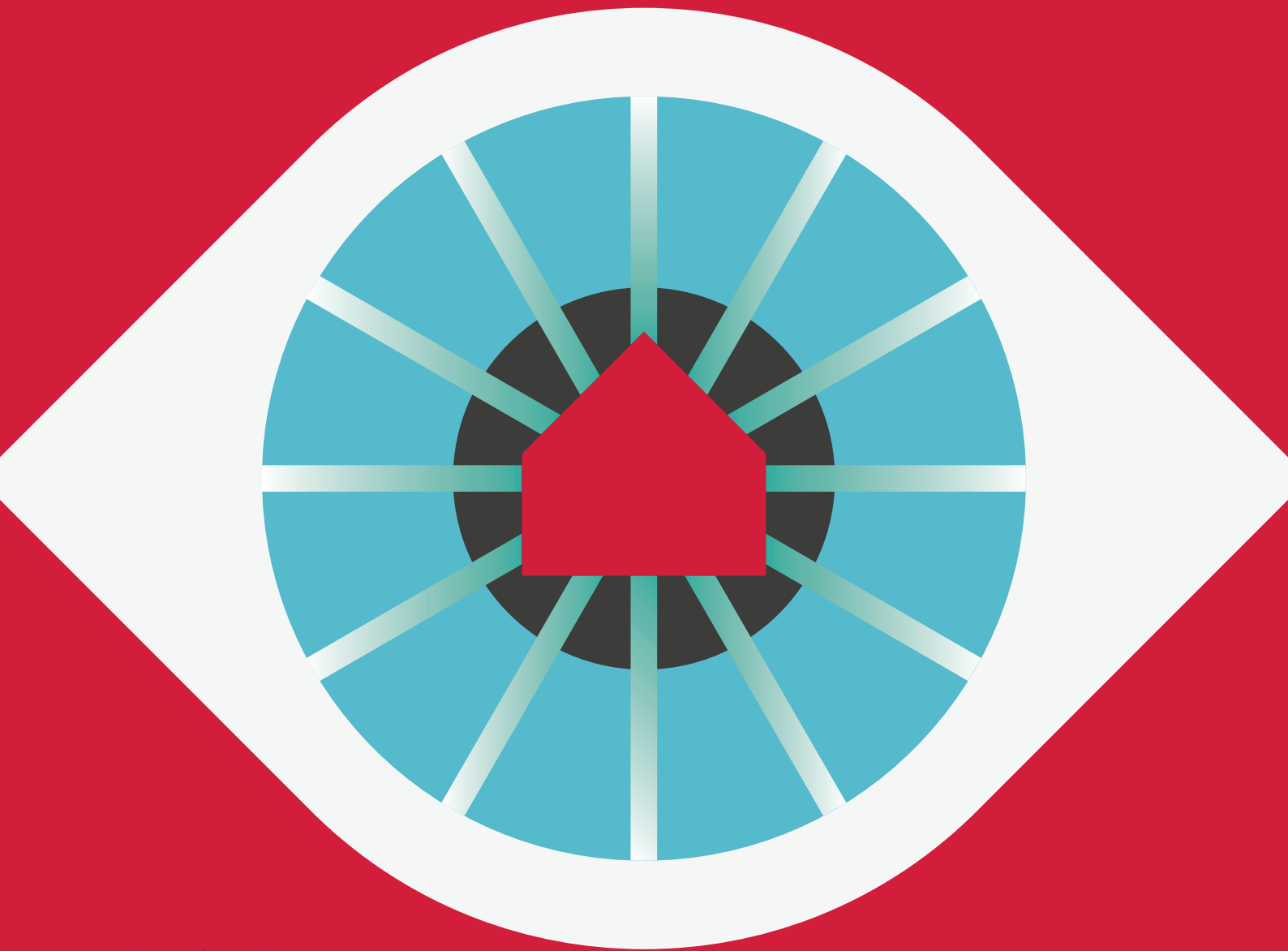
Justlife

May 2025

A Better Vision for Temporary Accommodation

Authored by: Morgan Tebbs,
Influencing Coordinator at Justlife



LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION
ENGLAND & WALES

www.justlife.org.uk

Justlife

About Justlife:

Our vision is to make people's experience of temporary accommodation as short, safe and healthy as possible. No one should face homelessness alone, but thousands are stuck in temporary accommodation, with no understanding of their rights, no knowledge of their housing options, and no clear pathway out of homelessness. We have frontline services in Brighton and Manchester as well as a Campaigns & Social Change team - the innovation and systems change arm of Justlife, driving long-term, national change in the housing and homelessness sector.

Acknowledgements:

I'm incredibly grateful to all those who helped me produce this report. A big thank you to all my incredibly clever colleagues in the Campaigns & Social Change team, particularly Signe Gosmann for reviewing and editing the work, and Christa Maciver for her support and patience while I carried out this project.

Most of all I'd like to thank all those who participated in the research, whether by survey, interview, or focus group. A special thanks goes to those who were brave and generous enough to share their experiences of what can often be a difficult time in temporary accommodation.

Justlife

Contents

Executive Summary 4
Introduction 6

1.Increasing the supply of affordable housing 8
1.1 Why social housing 10
1.2 How social housing 12
1.3 Right to Buy 16

2.Preventing future and repeat homelessness 20
2.1 Welfare Reform 21
Local Housing Allowance
The Benefit Cap
The Two-Child Limit
2.2 Rental Reform 25
The Renters Rights' Bill
Rental Discrimination
Rent Controls
2.3 Addressing pathways to homelessness 31
Domestic Violence
Leaving Home Office Accommodation
The Homelessness Cycle

3.Improving standards in TA 40
3.1 Setting standards 41
Basic Expectations for Temporary Accommodation
The Decent Homes Standard
New Legislation to Regulate Temporary Accommodation
3.2 Enforcing standards 53
Complaint Procedures
Independent Regulator

4.Better support for homeless households 58
4.1 Out of area placements 59
Limiting Out of Area Placements
Notification System
Signposting
Subsidising Travel
4.2 Accessing support 66
Accommodation Based Support
A 'One Stop Shop'
Digital Exclusion
4.3 Quality of support 70
Funding Support Work
Trauma-informed Training
Bring TA 'in-house'

Conclusion 78

Justlife

Executive Summary

The number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) has reached an all-time high, with the figure standing at more than 127,890 homeless households and counting. The reality of this figure is made worse when we know what life is like for those in TA. For example, stays are often far from temporary, with many households spending years or even decades in TA. On top of this, conditions can be dreadful. It's not unusual to hear from residents that they're frequently catching illnesses from their damp and mouldy rooms, that the places they're moved to are left filthy and unkept, or that their children don't have the space to move around and play.

Those in TA can also become isolated from structures that are meant to support them. This is especially the case for those households' unfortunate enough to be moved by the local authority away from their original area, but those who remain in area also experience problems accessing support. Even when support is accessible, a lack of funding and trauma-informed training for support workers, means that those experiencing homelessness often also experience poor quality support which isn't sufficiently tailored to their needs.

This is not always the case. There is good practice out there, and some households have positive experiences of stays that are short, safe, and healthy. However, many if not most people have a negative experience of TA.

This report develops a better vision for temporary accommodation. We've done this by consolidating feedback and policy proposals from 43 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, and 89 professionals working in the housing and homelessness sector. These 132 research participants gave feedback on their experiences, and offered recommendations on how to address the current crisis.

The report also relies on the expertise of other organisations who have developed their own research, and synthesises their ideas with those from our participants to create a coherent vision. In fact, one of the standout learnings from this project was the sheer amount of research and expertise that is already out there. The housing and homelessness sector, as well as those who have experienced time in TA, are all too aware of the issues contributing to the crisis. However, to this point, not enough of these expertise and learnings have been adopted by those who have the power to act.

Hopefully this report can add to the pool of research that exists, and help push decision makers closer to policy change. With the feedback from our participants in mind, we propose the following to establish a better vision for temporary accommodation:

Increase the supply of affordable housing

We need to create more affordable homes for people to live in, so they don't have to rely on temporary accommodation. This will need to be done with a heavy emphasis on creating social housing. This is not to say there's no place for private developments, but to guarantee that the homes we build on finite land are affordable, we have to focus on social housing. Creating 90,000 social homes a year for at least the next 10 years, is something the housing and homelessness sector broadly agrees on, and we also support this figure. We propose a significant number of acquisitions of long-term empty or derelict properties to be used for social housing, to protect the green belt and speed up the process of creating new homes. Crucially we need to put an end to the Right to Buy scheme, to ensure we retain current social housing stock, and keep what we build in the future.

Prevent future and repeated homelessness

Beyond building more homes, we can focus on preventing homelessness through other policy changes. For example, we propose bolstering the welfare system by permanently tying LHA rates to the 30th percentile of local rents, making PRS housing more affordable for households. We must also scrap the cruel benefit cap and two-child limit, which push so many into homelessness. On top of welfare changes, we need to reform the private rental market and give people more security in their tenancies. We should do more to stop rental discrimination and seriously assess the need for rent controls. These changes will help people find tenancies and keep them, rather than pushing them into temporary accommodation. We also have to begin directing preventative support at the key pathways of homelessness, including domestic abuse, the asylum system, and repeat homelessness.

Improve standards in temporary accommodation

We currently lack a strong set of enforceable standards for temporary accommodation, meaning residents have little in the way of rights to complain about poor conditions. We need to create better standards by, in the short-term, applying the Decent Homes Standard to TA, as this is currently being looked at by the government. In the long-term however, we need a new act of parliament which establishes standards specifically for temporary accommodation, as this will give residents the best means to complain about poor conditions. This legislation should establish an independent regulator of TA to enforce these standards.

Offer better support to homeless households

We need to reduce out of area (OOA) placements and the disruption they cause for those in TA. While people remain OOA, we have to mitigate the impact on households by: employing a notification system which ensures support services are notified when a household becomes homeless; signposting people toward services; and subsidising travel for anyone experiencing homelessness. We need a new ring-fenced budget for housing related services, which can fund accommodation based support, homeless hubs with services under one roof, and a recruitment drive for well-trained housing officers on better pay. We also need to have more temporary accommodation run by local authorities, so that we can better oversee the support offered to households.

