



Cathedral of Sanctuary Artist in Residence

Purpose

Chester Cathedral became a Cathedral of Sanctuary in 2023 and, with the help of Cheshire West and Chester Council Sanctuary Funding, is seeking to develop its successful Artist-in-Residence programme to reflect its commitment to this cause. This initiative will provide a powerful platform for artists with lived experience of seeking sanctuary or expertise in migration themes, offering opportunities to share authentic stories and challenge narratives of exclusion and othering.

Through the creation and curation of artwork, this project will explore fresh and engaging ways to present stories of sanctuary in the unique context of the Cathedral - connecting with its people, history, and the faith that underpins its mission of welcome.

Outline

Chester Cathedral is firmly committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Through this initiative, we are actively seeking to reach new and more diverse audiences in our events and exhibitions programming. Our expectations include the following:

- *Listening and Learning:* The artist-in-residence will work closely with those seeking sanctuary in Chester and beyond, providing a platform where their voices and experiences shape the creative process. Their insights and stories will guide the project, making it truly representative of their lived experiences.
- *Creating Welcoming Spaces:* Workshops and events will be designed with accessibility in mind, including language support, physical access, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that everyone can participate fully and meaningfully.
- *Growing Together:* The knowledge and perspectives gained through this initiative will shape Chester Cathedral's ongoing efforts towards inclusivity. By embedding these learnings into our wider work, we strengthen our ability to support marginalised communities through art and culture.

Through this residency, we want to create more than just an art project - we want to build a lasting, welcoming space where people can share their stories, form meaningful connections, and feel a genuine sense of belonging. Our goal is to

amplify voices that are too often unheard, bringing communities together and enriching the cultural landscape.

The artist's practice may encompass a range of forms, including painting, ceramics, photography, sculpture, and site-specific installations. Importantly, they will actively engage with schools, local communities, and the Chester City of Sanctuary group.

We would especially welcome interest from artists with lived experience of seeking sanctuary. A key focus will be working collaboratively with those who have lived experience of sanctuary, as well as organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, including Chester's City of Sanctuary group and the CWAC Refugee and Asylum Seeker Team, to co-create new artworks that weave together the Cathedral's historical narratives and contemporary experiences of displacement and belonging.

Outcomes and Impact

The residency will culminate in an annual public exhibition at the Cathedral, supplemented by workshops, community engagement activities, and discussion forums. By amplifying the voices of those with lived experience, we aim to foster empathy, increase awareness of refugee and asylum-seeker issues, and encourage meaningful social connections.

Evaluation and monitoring will form part of the project throughout and the artist will be supported in creating opportunities for regular feedback by members of the Communications Team. At the end of the first year, there will be a formal review of the residency, evaluating its impact and planning for sustainability beyond the second year. This review will include discussions with the artist, community partners, and Cathedral stakeholders to explore opportunities for long-term support and integration.

Expected Timeline

- April 2025: Invitation of expressions of interest to be received by end of May
- June 2025: Shortlisting and interviews
- September 2025: Residency begins

Grant - £8,000 p.a. (from CWAC Sanctuary Funding)

Benefits

The selected artist will be appointed for an initial period of two years and will receive access to dedicated facilities, workshop spaces, and exhibition opportunities, alongside structured support from the Canon Missioner through quarterly meetings. They will also benefit from integration into the Cathedral's volunteer hub and professional development opportunities.

How to apply

Send your CV, Artist's Statement and a covering letter detailing why you are interested in this residency at Chester Cathedral to Canon Dr Anthony Lees-Smith, Canon Missioner by email to anthony.lees-smith@chestercathedral.com no later than 31 May 2025.