




Registered Charity No. 1177624

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19



A person is sitting at a table, drawing a mind map on a large sheet of paper. The mind map has a central circle with several branches extending outwards, each containing handwritten text in various colors (red, blue, green). The text on the branches includes phrases like "Safe", "Helping", "Soft", "Good gifts", "Home", "Safe", "Good gifts", "Home", "Safe", "Good gifts", "Home". The person's hands are visible, with one hand holding a red marker. On the table, there are two clear plastic water bottles, a blue pen, and a small blue container. The background is slightly blurred, showing more papers and a desk lamp.

**We are building a
culture of welcome,
inclusion and support
for everyone in
Swindon, especially
for people seeking
sanctuary.**

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1. Introduction & Summary

2018-2019 has seen us progress and change throughout our first full year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). We have come a long way.

Progress:

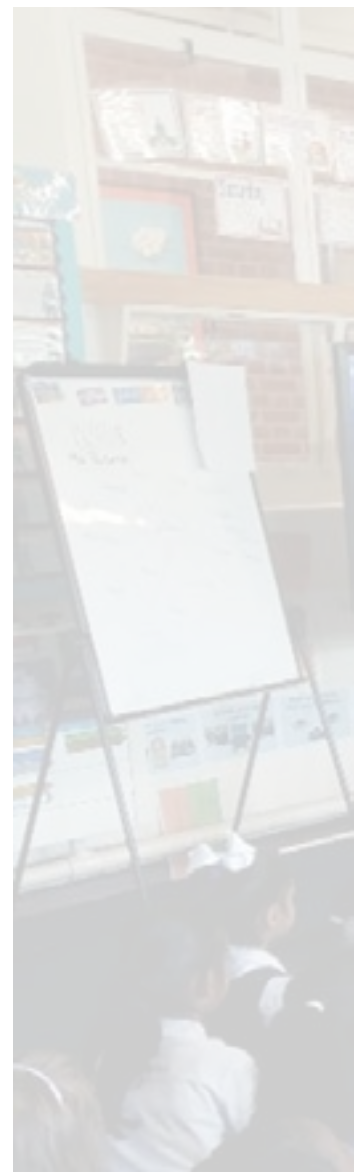
- Bringing people and organisations together through the arts, media and local communities – to broaden understanding about the issues relating to people seeking sanctuary
- Providing practical support to people seeking sanctuary, through innovative initiatives, partnerships and projects
- Raising awareness through campaigning for social justice

Changes:

- We have increased the numbers in our small team of committed, dedicated and supportive volunteers
- We have welcomed Ben Jackson as our new Chair of Trustees
- We have transferred the successful Swindon United football team initiative to **The Harbour Project** <http://harbourproject.org.uk/> now that the team is financially secure and has a sustainable future supported by **Wiltshire Football Association**

As you read our Annual Report you will see that we have made a positive impact in so many ways – but there is still much more to be done. Having left a life of fear and persecution, people seeking sanctuary encounter many further hurdles navigating their way through the complex and challenging asylum system in the UK. These hurdles prevent them from feeling truly safe here and from becoming fully included and involved in their new communities. This is where our work, in collaboration with our partners and friends in Swindon, the wider **City of Sanctuary** network and the UK-wide **No Accommodation Network (NACCOM)**, is crucial in building a culture of welcome, inclusion and support for everyone in Swindon, especially for people seeking sanctuary.

Swindon is a fascinating town, which, for more than 100 years, has welcomed people from other parts of the UK as well as from all over the world. Our town has grown into a vibrant cosmopolitan fusion of 200,000 people speaking over 120 different first languages. The driving force behind our projects and initiatives is to bring Swindon's diverse population together, creating a sense of community and hospitality. We want people seeking sanctuary in our area to be included in our community. We want to raise awareness and appreciation of the contribution that people seeking sanctuary make to their new town. We want our work to recognise and embrace all that people seeking sanctuary can add to our town's already rich cultural diversity.



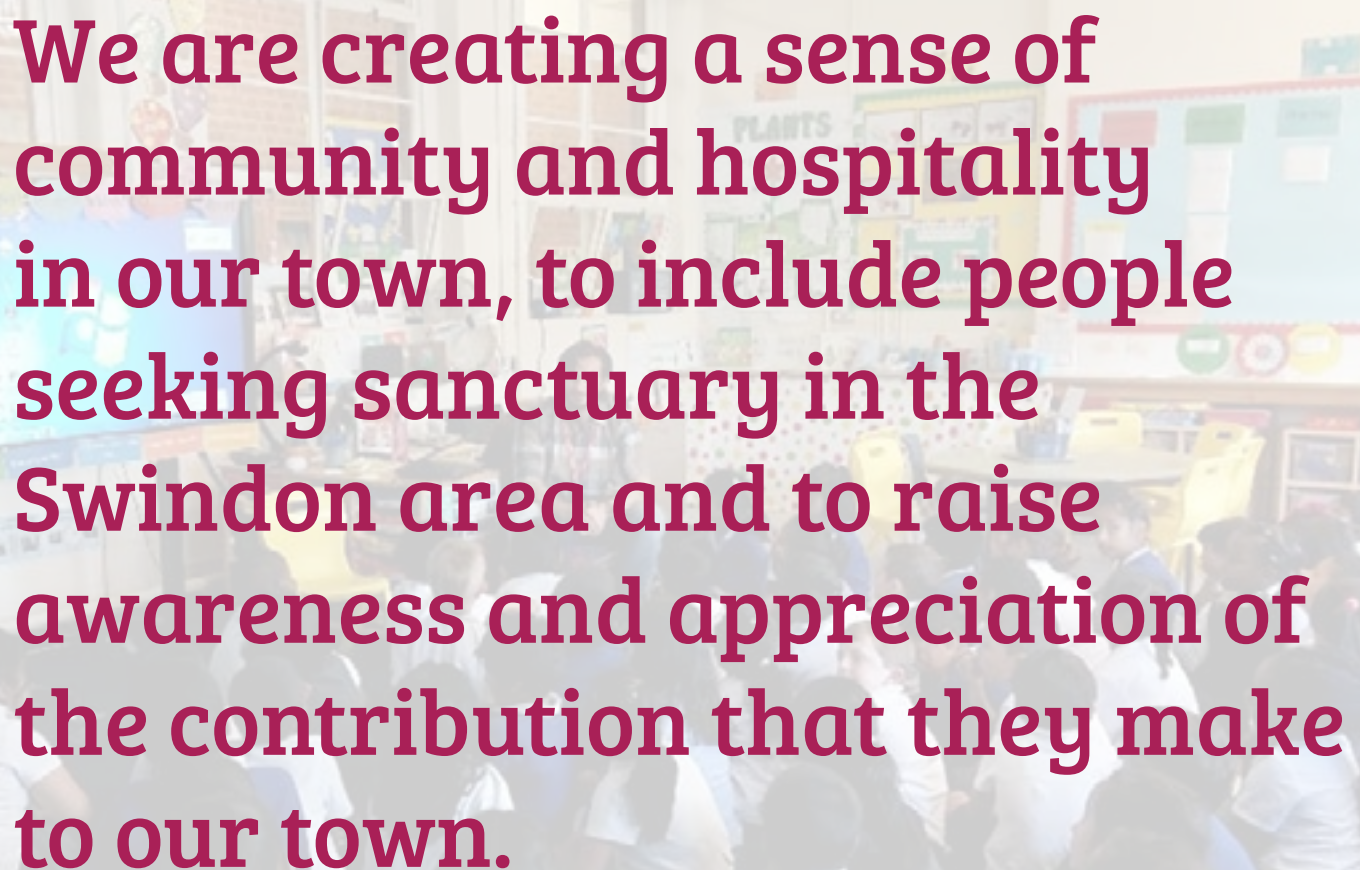
We are determined to encourage all in our community to involve, include and support each other. We are proud of Swindon's strong history of welcoming people from diverse global communities. We are committed to creating and celebrating Swindon as a true City of Sanctuary.