Introduction

At the time of writing, there are 127,890 households living in temporary accommodation (TA). This includes 165,510 children and at least 41,000 households living outside of their original local authority area.[1] These totals are based on the last quarter of 2024 (September-December); with the homelessness crisis rapidly intensifying, the figures are, in reality, likely to be much higher.

An optimist may look at these numbers and see more than 127,000 households saved from living on the streets. Afterall, it could be a source of national pride that the UK has placed a duty on our local authorities to house vulnerable people, temporarily, while they find a permanent home. It's certainly not a safety net that exists in all societies.

However, the reality is nothing to be proud of. Instead of TA acting as a safety net for those at risk of street homelessness, it has become a trap. Designed to be temporary, hence the name, people are spending years or sometimes even decades in unsuitable short-term housing before they find a permanent home.[2] The conditions are often appalling, with reports all too commonly made of damp, mould, and health & safety risks.[3] Time spent in temporary accommodation can also be an isolating experience, with the support offered, particularly by statutory services, being insufficient and often devoid of the properly trauma-informed approach that many individuals and families need. Life can be especially hard for those placed far away from their original area, cut off from friends, family, and their usual support networks. For far too many, a stay in temporary accommodation can be a harrowing experience, where existing traumas are exacerbated, and new challenges arise.

It doesn't have to be this way. Temporary accommodation can be a positive experience, with stays that are short, safe, and healthy. To get there, we need bold ideas, and bold decision makers to put those ideas into action.

---

1. Gov.uk (2025). Tables on Homelessness: Statutory Homeless in England: October to December 2024). https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=246c1e23-65e0-43d1-8c05-705aed46ce6e&utm_content=immediately#statutory-homelessness-live-tables

2. Lia Sanders (2025). Hundreds of households in temporary accommodation for more than a decade. Inside Housing. https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/hundreds-of-households-in-temporary-accommodation-for-more-than-a-decade-42522

3. Procter, A., Pratt, S. and Wise-Martin, I. (2023). Call for evidence findings: summary, analysis of themes and call to action APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation. APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation. https://householdsintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/APPG-Call-For-Evidence-Findings-Report.pdf.

Our recommendations in this report are based on conversations with 132 individuals (43 had lived experience of staying in TA; 89 were professionals working in the sector), who suggested routes out of the current crisis. Many of the solutions they identify are already well known, which suggests the crisis is not necessarily defined by lack of knowledge so much as who has that knowledge, and what they're able to do with it. With this report we aim to pull together a comprehensive set of proposals, to help decision makers take action to address this crisis.

Participants were asked variations of the following questions:

1. **What should policymakers prioritise to prevent people from ending up in TA?**
2. **Many people experience poor conditions in temporary accommodation, including mould, health & safety risks, overcrowding, and much more. What do people in power need to do to address this?**
3. **Many people experience a lack of adequate support on their temporary accommodation journey. How can support be improved for people in TA?**
4. **What do people in power need to change to ensure people can find permanent housing quickly and easily?**

Based on our responses, and informed by other research, this report presents a number of policy suggestions that will help make stays in temporary accommodation shorter, safer, and healthier. The proposals are clustered around four areas: 1. increasing the supply of affordable housing; 2. preventing future and repeat homelessness; 3. improving standards in TA; and 4. providing better support for homeless households.

This is our Better Vision for Temporary Accommodation.

1. Increasing the supply of affordable housing

Britain is in the midst of a housing crisis. Central to this crisis is a shortage of affordable homes. Owning your own home, once a realistic expectation for millions of young people, has increasingly become a privilege reserved for a minority. In 2023, 39% of 25-34 year olds in England owned their own home, compared with a peak of 59% in the year 2000.[4] During that time, house prices have more than tripled,[5] whilst wages remained relatively stagnant. In 2023 buyers could, on average, expect to spend over 8 times their annual income on a house, compared with an average of 4 times annual incomes in the year 2000.[6]

During the same time period (2000-2023), we see a similar crisis of affordability in the private rented sector (PRS). In the year 2000, the average private renter in England could expect to spend less than a quarter of their household income on rent.[7] In 2023, renters were giving more than a third of their incomes to private landlords.[8] The problem of affordability is set to get worse, with the Resolution Foundation in 2024 predicting rents to have risen 13% by 2027, compared with a forecasted increase of 4.2% for wages.[9]

The social housing sector, which offers a more affordable alternative to buying, or renting in the PRS, has been decimated in recent decades. The 2010s has seen a significant reduction in social housing being built, while we continue to lose stock through the Right to Buy scheme. The result has been a net loss of over 180,000 social homes over the past decade.[10] Homes that were once affordable places for those on lower incomes to live, have become part of the PRS, and, as such, contributors to rising house prices.

The rise in homelessness is a predictable result of the decline of affordable housing options. It's no coincidence that the number of households in temporary accommodation has more than doubled since 2011, the first year that saw more people renting in the PRS than in social housing. Our research participants recognised this correlation, and wanted to address this root cause of homelessness by investing heavily in affordable housing.

---

[5] *Statista. (2025). Total dwellings: simple average house price UK 2000-2020. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/285815/total-dwellings-simple-average-house-price-in-the-united-kingdom- uk/.*

[6] *ONS (2024). Housing affordability in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwale s/2023.*

[7] *Joseph Roundtree Foundation (2022). Housing affordability since 1979, p.3 JRF https://www.thinkhouse.org.uk/site/assets/files/2769/jrf0123.pdf.*

[8] *ONS (2024). Private rental affordability, England and Wales. ONS https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalaffordabilityengland/2023.*

[9] *Pacitti, C. (2024). Through the roof Recent trends in rental-price growth BRIEFING, The resolution foundation. p.5. https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2024/04/Through-the-roof.pdf.*

[10] *Crisis. (2025). Over 7,700 social homes lost last year as the homelessness crisis deepens across England. Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/crisis-media-centre/over-7-700-social-homes-lost-last-year-as-the-homelessness-crisis-deepens-across-england-1/.*

The rise in homelessness is a predictable result of the decline of affordable housing options. It's no coincidence that the number of households in temporary accommodation has more than doubled since 2011, the first year that saw more people renting in the PRS than in social housing. Our research participants recognised this correlation, and wanted to address this root cause of homelessness by investing heavily in affordable housing.

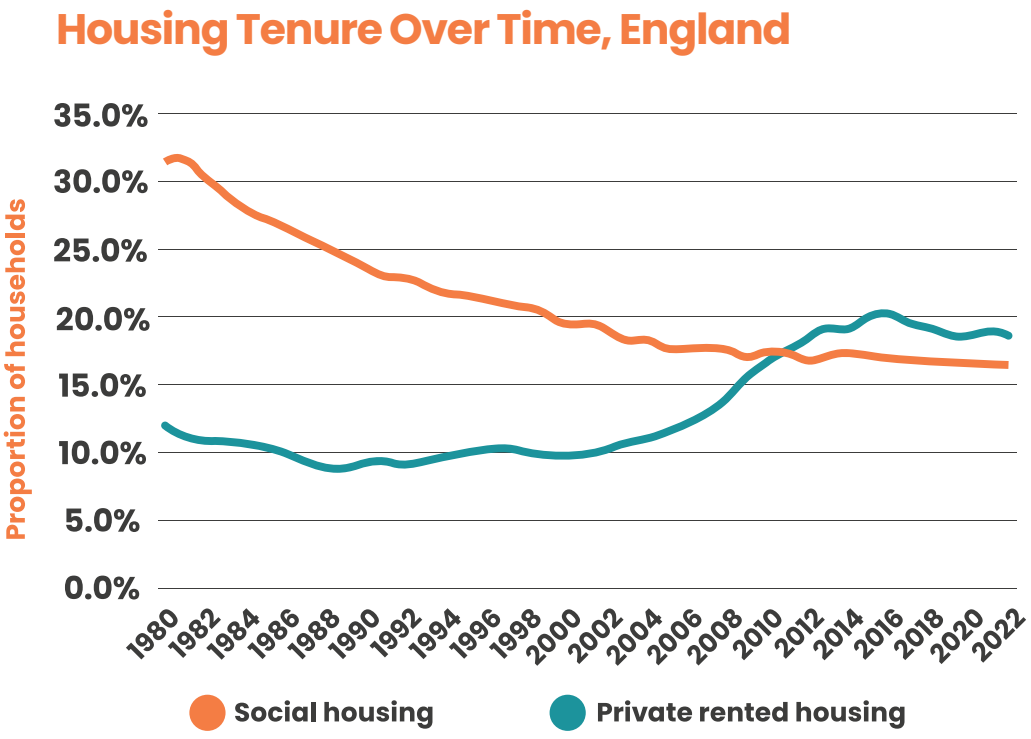


Figure 1: Graph from Shelter showing the loss of social housing, and rise in PRS tenancies over time [11]

[11] *Shelter (2020). Loss of social housing. Shelter. https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/social_housing/loss_of_social_housing.*

1.1 Why social housing?

Virtually all participants discussed the need to increase the supply of truly affordable housing in England as a long-term solution to the temporary accommodation crisis.

> *"There needs to be a lot more housing... a lot more social and affordable housing that the majority of working people can actually afford."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Increasing the supply of truly affordable housing will help both up-stream and down-stream; it will be easier for people already in TA to move on into settled accommodation, and fewer households will be pushed into homelessness in the first place.

How, then, do we ensure that the housing we build is actually affordable for the majority of working people? Elements of the YIMBY (Yes in My Back Yard) movement argue that increasing the supply of housing of *any* tenure will in itself bring rents and purchase prices down. The argument uses the same basic principle of supply and demand that we apply to other commodities: Stagnant supply, together with surging demand, puts upward pressure on prices. Taking this as truth, the new Labour government's commitment to build 1.5 million homes within the next parliament will help address the problem. Flooding the market with homes should ease demand, and therefore lower prices, or so the theory goes. Even more encouraging is the fact that many of these homes will fall under mandatory targets set by councils, some requiring up to 20% of major housing developments to be built as 'affordable'.

