



Annual report 2025

Highlights

HBTSR has been in existence for ten years with the aim of providing support and welcome to people seeking sanctuary. We do this by offering days out, raising money to help both individuals and groups who assist people seeking sanctuary and by campaigning for more humane asylum policies and laws.

- **Welcome Days:** Throughout this year we have continued with our programme of Welcome Days and kept in touch with our supporters by e-mail and monthly group meetings on Zoom – to increase attendance in our widely dispersed rural area and enable colleagues in Swansea to join. We have focused upon encouraging schools to become recognised as Schools of Sanctuary and our County Council to be a Council of Sanctuary.
- **Hardship support:** We have raised money to support individuals and families
- **Campaigning:** we continue to [campaign for people seeking sanctuary](#) in conjunction with the Together with Refugees coalition, pressing for more humane policies on asylum, quicker and more effective processing of applications and better understanding and support.
- **Communication:** our email newsletters, social media and zoom meetings reach a steadily growing body of support. We're trying to revive in-person meetings (abandoned during the Covid-19 pandemic) and held a first, successful hybrid meeting in Talgarth in mid-October. However, distances in this large rural area mean that Zoom meetings enable more supporters to attend, as well as our friends in Swansea and Newport.

- **Fundraising:** This year we had several innovative fundraising projects. A local Vicar arranged sponsorship for her first haircut since the start of the pandemic and raised more than £700. A Brecon art gallery in conjunction with two local artists hosted an exhibition of Brecon High school pupils artwork which was sold raising over £1,500 for us. A curry evening held with a local Gurkha group raised over £2,000 which was shared with us.
- **Grants:** A generous grant by the Gibbs Family Trust has helped us to run our Refugee week schools competition and award prizes. It also helped us to pay for speakers who have sought sanctuary to visit schools, to buy books for schools of sanctuary and to help to purchase some laptops to enable sanctuary seeking pupils to cope with school work. A grant from Bwyd Powys Food has directly helped us to run our welcome days and also support local businesses and food producers. This is complemented by the many local businesses and food producers who have supported us for many years.

- **Extending sanctuary:** we have worked steadily to support local schools to become Schools of Sanctuary, and our council, Powys, to become a Council of Sanctuary. The Welsh Government has already published a plan for being a Nation of Sanctuary.
- **Schools competition:** We ran a third successful [schools competition](#) to celebrate Refugee Week . The awards evening attracted over 200 people to Brecon Cathedral. The winning entries were displayed in the following weeks in Brecon Cathedral, Hay Castle, Ysgol Y Mynydd Du/ Talgarth Library and St Cattwg's Church Llangattock.
- **Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:** We had a day out with Newport Social services again when they paid for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under their care to have a day out at a multi-activity centre and with our grant we arranged for a BBQ for them all to enjoy. The grant also helped with a picnic lunch for a day out on Llangorse Common for the EYST homework club families.
- **Recognition:** We were also recognised as 'Voluntary Group of the year' in the Heart of Brecon Awards in July and invited to the Brecon Mayor's Civic Service.
- Continued support of the Ukrainian people living locally with a day out in Llandrindod, Attendance at welcome days, a trip to Winter wonderland in Cardiff and a New Years Eve party in Talybont. Rhiannon Davies works hard with the Powys Ukrainian support team to ensure that the Ukrainian families are well supported.

Welcome Days

These are single-day visits to a particular community or venue, where people seeking sanctuary can enjoy a 'day out' in the countryside and share hospitality and activities with the local community. Many people benefit from these days out – not only people seeking sanctuary but also the host communities and the organisations who support them. There are great benefits in working together for a common goal and providing activities that local communities can access alongside visiting sanctuary seekers. Community cohesion and intergenerational working are immediate benefits that hosting areas have noted. New friendships have formed both within the local community and among people seeking sanctuary.

