

A statement regarding people seeking asylum, from church leaders in Altrincham & Hale

Just over two years ago the Ashley Hotel in Hale was requisitioned by the Home Office to house people seeking asylum. It was the first time in Trafford where a hotel was used for such accommodation. In November 2024, the Home Office requisitioned the Cresta Court hotel to similarly house people seeking asylum, albeit that the Cresta Court hotel was to be used primarily for short term accommodation for residents.

Whilst concerns have been raised by some in the community that this was something new and therefore unknown in our community, it appears that the many of Altrincham and Hale's residents have welcomed the opportunity to offer kindness and compassion.

This area has been a welcoming place for numbers of different nationalities. In recent years people have opened up their homes to welcome families fleeing the war in Ukraine and also for people leaving Hong Kong after the political unrest in that country. The local churches played their part in this, providing English Language classes, clothing and safe places to meet for Ukrainian and Hong Kong families, helping them to integrate into our community.

So, it's no surprise that churches are stepping up again to support those now living in our local hotels. Our motivation for this comes from the Bible and the example of Jesus. In the Bible we are repeatedly instructed to welcome the stranger/foreigner into our community, and to care for others as we would do for our own. In the New Testament Jesus teaches that we should welcome others because in doing so we are welcoming Jesus himself. That is what drives us to act today.

We are saddened therefore that hostility has been aimed at these residents and those who work with them. It also appears that some in our community have identified this moment as a chance to make political capital from having asylum seekers in our town, aiming to promote uncertainty and fear. We believe that there is a legitimate place for protest, and this should be directed to those in power who shape policies. We also hope that, where there are concerns and differences of opinion locally, ways can be found of exchanging views and sharing information respectfully and constructively.

When we take time to listen to the stories of those who have become resident here, we hear the same message again and again—they did not want to leave their homes. Yet in campaigning for the same liberties which we enjoy, their lives have come under threat and their choice was between fleeing the danger or persecution, trauma or even death.

The churches of Altrincham and Hale are, and will continue to be, places of refuge for such refugees.

Revd Ashley Hardingham, on behalf of Altrincham Baptist Church

Revd Claire Corley, Vicar, St George's Church of England

Revd Jackie Bellfield, on behalf of Altrincham Methodist Church and The Vine Hale

Revd Clair Jaquiss, Vicar, All Saints Hale Barns with Ringway, Church of England

Revd Kuruone Mutimwii, Altrincham United Reformed Church

Revd Daud Gill, Vicar, St Albans Church of England

Revd Mike McGurk, Vicar, St Peter's, Hale