There is evidence to suggest, however, that housing does not operate like other commodities and that increasing supply of *any* kind of housing will not (even with 20% affordability targets), in itself, bring down prices or rents. According to research done by the University of Sheffield,[12] 45,069 units of housing were built under Greater Manchester private residential development projects between 2012 and 2020; of these, only 471 could be defined as 'affordable housing.' The affordable housing targets should have seen the region build 9000 new affordable homes, but developers found ways to exempt themselves from those requirements. This shows weakness of 'affordability' targets to deliver the homes people need. However, there was still a large increase in 'homes,' so the theory of increased supply/reduced demand should have still held. And yet, rents in Greater Manchester Authorities such as Salford, where 18,718 of the 45,069 units were built, have seen rents sore by 72% since 2015.[13] Supply alone is not a solution to our crisis of affordability.

[12] *Goulding, Richard and Leaver, Adam and Silver, Jonathan (2025). Centripetal Cities A critique of supply-side urban development. The University of Sheffield. https://ssrn.com/abstract=5176817*

[13] *Harvey, E. (2025). Greater Manchester rents have soared more than 72% in a decade. BuyAssociation Group - UK. https://www.buyassociationgroup.com/en-gb/news/greater-manchester-rents-72/ [Accessed 2 May 2025].*

It is clear that establishing more affordable housing cannot be done solely by expanding the PRS. We can't rely on private developers and landlords to guarantee affordability, and increasing stock doesn't automatically bring pricing down. The mission, instead, should be to guarantee affordability through the expansion of our social housing sector. That is not to say there is no place for private developments, particularly when they are genuinely affordable. We need a steady flow of all kinds of housing being supplied. However, while we have hundreds of thousands of households living in TA, and many more at risk of homelessness, we should be prioritising housing projects where we can guarantee truly affordable homes. This is why our participants suggested building social housing more than any other kind of accommodation:

> *"Build social housing, not affordable. [There] needs to be legally binding quotas on local authorities, backed by increased, ring-fenced funding from central government."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Not only is social housing guaranteed to be the most affordable, with rents being tied to local incomes and therefore on average costing 50% less than the market rate, it is also more secure for tenants. In social housing, unlike the PRS, tenants can only be evicted by the council or a housing association when the landlord has sought a court order. The social ethos of social housing also means landlords are more likely to work with tenants to keep them housed, than private landlords are.

Expanding the social housing sector is guaranteed to address current levels of homelessness. Those at risk of homelessness, whether it be through eviction, leaving the family home, domestic violence, or another cause, will have more affordable options available to them, outside of buying or renting privately. Households already in temporary accommodation will have a better opportunity to leave and find a tenancy they can afford to maintain. If we begin a substantial development project without significant targets for social homes, as the current government is looking likely to pursue, we risk increasing the supply of homes which aren't affordable. If we build 1.5 million homes where most are unaffordable, we'll have achieved little in the way of moving people out of TA, or preventing future homelessness.

1.2 How social housing?

Build Social Housing

Many of our participants were supportive of the sector-wide call for 90,000 social homes to be built in England every year for the next decade:

> *"I only see one solution and it's building more houses... if we were to build 90,000 social houses a year for the next 10 years, wouldn't that be incredible?"*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Shelter has adopted this figure as its flagship policy, and has done extensive work to show how it can be achieved. In their Brick by Brick report,[14] Shelter demonstrates how policymakers can work towards creating 90,000 social homes per year, primarily through significantly increasing grant funding for local authorities and housing associations to build, and by more strictly enforcing affordable housing targets on private developers. Shelter and the National Housing Federation have commissioned research[15] on the economic benefits of investing in such a project, which shows the homes paying for themselves within 3 years of delivery.

We support this proposal. It is backed by research and has broad political and public support, including amongst our participants.

[14] *Galarza, V., Rich, H., Trew, C., Bloomer, S., Berry, C. and Matthews, W. (2024). BRICK BY BRICK A PLAN TO DELIVER THE SOCIAL HOMES WE NEED. Shelter. https://downloads.ctfassets.net/6sxvmndnpn0s/3gKsteftNszu0ttpNdSdkO/4e5e1107d5236a579c164d46bcc49695/2024-07-11_-_Brick_By_Brick_Report_-_Single_Spread.pdf.*

[15] *Centre for Economic and Business Research. (2024) The economic impact of building social housing: A Cebr report for Shelter and the National Housing Federation. Cebr. https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/cebr-report- final.pdf.*

Acquisition of Empty Properties

In addition to this target, our participants wanted to see room for acquisitions of empty, derelict, or PRS properties to help achieve the goal of 90,000 social homes a year:

> *"You've got empty homes sat there, and you've got a shortage of housing. Then you have people living on the streets. You have people living in B&B accommodations. So if there are stronger regulations around compulsory purchase orders where it's a simplified process...It feels like that's a bit of a no brainer, doesn't it?"*

(Research participant)

While the plan laid out in the Brick by Brick report does recommend some acquisitions of empty properties (7,100 per year), the primary focus is on funding new construction. There are over 260,000 vacant properties in England classed as 'long-term empty'[16] (meaning they have been vacant for 6 months or more); we should be taking steps to acquire a significant proportion of them for use as social homes. Some of our participants proposed ways of increasing acquisitions:

> *"You could triple council tax on empty homes or second homes...and make second homes something that is not desirable for people."*

(Research participant)

[16] *Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024). Live tables on dwelling stock (including vacants). MHCLG. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants.*

A tax on empty homes would incentivise owners to either occupy the property, potentially through renting it out in the PRS, or sell. Councils should then be properly funded to acquire the property for use as social housing. Where properties still sit as long-term empty, one of our participants suggested the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs):

> *"I think taking control of some of those properties off people, whether that's compulsory purchase orders or it's more of a temporary arrangement with an owner of a building, I think absolutely needs to be front and centre of how we approach it."*

(Research participant)

It's not only empty properties that can be targeted for acquisitions. Many local authorities are already buying ex-Right to Buy properties for use as either temporary accommodation or social housing. One of our participants explained an advantage of rebuying homes that were once used as social housing:

> *"You've got to spend an absolute fortune converting (PRS) properties. Where we spend 10 grand on our ex-Right to Buy properties...you do the repairs and it's done within two months from purchase to moving in."*

(Research participant)

We propose acquisitions make up a significant proportion of the 90,000 social homes created each year. We should look at taxing long-term empty properties, increasing the use of CPOs where properties have been empty for a considerable amount of time, and funding councils to buy up more ex-Right to Buy property. Acquiring homes for social rent can be cheaper than building, and can protect the green belt.

Modern Methods of Construction

Some of our participants were also interested in utilising Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) to build more social housing:

> *"Traditional builders, their whole economic model is built on the sale price of the home they build... whereas modern methods construction suppliers, they are incentivised to keep the factory producing homes because their overheads are tied to their staff in the factories building the homes."*

The Housing Festival's playbook for local authorities[17] details how MMC can be utilised to start building now, without the need for funding or policy change at the national level. The playbook suggests creating high-quality, factory-built homes, which are cheaper and quicker to build than traditional homes. The idea is to place these homes on 'unlikely' brownfield sites which are currently not being considered. The playbook aims to inspire new capital investment for the project, based on the 'stable, long-term returns' offered by social housing.

While we do need policy change, and grant funding for building from the central government, it's important that we are open to other avenues of reaching the goal of 90,000 social homes per year. We therefore recommend that local authorities consider the Housing Festival's playbook, so they can begin to increase supply within the current political and economic landscape.

[17] *The Housing Festival (2024). THE MMC PLAYBOOK A Playbook for local authorities. The Housing Festival. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64bfa6aaaf61fe5ba8d681bf/t/663c95b552503c0559389e56/171524653421 2/Social+Rent+Housing+at+Pace+Playbook_May24.pdf.*

1.3 Right to Buy

While it is vital that we increase the supply of social housing, it's equally important that we reduce the losses we're already experiencing through the Right to Buy scheme. Since 1980, when the scheme was first introduced, 2 million homes have been lost to Right to Buy, with only 2% being replaced.[18] Many of these properties are now in the PRS, with significantly higher rents than would be charged if the stock was still social housing. One of our participants compared the effects of Right to Buy to removing the plug from a bath:

> *"You've got the tap on, which is new supply, you've got the bath, which is the number of stock, and you've got the plug, which is right to buy abolition. We need to turn the tap on more and we need to either put the plug in, or dramatically narrow the outflow."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Many of our participants recognised the need to address Right to Buy, but had varying views on how best to do this. Some advocated for addressing the discounts given to those purchasing their social home:

> *"[We need to be] making it much easier for councils to replace the homes that are sold through right to buy… So it's things like letting councils set the discounts rather than the discounts being set nationally."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The government has already taken action on discounts. While falling short of allowing councils to determine rates themselves, the maximum discount allowed by region has been reduced to pre-2012 levels. This means, for example, that where a London council could offer a maximum of £136,400 discount previously, they can now only offer up to £16,000 in all but 2 boroughs. In addition, these discounts will not be uprated according to inflation in market prices; this will instead be decided on an ad hoc basis.[19] If discounts are left at the current rate, over time they'll become increasingly less appealing for potential users of the scheme. The exact impact of this policy change remains to be seen, but it would be a step in the right direction. If discounts are heavily reduced, the number of social homes lost will inevitably go down by limiting occupants' incentive to buy. Such a change would also allow local authorities to recuperate more money from sales, which can then be reinvested in new social homes.