Ben Jackson
Chair of Trustees
May 2019



Nicola Wood
Executive Officer
May 2019

A background image of a classroom filled with children sitting at desks, looking towards the front. The room has colorful decorations, including a 'PLANTS' display and various educational materials on the walls.

We are creating a sense of community and hospitality in our town, to include people seeking sanctuary in the Swindon area and to raise awareness and appreciation of the contribution that they make to our town.

LAST YEAR...

486

people seeking sanctuary
connected with and benefitted
from our projects and initiatives

12

local and national organisations
engaged with our work

200

people called in on
The Global Garden Party

3

local campaigns with national
impact successfully continued

402

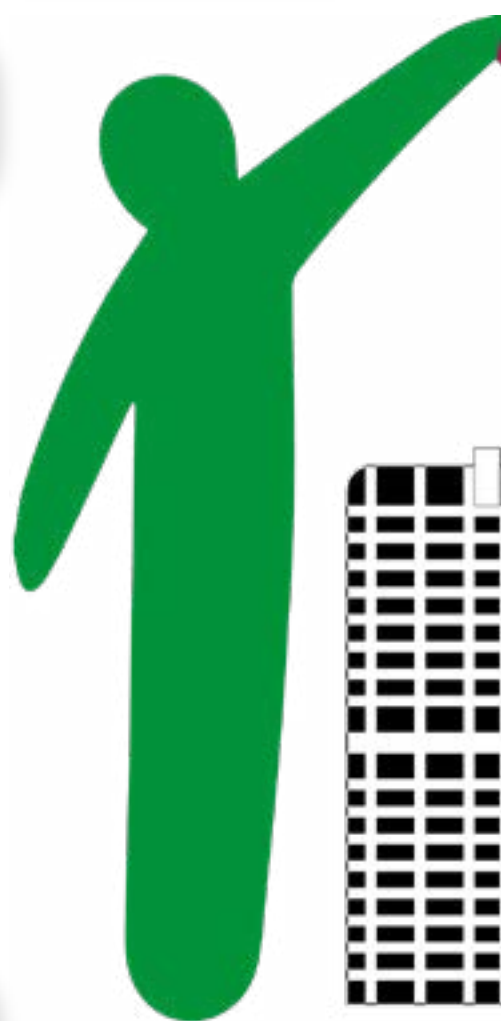
people dropped in to We're Open
at popular independent café
Darkroom Espresso

2,000

people checked out our website –
70% of these were new visits

2

business pledges of support were
added to the 31 already listed



...WE BROUGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER

4

key initiatives increased outreach across the town

19

guests accommodated through Room for All hosting scheme

100

volunteers involved in Refugee Week 2018

4

people seeking sanctuary participated in national City of Sanctuary initiatives

9

people seeking sanctuary dropped in to We're Open every week

6

new individual pledges of support – making a total of almost 140 pledges

2,000

school children were involved with our projects and curriculum developments



3. Financial Information & Report

This Year

We thank our funders who have continued to support and invest in our work this year – without them, our projects and initiatives would not have been possible:

- **Joffe Charitable Trust**, whose three-year donation (2018-2021) has supported the employment of our Executive Officer, the vital core of everything we do.
- **The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)**, whose grant funds our weekly drop-in, **We're Open** Project.
- **Wiltshire Community Foundation (WCF)**, whose grant helps to further the work of our **Room for All Hosting Scheme** and includes employment of our Hosting Co-ordinator.
- **South Swindon Parish Council**, whose grant enabled us to present events during **Refugee Week 2018**.
- The staff and customers of Swindon's classic Spanish tapas bar, **Los Gatos**. The staff promoted the popular 'Sanctuary Tapas' range. Through each 'Sanctuary Tapas', named after the person who has shared their recipe, ownership and pride in their cultural heritage is shared with the wider community. Donations from each 'Sanctuary Tapas' go to **Swindon City of Sanctuary**.
- Regular individual donors – from the monthly direct debit contributions, to the donations placed in our buckets at events.
- Occasional donations from individuals and groups who wish to remain anonymous; one such gift enabled guests on our hosting scheme to access a local gym. Access to free regular exercise has untold benefits on the physical health and, most importantly, the mental health of our guests.

Please note: Following the date of our registration with the **Charity Commission**, we have brought our new financial year and our accounting period in line with this date. As this now covers an extended period of time, we have published the income and expenditure figures in a separate document which is available to view on our website. Our full Financial Report, showing details of our investment in enabling **Swindon City of Sanctuary** to create a sense of community and hospitality in our town, is available on our website.

<https://swindon.cityofsanctuary.org/aboutus/annual-report-accounts-2018-2019>

Next Year

Our charity has grown impressively from small beginnings. Clear financial planning has been significant to our success; this will continue as we draw up our financial strategy for the year ahead.

