To the City of Sanctuary membership,

This proposal has been developed by the City of Sanctuary staff and trustees through a consultative process with members, allies, Local Authorities and others. If you have any questions, please contact Sian at sian@uk.cityofsanctuary.org.

**PROPOSAL 1: DISCONTINUE THE CITY-WIDE APPRAISAL RECOGNITION PROCESS**

**PROPOSAL 2: ESTABLISH A CITY OF SANCTUARY LOCAL AUTHORITY NETWORK**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

City of Sanctuary has grown from its origins in Sheffield in 2005 to become an extraordinary network and movement with well over 110 groups and rapidly growing networks of partners and streams. We are in a unique position to transform the experience of people seeking sanctuary in our communities, as well as to shift the narrative, policies and culture of welcome in the UK. This work has never been more crucial in light of the COVID-19 crisis and recent uprising against injustice and discrimination.

*One outcome of our efforts is that an increasing number of local authorities are committed to working towards becoming a City of Sanctuary (or to reaffirm and strengthen their previous commitment).*

[NB: In this document we will use the term ‘Cities of Sanctuary’ but recognise it also includes, towns, boroughs, villages and communities].

In the last two years a small number of Local Authorities have made becoming a City of Sanctuary a core part of their corporate strategy and have put in place the resources, networks and structures to make this a reality. They are working closely with us which gives us a potentially unique opportunity to deeply embed sanctuary at the heart of some of our local authorities.

[NB: In this document we will use the term ‘local authorities’ to include all types of local government from across the whole of the UK e.g. county councils, districts, boroughs or city councils, unitary councils, London boroughs, combined authorities, metropolitan boroughs as well as parish and town councils]

Equally, we are aware that local authorities have limited powers in the UK and for most people seeking sanctuary, their lives are governed far more by the Home Office than by Local Authorities. This is very different to the US where, as you probably know, there are Sanctuary Cities who limit their legal cooperation with the federal government. However, we have recently seen examples in the UK where local authorities are beginning to limit cooperation as with the refusal of several authorities to share data on rough sleepers.

In August 2013, City of Sanctuary produced a paper entitled ‘Developing a Culture of Welcome’ which set out a process for Sanctuary Awards to be made available to, ‘groups and organisations as well as towns or cities.’ [added emphasis]
The paper included a proposal for what has become the extremely successful Sanctuary Awards and ‘Streams’. It also proposed a process for ‘Becoming a recognised City of Sanctuary’ [Appendix 1 sets out the process from the 2013 paper].

The latter process was undertaken with a small number of cities but there remains ongoing confusion and a lack of clarity over how we define and recognise a ‘City of Sanctuary.’ With the significant changes in the internal and external environment since 2013, many CoS groups (as well as several Local Authorities) asked us to review the recognition process.

2. THE CHALLENGES

Developing an agreed process of recognising a whole city as a ‘City of Sanctuary’ has been fraught with difficulties since the early inception of the network. These difficulties remain and are arguably exacerbated by the growth of the network. It has proven impossible to develop appropriate ‘benchmark’ criteria given the diversity of external environments within which groups operate across the UK. Additionally, the size of our network means that we no longer have the capacity for staff and trustees to be engaged in the appraisal process and some have argued that a recognition process from an umbrella organisation does not align with being a grassroots movement.

We also recognise that not all local authorities will want to commit to becoming a City of Sanctuary. In these situations, we feel it is important to ensure that a City of Sanctuary group feel supported and empowered to continue their efforts locally. We have come to the conclusion that the City of Sanctuary Charter is in itself sufficient to provide groups with enough guidance and information to work towards our vision. We believe it enables the flexibility necessary for a grassroots movement to flourish but at the same time provides sufficient guidance on actions groups can take towards making their localities welcoming places of safety.

We also have to acknowledge the existence of differences across the network. Some groups established in the early stages have gone through the recognition process, other groups have ‘self-declared’ themselves as recognised Cities of Sanctuary and some groups are in the process of preparing to submit an application.

Additionally, many of us have debated the issue of whether any place in the UK can truly be a welcoming place of safety whilst Government policies and legislation contributes to the creation of a hostile environment for people seeking sanctuary.

3. CONSULTATION PROCESS

We have taken our time to undertake a thorough consultation process which initially involved one to one conversations with City of Sanctuary groups, councillors and officials from across local authorities and workshops at our 2019 conference. The next stage involved sending a questionnaire directly to our network of groups outlining the basis for this proposal. 99% of respondents to that survey agreed with the proposal (see Appendix 3).

At the beginning of May we held a meeting with a number of local authorities and CoS group representatives and gained positive feedback on the proposal (notwithstanding that some of those local authorities are yet to obtain the formal approval required before they can commit further).
This document now sets out the final proposal to the 2020 AGM (taking place virtually on June 24) to be voted on by the City of Sanctuary membership.

Whilst we are seeking approval from the membership of the proposal in principle, there will more opportunities to feed into the development of the local authority network through a Steering Group which would be set up to develop the terms of reference and action plan.

