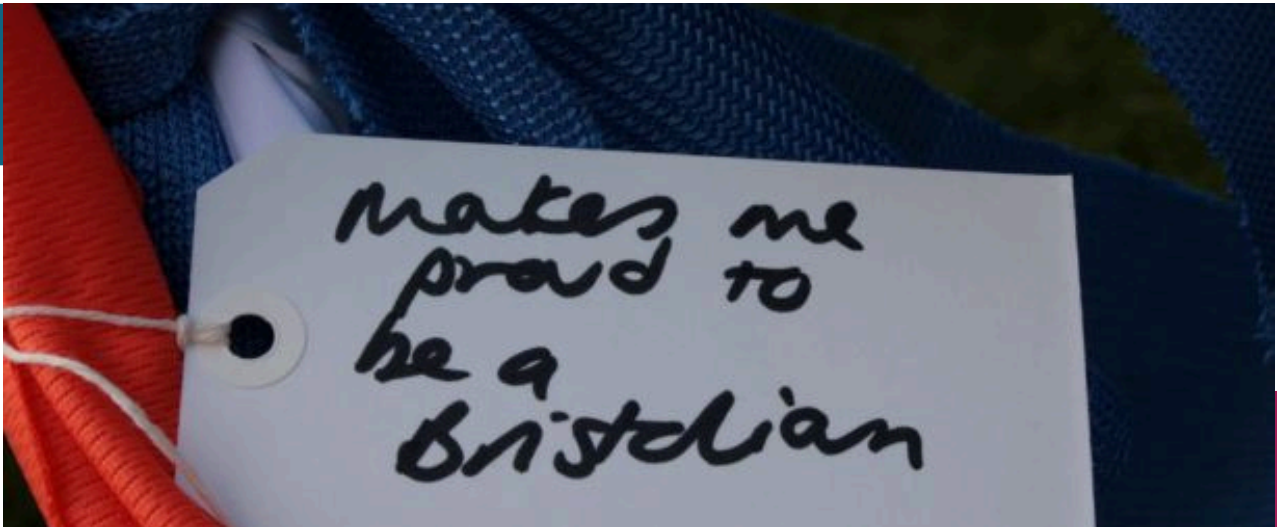




# AUTUMN NEWS LETTER

BRISTOL CITY OF SANCTUARY



## A Message of Solidarity and Strength *BCoS Director*

As we move into Autumn and past the 'anniversary' of the anti-migrant riots on the streets of Bristol, it can be difficult to feel hopeful about the cohesion of our communities and the safety and wellbeing of our sanctuary seeking neighbours. Protests by far-right groups outside initial accommodation for asylum seekers, including the hotel housing families with children, have become almost normal and present a very serious threat to the individuals inside, who now face re-traumatisation in the country they came to for protection.

The actions of the so-called 'Bristol Patriots' and other groups must be taken seriously, and by sticking to our values of respect, empowerment, connection, collaboration and equity, we strive to hear all perspectives, while staying firm on the point that targeting hotels housing vulnerable adults and children is not the answer to problems relating to the cost of living, the housing crisis and underfunded public services.

We should take heart from the fact that council leader Tony Dyer recently reaffirmed the council's support of refugees and asylum seekers, emphasising that 'as a City of Sanctuary, Bristol will continue to support and show compassion to people when they need it most'.

Here at BCoS, we have been inspired by the words of Cllr Karen Kilgour, leader of Newcastle City Council, who said recently that **'Everybody in our city is a Geordie, whether they have been in Newcastle for a day, a few months or years. Everyone contributes to the city in some way, shape or form...'** and in the same way, let's work together to recognise each other as Bristolians, regardless of our differences.



## Standing together with our Schools of Sanctuary

*Homa, SoS Project Coordinator*

Over the past weeks, we have witnessed far-right hostility directed towards the Schools of Sanctuary movement across the UK. Inflammatory and misleading claims have been circulating online, deliberately distorting the positive work that schools are doing to create safe and welcoming environments for all children.

Here in Bristol, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Schools of Sanctuary. We know that the recent letters and online narratives can feel intimidating and unsettling, but they also remind us why this work matters so deeply. Every young person deserves to feel safe, valued and included in their school. Every parent should be reassured that their child's school is a place of kindness, curiosity and learning – not fear.



*Schools of Sanctuary Awards Ceremony*



We are encouraged by the swift and united responses from across our network. Schools like Cotham have spoken out publicly, demonstrating values-led leadership in the face of threats, while all schools are doing what is right to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of their pupils. Avon & Somerset Police encourage schools to report hate crimes and any act of hate and discrimination can also be reported confidentially to SARI, ensuring that no school has to face this hostility alone.

