

Since 2016, when we last reviewed asylum seekers' and refugees' needs and services, most services have survived and developed and there have been substantial achievements. The Sanctuary is a thriving city centre social facility where many services can be accessed. There are significant increases in partnership working, information sharing and coordination between service providers. Specialist legal advice and support is still limited, as is specialist mental health support. Both are a priority if service users are to progress their situation. The Refugee and Migrant Forum is a lively monthly meeting place where people come to share information and work together. Partnership working needs to develop still further, as does promotion of people with lived experience of migration into leadership roles. Individuals who work in the movement are committed and robust, but their wellbeing must not be taken for granted. Continuously chasing short term funding is demoralising and counter-productive. For the movement to be resilient and to continue to thrive requires greater focus on strategic leadership, including working creatively with funders. A funded enabling project is required to take the recommendations forward.



Review of Needs, Services and Facilities for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Sheffield SUMMARY

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Foreword

The focus of this review is on the needs of people seeking asylum and those with refugee status, and on services and facilities that support them to integrate. It also includes, in less detail, consideration of a new social group, EU citizens potentially at risk due to Brexit.

These social groups are part of a bigger group, that of new arrivals in Sheffield. The work of the sector and movement is important for understanding and enacting the processes of welcoming, enabling and integrating all new arrivals.

Welcome and integration are impeded by the hostile environment which is intended to deter a defined group of people, but in practice has a much wider sweep and impact. It directly affects social cohesion. The more recent rebranding as the “compliant environment” changes little because the existing practices and culture of hostility do not seem to have changed. This can make *compliance* a form of *oppression*.

De facto ‘immigration officers’ are conscripted, in most cases unwillingly, to apply the law (for example landlords, employers, NHS staff, bank staff). Other people take it upon themselves to enact hostility outside of the law – hence the rise in hate incidents and hate crime.

The review reports on progress since 2016, on achievements and changes. It identifies strategic actions with recommendations for moving forward.

It is important to acknowledge that the work reviewed makes a necessary contribution to social cohesion in the city – the intention being to enable new arrivals to become full participants as neighbours, friends and active citizens in Sheffield life, enabling us all to live well together.

History and context

2016: The Northern Refugee Centre (NRC) closed, in January 2016, causing a crisis in service provision. Key organisations and individuals came together to develop an urgent and strategic response, and commissioned a review which led to valuable new developments.

2019-20: No crisis other than the everyday crises created by the intensified impact of the hostile environment – being refused asylum resulting in destitution and liability for NHS charges, possible detention and removal; 28 day ‘move on’ period for people granted refugee status to secure housing, open a bank account, claim benefits etc.; high cost of obtaining leave to remain and citizenship; more citizens feel conscripted “immigration officers”.

City of Sanctuary Sheffield (COSS) and Sheffield City Council (SCC) jointly commissioned Cohesion Sheffield to undertake a review of needs and services, partially funded by SCC, carried out by a team mostly with recent lived experience of migration.

What are the aims of the Review?

To help Sheffield review needs and services for people seeking refuge, those granted leave to remain, and EU migrants in Sheffield who may be at risk due to Brexit.¹

¹ During two learning/training sessions for the review team on research methods led by Dr Lucy Mayblin at The University of Sheffield it became clear that those with recent lived experience of migration were not comfortable with being described as *refugees*, *asylum seekers* or *migrants*. We have made a decision not to describe people in this report by these words which imply an identity, using instead phrases that describe a person’s situation or status in the UK legal system.

By learning together to identify what is working well, what needs further development, and to identify strategic actions and recommendations.

To produce a review that is useful for stakeholders:

- Organisations, groups and individuals working in the sector and movement;
- Funders who are considering supporting it;
- Researchers and others who wish to learn about needs, services and the review processes.

City of Sanctuary Sheffield (COSS)

- COSS is the charity that founded the city of sanctuary movement in Sheffield in 2005. Its primary purpose is to create a movement promoting Sheffield as a city of hospitality for people seeking asylum and to raise awareness of the refugee experience, and of the situation in Sheffield and more widely.
- This led to the creation of City of Sanctuary UK, an umbrella organisation that supports the development of a network of groups, which includes villages, towns, cities, schools, universities and regions across the UK – and beyond.
- From 2012 COSS became a service provider – initially staffing the Welcome Desk, then in 2015 coordinating the Victoria Hall Drop-in, and in 2018 establishing and opening The Sanctuary.
- COSS holds a coordinating role in the movement, chairing the Refugee and Migrant Forum. The movement is a loose network of groups and organisations that self-identify as part of a city of sanctuary.

