

Summary of Year 2 Action Plan Refresh

This report presents the refreshed Year 2 priorities for Oxford City Council's Local Authority of Sanctuary Action Plan (2025–2028), building on progress made during Year 1 and responding to emerging needs across the city.

Between January and May 2026, the Council of Sanctuary undertook a structured review process, gathering feedback from internal services, external partners, voluntary and community organisations, and people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary. This reflects the Council's commitment to co-production and ensuring that its approach is informed by both internal operational experience and city-wide lived realities.

The review identified strong progress to date, particularly in partnership working, community engagement especially co-production activities, and increasing awareness of sanctuary principles across services. However, it also highlighted a need to strengthen delivery in several key areas. As a result, the Action Plan has been updated to place greater emphasis on:

- Improved coordination and system-wide working
- More equitable access to provision across all parts of the city
- Stronger progression routes, particularly in employment, housing and skills
- Increased involvement and leadership of people with lived experience
- Greater sustainability, moving from pilot activity to longer-term delivery models
- Enhanced communications and community cohesion, including positive narrative and myth-busting work

The refreshed plan also streamlines completed actions and introduces targeted new actions, including a coordinated Sanctuary Pathway and a strengthened approach to community cohesion. Overall, Year 2 represents a shift from initial framework development to a stronger focus on delivery, impact, and system change, ensuring that Oxford continues to be a welcoming, inclusive city for people seeking sanctuary.

Oxford City Council, Local Authority of Sanctuary

Action Plan Priorities

1. Wellbeing, Education & Employment

2. Housing and Homelessness

3. Building Communities and Amplifying Voices

4. Shaping Services

5. Supporting Integration
6. Working in Partnership & Innovating

1. Wellbeing, Education and Employment

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Notes
1.1. Educate, engage and partner with Council teams, local businesses, and anchor institutions to expand employment opportunities for people seeking sanctuary, including promoting placements and apprenticeships, addressing misconceptions about migrant entitlements, and developing sustainable pathways into sector-based roles and long-term employment.	Regeneration and Economy	Year 2	On-going action
1.2. Evaluate the Refugee Employment Support Programme (RESP), its findings and respond to the recommendations. Explore opportunities for further work around employment, business support and social enterprise.	Housing Services	Year 2	On-going action
1.3. Work with the anti-slavery coordinator and local modern slavery network to promote understanding around rights and safeguarding risks faced by people seeking sanctuary locally.	Community Safety	Year 2	

2. Housing and Homelessness

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Notes
2.1. Expand education and support for local people seeking sanctuary to help them navigate the housing system, especially for those experiencing homelessness, those at risk of homelessness, and	Housing Services	Year 2	On-going action

	those with limited experience of independent living (including UASC) in line with the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.			
2.2.	Provide training as appropriate for housing colleagues on how to support people seeking sanctuary, e.g. residents with varying immigration status including victims of domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds.	Housing Services	Year 2	
2.3.	Develop further training on working with refugees (cross cultural communications and trauma informed practice) and offer it to colleagues.	Housing services	Year 2	
2.4.	Increase engagement and support for landlords who wish to house people seeking sanctuary, including information and communication on the Council's private rented housing access schemes.	Housing Services	Year 2	
2.5.	Provide appropriate support to sustain tenancies as part of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention and in line with the Housing, Homelessness, and Rough Sleeping Strategy.	Housing Services	Year 2	On-going action
2.6.	Continue to monitor the number of people seeking sanctuary who are sleeping rough and use intelligence to target support.	Housing Services	Year 2	Updated*

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3. Building Communities and Amplifying Voices

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Notes
3.1 Empower and support local institutions to become registered places of sanctuary including libraries, surgeries arts, community, colleges, and faith organisations.	Housing Services	Year 3	On-going action
3.2 Act as a lead Local Authority on joined-up campaigning for migrant rights, share learning and expertise through sanctuary networks at a local, regional, and national level including the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network.	Housing Services	Year 3	

<p>3.3 Work in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to convene a joint Council of Sanctuary stakeholder group, bringing together shared external partners to improve coordination, reduce duplication, and strengthen a collective approach to delivery, while continuing to promote co-production and the Thriving Communities vision of “doing with, not to.” Internal stakeholder group will continue to meet.</p>	<p>Housing Services</p>	<p>Year 2</p>	<p>New*</p>
<p>3.4 Support refugee partners and community groups to access opportunities in arts, culture, and community activity via the use of our facilities, grants, and external funding. Collaborate with the local VCS to build capacity and participation of local lived experience groups via funding advice and support. Develop effective pathways into volunteering and participation via social and cultural activities.</p>	<p>Community Services</p>	<p>Year 2</p>	
<p>3.5 Build capacity of local sanctuary seeking community via <u>Sanctuary Ambassadors</u> programme and access to the <u>Sanctuary in Politics</u> course.</p>	<p>Housing Services</p>	<p>Year 3</p>	
<p>3.6 Support refugee community groups to access spaces and places where they can come together to enjoy common interests and create new friendships.</p>	<p>Community Services</p>	<p>Year 2</p>	

