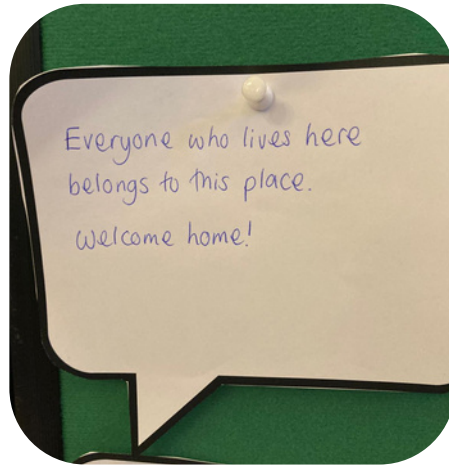
My role involves organising internal events and attending external events to spread our message of welcome and build relationships with other organisations in the sector. Last Autumn, I organised a film screening as part of Counterpoint Arts' Climate and Migration Community Film Festival, in which we showed and discussed two films on the theme of migration and climate. Also in November, I organised our stall at the Saltaire Peace Fair and updated our outreach resources. At the Peace Fair, we asked attendees, 'what does welcome mean to you?', and had some truly inspiring responses. At a time when narratives around migration have become so hostile, hearing how Bradfordians are welcoming people into their communities every day was a boost of hope.

Later in the year, I represented our charity at the Rosa Parks Symposium at the University of Bradford, and in February this year I attended Right to Remain's Leeds Gathering. These events have been useful for building relationships with other organisations in the sector, and reflecting on how we can improve our work. I have also been doing outreach to spread the word about our website, Welcome to Bradford.



Coordinator's Report

So far in 2026, I have been working with Tina and Fatima from Race Equality Network to organise 'Paths to Power', a series of workshops aimed at empowering sanctuary seeking communities and their allies to know their rights and advocate for themselves. The first workshop in the series was 'Reclaiming the Narrative: A Storytelling Workshop' with John Offord from Bradford Storyhub. The workshop explored the representation of Bradford in the media, mis- and dis-information, and provided participants with ways to tell their own stories. Our second workshop was facilitated by Ally Swadling from Right to Remain on the subject of immigration detention and enforcement. With a sharp spike in immigration raids, it was a timely opportunity to educate ourselves on how to prepare and respond to enforcement threats. We have also been working on an upcoming workshop with Liberty about how we can use the law to challenge the state.



Communications

2025-2026 saw a large growth in our social media following (+74% on Instagram), and we now regularly get about 1-4,000 views across Facebook and Instagram each month. I post once a week, using our platform to highlight positive stories around migration and celebrate our work.

We have also gained a significant amount of subscribers to our mailing list (+15%). I send out a fortnightly digest with news, events, and opportunities to people in the migration sector, and a Quarterly Newsletter to all of our subscribers to keep everyone updated on our work. I have developed our website by adding a blog section to the homepage and updating our resources. In March, I hosted a national communications skillshare for City of Sanctuary groups around the country, which was well attended, and proved a useful space for sharing challenges and tips. I also coordinate our monthly slot on BCB Radio, inviting guests and sharing clips of the interviews.

If you would like to hear more about what we do, you can contact info@bradford.cityofsanctuary.org to be added to our mailing list.



Receipts and Payments

1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

BRADFORD CITY OF SANCTUARY 2025/26 Income and Expenditure

(prepared on a cash accounting basis)

Mar-26

	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>General</u>	<u>Admin</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Director</u>
		<u>Fund</u>	<u>Fund</u>	<u>Fund</u>	<u>Fund</u>
INCOME					
Give as you Live	2,615	2,615	0	0	0
Grants	53,483	0	11,761	22,060	19,663
Other donations	2,853	2,075	0	778	0
Other income	605	0	0	605	0
Transfer from General Fund1	0	(2,385)			2,385
Total income	59,555	2,304	11,761	23,443	22,048
EXPENDITURE					
Employment Costs					
Wage Costs	47,292	0	10,257	17,518	19,517
Pensions	3,589	0	781	1,328	1,480
Payroll admin	569	0	190	190	190
Sub-total	51,451	0	11,228	19,036	21,186
Recruitment & HR	255	109	84	62	0
Room Hire	260	0	56	96	107
Events	194	194	0	0	0
Employees' expenses	567	0	83	206	277
Advisory group expenses	478	0	104	177	197
Training	65	0	14	24	27
Travel	67	0	0	41	26
Telephone	203	0	98	19	86
Printing	137	0	30	51	57
IT	146	0	32	54	60
Subscriptions	58	0	13	21	24
Insurance	342	342	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	191	191	0	0	0
Total expenditure	54,412	836	11,741	19,788	22,048
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	5,143	1,468	19	3,655	0

