

Report Type		
Title of Report	Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Action Plan	
Key Decision No	AHI S678	
For Consideration By	Cabinet 26 January Council 28 January	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Carole Williams, Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities	
Classification	Open	
Ward(s) Affected	All	
Key Decision & Reason	Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards
Implementation Date if Not Called In	3 February 2025	
Group Director	Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education	
Report Author	Beth Evans, Welcome Hackney Lead beth.evans@hackney.gov.uk	

1. Cabinet Member's introduction

- 1.1. In 2023, Hackney Council took the decision to formalise its status as a Borough of Sanctuary by joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority network. This report turns that commitment into a clear set of priorities and actions, and asks Cabinet to approve the publication of the framework and 3-year action plan.
- 1.2. The Borough of Sanctuary framework and action plan, co-produced through a Borough of Sanctuary Steering Group, articulates how we will embed a culture of practice and welcome across council services including housing, homelessness, employment, health, and libraries. Approval of the plan recognises the growing needs of refugees, migrants and sanctuary seekers, and will enable the council to improve access to services, remove barriers, and better uphold the rights, dignity and shared futures of sanctuary seekers.

1.3. Following the publication of the framework, we intend to submit a formal application to City of Sanctuary UK for Borough of Sanctuary status. I welcome the opportunity that the application and appraisal process will provide to reflect on our progress, strengthen our partnership working, and deepen the positive impact of this action plan for sanctuary seekers in Hackney.

2. Group Director's introduction

2.1. This framework and action plan has been developed over the past nine months, in collaboration with residents and voluntary sector partners. It forms part of our application to become a Borough of Sanctuary and as such we are pleased for it to be agreed and published.

3. Recommendations

3.1. **To note Cabinet's consideration of the publication of the Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Action Plan.**

4. Reason(s) for decision

4.1. The publication of the Framework and Action Plan is the final step of preparing to submit our application for Borough of Sanctuary status from City of Sanctuary UK.

5. Background

5.1. The Council signed a motion in July 2023 to be recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary by City of Sanctuary UK. It is an opportunity for Hackney Council to demonstrate solidarity with refugees and migrants, and embed a culture of inclusion and welcome to new residents, many displaced as a result of persecution and conflict.

5.2. As part of the application process, we have developed a co-produced action plan, outlining our priorities for the next three years. It is part of a Hackney Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Action Plan.

5.3. The Framework outlines the values and principles to support sanctuary seekers in the borough, ensuring that anti-racist and trauma-informed practice, co-produced with residents and local partners, is at the centre of this work. The Framework also outlines the ways in which different services within the Council have already been advancing their work with sanctuary seekers.

5.4. The action plan has been developed with local voluntary and community sector leaders and Hackney residents with lived experience of migration. In May 2025, Welcome Hackney coordinated the launch of a Borough of Sanctuary Steering Group. The Group comprised Council officers from a number of service areas, including housing, education, and adult social care,

as well as 5 Sanctuary Ambassadors and representatives from the voluntary and community sectors.

5.5. The group met regularly - every 5-6 weeks - to develop a three-year action plan, outlining the Council's priorities and actions for the next three years. The Group brought their personal and professional experiences, and also used the feedback that Welcome Hackney had gathered during a series of workshops, surveys, and engagement with residents and the wider sector in the spring. The action plan was agreed by the Steering Group on 11th November 2025.

Strategic Policy Context

5.6. Hackney - both as a Council and a place - has a long and proud history of welcoming everybody, regardless of their background, especially those fleeing conflict or harm in hope of a better life. In recent years, the Council and its residents have housed and helped hundreds of individuals and families, including those from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine, who have fled some of the most devastating conflicts of our generation.

5.7. Hackney Council has advocated for order to be restored to the asylum system, and for the Government to set out their plans for the legal aid system, recognising the significant barrier this poses for residents to access timely and crucial legal advice. The Council has also actively participated in resettlement schemes including the Syria Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme, and the Afghan Resettlement Programme. The Borough of Sanctuary Framework is an opportunity to outline our local response to ensuring sanctuary seekers feel welcome and supported in the UK.

Consultation/engagement

5.8. The framework and action plan have been informed by a wide spectrum of engagement with local organisations, staff and residents. Welcome Hackney conducted workshops with residents, with local voluntary and community sector partners, and circulated a survey for any Hackney resident to complete.

6. Financial implications

6.1. The primary funding for the framework and its associated action plan is derived from the Homes for Ukraine Grant, the Home Office Asylum Dispersal Scheme Grant, and the Afghan Resettlement Scheme Grant. As no commitments have been made at this initial planning stage, there is currently no financial risk.

6.2. Any subsequent modifications to financial resources resulting from the adoption of the motions outlined in this report must be processed through the established governance procedures. This necessitates the development of comprehensive business cases detailing all associated financial implications. Accordingly, individual service areas will be responsible for managing the financial impact of these changes within the confines of existing and

prospective grant allocations.

Financial Implications prepared on behalf of the Group Director Finance & Corporate Resources by Agim Rexha, Group Accountant
Email: agim.rexha@hackney.gov.uk
Date 8th January 2026

7. HR/OD implications

7.1. No HR Implications.

HR/OD implications prepared on behalf of the Director of HR/OD by Manjit Dhillon, Strategic HR & OD Business Partner
Email: manjit.dhillon@hackney.gov.uk
Date: 6 January 2026

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. In accordance with Article 5.5 of the Council's constitution, the Elected Mayor and Cabinet shall carry out all of the Council's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council. This includes setting priorities that contribute to the life and development of the Borough.
- 8.2. No automatic legal obligations arise from adopting the Framework and Action Plan, however if the action plan becomes a relevant policy, a failure to adhere to it without good reason could be subject to challenge and to complaints.

Legal implications prepared on behalf of the Director of Legal, Democratic & Electoral Services by: Juliet Babb, Assistant Director of Legal and Governance
Email: juliet.babb@hackney.gov.uk
Date: 12 January 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Borough of Sanctuary Framework and Action Plan

Reason(s) for exemption

N/A

Background documents

None