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| Meeting Name: | Cabinet |
| Date: | 16 September 2024 |
| Report title: | Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Sanctuary Action Plan |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Refugees |
| Ward(s) or groups affected: | All |
| Classification: | Open |
| Reason for lateness (if applicable): | N/a |

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR JASMINE ALI, DEPUTY LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & REFUGEES

- I am very proud to tell you about Southwark’s Borough of Sanctuary Framework.
- As an ancient borough at the heart of London and bordered by our great river, Southwark has a long and honourable history as a place of safety for those fleeing violence and persecution.
- We have given a welcome and a home to migrant communities across the ages, from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Our culture, cuisine, community, and spirit have been enriched a thousand-fold by citizens and families from all over the world.
- More than 40 per cent of our residents were born outside of the UK – over 121,000 people. So, we can say proudly and without exaggeration that we are one of the most diverse boroughs in the country. And one of the most harmonious!
- The very first Black Mayor of Southwark, Sam King MBE, was a community activist and campaigner. He served in World War II and then returned to Britain on the Empire Windrush in 1948. He co-founded the Notting Hill carnival. Today he is recognised as one of the key social architects of postwar Britain. This legacy can be seen in the names of public buildings, libraries, and health centres, and on plaques across the borough, paying tribute to the contributions of the bold pioneers that settled in Southwark.
- On a personal note, I moved to Southwark 25 years ago and I am so happy that I made my home here. My father was a Muslim, my mother was a Christian and my partner is Jewish. I can personally attest that our multi-faith communities make everyone welcome.

- On Southwark Council itself, 48 per cent of our councillors are from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups. Our Madam Mayor came to the UK as a refugee from Somalia and the MP for Peckham at the heart of Southwark arrived from Sierra Leone as a refugee at the age of five.

The Borough of Sanctuary journey

- Southwark has the third highest number of refugees in London. In 2018 a group of local voluntary sector groups and residents began working towards participating in the Sanctuary movement. In 2020 Southwark Council Assembly passed a motion committing Southwark to become a 'Borough of Sanctuary'.
- In that time, we have supported 2363 Asylum Seekers, receiving asylum support for 814 Refugees under Streamlined Asylum Processing (SAP). We supported a further 69 Refugees under various Refugee Resettlement Schemes (VPRS/ARCS/ARAP).
- Our communities came through when needed with 1668 Southwark residents registered with DLUHC volunteering to host Ukrainian guests. 341 residents have welcomed 556 Guests under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
- We supported 223 Afghan nationals under Operation Pitting/Afghan Bridging Hotels, 1027 destitute migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Restrictions, and more than 20 refugees supported by Community Sponsorship Groups to resettle and integrate into life in Southwark.
- We were the first local authority to commission a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, focusing on the health and wellbeing needs of asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants in the borough. This work has been recognised as exemplary and our approach is being replicated all around the country.
- In Southwark we made a conscious decision to invest in our Libraries and expand our services, ensuring community spaces are available to all our residents. We were delighted to find that our Libraires and Heritage service is the first in London to be awarded Library of Sanctuary award.

Thank you.

- All along, our council has worked together with our voluntary sector partners and refugees to deliver the best possible services to people seeking sanctuary in Southwark.
- Our framework and action plan has been shaped with all our partners and people with lived experience. We all agree that the launch of Southwark's Borough of Sanctuary framework could not be timelier.
- In these times of national and global tension, our commitment to providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all has never been stronger.

We have a strong tradition of opposing hatred in all its forms, from Islamophobia and antisemitism to all forms of xenophobia.

- Today we have a new national Labour government. We will work with the Prime Minister and Home Secretary to reform the cruel 'hostile environment' policy created by the previous Government. Together with the voluntary sector and our community organisations, we will reaffirm our commitment to equality, unity, and justice for all.
- I extend my deepest gratitude to all our partners from the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers, the Southwark Refugee Communities Forum, Community Southwark, the Law Centre, Panjshir Aid, United St Saviours, Citizens Advice. I extend a special thanks too, Sally Causer, Madeleine Kelleher, Eltayeb Hassan, Pauline Nandoo, Haidi Sharifi, Sarah Thurman and Anood Al-Samerai. All our sisters and brothers who brought this work to life through their experience and valuable feedback.
- Thanks too to our officers across the council including Stephen Douglass, Clara Fiti, Mekdes Alemayehu, Pamela Abdel-Baset, Anna Reid, Danielle Wallace their fantastic team and everyone else who contributed to making this vision a reality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note that Southwark Council was awarded Borough of Sanctuary status on 17th June 2024 under the City of Sanctuary movement. Part of undertaking the full assessment, the Council is required to have its own Sanctuary Framework and Sanctuary action plan to demonstrate its commitment to being a Borough of Sanctuary by adhering to the terms and values of the City of Sanctuary movement.
2. That Cabinet approves the 2024-2027 Southwark Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Sanctuary action plan for the delivery of services to refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities residing in Southwark and notes the next steps set out in this report.
3. That Cabinet note the requirement of the implementation of a framework and action plan for sanctuary seekers¹ for future decision making and integration into Council's business and budget planning process.
4. That Cabinet approves the four-year grant programme for Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) organisations working with refugees, asylum seekers and disadvantaged migrants with a total budget of 100k per year. This will be paid by the Local Authority through a number of grants already received from central government.
5. That Cabinet note the progress made against the other resolutions in the motion passed by Council Assembly on 28th January 2020.

¹ A broad term used through this document to refer to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with varied immigration statuses.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The main Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) agencies supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have for many years worked in partnership to support and provide improved access to mainstream services for this target group. In 2018 the partnership, working with local residents began to explore participating in the Sanctuary movement.
7. On 28th January 2020, the Council Assembly passed a motion to declare Southwark to be a 'Borough of Sanctuary'.
8. The 2024-2027 Southwark Sanctuary Framework and action plan, governs Southwark's commitment in becoming an accredited Borough of Sanctuary and formulises its work in delivering on a Borough of Sanctuary.
9. It forms part of the Council's application for recognition as a Borough of Sanctuary by the City of Sanctuary movement.
10. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan sits alongside the priorities and outcomes of the 2022-2026 Council Delivery Plan affirming the Council aims to *'welcome migrants and refugees to our borough and work with local communities to welcome and support people fleeing persecution, conflict, and disasters'*.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

11. To continue council work without a Borough of Sanctuary Framework and action plan.
12. The number of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees has risen significantly over the last five years, and it is likely that this number may continue to increase. To take no action would be to exclude the Council's vision of welcoming migrant, asylum seeker and refugee communities, who have unique and complex needs that may otherwise not be understood or specifically tailored to without an overarching framework to address these.
13. No specific benefits can be identified in undertaking Council work for those seeking sanctuary without an overarching policy and framework.

POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

14. To ensure the Council has a clear framework and statement of commitment to those seeking sanctuary in Southwark:
 - i. The Council will be adhering to the City of Sanctuary movement aims and values.
 - ii. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan outlines what steps the Council and partners will take over the next three years, with indicative dates for completing agreed actions.

- iii. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan focuses on continued collaborative working with internal and external partners from VCS organisations, health bodies, education and employment providers, housing, social services, Communications, and events and public affairs.
- iv. To give assurances to partner agencies and the wider community of Southwark's commitment to those seeking sanctuary.
- v. To ensure Southwark meets the criteria for Borough of Sanctuary accreditation.
- vi. To promote the well-being and improve outcomes for all people residing in Southwark.
- vii. The Council will aim to strengthen its partnership working via the Borough of Sanctuary Multi-agency Forum (MAF) an overarching body established to monitor the Sanctuary Framework and action plan.
- viii. Stakeholders, statutory services and voluntary and community sector organisations will report into and measure the progress against our key priorities and actions undertaken through Southwark's Multi-Agency Forum (MAF).
- ix. The MAF meets quarterly and is chaired by Cllr Jasmine Ali the Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees and the Council's Director of Stronger Neighborhoods.
- x. All stakeholders will provide six monthly written updates on their progress on the Sanctuary Framework and action plan for review at the Multi Agency Meetings (MAF)
- xi. A newly established Experts by Experience group will also be members of the MAF and able to participate in the monitoring and review of this action plan and framework.
- xii. An annual progress report will be submitted to the Cabinet Member.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 15. In recent years, local authorities across the country have seen an increase in the number of people fleeing forced displacement and seeking to find refuge and asylum in the UK. This has been true of Southwark where high numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants have settled into the borough in recent years.
- 16. On 28th January 2020, the Council Assembly passed a motion to declare Southwark to be a 'Borough of Sanctuary' and called on Cabinet too:

- Work with community groups to harness public support to help and support refugee, migrant and asylum seekers in Southwark.
 - Continue to celebrate the contribution of refugee and migrant communities to Southwark.
 - Continue to work with organisations in the borough who support refugees and asylum seekers in the borough.
 - Challenge anti-refugee and anti-migrant attitudes wherever they are found.
 - Lobby the government to reform No Recourse to Public Funds so that people are no longer blocked from fully participating in society for years while they wait for their status to be resolved.
17. Since the motion, the council joined the Local Authority City of Sanctuary Network which supports organisations seeking to become a Borough of Sanctuary. The City of Sanctuary Network has a clear set of criteria to assist Councils with achieving sanctuary status, based on three principles, 'Share, Embed, and Learn' in order to consider eligibility for being awarded Borough of Sanctuary status.
 18. Southwark Council successfully met these criteria and was awarded Borough of Sanctuary status on 17th June 2024, but one of the recommendations and expectations from the City of Sanctuary Network is for the council to have a clear framework and action plan to deliver on its sanctuary commitments over the next three years in order to maintain Borough of Sanctuary accreditation beyond this time.

Southwark history and context

19. Southwark has a long history of welcoming asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants from around the world, with growing numbers settling into Southwark in recent years.
20. The 2021 Census showed that 40% of Southwark residents (121,000 people) were born outside the UK, Channel Islands, and Ireland. Migration of all forms has enriched the culture and diversity of Southwark bringing vitality, skills, and experiences to create a resilient borough for us all.
21. Over the last five years Southwark has seen a dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants settling in the borough. Driven by various local, regional, national, and international factors there has been increased demand for the provision of holistic support services to help address the complex needs of our sanctuary seeking population.
22. The council's engagement with people seeking sanctuary has taken many forms including the provision of Council run universal services, Council run specialist services, resourcing and working collaboratively with key voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in this sector and continual engagement with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

23. The council aims to build on these successes and set ourselves even more ambitious targets to help us realise our vision to make Southwark a place that welcomes, supports, and celebrates asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Growth in our sanctuary seeking population:

24. Historically, the Home Office's dispersal policy has meant that Southwark has had a relatively low number of asylum seekers in the borough. In March 2019 the Home Office's National Asylum Support Service (NASS) was only supporting 59 asylum seekers in Southwark. By March 2023 this figure had increased by 3905% to total 2363.
25. As a result of a rapid growth in the asylum application backlog and a lack of suitable dispersal accommodation the Home Office has been using hotels as temporary 'Contingency Hotels' to house asylum seekers who are receiving NASS support. This has meant that Southwark, which historically only had 1 Initial Accommodation Centre, Barry House, currently has an additional 4 contingency hotels.
26. Recent humanitarian crisis has also led to an increase in the number of sanctuary seekers from Afghanistan (as part of Operation Pitting and ARAP/ACRS schemes) and Ukraine (through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme).
27. The figures below paint a picture of Southwark's sanctuary seeking population:
- a) **2363** Asylum Seekers receiving asylum support.
 - b) **814** Refugees under Streamlined Asylum Processing (SAP).
 - c) **69** Refugees under various Refugee Resettlement Schemes (VPRS/ARCS/ARAP).
 - d) **556** Guests under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
 - e) **223** Afghan nationals under Operation Pitting/Afghan Bridging Hotels.
 - f) **1027** Destitute migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Restrictions.
 - g) **246** Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Care Leavers.
 - h) **1000+** refugees, asylum seekers and migrants supported by key VCS organisations in Southwark.

Sanctuary in Southwark: Our Progress

28. The council has learned through practice that it takes the collective efforts and commitment of the Council, voluntary and community organisations, local grass roots refugee and migrant communities, statutory partners, funders, and regional and national networks to achieve our vision of sanctuary.

29. The council are very proud of the work undertaken across the borough by a range of different actors, often working in collaboration, which has allowed us to lay a strong foundation as a Borough of Sanctuary.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

30. We are one of the only Councils to commission a local university to undertake a thorough piece of research on the health, inclusion and overall well-being needs of asylum seekers and refugees (AS&R) living in Southwark. The council, in partnership with the South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB), commissioned the Migrant Health Research Unit at St George's University of London to carry out a health and wellbeing needs assessment for asylum seekers, refugees and those with irregular immigration status in Southwark.
31. The AS&R health & wellbeing needs assessment outlines the demographics of local asylum seeker and refugee populations, and highlights key health and wellbeing needs for these groups including: mental health, food & nutrition, infectious disease and immunisation, safeguarding, education, employment and income, housing and access to legal advice.
32. The needs assessment also highlights good practice, and ongoing barriers for access to services for asylum seekers, refugees, and those with irregular migration status.
33. The insights and recommendation from the needs assessment have enabled us to create an evidence-based Borough of Sanctuary framework and action plan.

Children First

34. All refugee, asylum seeking and migrant heritage children and young people who live in Southwark are treated as children first and foremost. This commitment represents the council's collective effort to make Southwark an exemplar of practice in reducing the social and economic disadvantages associated with having refugee, asylum seeker or migrant/irregular migrant status.
35. The Southwark Family Early Help Service (FEH) located within the MASH Team provides support for refugee, asylum seeker and migrant families ensuring that there is effective coordination of services aimed at providing comprehensive support encompassing legal advocacy, health and educational access, mental health services and a range of opportunities to promote social integration.
36. From April 2022-March 2024, Southwark Family Early Help Service (FEH) provided family assistance to 447 children and young people, totaling 207 families impacted by immigration issues.
37. In addition, approximately 71 children (32 families) received help and support through the Homes for Ukraine and Afghanistan Resettlement Schemes.

38. As at the end of 31 March 2024 Southwark council are supporting 52 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and 194 former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (now care leavers). This represents 13% and 29% of the total of children in care and care leaver population in our borough.
39. Alongside the fulfilment of our statutory duties in relation to Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and care leavers we provide the following specialist support:
- a) Our virtual schoolwork's proactively ensure children are in education as soon as possible and maintains strong links with colleges providing ESOL courses supporting children to learn English.
 - b) Carelink is a specialist CAMHS Service for looked after children in Southwark and has a dedicated post to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
 - c) In addition, there are embedded Clinical Practitioners in Social Work teams providing support and the Nest (a multi-agency youth mental health support project) offer a drop-in therapeutic support for Care Leavers.
40. In September 2022 Southwark had an inspection of Children's Services and in the report published in November 2022 inspectors wrote:

"Care leavers who spoke to inspectors expressed their gratitude to Southwark Council, their social workers, and their personal advisers. They all talked about how well they had been supported across every aspect of their lives. Most importantly, they are guided through the legal processes of applying for leave to remain. They told inspectors that Southwark is a 'special council' and like family to them."

41. In December 2023 Southwark had a focused visit looking at Support to Care Leavers aged 18 to 25 and in the report published on 29th January 2024 inspectors wrote:

"Unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers are well supported. Their health, education and cultural needs are understood by their PAs, including the impact of trauma. The provision of effective advocacy and legal advice helps to ensure that these care leavers are able to navigate successfully through the relevant processes to progress their asylum claims."

Education and Schools

42. The FEH service and the Education team have been working collaboratively to ensure a smooth and effective admissions process for refugee, asylum seeker and migrant children. The council has a dedicated lead officer working on Education Access.

43. There are a number of different types of English classes running in Southwark from beginner level to advanced levels. These include face-to-face or online classes, which are provided in a number of different organisations in the borough including at Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers (SDCAS).
44. The council has recently increased the provision of ESOL classes for our asylum seeker and refugee residents. The council recognise the importance of understanding English in enabling our sanctuary seeking population to make friends, find future employment, find better employment opportunities, assist with children's homework, build confidence in interacting with other professionals such as doctors and teachers, and prepare for higher education.
45. In April 2024, the Council presented a Borough of Sanctuary information session to primary school Head teachers encouraging schools to join our network and become an awarded school of sanctuary. We aim to encourage all schools in Southwark to become awarded schools of sanctuary by initially signing the City of Sanctuary pledge.

Supporting Asylum Seekers:

46. Since February 2023 the Council has been working in partnership with Southwark Law Centre (SLC), Southwark Refugee Communities Forum (SRCF), Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers (SDCAS), Citizens Advice Southwark (CAS) and Panjshir Aid to coordinate and mobilise a response to the Home Office's new Streamlined Asylum Processing (SAP) approach for clearing the asylum backlog. As the SAP process has evolved the partnership has been able to mobilise a system of support to help asylum seekers receiving SAP positive decisions move on to mainstream services and receive support to integrate within the community.
47. Working together, the council and its key partners have been able to mobilise a comprehensive outreach programme to raise awareness of the introduction of the SAP amongst the qualifying six nationalities; provide legal advice to those without legal representation of their own; and run weekly advice surgeries organised by SRCF, housing officers and relevant VCS and statutory partners.
48. The council has established the Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Team in December 2023 to offer wraparound support to asylum seeker residents in contingency hotels who fall under the Streamlining Asylum Processing (SAP). The Team act as a first point of contact for Clearsprings/Hotel Managers to refer asylum seekers who are receiving a decision. Resettlement Workers carry out a needs assessment and provide practical support to aid long-term integration.
49. The council is also working with VCS organisations to develop comprehensive information guides for refugees and asylum seekers in the borough to help them navigate the complex structures around them.

Resettlement Schemes:

VPRS

50. Working in partnership with key VCS organisations Southwark council has been able to participate in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). The council has been directly supporting 4 families (22 individuals) since 2018 providing one to one support to families through a dedicated Resettlement Worker.
51. Southwark Council also works with 4 Southwark based Community Sponsorship groups welcoming and supporting refugees under the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). The committed members of Bermondsey Welcomes Refugees, Herne Hill Refugees, Peckham Sponsors Refugees and Telegraph Hill Welcomes Refugees, working with Reset UK and Citizens UK, have successfully supported over 20 refugees resettle and integrate to life in Southwark.

Afghan Bridging Hotels

52. Southwark Council, working with key partners including Panjshir Aid (a Southwark based Afghan community organisation), SRCF, SDCAS, Community Southwark, DWP, NHS and public health colleagues, was able to mobilise a swift response to provide support to 223 individuals who had been rescued from Afghanistan as part of Operation Pitting in 2021.
53. Alongside work to ensure that people's practical needs were met, residents of the bridging hotels were able to access advice, support and advocacy services from a range of providers as well as a dedicated council Resettlement Officer stationed at each of the Bridging Hotels.

ARAP/ACRS

54. The current pressures related to scarcity of social housing and the lack of affordable private sector accommodation in and around Southwark places a significant challenge to securing accommodation for families seeking to resettle under the Afghan Relocations and Resettlement Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).
55. So far Southwark Council has been able to offer 1 family with accommodation under the ARAP/ACRS Schemes and accepted 7 families (25 individuals) who are able to resettle in Southwark via the Government's MEARS and Find Your Own Pathway (FYOP) schemes. We currently provide integration support with a dedicated council Resettlement Worker providing one to one support to individuals and families to help them resettle in our borough. We have placed no cap on the total number of households that we can provide wrap around integration support to and hope to see this population grow.
56. Southwark council is also working with a local Community Sponsorship group – Herne Hill Refugees - as part of the DLUHC led 'Communities for Afghans' pilot project.

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

57. Since March 2022, Southwark residents have shown immense generosity and welcome to individuals and families that have been displaced from their homes because of the Russian war on Ukraine. 1668 Southwark residents registered with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) volunteering to host Ukrainian guests under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Of those 341 hosts have welcomed 556 Ukrainians into their homes.
58. Working with key partners and several internal departments the council has been able to mobilise a response to swiftly meet the requirements placed on Local Authorities and to provide ongoing resettlement support with allocated Resettlement Workers to guests and hosts. The scope of the Scheme has led to the establishment of a dedicated Homes for Ukraine team within the Council who continue to support new arrivals under the Scheme as well as provide packages of support to enable guests to find sustainable accommodation and rebuild their lives in the UK.

Destitution and No Recourse to Public Funds

59. In 2015, the Council established a single service for people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). It falls on local authorities to assess the social care needs of single adults under the Care Act 2014 and/or the social care needs of children under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The Council also supports people with NRPF under the Mental Health Act 1983 who have been sectioned.
60. This specialist service works with vulnerable individuals and families to ensure that they receive appropriate support to meet their needs while also supporting them to find pathways to independence including through the provision of access to free legal advice and representation to resolve their immigration status.

Health

61. Southwark Council's Public health team and NHS partners have put in place a number of initiatives to support the health and inclusion needs of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the borough. These include:
 - i) The Southwark holiday food and fun programme, which focuses on healthy eating incentives, supports families living in the Asylum Contingency Hotels in the borough.
 - j) Southwark public health team and community health ambassadors carried out an audit aimed to assess adherence of Southwark's primary care surgeries to Doctors of the World's "Safe Surgeries" policies. Follow up work is underway to support GP surgeries to work on the identified recommendations.
 - k) Vaccine catch-up clinics are run in IAC/Contingency Hotels supported by the Health Inclusion Team, ICB and public health. Public health has funded translated cancer awareness talks delivered by Cancer

research UK at Southwark Refugee Communities Forum in Arabic and Tigrinya.

l) A health promotion van regularly attends key celebration events to reach the Southwark refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities.

m) A dedicated Health Inclusion Team (HIT) works with residents of the various Asylum Contingency Hotels and Barry House to ensure that their health needs are effectively identified and met.

Libraries of Sanctuary

62. In May 2024, Southwark libraries applied to become the first Libraries of Sanctuary in London and were successfully awarded this status. Southwark libraries have a proud history of welcoming asylum seeker, refugee, and migrant communities. Library services have historically undertaken outreach work to promote their services in Barry House, one of the Home Office's Initial Accommodation Centres (IAC) as well as engaging residents at local VCS organisations.
63. Library services previously visited a Somali refugee day centre on a monthly basis and won a Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals award called 'Welcome to your library'.
64. Weekly Baby and Toddler sessions are provided at Dulwich Library, offering, a games club and a homework help club for school age children.
65. Southwark Libraries have bought books in Spanish, Arabic, Pashtu, Farsi, Albanian and hold children's picture books in dual languages.
66. Libraries offer free membership to asylum seeker and refugee residents, and they are able to access free services, including books for adults and children, free computer use, free Wi-Fi, IT taster sessions, digital drop-in sessions, Go Citizen Support (practice for British citizenship test) are accessible, including events and activities for adults, children, and warm hubs.
67. Libraries run an annual 'Festival of Words' which is now in its sixth year. The seven-to-ten-day long programme of events has run concurrently with Refugee week for the last two years. Authors, filmmakers, and activists with lived in experience of displacement and migration attend and co-host these events.
68. A diverse range of data was used to inform the development of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan. This includes Home Office data, along with that used across service areas including public health and VCS organisations. Southwark's Sanctuary Framework and action was jointly shaped by the council, key voluntary and community sector partners and the voices of people seeking sanctuary.
69. The Sanctuary Framework sets out our ambition and commitment to build on and strengthen our work in the years ahead; welcoming all who arrive or settle in Southwark. Working collectively as a community of sanctuary we will empower refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to reach their full potential

and contribute to Southwark's community, culture and economy while thriving, and living safely and securely.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

70. It is believed the implementation of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will ensure that key internal and external partners including the wider council has a clear framework defining its commitment to maintaining Borough of Sanctuary status.
71. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan will underpin and provide a reference point for decision making relating to the council and its business to ensure positive outcomes for those seeking sanctuary in Southwark.
72. Implementation of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will be a key milestone in enabling the council to uphold Borough of Sanctuary status for the first time.
73. The council will be expected to re-apply for continued Borough of Sanctuary status to the City of Sanctuary Network in 2027 and will need to evidence its commitment through implementing a framework and action plan designed and tailored for sanctuary seekers.
74. Given the scale of the work already undertaken in supporting those seeking sanctuary in Southwark, and the prospect of this becoming a growing area of the council's business it would be advisable to ensure the council has a clear framework to underpin and direct its work.
75. The Southwark Sanctuary Framework and action plan 2024-2027 sets out a vision to making Southwark a place that welcomes, supports, and celebrates asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants.
76. Southwark is committed to creating a culture of empathy, understanding and inclusion across the borough by taking action to promote the rights and welfare of all people seeking sanctuary and protection by bringing communities together to address the issues that matter to them.
77. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan is supported by four high level objectives that will guide our work. These include:
 - **Stand Together:** We want Southwark to be a place of safety, support, and opportunity for those seeking sanctuary - embedding a collective message of welcome and kindness, and challenge to the wider hostile environment.
 - **Voice:** We want to celebrate the culture, diversity, and contributions of those seeking sanctuary and amplify their voices and experiences to shape positive change.
 - **Shaping Services:** We want to better understand the experiences and needs of those seeking sanctuary and ensure that services and local agencies are responding to these issues and enabling opportunities.

- **Bespoke Support:** We want to foster collaboration between different local agencies so they can respond effectively, cooperatively, and flexibly to the ongoing and changing needs of sanctuary-seekers.
78. We acknowledge that the Sanctuary Framework and action plan is just the beginning. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan sets out the strategic objectives for Southwark in supporting sanctuary seekers and we will continue to work with Cabinet, our anchor partners, and residents to ensure we deliver its ambitious vision.
79. There are no identified risks associated with implementing the Framework and action plan as it helps to cement the council's resolution to being a Borough of Sanctuary and provides a clear framework to uphold future Borough of Sanctuary status, which is the council's ambition and intention.

Policy framework implications

80. The values of the City of Sanctuary criteria fit well with the council's long-standing services to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The City of Sanctuary Charter: [City of Sanctuary Charter - City of Sanctuary UK](#) is well aligned with the council's ambitions of welcoming and supporting migrant and refugee communities as set out in the Council's Delivery plan.
81. Working through the application criteria provided invaluable insights on developing a Borough of Sanctuary Framework and action plan for reviewing how services deliver for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, identifying any opportunities for improvement, and gaps or barriers to services.
82. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan, affirms the Council's on-going commitment to build a protective system that treats all sanctuary seekers with dignity, compassion, and respect. While also assisting sanctuary seekers to thrive and positively integrate into Southwark's communities, ensuring that its policies and services support this commitment.
83. The council's Risk Management Strategy has established a proactive approach to the management of risks to support its strategies, day to day operations and associated activities.
84. Strategic risks are regularly monitored within the MAF working group and/or reported to the Director of Stronger Neighborhoods and the Community Support Manager who oversee sanctuary related work in the council. The proposals within this report will not impact risks or the monitoring of them and may act as controls and mitigations to better manage potential risks.
85. In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles. Southwark's 2021-2024 Corporate Parenting Strategy reflects the council's commitment to ensuring the most vulnerable children and young people are protected and their needs are considered in everything the council does. This includes Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) who are looked after by the council.
86. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan is committed to building a fairer future for all our children and young adults. The Sanctuary Framework and

action plan fully supports the council's Corporate Parenting Strategy in its vision that all children and young people in Southwark grow up in a safe, healthy, and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

