



SCHOOLS OF SANCTUARY

Learning and Sharing Conference

Saturday 12 October 2013

West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds

Introduction

“Really enjoyed the day. I am going away with lots of ideas + contacts + resources to buy/download. Clear in my mind what I need to do.”

All who attended this first national Schools of Sanctuary conference felt it was a great success. Participants came from Bradford, Bristol, Huddersfield, Leeds, London, Newcastle, Sheffield, Swansea and Wakefield. They included teachers, students of education, asylum seekers, representatives of City of Sanctuary projects and young people from refugee and asylum seeker families.

As well as the talks and discussion there were a number of information stalls, set up by members of participating organisations, and a Garden of Sanctuary display.

The conference was organised by a small group, led by Yael Arbell from Leeds City of Sanctuary, with representatives from the British Red Cross, the Children's Society, RETAS - Refugee Education and Training Service (Leeds) and Bradford and Wakefield City of Sanctuary.

The organisers are very grateful to the West Yorkshire Playhouse for its generous hospitality and to the Co-operative Community Fund for financing the conference.

Opening talk (Tiffany Allen – National City of Sanctuary)

Tiffany's opening talk was a rousing call to action. As a national organiser, Tiffany feels privileged to “wander around” and see what is happening. Schools of Sanctuary projects are fast-developing across the country. Tiffany explained that the conference was meeting at the West Yorkshire Playhouse because it was following up its vital work around *Refugee Boy* by aiming to become the first Theatre of Sanctuary.

There is currently a huge wave of negative opinion towards asylum seekers and refugees, which we are challenged to counter. If Schools of Sanctuary projects can get 50% of children to change their ideas, this will lead to a wholesale change in attitude.

Presentations by Young People (Representatives of the Children's Society Participation Group)

A.

Everyone has an idea of how refugees come to the UK. Most people's journeys are risky. Some people even risk their lives. It was so stressful to leave my family and friends behind, knowing this was permanent. Knowing that I wouldn't see them again was the hardest thing to bear. I couldn't think straight or eat for three days. We managed to get to Ethiopia and into a refugee camp there. The mental effects of being an asylum seeker and refugee are profound. Refugees can be very capable academically and just need help and support from teachers. I'd like to thank the teachers and my school for what they have done.

L.

L. comes from Algeria. Travelling to the UK was not as difficult as that experienced by our close family friends. They were taken away to a detention centre in the middle of the night in the back of a van, in what was like a dog cage. As young children we experienced a lot. We were always fearful of being taken to a detention centre. This affected us. We couldn't sleep and found it difficult to concentrate at school. The only place I felt safe was at school as I knew I couldn't be taken from here. I didn't want to leave school for that reason.

A.

A. came from Eritrea with her mother and two siblings

As a refugee it is very hard to settle into a new country. I had no idea what England would be like and what the people would be like here. Teachers, particularly the form teacher, played a big part in helping A. Early on A. saw a senior prefect at school and wondered what that meant. *"I looked up to her and admired her so much. Now I'm proud to be a senior prefect myself."*

Refugees come here because they have no choice. A. mentioned the recent deaths of migrants in unsafe boats in the Mediterranean. There is only a 50% chance of survival in such boats.

A has found welcoming people. *"I love your culture. Don't change."*

M.

M. came from Sudan three years ago. Some people find it hard to make friends when they move into a new school. Every country has its own country and traditions, some people find it difficult to fit in and settle. At the first school which M. attended he had a lot of support from staff and the Head of Year but not much support from students. He then moved schools and things were much better. The second school had a room where students could go if they had problems or were lonely. The number of people using this room is decreasing. Support for students is very important. Knowing someone was there for me really gave me the motivation to succeed. You might think it's a minor but believe me it could change someone's life.

B

B came to the UK aged twelve and is now 13. B. has had good support from teachers and parents. The British curriculum is very well organised, interesting and modern. *"I would like to thank all my teachers and I hope that they can continue to offer the same support to other children who move to the UK"*

Keynote Speech (Forward Maisokwado, Bristol City of Sanctuary)

Forward started by saying that he was encouraged and humbled by the presentations from the young people and encouraged them to continue to be proud of their identity.

