



# The Vulnerability of Sanctuary Seekers

*Volunteer Support Workers, Hosts and staff will hold an Enhanced DBS check before engaging with any Sanctuary Seekers within Swindon City of Sanctuary. This is essential to ensuring that all volunteers and staff working with Sanctuary Seekers have no history of abuse, grooming or exploitation.*

The term 'Sanctuary seekers' refers to refugees, asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants that we work with in Swindon City of Sanctuary.

Sanctuary seekers are vulnerable adults due to their immigration situation, a high rate of mental and physical health issues and a lack of autonomy.

Many sanctuary seekers suffer from mental health issues such as, but not limited to, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression and Anxiety. There is a much higher percentage of sanctuary seekers with mental health issues than the general public. Many asylum seekers come from a background of trafficking on their journeys to the UK and are still at risk (or are being) trafficked in the UK both through prostitution and modern slavery. Because of this, they are vulnerable to physical, mental and sexual abuse.

The language barrier that arises also makes them more susceptible to grooming and exploitation as they have a general lack of understanding of the way of life in the UK; have a lack of autonomy over their personal affairs such as money, benefit accounts, housing and passwords; they are more likely to accept what someone advises them as true due to their lack of experience in the UK and a lack of English language. It is very likely they will be unable to communicate their needs clearly or alert someone when there is danger or a safeguarding issue.

Sanctuary seekers have a general fearfulness in the UK, due to their immigration status and lack of understanding. This leaves them open to bribery, blackmail and threats of reporting adverse factors about them to authorities. Sanctuary seekers fleeing from authoritarian countries also present a fearfulness of the police and those holding authority and so are less likely to report incidents or fears of abuse.

They are also more vulnerable to radicalisation.

Many of the sanctuary seekers we work with are, or are about to be, destitute. They may not disclose fully, due to the language barrier or fearfulness, their personal history or any mental or physical health problem they have.

Sanctuary seekers living in a Host's property will have all their confidential paperwork stored within the home- there is not likely to be a safe locked area for them to store it. This leaves them vulnerable to fraud and exploitation.