[18] *Bloomer, S. (2024). It's time to say 'bye' to Right to Buy. Shelter England. https://england.shelter.org.uk/what_we_do/updates_insights_and_impact/bye_to_right_to_buy.*

[19] *Pennington Law (2024). Right to Buy: changes announced in October 2024 Budget. https://www.penningtonslaw.com/news-publications/latest-news/2024/right-to-buy-changes-announced-in-october-2024-budget.*

Region	Maximum discount
North East	£22,000
North West	£26,000
Yorkshire & the Humber	£24,000
East Midlands	£24,000
West Midlands	£26,000
Eastern	£34,000 (except the district of Watford, where it is £16,000)
South East	£38,000 (except Chiltern, Epsom & Ewell, Hart, Oxford, Reading, Reigate & Banstead) Tonbridge & Malling, Vale of the White Horse and West Berkshire, where it is £16,000)
South West	£30,000
London	£16,000 (except the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Havering, where it is £38,000)

Figure 2: Table showing the recent changes made to Right to Buy maximum discounts, by region[20]

It has also been positive to see the government's decision to let councils retain 100% of the profits on sales through Right to Buy. This was also mentioned by some of our participants:

> *"[We'd like to see] councils actually receiving the money that arrives from homes being sold, rather than that money going up to the treasury."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

[20] *Ibid*

This too will have a positive impact, allowing councils to reinvest more into new social homes.

Other participants suggested creative ways to address Right to Buy losses, including through protecting new build social housing, or by allowing councils to suspend right to buy when losses are severe, as has been proposed by Andy Burnham, the Mayor for Greater Manchester. Ultimately however, these initiatives are limited in scope. The majority of the participants who raised Right to Buy wanted to see the scheme scrapped entirely:

> *"We should stop Right to Buy. If you can afford to buy a house, go and buy one in the private rented sector. Don't buy a social house, because every time you do that, you've taken away a home for somebody...*
>
> *Too many people in the eighties and nineties bought houses for rock bottom prices, and now we've got nowhere to put our vulnerable people or our families that are just too poor to buy a house. And that really frustrates me. So in my opinion, Right to Buy needs to stop with immediate effect."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Reducing discounts, while a positive step forward, will still leave buying a social home a more attractive proposition for occupants than buying on the open market. Protecting new builds will not address the loss of existing stock, and it is far easier to retain stock than to create it. Suspending Right to Buy in areas with great losses will not prevent losses elsewhere.

While Right to Buy satisfies an understandable desire of people, who might otherwise not be able, to own their own home, it is also a major contributor to our current homelessness crisis. The more social homes we lose, particularly when we're not replacing them, the more people will be priced out of the PRS and find themselves relying on unfit temporary accommodation. To turn net losses into net gains of social housing, we must abolish Right to Buy and start building.

In conclusion, these are our recommendations:

1. **Increase the supply of new social homes to 90,000 per year, for at least the next decade**

2. **Reach 90,000 through major investment in grant funding for registered providers, and stricter enforcement of mandatory targets for affordable homes within private developments**

3. **Look to acquire existing property for use as social housing through a tax on long-term empty properties, the increased use of CPOs, and increased funding for councils to acquire ex-Right to Buy housing**

4. **When building, utilise the Housing Festival's playbook for local authorities, in particular its advocacy for Modern Methods of Construction.**

5. **Scrap Right to Buy to ensure we retain the social housing stock we currently have, as well as any future supply**

2. Preventing future and repeat homelessness

With homelessness, as with most things, prevention is better than cure. Financially, daily temporary accommodation costs are crippling local authorities up and down the country. Councils spent £2.29 billion nationally on TA in 2023/24,[21] with costs making up more than half of overall spending for many councils. This has already contributed to a number of local authorities issuing section 114 notices, effectively declaring bankruptcy, and will result in many more if left unaddressed.

The spending on the direct costs of TA leaves less money for prevention, which in turn means more homelessness and more spending. Investing heavily in prevention now, while costly in the short-term, will save the state money in the long run. Research from 2016[22] has shown that preventing 40,000 people from experiencing homelessness could save us £370 million in one year. Considering how costs have ballooned since 2016, the figure is likely much higher now.

More important than the financial benefits, preventing homelessness prevents the severe trauma that far too often comes with time spent in temporary accommodation. In a report by Oasis Community Housing and Northumbria University,[23] 94% of homeless survey respondents reported experiencing trauma. It was also a common experience among our participants with lived experience. Of course this trauma can come from experiences prior to time in temporary accommodation, particularly as trauma itself can be a driver of homelessness, but it's also clear that experiences during a stay in TA can be traumatising. Conditions are often substandard, with damp, mould, and health and safety risks commonplace. Support is minimal, with residents often left to fend for themselves, during a period where they are least able to. Previous research conducted by Justlife details how respondents have witnessed multiple deaths of close friends during their time in TA.[24] While saving money on homelessness spending is essential, we should be equally motivated to prevent the traumatic experiences associated with a period of homelessness.

It is clear then that preventative measures should be high on the government's agenda. Fortunately there are many levers that can be used to prevent homelessness. Our participants identified 3 key policy avenues: Welfare reform to address poverty and manage the cost of living; rental reform to give private tenants more security; and preventative measures targeted at the main drivers of homelessness.

---

[21] *HCLG Committee (2024). England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation. HCLG Committee. p.2 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmcomloc/338/report.html.*

[22] *Nicholas Pleace & Dennis Culhane (2016). Better than cure? Testing the case for enhancing prevention of single homelessness in England. The University of York, The University of Pennsylvania, and Crisis. https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/106641/1/Better_than_cure_Testing_the_case_for_enhancing_prevention_of_single_homelessness_in_England_FINAL_FULL_REPORT_2.pdf*

[23] *Irving, A. and Harding, J. (2022). The Prevalence of Trauma among People who have Experienced Homelessness in England A Report for Oasis Community Housing. Oasis Community Housing. https://www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/The-prevalence-of-trauma-among-people- who-have-experienced-homelessness.pdf.*

[24] *Gosmann, S., Procter, A., Paylor, D. and Maciver, C. (2020). HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS EXPOSED: The impact of COVID-19 on single homeless households in temporary accommodation. Justlife. p.21 https://www.justlife.org.uk/assets/documents/JL_Report-HiddenHomelessness-The-impact-of-COVID-19_v3.pdf.*

2.1 Welfare Reform

There are many pathways to homelessness. Domestic violence, addiction, leaving the care-, prison-, and asylum-systems; these can all be routes into temporary accommodation. The inadequate rights we grant renters, making it too easy for landlords to evict tenants, is another trigger for homelessness. A common thread across all of these pathways is poverty. If a single mother fleeing domestic abuse, for example, was in receipt of an income which afforded them a decent house in the private rental sector, she would not be reliant on temporary accommodation. If those given refugee status had been granted the right to work a decent paying job during their time in asylum accommodation, they wouldn't necessarily end up in the homelessness system. To fundamentally tackle homelessness, it is imperative that we tackle poverty.

The UK once had an enviable welfare state, which acted as a bulwark against extreme poverty and therefore against homelessness. Successive decades have seen this safety net slowly dismantled; not coincidentally, these same decades have seen a huge rise in the number of people needing to access temporary accommodation. If we reform and rebuild the welfare system, we can directly and permanently address homelessness.

Our participants identified the need for three key welfare reforms to prevent homelessness: Tying Local Housing Allowance rates to inflation in local rent prices, lifting benefit caps, and scrapping the two-child limit.

Local Housing Allowance

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate determines the amount of money private renters can receive in either housing benefit or the housing element of their universal credit. It is generally set at the 30th percentile of local rents, meaning it should in theory allow those in receipt of benefits to afford the bottom 30% of local rental properties. Originally tied to local rent increases, reform under the coalition government in 2011 saw rates instead tied to general inflation before they were frozen, first between 2016 and 2020, and then again between 2020 and 2024. Last year the Labour government made the welcome move to unfreeze the rate and uplift it back to the 30th percentile of market rents. Unfortunately, the current government has made the decision to yet again freeze LHA rates, until at least April 2026.

Our participants argued that keeping the rate unfrozen would prevent future homelessness:

> *"Policy makers should be focusing on… increasing local housing allowance rates to make sure that if you can't control the rent, what you can do is make sure people are given the financial support from the state to be able to pay those high rents."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The Housing, Communities, and Local Government (HCLG) committee's recent report on child homelessness found 'Widespread agreement…that the Government's decision to re-freeze LHA rates will put some families in the private rented sector at risk of homelessness."[25] This claim is substantiated by analysis of the 2011 cuts to LHA rates, by the University of Warwick, which showed cuts causing an "18.9 per cent rise in councils providing temporary accommodation to vulnerable households".[26]

The HCLG report goes further to question the Government's justification for freezing rates on fiscal grounds, arguing there is a 'false economy' whereby we save money in the immediate term, but quickly spend much more on new TA costs than the money saved by freezing rates.[27] This is again backed by analysis of the 2011 reforms by the University of Warwick, which argues that "for each pound of implied fiscal savings accruing to the central government due to the cuts, local government expenditures on homeless prevention increased by 53 pence."[28] With the sharp rise in households relying on temporary accommodation since 2011, analyses of the 2016, 2020, and now 2025/26 freeze are likely to show this false economy to an even greater degree.

Reversing the decision to freeze Local Housing Allowance at the current rate would demonstrably contribute to a reduction in the need for temporary accommodation. Freezing LHA rates will not save money in the long-term, rather it will have a substantial financial as well as personal impact on those at risk of homelessness. We recommend the government reverses this decision, and ensure the rate stays at the 30th percentile year on year.

[25] *England's Homeless Children. p.38.*

[26] *Fetzer, T., Sen, S. and Souza, P. (2019.). Housing insecurity, homelessness and populism: Evidence from the UK. The University of Warwick. p.4. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/manage/publications/444- 2019_fetzer_sen_souza.pdf.*

[27] *England's Homeless Children. p.39*

[28] *Housing Insecurity, p.4*

The Benefit Cap

The overall benefit cap limits the total amount of benefits that one household can receive. Our participants wanted to see the cap lifted to help prevent homelessness.

"The actual big issue is the benefit cap... What we find actually is that the proportion of someone's benefit that LHA makes up now ...is unworkable. It's totally unaffordable. So while they might be getting more housing element of their universal credit, the cap hasn't moved, so the total amount they receive hasn't changed.

So reviewing the benefit cap in line with LHA, and making sure that LHA is almost considered outside of the benefit cap...would be a key change for us in terms of that would really help people from being forced financially into temporary accommodation."