**PROPOSAL 1: TO DISCONTINUE THE CITY-WIDE APPRAISAL RECOGNITION PROCESSES**

All City of Sanctuary groups are expected to sign up as a network member. This commits them to the networks values and principles as set out in the City of Sanctuary charter, and to working towards our Theory of Change. The City of Sanctuary Charter provides groups with guidance and information to work towards our vision and enables the flexibility necessary for a grassroots movement to flourish.

Groups are also expected to follow the guide to becoming a City of Sanctuary which sets out the following actions (which remain unchanged):

1. Develop a strategy, agreed by the main supporting organisations, for how the city, town or area is to continue working towards greater inclusion and equality for refugees and people seeking sanctuary, as well as greater public awareness, through a range of initiatives, projects and activities.
2. Gather resolutions of support from a significant and representative proportion of groups and organisations;
3. Encourage supporting organisations (whether formally pledged or not) to turn their commitment into actions;
4. Engage with other groups across the network, in the expectation that such a conversation will lead to a mutually beneficial sharing of good practice;
5. Support and work alongside refugees and people seeking sanctuary in the City of Sanctuary group, including representation on its steering group or committee
6. Wherever possible sustain engagement with the local authority or other relevant authorities.

Local groups will be able to use the term ‘City of Sanctuary’ to describe themselves, despite not having gone through an appraisal recognition process and regardless of the level of local authority commitment or engagement. Groups are encouraged to celebrate achievements at various points during their journey towards making their particular area a welcoming place of safety, for example once they have made significant progress towards achieving the above actions. Whilst we do not want to be prescriptive we have been in discussions with some groups who have been planning celebrations and have suggested that ‘X City of Sanctuary: Building a welcoming place of safety’ might be the most appropriate wording.

**PROPOSAL 2: TO ESTABLISH A CITY OF SANCTUARY LOCAL AUTHORITY NETWORK**

**AIMS**

The aims of this network are to:
1) Embed a culture and practice of welcome in Local Authorities to support our theory of change i.e. encourage opportunities for social contact and movement building in order to raise awareness and contribute towards longer term attitudinal change

2) Recognise Local Authorities which are meeting certain standards to offer a benchmark and inspiration for other Local Authorities

3) Give clarity to the network to support their efforts to engage with and recognise the achievements of their own Local Authorities

4) Provide a mechanism for City of Sanctuary to engage and connect with other city-wide welcoming initiatives e.g. Inclusive Cities.

5) Create a network of Local Authorities that are demonstrating best practice and working together to influence UK Government policies and international processes

6) Encourage local authorities, who may not have engaged with a City of Sanctuary group or with City of Sanctuary UK previously, to join the network and share best practice (particularly when they are able to contribute to sharing innovative and best practice ways of building welcome)

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**MINIMUM CRITERIA**

Local Authorities are able to apply to City of Sanctuary UK to become a member of the *City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network*. In order to do this, they must:

1) Pass a council motion setting out their commitment to being a place of sanctuary

2) Sign up to the City of Sanctuary charter and commit to working with the local City of Sanctuary (which could be via a specific local pledge) (and/or other refugee networks)

3) Show evidence of the work with their local City of Sanctuary group (and/or other refugee networks) and to receive the endorsement from those groups for their application

4) Commit to work with partners to identify national policy issues in order to make collective representations to government to encourage and enable change¹

5) Produce a written strategy (either an independent strategy or as part of a broader strategy) which is publicly available and sets out their commitment for at least three years

6) Provide contact details for the councillor that has responsibility for City of Sanctuary, and at least one council officer as contact points for the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network

Membership will last for three years after which the Local Authority must re-apply.

When a local authority is able to demonstrate they have met all the criteria they would be given the right to use a logo to recognise their commitment. The majority of respondents agreed that the following wording would accompany the logo “X is recognised for its commitment to being a City of Sanctuary’.

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**BENEFITS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Local Authorities will be:-

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¹ This criteria has been added in recognition of concerns raised that City of Sanctuary would be endorsing local authorities that are sometimes obliged to comply with Government policy and legislation that is in direct contradiction to our vision of welcome.
1) Listed on our website under a list of Local Authorities with a commitment to being a place of sanctuary
2) Given the right to use a special logo (to be designed) recognising their commitment
3) Part of an active peer to peer network supporting each other to improve their sanctuary practices and, where appropriate, lobbying on relevant government policy

**HOW WILL IT FUNCTION?**

The City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network will be guided by a steering group made up of:

1) People with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in the UK
2) Councillors with relevant portfolios
3) Council officers with relevant job descriptions
4) Representatives from City of Sanctuary groups
5) A representative from the City of Sanctuary UK national team
6) A representative from the City of Sanctuary trustees

The steering group will be set up to work on a terms of reference and action plan. Groups will be able to feed into this process.
APPENDIX 1: PURPOSE AND AIMS

To resolve some of the current confusion, and at times disagreement, that exists in the network with regards to how we work with, and potentially recognise, Local Authorities and/or whole cities as ‘Cities of Sanctuary.’ Some of the key issues to be resolved include:

Wording

All cities with a local group are referred to as ‘Cities of Sanctuary’ (e.g. Norwich City of Sanctuary) whether or not the Local Authority has shown support or engagement.

