



City of Sanctuary

Annual Review 2015/16



City of Sanctuary is a grassroots movement of local people and organisations in cities, towns and other places across England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. We are committed to creating a culture of welcome and safety, especially for refugees seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

Wherever refugees go in our neighbourhoods, schools, businesses, public services, faith groups, etc. we want them to feel safe and to find people who welcome them, support them, include them in their activities, recognise and celebrate what they can contribute and understand why they are here.

Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Coordinator's Report | 3 |
| A map of our network | 4 |
| Back to our Roots—Sheffield Celebrates 10 Years | 5 |
| Our local groups in action | |
| England | 6—11 |
| Ireland | 12 |
| Wales | 13 |
| Scotland | 14 |
| Sanctuary across Europe | 15–16 |
| Sanctuary in Parliament | 17—18 |
| Streams of Sanctuary | 19—21 |
| Our National Team | 22 |
| Chair's Report | 23–25 |
| Financial Report | 26 |

Network Coordinator's Report

2015 – THE YEAR EVERYTHING CHANGED

Often we move along quietly, business as usual, from one month to the next, one year to the next, and we might mark small changes and modest growth with a special anniversary or landmark. As City of Sanctuary entered its tenth year, we thought of ways of celebrating the steady growth and quiet impact we've been having and setting out new plans. But then came the summer, and life changed forever. The needs, the desperation, the challenges, the responses, the generosity, the opportunities and the stretching all hit superlatives that we could never have imagined. We are on new and uncharted territory and we're still drawing on all the wisdom we can find to make a map. This is a report of our tiny part in a massive global story that has the chance to define humanity.

2015 was the year that refugees moved to the top of the media and political agenda – the year that produced the greatest refugee crisis since World War 2. We can no longer think locally without an awareness of what is going on across Europe and across the world. At best, the headlines triggered the 'revolution of generosity', with a grassroots response to the crisis in villages, towns and cities across UK, Ireland and far beyond. At worst, we are witnessing the insidious rise of xenophobia, islamophobia and walls of fear and prejudice springing up across borders and in the public parlance. The challenges that have arisen with the polarisation and negative discourse surrounding the recent referendum are a sober reminder of the vast challenges facing us. However, we believe that our core message of a culture of welcome and inclusion, backed up locally in a thousand unique volunteer-driven practical activities and a strong core of awareness raising, has a key and unique role to play. The evidence of the past twelve months is that many people agree with us.

2015 has changed everything for City of Sanctuary also – we now have groups established or starting up in almost 80 cities, towns, and villages. Our demographic has changed – the 'village of sanctuary' or 'county of sanctuary' has become a reality in several places, and having a city of sanctuary group in a non-dispersal area is not only feasible but commonplace. Groups are far more conscious of the bigger picture, with many supporters volunteering time and resources in Calais, Lesbos and other crisis spots. Resettlement is no longer a sideline topic, and we have been active in advocating for change and helping the change to take shape. Three years ago there were 750 resettled refugees per year allowed into UK, and the government said they would not increase this quota. Now, resettlement is taking centre stage as the mantra of 'safe and legal routes' has become part of public parlance and politicians feel compelled to respond. The number of additional places is now 20,000, and the momentum and advocacy goes on. Let's never forget that change can happen.

We hope you'll enjoy reading this report and that it will give you a snapshot of what has been happening. Highlights include the

ten year anniversary in Sheffield; Birmingham, Brighton and Tees Valley celebrated as new Cities of Sanctuary; new places like Waterford, Durham and Lancaster shaping into significant local movements; Belfast, Gloucester, Malvern and Stirling preparing for their first ever resettlement groups; villages offering sanctuary holidays and respite breaks for asylum seekers; the mushrooming of schools of sanctuary across our network; deeper and stronger partnerships across and beyond the sector and Wales, keen to become the first nation of sanctuary. December 2015 was a momentous finale to the year: a vibrant, dynamic Sanctuary in Parliament with 200 refugees, supporters from countless partners and friends and MPs from all parties and all over the UK aligning themselves with us. The last thing that happened during this extraordinary year was the unexpected outpouring of generosity and good fortune as we were selected as one of the Guardian charities to receive a large grant from the kind donations of readers.

As we moved into 2016, we realised



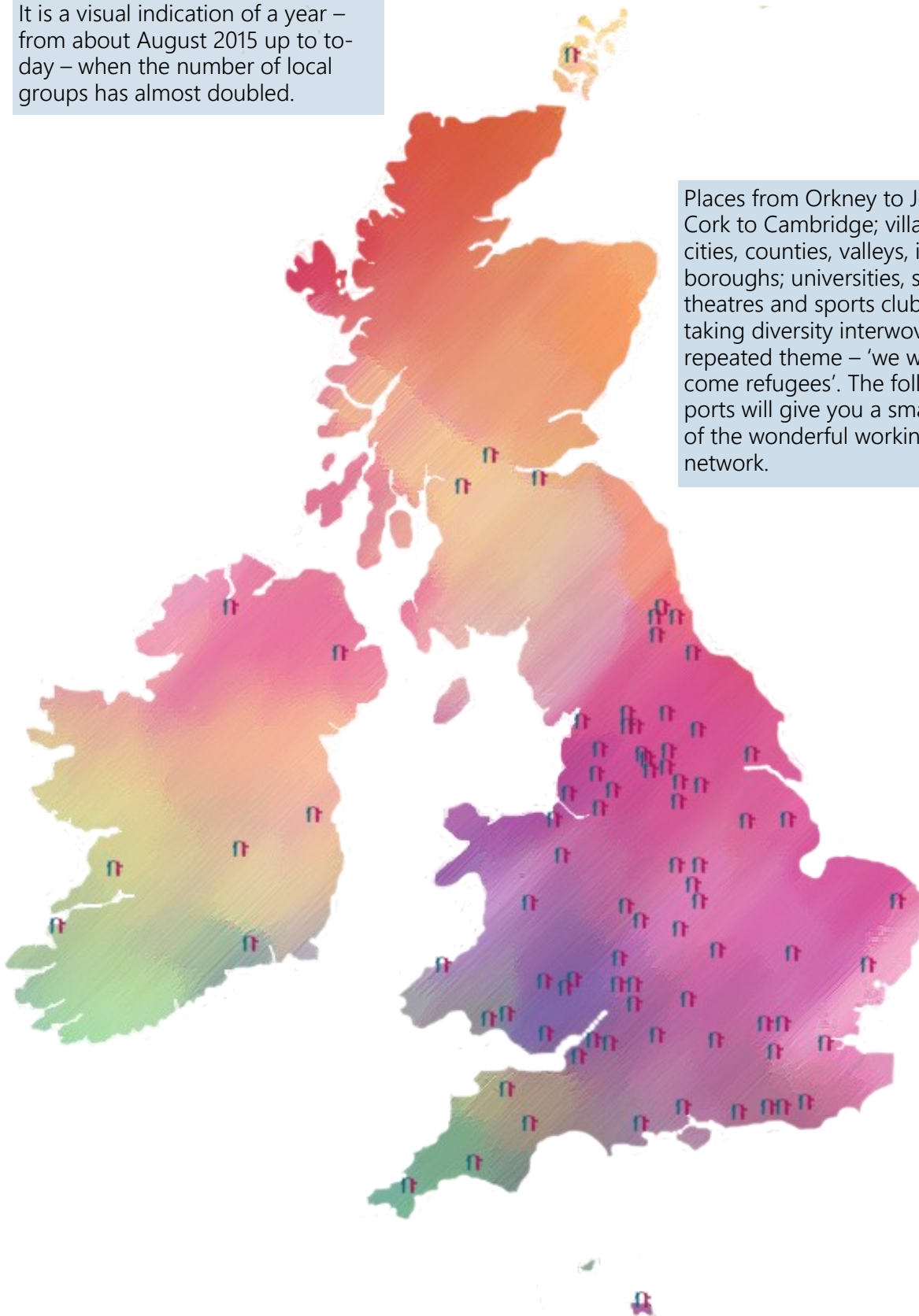
Dublin Welcomes Refugees Event

more and more that if everything has changed, we too need to change and adapt. We need to ensure that our accountability matches our increased profile, and we need fresh strategies to ensure that our core values are maintained as we adapt to greater size and more complex structures. We need to recognize that we are part of a much bigger picture and actively building and nurturing partnerships – the sanctuary movement – should be part of our DNA, not just something done by one or two people. And we need to make sure that we are listening to the heartbeat of the movement, the concerns, needs and amazing strengths of our local groups. We have begun to decentralise so that the staff and trustee teams can be better structured to serve the network and vision. We realise that change can be unsettling and even traumatic, and we'll need to listen carefully and be ready to admit we've made mistakes. Both Alan and I will be changing roles during 2016 and new leadership will be coming in. As we gear ourselves up for this bumpy but exciting ride, let's remember the wise advice of Inderjit Bhogal, our founder, and offer sanctuary to ourselves and one another as the foundation for reaching out to a world in more need of sanctuary than ever before. May I end by saying a huge thank you to our network, the wonderful group of coordinators, volunteers, supporters, for the sanctuary you have repeatedly offered me. You have welcomed me into your celebrations, your committees, your conversations and your lives. You've made me feel as if every local group is my home. You have affirmed, strengthened and energized me and given me hope when everything around looked hopeless. Never underestimate your power to affect lives far beyond your wildest dreams, and to change the world.

