

The Brighton Community Plan

The Home Office is moving families and single women claiming asylum out of hotel accommodation in Brighton & Hove, and dispersing them to HMOs around the UK, including in towns where refugees are being attacked by far-right racists. There are 17 people currently in this situation. They have made strong friendships and community links. Some have lived here for several years, others have had children here. They feel safe in Brighton.

Our plan is simple. We will keep our neighbours here with us. We are a coalition of community groups with decades of experience working with people seeking asylum in Brighton & Hove. Through our extensive networks, we have identified local residents who can act as hosts, as well as private sector housing that can be rented and managed by our network, and raised funding for emergency housing.

But in order to make this a stable arrangement, we need the Home Office to provide long-term funding, similar to recent arrangements under the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme. This will be cheaper than dispersal accommodation – and many times cheaper than hotels or ex-military camps.

As with “Homes for Ukraine”, the City Council can play a coordinating role. However, our network can do the bulk of the work, meaning no significant extra cost for the Council.

We call on the Council to publicly support this plan, present it to the government, and campaign alongside us to make it happen. Brighton & Hove is proud to call itself a Sanctuary City – let’s make that a reality.

Background: the state of asylum housing

Since 2002, the government has denied people seeking asylum in the UK the right to work. The majority are therefore dependent on state support for housing and maintenance.

The most obvious solution, and the demand of people seeking asylum themselves, is to allow people to work and pay their own way. However, this policy seems unlikely to be reversed soon – with successive governments preferring to isolate and demonise people seeking sanctuary.

Finding and managing asylum housing is contracted by the Home Office to private companies in three main regional contracts: Clearsprings, Mears and Serco. Clearsprings have the contract for Southern England. These companies further sub-contract out to other companies.

In Brighton and elsewhere, Clearsprings previously managed hotel accommodation through sub-contractor Belvedere Hotels Group (BHG). In March 2025 it was announced that BHG would lose this contract after multiple irregularities.ⁱ The Home Office then brought in Australian company Corporate Travel Management (CTM) under a four year contract to manage asylum hotels, worth £550 million.ⁱⁱ This company was already infamous for the scandal of the “Bibby Stockholm” barge, which was decommissioned after

the death of Leonard Farruku and a deadly legionella outbreak.ⁱⁱⁱ Since then, CTM has admitted overcharging the UK government by £118 million on other contracts.^{iv}

These contractor companies in turn rent properties – HMOs and hotel rooms – from landlords and hotel owners. This system means there are multiple layers profiteering from asylum housing, so pushing up the eventual cost. To maximise their return, contractors seek the cheapest possible accommodation, in the cheapest possible areas. But even so, the layers of profiteering mean the cost is higher than if funding went directly to local Councils and Community Groups.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Home Office moved people seeking asylum out of dispersal accommodation (HMOs) and into hotels.

This benefited hotel chains who were losing money when the tourist industry shut down. But it massively increased the Home Office's costs, even as conditions for residents deteriorated. These are by no means luxury hotels, but poor quality accommodation run on the cheap. For example, people have no facilities to prepare their own food, and the contractors provide meals which are in some cases unfit for human consumption.

The policy also led to pressure from right wing media misrepresenting hotels as “luxury” accommodation. In response, the Home Office is now moving people back into dispersal housing (HMOs), or onto large sites such as former military camps.

The Community Alternative

Members of our coalition believe there is a clear, sensible alternative. We are stepping up to organise housing for the former hotel residents by using our strong community networks. We call on the City Council to work with us as an official partner in this. We are able to organise emergency short-term housing without government funding. But to make this scheme stable in the long run, we need access to Home Office funding.

Our plan provides safety

Our Community Plan offers safety for people seeking sanctuary. Brighton & Hove has strong community support networks for refugees, and people feel safe here. In contrast, the Home Office's dispersal plan puts people in danger. Some of the people moved from the hotel already have been sent near to places where there have been attacks by far-right racists on HMOs housing refugees.

These attacks have included racist abuse, windows smashed, and buildings set on fire. They are escalating across the UK. Brighton & Hove prides itself on being a “City of Sanctuary”. This means nothing if we allow our neighbours to be scattered and exposed to racist violence.

