# Communities across Britain grapple with asylum seekers amid mixed reactions



Towns and cities across Britain are encountering mixed reactions regarding the accommodation of asylum seekers, with instances of both opposition and welcome emerging across the country. A notable movement urging communities to embrace asylum seekers and refugees is called the City of Sanctuary, which encourages local voluntary groups to join its network. So far, over two dozen locales, including Brighton, Newcastle, and York, have been recognised with this status as part of a concerted effort to provide safety and support to those fleeing conflict and persecution.

Newcastle, in particular, stands out for its commitment, having taken in 43 supported asylum seekers per 10,000 residents, translating to a total of approximately 1,323 individuals. Joan Hoult, a member of the local charity Walking With, highlighted the diverse support they provide, including trips, sports activities, and essential supplies such as food and clothing. Speaking to the Daily Mail, she described the dire situations many asylum seekers face, stating, "These people often come from countries where torture and corruption are rife and if they need to flee with their children then they must be desperate." Ms Hoult emphasised the misconceptions surrounding asylum seekers, clarifying that many possess considerable backgrounds before fleeing, asserting, "If we had war and were desperate, I would hope someone would welcome us."

In Brighton, although only 157 asylum seekers are supported, locals express a strong sense of favourable reception. Mark Hedger, a Brighton resident, articulated pride in the city's welcoming nature, stating, "It's fabulously friendly in a way that places just a little further down the coast simply aren't." Brighton's identity as a tolerant community, particularly towards migrants, has historical roots associated with its diverse population, including its significant LGBTQI+ community.

Meanwhile, York is also showing support for asylum seekers, currently accommodating 352 individuals, amounting to 17 per 10,000 residents. Paul Wordsworth, who leads York City of Sanctuary, conveyed a commitment to welcoming those escaping conflict, highlighting a holistic operation approach—working from various sites across the city without a central office. He shared that they encountered challenges as they supported individuals who had faced threats in their homeland, fostering a network of volunteers from backgrounds such as healthcare, education, and the arts.

The experiences shared by asylum seekers themselves, such as Nasrin Khaleghi, underline their personal journeys and the importance of community support. Having arrived in Newcastle from Iran, she expressed contentment in her new home, noting the local community's kindness during a challenging transition. She stated, “We are happy here because it has been a very welcoming place for us.”

Despite these encouraging narratives, sentiments do vary, particularly regarding the nature of asylum applications. In York, some residents, like Suzanne O'Farrell, voiced the need for distinction between genuine asylum seekers and those perceived as economic migrants. This reflects ongoing concerns about the proper verification of individuals seeking refuge.

As discussions continue around the asylum seeker population, communities like Newcastle, Brighton, and York are actively engaging in supporting those seeking safety and stability from conflict-impacted regions. Each city demonstrates a unique approach to fostering inclusivity while navigating the complexities associated with the asylum process.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://cityofsanctuary.org/> - This URL provides an overview of the City of Sanctuary organization, which encourages communities across the UK to welcome asylum seekers and refugees, aligning with the article's discussion of local support networks.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Sanctuary_(UK)> - This Wikipedia page offers background information on the City of Sanctuary movement, including its origins and how it supports asylum seekers and refugees across various UK cities.
* <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/communities-and-neighbourhoods/asylum-and-immigration/city-sanctuary> - This URL highlights Newcastle's involvement in the City of Sanctuary initiative, detailing its commitment to welcoming asylum seekers and its ongoing efforts to provide support and build a supportive community.
* <https://www.fmreview.org/darling-barnet-eldridge/> - This article from Forced Migration Review explores the City of Sanctuary movement's role in promoting hospitality towards asylum seekers and refugees across British cities.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - The source article itself provides a comprehensive overview of how different cities in Britain are handling the accommodation of asylum seekers, highlighting both welcoming communities and mixed reactions.