A Map of our Network – June 2016

This map gives you an idea of how much we have grown as a network since our last annual report, which showed about 40 cities and towns. It is a visual indication of a year – from about August 2015 up to to-day – when the number of local groups has almost doubled.

Places from Orkney to Jersey, from Cork to Cambridge; villages, towns, cities, counties, valleys, isles and boroughs; universities, schools, theatres and sports clubs; breath taking diversity interwoven with a repeated theme – ‘we want to welcome refugees’. The following reports will give you a small flavour of the wonderful workings of our network.



This map is intended to give an overview of our network; we apologise for any inaccuracies.

BACK TO OUR ROOTS – SHEFFIELD CELEBRATES 10 YEARS



Inderjit, Craig, the Lord Mayor & Tiffy hold hands in the image of City of Sanctuary

City of Sanctuary celebrated the achievements of the first decade of the movement. The message of one of the movement's founder, Rev. Inderjit Bhogal OBE was that this should not make us complacent about the continuing challenges for asylum seekers. About 200 people joined the celebration at Sheffield's Victoria Hall, where Inderjit welcomed the recent upsurge in public support for refugees, but stressed the need to keep up the pressure on the Government to do more to help those fleeing Syria and other countries. The event was attended by Sheffield Lord Mayor, who awarded certificates to volunteers of City of Sanctuary for their contribution in promoting the work of the Sheffield group. Also in

attendance was Councillor Talib Hussain, CoS National Coordinator Tiffy Allen and Inderjit's fellow founder Craig Barnett.

Speakers from partner organisations working for sanctuary in Sheffield echoed the importance of everyone working together under the banner of City of Sanctuary. Akoi Bazzie, who came here under the UN resettlement scheme reminded us that Sheffield was the first city to host the Gateway Programme, for which he now works. The vision behind the Gateway scheme works hand-in-hand with practical action. Gina Clayton of ASSIST, Ralph Hancock of the Conversation Club and Paul Harvey from the Volunteer Centre illustrated the different ways the word 'Sanctuary' gives meaning in the city – transforming attitudes and enabling us to see others as people, rather than the "other". Fear and hatred damage everyone, and City of Sanctuary is there to challenge these negative attitudes; to highlight the importance of providing a place free of prejudice and to free people from prejudice. Face-to-face encounters transform people, and can help to achieve this. Inderjit warned that the recent outpouring of concern and compassion might not last, but that the relationships we build now will last and that it is crucial for us to continue to maintain critical services for asylum seekers such as advice, teaching English, and many more. "It is relationships and friendships that change hearts and minds and we need to focus on helping people get to know each other and find creative ways to connect, because we never forget *people*." He concluded with the words:



"Be human; Be hospitable; Always challenge hatred"

OUR LOCAL GROUPS IN ACTION

Sanctuary in England

Durham, Gateshead,
Newcastle, Sunderland,
Tees Valley

The North East

The North East is an area of high dispersal and is supported by well-established CoS groups in **Newcastle**, **Sunderland** and **Tees Valley**, which was officially launched as a City of Sanctuary to great fanfare in Refugee week 2015 and covers Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees. They meet regularly as a region and their range of activities continue to inspire each other and the network. In addition to a wide range of awareness work and events to connect asylum seekers with the host community, the North East supports work with libraries and museums, needs assessment, language provision, hosting and other streams of sanctuary such as faiths, schools and the arts. New groups were formed in 2015 in **Gateshead** and **Durham**, and both have quickly become established and are thriving.



The Streams of Sanctuary have influenced significant improvements in access for asylum seekers to welcome events and new activities such as sports. Schools of Sanctuary are thriving and spreading in Tees Valley and Newcastle. Sunderland still holds its annual Walk for Sanctuary and Sharing Stories of Sanctuary events, providing opportunities to build networks and raise awareness of the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees. In 2015, the walk was along the coast and included a ferry crossing the Tyne, reflecting the long journeys that asylum seekers make. The crossing of water added poignancy and significance in the light of the thousands of refugees who die crossing the Mediterranean and petals were thrown over the side of the ship in memory of those who lost their lives seeking safety in Europe.

Resources are shared across the region and its excellent visual resource has been updated – a myth busting leaflet which folds into a credit card size, which was originally produced in conjunction with the Police and Crime Commissioners for Northumbria, Cleveland and Durham.





North West

The number of groups in the North West has increased dramatically this year, but we know it as a region with deep sanctuary roots; for ten years it has hosted over half the resettled refugees coming to the UK.

Manchester has recently completed an in-house training programme for volunteer sanctuary seekers, who will now take up defined responsibilities at regular conversation clubs and other social events. English language classes have started and are well attended, and there is a successful arts project based at the Royal Exchange Theatre involving a small group of members which will culminate in a public event in the summer. A bicycle training and maintenance initiative was recently established with a partner organisation so that several members are now safe riders and kitted out with bikes, safety equipment, locks and air pumps, thus liberating them from the challenges of costly public transport. A young persons group has been established to provide age-appropriate activities for those sanctuary seekers who are aged between 17 and 21 years old.

Liverpool continues to make tremendous contributions to the welfare of its sanctuary seekers, despite facing issues with funding, and has shown great generosity as a group and as a city by helping to host and care for asylum seekers, who now having to travel considerable distances to Liverpool to present their fresh claims in person. Liverpool also played host to a Schools of Sanctuary Conference in November.

Jeff Morgan, one of our trustees, visited **Bolton, Blackburn & Darwen, Oldham** and **Warrington** to speak about the CoS movement to representatives from statutory and voluntary services in these towns. Other CoS groups have put down roots in **Lancaster** and the **Wirral**.

Blackburn, Bolton
Lancaster and Morecambe
Liverpool, Manchester,
Oldham, Warrington, The
Wirral





Yorkshire and the Humberside

City of Sanctuary groups are growing both in number and in strength in Yorkshire and the Humber. Newly formed groups have sprung up in **Malhamdale, Skipton, Ripon and Barnsley** and they have been supported by the more established groups in **Bradford, Leeds, Hull, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Wakefield, Doncaster and York**.

Of all the established groups, York has the fewest asylum seekers, but its council are engaging with the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme and York volunteers are involved in supporting the work of others cities including collecting donations and providing day-trips for sanctuary seekers to visit the city. 120 asylum seekers in the region benefited from this programme, which is soon to be extended to week-long stays. York is developing a model of services and support that makes a difference, which will be shared right across the region. The other established groups continue to deliver drop-in and conversations club activities, as well as streams work.

The rural group in Malhamdale was formed after 34 mums and children from the Maternity Stream of Sanctuary in Leeds had an unforgettable weekend away staying with local families in Malhamdale. They visited a farm, and got involved in singing, dancing and eating food from around the world, as well as celebrating Eid and ending with a very moving church service. One mother said, "For me the trip takes away my loneliness and I felt I was in a sort of family. Also it was good break from life stress and putting away the stress of the town." There were benefits for both communities as Rev. Michael Jackson said, "they blessed us in the Dale with their fellowship, fun and faith, so it was very much a weekend of mutual blessing".

The idea of hosting refugee families from inner cities spread to the newly formed group in Skipton. They contacted BIASAN in Bradford and arranged for 28 refugees to have a holiday week-end staying with member hosts, with various events including a Mayor's reception at the Town Hall, a Ceilidh and various communal meals organised by the local Quakers and other churches. Following the week hosts Peter and Bridget Edwards said: "It was so good to meet so many new people both hosts and visitors. Our house feels very quiet this morning without our two lovely lads but we have a date to meet again!"

