

<b>Title of policy / procedure / function / project / decision:</b>	Borough of Sanctuary Strategy
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### **Evidence based equality analysis**

Main aims, purpose and outcomes and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation:

- 1.1 A Motion was unanimously passed at Council in October 2021 to commit to making Cheshire West and Chester a Borough of Sanctuary, and as part of that there has to be a strategy document to accompany the work. It provides a policy framework and action plan for the wide variety of work that the Council and its partners, especially those from the voluntary, community and faith organisations will undertake.
- 1.2 This is a key step to making the whole of the borough a place of welcome for those seeking sanctuary, working alongside other key partners and other “places of sanctuary”, such as schools, colleges, community organisations and places of worship. This will enable Cheshire West and Chester to be recognised as a borough proud of its diversity and history of welcoming people across the world to settle here.
- 1.3 This Equality Analysis is focussed on that Borough of Sanctuary strategy.
- 1.4 The Borough Plan sets out the shared vision and goals for the Borough for 2024 -28. The following statement is included in the Borough Plan: - *Providing sanctuary to those in need: We will show care and compassion, whilst continuing to support people fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries, building on our commitment to become a Council of Sanctuary and working with other places of sanctuary so that Cheshire West and Chester is a welcoming place.*
- 1.5 It identifies how the Council will continue to support the voluntary, community and faith organisations in Cheshire West and Chester to deliver on the strategy’s key aims, funding from the Resettled Refugee Schemes and Homes for Ukraine government tariffs, has been put aside to provide funding for project activities. The Sanctuary grants will be used to fund activities that support refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants living in the Borough.
- 1.6 Grants will be offered to support the needs of people seeking sanctuary, such as drop-ins, language skills and access to services, which will assist them to integrate and to actively involve themselves in their communities. Project ideas also include support with health and wellbeing issues, alongside activities to raise awareness of the needs of refugees, people seeking asylum and vulnerable migrant communities.

- 1.7 One of the funding criteria is that all project activities should also be open to any member of the local communities who wish to participate, thus helping to improve community cohesion and break down barriers.
- 1.8 Action Plan – the strategy includes a detailed action plan, and both have been out for consultation with key stakeholders between 18-12-24 and 28-02-25.
- 1.9 Agreed communications plan to promote the Borough of Sanctuary Strategy is attached as Appendix (3).

Lead officer: Shélah Semoff, Refugee and Asylum Seeker (RAS) Team Manager

Stakeholders: Voluntary, Community and Faith groups, Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA), Department of Works and Pension (DWP), Police, Fire, National Health Service (NHS), Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP), and other Council Services

For each of the areas below, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a positive, negative or neutral impact, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a high, medium or low assessment. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Target group / area			
<b>Race and ethnicity</b> (including Gypsies and Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers etc.)		High – As most people seeking sanctuary are from the Global Majority, coming to a perhaps less diverse community, this strategy will	Low - Some members of the local community may feel less engaged than others, however all of the activities funded under the Borough of

		<p>support their integration journey, providing a clear framework for partners to support those who don't have English as a first language.</p> <p>Global majority refers to people who are "black, Asian, brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'" and "represent approximately 80% of the world's population". (World Population review.com)</p>	<p>Sanctuary banner are open to all local residents to participate in. This means there are actually more activities in some of the most deprived communities in the Borough.</p> <p>The Council has a commitment to developing a Social Cohesion Strategy and there is a Multicultural Centre alongside other third sector partners who are helping to encourage better engagement between different community groups.</p>
<p><b>Disability</b></p> <p>(as defined by the Equality Act - a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)</p>		<p>Medium – With a focus on vulnerable people seeking sanctuary, those with additional complex needs are likely to be identified sooner. These can include issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health, as it is recognised that refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrant communities show high levels</p>	

		<p>of these conditions. Although Community-based and public health programs have shown promising results there are still barriers to help seeking support that need to be addressed, including stigma, cultural competency and cost.</p> <p>Added to this, the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Team (RAS) is piloting a project with the Home Office whereby large Afghan families who have children with very complex disabilities will be resettled in two of Chester West and Chester's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) properties.</p>	
<b>Sex</b> (male or female)		High – specifically for women, as the RAS team have cultural experience and expertise of working with and supporting women who are second class citizens in their home countries.	
<b>Gender identity</b> (gender reassignment)		Medium – the RAS team and partners, who in most cases have trusted relationships	

		with people who in some situations are under death sentences in their home countries, will be able to support and signpost more quickly.	
<b>Religion and belief</b> (including lack of belief)		High – as above, this is about the trusted relationships and knowing the religious and cultural differences within host communities. And then knowing how and where to signpost people to fulfil their religious beliefs.	
<b>Sexual orientation</b> (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and others)		Medium – same as gender identify above.	
<b>Age</b> (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults 25 – 50, younger older people 51 – 75/80; older older people 81+. Age bands are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs)		High – with dedicated RAS team and experienced partners, it is easier to work across generations within a family context and provide continued support. This has been recently illustrated by the support given to a three	