4. Shaping Services

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Notes
4.1 Review incorporation of sanctuary principles into services when strategies, policies or services are changed.	Corporate Strategy	Year 2	On-going action
4.2 Develop online resources to be more accessible for people seeking sanctuary including the Council's web page and information regarding accessing housing and other support.	Housing, Communities and Customer Services	Year 2	On-going action
4.3 Create opportunities and spaces for people seeking sanctuary to have their voices heard and their stories shared, ensuring their experiences inform service design and delivery, while also supporting community cohesion through positive storytelling, myth-busting, and greater understanding across communities. Ensure people seeking sanctuary can feed into Council activity through existing mechanisms and co-production approaches.	Housing Services	Year 2	Updated*
4.4. Increase the visibility and understanding of the Council of Sanctuary approach across Oxford, communications campaigns, and partnership promotion to ensure residents, organisations, and businesses understand and engage with the initiative.	Housing Services	Year 2	New*
4.5. Strengthen the collection and use of data on people seeking sanctuary across council services, including housing, homelessness, employment, and community engagement, to better understand needs, track outcomes, and inform service design and policy decisions.	Housing Services	Year 2	New*

5. Supporting Integration

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Notes
5.1. Grow and publicise wider migrant-specific information, advice and guidance for all residents such as a Sanctuary Door initiative (Single Point of Contact), embedding opportunities for people with lived experiences to lead on service support.	Housing Services	Year 2	On-going action
5.2. Facilitate a co-production process with sanctuary-seeking groups to gather insights on their unique experiences and needs related to domestic abuse and ensure learning informs council working practice which will improve response to other women	Regulatory Services and Community Safety	Year 3	New*
5.3. Via sanctuary ambassadors programme and the external stakeholders group review availability of legal advice services for people seeking sanctuary. Alongside community partners, explore opportunities to support expansion of provision as well as pathways to access, & to provide residents with information about their rights.	Housing Services	Year 2	
5.4. Work alongside the Oxford Food Hub and other local charities to raise awareness of free or low-cost food options for people seeking sanctuary, in relation to accessing food, and engaging in the wider local food system and increasing communication to ensure people seeking sanctuary are aware.	Housing services supported by Communities	Year 2	On-going action
5.5. Produce a joint calendar of events which promote integration and support sanctuary events such as during Refugee week	Housing services	Year 2	On-going action

6. Working in Partnership and Innovating

What are we going to do?	Organisation/ Group	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Notes
6.1. Support local research bodies to (a) create and develop body of evidence demonstrating the positive impact of people seeking sanctuary locally and (b) analyse the benefits and opportunities	Council of Sanctuary (CoS) external	Year 3	

	they bring.	stakeholders' group		
6.2.	Support Oxfordshire County Council and other key partners to increase English language provision (ESOL) accessibility and employment opportunities to those with different immigration status, ages, childcare provision needs or access needs in a wide range of both statutory and community settings across the City.	Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)	Year 2	Updated*
6.3.	Support the Getting Oxfordshire Online Digital Inclusion network, to bring together partners to identify digital barriers for refugees and asylum seekers in the City / county and promote greater digital inclusion for this group.	OCC supported by the CoS external stakeholders' group.	Year 3	Action year updated*
6.4.	Collaborate with local partners and individuals seeking sanctuary to develop culturally appropriate and accessible health initiatives, with a strong focus on expanding access to mental health support. Engage with relevant charities & public services to explore and enhance support networks/resources.	Council of Sanctuary external stakeholders' group	Year 3	
6.5.	Review existing support available to people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) via the establishment of an NRPF working group with Oxfordshire County Council and local VCS.	CoS external stakeholders' group	Year 2	Action year updated*
6.6.	Alongside partners, work to ensure asylum seekers have access to low affordable public transport & travel around Oxford	Oxfordshire County Council	Year 2	
6.6	Support the development of a coordinated "Sanctuary Pathway" offer across Oxford, which maps out the relevant support required i.e. housing, employment, ESOL, health, and community support into a clear, accessible and equitable pathway for people seeking sanctuary	CoS external stakeholders' group	Year 2	New*
6.7	Develop a coordinated approach to responding to community tensions related to migration and sanctuary, including cross-council collaboration, communication planning, and engagement with local communities to promote safety, cohesion, and trust.	CoS external stakeholders' group	Year 2	New*

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