(Research participant)

Citizens Advice have reflected similarly on the limiting effects of the benefit cap, highlighting that while last years' LHA uplift saw "an average 16.6% rise in the maximum housing cost support available", caps on both housing support and overall benefits meant "most households do not actually receive housing cost support at this level."[29] According to the briefing, LHA rates in several areas are still set below the 30th percentile, to avoid households breaching the national cap.[30] The result is "that the April 2024 uplift has not solved the problem of inadequate housing cost support', and "re-freezing LHA for 2025/26 would intensify this problem and cause significant hardship."[31] For our proposed reforms to LHA rates to have the desired effect, the overall benefit cap will also need to be lifted.

Further, evidence suggests the cap is so limiting for households that it's now beginning to affect those in social housing. According to the Child Poverty Action Group "in 2022/23, there were 78 local authority areas in England where average housing association and/or council rents exceeded affordable levels for families affected by the benefit cap".[32] If the cap remains in place at its current level, we will not only be increasing evictions from the Private Rented Sector, we will nullify the benefits of any social housebuilding that occurs under this government. Additonally, as with the freezing of LHA rates, CPAG suggests the cap doesn't necessarily save money, as "it causes downstream costs in the form of homelessness and temporary accommodation, discretionary housing payments and other support for struggling families."[33]

If we're serious about preventing homelessness, we should be investing to save, by reforming the welfare system and lifting the cap.

[29] *Berry, C. (2024). Uprating Local Housing Allowance Briefing note. Citizens Advice Bureau p.9. https://assets.ctfassets.net/mfz4nbgura3g/ZNEVD2Jagkr3WAfGkL262/9999157ba6dd4533e7ab27cb0266dbfd/LHA_uprating_2025_26_brief_2_.pdf.*

[30] *Ibid., p.9*

[31] *Ibid., p.16*

[32] *Why scrapping the household benefit cap is vital for families, children and survivors of abuse. CPAG, Shelter, Women's Aid. p.4 (2024). https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/Joint_benefit_cap_briefing_FINAL.pdf.*

[33] *Ibid. p.2*

The Two-Child Limit

Another lasting legacy of the Cameron government is the two-child benefit limit introduced in 2017. This limit stops families with more than 2 children from receiving any extra universal credit or tax credit payments, for costs incurred by having their third or any subsequent children. According to various children's charities, failing to lift the cap will see a quarter of a million more children in poverty by 2029.[34] Conversely, Action for Children claims up to 600,000 children could be lifted out of poverty if the policy is scrapped now.[35] The effect on poverty levels will inevitably influence the number of children forced into temporary accommodation.

It is regrettable that the current government is reluctant to lift the two-child limit, with ministers hinting that the policy will remain for fiscal reasons.[36] Again we see here the false economy that exists in welfare cuts. Instead of saving us money, keeping the two-child limit, as well as the overall benefit cap, will plunge more people into poverty and homelessness, and therefore costs us more in TA expenditure in the long run.

[34] *Crerar, P. (2025). Ministers privately ruling out scrapping two-child benefits cap. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/22/ministers-privately-ruling-out-scrapping-two-child-benefits- cap.*

[35] *Elton, L. (2025). End two-child limit on benefits to lift 600,000 kids out of poverty, Labour told: 'We're in a crisis'. Big Issue. https://www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/two-child-benefit-limit-action-for-children-poverty/.*

[36] *Ministers privately ruling out scrapping two-child benefits cap (2025)*

2.2 Rental Reform

In addition to welfare reform to alleviate poverty and prevent homelessness, our participants wanted to see reform in the private rental sector to give tenants more security in their housing, and prevent homelessness.

> *"Regulation of the private rented sector would also help, so that it's harder for landlords to just kick people out, so they're forced to be homeless."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Currently, a lack of regulation around evictions makes tenancies insecure, and contributes to homelessness. Of the 358,370 households who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness in England in 2023/24, over 22% were in this position because of an ending of their Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) in the PRS.[37] Roughly a third of those ASTs were ended through the use of a Section 21 'no-fault' eviction. A Section 21 notice allows landlords to end a tenancy without a reason, giving tenant's 2 months to leave the property. The current shortage of affordable housing means people who are issued a s.21 eviction often have insufficient time to find another place to live, forcing many to turn to their local authority for help.

Once in temporary accommodation, it can be difficult to move on, leaving many trapped. In this way, s.21 notices can result in years of homelessness for people who might have escaped the ordeal altogether if given the proper time to get their affairs in order. According to Homeless Link, between 2019 and 2024, there were 84,650 households threatened with homelessness due to a s.21 eviction.[38]

The PRS is insecure for tenants in other ways. Tenants have little say over the cost of their rent, for example. Currently, rent increases for those with an AST should be based on market rates, i.e. the average rent increase for properties in a given area. However, where a tenant wishes to challenge an above average increase, they have to go through the lengthy process of going to tribunal. This doesn't always result in success, with some tribunals proposing increases greater than that put forward by the landlord. Further, the average rent is itself determined largely by other landlords letting new properties or beginning fresh tenancies, meaning prices are set at the whim of private landlords. For people who can't afford the dramatically rising rents, the result is eviction.

While poverty is a major underlying cause of homelessness, a lack of security in the PRS is clearly acting as an immediate trigger, and therefore it should be addressed.

[37] *GOV.UK (2024). Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2023-24. Gov.uk. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2023-24/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2023-24.*

[38] *Homeless Link. (2024). Households threatened with homelessness over 80,000 times due to Section 21 evictions since Government promised to scrap them. https://homeless.org.uk/news/households-threatened-with-homelessness-over-80000-times-due-to-section-21-evictions-since-government-promised-to-scrap-them/.*

The Renters Rights' Bill

The Renters Rights Bill, originally the Renters Reform Bill launched under the previous government, is a piece of legislation aiming to increase the rights of private renters and offer them more security in their tenancies. There are many positive steps being taken within the Bill, and it was welcomed by many of our participants as key to addressing tenancy insecurity and homelessness:

> *"There is no regulation of the private rented sector... hopefully the renters reform bill would also address that with longer tendencies and more stability."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The Bill will abolish s.21 'no-fault' evictions, and convert all ASTs to periodic tenancies with a clearer system for evictions. Landlords will need to give legitimate reasons to evict, and tenants will be given more notice. On top of this, rent increases will be more strictly managed. Landlords will only be able to increase rent once per year, again in line with market rates. Appeals will be more effective, with tribunals no longer able to propose rent beyond the landlord's offer. Increases will no longer be backdated, and tribunals will have the power to defer any increase for up to two months.[39]

These are all welcome changes that will go some way to preventing people being forced into temporary accommodation. However, our participants wanted to see additional, more radical reforms introduced to increase security for tenants in the private rental sector.

[39] *MHCLG (2024). Guide to the Renters' Rights Bill. GOV. UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to- the-renters-rights-bill/guide-to-the-renters-rights-bill#prohibiting-rental-discrimination*

Rental Discrimination

Discrimination by private landlords is preventing some tenants from accessing the PRS, and forcing them to turn to temporary accommodation. One of our participants detailed how private landlords were keeping them from accessing the PRS due to their status as someone in receipt of benefits:

> *"Some landlords tell you we don't accept DSS [Department for Social Security]. So it takes forever… I tried for nearly two years, and I gave up."*

(Research participant)

The Bill does address this kind of discrimination, introducing rules against blanket bans on people in receipt of benefits. However, according to the government, "Landlords will continue to have the final say on who they let their property to".[40] Instead of blanket bans, landlords will instead make decisions on a case by case basis, allowing them to continue to discriminate in practice. This is difficult to address in rental reform policy, as all landlords will need proof of income to let their properties. However, the changes we've proposed to the welfare system would hopefully make landlords more willing to rent to people in receipt of benefits, as the benefits would be greater and therefore more likely to cover the bills.

There are ways the Renters Rights' Bill could reform the PRS to address rental discrimination, beyond what is currently proposed. Many of our participants wanted to see the Bill include a ban on demanding guarantors:

> *"[Policymakers should] make it easier to rent privately, because not everybody has a guarantor or big amounts of money for deposits."*

(Research participant)

[40] *Ibid.*

Another participant explained how the need for guarantors creates discrimination against certain groups needing to access housing:

> *"If you haven't got friends and family, if you fled domestic violence, or you've left the family home because you've disclosed that you're gay and your family won't let you stay anymore, you haven't got that support network. You might never need [a guarantor]. It may well be that you can completely afford your rent and it's not an issue. It's covered by LHA and it's there, but if you haven't got a guarantor to countersign it... people really do get stuck."*

(Research participant)

In an open letter to Angela Rayner, several charities have requested that the RRB be amended to include restrictions on the right to request a guarantor.[41] As our participant pointed out, many people who can actually afford the rent of a property, are excluded from the market, as landlords require a guarantor on top of proof of income. This can cause homelessness, and makes it more difficult for people to get out of temporary accommodation. By reforming the guarantor system to limit demands when a prospective tenant can prove their income, we can increase tenancy security to prevent people from becoming homeless, while also helping more people out of TA.

[41] *Toth, A. (2025). Labour urged to crack down on 'unfair' guarantor rules which lock renters out. The Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/labour-renters-rights-bill-guarantors-changes- b2715187.html*

Preventing future and repeat homelessness • Rental Reform

Rent Controls

Many of our participants were concerned by rapidly increasing rents in the PRS, and wanted to do more to control these rents:

> *"People who may not have even thought about ever being at risk of homelessness 5 or 10 years ago are suddenly finding themselves in a situation where the landlords are taking advantage of the ability to just increase rents in line with what's happening all across the country. It's leaving people in a situation where they are falling into arrears and are then at risk of losing their tenancy....So I think that policy makers should be focusing on rent control for private rented housing."*

(Research participant)

In the 12 months to December 2024, rents in the PRS rose by 9%.[42] While the average wage rises below this rate, and benefits are being frozen or slashed, these rising rents will continue to cause increasing insecurity and homelessness for private tenants. Even if we make our participants' proposed changes to the welfare system, there are insufficient protections in place to stop landlords matching higher incomes with higher rents. Building social and affordable housing can help bring average rents down for tenants, but while we're waiting for this to materialise, we should look at placing controls on rent levels.

