



Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria

1. Introduction

City of Sanctuary UK holds the vision that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. In order to realise this vision, City of Sanctuary UK supports [a network of groups](#), which includes cities, towns, villages, boroughs and regions across the UK, and others engaged in Streams of Sanctuary¹, Sanctuary Awards and activities intended to welcome people seeking sanctuary². For more information see our [Charter](#).

2. What is City of Sanctuary?

City of Sanctuary is an umbrella organisation working with 125+ local grassroots groups to create communities welcoming to people fleeing violence and persecution. To this end we apply an institution-by-institution approach striving to develop a tapestry of inclusive and accessible local organisations and services.

By fostering local partnerships between City of Sanctuary groups (where they exist), refugee and community sector organisations, people with lived experience, and mainstream organisations, we support the development of **local refugee frameworks** that are joined-up, coherent, and effective in supporting people to rebuild their lives from day one.

3. What are Sanctuary Awards?

The [Sanctuary Award](#) process is strategic framework for cultural and institutional change within local organisations (councils, schools, universities, colleges, libraries etc.) which ensures that

¹ We call each sector that we work within a 'stream'. These Streams of Sanctuary encourage professionals or practitioners within a sector to come together and collaborate with other interested parties including people seeking sanctuary.

² A term used to describe people predominantly categorised as either a refugee or an asylum seeker (including those whose appeal rights exhausted).

they contribute to the creation of a welcoming environment for people seeking sanctuary in local communities, and that they play an active role in the wider movement for safeguarding and promoting the rights of people in need of sanctuary in the UK.

Councils, as anchor institutions, play an important role in promoting inclusion within their own institutions, the wider community, and with other local statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders. The ‘Council of Sanctuary’ award process and minimum criteria for recognition are therefore tailored to the specific contextual challenges and opportunities within local government, and the role they play in welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.

4. The award process

The Award process usually starts with a conversation with the [City of Sanctuary UK officer](#) for local authorities³, and with your local [City of Sanctuary group](#) (if such exists). We also encourage councils to express their aspiration to be recognised as a ‘Council of Sanctuary’ with local refugee supporting organisations at the earliest opportunity and involve these organisations in the process from the start.

In June 2020 the City of Sanctuary Network voted at the AGM to dispense with the city-wide recognition process and to establish the Local Authority Network and the related Council of Sanctuary Award. Any local authority can become a formal member of this network, following a public commitment via a full council motion (or an informal member without a motion). To recognise the work undertaken by councils through the city-wide assessment, those councils can join as ‘awarded’ members but must then submit an application following the new recognition process.

A step by step guide is detailed below, but note that these steps need not be sequential and can take place in parallel:

Step 1 – The council publicly commits to joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, and to work towards recognition as a ‘Council of Sanctuary’. This can be via a [motion](#) at a public committee such as Council or Cabinet.

Step 2 – The council becomes a member of the [Local Authority Network](#) by signing the membership form. In joining the network the council is committing to work towards the ‘Council of Sanctuary’ Award and is agreeing to sign up as a Supporting Organisation (this

³ We 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.

includes an endorsement of the [City of Sanctuary Charter](#)).

Step 3 – The council engages with the City of Sanctuary local group (if one exists), local refugee organisations, and people with lived experience. Councils usually do this via existing partnership/multi-agency (Sanctuary) forums, or where such don't exist or don't undertake strategic work the council can set one up. (There is no one size fits all approach to engagement so please ask the City of Sanctuary UK officer for local authorities for good practice examples).

Step 4 - The council develops a strategy/framework for supporting people seeking sanctuary in the community by embedding 'Sanctuary' principles across council services and works to promote inclusion and welcome across the wider community. Councils usually develop [Sanctuary Strategies](#) either as a standalone or as part of an existing strategy. Councils can focus on reviewing/uplifting council services, or facilitate the development of a partnership strategy which includes services provided by a wider section of local stakeholders.

Step 5 – The council reviews the LEARN, EMBED and SHARE criteria set out below and ensures it meets them, and when ready, applies for recognition by submitting the council specific [Awards Application form](#).

Step 6 – The application will be appraised by a panel which will normally include members of the local City of Sanctuary group (if one exists), people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary, representatives from local refugee supporting organisations, and members of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Steering Group (usually officers and/or councillors who have been through the process themselves). The panel assessment can be thought of as a peer review and usually results in a set of recommendations. Guidance regarding assessment panels can be found [here](#)

Step 7 - When a local authority is able to demonstrate that all of the minimum criteria are met, the council will be awarded a 'Council of Sanctuary' for a 3 year period, and will be given the right to use the 'Council of Sanctuary' logo to recognise their commitment accompanied by the wording:

"X...is a recognised County/District/Borough/City/Unitary/Parish/Town [delete as appropriate] Council of Sanctuary.

Step 8 – A plan should be made for the Award presentation to include an event/ media statement etc. to celebrate the achievement of the council (and local partners) in including and supporting people seeking sanctuary. *Please note that the small application fee must be paid before the Award is made public.*

Step 9 –The recommendations agreed during the appraisal process should be discussed and where possible taken forward during the three-year award period. This will inform a review (re-accreditation) at the end of the three years. A new application has to be submitted to renew the award after three years and if successful an updated certificate of recognition can be issued.

