

# Annual Report

For the financial year

1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



This report covers how over the past year, Swansea City of Sanctuary has focused on strengthening partnerships and building new connections across the city. It gives highlights from the Sanctuary Awards achieved this year, the success of Refugee Week 2024, and discusses other important activities we've been involved with. It brings attention to the challenges we are facing, particularly around funding and volunteers, and gives examples of the ways you can support us.

## 1. Making and strengthening connections

On the basis of last year's discussions and reflections on how to implement the objectives of SCoS and on our potential role(s) within the sanctuary movement and in the wider community, we have been strengthening our existing connections and forging new ones, particularly through our new [Community Cohesion Project](#) and through the Swansea Asylum Seeker and Refugee Coordination group, both of which are described below.

We also have a presence on the Sanctuary Panel of University of Wales Trinity Saint David and on Swansea Council's Swansea Ukrainian Response Partnership. We continue to keep in touch with the wider City of Sanctuary (CoS) community by participating in Wales-wide and UK-wide virtual meetings with members of CoS UK staff and other CoS groups.

Our input to the Lleisiau Profiadol initiative at Swansea University's Department of Social Work has continued. Our representatives, who have lived experience as sanctuary seekers, take part in various awareness-raising events organised for the students and take part in regular core group meetings between the department and representatives from other sectors.

We welcome all opportunities for further cooperation. We are particularly keen to connect with and support groups, organisations and businesses that do not themselves operate within the sanctuary sector but wish to explore ways in which to show support for sanctuary seekers and help in making Swansea a place of welcome for all. On request, we can deliver a *Speak Up for Sanctuary* session, based on material created by City of Sanctuary UK, which describes

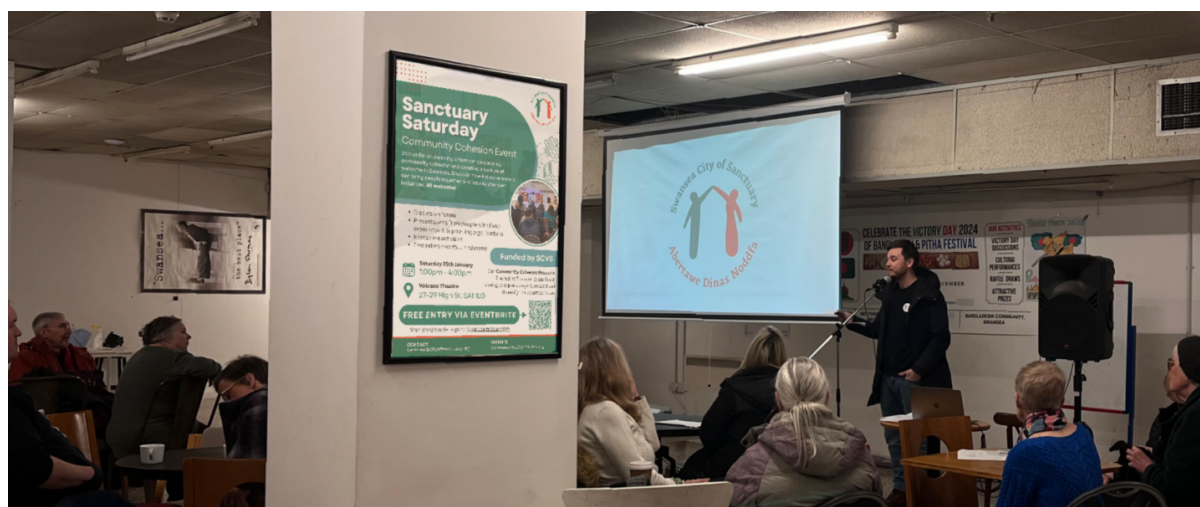
how to counter anti-migrant sentiments by means of non-confrontational dialogue.

### *1.1. Asylum Seeker and Refugee Coordination Group*

Originally convened by SCoS during the pandemic, to facilitate the sharing of information between voluntary and statutory organisations active in the sanctuary sector, the group continues to meet on a regular basis with SCoS Management Committee member Tom Avery acting as chair. Over the past year, it has welcomed new members from organisations that were not previously represented. The group has proved a very useful forum to exchange information, obtain the views of the various organisations on matters that concern us all, and explore possibilities for joint actions/events and funding applications.

### *1.2. Community Cohesion Project*

Following a successful presentation to the annual meeting of Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS) members, SCoS became one of the first two recipients of a grant from the Alun Evans Fund. The purpose of the grant is to support us over two years in experimenting with new approaches to increase and diversify our volunteer base. We decided to take the route of promoting community cohesion, particularly involving areas and communities in Swansea where our voice has been less heard in the past.



*Sanctuary Saturday event at Volcano Theatre*

Our launch event 'Sanctuary Saturday' was in January, which brought together about 70 participants who listened to excellent presentations and conducted lively discussions concerning the key questions:

- What does community mean to you?
- How can we involve more people in our communities?
- What would make a good Community Cohesion event? (venue, activities)
- Resources needed

The findings from the event are available to view on our [website](#).

