



September 11th, 2025

**Notice Of Meeting**

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Monday, 15th September 2025** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre.**

**Committee Membership 2025-26**

Councillor C Bowsie **Chairperson**

Councillor M Gibbons **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor J Brennan

Councillor L Devlin

Councillor D Finn

Councillor C Galbraith

Councillor R Howell

Councillor J Jackson

Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Councillor O Magennis

Councillor A Mathers

Councillor L McEvoy

Councillor D Murphy

Councillor K Murphy

Councillor J Truesdale

# Agenda

## 1.0 Introduction and Apologies

## 2.0 Declarations of Interest

## 3.0 Action Sheet arising from Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 11 August 2025

 *Action Sheet from AHC 2025 08 18.pdf*

*Page 1*

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### *For Discussion/Decision*

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## 4.0 Council of Sanctuary

*For Decision*

 *City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network - vf.pdf*

*Page 4*

 *Appx 1 - Further Information - Council of Sanctuary - vf.pdf*

*Page 7*

 *Appx 2 - City of Sanctuary Charter - vf.pdf*

*Page 12*

 *Appx 3 - Council Award Procedure and Criteria 2025 - vf.pdf*

*Page 14*

## 5.0 Crotlieve Multi Sports Hub Review

 *AHC - Multi-Sports Facilities Review 2025- Crotlieve - vf 10.09.25.pdf*

*Page 21*

 *Appendix 1 - Crotlieve MSH Review 2025.pdf*

*Page 25*

## 6.0 Kilbroney Pitches

*For Decision*

 *AHC Report - Kilbroney Park - vf 10.09.2025.pdf*

*Page 40*

## 7.0 DEA Forum Update Report

*For Decision*

 *AHC DEA Report September 2025..pdf*

*Page 47*

 *Appx 1 -Action Sheet Newry DEA Forum Meeting 3 June 2025 - vf.pdf*

*Page 49*

 *Appx 2 -Action Sheet Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting 12 August 2025 - vf.pdf*

*Page 52*

## 8.0 Consultation Response on The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy

📄 *Response to Anti Poverty Strategy 2025 - AHC - vf.pdf*

Page 59

📄 *Appx 1 - Proposed Response Anti-Poverty Strategy Public Consultation - vf.pdf*

Page 63

📄 *Appx 2 - NI Executive Anti-Poverty Strategy - vf.pdf*

Page 83

***Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014***

## 9.0 Programme Delivery Partner

*For Decision*

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act Northern Ireland 2014- information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📄 *Programme Delivery Partner - restricted.pdf*

**Not included**

***For Noting***

## 10.0 Newcastle Centre Site Selection

*For Information*

📄 *AHC - Newcastle Centre September 2025 - vf.pdf*

Page 115

## 11.0 Council Good Relations Programme Update

*For Information*

📄 *AHC Good Relations Update Report September 2025 - vf.pdf*

Page 118

## 12.0 Play Strategy Programme of Works for Year 2 and Year 3

📄 *AHC -Play Strategy Programme of Works for Year 2 and Year 3 - vf.pdf*

Page 121

# Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews  
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Cllr Callum Bowsie  
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Cllr Jim Brennan  
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Mr Gerard Byrne  
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Cllr Pete Byrne  
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Cllr Philip Campbell  
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Cllr William Clarke  
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Cllr Laura Devlin  
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Cllr Cadogan Enright  
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Cllr Killian Feehan  
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Cllr Doire Finn  
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Cllr Conor Galbraith  
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Cllr Mark Gibbons  
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Cllr Oonagh Hanlon  
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Cllr Glyn Hanna  
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Cllr Valerie Harte  
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Mr Conor Haughey  
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Cllr Martin Hearty  
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Cllr Roisin Howell  
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Cllr Tierna Howie  
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Cllr Jonathan Jackson  
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Joanne/Noelle Johnston  
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Cllr Geraldine Kearns  
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Miss Veronica Keegan  
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Cllr Cathal King  
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Cllr Mickey Larkin  
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Cllr David Lee-Surginor  
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Cllr Alan Lewis  
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Cllr Oonagh Magennis  
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Cllr Aidan Mathers  
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Cllr Declan McAteer  
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Cllr Leeanne McEvoy  
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Cllr Declan Murphy  
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Cllr Kate Murphy  
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Cllr Selina Murphy  
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare  
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Mr Andy Patterson  
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Cllr Áine Quinn  
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Cllr Henry Reilly  
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Cllr Michael Rice  
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Ms Alison Robb  
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Cllr Michael Ruane  
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin  
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Cllr David Taylor  
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly  
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Cllr Jill Truesdale  
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Cllr Helena Young  
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|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Report to:</b>                                   | Active and Healthy Communities Committee              |
| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>                             | 15 September 2025                                     |
| <b>Subject:</b>                                     | Council of Sanctuary                                  |
| <b>Reporting Officer<br/>(Including Job Title):</b> | Alison Robb, Assistant Director Community Development |
| <b>Contact Officer<br/>(Including Job Title):</b>   | Justyna McCabe, Projects Coordinator                  |