		generational asylum seeking family.	
<p><b>Care Experienced</b> (all young people and adults who have been in the care of Cheshire West and Chester Council - for a period of 13 weeks or more - from the age of 14 years. This includes those children/young people for whom the Council currently or have previously held corporate parenting responsibilities)</p>		<p>Medium – whilst there are dedicated teams within the Council to support Looked After Children (LAC), Care Leavers and Separated Children (formerly known as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UACS), the RAS team is working to support colleagues with three different aspects of this work:- members of the team are working towards an accreditation in immigration advice in order to spend less on external legal advice; have agreed to support individuals identified as over 18 following an age assessment, as they move from children's settings into the adult asylum system; and finally supporting new separated children arrivals in the borough with cultural and integration support to hopefully reduce the number of "missing from home" recorded incidents.</p>	

<b>Carers</b> (people who care for others, informally or formally)		Low – whilst there aren't many carers and their charges who seek sanctuary due to the difficult journeys undertaken, with a dedicated team, they would get additional integration support and gain a better understanding of the social care system within the UK.	
<b>Rural communities</b>	Low – very few sanctuary seekers will end up in rural communities, and if they do – the RAS team will support.		
<b>Areas of deprivation</b> (include any impact on people living in poverty who may not live in areas identified as deprived)		High – Due to the systems and processes used by Government contracted providers, people seeking sanctuary tend to be placed in areas of deprivation, however with this strategy there is a dedicated framework on how to support not only the individuals, but local residents	

		<p>and those 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations who are at the front line of this work.</p> <p>Whilst it is possible to map these properties to evidence this, it is not deemed appropriate to have this information in the public realm.</p>	
<p><b>Human rights</b> (see guidance note for key areas to consider)</p>		<p>High – everything about this strategy is enabling those seeking sanctuary to engage with their human rights such as:- right to life; prohibition of torture; prohibition of slavery and forced labour; right to liberty and security; right to a fair trial; no punishment without law; right to respect for private and family life; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression; freedom of assembly and association; right to marry; prohibition of discrimination; protection of property; right to education; right to free election.</p>	



<p><b>Health and wellbeing and Health Inequalities</b> (consider the wider determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, environment, crime and transport, plus impacts on lifestyles and effects on health and care services)</p>		<p>Medium – due to various barriers such as lack of English, literacy levels, cultural differences, poor housing and low incomes, those seeking sanctuary can present with many of the key health inequality indicators. Having a dedicated framework for the Council and key partners to support this cohort will help to eliminate these negative factors.</p> <p>Almost all of the targeted activities for people seeking sanctuary are also available to the wider community. Thus ensuring that there are actually additional activities for them to access. This also helps with community cohesion and integration.</p>	<p>*** does this impact on local communities</p>
<p><b>Procurement/partnership</b> (if project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)</p>	<p>N/A</p>		

**Evidence (see guidance note for details of what to include here):**

Following advice from legal services, a key stakeholder engagement process was held, rather than a full public consultation. The detail comments received from this exercise and how these were incorporated into the revised strategy are attached.

**Attached Documents: -**

Appendix (1) Borough of Sanctuary Strategy FINAL DRAFT

Appendix (2) Strategy Document Comments

Appendix (3) Borough of Sanctuary media release DRAFT

**Action plan:**

<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outcomes required</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>	<b>Review date</b>
The strategy will be reviewed and evaluated every three years inline with the Council of Sanctuary award	Low	Partnership involved in the review.  Refreshed strategy.	Refugee and Asylum Seeker Team Manager	Oct 27
Strategy Action Plan to be review annually with partners via the Multi Agency Forum	Med	Actions detailed within the plan should be completed, or an explanation given as to why not	Multi Agency Forum for Refugee and Asylum Seekers	Oct 25
The RAS team continues to engage with cross council and partnership work to improve mental health support and also support community cohesion	Med	Development of Councils strategies and partnership activities	Refugee and Asylum Seeker Team Manager	Oct 25

<b>Sign off</b>	
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Lead officer:	Shélah Semoff, Refugee and Asylum Seeker (RAS) Team Manager
Approved by Tier 4 Manager:	Lucy Health, Head of Housing – 07.03.2025
<b>Moderation and/or Scrutiny</b>	
Date:	
<b>Date analysis to be reviewed based on rating</b> (high impact – review in one year, medium impact - review in two years, low impact in three years)	

**Please forward the completed Equality Analysis to the Equality and Diversity Managers for publishing on the Council's website**