

## South Staffordshire Council

### Hatherton Hotel Asylum Seekers

The increase in dangerous small boat crossings is causing an unprecedented strain on the asylum system, consequently the Home Office are having to acquire hotels through contracted providers at very short notice. Given the immediate challenges at the Manston facility in Kent, they have also in recent days on occasion needed to acquire additional hotels and individual hotel rooms on a night-by-night basis. This is an additional, temporary measure given the imperative to move a significant number of people on from Manston at pace.

South Staffordshire Council was notified by the Home Office that the Hatherton Hotel, Pinfold Lane, Penkridge had been made available for immediate use by Asylum Seekers from 10th November 2022.

South Staffordshire Council and local partners were not consulted prior to the use of this hotel by the Home Office and were not part of the decision making process to place asylum seekers there. Due to the emergency situation in the Manston asylum processing centre and the urgent need to find accommodation elsewhere the Home Office are having to acquire additional bed spaces on a night- by-night basis. This is happening across the country, and not just in South Staffordshire, as the Government tries to uphold its obligations under the Refugee Convention and continues to process claims for both individuals and families awaiting a decision on their asylum claim at this current time.

There are currently 95 asylum seekers resident at the hotel out of a capacity of 104 bed spaces. The Home Office has indicated that this will be short term accommodation until more suitable accommodation can be found, but they are unable to give a timescale due to the continuing pressures in the asylum system.

SERCO are the Home Office appointed contractors for asylum dispersal and are responsible for ensuring the health, wellbeing, safety and welfare of asylum seekers. This includes providing food and other basic provisions such as clothing where this is required. This is not a local authority or NHS responsibility. SERCO are providing 24-hour onsite support to these residents.

Council officers are working closely with partner organisations, including the County Council, Health, Fire and the Police to ensure we can address any issues should they arise. We are continuing to meet with the Home Office and SERCO to review the situation and find out more information including the timescale for use of this temporary accommodation.

More information can be found on the council website at: <https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/communities/asylum-seekers.cfm> and will be updated on a regular basis.