Rent controls can take many forms. While the Renters Rights Bill establishes greater control on rent by increasing the power of tenants to challenge rent increases during a tenancy, this won't stop landlords from determining prices outside of an ongoing tenancy. New lets will still have no restrictions, which will likely lead to the average price going up, and making it easier for landlords of existing tenants to also justify further increases.

[42] *ONS (2025). Private rent and house prices, UK. ONS. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/privaterentandhousepricesuk/january2025.*

However, there are models of rent controls which can meaningfully temper rising rents. In Sweden, rents are determined by the 'utility value' of a given property, which is a reflection of its overall quality. Increases are negotiated between landlords and a national tenants union, and disagreements are arbitrated by an independent tribunal. In Catalonia, new leases in 'areas of difficult to access housing' cannot exceed the price the property was previously let at, as long as it was let within the previous 5 years. This is essentially a rent freeze, and stops prices from spiralling in areas already struggling to house people.[43] One of our participants proposed their own unique rent cap solution:

> *"There could be your mortgage payment plus 10% or plus 20% that you could charge. I suppose that would be probably about as far as I would go, rather than an absolute cap."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Whichever way rent controls are introduced, it is essential that it improves affordability and ensures any increases in income aren't met with an equal increase in rent prices. It's a particularly controversial policy point in Britain, so rather than introduce it automatically, we propose that the government evaluates the different approaches to controlling rents, and determines which best suits a UK context. If we fail to control rents, we'll be stuck in a position where private landlords determine the cost of living for millions of people, and we'll continue to see more and more people pushed into homelessness.

[43] *Jones Day (2020) Mapping Out Rent Controls Across Europe. https://www.jonesday.com/-/media/files/publications/2020/10/mapping-out-rental-controls-across-europe/files/mapping-out-rent-controls-across-europe/fileattachment/mapping-out-rent-controls-across-europe.pdf.*

2.3 Addressing pathways to homelessness

There are other drivers of homelessness that are not just about finances. Alongside reforming our welfare system and giving tenants more security in the private rental sector, our participants wanted to see policy change around other main drivers of homelessness.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. According to government data for 2023-24, "the most common reason for loss of last settled home for those owed a relief duty was due to domestic abuse at 12,130 or 25.6% of households with children." This figure is rising, having gone up by 0.5% on the previous year.[44] This trend was also reflected by our participants who supported homeless families:

> *"The biggest reason for seeking accommodation at the moment is through domestic abuse."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

If we're serious about prevention, we will need to target proposals and support at domestic violence as a driver of homelessness. Our participants offered proposals aimed at supporting those at risk due to domestic violence. Firstly, some participants proposed allowing tenancy transfers for victims who have to flee social housing. Currently, if a victim has to flee their social home due to domestic violence, they have to go through the same homelessness application pathway as everyone else. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 granted victims with a lifetime tenancy after they've had to flee, but only if the local authority make a new offer of social housing.[45] If victims aren't offered social housing, the main housing duty can either be resolved through a PRS offer, or they have to wait in temporary accommodation.

[44] *Statutory homelessness in England*
[45] *GOV.UK (2021). Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Gov.uk. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents.*

"If a survivor is forced to leave their social housing tenancy because of domestic abuse, and then they have to approach as homeless, they should not be made a private rented sector offer, they should always get to retain, non-negotiable, that lifetime tenancy status."

(Research participant)

This call for tenancy transfers will of course have to come alongside an increase in the supply of social housing, but it's clearly unfair to allow victims to lose out on the security of a social housing tenancy, through the violence of their abusers. Supporting survivors to transfer their tenancies will help prevent homelessness and offer some justice.

On top of this, participants wanted survivors to have greater priority in general when accessing social housing:

"Domestic abuse is an additional welfare need, they've got reasonable and additional preferences. And we need to improve the banding priority for people in [specialist safe accommodation]"

(Research participant)

Currently survivors can be given priority in waiting lists, but our participants wanted to see this extended and expanded so that all victims are given priority banding as a rule, when they've experienced domestic violence.

A final proposal our participants offered to prevent victims ending up in TA, was for local authorities to stop treating an offer of specialist safe accommodation as an ending of their homelessness duties:

> *"Local authorities quite often give them a letter that ends the duty to say: 'we've provided you with a suitable accommodation offer. We're now ending the duty.'... No, its a refuge, they're still homeless."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The problem with this approach from housing teams is that it forces survivors to restart their homelessness journey once they leave safe accommodation. When survivors leave safe accommodation, having to re-enter the homelessness system can re-traumatise victims of domestic abuse. By treating safe accommodation as still temporary, local authorities can prevent further homelessness by more quickly finding settled accommodation for survivors.

On top of these proposals, there must be wider approaches in place to address domestic violence, holding perpetrators to account, and protecting survivors. Although this is beyond the scope of this report, it will be necessary for preventing homelessness.

Leaving Home Office Accommodation

Another common pathway to homelessness is the granting of refugee status for those leaving the asylum system. In the year to September 2024, 21,650 households granted refugee status were owed a homelessness duty by local authorities in England, an increase of 250% on the previous year.[46] Not only do asylum seekers have to deal with home office accommodation that is often unfit, and a hostile environment created by both the public and those in power, they're also not sufficiently supported to find housing when they receive refugee status.

Our participants highlighted three key proposals to help prevent homelessness for those granted refugee status. Firstly, our participants wanted the notice period for those leaving home office accommodation to be extended. One participant told of the anxiety associated with having to leave at short notice:

> *"I have my leave to remain now, so I'm moving on. I don't know where I'm going to... and the anxiety, the worry, the not knowing. I've built a community of friends and going to a place to start all over is very difficult."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Refugees were previously given just 28 days to leave home office accommodation once they received leave to remain, giving them little time to find settled accommodation. The government has made the welcome move to extend the notice period to 56 days, recognising the lack of time to find housing as a driver of homelessness. However, this move is temporary and is due to be reviewed in June 2025. We recommend the 56 day notice period be made permanent, to give people a chance to settle into permanent accommodation.

A second recommendation from our participants is to give those awaiting decisions on asylum claims the right to work during their wait. One participant emphasised how their lack of ability to work drove them to temporary accommodation:

[46] *Statutory homelessness in England*

Granting asylum seekers the right to work would allow people residing in the UK to contribute to the economy through taxes, while giving them a chance of avoiding homelessness and the trauma that comes with it. Research from London School of Economics has shown encouraging employment for asylum seekers could net the British economy £1.2 Billion within 5 years.[47] Crucially, the change in policy would also help integrate a population of migrants who are currently demonised and viewed as simply taking without giving back to society. This is a quick and easy win for policymakers, and should be implemented as soon as possible.

> *"Going to the council for help because you're not working. You can't go get a house yourself to say, 'okay, I'm moving on. I want to rent a private house for myself.' So I would say temporary accommodation is something that can't really be avoided."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

[47] *Woolf Institute, LSE, Good Faith Partnership, Neighbourly Lab. (2024). From Arrival to Integration: Building Communities for Refugees and for Britain. https://refugeeintegrationuk.com/wp- content/uploads/2024/03/CIR_Report.pdf.*

Proposed Scenario

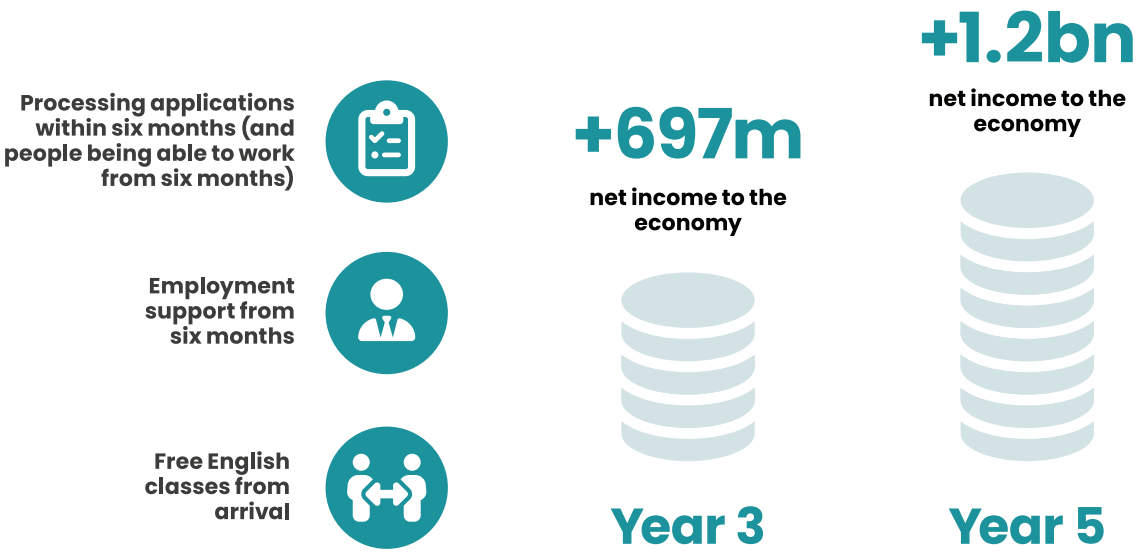


Figure 3: Graphic showing the potential economic benefits of giving asylum seekers the right to work[48]

Lastly, our participants wanted to see investment in introductory support for those granted leave to remain:

> *"You don't get anyone to tell you what to do at all. For example, applying for housing benefits, stuff like that."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Moving somewhere new is a daunting prospect for most people, not least those who are fleeing danger and persecution. If we can help support people along their introduction to life in the UK, showing them how to access benefits, jobs, or housing, we can help prevent homelessness and give people the best chance at integrating into our society.