Since then, we have provided modest financial support for several events that meet our criteria:

- Apart from giving SCoS a visible presence by means of either a presentation by a SCoS member, displaying some of our exhibition banners and/or having our leaflets available, cohesion elements at these events should include at least one of the following:
- Opportunities for people with and without lived experience of seeking sanctuary to interact and have a good time together.
- Raising general awareness and stimulating discussion about the realities of asylum to counter the negative messages appearing in some of the mass media; we have an exhibition with content to support this objective.
- Encouraging people to feel more confident about responding in a non-confrontational manner if a friend, relative, work colleague, etc. expresses hostile sentiments about asylum seekers; we have a *Speak Up for Sanctuary* presentation and associated handbook produced by City of Sanctuary UK on this topic.

Please contact us if you have a suggestion for an appropriate event that you could organise within your region and/or community in the context of this project. Events that focus on one or several of food, music, sports and other outdoor activities were among the top wishes listed by Sanctuary Saturday participants.

### *1.3. Faith-based communities*

We were invited by Uniting Church Sketty to give a presentation during a service held in September to celebrate Adella Pritchard's 25 years as a church community worker. This was attended by members of other congregations as well and enabled us to develop further contacts among churches. A recording of the whole service is available on YouTube: [Stephen Richardson's presentation about SCoS starts at 33:48 minutes](#).

Some churches have expressed interest in working towards a National Sanctuary Award and we will gladly support them in this. We also wish to develop contacts with communities from other faiths.

An interfaith conference on sanctuary issues has been suggested several times in previous years, but we do not currently have sufficient people to take this forward.

If you are interested in helping us expand our work with faith-based communities in any way, please get in touch. We would love to hear your ideas and welcome you as part of our team.

### *1.4. Sports*

We have been making connections with football clubs to explore their involvement with sanctuary seekers and how this could be extended. This included meeting with Swansea City AFC Foundation to discuss closer co-operation and to look at the potential for the club to start the process of become a Football Club of Sanctuary.

One of our [Sanctuary in Politics](#) graduates in Swansea investigated the perceptions and experiences of young asylum seekers regarding participation in sports for her course project. She is eager to look at the feasibility of initiatives to encourage and facilitate such participation. Please get in touch with us if you belong to a sports or physical recreation organisation/group that might be interested in becoming involved such a project.

## 2. Sanctuary Awards

One of the most important areas of activity for us continues to be helping to implement the National Sanctuary Awards conferred by City of Sanctuary UK.

The subgroup that works on **Schools of Sanctuary** awards was particularly busy and four new schools received their awards at a special ceremony during Refugee Week in June when we celebrated the exceptional achievements of [Gyfun Gŵyr](#), [Parkland Primary](#), [Sketty Primary](#), and [St. Illtyd Primary](#) and their commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision.

We are delighted to say that Swansea Library Service has been recognised by CoS UK as a [Library Service of Sanctuary](#). The commitment of the library staff had been evident right from the start of the process, and they totally deserve this recognition. Some of us attended a [celebration](#) in August. In addition to speeches and poetry, this included SCoS Management Committee member

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Funmi Olaniyan teaching us to sing nursery rhymes in Yoruba with the corresponding actions, an activity Funmi has presented to children in libraries around Swansea.

Other award applications are currently under way, and we are looking forward to some celebrations during Refugee Week 2025. You can find more information about the awards process and the various award categories at the [City of Sanctuary UK website](#).

### 3. Refugee Week 2024

Refugee Week is the world's largest arts and culture festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking asylum. In 2024, the theme was 'Our Home', which invited people across the world to consider what home means to them.

#### 3.1. Sing for Sanctuary



Sing for Sanctuary event held at St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's Church was filled with music and song as we hosted our very first Sing for Sanctuary choir concert and fundraiser, initiated and organised by former SCoS chairperson Alan Thomas with help from our Treasurer, Stephen Richardson. Held as part of Refugee Week, the event brought together a diverse range of choirs and performers in celebration of sanctuary, welcome, and solidarity with people seeking asylum here in Swansea.

The event raised over £1000 for SCoS and created lots of interest. We are very grateful to have received sponsorship from: Alan & Elaine Griffiths, Postcode Lottery Community Fund, Western Bay Community Cohesion Team and Welsh Refugee Council. [See our website for a full report and video clips](#).

### 3.2. School art competition

In addition to their hard work implementing the Schools of Sanctuary awards and organising the awards celebration event described above, our wonderful Schools of Sanctuary team organised a competition across schools in Swansea to explore the theme of Refugee Week 2024: *Our Home*. Students were asked to make either a poster of welcome that can be shared within their community, or a digital fact file about famous refugees and their contributions to life in the UK. You can see all the [winning entries](#) on our website.

