



Report author:

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Leeds City Council becoming an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network

Date: 1 February 2023

Report of: Safer Stronger Communities Team

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief Summary

The City of Sanctuary UK is a **national movement** that works towards **promoting welcome** across the UK, for refugees and **people seeking sanctuary**.

City of Sanctuary UK support a network of groups, from across all sectors, and they have established an awards programme to recognise and celebrate organisations who go above and beyond. In the past, entire cities were awarded City of Sanctuary status, but in 2021 the movement introduced a Council of Sanctuary Local Authority Network award process, to replace the citywide status.

To become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary UK, the council must publicly commit to joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network via a motion or formal decision at a public committee meeting, such as Full Council or Executive Board.

A deputation was taken to full council on the 13 September 2023, by the Leeds City of Sanctuary group, asking the local authority to consider becoming an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary UK network. Full Council resolved that the matter be referred to the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment for consideration in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

In October 2023, Members of Executive Board received a report on Migration in Leeds from the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment and agreed “to endorse the council’s approach to becoming a member of the national Local Authority of Sanctuary Network”.

This report now seeks formal approval from the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment on the local authority plan in its application to become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary UK Local Authority Network.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is requested to approve Leeds City Council's application to become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides an overview of the City of Sanctuary UK and outlines the steps Leeds City Council are required to take to become **an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network**.
- 2 Leeds is a diverse city with a history of being compassionate, welcoming, and valuing the contributions of migrant communities to the city's economy, culture, and diversity. In recent years, Leeds has demonstrated its commitment to **people seeking sanctuary** (refugees and people seeking asylum) by supporting several government programmes. The UK national policy gives different groups in the UK different rights and entitlements, which has created challenges and opportunities. Leeds City Council has adopted a partnership approach to respond to the challenges and recognise the value in applying for City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network Award, as it creates an opportunity to strengthen the partnership approach between the council, the city and the migrant third sector to engage with people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary.

3 Introduction to the City of Sanctuary UK

The [City of Sanctuary UK](#) is a national charity that is working towards building a movement of welcome across the UK, to refugees and people seeking sanctuary. To realise this vision, City of Sanctuary UK support a network of groups, from across all sectors, and have established an awards programme to recognise and celebrate organisations who go above and beyond.

In the past, entire cities were awarded City of Sanctuary status, but in 2021 the movement introduced a Local Authority Network award process, to replace citywide status.

The network provides opportunities for Leeds City Council to: share best practice, learn from other local authorities on how to manage the competing demands on resources, help strengthen partnership work with statutory and third sector organisations (including the Leeds City of Sanctuary), and to ensure sanctuary seekers voice is heard at a strategic level.

4 Introduction to Leeds City of Sanctuary

The [Leeds City of Sanctuary](#), led by the migrant third sector, was launched in November 2010 and continue to demonstrate their commitment to welcome people seeking sanctuary through their campaigning [activities](#).

The Leeds City of Sanctuary work collaboratively with institutions such as universities, schools, General Practitioners, theatres, and any group or organisation applying for awarded City of Sanctuary membership, across the different streams of sanctuary.

5 Leeds City Council's membership

In May 2023, Leeds City Council joined the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network as an unawarded member and signed up to the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network pledge. Signing up to the pledge demonstrates the council agrees with the network vision and are committed to apply to become an awarded member, following the [8-step process](#). This action was taken following consultation with the leader of Leeds City Council, Councillor James Lewis, and the Executive Board Member for Communities, Councillor Mary Harland.

There is considerable evidence across the council, demonstrating the council's commitment to those seeking sanctuary and some of this is referenced in the 2023 [annual report on migration](#). The evidence is being collated centrally to inform the development of an action plan, which aligns with the City of Sanctuary '**learn**', '**embed**' and '**share**' principles.

City of Sanctuary Guiding Principles	
Learn	Learning about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, both in general, and specifically. Provide examples of how we as a council show a commitment to learn about what it means to be seeking sanctuary.
Embed	Taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion. To take steps to ensure this progress remains sustainable. Embedding means that the local authority is taking positive action to implement welcome, safety and inclusion and show this in a plan of continuation support for sanctuary seekers.
Share	Sharing our vision, achievements, what we have learned, good practice with other local authorities and the local community, and beyond.

6 Endorsement to become an Awarded Member of the Network

To become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary UK, the council must publicly commit to joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network via a motion or formal decision at a public committee meeting, such as Full Council or Executive Board.

A deputation was taken to full council on the 13 September 2023, by the Leeds City of Sanctuary group, asking the local authority to consider becoming an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary UK network. Full Council resolved that the matter be referred to the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment for consideration in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

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7 Communications Plan

A press release will be shared upon receipt of the awarded membership status of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network. This will be followed by an inclusive celebration event.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 8 The process of applying for the City of Sanctuary UK Local Authority Network award ensures people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary can influence strategic planning across

council services.

- 9 This work supports the council to deliver on the Public Sector Equality Duty which states: 'A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.'

Equality Act 2010, c.15 Part 11, Para 149(1) [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/equality-act-2010)

10 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out (see appendix 1).

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 11 The Best City Ambition outlines 3 pillars of commitment; [health and wellbeing](#), [inclusive growth](#), and [zero carbon](#) and applying for the City of Sanctuary award encourages a partnership approach with services across the city, to achieve the outcomes within the three pillars.
- 12 [Leeds strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration](#) builds upon the [Best City Ambition](#) which states it is '*our mission to tackle poverty and **inequality** and improve quality of life for **everyone** who calls Leeds home*', adopting a Team Leeds approach by '*shifting power to citizens through vibrant and sustainable community social infrastructure, and tackling systemic inequalities*'.
- 13 To achieve outcomes of the Best City Ambition, the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network Award action plan will align priorities with the recommendations shared by the Council of Europe on [Leeds, United Kingdom - Intercultural City](#). This international network aims to support cities to manage diversity and realise diversity as an advantage through tools and expert advice The membership of both the ICC and City of Sanctuary UK strengthen the approach on the Council's cohesion agenda.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 14 The Leeds Strategic Migration Board was consulted in October 2023 with continued commitment to update the board and raise awareness with council services.

What are the resource implications?

- 15 A commitment of a £1500 fee for the duration of the 3-year membership status has been allocated through external funding.

16 An allocation of up to £2000 has been identified through an external grant to celebrate the official launch of the award, this will also include comms material.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 17 A Steering Group has been established which is chaired by the Executive Board member for Communities.
- 18 An awards panel will be appointed to make recommendations to the council once the award has been approved.
- 19 The council works in partnership with the Leeds Migration Partnership and the City of Sanctuary movement.

What are the legal implications?

20 There are legal implications arising because of national policy changes. The [Illegal Migration Act](#) may be incompatible with our international obligations under the European Court of Human Rights and UN Refugee Convention. The Act contains limited safeguards, and it is unclear where those in detention will be held and how they will access legal advice. The Best City Ambition outlines the council's commitment to address systemic inequalities and our commitment to joining the network will strengthen our partnerships and support our city ambition of being a welcoming and compassionate city.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

How will success be measured?

- 21 The award process requires Leeds City Council to develop a 3-year action plan that builds on the good work already being delivered by the council. This work also aligns to the Council's migration strategy priorities.
- 22 The steering group will lead on the action plan, which will feed into the council's Intercultural Cities Steering group.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

23 The process of becoming an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network takes approximately 12 months. The award period lasts for three years, and the council will need to renew the awarded membership every three years.

Appendices

Equality, Diversity and Cohesion Integration Screening.

Background papers

None