[48] *Ibid*

The Homelessness Cycle

Many of those who present as homeless to their local council, have already experienced homelessness in the past. A recent MHCLG report[49] on repeat homelessness showed that 16% of households which presented as homeless between 2018 and 2023, contained at least one person who had previously experienced homelessness. Adding to this research, Crisis and Shelter have shown that around a quarter of those who find a tenancy in the PRS after a period of homelessness, are back presenting as homeless within 18 months.[50] This theme was reflected in responses from those of our participants who directly support people in temporary accommodation:

> *"We see so many situations in which people are moved in somewhere, and then they present as homeless six months later because they're in rent arrears. When the council say, 'why are you in rent arrears?' they say 'well, no one ever helped me to get my universal credit paid to my landlord. I didn't know how to do it. I buried my head, and now here I am'"*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The solution for many participants who recognised this pattern, was improving support for people after they've moved on from temporary accommodation:

> *"We need continued support for people who move out of TA – people can't manage things when they move out, the same as they couldn't before they moved into TA. It's similar to a cycle of reoffending."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

[49] *MHCLG (2025). Better Outcomes through Linked Data: Repeat homelessness report. Gov.uk. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-outcomes-through-linked-data-repeat-homelessness-report/better-outcomes-through-linked-data-repeat-homelessness-report.*

[50] *The vicious cycle of homelessness | Simon on the Streets. https://simononthestreets.co.uk/news/the-vicious-cycle-of-homelessness.*

Investing in continued support would be a preventative measure. One model we should follow nationally, according to many of our participants, is Housing First:

> *"Even when you provide accommodation for people that is permanent and secure, that doesn't end the support needs, because the effects of their lives in the past as a domestic abuse victim or substance misuser. So I generally believe that a housing first or supported environment is important."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The Housing First model is based on the idea that ending homelessness, particularly repeat homelessness, requires individuals and households to be in stable, permanent accommodation first, before we begin to think about supporting them through other needs. In this sense, it is a model of continued support. Currently, there is no uniform, national approach to Housing First. Instead, different regions practice it differently. Crisis' 2018 report on how to end homelessness advocated for the creation of a national director of Housing First, who would have 'strategic oversight' of the model's implementation across each nation of the UK.[51] This is yet to be realised, but is still important if we're to offer people the necessary support in finding and maintaining settled accommodation.

[51] *Pritchard, B. et al. (2018). Everybody in: How to End Homelessness in Great Britain. Crisis. p.208-231. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239951/everybody_in_how_to_end_homelessness_in_great_britain_2018.pdf.*

Our policy recommendations to prevent future and repeat homelessness:

1. Reverse the decision to re-freeze LHA rates until 2026, and permanently tie the rate to the 30th percentile of local rent costs, adjusting for inflation in rents year on year
2. Lift the benefit cap and scrap the two-child limit
3. Address rental discrimination in the PRS by banning requests for a guarantor in cases where a prospective tenant can prove their income
4. Commission research into the benefits of rent controls
5. Address Domestic Violence as a driver of homelessness by giving greater priority to survivors looking for social housing, allowing them to transfer a social tenancy when fleeing abuse, and stopping the practice of treating specialist safe accommodation as a resolution to their homelessness
6. Assist those leaving Home Office accommodation to avoid homelessness by making the 56-day notice period permanent, allowing asylum seekers to work, and offering introductory support to help people settle in the UK
7. Improve continued support for people leaving temporary accommodation, launching a Housing First model nationally to break the cycle of homelessness

3. Improving standards in temporary accommodation

The regulation local authorities are primarily instructed to follow, through the homelessness code of guidance, comes from Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, which places a duty on local authorities to provide 'suitable accommodation' for people presenting as homeless.[52] The problem with Part VII is two-fold: firstly, the legislation does not define 'suitable', this is found in guidance from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.[53] The guidance is weak, and doesn't clearly define what should be expected of 'suitable accommodation.' Secondly, it isn't being enforced. These two issues combined make it difficult to successfully appeal against the poor standards of a temporary accommodation placement. The process is also not advertised, so it can be both daunting and costly.

This lack of enforceable legislation makes malpractice an inevitability, and keeps individuals, children and families in unsuitable environments. Our consultation received responses that told of parents forced to raise children on takeaway meals due to a lack of cooking facilities; people fearing for their safety because of a lack of secure locks on doors; and even landlords leaving faeces on the floor for new occupants, because the regulations aren't in place to mandate a pre-move in clean.

Unfortunately, we also know life in temporary accommodation can reach a devastating end. Between 2019 and 2024, Temporary Accommodation contributed to the deaths of 74 children.[54] It's not hard to see how an unregulated sector of housing, with damp, mould, lack of space/bedding, and health & safety risks a commonplace, would lead to infant mortality.

Our participants were acutely aware of the severity of the situation. Based on their responses, we recommend standards are better established in legislation. To begin with, this can be done by explicitly applying the Decent Homes Standard to temporary accommodation, as is being reviewed by the government through the Renters Rights' Bill. We also recommend that the Decent Homes Standard is strengthened in the ongoing review, to meet our participants minimum expectations for living conditions, which we will lay out. Where the DHS can't meet these expectations, and because we know temporary accommodation is treated differently to settled housing when enforcing standards, we also recommend a new TA standards bill is passed, which outlines standards for temporary accommodation specifically. Importantly, both existing and new regulations must be better enforced. We can improve enforcement by establishing a clear complaints mechanism and allowing an independent regulator to oversee temporary accommodation.

[52] *legislation.gov.uk (1996). Housing Act 1996. www.legislation.gov.uk. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII.*

[53] *Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (2023) Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation: Guide for practitioners .LGSCO. https://www.lgo.org.uk/assets/attach/6410/GPG-Unsuitable-temp-accomm-F.pdf*

[54] *APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation (2025) Child Mortality in Temporary Accommodation. APPGHTA. p.1 https://householdsintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Child_Mortality_in_TA_2025_APPG_Report.pdf*

3.1 Setting standards

Basic Expectations for Temporary Accommodation

To establish how we can improve regulation, we first need to understand the current state of TA, and what residents expect as a minimum standard of housing. Our participants felt that the following criteria should be expected as a minimum, and that currently these basics were missing:

- Cleanliness
- Freedom from damp & mould
- Security
- Sufficient space
- Housing Rights
- Cooking Facilities
- Other facilities

Cleanliness – Our participants argued that people in TA should expect, as a minimum, that the accommodation they're placed in is clean.

The majority of those we spoke to, who have spent time in TA, raised a lack of cleanliness as an issue they had faced. We heard about faeces left on the floor and walls, rat and cockroach infestations, and kitchen surfaces left to develop mould. In one of our focus groups, participants revealed that, despite all these issues, they were still paying service charges (on top of rent) to landlords for the upkeep of the accommodation.

Any standards set for TA must recognise the need for residents to have a clean home environment.

Damp & mould – Our participants also stressed the need for temporary housing to be free from damp & mould. One member of a focus group described raising her child around damp and mould:

> *"The whole pillow part of (my) mattress is covered with mould, so I'm not sleeping on the bed. Me and my son, we are sleeping on the floor…I thought that we are getting sick, maybe of the mould from the washroom and kitchen, but actually it's in the blanket and it's in the mattress as well. So it's everywhere."*

(Research participant)

Of course, this is not a unique case. The tragic story of Awaab Ishak, whose death was linked to the presence of black mould in his Rochdale home, has led to the creation of Awaab's law. Awaab's law sets time limits on social housing providers, for how quickly they must address hazards like damp and mould.[55] The Renters Rights Bill will apply the law to the private rented sector, but not automatically and explicitly to all forms of TA. As well as bringing the DHS over temporary accommodation, we will need to apply Awaab's law to temporary accommodation explicitly, through the Renters Rights' Bill.

[55] *MHCLG (2025). Awaab's Law to force landlords to fix dangerous homes. Gov.uk. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/awaabs-law-to-force-landlords-to-fix-dangerous-homes.*

Security – Security was another expectation listed by our participants.

Some participants expressed a fear for their own safety while in temporary accommodation. Some described staying in HMO properties without functioning locks on the windows or doors. Others highlighted the need for CCTV in shared accommodation, as well as security staff who can monitor the wellbeing of occupants.

Of particular concern was the placing of potentially vulnerable people in shared accommodation. Many were worried about the risks associated with placing women and children in the same spaces as single male adults:

> *"I've known of women who've reported sexual assault in the mixed temporary accommodations. Unfortunately, even inappropriate behaviour from security guards that are working there."*

(Research participant)

Others worried about placing those struggling with addiction alongside those in recovery:

> *"Should be inspections of the HMOs - people have found drugs left in flat, not good for addicts or non-addicts."*

(Research participant)

Everyone has the right to live in security and safety; these should be the things that define a home. We should acknowledge, through policy, that those in temporary accommodation have, or ought to have, the same basic rights as those in settled housing. Any regulation brought over temporary accommodation, should provide for security.

Space – Many participants mentioned the need for sufficient space for people living in TA, as this was currently not a standard met. Our participants with lived experience described the effect a lack of space can have.

> *"I have four children and I'm together in one room with the four…. My kids don't have space to play… its affecting my mental health as well as that of the children."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

A child's right to play has been seen as such a fundamental right that it's enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC places a duty on governments to create, for all children, the opportunity to play safely and freely.[56] This surely includes the necessary space within one's home, to create play.

The importance of play is also recognised in education. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework describes play as "essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals, and solve problems."[57]

Peter Gray, leading academic on the psychological importance of play, describes how "over the same period of time that play has been declining, there have been large, well-documented declines in mental and social well-being among young people."[58] This is evidenced by our aforementioned participant, who is forced, by our inability to regulate the TA sector, to raise four children in one room, and who describes this as having a detrimental effect on her children.

As highlighted by our participant, the lack of space in TA also affects the mental health of adults. Findings published by the APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation back this up, with around a third of participants in their call to evidence (2023) describing TA as having an adverse effect on their mental health.[59] When much temporary housing restricts families and individuals to a confined space, this is unsurprising.

Any regulation of temporary accommodation must ensure a minimum amount of space for residents, which takes into account the reality of their needs.