|                     |          |                        |  |
|---------------------|----------|------------------------|--|
| <b>For decision</b> | <b>X</b> | <b>For noting only</b> |  |
|---------------------|----------|------------------------|--|

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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose and Background</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1.1        | <p><b><u>Purpose</u></b></p> <p>To note the contents of this report and to consider the recommendations in section 3.1 of this report in relation to Council joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network and working toward formal recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1.2        | <p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>At the Council Meeting on 7 July 2025, it was agreed that a report would be brought back to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee outlining the process for Council of Sanctuary, and what it meant, including the Charter for the Council of Sanctuary, to alleviate any concerns that people had.</p> <p>Further information on the Council of Sanctuary Local Authority Network &amp; Accreditation is included at Appendix 1. This includes Council's current position, and information on addressing concerns and clarifying misconceptions.</p> <p>The City of Sanctuary UK movement began in 2005 and now supports a growing network of communities and institutions working to build inclusive environments for people fleeing violence and persecution. The Local Authority Network, created in 2020, includes over 170 Councils across the UK actively engaged in sharing good practice, developing strategic frameworks and supporting effective public service responses.</p> <p>By joining the network, Councils sign up to the vision and values of City of Sanctuary (see City of Sanctuary Charter attached at Appendix 2) and commit to working towards the Council of Sanctuary Award.</p> <p>To achieve the award, Councils must demonstrate a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about the experiences and needs of people seeking sanctuary;</li> <li>• Embedding the values of welcome and inclusion across their services and policies;</li> <li>• Sharing their progress and learning with others to inspire wider change.</li> </ul> <p>The Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria is attached at Appendix 3.</p> |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Key issues</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2.1        | <p>The City of Sanctuary initiative closely aligns with the Council's statutory responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, particularly in promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|            | <p>The Council of Sanctuary approach complements the Community Plan and the Corporate Plan 2024–2027, aligning with the following corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District</li> <li>• Empower communities to play an active part in civic life</li> <li>• Represent the voice of the District with our partners</li> <li>• Deliver sustainable services.</li> </ul> <p>This initiative aligns with the work currently undertaken by Community Development through its Ethnic Minority Support Centre, Good Relations Programme and Financial Assistance.</p> |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 3.1        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the contents of the report.</li> <li>2. Councillors to consider NMDDC joining the Local Authority Network and work towards formal recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Resource implications</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 4.1        | Local Authority Network membership fee of £250.00 per annum, which will be met within existing budget. If approval is obtained to achieve accreditation at a later date, there would be a fee of approximately £1,500.00.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 5.1        | <p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input type="checkbox"/></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5.2        | <p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>                                                        |
| 5.3        | <p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i></b></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p>                                                                                                                                             |

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|            | <i>Rationale:</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>6.0</b> | <b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| .1         | <p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <b>7.0</b> | <b>Appendices</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 7.1        | <p>Appendix 1 – Further Information on Council of Sanctuary Local Authority Network &amp; Accreditation</p> <p>Appendix 2 - City of Sanctuary Charter</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria.</p>                                                                                                                     |
| <b>8.0</b> | <b>Background Documents</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 8.1        | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Information on Council of Sanctuary Network & Accreditation

### Current Council Position

NMDDC has not agreed to join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network or to work towards formal recognition as a Council of Sanctuary at this time.

