

# Shrewsbury as a Town of Sanctuary

# City/Town of Sanctuary Status

## **Shrewsbury Town Council agreed to apply for CoS status in June 2021:**

That this council is committed to support an initiative to make Shrewsbury into a recognised 'Town of Sanctuary' welcoming those fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries. We recognise their potential contribution to our town, and also recognise that a comprehensive, co-ordinated and forward-looking approach is needed if the welfare of people moving into the town, and community cohesion between new and existing communities, are to be supported effectively. To this end, we:

Acknowledge the contribution of refugees and people seeking sanctuary to the town of Shrewsbury

- Are willing to add our organisation's name to the list of supporters of City of Sanctuary
- This council will work to implement the City of Sanctuary pledges through its actions and policies, and with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- This council is committed to support an initiative to make Shrewsbury into a recognised 'Town of Sanctuary'
- We call on Shropshire Council to apply for 'City of Sanctuary' Status.

**Since then a working group has been established and work is underway to submit an application for CoS status.**

Why is this important?

## Global Displacement

**117.2 million people** will be forcibly displaced or stateless in 2023, according to UNHCR's estimations.

### People under UNHCR's mandate in 2023

In millions



2023



\* Venezuelans previously designated as "Venezuelans displaced abroad (VDA)" are included in this new category. This change has been made retroactively in UNHCR's statistics since 2018. The term VDA will no longer be used.

[Get the data](#) • [Download image](#)





# UK Statistics

- The UK offered protection to 175,142 people in the year ending June 2023.
- 154,254 (88%) were offered a safe and legal (humanitarian) route to the UK in the year ending June 2023.

There were:

- 102,807 people granted Ukraine Visa and Extension Schemes visas
- 43,368 people granted Hong Kong BN(O) visas
- 4,671 people granted Family Reunion visas
- 3,408 people resettled and relocated, including 2,570 under Afghan schemes

## Figures of Refugees and people seeking Asylum in Shrewsbury (estimated)



- Syrians : Approx. 20 families
- 1 Asylum hotel Approx. 100 people
- Hong Kong Approx. 25 Families in Shrewsbury
- Ukrainians Approx 500
- Nationalities in the hotel: Iran, Iraq , Kurdish ,Sudanese , Eritrean, Tamil, Afghans, Syrians
- Apart from certain nationalities like Albania, 92% of people are expected to get their leave to remain status.
- <https://www.myshrewsbury.co.uk/blog/refugees-in-the-heart-of-town/>

# Refugees Lived Experience

## Reasons why people are here:

- Effects of long-term political unrest in a country – war
- Food and sometimes water shortages
- Sexuality
- Destruction of infrastructure - livelihoods and education impacted long-term
- Attacks from own government - arrests leading to torture and often murder
- Police and political structures, corrupt and untrustworthy
- Fear of what would happen if they remain is stronger than the fear of going into the unknown and risking death
- Going back is never an option
- Refugee camps are dangerous and miserable. Gangs rule and corruption is rife in the UN and security teams
- Most really struggle with adapting to the UK culture, lifestyle and budget



# What Support is in Place?

## Shropshire Supports Refugees Model:

- To facilitate as many offer of support as possible from as many people as possible.
- To be the support network that their friends and family would have been and help them to create a support network of their own
- Educate community on refugee experience and vulnerability using local and national platforms, improve community cohesion
- Engender a role of responsibility within the local community and empower them to support safely
- Bring refugee community together with local authority, statutory bodies and the third sector
- To empower refugees and asylum seekers to stand on their own two feet
- To ease the pressure on local services and infrastructure



# The SSR Hub

- The Hub acts as a place of safety and welcome for people seeking sanctuary in Shrewsbury and Shropshire
- People are encouraged to make themselves at home, use the Wi-Fi and access the support services
- They can make their own food in the kitchens, and we host drop-in support sessions from our partners such as The Housing Options team and Enable employment services
- The local authority resettlement team has an office with us
- Monthly visits by Axis Counselling, Women's Aid and the Job Center to mention just a few partners