We were fortunate to be given a substantial grant from Bwyd Powys Food that paid for transport and towards some food for all of our Welcome Days and catering for our Refugee Week awards evening. BBNPA paid for transport to a Welcome day in August. As always our generous supporters supply most of the food as part of their contribution towards welcome, providing lunches and teas for up to 200 people at a time.

People seeking sanctuary who live within our local area are also invited to the Welcome Days and helped to integrate and feel welcome. For this we continue to work closely with Beacons for Ukraine and with others who are supported by Powys County Council. Most of the Ukrainian people who now live in Powys are well integrated and rarely feel the need to attend welcome days. We have however arranged a few events specifically with them, including a Christmas party and a summer all-Powys get together in Llandrindod. Thanks are due to Rhiannon Davies for her hard work in ensuring these events take place and are successful. We are beginning to offer support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who are under the care of Powys Council.

Most Welcome Day visits are held in collaboration with Swansea drop-in support groups SASS and UID who compile lists of those sanctuary seekers who wish to attend – with frequent revisions as people drop in and out – and help them to reach the departure point for transport. Many thanks to Thanuja Hettiarachchi who has undertaken most of this work and without whom these trips would not be possible.

Welcome Days 2025
Reports of all of these can be found on our website (hbtsr.org.uk)

| Month | Venue | Hosts – local communities with additional help from: |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <u>March</u> | Llangorse | Llangorse Community Hall and School, Melrose East, Penny Scruby and Alison Eagle, Black Mountains Taiko Drummers and Thanks to the Morgan Family for allowing a farm visit. |
| <u>April</u> | Penpont | Vina and Gavin Hogg, Margaret Blake, Jackie Oliphant, Fiona Cloke, Kate Thomas, Emily Hedges. |
| <u>June</u> | Brecon High School | Meriel Gillespie and many High School students and families, Rowland Jepson, Sally Morris, the Nepali Community, Gail Sequeira, Nicola Jones, Janet Williams, Alfie Dan's Market Garden, Black Mountains College and Pobl Bakery |
| <u>July</u> | Talgarth Ysgol Y Mynydd Du | Dee Foster, Tara Morgan, Carol Hoskins, Lawrence Duffy, Nicola Jones, Ysgol Y Mynydd Du PTFA, and many others! |
| <u>August</u> | Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Visitor Centre, Libanus | Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Francesca Bell, Jackie and Rob Thomas, The Big Skill, Melrose East, Lis Lifford, Adil Gatrad and family, Gail Sequeira. |
| <u>August – UASCs</u> | Llangorse–Newport Children and Young People Services UASC | Llangorse Community Hall, Llangorse Rope and Riding Centre, Dara, Lynne and Philip Oliver, Lawrence Duffy, Ailsa Dunn |
| <u>August EYS</u> | Llangorse common- Ethnic Youth Support homework club and families | Powys Sports development, Robbie and Garnie of Lakeside Caravan and Camping Park, Pat Hope, Ailsa Dunn, Melrose East, Rhiannon Davies, Gaynor Kavanagh and many others. |

| <p style="text-align: center;">Welcome Days 2025 <i>Reports of all of these can be found on our website (hbtsr.org.uk)</i></p> | | |
|--|--------------|---|
| Month | Venue | Hosts – local communities with additional help from: |
| <u>October</u> | Llangynidr | Llangynidr Village Hall, Llangynidr school and parents, Red Lion pub, Coach and Horses pub, Walnut tree shop and cafe, Church & Chapels, Tessa Craig, Lucy Lancaster, Mike Gatehouse, Katherine Mason, Helen O'Sullivan, Lizzie Dutton, Rachel Cadman, Ailsa Dunn, Thanu Hettiarachchi, Claire Armstrong, Rowland Jepson, Adil Gatrad, Louise Quah, Wendy Murray, Graham Craig, Rhiannon Davies, Sue Dale, Lizzie Dutton, Simon (Purple Carrot), Sarah Farr, Nadia and Tim Epping, Jean Barnes, Natasha De Gouveia, Cath Watkins,, Gibbs Family, Yolanda Sidler, Thomasin Toohie and Lesley (The Hallelujah Joes), Katherine Mason, Graham Craig, Loretta and Steve, Arthur Cadman. |
| <u>November</u> | Clyro School | Claire Armstrong, Lynne Oliver, acting Headteacher Heulwen Stevens, staff, parents, School Friends and Governors, HBTSR supporters, Melrose and Rob, Philip, Chris, Lis, Margaret, Nadia, Tim, Carola, Sue, Gez, Christina, Ian, Virginia, Adil, Annie, Gail, Angharad and many others. Hay supporters, including Kieran from the Castle Greengrocers Shop, Hay Wholefoods, Tom from Gay on Wye, Pobl at Talgarth Mill, Emily and the Quilting group |

