

Poor housing and refugee homelessness highlighted in new reports

February 13 2024



Credit: Peter Hall/Unsplash

Two new reports based on research led by the University of Huddersfield's Professor Philip Brown have highlighted issues surrounding housing and homelessness during the cost-of-living crisis.

Professor Brown, the academic lead on the university's Healthy Housing Initiative, worked with the Northern Housing Consortium and the Center for Homelessness Impact on reports that assess poor quality housing stock as well as links between refugee resettlement and homelessness respectively.

The [first report](#), "Living in Fear" focuses in particular on housing in the north of England, and is based on research with renters and owner-occupiers who were spoken to during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and in 2023. The new report follows [pioneering work](#) undertaken at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report proposes a three-point plan that it is calling upon the government to implement.

"During the winter months, people living in poor housing conditions are more likely to die as a result of respiratory, circulatory and cardiovascular diseases and are more likely to experience depression and anxiety," says Professor Brown.

"In certain parts of the U.K., such as the north of England, this is made even worse by the prevalence of older, colder and poorly maintained properties. But even if you are fortunate enough to have adequate accommodation, this does not insulate you from the spiraling cost of living, in particular rising energy prices.

The study sets out a three-point plan to ease the squeeze on struggling households:

- The speedy progress of the [Renters' Reform Bill](#) to end no-fault evictions
- Local Housing Allowance levels must continue to keep pace with spiraling rents
- New support with energy bills, including a 'social tariff' to help

people meet soaring costs of gas and electricity.

Northern Housing Consortium Chief Executive, Tracy Harrison, said, "This was a [small-scale study](#) but, the Northern Housing Monitor, our state of the region housing report illustrates these problems are likely to be widespread. The North West and Yorkshire and the Humber have experienced the biggest market rent hikes in England. The North accounts for a disproportionate number of homes with the most serious hazards, and there is a higher-than-average number of people experiencing fuel poverty."

Huge increase in homelessness among asylum seekers

The [second major report](#), for the Center for Homelessness Impact, has revealed there was a 223% surge in street homelessness for people leaving asylum between June and September 2023. This trend indicates a troubling link between the U.K.'s asylum system and the growing levels of homelessness. The report is titled "Homelessness, refugees and resettlement."

It recommends practical measures, including extending the move-on period, acknowledging the crucial role of social housing providers, and ensuring access to rights-based advice. By providing increased face-to-face support and building capacity within refugee communities, it is hoped that more thoughtful and effective approaches towards refugee resettlement can be created.

"Those people who arrive in the U.K. to seek sanctuary have, over the last few decades, been increasingly finding themselves accommodated in precarious situations, often enduring homelessness," adds Professor Brown.

"This is particularly common for those receiving refugee status after a

decision on their claim for asylum. These are challenges shared by many people in the U.K. A lack of social housing, low-pay work and a poorly resourced support system maintain common struggles. The lack of familiarity with U.K. systems, difficulty getting into employment and an often fledging grasp of English mean that, for refugees, they find things even harder."

Ligia Teixeira, Chief Executive of the Center for Homelessness Impact, said, "We hope that our analysis helps to see where things can be done to help refugees live their lives in peace. Many of these things will help everyone who is struggling to have somewhere safe to call home."

The team have taken a 30-year view to understand how refugees have navigated the housing system since the 1990s. This has resulted in a number of resources including a [toolkit](#) to help improve housing outcomes for refugees.

More information: Living in Fear: the cost-of-living crisis and poor-quality housing. www.northern-consortium.org.uk/living-in-fear/

Homelessness, refugees and resettlement. [assets-global.website-files.com/... settlement.paper.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5e911111-4169-408c-b083-41737159015d/63901111-4169-408c-b083-41737159015d-settlement.paper.pdf)

Provided by University of Huddersfield

Citation: Poor housing and refugee homelessness highlighted in new reports (2024, February 13) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-02-poor-housing-refugee-homelessness-highlighted.html>

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