



Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy

*Partnership strategy between Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell's
local organisations and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council*



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Introduction

The aim of this strategy is to establish and deliver a partnership between Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell's local organisations and Sandwell Council.

Our vision is for Sandwell to be a sanctuary borough, that welcomes those fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries and protects the rights of all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. A 'Borough of Sanctuary' is a borough which provides a welcoming place of safety for people who are asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. **Appendix one** details key definitions for the purpose of this strategy.

We want Sandwell to be a welcoming place of safety for those arriving in the borough. We recognise that how individuals and families arriving in Sandwell are supported to settle and integrate into their communities is vitally important to enable them to feel welcome and part of their local communities. A welcoming place for all will bring benefits for all of Sandwell's residents and communities across the borough.

This strategy sets out the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell local organisations and Sandwell Council's commitments to welcoming and integrating individuals and families who arrive in Sandwell. This strategy co-ordinates the approach of council officers and organisations, council-wide and borough-wide, delivering services to those arriving and settling in Sandwell.

That's why we're committed to becoming a Borough of Sanctuary, and for Sandwell Council to be an equal and active member of the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell partnership. We want to make sure that Sandwell is inclusive and welcoming, that we are meeting people's specific needs, and that we listen to and amplify the voices of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

The strategy is for five years with a review built in after the second year to ensure the strategy best enables us, as a partnership, to support individuals and families arriving in Sandwell. This will enable services to develop with the stability of a medium-term strategic directive while allowing the strategy to be responsive to any changes and progress.



What welcome means to Sandwell

Across the borough we have a wide range of third-sector partners and community groups providing specialist support and delivering community events and activities. Thimblemill Library in Smethwick was recognised nationally as the first Library of Sanctuary and a tailored pathway of support is available to newly arriving children, young people, and families as part of Sandwell's Transition, Education and Partnership Service- Sandwell's first School of Sanctuary. As part of the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership, we want to continue to build our local offer, both as a council and through community-led actions, to those seeking sanctuary in Sandwell and tailor services and provision to best meet the needs of existing and newly emerging communities across the borough.

As part of the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership, we want to ensure that asylum seekers, refugees and migrants can:

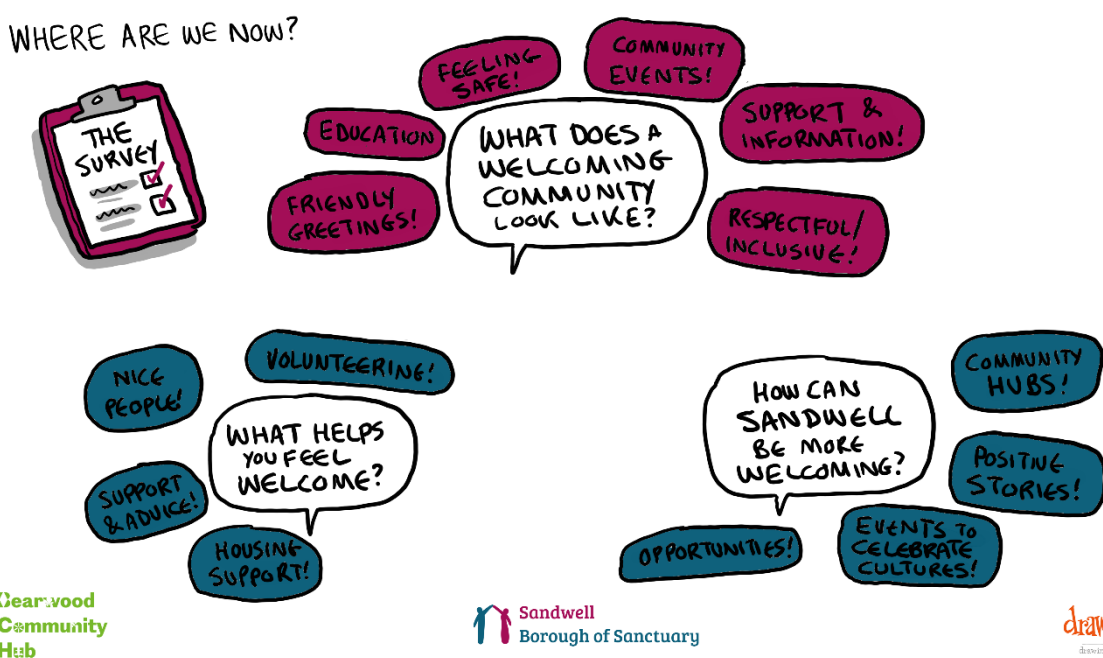
- thrive safely in their communities
- build diverse positive relationships locally
- understand their rights, responsibilities, and entitlements
- access well-coordinated and effective services
- and inform local policy and programmes where individuals wish to be more involved.

