# Keir Starmer faces criticism as asylum housing costs triple Home Office forecasts



Keir Starmer is facing a growing backlash for drastically underestimating the British public's awareness of the immigration crisis and the financial strain it imposes on taxpayers. Recent findings from the National Audit Office reveal that the cost of housing asylum seekers has skyrocketed to £4 million a day—three times higher than the Home Office's own projections. This figure underscores the escalating anger and frustration surrounding the government's ineffective immigration policies, highlighting systemic failures in an institution deemed unfit for purpose for two decades.

The severity of this mismanagement is staggering. Projections estimated that costs would hit £4.5 billion by 2029, yet current forecasts suggest they could soar to an astonishing £15.3 billion. Such discrepancies raise serious questions: Are government officials incapable of basic arithmetic, or are they deliberately misleading the public? With the number of asylum seekers arriving by small boats exceeding 140,000 since 2019, public discontent is palpable, as evidenced by the Reform party’s significant local election gains—a clear message that the electorate is fed up with the government's handling of immigration.

Moreover, the claim that Labour would abolish temporary accommodations, such as hotels, rings increasingly hollow, as the number of asylum seekers living in these precarious situations has surged by 134%. Currently, around 38,000 individuals are trapped in makeshift living conditions while long-term residents face a scarcity of housing options. Critics highlight the disparities in government spending, pointing out that £1 billion is allocated annually to welfare support for migrants, raising further concerns about the neglect of vulnerable British citizens, including pensioners and the disabled.

In light of mounting criticism, Starmer and Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper have proposed stricter English language requirements for new migrants. However, buried in the details is the reality that migrants will have up to five years to comply—essentially diluting the promise and avoiding a genuine solution to immigration woes. Critics assert that without addressing loopholes, any proposed immigration strategy lacks credibility and fails to address the public's pressing concerns.

This lack of a cohesive strategy has been echoed by David Neal, the outgoing chief inspector of borders, who criticized the government's failure to learn from its mistakes. Neal pointed to inadequate facilities and unnecessary delays that only deepen the suffering of asylum seekers and expose the entire system’s shortcomings. While there have been some efforts to improve conditions, the fundamental issues remain unaddressed, worsened by funding cuts and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

The government’s flawed plan to relocate asylum seekers to military bases was intended to ease the financial burden of hotel stays, but it has backfired, costing an extra £46 million. Expenses could balloon to a staggering £1.2 billion by 2034. Moreover, plans to house migrants on barges face significant human rights challenges, further complicating this ill-considered initiative.

A dire report warns that if the current path in managing asylum claims continues unchecked, costs could exceed £6 billion a year. The recently passed Illegal Migration Act, which strips many asylum seekers of their right to appeal, heightens the risk of pushing individuals into a state of indefinite limbo. Experts like Marley Morris from the Institute for Public Policy Research have insisted that without immediate reforms, the next government will be left grappling with a crisis that is too costly to ignore.

