

STILL LIVING IN LIMBO

WHY THE USE OF
TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION
MUST END



SHELTER



**WE FLED TO
NOTHING
AND LOST
EVERYTHING**



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RESEARCH STEERING GROUP MEMBER

SHANDOR

My name is Shandor and I had the misfortune of living in temporary accommodation for 9 months. My experiences of temporary accommodation left me determined to stand up for those unable to challenge the wrongs of society. Being involved in the Steering Group for this ground-breaking research was the perfect opportunity to do just that.

After suffering an accident at work and losing my job, I lost my home and me and my son found ourselves homeless. I was passed around between two councils who refused to accept responsibility for housing me and had no shame in telling me: I was not their problem. Until the night before my eviction date when I received a phone call from the council informing me that I have a place in temporary accommodation.

Things went from bad to worse for me and my son. I received the keys to a small room in a block – it had a fridge, sink, fold up bed and the windows were screwed shut. Gaps in the back door meant it was freezing and insects could freely enter. We shared the place with strangers, some of whom had severe mental health issues like PTSD or struggled with substances. The TV in the communal living room was often blaring at 4am. Management were never on-site when they were supposed to be. Despite my efforts to make it comfortable for my young son, the stress of the situation was clearly taking its toll on him.

I was eventually moved to a new block, but this had a whole new set of serious health and safety issues. The facilities were appalling, the sinks and communal showers were out of action, and management weren't responding to our numerous complaints. After months of stress, my slow-moving Housing Officer finally found me a place to live. Although I was glad to move on from this fiasco, I did make friends and have laughs with other homeless tenants in the block. We had to support each other just to get by in this cold, uncaring system.

Shelter had helped me when I was on the lowest spoke of fortune's wheel and had a puncture. If I can also help make the difference for one person by giving my time, then to me that is priceless. For that reason I've worked with Shelter on various projects over the years, both in the spotlight and behind the scenes.

I am a shy person by nature. But I felt being part of a Steering Group would be interesting as I could draw on my skills and experiences without feeling 'vulnerable'. There was an undeniable volume of personal stories and experiences – each of which unique yet relatable. I particularly enjoyed the technical aspects of the project – what are our aims? What do we ask and how? It was something to sink my teeth into.

The Steering Group morphed from a group of individuals into a team. I grew in confidence and got so much from seeing through a project of this nature, from conception to viewing the final survey results. I will be extremely interested to see how this research is received by the Government and what impact it will have for the thousands of families and children in circumstances worse than I shudder to recollect.





TRUST FOR LONDON

SUSIE DYE

One in a hundred children are currently homeless in our country. This is not right.

In London, this problem is particularly acute. Rents have increased faster than earnings, particularly for those on lower incomes. This means that many struggle to afford to pay the bills. Of these, a depressingly large number of people end up in government-arranged 'temporary' accommodation – often called hidden homelessness.

At Trust for London, we want to see a world where all Londoners can afford a secure, decent place to call home, regardless of their income. Through the work we fund – such as projects supporting Londoners living in temporary accommodation to access legal advice and have their voices heard – we know how far from this reasonable expectation we currently are.

For the first time in over a decade, this research provides reliable, national evidence on the impact of living in temporary accommodation on the people and families affected. It makes a series of achievable recommendations, influenced by people who have lived it and know best what would make a difference.

We call on those with the power to make change to listen. Let's together do what we can to stop the injustice of hundreds of thousands of families living in expensive, cramped, unhealthy homes, paid for only partially by benefits, that make them sick and less able to work, and harm children's life chances. It's time we do better by those in temporary accommodation.



JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION AND THE JOSEPH ROWNTREE HOUSING TRUST

PAUL KISSACK

A safe, secure and stable home is the foundation for a decent life.

Housing pressures are now at the centre of the cost-of-living crisis. Families are struggling to cope with the highest rates of inflation in forty years. Rents are increasing at their highest rate for decades. Interest rate hikes are piling pressure on those with mortgages. While things are bad for those with a secure place to call home, they are even worse for those who are homeless.

Homeless families are bearing the brunt of this crisis.

Temporary accommodation is often too small. This leaves children without a safe space to do their homework and play. Many are in a poor state of repair, with mould and damp problems common. This has a detrimental impact on children's physical and mental health. Children and their families are being denied a stable home where they can put down roots.

Successive governments have failed to maintain our social security system and build enough social homes. More and more families are now reliant on insecure temporary accommodation. The majority have lived in 'temporary' accommodation for over a year. Many now live far from their schools and support networks. This cannot continue.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, alongside the Trust for London, has co-funded this research by Shelter to shed light on the experiences of those living in temporary accommodation and to develop solutions for the crisis they face.

We thank the families who participated in the study for sharing their experiences and to the team at Shelter for carrying out this important and timely work.

Their experiences show that the Government must take decisive action to rebuild the safety net and provide families with permanent, safe and affordable homes.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last decade, the number of social rented homes in England has fallen by more than 100,000. Into this void has emerged 'temporary accommodation'. This is accommodation councils offer to homeless households while they wait for their application for help to be processed and to be offered a settled home.

Temporary accommodation was never intended to exist outside of emergencies. But it's now accommodating almost 100,000 households, including over 125,000 children. And its use is on the rise. The number of households living in temporary accommodation has doubled in the last ten years. Temporary accommodation is often far from a temporary arrangement. The majority of households live there for a year or more.

We conducted research with 1,112 people living in temporary accommodation. This is the largest ever survey with this group. Our sample reached across England and was broadly representative of all households in temporary accommodation. The research and analysis was guided by a Steering Group of 'experts by experience', and grassroots organisations.

PEOPLE TOLD US THAT:

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN DANGEROUS, SLUM-LIKE CONDITIONS

- Three-quarters (75%) of households live in poor conditions, including one in five (21%) with a safety hazard, such as faulty wiring or fire risks.
- More than two thirds (68%) of people have inadequate access to basic facilities - such as cooking or laundry facilities.
- More than one in three (35%) parents say their children do not have their own bed.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ISN'T TEMPORARY

- Six in ten (61%) households have spent a year or more living in temporary accommodation, increasing to more than two thirds (68%) of families.
- Some people live in temporary accommodation for decades.

LIFE IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS PROFOUNDLY UNSTABLE AND UNCERTAIN

- Three in ten (30%) households have lived in three or more temporary accommodation places. One person had moved fourteen times.
- Two thirds (62%) of people were given less than 48 hours' notice when they were last moved between temporary accommodation placements.

PEOPLE ARE OFTEN MOVED FAR FROM THEIR HOME AREA, CAUSING EVEN GREATER DISRUPTION

- More than one in four (27%) households were placed more than an hour from their previous home.
- One in five (19%) families with school age children have to travel more than an hour to get to school.

PEOPLE FEEL TRAPPED AND POWERLESS TO IMPROVE THEIR SITUATION

- One in four (26%) waited more than eight weeks for an urgent repair.
- More than four in ten (43%) feel they have been ignored when trying to get in touch with their temporary accommodation provider.

PEOPLE TOLD US THAT LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION:

ENTRENCHES POVERTY AND HOUSING INSECURITY

- Almost nine in ten (87%) struggle to keep up with the costs of their temporary accommodation.
- One in four (26%) report falling behind and almost half (47%) have borrowed money to keep up.
- More than one in four (27%) had to reduce their working hours and one in ten (11%) had to stop work completely due to the impact of temporary accommodation.

IS VERY BAD FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Two in three (66%) people report temporary accommodation having a negative impact on physical or mental health.
- Almost six in ten (57%) parents report temporary accommodation having a negative impact on their children's physical or mental health.
- One in four (26%) parents report their child being often unhappy or depressed as a result of temporary accommodation.

DEVASTATES CHILDREN'S LIVES

- Almost half (47%) of children have had to move schools.
- More than half (52%) of parents report their children have missed days of school. Of these, more than one in three (37%) have missed more than one month.
- One in four (26%) parents say their children are unable to keep up or have performed poorly as a result of living in temporary accommodation.

Our research shows people are trapped in Dickensian conditions that harm health, sever support networks and compound poverty. It is devastating children's lives and jeopardising their future success.

These problems are compounded by the constant uncertainty of temporary accommodation. For these 100,000 households there's no clear end in sight – they are no nearer a settled home and the lack of affordable homes means many will spend years living like this. This cannot continue.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

People living in temporary accommodation are being badly let down. This hidden scandal requires urgent attention from both central and local government.

Working with 'experts by experience', we developed four principles to guide the reform of temporary accommodation and created recommendations for change to achieve these goals.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION SHOULD BE BARELY USED

A temporary house can never be a home. It wasn't designed to provide anything other than a brief stay, while the administrative process of assessing an application was completed and a suitable home offered.

We've reduced its use before and can reduce it again:

1. Invest in a new generation of permanent social housing by committing to fund the delivery of 90,000 homes per year, a significant proportion of which should be allocated to people in temporary accommodation.
2. Make housing benefit adequate, so that homelessness can be prevented and relieved via a suitable and affordable rental. This would make it easier for both people at risk of homelessness, and councils, to find an affordable rental – significantly reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation.
3. Introduce the Renters' Reform Bill to Parliament, which will end no-fault eviction from the private rental market ensuring private rentals provide a permanent home. No-fault evictions are a major trigger of homelessness.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MUST BE TIME-LIMITED

Living in temporary accommodation longer-term is especially damaging. The government must give much greater priority for suitable social housing and/or much more help into a suitable private rental to individuals and families who have spent more than one year in temporary accommodation. This might be challenging in areas with a high need for family-sized social housing, such as London.

4. Amend statutory guidance on allocations, so that households who have spent a year or more in temporary accommodation have an 'additional preference' for an allocation of social housing.
5. Amend statutory code of guidance on homelessness, so that households who have spent a year or more in temporary accommodation are offered priority help to access a suitable private rental.



TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MUST BE WELL-MANAGED

People in temporary accommodation are at a vulnerable point in their lives. Yet private temporary accommodation providers, who charge very high rates, are unregistered and unregulated. The government must strengthen standards, increase transparency about providers' performance and – most importantly – require enforcement by a strong national regulator. Regulation must be Westminster's responsibility:

6. Require temporary accommodation providers to be registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, or a separate national regulator, so that suitability standards are proactively enforced and performance can be monitored and reported.
7. Introduce new national standards on facilities and service standards in temporary accommodation. This should include access to basic amenities (such as Wi-Fi, washing machines and play space) and a requirement on councils to give people regular updates on their case.
8. Legally require local housing authorities to inspect temporary accommodation before it's offered, so that people at a very vulnerable point aren't expected to move into unsuitable, substandard, and filthy accommodation.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MUST BE PERSON-CENTRED

People, and especially families with children, must be offered adequate support to recover from the shock that led to homelessness while they are living in temporary accommodation. There's also a need for greater input from people in temporary accommodation:

9. Require and adequately fund local housing authorities to offer multi-agency wrap-around support to all families and individuals in temporary accommodation, so that they have support to cope with problems, such as poor mental health, poor physical health, disabilities, domestic abuse, early years and educational needs, as appropriate to meet the individual needs of each household.
10. Amend statutory homeless guidance by adding a new chapter on temporary accommodation, so that it's clear to local authorities the level of choice and autonomy they should offer.
11. Fund and encourage the creation of Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAGs) or equivalent bodies in which residents have an active and inclusive role in every locality, so that people living in temporary accommodation don't feel so isolated, and can express their views on what needs to change and receive meaningful engagement with these views from providers and statutory agencies.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, successive governments in England have failed to invest in building safe, permanent and affordable social homes.