There is still much to be done on Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary in Bristol. In developing the project, Bristol City of Sanctuary had leaned heavily on the pioneering work done in Leeds. Schools and Colleges of Sanctuary are needed in Bristol because of poor understanding and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees amongst young people.

The project had targeted schools with a big BME intake *and* all-white schools. The Schools of Sanctuary project was started even before Bristol got City of Sanctuary status. The Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Mary Prior, has been a great supporter and champion of Schools of Sanctuary. Mary Prior attended the very moving launch event.

Bristol Schools of Sanctuary has made significant use of music. There was a choir at the launch event and there is a City of Sanctuary song, with words drawn from the Bible and the Koran, and a specially composed tune.

The Schools of Sanctuary project was launched in September 2012. Since then:

- 10 schools have signed a pledge form
- 3 schools have been awarded School of Sanctuary status, and
- 20 workshops have been held in schools.

The approach to schools has not been prescriptive. Schools have been encouraged to share information on what they are doing. Involving parents is vital.

Working with the City Council has been key to the success of the project. It has been a marathon journey. From the beginning, the leader of the council and, later, the elected mayor have been very supportive. There is cross-party support and a City of Sanctuary plaque in the entrance to City Hall. In January 2013, Bristol became the second city, after Glasgow, to pass a motion condemning the policy of forcing people seeking asylum into destitution. This motion had support across the political spectrum.

Tea parties, in the Mansion House, with the Lord Mayor and sanctuary seekers are regular events. These provide a way of getting messages to the local authority from refugees and asylum seekers. Forward has worked to maintain links with the new elected mayor.

There have been some challenges in working with the local authority. Sometimes councillors and local authority officers are not sure how to help.

Partnership working with other bodies has also been important. A relationship has been built up with SACRE (Standing Conference for Religious Education). City of Sanctuary will be contributing to training on Sanctuary and Belief in June 2014.

Response to questions and comments from the floor

- It is important to keep in regular touch with schools that have been awarded School of Sanctuary status. The asylum system changes frequently and schools need to

be briefed on this.

- School students are not involved in the project at city level in Bristol but university students are involved
- The project has not yet done much work with the University of Bristol

Workshops

There were three workshops, based on the three 'principles' of Schools of Sanctuary. Participants attended all three workshops on a carousel basis.

Workshop 1: Learn

Learn about what it means to be seeking sanctuary

Workshop Leaders: Mary Blacka and Brogan Sohanpaul

The handout for Workshop 1 is in the Appendix.

- The Global Dimensions Curriculum was a good source of information (Leeds)
- Stephen Lawrence Award – held by several schools in Leeds
- How to get information to *all* staff, including all auxiliary staff, lunchtime supervisors, caretakers and administrative staff. Need to involve the *whole* school.
- How to get information to parents
- There is a lot of information available. The problem is turning it into Programmes of Study and lesson Plans and mapping it all to the national curriculum.
- Not being episodic. There needs to be engagement with the issues over a lengthy period not just one myth-busting session from an external agent.
- Lack of input about asylum seekers and refugees in initial teacher training courses. Working with Initial Teacher Training would be a great way of spreading the message.
- Inevitably some of the source material lacks local context, eg numbers of asylum seekers / refugees living in the local authority area.
- Issues posed by growing numbers of students from Eastern Europe
- How to approach “ethnically parched”, all-white schools, to achieve their engagement?
- Problems around terminology create barriers to understanding. The specific use of the terms asylum seeker and refugee in the asylum system and their looser deployment in every day speech.

Workshop 2: Embed

Take positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion within your school and the wider community.

Workshop Leaders: Nola Pugh and Olivier Nkuzimana

Participants were asked to imagine their ideal School of Sanctuary. There were many, very creative ideas, a lot of energy and a willingness to change. The following is a summary of their ideas:

- School leadership
 - Head teacher's support
- Staff – whole school approach
 - Training and support for staff, including:
 - Teachers
 - Teaching Assistants
 - Lunchtime supervisors
 - Governors
 - Form tutors – pastoral role
 - Learning mentors
 - Ambassadors of Sanctuary, who will:
 - Teach / train others
 - Share
 - Spread ideas out into the community
- Students
 - Peer mentors – preferably with the same language
 - Buddies
 - Award for buddy of the week
 - Buddy benches
 - Diversity Forum – student-led
 - Race Equality Council
- Physical environment
 - Welcoming signs in different languages
 - Displays in reception
 - Classroom displays
 - Inclusive
 - Different languages
 - Portraying different cultures
 - Mosaics / murals
- School policies
 - Inclusion
 - Race equality
 - Behaviour
- Curriculum – embed ideas – cultural diversity
 - Art
 - ASDAN's programmes on skills for learning, employment and skills for life.

