

Lewisham Borough of Sanctuary

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Sanctuary Principles

- Offer a **positive vision of a culture of welcome and hospitality** to all
- Create opportunities for **relationships of friendship and solidarity** between local people and those seeking sanctuary
- Encourage **partnership working** and network development
- Identify **opportunities for practical action** and work on common cause.
- **Celebrate and promote** the welcome contribution of people seeking sanctuary
- **Engage people seeking sanctuary in decision making processes** at all levels



What does mean Borough of Sanctuary for Lewisham Council?

01

Making changes across the entire Council to create a supportive environment for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who access

02

Working with **community partners** (e.g. voluntary organisations; schools; libraries; community groups) on embedding sanctuary across the borough

03

Working with our services and with our partners to identify **national policy issues** where we can work collectively to encourage and enable change.

Key Dates



- May 2021 – Lewisham is awarded the Borough of Sanctuary status
- January 2023 – new Borough of Sanctuary Programme Manager is appointed (Community Development Team)
- September 2023 – **re-application for Borough of Sanctuary** to be submitted.

Borough of Sanctuary mapping exercise

- **Meeting with the key stakeholders** and groups across the Council, community and Third Sector:
 - Housing and Resettlement
 - Education and Work
 - Health
 - Culture
 - Communications
 - Modern Slavery network
 - Cabinet Member for Communities, Refugees and Wellbeing
 - Migration Museum
 - City of Sanctuary Local Authority network
 - Lewisham Migration Forum
 - Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
 - Action for Refugees in Lewisham
 - Refugee Council
 - Ukrainian community group
 - Asylum working group

Borough of Sanctuary: Achievements

- Committed to **resettling 110 refugee families by Summer 2023** and on track to fulfil this commitment
- **Removed the Home Office embedded officer** in the Council's NRPf service and used saved funds to pay for independent legal advice
- Nearly all Lewisham surgeries signed up to Doctors of the World '**Safe Surgeries**' scheme so that undocumented migrants retain access to healthcare.
- Guaranteed that no child in Lewisham should be denied **free school meals** because of their immigration status
- Stopped collaborating with the Home Office on the **new immigration rules on rough sleepers**.
- Acted as a Lead member in the **City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network** and supported other LA's in becoming Boroughs of Sanctuary
- Co-run **Lewisham Migration Forum** - open forum for representatives of groups and organisations working with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Lewisham.
- **St. Mary's Primary school** became the first School of Sanctuary in Lewisham



Borough of Sanctuary: Governance

- **Review BoS governance structure**
- **Currently:**
 - The corporate board for sanctuary is the **Corporate Equalities Board**.
 - The scrutiny committee for sanctuary is **Safer Stronger Communities Committee**.
 - **Action plan** on embedding sanctuary across the Council created by BoS Programme Manager with relevant departments and input from the Lewisham Migration Forum
 - **Reports** on the action plan made twice yearly to the Corporate Equalities Board on the action plan, then key issues presented to the Executive Management team.

Looking ahead



- Review of **Borough of Sanctuary governance structure**
 - How to achieve **greater level of ownership and accountability by senior leaders** across key areas?
 - Ways of applying the '**Nothing about us without us**' principle – from listening to co-creation with sanctuary seekers, where feasible
- Review of the Council's Borough of Sanctuary **strategy and action plan**
 - How do we **embed the culture of welcome** that goes beyond statutory requirements?
- Re-apply for Borough of Sanctuary **status**

Borough of Sanctuary action plan: key actions

- Comprehensive **communications plan** to engage Council workers and residents with the Borough of Sanctuary
- Raising awareness through **campaigns and events**, e.g. Refugee Week
- **Training** on Borough of Sanctuary principles and key groups of sanctuary seekers as part of **staff induction**
- **Training** on needs of sanctuary seekers for **relevant services** (e.g. housing, adult and children social care)
- Integrating **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking** work in the BoS strategy and action plan
- Embedding **principles of welcome to people seeking asylum** beyond statutory requirements (e.g. mental health and community support; ESOL provision; libraries, quality of housing)



Borough of Sanctuary action plan: key actions (continued)

- **Resettling over 100 refugee families** by Summer 2023 and further extending this commitment
- Working with **GP surgeries** to achieve greater consistency in application of sanctuary principles
- Improving access to **mental health services** for migrants (e.g. community embedded workers and be well hubs)
- Supporting more institutions, **e.g. schools/libraries/University** to become places of sanctuary