Combined with an inadequate housing benefit system, especially the freeze to Local Housing Allowance needed by a third (33%) of private renters, this has resulted in growing homelessness.¹

Consequently, more and more money is being sunk into homelessness accommodation. A growing 'temporary accommodation sector' has emerged, where billions are being paid to often unregulated private providers.²

In 2004 Shelter conducted a survey of people living in temporary accommodation: Living in Limbo. This revealed the hidden experiences of people living in temporary accommodation and showed the terrible impact it has on people's lives.

Almost twenty years on, we have repeated this survey to document what temporary accommodation is like in the 2020s, whether it meets the standards it sets for itself, and how it matches up to a suitable settled home.

One woman we heard from has been living in temporary accommodation for so long, that she was even living in it in 2004 - when we last carried out a survey of people living in temporary accommodation.



This report sets out the results of a survey of 1,112 people living in temporary accommodation across England. This is the largest ever survey of people living in temporary accommodation.

Our findings are broadly representative of households living in temporary accommodation in England across various demographics including household type, work status, ethnicity and type of accommodation. We have set out further details of the research method and survey sample in the appendix.

Our research shows what temporary accommodation is like, how common certain issues are, and how it impacts people, especially families with children. We used quantitative methods to complement and bring new insight to the mainly qualitative research that Shelter³ and others have produced on temporary accommodation to date.

Our research was steered throughout by ‘experts by experience’ – people from across the country who have their own lived experience of temporary accommodation, and people from grassroots organisations. This involved three key activities:

- A Steering Group of 14 experts by experience, along with grassroots groups, guided the research design, analysis of the findings and development of the recommendations.
- 30 interviews with experts by experience and grassroots groups to help define the themes to explore.
- 11 testing sessions with experts by experience to help us to identify issues with the language or structure of the survey and invitation materials.

The report is in four parts. Firstly, we introduce what is meant by ‘temporary accommodation’, and how it is being used today. Next, we explore what temporary accommodation is like: the condition it’s in, the facilities and space it offers, and the service provided to people living there. We then move on to exploring the impact of living in temporary accommodation, before sharing conclusions and recommendations for change.



WHAT IS TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION?

Local authorities offer 'temporary accommodation' while a household's application for statutory homelessness assistance is being considered, or as a stopgap while they wait for the offer of a settled home.

This research looks exclusively at the experience of homeless people living in statutory temporary accommodation provided by local housing departments, which is the most common type.⁴

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS:

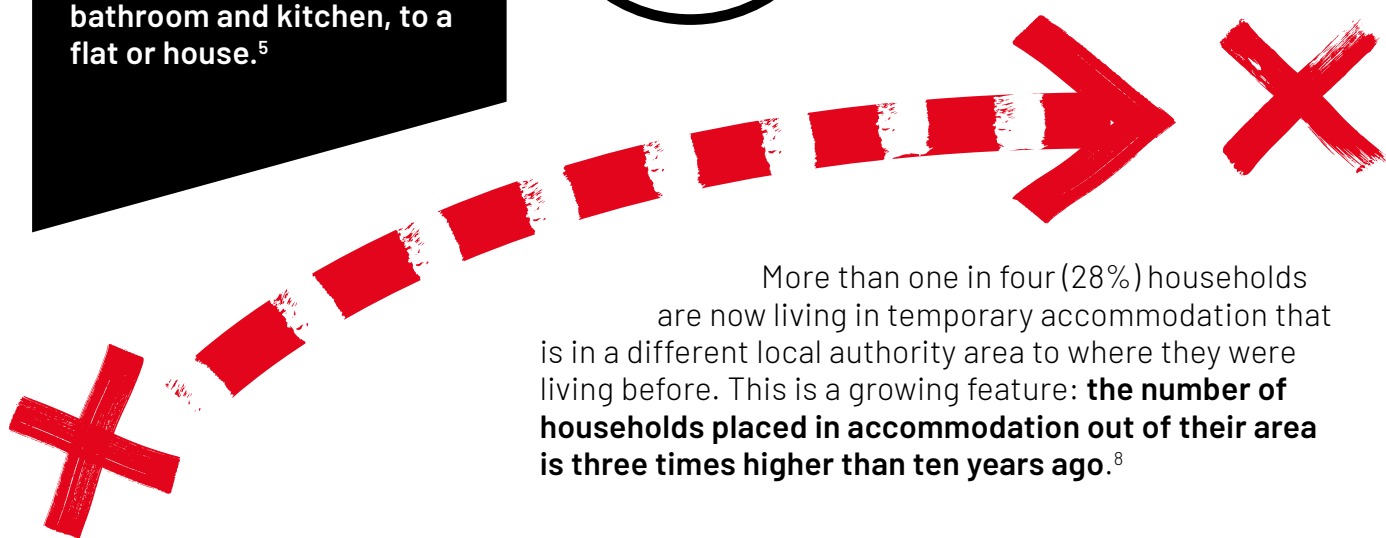
DIVERSE

Temporary accommodation can be self-contained or be shared with other households. It can range from **a budget hotel with a kettle and ensuite, to a hostel room with shared bathroom and kitchen, to a flat or house.**⁵



16%

One in six (16%) households live in a hostel, B&B or budget hotel.⁶ But **we know very little about the way that other households live** beyond whether their accommodation is owned by a private or social landlord.⁷



More than one in four (28%) households are now living in temporary accommodation that is in a different local authority area to where they were living before. This is a growing feature: **the number of households placed in accommodation out of their area is three times higher than ten years ago.**⁸

HELD TO SUITABILITY STANDARDS

WHATEVER TYPE THE ACCOMMODATION IS - BY LAW, IT MUST BE SUITABLE. IT SHOULD BE **SAFE, AFFORDABLE AND IN A SUITABLE LOCATION.** IT SHOULD BE AN INTERIM SOLUTION WHILE PEOPLE WAIT FOR A SETTLED HOME.

Local authorities must only offer accommodation that the household can afford⁹ and is within their local area.¹⁰ If it is not 'reasonably practicable' to offer accommodation in the area, it must be as close as possible to where the household were previously living, and be in a location which minimises serious disruption, and safeguards child wellbeing.¹¹

**TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION
IS THE NAME GIVEN TO
ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED
BY COUNCILS TO FAMILIES
AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE
HOMELESS. NOT ALL TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION IS A HOSTEL,
HOMELESS B&B OR BUDGET
HOTEL. WHATEVER TYPE THE
ACCOMMODATION IS - BY LAW,**

**IT MUST BE
SUITABLE**



TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS:

COMMONPLACE

99,270

HOUSEHOLDS

Temporary accommodation was never intended to exist outside of emergencies but is now accommodating almost 100,000 households (99,270) in England.

That's a larger population than a city like Oxford.¹²

↳ **125,000+**
CHILDREN

Within these households are over 125,000 children.¹³ This is equivalent to **1 in every 100 children, or five children in every school in England.**¹⁴



FAR FROM 'TEMPORARY'



Six in ten (61%) households in temporary accommodation have been there for longer than a year. **This increases to more than two-thirds (68%) of families with children.**¹⁵

14 YEARS

One member of our Steering Group has been **living in temporary accommodation with her children** for 14 years.

'If we discuss it as 'temporary' accommodation, people think of it as just this. It's OK because it's not for long - but this is people's whole childhoods, this is people's whole working lives. By calling it TA [Temporary Accommodation], we are giving policy people an 'out'.'

Steering group member

GROWING



The numbers living in temporary accommodation have changed hugely over time.



They increased from fewer than **5,000 households in 1980 to over 100,000 households in 2004**¹⁶, as the number of social homes dropped.¹⁷

But then, the numbers halved, to 48,010, by 2010.¹⁸ This was because local authorities increasingly offered private rentals to discharge rehousing duties to people who were homeless.

However, as inadequate housing benefit has made private rentals increasingly unaffordable, the use of temporary accommodation has risen sharply again.

By September 2022, 99,270 households lived in temporary accommodation – over twice as many as a decade ago.

BIG BUSINESS

£1.6 BILLION **A RISE OF 61% IN FIVE YEARS**

The growth in demand for temporary accommodation has led to billions of pounds being sunk into it.¹⁹ **Last year, almost £1.6 billion was spent by councils on temporary accommodation – a rise of 61% in just 5 years.** More than a quarter (27%) of the total – £431 million – was spent on emergency B&Bs and hostels alone.²⁰

This has led to private ‘temporary accommodation providers’, who are attracted to the significantly higher rates that can be charged compared with housing benefit limits.²¹ **More than one in three (37%) temporary accommodation placements are now charged at expensive (hotel-style) nightly rates. This has increased by 36% over the last five years.**

Temporary accommodation was never intended to exist outside of emergencies but is now accommodating almost one hundred thousand households.²² It is also rarely used as a temporary solution: **the majority of households stay in temporary accommodation for more than a year.**

Temporary accommodation grew in use over the eighties and nineties. But this was brought down at the end of the 2000s. Its use is now rising steeply again. This growth in demand has led to large sums of money being spent on temporary accommodation, yet there is no national regulation of this.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS:

A LONDON PHENOMENON THAT HAS EXTENDED NATIONWIDE

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS MOST COMMON IN LONDON.

SIX IN TEN

Households living in temporary accommodation in England are accommodated by London boroughs.

However, this is shifting fast. In the last five years, all English regions have seen the numbers of households in temporary accommodation grow faster than London. **While the number of households placed by London boroughs has grown by 3%, it has**

DOUBLED

in every part of the North and Midlands.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS NOW USED **ACROSS THE COUNTRY**. IN 2017, THERE WERE 37 LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITIES REPORTING NO HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION. IN 2022 THAT IS DOWN TO JUST FIVE.²³



We're also seeing areas that had relatively small numbers of households in temporary accommodation just five years ago experience significant growth in use, with some now close to 500 households.

IN SHORT SUPPLY

79%

Last autumn, councils warned that temporary accommodation is at crisis-point. A tidal wave of homelessness meant 79% of councils did not have sufficient temporary accommodation to meet current need.²⁴

OUR SERVICE HUBS AND LEGAL TEAMS ARE REPORTING CASES WHERE COUNCILS ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE HOUSEHOLDS BUT **SIMPLY CAN'T DO IT** BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION. WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS OF THIS HAPPENING IN MULTIPLE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS STILL MOST COMMONLY USED BY LONDON BOROUGHES, BUT ITS USE IS ON THE RISE ACROSS ENGLAND. LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE REPORTING THAT THEY ARE **STRUGGLING TO PROCURE ENOUGH ACCOMMODATION TO MEET DEMAND.**

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS:

MAINLY OCCUPIED BY FAMILIES



63%

The majority of households living in temporary accommodation are **families with children, and over half of these are lone mother led families.**²⁵

People become homeless when their household income can't cover the cost of a suitable home. When a family home is needed, the costs are even greater. This can put low-income families, trying to juggle work and childcare, at greater risk of homelessness, and lone parent families at particularly acute risk.

Among families, lone mother led families are overrepresented.