Our thanks to all those communities and organisations who made these visits possible. All events involve many others from the communities and many HBTSR supporters, in addition to those listed here. Many who couldn't attend contributed food, money and gifts.

Some of the feedback we receive from our guests:

- *We offer many thanks to all those that made this such a fantastic day for everyone involved. We have benefited from their hospitality. Their kindness is so appreciated, The beautiful lake visit given us chance to get in some fresh air. I feel beautiful on this day. Also the farm visit with sheep has been a very new experience for my tender age children. Thank you for bringing back my childhoods into my family*
- *It was an amazing day I really did enjoy so much – the people there attend us very nicely they were very kind to us, offered us hot and cold drinks, lots of different delicious foods. [It] was a great trip for me to meeting new kind lovely British people. I love it thanks to you all and thanks to people who does do this awesome organisation...hopefully next trip my name will be there again would love to*

go see new places and have new experiences meet new peoples once more thank you all of you for that amazing trip today.

- *I just wanted to tell you how much we all enjoyed the trip last Sunday. We were blessed with good weather and everyone had a wonderful time. I acknowledge and appreciate that time is a precious commodity. Every person there on Sunday gave up their free time to warmly welcome a group of people who in general are not made to feel welcome. The efforts made by those who amongst other things prepared, cooked, served, cleared up, set up games, arts and crafts, kite flying, football, tennis, apple pressing, organised walks, sang in the choir, arranged flowers and offered massages to weary shoulders, was huge and greatly appreciated.*
- *The food was nutritious and delicious. Home cooked food tells people that someone has put effort and care into preparing a dish. Homemade cakes, fresh fruit and salads are something that our friends do not have the luxury of, on a daily basis. Old, young and 'in between' all had a chance to step out of their real world and enjoy the warmth and welcome that the community and friends of HBTSR offered. They left clutching donations, food and fresh flowers with smiles on their faces and a lightness in their hearts. On behalf of SASS and our friends, I extend heartfelt thanks to anyone and everyone who contributed to the day. You will never know the difference you have made in a world which is increasingly intolerant and misinformed.*
- *I believe this time in nature would be particularly beneficial for those who have faced significant challenges. We feel that providing positive experiences for these younger individuals can be particularly impactful. Even if it's not possible this time to arrange a trip, thank you so much for being such truly fabulous people with such big hearts. Your willingness to welcome and support everyone without any distinction makes me so emotional every time I think of you.*

Hardship fund

Established in the early days of HBTSR to meet urgent or one-off needs, and guided by a small group of advisers, we can usually respond to Hardship Fund requests within 24 hours. All decisions are subsequently discussed at HBTSR monthly group meetings. Individuals are asked to apply via one of the sanctuary seeker support groups we work with who help us to assess and balance local needs.

