2025-26 IMPACT REPORT

Bristol City of Sanctuary

Building a City of Welcome, Safety and Hope

I am delighted to be writing my first introduction to our Annual Impact Report. Taking on the role in November 2025, I have been building on the excellent work of Yasmin Millican and other predecessors. For me, this is a continuation of 24 years working in the Sanctuary sector, but a change of setting in moving to Bristol. It is great to be part of a city with so much going on and such strong, existing partnerships and ambitions.

This year has seen more changes and more division, sadly. There have been some protests on the streets of Bristol and hotels targeted, but we see greater support and push back against the division and more organisations concerned to build a welcome.

As an organisation our ambition remains that of being deeply committed to building a more cohesive, compassionate Bristol. A city where individuals, communities and organisations across all sectors stand shoulder to shoulder with those seeking sanctuary. Our vision is bold and hopeful, an ambition to grow the welcome and belonging to all who are living here and for whom Bristol can become their home.

The year has also seen a growth in the team here at Bristol City of Sanctuary and there are now six of us working across different sectors. It is a great team and I want to thank each of the team and the trustees for all their contributions.

Adele Owen, Bristol City of Sanctuary Director.

Highlights from Our Year:

Schools of Sanctuary



- There are currently 20 schools of Sanctuary in Bristol with 7 schools being awarded in 2025.
- We now have four members of the team involved in education work, two working with Schools of Sanctuary and two Education Champions.
- 12 schools working towards the award in 2026 including 2 nurseries and City of Bristol College renewing.
- Safeguarding training delivered to Designated Safeguarding Leads(DSL) in collaboration with Bristol City Council.
- Continued to work with Bridges for Communities, Bristol Refugee Festival and the Bell Foundation.
- In January we began a project with Unique Voice and Asylum Refugee Clinic (ARC) that developed working and partnerships with schools.
- Working with Bristol City Council we have been writing a specific Safeguarding Policy for schools working with asylum seekers and refugees.

- The Education Champions are working within community organisations and schools, meeting with and supporting parents. They are providing a direct link between parents and schools along with running monthly workshops in communities on a number of concerns around education including school admissions, crime, SEND and Safeguarding.
- For part of the year the Schools team supported families in hotels as they accessed schools, admission and other concerns.

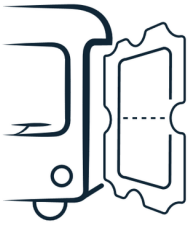
Universities of Sanctuary

- University of Bristol was re-awarded their Sanctuary Award in March 2026 and continues to award scholarships covering the full tuition fee and full living costs every year to Sanctuary Students. We are looking forward to presenting the award to the University.
- Since launching its Sanctuary Scholarship programme in 2016, the university has awarded more than 100 scholarships, with around 10 to 12 offered each year in recent years, covering both tuition fees and living costs. Over that time, the programme has grown well beyond financial support. Scholars now have a dedicated point of contact, and the university has extended its work into the wider community, with regular events to raise awareness. This reaccreditation recognises their continued commitment to welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.
- The University of Bristol appointed a sanctuary programme officer to support sanctuary scholars.
- Each year since 2020, UWE has awarded a full waiver of tuition fees and a maintenance grant for its sanctuary scholars, which UWE Sanctuary Leads have recently worked hard to increase.
- This year has also seen BCoS involved with The University of Gloucestershire as it submits its application to be a University of Sanctuary.
- Staff and students at UWE hosted the annual innovative Asylum Seeker and Refugee Wellbeing Conference in January 2026. This was a great event, an opportunity for so many across the sector to get together and to learn and share experiences. Presentations and workshops looked at wide-ranging topics of interest to all the attendees and it continues to be a great start to the New Year.
- BCoS has been pleased to continue to work with students from both Universities, including internships, students working on research projects and the opportunity to present to students in different fields at the Universities.
- Staff and trustees from BCoS have been involved in the panels for all the university assesments.

Arts Organisations of Sanctuary

- It is a delight to be continuing the work with arts groups and organisations in the City. We meet together four times a year looking at the contribution they are making in their community work and outreach. Building a network and learning from each other means ideas and development is growing.
- Training has been provided to many of the partners in the asylum experience and in trauma aware practice.
- It was a delight that both Arnolfini and Dovetail Orchestra received their Sanctuary in Arts awards this year and we have been working with the Bristol Beacon as they submit their application.
- A regular newsletter of events designed with sanctuary seekers in mind, has been produced and is regularly updated to promote events and workshops.