87. Performance related to the delivery of services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are to be monitored within directorates according to specific internal controls. Other measures include regular reporting through the MAF, where quarterly updates will be provided with respect to the progress made under the Borough of Sanctuary Framework and action plan.
88. No specific new resources are proposed for the implementation of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan. It is anticipated that this process may identify the need for changed ways of working and any new resource requirement would need to be considered through the internal budget and business planning process alongside other priorities.
89. The proposal set out in this report has no direct impact on the council's sustainability strategy.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

90. The impact of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will benefit those who are at significant risk of discrimination and structural inequalities on the grounds of race, ethnicity, culture, and religion whilst recognising that those seeking sanctuary may also have other protected characteristics.
91. The aim is to ensure the council undertakes its business with due regard to the needs of vulnerable groups and does not discriminate or create disadvantage. In terms of the council's Equality Framework 2021, the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will ensure that services provided to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are accessible and achieve outcomes consistent with the council's statutory responsibilities.
92. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan will enable the council to foster good community relations, promote social cohesion and improve the council's understanding of the needs of different communities in the borough, in order to provide services to help tackle discrimination, hate crime, inequality and to promote community safety, social cohesion and to help close the gap in outcomes for Southwark's citizens.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

93. At its core, the essence of sanctuary values is to act in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, especially in the case of marginalisation experienced by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants by promoting and safeguarding the welfare of all our residents.

94. The Council is committed to following the City of Sanctuary values, setting out the importance of inclusivity, openness, participation, inspiring, and integrity: [About - City of Sanctuary UK](#). These values sit alongside Southwark Council's values:
- Treating residents as if they were a valued member of our own family.
 - Being open, honest and accountable
 - Spending money as if it were from our own pocket.
 - Working with everyone to realise their own potential.
 - Making Southwark a place to be proud of
 - Always work to make Southwark more equal and just.
95. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan is an integral piece of work with respect to the council's vision of tackling inequalities and its commitment to welcoming those from a diverse range of backgrounds. Equalities and diversity considerations are key to the work the council prioritises to supporting sanctuary seekers.
96. The council acknowledges the unique challenges faced by sanctuary seekers and the approach taken in the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will ensure sensitivity to the protected characteristics of those seeking sanctuary in Southwark, including age, disability, race, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender and sexual orientation, parental status, and languages.
97. Decision-makers are reminded of the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act. (ii) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (iii) foster good relations between persons from different groups.
98. Reducing inequalities is a core principle of Southwark 2023, that supports our Equalities Framework. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan builds on this progress, and it will not negatively impact those with protected characteristics. It is expected that the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will go further to support reductions in inequality.
99. Considering the above, at this stage the recommendations are not considered to have a disproportionate effect on any protected characteristic and is not considered to have a detrimental impact on equality of opportunity under the Equality Act 2010.

Health impact statement

100. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan has been developed with a focus on supporting the improved health and well-being of Southwark's asylum seeker, refugee, and migrant residents, who often face structural and health inequalities.

101. The council has demonstrated a commitment on meeting the health, inclusion and overall well-being needs of sanctuary seekers living in Southwark by commissioning a local university to undertake a thorough piece of research. The aim was for Southwark Public Health, together with key partners and stakeholders across the council, the NHS, and voluntary sector organisations to identify the needs of sanctuary seekers and the barriers they face to accessing services.
102. The full JSNA contains nearly 50 recommendations on how to meet the health and well-being needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Southwark. The recommendations within the JSNA supported the council's aspirations of achieving Borough of Sanctuary status and provided a strong evidence-base for the Sanctuary Framework and action plan.
103. Part of the work for the JSNA researchers held two community focus groups and two interviews. The two community focus groups were held with:
 - a) With local communities, including Eritrean, Latin American, Iranian and women's groups and
 - b) Asylum seekers residing at Barry House and the 4 asylum contingency hotels.
104. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan shows no potential for discrimination and takes all appropriate opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with different protected characteristics.

Climate change implications

105. No impact. It is not anticipated that this report contributes nor presents any risk covered in the council's Climate Change Strategy. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan hopes to create more opportunities for accessible local provisions as all asylum hotels are based in Southwark. This will reduce travel emissions.
106. In a larger context, the impact of global climate change maybe associated to new displacements related to environmental disasters. This can result in Southwark experiencing increased numbers of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, seeking refuge in the years ahead related to global climatic and environmental factors experienced in other parts of the world.