Motions

A growing number of Local Authorities have passed motions stating their commitment to being a City of Sanctuary but these vary enormously in terms of their practical impact. There is also rarely a process for reassessment or renewal of these motions.

Best practice

There are now several Local Authorities with a deep commitment to being Cities of Sanctuary and demonstrating best practice, and we would like to encourage other Local Authorities to follow their example. Equally it should be noted that there are some Local Authorities seeking recognition despite offering relatively little in terms of practical action of support.

Lack of clarity across the network

There are different views expressed in the City of Sanctuary network with the two ends of the spectrum loosely being those who suggest any Local Authority that passes a motion should be recognised as a City of Sanctuary and those who suggest we should never refer to places as being a City of Sanctuary as they don’t have the power to ensure that people are truly safe (unlike, for example, the US Sanctuary Cities model). There will also be some local authorities that are unwilling to publicly declare their support for CoS despite a lot of good work happening at a local level.

Differing contexts

We work across extremely different contexts including (but not limited to) rural and urban; areas with large numbers of people seeking sanctuary and those with very few; authorities with different powers (for cities, counties, boroughs etc.). The process for recognition must recognise this.

APPENDIX 2: THE PROCESS FOR BECOMING A CITY OF SANCTUARY FROM THE 2013 PAPER

PROCESS

1. The local group develops its own strategy in a way that is relevant to the situation in its own town or city. This strategy should be based on the six guidelines and the three core values above. It should specify the group’s initial goals for its town or city and explain what evidence of progress will be required before the town or city is in a position to be ‘recognised’ as a Town or City of Sanctuary. This should include evidence to be gathered from asylum seekers and refugees.
2. The local group’s strategy is presented at a regional network meeting and/or circulated to groups in the region for comment. Other groups across the network can be involved in the process at the discretion of the National Trustees and National Appraisal Committee.

3. When the local group believes it has achieved its initial goals and gathered the required evidence of progress, it submits an application to the National City of Sanctuary Trustees, detailing how it is addressing the guidelines and core values set out in its strategy.

4. The National Trustees will set up a separate Recognition Group in each case, to be chaired by the National Co-ordinator. At least three other members will be appointed to each Recognition Group, who will not be directly connected to the local City of Sanctuary group making the application. They will normally include:
   - A representative of the local refugee community
   - A national Trustee from the National Appraisal Committee
   - A representative of another refugee charity, refugee organisation, or similar

5. The Recognition Group considers the application: this may involve email communication between the members, a phone conference or, in some cases, a meeting.

6. The Recognition Group may ask questions, make suggestions, or recommend further work before awarding official recognition.

7. Recognition is awarded and marked with an appropriate local celebration.

8. Following recognition the town or city will continue to develop a culture of welcome and to monitor the progress it is making. Recognition as an official City or Town of Sanctuary should not be seen as the end of the process.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Does your group agree with the proposal?

99% of respondents agreed with the proposal.

2. How important are each of the recommended criteria?

100% of respondents felt that the following was ‘Very Important’:

   - Pass a motion; Sign up to the charter; Endorsement from a local group; Providing contact details;

10% of respondents indicated that the ‘Three year written strategy’ was ‘Quite Important’

Comments on criteria:

“They are all important, but most important of all is a genuine commitment that this will mean something from the key leaders on the political and the officer side - in our case City Mayor and Chief Operating Officer”.
“It may be challenging for some LAs, depending on their institutional architecture, to have an self-standing CoS Strategy. It might be good to allow something equivalent, e.g ensuring that relevant existing strategies, such as inclusion and/or equalities take full and explicit account of the needs of those who have sought sanctuary in the city/town/borough/village”.

3. When a local authority joins the network they will be given the right to use a logo to recognise their commitment. Which of the following wording do you think should be used (recognising a City could be a Town, Borough, Village or other)?

70% of respondents preferred the term “X is recognised for its commitment to being a City of Sanctuary’

4. Other: Feedback which requires consideration in developing the network further:-

“We have a problem with our LA inasmuch as it already works closely with groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers are reluctant to publicly endorse the City of Sanctuary charter or pass a motion committing to the city being a place of sanctuary because they are scared of losing working class votes and a right wing backlash”.

“Our is a county-wide group and there are 7 town councils and a county council in the county. So using City of Sanctuary as the generic banner title is good, but clarity might needed for groups operating at county, borough, village, etc. level on what constitutes the target local authority”.

“Our Borough has a pretty anonymous name […] which does not exist as particular, focused location. We would want individual settlements, towns and villages, within the Borough, to be termed for eg Walton, town of sanctuary, Thames Ditton, village of sanctuary, etc”

END

If you have any questions about this document Siân at sian@uk.cityofsanctuary.org.