Council agreed at a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025 that a report providing additional information would be brought back to the Active & Healthy Communities Committee for further consideration.

### Addressing Concerns and Clarifying Misconceptions

| Concern/Misconception                                                                            | ✓ / X | Clarification                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Council of Sanctuary work influences asylum decisions, placements and/or immigration status. | X     | No - this remains within the Home Office remit. Council's role is to respond appropriately to the needs of those who arrive here for the benefit of the whole community. This initiative is intended to improve Council services for all residents as it helps create more inclusive services for all as well as resilient and cohesive local communities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Council influences who arrives or stays.                                                         | X     | No – Council responds to Home Office placement decisions and must fulfil its duties accordingly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Asylum Seekers choose to come to our District.                                                   | X     | No - Asylum Seekers <b>cannot choose where they live</b> . They are housed in temporary accommodation and do not take priority over local housing lists.<br><br>Asylum Seekers who receive Refugee status tend not to remain in the longer term in our District and currently the number is amongst the lowest in Northern Ireland Council areas – currently less than 40.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| The district is flooded with illegal migrants.                                                   | X     | The narrative has become confused between illegal migrants or people who may have been trafficked, and those who are in one of the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people who are legally seeking asylum or have been granted refugee status,</li> <li>• legal migrants,</li> <li>• individuals on student or work visas from different countries,</li> <li>• people from different countries who have lived in Northern Ireland for some time – often working here, buying property, having families and are contributing to our community.</li> </ul> |
| Council decides where Asylum Seekers are accommodated.                                           | X     | No - the placement of individuals in asylum accommodation <b>is currently managed by the Home Office and its contracted providers, not by the Council</b> . Councils do not control immigration policy or asylum decisions, and we are not                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                                                                       |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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|                                                                                       |   | responsible for allocating accommodation for asylum seekers. Our role is to ensure that all residents, regardless of their background, are treated fairly and supported so that they can integrate quickly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Council of Sanctuary is the same as Sanctuary Cities in the USA.                      | X | <p>No - a "Sanctuary City" is a USA city, county, or state limits cooperation with federal immigration enforcement agencies to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation and ensures access to local services like schools and healthcare. These policies are controversial, with proponents arguing they foster community trust and protect vulnerable populations, while opponents contend they undermine federal law and encourage illegal immigration.</p> <p>Council, in managing social inclusion and good relations work, cooperates with all statutory, community/voluntary and other partners in order to do the best for <b>all</b> our community within current Government legislation and policy.</p> |
| Council receives £70,000 for each Asylum Seeker who comes to the District.            | X | <p>No – last year Council received funding from The <b>Executive Office for Refugee Integration Funding</b>. This is to cover Council working with local groups to support cultural integration activities, and needs based projects, etc. This is not annual funding, and no funding decision has been confirmed for this current financial year as yet.</p> <p><b>Council does not directly fund Asylum Seekers/Refugees.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Asylum Seekers are living in luxury in hotels.                                        | X | <p>No - whilst some Asylum Seekers are accommodated in designated hotels as a short-term measure the number of hotels in Northern Ireland being used for this purpose has now reduced from 8 to 3. There are fewer than 300 Asylum Seekers in hotel accommodation at the current time and none within the NMDDC area.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Being a welcoming District means that Council is encouraging or attracting migration. | X | <p>No - being a welcoming District <b>does not equate to encouraging or attracting migration</b>. People do not risk everything to come here because of local services they likely know nothing about. Asylum seekers <b>cannot access normal benefits</b>. They receive only minimal support and usually cannot work.</p> <p>Supporting people seeking sanctuary <b>does not mean favouring one group over another</b>. It is about building efficient, inclusive systems that work for all residents.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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| What about illegal immigration?                                              | X | <p><b>Seeking asylum is not illegal.</b> Under international law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, anyone fleeing persecution, war, or serious harm has the legal right to claim asylum.</p> <p>As a Council, <b>we do not determine immigration status</b> - that is the responsibility of the Home Office. Our role is to ensure that anyone who is here, especially vulnerable people and children, are treated with dignity and supported in line with our legal and statutory duties.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Asylum Seekers are more likely to commit crimes than the general population. | X | <p>No - there is <b>no evidence</b> that asylum seekers are more likely to commit crimes than the general population. People seeking sanctuary are often women and children fleeing violence, seeking the same protection and safety local families hope for.</p> <p>In particular there has been an narrative around asylum seekers, refugee men and sexual offences. Data shows that in relation to Violence against Women and Girls the vast majority of perpetrators are known to the victim.</p> <p>Anecdotally feedback from Council's Ethnic Minority Support Centre, organisations we work with and even our own employees, is that there is a level of fear within the community as a result of the current climate and anti-migrant narrative.</p> |

