



# CIVIC EXCHANGE NETWORK

Wednesday 7 December 2022 – Building a community of welcome.

Workshop discussions

## WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE OF WELCOME?

### Q1. What does being made welcome look like?

Key words used across groups included - **Understanding, acknowledgement, education, communication, acceptance, friendship, listening, respect, and support.**

- A requirement to understand the many conditions under which people have travelled into the city e.g., study, family, transport, sanctuary etc. and has this been through necessity or by invitation.
- Communities understanding the differences between refugees, asylum seeker, migrant and immigrant.
- Non-verbal actions through a simple smile, gestures, or a visual aid.
- Respecting language barriers through the identification of other individuals and families that could support each other across the city.
- Building friendship networks between young people and their families in schools who speak the same language.
- Providing safe spaces for people to come together and share experiences and stories to aid in mental health, trauma, and wellbeing.
- An understanding of cultural beliefs, differences, and religion.
- Providing central community hub(s) where people can go to access core amenities or information on medical assistance, counselling, housing, food, safety, clothing, schools, language courses, transport, help with legal documents, etc.
- Welcome points or areas in/at key central transport links into the city (bus stations, train stations, port, airport) which provides maps or QR Codes identifying the key community hub(s) locations in the city.
- Having frontline staff and named colleagues in organisations who are trained in welcoming those seeking sanctuary or who are new to the area.

## Q2. What are you currently doing within your own organisation to welcome people arriving to Southampton?

- Providing sanctuary scholarship, and additional support package based on individual requirements/needs.
- Launching Sanctuary Week (March 2023) to engage and educate students, staff, and communities through a range of activities, lectures, and events.
- Embedding knowledge exchange around sanctuary both locally and globally across courses.
- Identifying core staff and ensuring colleagues and students are aware of their role and where they can be contacted/accessed.
- Building support hubs through coffee mornings and craft activities, building safe places for people to come together and build friendships.
- Providing spaces to learn English and access online networks.
- Staff provided with specific training to raise awareness around those seeking sanctuary.
- Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) with local public health team and young people foundation.
- Developing 'Tools for self-reliance'.
- Delivering free artist workshops.
- Providing practical support through the provision of local maps.
- Creating Host communities to welcome new residents e.g., Afghan Solidarity Day.
- Development of Ukrainian Hub providing support (informal and social) where individuals and families can come together, share skills, and make connections.
- Support with local day to day living and integration.
- Encouragement of face-to-face interaction through events and activities across the city.
- Removing barriers for engagement by offering registration without ID requirements and no fees incurred in local libraries.

### Q3. What could be enhanced within your organisation?

The key area which stood out during this session was **better communication**. If you are in the know you know!

- Developing volunteering opportunities.
- Events to share culture and sense of pride.
- Consultations with refugees through a 'cultural exchange'.
- Greater understanding of individual requires within a family. Focus groups around conversational topics?
- Basic resources such as bus pass for access to food banks etc. Reducing isolation.
- Better engagement with schools as a platform to engage with families and knowledge exchange.
- Better planning and preparation through the development of clear strategies i.e., location of support hubs, utilising current facilities better (e.g., Debenhams) and requirement of new activities and facilities.
- Increase awareness John Hansard Gallery are an open welcome space.
- Funding opportunities to work with communities.
- Contacts across organisations and establishments – who does what?
- Understanding of what other cities are doing to support those seeking sanctuary. What lessons could be learnt? What resources could be shared?
- Council of Sanctuary.
- Asking those seeking sanctuary to be part of the organisation of events.
- Greater collaboration of Creative Day – more courses and local organisations.

### Q4. What could be enhanced across the city?

- More and better collaboration between organisations.
- More focus groups engaging with refugee communities.
- Volunteering incentives to support communities to get involved.
- Raising awareness of different cultures, events, and expectations.

- Landlord check and private landlord initiatives.
- Training and wellbeing support for those staff working with vulnerable people.
- City of Sanctuary movement and collaborative projects and events.
- Open discussions.
- Workshops that teach skills.
- Marketing our city better!
- Child Friendly City.
- More focus groups engaging with refugee communities.
- Raising awareness of different cultures, events, and expectations.
- Awareness. Public understanding and sharing of knowledge.
- Increase in investment, resources, and time.
- Better coordination of city-wide events. Event calendar?
- Utilise SO:Links to create residential postcode/ward 'bubbles' which could then send representatives to citywide meetings which cover housing, schools, facilities, health & wellbeing etc.

**Final thought - Refugee Week 2023 (19-25 June).**

**This year the theme for National Refugee Week is compassion.** Are there opportunities to collaborate across organisations to share experiences, stories, skills and bring individuals and families together who are looking for sanctuary and new beginnings here in Southampton?

- We would love to bring people together to discuss what could take place in the New Year so please email us on [engagement@solent.ac.uk](mailto:engagement@solent.ac.uk) before 20 January 2023 and we will coordinate a meeting date near the beginning of February.



Thank you for attending.