Our plan has public support and is in line with the values of our city

Brighton & Hove, with its strong traditions of anti-racism and welcoming refugees, is the ideal place to make this work. Over 30 community groups (and counting) have signed up as supporters of the campaign, including local trade unions, and long-standing and well respected groups working with migrants and Black and ethnic minority communities in our City. Our coalition's emergency fundraiser raised over £20,000 in donations from residents in just the first week.

Our plan is affordable

Our Community Plan is more affordable than Home Office dispersal accommodation – and many times cheaper than housing people in hotels or ex-military camps. We expect the cost of the Community Plan to be £11,600 per month – compared to £14,000 for dispersal accommodation (not including relocation costs), or £88,000 for hotel accommodation.

According to the most recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO), it costs the Home Office an average of £170 per person per day – or £5,170 per month – to house people seeking asylum in hotels.^v

Accommodation in “large sites,” such as ex-military camps, is also extremely expensive. According to the NAO, last year the Home Office spent £40 million on housing just 735 people in these camps. That is a cost of £54,420 per person, equivalent to £4,535 per month or £104 per day. As the NAO notes, the Home Office previously abandoned these “camp” projects because of their high cost. It has returned to them because the current priority is cruelty rather than cost efficiency.

Dispersal accommodation, usually HMOs, costs the Home Office £27 per day on average or £821 per month. This is significantly cheaper than hotels or camps. But it is still unnecessarily expensive. The majority of dispersal accommodation is sourced by Home Office contractors in areas with low rents, e.g., in the Midlands, North of England, Wales and Scotland. In many areas, standard room rents are much lower than £821 per month. Much of this cost is therefore due to profits made by the layers of profiteering “middlemen”: landlords, contractors and sub-contractors.

Because of this, even though rents in Brighton & Hove are higher than in the main asylum dispersal areas, we can still house people more affordably here through community hosting.

In the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme, the government gave a minimum £350 per month “thank you payment” to hosts, who committed to housing people for at least an initial 6 months period. It also gave extra funding to Councils, who could use it to top up payments to reflect local conditions. Brighton & Hove City Council previously topped up payments to £750 per month, funded by the government.^{vi}

Our network of community groups has decades of experience in supporting housing for people seeking asylum. For example, we have sourced a 3 bedroom flat for former hotel residents at £1,600 per month, and single rooms (bills included) at £650 per month.

Based on this experience, we expect an average cost per person to be a maximum of £650/month. This is what we would expect to pay on the “private market”. We also have other hosts who have offered rooms for free. However, we agree with the City Council that to create a stable and sustainable hosting system it makes sense to offer a fair payment to hosts.

This scheme could be administered through the existing Council systems used to run the Homes for Ukraine and other refugee resettlement programmes. The Community coalition can work closely with the council on finding suitable hosts and properties and provide all assistance needed.

There should be no significant extra administrative cost for the Council. However, the Home Office asylum housing contracts include an administration fee on top of direct housing rental costs: according to the NAO, this is around 5% on top of rental costs. For purposes of comparison, we cost the plan including an extra 5% administration fee – so £682 per person per month.

The costs of housing the 17 hotel residents under these different schemes are:

- Hotels: £5,170 per person per month – total £88,000
- Camps: £4,535 per person per month – total £77,095
- HMOs: £821 per person per month – total £14,000
- Homes for Ukraine equivalent (with top-up): £750 per month – total £12,750
- Community Plan: £682 per month – total £11,600

Next steps

This plan is fair, it provides safety, and it will save public money. We call on Brighton & Hove City Council to do the right thing. Publicly support our Community Plan, and work with us to make this happen.

i <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/mar/25/bibby-stockholm-contractor-to-replace-home-offices-asylum-hotel-provider>

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/national/25034747.company-contract-house-asylum-seekers-removed/>

ii <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/34399f11-d3e2-4046-8c4b-256be95a52ff>

iii <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/08/legionella-found-onboard-the-bibby-stockholm-is-most-deadly-strain>

iv <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/apr/23/bibby-stockholm-asylum-berge-corporate-travel-management-uk-government>

v <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/home-offices-asylum-accommodation-contracts.pdf>

See also the analysis by Oxford University Migration Observatory:

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/asylum-accommodation-in-the-uk/>

vi <https://democracy.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s193722/Brighton%20Hove%20Response%20to%20Refugees%20and%20Asylum%20Seekers.html?CT=2>

Note that the national “Homes for Ukraine” payments are being reduced from January 2027, and the Council’s latest website information does not include the top-up figure.