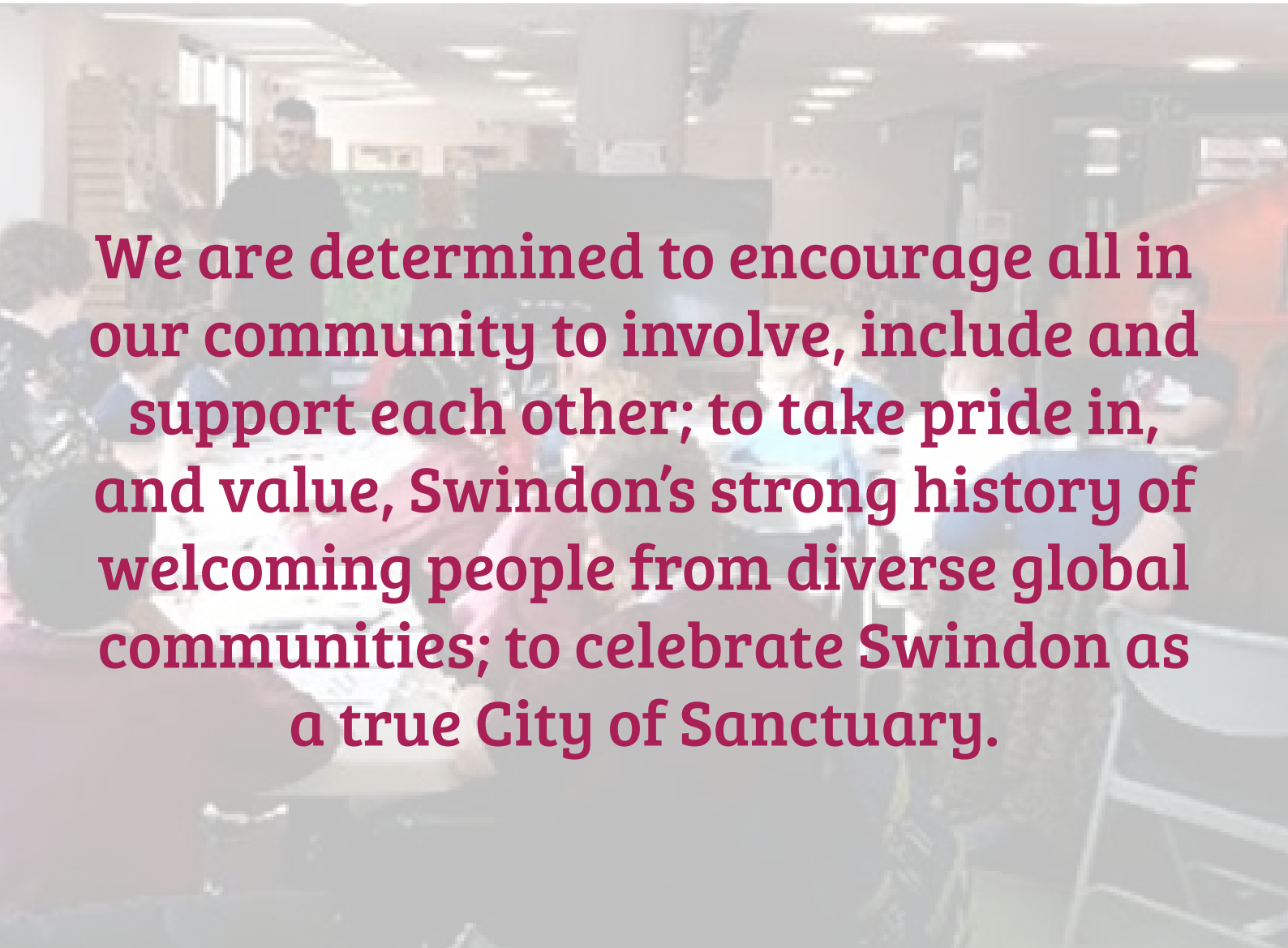
Our Charitable Objects

To advance the education of the public in general, especially in Swindon, about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.

To provide or assist in the provision of facilities and activities for recreation or other leisure time occupations in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities.

The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit by promoting activities to foster understanding and engagement between people from diverse backgrounds.

The prevention and relief of poverty amongst those granted refugee status and those seeking asylum in Swindon.



We are determined to encourage all in our community to involve, include and support each other; to take pride in, and value, Swindon's strong history of welcoming people from diverse global communities; to celebrate Swindon as a true City of Sanctuary.

3. Our Impact & Value

3.1 Project: Room for All

... providing a simple solution to help people seeking sanctuary avoid the indignities of homelessness.

Room for All in numbers:

31 referrals from other local charities (The Harbour Project, The Medaille Trust, Swindon Night Shelter, Threshold Housing Link)

9 guests accommodated

6 host households

4 volunteer support workers

OUR PROJECT

Whilst some of the difficulties of the long and unpredictable asylum process are becoming more evident in the news media, there is still a common misconception that once refugee status is gained, the battle for acceptance is over.

In reality, this is not the case. Instead, a whole new set of obstacles emerges for people seeking sanctuary. Principal among these is housing. When someone is given 'Leave to Remain' (i.e. given refugee status), they have just twenty-eight days to leave their asylum accommodation, apply for Universal Credit (which can take up to five weeks), find a job and find somewhere to live.

People with families will be found somewhere to live by the council; single people may end up destitute and sleeping rough. This immediate risk of homelessness is not much of a welcome.

That's where our flagship hosting scheme initiative steps in. **Room for All** provides a network of volunteers who offer a spare room in their home as short-term, rent-free accommodation to people who have been given 'Leave to Remain' who would otherwise be homeless. **Room for All** prevents and relieves poverty for these people, protecting them from becoming 'sofa surfers' or, worse still, rough sleepers.

"Opening our home has been the most insightful, emotive and inspiring experience."

Room for All host, Swindon

OUR SUCCESSES

“Room for All provided me with a warm room, delicious meals and a month’s bus pass! Thank you so much – I can’t even imagine where I would be were it not for this scheme. I hope it carries on growing and helping more people facing similar challenging situations.”