ONE IN 107

families in England are homeless and living in temporary accommodation.

ONE IN 43

lone mothers in England are homeless and living in temporary accommodation.²⁶

THE MAJORITY OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ARE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN. MOST OF THESE ARE LONE MOTHER LED FAMILIES.



DISPROPORTIONATELY OCCUPIED BY RACIALLY MINORITISED GROUPS

50%

Half (50%) of heads of households in temporary accommodation identify as Black, Asian, Mixed or another ethnicity, where ethnicity is recorded.²⁷ In England as a whole, just 15% of people identify as being from a racially minoritised group.

Black households are particularly overrepresented – black households are 11 times more likely to be living in temporary accommodation than white households.²⁸

11X

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN HOW THE STRUCTURAL RACISM IN OUR HOUSING SYSTEM MEANS THAT RACE, ETHNICITY AND DISCRIMINATION CAN HEIGHTEN LEVELS OF POVERTY, AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF BEING A RENTER. BOTH OF WHICH INCREASE THE RISK OF HOMELESSNESS.²⁹

PEOPLE FROM RACIALLY MINORITISED GROUPS ARE HIGHLY OVERREPRESENTED AMONG HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION.



Fiona, an expert by experience on the Steering Group, shares her reflection about being part of the research:

When I first heard about the Temporary Accommodation Research Project, I was immediately interested in being involved. As the Involvement Officer for Shelter in London, one of our local priorities is working with people living in temporary accommodation to improve their experiences and the processes surrounding temporary accommodation.

On a personal level, I spent six years in temporary accommodation with my teenage son. This is when I first became involved with Shelter as a client. I have always been very passionate about sharing my lived experience, especially if it was to help change the future for others in the same situation.

Sitting in the meetings, sharing my story and listening to the others do the same; it gives you a feeling you don't get from anything else. It's validation that your feelings are warranted, and your experiences give you an expertise that others just do not have. Your experiences need to be heard, particularly if positive and sustainable change is going to be made.

It was brilliant having Steering Group members involved throughout the project. We were genuinely respected as an active part of the process at every stage. Pre-conceived ideas of what the research themes and report should explore were never imposed on us. Instead, the research was led by the voices of people with lived experience. I also had the opportunity to learn about the different stages and processes of a research project.

Even at the end of the research and listening stages, there were lots of opportunities to stay involved, such as writing blogs or giving feedback through surveys. Most importantly, we can see our contributions in this report, written down in black and white, and validated by the quality and presentation of the research.







WHAT IS TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION LIKE?

Homelessness support is a vital statutory service. It should be trauma informed, and help families and individuals to find safety, resolve issues and a settled place to rebuild their life .

Due to the collapse of social house building, homelessness support is now very reliant on placing households in temporary accommodation.

But, as the following section shows, temporary accommodation is often the opposite – Dickensian conditions, overcrowded, unsafe and ignoring people’s needs.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS:

IN POOR CONDITION



THREE QUARTERS OF HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCED POOR CONDITIONS

Shockingly, dangerous hazards like faulty wiring or structural problems, are commonplace. This is in spite of regulations that should mean accommodation is safe.

ONE IN FIVE

REPORT SAFETY HAZARDS

ONE IN FIVE

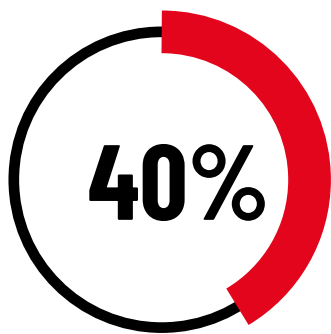
REPORT STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

'The sewer pipe burst carrying all the waste from the above flats. I spend days bleaching my kitchen. Sometimes I feel scared if I go out or [if I'm] at work I am going to come home to find my belongings under water or damaged.'

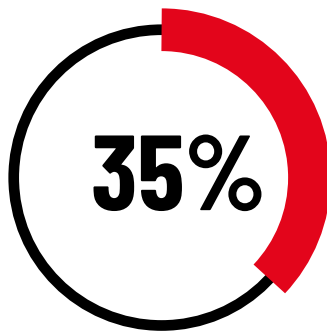




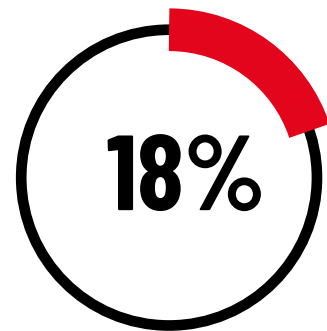
Accommodation is often damp, and prone to animal infestations. Many families even reported having no access to running water.



FOUR IN TEN HAVE EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS WITH DAMP, MOULD OR CONDENSATION



MORE THAN ONE IN THREE HAVE HAD ISSUES WITH INSECT OR ANIMAL INFESTATIONS



MORE THAN ONE IN SIX HAVE HAD PROBLEMS ACCESSING RUNNING WATER

'On an average day, we see about 15 cockroaches in various places, especially the kitchen (including food cupboards, fridge, prep area, oven, sink, ceiling, microwave, walls) but also the bathroom and other rooms.'

Survey respondents

Poor conditions are not confined to certain types of temporary accommodation. People living in flats or houses used as temporary accommodation were just as likely to report poor conditions as those living in B&Bs or hostels.

'NO CONSTANT DRINKING WATER FOR 6 MONTHS, SERIOUS BLACK MOULD.'

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION:

LACKS ESSENTIAL FACILITIES

TWO IN THREE

SAY THE FACILITIES IN THEIR ACCOMMODATION
ARE INADEQUATE FOR THEIR NEEDS

**ONE
IN THREE**

HAVE INADEQUATE
WI-FI/ INTERNET

**ONE
IN THREE**

HAVE INADEQUATE
LAUNDRY FACILITIES

**ONE
IN FOUR**

HAVE INADEQUATE
COOKING FACILITIES

Many people lack the essential facilities that are necessary for family life.

Households in emergency accommodation, like B&Bs, are more likely to report that the facilities are inadequate. But it is shockingly prevalent across all types of accommodation.

Similarly, households don't seem to start off in accommodation with inadequate facilities, then subsequently move into accommodation that meets their needs. We found no link between the length of time someone is in temporary accommodation, and whether their facilities provide what they need.



EXTREMELY OVERCROWDED

33%

ONE IN THREE FAMILIES LIVE IN ONLY ONE OR TWO ROOMS

62%

NEARLY TWO THIRDS OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN SAY THEY DO NOT HAVE THE SPACE THEY NEED

This means having to cook, eat, sleep and store all your clothes, books, toys and precious possessions in the same room. It's impossible to find quiet space to work, to spend time away from each other or to have any privacy.

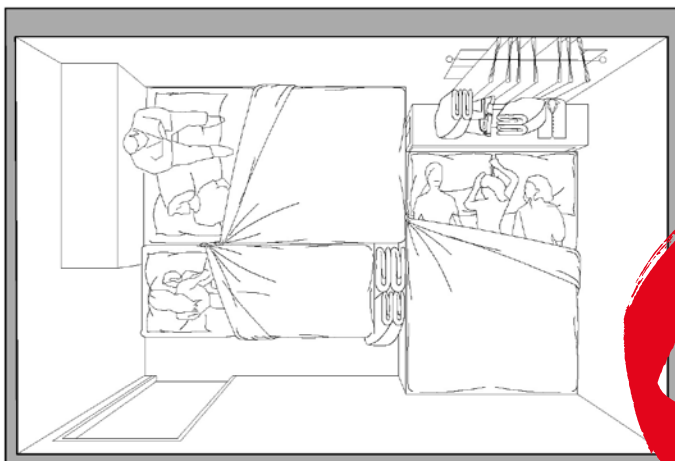
'It means that my son and I would be sharing a room while he's going through changes in puberty. I believe this will have a mental impact on my son. I think a mother [shouldn't] share a room with their son and have to in a way sleep together.'

Survey respondent

ONE IN FOUR HOUSEHOLDS TOLD US THEY DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO EAT OUTSIDE OF THE ROOM THEY SLEEP IN

ONE IN THREE SAY FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE TO UNSUITABLY SHARE BEDROOMS (SUCH AS AN ADULT AND TEENAGE CHILD)

Shockingly, many families do not even have enough space to fit in enough beds for everyone.



OVER A THIRD OF FAMILIES SAY THEIR CHILDREN DO NOT HAVE A BED OF THEIR OWN

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION:

FEELS UNSAFE



3 IN TEN SAY THEY FEEL UNSAFE IN THEIR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION.

Many people reported feeling unsafe in their accommodation. This could be due to dangerous conditions, such as electrical hazards or unsafe locks. It is also due to other residents in the accommodation perpetrating verbal abuse, physical violence or criminal activities.

ONE IN EIGHT

FEEL UNSAFE DUE TO LIVING WITH CRIMINAL ACTIVITY



ONE IN 10

FEEL UNSAFE DUE TO EXPERIENCING PHYSICAL VIOLENCE, THREATS OF VIOLENCE OR VERBAL ABUSE

Some families reported being inappropriately accommodated with their children alongside people using or selling drugs or in mental health crisis.

This set up does not meet the needs of anyone. But it is particularly unsuitable for families, and especially for domestic abuse survivors, including children.³⁰

'The hotel... TA [temporary accommodation] that I was in... the cohort of people was such an inappropriate mix of people - you had addicts scoring and using, you had people having violent mental health episodes and you had school children and babies. So the communal areas are really not safe.'

Steering group member



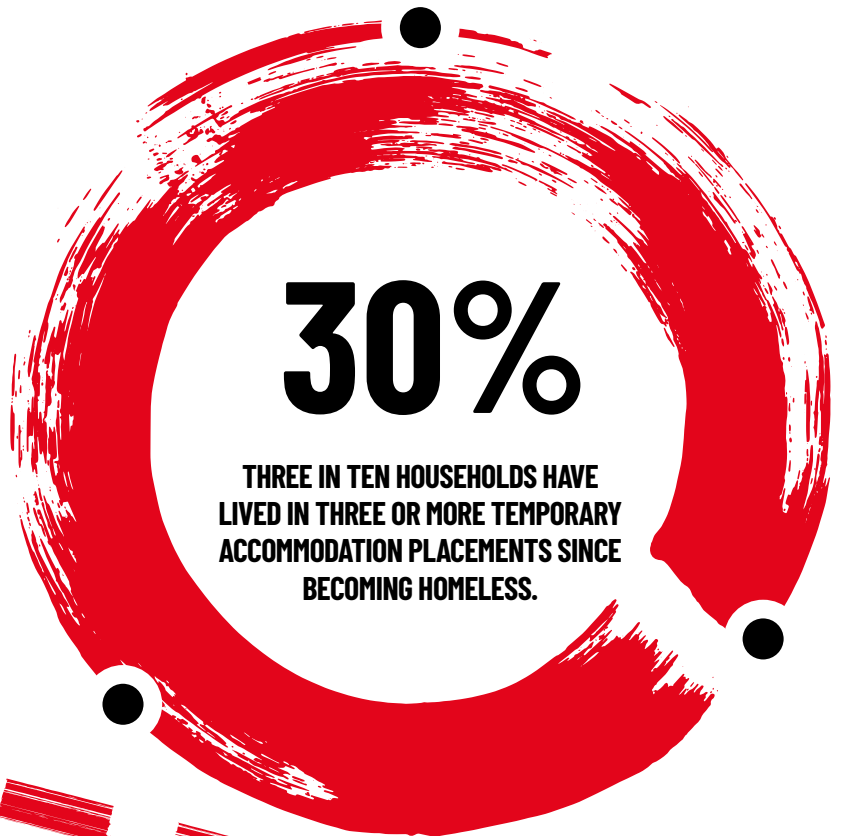
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS:

UNSTABLE

Temporary accommodation is far from 'temporary', with most households now staying there for years at a time.