***Being part of the Local Authorities of Sanctuary network is about supporting vulnerable people, strengthening community cohesion, and ensuring that all residents can live safely and with dignity.***

***Supporting the Council of Sanctuary movement is not about encouraging people to come to our District. It is simply aimed at ensuring those who are going through a Home Office application process, or who are legally allowed to remain in this country and have been placed in our District by due legal and governmental process, are provided with support. Individuals are assigned to areas by the Home Office while their cases are being processed. Local authorities are not involved in these decisions or allocations.***

## Background Information

Council has a long-standing history of supporting, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers through the work of our Ethnic Minority Support Centre and by providing a range of support services and integration projects. It has consistently demonstrated commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for **all** residents, including newcomer families and individuals.

Council's Corporate Plan 2024/27 set out the following Strategic Objectives:

| Strategic Objectives                                               | Key Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Measures of Success                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life</b> | <p>Development and delivery of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Electoral Area Action Plans</li> <li>• Policing &amp; Community Safety Partnership Action Plan</li> <li>• Good Relations Programme Action Plan</li> <li>• Downpatrick and Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Areas Action Plan</li> <li>• Social Inclusion Action Plan including the delivery of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre</li> <li>• PeacePlus Action Plan</li> <li>• Community Wealth Building Action Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Implementation of the Community Plan.</p> <p>Development of a Community Facilities Strategy.</p> <p>Delivery of the Financial Assistance Programme.</p> | <p>Percentage of residents who agree their local area is a place where people of different backgrounds get on well together.</p> <p>Percentage of residents who agree the Council consults with, and listens to, the views of local people.</p> <p>Percentage of residents who feel they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area.</p> <p>Number of financial assistance projects funded.</p> <p>Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office services.</p> |

## City of Sanctuary UK Movement in Brief

11

- The movement began in 2005 and now supports a growing network of communities and institutions working to build inclusive environments for people “fleeing violence and persecution.”
- The Local Authority Network, created in 2020, includes over 170 Councils across the UK actively engaged in sharing good practice, developing strategic frameworks and supporting effective public service responses.
- By joining the network, Councils sign up to the vision and values of City of Sanctuary and commit to working towards the Council of Sanctuary Award. To achieve the award, Councils must demonstrate a commitment to:
  1. *Learning about the experiences and needs of people seeking sanctuary,*
  2. *Embedding the values of welcome and inclusion across their services and policies,*
  3. *Sharing their progress and learning with others to inspire wider change.*
- Joining this network will position the Council at the forefront of best practice across the UK and Ireland, aligning it with other leading organisations in Northern Ireland that have already received Sanctuary Awards — including Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast Metropolitan College, the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and 42 schools.
- Being recognised as a Council of Sanctuary means a local authority has shown it is committed to making its area welcoming and inclusive for everyone – including people who have moved here seeking safety.
- This recognition does not give the Council any powers over immigration or who comes to live in the area. Decisions about immigration, asylum, and dispersal are made by Central Government, not local Councils. What a Council of Sanctuary does is focus on how people are treated after they arrive – making sure that everyone who lives here is treated fairly, can access support when needed, and has the chance to contribute to our communities.
- Becoming a Council of Sanctuary means a local authority is committed to being welcoming and fair to everyone in the community. The process involves the Council – in the longer term - creating a practical plan and working with local organisations to ensure services work well for **all** residents. This approach helps create a more cohesive community where everyone feels valued and can contribute positively.