The overall aim of the partnership is to make Sandwell a welcoming place for individuals and families seeking sanctuary in the Borough, by working to:

- strengthen collaboration and partnerships between local businesses, schools, the council, healthcare providers, and other organisations to support the integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants in the community
- develop training and support programs for volunteers and community members to promote understanding and empathy for the experiences of refugees and migrants, and to equip them with the skills needed to support these individuals
- promote and protect the mental health and wellbeing of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants, who may have experienced trauma and face significant challenges adjusting to a new environment
- advocate for policy changes at the local, regional, and national levels that support the rights and needs of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants.



In April 2023, the partnership undertook a consultation exercise with over 40 attendees to understand what a 'welcoming Sandwell' looks like and to establish the approach we need to take to become a borough of sanctuary for all. The consultation workshop included representation from local and national groups, residents, the council, and people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in Sandwell to understand what issues meant the most to them. The consultation highlighted a need to further explore issues related to accessing healthcare, housing conditions, and communication with services and local authorities, as well as access to ESOL classes. The following drawings capture some of the discussions from the session:



Sandwell's Local Context

Over the past decade, the population size in Sandwell has grown by 11% from 308,100 in 2011, to 341,832 in 2021.



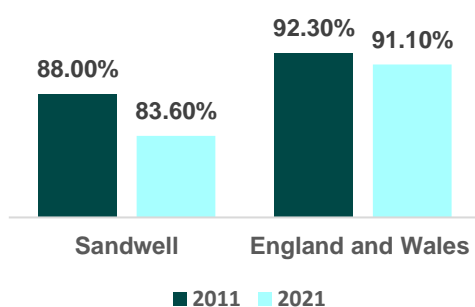
The overall population increase was much greater in comparison to the West Midlands (6.2%) and the rest of England and Wales (6.6%)¹.

In Sandwell, almost one in four (23.6%) usual residents were born outside the UK, compared with one in six nationally.

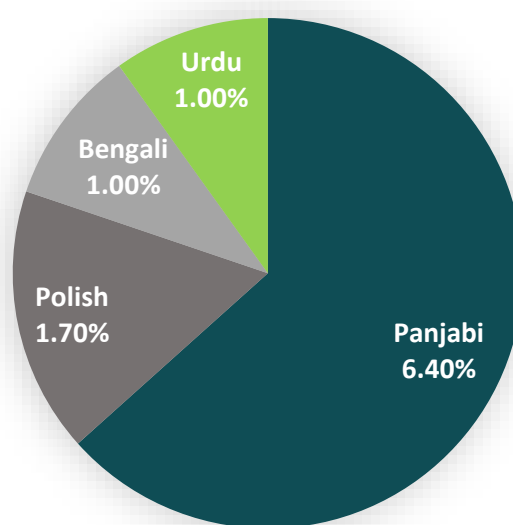


This proportion puts the borough in the top 50 Local Authorities across England & Wales for this measure².

In 2021, 83.6% of Sandwell's population, aged three years and over, had English as a main language, compared with 91.1% in England & Wales. The Sandwell figure is down from 88.0% in 2011³.



The most common main languages spoken in Sandwell (other than English)



¹ National Census 2021 England and Wales

² National Census 2021 England and Wales

³ National Census 2021 England and Wales

Welcoming resettlement in Sandwell

Sandwell has a proud history of supporting individuals resettling. Everyone who seeks to make our borough their home is welcome here – no matter where you are from in the world. We are proud to celebrate the achievements and contributions that refugees, migrants and asylum seekers have made. Across the borough, you'll see their influence everywhere you go.

