# Royal Hotel in Hull becomes flashpoint as asylum seeker tensions escalate



Take the train to Hull, and mere moments after you step off, you arrive at the Royal Hotel. Once a luxurious host to royalty, it now serves as temporary accommodation for hundreds of asylum seekers, giving the city a complex and often contentious character. This transition encapsulates a broader national debate over immigration and social responsibility, making the Royal Hotel a flashpoint for local tensions.

Last summer, this historic venue became the scene of distressing riots, as windows were shattered and frightened asylum seekers found themselves trapped inside, fearing for their safety. Anei, a 27-year-old from South Sudan, recalls those harrowing days, saying, “Everyone was scared... we had to stay inside fearing that if we went outside we die.” Anei, who fled a life of violence and loss, now experiences both the struggles of his past and the harsh realities of his present in Hull. He has recently been granted the right to remain in the UK, expressing a desire to contribute positively to society. “I want to work and pay back the UK for the help I’ve already received,” he states, highlighting the ongoing asylum seekers’ need for both shelter and acceptance.

The recent Home Office statistics may suggest a decline in the number of asylum seekers housed in hotels, but the current figure of over 32,000 remains significantly higher than when Labour took power last year. This discrepancy has fostered persistent community divisions. Local residents, like Gaynor, who reminisced about the hotel’s glory days, articulate a mix of nostalgia and frustration. “I do feel sorry for them,” she reflects on the asylum seekers, acknowledging their plight yet expressing concerns about perceived fairness in the immigration system. Gaynor's sentiment resonates with others in the community who feel that their voices are not heard. Her vote now aligns with parties advocating for stricter immigration policies.

Contrasting these narratives are voices within the city that advocate for compassion. Nearby, Shane, a taxi driver, recounted a tense incident he captured on video, wherein an asylum seeker apparently attempted to damage hotel property while brandishing a knife. Shane’s words reflect a broader sense of unease felt by many locals as tensions rise: “It’s a case of shut up and put up because you can't do anything about it.”

The negative perceptions surrounding asylum accommodation often overshadow the realities faced by not just the asylum seekers, but also those offering services to the homeless or struggling in Hull. Danny Taylor, founder of Adapt Resettlement, aims to help the most vulnerable, some of whom have been without homes for extended periods. He notes the urgent need for more comprehensive approaches to housing, indicating that local resources are stretched thin amid the growing demand from both asylum seekers and long-term residents experiencing hardship.

Meanwhile, some asylum seekers have gone to extraordinary lengths to address what they view as inadequate living conditions. Reports emerged of individuals preparing meals in local parks after expressing dissatisfaction with the hotel’s food service, underscoring issues related to dignity and self-sufficiency. The company managing the accommodation, Mears, asserts that its meals adhere to NHS standards, yet the criticism reveals a gap between service and perceived equity.

The challenges of community integration have been starkly illustrated in recent months. High-profile incidents of violence, including the involvement of individuals in racist mob actions outside asylum housing, have further compounded fears and divisions. Julieanne Kay, for instance, was jailed for her part in riots described by the judiciary as “racist, hate-fuelled mob violence.” Such actions underscore a growing trend of hostility that asylum seekers face, reinforcing a narrative that positions them as unwelcome outsiders—a narrative that risks overshadowing their aspirations for safety and normalcy.

Yet despite the tumult, there are calls for more inclusive conversations about asylum in the context of broader community needs and available resources. Hull City Council has voiced concerns over the manner in which asylum seekers are housed, including a lack of local consultation regarding the arrangements. They assert that community input is vital in shaping effective policies that will address both local concerns and the rights of asylum seekers.

As Hull grapples with these complex issues, the Royal Hotel stands as a microcosm of the national debate over immigration and identity. The voices from within its walls—both asylum seekers and locals—are often at odds, yet they prompt a necessary discourse on empathy, equity, and the shared responsibility to provide sanctuary amid adversity. In a landscape fraught with division, it remains imperative to foster understanding, facilitate dialogue, and look toward solutions that honour both community integrity and compassion for the displaced.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 6, 7
3. Paragraph 8
4. Paragraphs 9, 10
5. Paragraph 11
6. Paragraph 12
7. Paragraph 13

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c628glqxlp9o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-humber-64026320> - Asylum seekers in Hull have been cooking meals in a city park after criticizing the food provided by the hotel where they are staying. A woman was photographed using camp stoves in the park to prepare food, as some asylum seekers found the hotel food repetitive and unsuitable due to health conditions. Mears, the company managing the accommodation, stated that its menus meet NHS standards and that dietary and religious requirements are taken seriously.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/2024-10-16/grandma-jailed-for-part-in-riots-outside-asylum-hotel> - Julieanne Kay, a 47-year-old grandmother, was jailed for her involvement in riots outside a hotel housing asylum seekers in Hull. On August 3, 2024, she participated in a '12 hours of racist, hate-fueled mob violence' in the city center. Kay was seen confronting police, making racist remarks, and attempting to damage property. The judge emphasized her prominent role in the violence, which caused 'immeasurable harm' and significant financial cost.
4. <https://www.irishtimes.com/world/uk/2023/02/11/fifteen-arrested-in-england-after-protest-outside-hotel-for-asylum-seekers/> - Fifteen people, including a 13-year-old child, were arrested after a protest outside a hotel housing asylum seekers in Knowsley, near Liverpool, turned violent. The initially peaceful protest escalated when demonstrators threw projectiles, including lit fireworks, at police officers and set a police van on fire. One officer and two members of the public sustained minor injuries. The incident was reportedly triggered by social media speculations about a man accused of inappropriate advances towards a teenage girl.
5. <https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/500-asylum-seekers-hull-housed-6115956> - Hull City Council has raised concerns over the housing of asylum seekers in the Royal Hotel, criticizing the lack of consultation and the suitability of the accommodation. The council, along with local MPs, objected to the 'private arrangement' between the Home Office, Britannia Hotels, and Mears. They emphasized the need for proper consultation and the importance of involving local authorities in decisions affecting the community.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/calendar/2022-10-31/council-takes-legal-action-to-block-hotel-asylum-seeker-plan> - East Riding of Yorkshire Council secured an interim injunction to prevent the Hull Humber View Hotel from being used to house asylum seekers. The decision followed objections from residents, councillors, and MPs, as well as complaints from guests whose reservations were canceled. Local representatives criticized the lack of public consultation and the suitability of the hotel for accommodating migrants.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/dec/29/they-thought-they-were-going-to-die-the-asylum-seekers-who-survived-rioters-trying-to-burn-down-their-accommodation> - Asylum seekers in Hull recounted their terrifying experiences during riots that targeted their accommodation. Rioters smashed windows and set the hotel's fire escape on fire in an apparent attempt to burn down the building. One asylum seeker described the fear of suffocating from smoke inhalation, while staff barricaded doors to protect residents. The violence was described as unprecedented, with some protesters shouting 'kill them' during the attacks.