# City of Sanctuary Charter

12

## City of Sanctuary Charter

We, organisations and individuals working together under the City of Sanctuary banner, share the following common vision, values and purpose:

### Vision

Our vision is that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all, and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

### Purpose

We aim to build a culture of hospitality and welcome by creating opportunities for relationships of solidarity between local people and those seeking sanctuary.

We support local and national groups and organisations to:

- Embed sanctuary principles in their everyday work.
- Learn about the issues facing people seeking sanctuary.
- Share best practice and experiences with others.

### Core Values

#### 1. Inclusivity

We welcome and respect people of all backgrounds, and we include those with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in all aspects of our work.

#### 2. Openness

We work transparently and collaboratively with a spirit of generosity, sharing resources, knowledge and power.

#### 3. Participation

We encourage people seeking sanctuary to shape and lead our work, ensuring their voices are heard and

## City of Sanctuary Charter

valued.

### 4. Inspiration

We celebrate the contributions of people seeking sanctuary and the positive impact of welcoming communities.

### 5. Solidarity

We stand in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary and challenge injustice wherever we see it.

### 6. Integrity

We act with honesty and accountability, guided by our values and by the experiences of those we work alongside.

### We Commit To:

- Learning from those who have sought sanctuary.
- Embedding welcome and inclusion into everything we do.
- Sharing our experiences and encouraging others to join the movement.

### Endorsement

By signing this Charter, we commit to building a culture of welcome, equality, and respect for people seeking sanctuary in the UK.



## Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria

### 1. Introduction

City of Sanctuary UK holds the vision that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. In order to realise this vision, City of Sanctuary UK supports [a network of groups](#), which includes cities, towns, villages, boroughs and regions across the UK, and others engaged in Streams of Sanctuary<sup>1</sup>, Sanctuary Awards and activities intended to welcome people seeking sanctuary<sup>2</sup>. For more information see our [Charter](#).

### 2. What is City of Sanctuary?

City of Sanctuary is an umbrella organisation working with 125+ local grassroots groups to create communities welcoming to people fleeing violence and persecution. To this end we apply an institution-by-institution approach striving to develop a tapestry of inclusive and accessible local organisations and services.

By fostering local partnerships between City of Sanctuary groups (where they exist), refugee and community sector organisations, people with lived experience, and mainstream organisations, we support the development of **local refugee frameworks** that are joined-up, coherent, and effective in supporting people to rebuild their lives from day one.

### 3. What are Sanctuary Awards?

The [Sanctuary Award](#) process is strategic framework for cultural and institutional change within local organisations (councils, schools, universities, colleges, libraries etc.) which ensures that

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<sup>1</sup> We call each sector that we work within a 'stream'. These Streams of Sanctuary encourage professionals or practitioners within a sector to come together and collaborate with other interested parties including people seeking sanctuary.

<sup>2</sup> A term used to describe people predominantly categorised as either a refugee or an asylum seeker (including those whose appeal rights exhausted).

they contribute to the creation of a welcoming environment for people seeking sanctuary in local communities, and that they play an active role in the wider movement for safeguarding and promoting the rights of people in need of sanctuary in the UK.

Councils, as anchor institutions, play an important role in promoting inclusion within their own institutions, the wider community, and with other local statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders. The 'Council of Sanctuary' award process and minimum criteria for recognition are therefore tailored to the specific contextual challenges and opportunities within local government, and the role they play in welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.

#### 4. The award process

The Award process usually starts with a conversation with the [City of Sanctuary UK officer](#) for local authorities<sup>3</sup>, and with your local [City of Sanctuary group](#) (if such exists). We also encourage councils to express their aspiration to be recognised as a 'Council of Sanctuary' with local refugee supporting organisations at the earliest opportunity and involve these organisations in the process from the start.

In June 2020 the City of Sanctuary Network voted at the AGM to dispense with the city-wide recognition process and to establish the Local Authority Network and the related Council of Sanctuary Award. Any local authority can become a formal member of this network, following a public commitment via a full council motion (or an informal member without a motion). To recognise the work undertaken by councils through the city-wide assessment, those councils can join as 'awarded' members but must then submit an application following the new recognition process.