## 4. Other activities

Our 2024 AGM took place on 10<sup>th</sup> July online. We welcomed Elaine Rees, Gillian Hull and Sweeta Durrani onto the Management Committee. Stephen Richardson was re-elected as Treasurer and Krys Williams was elected as Secretary.

Several Committee Members worked on our CIO application. Members of the Committee who agreed to be among the initial Trustees of the CIO also underwent Level A and B safeguarding courses. The application was submitted in November, but we have not heard anything definite yet.

Two Committee Members attended the 'Train the Trainer' sessions organised by CoS UK over three days. This will enable them not only to present the Speak up for Sanctuary course but also train others to present it.

The Committee has held discussions to clarify the membership structure, and its proposal will be presented for acceptance at the 2025 AGM.

A subgroup of the Committee has developed a system for phoning our Members and Supporters, including scripts and a volunteer roster. The aim is to connect with our community, update individuals and organisations on our recent work, and strengthen our relationships.

SCoS is supporting a [Sanctuary in Politics](#) graduate and Management Committee member, Sweeta Durrani, with initiating a proposed project centred on providing practical advice to refugees faced with problems around family reunification.

We have a subgroup of the Committee who have worked on updating our exhibition, and secured funding from Western Bay Community Cohesion Team,

to cover the costs of the graphic design and banner production. We are very grateful to Gower College Swansea for providing translation into Welsh at no cost to us, as well as Tony from AW Graphics & Design for putting the designs together.

We met with Tonia Antoniazzi, MP for Gower, in November. We discussed our activities in SCoS and the difficulties sanctuary seekers face with respect to high public transport costs, homelessness, and family reunification. Given Tonia's positivity during our meeting, we look forward to working with her to promote sanctuary issues in and around Swansea. You can read our blog about this meeting [on our website](#).

Management Committee member Martha Ako attended Aberystwyth University's Refugee Week event, where she gave a presentation about SCoS, the Sanctuary in Politics course and being a Sanctuary Ambassador. She also presented poems she had written for Refugee Week.

Martha also made a speech on asylum seekers needing the right to work at the Sanctuary in the Senedd event in November and presented a poem she had written.

All at SCoS were saddened by the rise in racism and anti-migrant sentiment that blew up in summer following the Southport murders, and by how it made the sanctuary seekers we know feel even less secure. Martha made a powerful speech on this topic at a rally in Cardiff and a [transcript](#) is available to read on our website.

SCoS members have been present at rallies in Swansea, which were organised throughout the year in response to demonstrations by right wing groups that have a strong anti-migrant and "stop the boats" focus.

## 5. Challenges

SCoS faces major challenges with respect to resources, in terms of both people and funds. We urgently need to find solutions that will allow us to continue the work we have done so far and ideally also expand into new activities and initiatives.



## 5.1. Funding

**Funding remains a constant source of worry**, particularly due to the difficulty of getting core funding through grants and the increasing difficulty of getting grant funding of any sort. Not having obtained CIO status yet excludes us from a large number of potential sources of funds.

Having an assured regular income through monthly donations from supporters would give us a measure of security. In addition, being able to show this is the case would put us in a stronger position with some grant-awarding bodies. For this reason, we would ideally like our supporters to consider donating to us on a regular basis through our [Local Giving page](#). Of course, regular or one-off donations by any other route as well as through Local Giving are also very welcome.

There are easy ways to support us financially, other than direct donations:

- [easyfundraising](#): Any SCoS supporter who shops online can help us at no cost and with no effort by signing up to easyfundraising. Each time you shop with a retailer participating in the scheme, a percentage of what you spend will come to us. Installing the easyfundraising browser extension means that you will be asked whether you wish this contribution to be made whenever you enter the retailer's website; no need to go to the easyfundraising website first.
- [Lotto Abertawe](#): By choosing Swansea City of Sanctuary as your cause when you sign up with Lotto Abertawe, you could win prizes while supporting us.

## 5.2. Volunteers

**We also need volunteers** in any capacity, either to help on a regular basis in one of our subgroups or on a one-off basis at events or to work on a specific task. We have no minimum commitment requirement but leave it up to each volunteer to decide how much time they can give us, how often and what they would like to do for us.

We need **people with lived experience as sanctuary seekers** to take an active role in SCoS. We need your voices to be heard all over Swansea, to make people aware of the realities faced by asylum seekers. We also need to hear

your voices within SCoS itself and want your contribution to directing our work, so that what we do stays relevant and addresses the important issues.

We particularly need **people with the skills to help us with fundraising** via grant applications and fundraising via event organisation. We also need people with media skills and people with general financial skills.

We need **people with the creativity and imagination** to think of new approaches we can follow. We need people who are happy to be in the public spotlight, but we need people who are happy to work in background just as much.

In short, if you share our goal of making Swansea a place of welcome to all,  
**we need you!**

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Drafted by Krys Williams on behalf of Swansea City of Sanctuary.