

# 'Call out the lies': UK charities hit back over bids to blame refugees for housing crisis

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**Far-right harassment of asylum seekers and refugees in emergency accommodation comes as Home Office gears up for mass evictions**



A group of people thought to be migrants arrive on the Kent coast. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

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Thousands of asylum seekers and refugees temporarily housed in emergency accommodation across the UK are being “unfairly and inaccurately” blamed for the national housing crisis, according to a

coalition of more than 100 housing organisations.

Charities including Shelter, Homeless Link and the Big Issue say the housing emergency is the fault of the government, not those who have fled trafficking, violence and conflict.



Polly Neate: 'We must stand up to hate when we see it.' Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "Our country is in the grip of a housing emergency that has been caused by the failure of successive governments to build the social homes we need. It has not been caused by refugees. We must call out the lies that certain groups tell in order to sow division between people and

communities for their own ends. We must stand up to hate when we see it."

The charities' call follows [a series of incidents](#) in which far-right groups targeted asylum seekers temporarily accommodated in hotels across the country.

In a [video posted on social media](#), far-right activists were seen entering a hotel near Birmingham without permission and knocking on doors and questioning migrants about their circumstances. The original footage shows the faces of asylum seekers, who have no recourse to public funds.

One woman said she was too afraid to leave her room following an attack on the hotel where she is staying. "They were banging on my door," she said. "I could hear shouting and I didn't know what was happening. I've been told not to open my door or window. I feel really traumatised."



Far-right activists knocking on asylum seekers' doors at a hotel in Bromsgrove, near Birmingham. Photograph: Britain First

Sarah Taal, director of Birmingham-based Baobab Women's Project, supporting those in emergency accommodation, says asylum seekers are being unduly blamed for the social housing crisis by far-right groups.

"Asylum seekers aren't entitled to social housing, so they're not taking homes from anyone," Taal said. "What we see is some women are too afraid to leave the house because they don't know who's outside. There are members of these groups demanding to know where they're from and shouting, 'Why are you here? Who's paying for it?' It's deeply concerning."

The Home Office has [begun evicting asylum seekers and refugees](#) from emergency accommodation in recent weeks. It is thought that the department is currently reviewing between 2,000 to 3,000 cases with a view to mass evictions within the next 10 weeks.

Asylum housing charity Naccom says it is concerned that this new wave of evictions could see thousands of asylum seekers and refugees forced into street homelessness.

"Last year our members accommodated 1,270 people who had been

refused asylum, yet we know that capacity for the months ahead is a real concern," said Renae Mann, the charity's national director. "Covid-19 has also severely impacted the network's ability to support people in challenging unfair decisions."

The [Home Office](#) says it gives all those who receive a negative asylum decision a grace period of 21 days to return to their country of origin while still remaining accommodated. A spokesperson said: "We work tirelessly with local authorities and other partners to provide asylum seekers, who would otherwise be destitute, with suitable accommodation – as we are required to do by law. As the home secretary has said, we are determined to fix the broken asylum system to make it firm and fair."

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