



Lambeth
**SANCTUARY
SERVICES**

Borough of Sanctuary Strategy

2022 - 2025




Lambeth

FOREWORD FROM CABINET MEMBERS



Lambeth has long been a borough that welcomes people from all over the world. We see diversity as a strength, and we champion the benefits of plurality. We recognise that people have many chapters to their lives and during some of those chapters our residents require some additional support, and in other chapters we come together as a community to offer that support.

We are proud that as a community and as an organisation, we have committed to supporting sanctuary-seekers who are fleeing violence and persecution. It says a lot about Lambeth and what we stand for.

We are dedicated to listening to all of our residents, in order to provide services that meet their needs. We are adapting our processes internally to ensure this, and we are collaborating with our fantastic voluntary sector partners in order to combine our individual strengths.

We have worked for 12 months to build Lambeth Sanctuary Services, a resilient and proactive service that endeavours to raise the voices of people with lived-experience and provide equitable access to support for all sanctuary-seekers.

In December 2022, Lambeth Sanctuary Services will join with residents with lived-experience, voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners, representatives from healthcare and education and our Sanctuary Champion to convene the first meeting of the Lambeth Sanctuary Forum. The forum will be responsible for delivering this three-year strategy driving improvement where possible and ensuring our sanctuary-seeking residents have the opportunity to thrive in Lambeth.

We wholeheartedly endorse this strategy, and we are committed to its successful delivery; not just during our tenure as Cabinet Members for Healthier Communities (covering Sanctuary issues) but setting a standard that the council will honour and build-on as we continue our journey as a Borough of Sanctuary.

INTRODUCTION

This strategy is Lambeth Sanctuary Forum's commitment to ensuring sanctuary-seekers are welcomed and supported to make Lambeth their home. It sets out how we will work openly with sanctuary-seekers and collaboratively as partners to ensure our borough is a beacon of sanctuary. The VCS in Lambeth has a longstanding history of meaningful and unwavering support of sanctuary-seekers. We acknowledge the agility of our voluntary sector partners and their ability to operate in spaces and ways that can be challenging for larger institutions.

This document sets out the following:

- Introduction
- What is Sanctuary?
- Where are we now?
- What do we want to achieve?
- Who will do this?
- How will we do this?

WHAT IS SANCTUARY?

In the context of migration, sanctuary means when someone arrives in a safe place after fleeing their home due to violence or persecution or may continue to seek sanctuary due to continuing insecure status in their new home. This person or family might be, but is not limited to:

- an asylum-seeker
- a resettled refugee
- someone who has been sponsored, like people arriving from Ukraine
- Lambeth residents who have lived, worked or contributed for years but experience insecurity, discrimination and hardship because of insecure or irregular immigration status including those facing ongoing hardship as a result of Windrush
- children and young people in the care of Lambeth Council who have insecure immigration status
- women who have fled violence and abuse in their home country or are at high risk of violence because their immigration status is insecure or subject to no recourse to public funds restrictions

Lambeth's vision is to improve equity of access to support for all sanctuary-seekers and raise the voices of people with lived-experience.

This vision has led us to apply to become a Borough of Sanctuary. The organisation who awards the Borough of Sanctuary title is City of Sanctuary and is committed to the following values, which Lambeth shares:

- **Inclusive:** We welcome and respect people from all backgrounds, place the highest value on diversity and are committed to equality.
- **Openness:** We are committed to a culture of working collaboratively across the City of Sanctuary networks and in partnership with others.
- **Participation:** We work with people seeking sanctuary and value and recognise the contribution of all. We aspire to ensure people seeking sanctuary are involved in all decision making at all levels and are supported to become leaders in the organisation, networks, and the wider movement.

- **Inspire:** We work with enthusiasm and positivity and are determined to surpass what has already been achieved to welcome refugees and people seeking sanctuary. We act as a catalyst for change by being open to new and innovative ideas and through sharing knowledge gained with others and working in partnership.
- **Integrity:** We aspire to high standards of honesty and behaviour, and always to act in the interests of people seeking sanctuary.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Lambeth has a proud history of celebrating diversity and acting as a beacon of sanctuary which has been achieved through the work of local government and VCS both individually and together. From our work with the Windrush Advisory Group to resettling Afghan evacuees, Lambeth is committed to supporting those who wish to call the borough home.

Since 2016 Lambeth Council has:

- Resettled thirty-one families through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme, surpassing the original pledge of twenty-eight.
- Resettled eight families as part of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Programme and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.
- Pledged to resettle thirty-eight families through the UK Resettlement Scheme which welcomes vulnerable families from all over the world.
- Supported four voluntary sector groups to welcome five families consisting of twenty-two individuals.
- Welcomed four hundred people fleeing Ukraine and now living with hosts.
- Coordinated additional support for asylum seekers living in hotels provided by the Home Office.