A step by step guide is detailed below, but note that these steps need not be sequential and can take place in parallel:

**Step 1 – The council publicly commits to joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, and to work towards recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'.** This can be via a [motion](#) at a public committee such as Council or Cabinet.

**Step 2 – The council becomes a member of the [Local Authority Network](#) by signing the membership form.** In joining the network the council is committing to work towards the 'Council of Sanctuary' Award and is agreeing to sign up as a Supporting Organisation (this

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<sup>3</sup> We use the term 'local authorities' to include all types of local government from across the whole of the UK e.g. county councils, districts, boroughs or city councils, unitary councils, London boroughs, combined authorities, metropolitan boroughs as well as parish and town councils.

includes an endorsement of the [City of Sanctuary Charter](#)).

**Step 3 – The council engages with the City of Sanctuary local group (if one exists), local refugee organisations, and people with lived experience.** Councils usually do this via existing partnership/multi-agency (Sanctuary) forums, or where such don't exist or don't undertake strategic work the council can set one up. (There is no one size fits all approach to engagement so please ask the City of Sanctuary UK officer for local authorities for good practice examples).

**Step 4 - The council develops a strategy/framework for supporting people seeking sanctuary in the community** by embedding 'Sanctuary' principles across council services and works to promote inclusion and welcome across the wider community. Councils usually develop [Sanctuary Strategies](#) either as a standalone or as part of an existing strategy. Councils can focus on reviewing/uplifting council services, or facilitate the development of a partnership strategy which includes services provided by a wider section of local stakeholders.

**Step 5 – The council reviews the LEARN, EMBED and SHARE criteria** set out below and ensures it meets them, and when ready, applies for recognition by submitting the council specific [Awards Application form](#).

**Step 6 – The application will be appraised by a panel** which will normally include members of the local City of Sanctuary group (if one exists), people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary, representatives from local refugee supporting organisations, and members of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Steering Group (usually officers and/or councillors who have been through the process themselves). The panel assessment can be thought of as a peer review and usually results in a set of recommendations. Guidance regarding assessment panels can be found [here](#)

**Step 7 - When a local authority is able to demonstrate that all of the minimum criteria are met, the council will be awarded a 'Council of Sanctuary' for a 3 year period**, and will be given the right to use the 'Council of Sanctuary' logo to recognise their commitment accompanied by the wording:

"X....is a recognised County/District/Borough/City/Unitary/Parish/Town [delete as appropriate] Council of Sanctuary.

**Step 8 – A plan should be made for the Award presentation** to include an event/ media statement etc. to celebrate the achievement of the council (and local partners) in including and supporting people seeking sanctuary. *Please note that the small application fee must be paid before the Award is made public.*

**Step 9 –The recommendations agreed during the appraisal process should be discussed and where possible taken forward during the three-year award period.** This will inform a review (re-accreditation) at the end of the three years. A new application has to be submitted to renew the award after three years and if successful an updated certificate of recognition can be issued.

## 5. Minimum Criteria

This guidance aims to outline the minimum criteria required for the award. We would encourage local authorities to build on these in a way that best reflects their specific context.

**Criterion 1:** Pass a council motion setting out commitment to being a place of sanctuary, joining the Local authority Network and working toward the 'Council of Sanctuary' award at some point in the future.

**Criterion 2:** Join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network which includes a pledge to support the vision of City of Sanctuary and an endorsement of its charter.

**Criterion 3:** Commit to working with the local City of Sanctuary group and/or other refugee supporting organisations and/or networks.

**Criterion 4:** Show evidence of the work with the local City of Sanctuary group (and/or other refugee organisations/networks) and receive the endorsement from those groups for the award application.

In addition to the **above criteria** all Sanctuary Awards follow the Learn, Embed and Share principles:

- **Learn:** learning about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, both in general, and specifically.
- **Embed:** taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion and ensuring this progress remains sustainable.
- **Share:** sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned, and good practice with other local authorities, the local community and beyond.

