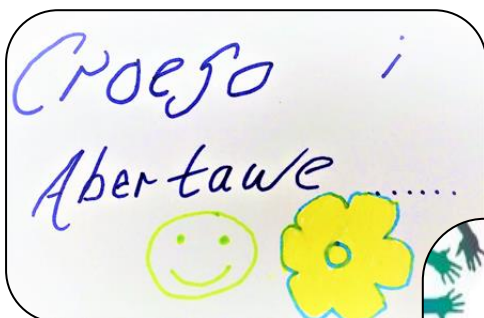




**Swansea City of Sanctuary**  
**Abertawe Dinas Noddfa**



*"City of Sanctuary is what all its supporters do!"*



# Annual Report 2017-18

## Swansea City of Sanctuary Management Committee

from April 2017

Name	Membership Category (Indiv or rep)	
Alan Thomas	Quakers	Co-chair
Helen Clancy	CCS	
Jill Duarte	ACC	
Amber Esther	Individual	Co-chair
Marilyn Thomas	SBASSG	
Sohail Ali	Individual	Treasurer
Joy Mason	Individual	
Kathryn Williams	Individual	Secretary
Vicky Goodban	Oxfam	
Hamid Shah	Individual	
Veronika Ekwere	Individual	
Thanuja Hettiarachchi	Individual /Women's group	
Mary Sherwood	Individual	
Elisabeth Essayas	Individual	
Akem Colins	Individual	
Saba Humayun	Individual	
Grace Michell	Individual	
Tahir Bilau	Individual	
Helah Uddin	EYST	
<b>Co-opted</b>		
Jim Stewart	DPIA Rep	

## Chairs' Report 2017/18

This report covers the period from the 2017 AGM on 5 April 2017 to the 2018 AGM on 21 June 2018. During this period the role of Chair has successfully been shared between Amber Esther and Alan Thomas. We are pleased that this sharing between asylum seekers and others is reflected in our having more-or-less equal participation from asylum seekers as from other volunteers and representatives of supporting organisations on the Management Committee. Sohail Daredia has been Treasurer, so with Kathryn Williams as Secretary we have had parity on our small officers' group. We noted a similar parity on the Management Committee at its first meeting after the 2017 AGM and also discovered a very high and varied level of skills and experience among our members, including nursing and catering, MBA, financial management and a PhD in political science.

We know that for asylum seekers the insecurity of their situation makes it very difficult to take on long-term responsibilities. So we are pleased that several asylum seeking committee members have played big roles throughout the year, e.g. on the Strategy Working Group, assessing Sanctuary Awards, representing us at events, advocacy on housing standards and access to further education, sitting on interview panels, and in many other ways. As far as possible we will continue with the policy of 'pairing' asylum seekers with other committee members so as to provide support to enable more asylum seeking members to play a role.



### **Officers**

*(From Left):*

*Sohail, Kathryn,  
Amber and Alan*

## Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The highlight of the year was for Swansea City of Sanctuary to receive the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It was presented by HRH The Countess of Wessex at a ceremony in Swansea Guildhall on Monday 19 March 2018. Around 50 Swansea City of Sanctuary volunteers from all over the world attended, representing a variety of volunteer-led activities. Our co-Chair Amber Esther accepted the award on our behalf, saying:

*"We are very happy to receive this award and honoured to receive it from Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex. It brings recognition of the hard work undertaken by our volunteers, many of whom are themselves seeking sanctuary. The award serves as a celebration of the welcoming attitudes and behaviours demonstrated by individuals in Swansea, the UK's second City of Sanctuary."*

The award is the equivalent of an MBE for volunteer groups and is the highest award presented to volunteer groups throughout the UK. Two of our members were able to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. The Royal visit recognises the outstanding contributions made by individuals who donate their time and skills to make Swansea a welcoming and safe place for people fleeing violence and persecution.