Two sanctuary seekers from Leeds shared their experiences of the City of Sanctuary trip to the Dales with a group of people interested in setting up a City of Sanctuary group in Ripon. They were so inspiring that the decision to formally join the movement was made that night and now Ripon are in the process of arranging for asylum seekers from Wakefield to have some fun in the countryside during Refugee Week. The idea of forming a database of groups that are linked has been suggested and stories of these experiences are always welcome. We will soon be launching a website page where we will share experiences and practical advice for providing Sanctuary "breaks" and days out.

Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale,
Doncaster, Huddersfield, Hull,
Leeds, Malhamdale, Ripon,
Sheffield, Skipton, Wakefield,
York

Central England

Central England now includes **Cambridge, Coventry, Birmingham, Derby, East Lindsey, Ipswich, Leicester, Lincoln, Loughborough, Malvern, Northampton, Nottingham, and Wolverhampton**. They reflect a diversity of practice from a strategic network of agencies and civic organisations to direct service delivery and much more besides.

The newer groups are mostly in non-dispersal areas and are focusing on Syrian resettlement campaigning with their local councils and building a network of support for a positive refugee voice in their communities. East Lindsey is a collection of small villages dedicated to Syrian resettlement campaigning and providing sanctuary breaks for asylum seekers from nearby cities. There are 14 people offering hosting weekends and they are connecting to Leicester city where there are now well over 1000 asylum seekers. Leicester is still focused on providing many front-line services including 2 drop-ins, several English classes, a bicycle loans scheme and a New Evidence Search Team (NEST) which is linking nationally with Refugee Action, and supporting the LGBT group, Leicester Pride without Borders who are successfully preparing their members for Home Office interviews.

Coventry has received more Syrian refugees on the SVPR scheme than any other place, and its representatives, including our trustee Sabir Zazai, have offered mentoring and support to many other local councils through conferences and visits.

Loughborough Town of Sanctuary welcomes asylum seekers and other migrants to the East Midlands Regional Immigration Reporting Centre, and have developed an excellent working relationship there, distributing free refreshment vouchers and providing activity packs for children in the school holidays. Their work is receiving growing support across this heart of England town.

Birmingham has successfully built a wide network of supporters across all sectors of society and have officially launched Birmingham City of Sanctuary with support from the Birmingham City Council and have developed a comprehensive strategic plan for the city. Schools of Sanctuary have had a considerable impact in Birmingham this year.

A well attended and very successful regional conference was held in May, giving people a welcome opportunity to network and make new friends and connections.

Birmingham, Cambridge, Coventry,
Derby, East Lindsey, Ipswich,
Leicester, Lincoln, Loughborough,
Malvern, Norwich, Northampton,
Nottingham, Walsall,
Wolverhampton





South East

The South East has been coming along in leaps and bounds over the past year, with new villages, cities and boroughs of sanctuary across the region.

After being inspired by the 2015 Sanctuary in Parliament, **Camden** City of Sanctuary formed at the beginning of this year, and has quickly gained a lot of local support, building partnerships with a range of local groups and charities working in the area. As well as focussing on supporting the work of others, their main focuses so far have been the introduction of informal conversation and befriending services in the borough.

East Hoathly and Halland Village of Sanctuary, in East Sussex have focussed on building community engagement. This has produced over 100 supporters and raised some £1500. They are as yet unable to accommodate any refugees, so have given donations to charities operating in Syria, and have also collected several dozen bags of clothing which have been despatched to Calais and elsewhere.

Medway City of Sanctuary have hosted meetings with a focus on helping refugees in Calais, Athens, Lesbos and Leros. Humanising the crisis has been a key objective. They have been helping Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and are building a partnership with the West Kent Young Refugee Project run by the British Red Cross.

Brighton's Sanctuary on Sea group has helped to find enough private landlords willing to take less than market rents for the city to be able to offer sanctuary to 13 Syrian refugees. It is helping Syrians living in the city to establish a Sussex Syrian community group and has been working with partners to ensure that asylum seekers and migrants have access to proper legal advice and a roof over their heads. Their Arts stream is active, hosting the play *Nine Lives*, as well as a Crossing Borders Festival,

which will celebrate the music and musicians of exile with a series of classical, jazz and world music concerts during Refugee Week 2016. 22 schools attended the launch of Schools of Sanctuary in March, and in May Sanctuary on Sea made the first ever Club of Sanctuary award to Brighton table tennis club, which offers unaccompanied asylum seeking children a fun fusion of table tennis and English classes. It is committed to working alongside the Council and other partners to develop a strategy in line with the city's commitment to being a City of Sanctuary.

Thames Valley Police have signed a declaration of support, and are looking to work with **Reading** City of Sanctuary to tackle exploitation. They are also launching a coffee bank scheme with the local Shed cafe and have had Reading Community learning centre signing a pledge.

Oxford City of Sanctuary has focused this past year on building and growing a hosting scheme for destitute sanctuary seekers. This scheme, 'Host Oxford', which has helped 26 people since its inception, is now running as a separate group. They participated in and supported Oxford Refugee Week 2016, and partnered with Oxford University's Refugee Studies Centre, to deliver a major Conference: 'From Fortress Europe to Sanctuary Europe', focusing on the role of European civil society in promoting inclusive asylum.

Brent, Brighton & Hove, Camden
Chichester, East Hoathly & Halland
Hackney, Medway, Oxford
Reading, Steyning, Sutton, Thanet



South West

With only two groups at the start of 2015, South West is one of the regions that has experienced huge growth this year. As well as the destitution conference in early 2015, Bristol and the South West have hosted other significant events over recent months.

Bristol City of Sanctuary hosted “Sanctuary can work: The Business community and Refugees” conference on the 28th October 2015. Aimed at Bristol businesses, the meeting helped to raise awareness of refugee issues, whilst also encouraging attendees to engage with sanctuary seekers both within business and the community. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the subsequent launch of Bristol City of Sanctuary Transport Fund to help destitute and vulnerable sanctuary seekers with bus travel tickets.

Thirty-five delegates from seven cities and towns of sanctuary groups from the South West and Wales came together on 18th November 2015 to learn from each other, be nourished, encouraged, inspired – and warmly hosted by Borderlands, Bristol’s Refugee Welcome Centre and Bristol Hospitality Network – under the banner of Bristol City of Sanctuary.

Coming so closely after the shock of violence in Syria and Iraq reaching Western Europe, it felt timely and important to affirm and proclaim our unequivocal message of welcome for refugees from war and persecution.

Refugee delegates reminded us that the sense of being

welcomed is essential to well-being, but there is still a long way to go for asylum seekers to feel respected and safe, to be supported to learn English, to be able to use the skills they bring with them, and not live in fear of detention, destitution or deportation. They also made passionate pleas for raising awareness beyond the Syrian crisis alone – to remind people that bullet wounds cause the same pain whichever country’s gun is used against its people.

National staff, Tiffy Allen, Forward Maisokwadzo and Elinor Harris were able to brilliantly set the national context of work being done locally – to enable us all to feel part of a movement that’s growing with unprecedented speed.

The main message on the day was that we can share and build on our own and each other’s strengths – that everyone does things a bit differently according to their own area, that each way is valid and this creativity and energy is a strength of the movement itself. If we are able to organise together we can capture this unique moment in history to secure lasting change for refugees.

Bath, Bournemouth and Poole, Bristol, Cornwall, Cheltenham, Exeter, Jersey, Gloucester, North Devon, Plymouth, Southampton, Stroud & Cotswolds, Swindon

Places of Sanctuary Ireland

Céad míle fáilte – 100,000 welcomes – is one of the world’s best known Irish expressions, and so it comes as no surprise that the ‘refugee crisis’ of summer 2015 resulted in the same outpouring of compassion as many places across these isles and beyond. Thousands of people took to the streets, signed petitions and offered their homes to accommodate and welcome refugees. Tapping into the time-honoured tradition of Irish people being at the forefront of humanitarian response across the globe, hundreds made the trip to Calais and Lesbos, with some starting relief programmes.

With a history of very small resettlement numbers in the Republic, and none in Northern Ireland, it would take work, co-ordination and dedication for all this goodwill to be translated into action across the communities of the island. The City of Sanctuary movement is new and little known in Ireland, but we’re honoured to have been part of the conversation and are committed to working in partnership with people and organisations up and down who are determined to make sanctuary a tangible reality. It is a testimony to all involved that a resettlement programme was very successfully launched in **Belfast** in December, with a second group moving to the North West more recently. Meanwhile in the Republic, a commitment has been made to a relocation programme for 4000, while a smaller resettlement programme continues.



We know that for public goodwill to be sustained and harnessed, it needs to be properly informed, and so our basic building blocks of Awareness Raising, Befriending and Cultural Engagement are resonating with other support organisations as well as potential streams of sanctuary such as schools, universities, arts groups and sports groups. Having consulted quite widely across the refugee and migrant support sector and identifying a widely felt need for a stronger refugee voice in the media and the political sphere, we decided to pilot a course – Sanctuary in Politics – in **Dublin and Waterford**. This vision was partly inspired by the visit of seven Irish people from Belfast, Dublin, Waterford and **Causeway** to the Sanctuary in Parliament event in December 2015. The course gave over 50 refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants an opportunity to be trained in how Irish politics works, how to engage with decision makers, and how to work with the media. Organisations and experts were generous with both their time and their resources, and the courses were a resounding success, with both groups continuing as activists and spokespeople with plans afoot to spread the course to other areas. Highlights have included two students translating the 1916 Irish Proclamation into Somali and a group of representatives meeting President Higgins at a

recent conference. Meanwhile we’re seeing a growing interest in schools and universities of sanctuary – Port Stewart’s Dominican College becoming a worthy first awarded school of sanctuary in Ireland - as well as an array of connections with the world of the arts and sport.

City of Sanctuary started in Northern Ireland three years ago, and now has groups in Belfast, Causeway Borough and **Derry/Londonderry**. Further south in the Republic, 2015 saw the launching of groups in Dublin and Waterford. The interest in City of Sanctuary is spreading across the country with several cities, towns and counties forming new groups, and we are in the process of registering in Ireland under the name Places of Sanctuary.

Belfast, Causeway, Derry/
Londonderry, Dublin, Ennis,
Portlaoise, Waterford

Wales – an emerging Nation of Sanctuary?

At the start of 2015 the idea of Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary was little more than a pipe-dream, but it has now really taken off. Since the 'revolution of generosity' in summer 2015, there has been a burgeoning of support for refugees all over Wales and several new groups have formed or are forming, including **Wrexham, Neath Port Talbot, Abergavenny, Montgomeryshire and Newport**.

In **Swansea**, highlights have been the "Welcome to Swansea" mentoring scheme, with 40 volunteers (half refugees, half other locals) having mentored over 100 newly arriving asylum seekers; work with about 20 local pledged supporting organisations to make their pledges practically meaningful; four local charities achieving a Sanctuary Award; a thriving "Sanctuary Speakers" team; continuing working groups on Mental Health and Family & Play; and now the launch of a Maternity Stream in Swansea. The Swansea voluntary hosting project has many new hosts, with over 1700 nights in beds provided in 2015.

Cardiff has a different model, with resources from a successful Lottery project shared between DPIA, the wonderful refugee centre Oasis (which has an open drop-in four full days every week and provides up to 200 hot meals per day), and communications work based in the Welsh Refugee Council.

Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees (HBTS4R) and Hiraeth Hope in West Wales began by collecting and fundraising for Calais and Lesbos, and also link up with places in Wales to support asylum seekers. Both groups now have a regular programme of respite breaks and weekends away for groups of asylum seekers from Swansea and Cardiff. Hiraeth Hope has workshops for training in practical rural skills (woodworking etc.), while HBTS4R has been instrumental in achieving visibility and support for sanctuary at the 2016 Hay Literary Festival, including several events with refugee speakers or focusing on refugee issues.

At a national level, all 22 Welsh Local Authorities have committed in principle to accepting Syrian refugees under the government's resettlement scheme. Some are also involved in the smaller scheme for Afghan interpreters. The first Syrians to come to Wales under the scheme arrived in Aberystwyth just before Christmas to a great local welcome and some very positive publicity. So far four other Councils have received Syrians, while others are gearing up with contracts from the Home Office in place.

A Welsh Refugee Coalition has been formed including all the main refugee organisations in Wales (22 so far). A joint manifesto was developed setting out what would be needed from the Welsh Government to make Wales truly a Nation of Sanctuary. The Coalition also has representation on the Welsh Government's Syrian Refugee Operations Board, and has repeatedly tried to ensure that Syrian resettlement is integrated with support for all asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. The Coalition's manifesto has now been published as a booklet entitled "Seven Steps to Sanctuary" and it is being used to press the new Welsh Government to make the commitment to Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary more tangible.



Welsh Refugee Council put on the first Sanctuary in the Senedd on 10 December (Human Rights Day), just after Sanctuary in Parliament 2 in Westminster. All Assembly Members (AMs) were invited and sent a briefing based on the Coalition's manifesto. Over 120 people were present to hear an inspiring keynote address from Rocio Cifuentes, Director of the multi-ethnic Swansea youth charity EYST, who reflected on the welcome her family received when she came as a child with her parents, as refugees from Pinochet's Chile in the 1970s. There were moving testimonies from several asylum seekers and refugees and a panel of AMs from the four parties represented in the Senedd at the time. All four committed publicly to Wales becoming a Nation of Sanctuary.

"Every refugee coming to Wales is escaping fear, and has a dream. If we can make this country a place of safety and welcome, we have a chance to make that dream come true..."

BETTY NYAMWENGÉ – Chair of Cardiff City of Sanctuary



**Abergavenny, Cardiff
Hay, Brecon & Talgarth
Hiraeth Hope—West
Wales
Montgomeryshire
Neath Port Talbot
Swansea, Wrexham**

Sanctuary in Scotland

Scotland has long given a lead in positive and consistent welcomes to refugees, and has been very busy since the induction of the VPR scheme last year. The amount of support for sanctuary in Scotland is very evident, with Sanctuary in Parliament being very well supported by Scottish MPs. Having taken over a third of all Syrian arrivals before Christmas, we hope to continue to proudly take more than our fair share of refugees. The refugee crisis has taken this well beyond the traditional hub of Glasgow, as these reports - just a small fraction of practical Scottish response - show:



Edinburgh

The last year has seen Edinburgh welcome its first significant arrival of refugees for some years through the Syrian relocation programme, and the response has been extremely positive, with many grassroots initiatives springing up around the city. The City of Sanctuary group is working to trying to network all these initiatives and to map what is going on where at this early stage.

More broadly, the Scottish government has continued to express a strong message of welcome towards refugees and asylum seekers, which reflects the generally positive attitude of solidarity that is prevalent in Scotland. Glasgow has taken almost half the Syrian relocation refugees so far, and smaller cities and towns like Stirling have also offered a warm welcome to newly arrived Syrians, with a busy and thriving C of S group underway there. We hope the coming year will bring us closer to Scotland becoming a nation of sanctuary.

Glasgow and Beyond

Organisations and individuals in Glasgow have been continuing to advocate for better housing for asylum seekers throughout the United Kingdom, having been instrumental in encouraging the Home Affairs Select Committee to announce a full review into asylum housing. Over the past year various campaigns, organisations and community groups have reacted to the refugee crisis through collecting donations, volunteering and campaigning to raise awareness about the ongoing crisis. In September 2015, three members of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees visited and raised almost £10,000 to support thousands of people arriving each day in Greece. Glasgow was the first city to accept Syrian refugees since the government announced that the UK would welcome 20,000 refugees over 5 years.



Amal in Greece supporting refugees

Stirling

The local group in Stirling is called Stirling Citizens for Sanctuary (SCfS). The name reflects their association and shared goals with two other organisations, Citizens UK and City of Sanctuary, though they operate independently. SCfS was formed in June 2015 in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, with an initial goal to persuade Stirling Council to sign up to the UK government's Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement programme (SVPR). They did this by lobbying councillors, their MP and MSP, holding a vigil and raising a petition. Stirling Council signed up to the SVPR scheme in Autumn 2015 as part of a broader, Scotland-wide commitment by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The group's focus then shifted towards supporting the befriending and integration of the refugees due to arrive in Stirling.

There is a network of around 90 volunteers in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire area, who are working to help the refugee families that have been resettled locally during the last few months. The volunteers are a diverse mix of local people, including Arabic-speaking students from the University of Stirling. They have been befriending refugees, arranging picnics and other social events, helping with English language conversation practice, and providing material goods such as pushchairs, spare bedding and clothing.

Edinburgh
Glasgow
Stirling

Sanctuary Across Europe

There can be no doubt that one of the outcomes of the refugee crisis has been a greater awareness of the bigger global and European picture across our network. Several of our groups have been founded because of a response to what is happening in Turkey, Greece or Calais, and many are involved in donations and visits, as well as Europe-wide conferences where we've been able to exchange ideas with people committed to sanctuary on the much larger scales being experienced in other parts of our continent. In order to reflect this growing area of activity, here are some of the testimonies: Amal Azzedin, our much loved Glasgow girl, sent us a diary from a visit to Lesbos. This is an extract:

Day 6

Our last day in Lesbos consisted of visiting a self-organised refugee camp in Pikpa which has capacity for a hundred refugees but previously accommodated over 300 people. The workers in the camp were all volunteers. The volunteers spend about 12 hours a day helping refugees. The food, shelter and clothing are provided through solidarity donations. I was stunned to hear that some of the money donations received was also used to bury refugees who drowned crossing the Mediterranean.

I spoke to a Syrian refugee called Samer in the camp who was also used as one of the camp's translator for people who could not speak Greek or English. He told us about the issues people are experiencing but also the good work that the volunteers are doing. Samer said something that will remain with me forever. He said that "in Syria we may die once through a bullet or an explosion but being a refugee we die a hundred times".

When I asked him to explain what he meant he said that the humiliation, desperation, loss, bereavement and trauma is a slow killer. A refugee has no guarantee of a safe and secure future.

Day 7

While we were waiting for our plane to go home, all I could think of were the wee kids we met and the amazing people taking solidarity holidays to Greece dedicating their time to help traumatised and vulnerable people. It was inspiring to see that the support and aid for refugees was coming from a grassroots level due to the governments failing to come to a sustainable solution.

The crisis is only going to get worse and many people are going to continue to die. People will cross the Mediterranean even in the winter.

The Present

Since I have been back I have struggled to speak about my experience without crying. This experience is just a glimpse of what happens in Greece. I cannot help but feel a sense of helplessness, despair and sadness. But I also feel very lucky because I was able to come back to my family, friends and a roof over my head. I live in a safe and secure environment free from war, torture and violence. Not everyone has an opportunity to have a safe future.

No one leaves their country, family, culture and home for no reason. It is in a state of desperation where people flee to seek refuge, safety and a chance of some kind of future elsewhere.

The purpose of our visit was not only to support refugees through the money we raised but to also raise awareness of what is occurring on a daily basis. The support for refugees has been overwhelming and absolutely amazing but it also needs to come with those in power who have the ability to stop this crisis and save lives.

At the beginning of refugee week in 2016, the Oxford City of Sanctuary group came together with the Oxford Refugee Studies Centre and the British Red Cross to hold a European-wide conference called "From Fortress Europe to Sanctuary Europe: Building a Social Movement for Inclusive Asylum". With delegates attending from countries all over Europe, including Iceland, Bulgaria, Malta, Italy and Germany, there was really a sense of people pulling together from all over the continent, to look at how we could work together and learn from each other, to challenge the negative discourse sprouting up Europe-wide in the wake of the refugee crisis.

With plenaries concerning access to higher education, how to influence the media, welcome and inclusion, the road ahead and many more, there were well over 40 speakers altogether, and everyone left feeling inspired to effect change in their respective countries, and to build a stronger and wider network between all in the refugee sector.

Our very own trustees Sabir Zazai, Nick Gill and Jonathan Ellis spoke, along with John Patrick from Bristol City of Sanctuary who gave a very moving talk about his experiences of social exclusion.

In the wake of the UK's decision to leave the EU, it is even more important to build upon these connections and come together to build a Europe of Sanctuary. We hope the connections made here will make us stronger in our quest to end anti-refugee rhetoric, and to promote the positive message of "Welcome".

Two Snapshots of Calais

Wyon Stansfeld (Oxford, October 2015)

There are around 3,500 refugees in Calais now. That's 3,500 tragic stories. Here are just a few examples:

A man from Kosovo on crutches. He told us he'd just been discharged from hospital after breaking his leg in four places when he fell from a train. 'There was a whole ward full of people like me –limbs broken, burns ... and worse'. He choked back a sob. 'But I shall try again'. After hearing this I began to notice just how many people were limping or had limb injuries.

In a small encampment inside the Sudanese section, we were (remarkably) invited to share lunch. A speechless man had a badge on his chest showing a plane with a line through it. In answer to my question his friend explained for him: 'He lost his whole family from a bomb dropped from a plane'.

A fifteen year old Afghan boy approached us and showed us damage to one of his eyes where he had been squirted close up with tear gas by French police after being caught trying to hide in a train.

As the sun was going down a Kurdish man from Iraq arrived at the Jungle for the first time. He looked late 60s, was obviously in severe pain and clutching his chest. He bent his fingers indicating 5 broken ribs. Someone got him a chair to sit on whilst we tried to put up a donated tent for him in the wind. The first tent we tried turned out to have neither poles nor instructions. The second had both but two of the poles were broken and we had to repair them using splints made out of tent pegs and tape. Throughout this process the man seemed oblivious, staring off into the distance, in another world. Finally when the tent was up and flapping flimsily in the wind he beckoned to one of the people who had been putting it up to join him inside and whispered his story to her: Together with others he had been captured by ISIS (Daesh). They tied his hands behind his back and blindfolded him. Then they led him to a place where they kicked in his chest.

In Calais I saw many examples of boundaries between nationalities blurring, of people from all over the world doing what they can to live together harmoniously and to improve things together in extremely difficult circumstances, building hope out of despair, and caring for one another in a way that transcends race, religion and country. One species, working together, as brothers and sisters. We need to heed their example.

Soccer tournament in a refugee camp by Andy Pollak (Dublin)

It was a surreal scene: a soccer tournament on a sand-covered space which looked more like a rubbish dump than a football pitch; the players (all wearing tops reading 'We are Human') drawn from half-a-dozen countries ranging from Sudan to Afghanistan; in the background a small squad of heavily armed French CRS riot police and the pipes and tanks and gantries of a multinational chemical plant. Welcome to 'sports day' in the 'Jungle', the infamous refugee camp outside Calais in northern France. Because it hasn't gone away. Despite the authorities enforced clearing of half the camp two months ago, the refugees keep coming: from Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Pakistan – the whole benighted crescent of countries smitten by Western invasions, abortive popular uprisings, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and ISIS (Daesh). According to a recent census carried out by charitable groups, there are nearly 5,000 people in the camp (also counting the 1,400 who live in containers next door as the first step into the French asylum system), including over 500 children and 300 unaccompanied children (the youngest eight years old). It is particularly disturbing that after the evictions in early March 129 children disappeared from the statistics. I worked briefly last month as a volunteer for the remarkable British charity Care4Calais, founded six months ago by a Cheshire accountant with a very large social conscience, Clare Moseley. Every day we opened a container in the middle of the Jungle and gave out clothes, shoes, sleeping bags and blankets, toiletries and food bags. 95% of the people in the long queues that formed were young men under 40. Many of these men have been 'trafficked' by criminal people smugglers, which is an expensive and dangerous business, involving multiple illegal border crossings and terrifying trips across deserts and seas. Determination, toughness and a 'never say die' spirit are what it takes.

If the residents are a resolute lot, the young long-term volunteers – most of them in Care4Calais and its larger French equivalent, L'Auberge des Migrants – are simply inspirational. I count it a real privilege to have been able to work alongside them for eight days. If you want to be reassured about the idealism and competence of the younger generation, come to Calais. These are young humanitarians of the highest calibre: hugely selfless and committed; superbly skilled and organised; wonderfully sociable and humorous; and impossibly hard working. They toil into the night to deal with daily crises such as the sudden arrival of new groups of refugees ill-prepared for the bitter easterly winds and rain that sweep the camp; the discovery of small, needy groups who fled the Jungle in March and are now camped out in villages hours away in other parts of Normandy; and the need to find drainage equipment and building materials to deal with flooded tents and flimsy huts made of planks and tarpaulins.

They come here because they are disgusted with the uncaring, begrudging efforts of their governments when faced with Europe's greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War.

Sanctuary in Parliament 2

On the 1st December 2015, City of Sanctuary and Sanctuary Alliance partners converged on Westminster for the second time to hold the annual Sanctuary in Parliament event. It was a roaring success, with almost 200 refugees, asylum seekers and their supporters from our local groups attending the event held in Committee Room 14.



Many shared their stories, and we attracted over 40 MPs to hear them speak and to hear our message that the British people want to extend welcome to those fleeing war and persecution, on the very day of the Third Reading of the Immigration Bill 2015 just down the corridor in the House of Commons.

The event was jointly hosted by Thangam Debonnaire MP for Bristol West and Caroline Lucas MP for Brighton, Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees.

Participants listened to talks, poems, testimonies, and watched a film and play. We were also joined by nine barons, baronesses, lords and a bishop. The main themes of the day were Destitution, Safe and Legal Routes and Detention. Over the course of the event refugees and sanctuary supporters from all over the UK and Ireland met their MPs and talked to them about the role they could play in helping refugees feel welcome in the country. Groups went to the Commons chamber to observe the immigration debate and make our presence known. There were disappointingly few MPs attending the debate, but there were some brilliant points put across by MPs, many of whom had previously been with us in Committee Room 14, including Anne McLaughlin MP for Glasgow North East who spoke in the Commons about stories she had heard at the Sanctuary in Parliament event, urging others to come visit.

All throughout the day, the corridor just outside the committee room was an adjacent hive of activity, with sanctuary seekers, supporters, partner organisations, MPs, lords and more coming to register, put on their stickers of support and talk to each other, an opportunity for constituents to meet their MPs and talk to them about the Immigration Bill and what they want to see change. Throughout the day, groups headed to the viewing gallery to watch the debate, a rare opportunity to watch the political process in action. Other people were in the lobby, talking to MPs and directing them up to the room to learn more about the stories being shared there. Attendees also handed in green slips, requesting an audience with their MP to talk about the bill and get a dialogue going. Sanctuary in Parliament was not just limited to Committee Room 14!

We are working on plans to organise SIP 3 tentatively for Wednesday 23rd November 2016. Watch the space and definitely all roads will lead to Sanctuary in Parliament again this year: SAVE THE DATE!



Testimony by Emad Raad

"It is my great honour to be here in Parliament.

Please excuse my English, I am trying hard but I cannot yet go to English classes because this is only available after 6 months in the UK.

I can tell you about my journey, but I have to say that there are many people who have had more and worse difficulties than me. My journey was like a picnic compared to others.

My name is Emad Raad, I am 28 years old, and a Syrian refugee.

I studied Law for 4 years but could not finish my degree because the government wanted me to join their army. I refused to join up because I didn't want to kill people. This made me a wanted man in my country, so I had to escape. The only other choice was to stay and risk being arrested and tortured.

I escaped to Lebanon, then to Turkey, where I had to pay a trafficker a lot of money for a place on a small boat. My whole family sold everything to raise the money for my journey so I could reach the UK and ask for help for us all.

The inflatable boat was made for 20 people, but there were 45 of us. It was so dark and dangerous - none of us had ever driven a boat before, the engine broke down twice, there was a storm, and the waves were so high and fierce that we were very scared for our lives.

After landing on a Greek Island in the dark of night we were cold, wet and traumatised, but we had to walk more than 12 hours to a police station, where we were crammed into a tent for 7 days until we were given transit documents. I went on foot for 20 days across Macedonia and Serbia, using GPS on my phone. Travel by public transport was forbidden for refugees.

At the Hungarian border was the most frightening part of my journey. I was chased by police with dogs, and tracked by helicopters. I hid in the forest for more than 10 hours. People who were caught were treated brutally and forced to give fingerprints.

My journey continued in this way, hiding because I didn't have transit documents. Myself and others led groups of many people who needed help. I went from Budapest through Austria, across Germany and into France where I reached Calais.

In Calais the conditions were so so bad. There were no toilets, electricity, clean water or even the most basic resources - people there are totally dependent on charities. The small tents did not protect us from storms, and it was very cold and miserable.

I tried many times every day to reach the UK from Calais. I would climb the razor-wire fence and try to hide on a lorry. Each time the police caught me they would spray tear gas and beat me. Then they would take me in a car many miles away, and leave me there, and then I had to walk back to Calais each time.

Finally I managed to hide behind the wind deflector on top of the cab of a lorry. The freight trains these lorries travel on are frightening. I was very scared while the train was being searched and I had many injuries by this time. When the train reached Dover, I kissed the ground and immediately gave myself to police to claim asylum in the UK.

I have a twin brother. He is very close to me, and this is the first time in our lives we have been apart. He is still in Calais trying to make the crossing every day like I did. People in Calais are suffering so so much in the cold and wet and lack of food and resources.

Please please make this journey to the UK easier for everyone fleeing from war who has already suffered so much.

And please help me anyway you can to get my twin brother to safety as quickly as possible.

Thank you."



Streams of Sanctuary – some examples from unusual places....

'Streams of Sanctuary' is the name we have been using to describe sanctuary activities in particular sectors which transcend local boundaries, rather like streams connecting several places, and it is also used by some groups simply to describe subgroups in a particular activity. Through the Streams of Sanctuary, we hope that local groups will be able to establish awareness raising and welcome in the wider community, sometimes using awards as an incentive and benchmark to make these values embedded and sustainable within the organisation or institute involved. It is uplifting to find groups which do not normally engage with the refugee sector reaching out to be welcoming and inclusive. Here are some highlights from streams during the past year:

Schools of Sanctuary

Once children have an insight into the needs and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees they want to help and get involved. Over 100 schools in England, Ireland and Wales are either working towards becoming Schools of Sanctuary or have been awarded already. In order to achieve the award they show that they are practicing the three key principles, firstly that they **learn** about asylum issues, secondly that they **embed** a culture of welcome within their school community and thirdly that they **share** their learning with others. It is an opportunity to celebrate good practice, achievements and to be proud!

Over 20 cities now have school of sanctuary groups where representatives come together, share ideas, have a newsletter and offer support. Schools rich in diversity link with schools less diverse and share assemblies and plays. The enthusiasm and creativity is inspiring. For instance, Bradford runs an annual School of Sanctuary arts exhibition, a homework club and a summer school for asylum seeking and refugee children, Liverpool held an excellent School of Sanctuary conference which was "powerful and moving" and ended with 10 Schools receiving School of Sanctuary awards that day. This event was featured in a major article in the Guardian.

The School of Sanctuary resource pack, now in its third edition, is very popular. It has been used as a basis of collaboration to make resources for Oxfam's Young Ambassador Clubs. Using these resources which are on our website, Young Ambassadors can campaign for their schools to become Schools of Sanctuary. An important feature of our work in schools is to ensure that we work in a collaborative manner with other organisations. This year, we have worked closely with the Red Cross, Oxfam, Counterpoint Arts, Migrant Help and Project Paddington, a Sheffield based project engaging children to send teddy bears to refugee children.



Arts Stream

We believe that the Arts offer immense scope for expressions of sanctuary, awareness raising, support and lobbying and we're excited about ways this stream may develop through all forms of the Arts. Different ideas are springing up in different cities and for different age groups such as Sanctuary Choirs, Songs for Sanctuary, Musicians for Sanctuary, dance and drama sanctuary workshops, photographic and art displays, as well as books on sanctuary. Some groups have a volunteer to coordinate the various activities in a city and to ensure that free tickets to shows or operas are available to refugees.

The first theatre to have a major involvement with CofS was the West Yorkshire Playhouse which has been a beacon of inspiration to other theatres, with free tickets now available to asylum seekers and refugees in many theatres and active links between theatres/theatre companies and local CofS groups in Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield. We work closely with Counterpoint Arts, who are responsible for coordinating Refugee Week nationally.

Universities of Sanctuary

The current refugee crisis has evoked a need to respond from many institutions including universities. There are examples in universities of working to become Departments of Sanctuary, Faculties of Sanctuary and Universities of Sanctuary. The level of interest within student communities has greatly increased, with attendances at meetings of several hundred are known. We have been working with agencies such as STAR, the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) and Article 26 to create a University of Sanctuary resource book, to help universities across the country gain inspiration and share their journeys, and support all campaigns for equal access to higher education for sanctuary seekers. We expect to see this stream grow in the next few years.

Maternity and Health Stream

This year, the Maternity Stream's Excellence in Maternity Care conference was held in Leeds and Hull, similar events are planned in York, Huddersfield, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff/Swansea. The conference is an ideal way to learn about issues facing pregnant asylum seekers and refugees, work with local people to overcome barriers and to set up a Maternity Stream of Sanctuary group. At the Leeds conference, the Haamla midwifery service received the first Maternity Service of Sanctuary Award. Members of the maternity stream have given over 65 presentations at local, national and international level. They have produced an e-learning module for the Royal College of Midwives which reached over 8000 midwives and have made plans to work in partnership with Doctors of the World to make e-learning modules for other health professionals.



The health stream have given over 50 awareness raising sessions and Sanctuary for Health Awards have been awarded to Bradford Facility of Health, Leeds Institute of Medical Education, York St Health Practice and supporters of mental health, People and the Dales and the Grange Retreat Centre in Norwich. They have run consultation meetings with Regional Activism on the implication of the latest Immigration Bill on health and are in the process of creating a mental health resource pack.

Destitution Stream

Following the Birmingham Declaration, a conference on destitution was held in Bristol in March 2015. Co-hosted by Bristol group and the then Mayor of Bristol, George Ferguson, the conference attracted representatives from 12 local authorities across the country. It was the product of much work by local CofS groups. The purpose of the Bristol conference was threefold:

- to hear clearly and publicly the voice of those who are currently experiencing destitution,
- to share the many different initiatives taking place around the country (both in the voluntary sector and by councils themselves) to alleviate the government's policy of enforcing destitution
- to take this nationwide concern to the next level by making a joint commitment both to act locally and to press MPs to work in parliament towards a change in law and policy.

It resulted in a coordinated response in the refugee and homeless sectors to lobby MPs in the face of the new Immigration Bill. CofS groups have also organised collection of funds and clothing for both refugees and the homeless, and groups are supportive of hosting schemes and have more recently been involved in projects assisting Syrian resettlement. The Conference has enabled many in local government to recognise that their stand of upholding a caring attitude to destitution is not isolated.

Faith Stream

City of Sanctuary is a movement of all faiths and none and we work within all faiths and in interfaith forums across the network. Interest in the Faith Stream is cascaded through our website, presentations to individual faith communities or at regional conferences. There are many interesting faith group resources on our website, including an excellent document produced by our founder, Rev Inderjit Bhoghal.



Dominican College, Northern Ireland's first School of Sanctuary

Dominican College was awarded recognition as a school of Sanctuary, the first school in Ireland to be recognised with this honour. Four cities in Ireland, Belfast, Derry, Dublin and Waterford have very active City of Sanctuary Groups, and Causeway Borough of Sanctuary group is currently working hard towards the aim of becoming a Borough of Sanctuary.

Head Boy, Jan Dillenburger- Keenan, introduced the two guest speakers telling his fellow pupils, "Our school is proud to be a school of Sanctuary. A school of Sanctuary is part of the Causeway Borough of Sanctuary group which work collectively and collaboratively for social justice. A school of Sanctuary is a school that helps its students, staff and wider com-



munity understand what it means to seek sanctuary and to extend a welcome to everyone as equal, valued members of the school community" Jan continued, "So what makes Dominican qualify as a school of sanctuary? Within the ethos of this school we are committed to helping others; we continue to campaign for social justice through both our St Vincent DePaul and John Paul II groups and, consistent with our Dominican values, we came together at the start of this year to raise awareness and donate to the Cork to Calais refugee appeal. Within our Year 14 RE programme we also explored the issue of immigration to develop our understanding of this issue within and beyond our local society."

Presenting the School of Sanctuary award to the pupils and staff of Dominican College were Maire Rodgers, a member of Causeway Borough of Sanctuary group and Richard John, secretary of both this group and the Causeway Multi-cultural Forum.

They spoke to pupils about the way that pupils looked to the outside world to create an ethos of inclusion and safety within their school. Maire, herself a past member of staff of Dominican College spoke of her delight in returning to her old school for such a special occasion, telling pupils, "There was always a warm tradition of welcome within Dominican and a strong sense of pupils and staff looking out for each other". Drawing on an old Irish saying she characterised the school's tradition as: "In the shelter of each other the people live". Richard spoke of Dominican pupils, "You are truly game changers who have worked hard to create a place of safety, a place which would stimulate opportunities for those in our world seeking sanctuary, allowing them a voice within society and ensuring that they are not left out". Speaking about refugees and asylum seekers, Richard read from Shylock's great plea for equality from The Merchant of Venice, allowing pupils to reflect on the trouble, turmoil and terror of fleeing from home and being forced to run for your life. He concluded with the words of St Paul that there are there great gifts, faith, hope and love and that, of these, love is the greatest. He told the pupils of Dominican that they continue, in their quest to ensure social justice for all, to demonstrate all three virtues in abundance.

Sanctuary Breaks

As our network has grown, we have had more and more groups springing up in rural areas, where they may not have any refugees or asylum seekers living in their community. This means that we have seen a huge increase in activity around "Sanctuary Breaks" - Where groups in rural areas organise respite hosting, weekends away and days out to sanctuary seekers in nearby cities.

Connecting with urban groups allows them to offer some much needed time away in the countryside, with different groups offering chances to go on hikes, go to the seaside, learn a spot of dry-walling (or other traditional outdoor skills) and many other activities.

Refugees and asylum seekers in Leicester have been given a chance to have a day in a Leicestershire Village, with a day of games on the green for the children.

With groups active in Malhamdale, West Wales, Leicestershire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire, we are expecting to see more and more rural groups embark upon such ventures, with whisperings that a new group in Otley is emerging and hoping to use convenient bus links with Leeds to give sanctuary seekers a chance to get out of the city, and "twinning" initiatives, between rural and urban groups, starting to be set up.

If you would like more information on how your group could start providing Sanctuary Breaks please do get in touch—we hope to have a website active for this stream soon, with information, guidance and advice on how to start!



Our National Team

We at City of Sanctuary are enormously grateful to our supporters and funders, without whom we would be unable to do this important work. Since last year our admin and finance officer, Joanna, has gone on maternity leave and had a wonderful baby girl! Emma is taking over this role for the year, and has also been one of those leading on the universities stream. BREAKING NEWS! We have been in the process of recruiting a brand new member of the team, and are delighted to announce that we have just appointed a new Chief Officer. Join us in welcoming SIAN SUMMERS-REES, known to many of us for her tireless work with refugees in South Wales and beyond. Sian will be joining our staff team in the autumn.

Our current staff team:-

Tiffany Allen, Network and Ireland Coordinator

Colleen Molloy, National Development Officer and Central England Coordinator

Rose McCarthy, National Health, Maternity Streams Coordinator and Y&H Coordinator

Forward Maisokwadzo, National Communications Officer and South West Coordinator

Joanna Spooner, Administration and Finance Officer (currently on maternity leave)

Emma Finlinson, Administration and Finance Officer (maternity cover)

List of trustees continuing into 2016

Alan Thomas (Chair) - Swansea

Andrew White (Treasurer) – Southampton

Caroline Beatty – Bristol

Dennis Minnis – Birmingham

Helen Moore – York / Faith

Herbert Dirahu – Newcastle

Jeff Morgan – Manchester / Health

Jeni Vine (Secretary) – Sheffield

John Mellor– Ripon

Jonathan Ellis (Vice Chair)– London

Jonathan Featonby - London

Mel Cooper – Bradford/Maternity

Nick Gill – Exeter/ Universities

Owen Fenn – Glasgow

Pamela Inder - Leicester

Rodrigo Edema – Sheffield

Roger Nyantou – Leeds

Sabir Zazai - Coventry

Chair's Report 2015-2016

Plus ça change¹...

Tiffany has called 2015 "the year everything changed", and she is quite right.

The context we work in has changed: the refugee crisis is daily news; anti-refugee rhetoric is now huge; government policy towards "spontaneous arrivals" is increasingly hostile (e.g. the Immigration Bill) and Home Office practice can be slapdash on the assumption that no-one who matters cares. The European context has brought resettlement and (potentially) relocation firmly into the UK refugee context.

Our own position has changed: since the "revolution of generosity" we have more support and potential support, with a big increase in the number of local groups, including in rural and non-dispersal areas - and potential for much more; we have more public visibility and recognition; we have more funds; we are receiving a number of offers of partnership.

To sum up: bigger challenge, bigger opportunity - and one which may not come again.

Trustee Group 2015-16

At the 2015 AGM, Andrew White was elected as Treasurer, replacing Gary Shaw who had given notice he would retire. We also elected four new trustees: Pam Inder from Leicester, Sabir Zazai from Coventry, Nick Gill from Exeter and Owen Fenn from Glasgow. They replaced Eddie Ralston, Nacera Harkati and Rachel Farrier. In addition, we co-opted Jonathan Featonby, now Parliamentary Manager for the Refugee Council, to enhance our national and political contacts. This has given us a stable group of 18 committed trustees, including representation from at least 13 cities in all parts of UK (although three of them have taken sabbaticals for periods of months).

Given the pressure of change we have increased the frequency of our meetings to quarterly, with four day-long meetings and one residential during the 15 months between AGMs. We have consulted between meetings, while delegating more to the Executive Committee of our four officers. This group has held frequent teleconferences with two extra members from the HR Subgroup.