In the last 12 months:

- The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Team have accommodated more than ten families and three adults who were granted Leave to Remain with no recourse to public funds and at risk of destitution. An additional twelve families and two adults are expected to receive similar support by the end of 2022.



Since August 2021, Lambeth Council has increased its focus on sanctuary. This focus came with a commitment to increase support and build proactive service to respond to the evolving needs of displaced people. In October 2022, Lambeth Sanctuary Services was launched with an expanded focus to extend support to sanctuary-seekers with insecure immigration status and NRPF. Officers work closely with the Joint Cabinet Members, the Leader of the Council as well as local MPs to continue to raise issues regarding national policy and the ongoing impact of the hostile environment.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

We are bold in our ambitions in developing our borough further in order to serve our sanctuary-seeking residents. This will require involvement and contributions from all stakeholders in order to achieve our vision including:

- **Sanctuary-seekers** – we want our sanctuary-seekers to feel like their immigration status does not limit their access to support and that they feel both heard and a valued part of our communities.
- **Community** – we want residents to feel informed about the realities of forced migration and sanctuary-seekers and understand how they can support if they wish to.
- **Voluntary and community sector** – we want groups to contribute their decades of experience and expertise to our collaborative vision and draw on the individual strengths of each partner to create a service that's sum is greater than its parts.
- **Lambeth Council** – we want officers and members to have a clear understanding of what we want to achieve and feel motivated to become sanctuary change-makers in their teams.

WHO WILL DO THIS?



To improve equity of access to support for all sanctuary-seekers and raise the voices of people with lived-experience, we have created the Lambeth Sanctuary Forum. This is a multi-agency group co-chaired by the voluntary sector and Lambeth Council to deliver the priorities sanctuary-seekers raise.

The co-chairs work alongside a board comprised of sanctuary-seekers from various forced-migration streams, a Sanctuary Champion, and representatives from statutory services. Membership is open to voluntary sector groups who support sanctuary-seekers.

HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

We commit to achieving and maintaining these ambitious and innovative goals and will establish agreed timescales and delivery model as part of the Lambeth Sanctuary Forum. We have spent the last six months engaging with sanctuary-seekers, the voluntary sector, internal Lambeth departments, councillors, and people with lived-experience to understand the biggest challenges for sanctuary-seekers. We also asked participants to measure their understanding of sanctuary and we will measure again in one year to monitor progress.

Through this period of consultation, we have learned that the most difficult issues sanctuary-seekers face are:

- Access to English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes
- Access to services for all sanctuary-seekers including legal/immigration advice
- Access to health and wellbeing support
- Improved access to education and communication between schools and sanctuary-seekers
- Access to training and development opportunities - voluntary work that is not detrimental to immigration status/applications and access to bank accounts to improve independent living
- Opportunities and support for young people and vulnerable sanctuary-seekers

While we acknowledge that some elements are beyond the control of local government and the VCS, Lambeth is fully committed to improving support and therefore wellbeing of our sanctuary-seeking residents. We envisage that the Lambeth Sanctuary Forum will be a helpful platform for coordinating advocacy on shaping national policy where the issues are external factors.

We will undertake a mapping exercise of current ESOL provision, particularly classes which provide childcare, and identify any gaps in services. We will drawdown funding from regional authorities that support parents to access ESOL. We will review any additional commissioning required and the map of ESOL will be published online and maintained by officers.

In November 2022, we will launch a pilot to commission a caseworker providing legal and immigration advice. Should this prove successful, we will seek to expand the provision.

We will continue to develop the relationship with Home Office accommodation providers, striking the balance of accountability and constructive collaboration. We will continue to lobby for improvements within the hotels, particularly nutrition for clinically vulnerable people.

In order to tackle these priorities, and an extensive programme of work, a genuinely collaborative approach is required from all stakeholders. We will continue to listen to sanctuary-seekers as the migration landscape evolves, particularly in response to upcoming changes in Asylum and Resettlement policy. We will require the skill and reach of the voluntary sector to continue to pivot to these demands. We will require the support of our residents and communities to welcome all sanctuary-seekers and join us in our vision of equity. As Lambeth renews its Borough Plan with a vision for Lambeth 2030, we are asking residents to share their thoughts and experiences of what makes Lambeth home. The Lambeth Sanctuary Strategy will be an enabler of the new Borough Plan ambitions, captured explicitly within the theme of Equity with a reference across each of the new priorities.