- Bradford City of Sanctuary ended the 2025/26 financial year with a surplus position of £5,413.
- Overall income in year increased compared to 2024/25 by 6.4% which is in excess of the 5% planned increase.
- Overall expenditure reduced by 1.4% compared with last year in spite of an increase in wage costs of 5.8% (inflationary increases and pay progression)



Balance Sheet

as at 31st March 2026

25/26 BALANCE SHEET

FUNDS

Balances from last year

Surplus/deficit ytd

BALANCE

ASSETS

Bank balance

BCP a/c balance

Equals a/c balance

Petty cash

TOTAL ASSETS

	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>General</u> <u>Fund</u>	<u>Admin</u> <u>Fund</u>	<u>Schools</u> <u>Fund</u>	<u>Director</u> <u>Fund</u>
Balances from last year	40,273	12,485	6,787	5,889	15,112
Surplus/deficit ytd	5,143	1,468	19	3,655	0
BALANCE	45,416	13,953	6,806	9,544	15,112
ASSETS					
Bank balance	43,965				
BCP a/c balance	1,142				
Equals a/c balance	275				
Petty cash	35				
TOTAL ASSETS	45,416				

- Overall assets have increased compared with this time last year by £5,413 – the value of the 2025/26 surplus delivered.
- The Bradford City of Sanctuary bank balance has increased significantly compared with last year (+ £16,383) however this is partially offset with a reduction in the Bradford Community Payroll balance (- £11,215). This is likely to do with the timing of the payment on account to payroll for the Apr-Jun salaries which was made in March 25 compared with April 26.



Introducing our New Chair



Hello,

I am delighted to be joining the team at BCoS as Chair of Trustees. I feel really privileged to have been trusted with taking on this role for such a wonderful charity whose work has never felt more important than it does right now. I am excited to become part of this amazing movement whose mission is to ensure that those who seek sanctuary here in Bradford, and across the rest of the UK, feel welcomed and included. As someone who was born in Bradford and has worked in the asylum and refugee sector in the city for the past 11 years, joining the BCoS team feels really special.

My journey in the refugee and asylum sector began in 2015, as a Volunteer Caseworker for the British Red Cross, a role I stayed in until I joined the Abigail Housing team as Coordinator of the Bradford Destitution Project in October 2017, after graduating from the University of Bradford with a First Class BSc (Hons) in Health, Wellbeing and Social Care,. In 2020, and whilst working at Abigail Housing full-time, I embarked on a new challenge studying for an MSc, Leadership in Health and Social Care at the University of Bradford, graduating with a Distinction in December 2023. Almost 9 years on, I am still at Abigail Housing leading the charity as CEO, with the same hope and commitment to improving the lives of people seeking sanctuary here in West Yorkshire. I promise to bring with me the skills, knowledge and experience that I have gained from working in the sector for the past 11 years, as well as my passion and commitment to the role as Chair.

Outside of Abigail I sit as a Trustee on a board for another charity in Leeds, also in the asylum and refugee sector, and enjoy being a devoted mum to my 2-year-old daughter and going to the gym.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to Will Sutcliffe, for the amazing legacy he has created at BCoS since it started in 2010 (you say BCoS to anyone and they immediately think of Will), and for all the important work he has done in the city for the refugee and asylum community, to ensure that Bradford is and continues to be a place of welcome and inclusion for those who settle and rebuild their lives here. Wishing Will a long and very happy retirement.

I am overjoyed to be joining the fantastic team at BCoS, and to continue with them the legacy that Will started.

In Solidarity,

Amanda



With Thanks To...

As an organisation a lot of what we do is hidden: helping local frontline services find the right support for a person seeking sanctuary, working alongside the council to ensure that their services are appropriate and accessible, or identifying gaps in support and how they may be filled. It is valuable but often unseen work. We couldn't carry on without the small and growing body of donors who give to help us build a culture of welcome. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your faithful support.

We would also like to thank our **trusts and funders**: Bradford Council, BD25, the Rayne Foundation, Scurrah Wainwright, Shears Foundation, Wharfedale Foundation, The Christian Scientists, The Evan Cornish Foundation, The Tilehouse Trust, Sir George Martin Trust, and Hilden Charitable Fund.

We would like to thank these **schools** for their fundraising efforts: Shipley College, Heaton St Barnabas' CE Primary, Carlton Bolling, St Cuthbert and the First Martyrs' Catholic Primary.

We are grateful to all our **trustees** who give their time to build a culture of welcome, hospitality and inclusion: Rosie, Zoe, Amanda, Amy, Esther, Kay, Sue and Danelle*.

We are grateful to our **advisory group** for their expertise and for ensuring that our work meets the needs of sanctuary seeking communities: Kamil, Kafa, Danelle*, Zan*, Hamza, and Heba.



 [BradfordCoS](#)

 info@bradford.cityofsanctuary.org

 bradford.cityofsanctuary.org



Registered address: Bradford City of Sanctuary, c/o Touchstone, 4 Easby Road, Bradford, BD7 1QX



TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES