

# Reflections

on CoS UK  
staff achievements  
in difficult times

2020



**City of Sanctuary UK**

Across the network, we have had to reprioritise, be creative in both strategy and operations and respond to new opportunities as a result of the global pandemic and sudden lockdown in March 2020. This review summarises the response of the CoS UK team to the enormous challenges, both to inform the network and our funders, and also to remind ourselves of our efforts to remain true to our [values and charter](#). **Please skim through and read the sections that you are most interested in. Or grab a cuppa and enjoy a longer read.**

## Context

All members of the CoS UK staff team work part time (some only one day a week) and many contribute voluntary hours to supporting people seeking sanctuary. Although we all work from home, most of our meetings across the network were face to face. In mid-March, the Chief Officer instructed the team to avoid public travel in response to the growing number of Covid cases and we have continued to work from home since then. Many on the staff team have had to juggle caring responsibilities while working as schools closed and vulnerable family members required more support during the Covid crisis. Some team members fall into the vulnerable category and have needed to isolate for most of the pandemic - or undergone periods of isolation because of track and trace requirements.

No one on the team was furloughed, instead we worked collectively as a team to identify priorities to maintain momentum and support the network. We recognised that people seeking sanctuary and City of Sanctuary groups continued to work during the crisis and we wanted to support as much as we could. We are also aware that the majority of our groups rely on volunteers, and a significant number of these dedicated volunteers are in the vulnerable category.

## Sanctuary for the team

Early in the crisis, the management team recognised the need to reframe our work planning and prioritisation to ensure that staff members felt well-supported. With the encouragement of the CoS UK Board, we have instituted several support mechanisms to foster morale. We have moved to weekly check in staff meetings and set up a system of paired "buddy" support to reduce isolation and ensure mutual support.

Additionally, for six weeks over the summer, the staff team were invited to take part in a weekly yoga class to promote time for self-care and well-being as part of the Connect and Create series. These steps were taken in line with [our values](#) and have enabled us to maintain our productivity despite difficult external and personal circumstances. In many ways, the pressures of the pandemic have taken its toll on staff wellbeing and we continue to look at ways to support staff through changeable circumstances, including school class closures, self-isolation etc. Whilst such challenges may affect our output, we remain true to our values, and know that taking sanctuary for ourselves and our loved ones is necessary since we are in for the long haul.

# Recruitment and Staff Changes

We acknowledge the challenges for new staff joining us in the current context as they have not been able to meet the team face to face.

In February, Streams and Partnerships Manager **Ben Margolis** moved on from City of Sanctuary but has remained as a Trustee due to his expertise and passionate commitment to our vision.

## New team members who have joined us this year include:

**Maggie Fillipova-Rivers** started in March just as the pandemic hit. She is Regional Coordinator for the Midlands, East of England, London and the South East. Her experience as a Councillor has informed our efforts to support the launch of the City of Sanctuary Local Authorities Network.

**Hayley Richards** joined the team in August as a Regional Coordinator for Wales and has provided important support to the Pembrokeshire County of Sanctuary group which was launched following the arrival of asylum seekers into the military barracks in Penally.

Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to **Abigail Grace**, who as Universities of Sanctuary Coordinator oversaw a significant expansion of the number of Universities, and organised the highly successful [Universities of Sanctuary Conference](#). We are delighted to welcome **Maryam Taher** who replaces her.

Thanks to Barrow Cadbury Trust short term funding from November until March 2021, we also welcome **Julie Ward** who joined us as On-line Activities Coordinator and **Megan Greenwood** as Schools of Sanctuary Support Officer. This funding has also enabled us to retain **Sam Slatcher** in his role as Communications and Sanctuary Voice Coordinator -previously supported from April to October with a grant from Necessity.

We made the decision to close our Leeds office earlier this year and all staff continue to work from home.

The last time we met face to face as a team was in December 2019 and since then we have had staff changes.



# Digital Connections

New resources for the network to stay connected were launched in March and April 2020.

## Zoom

Thanks to Unbound Philanthropy for funding our Zoom business account allowing up to 10 meetings at a time - enabling us to [share this facility](#) with the network. From March to December there were **1,569 meetings** on our account supporting CoS groups and people seeking Sanctuary across the UK.

These included steering group meetings, AGMs, planning groups, a wide range of activities with people seeking sanctuary and even ESOL classes.

Some groups are setting up their own Zoom accounts as they now use this platform so frequently.

## The City of Sanctuary Network Slack Workspace

This was set up as a **messaging platform** for the network to connect with each other. We developed several channels (General, Covid-19, Universities, Drop-ins, schools, governance, arts and resettlement) in response to need. Other channels may emerge with time and as needs change. It is mostly used to ask questions and **share experiences**, especially examples of good practice. **Thank you for all the amazing contributions** and document sharing. It has now developed into a useful resource. 25% of groups have taken advantage of this resource and we invite all groups to engage with this. It is a virtual space for those conversations and networking opportunities that happen in workshops or lunchtimes at our conferences and regional meetings.

**“Absolutely invaluable”**

(CoS group about Zoom facility).

### ZOOM MEETINGS

In March, a grant from Unbound Philanthropy allowed us to offer enhanced Zoom features to CoS groups. This is the number of meetings on our account per month.



## New Covid-19 Website

This was developed to keep the network informed ( see also below in streams of other new website developments). This can be [reached](#) from the menu on the main page of the CoS website and includes: Latest **Home Office Changes** and developments in response , **Advocacy** page on what you can do from home, **Health Advice** and links to translated guidance, **Coping in Lockdown** with links to looking after your mental health, **New funding opportunities, Providing Practical Support** with case studies of good practice from across the network to inspire and support responses to the pandemic restrictions, **Refugee Week** (when planning for this was current) and Other Information including links to other resources and an infographic on the global impact of Covid-19 on refugees. [This website](#) is being regularly updated so check it out and make the most of this new resource.

## Regional and Network Group Meetings

Regional coordinators held over **20 regional** meetings via Zoom bringing together groups within regions to share and learn together and respond to varying needs. In addition, coordinators attended over **100 individual group meetings**. Coordinators would not ordinarily have had the capacity to travel and attend this number of meetings face to face. So a **silver lining** of the pandemic has definitely been a growing use of technology enabling stronger connections, more discussions and more regular communication between regional coordinators and City of Sanctuary network groups.

Yorkshire and Humberside were able to hold an in person [regional conference](#) in Leeds in mid February. 80 attendees from across the region enjoyed a day of sharing and learning with a variety of workshops.



# AGM

We were unable to hold our planned face to face Annual Conference and AGM which was to be hosted by Bradford City of Sanctuary. Instead, in June 2020, we held the first AGM for the new charitable incorporated organisation, City of Sanctuary UK, and the last AGM of the former charity City of Sanctuary online. The minutes, papers and video can be viewed [here](#).

Whilst we missed the usual social interaction, the AGM did give us an opportunity to feel connected to the rest of the network and we were so pleased that the proposal of setting up a City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network was unanimously agreed.

## Advocacy and Solidarity

**Response to #BlackLivesMatter** We issued a [statement of solidarity](#) and created a new set of [anti-racism resources](#) with links to books, films, podcasts, courses, organisations etc, including a specific set of anti-racist teaching resources for schools. We would love to see **more suggestions** for these pages from the network and our partners. Please share with us your experiences of raising awareness about racism.

## Stand Up for Sanctuary

We usually **mobilise the network** behind campaigns developed by our partners, but created our own in response to the backlash of negative political rhetoric in the summer weeks about the channel crossings. We felt compelled to mobilise groups to engage with their MPs and share growing concerns at the lack of compassion and verbal attacks in the media and from some politicians. We published [a statement](#) and suggested template letter to MPs and then linked these to bigger partners when they developed their own campaigns.

## Facilitated Conversations

Online meeting platforms like Zoom have become the norm and people are much more willing to engage in online events. This means CoS UK has been able to organise a series of events bringing the network together, to share best practice, challenges and solutions which has fostered greater interactions between partners and across the regions and nations of the UK. Whereas previously, annual regional meetings were often the primary opportunity for CoS groups to gather and learn together, the network is now sharing more often and more consistently - principally around these themed online events.

Facilitated conversations have also been recorded and notes of break out discussions and presentation slides are made available on the website. These form an accessible **resource** for groups on themed topics of interest.

So far the following topics have been covered and many more are being planned for 2021.

## Resettlement

In August, we had a Facilitated Conversation on how CoS groups support refugees who arrive through resettlement programmes in their communities. Speakers from Forth Valley in Scotland, Harrogate and Epsom all shared their experiences and learnings from new arrivals.

The full event report: [Resettlement](#).

## ESOL

An introduction to teaching ESOL on-line was delivered to 47 participants from Southampton to the Isle of Bute and participants shared challenges and solutions. A video recording of the presentation and plenary session, the PowerPoint Slides and notes of the break out discussions are [available here](#). Please contact [colleen@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:colleen@cityofsanctuary.org) if you are interested in a City of Sanctuary network forum for ESOL and Conversation Club volunteers.

## Rural Network

Recognising the similarities in both challenges and opportunities in rural and semi-rural settings we have set up a mini-network which will set its own agenda for discussions.

## Using Sports and Arts to support mental well-being

Attracted over 30 people who heard from experts by experience. Their contributions provided important learning for participants and they were highly valued. The meeting heard from Sports initiatives in Bradford and about the online Connect & Create programme which connected people through arts and other themes. There was valuable sharing of a wide range of other activities and good discussion on [barriers, challenges and solutions](#).

## Drop-ins

We have held two sessions, one in July and one in November, to support groups and linked organisations who had previously run face to face services to [share practice and information](#) about safe ways to operate given the Covid-19 restrictions and how to move activities online. Both sessions were well attended and many groups took the opportunity to share what they had been up to in 2020 and discuss solutions to some of the challenges they were facing.

## Befriending

The befriending session saw participation of 70 people reaching beyond the network. There were 4 speakers (Birmingham Restore, Host Nation UK and Swansea, Reading CoS groups). There was a lot of interest from groups interested in starting a befriending initiative and the [report](#) collated resources from more established groups to help new initiatives get started.

## DBS

In response to queries from our network around DBS processes for their volunteers, we held an online Facilitated Conversations, focusing on Safeguarding and DBS checks on Tuesday the 20th of October. Lyn Gavin, Senior Safeguarding Engagement Officer from DBS joined us for a presentation and Q&A - a copy of the slides and video of the session can be found in the safeguarding page of our website [here](#).

For 2021 we plan an ongoing programme of on-line events for the network. Sessions will include training opportunities (media, Sanctuary awards, anti-racism etc.), themed discussions and strategic consultation events with City of Sanctuary member groups. Recorded sessions, slides and notes of these Facilitated Conversations can be found on [The Latest CoS UK Events](#) page under Past events, as news stories and also in the relevant resources section of the website.

# Empowerment of People seeking Sanctuary

## Development of the Operational Advisory Group

In 2019 we committed to do more to increase the participation and engagement of people seeking sanctuary in all that we do. As part of that commitment we set up an Experts by Experience Operational Advisory Group, and in 2020 the group has really **influenced our operations**, for example as a result of their input both projects and priorities have been changed.

Additionally, in order to ensure that people seeking sanctuary are part of the organisation at all levels, members of the Advisory Group have attended trustee meetings by rotation. Since then one member has joined as a trustee and the other as an Expert Advisor to the Board.

Members of the Operational Advisory group work have engaged in various aspects of our operations including involvement in staff recruitment, streams of sanctuary initiatives and **representing the organisation** at meetings, for example contributing to the NACCOM (No Accommodation Network) and Refugee Action Experts by Experience good practice event. **We cannot thank the group enough** for sharing their expertise and for their incredible commitment.

## Sanctuary Ambassadors

We now have [registration](#) for people with lived experience who want to help us with Sanctuary award appraisals, media interviews and telling their stories, blogging, and making videos. We provide data support to ensure digital inclusion. We are developing terms of reference for Sanctuary **Ambassadors** and a support programme in consultation with the ambassadors and with the Operational Advisory Group. We continue to encourage groups to ensure **more representation of people with lived experience** on their boards/steering groups and in decision making at all levels. We will launch a webpage on Sanctuary Ambassadors in the New Year.

## Use of Language

We have continued to reflect on and consult about our use of language to ensure ongoing sensitivity and mindfulness in the terms we use. There are no "correct" terms as language evolves, but we seek to avoid inadvertently undermining or dehumanising language. In order to support ourselves and the network to continue their own reflections, we have produced a [Guide to the Use of Language](#) to explain why language matters and encourage wider sharing and welcome feedback.

# Streams of Sanctuary

Our streams work develops networks around communities of practice amongst professionals and aims to build places of welcome in mainstream organisations.

## Local Authority Network

In the run up to the AGM a number of interested representatives from groups and local authorities met to discuss the setting up of the network and the new criteria for the award. This meeting informed the proposal which was then presented to the members at the AGM. Following on from the AGM we reached out to individuals who had shown an interest in the network to invite them to form a steering group. The steering group has been made up of ten individuals, representing six local authorities and 2 members of the **Experts by Experience Operational Advisory Group**. The Steering Group has been collectively working on developing the network including the membership terms, the objectives, steering group terms of reference and the awards guidance. The Local Authority Network network and the [new website](#) was launched on Wednesday 9th December with over 100 people in attendance and [excellent presentations](#) from **Lewisham Borough, Swansea** and **Bristol**. There is great potential for a network of local authorities working together to share best practice in meaningful welcome and overcoming the hostile environment.



# Arts

We now have a Theatre of Sanctuary Network Gathering that meets bi-monthly bringing together anyone within the [Arts Stream](#) to share practice.

We have had a few new awards including **Norwich Theatre Royal** and **ice&fire**, a Theatre Company of Sanctuary that supports refugees/sanctuary seekers through sharing stories through scripted performances. In addition, a new Theatre Company of Sanctuary group has been set up by **SBC** (Stand Up and Be Counted) to bring together theatre companies specifically for sharing practice. The first meeting took place 23 November 2020.

**The Bridge Theatre** used the run of *Nine Lives* - a production on the life of a destitute gay man seeking asylum to promote City of Sanctuary to its audience.

# Faiths

We have now developed a new [Faiths Stream of Sanctuary](#) website and have developed guidance for the Faiths Stream of Sanctuary Award and Church of Sanctuary Award. We were very pleased to publicise in our website the good work of **Scottish Faith Action for Refugees** - including case studies and their new publication: *Sanctuary in Scotland: Information on refugee issues for faith groups in Scotland*

# Schools

It was a busy year for the [Schools of Sanctuary stream](#). A new steering committee with members from across the network was convened in spring 2020; the committee met four times over the year to help share best practice and identify key challenges. CoS UK started a [JISC email listserv](#) dedicated to Schools of Sanctuary which provides a platform for sharing ideas on how to support welcome in schools. Over the summer, CoS UK launched an updated Schools website, complete with a range of new videos, lesson plans, and [resources](#). A bi-monthly Schools of Sanctuary [newsletter](#) is now circulating; you can sign up to receive it here. Despite all the challenges posed by Covid for schools, more than 30 schools received an award in 2020. **Tower Hamlets Borough Holiday Camp Scheme** was the first children's holiday scheme to be awarded in October under the schools stream.



# Universities

Congratulations to **University of Bath, University of York, University of St Andrews** and **University of Essex** who we recognised as Universities of Sanctuary. We were pleased to review the first UK University of Sanctuary and re-award the **University of Edinburgh**.

The [University of Sanctuary Streams](#) steering group meetings continued online and the group organised a successful [two day conference](#) that was entirely virtual and engaged a total of 392 people. There was an average of 52 people attending each of 13 informative and interactive sessions involving students seeking sanctuary and partners.

The University of Sanctuary network was maintained and even strengthened with "regional working" via zoom gatherings which we held with Student Action for Refugees.

For example in May we ran a [STAR and UoS Scholarships and Sanctuary webinar for Scotland](#) - with contributions from St Andrews, Strathclyde and Edinburgh University (Syrian Futures Project). The University of St Andrews welcomed its first cohort of Sanctuary Scholars as a newly-recognised University of Sanctuary.

We developed a productive partnership with **SCAPP** (Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners) Two online meetings ([July](#) and [December](#)) for practitioners from Scottish Universities and charities brought together the higher education widening access community with an interest in refugees' access to higher education. We also published a [Blog on NATECLA website](#) on Universities for Sanctuary in Scotland.

