Motion F: Haringey, a Borough of Sanctuary

Proposer: ~~**Councillor Luisa Brands**~~ **Councillor Lucia das Neves**

Seconder: ~~**Councillor Anne Gray**~~ **Councillor Andrea Hodgson**

This Council notes:

Haringey is a diverse, welcoming and proudly multicultural borough, enriched by people from across the world who have made their lives here. Refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and people seeking sanctuary contribute enormously to the social, cultural and economic life of our borough.

Haringey has a long tradition of standing against racism, discrimination and injustice, and of supporting those fleeing war, persecution, violence, oppression and increasingly the impacts of climate breakdown. Across the world, millions of people are currently displaced from their homes. Many people seeking sanctuary face serious barriers, including insecure housing, poverty, restricted access to employment, healthcare and education, family separation, trauma and uncertainty about their future. Women and children are often particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence.

The City of Sanctuary movement has demonstrated how councils and communities can work together to foster a culture of welcome, promote inclusion, challenge racism and support people seeking safety to rebuild their lives.

Haringey councillors from across the political spectrum signed the Haringey Welcome Pledge during the 2026 local elections, committing themselves to supporting migrant residents, removing barriers to public services, opposing harmful immigration policies wherever legally possible, and reviewing contracts and practices that may contribute to the hostile environment.

The previous administration established Haringey as a Borough of Welcome embedding support for refugees and asylum seeking people within council services. This included ending information sharing regarding rough sleepers with the Home Office, extending free school meals to under documented people and those with No Recourse to Public Funds and introducing the borough's first Welcome Strategy.

~~In recent weeks we have seen the Government introduce new policies placing conditionalities on entitlement to settlement in the UK that particularly affect lower paid migrant workers and refugees.~~ Parliament is currently considering significant changes to both the settlement and asylum system. In some cases, these proposals will be applied retrospectively. ~~These plans will apply to those already here as well as newcomers and will force some people to wait up to 30 years before they will be allowed to remain in the UK indefinitely~~. These~~y~~ will divide communities, making it harder for people to put down roots, and lead to increased hardship, instability poverty

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and homelessnesss.s, ~~with large numbers of people unable to plan for their long term future.~~ -

Recent years have seen a significant increase in immigration enforcement activity nationwide, including workplace immigration raids. Such operations create fear within communities, undermine trust in public institutions and disproportionately affect racialised and migrant communities.

Immigration enforcement activity increasingly relies upon cooperation and information-sharing between public bodies, private contractors and enforcement agencies. Where residents fear that engaging with public institutions may expose them to immigration enforcement, they may be deterred from seeking housing support, healthcare, safeguarding assistance or reporting crime.

The Government is moving to introduce the Asylum and Immigration Bill~~, despite an array of negative impacts that will inflict further harm on some of our most vulnerable residents, increase financial pressure on stretched statutory services, and damage relationships and cohesion in our communities~~. T~~his includes forcing destitute people seeking a~~Alongside welcome plans to open new safe and legal routes for women and children from Gaza and Afghanistan, the Bill would require asylum seeking people~~sylum~~ to repay their support costs and preventing them from settling until they do so; changing the infrastructure of the appeals process, using people who are not qualified lawyers to make decisions; limiting the right to family life and increased restrictions on victims of modern slavery. These changes put our residents at risk and will result in vulnerable residents being pushed into crisis and experiencing unnecessary harm.

Statutory services and VCS organisations providing crucial support will be further stretched without a proportionate increase in funding to safeguard service provision.

The ~~lack of~~ limited funding available for legal aid and government funded immigration advice and support continues to result in people falling out of the immigration process, facing destitution and exploitation. The Government has delivered the first increase in legal aid hourly rates for immigration since 1996, but there remains severe gaps in advice provision. -

This Council believes:

1. Seeking sanctuary is a fundamental human right.
2. People should be treated with dignity, compassion and humanity regardless of their immigration status, nationality, ethnicity, faith or country of origin.

3. Strong, inclusive communities are built through welcome, solidarity and mutual support, not through fear, exclusion or the stigmatisation of migrants and refugees.

4. Haringey's commitment to sanctuary is inseparable from its commitment to anti-racism. The Council recognises that racism affects different communities in different ways, including through antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Roma racism, anti-Asian racism, xenophobia and hostility towards migrants and refugees. A Borough of Sanctuary must be a borough where all communities are able to live free from discrimination, where acts of hatred are challenged wherever they occur, and where solidarity is built across communities rather than placing them in competition with one another.

