

Secretary's Annual Report 2025-2026



Barnsley Borough City of Sanctuary work has continued due to the fantastic teamwork of all those involved, people with lived experience and people without. Thank you to the Refugee Council and the Barnsley Refugee Advice Project, who have been fantastic partners.

The ever-changing national rules around asylum have made this year particularly difficult. This has been accentuated by the tone of public discourse around asylum particularly online. City of Sanctuary nationally and locally have been targets of inaccurate information and abuse. This is particularly hard when we play a role in safeguarding some of the most vulnerable people in our Borough.

Our affiliation agreement with national City of Sanctuary was reaffirmed last year. I have worked together with other local City of Sanctuary groups in the region to share good practice. I have represented the Voluntary and Community Sector as the Barnsley representative for Migration Yorkshire in 2025-26 and as a result have attended a number of meetings and conferences.

We have held successful community events working with partners to bring people together with asylum seekers and refugees sharing food, music and other cultural activities. Refugee Week in 2025 included BMBC Libraries and Museums both becoming places of Sanctuary and St. John's Penistone Primary School announced as the first School of Sanctuary in Barnsley. Refugee Week 2025 included a poetry workshop, film showing, craft activities and a theatre group visit. We attended and had a stall at events organised by Barnsley College, Flavours of Christmas in Worsborough and the Volunteer Fayre organised by Barnsley CVS.

The Celebrating Our Communities event in November 2025 at the YMCA was a fun day bringing all communities together in the town demonstrating welcome for all. The event brought people together, sharing ways to collaborate and helped foster a wider sense of community and belonging. This event included food and music from different cultures, craft activities, games, entertainment, facepainting and Zumba dancing.

Our regular monthly meetings at 3pm on the first Monday of the month are now at the Quaker Meeting House in Barnsley. Thanks to George Arthur our Chair who ensures everyone who attends is included and involved in the discussions and decisions. Our new Treasurer Wafaa Ghafari has done an excellent job collating and presenting our accounts. Our regular individual donations are invaluable but our income will be squeezed over the next year as the Household Support Grant for travel, food and clothing ends. Funding for our excellent newsletter edited by Liz Wallis in 2025 and made possible with funding support from Penistone Refugee and Asylum Support Group has also finished.

Other officers who are doing a great job include Melica Kiani our new Social Media Officer, Frank Parnham our Distributions Officer and Fran Postlethwaite our Schools of Sanctuary lead, I am proud of all our officers, volunteers and supporters in these uncertain and difficult times.

. Steve Ruffle (25/05/26)