

Bristol A City Of Sanctuary

Bristol formally declared itself a City Of Sanctuary in June 2011. By so doing, the city council committed itself to recognise the plight of asylum seekers forced to flee their home countries for expressing views or holding opinions that ruling regimes disagreed with or found to be confrontational.

In exercising their human right of free speech in their own countries, many have received death threats, suffered beatings and threats to their family members, forcing them to abandon their homes, their country and all their possessions. Here in Britain, if their asylum cases are refused by the Home Office, they lose all financial support and accommodation. Current laws also prevent them from working.

This leaves them in a cycle of deprivation and poverty that is currently impossible to break. Many are forced into homelessness on the street.

Council welcomes the Glasgow City Council initiative in passing a motion, highlighting the concerns for refused asylum seekers and the lack of support and facilities UK wide.

Council asserts that if our proud declaration stating that Bristol is a City of Sanctuary is to be meaningful and worthy of its fine words, we must act to improve this situation with the following actions:

1. The Mayor writes on behalf of the city council to the Minister of State deploring the government policy that forces refused asylum seekers into destitution while they continue to fight for a safe haven from persecution.
2. The Mayor writes to the UK government seeking a change of policy to allow local authorities to assist refused asylum seekers in danger of destitution and provide equal emergency provision to refused asylum seekers as they would to any other homeless person.
3. The Mayor calls on all Bristol MPs to support the content of this motion and to raise the matter in the House of Commons, and support a change in current laws regarding asylum applications by removing restrictions on local authorities in the support they can provide to destitute asylum seekers.
4. The council agrees to produce a report highlighting all existing support available in Bristol including housing, training, education, and legal advice open to vulnerable asylum applicants.
5. The city council should work closely with the voluntary sector through a designated officer to provide help, support and advice to applicants and enable a coordinated response to be easily available to those in need at this vulnerable time of their lives.

6. The council should join the national campaign *Still Human, Still here*(a coalition of 29 organisations, including the Church of England and Catholic Archbishop Conferences, Amnesty International and the Red Cross, who are proposing practical solutions to ending the destitution of refused asylum seekers in the UK.)
7. The council agrees to seek further support for this motion and actions via the Local Government Association and encouraging other councils in the UK to follow Bristol's lead.

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