You'll come across individuals from across the world in every walk of life. You might be treated by nurses and doctors in our hospitals or taught by teachers in our schools. You could be supported by carers in care homes, driven in buses and trains, served in shops, or cared for in hospices. Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants have helped shape our borough in so many profound ways.

Sandwell's History of Migration and Resettlement

International migration has helped to shape Sandwell's population, communities and identity for decades. Mass migration, primarily from countries in the New Commonwealth, arose through the 'pull' of UK labour shortages in the 1950s and 60s with many arriving from the Indian subcontinent – a significant number of Afro-Caribbean immigrants also settled in the local authority too⁴. Areas such as Smethwick attracted a high concentration of immigration in the post-war years because of plentiful employment opportunities and accessible private housing, in addition to its proximity to Birmingham. In recent decades, free movement of labour has resulted in increased migration to Sandwell from European Union countries. As a result, Sandwell is a diverse borough with many well-established migrant communities across Sandwell's six towns and continues to welcome the emergence of new communities⁵.



A black and white photograph of the Sikh Temple, High Street, Smethwick, formerly Congregational Church. Interior view showing some of the members. 9th June 1963. *Sandwell Archives (PHS/8621)*.

⁴ Politics, Governance and the Shaping of Smethwick Since 1945, Adam John Carey

⁵ Social and Public Service Impacts of International Migration at the Local Level

Migration and Resettlement in Sandwell Today

International migration has been a major driver of population change, first from the Commonwealth then from Europe and globally, including asylum seekers and refugees. Over the past decade, the population size in Sandwell has grown by 11% - from 308,100 in 2011, to 341,832 in 2021 - the overall population increase was much greater in comparison to the West Midlands (6.2%) and the rest of England and Wales (6.6%)⁶.

In Sandwell, the 2021 Census found that almost one in four (23.6%) usual residents were born outside the UK, compared with one in six nationally - this proportion puts the Borough in the top 50 Local Authorities across England & Wales for this measure. In the last decade, this proportion has increased by 7.7%.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Armed conflict and human rights abuses has seen many families and individuals fleeing their own countries to seek a welcoming place of safety.

The West Midlands is currently the 4th largest of all 12 UK regions for welcoming asylum seekers and refugees⁷. Sandwell has been accommodating people through the Home Office's contracted dispersal programme for decades – most recent projects include the Afghanistan resettlement and Homes for Ukraine schemes. Sandwell has around 1,100 asylum seekers dispersed in the Borough⁸.

For the cohort of asylum seekers who have resettled in the past two and a half years, the most common country of origin was Iran with 31.1%, followed by Iraq with 19.8%. The remaining countries include Albania (9.3%), Afghanistan (7.1%), Syria (5.4%) Sudan (5.1%), El Salvador (4.5%), Eritrea (3.1%), India (2.3%) and Turkey (2.0%)⁹.

For a further breakdown of language composition, migration and asylum statistics please see **appendix two**.

⁶ National Census 2021 England and Wales

⁷ Migrant Health in the West Midlands, Public Health England

⁸ Migration Statistics Briefing, West Midlands Migrant Strategic Partnership

⁹ Serco



Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell

The Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell network of partners aims to engage individuals and organisations across the borough to join us in enacting the principles of the Cities of Sanctuary movement.

We are working to become a recognised Borough of Sanctuary, working alongside partners to take practical steps to welcome and include refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in our activities, and to actively seek ways of supporting them wherever we can.

Borough of Sanctuary Charter

The following Borough of Sanctuary Charter has been agreed by Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell.

Vision We hold the vision that the UK, and specifically Sandwell will be a welcoming place of safety for all and is proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

Our Values Borough of sanctuary Sandwell will be guided and informed by commitment to the following values:-

Inclusiveness: We welcome and respect people from all backgrounds, place the highest value on diversity and are committed to equality.

Openness: We are committed to a culture of working collaboratively and in partnership with others.

Participation Those who support our vision work together with people seeking sanctuary. We value and recognise the contribution of all involved. We aspire to ensure people seeking sanctuary are fully involved in decision making processes and are supported to become leaders within the Borough of Sanctuary organisation and network as well as within the wider movement.