5. Minimum Criteria

This guidance aims to outline the minimum criteria required for the award. We would encourage local authorities to build on these in a way that best reflects their specific context.

Criterion 1: Pass a council motion setting out commitment to being a place of sanctuary, joining the Local authority Network and working toward the ‘Council of Sanctuary’ award at some point in the future.

Criterion 2: Join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network which includes a pledge to support the vision of City of Sanctuary and an endorsement of its charter.

Criterion 3: Commit to working with the local City of Sanctuary group and/or other refugee supporting organisations and/or networks.

Criterion 4: Show evidence of the work with the local City of Sanctuary group (and/or other refugee organisations/networks) and receive the endorsement from those groups for the award application.

In addition to the **above criteria** all Sanctuary Awards follow the Learn, Embed and Share principles:

- **Learn:** learning about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, both in general, and specifically.
- **Embed:** taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion and ensuring this progress remains sustainable.
- **Share:** sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned, and good practice with other local authorities, the local community and beyond.

The ‘Learn, Embed and Share’ criteria specific to councils are outlined below:

5.1. Learn Criteria

The LEARN element encompasses any activity that seeks to improve awareness of the sanctuary-seeking community and the reasons why people are forced to migrate. Knowledge of the asylum system or of the many challenges and institutional barriers which face people seeking sanctuary can help officers and members to reflect on how they might help and better focus their efforts. This is often best achieved by including people seeking sanctuary and finding ways to learn from them as well as about refugee issues more broadly. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following LEARN criteria:

Criterion 5: Awareness raising opportunities are provided, and opportunities for discussion around the theme of welcome and sanctuary are facilitated on a community level. This can be via partnership/multi-agency forums

Criterion 6: Evidence of refugee/asylum/migration awareness raising is included into everyday business of the local authority e.g. staff induction/training.

Criterion 7: Commitment to platform and amplify the **voices of people seeking sanctuary**. This can be by including people with lived experience on ‘sanctuary forums’ or by ensuring meaningful engagement on strategy development.

5.2. Embed Criteria

For City of Sanctuary UK, ‘embedding’ means that the local authority is taking positive action to implement welcome, safety and inclusion within services and beyond. City of Sanctuary UK would like details on how the local authority will ensure a continuation of support for sanctuary on an ongoing basis. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following ‘embed’ criteria:

Criterion 8: Produce a written strategy (either a standalone strategy or as part of a broader strategy e.g. equality, migration etc.) which is publicly available and sets out commitment of the council for at least three years. This should be **co-produced** as far as possible with people seeking sanctuary and organisations representing them.

- As part of the strategy the council should also **have a clear and transparent plan to support people with NRPF.**

Criterion 9: The local authority must **demonstrate how it has embedded the concepts of welcome and inclusion across the organisation.** This should show how the local authority will continue to develop and sustain a culture of welcome beyond the award. Councils often develop internal officer groups bringing together heads of service (or team leads) from various service areas that oversee the delivery of the strategy.

Criterion 10: The council is able to demonstrate a commitment to being an anti-racist organisation and has policies and practice in place that align to their work to become a 'Council of Sanctuary'.

5.3. Share Criteria

City of Sanctuary UK will be seeking evidence that the council shares its experience of sanctuary and welcome with the wider community, local organisations and spreading the word about their welcoming efforts. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following criteria:

Criterion 11: The local authority publicly highlights its work in support of welcome and inclusion by making it visible on its website and noticeboards NB. Once the sanctuary award is received, we would expect the logo and a link to the webpage on the website.

Criterion 12: Commitment to supporting initiatives that embeds welcome and fosters solidarity between receiving communities and people seeking sanctuary e.g. participation in Refugee Week or other cultural events. As well as promoting sanctuary principles among local statutory and voluntary sector partners.

Criterion 13: Commitment to on-going engagement with the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network. This may include sharing resources, ideas and achievements via the network and City of Sanctuary UK website.

Criterion 14: Work with the national Local Authority network and local partners to identify national policy issues in order to make collective representations to the government to encourage and enable change via contributing to consultations, position statements etc.

6. How to complete your application form?

Your written application needs to include:

- Evidence which demonstrates how the local authority has used the three principles of the process: learn, embed and share and how through following the process the values and principles in the charter are being upheld.
- Evidence can be collected in a variety of ways and can include self- evaluation, photos and testimony, strategic plans, training records, policies and procedures and through consulting with people seeking sanctuary.

- Applications should be concise and focused, including supporting evidence via links or an additional document.

Q: Please provide a summary of how the local authority engages with people seeking sanctuary.

In this section, outline the ways the local authority has engaged with people seeking sanctuary. What schemes is the council participating in? Is the council commissioning any service providers to support people seeking sanctuary. How has the local authority sought to build relationships with local people seeking sanctuary and organisations that work and representing people seeking sanctuary.

Q: Using the 3 principles of the sanctuary award, please reflect on how you have achieved these principles attaching evidence to support your answer.

Here we are looking for evidence of initiatives, projects, policies and progress. Even if something is ongoing, include it as it helps to build a picture of how the local authority is developing its culture of welcome. Try to be concise but don't assume that the appraisal panel has the requisite knowledge (so please explain all acronyms and give context where necessary).