



Teacher's Guide: Talking about the Use of Hotels for People Seeking Asylum

Introduction

This guide is aimed at helping teachers talk with students about the use of institutional hotel accommodation and people seeking asylum amidst escalating incidences of distrust, hostility and violence towards people seeking asylum. It aims to combat misinformation and encourage children to lead with compassion and kindness.

This teacher's guide should be used to support open and interactive class discussions and can be adapted for both primary and secondary ages. We advise against shutting down difficult questions, but opening these conversations prepared with the relevant background information and from a place of non-judgement.

As a general rule we advise taking a wider approach to this subject which focuses on the experiences of people seeking sanctuary, rather than the hostility and incidences of violence. Having said that, teachers should just be prepared with relevant information and responses should this come up.

NB: Please approach this topic with extreme caution if you have students from sanctuary seeking backgrounds in the class. In these cases, students should always be told in advance and given opportunities to leave the classroom.

Part 1 - Clarifying key terms and concepts

Discussion Prompts:

- Write 'asylum-seeker' on the board. Ask students to explain what they think this means.
Answer: Someone who has submitted an application for asylum/safety in the UK, having been forced to flee their country, and is waiting for a decision on their application.
- Why might someone have to flee their country? What might they have experienced? *(Possible answers: War, torture, persecution, violence, long journeys, death of loved ones, separation from family)*
- What might be some of the challenges they experience in the UK? *(Possible answers: language, culture, hostility, missing family and friends)*
- How would you feel if you arrived in a different country having been forced to leave your home?

Part 2 - The Experiences of People Seeking Asylum

At the moment, there are people seeking asylum being housed in hotels across the UK because there is a lack of suitable accommodation. Over recent years, the time it takes for a decision to be made on someone's asylum application is getting longer and longer, meaning there is a backlog of applications and more people in need of accommodation whilst waiting



for a decision. For example, there are three times as many people (or 96,000 more people)¹ waiting for a decision on their application today in comparison with 2017.

Whilst people wait for a decision on their asylum claim, most people seeking asylum are not allowed to work and those staying in hotels are not able to cook: instead they are given basic food and only £9.10 a week to cover all other costs like transport, clothes, hygiene and personal care.² There have been reports that have criticised the quality of the food people are given and whether they can eat it according to their beliefs. Those housed in different types of uncatered accommodation receive only £45 per week.

Hotel accommodation is often in isolated locations far from the rest of the community. The poor quality accommodation, isolation, lack of privacy and basic essentials often damages people's physical and mental health.³ Previously people seeking asylum had largely been dispersed to certain, typically urban areas. In the past year, people seeking asylum have started to be dispersed to all parts of the UK, including rural areas and those with less recent history of welcoming large numbers of immigrant communities.

People seeking asylum can often be moved on very suddenly to new accommodation and parts of the UK, even if children are attending local schools and they have medical appointments. This can be incredibly destabilising for families.

Discussion Prompts:

- Why would living in a hotel not be a nice experience? (Lack of catering facilities, space, lack of freedom, unsafe/easy for protestors to find where they live, inappropriate for children).
- Why might it be frustrating not to work? (Boredom, unable to make money, want to contribute to society, want to use skills and qualifications)

Part 3 - Protests at Hotel Accommodation

NB: Depending on the age/background of students and your local context, it may be best to not proactively raise this discussion, but instead this information is included to help teachers respond to things that students might raise having heard in the media and/or from other people.

We typically advise not shutting down students if they raise these issues but instead allow them space to talk before circling back to building compassion with those seeking asylum and how they might be feeling in these situations.

Recent weeks have seen escalating incidents of protests at accommodation housing people seeking asylum with reports of 'migrant hunting' doubling in a year.⁴ These include cases where either small or large groups of people have gone to places believed or known to be

¹ [Asylum backlog | Institute for Government](#)

² [Asylum support: What you'll get - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [Number of asylum seekers placed in UK hotels has soared since 2020 | Immigration and asylum | The Guardian](#)

⁴ ['Migrant hunts' double in one year | News | The Times](#)



housing people seeking asylum and either confronting, protesting against and in some cases even harassing and attacking those staying inside.

Often these incidences have been ‘triggered’ by allegations of criminal behaviour from people within the hotel but are often compounded by concerns with regards to the money spent on the hotel and the food and care of those within them, false assumptions that people seeking asylum receive preferential treatment with regards to accessing doctors’ appointments etc. This has been particularly exacerbated amidst the cost of living crisis where more people are struggling to get by and because hotels are commonly used in areas of high deprivation.

Discussion Points

- ❑ Why do you think allegations like this are often attached to people seeking asylum? (Discuss prejudice, othering/ fear of the other’, media representation)
- ❑ What does the word ‘prejudice’ mean? (*Answer: preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience*). What kind of prejudices do people have about people seeking asylum? Why do you think people have prejudices against people seeking safety in the UK?
- ❑ Even if reports of criminal behaviour by one person are true and connected with someone in the hotel, how might other people at the accommodation feel if people arrived to protest?

After a recent incident outside asylum-seeker accommodation, the people inside said:

- “We just want to be safe”
- “We haven't done anything wrong”
- “Please, can you help us move to another town?”
- Someone from Afghanistan said “I wasn't safe in my country and I'm not safe here.”

Par 4 - Open Discussion

- How do you feel having discussed and heard about all of this?
- What do you think the people in the hotel feel about staying in our area?

Part 5 - What can your students do to show their support for people seeking safety?

Having established that it is better to treat people with kindness, trust and respect rather than hostility and hatred, ask children how they think they could make your local area welcoming.

Some suggestions include:

1. Fundraise/donate to a local refugee support organisation
2. Work with a local refugee support organisation to send ‘welcome’ letters to people in the hotels/ new members of the community
3. Write letters to your local MP telling them what you think about the use of hotels as accommodation.



Supporting Resources

[Being a Teacher Means Talking About Sensitive Social Issues. Here's How \(Opinion\) \(edweek.org\)](#)

[HnH-14-steps-to-challenge-hate_2019-06.pdf \(hopenothate.org.uk\)](#)

[How Hate Can Come to Town – HOPE not hate](#)