Most requests in Swansea are now handled locally, with HBTSR providing regular block grants to the drop-in centres (see *Devolved Hardship Funds*, below).

| Month | Amount | Detail |
|--------------|---------------|--|
| January | £500 | After gaining refugee status he discovered he now had to pay for course fees to pass his L2 accountancy exams. |
| February | £240 | Family moved short term to accommodation at a distance from their schools. Bus fares needed so 3 children didn't need to change schools. |
| March | £300 | Fund to obtain legal advice on case preparation |
| March | £60 | Train fare for man to attend hospital appointment after he was moved unexpectedly |
| April | £291.95 | School fees for 3 children for 2 terms in Africa supported by their mother who was unable to work. |
| April | £115 | Verification needed for High school diploma so new Refugee could attend college. |
| May | £150 | To pay for a van to help pick up household furniture to be distributed among several households. |

| | | |
|-----------|---------------|--|
| June | £200 | For storage of belongings of asylum seeker admitted to hospital. |
| August | £370 | School fees, uniforms and books |
| September | £200 | To give small amount of support to destitute man for 10 months |
| September | £184.29 | 3 nights accommodation for mother and newborn when moved precipitately by HO |
| October | £400 | To support enable wife to stay nearby while husband in Singleton Hospital for cancer treatment. |
| November | Loan of £3000 | Exceptional request to help a care leaver refugee needing to apply for leave to remain or risk deportation to a country she left over 15 years ago. Loan underwritten by local supporters and being carefully monitored. |
| December | £90 | School blazers for 2 teenage refugees who have just moved school and need to fit in.. |

Devolved Hardship Funds

Since 2022 we have given periodic block grants directly to SASS as a devolved hardship fund allowing decisions and money to be made available on the spot by people who know the need. The three volunteers Maria, Bev and George who receive and administer individual payments send in regular reports to HBTSR group meetings and these are included in our minutes. We are very grateful to the people at 'the sharp end' who spend this money wisely and carefully.

In addition, there is need for footwear as many new arrivals in Swansea have either inappropriate or very worn footwear. Maria uses a mail-order footwear company with bargain prices. Giving people new shoes rather than secondhand ones helps to restore a degree of dignity and sense of self-worth.

Feedback: During these challenging times, it is both heartwarming and reassuring to know that for our work in Swansea we have your ongoing financial and moral support. Your generosity means more to us than words can express.

Current circumstances have presented us with unprecedented challenges, leading to greater needs than ever before. Having access to this fund enables us to offer practical acts of kindness and compassion, where we might otherwise have been unable to assist.

Moving-on Fund

This was set up in March 2021 to help people with newly granted refugee status with the expenses of emergency accommodation and setting up a new home, as they were obliged to leave supported accommodation at very short notice. Up to £200 per Family/Person can be given and spent as needed. Applications are made via volunteers and the usual agencies. There was less demand this year, possibly due to the government extending the 'moving on' period to 56 days. However the announcement in the summer that this period is reverting to 28 days may mean more people need this fund and help with emergency accommodation costs in the near future.

Asylum Justice Sanctuary Fund and Legal matters

Asylum Justice, the only organisation in Wales providing specialised immigration advice and representation for people seeking sanctuary, has been completely inundated with work. For the past three years, we have made block grants to Asylum Justice to help with obtaining expert reports and other essential documentation required in asylum hearings. Unfortunately, due to their overwhelming workload, they were unable to provide report on the use of this fund. In

November they were able to submit a report and re-establish regular contact with us, enabling us to send further funds to support their work.

Their report includes:

S, a Pakistani woman fleeing severe domestic and honour-based violence, was at risk of return to a country where state protection is largely inaccessible to women in her situation. Thanks to your support, we were able to commission an expert country report and a document authentication report which played a critical role in securing a positive outcome - the Home Office withdrew their case and granted her status before the hearing, sparing her the trauma of recounting her abuse in court.

This is just one example of the life-saving impact your support makes possible.

This expert report cost £2,400 each, which means the fund has now been fully used. As the political and media environment becomes more hostile - and legal aid gaps continue to widen - asylum claims are becoming increasingly complex. Expert evidence is not a luxury; it is often essential to securing justice. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and the role you've played in helping us fight these cases

HBTSR also holds some funds donated specifically to help with legal cases such as to pay for short reports, fares to travel to hand in paperwork, translations etc. This money is ring-fenced with decisions on use made by a small HBTSR group with help as needed from others. A single small payment was made this year.