Bristol Sanctuary Transport Fund



- We are pleased that we have been able to continue to work with First Bus supporting access to travel across the city.
- Following the challenging summer of protests in 2025 we developed a partnership with a local foodbank to recognise what we have in common and the impact poverty has to access to travel and the impact of poverty on city wide participation where transport is an issue. This built on the work with Citizens UK.
- We held a “Weaving Trust” event at Bristol Station in November 2025 attended by a wide ranging group of people, learning from each other and considering the impact of transport poverty.
- Working with partners BRR, Borderlands and Trauma Foundation South West we have been successful in being funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation for a Campaigns Co-ordinator for a two year project. The post is hosted by Bristol City of Sanctuary. The co-ordinator began their role at the end of March 2026.

Bristol City Council as a Local Authority of Sanctuary

- Bristol City Council(BCC) Sanctuary Strategy and Action Plan 2025 - 2030 was approved in November 2025 and continues to support asylum seekers, refugees and those with unstable immigration status across Bristol with three pillars of: Meeting Basic Needs; Promoting Opportunity and Compassionate and Resilient Communities.
- The numbers supported by BCC Sanctuary Services and partners has seen a lot of fluctuation in the last year with hotels that had been used to support families being highlighted for closure during the remainder of 2026.
- BCC continues to support families arriving on Resettlement Schemes and Homes for Ukraine alongside continuing support for vulnerable families and individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds(NRPF).
- BCoS participates and contributes to the City of Sanctuary Strategic Partnership Forum as we investigate ways to increase the support of sanctuary seekers across the city.

Faith Groups of Sanctuary

- We continue to work with faith groups to encourage participation in the Sanctuary Awards recognising the vast amount of support that is provided by faith groups across Bristol.
- Faith groups have played a significant part in our campaign project.
- We have been able to join two special services for churches celebrating their awards as faith groups; Easton Christian Family Centre received theirs in April 2025 followed by St Andrews, Avonmouth in July.

Health

- We have continued to work with Doctors of the World and Public Health to grow the network of Safer Surgeries across Bristol. We have been involved in planning sessions and contributing to lunch time training events.
- Students from Bristol University have continued to be involved including supporting research in how the work with Safer Surgeries impacts the response of surgeries.
- We deleivered training to medical students on global health in the summer of 2025.

Memorial Garden







- The Sanctuary Garden is becoming a reality at last. A professional garden Designer, Karena Bathstone, has joined the project and has been instrumental in designing the garden and organising clearing, weeding and planting various areas of the Quaker Burial Ground. This has happened with the participation of people from the community that attend monthly gardening sessions, supported by the Council Parks Team and the Redcliff and Temple Business Improvement District (BID).
- Bristol City Council has appointed a landscape architect (Mena Shah) who is working on the landscape design and as soon as this is completed the project will go out to tender. We have decided to build a second entrance/exit to the garden to make it more accessible and safer for the users. This will require planning permission and this is being organised by the School of Architecture, as three members of the teaching staff are a key part of our project.
- The project is now truly embedded in the community. We have established a good relationship with St Mary Redcliffe and also with the Colosseum. The monthly gardening sessions are very well attended by people of all ages and some have applied to become Friends of the Garden.
- We look forward to further developments in the coming months that will include the provision of water for the garden, planning permission for the second entrance/exit and the completion of the hard landscape design that will go out to tender.

Influencing and advocacy

- We have continued our partnership with Citizens UK and have grown to include other partners includingBristol North West Foodbank.
- We have continued to work with a group of those living with lived experience campaigners.
- In March we visited the MShed with a group including those seeking sanctuary and foodbank representatives; a really useful opportunity to recall past campaigns from Bristolians including the Bristol Bus Boycott.
- In January a group of representatives from Bristol Refugee Rights, Borderlands and Refugee Women of Bristol, along with ourselves, met with the local MP to discuss the deep concerns regarding recent legislation and policy proposals from the government.
- We also joined a group including Bristol CAB and Bristol Law Centre to bring the legal ramifications of the legislation and policy proposals to two city centre MPs
- At our AGM In January it was really helpful to hear from Colin Yeo regarding the proposed changes and what the impact would be.

Partners and other support

- BCoS continues to work with a number of partners and partnership groups. The major one in the sector being BRASP (Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeking Partnership). The collaboration between the partners and the commitment continues even when there are difficult discussions to be had.
- A fundraising event at the Watershed in April 2025 with Child Migrant Stories was a sell out event and was a moving evening hearing powerful stories, films and live music.
- We were able to have stalls at Refugee Festival in June and also at Fowards Festival on the Downs in August 2025.
- A very succesful fundraiser was held at St Georges for Bristol City of Sanctuary performed by Bristol Concert Orchestra.
- We are grateful to all who support us through various ways including funding . Funders in the period have included Bristol City Council, Nisbet Trust, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Quartet Community Foundation, John James, Society of Merchant Venturers, and Hilden Trust and to all our generous donors - Thank you.