



Housing for asylum seekers 'a disgrace'

Marc Horne

February 1 2017, 12:01am, The Times



[PREVIOUS ARTICLE](#)

[NEXT ARTICLE](#)

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has made a written submission to a parliamentary committee investigating the treatment of people seeking refuge in the UK

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP



Share



Save

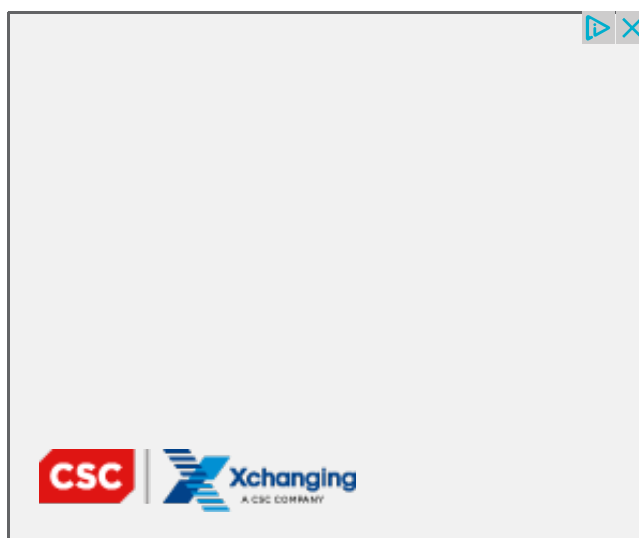
Traumatised asylum seekers have been threatened and treated like animals by housing officials, a report has claimed.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has made a written submission to a parliamentary committee investigating the treatment of people seeking refuge in the UK.

It has said that the mental health of vulnerable people is being made worse by the conditions they face when they arrive in Scotland.

The report has come to light after MPs on the home affairs committee described rooms that had been provided for asylum seekers as “a disgrace”.

The health board’s submission, which has been seen by *The Times*, calls for changes to be made to prevent such suffering.



It lists issues that have been reported to the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service (GPTS) and said: “Clients often felt fearful pursuing complaints and one reported being threatened with deportation by a housing provider employee when they spoke of making a complaint.

“There were reports of clients being spoken to by housing provider employees in what was perceived to be a derogatory, rude or aggressive manner.

“There were reports of insect infestations, which although repeatedly treated still remained a problem.

“Clients reported feeling unsafe, or being unable to protect their privacy and belongings.”

One asylum seeker, quoted in the report, said: “I was treated like an animal.”

“

We have come across too many examples of vulnerable people in unsafe accommodation, for example children living with infestations of mice, rats or bed bugs

The report noted that NHS staff felt compelled to try and help asylum seekers with a support system that often appeared to be bureaucratic, confusing and unresponsive.

It concluded: “Clinicians in the GPTS were concerned that clients’ needs for safety, respect and privacy were not always responded to.

“They often find themselves advocating for clients through written correspondence, making telephone calls and helping them navigate multiple complex systems.

“Such tasks are typically protracted and unclear, often without successful resolution.”

The cross-party home affairs committee found that asylum seekers were being housed in substandard conditions around the UK.

Yvette Cooper, MP, the chairwoman of the committee, gave a damning verdict on much of the accommodation being provided.

She said: “We have come across too many examples of vulnerable people in unsafe accommodation, for example children living with infestations of mice,

rats or bed bugs, lack of healthcare for pregnant women or inadequate support for victims of rape and torture.

“No one should be living in conditions like that.”

The Scottish government called on the Home Office to take urgent action.

Angela Constance, the equalities secretary, described the report as “deeply concerning”. She added: “The Home Office must ensure that asylum seekers, many of whom have endured great hardship and are particularly vulnerable, are treated with dignity and respect at all stages of the asylum process, including access to good quality, safe and secure housing.”

A Home Office spokesman said it worked with contractors to keep accommodation up to standard, adding: “We have also made significant improvements to the operation of the contracts, including increasing the number of dispersal areas by more than a third.”

The contract to provide housing, transport and support services to asylum seekers north of the border has been given to Serco, the multinational company, until 2019.

Serco originally outsourced the housing of asylum seekers in Scotland and Northern Ireland to Orchard & Shipman, a private property company.

However, it ended the £60 million contract after *The Times* published allegations that asylum seekers had been taunted with handcuffs and that 40 people were forced to share a kitchen.

Rupert Soames, Serco’s chief executive, said: “ We welcome the suggestions for improvements in the report and we will work with the Home Office to see how we can address them together.”



Share



Save

Comments are subject to our community guidelines, which can be viewed [here](#).

2 comments

Post comment

Newest | Oldest | Most Recommended

Robert Malyn 7 hours ago

Beggars can't be choosers.

I bet the accommodation they are given here is far better than the accommodation that they left behind!

| Recommend Reply

Leanora Munn 7 hours ago

"The cross-party home affairs committee found that asylum seekers were being housed in substandard conditions around the UK."

Scandalous yes, but just like many of the indigenous poor.

| Recommend Reply



BACK TO TOP



GET IN TOUCH

[Contact us](#)

[Help](#)

[The Times Editorial Complaints](#)

[The Sunday Times Editorial Complaints](#)

[Place an announcement](#)

[Classified advertising](#)

[Display advertising](#)

[The Times corrections](#)

[The Sunday Times corrections](#)

MORE FROM THE TIMES AND THE SUNDAY TIMES

[The Times e-paper](#)

[The Sunday Times e-paper](#)

[Times Currency Services](#)

[The Sunday Times Wine Club](#)

[Encounters Dating](#)

[Times Print Gallery](#)

[Times Crossword Club](#)

[Sunday Times Driving](#)

[Times+](#)

[The Sunday Times Rich List](#)

[Insider City Guides](#)

[Good University Guide](#)

[Parent Power](#)

© Times Newspapers Limited 2017.

Registered in England No. 894646.

Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

[Privacy & cookie policy](#)

[Syndication](#)

[Commissioning Terms](#)

[Terms and conditions](#)