In 2014 City of Sanctuary UK held a summit at which it created ‘The Birmingham Declaration’:

1. All asylum seekers, refugees and migrants should be treated with dignity and respect.
2. A fair and effective process to decide whether people need protection should be in place.
3. No one should be locked up indefinitely.
4. No one should be left sick or destitute in our society.
5. We should welcome the stranger and help them to integrate.

These principles guide the movement in Sheffield, and act as a framework for this Review.

Achievements

In the national political context of austerity and anti-migrant sentiments, the survival and continuing development of existing organisations and projects, plus the development of new ones, is a significant achievement. The increasing activity and collaboration is a tribute to the extraordinary commitment and skilful work of many individuals, groups and organisations.

There are now 23 Sheffield based city-wide organisations and groups providing direct support to people with refugee status or those seeking it. Some of the 23 also provide neighbourhood-based services and support, more so than in 2016. The Victoria Hall Drop-in continues to provide a weekly multi-agency service, and a new facility - The Sanctuary – is an immense achievement. Now a thriving city centre resource, it was set up in response to recommendations in the 2016 review.

The Asylum Journey is a significant achievement. It was originally developed for gap analysis. It is now an information resource - <https://asylumjourney.org.uk/> - maintained and updated by COSS. It provides a valuable overview and details of facilities, organisations and groups that provide services to asylum seekers and refugees in Sheffield – in addition to its primary purpose as a searchable tool for use by service providers and support workers and advocates.

A substantial achievement is increasing partnership working between provider services, mostly within the voluntary and community sector, and with key local authority services.

Organisations and groups in the movement have a campaigning and advocacy role – for some it is their main activity, for others that provide direct services to clients, it is important for policy work promoting systemic changes, which can have more impact than case work alone.

There are limited but developing facilities to support EU citizens potentially at risk due to Brexit. These facilities and developments also have the potential to bridge an existing separation between city-wide and neighbourhood-based services and facilities.

Strategic Action Themes *(see end of report for expansion of abbreviations)*

The first two *Strategic Action Themes* highlight key developments and achievements over the past three years and the current associated challenges and development needs. The next eight themes focus on gaps, key challenges, learning and development to identify strategic actions.

1. Co-ordination of activities and partnership working

Until 2016

- NRC had been the hub for much provision – its closure led suddenly to a lack of coordination.

In 2019-20

- The Refugee and Migrant Forum (RMF) has expanded and developed to fill successfully the information sharing and collaboration gap – it also has a role in coordinating campaign activities.
- Increased levels of activity and partnership working:
 - Victoria Hall Drop-in – COSS coordinating role with partners – highly rated by users.
 - The Sanctuary – new resource implementing key recommendation of 2016 review.
 - SPRING - 6 partners - CAS, COSS, VAS/NB, SAVTE, SCC/LAASLO, and SOLACE - coordinated by VAS and funded by AMIF – to provide support for people immediately after they obtain refugee status. The partners are very positive about impact on service coordination – joint training and sharing of volunteers - a model for future development.
 - ASSIST, British Red Cross (BRC) and South Yorkshire Refugee Law and Justice (SYRLJ) – legal support for destitute asylum seekers – referral and feedback in place.
 - Refugee Council (RC) working with Sheffield City Council (SCC - Housing and Life Long Learning), Mulberry Practice, SAVTE and DWP (Job Centre Plus) to resettle people arriving in Sheffield with refugee status – improving joint working.
 - Sheffield Hallam University Family Reunion Clinic (SHU RFRC) now fully operational, providing legal support to refugees, plus awareness raising and training of students.
- SCC's Cohesion Migration and Voluntary Sector Relationships team has a vital enabling and liaising role, being the link that can influence and access mainstream resources, in local government and NHS, and in national government (MHCLG and Home Office), that are not directly available to VCS organisations.
- Sheffield Community Investment Deal (SCID) – an SCC and VCS collaboration – including with Darnall Well-Being and New Arrivals Health Needs Group (NAHNG) - in areas with high migration (important neighbourhood working and development).
- Still relative lack of strategic leadership and development for the sector and movement.

- Strong partnerships can be more resilient, also potential risk that their power and influence can exclude smaller groups unless they are consciously inclusive.
- The current need is to develop an *Enabling Hub* (as previously existed at NRC) – active support for groups led by people with user experience to innovate and develop service provision.