We have also agreed with SASS that in specific cases when they have worked upon someone's case and need some legal advice, we can help to pay for this. They have managed to find a retired Immigration solicitor who will help for a much-reduced fee. Two such payments have been made.

An example:

I'm writing to ask if HBTSR could offer £200 to obtain a legal opinion from G, a Barrister, for a family preparing their second Fresh Claim. G has kindly agreed to review the papers and guide us on the best way forward. We've exhausted every option in trying to find a solicitor, and this is the only practical step left. G's fee is just a fraction of the usual professional rate, and he's generously willing to help.

This family has had no legal advice at any stage and were denied the right to appeal after both their Substantive Decision and their first Fresh Claim. As a result, no judge has reviewed the Home Office's decisions, and their case has never been properly presented from a legal standpoint. This is particularly unfair to those with limited education, Language skills and support. We continue to share the work of trying to assist people to put their history into a coherent narrative form

Courts support group

People seeking sanctuary are understandably very anxious about attending immigration tribunal hearings and we have been able to offer moral support this year by accompanying 3 individuals to their hearings. We have a leaflet on our [website](#) explaining our role as observers and to provide support.

Other Activities

At the start of Lockdown in March 2020, ShareTawe asked if we could accommodate a man who would otherwise have been homeless or placed in a hostel/dormitory. The owner of a local holiday cottage agreed to make this available and HBTSR was able to befriend, help with subsistence and ensure that he was safely accommodated. Since April 2022 he lived with a generous local host family. Unfortunately, his asylum case is still not resolved. Recently he applied for asylum support and has now been granted this with accommodation elsewhere. We still maintain contact.

Friendship and support

Many HBTSR members keep in touch with individuals they meet at welcome days and we have maintained contact with support groups. We are told that this is greatly appreciated and helps to sustain, bolster and encourage others.

Goods

Until the start of lockdown in March 2020 we were often given large amounts of clothing, bedding, toys, household and kitchen items that were of use to people seeking sanctuary both here and abroad. In March 2020 we stopped collecting goods as none of the drop-in centres were open and we had nowhere to send items. We have now restarted in a small way with kitchen, small household items, sewing machines, garden tools and digital devices that can be distributed at Welcome Days or via SASS.

Ty Mawr Lime continue to provide us with a warm, secure storage area where we can keep things that are needed for Welcome Days and items needed by Support groups. We are extremely grateful for this

Bicycles

Bikes continue to be donated to Newport Sanctuary for their cycle refurbishing project. Drovers' Cycles and Vanessa have continued to collect bicycles which are transported to Newport by Vanessa. We are very grateful to everyone who has donated bicycles and given storage or transport. These bikes have allowed so many people freedom to travel.

Newport Gap Sanctuary hold regular bike maintenance sessions in city centre premises offering a secure bike park and space to refurbish and maintain bikes. They credit our support for helping to start and maintain this popular activity.

We donated bikes to 4 of the asylum seeking teenagers under the care of Powys Council who are living within Powys. These were a mixture of newly bought and locally refurbished bikes and will give freedom to those who receive them.

Sewing Machines

Tools for Self Reliance Cymru kindly let us have machines that are not suitable to be sent to their partners in Africa and some other kind people have also donated machines. These allow people to make clothes for themselves and their families and have formed the basis of successful sewing groups in both Newport and Swansea. Swansea Asylum seekers support have identified a sanctuary seeker who is able to repair machines. 36 machines have been donated this year

Digital devices

We receive many more requests than we can help with. In December we purchased 20 laptops from Every Child online to ensure the 'UASC' supported by the Council in our area have access to laptops for work, training and educational purposes. These would not otherwise be available via the council/Home office.

Christmas and Eid presents.

For a number of years, HBTSR has helped Swansea sanctuary-seeking support groups with Christmas celebrations and part of this support has revolved around gifts donated by Breconshire schools, churches and supporters. This year was no exception and four schools and two churches responded generously. Money is also given to help with Christmas food.