As the immigration debate intensifies, the efficacy of government responses will play a crucial role. Claims of fiscal responsibility must be backed by tangible results, or the political fallout could deepen as dissatisfaction with the current regime mounts. The populace's outcry for accountability and transparency in the immigration system has never been louder, and whether Starmer’s strategies resonate with voters remains an open question.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2053075/keir-starmer-fool-who-doesnt> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/relocating-uk-asylum-seekers-hotels-will-not-save-money-watchdog-says-2024-03-20/> - The UK's plan to relocate asylum seekers from hotels to military bases and other facilities is projected to cost taxpayers more than keeping them in hotels, according to the National Audit Office (NAO). Originally aimed at reducing annual housing costs of £3 billion, the government now estimates an additional £46 million in expenses. The total cost of establishing and running these new sites is projected to reach £1.2 billion by 2034. Critics, including the Labour Party, have highlighted the excessive spending on asylum hotels and the rising costs of the new sites. The controversy extends to plans like housing asylum seekers on barges, which have faced human rights criticisms. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak promotes a stricter policy on asylum seekers, including a still-pending deportation plan to Rwanda.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/3d86a10b-f44e-4a52-8139-071e4026a335> - Converting former UK military bases and a barge to house asylum seekers has cost £46 million more than using hotels, according to the National Audit Office (NAO). The government projects a total cost of £1.2 billion to reduce hotel use, after spending nearly eight times more than anticipated on refurbishing two sites. In December, hotels cost up to £8 million daily for over 106,500 people. Despite internal and external warnings, the Home Office continued the program, resulting in significant additional costs. Two sites, Bibby Stockholm and RAF Wethersfield, housed less than half the expected number of people by late January. The government defends the initial cost, claiming it is now more cost-effective to continue using these sites. These findings align with a report highlighting the waste of human capital in the asylum system and its significant delays in processing cases. The report suggests that implementing certain recommendations could yield £1.2 billion in net benefits to the UK economy over five years.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/ddb96596-a164-4633-b1a5-b029ace81708> - David Neal, the outgoing chief inspector of borders, criticized Rishi Sunak's government for lacking an effective strategy to house asylum seekers and failing to learn from past mistakes in the immigration system. In his interview with the Financial Times, Neal highlighted several problems, including inadequate facilities and delayed actions on legislative requirements, which have led to poor living conditions and wasted human potential among asylum seekers. He pointed out that despite progress in some areas, such as improving conditions at certain sites and hiring more asylum caseworkers, substantial issues remain unaddressed. Neal also accused the government of stifling the inspectorate’s efforts by delaying report releases and cutting its budget. Although recent relations with the government improved and targets were met for reducing backlog cases, Neal warned of potential future challenges and the ongoing human cost of mismanaged asylum processes.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/ce371469-dbb9-4354-a9b5-a315afdca14c> - The UK’s plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, championed by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, could exceed £580 million by the decade’s end, according to a National Audit Office report. This includes £500 million in aid and £80 million for operational and setup costs. The scheme, criticized by charities and opposition MPs, aims to 'stop the boats' crossing the English Channel. The report uncovers fixed and operational costs associated with the five-year Rwanda Partnership, including substantial payments to Rwanda and high per-person costs for flights and processing. The Home Office defends the plan as a long-term solution to illegal migration, while critics argue its efficacy and cost-effectiveness. The ultimate financial impact will hinge on the number of asylum seekers sent to Rwanda, with the scheme facing potential legal challenges.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/aug/21/uk-bill-for-housing-asylum-seekers-to-hit-5bn-a-year-by-end-of-next-parliament> - With a backlog of 130,000 cases, asylum support costs were already running at £3.5 billion a year and are set to rise further. Under the Illegal Migration Act, which was passed by parliament in July, migrants arriving by irregular means – including on small boats – are denied any prospect of a hearing, the thinktank said. As most could not be returned home under international or UK law, those who are not sent to Rwanda or another third country – through a scheme the courts have judged to be unlawful– would find themselves in indefinite limbo. Even on the government’s assumption that it removes 500 people a month to be processed overseas, the annual cost of housing asylum seekers would be more than £5 billion within five years. The bill would rise to more than £6 billion a year if the number removed reduced to 50 every month. There was little realistic prospect that most of those who arrived by small boat crossings would be removed to a third country, even if the Rwanda plan is eventually ruled lawful, the IPPR said. Marley Morris, associate director for migration, trade and communities at IPPR, said: “Even with the act fully implemented, under most plausible scenarios arrivals will still outpace removals. “This will mean a growing population of people permanently in limbo, putting huge pressure on Home Office accommodation and support systems – plus a risk of thousands of people who vanish from the official system and are at risk of exploitation and destitution. “Any incoming government would be likely to face a dire and increasingly costly challenge which it would need to address urgently from the outset – there will be no option to ignore or sideline the crisis it inherits.” A Home Office spokesperson said: “The Illegal Migration Act will help to clear the asylum backlog by allowing us to detain and swiftly remove those who arrive here illegally. While we operationalise the measures in the act, we continue to remove those with no right to be here through existing powers. “We are also on track to clear the ‘legacy’ backlog of asylum cases. It has been reduced by a nearly a third since the start of December and we have doubled the number of asylum decision makers in post over the past two years.”