Despite this, it can feel acutely unstable. And provides none of the certainty or stability that people need from a home.

It is common to be asked to move multiple times.



SOME PEOPLE HAD BEEN MOVED OVER TEN TIMES, WITH ONE PERSON REPORTING 14 MOVES.

Moves often come with very little notice.

'Makes you feel like cattle being herded around.'

Survey respondent

ALMOST TWO THIRDS OF HOUSEHOLDS WERE GIVEN **LESS THAN 48 HOURS' NOTICE WHEN THEY WERE LAST MOVED BETWEEN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENTS.**

FAR FROM HOME

Moves can be to whole new areas, far from their home, and miles away from everything familiar.

WE KNOW THAT MORE THAN ONE IN FOUR HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION LIVE IN A DIFFERENT LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA.³¹

This figure doesn't give the full picture of whether people are still close to their previous homes. However, our survey found that many people are forced to move far away, and uproot their lives.

MORE THAN ONE IN FOUR HOUSEHOLDS ARE NOW LIVING...



...MORE THAN AN HOUR AWAY FROM THEIR PREVIOUS SETTLED HOME.

This leaves people far from family and friends, children's schools, healthcare and their workplace.

**ONE
IN FIVE**

FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN NOW HAVE TO TRAVEL MORE THAN AN HOUR TO GET TO SCHOOL.

**ONE
IN THREE**

WORKERS TRAVEL MORE THAN AN HOUR TO GET TO WORK.

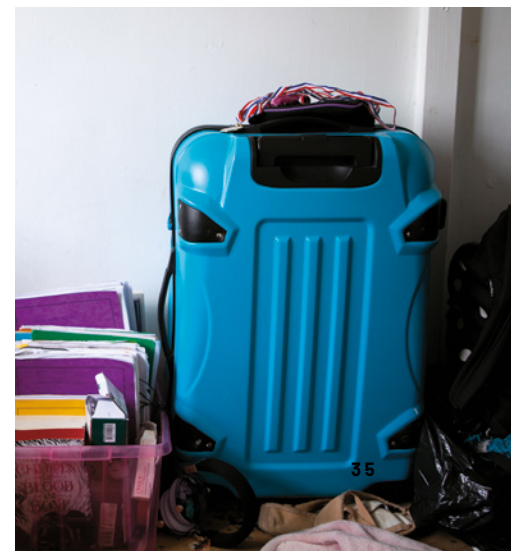
**ONE
IN SIX**

HAVE TO TRAVEL OVER AN HOUR TO ACCESS THEIR GP AND OTHER HEALTHCARE APPOINTMENTS.

'I had lost my job because we had been moved so far away and my daughter missed about two months of school'

Survey respondent

Our survey findings suggest that people from racially minoritised households are more likely to be placed out of area than other groups. This means they are disproportionately affected by the significant disruption of moving across local authority boundaries.



IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION:

PEOPLE FEEL IGNORED AND DISRESPECTED BY UNPROFESSIONAL PROVIDERS

People living in temporary accommodation – who will have recently experienced the trauma of homelessness – need a professional and efficient service from temporary accommodation providers.

There is no entry requirement for providers to meet in order to start providing temporary accommodation. And our findings suggest that the service provided can be woeful. They suggest some staff may be unfit, or at best out of their depth.

Reports ranged from rudeness and disrespect, to threats, harassment and even physical assault.

55%

OVER HALF OF HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED MISTREATMENT OR DISCRIMINATION FROM THE PEOPLE WHO MANAGE THEIR ACCOMMODATION

Many providers also enforce restrictive rules, such as a curfew or limits on visitors that make life harder and make people feel fearful of stepping out of line.

THREE IN TEN HOUSEHOLDS HAVE RESTRICTIONS ON WHAT THEY CAN DO IN THE ACCOMMODATION

Restrictive rules are more common in hotels or other forms of emergency accommodation. But they are also seen in self-contained units, where households should have a reasonable expectation to be left alone.



'When you call them, they make you scared. Their tone is more threatening than helpful.'

Scoping interview participant

The level of service provided is often severely lacking. Many people reported feeling abandoned, and ignored when they tried to get in contact for an update on their case, or for help to resolve an issue they faced.

FOUR IN TEN

FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN IGNORED WHEN THEY TRY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THEIR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS

Worryingly, people face unacceptable waits for urgent work to be carried out.

A QUARTER WAITED MORE THAN FOUR WEEKS FOR AN URGENT REPAIR TO BE FIXED, INCLUDING ONE IN TEN WHO WAITED MORE THAN SIX MONTHS



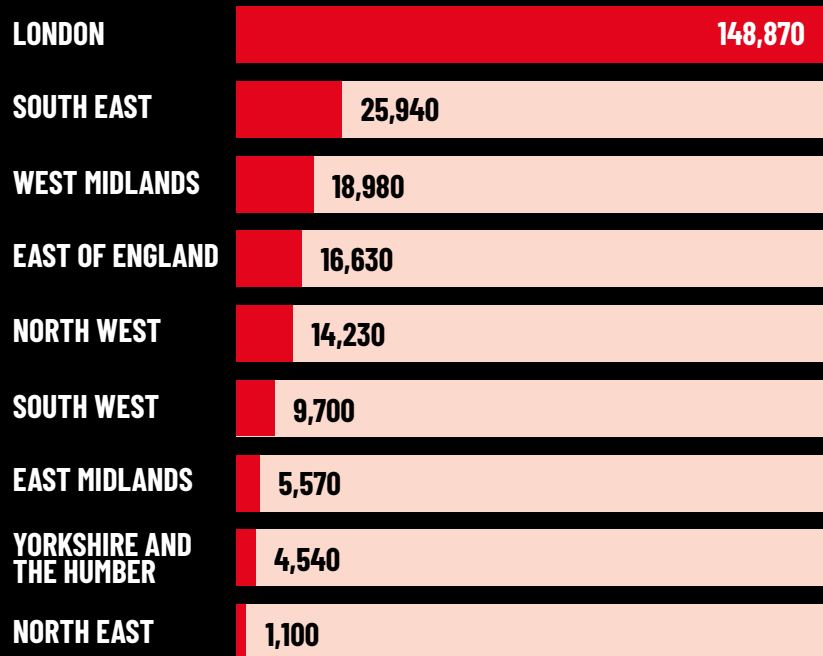
SPOTLIGHT ON LONDON

Areas outside of London are seeing faster growth in the use of temporary accommodation than London. But the numbers of London households in temporary accommodation are already shockingly high and continuing to rise.

Many aspects of life in temporary accommodation are similar for those inside and outside of London, including the massive instability and disruption caused to people's lives. However, there are some ways that the experience of Londoners is different.

The numbers of people who are homeless from London far exceed other areas of England. Londoners make up six in ten (59%) households in temporary accommodation.

The ten local authorities with the most (per capita) households in temporary accommodation are also all in London.

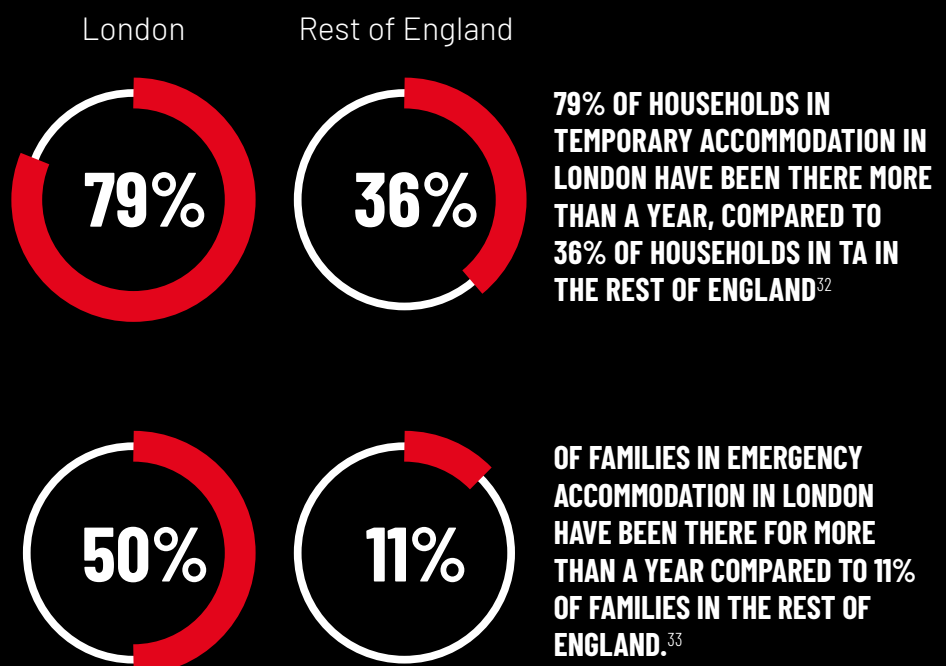


Estimated number of people living in temporary accommodation as at a given night in 2022, by region of England

MORE LIKELY TO BE PLACED IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION, AND TO STAY THERE LONGER

Households from London are more likely to stay in temporary accommodation longer.

This includes spending longer in emergency accommodation like hostels and B&Bs.



MORE LIKELY TO BE IN POOR CONDITION ACCOMMODATION

Households placed in temporary accommodation by London boroughs experience worse conditions across the board when compared to those outside of London.

In particular households from London are more likely to see problems with:

- Infestations (42% in London compared with 27% outside of London)
- Problems with heating (35% in London compared with 23% outside of London)
- Problems with access to running water (24% in London compared with 13% outside of London)
- Safety hazards (24% in London compared with 17% outside of London)

MORE LIKELY TO LIVE IN CRAMPED CONDITIONS

London children who are homeless in temporary accommodation are growing up in crowded, Dickensian conditions.

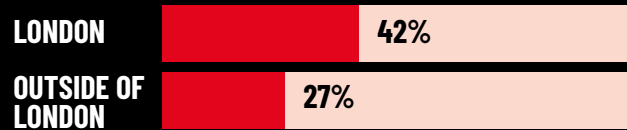
London households in temporary accommodation are more likely to say they do not have enough space.

Two in three (66%) families in London told us they don't have enough space to live in.

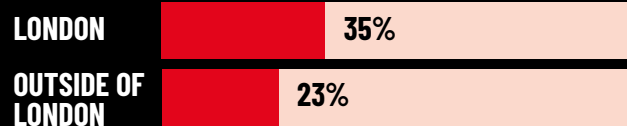
Just under a quarter (23%) of London temporary accommodation residents don't have anywhere to eat outside of the room they sleep in, compared to one in eight (13%) of those living in temporary accommodation outside of London.

In four in ten (42%) homeless households in London, children have to share a bed with another family member, compared to just over one in four (27%) for those outside of London.

