



April 2026

SPRING NEWS LETTER

BRISTOL CITY OF SANCTUARY

An Interview with Our New Director,
Adele Owens, After Five Months in the
Role.



What Drew You to This Role at BCoS?

I have worked with asylum seekers and refugees for 24 years, and it has always been work I feel very passionate about. Having worked at GARAS for 23 years I was ready to wind down, but after the anti-migrant riots in the summer I realised my work countering the hate and harmful narratives around people seeking sanctuary was not done.

Motivated by my experience at GARAS, I want to work with organisations that can advance Bristol City of Sanctuary's mission of creating inclusive communities that can help to counter the rising levels of hate.

How Have You Found Settling In? What Projects Are You Focusing On?

I have received an amazing welcome and support from trustees, my predecessors, and the existing team. Moving to Bristol has been a positive experience, it's been great realising the breadth and depth of support already in place. I have particularly enjoyed getting to know the different areas of work and exploring how they can connect to better support the journeys and integration of people seeking sanctuary in Bristol.

I have been particularly focused on the arts streams and health programmes, including Safer Surgeries, and have been working closely with the education team. My aim is to maintain these areas whilst also developing new streams or refreshing existing ones.

What Gives You Hope When You Think About the Future of Sanctuary in Bristol?

I am hopeful because there are already organisations across Bristol making a real difference in people's lives, often in unexpected ways.

The general tenor of Bristol is to be supportive and welcoming, and with the backing of the City Council, we are able to build and develop strong communities that stand with and support these resilient, extraordinary people seeking sanctuary.



Update on the Charity Commission



A Statement from City of Sanctaury:

We are extremely pleased to share the Charity Commission has closed its compliance case into the City of Sanctuary UK, finding no evidence of wrongdoing.

The Charity Commission has confirmed City of Sanctuary were subject to a misinformation campaign and cleared us of all allegations.

In August 2025, a misinformation campaign misrepresented a Valentine's Day craft taking place in a few Schools of Sanctuary. The Charity Commission investigated and found the allegations to be misleading and unsubstantiated. There was no evidence of wrongdoing.

The Commission also acknowledged the real impact this campaign had on our team and the schools we work with, including direct threats.

We are grateful to our staff, trustees, supporters, partner organisations and the wider Sanctuary community for their support.

We move forward with confidence continuing to build welcome, support and opportunity for people seeking sanctaury across the UK.

Read the Charity Commission Statement at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-finds-no-evidence-that-refugee-charity-engaged-in-inappropriate-activity>



Schools of Sanctuary

'Seats of Resistance Project' at Cotham School.



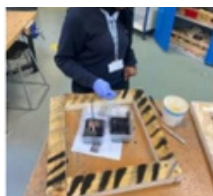
We will continue to pursue our mission to establish Schools of Sanctuary, as we believe every young person deserves to feel safe, valued and included in their school and that every parent should be reassured that their child's school is a place of kindness, curiosity and learning – not fear.

We would like to congratulate Cotham School for their 'Seats of Resistance Project' that demonstrates the power of student voice, creativity and collective action. The project has been developed by the students and centres around a circular bench designed to bring the school community together.

The project marks a powerful symbol of resistance, unity and acceptance. Resistance against the cruelties of racism and the injustices of inequality. Unity in the community they have built, and their unwavering acceptance of every student at Cotham, no matter their story, or identity.

"The circle has no beginning and no end, reflecting the continuous support and solidarity we must offer each other"

Quote from a student at Cotham School



Mental Resistance -
Mental or emotional resistance refers to a person's ability to withstand and recover from challenging situations, stress, and setbacks. This is also known as mental toughness or resilience.



Seat of Resistance

- Final Outcome October 2026 - bench to surround a School of Sanctuary tree for Black Resistance
- Created by students - each student builds and creates a
- Individualised for **Diversity**
- Assembled in **Unity**
- A resistance movement - developing strong social connections = **Seat of Resistance**



Resistance materials are substances specifically chosen for their **ability to resist** certain forces, environmental conditions, or other forms of degradation



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 www.bristolfolkhouse.co.uk. Find the full details on the website, fill in the [participation form](#) and send it to Harry at st_community@bristolfolkhouse.co.uk.

PLEASE SEND ANY QUESTIONS TO HARRY AT COMMUNITY@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 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 2025.

FOR FREE MUSIC LESSONS AND INSTRUMENT HIRE APPLY THROUGH WEBSITE OR EMAIL: LO.BRISTON@BRISTOLBEACON.ORG.UK.

PLEASE CONTACT COMMUNITY@BRISTOLBEACON.ORG.UK 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 [01179380000](tel:01179380000) OR PLEASE CONTACT 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](tel:01179276444)



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JOIN DOVETAIL ORCHESTRA REHEARSALS



REHEARSALS: EVERY TUESDAY, 2.30PM-4PM
LOCATION: SAINT AMBROSE WHITEHALL, BS5 7AN
PLEASE CONTACT: HELLO@DOVETAILMUSICWORKSHOPS.CO.UK FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

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

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 FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

ARNOLFINI

EST. 1981

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@STGEORGE.SBristol.CO.UK FOR MORE INFO/ QUESTIONS

FREE WELLBEING SESSIONS AT TRINITY CENTRE

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

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



VISIT ART EXHIBITIONS FOR FREE



RIWA 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: www.rwa.org.uk 44 QUEENSD 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.