- Cooking
- Dance
- Drama
- Geography
- ICT
- Maths
- Music
- Poetry
- Writing

- Teaching / Classroom Resources
 - Variety of books and multi-media for use in the classroom
 - Multi-sensory teaching
 - Resources which encourage interaction

- Student support
 - Open door to support
 - Individual Learning Plans – which *all* staff understand
 - Good ESOL support
 - Specific staff to go to for support
 - Safe Space – for students to access at lunchtime and breaks
 - Breakfast
 - Child protection

- Introducing new students to the school
 - New starter meetings
 - Parents of new starters meetings
 - Induction programme
 - Welcome pack, with key information in translation
 - Benefits
 - Agencies
 - Access to medical services, including GPs
 - Buses
 - Maps
 - Supplementary schools
 - How schools and the school system works in the UK

- Parents
 - Home visits
 - ESOL for parents
 - Parent Group
 - Drop-in
 - Translation service
 - Family Support Room – 'coffee room'
 - Parent notice board
 - Newsletter
 - Friends of . . .

- Activities / Events
 - Celebrating festivals, traditions and cultures
 - Teas and biscuits from throughout the world – invite everybody
 - Lunch from the nations
 - Assemblies
 - Guest speakers, who can talk about their own experiences
 - Visitors from other countries
 - Reading groups / bibliotherapy
 - Picnic – with food from around the world
- Faith
 - Prayer room
 - Ignite Christian Group
- External partnerships
 - Fundraising for asylum seeker / refugee agencies
 - Community link working

Workshop 3: Share

Share your vision and achievements – be proud!

Workshop Leaders: Brian Hamill and Richard Lewis

Schools of Sanctuary goes beyond the school, to create a change of attitude leading to action.

- Within the school community, work with:
 - All school staff
 - Parents
 - Make use of the School Council
 - Concentrate on the community round the school
- Networks of sharing resources and good practice, including:
 - Cluster groups / High School Wedges / Families of schools / School pyramids
 - Governors
- More conferences, involving:
 - Teachers
 - Student teachers
 - Administrative staff
 - Parents
- Working with other other sectors of education, including:
 - Initial Teacher Training
 - STAR (Student Action for Refugees)
 - Developing peer-led education

- Working with other external agencies, eg
 - Youth Councils
 - Third sector organisations - local community and voluntary groups
 - Statutory agencies
 - Faith groups
- Develop relationships with the media:
 - Traditional media
 - Social media
- Concentrate on specific times of year, eg Refugee Week but do not focus *exclusively* on Refugee Week
- Upload materials (lesson plans, induction programme resources etc) onto the School of Sanctuary web-page and Facebook page
- Artistic responses:
 - Drama
 - Music
- Ways of working:
 - Practical responses to the issue of Destitution or Section 4 support
 - Adopt a Champion model, working with existing Schools of Sanctuary, using case studies etc
- At what age should children be introduced to the ideas and issues involved in Schools of Sanctuary?

Panel discussion

Chair: Brian Hamill

Panel members: Rodrigo Edema (Sheffield City of Sanctuary); Eddie Ralston (National CoS Trustee); Nola Pugh (The Children's Society); Brogan Sohanpaul (British Red Cross) and young people from the Children's Society Participation Group.

Q: How did Schools of Sanctuary start?

A: Eddie was working in Leeds, on the Refugees into Teaching programme, when Elizabeth Bullamore-Brown suggested that Schools of Sanctuary awards should be set up. The standards and principles, which are still the basis of Schools of Sanctuary, were then drawn up.

Q: Could more be done to develop Schools of Sanctuary at a national level?

A: Eddie responded that the School of Sanctuary brand is very portable. What is needed now is to give the brand more substance. Schools which have School of Sanctuary status could act as Champion Schools to support those working towards the award. Funders could be approached for money to develop the award and give it greater structure.