Inspiring We work with enthusiasm and positivity and are determined to surpass what has already been achieved to welcome refugees and people seeking sanctuary. We act as a catalyst for change by being open to new and innovative ideas and through sharing knowledge gained with others and working in partnership.

Integrity We aspire to high standards of honesty and behaviour, and always to act in the interests of people seeking sanctuary.

Additional information on the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell, and details of how organisations can join, can be found at: <https://sandwell.cityofsanctuary.org/>



Sandwell Council's strategic vision

Sandwell Council recognises that providing a welcoming place of safety is about more than just how people arrive in Sandwell, and are welcomed, and that how they settle and integrate in the borough is just as important.

Sandwell Council's corporate plan details how we are working to create a fairer Sandwell through investing locally, doing things with the community, being green in everything we do and ensuring no one gets left behind.

We must be proactive to ensure we work in partnership to create a welcoming place of safety for individuals and families arriving in Sandwell. Following the framework of this strategy ensures the council takes a joined-up 'One Council, One Team' approach to best support individuals and families accessing services and formalises the council's role in wider work on sanctuary across the borough.

Sandwell Vision 2030

Sandwell has a clear vision for what the borough should look and feel like by 2030. In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community. It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong. Our vision for Sandwell:



Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.



We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.



Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.



We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.



Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.



Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.



Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high-quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.



Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.



Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.



Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.

Sandwell Vision 2030 is inclusive of all residents whether they were born in Sandwell or have recently arrived from other parts of the world as refugees, asylum seekers or migrants. We want those arriving in the borough to feel Sandwell is a place they want to bring up their families, to feel safe and cared for, to enjoy good health and rewarding work, be confident in the future and feel connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities.

Objectives for the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership

The following joint objectives have been developed and agreed by Sandwell Council and the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell local organisations. They are recognised by senior management, frontline officers delivering services and political leaders within the council alongside being recognised by local charities, organisations, residents, and services that form Sandwell's multi-agency local Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership.

A detailed action plan will be developed by the Borough of Sanctuary partners, identifying the specific actions required, who is responsible, and timeframes involved which will be monitored to evidence impact the action plan. The action plan template can be found in **appendix three**.

The partnership will work together as a network to make Sandwell a Borough of Sanctuary. We will strive to build a welcoming place for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, whilst also promoting integration and community cohesion.

- The partnership will build strong and resilient communities through cohesion and support. Furthermore, we want groups to contribute their decades of experience and expertise to our collaborative vision and draw on the individual strengths of each partner.
- The partnership will constantly strive for excellence and best practice in our service delivery and partnership working. We will seek to uphold the dignity and worth of every migrant, refugee and asylum seeker in the borough.
- The partnership will work to identify gaps in provision and encourage the diverse range of refugee and asylum support organisations in the borough to work together.

The partnership will promote a culture of inclusion between Sandwell residents and support a mutual understanding in which longer-standing communities feel able to understand and welcome migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

- The partnership will not tolerate a hostile environment towards individuals resettling in the Borough. Rather, we will celebrate and be strengthened by our diversity and the values we hold which enable and empower it.
- The partnership will challenge the negative perceptions and misleading narratives of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the media, through facts and positive stories of integration.
- The partnership will challenge and question policy changes at a local, regional, and national level that support the rights and needs of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. We will assist and educate those seeking sanctuary as to what rights and entitlements they do have.



The partnership will enhance opportunities for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to utilise and develop their skills, to access opportunities to support themselves and their families which contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the borough.

- The partnership will provide opportunities for resettled individuals to apply their skills, determination, and enthusiasm within the local Sandwell economy.
- The partnership will help support those facing discrimination and lack of equal opportunities in labour markets and in work. We will actively engage in developing pathways for people who are resettling with leave to stay and the right to work in the UK into a number of different programmes.
- The partnership will support those who do not have the right to work in order to access volunteering opportunities that meet their aspirations and increase their employability.

The partnership will advocate the engagement of those seeking sanctuary in decision making processes at all levels and in all activities.

- The partnership wants our sanctuary-seekers to feel like their resettlement status does not limit their access to support and that they feel both heard and a valued part of our communities.
- The partnership will engage people seeking sanctuary in all activities to promote understanding of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker issues, especially by enabling voices to be heard directly.
- The partnership will play a proactive role as a network in empowering key stakeholders across the borough to make changes to the systems that affect them to ensure that the issues affecting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are raised and addressed.