# The SSR Hub

- Food Hub deliveries
- Job centre runs sessions
- We have mental health support delivered by MPFT
- We have volunteer therapists that deliver therapy
- We run coffee mornings for Syrian ladies & Ukrainians
- Tea parties for the Hong-Kongers
- Bespoke conversation classes
- Exam center
- Good contacts with the local police
- Access to laptops and online support
- Access to laundry services
- We run 18 ESOL classes a week from our dedicated learning space



# Awareness Raising

- City of Sanctuary - 23 Schools
- Schools of Sanctuary- (town council working towards accreditation)
- Refugee week
- Arts projects
- Poetry books
- Short films
- Music video
- Deliver talks





# Local Partnerships

Shrewsbury Bid	West Mercia Women's Aid	Shropshire Local Authority	Cavalier Horse-Riding Centre	Shropshire Youth Association (SYA)	Telford AFC	Telford and Shrewsbury Colleges
Enable	Landau				Shrewsbury Football Club	
Shrewsbury Shopping Centre Management	The Branch Project	Shrewsbury Town Council	Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Centre	Concorde International School	Local Mosques	Sport England
Storage King	Shrewsbury Food Hub	Beam/The Childrens Society	Wrekin Forest School	Shrewsbury School	Local Churches	National Trust
Wenlock Water	The Ark Homelessness Centre	Performers without Borders	Shropshire Cat Rescue		Shropshire Tennis Club	Migrant Help
Energize Shropshire	Access Counselling	Brightstar Boxing	Archery GB	The Hive Arts Centre	Shropshire Pickle Ball Club	Serco
Telford and Wrekin			Jump In	Shropshire Cricket Board	Telford and Shrewsbury Colleges	House of Prayer Wellington

# Community Networking

- Two migration resettlement meetings
- Homelessness forum-tackling exploitations-strategic priority group
- VCSE
- Shropshire mental health forum
- NHS consultation groups
- Inclusion network
- Trauma informed steering group
- City of Sanctuary
- Refugee week meetings
- Community connectors meetings
- Invited to do talks for various teams
- NHS talking therapies
- Schools' psychology teams
- Work closely with MPFT
- West Midlands strategic migrations partnership meetings
- Many others



# Support In Asylum Hotels



# Refugee Week & Events

- We have run some extraordinary awareness raising events in the run up to and during refugee week
- We have a dedicated website [www.shropshirerefugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.shropshirerefugeeweek.org.uk)
- We screened a film, led poetry workshops, hosted SCARF coffee morning, a light workshop ,a rice dumpling workshop, a garden party and a multi-cultural day in collaboration with Stand Up to Racism, Short film about Ukrainian women in Shropshire, a song that will be released in the general public, with a video and ongoing poetry which will become another SSR poetry book.
- These are just a small selection of the events through the year



# What else can STC do?

Commit to work with partners to identify national policy issues in order to make collective representations to government to encourage and enable change.

**Criterion 1:** Awareness raising opportunities are provided, and opportunities for discussion around the theme of welcome and sanctuary are facilitated on a community level.

**Criterion 2:** Evidence of refugee/asylum/migration awareness raising is included into everyday business of the local authority e.g. staff induction/training.

**Criterion 3:** Commitment to supporting the voices of people seeking sanctuary to be heard.

**Criterion 4:** Produce a written strategy (either an independent 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.

**Criterion 5:** The local authority must demonstrate how it has embedded the concept of welcome and inclusion at all levels of the organisation. This should show how the local authority will continue to develop and sustain a culture of welcome beyond the award and across all council services.

**Criterion 6:** Commitment to supporting initiatives that embeds welcome and fosters solidarity between receiving communities and people seeking sanctuary e.g., participation in Refugee Week, more information about the annual event can be found here: <http://refugeeweek.org.uk>

**Criterion 7:** A public commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision of welcome

**Criterion 8:** 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 9:** 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 10:** Work with the network to identify national policy issues to make collective representations to government to encourage and enable change