5. Home Office immigration enforcement practices, including immigration raids, can undermine community cohesion, deter people from accessing essential services and place vulnerable residents at risk.

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6. Residents should be able to access local authority services, healthcare, education, safeguarding and support services without fear that doing so may expose them to immigration enforcement.

7. Public resources should be used to support residents and strengthen communities and should not, wherever legally possible, be used to facilitate hostile environment policies.

8. Effective community safety depends upon trust between residents and public institutions, and that trust is damaged when public bodies are perceived to participate in immigration enforcement activity.

9. The Council should support migrant residents to settle and thrive, ensure public services are accessible on the basis of need, and, wherever legally possible, avoid participating in policies and practices that cause harm to residents.

10. Becoming a Borough of Sanctuary should be more than a symbolic designation. It should represent a practical commitment to making Haringey a borough where everyone can live in safety, dignity and belonging.

11. That there will remain cases where Home Office intervention is appropriate and necessary including those involving serious crime, human trafficking and modern slavery. Any borough policies must ensure work to tackle these crimes is not inadvertantly impacted.

This Council resolves to:

1. Become a recognised Borough of Sanctuary

Engage with the City of Sanctuary network and local refugee and migrant-led organisations with the aim of achieving recognised Sanctuary status and affirm the Council's commitment to standing in solidarity with refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and all people seeking safety.

2. Strengthen support for residents

Continue strengthening access to independent immigration and legal advice, housing advice, English language provision, education, employment support, healthcare, mental health services and community participation opportunities for people seeking sanctuary.

3. Refresh the Welcome Strategy and develop a Welcome Action Plan

Cabinet to continue the refresh of the Council's Welcome Strategy with direct involvement from frontline organisations and residents with lived experience, ensuring services are accessible, compassionate and designed around dignity and need. Ensure the Action Plan sets our practical and measurable actions with annual reporting by the Cabinet Member to Full Council.

4. Review information sharing and cooperation

To maintain the council's longheld policy of not sharing information on rough sleepers and built on this through ~~Undertake~~ a review of Council information-sharing practices, protocols, data-sharing agreements and operational arrangements relating to immigration enforcement, including arrangements involving contractors, external partners and policing bodies, to ensure the rights of migrants and refugees are upheld, whilst maintaining collaborative work to tackle serious crime including modern slavery.

5. Protect services from immigration enforcement practices as far as possible

Commit to the council considering whether, acting within its lawful discretion, it should comply with particular HO requests, so that residents can access housing, safeguarding, education, public health and other essential services without fear of immigration consequences.

6 Object to harmful immigration enforcement practices

Publicly condemn the use of immigration raids and enforcement practices that undermine trust, community cohesion and public safety, and write to the Home Secretary calling for an end to such practices.

7. Support residents to know their rights

Work with migrant support organisations, law centres, faith groups, trade unions, community organisations and anti-raids networks to ensure residents and local businesses have access to accurate know-your-rights information, independent advice and practical support when facing immigration enforcement activity.

8. Champion sanctuary across the borough

Encourage schools, public institutions, faith communities, businesses and voluntary organisations to adopt sanctuary principles, celebrate Haringey's diversity and actively challenge racism, xenophobia and misinformation about migrants and refugees.

9. Champion sanctuary across London

Join with other local authorities pursuing Sanctuary principles, alongside migrant organisations, law centres, anti-raids networks, faith groups and community organisations, to develop an anti-raids Sanctuary corridor across London, sharing best practice, strengthening Council-wide Sanctuary policies, improving support for migrants and refugees, and objecting to hostile environment policies and harmful immigration enforcement activity.

10. Advocate nationally

Use the Council's voice to advocate for a humane asylum and immigration system, including:

- the right to work for people seeking asylum;
- fair and secure pathways to settlement and citizenship;
- immigration rules that protect workers from exploitation and workplace abuse;
- safeguards that enable workers to leave unsafe employment and raise concerns without fear of immigration consequences;
- access to safe and secure accommodation;
- timely access to healthcare and education;
- family reunion;
- safe routes for people seeking asylum and refuge;
- adequately funded support services; and
- immigration policies that reduce hardship rather than deepen poverty and exclusion.