The 'Learn, Embed and Share' criteria specific to councils are outlined below:

### 5.1. Learn Criteria

The LEARN element encompasses any activity that seeks to improve awareness of the sanctuary-seeking community and the reasons why people are forced to migrate. Knowledge of the asylum system or of the many challenges and institutional barriers which face people seeking sanctuary can help officers and members to reflect on how they might help and better focus their efforts. This is often best achieved by including people seeking sanctuary and finding ways to learn from them as well as about refugee issues more broadly. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following LEARN criteria:

**Criterion 5:** Awareness raising opportunities are provided, and opportunities for discussion around the theme of welcome and sanctuary are facilitated on a community level. This can be via partnership/multi-agency forums

**Criterion 6:** Evidence of refugee/asylum/migration awareness raising is included into everyday business of the local authority e.g. staff induction/training.

**Criterion 7:** Commitment to platform and amplify the **voices of people seeking sanctuary**. This can be by including people with lived experience on 'sanctuary forums' or by ensuring meaningful engagement on strategy development.

## 5.2. Embed Criteria

For City of Sanctuary UK, 'embedding' means that the local authority is taking positive action to implement welcome, safety and inclusion within services and beyond. City of Sanctuary UK would like details on how the local authority will ensure a continuation of support for sanctuary on an ongoing basis. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following 'embed' criteria:

**Criterion 8:** Produce a written strategy (either a standalone strategy or as part of a broader strategy e.g. equality, migration etc.) which is publicly available and sets out commitment of the council for at least three years. This should be **co-produced** as far as possible with people seeking sanctuary and organisations representing them.

- As part of the strategy the council should also **have a clear and transparent plan to support people with NRPF**.

**Criterion 9:** The local authority must **demonstrate how it has embedded the concepts of welcome and inclusion across the organisation**. This should show how the local authority will continue to develop and sustain a culture of welcome beyond the award. Councils often develop internal officer groups bringing together heads of service (or team leads) from various service areas that oversee the delivery of the strategy.

**Criterion 10:** The council is able to demonstrate a commitment to being an anti-racist organisation and has policies and practice in place that align to their work to become a 'Council of Sanctuary'.

### **5.3. Share Criteria**

City of Sanctuary UK will be seeking evidence that the council shares its experience of sanctuary and welcome with the wider community, local organisations and spreading the word about their welcoming efforts. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following criteria:

**Criterion 11:** The local authority publicly highlights its work in support of welcome and inclusion by making it visible on its website and noticeboards NB. Once the sanctuary award is received, we would expect the logo and a link to the webpage on the website.

**Criterion 12:** Commitment to supporting initiatives that embeds welcome and fosters solidarity between receiving communities and people seeking sanctuary e.g. participation in Refugee Week or other cultural events. As well as promoting sanctuary principles among local statutory and voluntary sector partners.

**Criterion 13:** Commitment to on-going engagement with the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network. This may include sharing resources, ideas and achievements via the network and City of Sanctuary UK website.

**Criterion 14:** Work with the national Local Authority network and local partners to identify national policy issues in order to make collective representations to the government to encourage and enable change via contributing to consultations, position statements etc.

### **6. How to complete your application form?**

Your written application needs to include:

- Evidence which demonstrates how the local authority has used the three principles of the process: learn, embed and share and how through following the process the values and principles in the charter are being upheld.
- Evidence can be collected in a variety of ways and can include self- evaluation, photos and testimony, strategic plans, training records, policies and procedures and through consulting with people seeking sanctuary.

- Applications should be concise and focused, including supporting evidence via links or an additional document.

**Q: Please provide a summary of how the local authority engages with people seeking sanctuary.**

In this section, outline the ways the local authority has engaged with people seeking sanctuary. What schemes is the council participating in? Is the council commissioning any service providers to support people seeking sanctuary. How has the local authority sought to build relationships with local people seeking sanctuary and organisations that work and representing people seeking sanctuary.

**Q: Using the 3 principles of the sanctuary award, please reflect on how you have achieved these principles attaching evidence to support your answer.**

Here we are looking for evidence of initiatives, projects, policies and progress. Even if something is ongoing, include it as it helps to build a picture of how the local authority is developing its culture of welcome. Try to be concise but don't assume that the appraisal panel has the requisite knowledge (so please explain all acronyms and give context where necessary).