

Taking Action

This report provides an overview of progress against the Year 1 (April 2025 – March 2026) actions set out in the Council of Sanctuary Action Plan 2025- 2028, as approved by Cabinet in January 2025. The programme was originally designed as a phased three-year plan, with actions allocated across Years 1 to 3. The Action Plan is structured around six priority areas, reflecting the key themes identified through engagement, research, and partnership working. These priorities (see below) provide a clear framework to guide delivery and ensure a coordinated approach to supporting people seeking sanctuary across the city.

Since adoption, a number of actions have been brought forward into Year 1 (2025-26) in response to emerging business needs and local priorities. In such cases, actions may be recorded as year 2 or 3 within the overall programme; however, progress relevant to Year 1 delivery has been assessed using the standard RAG rating to ensure transparency.

A small number of Year 1 actions have not yet commenced due to competing operational priorities, but these have been reviewed and are being actively prioritised for delivery in Year 2. More detailed operational commentary and live progress tracking for all actions is maintained within the programme's dedicated Smartsheet.

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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	Progress Green - on track Amber - minor issues and/or delays Red - significant issues and/or delays Blue - completed Blank – Scheduled/Not Yet Started
1.1. Educate and empower Council teams and local businesses about opportunities to employ people seeking sanctuary and how to offer placements and apprenticeships, including through myth-busting on migrant entitlements with businesses as well as job brokers.	Regeneration and Economy	Year 1	A number of employment projects on-going, see cabinet report for further details.
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 1	RESP evaluation to be produced in Year 2, minor delays due to developing evaluation project work.
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	
1.4. Work with key partners to develop and extend the existing schools advocacy project, subject to project viability.	Housing Services	Year 1	Schools Advocacy Project extended into 26/27
1.5. Improve access to wellbeing and leisure facilities for local people seeking sanctuary to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.	Community Services	Year 2 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	A number of wellbeing and community projects implemented, see cabinet report for further details.
1.6. Work with partners including Refugee Resource to improve therapeutic outcomes for people seeking sanctuary.	Housing Services	Year 2 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	A number of health related projects supported, see cabinet report for further details.

2. Housing and Homelessness

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Progress Green - on track Amber - minor issues and/or delays Red - significant issues and/or delays Blue - completed Blank – Scheduled/Not Yet Started
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 those with limited experience of independent living (including UASC) in line with the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.	Housing Services	Year 2 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	A number of housing projects on-going, see cabinet report for further details
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 1	A number of housing projects on-going, see cabinet report for further details
2.6. Improve monitoring of the number of people seeking sanctuary who are sleeping rough and use intelligence to target support.	Housing Services	Year 1	Improved monitoring now in place working in partnership with the rough sleeping team.

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	Progress Green - on track Amber - minor issues and/or delays Red - significant issues and/or delays Blue - completed Blank – Scheduled/Not Yet Started
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 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	The Council is supporting a number of partners including Local Authorities and a local University to being registered places of sanctuary
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	
3.3. Continue to convene the Oxford City Council of sanctuary internal and external stakeholders' meetings to meet regularly to facilitate the Thriving Communities vision of "Doing with, not to" and advocate for an ethos and practice of 'Co-production'	Housing Services	Year 1	Stakeholder meeting groups successfully launched and convened.
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.	Community Services	Year 2 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	See progress update in cabinet report – action on-going
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.	Housing Services	Year 3	
3.6. Support refugee community groups to access spaces and	Community	Year 2	See progress update in cabinet

places where they can come together to enjoy common interests and create new friendships.	Services	(brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	report – action on-going
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4. Shaping Services

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year 1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Progress Green - on track Amber - minor issues and/or delays Red - significant issues and/or delays Blue - completed Blank – Scheduled/Not Yet Started
4.1. Develop/co-produce and share a sanctuary framework to support people seeking sanctuary and promote independent living for those staying in the City and beyond.	Housing Services	Year 1	Action complete, updated framework completed and updated onto OCC website.
4.2. Review incorporation of sanctuary principles into services when strategies, policies or services are changed.	Corporate Strategy	Year 2 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	The Council has incorporated sanctuary principles into a number of strategies
4.3. Develop online resources to be more accessible for people seeking sanctuary including the Council's web page, the Communities Toolkit and information regarding accessing housing and other support.	Housing, Communities and Customer Services	Year 2 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	The OCC website has been updated and made more accessible for example through enhanced translation icon to aid navigation
4.4. Create opportunities and space for people seeking sanctuary to have their voices heard and their stories told, so that their experiences can inform how services are delivered in the city. Ensure people seeking sanctuary can feed into Council activity through existing mechanisms.	Housing Services	Year 1	A number of co-production projects implemented, see cabinet report for further details.
4.5. Promote sanctuary informed practice across local strategic partnerships where Oxford City Council is key stakeholder.	Housing Services	Year 1	OCC continue to promote sanctuary informed practice across a number of partnerships

			including the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership.
4.6. Via the community health champions programme improve advocacy for people seeking sanctuary and access to primary health care for vulnerable and undocumented migrants.	Community Services	Year 1	Programme completed, see cabinet report for further details

5. Supporting Integration

What are we going to do?	Service	By end of year	Progress
		1- 2025 - 2026 2- 2026 - 2027 3- 2027 - 2028	Green - on track Amber - minor issues and/or delays Red - significant issues and/or delays Blue - completed Blank – Scheduled/Not Yet Started
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 1	See progress update in cabinet report – action on-going
5.2. Continue to support local people seeking sanctuary who settled under government schemes including UK resettlement scheme (UKRS), Afghan Resettlement scheme (ARAP, ACRS), Asylum Dispersal Scheme and Homes for Ukraine scheme in line with statutory duties, corporate objectives and viability requirements.	Housing Services	Year 1	Resettlement activities successfully met corporate commitment in 2025.
5.3. Support the Council's ambition to support the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and feed in from sanctuary seeking groups perspective.	Regulatory Services and Community Safety	Year 3 (brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	Action completed
5.4. 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	
5.5. Work alongside the Oxford Food Hub and other local charities to	Housing	Year 2	

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.	services supported by Communities	(brought forward to Year 1 because of local need)	
5.6. Produce a joint calendar of events which promote integration and support sanctuary events such as during Refugee week	Housing services	Year 1	To be produced in Year 2, delays due to prioritisation of other action plan objectives

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	Progress Green - on track Amber - minor issues and/or delays Red - significant issues and/or delays Blue - completed Blank – Scheduled/Not Yet Started
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 they bring.	Council of Sanctuary (CoS) external stakeholders' group	Year 3	
6.2. Support Oxfordshire County Council and other key partners to increase English language provision (ESOL) accessibility 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	
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 1	Action delayed to Year 3 due to prioritisation of other action plan objectives
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	Council of Sanctuary external stakeholders' group	Year 3	

	services to explore and enhance support networks/resources.			
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 1	The Council is working on a number of key projects related to NRPF individuals, see cabinet report for further details.
6.6.	Alongside partners, work to ensure asylum seekers have access to low affordable public transport & travel around Oxford	Oxfordshire County Council	Year 2	