2. Development of The Sanctuary

- Immense achievement – came out of the 2016 review – bringing together a social space for people with refugee status and those seeking it combined with a one-stop shop providing them with professional services – a safe space in the city centre established mainly by public subscription.
- Has enabled users to access several services in one place, with substantially increased collaboration between service providers, thus addressing the need for better signposting identified by the 2016 Review.
- Immense challenge – making these two different aspirations (homely social space and high quality professional services) coexisting in a limited space with limited human and physical resources.

3. Provision of qualified professional services:

(a) immigration and asylum legal advice and (b) specialist mental health support

Until 2016 qualified legal support was inadequate (NRC funding had reduced, legal aid for immigration work had been substantially cut as a result of the LASPO Act, 2012). Specialist mental health support was not available following the closure of the NHS Transcultural Team with loss of expertise.

In 2019-20 provision is still inadequate.

(a) Immigration and asylum legal advice

- The impact of the LASPO Act continues to bite, leaving South Yorkshire increasingly lacking in solicitors doing immigration and asylum work. This impacts on provision that is available in the sector.
- Shortage of legal provision results in high stress for individuals with risk of loss of legal rights (to housing, work, benefits, family reunion etc.), extended destitution or return to destitution.
- The 2019-20 review includes a gap analysis with strategic assessment of priorities and a recommendation to create a strategic leadership group for legal provision.

(b) Specialist mental health support

- Solace provide a limited service for people with refugee status, funded as part of the SPRING project. Solace also facilitates a stress management group at the Victoria Hall Drop-in for people seeking refugee status as well as for those with it.
- More provision is needed – probably double existing capacity - which would enable trainee therapists to be used under supervision.
- Further investigation is needed to identify unmet primary care mental health needs and how these might best be met – possibly with CCG funding.

4. Involvement of migrants and refugees (people with lived experience) in staff teams and leadership roles, including trustees – an example of progressive development

- From the early days people seeking asylum have volunteered to give something back, which for many has provided meaningful activity and a supportive environment, thereby supporting their wellbeing. As the sector and movement has matured some refugees have become trustees and a few are paid staff, in some organisations, but numbers are small. There is a slow development of people with lived experience into staff and leadership roles.
- Within the movement there is a growing commitment to increase this uptake. The *Enabling Hub* proposal is an attempt to accelerate this process to bring about a cultural change from ‘we help them’ towards ‘we work together – shared leadership, shared delivery’. DEWA is an example of a volunteer group (originally supported by NRC) who could benefit from the support that an *Enabling Hub* could provide.

5. Balance between central / specialist and neighbourhood / generalist model of service provision – towards a neighbourhood strategy

- ‘Specialist services’ in the city centre have created a model of a safe space in the context of a hostile environment. They are open to others, but in practice people who go there are people who need a safe space, or people who welcome and support people who do.
- There is a growing recognition of the importance of neighbourhood based facilities and services for new arrivals – nearer to where people live, enabling more mixing. This requires specialist knowledge (poor advice is worse than no advice). Over time, specialist support, training and supervision can keep case work local, thereby reducing central demand.
- Learn Sheffield, in partnership with COSS and others, are working with Sheffield schools to introduce the refugee experience into the curriculum.
- The neighbourhood strategy promoting community development requires support from specialised services to enable informed provision in local community facilities and centres.

6. Support for EU citizens at risk due to BREXIT

- By September 2019, 26% of EU nationals in Sheffield had completed applications for settlement. This is a smaller percentage than in other cities in the region.
- Some applicants who have difficulty evidencing their continuous residence in UK for 5 years are being granted ‘pre-settled status’, leading to concern that this will make them vulnerable to removal later. The EU is seeking assurances from the UK that those without settled status will not be removed without a review process.²
- Sheffield has a substantial EU Roma population (an estimated 6000), mostly from Slovakia³. There is particular concern that they (and others who are potentially marginalised) will be at risk of sanctioning and removal due to lack of awareness of the requirement to apply for settlement and difficulties in satisfying the settlement requirements.
- Projects have developed to support Sheffield’s Roma community to engage with the process and to provide the necessary evidence. Darnall Wellbeing is coordinating project work as a priority of the New Arrivals Health Needs Group. SCID is co-ordinating support on offer through CAS, DWB, Firvale Community Hub, Faithstar, and is working to enable Roma engagement.