# Colleges

Following a surge of interest from FE Colleges during the winter 2019-2020, CoS UK organised a meeting in Leeds with the **Association of Colleges** and seven Colleges to share information and discuss how to develop a stream of work around awards of sanctuary to FE Colleges. A working group developed out of this meeting, and a series of on-line meetings and consultations led to the development of a set of criteria for FE Colleges, reflecting their unique role in supporting students from a sanctuary-seeking background. CoS UK developed a [website dedicated to Colleges](#), complete with inspiring case studies and examples from campuses across the UK. During 2020, **Derby College** and **Halesowen College** received awards, and others are working towards recognition. A new Colleges of Sanctuary [resource pack](#) was launched alongside [an article](#) in the TES about Colleges of Sanctuary in early December.

# Libraries

We launched a [new website](#) and resource pack in partnership with **Libraries Connected** - the professional association for Chief Librarians. Thanks also to our partners from Birmingham, Coventry, Oldham, Bolton and Manchester Councils, The Network and the Arts Council. A national launch event at Coventry Library in June had to be cancelled but this stream of work was promoted through professional networks, journal publications and created lots of interest in libraries. **Brighton and Hove Libraries, Southampton Libraries** and **Newcastle Kitiwake Multilingual Library** have been recognised with an award and a new application was received from **Newcastle Libraries** in December.

# Maternity

We have been successful in applying for a small grant which will enable the development of the [Maternity Stream](#) across the UK in 2021. A Maternity Stream resource pack is nearing completion.

# Shops

We have developed materials, including minimum criteria for a Sanctuary Award, with **Oxfam** to support their network of Shops to become Shops of Sanctuary and intend to launch this as a new stream for charity shops on 2021.

# Health

We met with **Doctors of the World** and agreed to continue promoting the [Safe Surgeries](#) project. We joined the [Hands up for our Health](#) Coalition and encouraged network groups to also join. We advised some groups interested in developing this stream and are planning a Facilitated Conversation with input from Doctors of the World, the **Yorkshire and Humberside Health Stream of Sanctuary** and **Hands up for our Health** campaign. The [Health Stream of Sanctuary](#) also promoted the Doctors of the World Hospital Access project which supports people refused access to secondary care or charged upfront and particularly in relation to Covid-19. The Yorkshire and Humberside Health Stream of Sanctuary has remained active throughout the pandemic.

# Gardens

Unfortunately we have had insufficient capacity to further develop [Gardens of Sanctuary](#) but we have had some interest and are confident about its potential. Our partners at **Social Farms and Gardens** have a Gardens of Sanctuary Coordinator to provide training and we are talking to **The Lemon Tree** about collaborative development.

# Online Activities for People Seeking Sanctuary

## Connect and Create

External Funding from Necessity enabled us to offer Connect & Create - a summer activity series of 5 sessions a week for 6 weeks throughout August and September 2020. Sessions were run by Displace Yourself Theatre, Citizen Songwriters and City of Sanctuary staff.

**Shared Voices** – interactive theatre enabling participants to learn how to use self-expression and write monologues and dialogues.

**Creative Filmmaking** – learning how to create a film narrative and using a mobile phone to capture video footage and edit a short film to share on social media.

**Funday Friday** – a safe and supportive space to meet, share stories, play online games and for conversation.

**Rest and Relax** – a restorative yoga stretch and meditation session designed to help participants relax, unwind, and look after their own mental health and wellbeing.

**Sanctuary Songwriting** – sessions on the art of songwriting (writing lyrics, melodies, and learning how to sing) and creating a unique song together with participants.

“Connect & Create has basically helped me stay in touch with so many people I have come to call really close friends. We had loads of fun, we have basically created so many videos. And not just that we’ve connected, we will stay in touch long after the Connect & Create programme”.

“I am so blessed for Connect & Create in my days here in the process of asylum. I am happy to know people, to know this programme, to know these different topics – about music, about movies, about different diversity of topics. “Sanctuary is the best option because it’s not easy, our situation – the waiting and waiting. It’s the best option, it’s amazing, it’s incredible, it’s wonderful – I am grateful – I don’t have words to describe that!”

“Connect & Create helped me form a community and helped me free my mind away from Covid for even an hour a week. For me Connect & Create helps me feel close to everyone even if we are very far away”.

