# Former handyman jailed for rapes at Eastfield guesthouse amid concerns over temporary accommodation



Ricky Lee, formerly a homeless individual himself, was employed as the handyman at Eastfield guesthouse in Peterborough, a facility used to house homeless people. Holding keys to every bedroom, Lee lived in a caravan on the premises rent-free in exchange for maintenance work. Over a seven-month period, he was convicted of raping and sexually assaulting several women staying at the guesthouse. One victim was raped twice within hours of being placed there by her local authority in June 2022.

Detective Chief Inspector Amerjit Singh of Cambridgeshire Constabulary spoke to The Guardian, stating, “Lee exploited vulnerable women believing he could get away with it because they had dependency issues. Most were too scared to report what had happened.” In January, Lee received a 25-year prison sentence, with the sentencing judge remarking it was “inconceivable management gave you the responsibility they did.”

This case has prompted scrutiny over the regulation and oversight of temporary accommodation providers in England. The charity Shelter has analysed housing trends, estimating that by the end of the current parliamentary term, over 200,000 children will reside in temporary housing. This figure reflects a 26% increase over five years, despite government efforts to boost housebuilding. Meanwhile, costs to taxpayers for such accommodation are projected to rise 71%, reaching £3.9 billion annually.

Businesses ranging from hotel chains and travel agencies to caravan parks have profited by housing those with no alternative shelter, amid rising waiting lists for social housing and the increasing unaffordability of private rents. Between 2021 and 2024, Eastfield guesthouse received £4.5 million in public funds from local authorities to provide accommodation to homeless individuals.

Peterborough City Council, which spent over £2.5 million on rooms at Eastfield during that period, explained its reliance on the guesthouse as emergency temporary accommodation when other options were exhausted. The council stated it only became aware of the assaults on 7 February 2025, after Lee’s sentencing. Matt Oliver, Peterborough’s head of housing needs, told The Guardian, “As soon as we found out, we set up weekly meetings with Eastfield guesthouse to find out what had happened and to ensure that residents were safe. A range of new security and safeguarding measures have been introduced to ensure this can never happen again.”

South Cambridgeshire District Council confirmed it had been informed about the allegations against Lee on 20 June 2022. Following “rigorous checks,” the guesthouse continues to be used to accommodate individuals, though not families or children. The council noted that all staff hold Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and casual employees are prohibited from entering rooms without another staff member present. Eastfield guesthouse did not respond to requests for comment made by The Guardian.

In another example of unconventional housing, Newham Council has allocated more than £2.4 million to a company called HungerBurger — formerly a fast food restaurant, now converted into a hotel for homeless families. The Guardian visited an off-site extension of this facility, known as Barking hotel, where expansion work is underway to add more rooms.

Rebecca Adebayo, aged 44, moved into the Barking hotel in January and described her room as still under construction, with exposed walls near new windows and initially disconnected central heating, for which she received a portable heater instead. She said, “The room has started cracking. They just rushed to build it.” Rebecca was placed there with her two toddlers.

Residents of the extension live in cramped conditions, sharing a single kitchen. They pay £9.24 weekly for breakfast, which Rebecca said typically consists of cold items such as bread and cheese. The hotel lacks laundry facilities, forcing her to spend approximately £25 weekly on laundrette services, which she finds difficult to afford. Consequently, she resorts to washing clothes in the bathroom sink. One former resident, a pregnant woman who has since left the hotel, claimed she had to share a bed with her teenage son.

Paul Kitson, Newham Council’s Corporate Director of Inclusive Economy and Housing, spoke to The Guardian about the housing pressures faced by the borough. He said, “We are acutely aware of the pressures of providing much-needed temporary housing. An overheating property market, persistent low levels of housing supply and insufficient levels of government funding across many years have led us to this point. We simply do not have enough suitable accommodation to house everybody within the borough.”

Kitson added that costs for temporary accommodation are increasing, and the council is reviewing how best to provide value for money. Newham is among the top local authorities in England for housebuilding. “We carry out inspections on properties that we put people into, and take any breaches of housing regulations very seriously. We’d urge anyone with concerns to contact us,” he said.

HungerBurger did not respond to The Guardian’s requests for comment. Eastfield guesthouse also declined to comment.

This series of revelations highlights issues concerning the security, management, and living conditions within temporary accommodation used across England amid a growing homelessness crisis. The involvement of various public bodies and private operators underscores the complexity of addressing this enduring social challenge.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.cambs.police.uk/news/cambridgeshire/news/2025/january/rapist-sentenced-to-25-years-in-prison/> - Corroborates Ricky Lee's role as a maintenance worker at Eastfield guesthouse, his 25-year sentence, and the pattern of sexual assaults on vulnerable residents.
2. <https://hellorayo.co.uk/greatest-hits/rutland/news/man-attacked-women-peterborough-guesthouse-jailed/> - Provides details about Lee's access to keys and CCTV, the timeline of attacks (2021-2022), and the indefinite Sexual Harm Prevention Order.
3. <https://www.shelter.org.uk/> - While not the direct source, Shelter is cited as analyzing housing trends showing rising temporary accommodation use (no direct link to specific analysis found in results). Note: This requires seeking Shelter's publications for exact figures.
4. <https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/> - Peterborough City Council's official site would detail temporary housing spending and policies (no direct transaction records found in results). Note: Actual spending disclosures might require FOIA requests or council reports not indexed here.
5. <https://www.newham.gov.uk/> - Newham Council's site would outline temporary accommodation strategies, though HungerBurger/Barking Hotel specifics are not publicly detailed in indexed results.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service> - Confirms DBS check requirements mentioned by South Cambridgeshire District Council, though no direct link to Eastfield's staff checks exists in results.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/apr/29/the-room-has-started-cracking-concern-condition-stopgap-housing-england> - Please view link - unable to able to access data