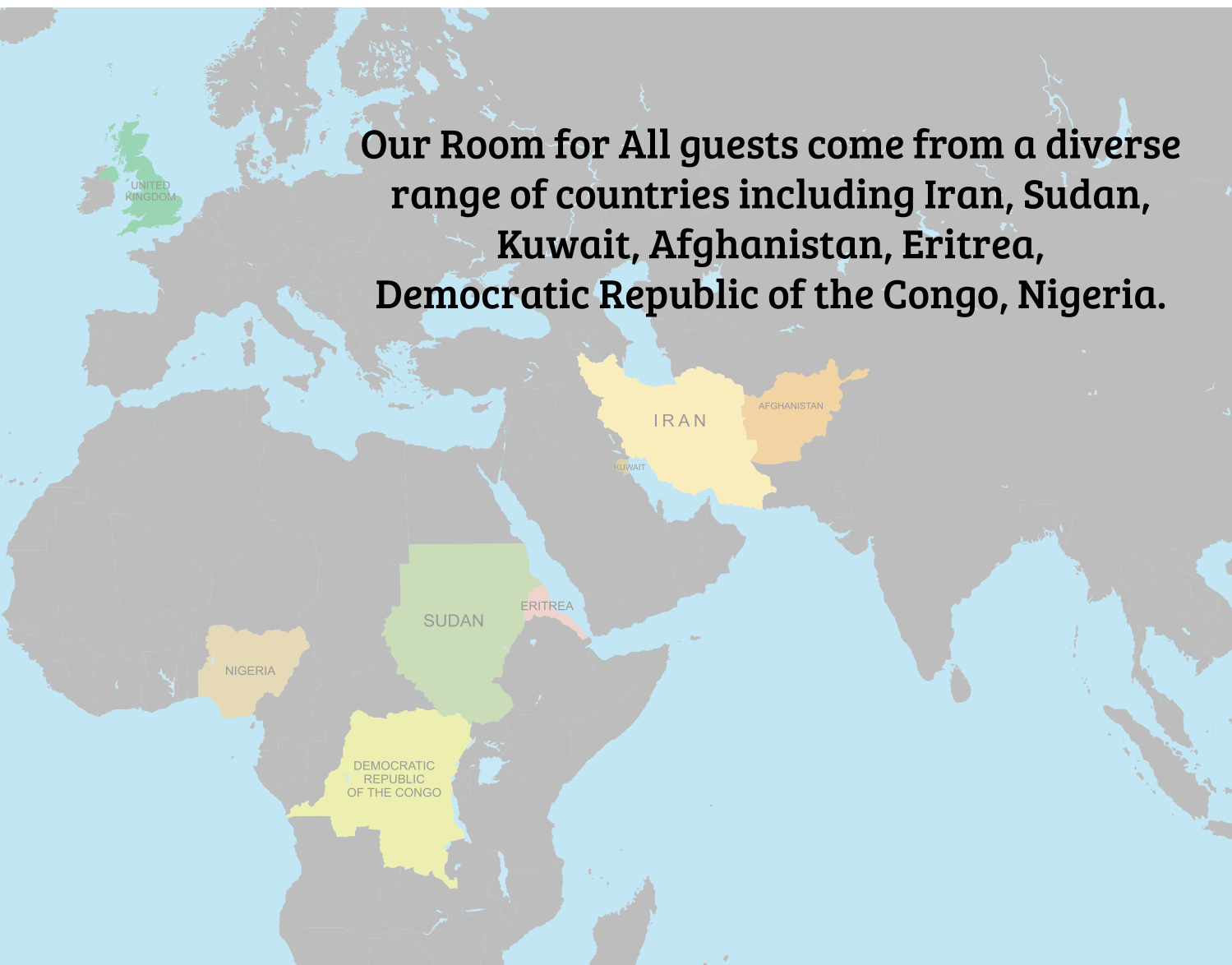
Room for All guest, Swindon

During 2018-2019, our first fully operational year (following a successful volunteer-led pilot in 2017-18), we secured funding from the **Wiltshire Community Foundation (WCF)** and a grant from the **No Accommodation Network (NACCOM)**, which we joined in February 2017. **NACCOM** nationally supports schemes like **Room for All** that work to prevent destitution amongst people seeking sanctuary.

Our membership of **NACCOM** has enabled us:

- To take advantage of being part of a strong network through the mutual support offered at regional and national meetings
- To learn from long-established hosting schemes
- To take pride in the development of **Room for All**
- To add our voice to **NACCOM**’s national campaigns to improve outcomes for people seeking sanctuary

Our Room for All guests come from a diverse range of countries including Iran, Sudan, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria.



As a result of this funding from **WCF** and **NACCOM**, we were able to employ a much-needed part-time Hosting Co-ordinator. In post, our first Hosting Co-ordinator expanded the scheme by increasing our host households and volunteer numbers. By extending the reach of **Room for All**, we can now accommodate two other groups of people seeking sanctuary at great risk of homelessness and who are not currently eligible for social or supported housing: people seeking asylum whose appeal rights have been exhausted [Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE)] and vulnerable migrants.

Another organisation which has been supportive in setting up and sustaining **Room for All** is **Sanctuary Hosting** in Oxford, who generously shared their ideas. Working with other organisations in this way exemplifies the national **City of Sanctuary** approach of joining up with existing networks to strengthen and amplify the support available.

Room for All not only fills a crucial need in reducing homelessness in Swindon, but also provides the support and welcome that is at the heart of a **City of Sanctuary**.



Host family and guest. Photo courtesy of Swindon Advertiser

"Our guest stayed with us for four weeks and is now part of the family. He learnt a little more English, laughed at the same things as us and followed world news intently. We learnt where to buy Halal meat, how alien a knife and fork can be, how rough life is for far too many, and that family can be made in four weeks."

Room for All host, Swindon

Room for All does more than just provide a room. The combination of our Hosting Co-ordinator's expertise and tireless work, the time and commitment of **Room for All**'s dedicated volunteers, and the support of statutory agencies and voluntary organisations to create 'move-on' plans towards permanent accommodation, has contributed to the continuing growth and success of our hosting scheme.

Our informative and comprehensive training programme for **Room for All** volunteer hosts and support workers, which is constantly being updated, provides essential knowledge and realistic expectations. For 2018, the programme included:

- Overview of **Room for All** and **Swindon City of Sanctuary**
- Definitions and issues our guests may face
- Safeguarding
- Being a Support Worker
- Being a Host
- The move-on process



Photo from Room for All training workshop, November 2018

We are gradually increasing the provision of this regular training programme and increasing comprehensive, on-going supervision for all our **Room for All** hosts to support them in their complex role.

The value of these training programmes cannot be under-estimated. Responses from potential and established hosts, attending the training programme in November 2018, noted:

“... the opportunity to share knowledge and experience with other volunteers was invaluable ... it was very professional ... a good networking opportunityuseful to think about the issues faced ... clear presentation and a friendly and welcoming atmosphere ...”

Room for All's success is boosted by generous pledges of support from individuals and organisations within and beyond our community.

Through regular individual donations, via **Local Giving** on our website, we have funds available to provide some of our most vulnerable people seeking sanctuary with a route towards dignity and independence. A proportion of these donations goes towards funding discounted bus passes from **Swindon's Bus Company** which are given free-of-charge to guests with transport needs. This simple, generous arrangement has been essential. For guests being hosted in places 'out of town', this has provided a vital communication link which has contributed towards reducing people's isolation. Please see the **Transport Fund** section on page 13 for further details.

Swindon Fire Service (Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service) pledge their support to our hosting scheme by providing safety training and advice to hosts – this includes a Safe and Well check of hosts' properties.

OUR PLANS AND CHALLENGES

Sadly, not everyone referred to the scheme could be accepted. Some were deemed too high risk or did not meet the criteria. As yet, we have no hosts who can accommodate couples. The capacity of our hosting scheme to expand depends on having hosts available to help.

Without volunteers opening up their homes and providing their generous and much needed support, several vulnerable people seeking sanctuary would be homeless. The indignity of homelessness, added to the trauma and loss already experienced through the asylum process, can only exacerbate vulnerability. Hence, our drive to recruit new volunteers as **Room for All** hosts continues.

"The bus pass helped me get to job interviews and when I started working, I didn't have to worry about the logistics until the first pay cheque. Thank you so much for the comprehensive and well-thought out support."

Room for All guest, Swindon

3.2 Project: Transport Fund

... breaking down the barriers of loneliness, isolation and lack of opportunity, one bus ride at a time.

Transport Fund in numbers:

23 free bus passes

23 opportunities to access English classes

23 chances to take part in community life



Swindon City of Sanctuary Executive Officer with representatives from Swindon's Bus Company and Business in the Community

OUR PROJECT

In 2018 – 2019, we provided twenty-three free bus passes to people seeking sanctuary being accommodated through our flagship hosting scheme **Room for All**. This was made possible thanks to a pledge from **Swindon's Bus Company**, coupled with financial support from individual monthly donations, via our website on **Local Giving**.

OUR SUCCESSES

The **Transport Fund** is a great example of how we enabled some people seeking sanctuary to be included in community life. Some people being accommodated by **Room for All** often have "no recourse to public funds" (NRPF), either because they are awaiting fresh evidence to submit as part of a new asylum claim, or because they are still waiting for the Universal Credit system to catch up with their needs.

Whatever their circumstances, even if people are in receipt of asylum support (£37.75 per person per week, correct at time of writing), the money does not go far when clothes, food, toiletries and non-prescription medicines are added to weekly living costs. It is unlikely there will be enough spare cash for travel as well, especially as a weekly **Swindon's Bus Company** pass costs £14.50 (correct at the time of writing), more than one third of the income of someone seeking asylum.

OUR PLANS AND CHALLENGES

As many of our **Room for All** hosts live beyond walking distance of the town centre where so many services are based, the need for such practical support continues to be a priority. Without means of transport, people seeking sanctuary have no way of accessing English classes, asylum advice, health care, social activities and volunteering opportunities. Being able to travel means that people seeking sanctuary can get the support they need and begin to take part in the life of their new community.

3.3 Project: We're Open

... bringing our community together through our shared love of good coffee (or tea), conversation, music and board-games!

