# Whistleblowers raise concerns over Iranian asylum seekers returning home for holidays



Whistleblowers from a Derbyshire asylum accommodation have raised serious allegations regarding the activities of three teenage Iranian asylum seekers, claiming they returned to Iran for holiday despite asserting persecution in their home country. The claims were made by two former employees of Framework, a housing provider that oversees accommodation for asylum seekers.

Darren Jennings, a former housing officer, reported that these Kurdish-Iranian teenagers had made trips back to Iran, with their holidays allegedly funded by another asylum seeker residing in the UK. Jennings noted that the trio had arrived in Britain via small boats and expressed deep concerns over the implications of their travels. “If you’re saying you’ve left the country because it’s unsafe and then you’re choosing to travel back there, it doesn’t make sense,” Jennings said, speaking to the Express. He added that the areas they purportedly visited are known for terrorism, people smuggling, and drug trafficking.

Mr Jennings' suspicions arose during routine check-ups at the asylum seeker accommodation, where he noticed an Iranian resident had not answered his door. He later learned that this individual had returned to Iran in April for about two months to visit family. Furthermore, this led to information suggesting that another Iranian resident was also planning a similar trip. After resigning from Framework in July 2022, Jennings pursued several channels to raise his concerns, suggesting that the trips could indicate potential benefit fraud.

Joining Jennings in his concerns was Weston Walton, another former support worker who noted that there were at least three instances of young men taking extended holidays. "I knew of three cases where they went on holiday... it was bizarre," Walton reported. He expressed frustration that concerns raised by staff about safeguarding risks were dismissed by the administration. Walton claimed that although Framework receives £370 weekly in housing benefits for each asylum seeker, the organisation was not conducting adequate check-ins, primarily relying on WhatsApp messages and video calls rather than face-to-face interactions.

Despite raising alarms through the internal whistleblowing process and reporting his concerns to law enforcement, Jennings noted a lack of appropriate action from the authorities. A spokesperson for the Home Office stated: "We take all claims of abuse of the immigration system extremely seriously and will not hesitate to take action where necessary." Additionally, Framework has stated that the allegations were investigated thoroughly and found to have been handled appropriately.

In related matters, concerns were also voiced regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding for asylum seekers, particularly given that the three individuals in question are care leavers above the age of 18, and thus legally capable of travelling. A spokesperson for Derbyshire County Council remarked on the limits of their powers, noting that they had set up a multi-agency safety plan when travel plans were brought to their attention, affirming that the statutory duties to support care leavers were properly followed.

In a separate incident, a couple from Birkenhead, Wirral, Phillip Richards and Lisa Ives, experienced significant distress after the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) attempted to take them to court over an alleged £8,000 debt linked to housing benefits. The couple claimed the issue stemmed from a failure by the DWP to properly process their claims after they began cohabiting in 2020. They assert their housing benefit debts were unfounded, as they provided evidence showing they owed no council tax during a certain period, while maintaining extensive correspondence with the DWP to rectify the situation.

Lisa Ives expressed the anxiety this situation brought upon her, stating she was fearful of potential bailiffs arriving at their home. “I was scared to take my babies out of the house because I was worried the bailiffs were going to come to the door,” she conveyed, emphasising the psychological toll it took on her and her family.

As their dispute with the DWP escalated, a subsequent hearing ruled in their favour regarding the housing benefit debt, which the couple claimed had been written off. However, they are now facing a new issue regarding council tax that they were reportedly unaware of until recently. Wirral Council has acknowledged its duty to address outstanding debts but confirmed the complications began from an error associated with the DWP’s handling of their welfare claims.

Following the ECHO's involvement, the council indicated that it would be reversing most of the charges against the couple, reducing their liability to around £970.49, which they must repay over a series of monthly payments. Despite this, the couple remains intent on contesting the reduced amount due to the circumstances surrounding the initial failure to inform them of their debts.

The DWP was approached for comment, but no response has been received.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.gbnews.com/news/harry-redknapp-migrant-crisis-gb-news-panel-asylum-seekers> - This article supports the claims of whistleblowers at Derbyshire asylum accommodations about some asylum seekers returning to their home countries for holidays despite claiming persecution. It also mentions similar incidents where asylum seekers were caught traveling back home.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/opinion/patrick-christys-asylum-seekers-holidays> - This article further details the concerns raised by whistleblowers, including Darren Jennings, regarding Iranian asylum seekers returning home for holidays. It highlights criticisms of the asylum system and calls for stricter enforcement.
* <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/compass-contracts-provision-accommodation-asylum-seekers/> - Although not directly related to the specific whistleblower claims, this report by the National Audit Office provides context on the broader challenges and complexities in providing accommodation for asylum seekers in the UK.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the original source of the article highlighting whistleblower allegations and related issues with asylum seekers and welfare benefit disputes.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office> - The Home Office is responsible for immigration policies and asylum procedures, and their website can provide information on how they address allegations of abuse in the asylum system.
* <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/care-leavers/care-leavers-information-for-carers.aspx> - This website explains the support for care leavers, which includes young adults who are asylum seekers. It highlights the challenges and responsibilities in safeguarding their well-being.