A statement from Sandwell Council

As a local authority, we will commit to doing everything in our power to make Sandwell a welcoming place of safety for people who are asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. By working proactively, we can make our neighbourhoods places of sanctuary, where everyone can build a life, be part of the community and get the support they need. We will demonstrate strong local leadership through working proactively with national and local government, the voluntary and community sector, faith bodies and our local communities on Borough of Sanctuary initiatives.

We wholeheartedly endorse this strategy, and we are committed to its successful delivery; we will set a standard that the council will honour and build-on as we continue our journey as part of a Borough of Sanctuary.



Embedding Sanctuary as a partnership

All six of Sandwell's strategic objectives relate to the aims of the partnership. The following strategic outcomes, which are outlined in the council's Corporate Plan, have formed the basis of our framework. Through applying the six strategic outcomes, we have defined our approach to ensuring that the work we do, and services we provide, as a local authority and local organisations contributes to creating a welcoming place of safety for individuals and families who arrive in Sandwell as asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

The partnership has applied the strategic outcomes to creating a welcoming place of safety for those arriving in the borough.

Strategic Outcome



We will support families to be able to engage with relevant providers of services such as childcare, family support, schools and activities for children and young people.

- Education and language learning for children and young people
- Dedicated support for newly arrived children and young people in school environments
- Early years support
- Family support
- Activities for children and young people outside of school



We will enable individuals and families to settle in Sandwell by sharing information and signposting to wellbeing activities, healthcare, and welfare provisions.

- Support for individuals to know their rights and access healthcare and welfare benefits
- Creating safe places to engage and access information
- Language learning for adults (ESOL)



We will work with communities to build relationships, support each other, and celebrate communities and culture.

- Building welcoming communities
- Taking part in community activities
- Create more opportunities for community enterprise
- Sharing and celebrating communities and cultures



Strategic Outcome



QUALITY HOMES IN
THRIVING
NEIGHBOURHOODS

We will take a holistic approach and support individuals throughout their housing journey.

- Wrap around support for transition from temporary accommodation
- Support individuals and families to feel safe and at home
- Provision of affordable and quality homes
- Provision of move-on accommodation



A STRONG AND INCLUSIVE
ECONOMY

We will advocate for and promote services that offer opportunities for individuals to use their skills and access employment and language support.

- Sharing opportunities to engage in employment that utilises individuals experience, qualifications, and transferrable skills
- Employment and volunteering opportunities
- Recognition of migrant expertise in the workforce and sharing with young people
- ESOL classes and language support for work purposes



A CONNECTED AND
ACCESSIBLE SANDWELL

We will work to ensure there is a cohesive transport model across the six towns that helps to promote social connectedness.

- Social connectedness and accessibility to services
- Access to and affordability of public transport
- Clear information about public transport and how to get around the Borough
- Signposting to wider support services and community activities



Dearwood
Community
Hub

Action Planning

This strategy will inform actions for local organisations and directorates within the council. The action plan will set out how the council and Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell local organisations will work in partnership to create a welcoming place of safety for individuals and families seeking sanctuary in Sandwell.

Governance

The aims of this strategy and actions detailed within the action plan will be monitored by Sandwell's Borough of Sanctuary Partnership Group. The partnership group consists of representatives from local organisations alongside the council's Resettlement Co-Ordinator and representation from council directorates.

The Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership Group enables collaborative working between the council and local organisations, residents, and local businesses. As part of the group, partners can collectively engage with national organisations and respond to policy changes at a local, regional, and national level to support the rights and needs of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants.

Local organisation and council leads will need to ensure that their organisation or directorate within the council are working on their actions and will be accountable to the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership Group.

Within the council, the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership Group is one of the council's several thematic sub-groups that reports to the Sandwell New Arrivals Partnership (SNAP), which feeds into and receives updates from the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (<https://www.wmsmp.org.uk/>).