“I learnt so many things – it helps to bring out the actual talent in you, cos there are times you have this talent that you might not know – you have this ability to be creative and think outside the box. The sessions were so lively. They came from real life experiences... We get to meet with different people and build real community where everyone can feel they belong”.

“I would like these sessions to continue, the reason for this is that at the moment I am an asylum seeker and there are so many [of us] going through a similar situation. At this time, these sessions help us keep very alive, lively. You know, you can't stay in the house, there is no internet, no television, so programmes like this help to keep our minds busy. It's good for our mental health”.

“I've met so many people who are in self-isolation – such people can join and they cannot feel bored of depression. It would be very nice if this programme continues, because if the programme ends now I might be depressed. Not might, actually, I will, because this is the only thing that is keeping me going” (Anon).

# Margaret Fingerhut

## online fundraiser event

On the 5th June, City of Sanctuary hosted 'Let Us Be Together - Margaret Fingerhut's Fundraising Finale', involving a 1 hour 15 minute performance featuring Margaret Fingerhut, Peter Fisher, Arian Hu and Sam Slatcher. During the event the fundraising total went from £82,000 to £88,300, reaching the target of £88k, representing £1,000 for each piano key. A **huge thank you** to Margaret and her colleagues Peter, Arian and Sam.

# Sanctuary Stories Online project

Sanctuary Stories Online was an initiative launched in May to engage Sanctuary Ambassadors in a creative participatory filmmaking project, encouraging participants to share video and blog posts calling on our groups to mobilise behind advocacy asks, sharing their experiences on how to cope in times of crisis and promoting our **theory of change/network principles**. We held several online training sessions for participants to learn how to create short videos using their phone to enable them to share their story or their campaign. This work has been crucial for City of Sanctuary's capacity building, in supporting individuals to **share their stories** and bringing together participants from across the UK.

## 'The North East Sanctuary Ambassadors share their top tips for campaigning during lockdown'

'#WelImagine' – a film capturing sanctuary seekers' visions for their future.  
(Shortlisted for the FilmAid Film Festival, 30 September)

'World Mental Health day 2020' – a film showing how people seeking sanctuary are coping with mental health during Covid-19

'Connect & Create' – a film about Connect & Create and the impact it's had on participants' lives

'Creating a culture of welcome in challenging times' – a video showcasing how City of Sanctuary is continuing to create a culture of welcome in the challenge of the pandemic

## Participant-led videos:

A number of participants also produced their own short videos:

### 'Of Heart'

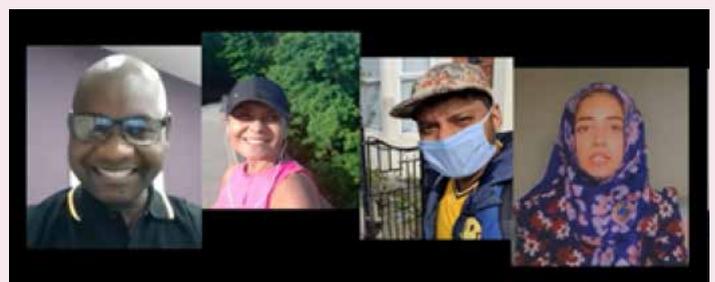
- poem by Loraine Mponela (Coventry)

### 'Refugee Art Table'

- Marian Liebmann (Bristol)

### 'Imagine'

- poem by Saba Humayun (Swansea)



# Collaboration and Partnerships

We have participated in conversations about Initial Accommodation support, preventing evictions, the week of action planning, Hope not Hate, Community Sponsorship, **Detention Forum** (we are now members of the Community campaigning working group) **Families Together, Lift the Ban** and other coalitions.

We have signed a considerable number of joint letters to the government in collaboration with other organisations on various asylum related matters including on detention, asylum support and asylum accommodation, slavery, resettlement, trafficking, health charging, etc. Thanks to **UKLGIG** and the **Red Cross** for the Covid email distribution groups enabling excellent communications across the sector.

At the regional level, Regional Coordinators continued to regularly meet with Strategic Migrations Partnerships, **Asylum Matters** local representatives and other refugee sector partners like Refugee Council and Refugee Action, Welsh Refugee Coalition, Welsh Government Refugee & Asylum Seeker Operations Board & Taskforce, 'Localities of Welcome', 'Urban Economy Forum', LGA, London United, and many others.