Resource implications

107. There are no immediate cost implications arising from this report. Financing of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will be contained within agreed budgets.
108. Any future resourcing decisions as part of the Sanctuary Framework and action plan will be assessed and reviewed as part of the council's normal budget process.

109. There is an annual fee of £700 for Local Authorities to be accredited as a Borough of Sanctuary and this will be resourced through existing funding streams.

Consultation

110. Southwark's 2024-2027 Sanctuary Framework and action plan is our shared vision for the borough, designed and developed in partnership with sanctuary seekers from a wide range of backgrounds and ages in Southwark, colleagues from City of Sanctuary UK as well as internal senior council officer's representative from different service areas who work and support sanctuary seekers including our key external partners from voluntary and community sector organisations.
111. The Sanctuary Framework and action plan has been developed through extensive and wide-ranging engagement and research to understand Southwark's sanctuary seeker community today considering evolving trends and needs.
112. Our approach has helped us to reflect the diversity of Southwark including the voice of our people and communities, centering this work on their needs and hopes throughout the Sanctuary Framework and action plan cycle over the next three years.

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance (CM 28.08.2024)

113. The City of Sanctuary UK is a registered charity which has a mission to provide coordination and development support for networks of local authorities regarding refugee, migrant and asylum seekers.
114. Southwark Council was awarded the status of Borough of Sanctuary on 17 June 2024 after going through the award appraisal process and gaining recognition with the City of Sanctuary Charity.
115. The status carries no legal obligations but demonstrates the Council's commitment to the values of City of Sanctuary UK.
116. The recommendations from the City of Sanctuary have been discussed and taken forward during the three-year award period. The Council will have to re-apply to renew the award at the end of the three-year period.
117. The implementation and adherence to Southwark Sanctuary Framework will be assessed as part of the renewal process.
118. The cabinet will need to ensure that the public sector equality duty in section 149 Equality Act 2010 is considered, which is to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and others.
119. The "Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts" section of this report sets out how the recommendations demonstrates compliance are inherently in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Strategic Director of Resources (DBR 28.8.2024)

120. This report is requesting the cabinet to note the award of Borough of Sanctuary status to Southwark Council on 17th June 2024 under the City of Sanctuary movement; approve the 2024-2027 Southwark Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Sanctuary action plan for the delivery of services to refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities residing in Southwark and note the next steps set out in this report.
121. The SDF notes the financial implications detailed in this report and that there are no immediate additional costs arising. The SDF also notes the recommendation to the cabinet to note the requirements of the implementation of a framework and action plan for sanctuary seekers for future decision making and integration into Council's business and budget planning process.
122. The SDF notes that the Sanctuary Framework and action plan sit alongside the priorities and outcomes of the 2022-2026 Council Delivery Plan, any associated costs and Grant funding received will be monitored as part of departmental budget monitoring process.
123. Officers' time and any other costs associated with this recommendation will be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

| Background Papers | Held At | Contact |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Equalities Act 2010 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH |
| Climate Change Strategy Climate Change Strategy (July 2021) (1).pdf | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH |
| Risk Management Strategy Risk Management Strategy 2018 final.pdf | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH |
| The Southwark Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf | Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH |
| Southwark Asylum Seeker and Refugee full version of Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) full version https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/230579/The-Southwark-Asylum-Seeker-and-Refugee-JSNA-June-2023.pdf | Public Health Children & Adults services 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH | 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH |
| City of Sanctuary UK About - City of Sanctuary UK | City Of Sanctuary UK PO Box 384. Leeds LS26 1GJ | councils@cityofsanctuary.org |
| City of Sanctuary Charter City of Sanctuary Charter - City of Sanctuary UK | City Of Sanctuary UK PO Box 384. Leeds LS26 1GJ | councils@cityofsanctuary.org |

APPENDICES

| No. | Title |
|------------|---|
| Appendix 1 | Southwark 2023-2027 Sanctuary Framework and action plan |

AUDIT TRAIL

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| Cabinet Member | Cllr Jasmine Ali, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees | |
| Lead Officer | Stephen Douglas, Director of Stronger Neighborhoods, Communities Division | |
| Report Author | Mekdes Alemayehu Community Support Manager Pamela Abdel-Baset, Team Leader | |
| Version | Final | |
| Dated | August 2024 | |
| Key Decision? | Yes | |
| CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER | | |
| Officer Title | Comments Sought | Comments Included |
| Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance | Yes | Yes |
| Strategic Director of Resources | Yes | Yes |
| Director of Stronger Neighborhoods | Yes | Yes |
| Cabinet Member | Yes | Yes |
| Date final report sent to Constitutional Team | | 6 September 2024 |