This is a moment to reaffirm what the Schools of Sanctuary programme is truly about: celebrating diversity, sharing truthful information about people seeking sanctuary, and standing against racism and inequality in all its forms. We are proud of our schools, proud of our young people, and proud of this movement. Together, we will continue to nurture spaces where compassion outweighs hatred, and where every child can flourish.



# Maternity Services of Sanctuary



## ***City of Sanctuary aims to:***

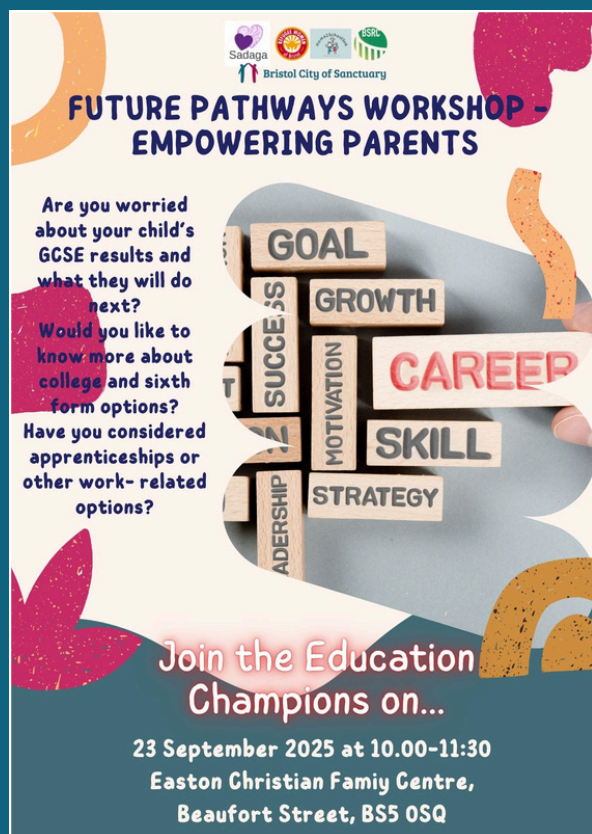
1. Promote welcome, safety and inclusion within maternity services and support groups for pregnant women.
2. Ensure that the voices of women in the asylum system are heard and considered when discussing the development of maternity related services and support groups.
3. Help families overcome the barriers they experience when accessing maternity services.
4. Develop a supportive community for women whilst providing opportunities for sharing relevant resources and best practice.

We'd like to congratulate Project Mama, who offer migrated women holistic compassionate support during pregnancy, birth and early motherhood, for becoming the first Maternity Service of Sanctuary in Bristol!

The next stage of this work is to ensure that sanctuary principles are embedded into Bristol's statutory maternity services and we're excited to be in talks with colleagues at UHBW and NBT about the Sanctuary Award.







## Education Champions!

Arwah Ismail, Education Champions Project Coordinator

After a pause with service closure over the summer holidays, the Education Champions are back to help ensure every child has the best chance to thrive in education!

*"The Education Champions project aims to support families and young people in accessing education, advice, and guidance within the community. We provide a safe space for drop-in conversations where parents and carers can ask questions, share concerns, and get practical support on navigating school systems. Our drop-ins currently run at ECFC with Refugee Women of Bristol **every Tuesday**, Sadaga Group **every Friday from 10:30am to 12:00pm** and at Somali Resource Centre **every two weeks from 10:30am to 12:00pm.***

*If you are a parent and concerned about your child's future after GCSE options, join us for a workshop on **Tuesday 23rd September, 10-11.30am at ECFC**. For more information, please contact*

*[Coordinator@bristol.cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:Coordinator@bristol.cityofsanctuary.org)."*

We reach out to schools to offer our support during any events such as coffee mornings or open days for parents who would like additional information about the schooling system and their child's needs.

## CALL OUT to faith groups:

engaging refugees and asylum seekers in their places of worship

The call to 'welcome the stranger', through protection and hospitality, and to honour those of other faiths with respect and equality, is deeply rooted in many religions. As such, **Bristol City of Sanctuary** and **Good Faith Partnership** are convening representatives from different faiths to celebrate and promote the good practice of fostering a culture of welcome and inclusion for all, especially refugees and people seeking asylum.

To find out more about this emerging Community of Practice, please contact [bristol@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:bristol@cityofsanctuary.org) and [joseph.davies@goodfaith.org.uk](mailto:joseph.davies@goodfaith.org.uk).

To learn about the process of becoming a Faith Group of Sanctuary, read the criteria guidance [here](#).



