



Bristol City of Sanctuary

Vision

“Bristol as a place where we celebrate the contribution of people seeking sanctuary, and seek to provide a welcome and safety for all.”

Background information

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1 History

- 1.1 Set up in October 2008, city of Sanctuary Steering Group developed as a loose but organic network of individuals and organisations who shared the same vision of wanting to make Bristol a real place of welcome and safety for all, including people seeking sanctuary.
- 1.2 From its formative stages, the Steering Group always had representative from across the refugee sector, local authority, university, faith and more importantly people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary. Alongside a vibrant refugee sector in Bristol, there was support for the idea of a City of Sanctuary group, which was seen as the glue to bring communities together.
- 1.3 City of Sanctuary status was awarded to Bristol in March 2011 by the national network in recognition of 100 pledges of support from organisations, 1000 from individuals, and the support of the local authority.
[http://www.bristol.gov.uk/press/community-and-safety/city-leaders-celebrate-award-refugee-service.](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/press/community-and-safety/city-leaders-celebrate-award-refugee-service)

- 1.4 In Refugee Week 2011, a large and colourful launch in Bristol marked the adoption of City of Sanctuary status in the city, and a plaque hangs in City Hall to mark the occasion, and a Tree of Sanctuary has been planted on College Green.
- 1.5 The Bristol City of Sanctuary (BCoS) ran activities from 2008-2017 as a loose network until it was formally registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in February 2018.
- 1.6 In September 2012, we launched our Schools and College of Sanctuary initiative at City Academy which saw Ashley Down Primary, Compass Point South Street School & children Centre, City Academy and City of Bristol College being awarded School/College of sanctuary status.
- 1.7 After further work by BCoS volunteers and supporters, in January 2013 Bristol became not only the second UK Council to pass a cross-party motion to deplore the destitution of sanctuary seekers in the city, but the first whose full Council agreed to take practical action towards changes in the policy & legislation which cause destitution and exclusion. The full wording of the Council's commitment to these changes can be found at:
<http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/news/1937/bristol-council-stands-destitute-asylum-seekers>.
- 1.8 BCoS has continued to hold the Council to account on their pledged actions, and the city's then first Mayor, George Ferguson, agreed to use his position to encourage other local authorities to pass similar motions via the Local Government Associations & Core Cities networks. Bristol Councillors also supported BCoS's request that they be the one of the first UK local authority to sign up to the *Still Human, Still Here* campaign <http://stillhumanstillhere.wordpress.com/>. The Mayor wrote to the Home Secretary highlighting concerns about the impact of destitution on people seeking sanctuary.
- 1.9 The City of Sanctuary UK network comprises over 100 groups in cities and towns across the UK and Ireland. BCoS is distinct in the creative partnerships we have built with all sectors, and in our ambition to support other groups in influencing local and national policy, and work towards changes in policy & legislation which reduce destitution and exclusion amongst people seeking sanctuary.
- 1.10 Over the last two years during COVID and lockdown in particular, BCoS has taken a leading role in voicing the concerns of the refugee sector to the Mayor and the City Council, and works closely with the Inclusion Advisors in the Mayor's office.

2 Charitable Objects

The overall purpose of BCoS is to facilitate the growth of networks and partnerships in the city, in which all communities have a common vision of welcoming and a sense of inclusion for sanctuary seekers; to develop positive relationships in the workplace, schools and wider community to help tackle discrimination and ensure that similar life chances are available to all.

Throughout the work runs the intention to enable the voice of those with lived experience to be clearly heard, especially in decision making forums in the city.

We are a city-wide grassroots-led network of local people and organisations, working in different ways to make the city a place of welcome and safety for people seeking sanctuary from war, violence and persecution, to increase inclusion, and bring mutual understanding. <http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/bristol>

This vision and these principles are formally written in to the BCoS CIO constitution, as the following Charitable Objects, as follows

- i. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers, socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by promoting and/or co-ordinating services and facilities to assist them to adapt within a new community**
- ii. The relief of financial hardship among asylum seekers and refugees living or working in Bristol and surrounding areas by acting as an umbrella and resource for local refugee support services,**
- iii. The advancement of the education of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum and human rights**
- iv. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit by promoting activities to foster understanding and good relations between the general public and people seeking sanctuary.**

4. Structure

4.1 The CIO has a Board of trustees of up to 13 members (elected and/or appointed) and a minimum of two places are reserved for people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in the UK.

4.2 BCoS currently has funding for two staff members: a Manager, and Administrative post. The Manager is accountable to the Board of Trustees, and is line-managed by one of the trustees. The Administrator post-holder is line-managed by the BCoS Manager. Volunteers are recruited, overseen and supported by the Manager and/or the Administrator.

4.3 The work of BCoS is largely delivered through stream specific sub-groups, on each of which there is at least one trustee. The sub-groups are supported by the Manager, and accountable to the Board of Trustees for their work. Current sub-groups include:

4.3.1 Campaigning for rights and inclusion of People seeking sanctuary: Destitution /Transport Fund

4.3.2 Schools for Sanctuary

4.3.3 Universities for Sanctuary

4.3.4 Faith communities

4.3.5 Business communities

4.4 Other work is delivered by the staff team, with the help of volunteers

4.5 The Board of Trustees meets 6 times a year, and is advised by a wider steering group 3 times a year. The sub-groups meet according to their own schedule set in relation to their current programme of work. The steering group comprises representatives from the sub-groups, plus other individuals as invited.

5. Financial position

5.1 Sources of income for BCoS are grants, donations and membership fees. We also receive various forms of in-kind support, such as venues to meet, office equipment, etc. The organisation is secure in funding for the next 12 months.

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