A donation was given in April to Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association via our trustee Adil Gatrad to buy gifts for Eid. The amount was match funded .

Schools of Sanctuary

One young Ukrainian, Sofiia, spoke movingly about the importance of schools being sanctuary, for herself and others:

Three years ago, I arrived in Wales from Ukraine because of the war. I was just a teenager, only 11 years old, leaving behind everything I knew – my home, my friends, my language and my dad, who

is still in Ukraine today. I didn't know what my future would look like. I didn't even know how to say how I felt.

I still remember my very first day at School, when I met Mrs G. She smiled and asked me how I was – and all I could say was “so-so.” That was the only phrase I understood... and honestly, it was the only one that truly described how I felt. I was lost, scared, and unsure of who I was in this new place. But from that very moment, Mrs G never stopped believing in me. She didn't just support me as a teacher – she supported me as a person. She listened, she cared, and she reminded me – again and again – that I belonged, and that I was stronger than I thought. She gave me a safe place when everything else in my world felt uncertain.

And I wouldn't be standing here today without the people who carried me through. To my parents – who gave up everything to keep me safe. To our amazing sponsor – who gave us not just a home, but hope, warmth, and a chance to start again. Kindness can really change people's life, and I'm reminded of that every single day. To my granny, my brother, and to every teacher, friend, and person who saw me not as a refugee, but as a human being with dreams.

This award is not just a certificate or a title – it's a symbol of hope. Of kindness. Of what happens when people choose to open their hearts to those who need it most. Thank you for helping me feel at home – when home felt so far away.

Encouraging local schools to be formally recognised as [Schools of Sanctuary](#) has become a particular interest for HBTSR. We have a small group of Trustees and supporters who undertake these activities. We are helped by the Church in Wales [encouraging all its schools](#) to apply, recognising that Schools need to be welcoming and safe places.

This year, Llangattock CIW primary school, Crickhowell Primary school, Ysgol Y Mynydd Du Primary school and Brecon High school were all recognised as Schools of Sanctuary, joining Llangors Church in Wales and Cradoc Primary schools.

Clyro Church in Wales, Archdeacon Griffiths, Hay on Wye Primary schools and Gwernyfed High school are working towards this recognition. Several other schools are considering joining this scheme, despite misinformed commentary in some media reports.

Refugee Week Art Competition: We invited all local schools to enter a [writing and art competition](#) for Refugee Week and eight schools entered with nearly 500 entries. We held a very successful [awards evening](#) at Brecon Cathedral on 20th June. We were privileged to have awards presented by Chair of Powys County Council William Powell, Deputy leader of Council Matthew Dorrance, Sanctuary seekers Ludmila Souproun and Michael McBaye, Brecon Mayor Marie Matthews, MS Jane Dodds and Major Khusiman Gurung from the Nepali Village project.

Fundraising/ Awareness raising activities

Our generous supporters have ensured that we are able to continue our work. Some give regularly by direct debit. We encourage donors to donate via [CAFDonate](#) and hope soon to enable donors to opt for GiftAid, if they are UK tax-payers, which would increase the value of each donation by 25%. We also receive donations at many of our Welcome Days.

Fundraising events and activities included:

| Date | Event | Details |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| January | Rev Liz Bramley's sponsored haircut. Curry evening with Gurkha community [proceeds split with them- £1590 cost and £2400 raised and split] | Raised £800 £1200 |
| | Gibbs Family Trust | £3,000 |

| Date | Event | Details |
|-------------|---|---|
| February | Launch of Big Raffle (Draw in October) | £2,434 Coordinated by Lawrence Duffy. Prizes donated by a local business and supporters |
| | Bwyd Powys Food | £4000 to support our community gatherings as they focus upon provision and sharing of healthy locally produced food. |
| April / May | Found Gallery | £1,518 Exhibition of art by Brecon High school students supported by Vivienne Williams and Geoff Lloyd. The work was exhibited at the Found Gallery, and the paintings sold with all proceeds to HBTSR |
| | Hay festival Awards evening in Cathedral | Bucket collections & street stalls £2598 £291 |
| August | Llangynidr Agricultural Show | Stall |
| September | Second tranche of Grant from Bwyd Powys | £4,000 |
| November | PAVO community Conversations sessions | Stalls in Hay and Brecon |
| November | Fundraising meal at Zeera | Raised over £800 |
| December | Hay Fair Trade winter market | £217 |

