From Sanctuary to Settlement - Year 2

Achievements Summary (October 2025 – September 2026)

Introduction

The second year of our National Lottery Reaching Communities-funded project "From Sanctuary to Settlement" has been a year of growth and development for Leicester City of Sanctuary. We launched our new Strategic Plan in April 2026 and have continued to work collaboratively to deliver our aims.

Through our welcoming weekly Hub, signposting and support, learning opportunities and activities, we have helped people seeking sanctuary in Leicester build connections, develop language and skills and become more confident in independently navigating everyday life. We've undertaken independent impact evaluation and the feedback is helping us to shape services around what matters most to the people who use our service.

Our numbers reflect how much we've grown since last year.

OUR GROWTH	YEAR 1	YEAR 2
People attending	**539**	**641 ↑ 19%**
Total attendances	**3,523**	**4,828 ↑ 37%**

Our year at a glance

641 People welcomed*	4,828 total attendances**	296 casework/referrals	54 volunteers including 23 service user volunteers

*Individual profiles attending

**includes repeat attendances

Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing

What we delivered

- Our weekly shared meal provided an average of **87** nutritious meals each week.
- **135** people joined arts and crafts activities
- **137** people took part in physical activity; sessions included exercise, outdoor games and wellbeing walks.
- Worked with Inclusion Healthcare to connect people with mental health support,
- Worked with Go Learn to deliver 2 "5 Ways to Wellbeing" workshops
- Delivered NHS information sessions.

Difference made:

The weekly hub creates opportunities to be creative, exercise and talk and eat together. Having this as a regular meeting place plays a part in helping reduce isolation, encouraging friendships and support networks to develop and providing a sense of routine and belonging. Our impact evaluation shows that people described improved mood, connection and opportunities to manage stress as a result of coming to the drop in. We've had Reena, the mental health and wellbeing social prescriber regularly

attending the hub, which has supported people to better access the help that is available in other settings as well as ours.

Language and Education

What we delivered

- **188** people attended our English class and **286** joined additional informal English support at the Hub.
- We expanded our language support through conversation clubs and additional reading and writing activities with volunteers at the hub
- **44** learners received assessments and registered for free University of Leicester classes during two visits; we also supported access to Leicester College and WEA courses.

Difference made:

Our impact report shows that people reported growing confidence in speaking English, making friends beyond their own language groups and asking questions independently. Informal practice helped make learning less intimidating and supported everyday communication, participation and access to education.

Employment and Skills

What we delivered

- **22** people attended the Leicester College campus tours that we organized. Some also attended the work clubs, introducing CV, job-search and careers support.
- **33** people attended sewing sessions making a range of garments and learning new skills
- We supported our service user volunteers with structured training and continue to develop this to help them become more employment ready

Difference made:

We helped increase confidence in independently navigating new places, We also helped people develop useful practical skills. We introduced people to support for employability. We started the process of supporting our service user volunteers in a more structured way, with the aim of providing real work experience and offering a route from receiving support to contributing and preparing for future work; we are developing more structured training for these roles.

Transition to Settlement

What we delivered

- From January 2026, we hosted the Home Office Asylum Move-on Liaison team at the Hub.
- Connected people granted leave to remain with support on eVisas, Universal Credit, bank accounts and housing.
- Recorded 296 casework and referral interactions across our services, including to services that support around health, education, housing, homelessness, wellbeing and participation in the wider community.

Difference made:

We've worked with partners to bring specialist advice into our trusted setting where possible. This has helped people access timely information and resolve issues more quickly, especially around the

move-on process. This has alleviated anxiety for many. We've also built strong referral pathways with
our partners, ensuring people get the information, advice and guidance that they need.

Navigating the Community

What we delivered

- We organised library visits (**24** attendances), cathedral visits (**19**), fire station visits (**36**), and visits to museums in Leicester.
- We introduced people to local services including health, housing and education and welcoming community spaces
- We showed people how to get around Leicester using the free Hop! bus
- **409** SIM cards were provided to help people stay connected and access information.

Difference made:

Visits and introductions helped people become familiar with Leicester, learn how local services work and feel more confident travelling independently. Discovering welcoming places beyond the Hub helped widen social connections and reduce isolation.

Lived Experience, Participation and Belonging

What we delivered

- **54** volunteers supported our work, including **23** service user volunteers
- **8** Sanctuary Ambassadors participated in a Resilience workshop to support teambuilding
- Sanctuary Ambassadors helped shape our strategy and activities, represented the charity at events and shared their feedback of the service.
- **2** of our service user volunteers completed training for "Volunteer ESOL" teachers and continue to support with delivery

Difference made:

We enabled people to share their skills, support others and have a say in how and what we do. We have increased opportunities for people to participate and give feedback, and also listened to what they have to say which has helped (in particular) our service user volunteers to feel valued. We have involved our community in how we work, and it supports people feeling that they are a part of the charity, and able to give back.

Partners

Our work is strengthened by partners across Leicester. We worked with Inclusion Healthcare, NHS services and GP Assist; Leicester City in the Community; Go Learn; Leicester College, the University of Leicester, De Montfort University, WEA, Workpays and Bright Paths Futures; the British Red Cross, The Race Equality Centre, After 18, Local Welcomes, St Philip's Centre and Horses for Causes. We also worked with Leicester's libraries, museums, Cathedral, fire station, community policing team, family hubs and midwifery services. For settlement support we worked with the Home Office Asylum Move-on Liaison team and referral partners including Help the Homeless and The Bridge. Since January 2026, we have chaired Leicester's Multi-Agency Forum (MAF), bringing local organisations together to identify emerging issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees, share good practice and coordinate joined-up support.

Independent Impact Evaluation Summary

Our independent evaluation (February–August 2026) combined 37 survey submissions, 19 individual conversations and two in-depth discussions. It found that belonging and social connection are the foundation for change: a welcoming, dependable place helps people build friendships, communicate and take part in community life.

Of those answering each question, 28 of 30 (93%) said the charity made a difference to everyday life; 33 of 33 felt more welcome; 32 of 33 felt more connected to their community; and 27 of 29 felt less alone. Participants also described greater confidence, independence and opportunities to contribute through volunteering, teaching and helping others.

These are participants' reported experiences of interacting with our service. The full Independent Impact Evaluation Report is available on our website.

Looking ahead

Growing demand for our service and limited space remain challenges. We will continue expanding accessible English learning, improving support for volunteers, strengthening referral pathways and listening to people with lived experience. Our aim remains simple: to help people seeking sanctuary feel safe, connected and able to build their lives in Leicester.