². <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/03/data-shows-90-of-eu-settlement-scheme-appeals-successful-brexit>

³ <https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/userfiles/file/projects/roma-syorks/syr-7-roma-in-sheffield-2017.pdf>

7. Workforce wellbeing and development

- Helping people to resolve desperate situations, when little can be done, and when progress will require collaboration with other organisations who may not understand the situation, is inherently distressing and over the longer term can be damaging to staff and volunteers' health.
- Intensive work with people who have experienced trauma, and who now experience the hostile environment, can put staff and volunteers at risk of secondary trauma.
- Protection against these risks is provided by amazingly committed and resourceful colleagues supporting each other – but only up to a point.
- Racism, sexism and unconscious bias are endemic in society. Organisations working in this area are not immune. The values of organisations in the sector and movement create an opportunity to address discrimination, but also create added stress if expectations and aspirations are not met.
- Education is important, as is awareness raising, learning and empowerment.
- Stress in the context of hostile environment can produce *unproductive outrage* – this needs support to focus action productively.
- It is important to prioritise wellbeing and development – through training, supervision, and mentoring.
- There is an experience that these things are not funded, which leads to an expectation that funders will not fund it. It is important to make the case to funders – a healthy workforce is effective and resilient, and better for service users.

8. Leadership to enable strategic development, including revisiting 'What it means to be a city of sanctuary'

- A strategic development group (SDG) is needed – linked to the Refugee and Migrant Forum which acts as the operational communications and partnership group.
- The SDG should have a non-hierarchical relationship with the RMF – with members valuing diversity and whole system thinking and signed up to partnership principles (recommendations 1.2 & 1.3). Leeds Migration Partnership may be a useful model to draw experience from – it has information, operations and strategic groups working together, linked by guiding principles⁴.
- The RMF should actively promote and support diversity of leadership, building on learning and developments outlined in Strategic Action 4.
- The recent initiative to review what it means to be a City of Sanctuary, a decade after the original idea came to prominence, is important. COS UK have initiated this and are supporting local groups. A nationwide consultation is currently running and COS UK will be convening a local authority event in May 2020 to discuss the issue.
- This question and the associated question "What do you do that is actually different as a city of sanctuary?" are being raised right across the movement from Sheffield City Partnership Board to SCC to smaller refugee led organisations.

9. Funding and funders

- Funding is a fundamental issue – all VCS organisations in the movement survive on short term funding – from a few months to a year or two. Three year grants are the exception. Longer term

⁴ <https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/who-are-we/tor/>

funding (5 years) would create more resilience and effectiveness. Too much, indeed often excessive and unproductive time is spent applying for funding, gearing up to deliver, a period focused on delivery, and a period of wind down (during which experienced staff may leave) and reporting to funders, which may be extensive.

- A review of existing funders is needed, building on the funder analysis carried out by the SPRING partnership, as a basis for increasing partnership funding across the sector and movement.
- Continued development of multi-partner funding applications is also needed, being mindful of the developmental needs of the movement (as identified in other strategic actions) and who is best placed to deliver services.
- The sector and movement needs to seek and encourage funders working, or willing to work, as a consortium.
- SCC grant aid is significant. It can enable matched funding and is potentially longer term, vital to the resilience of the sector.

10. The future development of the sector and movement – an enabling project

- Owing to operational demands and continual firefighting, there is currently lack of sufficient capacity for collaborative strategic development.
- The review identifies important themes that require development if the sector and movement is to progress its ambition and vision.
- Time limited resourcing is required to do this, building on the findings and recommendations of the review.
- This can be an opportunity for a multi-partner application to a consortium of funders interested in progressive development (see 9 above).

Recommendations

1. Coordination of activities and partnership working

- 1.1 Continue structured evolution of partnerships.
- 1.2 Create a Strategic Development Group (see recommendation 8.1) with agreed criteria for which organisations join as core partners, and with others who support its aims joining as associates.
- 1.3 Find a way of providing information on the outcome of asylum applications – for example to ASSIST on negative decisions and SPRING on positive decisions.

2. Development of The Sanctuary

- 2.1 The Sanctuary Partners Group and the User/Member Forum to review and implement actions, in particular:
 - a) Develop volunteer coordinator role to enable selection of volunteers, training and supervision – based on agreed protocols to manage expectations.
 - b) Ensure there is an experienced person available during opening hours to undertake triage when people arrive with unspecified needs. Provide information on activities and staff/volunteers plus facilitate regular feedback.
 - c) Develop best use of the building – this will require an innovative architectural project to reconcile co-existing aspirations in limited space with limited resources.

3. Provision of qualified professional services:

(a) immigration and asylum legal advice and (b) specialist mental health support

- 3.1 Establish a legal services leadership group to review and pursue priorities for (i) the provision of legal support for people with refugee status and those seeking it – plus support for EU citizens with the settlement process arising from Brexit; (ii) the provision of information on changes in legislation and rules affecting client groups to those working in the sector and movement and other service providers who need this.
- 3.2 Contribute to the Strategic Development Group (see recommendation 8.1).
- 3.3 Quantify the need for specialist mental health services centrally and to support neighbourhood services; seek funding to increase provision to meet this need.