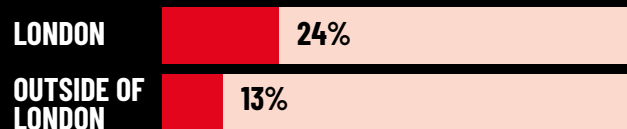
Infestations



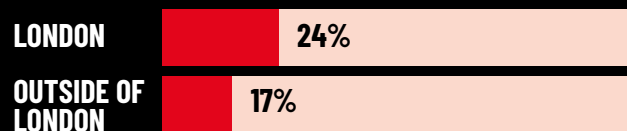
Problems with heating



Problems with access to running water



Safety hazards



TWO IN THREE

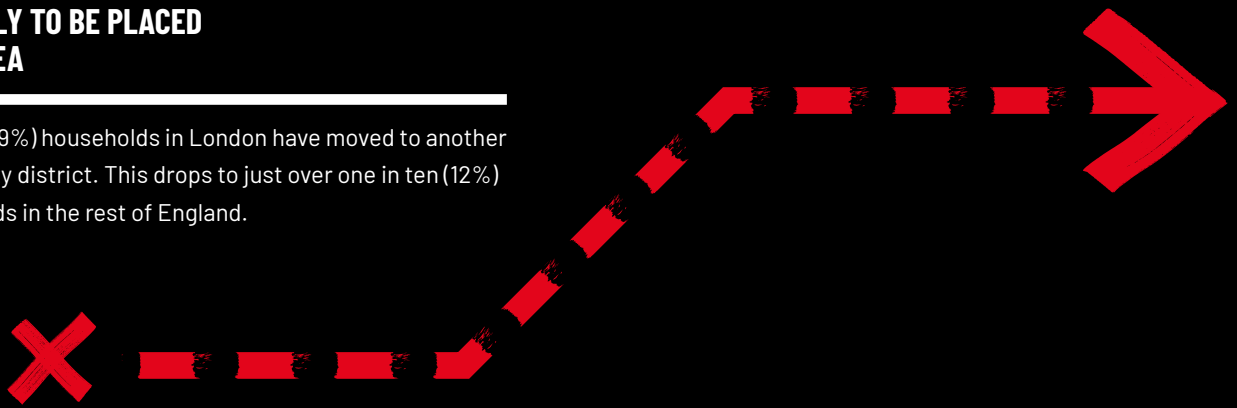
FAMILIES IN LONDON TOLD US THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SPACE TO LIVE IN.

FOUR IN TEN

CHILDREN IN LONDON TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION DON'T HAVE THEIR OWN BED

MORE LIKELY TO BE PLACED OUT OF AREA

Two in five (39%) households in London have moved to another local authority district. This drops to just over one in ten (12%) for households in the rest of England.



MORE LIKELY TO FEEL IGNORED AND ABANDONED

Making matters even worse is that many households struggle to be heard by their accommodation providers.

Half (49%) of households told us they have been ignored when they tried to get in touch with their provider, compared to just over a third (36%) for people outside of London.

49%

SAY THEY HAVE BEEN IGNORED

LONDON: A WARNING FOR THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

Homeless households up and down the country are enduring intolerable conditions.

In London, the toughest aspects of life in temporary accommodation are even more prevalent.

The housing market in London is severely overheated. Housing benefit is inadequate across the capital. There is a high need for social homes. Homelessness is rising.

However, these issues are not exclusive to London.

The situation facing London families left for years in sub-standard temporary accommodation, and London local authorities having to shell out extortionate sums for sub-standard 'temporary' solutions, is a stark warning to the whole of England about what failures in national housing policy can lead to.





WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION?

Homeless households seek, and are entitled to, support into a settled home.

But our current response is to place people in temporary accommodation that is extremely cramped, in poor condition, poorly managed and often unsafe. Households who are homeless are expected to live this way for years, while never having the certainty of knowing where they will be by the end of the week, let alone when they will be in a settled home.

Our survey set out to identify the impact of living this way. We looked particularly at three important aspects:

- household finances
 - health
 - children

As we set out below, temporary accommodation has a destructive impact on people experiencing homelessness. These findings unequivocally point to a real and pressing impetus for change.

IMPACT ON HOUSEHOLD FINANCES

Living in temporary accommodation traps people in homelessness and pushes them into greater poverty. Accommodation costs are usually higher in temporary accommodation than other rentals, as are basic living costs. It can be harder to stay in work too. This means the support system meant to protect them actually leaves people in even greater housing insecurity.

RENTS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ARE HIGH

Homeless households face high rent costs. If they're entitled to housing benefit, people are expected to claim it. But they will have to pay anything above the amount that this covers themselves. Sometimes councils top up too. People who earn above housing benefit thresholds are only entitled to partial housing benefit. Where housing benefit fails to cover the full cost (which is very common), homeless households can be landed with substantial monthly bills. Some people shared eye-watering costs (when compared to their local market), especially given the service provided:

'I realise I've been very lucky being put in this flat rather than a hostel, B&B or hotel but I do think £450 per week... is taking the ps a bit... The smell of dead rats in the walls and floors in summer was extremely unpleasant'**

Survey respondent

In fact, we found that almost nine in ten (87%) households are struggling with the cost of their temporary accommodation.

THE BASIC COST OF LIVING INCREASES

Households in temporary accommodation are also hit by higher day-to-day costs due to the inadequate facilities in their accommodation. The majority (54%) of people told us they now spend more on food. The lack of cooking facilities or fridges to store milk and other fresh food means people can't even cook basic meals, forcing them to rely on expensive and unhealthy takeaway meals. Almost half (47%) of people say they have to spend more on laundry, and over half (53%) have to spend more on internet access.

Households also face new and ongoing costs. One or two rooms is not enough to hold a home's worth of possessions, especially furniture, books or sentimental items. Half (48%) say they spend more on storage as a result of living in temporary accommodation. The lack of certainty about how long they might be homeless makes it impossible to know when they might need their furniture and furnishings again, or whether to get rid of bulky objects to avoid these high costs.

Travel costs can also rocket. Six in ten (59%) households say they are spending more on transport than they were before.

Other people reported large outlays just to make



their accommodation habitable, such as replacing unsanitary mattresses, missing essential kitchen appliances, or flooring, which they might not be able to take with them when they move again.

'We don't have a full working cooker and fridge freezer, had to wait over a year for heating, had disgusting carpet put down, had to borrow a lot of money off family to make the house somewhat liveable'

Survey respondent

Our Steering Group pointed out how large outlays wouldn't necessarily be one-off expenses at the start of a new tenancy; rather, there are costs each time you move into and out of inadequate accommodation.

As this survey respondent shared, belongings and furnishings destroyed by mould, flooding and disrepair can also come at huge cost.

'We lost so many clothes to mould, and took out loans to purchase furniture, washing machine, fridge/freezer etc. as we were moved into a completely empty property. Then had to take out loans to replace them again... when we were moved'

Survey respondent

IT CAN BE HARDER TO WORK

Rather than supporting people onto a more stable financial footing, living in temporary accommodation makes it harder for people to work.³⁴ While a third of households in temporary accommodation do work, one in ten (11%) say they stopped working altogether due to their temporary accommodation. Of those still in work, more than a quarter (27%) had to reduce their working hours.

Temporary accommodation is affecting people's ability to do their job well. A quarter (24%) of those in work say they have struggled to perform, and almost one in three (31%) have arrived late or had to take days off. As well as causing stress and anxiety, this may reduce people's earning potential by removing opportunities for progression, or to be considered for further shifts.

'I'm stuck in this cage where I can't afford anything. I'm forced to live in poverty when I'm a capable person. I'm having to turn down work'

Steering group member

There are many reasons why living in temporary accommodation makes it harder to work. Location clearly plays a part. Half (50%) of people say that living in temporary accommodation makes it harder to access their workplace. More than half (57%) of households say it is harder to access their support networks. This has a major impact for people who rely on family for childcare, especially when children are unwell.



Respondents told us they are falling behind with rent payments.



Say they are having to borrow money or take out loans to cover the cost of temporary accommodation.



Say they are cutting back on either food, heating or other essentials to meet the costs.

Temporary accommodation is rarely an environment that is conducive to work. Home working is impossible in a place without enough space for beds, let alone a desk or a quiet space away from children. No or limited access to the internet (experienced by 1 in 3 households) makes it much harder to work remotely or to find, or book, jobs online.

Restrictive rules also pose challenges. Shift workers reliant on childcare in the home struggle if visitors aren't allowed. Night work becomes impossible if rules insist residents must be out during the day at a time they need to rest.

Putting the many logistical barriers aside, our Steering Group highlighted how the stress of coping with life in temporary accommodation can make working neither mentally nor physically feasible:

'In a hostel, there were people going out to work. I don't know how they do it. They're having to pay £265 a week for these single rooms. You'd end up in more debt and more stress as you're having to work and cope with the stress of being in this temporary situation.'

Steering group member

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PUSHES HOUSEHOLDS INTO FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY

Temporary accommodation can leave people in an impossible financial situation.

One in four (26%) respondents told us they are falling behind with rent payments. This leaves them vulnerable to eviction from even their homeless accommodation, and arrears pose a barrier to further accommodation options and a permanent home.

An even larger group are only keeping up through actions that aren't sustainable long-term. Almost half (47%) say they are having to borrow money or take out loans to cover the cost of temporary accommodation. Two in three (65%) say they are cutting back on either food, heating or other essentials to meet the costs – potentially putting their, or their children's health at risk.

Being in work doesn't seem to offer much protection either. Working households struggle as much as out of work households.

This situation is not just shocking, but perverse. Temporary accommodation is offered to people who are homeless because they're unable to afford a suitable home. However, it is driving people into greater housing insecurity and a downward spiral of destitution.



IMPACT ON HEALTH

Living in temporary accommodation is making people sick.³⁵ Two thirds (66%) of people report that their physical or mental health has been damaged by living in temporary accommodation. This ranged from worsening physical conditions, to higher rates of mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression.³⁶ This affects children too, with almost six in ten (57%) parents reporting that temporary accommodation is harming their children's health.