<https://bristol.cityofsanctuary.org>



[bristol@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:bristol@cityofsanctuary.org)



[@bristolcityofsanctuary](https://www.instagram.com/bristolcityofsanctuary)

# Sanctuary in Arts Opportunities

The **Sanctuary in Arts Steering Group** has continued to meet every couple of months to explore ideas and resources that widen the meaningful participation of sanctuary seekers in Bristol's arts, cultural and visitor attractions. See our new shared poster for the exciting range of opportunities currently on offer for refugees and asylum seekers!

## SANCTUARY IN ARTS: OPPORTUNITIES

...FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

### DISCOUNTED SPACES FOR COURSES, AND MORE AT BRISTOL FOLK HOUSE

20 subsidised spaces are on offer each term to refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol who are over the age of 18. Just take a look at the [upcoming programmes](#), find the full details on the website, fill in the [participant form](#) and send it to Harry at [comms@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk).

PLEASE SEND ANY QUESTIONS TO HARRY AT [comms@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk) WITH THE SUBJECT LINE 'OPEN HANDS PARTICIPANT'. PLEASE NOTE: ALL PROGRAMMES REQUIRE A SUBSTANTIAL LEVEL OF SPOKEN ENGLISH, AND SOME ALSO REQUIRE WRITTEN ENGLISH SKILLS.

You are also able to get free tickets to  [gigs and live music](#) at the cafe. Just email [events@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk](mailto:events@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk) to book!



### FREE MUSIC LESSONS, REHEARSALS AND MORE



Bursaries, which include: [free music lessons](#), [instrument hire](#) and workshops, are being offered for Primary and Secondary aged children who identify as refugees and asylum-seekers.

You are also able to pay whatever you can to attend the Today's The Day: Community Band rehearsals Oct- Dec 2023.

FOR FREE MUSIC LESSONS AND INSTRUMENT HIRE APPLY THROUGH WEBSITE OR EMAIL: [U@BRISTOLBEACON.ORG](mailto:U@BRISTOLBEACON.ORG). PLEASE CONTACT [COMMUNITY@BRISTOLBEACON.ORG](mailto:COMMUNITY@BRISTOLBEACON.ORG) FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

### FREE ENTRY TO WE THE CURIOUS

Refugees and asylum-seekers are welcomed to our science centre at no cost. This offer is for adults and children! The postcode is BS1 5DB with a nearby bus stop.



YOU CAN COME TO OUR MAIN ENTRANCE FOR MORE INFO CALL 01179151000 OR PLEASE CONTACT [INFO@WETHECURIOUS.ORG](mailto:INFO@WETHECURIOUS.ORG)

### FREE TICKETS: FRIDAY 'ELEVENSES' FILM SCREENINGS AT WATERSHED




Simply arrive at Watershed's Box Office on the day and say you would like a refugee/asylum seeker ticket. You are also eligible for a free popcorn and filter coffee or tea!

EVERY FRIDAY AT 11:00

FOR MORE INFO SEE THE WEBSITE OR CALL 01179276444



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 Bristol City of Sanctuary



## JOIN DOVETAIL ORCHESTRA REHEARSALS



REHEARSALS: EVERY TUESDAY, 2.30PM-4PM  
LOCATION: SAINT AMBROSE WHITEHALL, BUS 7AN  
PLEASE CONTACT: [HELLO@DOVETAILMUSICWORKSHOPS.CO.UK](mailto:HELLO@DOVETAILMUSICWORKSHOPS.CO.UK) FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

If you are a refugee or asylum-seeker and have any musical knowledge you can join the orchestra! They are open to all, regardless of background and experience. To join simply fill out the [attached form](#).

From the city centre you can take the 6 or 7 to Gordon Road or 42, 43, 44 or 45 to Blackwarth Road, or even local train to Lawrence Hill Station and walk 10 minutes up Whitehall Road. They can contribute to bus tickets.

## FREE TICKETS: LUNCHTIME CONCERTS AT ST GEORGE'S BRISTOL



St George's Community Ticket Club offers free tickets for refugees and asylum-seekers! There are 10 tickets and a free hot drink available a week.

SELECTED THURSDAYS/FRIDAYS AT 13:00  
PLEASE CONTACT: [COMMUNITYTICKETCLUB@STGEORGESBRISTOL.CO.UK](mailto:COMMUNITYTICKETCLUB@STGEORGESBRISTOL.CO.UK) FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

## ATTEND FREE CRAFT CLUBS, WORKSHOPS, AND MORE

Join Bristol Refugee Festival's weekly [Women's Craft Club](#). All women are welcome to come along, have a cup of tea and get crafty. Children under 12 are also welcome to join in.

EVERY FRIDAY, 11AM - 1PM IN ARNOLFINI, LEVEL 2, READING ROOM

Latin American women can join the [Latinas in Bristol Art and Craft sessions](#) for free.