Hay Festival

Hay on Wye is always busy during festival week and offers a great opportunity to talk about our group and raise money. Hay Festival allowed us to make two collections after events and Richard Warr gave us use of his front garden for a stall for the whole first weekend.

Thanks to the generosity of the many festival-goers we were able to raise a substantial amount for our activities. Thanks to Penny, the Box Office team and Hay Festival Chief Executive and Trustees and to Richard for all help and support. We remain grateful to Hay Castle for its support.

Homes for Ukraine, Wales Super Sponsor , Beacons for Ukraine

We have worked closely with Powys County Council and the Ukrainian resettlement programme. We work closely with Beacons for Ukraine [we hold money for them] and helped them to run a Ukrainian Christmas party in January. In July Rhiannon arranged a day out in Llandrindod for all Powys Ukrainians to meet up . In December a trip to Winter Wonderland , The National Museum and Christmas market was popular. On New Year's Eve a party in Henderson Hall Talybont was opened to 29 Ukrainians to join in. Some of these activities had grants from The Powys Ukrainian support team and some were funded by Beacons for Ukraine with support from others. Ukrainians living locally have an open invitation to all Welcome days but now feel less need to meet together in this way as they have other established links. We hold/administer monies for Beacons for Ukraine.

Powys 'Dispersal, Resettlement' and Unaccompanied asylum seeking children 'UASC'

As all areas of the UK are now expected to receive people seeking asylum, we strive to work with Powys council to support both UASC teenagers and others arriving in our county. We have established good links with the Resettlement Officers and personal advisers and are able to respond quickly to requests for help.

A recent example: a support worker contacted us in September about whether we could help with provision of bikes for two unaccompanied asylum seeking teenagers. Trustees immediately agreed and we were able to buy 2 new bikes with helmets and lights and also to provide 2 good secondhand bikes, helmets and lights for use by other residents in their sheltered accommodation to avoid creating tensions. We have since also found bikes for 2 teenagers in Llandrindod and Laptops for many of the teenagers allocated to Powys.

Lobbying, Awareness raising and Education.

Throughout the year we have continued to highlight important petitions and causes. We have been helped in this by the regular briefings of Asylum Matters and updates from Lift The Ban Coalition and Together with Refugees.

We have regular correspondence with our MP and regional MS.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Migration Act in conjunction with the 'Together with Refugees' coalition. Our activities are described on our website. We held [a lovely day at Hay Castle](#) on 14 February to highlight the need for fairer kinder asylum laws. On this occasion Hay school pupils were able to join us to participate in some crafts and to learn a little about seeking sanctuary and the importance of welcome.

We presented a handmade book of Parliamentary immigration bills to Hay Castle. The beautiful blue book was hand bound by Rebound Books using copies of some of the 2019-2024 Conservative government's immigration Bills – The Illegal Migration Act and the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and immigration) Bill. The pages were overwritten with messages of empathy, humanity and welcome, turning documents that were designed to continue a hostile environment into a thing of beauty and support.

We have information boards in Brecon Cathedral and displayed our Schools competition work in Hay Castle, Ysgol Y Mynydd Du/ Talgarth Library, St Cattwg's church Llangattock and Brecon Cathedral. We also had information stalls which sold our raffle tickets at Hay Festival and at Llangynidr show.

For Refugee Week, Brecon Cathedral hosted an exhibition of the schools Refugee week competition. We held an awards ceremony for pupils who entered our Refugee week competition and a very successful Welcome day at Brecon High school.

We have worked with schools to encourage them to become recognised as Schools of Sanctuary and helped them to celebrate these awards.