We contributed to the [Coronavirus Asylum Handbook](#) - a collaborative resource started by Refugee Action sharing good practice across the refugee support sector.

## Communications

We have maintained our social media presence, website articles and monthly newsletter. We have also worked with national and specialist journalists to get coverage of some of our streams work (nurseries, colleges, libraries, arts), Thank you to **IMIX** for their support to promote the voices of people seeking sanctuary in local and national news.

We are monitoring **positive news stories** which mention City of Sanctuary and we are building a database of friendly journalists. Since January 2020 we have recorded nearly 60 articles featuring City of Sanctuary in the print and online media. Please send us any local news stories which feature local group activities. We monitor and contribute to JISC list serves for streams ([Schools](#), [Universities](#) and [Library and Museums](#)).

[Twitter](#) followers have now exceeded 10,100. We are building a list of twitter handles to better target our partners and network so that we can be more strategic in our posts. Our [Facebook](#) followers are just under 4,000 but our reach is often wider. Please tag us in your posts and tweets so that we can share them.

# Website Development

We have continued working with **Rainbow Web Services** for ongoing technical support, maintenance, security improvements, bug fixing and developments to our multi-site website. Thanks to their professionalism and expertise we have seen considerable improvements in the last year. A new theme was deployed to all group websites increasing functions and opportunities for customisation including donation forms and built in social sharing buttons.

We have added **online documentation** for groups' website editors, incorporating all the new features from this year which is [available here](#). There were significant challenges around improving the layout of pages, given the diversity of ways groups use images and text on their websites, and the different "page builder" plugins that some groups use to extend functionality.

We've improved the capacity to display funders/partners, often used in the footer area of group websites. In addition, the search options and network search functionality has been improved.

Further improvements to be implemented early in the new year include a new front page with an up to date interactive map and search facility for groups.

## Welcome

A big welcome to Winchester, Sandwell, Carlisle, Pembrokeshire and Richmondshire groups who have joined the CoS UK network in the last year.

## Other ongoing work

In January 2020, we introduced a paperless filing system for our financial records which made the move to home working much easier. There has also been work behind the scenes on maintaining our data storage systems (GDrive and database), monitoring and recording Sanctuary Awards across the UK, developing resources on the website and administration around Facilitated Conversations and Connect and Create, including making sure everyone who needs data has access to these. We held 49 website support/training sessions and 44 email support sessions.

# Current Staff List

*(all part time)*

Siân Summers-Rees - Chief Officer

Colleen Molloy - Communications Manager

Sara Trew hitt - Regional Coordinator for Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East, England Regions Manager, Streams Lead for Schools and Colleges

Joanna Spooner - Finance and Administration Officer

Nawal Careem - Website and Database Officer

Forward Maisokwadzo - Communications Officer

Maggie Filipova-Rivers - Regional Coordinator for the Midlands, Eastern Region, London and South East

Nikki Walters - Regional Coordinator for the South West

Gün Orgun - Regional Coordinator for Scotland

Hayley Richards - Regional Coordinator for Wales

Maryam Taher - Universities of Sanctuary Coordinator (from December)

Sam Slatcher - Communications and Sanctuary Voice Coordinator (temporary to March)

Julie Ward - Online Activities Coordinator (temporary from November to March )

Megan Greenwood - Schools Stream Support Officer (temporary from November to March)

## Trustee list

Jonathan Ellis (Chair) - London

Adrian Bulley (Secretary) - Cardiff

Andrew White (Treasurer) - Southampton

Jeff Morgan - North Wales (Also Volunteer Coordinator for the North West)

Joseph Chivayo - Derby

Pam Inder - Leicester

Herbert Dirahu - Newcastle

Amani Yahya - London

Ben Margolis - Norwich

Bianca Mukasa - Winchester

Richard Williams - Brighton

Thank you as always to our funders: Unbound Philanthropy, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Tudor Trust, The Joffe Charitable Trust, AB Charitable Trust, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Network for Social Change, Necessity.

City of Sanctuary UK is a registered charity (No 1184613) PO Box 384, Leeds LS26 1GJ