

Tips for working with people seeking sanctuary

Every person is an individual, and every story is unique. The ideas below may not be suitable or relevant to all situations, they are points to get you thinking. For information about more specialist training email: info@wrexham.cityofsanctuary.org.

- **Smile** – positive body language goes a long way to help people feel welcome and safe.
- **Always respect a person's dignity and privacy.** Information about a person's migration status should be considered confidential, as people can experience stigma and discrimination around this.
- Remember people seeking sanctuary have been forced to leave their home country because it is not safe. Consider how you might feel upon arrival in a new country, especially if you had been forced to leave your home.
- **Try not to make assumptions about a person.** If you are unsure, ask the person what they require.
- Consider the impact of asking someone seeking sanctuary personal questions about their home country or family. Ask open questions then try to follow the lead of the person, basing any questions on what information they voluntarily share with you. Some people may be pleased to talk about their home country or family, but other people may also prefer not to discuss this.
- **Every country and culture has different 'norms' and conventions.** For example, in the UK we do like to talk about the weather a lot, but this is not such a strong topic of conversation elsewhere in the world! Another example would be that in the UK we place a high importance on the saying of please/thank you, but some languages may not have the equivalent word or concept of saying 'please'.
- **Just because you are using the same words does not mean you mean the same thing.** Sometimes concepts like being 'on time' could have a completely different meaning within different countries/cultures. Try to build your understanding of the person's culture.
- **Choice:** try to make clear to the person you are working with that it is their choice to engage with you/your organisation. In some cultures refusing an offer or saying 'no' is seen as very impolite.
- Remember that people may have very different experiences in their home country of the police or uniformed workers. They may have experienced corruption, discrimination and/or persecution from Public Services/authorities, which could lead to distrust and re-checking of information.
- **Friendly, but not friends.** In the UK professional boundaries are in place between workers and services users, to ensure everyone receives a fair service, and is protected from abuse and exploitation. In voluntary roles, faith or community groups the boundaries may be different. Discuss with your line manager/group leader what the expectations are for your role.

For people seeking sanctuary who are learning English, or who speak English as an additional language:

- Think about the language you are using. Try and avoid colloquialism, slang, and speaking too quickly. If someone is struggling to understand what you are saying try to rephrase the sentence using different words, and/or speak more slowly.
- Translation apps like Google Translate can help with basic communication. There are also functions which read out text if required. Translation apps need to be used with caution as they are not always correct, and are not appropriate for discussion around sensitive topics such as medical information.



Wreccsam
Tref Noddfa



Wrexham
Town of Sanctuary

- People may speak a language fluently, but this does not automatically mean they can read in that language.
- Even when someone sounds fluent in English, it could still be difficult for them to communicate in an additional language, particularly if they are distressed, or if the topic is complex.
- The NHS and other services have access to an easy to use telephone interpretation service, and are able to book face-to-face interpreters. Find out from your employer if this is available.
- When working with an interpreter, try to look at and speak to the person you are conversing with, not the interpreter (this can be a little tricky to get used to at first). If it is a pre-arranged meeting, try to set up the room to facilitate this; for example arranging chairs in a triangle shape.
- Where interpreters are not available, be cautious about family members/friends being used as interpreters, especially around sensitive matters.

Advice & support for people seeking sanctuary

If you are looking for specific advice or information for refugees or asylum seekers a good starting point is **British Red Cross Refugee Services**. They provide a number of services for refugees and asylum seekers, and if unable to assist directly, they will have the most up to date signposting information about other services for people seeking sanctuary.

Contact: Jonathan Brown (Refugee Services Manager for North Wales)

Email: Jonbrown@redcross.org.uk Telephone: 01745 828330 (press 3 for Refugee Services)

Further Training

Town of Sanctuary Training is a brief introduction around welcoming and supporting people who are asylum seekers or refugees in your professional or community role. There is some fantastic training available to develop your skills and knowledge further:

IOM UN Migration - Refugee Information Session

This CPD certificated training usually lasts 4-5 hours, and focuses on specific countries (e.g. Syria). It will build participants understanding of the country, and develop their practice to support and work with people who are refugees from this country effectively. For more information contact Meredith Radke: mradke@iom.int

School Staff

Training is available on how to support students who speak English as an additional language. Please contact Rona Lewis at the EAL service.

Students

Show Racism the Red Card: <https://www.theredcard.org/education>

British Red Cross Youth Education: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/free-workshops>

Welcoming People Seeking Sanctuary

If you would like to do more to support and welcome people seeking sanctuary, please see your Town of Sanctuary pledge form for ideas. If you would like any further support to welcome people seeking sanctuary, or to book training, please contact Wrexham Town of Sanctuary:

info@wrexham.cityofsanctuary.org