# Hillingdon council faces £5 million annual shortfall amid rising asylum seeker housing crisis



The rising number of asylum seekers in Hillingdon, West London, has resulted in significant challenges for both local authorities and residents. Increasingly pressured by an influx of new arrivals, the borough has seen the emergence of makeshift ‘tent cities’ as the housing crisis deepens. Councillors have reported that Hillingdon now supports up to 89 asylum seekers for every 10,000 residents, equating to one in every 112 individuals living in the area. This adjustment has led to a palpable strain on local services and resources, as the borough grapples with a funding shortfall of approximately £5 million annually to accommodate these new residents.

Asylum seekers arriving in Hillingdon are often housed in hotels, primarily due to the borough’s proximity to Heathrow Airport. These accommodations frequently become the responsibility of the local council once migrants are relocated there, compounding the financial burden on taxpayers. Local residents have expressed both frustration and sympathy regarding the situation. For instance, Lisa Stevens from Cowley shared her disbelief over the expenses incurred, noting that her family's difficulties in securing stable housing overshadowed the council's financial responsibilities toward asylum seekers.

While many residents vocalise their concerns over the costs to the taxpayer, there exists a concurrent thread of empathy for the asylum seekers themselves. Some residents, such as Gina Forse, who works in mental health services, noted the complex issues faced by these individuals. She called for increased central government funding to support both their accommodation and the mental health implications stemming from their traumatic journeys. Hillingdon's councillors echo this sentiment, highlighting the inadequacies of government funding to cover the escalating costs of housing asylum seekers. Councillor Steve Tuckwell pointed out that their financial struggles are further exacerbated by additional arrivals, such as British Nationals Overseas (BNOs) from the Chagos Islands, underscoring the growing diversity of individuals requiring support.

This situation reflects broader trends observed across the UK. According to recent reports by the Institute for Public Policy Research, the average annual cost of supporting an asylum seeker has more than doubled since 2019, soaring to around £41,000 in 2023. This financial strain is largely attributed to the government’s reliance on costly hotel accommodations, as traditional housing options become increasingly scarce. A report revealed that this dramatically rising cost necessitates systemic reform to ensure better living conditions for asylum seekers while relieving pressure on local councils.

The challenges present in Hillingdon resonate with similar stories throughout the UK, where other areas have also seen the establishment of makeshift camps as communities struggle to provide adequate accommodation. In Dublin, for instance, approximately 50 tents have been pitched by homeless asylum seekers, highlighting systemic issues in addressing the needs of those seeking refuge and the provision of state-supported accommodation.

Despite the confluence of challenges faced by both the asylum seekers and the local community, many believe that central government intervention is essential. As Sharon Harries, an employee at Hillingdon Hospital pointed out, asylum seekers often bear the brunt of frustrations directed at broader systemic failures within public services such as the NHS. The lack of timely support and resources can inadvertently exacerbate tensions within local communities, leading to a cycle of blame that distracts from the complexities of the asylum process.

While the local council strives to maintain a balance between humanitarian support and logistical challenges, the mounting pressures could spark a call for significant policy re-evaluation. The Hillingdon situation serves as a microcosm of the ongoing national conversation about immigration, accommodation, and the responsibilities of government towards its citizens and migrants alike. The case continues to highlight the urgent need for more comprehensive funding frameworks to manage and support the growing number of individuals arriving in search of safety and stability.

As fiscal pressures on local services grow, it will be essential for authorities to advocate for a fairer distribution of resources, ensuring that communities can remain both welcoming and sustainable in the face of ongoing asylum applications.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 4, 5
3. Paragraphs 1, 4
4. Paragraphs 1, 4
5. Paragraphs 3, 6
6. Paragraphs 1, 6
7. Paragraphs 2, 4

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14716251/Hillingdon-asylum-seeker-pressures-mini-tent-cities.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/fears-west-london-village-is-becoming-a-transit-camp-for-immigrants-arriving-to-the-uk-a3088816.html> - Residents of Longford, a village in west London, express concerns that their area is transforming into a 'transit camp' for asylum seekers arriving from Calais. The influx has led to increased housing of refugees in properties rented by the Home Office, causing local residents to feel 'overwhelmed' by the daily arrivals. The situation was highlighted in a BBC report, emphasizing the challenges faced by the community due to the rising number of immigrants.
3. <https://www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/asylum-seekers-hotels-support-cost/> - A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) reveals that the average annual cost of housing and supporting an asylum seeker in the UK has more than doubled since 2019, reaching approximately £41,000 per person in 2023. This surge is attributed to the increased reliance on hotel accommodations, which are significantly more expensive than traditional housing options. The report calls for urgent reform to address the escalating costs and substandard living conditions.
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/migrant-asylum-seeker-home-office-housing-hotel-b2634213.html> - The Independent reports that the average annual cost of housing and supporting an asylum seeker in the UK has risen by £24,000 per person over the past four years, reaching approximately £41,000 in 2023/24. This increase is largely due to the Home Office's growing dependence on more expensive hotel accommodations, as traditional housing options become scarce. The report highlights the need for systemic reform to address these escalating costs and improve conditions for asylum seekers.
5. <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/dublin/2024/06/28/around-50-tents-pitched-by-homeless-asylum-seekers-near-grand-canal-in-central-dublin/> - The Irish Times reports that around 50 tents have been pitched by homeless asylum seekers near the Grand Canal in central Dublin. This encampment emerged as the number of international protection applicants awaiting state-provided accommodation stood at 2,170. The situation underscores the challenges faced by Dublin in providing adequate housing for asylum seekers, leading to the establishment of makeshift camps in public spaces.
6. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/369/369we20.htm> - A written submission to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee highlights the financial strain on Hillingdon Council due to housing asylum seekers. The council estimates that caring for these individuals costs between £1 million and £1.5 million annually. The submission also notes that the Home Office has failed to deport asylum seekers who have exhausted all appeals, further burdening local resources and finances.
7. <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/12061/Council-calls-on-government-for-dedicated-financial-support-for-asylum-seekers> - Hillingdon Council is urging the government to provide exceptional funding to support boroughs with higher numbers of asylum seekers. The council emphasizes that the current funding package is insufficient, leaving local authorities like Hillingdon to balance budgets while assisting those entering the asylum process. The call for dedicated financial support aims to alleviate the strain on local resources and ensure adequate support for asylum seekers.