



UK first for Sanctuary Club Brighton

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For its work with refugees, Brighton Table Tennis Club (BTTC) has become the first sports club in the UK to be awarded Club of Sanctuary status.

The award is in recognition of its work with 15 unaccompanied refugee minors during the last 18 months from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan and Vietnam. One of them is now a qualified coach and another is training for his coach's badge.

The award was made by Brighton and Hove's Sanctuary on Sea organisation, which is part of the national-wide City of Sanctuary movement. The other 70 member cities and towns include London, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Cardiff, Leeds, Belfast, Plymouth and Newcastle.

Tim Holtam, BTTC Director, said: "We are greatly honoured to be the first club to achieve this recognition. We believe sport has a critical role to play in helping these young people to become part of our society.

"Table tennis is a truly accessible sport, and almost everybody had played it at one time or another. Our thanks go to the Brighton and Hove Virtual School and the city social work team who are hugely supportive of the club's work."

Jenny Lansdell, Chair of Brighton and Hove Sanctuary on Sea, said: "We are delighted to present the first Club of Sanctuary award in the country to Brighton Table Tennis Club for its impressive work with unaccompanied refugee minors. This will hopefully be the first of many clubs in Brighton and Hove to put into reality our welcome to refugees and asylum seekers."

The club recently received Table Tennis England's annual Equality Award for its work with unaccompanied minors, looked after children and people with learning difficulties. Club member Harry Fairchild is a national Down Syndrome champion, and the club takes part in international tournaments for those with learning difficulties in Sweden, Germany and Italy. The Grace Eyre Foundation, Special Olympics Brighton and Hove and the Sports for All Project Sussex, support the club in this work.

Women-only sessions and sessions for over-50s are also a central part of the club's work.

"We are a Club of Sanctuary for absolutely everyone," added Tim Holtam.

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