We also send information about our activities to local papers regularly and maintain a presence on social media. We decided to withdraw from X (ex-Twitter). We post regularly on Facebook and Instagram.

In November an HBTSR team wrote and submitted [a detailed report](#) to the Home Affairs Committee of Parliament's inquiry 'Routes of Settlement', based on our work and case studies of the experiences of people seeking sanctuary.

Website and social media

The website is maintained by City of Sanctuary and Ailsa with help from Mike and Yannick. It contains all our newsletters, reports, event write-ups, policies and links to other groups.

| Channel | Followers/ Subscribers at 1 December 2025 | Maintained by |
|----------------|--|---|
| Facebook | 1,300 | Public group with posts approved by Steve and Ailsa |

| | | |
|----------------|-----|--|
| Instagram | 59 | Re-launched this year as hbtrefugeesanctuary and maintained by Tamara and Maria |
| Email | 495 | Subscribers to our newsletters, which are written by Ailsa with details of meetings, activities, updates, and petitions. |
| X (ex-Twitter) | | We withdrew from X this year |

We officially withdrew from X/Twitter this year.

Graphic design: we are very grateful that Neil and Cate continue to help with design of our leaflets, certificates and posters to ensure that we have a consistent, recognisable and effective visual presence.

Administration.

Meetings: All are welcome to attend our regular, monthly Group meetings (currently mainly by Zoom, though this is reviewed regularly). Meetings hear and discuss reports on activities, income, expenditure, any issues, plans and seek views and aim for consensus about future work. In October we had a hybrid meeting whereby many met at Talgarth Library – thanks to volunteer Librarian Jan – and others were able to join online. We will restart these in March and if the meetings continue to attract more people we will offer this option regularly .

Policies: all are on our website and are reviewed annually by the Chair and trustees. We have nearly 500 people on our mailing list who receive regular mailings.

Bank account: with two signatories is with Lloyds Bank. We have finally gained access to internet banking which will ease the work of the Treasurer.

Officers and Trustees: are appointed at the AGM with Trustees able to co-opt additionally as needed. Trustees have met twice this year and have kept in touch regularly.

HBTSR Roles & Responsibilities (as of December 2025)

Please let us know if you'd like to take on or assist with any of the roles listed above.

| Post | Name | Responsibility | Appointed |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Chair and Trustee | Margaret Blake | | Jan 2025 |
| Treasurer and Trustee | Lawrence Duffy | | October 2016 |
| Secretary and Trustee | Ailsa Dunn | | October 2016 |
| Other Trustees | Melrose East | Risk Management & Welcome Days | Dec 2017 |
| | Meriel Gillespie | | February 2025 |
| | Adil Gatrad | | (*Nov 2021) Jan 2022 |
| | Claire Armstrong | Support | Jan 2023 |
| | Lis Lifford | | Jan 2023 |
| | Rowland Jepson | Schools of Sanctuary | Jan 2023 |
| Safeguarding Lead | Dr Aideen Naughton | | |

| Post | Name | Responsibility | Appointed |
|---|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| Hardship Fund advisers | Mike Gatehouse | | |
| | Lynne Rogers | | |
| | Lawrence Duffy | Treasurer | |
| | Margaret Blake | Chair | |
| Social Media | Steve Buzza | Facebook | |
| | Ailsa Dunn | Facebook | |
| | Tamara Mascarenhas / Maria Duggan | Instagram | |
| Risk Management | Melrose East | | |
| Legal Fund Group | Margaret Blake, Lawrence Duffy, Maria Duggan, Rowland Jepson, Philip Oliver, Mark Seymour, Marilyn Thomas | | |
| Policies | Mike Gatehouse & others | | |
| Ukrainian support Lead and link to Beacons for Ukraine. | Rhiannon Davies | | |

Thanks to all our supporters and friends for all that you have done this year to help raise the profile of and to directly help people seeking sanctuary.

Ailsa Dunn

31 December 2025