HARMING MENTAL HEALTH

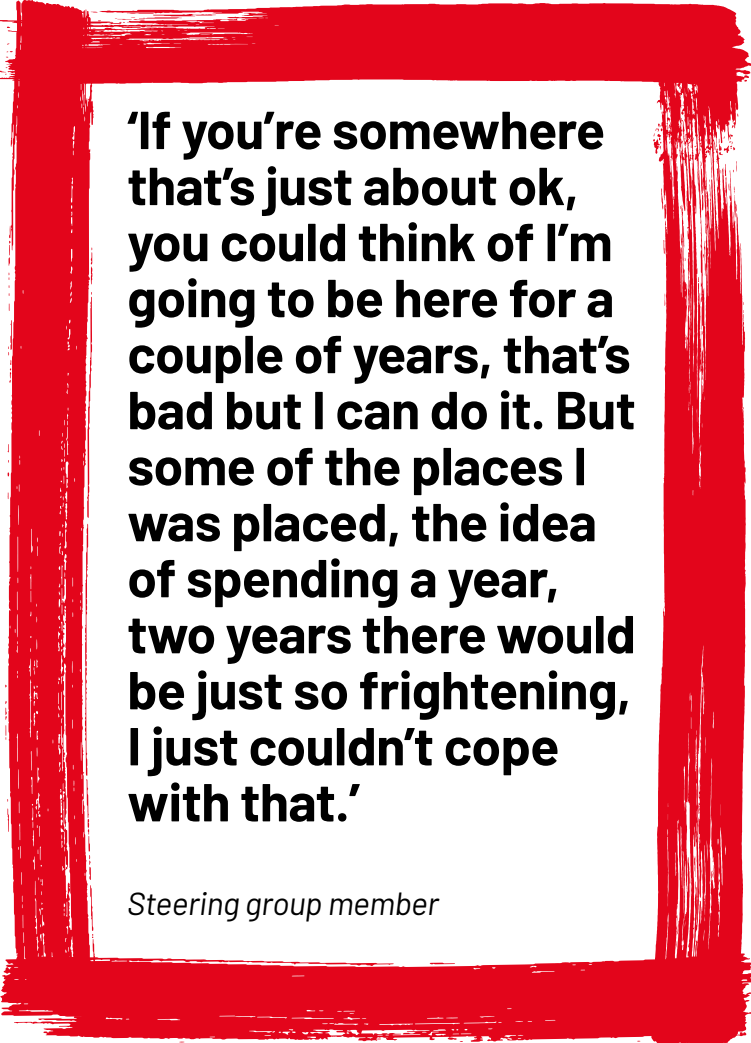
Losing your home and becoming homeless is stressful. Eight in ten (80%) people in temporary accommodation report suffering from stress or anxiety. But rather than providing a place to recover, seven in ten (71%) say that their stress or anxiety had worsened because of their living situation. Only 14% say that it had improved.

'My depression deteriorated. But I was too scared to tell anyone - I needed to live here, because I needed a roof over my head.'

Scoping interview participant

The unpredictability of temporary accommodation magnifies this impact. Not knowing how long they might be forced to stay in accommodation with poor conditions or a lack of facilities can make even relatively short stays, impossible to face.

It's also taking a toll on children's mental health and wellbeing. One in four (26%) parents report their child or children being often unhappy or depressed as a result of living in temporary accommodation. And six in ten (61%) parents report that temporary accommodation has had a negative impact on their children's stress or anxiety. Half (52%) report that their children's depression has got worse.³⁷



'If you're somewhere that's just about ok, you could think of I'm going to be here for a couple of years, that's bad but I can do it. But some of the places I was placed, the idea of spending a year, two years there would be just so frightening, I just couldn't cope with that.'

Steering group member



AGGRAVATING EXISTING ISSUES

Temporary accommodation worsens pre-existing conditions. 57% of people suffering bone and muscle related pain, 46% of people with respiratory issues and 34% with alcohol or substance abuse issues reported that their conditions had got worse as a result of living in temporary accommodation.

Parents of children with behavioural issues and learning difficulties also report these worsening from temporary accommodation. The majority of parents who report that their children have issues with hyperactivity or problems with concentration say these have worsened. Children who are autistic may find the uncertainty and conditions in temporary accommodation particularly challenging. Four in ten (39%) parents of autistic children report that temporary accommodation had a negative impact on their child.

'My son has emotional deregulation, the building has made his learning inability worse because of the insect/ants, spiders and all. He doesn't like any of these so it's makes him fidget a lot and scared, he constantly asking when we'll be moved to a nicer place which will be permanent.'

Survey respondent

More than four in ten (44%) parents of children with learning difficulties or disabilities also saw a negative impact on their child.

IT'S HARD MANAGING YOUR HEALTH

As well as aggravating health conditions, temporary accommodation makes health harder to manage. One in eight (12%) parents report that the negative impact of temporary accommodation means their children need to attend more medical appointments. But, at the same time, four in ten (39%) people say that living in temporary accommodation has made it harder to access healthcare appointments. Every move across a local authority border can mean having to re-register with many different services. This leads to reassessments, long waits, missed support and additional stress:

'Even if you're not moved an hour away – I moved (round the corner). But everything changed. If you have kids and you move local authority, that's worse. If you move across a border you have to restart with health visitors, SEN [Special Educational Needs], mental health. All your referrals are cut off.'

Steering group member

Many lose emotional support from nearby family and friends after moving into temporary accommodation, as well as practical support for staying healthy on a budget, such as children being able to play and eat at grandparents' homes.

WORSE QUALITY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION LEADS TO WORSE HEALTH OUTCOMES

Unsurprisingly, people living in temporary accommodation that is in poor condition, overcrowded and that lacks basic facilities are more likely to report a negative impact on their health.³⁸

There is strong research evidence of a link between bad housing conditions, such as mould, cold or a lack of running water, and poor health outcomes.³⁹ A lack of cooking facilities makes it difficult to eat nutritious food and limited laundry access makes it hard to keep clothes and bedding clean, especially for children.

We also know that damp, mouldy or poorly heated accommodation is particularly dangerous for children's developing lungs.⁴⁰ For parents of children with chest or breathing problems, almost half (47%) reported that temporary accommodation has had a negative impact on their child's breathing.

'My 5-year old's room was full of mould and he has since had a cold and cough which he still has as of today even after steroids and antibiotics. He has never ever suffered like this before'

Survey respondent

Families living in cramped conditions without adequate space report a worse health impact on their children than those with enough space. Overcrowded housing can present many dangers for children. Some

temporary accommodation does not have space for cots or for babies to co-sleep safely away from radiators or drafts – essential for keeping new-born babies safe.⁴¹ Having sleep or play space close to hazards, like kettles or sharp-edged furniture, also threaten younger children's safety.

'There's hardly any space for my kids to just play and feel free. The sink, cooker/oven is next to where my toddler plays every day and having to watch him religiously so he doesn't touch the oven door while it's on is really big challenge'

Survey respondent

Our Steering Group also highlighted the mental health consequences of damp, cramped or dangerous conditions – including parents fearing for their children's health, the emotional impact of damage to belongings, and an inability to feel clean, in control and practice self-care in dirty bathrooms. The Steering Group felt that parents are likely to underreport their children's health issues due to the difficulty of confronting the toll that living in temporary accommodation is having on children.

'It's hard as a mother to say these things out loud – as its unimaginable, its unspeakable... [People] are terrified to say they're struggling as they fear their parenting being judged.'

Steering group member



LONGER STAYS AND FREQUENT MOVES ARE PARTICULARLY DAMAGING

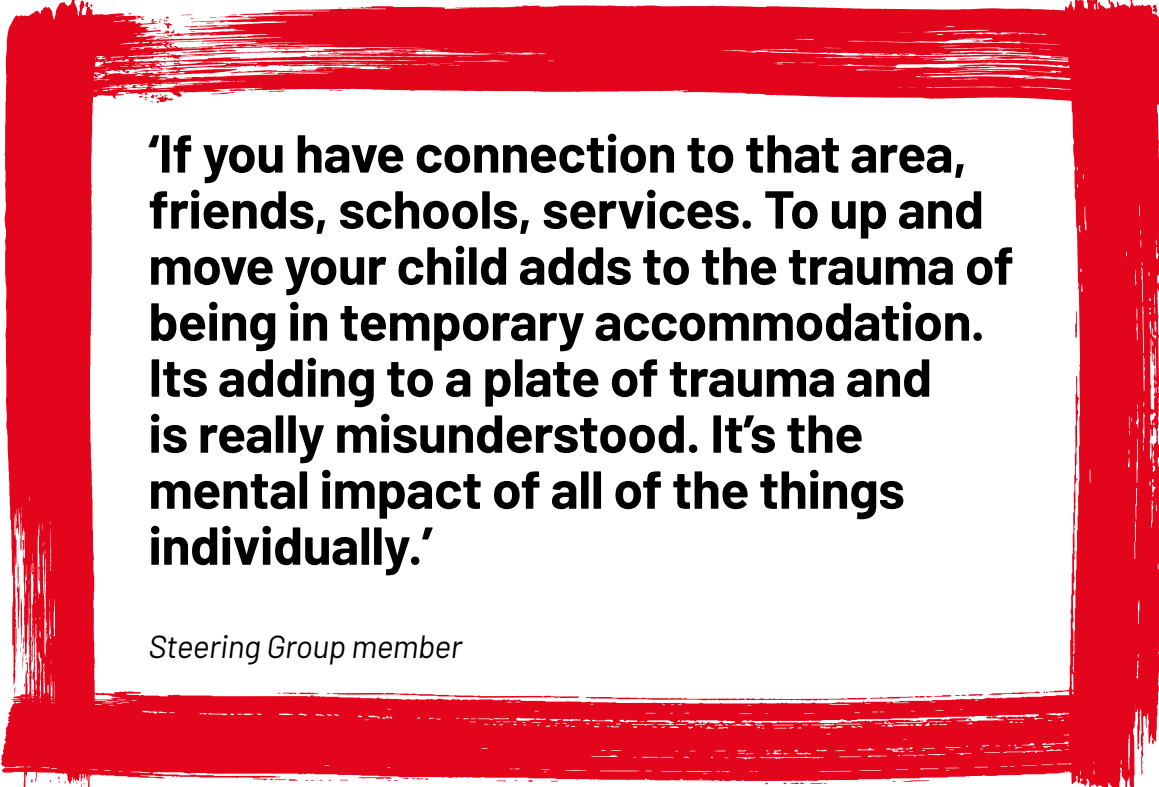
The longer that people have been in temporary accommodation, the more likely they were to report poor health outcomes or see a negative impact on their child's health or wellbeing.

This builds on other research which shows that children who spend longer in temporary accommodation are more likely to suffer from mental health problems, like anxiety and depression.⁴² The damage caused to children's wellbeing due to long stays was one of the gravest concerns for our Steering Group.

'I look at my 19-year-old son now and he's got the same level of pessimism as I do. So to see that in a teenager is quite sad'

Steering Group member

Families who've had frequent moves within temporary accommodation are also more likely to report that it's damaging their children's health and wellbeing. Children need security, familiarity and predictability. But living in temporary accommodation means the upheaval of familiar routines, the loss of connections with an area and uncertainty about the future.



'If you have connection to that area, friends, schools, services. To up and move your child adds to the trauma of being in temporary accommodation. Its adding to a plate of trauma and is really misunderstood. It's the mental impact of all of the things individually.'

Steering Group member

IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Temporary accommodation disrupts children's education, puts up barriers to taking part in school and, ultimately, jeopardises the future of over 125,000 children living in this uncertainty. Almost half (46%) of families with school age children say that living in temporary accommodation has a negative impact on their child's education. And one in four (26%) parents say their children are unable to keep up with schoolwork or have performed poorly in assessments or exams as a result.

LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION DISRUPTS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Almost half (47%) of families with school age children have had to move their child's school, with one in five (22%) having to move multiple times. Children who have been placed in a different local area are more likely to have moved schools.⁴³ Schools provide a central and secure place in a child's world. Having to move schools can affect children's sense of belonging, disrupt their relationships with friends and trusted teachers and leave them falling behind as they adjust to a new curriculum.

'I had to give up work and my children had no choice [but] to leave an amazing school and now go to an absolute dive. This whole situation is life changing. My children's education has gone down the pan, they are surrounded by nothing but bad influences, witnessed disgraceful situations, see drug deals and violence in the area regularly.'