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There has been a growing enthusiasm for climbing across the UK. Climbing gyms offer individuals a space in which it's ok to fail as you push yourself beyond your limits.

We are pleased to announce that Refugees Rock have partnered with a climbing gym in Bristol to offer regular, free climbing sessions to refugees and asylum seekers. This marks an exciting opportunity for the creation of another welcoming community within Bristol, furthering our mission of strengthening inclusive spaces where everyone is welcomed and supported.

Refugees Rock operates through a volunteer system, where members of the local community can sign up to be a 'boulder buddy'. These are usually enthusiastic climbers who are willing to help people navigate the wall, while creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

Climbing offers a unique opportunity to share experiences, regardless of language, background, age, or ability, helping to break down barriers and build connections through shared activity. The aim is to create a collaborative space where individuals can challenge themselves, work together and have fun, while developing a sense of connection and belonging to the city.

Expanding Sanctuary of Arts: Refugees Rock



REFUGEES ROCK



How to get involved:

Run a Refugees Rock Group – charities and climbing gyms – if you're not already partnered up Refugees Rock will help you find a local match.

Become a Boulder Buddy – volunteer and monthly sessions. Refugees Rock will introduce you to local opportunities as they become available.

To find out more visit:
<https://www.refugeesrock.org>



<https://bristol.cityofsanctuary.org>



info@bristol.cityofsanctuary.org

Expanding Sanctuary of Arts: SS Great Britain

We are excited to announce a new opportunity with The SS Great Britain Trust. We encourage you to get involved with the Community Research Group or the Community Advisory Group.

Community Research Group

What is it?

The SS Great Britain Trust are inviting people from the Bristol community to research and explore the ship's history through their library. The Community Research Team is a relaxed, friendly, and supportive group of people who are looking for new researchers. Previously, the Community Research team has spent time looking through letters, photos, and artefacts. Members have chosen personal interests to research further, eventually creating activities and events to share what they have discovered with friends and family.



Contact Information:

E-mail: community@ssgreatbritain.org

Phone: 0117 462 3129

Participation Details:

Members of the team have said that when they started, they didn't know what they were doing or where things might lead – but by working together, sharing skills and experience they have been surprised by what they have achieved.

The SS Great Britain Trust will cover travel costs for those who wish to take part in the project, provide refreshments and a budget to enable each researcher to realise their ideas and share their discoveries. If you are interested in this opportunity please get in touch!



<https://bristol.cityofsanctuary.org>



info@bristol.cityofsanctuary.org

Expanding Sanctuary of Arts: SS Great Britain

The Community Advisory Group:

What is it?

The Community Advisory Group is made up of representatives from a range of Bristol's diverse communities and voluntary organisations. The group meets at the SS Great Britain at least eight times per year, on a voluntary basis. The group provides a platform to participate in shaping the long-term goals of the SS Great Britain Trust and to build relationships with the museum team. They are always looking for new members, so if you are interested, please get in touch!



Ticket Information:

If you don't wish to take part in these projects but want to visit the SS Great Britain there are a variety of ticket options:

1. Community Tickets are for partner organisation to share with their members or service users in the way that works best for them.
2. Discounted tickets are available for visitors who are receiving Universal Credit or who are refugees.

To find out more on visit: [Tickets & Pricing - SS Great Britain](#)



Call Out From Refugee Welcome Homes

Refugee Welcome Homes support single refugees who have recently been granted status but aren't eligible for council housing, helping match them with spare rooms from local landlords.

Refugee Welcome Homes believe that all people should have a place to call home.

They are currently looking to grow their network of landlords. If you feel this is something you would be interested in, visit their website, [Refugee Welcome Homes](https://refugeewelcomehomes.net) to find out more or contact them at support@refugeewelcomehomes.net



REFUGEE WELCOME HOMES



SPARE ROOM? House or HMO?

Join **Refugee Welcome Homes** and reduce homelessness for refugees. Rent out your spare space to earn money and help those in need.

We support you every step of the way with a dedicated support worker and cross-cultural training.

Contact us today to find out more.
support@refugeewelcomehomes.net
07395 901 365



Refugee Week

Bristol Refugee Week: 6th – 21st June

This year's Bristol Refugee Week will bring together a diverse programme of arts, culture, education, and community events, celebrating inclusion, connection, and the many contributions of refugee communities.

This year's theme is COURAGE

The festival is curated in collaboration with a wide range of individuals, organisations, and community groups across the city, creating opportunities for people to come together, share stories, and build understanding.



BRISTOL
REFUGEE
FESTIVAL

Have an idea for an event?

You can become a Festival Event Partner by proposing your own activity as part of the programme.

**The deadline for submissions is
Wednesday 1st of April .**

To get inspired, explore the resources created by Refugee Week to help shape your event.

**To submit a proposal visit the Website:
<https://www.bristolrefugeefestival.org>**