Tiffany Allen commented, from the floor, that it was important to share resources widely. The schools page on the City of Sanctuary web-site will soon be developed, to include more resources. Might it be possible for the young people from the Children's Society Participation Group to help with the use of social media.

Q: What's next?

A: Young people from the Participation Group commented that secondary school students should be educated and given the facts about asylum. Young people who are from asylum seeker families should be encouraged to share their experiences. They are wary of being judged because of ignorance. Rodrigo felt that it was important to build a culture of awareness. Brogan commented on the amazing turn-out at the conference and the need to get more schools on board.

Q: What can Sanctuary in Schools do to counter the culture of disbelief in the asylum system

A: Nola thought that it was vital that City/Schools of Sanctuary should join forces with other organisations, eg the Refugee Council and the Children's Society. Eddie thought that Schools Councils could be involved and Rodrigo suggested inviting staff from the Home Office to the next conference.

Q: How much impact can Schools of Sanctuary have?

A: Rodrigo explained how Ecclesfield School, which is on the edge of Sheffield, raised £600 with a non-uniform day. Continuity was felt to be important. We all need to keep in contact. Keep calling us back. Personal stories are always very powerful. Eddie thought that Schools of Sanctuary had the potential to grow widely, like Fair Trade Schools.

Q: What can schools do to become welcoming?

A: Young people from the Participation Group suggested after-school sessions to help new arrivals to fit in. Brian thought that having a room available, at break times, for students with no friends was a really good idea. Nola reported that it had been consistently found that children moving into a new school greatly value the support of other pupils, not just support from teachers.

***Refugee Boy* Announcement**

Aoibheann Kelly, from the West Yorkshire Playhouse, announced that funding had been received, from Arts Council England, to take *Refugee Boy* on a national tour to seven different venues. Each venue will also receive funding to actively engage with local organisations which work to support Refugees and Asylum seekers and also create a meaningful programme of work for schools and members of the community.

Evaluation

Feedback to the Young People from the Children's Society Participation Group

- You are all such brave and inspiring individuals. Thank you for sharing your stories and experiences with us.
- Very brave and well presented. Loved it.
- I particularly enjoyed the pupils from St Mary's sharing their experiences and ideas. Uplifting!
- The talks from personal experience were fantastic – they were hugely inspiring and very confidently delivered. I was very impressed. I feel motivated after them sharing it – it puts it into perspective
- You were all brilliant. Thanks so much for your help with signing in & contributions to the workshops. Well done indeed! I am very impressed.
- Very professional. Articulate and inspiring. Excellent role models.
- Fantastic! Had a huge impact and really moved me. You are extremely brave. I hope you do this many more times to educate people and make a real difference. Well done!
- Very powerful and well-delivered – well done. Great English!

General Feedback

- Very good event – Could get people taking part in more of the school activities. Invite schools in to talk. Thank you.
- Great to get a better insight into Schools of Sanctuary- excellent to network and make links to support work in schools.
- The noise was overpowering. The resources workshop was good. The workshop on practical ways to embed was good. Struggled a bit to follow Brian's workshop – wasn't very well structured.
- Really enjoyed the day. I'm going away with lots of ideas +contacts + resources to buy / download. Clear in my mind what I need to do.
- Possible to have more ideas of in-school practice / ideas. Ones for primary and secondary. Really good starting point to find out more.
- Get rid of that horn :)

Key issues

- The enormous impact of the stories from the young people and the verse and music by refugee women
- Using music as a means to educate and share values
- Significance of support from local authorities
- How to best meet the needs of all-white, semi-rural and rural schools
- Impact of the new OfSTED framework and the loss of the direction to take account of a school's contribution to community cohesion

The way forward

- Further exploit the use of social media
- Organise mini-conferences for secondary and primary schools separately
- Organising a mini-conference for school students
- Organise a competition for a song - words and music - for Refugee Week
- Develop a detailed Programme of Study on asylum seeker / refugee issues, mapped to the national curriculum for all Key Stages
- Working with initial teacher training providers to ensure that newly qualified teachers are aware of the issues

Conference Organising Group

Yael Arbell (Leeds City of Sanctuary) - CHAIR

Mary Blacka (Bradford City of Sanctuary)

Brian Hamill (Wakefield City of Sanctuary) – CONFERENCE CHAIR

Olivier Nkuzimana (RETAS - Refugee Education and Training Service)