We're Open in numbers:

120 litres of coffee and tea shared during the year

40 people welcomed each month

9 people seeking sanctuary visited each week

"I really enjoyed my first time here...it's a happy place... with a great atmosphere."

We're Open guest



Photo from Swindon City of Sanctuary – We're Open event, 2018

OUR PROJECT

We're Open, a weekly social event that celebrated its first birthday in September 2018, was an inspirational project set up by a volunteer; it is still entirely volunteer led.

We're Open is an innovative approach to reducing social isolation amongst people seeking sanctuary, offering a weekly, two-hour early evening drop-in at a popular cafe, where everyone is welcome.

We're Open has been made possible with funding from the **Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)** & **High Sheriff Awards** fund, as well as donations from regular volunteers and friends.

OUR SUCCESSES

At **We're Open**, people seeking sanctuary, Swindon-born residents and people visiting from elsewhere all get together to share coffee, conversation and entertainment.

During 2018-19, **We're Open** took place in **Darkroom Espresso**, a popular independent café in the centre of Swindon. Volunteer 'hosts' ran the evenings, ensuring that everyone was welcomed, and no one was left standing or sitting alone. Games like Connect 4 and Dominoes proved to be very popular. These were set out at various tables around the café and provided a great vehicle for ice-breaking and building confidence, as well as a way of sharing culture. We are grateful to Will Davies at **Darkroom Espresso** who encouraged the growth of **We're Open** by extending his opening hours each Thursday evening during 2018-19.

With the combined cost for the evening, of bus fare and coffee, totalling more than the daily allowance for someone receiving asylum support, the funding we received enabled us to provide a successful, inclusive and welcoming social event.



Photo from Swindon City of Sanctuary – We're Open event, 2018

We're Open, welcomed over four hundred people from all walks of life and from all over the world during 2018-2019. On average, nine people seeking sanctuary regularly dropped in each week, joined by occasional visits from local students and residents, the High Sheriff for Wiltshire, the Police and Crime Commissioner and European tourists.

We're Open provided an opportunity to foster understanding and engagement between people from diverse backgrounds and focused on three ways to reduce social isolation:

- Conversation and networking
- Playing games and activities
- Watching, listening to and participating in musical performances

Having a place where people seeking sanctuary can temporarily leave behind the worries about issues relating to their asylum claim and meet other people in a friendly and inclusive environment is crucial. Conversation enabled supporters, volunteers and people seeking sanctuary to connect and network with each other providing a warm, robust welcome. Over the weeks, through their conversations, many of the 'regulars' were able to break down barriers based on misconceptions of each other.

The positive impact of **We're Open** cannot be over-stated.

"Mohammed came to We're Open every week last year. In the beginning he was shy, resisted communication and didn't generally participate in activities. Slowly, over the months, his confidence has grown hugely, a large part due to the gentle support and non-threatening environment found at We're Open. Now, Mohammed helps the volunteers, welcomes newcomers, and is keen to chat at length, sharing what he's up to ...and even dance a little bit when we have musical performers."

We're Open Lead Volunteer

We're Open's attraction of occasional live music added to the entertainment and diversity of the evening and provided a vehicle for communicating with and involving a wider public. As a group of 'regulars' began to form, so confidence grew and people seeking sanctuary became more relaxed about getting directly involved, making regular musical contributions of their own.

OUR PLANS AND CHALLENGES

We're Open, has secured another year of funding (2019 – 2020), thanks to the continued support of and recognition by the **OPCC** and the **High Sheriff**. Their support in recognising and rewarding the strength, quality and need of our work at **We're Open**, is testament to our success.

For 2019-2020, the venue changes, but the desire to reduce social isolation and create social inclusion and welcome will continue at **Coffee#1** – another popular central Swindon café location. For the year ahead, we will continue our drive to recruit more volunteers to join our regular team at **We're Open**.

WE'RE OPEN ON TOUR – WOMAD 2018

...bringing people together through a world of music and dance.

We're Open On Tour in numbers:

100^s of conversations

50 expressions of interest

10 volunteers

5 days



Some of the Swindon City of Sanctuary WOMAD team

"This place is out of this world. I never want to leave!."

Comment by one of the group, about the WOMAD experience

OUR PROJECT

In July 2018, a group of local and national volunteers and people seeking sanctuary took **We're Open** on tour to **World of Music and Dance (WOMAD)**. With the chance of some subsidised tickets for stallholders, the visit to the festival was an opportunity for a group from **Swindon City of Sanctuary** to join a team of volunteers to set up and run a stall and experience the escapism that is **WOMAD**.

In preparation for the festival, a fundraising project saw our collaboration with Swindon artist, Nicky-Ann Walker, and Swindon haute-couture designer, Anabel Giraud-Telme, along with some members of **The Harbour Project** Art Group. They created two exclusive designs for 'limited edition' tee-shirts.



Design by Ngawang Lektso



Design by Nicky-Ann Walker

OUR SUCCESSES

The impact and value of the **WOMAD** experience went beyond our expectations. Having the opportunity to escape for five days from the difficulties of asylum seeking and being immersed into a world of welcome and inclusion was completely positive. Interacting with a broad range of people from all over the country, in an environment of peace and shared interest, is paramount to enabling well-being and social inclusion.

This comment from the group leader summarises the positive impact of the whole experience. "Over the five days the group spent together, talking about the personal experiences of the asylum process was suspended and replaced by conversations about the sun, rain and gales (which all happened during the festival and tested the resolve of the team), the warm welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, the brilliant and inspiring music and delicious food from around the world."

"... the absolute highlight of it all was seeing the looks on the faces and hearing the words expressed by our sanctuary seeking friends over the course of the weekend. It was all worth it just for that alone!"

Swindon City of Sanctuary Trustee and
WOMAD Lead Volunteer



Swindon City of Sanctuary stall at WOMAD 2018

"My thanks to everybody who was involved in setting up the fabulous marquee and stall at WOMAD Festival. I think it was a wonderful experience for our sanctuary seeking friends who had never been before and we certainly caused some interest and had some excellent conversations with people."

National Development Officer, City of Sanctuary

OUR PLANS AND CHALLENGES

No budget was allocated to enable participation in **WOMAD** 2019. It is hoped that in the future there will be the opportunity for more people, now in Swindon where they are seeking sanctuary, to experience and contribute to this valuable and inclusive event.

We want to raise awareness and appreciation of the contribution that people seeking sanctuary make to their new town.

3.4 Project: Refugee Week 2018

... bringing people together to celebrate and embrace Swindon's cultural diversity through the positive and potent vehicle of the Arts.

Refugee Week 2018 in numbers:

5,000 engagements on social media

400 people attended film and dance events

200 people at the Global Garden Party

50 people sharing stories, songs and music

1 poet in residence for the week



Discussion after event at Swindon Arts Centre, June 2018

OUR PROJECT

2018 saw the 20th Anniversary of this national celebration of the contributions that people seeking sanctuary have made, and continue to make, to the UK.

In keeping with our objective to educate the wider public of issues relating to asylum, we saw **Refugee Week** as an opportunity to celebrate Swindon as a designated dispersal town for people seeking asylum, and for drawing attention to the realities of the asylum process.