I will report on trustee business under the same three headings as last year. Much but not all of this has taken place in subgroups.

Human Resources, Employment and Organisation

This is perhaps the biggest area where we have had to change to meet the new challenges.

At the start of the period we welcomed Forward Maisokwadzo as our new National Communications Officer. We were sorry temporarily to lose Joanna Spooner, our Admin and Finance Officer, on maternity leave (but very happy about her baby!) and recruited Emma Finlinson on maternity cover. We are looking forward to Joanna's return and hope we will have sufficient resources to fund increased administrative hours from then on.

There has been a big increase in work supporting local groups, especially the many new ones, and we have decided to move to a system where staff combine regional coordination with their national responsibility. We have been able to fund an extra regional day per week for Forward, Rose and Colleen, plus extra admin days.

The increase in work and the size of the staff team, and in opportunities and challenges, means that the management of the national charity now goes well beyond the network coordination role which Tiffany has performed so magnificently over the last five years. Tiffany has preferred not to take on a full management role. She has moved to Ireland where she now combines her UK network coordination responsibilities with promoting City of Sanctuary in Ireland.

In the meantime, resources are available and we have consulted widely over the preferred nature of a new senior appointment. We have now recruited a Chief Officer who will coordinate our external relations, manage our internal operations and deliver on the strategy being developed by trustees in consultation with the whole network and staff.

¹"The more things change ..."

Development & Fundraising

We have expanded our core work to include facilitating national partnerships, with commitment to making Sanctuary in Parliament an annual event, similar events in Wales, Scotland and Ireland and a repeat of the Sanctuary Summit. We now describe our core work as being in two parts, each further divided into two:

1) Network coordination and development:

- supporting and developing our network of local groups and regions
- promoting and coordinating 'streams of sanctuary'

2) Promoting the sanctuary vision nationally

- national media and communication
- partnership work, especially facilitating the sanctuary alliance

Trustees' latest conclusion on our future strategic direction, reached after considerable discussion at our residential in September, was that we should continue with all four and do *more of each* of them, as resources allow. We recognised this implies paying more attention to "infrastructure". The huge external changes mean we are still debating and consulting before producing a new Action Plan to replace the one agreed in 2012.

In terms of fundraising, we secured a larger, repeat grant from Unbound Philanthropy for movement building work over three years 2016-18, as well as several smaller grants, including two from funders who approached us but prefer to remain anonymous. We have received our largest increase in funding ever, from our unexpected inclusion in the Guardian & Observer Refugee Charity Christmas Appeal. We will use our share of these funds mainly for the Chief Officer post and to distribute to local groups. We have also benefited in terms of increased visibility and national publicity for our work and for the welcome shown towards those fleeing violence and persecution by ordinary people in our local groups, contrary to the misleading coverage of refugee issues in much of our national press.

Principles, Recognised Cities of Sanctuary and Sanctuary Awards

Following the debate last year on the criteria and process for recognition of cities and other institutions of sanctuary, we have been putting more emphasis on what makes a city of sanctuary *group*. We now have a clear statement of expectations on both sides on our website: what are the principles a group should adopt and the broad approach we expect before they affiliate to us, and what support they can expect from the national organisation.

As for the issue of how to become a "recognised" City of Sanctuary, trustees agreed to publish clear guidelines on what being a City of Sanctuary means, and then give a clear choice between two routes to recognition. In some cases the decision will be made within a city that enough has been done to warrant celebration as a city of sanctuary; in others there may be a request for national involvement in appraisal of the achievements. During the year three cities have declared themselves Cities of Sanctuary: Brighton, Birmingham and Tees Valley; bringing the number of recognised cities of sanctuary to 10. At least two others have expressed interest in the national appraisal route. We are also aware of several cities where there are huge achievements but which are not pursuing recognition by either route.

Finally, sanctuary awards for schools, health services and other institutions and organisations. Here trustees agree on the three elements of Learn, Embed and Share and that appraisal is generally conducted locally. Some local groups strongly promote sanctuary awards while others do excellent work with local partners without recourse to this particular tool.

... plus c'est la même chose².

As I prepare to stand down as National Chair after almost five roller-coaster years, it seems to me that the basic problem of an unwelcoming press and inhumane asylum system, with the public misinformed but potentially sympathetic, remains the same.

Here are some of our slogans which have stood us in good stead, make us who we are and attract people to us:

- a vision of a network of places and spaces of sanctuary
- promoting a culture of welcome
- proud to be a place of safety

We mobilise individuals and organisations not previously involved with refugees, arranging opportunities for them to have direct contact with, hear from and get involved alongside refugees themselves, moving them from ignorance or passive sympathy to active support.

We want refugees, wherever they go in our neighbourhoods, schools, businesses, public services, faith groups, etc. to feel safe and to find people who welcome them, support them, include them in their activities, recognise and celebrate what they can contribute and understand why they are here.

What we are doing is movement building, both building the size and capacity of our own network as a movement and working in partnership with others, facilitating a broader network of support for the sanctuary vision that can bring together all organisations working to support and integrate refugees.

In concentrating on movement building, we **do not** focus on direct service delivery, or on individual advocacy, or on our own campaigns. Of course, our supporters may do these things, and we share information that helps with them. If some of our local groups get involved we try to ensure it is done in a way that simultaneously promotes our principles.

We are working towards a 'tipping point' where support for sanctuary becomes the norm – in cities, and other places; within institutions; eventually throughout the whole of society.

I hope we can use the huge opportunity to move closer to this 'tipping point'. I think the way to do this is to continue in the same way, but to redouble and deepen our efforts in the four core areas above, doing as much as possible of each, plus concentrating on internal systems, updating them to match our growth.

It's been a privilege to have contributed in a small way to City of Sanctuary, and an honour to have worked alongside Tiffy. I would like to thank her enormously, and all our staff, volunteers, trustees and members of our fantastic network who have helped build our movement over the years. Many special thanks also to our tireless and highly gifted volunteer, Nawal, who spends many hours advising and guiding groups about the website and who has put much of this report together. Keep it up and I'm hopeful we can cement the message of welcome in many more places and institutions over the years to come.

Alan Thomas
2016

We want to thank Alan for all the wonderful work he has done over the years as our chair. Thank you for all your years of leadership and we value the fact that you will continue the journey alongside us.



Financial Report 2015

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Cash brought forward | £33,778 |
| Income Grant from Tudor Trust £40,000 Grant from Allen Lane Foundation £5,000 Grant from A B Charitable Trust £10,000 Grant from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation £30,000 Grant from Unbound Philanthropy (2015) £30,000 Grant from Barrow Cadbury Trust £4,500 Grant from Unbound Philanthropy (2016/17) £50,000 Other £30,000 Donations £12,358 Other Receipts £1,523 Maternity Stream ¹ £1,420 Total £214,801 | |
| Expenditure Salary costs £79,711 Travel expenses £8,323 Website and IT £4,517 Other running costs £10,373 Sanctuary Summit £2,474 Maternity Stream ² £3,936 Total £109,334 | |
| Cash carried forward Including £50,000 of restricted income for use in 2016/17 and excluding £5919 held for the Maternity Stream | £139,245 |
| Restricted Funds £93,765 Unrestricted Funds £45,480 | |

¹City of Sanctuary is currently holding funds for the Maternity Stream, pending the set-up of their own bank account. This amount is not included in the "Cash carried forward" balance.

2015 was a year that saw people give very generously, with donations of £12,358, an big increase on the previous year, in part due to the huge surge in generosity from the public after September. We also received £199,900 in grants (including £50,000 to be spent in 2016/17) with £1523 in other receipts. Total receipts were £214,801.

This helped us to support groups, spread the network and cover our core costs. Our total expenses came to £109,334, with £79,711 spent on salaries for our core team of five staff members.

We started 2015 with reserves of £33,778. Reserves at the end of the year were £139,245.

A summary of the receipts and payments account for 2015 is set out above. For a copy of our full signed accounts for 2015, please email emma@cityofsanctuary.org

City of Sanctuary is a movement of local people and community groups in towns and cities across England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. We are committed to creating a culture of welcome and safety, especially for refugees seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

Wherever refugees go in our neighbourhoods, schools, businesses, public services, faith groups, etc. we want them to feel safe and to find people who welcome them, support them, include them in their activities, recognise and celebrate what they can contribute and understand why they are here.

With many thanks to our funders:

A B Charitable Trust



Readers of

the **guardian**

Images credit: City of Sanctuary local groups

City of Sanctuary is a registered charity (No 1124921).

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