Appendix 1: Definitions

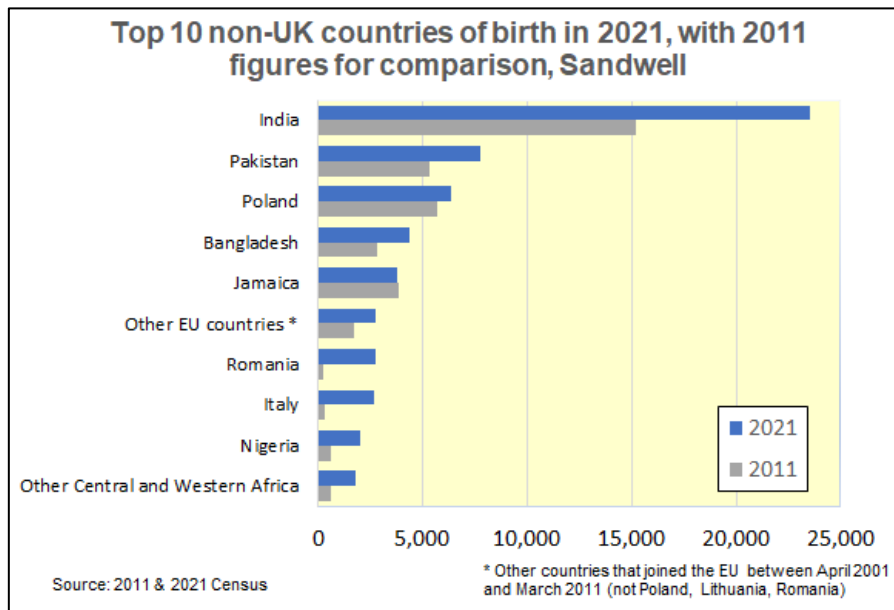
There are some core concepts that this strategy centres on which need to have a common meaning across the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership. These are defined for the purpose of this strategy as set out below:

- An **asylum seeker**, or a **person seeking asylum**, is someone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum but whose application has not yet been concluded, where **asylum** is protection or safety given by a government to people forced to leave their own countries for fear of persecution.
- **UASC** stands for **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children** and refers to children who are outside their country of origin to seek asylum, are separated from parents and relatives, and are not in the care of someone who is responsible for them in a guardianship role.
- A **refugee** is someone who:
 - i. has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and
 - ii. is outside the country of their nationality; and
 - iii. is unable, or owing to their well-founded fear unwilling, to avail themselves of the protection of that country.
- In the UK, a person becomes a refugee when government agrees that their application for asylum meets this definition (taken from the Refugee Convention) and recognises them as a refugee. The other route for refugee status in the UK is to be accepted onto one of the dedicated resettlement schemes prior to arrival.
- The **Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme** (both up to 2020/21) or the **Global Resettlement Scheme** (from 2020/21) refer to specific programmes where the Home Office and United Nations Human Rights Committee identify the most vulnerable refugees for resettlement. The **refugee resettlement programme** is how we refer to this programme in the Council, where we accept referrals to welcome and resettle these families.
- A **migrant** is someone who has moved from one country to another, not for reasons of asylum or refuge. Often the move is for work, education or to be with family.

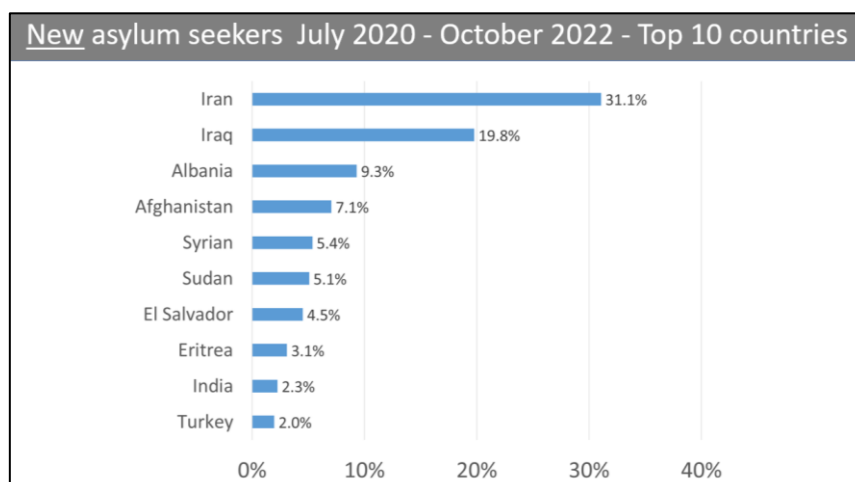


Appendix 2: Sandwell's Local Context- Data

The table below gives some breakdown to migration in Sandwell and their country of origin¹⁰:



