

## Rising Refugee Homelessness in Derby Sparks Concern

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A growing number of newly recognised refugees in Derby are finding themselves homeless, highlighting the strain on local support networks and the urgent need for practical housing solutions. As demand for accommodation surges, community groups are stepping in where public systems fall short.

Mohammad, a refugee from Afghanistan, arrived in Derby in 2022 after fleeing the return of Taliban rule. Initially housed in a government-funded hotel while awaiting a decision from the Home Office, he was granted refugee status in 2023. But the relief of gaining legal recognition was short-lived. He was given just 28 days to vacate his accommodation, with little to no formal support for securing a place to live.

With housing demand in Derby at crisis levels, Mohammad, like many others, faced the very real prospect of sleeping rough. On his final day in temporary housing, he was connected with Upbeat Communities, a local charity that offers short-term accommodation through volunteer host families. Without that intervention, he says he would have been forced onto the streets.

Others in similar situations weren't as fortunate. According to official figures, 192 refugees in Derby were classified as homeless in 2023. That number surged by 70% in 2024 to 326. More strikingly, the number of refugees confirmed to have slept rough for at least one night jumped from 16 in 2023 to 161 in 2024.

The Home Office, the department responsible for immigration, security, and law and order in the United Kingdom, provides housing for asylum seekers while their cases are reviewed. However, once granted refugee status, individuals are given a month to leave their accommodation. At that point, responsibility for housing shifts to local councils, which are legally obligated to assist those at risk of homelessness, but many councils are buckling under pressure.

Andrew Jackson of Upbeat Communities, who leads the Host Derby programme, said referrals have risen sharply. "We started out helping destitute asylum seekers whose claims were rejected. But over the past few years, the real need has come from those who are now recognised refugees and suddenly find themselves without a roof over their heads," he told the BBC. Jackson pointed to soaring private rent prices and a shortage of social housing as driving factors behind the surge in homelessness.

Some members of the public have taken it upon themselves to help. Gillian Scothern, a volunteer with Upbeat Communities, began by teaching English and soon realised many of her students were slipping into homelessness after receiving their immigration decisions. Shocked, she opened her own home to provide temporary shelter through the hosting scheme. "One of the first people who came to us had been sleeping rough for a long time.

He was due for knee surgery, but it was cancelled when the hospital found out he had nowhere to go after discharge,” she said.

Mohammad, now reunited with his family in Derby, says he’ll never forget the kindness shown by his host family. “They gave me everything,” he said. His story underscores the reality faced by many refugees; legal recognition alone is not enough without a secure place to rebuild their lives.

The dramatic rise in refugee homelessness underscores broader systemic issues in housing and integration. While community efforts provide critical support, a more coordinated approach may be needed to ensure that those who have already endured hardship abroad are not abandoned upon reaching safety.