

Shrewsbury Town Council Town of Sanctuary Strategy & Action Plan 2023 – 2026



Shrewsbury Town Council, Livesey House,
7 St. John's Hill, Shrewsbury SY1 1JD

1. Purpose of Document

Shrewsbury Town Council along with Shropshire Supports Refugees resolved to apply for City (Town) of Sanctuary Accreditation as below:

It is to be considered that the following objectives be approved and submitted as the shared vision for the City of Sanctuary accreditation application:

1	The relief of financial hardship amongst those granted and seeking refugee status and their dependents living (temporarily or permanently) in Shrewsbury.
2	To advance the education and training of those granted and seeking refugee status and their dependents in need thereof so as to advance them in life and assist them to adapt within a new community.
3	To advance the education of the public in general, including landlords and local authorities, on the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.
4	The provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship, or social and economic circumstances.
5	To develop the capacity and skills of the members of the refugee community of Shrewsbury in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society.

The Strategy and Action Plan is being prepared in collaboration with Shropshire Supports Refugees and with an open-minded view to work with all stakeholders for the benefit of people seeking sanctuary.

The Strategy and Action Plan sets out what Shrewsbury Town Council and Shropshire Supports Refugees will do to make Shrewsbury a welcoming town for people seeking sanctuary.

2. Background

City of Sanctuary is a mainstream, grassroots movement. It works by creating opportunities for relationship between local people and those seeking sanctuary, and by offering a positive vision of a culture of hospitality and practical assistance for those in need of safety.

Shrewsbury Town of Sanctuary as part of this organisation, will be made up of different people and organisations who work in different ways to make the town a place of welcome and safety for people seeking sanctuary from violence, war and persecution. In support of this work it builds on practical experience of welcoming refugees to Shrewsbury for many years.

Shrewsbury is aiming to apply for City (Town) of Sanctuary status in 2024.

Shrewsbury Town Council has signed up to the Local Authorities City of Sanctuary Networks Group.

3. Principles

Our aims and priorities are underpinned by a *Human Rights* approach with an emphasis on self-help. Shrewsbury Town Council and Shropshire Supports Refugees will seek to act in accordance with City of Sanctuary principles to demonstrate good practice in working with people seeking sanctuary and to encourage others within the town to offer the same good practice.

In Shrewsbury there has been a demonstrated firm commitment to creating a co-ordinated community response to providing support for people seeking sanctuary. Shrewsbury Town Council will work in partnership with the voluntary sector and with asylum seeking and refugee communities, and with all organisations who support City of Sanctuary principles and who are committed to welcome, inclusion and equality.

We recognise the influence which Shrewsbury Town Council can have on public perception and understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, and their reasons for seeking sanctuary in Shrewsbury, if we use positive and accurate language about people seeking sanctuary in all media, policy statements and publicity materials.

4. Aims & Priorities

Priorities:

1	The relief of financial hardship amongst those granted and seeking refugee status and their dependents living (temporarily or permanently) in Shrewsbury.
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5	To develop the capacity and skills of the members of the refugee community of Shrewsbury in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society.

Aims:

- Assist with workshops for schools on sanctuary issues.
- Assist in the provision of other awareness raising events.
- Enabling social and cultural events where people seeking sanctuary and local people interact
- Assist with enabling concerts, drama productions, art events by Refugee artists.
- Enabling interfaith events promoting sanctuary and hospitality
- Work with local media to publicise positive stories of sanctuary seekers.
- Involving the Refugee community in festivals and cultural events

- Be involved in the promotion of events and activities for Refugee Week
- Encourage local businesses to offer employment opportunities to Refugees.
- Improve consultation with refugees and asylum seekers on town issues.
- Other projects which help Refugees to feel more welcome and included.

5. Consultation

The strategy aims to improve consultation with refugees and asylum seekers on local town issues.

The strategy also aims to improve consultation and shared working with those involved in providing services for refugees and asylum seekers.

Shropshire Supports Refugees was established in 2016 and began as a welcome group for Refugee Action. Amanda Jones and a group of her friends started arranging collections of items for arriving families who were resettling in Shropshire under the governments VPRS.

The group set about coordinating the many offers of informal help, donations and friendship from local people.

In 2017, Shropshire Supports Refugees became a not-for-profit Community interest company and started to promote awareness of the migration crisis and the needs of the refugee community in Shrewsbury and Shropshire.

Towards the end of 2021 SSR gained charity status and is now a registered CIO.

6. A Co-Ordinated Community Response

The Town of Sanctuary accreditation will raise the profile the work being undertaken for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers and how the community can support this work, seeking to encourage a coordinated community response to bring people together to identify who does what and when to enable a service user or issue onto the relevant organisation.

It also seeks to start and share the evidence of good practice that is already taking place by other local authorities and voluntary organisations to enable awareness of this, how the community in general can assist in these operations.

Some people seeking sanctuary need generic services to help them rebuild their lives and flourish and others have specialist care or health needs and need to use specialist services. Generic services need to be supported to ensure they have sufficient understanding to include people seeking sanctuary in everything they do, but also understand when to refer to specialist support services. It is noted that some specialised knowledge is needed to work with people seeking sanctuary, especially when offering advice, legal advice, and advocacy.

As the Strategy and Action Plan is implemented a more coordinated and transparent Community Response will develop to ensure better outcomes for the refugee or asylum seeker. In addition, it will aim to ensure that everyone, who wants to do more to support refugees and asylum seekers, is able to contribute.

Resettlement programmes in particular, where people seeking sanctuary are brought into the UK and are given full citizenship rights from arrival, provide opportunities for active citizens and volunteers to volunteer and contribute to improving the lives of resettled families. Any volunteering must comply with safeguarding best practice and there should be supervision of volunteers working with resettled families.

The Strategy and Action Plan will also enabling shared aims with neighbouring parishes noting that Shrewsbury acts as a natural hub for facilities for local areas.

7. Conclusion

Shrewsbury Town Council along with Shropshire Supports Refugees will take a lead on the City (Town) of Sanctuary Accreditation process working with local communities to ensure it provides a safe and welcoming and inclusive environment for people seeking sanctuary within the town of Shrewsbury.