

Together we will Stand up for Sanctuary



City of Sanctuary

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City of Sanctuary Response to the Immigration Plan

Last month (March 2021) the UK Government announced new [plans](#) for changes to the asylum system. Taken in their entirety the proposals represent an **attack on the right to seek sanctuary** in the UK and will do little to address the systemic, long-term failures of the system that cause such extreme hardship to people seeking sanctuary.

At a recent refugee sector meeting, convened by [Asylum Reform Initiative](#), Jonathan Featonby (British Red Cross) helpfully summarised the main changes, see [Presentation on Immigration Plan](#). There are also commentaries which provide further details, including [Free Movement](#) and [JCWI's explainer](#).

Brief Summary of the Proposals

- The creation of a three-tier system where people are granted different rights and status dependent on how they have entered the UK;
- Immigration rules that deem the claims of people who have entered the UK irregularly as 'inadmissible' will be put into legislation (they have been in force since 1st Jan) and the Home Office will make all attempts to return them to another 'safe' third country;
- Those who have arrived irregularly but are then recognised as refugees will be granted 'temporary protection status' (30 months with no recourse to public funds and limited family reunion rights);
- Refugees who are resettled to the UK through government resettlement schemes will have enhanced levels of protection (Indefinite leave to remain on arrival and enhanced family reunion rights);
- The introduction of reception centres to provide basic accommodation for people while their asylum claim is processed;

- Implement the provisions in the Immigration Act 2016, including removing Section 95 support from families who had been refused asylum as well as replacing Section 4 and restricting its access).
- For information on family reunion proposals see the [statement](#) from the Families Together

The Consultation

The Government has announced a six week [consultation](#) on these proposals, through an [online](#) platform where organisations and individuals can submit their input up until 6th May. You can also see the questions in advance [here](#).

Our incredible partners at [Asylum Matters](#) have published [guidance for organisations](#) and individuals who want to respond to the consultation and will be holding a [webinar](#). City of Sanctuary UK will produce a brief appendix with some specific messages on welcome and the importance of City of Sanctuary [values/principles](#).

Whilst we believe it is important to submit a consultation response if you are able to, we need to be realistic and realise it is unlikely to achieve the changes we want to see. For anyone wanting to engage with the media on the proposed plans please check out the [IMIX guidance here](#).

Appalled but not disheartened

We are appalled by the plan, but many of us who have worked in the refugee sector for many years will recognise that many of the proposals are not new; they are re-runs that were either proven to be **unworkable**, or have been **prevented by legal challenges**. The plans will do nothing to address the root causes of why people put their lives at risk trying to cross the Channel, or the backlog of people waiting in inhumane conditions for a decision on their claim for asylum. They will make an already broken system even worse.

During the coming months we will **continue to mobilise** behind specific campaigns on the proposals which are led by partners and the existing coalitions. e.g. [Families Together](#) etc. We know it is going to be challenging with the current Parliamentary arithmetic, but we are determined to reach out to parliamentarians from all parties to emphasise the vital importance of a humane and welcoming asylum system. As part of these efforts we will continue to work with the **City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network** to increase awareness of the impact these proposals will have on increasing destitution.

We are not disheartened though, in fact the opposite! We are more determined than ever to continue our efforts and plans to create a welcoming environment that makes negative asylum reform as difficult as possible and to achieve our ultimate longer term goal of bringing about positive change.

We will not let these Government plans distract us from our vision.

Our intentions

1. Build a counter-narrative to the negative rhetoric;

Over the past few months we have been involved in cross-sector work, led by [IMIX](#), on developing an audience strategy and common narrative. This work aims to support the sector work to win **public support through uniting our supporters** and reaching the so-called 'anxious middle', or most importantly the 'persuadables' within that segment of people. We cannot underestimate how

important we think this work is, and as such we have become to focus our efforts on this endeavour through: -

Promote Streams and Awards work

We are prioritising our focus on promoting streams and awards work as we know they are **effective and strategic tools** by which we can reach the so called 'anxious middle' or 'persuadables'. See the Facilitated Conversation for further information on [Sanctuary Awards](#).

2. Mobilise support for the forthcoming sector wide campaign

It is **imperative we mobilise support behind the new broad based coalition campaign** being launched in May, led by the [Asylum Reform Initiative](#). This new campaign will present a positive, humane and credible alternative asylum system. We will need to call on supporters to **stand up for sanctuary**, engage with the campaign, support the **Days of Action** and influence elected officials.

This wider campaign to reform and humanise the asylum system in the UK will take our energy, commitment and sustained engagement over the long term.

We recognise that we face a deeply challenging situation, but we must not be distracted by the current plans. Rather, we need to focus our energies on affecting **change in our local communities and standing united** so we can achieve the longer term change we want to see in the UK.