

Fail, fail, and have another government contract  
John Grayson 16 February 2017  
Open Democracy UK

Security contractors G4S and Serco and housing company Clearsprings have for years supplied UK asylum seekers with shoddy housing. The contracts carry on regardless.



*G4S asylum*

*housing, Leicester (John Grayson)*

For five years now I've exposed the dangerous consequences of the UK's ill-conceived, badly planned and poorly executed rush to privatise housing for asylum seekers. I've told of children exposed to health risks

in [rat-infested homes](#), a [cockroach in the baby's bottle](#), lone women [intimidated by their landlords](#).

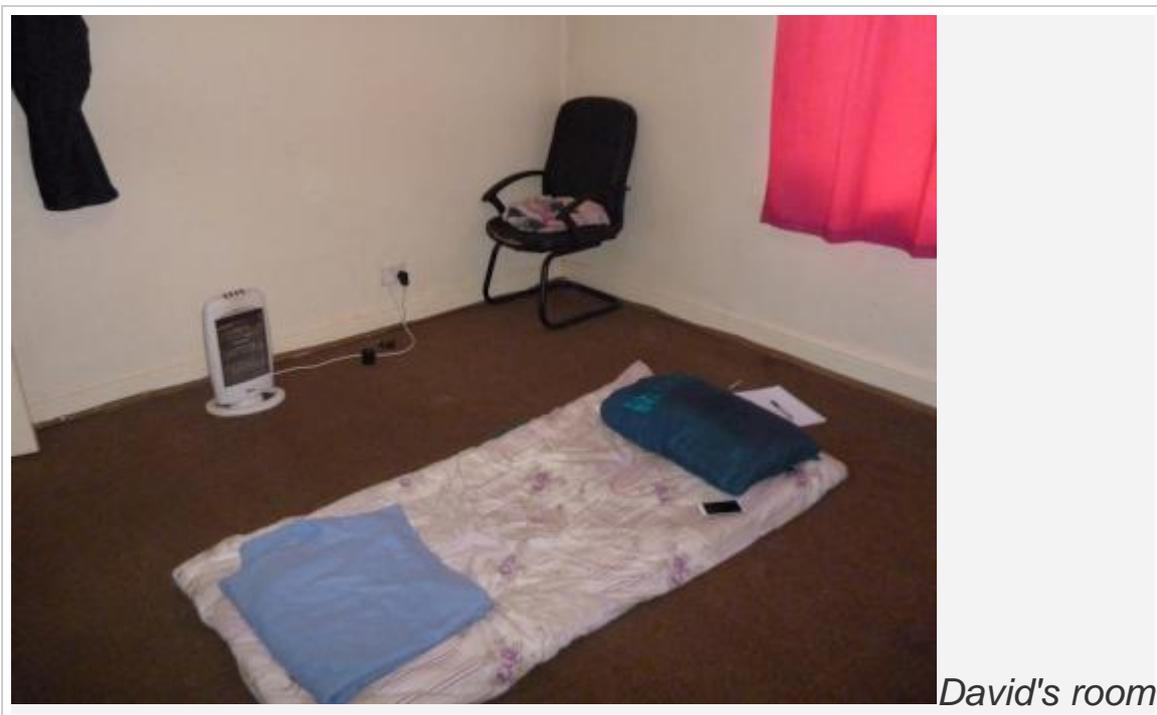
This home is one of the worst. It's a terraced house in the East Midlands of England, just off Leicester's city centre. I call in one frosty morning in early January. Paul comes to the door. He is an asylum seeker from the Middle East who speaks fluent English.

### **Living with bed bugs**

"The house is full of bedbugs, in David's bedroom, another guy's bedroom and all in here—." Paul points to the settee in the lounge.

The room is full of bedclothes and personal belongings. "G4S never clears away what they take from rooms when people leave," says Paul. "We don't like throwing the things away, people might come back."

Four men live here. David speaks to me in Arabic, Paul interpreting. "I have been here over a year and the bedbugs have got worse," says David. "I had to throw my mattress in the yard and I sleep on the floor. I try and stop the bugs coming in through the floor boards by taping up the room."



*David's room*

*(John Grayson)*

Outside David shows me piles of rubbish – infested mattresses, bedclothes, broken furniture.

"Ring G4S all the time," he says in broken English. "Never come."

Paul fetches some dead bugs he has saved. David shows me the bites on his arms and stomach.

I ask Paul how long he has been in the house. “Four months,” he says. Paul came to England in a refrigerated lorry— “It was very cold, four people on the lorry had to go to hospital.”

He claimed asylum: “They took me to detention centre, Campsfield. I was there two months, then Birmingham. One month in Kensington hotel.”

I had been to the Kensington, a rundown place G4S used alongside Birmingham initial accommodation centre, for people waiting to be housed.

Paul goes on: “Two months in Birmingham centre, then Stoke.”

I ask him about the Stoke house.

“Really bad,” he says.

After a further two months the Home Office claimed that Paul had been fingerprinted in Hungary on his journey and thus had to be deported back there. He was rearrested and sent back to Campsfield where he spent a further two months. Then in October 2016 he was moved again to the Leicester terraced house with the bed bugs.



*Bed bugs (John*

*Grayson)*

David shows me his leg and a badly scarred knee.

“I get this from torture in my own country,” he says. “I cannot walk very far but I have been given a bus pass.”

The heating has failed many times and the radiator in Paul’s bedroom has broken away from the wall. His window doesn’t shut.

“The walls were falling on me,” Paul said, pointing to cracked plasterwork he had repaired with tape.

A G4S maintenance worker had inspected the house on 12 December and passed on an urgent text message to G4S, demanding remedy. One whole month later David told me nothing had happened. I went back to the house a few days ago. Friends had come to help get rid of the sofa and the lounge had been cleared, but not by G4S. The bed bugs were thriving. Paul showed me fresh bites on his arms.

### **Victoria Derbyshire — a bad day for contractors**

Lately the lives of asylum seekers housed in the UK by commercial contractors got [rare prime time attention](#) on BBC television. The occasion was publication of a damning report from the Home Affairs Select Committee who’d found “vulnerable people in unsafe accommodation. . . children living with infestations of mice, rats or bed bugs, lack of health care for pregnant women. . . inadequate support for victims of rape and torture.”

The MPs had urged a complete overhaul of the contracting system.

Committee chair Yvette Cooper appeared on the BBC’s Victoria Derbyshire programme alongside G4S executive John Whitwam.

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'DISGRACEFUL' STATE OF HOMES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

**'Rats and cockroaches' found in asylum housing**

Some asylum seekers have been placed in accommodation infested by rats, mice and insects after arriving in the UK, a report by BBC says. The Home Affairs Committee called the conditions a "disgrace" and said estate councils were doing far more than others to take in those in need.

31 January 2017  
11 minutes

This clip is from



Victoria Derbyshire  
31/01/2017

BBC Victoria

Derbyshire programme 31 January 2017