# Home Office appeals to landlords to house asylum seekers amid rising Channel crossings



The Home Office has approached British landlords with an appeal to rent their properties to asylum seekers amid a significant rise in Channel crossings. This move includes an offer from Serco, a private contractor working with the Home Office, which has proposed a five-year guaranteed full rent deal to landlords. Serco, responsible for managing over 30,000 asylum seekers across 7,000 properties, is actively seeking landlords, investors, and agents with available properties particularly in the East of England, North West, and Midlands regions.

According to promotional material from Serco, the lease arrangements come with assurances such as rent paid on time every month without arrears, full repair and maintenance services, free property management, coverage of utilities, and council tax payments. This approach is considered cost-effective compared to housing asylum seekers in hotels, which average £145 per night, while private housing costs about £14 per night. As of the end of 2024, 38,079 asylum seekers were still accommodated in hotels, though this number has decreased from a peak of 56,042 in September 2023.

The surge in Channel crossings has been notable, with a record set earlier in the year when 705 migrants crossed aboard just 12 small boats. The total number of arrivals in the first quarter of 2025 has reached approximately 8,888, marking a 42% increase compared to the same period last year and an 81% rise since 2023. This increase has prompted the Government to intensify efforts in collaboration with France and other countries to combat people-smuggling networks and implement tougher enforcement powers under new legislation.

The response to the Home Office's initiative has been mixed and marked by criticism. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp expressed strong opposition, accusing Labour of prioritising illegal immigrants over long-term British residents. Speaking to the Telegraph, Philp stated, “This is taking away homes that hard-working, tax-paying Britons who are struggling to find a place to rent need.” He further criticised the policy, saying, “Labour is once again giving a better deal to illegal immigrants than people who have lived, worked and paid tax here all their lives. These illegal immigrants should have been sent to Rwanda, not put up in nice flats.”

In response, a Labour source highlighted that such arrangements with private landlords have been in place since 1999 and continued throughout the previous Conservative government, suggesting that the current criticism overlooks this continuity. The source said, “He well knows that Labour inherited a system in complete chaos. He had stopped making decisions and left people stranded, so more hotels were needed.”

Local councils and housing officials have also weighed in on the issue. With around 1.3 million people on social housing waiting lists, concerns have been raised about the pressure on local housing markets. One council leader commented on Serco's role, noting, “It’s Serco who are encouraging landlords to exploit taxpayers, then it’s blamed on councils because of the impact it has on local rents, services and social cohesion. I don’t think it’s good for the fabric of society or the individuals involved.”

Enver Solomon, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, emphasised the need for reform of the current asylum dispersal system. Speaking to the Telegraph, he said, “Dysfunctional and costly, it comes at terrible value for taxpayers’ money, but also sees people in need of safety being accommodated in very isolated areas with little support. This makes it really difficult for those recognised as refugees to properly integrate into British life.” Solomon advocated for closer cooperation between the Government and local authorities, describing this as a more reliable and cost-effective arrangement than working with private contractors.

The Home Office has stated that these arrangements with the private rented sector have been longstanding, including under previous governments, and that they have a statutory responsibility to support destitute asylum seekers who cannot afford fees such as utilities and council tax. A spokesperson added, “We are restoring order to the asylum system and cutting costs to taxpayers by reducing the number of people we are required to accommodate through a rapid increase in asylum decision-making and the removal of more than 24,000 people with no right to be in the UK.”

Following media inquiries, Serco declined to comment, and the planned housing event in Malvern Hills organised by Serco was cancelled. The Home Office continues to face the challenge of managing increased arrivals while balancing public concerns about housing availability and the housing market amid a backdrop of record numbers of Channel arrivals in recent years.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.serco.com/uk/sites/serco-aasc/landlords> - This Serco page directly supports the claim that Serco is seeking landlords, investors, and agents with available properties particularly in the East of England, North West, and Midlands, managing over 30,000 asylum seekers in more than 7,000 properties, and offers a five-year lease with rent guarantees and property management benefits.
2. <https://www.serco.com/uk/sector-expertise/immigration/asylum-accommodation-support-services> - This source corroborates Serco's role in providing accommodation and support services to asylum seekers across the UK since 2012, including maintenance and management services that reduce government costs and ensure quality housing standards.
3. <https://asylummatters.org/app/uploads/2019/11/The-Asylum-Accommodation-and-Support-Contracts-A-Guide.pdf> - This Home Office contract guide confirms that Serco manages the asylum accommodation contract for the Midlands and East of England regions with a contract value surpassing £1 billion and explains the contractual framework for supporting asylum seekers, supporting the article's claims about Serco's extensive operational role.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-asylum-accommodation/living-in-dispersal-accommodation-english> - This UK Government guide provides context about asylum dispersal accommodation, supporting the claim that the Home Office has longstanding arrangements to house asylum seekers in the private rented sector and their statutory duty to cover associated costs such as utilities and council tax.
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxKISf-2hIE> - This recent video news report discusses the Home Office and Serco's appeal to landlords to rent properties to asylum seekers following a surge in Channel crossings, including the five-year guaranteed rent deals, thus corroborating key elements of the article regarding the housing initiative and rising arrivals.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/04/25/chris-philp-labour-prioritising-illegal-immigrants-housing/> - This Telegraph article quotes Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp criticizing Labour's asylum housing approach, emphasizing concerns about housing availability for British residents and supporting the article's statements about political opposition and public criticism.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMipAFBVV95cUxQa1lJSjU2dDU3blFaaXdZc0loMFlSZ1RZMlNZX3BTTDMwdlcyd3lhSk9icU03blFtS1NPb0tjTGxMV0U5U3VSU0tGdmFuWEFCdHFMTFNjT3hWYzNhMUdmTjhyZl9Za2ZoeWVaSkU0SmpscmtVTks5ajVmeF9ZSGRZam9ab0diNm5CNFFBWEdTMUIzcUtXQXpna1hDWk1qbTlMQWFacQ?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data