Survey respondent

Living in temporary accommodation can also mean lost learning. More than half (52%) of parents report their children have missed days of school. Of these, more than one in three (37%) have missed more than a month. This has a significant impact on their ability to keep up with schoolwork, making educational attainment more challenging and creating further stress for parents.

BEING HOMELESS AFFECTS CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO LEARN

Even if children are attending school, it can be harder to participate fully in class.⁴⁴ As well as behavioural and learning difficulties or disabilities getting worse, almost half (45%) of parents say their children have arrived at school tired, late or hungry. Teachers can also see that children are losing out on learning time.⁴⁵

'Even if they're in school it's not just the missed days if they're exhausted it's not just being present its being able to learn.'

Steering group member

Longer travel times are a major factor behind children arriving late or being exhausted at school. Half (50%) of families report more difficult journeys to school after moving into temporary accommodation. Inadequate kitchens and sleeping arrangements add to children's exhaustion at school.

'Because of us getting two buses this means we are up very early and this leads to my one child sleeping in school because of lack of sleep.'

Survey respondent



A LACK OF SPACE AND FACILITIES AFFECT LEARNING OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

Temporary accommodation can affect education in other ways. The lack of basic facilities in the temporary accommodation means that a third of families lack adequate internet access for homework or studying, creating a “digital divide” between children in temporary accommodation and their peers.⁴⁶ Longer and more difficult journeys mean children are unable to stay later at school to use the internet and miss out on time for studying at home.

‘It takes 5-6 hours a day for my son to go to school and come back also... my son’s education has been extremely damaged as he spends most of his time travelling and when he comes back home he has no time for revision. This led to him not performing as good as he could in his GCSE.’

Survey respondent

Temporary accommodation affects children’s ability to learn in multiple ways. Children and families are resilient. But this disruption can have long term repercussions for children growing up homeless.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL LIVES

Living in temporary accommodation impacts on children beyond their health and education. Many children are being deprived of a safe environment with space to grow and develop. Teenagers face particular challenges.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION LIMITS CHILDREN FROM DEVELOPING HAPPY SOCIAL LIVES

Living in temporary accommodation can prevent children from building strong social connections. One in four parents (28%) say their children are finding it hard to make or keep friends as a result of living in temporary accommodation.

Children's friendships are disrupted by being moved far away from school and family, and too far away to attend after-school clubs.

'It's too far from my daughter's school and my work... we lost our activities like swimming, tennis or to go to the park with our friends. We don't have any more time for that now just school- work-home.'

Survey respondent

Children's relationships are also affected by the stigma of homelessness. One in four (26%) parents report that their children feel ashamed of living in temporary accommodation.

'It's the stigma... at the school. These children are putting on a front, they're pretending that they have the stability that other children have... secretly she's anxious, she's stressed she's worried, because she feels vulnerable, as do we all in this situation.'

Steering Group member

This draws divisions between them and their peers. 1 in 12 (8%) parents report that their child has been bullied due to living in temporary accommodation.

The accommodation also rarely meets children's needs for play and socialising. Six in ten (61%) parents report that there is insufficient space to play in their accommodation. Added to this, some families face restrictions on having guests in their home.





TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ALSO PREVENTS TEENAGERS FROM FORMING SAFE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Overcrowded accommodation cannot provide the privacy and quiet sanctuary that teenagers need in a home environment. Sharing beds or rooms with family members – something that one in three families report – can badly affect younger children. But it's a much bigger issue for teenagers who need greater independence from parents. Living in one room means evenings spent sat quietly in the dark while younger children sleep. It also means that there is no space from family members when tensions rise.

Inevitably, this prevents older children developing their social lives in the home where parents can keep an eye on them. Steering Group members highlighted the tension for parents of wanting your children to be out of the accommodation, which many found dangerous and depressing, but being afraid to encourage their teenagers to go out, potentially to unsafe spaces.

'If you're talking about teenagers it's not easy to make new friends. But you don't necessarily want them to be picking up new friends if you don't know the area well. So it's hard as you want them out as much as possible as you don't want them in that place (TA) but you don't necessarily want them to be out, as you don't want them out on the street.'

Steering group member

Living in temporary accommodation badly affects children's social lives. The location, poor conditions and restrictive rules can act as a barrier to building healthy relationships that underpin good mental health. Feelings of stigma and shame can further undermine children's relationships with peers. Living in temporary accommodation has particular implications for teenagers who need privacy and greater independence from their parents.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Being homeless sends shockwaves through your life. People experiencing homelessness need somewhere safe and settled where they can recover and rebuild. Temporary accommodation is not that place.

Our research reveals that tens of thousands of people are being forced to live for years in sometimes dangerous, slum-like conditions. Damp, mould, structural problems and dangerous hazards are commonplace. Many people have inadequate access to the necessities: somewhere to wash or cook. Even access to running water is difficult for more than one in six households. Over a third of children living in temporary accommodation do not have their own bed. On top of this, people feel ignored and that providers fail to take effective action to fix dangerous problems in their accommodation.

But our results show that even if conditions are fair and facilities are adequate, temporary accommodation is still not a home. Living in temporary accommodation entrenches poverty and housing insecurity, separates people from their support networks and decimates their physical and mental health. Depriving children of space to play, interrupting their education and cutting them off from friendships can cause lasting harm to kids' emotional, behavioural and academic development. Ultimately, this undermines their life chances.

This is compounded by the debilitating uncertainty of temporary accommodation. People's living situation could change at any moment. This means they feel unable to re-establish routines. They feel less able to work in order to secure their future. And, ultimately, they feel forgotten and no nearer a settled home.

Living like this may be tenable (if very hard) for a few weeks. But temporary accommodation is not accommodating people temporarily. Two thirds of households have been living in accommodation for more than 12 months. Far from supporting people going through homelessness, temporary accommodation feels like abandonment in indefinite detention, with slum-like conditions.

'My temporary accommodation is a great house with outside space for my younger child, we love living here but we just want to be settled in our own home so we can make it a home... Not knowing how long we're going to or not going to be here is having a negative impact on myself & my children's mental health. It's very unsettling.'

Survey respondent



Appallingly, at least one person who took our survey in 2022 had moved into 'temporary accommodation' before our last survey report (a report that documented the 'constant insecurity and disruption'⁴⁷ of living in temporary accommodation) was published in 2004: 19 years ago. Her daughter had spent her entire childhood in temporary accommodation, and she had spent most of her working life there. Yet two decades on, she still lived with enormous uncertainty:

It can be hard to know how best to adjust to life in temporary accommodation, and the multiple challenges that it presents. Some people may try to disrupt as little of their life as possible and make long commutes back to their home area. Others will change schools, leave jobs, spend money to make their accommodation slightly more habitable, and face having to make these changes multiple times. There are no good choices. This constant second guessing and worry about whether you are doing the right thing, is also exhausting.

People in temporary accommodation are the hidden and ignored homeless population. The current government has made promises to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament. But no such commitments have been made to end the use of temporary accommodation.

Every person who is homeless should have access to suitable, well-regulated and affordable settled homes. The experiences of the nearly 100,000 households left in temporary accommodation show how far the government is from achieving that.

'I have been in temporary accommodation since 2004... They have not made me permanent. Still, 19 years [later]. My daughter is 21, we don't know what will happen to us and I'm approaching 60 years. Living in temporary accommodation is depressing and makes me anxious... I still hope for permanent in the near future. I don't know how long I have'

Survey respondent

'You don't know whether to change the school - because of the word 'temporary' and the hope you'll get back without having to take people from their friends.'

Steering group member

LET DOWN BY POLICY

Our research is clear. People in temporary accommodation are being let down by failing policy. Change is needed.

RULES BUT NO REGULATION

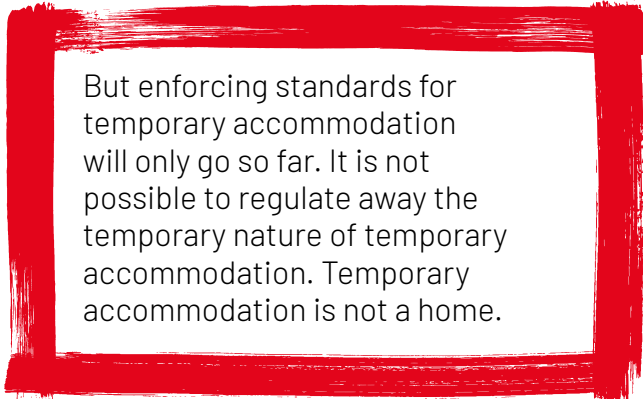
There are already strong legal standards for temporary accommodation. But our research, and the work of many others, shows that these standards are flouted frequently.

One reason is the inadequate enforcement of existing standards. There is no national regulation of temporary accommodation. This means that large temporary accommodation providers, some of whom receive millions of pounds a year from local authorities and operate accommodation across the country, are unregistered and unregulated.

This is extremely worrying, given that such providers accommodate people who are homeless and in need of support at a vulnerable point in their lives, including tens of thousands of children.

If providers systematically fail to meet standards, there is no national regulator who can take tough enforcement action against them. Local authorities, which have legal duties to offer (and thereby procure) temporary accommodation can have insufficient capacity, a lack of leverage or conflicts of interest in enforcing standards. People living in temporary accommodation have limited recourse, and face serious risks, in challenging the suitability or standard of accommodation.

We need greater oversight of temporary accommodation, enforcement of the standards that are in place, and stronger service and support standards. Local authority temporary accommodation teams need to improve their communication with the households they are accommodating and make a more concerted effort to offer people suitable settled accommodation.



But enforcing standards for temporary accommodation will only go so far. It is not possible to regulate away the temporary nature of temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation is not a home.

PEOPLE NEED SETTLED HOMES, NOT BETTER TEMPORARY ONES

The growth in homelessness and temporary accommodation, the rise in the use of out-of-area placements, and prevalence of inadequate temporary accommodation, is first and foremost due to there being nowhere else for people to live.

People become homeless because they can't access a decent, suitable, affordable home. Local authorities struggle to rehouse them due to the same acute shortage of decent, suitable, affordable homes. So temporary accommodation must be found, but that has become substandard, unsuitable, unaffordable, as well as far from temporary.

Because so many people can't move on from temporary accommodation, its use is now at breaking point. 79% of district councils say they don't have sufficient temporary accommodation to meet demand.⁴⁸ In the cases of some people experiencing homelessness, councils have informed Shelter advisers they know they're breaching their legal duties to accommodate, but they've simply run out of options to procure more temporary accommodation.



For decades successive governments have failed to meet the need for truly affordable social homes. There is now a backlog of over 1.2 million households in England on waiting lists for social housing,⁴⁹ many of whom will be homeless. All the while existing stock is reducing. In the last ten years, the number of social homes in England declined by over 100,000 homes.⁵⁰

The lack of access to secure social housing has resulted in a large increase in the number of households renting privately. When central government scaled back investment in social housing in the late 1980s, Ministers envisioned that low-income households could be helped to afford the newly deregulated private rental sector. When asked how people would afford to keep up with market rents, housing minister Sir George Young famously said in 1991 that “housing benefit will take the strain”.⁵¹ Subsequently, private rentals (covered by housing benefit) were relied on to reduce high levels of homelessness and temporary accommodation in the early 2000s.