## **Supporting the Wales Cities of Sanctuary (WCoS) Project in Swansea**

This has been the final year of the WCoS project. Throughout the year we have had the benefit of working with the excellent Swansea project team. One of the roles of the committee has been to liaise with Displaced People in Action (DPIA), who have been our highly valued partners over many years and who manage the project both here and in Cardiff. We have been able to ensure part of the project underspend was used to re-launch the Swansea Refugee and Asylum Seekers Advocacy Forum as part of the project and to extend the project as a whole for three months from April to June 2018.



## **Securing the Future**

Another major preoccupation has been our strategy for the period following the end of the project. We saw little prospect of a single large continuation project, so our Strategy Working Group has worked throughout the year to discern our priorities and to embed the most important lines of work in different partnerships. Perhaps most importantly, we are working to secure the future for our core activity of movement building and mobilising support for welcoming refugees among local organisations and individuals across Swansea – something not encapsulated in any single line of project work.

Specifically we have:

- consulted local partner organisations on our priorities at a networking meeting;
- organised 'peer research' on the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, including training and support for asylum seekers taking part as peer researchers;
- ensured that the Speakers Team and Advocacy Forum continue as parts of the Asylum Rights Programme led by the Welsh Refugee Council, with a part-time DPIA staff member supporting these activities in Swansea and spreading them to other Welsh cities;
- worked with Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS) to be granted two years' lottery funding for a “Better Welcome to Swansea” project which will be managed by SCVS in partnership with SCoS, to build on the success of the “Welcome to Swansea” volunteer mentoring project;
- Obtained a small grant from the Swansea Compact Fund for six months' work on securing a sustainable future for SCoS and our core movement building activity.

## **Other committee work during the last 12 months**

We are involved and influential in various ways in Swansea, Wales and beyond. Here are some of the other things we have been doing over the year to promote our vision:

- Fundraising especially for bus fares to enable asylum seekers in particular to participate in our meetings, events and working groups
- Working towards becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Organising networking meetings and other meetings and events
- In our Destitution Working Group, developing a shared house in conjunction with SASS and Gwalia for future

- Temporary accommodation for new refugees and destitute asylum seekers
- Working with WLGA Strategic Migration Partnership and City and County of Swansea to improve the standard of housing for asylum seekers in Swansea
- Discussions with Gower College to try to improve accessibility to further education for asylum seekers, including 16 – 18 year olds
- Worked with HBT Sanctuary Group on ‘Project Get Together.’ 20 young people from Swansea, both asylum seekers and local people, joined others from Cardiff and Newport for an activity weekend, held at the PGL Tregoyd Centre near Hay-on-Wye. The weekend gave all a chance to interact with people from different cities and cultures and appreciate all they have in common.
- Contributing to wider networks across Wales and UK, such as the Welsh Refugee Coalition, including inputting to Welsh Government’s Refugee & Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan and other consultations both national and for Swansea
- Influencing proposals for Wales to become a Nation of Sanctuary
- Participating in ‘Sanctuary in the Senedd’ and ‘Sanctuary in Parliament’ and meeting with Assembly Members and MPs
- Influencing UK national policy relating to asylum including meeting with the Home Office about the new tendering process for Asylum Seekers’ housing in UK.

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*Our vision is ‘to be one of a network of cities which are welcoming to all, which are proud to offer sanctuary and support to those fleeing violence or persecution, and which celebrate the contribution of asylum seekers and refugees to city life’.*

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## Thank you to all!

*Finally we would like to extend warm thanks to all who have contributed to making the work of Swansea City of Sanctuary a success over the past year. We are particularly grateful to those who have worked on the Swansea part of the WCoS project during the year: Stepheni Kays, Rebecca Scott and Eleri Williams, as well as (for shorter periods) Hannah Chapman, Leila Usman and Elisabeth Hudson, And we also give a big "Thankyou!" all our Committee Members, volunteers, partners and supporters - "City of Sanctuary is what all our supporters do!"*

*Amber Esther*

*Alan Thomas*

*June 2018*



**Swansea City of Sanctuary**  
**Abertawe Dinas Noddfa**



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*