

UK Migrant Hotel Numbers Reach Record High

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The government is facing growing pressure after new Home Office data revealed that more asylum seekers are living in hotels than a year ago, despite earlier pledges to reduce the practice.

Figures released this week show that as of 30 June, 32,059 asylum seekers were being housed in hotels, compared with 29,585 in June 2024. This marks an increase of nearly 2,500 people in just twelve months.

Labour had pledged during last year's election campaign to phase out hotel use entirely by 2029. Critics argue that the latest figures suggest the problem is worsening rather than improving, with little sign of immediate progress.

The use of hotels has long been a contentious issue, driven by both soaring costs and opposition in areas where asylum seekers are placed. According to the Migration Observatory at Oxford University, the cost of housing an asylum seeker in a hotel is around £170 per night, compared to about £27 for other forms of accommodation.

Government accounts show the Home Office spent £4.76 billion on asylum in 2023–24, more than triple the £1.34 billion spent in 2020–21. Of every pound spent, 76 pence went directly on hotel accommodation.

Efforts to shift asylum seekers into residential housing, considered cheaper and more sustainable, have met resistance from local councils and residents. In some cases, protests and legal challenges have delayed moves.

In 2023, the Conservative government introduced a dispersal policy designed to reduce reliance on hotels by spreading arrivals more evenly across the UK. The shift became visible even before the scheme was formally launched: in September 2022, ten councils housed 31% of all asylum seekers, but by December that year the figure had fallen to 24%.

However, analysis indicates that many of the councils receiving greater numbers of arrivals have also relied heavily on hotels, limiting the intended savings.

The government's core challenge remains twofold: reducing the overall number of people needing accommodation and speeding up asylum claim processing. Yet the latest figures point to little progress on either front. Persistent delays mean large numbers remain in the system for extended periods, while new arrivals continue to increase pressure.

Both Labour and Conservative leaders have acknowledged the urgent need to cut costs and ease the burden on taxpayers. But with hotel numbers at record levels, costs rising, and local opposition intensifying, critics argue that the government must deliver results well before 2029.