OUR SUCCESSES

Key to our success was enabling people and organisations to plan and work together. To engage the wider community, we encouraged individuals, small groups and larger organisations involved in the Arts, to volunteer their creativity, expertise and time to create and run events of their choice. The range of events was encouraging with everything from theatre, film, dance, music, art and crafts, to poetry, stories and a big party! Nationally recognised local media organisation, **Viewpoint Community Media** and internationally renowned, **Swindon Dance**, drew in audiences from across the town.

In addition to the diverse range of events taking place around some key areas of the town, we were fortunate to host a poet in residence for the week, Malka Al Haddad. Malka – an academic originally from Iraq and now seeking sanctuary in the UK – made exhilarating and thought-provoking contributions by performing her poetry at events throughout the week; these included poetry workshops in schools and at **The Harbour Project**.

To create interest, engagement and understanding across the town, we invested time, funding and expertise in media coverage:

- We distributed hundreds of flyers to many commercial outlets, libraries, schools and museums
- We successfully engaged local media – especially with **Swindon Advertiser**, **Swindon Link** and local radio station **Swindon 105.5FM**
- We maintained our social media activity before and during the week by streaming film clips and links to the national **Refugee Week** and **Swindon City of Sanctuary** websites ensuring that **Refugee Week** in Swindon had a virtual as well as physical presence.

Attendance at our events during the week, along with capturing the 'virtual footfall' through 'likes' online, gave us a clear indication of the successful 'reach' of our message and purpose across Swindon.

OUR PLANS AND CHALLENGES

We have successfully connected with the wider community this year. To emphasise inclusion as a key objective for our future developments, we anticipate that arts, cultural and media events connected with **Refugee Week** could become a more integral part of our town's overall cultural calendar.

This becomes both an exciting plan and a motivating challenge requiring further development and review in the year ahead.



Malka Al Haddad - Poet in Residence for Refugee Week, June 2018



Swindon band, Royal Soul, at The Global Garden Party, June 2018

**One of our objectives is to
advance education ...
about the issues relating to
people seeking sanctuary.**

3.5 Project: Schools of Sanctuary

... welcoming everyone as equal, valued members of their local and global community.



Schools of Sanctuary in numbers:

2,000 young people

50 staff

11 schools

5 'Experts by Experience' volunteer team members

3 innovative projects

3 collaborations with other local and national organisations

1 social media short film with 2,000 likes

1 fifteen minute documentary film

OUR PROJECT

Our Swindon **Schools of Sanctuary** Network began in **Refugee Week 2017** (a week in mid-June) and grew out of the Swindon Schools' Global Learning Programme Network. With the drive and support of a small, dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer team, the breadth of engagement and involvement from schools throughout our second year has been exceptional.

This year we have been working to bring people and organisations together – a key objective of the national **City of Sanctuary** movement. It has been exciting, rewarding and challenging.

In line with our **Swindon City of Sanctuary** charitable object, to enable people in our local communities to engage with and learn about issues relating to people seeking sanctuary, we have:

- Worked with young people in primary and secondary schools to engage and inspire them to create school-based projects and campaigns built on social justice and inclusion, and to speak out about the importance of welcome
- Worked with teaching staff: to begin looking at embedding learning about the human right to sanctuary into curriculum developments
- Expanded our small group of volunteers to include local Experts by Experience who are seeking sanctuary

OUR SUCCESSES

Our year began, with the success of two exciting and rewarding sustainable projects:

- **The Journey to Safety and Welcome** art project at **Drove Primary School** – facilitated by the **Harbour Project's** Art Club leaders and members, alongside expert co-ordination from two key teaching staff at **Drove Primary School**
- **Twenty Welcomes** poetry project inspired, led and run by two **Swindon City of Sanctuary** Trustees (one of whom is the **Schools of Sanctuary** volunteer lead) and a local poet

Our year continued with the success of two whole school staff CPD sessions, several workshops for teaching staff across all eleven schools in our network and the expansion of our Advisory Group.

Without the perceptive and essential involvement and guidance of the **Schools of Sanctuary** Network Advisory Group, who meet twice a year, we would not have had the clarity of focus for steering the direction of our work. Set up in March 2018, our Advisory Group is formed of local teaching staff, local Experts by Experience who are seeking sanctuary and **Swindon City of Sanctuary** trustees, staff and volunteers.

Our year ended with the start of another inspiring and sustainable project:

- **See Me Too** Schools' Workshops saw ten schools begin planning oral history projects inspired by **Create Studios'** film project of migration stories, **See Me Too**.



Final art piece, The Journey to Safety and Welcome which hangs as a mural in Drove Primary School's reception corridor

The Journey to Safety and Welcome

Bringing together all the learning from throughout **Refugee Week 2018**, **Drove Primary School's** lead teachers for values learning, **Swindon City of Sanctuary's** Schools' lead volunteer, local artists and local volunteers who are Experts by Experience, planned how the whole school could be involved in preparing and mounting a giant mural. The mural is displayed in the school's foyer. It tells a story of the children's learning about journeys made by people seeking sanctuary and their arrival to a welcoming place of safety.

This inspiring art project was organised, run and facilitated by local artists Rachel Pryor and Nicky-Ann Walker who led weekly art sessions at **The Harbour Project**. They involved some **Harbour Project** Art Group members in the design ideas and painting of the background and in participating in the whole-day school activity during **Refugee Week**. This project has enabled the school to embed some significant curriculum approaches to learning about the human right to sanctuary.

Twenty Welcomes



Young poets with teaching staff, volunteers and poets at first Twenty Welcomes workshop

Refugee Week 2018 saw the emergence of the brilliant and engaging **Twenty Welcomes** project: a short, three-day poetry project. **Twenty Welcomes** was funded by **South Swindon Parish Council** and created by two **Swindon City of Sanctuary** Trustees (one of whom is Lead Volunteer for Schools of Sanctuary), local poet Hilda Sheehan and supported by the expertise, time and total commitment of community media organisation **Viewpoint Community Media** and film-makers Florence Pellacani and Sophia Henke of **CrissCross Films**.

This unique and exciting project brought together, from five schools across Swindon, twenty talented, multi-lingual young people. Out of our three days came an inspiring and thought-provoking documentary film about the creation of a fantastic poem and showing the power and clarity of twenty young people's thoughts and ideas for a shared future – with 'welcome' at its centre.

at its centre.

<http://CrissCrossFilms-20Welcomespoetryproject>



Opening image from the final Twenty Welcomes film which shows the process of how the poem was created

The **Twenty Welcomes** project continued with the successful film premiere, held at **Swindon Arts Centre** in January 2019. The project's sustainability is evident within each of the five schools engaged in their own follow-up work about the meaning of 'welcome'.

In March 2019, three young people from the **Twenty Welcomes** group were given the opportunity to express their visions for a shared future at the national conference **Empowering Young People to Change the World** run and hosted by the **UCL Centre for Holocaust Education at Royal Wootton Bassett Academy**. This experience gave young people an excellent opportunity to present their views to an older generation about the importance of welcoming people into communities. Their passion in expressing their message had a powerful impact on conference delegates.



Young people at Conference workshop

"I pledge to go back to our setting and explore what we want 'welcome' to look like for all our children."