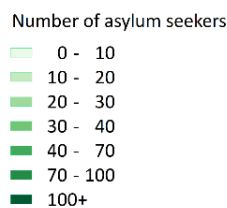
- India remained the most common country of birth outside the UK in 2021 with 6.9% of the population. Relatively large proportions of Sandwell residents were born in Pakistan (2.3%) and Bangladesh (1.3%).
- The number of people living in Sandwell who were born in Poland grew slightly 0.1% since the previous census, from 1.8% in 2011 to 1.9% in 2021. Whereas the number born in Romania saw a fairly significant increase from 0.1% in 2022 to 0.8% in 2021.
- 13.9% of Sandwell residents owned a non-UK passport; the most common non-UK passport held was Polish (2.0% of the population).
- 0.8% of the population had an address outside the UK one year before the census.



¹⁰ National Census 2021 England and Wales



Individuals and families seeking asylum in Sandwell are living across a number of wards within the Borough, most commonly in the areas of St. Pauls, Smethwick and Soho and Victoria. However, there are several wards within Sandwell where no asylum seekers are placed – including Great Barr, Newton, Princes End, Hateley Heath, Charlemont with Grove Vale and Blackheath¹¹. This suggests that there has been some disproportionate dispersal in the re-settlement of migrants in wards and towns in Sandwell.



Language Composition







- In 2021, 11.3% (14,750) of households consisted of members who had different main languages.
- In 2021, 83.6% of Sandwell’s population, aged three years and over, had English as a main language, compared with 91.1% in England & Wales. The Sandwell figure is down from 88.0% in 2011¹².
- A further 5.2% of Census respondents stated they were proficient in English (saying they speak it very well) but did not speak it as their main language.
- The most common main languages spoken in Sandwell, other than English were: Panjabi (6.4%), Polish (1.7%), Bengali (1.0%) and Urdu (1.0%).
- The largest increase was for people who specified Punjabi as a main language, rising by 2.1% in the past decade.

¹¹ Serco

¹² National Census 2021 England and Wales



Appendix 3: Template of thematic action plan

Strategic Outcome	Thematic areas of focus	Action	Lead Organisation	Evidence of impact and involvement of individuals with lived experience	Examples of support and services we currently offer and can build upon
 <p>THE BEST START IN LIFE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and language learning for children and young people - Dedicated support for newly arrived children and young people in school environments - Early years support - Family support - Activities for children and young people outside of school 				
 <p>PEOPLE LIVE WELL AND AGE WELL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for individuals to know their rights and access healthcare and welfare benefits - Creating safe places to engage and access information - Language learning for adults (ESOL) 				
 <p>STRONG RESILIENT COMMUNITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building welcoming communities - Taking part in community activities - Create more opportunities for community enterprise - Sharing and celebrating communities and cultures 				
 <p>QUALITY HOMES IN THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wrap around support for transition from temporary accommodation - Support individuals and families to feel safe and at home - Provision of affordable and quality homes - Provision of move-on accommodation 				
 <p>A STRONG AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing opportunities to engage in employment that utilises individuals experience, qualifications, and transferrable skills - Employment and volunteering opportunities - Recognition of migrant expertise in the workforce and sharing with young people - ESOL classes and language support for work purposes 				
 <p>A CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE SANDWELL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social connectedness and accessibility to services - Access to and affordability of public transport - Clear information about public transport and how to get around the Borough - Signposting to wider support services and community activities 				





Contact us

If you have any questions about this strategy or the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership please email Bossandwell@gmail.com

To find out more, and for details of how to get involved, please visit www.sandwell.cityofsanctuary.org

Please visit the Settling in Sandwell webpage to find out about support for individuals and families settling in Sandwell www.sandwell.gov.uk/settlinginsandwell

