How can councils foster welcome and inclusion in their community?

Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Local Authorities Network Lead
maggie@cityofsanctuary.org

23rd of Sept 2021
Why do we need to talk about ‘Welcome’?

• ‘Hostile Environment’
• Inhumane and Ineffective policies
• Negative public narrative
• Exclusion of people from participation in mainstream society
• Poor outcomes for individuals: destitution, racism, discrimination, mental health
• Threat to social cohesion
A movement about welcome and belonging

Local people, community groups and key local institutions committed to creating a culture of welcome and safety for all, especially for people seeking sanctuary from violence and persecution.
What does a “welcoming” community look like?

- Is a community for everyone.
- Where local services and public spaces can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone.
- Recognises that the UK is enriched by new arrivals.
- Does not tolerate hate crime, discrimination and harassment.
- Supports residents from all backgrounds to feel seen, supported, included.
How to make ‘welcome’ manifest?

1. Facilitating contact and building relationships of solidarity – Welcoming Activities

2. Working with key local institutions
   - Schools, FE Colleges, Universities
   - Health care providers
   - Arts institutions
   - Libraries
   - Gardens
   - Shops
   - Places of worship
   - Local Authorities
Local Authorities - How do they work?

- **Local Gov**: aspects of social care, education, housing and transport and services such as waste, libraries, community buildings, business support, resettlement and others
- Statutory vs Discretionary Services
- Single Tier vs Two Tier areas
- **Councillors** (or members): elected, responsible for policies, decision-making, link to communities
- **Officers**: paid staff, non-elected, non-partisan, implement policy
- **Structure of Councils**: Cabinet vs Committee System
- Metro Mayors and Executive Mayors
- **Decision-Making**: Delegated Authority, Individual Cabinet Member Decisions, Council, Committees
- **Public Committees**: accountability and transparency
- **Constitution**: rules and procedures as to how council operates
- **Corporate Plan**: vision and priorities set in the context of budgets
Local Authorities Network

- Launched in Dec 2020

Aims:
1. To support the development of a network of local authorities (cross-party) that are working towards a vision of welcome for all which is lead by LAs themselves.
2. To facilitate the sharing of innovative practices which promote the embedding of a culture and practice of welcome in Local Authorities.
3. To speak with one voice on national matters which affect local communities and LAs.
Local Authorities Network- How does it work?

• LAs join the network as Awarded or Non-awarded members
• LA members commit to work towards a Council of Sanctuary Recognition
• LA creates an Action Plan based on Learn, Embed, Share and minimum criteria
• LA submits an application for Council of Sanctuary Award
• Application is appraised by recognition panel for 3 years
The Criteria

- Join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network which includes a pledge to support the City of Sanctuary vision and charter
- Pass a council motion setting out commitment to being a place of sanctuary
- Commit to working with the local City of Sanctuary group (and other refugee orgs) and show evidence of this work
- Commit to work with partners to identify national policy issues to make collective representations to government to enable change
- Produce a written strategy, publicly available and sets out commitment for at least three years.

The full set of Learn, Embed and Share criteria can be found here.
What are the benefits of joining the Network?

- Support with development of policies/strategies
- Help with responses to consultations (adapted to local context)
- Local ‘Systems Approach’- inter-department multi-level, inter-council, multi-agency working
- Enhanced relationship with local community groups, VCSOs, and people with lived experience
- Learning opportunities for staff & Cllrs about matters of forced migration
- Opportunities to work with other LAs and share good practice
- Improved preparedness to respond to emergencies
- Steer the direction of the LAs network
- Resource savings resulting from partnership working and sharing of good practice
- Stronger more cohesive communities
- Kind and inclusive practices/services
The Role of CoS groups

• Where can groups we start?
  • Build positive relationships with Councillors or officers
  • Encourage LAs to join the network from the grass-roots level

• CoS UK staff, together with groups create the opportunity for policy and culture change in councils

• CoS groups and the LA work together to co-create policy/strategy suitable for the local context

• Accountability via public meetings and ongoing conversations
Final thoughts

• Change can happen quickly
• We are globally connected- No one is safe until we are all safe
• Communities are built on relationships
• Proximity matters
• Working in partnership working can deliver great results locally
• Wherever we came from, we all deserve to feel safe in our homes and communities
• Welcome is for everyone, not just those who have fled war and persecution
• Engagement with and centring those with lived experience in this process to help identify what welcome/integration can really mean