A delegate's response at the end of the workshop

See Me Too

See Me Too Schools' Workshops was a collaboration with Swindon's award-winning digital agency, **Create Studios**, who also sourced funding for the project. Our ability to engage with the community has been enhanced and enriched by this exciting collaboration – through which we have directly involved ten schools, fifty young people and sixteen members of staff.

Create Studios' See Me Too Project celebrates Swindon's diverse heritage. Our work together involved devising and running staff workshops and young people's workshops using **Create Studios' See Me Too** archive as inspiration for schools to devise their own oral history projects tracking stories of migration within their own school communities.

Working with **Create Studios** enabled the schools involved to use the overall Refugee Week theme, Different Pasts, Shared Future, not only to get to know their communities but also to empower young people with confidence: to engage with others in their communities; to develop and use skills they didn't realise they had; and to share their work with a wider audience.

By encouraging all in a school community to look at who they are and where they've come from, this gives a positive image of migration, rather than one based on suspicion and prejudice. The schools involved, aim to build-in to their curriculum development, further positive exploration of the lives of people in different migrant groups, especially people seeking sanctuary – past and present.



Create Studios' photographer at See Me Too workshop



Young researchers at the start of their workshop exploring some people's stories from See Me Too archive



Young oral history interviewers practising their speaking and listening skills at See Me Too workshop

OUR PLANS AND CHALLENGES

Our successes have been extremely encouraging and have shaped our future plans:

- To support some of the eleven schools in our **Schools of Sanctuary** Network to become accredited **Schools of Sanctuary**
- To continue collaborating with other organisations:
 - The national **Schools of Sanctuary** steering group and regional **National Education Union (NEU)** branches to create sustainable CPD resources for all teaching staff in primary and secondary schools. This will enable schools to broaden awareness, understanding and empathy around the issues related to sanctuary seeking; to embed this work into their curriculum and the life of the school; to share their work across the **Swindon Schools of Sanctuary** Network
 - **Create Studios**, whose schools' work focuses positively on celebrating Swindon's cultural diversity

Our successes have also shaped our immediate challenges for the future:

- To maintain and sustain the provision of support to enable more schools to become accredited **Schools of Sanctuary**
- To increase the involvement in schools' developments of people who are Experts by Experience seeking sanctuary



Exploring the meaning of 'welcome' at
Twenty Welcomes workshop

We work at local, regional and national level engaging with key partners to help bring about positive changes for people seeking asylum.

3.6 Project: Campaigning

A key aspect to being part of the national City of Sanctuary network is campaigning for change to the asylum process so that it is more just and equitable.

Campaigning in numbers:

5 people seeking sanctuary invited to Parliament

3 key campaigns

3 people seeking sanctuary involved in Sanctuary in Politics scheme

1 important conversation with a local MP

OUR CAMPAIGNS

We work at local, regional and national level engaging with key partners to help bring about positive changes for people seeking asylum.

Three key campaigns have been the focus of our attention and action this year.

Campaign 1: Legal Aid for people seeking asylum in Swindon

Despite the fact that claiming asylum in the UK is essentially a legal process, at the time of writing, there are no solicitors in Swindon offering Legal Aid-funded asylum advice. People seeking asylum in Swindon must travel further afield to secure a solicitor to lead their asylum case.

Working with **Wiltshire Law Centre** and **The Harbour Project**, we made the case for the need for Legal Aid in Swindon to help people seeking asylum. In 2018, we heard the good news that **Wiltshire Law Centre** had been awarded a Legal Aid contract to undertake this work. **Wiltshire Law Centre** is now in the process of recruiting an immigration solicitor to lead on asylum claims. Once recruited, this will mean that people seeking asylum can seek legal advice on their doorstep rather than having to travel to Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford or London. Not only will this be better for them, it will also be a more efficient use of public money as the cost of unnecessary travel to see solicitors will no longer come out of the Legal Aid budget.

Campaign 2: Biometric Residency Permit (BRP) cards



Example of BRP card from: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk

where BRP cards can be issued. Despite Swindon hosting major international employers and being a designated dispersal town for refugees for nearly 20 years, those needing BRP cards must travel to Oxford, Bristol, Trowbridge or London.

In 2018-19, we continued our campaign to focus attention on the lack of a local BRP-card facility in Swindon. BRP cards are required by the Home Office to be carried by all non-EU residents in the UK, including people who are refugees.

We campaigned to have a facility in Swindon hosting major international employers and for nearly 20 years, those needing BRP cards must

Towards the end of the year, we heard that the local central Post Office would be able to take on the facility. This good news was tempered by the fact that the Post Office nationally was to lose the contract to issue BRP cards.

The situation at the time of writing is that those who receive the right to stay in the UK (Leave to Remain) receive their BRP cards by courier and do not need to travel to receive their cards. People with new asylum claims process their BRP cards whilst at the first interview in Cardiff although some have been sent to Birmingham to process theirs. **The Harbour Project** is working to ensure that people who are asylum seekers living in Swindon will be able to process their cards in Cardiff, an easier and cheaper location to reach.

We are thankful to Robert Buckland MP for South Swindon, Honda of the UK Manufacturing, and Post Office Ltd for their support in helping us address this issue.

Campaign 3: Free English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for people seeking asylum in England

As part of the right to work discussion during the **Sanctuary in Parliament** visit (see page 30), recently arrived sanctuary seeking Swindon resident, Zinat, wanted to meet South Swindon MP Robert Buckland, to explain the difference that free English classes had made to her life. She explained how the classes had helped her integrate, and how she knew this would help her find work and thus gain financial independence.

At the time of writing, free ESOL is offered to people seeking asylum when they first arrive in Scotland and Wales but not in England. In England, people seeking asylum have to wait six months or more before being offered free accredited classes. We believe that having access to free English language learning is crucial in providing a warm welcome and support for people seeking asylum. Integration, education and an end to destitution are simply not possible without the opportunity to learn to speak the language.

In conjunction with **Asylum Matters** and **Refugee Action**, we are working to find out what steps have been taken nationally to end this gap in asylum provision. After all, why should people seeking asylum in England be at a disadvantage compared to those in Scotland or Wales? Campaigning on this important matter continues.

Other Campaigning Opportunities:

Sanctuary in Parliament

In November 2018, we attended our second **Sanctuary in Parliament** event organised by the national **City of Sanctuary** movement in conjunction with **NACCOM** and **Asylum Matters**.

Hosted by Thangam Debbonaire, Bristol West MP, and Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, the day saw discussion on:

- The right to work for people who have asylum claims outstanding for more than six months
- An extension of refugee family reunion
- An end to indefinite immigration detention

Sanctuary in Politics

In December 2018, three sanctuary seeking Swindon residents participated in the residential course **Sanctuary in Politics**, held in Bristol. This was a valuable opportunity for people seeking sanctuary to have their voices heard and to empower them to become actively involved in change.

The Swindon group's follow-up work continues.



Bristol Sanctuary in Politics conference with MP (courtesy of Bristol City of Sanctuary)

4. Organisational Development & Governance

The transition into becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) has been both challenging and rewarding. It has given us a clear sense of purpose, with defined charitable objects that enable us to ensure that our work at all times is focused on our goals. It has also given us greater confidence that we can continue to support people seeking sanctuary in our community for many years to come.