EVERY TUESDAY, 4PM - 6PM IN ARNOLFINI, LEVEL 2, THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP.

[Free Family Workshops](#) are taking place where families are invited to take part in a range of activities.

NEXT SCHEDULED DATES - TUESDAY 28TH AND WEDNESDAY 29TH OCTOBER.

PLEASE CONTACT [COMMUNITY@ARNOLFINI.ORG.UK](mailto:COMMUNITY@ARNOLFINI.ORG.UK) FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

## ARNOLFINI

EST. 1961

## FREE WELLBEING SESSIONS AT TRINITY CENTRE

Trinity Centre is offering free Art for Wellbeing sessions for refugees and asylum-seekers every Thursday from Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September.

TO REGISTER FILL IN THE ATTACHED FORM OR CONTACT [JEN@TRINITYBRISTOL.ORG.UK](mailto:JEN@TRINITYBRISTOL.ORG.UK) FOR HELP TO REGISTER.



## VISIT ART EXHIBITIONS FOR FREE



RWA Art Gallery exhibitions are free for refugees and asylum seekers. There is also a Free Family Activity Space with a book corner, puppet theatre, dressing up, and more!

You will find a warm welcome, open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am-5pm

LOCATION: [BUS 15X ON QUEEN'S ROAD, OPPOSITE THE VICTORIA ROOMS](#).

YOU CAN TAKE THE TRAIN FROM BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS TO CLIFTON DOWN STATION, WHICH IS A 10 MINUTE WALK FROM THE RWA.

BUS NUMBERS 8 AND 9 RUN A CONSTANT SERVICE FROM BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS TO WITHIN 100 METRES THE RWA.



## 5 steps to more connected and welcoming neighbourhoods.



**Bristol City of Sanctuary, Bristol Refugee Festival, and Bridges for Communities** are working with community groups, schools, cafes, visitor attractions, GP surgeries, arts organisations, and places of worship all across Bristol. And we would love to work alongside you to see your neighbourhood become more connected and welcoming.

Which step would be a good fit for your community?

## Campaign for free bus travel for asylum seekers! Campaigner with lived experience of the asylum system

*"Recognising and acknowledging the need by listening to the voices of asylum seekers throughout Bristol, we have clearly identified the unanimous plea for travel assistance. We have sought to shed light on the issue of transportation difficulties faced by asylum seekers through discussions with lived experience advocates. Earlier this year we met with representatives from Bristol City Council, First Bus, a number of MPs and councillors across the political divide who all came to hear the issue first hand at the Trinity Centre.*

*Our campaign team and advocates received some expert guidance from Citizens UK who showed us how to effectively structure the campaign for success. Our upcoming meetings will aim to structure strategies and gain alliances that will push our purpose forward until we achieve overall success which will be free bus passes for asylum seekers in Bristol."*



Refugee Research Invitation -  
From Souvik Saha, PHD researcher at University  
of Exeter

My name is Souvik Saha, and I am a PhD researcher in Human Geography at the University of Exeter. My research focuses on refugee integration in the UK, and I am particularly committed to amplifying refugee voices through both academic work and community engagement. Alongside my doctoral study, I have been involved in refugee and asylum seeker education/support initiatives, which has shaped my motivation for this project.

This study explores refugees' experiences of integration into UK society, with a focus on:

- The challenges they face,
- The support systems they access, and
- The hidden or "silent" barriers that may prevent them from voicing their needs or concerns.

The research aims to amplify refugee voices and inform more inclusive and compassionate policies and services in education, healthcare, and social support. The invitation is open to **refugees in the UK aged 20–45**. Participation is voluntary, anonymous, and fully approved by the University of Exeter's ethics committee. Please contact: [ss1610@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ss1610@exeter.ac.uk)

New episode:  
The René Cassin  
Podcast

Rene Cassin has launched the start of a new refugee podcast, titled **Safe Routes and a New Promise To Refugees**. Their first guest was *Enver Solomon* from the *Refugee Council*, discussing safe routes and the vital role the media plays.

Listen on Spotify now: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/7lyK38WkqsyRN4rtDPhjte>  
Watch on YouTube now: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xyVODujSyo>

Closing words from Sukina Noor,  
Bristol's City Poet...



@SUKINANOOR

“  
‘I come from people who know  
what it means to be displaced.  
To be severed from land, from  
language, from ancestral  
custom.  
And yet—I come from people  
who survived, who adapted,  
who rebuilt.  
Who crafted homes from  
prayers and sanctuaries from  
hope  
Who built safe havens where  
their offspring could live, grow,  
and dream into a brighter  
future.  
Something about these streets  
made my grandparents say:  
This is a safe place. This is  
where I will stay.’  
”

