

# BRIEFING ON THE FAR RIGHT, ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIVISM AND CONTINGENCY ACCOMMODATION

## KEY ASKS

HOPE not hate calls on the Government to:

1. End the use of inflammatory language by the Government and the media which feeds and enables the far right.
2. Make sure the Home Office puts the right safeguards in place for those in unsafe and unsuitable accommodation. At the moment local authorities and police are not fully informed and not adequately supported to address issues before they spill over.
3. Put together a long-term plan to provide suitable community-based accommodation for people seeking asylum, and to take action to address the backlogs that trap people in unsuitable accommodation where they become targets for hate.

## FAR RIGHT AND ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIVITY

- The weekend of the 18th February saw five anti-migrant protests, either led or supported by far right groups, with banners such as ‘Stop White Genocide’ and ‘End the Invasion, Stop Immigration’ from the extreme fascist group Patriotic Alternative prominent.
- In Rotherham, two people were arrested, one of whom was detained on suspicion of obstructing a public highway and was in police custody. This followed the violent scenes in [Knowsley, Merseyside](#) on the 10th February where 15 people were arrested and 3 people were injured as a police van was set on fire and fireworks were lit.
- Far right activity around asylum accommodation in hotels has increased massively since 2020, with hundreds of incidents of far-right activists turning up to asylum accommodation sites to protest, harass residents, and film content in order to

boost their online profiles and encourage anti-migrant activism. **This weekend, HOPE not hate announced that far right activity around asylum accommodation had risen 102% in 2022 from the previous year with 253 separate incidents.**

- In Knowsley, far-right groups had been active in the run up to the protest stirring up hate. Britain’s most active fascist group, [Patriotic Alternative](#), was agitating around the hotel, leafleting the local area and posing with a banner outside the hotel in the weeks prior to Friday evening. The group has been active in this way across the country for the last two years. [Britain First](#), the anti-Muslim political party, also filmed outside the hotel, using the footage to rile up its supporters.
- Knowsley was not the first protest we have seen provoked by these groups, and we will continue to see protests around asylum accommodation sites, with far-right chat forums frequently sharing intel on hotel names and locations in an attempt to stir up division.
- In October 2022, we saw where this activism can lead. [Andrew Leak](#), an individual who consumed and interacted with content from far right and anti-migrant activists, threw multiple petrol bombs at a migrant processing centre in Dover.

## THE ISSUES WITH CONTINGENCY ACCOMMODATION

- The use of hotel accommodation for asylum seekers has been a particularly potent issue. A shortage of housing and failure to address a growing backlog of asylum cases has meant that increasing numbers of asylum seekers have been offered “contingency accommodation” by the Home Office, which includes hotels or B&Bs. This accommodation is wholly unsuitable, conditions are often dire, yet the far right have leapt on the issue, generating outrage about the ‘5 star experience’ given to asylum seekers while British people struggle.

- While the accommodation is wholly unsuitable for asylum seekers, and the dire conditions in such accommodation have been well documented, their widespread use across the country has also become a flashpoint for community tension over the last couple of years, agitated by the far right.

## **MIGRANT HUNTERS: WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT THREAT DO THEY POSE?**

- **Amanda Smith (aka Yorkshire Rose) visited migrant accommodation 124 times in 2022, a 143% increase on 2021.** Smith, from Castleford, is by far the most prolific hotel harasser of 2022. She poses as a concerned local journalist to try to get migrants to talk to her. Her visits at times end in her screaming “traitor” and verbally abusing staff and security. She has nearly 11,000 subscribers on YouTube with 1.8 million views. She has called asylum seekers “filthy animals” and was arrested in January 2021 for causing alarm and distress and banned from North Yorkshire as part of their bail conditions. She has also harassed staff at COVID-19 test centres, claiming COVID-19 is fake. On her accounts she has posted 5G and New World Order conspiracy theories and content from the fascist group Patriotic Alternative.
- **Patriotic Alternative made 14 visits in 2022.** They dropped banners saying “White girls are not Fair Game” in front of hotels and leafleting to stir up hate with messages such as “we’re full”.
- **Britain First and Paul Golding have carried out 81 visits, a 53% increase on 2021.** They also leafleted areas near migrant accommodation, most notably in Linton-on-Ouse where they ran a campaign designed to play on local concerns. Replicating their previous tactic of ‘mosque invasions’ they filmed outside hotels and even entered the accommodation on numerous occasions. Britain First messaging focused on painting asylum-seekers as potential terrorists or sexual predators. The group uses Islamophobic narratives about a “Muslim takeover of Europe” and regularly refers to the “Great Replacement” – a white nationalist conspiracy theory that states the ethnic white population is being demographically and culturally replaced with non-white and specifically Arab and sub-Saharan Muslim populations through mass migration and demographic changes.

- **Far-right ‘journalists’ Voice of Wales have visited 13 sites in Wales in 2022 creating content.** They were permanently banned from YouTube and now use fringe social media platforms to spread their videos, such as Gettr.
- **Steve Laws is one of the most prominent anti-migrant figures who films arriving boats in Dover.** He uses the language of “invaders”, “swarm” and the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory. He is a former member of For Britain, the now defunct far-right party.
- **Chris Johnson posts near-daily videos of migrants rescued by the RNLI on his Facebook page.** In September 2022, he posted, “The first thing Liz Truss should do is build more prisons because the levels of violence and sexual assaults in the country is unbelievable. Bang them all up. We have a right to feel safe.”

## **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?**

1. **Politicians and the media need to take real responsibility and drop their line of inflammatory language that feeds and enables the far right.**

The tenacity of anti-migrant activists is encouraged by a broader anti-migrant narrative. Directing hate at Albanian nationals, branded as ‘criminals’, tropes about people claiming asylum as ‘freeloaders’, claims of Britain ‘swamped’ by an ‘invasion’ of migrants, and direct attacks on so called ‘activist lawyers’ have all come from the heart of power, are amplified by the press, and swiftly become focal points of far-right activity.

The violent scenes of Friday and repeated attacks on asylum seekers by the far right have all happened in an anti-migrant climate where the government has continually scapegoated migrants and whipped up asylum as a political issue. But it is within their power to deal with backlogs and find more suitable accommodation, to provide service providers with information and equip them to respond to any community tensions, and to take the far right threat more seriously.

2. **While people remain in unsafe and unsuitable accommodation, the Home Office needs to ensure the right safeguards are in place** - at the moment local authorities and police are not fully informed and not adequately supported to address issues before they spill



over. This protest was just months after a far-right terrorist threw petrol bombs at a migrant centre in Dover. We need to see the Government taking the threat of the far right seriously and ensuring that local services are equipped and prepared to deal with the risks posed.

- 3. Finally, we need to see a long term plan for the Government. The Home Office must provide suitable community-based accommodation for people seeking asylum and action taken to address the backlogs** trapping people in unsuitable accommodation where they become targets for hate.