4. Involvement of migrants and refugees (people with lived experience) in staff teams and leadership roles, including trustees – an example of progressive development

- 4.1 All providers to actively recruit people with lived experience into leadership roles – as staff, trustees and volunteers.
- 4.2 Establish the *Enabling Hub* to accelerate the process of bringing about a cultural change towards ‘shared leadership, shared delivery’.
- 4.3 Support the development of autonomous Refugee Community Organisations and include them in sector and movement leadership and decision making.

5. Balance between central / specialist and neighbourhood / generalist model of service provision – towards a neighbourhood strategy.

- 5.1 The Strategic Development Group (see recommendation 8.1) to identify support requirements of neighbourhood centres to provide information and support for people with needs related to migration.
- 5.2 Link to Learn Sheffield and COSS’s development of refugee experience in school curriculum.
- 5.3 Link to provision of services for EU citizens re settlement post Brexit.

6. Support for EU citizens at risk because of Brexit

- 6.1 Identify resources and organisational arrangements required to engage and support EU citizens who wish to remain in the UK, in particular Roma and other potentially marginalised EU citizens, to achieve settled status.
- 6.2 Assess the potential and viability of establishing a voluntary registration scheme for new arrivals, linked to access to information and facilities.

7. Workforce wellbeing and development

- 7.1 Prioritise wellbeing and development including:
 - a) Sharing best practice between partners.
 - b) Review of staff and volunteer roles – are people using their talents to best effect?
 - c) Develop collaborations that can offer specialist support.
- 7.2 Consult with funders on willingness to support staff and volunteer wellbeing

8. Leadership to enable strategic development, including revisiting ‘What it means to be a city of sanctuary’

- 8.1 Establish a Strategic Development Group for the sector and movement, addressing each of the identified strategic action themes.
- 8.2 Develop terms of reference and membership criteria for full partnership (see recommendation 1.2), and the requirements for associate membership.
- 8.3 Develop and work to an annual programme building on the RASM 2020 Review.
- 8.4 Participate in the COS UK review of what it means to be a city of sanctuary in the 2020s.
- 8.5 This will require resourcing – see recommendation 10.

9. Funding and funders

- 9.1 Develop a framework for the sector and movement to share information and collaborate in funding bids – review current funding portfolios.
- 9.2 Engage with funders and invite funders to work as a consortium in partnership, drawing on the experience of funders already doing this – for example the Migration Exchange network.

10. The future development of the sector and movement – an enabling project

- 10.1 Assess and implement the findings of this review. This to include:
 - a) Coordinating early actions underway to implement learning arising from the review process;
 - b) Seeking funding from a consortium of progressive funders who are willing to work developmentally in collaboration with partners to implement strategic actions and recommendations;
 - c) Reviewing progress at 12 months.

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ACRONYMS - ABBREVIATIONS

AMIF - European Union Asylum, Migration, Integration Fund	NRC – Northern Refugee Centre
ASSIST – ASSIST Sheffield	RASM – Refugee, Asylum Seeker, Migrant
CAS – Citizens Advice Sheffield	RC – Refugee Council
CCG – Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS)	RCO – Refugee Community Organisation
COSS - City of Sanctuary Sheffield	RMF – Refugee and Migrant Forum
DEWA - Development Empowerment for Women’s Advancement	SAVTE - Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English
DWB – Darnall Well-Being	SCC/LAASLO – Sheffield City Council / Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officer
DWP/JC+ - Department of Work & Pensions / Job Centre Plus	SCID – Sheffield Community Investment Deal (SCC)
EUSS – European Union Settlement Scheme	SHU RFRC – Sheffield Hallam University Refugee Family Reunion Clinic
FCH – Firvale Community Hub	SOLACE – solace: surviving exile and persecution
GAFS - Gay Asylum Forum Sheffield	SPRING - Sheffield Project for Refugee Integration & Growth
LASPO - Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012	SYMAAG - South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group
LASS – Lesbian Asylum Support Sheffield	SYRLJ – South Yorkshire Refugee Law & Justice
Mears – Mears Housing Management	UASC – Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
MH – Migrant Help	VPRS – Vulnerable persons resettlement scheme
MHCLG – Ministry Housing Communities Local Government	UoS – University of Sheffield
MY- Migration Yorkshire	VAS – Voluntary Action Sheffield
NAHNG – New Arrivals Health Needs Group	VCS – Voluntary & Community Sector
NB – New Beginnings Project (part of VAS)	