

UK Refugees at Risk: How Current Move-on Policy Generates Homelessness

by **Anna Lindley** (SOAS University of London, al29@soas.ac.uk) and **Philip Brown** (University of Huddersfield, P.A.Brown@hud.ac.uk), with **Hasan Pandor** (SOAS ICOP) (07 January 2026)

Refugee homelessness in the UK has surged in recent years and remains a critical issue. Home Office efforts to clear [the asylum backlog](#) have collided with systemic [housing and homelessness](#) pressures, making newly granted refugees disproportionately vulnerable to homelessness. Councils have a statutory duty to take 'reasonable steps' to support people to resolve or avert the threat of homelessness. Newly recognised refugees across England rose from 2% to 9% of [homelessness duties](#) over 2023, and in the first half of 2025 accounted for 6-7%. In London, refugees evicted from asylum accommodation accounted for [8%](#) of homelessness duties in June 2025 and [16% of new rough sleepers](#) identified in 2024/25 were newly recognised refugees whose last settled base was asylum accommodation. Recent research in [London](#), [Yorkshire and Humber](#) and [wider evidence](#) from across England highlights four key issues:

1. **The 'move-on' period of 28 days for most newly recognised refugees is unrealistically short.** Their ability to be [prepared for the transition](#) into mainstream employment and housing is impeded by restrictions on working during the asylum process and by a lack of early ESOL provision. Rapid eviction results in homelessness, increasing overall cost to the public purse.
2. **The rental market refugees enter is under acute pressure.** The chronic shortage of affordable housing means that both individuals and local authorities struggle to source accommodation. This is compounded by restrictive [Local Housing Allowance rates](#) and [economic](#) and [racial](#) discrimination.
3. **Local authority homelessness prevention systems are failing to keep pace with needs.** The Home Office's coordination with councils has been fragmented and inadequate. Councils have thus struggled to plan early and effective prevention work. Furthermore, practice varies widely, creating [a postcode lottery](#): while some councils are proactively developing smarter ways of operating, expanding referral routes and move-on support, and working collaboratively with local voluntary and community sector organisations, other councils flounder.
4. **Homelessness prevention and relief is inadequately resourced.** Funding has not kept pace with the [rising cost](#) of temporary accommodation, leading to ballooning shortfalls which jeopardise the financial position of many councils. The [voluntary and community sector](#) is also under-funded and overwhelmed with people needing support, including people with newly granted refugee status.

To reduce harm and prevent homelessness, central government is urged to:

1. **Extend the move-on period permanently to at least 56 days.** This aligns with the prevention duty [timescale](#) and enables effective sequencing of support with accessing work, benefits and housing.
2. **Create a robust and holistic national strategy to help asylum route refugees progress with their lives in the UK.** This includes: early ESOL provision; reducing restrictions on access to training and employment during the asylum process; and navigational and financial support for the transition to mainstream life outside asylum accommodation.
3. **Ensure fair and practical access to housing.** This requires: improved resourcing for housing and homelessness prevention; targeted uplift to LHA rates for under-35s; scaling housing referral routes and partnerships; and making statutory pathways more predictable.