More than 30 years later, many more people rent privately and a third of private renters (1.8 million) rely on housing benefits. However, the Coalition and subsequent governments have sought to curb the amount of strain housing benefit will take: local housing allowance (LHA), which determines the amount that can be claimed, has been hit by over a decade of cuts and freezes. In the past 3 years, rents have soared at record rates while LHA remains frozen. Over half of households now have shortfalls between their rent and the amount of LHA they can claim. Average shortfalls are a shocking £151 a month.⁵² Furthermore, thousands of households, particularly lone mother households (including those who’ve fled domestic abuse), have their housing benefit restricted by the household benefit cap.⁵³ The result is that households are pushed into arrears, locked out of finding new affordable rentals when they lose a home and, ultimately, tipped into homelessness.

The LHA freeze and benefit cap also means it’s almost impossible for local authorities to find suitable and affordable private rentals to offer to households who are homeless in temporary accommodation. So they remain there, and as more people join them, the numbers grow and grow.

Now, both routes out of homelessness and temporary accommodation are firmly blocked:

- 1. The acute shortage of social homes means few options to move out into a permanent, genuinely affordable social home.**
- 2. The freeze to local allowance and household benefit cap means very few options to move out in a settled and affordable private rental.**

Clearly, it is no longer just housing benefit which is taking the strain, but the budgets of renting families across the country struggling to make ends meet. And ultimately, the thousands of families who are homeless and now living (often long-term) in temporary accommodation.

This is why we must invest in a new generation of social housing to end homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation for good – as well as make sure people can afford both social and private rentals via an effective housing benefit system. There is no other response to this crisis.



THE WAY FORWARD

The experience of people who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation is a hidden scandal, which needs urgent attention. However, there are different approaches to tackling the harm it causes.

Our Steering Group of 'experts by experience' charted our course. Through a deliberative process, they produced four key principles to set priorities for reform and guide the development of the urgent changes needed to improve the lives of people living in temporary accommodation.



To understand how to take these principles forward, we co-produced recommendations for change, which help to achieve these goals.

Below, we outline each principle in more detail and set out specific actions both central and local government must take to protect and improve the lives of people, including tens of thousands of children, living in temporary accommodation.



Principle 1:

BARELY USED

Temporary accommodation should not be used.

However high the standards of temporary accommodation, it's still temporary and insecure. It can never be conducive to a settled life, especially for families. The solution to homelessness should never be temporary accommodation – it should be access to a suitable, permanent home.

Recommendations to address the structural housing problems which lead to the reliance on temporary accommodation:

The government must invest in a new generation of permanent social housing by committing to fund the delivery of 90,000 homes per year, a significant proportion of which should be allocated to people in temporary accommodation.

The government must make housing benefit adequate, so that homelessness can be prevented and relieved via a suitable and affordable rental. This would make it easier for both people at risk of homelessness, and councils, to find an affordable rental – significantly reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation. This includes

- urgently restoring Local Housing Allowance to cover the bottom third (30th percentile) of local markets, where government policy says it should be.
- abolishing or reviewing the Household Benefit Cap, which leads to so many households (and particularly lone parent households) being stuck in temporary accommodation because they fail both social and private tenancy affordability checks.
- The government must introduce the Renters' Reform Bill to Parliament, which will end no-fault eviction from the private rental market ensuring private rentals provide a permanent home. No-fault evictions are a major trigger of homelessness.

Principle 2:

TIME-LIMITED

2

Temporary accommodation must not be used to house people for years on end.

We must put an end to people being stuck in temporary accommodation indefinitely.

Ideally, temporary accommodation should not be used. However, our Steering Group advised it could play a short-term role in some circumstances. This could be to provide breathing space for people. It could be to help people connect with support to resolve issues that led or contributed to them becoming homeless. However, this must be as a short-term intervention.

Our Steering Group advised that two years was a tipping point. Two years could be bearable (depending on the accommodation). However, staying beyond this, and especially not knowing whether your stay would be months or years beyond that, was very harmful. People should not be provided with temporary accommodation and then feel forgotten, with little priority or help to move to a suitable, settled home.

Recommendations to make sure people do not get stuck in temporary accommodation:

- Until the acute shortage of affordable rehousing options is addressed, legal time limits for length of stay in temporary accommodation could have unintended consequences, such as people being pressured into accepting unsuitable offers of settled accommodation.
- Instead, the government must make sure that individuals and families who have spent a year in temporary accommodation get greater priority for suitable social housing and/or help into a suitable private rental. This might be challenging in areas with a high need for family-sized social housing, such as London.
- Amend statutory guidance on allocations, so that households who have spent a year or more in temporary accommodation have an 'additional preference' for an allocation of social housing.
- Amend statutory code of guidance on homelessness, so that households who have spent a year or more in temporary accommodation are offered priority help to access a suitable private rental.

Principle 3:

WELL-MANAGED

3

Temporary accommodation must meet all existing suitability standards and have high standards of housing management.

It is essential that temporary accommodation is well-managed. Our Steering Group identified that many homeless households are at a very vulnerable point in their lives. Homelessness can be triggered by the need to escape domestic abuse or neighbourhood violence, or bereavement, disability, ill-health, relationship breakdown, job loss and poverty.

People who are recovering from trauma, or living with disability or ill-health, should expect to be offered accommodation which is delivered professionally, trauma-informed and maintained to legal standards.

The challenges they face shouldn't be compounded by substandard accommodation, or poor communication by the people involved in providing the assistance.

Service standards shouldn't only cover facilities in temporary accommodation. They should be an important way of achieving the principle of temporary accommodation being 'time limited'. As soon as someone is placed in temporary accommodation, there should be concerted efforts to move them out into settled accommodation, with an expectation of regular updates on how this is progressing.

Recommendations to ensure temporary accommodation is well-managed and maintained:

People in temporary accommodation need a named and responsive housing officer to contact should they encounter any problems with their accommodation. The Steering Group also recommended transparency on temporary accommodation providers, so that everyone can see how they are performing and how much they spend on repairs and management.

The government must amend legislation, regulations and guidance to ensure there are robust standards and – most importantly – these are enforced by a strong national regulator:

- Require temporary accommodation providers to be registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, or a separate regulator, so that suitability standards are proactively enforced and performance can be monitored and reported.
- Introduce new national standards on facilities and service standards in temporary accommodation. This should include access to basic amenities (such as Wi-Fi, washing machines and play space) and a commitment to receive regular updates on their case.
- Legally require local housing authorities to inspect temporary accommodation before it's offered, so that people at a very vulnerable point aren't expected to move into unsuitable, substandard and filthy accommodation.

Principle 4:

PERSON-CENTRED



Temporary accommodation must be provided in a way that puts the needs of people experiencing homelessness in temporary accommodation, especially children, first.

Temporary accommodation provision and services must be psychologically-informed, and take into account the emotional, psychological and practical needs of the entire household, including children of all ages.

People in temporary accommodation must have their voices heard by local authority homelessness services and temporary accommodation providers. This is to ensure that their needs are met, and that wider issues are addressed. Support provided must be tailored to individual household's circumstances. Ideally, people with lived experience of temporary accommodation should be empowered to provide this support.

Recommendations to ensure temporary accommodation is person-centred:

The government must improve temporary accommodation by offering adequate support, greater choice and empowering people living there. It must:

- Require and fund local housing authorities to offer multi-agency wrap-around support to all families and individuals in temporary accommodation, so that they have support to cope with problems, such as poor mental health, poor physical health, disabilities, domestic abuse, early years and educational needs, as appropriate to meet the individual needs of each household.
- Amend statutory homeless guidance by adding a new chapter on temporary accommodation, so that it's clear to local authorities the level of choice and autonomy they should offer.
- Fund and encourage the creation of Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAGs) in every locality, so that people living in temporary accommodation don't feel so isolated, and can express their views on what needs to change and receive meaningful engagement with these views.

RESEARCH METHOD

The survey was conducted online and over the phone between 19th May and 10th August 2022. We received responses from 1,112 households living in temporary accommodation (response rate of 11%).

We are grateful for the support of six local authorities who helped us to disseminate the survey to households currently living in temporary accommodation. This includes local authorities in London, South West, the Midlands and the North. This approach helps us to reach a broadly representative sample of people living in temporary accommodation.

Our results are broadly representative of households in temporary accommodation. We have compared our findings to the statistics on people living in temporary accommodation collected by local authorities and published by the department for levelling up housing and communities.

One in seven (14%) households are living in emergency accommodation, such as a hostel or B&B. This is very similar to the proportion recorded by government figures.

Three-quarters (75%) of the households we heard from are families with children. Half (51%) of households, (or two thirds of families) are lone mother households.

Six in ten (65%) people who responded to our survey identify with a racially minoritised group. The most common minoritised ethnic group is Black or Black British (more than a fifth of responses). These breakdowns are similar to those recorded by DLUHC figures, albeit our sample has a slightly higher proportion of families.

More than a third (37%) of households are in work. Again, this aligns with previous research looking at the rate of working homelessness.

Four in ten households have been moved to a different local authority to where they were living before they became homeless. This is more common than the DLUHC statistics which show that three in ten of households have been placed out of area.

The report also draws on analysis of data on temporary accommodation collected by local authorities and published by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities. These are available here: Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) All figures, unless otherwise cited, are from September 2022.

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7. 16% of households live in 'hostel' or 'B&B' accommodation. Half (49%) of accommodation is owned by private landlords (half (49%) of which is leased, and half (51%) rented on a night-to-night basis). A quarter (26%) is owned by a social landlord. The proportion owned by private landlords does not include the number of households who rent directly from a private landlord as this is included in a combined 'any other type of temporary accommodation' category or those defined as hostel or B&B accommodation. DLUHC, Tables on homelessness, Statutory homelessness live tables, Table TA1
8. DLUHC, Tables on homelessness, Statutory homelessness live tables, Table TA1
9. DLUHC (February 2018) Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities, paragraphs 17.46-47
10. Housing Act 1996, section 208: Discharge of functions: out-of-area placements
11. For example, local authorities must minimise disruption to employment, caring or education and inform the new local authority within 14 days.
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20. Councils spent £1.64 billion on providing temporary accommodation for homeless households between April 2021 and March 2022. This figure includes the cost to local authorities of administering temporary accommodation. We have compared 2021/22 data with 2016/17 data to show the change over the last five years. The amount spent on administering temporary accommodation was not available as a standalone figure pre 2020/21. When comparing the figure over five years we have compared the amount spent just on accommodation (£918 million in 2016/17). The amount spent on hostels and B&Bs was £431 million in 2021/22. The total amount spent on temporary accommodation includes DWP funding through housing benefit and the housing element of Universal Credit. The DWP sends their percentage of funding to councils to pay for costs, and councils make up the remaining from their own budgets. In addition, many households have to contribute towards their housing costs from their own earnings.

DLUHC, Local authority revenue expenditure and financing, Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2021 to 2022 individual local authority data - outturn, Revenue outturn housing services (RO4) 2021 to 2022

DLUHC, Local authority revenue expenditure and financing, Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2016 to 2017 individual local authority data - outturn, Revenue outturn housing services (RO4) 2016 to 2017
21. Housing benefit restrictions include local housing allowance and household benefit cap.

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We exist to defend the right to a safe home and fight the devastating impact the housing emergency has on people and society.

We believe that home is everything.

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