However, along with that renewed sense of purpose come some challenges, including:

- Setting up a formal Board of Trustees
- Establishing policies and procedures that cover, amongst many other things, our responsibilities as an employer
- Writing detailed job specifications for our employees
- Understanding and defining what we stand for and our culture and values
- Reporting to our supporters regarding our activities and the impact of the funding they have provided

In 2018, our first Chair, Shareen Campbell, left us after relocating to France. We'd like to thank Shareen for her hard work and commitment during her year as Chair.

Under Shareen, our Board of Trustees grew to nine people, including volunteers and people from other charitable organisations. We continue to work towards meeting our pledge to engage, onto the Board of Trustees, people who have direct experience of seeking asylum.

Under our new Chair, Ben Jackson, we have established two new sub-committees of the board, to ensure easier decision making. These sub-committees are:

- Funding and Fundraising
- People and Policies

Throughout 2018, our board met every three months for two hours. As there have been some changes on our board this year, we plan to ensure consistency and stability for the year ahead. Also, as we become more established, and see our work having greater impact, we plan to increase the frequency of our meetings.

Another development, in 2018, was the creation of a number of policies (listed below) covering all aspects of our organisational activity. We continue to review and update these policies annually.

- Health and Safety
- Lone Working
- Equal Opportunities
- Adult Safeguarding
- Children Safeguarding
- Complaints Procedure
- Conflict of Interests
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Social Media
- Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

"We have made a positive impact in so many ways but there is still much more to be done."

Ben Jackson, Chair of Trustees

5. Our Ambition and Longer-term Strategy



Swindon City of Sanctuary Board of Trustees and guests

We will always remain indebted to all organisations and individuals who have contributed time, resources and finance to enable us to become a CIO. But special thanks must go to the **Joffe Charitable Trust**, whose funding for a period of three years has given us the time and space to become successfully established without fear for the future.

However, the knowledge that funding from the **Joffe Charitable Trust** will cease in 2021, informs much of what we plan to do in 2019–2020.

These are the key pillars of our strategy for the next couple of years:

We will continue:

- To work on our core projects for people seeking sanctuary in Swindon: **Room for All** hosting scheme and **We're Open** drop-in cafe
- To work with schools throughout the Swindon area to promote our **Schools of Sanctuary** initiative
- To work with the local community, press, local politicians and councillors to ensure that the difficulties faced by people seeking asylum in our community are highlighted, and where possible, we will aim to contribute to national policy regarding asylum seeking
- To expand our capacity, our reach and our range of projects

We will review:

- How we use the passion that unites us and the energy that sustains us, to maintain our projects and campaigns
- How we enable people throughout our community to learn about the challenges faced by people seeking sanctuary
- How we invest our limited resources (financial and human) to best advantage
- How we ensure that our level of ambition is in line with what is realistically achievable: (a) by focusing on our most established projects that have had notable impact; (b) by prioritising long-term, sustainable funding for our core projects; (c) by maintaining a clear and objective focus on additional activities that we believe will truly benefit our community

We will begin:

- To create a detailed fundraising strategy to ensure that we can meet our financial obligations on a long-term, sustainable basis
- To create a financial surplus to enable us to run the charity for three months without any further funding
- To seek funding for an additional part-time post to assist with finance and book-keeping
- To seek funding for additional **Schools of Sanctuary** developments over the coming years, as we identify both need and opportunity
- To expand our Board of Trustees to include some people with direct experience of seeking sanctuary

6. Our Year Ahead

Room for All – Hosting Scheme:

- Recruit new Hosting Co-ordinator (16-hour contract)
- Increase the number of volunteer hosts and support workers
- Renew and update training sessions

We're Open:

- Recruit more lead volunteers
- Engage with other groups across Swindon who would benefit from this social evening

Schools of Sanctuary:

- Find a base for our schools' work so that we can create and deliver training to teaching staff
- Increase the participation of the Experts by Experience members of our Advisory Group to give them a significant 'voice'
- Consider ways of continuing our work in a sustainable way without relying on the leadership of a Schools' Lead Volunteer
- See our first group of schools achieve the School of Sanctuary Award

Campaigns:

- Continue our work pressing for people seeking asylum to have access to free ESOL courses during their first six months in England

Training:

- Create a comprehensive training plan for our volunteers across our projects so that they gain a greater understanding of our work, the asylum system and the issues that those we support may face
- Open up training sessions to other agencies in order to broaden understanding within the wider community

Publicity:

- Create and distribute new leaflets which promote our work
- Create some short films which will promote our work and prompt even greater involvement and understanding within the Swindon community; these films will cover issues facing people seeking sanctuary, as well as some positive stories they have to tell

Governance:

- Agree and set our Culture and Values as a charitable organisation
- Create a financial strategy for establishing a more sustainable future
- Ensure that the voices of people who have experienced seeking sanctuary in the UK are represented on our Board of Trustees
- Establish a programme of frequent Board of Trustees' meetings

7. Thanks

We thank all the organisations and individuals who have contributed to our work and the many others who pledge to do so in the future.

We are immensely grateful to Shareen Campbell, **Swindon City of Sanctuary's** inaugural Chair, who gave a year of her hard-pressed time to steer us as a fledgling charity, before she left for pastures new.

We thank all our volunteers and supporters for their pledges, individual donations, grant funds and time. These essential groups of generous people and organisations have enabled us to continue developing our work to meet our objectives.

Air Photo Services Ltd
Alan Wang
Anabel Giraud-Telme
Arts and Humanities Research Council
Artsite
Asylum Matters
BBC Wiltshire
Calne Mothers' Union
Carole Bent
Central Community Centre
City of Sanctuary (National)
Coffee#1 Swindon
Create Studios
CrissCross Films
Darkroom Espresso
Debutots Swindon
Desk Cowork
Disability Experts
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
Eastcott Community Organisation
Good Gym
Helen Browning's Organic
High Sheriff of Wiltshire
Hilda Sheehan (poet)
Honda of the UK Manufacturing
Los Gatos
Martin Parry
Mechanics' Institution Trust
Ngawang Lektso
Nicky Ann Walker
No Accommodation Network (NACCOM)
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Post Office Limited
Prime Theatre
Rachel Pryor (Artist)
Rachel Prosser
Real Print Management
Redlands Airfield
Refugee Action

Robert Buckland MP South Swindon
Ryan Acres (Acres Retail)
Sally Taylor (Artsite)
Social Media Support Ltd
South Swindon Parish Council
South Swindon Labour Party
Steve Cox (AKA Mr Love and Justice)
Strength Outsourcing
Swindon 105.5 FM
Swindon Advertiser
Swindon Advocacy Movement
Swindon and Marlborough Amnesty Group
Swindon's Bus Company
Swindon Community Choir
Swindon Dance
Swindon Heritage
Swindon Link
Swindon Night Shelter
Swindon People's Assembly
Swindon Quakers
The Cooperative Group
The Emporium of Loveliness Charity Boutique
The Everyone Foundation
The Harbour Project
The Joffe Charitable Trust
The Medaille Trust
The Olive Tree Café
The Royal Soul Band
Threshold Housing Link, Swindon
Viewpoint Community Media
Voluntary Action Swindon
Volunteer Centre Swindon
Volunteer Event Organisers
Willows Counselling Service
Wiltshire Community Foundation
Wiltshire Law Centre
WOMAD
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