Nola Pugh (The Children's Society)

Brogan Sohanpaul (British Red Cross)

Joanna Spooner (Refugee Council)

APPENDICES

Schools of Sanctuary conference programme

9-30 to 10-00	Registration (at a table in the foyer of WYP)
10-00 to 10-15	Opening talk (Tiffy Allen, City of Sanctuary National Coordinator)
10-15 to 10-30	Presentation by students from The Children's Society Participation Group
10-30 to 11-00	Keynote speaker + Questions (Forward Maisokwadzo, Bristol City of Sanctuary)
11-00 to 11-20	BREAK
11-20 to 12-00	First round of workshops (Learn/Embed/Share)
12:00 to 1:00	LUNCH
1:00 to 1:45	Poetry by Margaret Katula (Reading Group)
1:45 to 2-00	Second round of workshops (Learn/Embed/Share)
2-00 to 2-40	Third round of workshops (Learn/Embed/Share)
3-00 to 3-20	Feedback on Workshops
3-20 to 4-00	Panel discussion, with questions from the floor. Panelists: Eddie Ralston (National CoS Trustee), Nola Pugh (Children's Society), Brogan Sohanpaul (Red Cross), Rodrigo Edema (Sheffield CoS), Students from Children's Society Participation Group.
4-00	CLOSE + SAFE JOURNEY HOME

Workshop 1 - Outline

Schools of Sanctuary (SoS)

Learning and Sharing Conference

WORKSHOP 1: Learning

Schools of Sanctuary: First principle

To learn what it means to be seeking sanctuary. This includes understanding the reasons why people leave their own countries; the difference between asylum seekers/refugees and other migrants; the problems faced by those seeking sanctuary in the UK.

Definitions

Asylum seeker: *Someone who has reached another country and has submitted a claim for refugee status.* **Refugee:** *An asylum seeker who has been granted refugee status because the host government agrees that they have a well-founded fear of persecution in their own country.* (Amnesty International)

Further definitions of terms used in the asylum system are available on the Refugee Council web-site at: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary>

Sources of information:

Local resources

The Schools of Sanctuary webpage is due for updating. It will soon have a list of all local SoS groups. Details of local City of Sanctuary projects can be accessed from the home page - <http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/> - by clicking on *Find your nearest group*.

Web based resources: a sample

Moving Here:

<http://www.movinghere.org.uk/schools/>

Offers free access, for to an online catalogue of original material related to migration history, over the last 200 years, from local, regional and national archives, libraries and museums.

Refugee Council:

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

A major resource for general information on asylum seekers and refugees. The short booklet *Tell it like it is: the truth about asylum* can be accessed at:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum The Refugee Council has produced a resource pack on meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in schools and, with the Equality & Human Rights Commission, a booklet on employing asylum seekers in schools.

British Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Refugee-support>

This site is a good source of background information, including 'Refugee Facts and Figures' and information on the services that the Red Cross provides for refugees. The site also includes teaching materials for primary and secondary schools.

What do we need to learn? Is there anything you want to add to this list?

- Why do people leave their homelands?
- Where do asylum seekers and refugees come from?
- Where do they go to?
- How many asylum seekers come to the UK?
- Definitions – asylum seekers / refugees / failed asylum seekers / economic migrant
- The asylum system:
 - Moves around the country
 - Levels of support
 - No choice over accommodation and its location
 - No right to work
 - Length of time to get a decision
- Impact of the working of the system on the lives of asylum seekers and refugees

Red Cross - Awareness raising session

The Red Cross delivers awareness raising sessions in schools in West Yorkshire. As well as delivering sessions to schools students the Red Cross can also deliver training to school staff, dispelling the myths about asylum seekers and refugees.

Suggested topics for discussion

- Gaining Sanctuary in Schools status requires a whole school approach. How can we ensure that *all* school staff are aware of the issues.
- When should awareness raising begin in schools?
- How can we get issues around asylum seekers and refugees into initial teacher training, so that newly qualified teachers are already aware of the issues?
- Do schools want to learn about the issues? How do we get more schools involved?
- Examples of good practice / case studies

Workshops are asked to select select three major points to feed back to the whole conference.

Mary Blacka (Bradford City of Sanctuary)
Brogan Sohanpaul (British Red Cross)