[56] *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 31. UNCRC. p.10. https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/unicef-convention-rights-child-uncrc.pdf*

[57] *Department for Education (2024). Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and school-based Providers Setting the Standards for learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five. DfE. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670fa42a30536cb92748328f/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_ and_school_-_based_providers.pdf.*

[58] *Gray, P. (2017). What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning? Topics in Language Disorders. Psychology Today. p.225. https://cdn2.psychologytoday.com/assets/what_is_play_published.pdf*

[59] *Call for evidence findings. p.16.*

Access to Housing Rights – Our participants wanted greater freedoms for people living in TA. People in TA don't have the same rights that other renters enjoy. We heard from participants about restrictions on who can visit them, occupants being barred from visiting others, people being forced to sign away certain rights as a condition of their stay, and more. One participant described the effects of such policies, particularly for people fleeing domestic abuse:

> *"Many survivors have mental health difficulties, and particularly for young survivors, it can be difficult not being able to have a visitor stay over, especially with the dearth of mental health services."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

These infringements on rights for those in TA are particularly egregious as its difficult to see any reason behind such policies. Typically, reasons given for poor standards in TA highlight a lack of resources to fund improvements to properties. Here, granting everyone the same rights as those in settled housing would be a simple, cost-effective means of improving the lives of people living in TA. Any new regulation introduced over TA, should ensure everyone has equal housing rights to those in settled accommodation.

Cooking Facilities – One of the most effective ways in which standards could be improved, according to our participants, would be if cooking facilities were a guarantee in all temporary accommodation. It was a high priority among the people we spoke to, many of whom have spent time in hotels, hostels, or bed and breakfasts, which often have shared or no kitchen space.

The REACH team at Magpie, who are a group of mums with experience of both temporary accommodation and the hostile environment, are currently running their 'Kitchen Campaign'. The team are asking for immediate support for families without access to a kitchen, with a view to an eventual ban on the use of hotels without kitchens when housing families with children under 5. In their 2024 briefing, the team described the effects a lack of cooking facilities has on people's mental health: "Families in emergency accommodation have often survived an awful period of anxiety and upheaval on becoming homeless. In hotel rooms without cooking facilities for a period longer than the statutory six weeks, they cannot begin to heal, or plan but find themselves in limbo."[60]

The lack of regulation for cooking facilities is also having a serious effect on the physical health of people in TA, particularly children. Without the necessary means to cook healthy, nutritional meals for themselves and their children, parents in TA are often forced to turn to takeaway food. According to the Reach Team's briefing ,"both weight loss and weight gain were cited as problems of relying on a pre-prepared diet. A pregnant mum feared for her own pregnancy as she felt she was not getting enough nutrients – at the same time she noted her child had lost weight."[61]

By failing to regulate for the very basic human need, of the means to cook healthy meals for you and your family, we are not only damaging the mental and physical health of adults in temporary housing, but we're also robbing the next generation of the chance to live a healthy life, and reach their potential. We should back Magpie's campaign, and ensure regulations are in place to guarantee cooking facilities for households in TA.

[60] *Magpie REACH Team (2024). Hungry, unhealthy, and heartsore: Families fed up of being unable to feed themselves. Magpie. p.11. https://themagpieproject.org/hope-for-a-home-with-a-kitchen/*

[61] *Ibid. p.9*

Other facilities – There were various other facilities participants believed people in TA should have as a minimum. Wifi was stressed by some as essential in the modern world, with so much of our lives being moved online in recent years, including important applications for benefits and social housing. One participant described a lack of laundry facilities as 'a line that should never be crossed.' Another participant, working in the sector, described how they've long campaigned for flooring and window coverings to be standard in all properties. These are all things that should be considered when creating better regulation of temporary accommodation.

The above is not an exhaustive list, but it shows us that much temporary accommodation lacks the very basics that those in settled housing have come to expect as a certainty. Our participants have painted a picture of TA that lacks the essentials to live an ordinary, modern life. Any standards that we introduce for TA, should consider these minimum expectations of our participants, who have themselves either lived in temporary accommodation, or have expertise through their professional work in the homelessness sector.

The Decent Homes Standard

Now that we understand what is lacking in terms of standards for TA, and what our participants expect as a minimum, we can assess how best to improve regulation and meet these expectations.

Some of our participants recommended applying the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) to temporary accommodation:

> *"We've supported the introduction of a decent home standard, where there are consistent standards applied to what constitutes a home that's fit to live in, and we've supported the application of that standard to temporary accommodation."*

(Research participant)

The Decent Homes Standard currently covers social housing, and will apply to the private rented sector when the Renters Rights' Bill finishes its journey through parliament. The bill also provides the secretary of state for housing with the power to bring the standard over temporary accommodation after the bill is passed. We recommend that the secretary of state bring the standard over TA as quickly as possible, so we can at the very least bring TA up to the standard of other forms of housing.

However, the Decent Homes Standard won't necessarily be enough to ensure we meet our participants minimum expectations for TA. It's certainly not the case that all existing social housing is free from damp and mould, for example. By taking a deeper look at the standard, we can assess where it needs strengthening.

The Decent Homes Standards criteria for housing are as follows:

It must meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing

This refers to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS): "Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those containing one or more hazards assessed as serious ('Category 1') under the HHSRS."[62]

The HHSRS provides guidance for local authority inspectors on what might constitute a hazard, and provides for enforcement by the local authority when a hazard exists. Examples given of potential hazards include damp and mould, a lack of cleanliness, a lack of security, and a lack of sufficient space. Within the HHSRS, category one hazards are described as 'the most dangerous and life threatening'.[63]

This is the only criteria in the DHS which already applies to temporary accommodation. Unfortunately, as we know some of the serious hazards identified are common occurrences in temporary accommodation, we know the rules aren't being enforced. We therefore recommend better enforcement of this criteria, if and when the DHS is applied to TA.

We can also strengthen this criteria by removing the need for hazards to be 'the most dangerous and life threatening'. If we were to restrict this criteria to those kinds of hazards, someone living in TA which is cramped and unclean, might struggle to claim these problems were 'life threatening'. By relaxing this rule, we could allow people a means to complain about other problems with their housing, which aren't necessarily the most dangerous or life threatening.

It must be in a reasonable state of repair

The Decent Homes Standard states that 'building components', including key components like walls and ceilings, as well as internal components such as electrics or central heating, must not be old and in need of major repair due to their condition.[64]

This criteria would sufficiently address some of the minimum expectations our participants set, including improving health and safety, and security. It should be applied to temporary accommodation.

[62] *Department for Communities and Local Government (2006). A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation. p.11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7968b740f0b63d72fc5926/138355.pdf.*

[63] *Department for Communities and Local Government (2006). Housing Health and Safety Rating System Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals housing, p.11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a799834ed915d0422069a0a/150940.pdf.*

[64] *A Decent Home. p.11.*

It must have reasonably modern facilities and services

A dwelling is considered not to meet this criterion if it lacks three or more of the following facilities:

- a kitchen which is 20 years old or less
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout
- a bathroom which is 30 years old or less
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC
- adequate external noise insulation
- adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats. [65]

Criteria C of the standard also states that *"A dwelling would not fail this criterion, where it is impossible to make the required improvements to components for physical or planning reasons."* [66]

This means that TA which doesn't have a kitchen, but which contains the other facilities, would still be considered 'decent', as it only lacks two of the list. Further, hotels and hostels which don't have room to fit a kitchen or bathroom for each room, would not automatically break the standard, as it would be viewed as 'impossible' for a landlord to make the required improvements.

This is clearly an area of the DHS that will need strengthening if we're to meet our participants minimum expectations for housing. Any review of the DHS should reduce the number of facilities which must be lacking for housing to break the standard, from three to two. This would ensure that TA without a kitchen would not be considered 'decent'. The review should also remove the exception for landlords where making the required improvements is 'impossible'. No one should be placed, and no property should be considered 'decent', where it's impossible to provide a kitchen or bathroom.

If we strengthen this criteria of the DHS in these ways, we can ensure the standard better meets our participants minimum expectations.

It must provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Criteria D requires dwellings to have sufficient heating and insulation.67 This would help address our participants' concerns around damp and mould, and would make TA more environmentally friendly. This element of the DHS should be incorporated as it is.

By analysing its criteria, we can see that the Decent Homes Standard would provide for a significant improvement to the conditions of temporary accommodation as they are. People in TA would have some regulation in place to address expectations of cleanliness, health and safety, security, space, cooking and other facilities.

However, the DHS must be strengthened to better realise our participants' minimum expectations. Hazards should not have to be incredibly dangerous or life-threatening for landlords to fix them. Further, the standard should ensure everyone in TA is entitled to both a kitchen and bathroom as a minimum.
In a strengthened form, the Decent Homes Standard would meet many of our participants' minimum expectations for housing.
We therefore recommend the standard be strengthened and applied to TA.

[65] *Ibid. p.16.*
[66] *Ibid. p.17.*
[67] *Ibid. p.12.*

New Legislation to Regulate Temporary Accommodation

Even in a strengthened form, however, the DHS wouldn't necessarily meet all of our participants expectations. For example, the standard would not guarantee people in TA have the freedoms that people in settled accommodation have, such as the ability to accept visitors, or to visit others. The standard also wouldn't provide a guarantee for facilities like Wifi or laundry, which our participants wanted as a minimum.

More importantly, we and our participants know that existing sets of standards, such as HHSRS, are not enforced properly when it comes to temporary accommodation.

> *"There's regulation out there, but somehow or another temporary accommodation is always exempted from it."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Many of the extreme hazards that the HHSRS, for example, is supposed to regulate against, such as unsecure entrances or black mould, are more common in temporary accommodation than settled housing, which is also covered by the HHSRS. While we should apply a strengthened Decent Homes Standard to TA, especially as it's already being reviewed by the government, there is always a worry that it will not be applied to TA in the same ways it will be applied to social housing and the private rented sector.

Therefore we propose that parliament passes a unique piece of legislation, which creates standards specifically covering temporary accommodation. This would give residents better recourse to resolve problems with the condition of their housing, and would prevent temporary accommodation being ignored when it comes to enforcing standards.

But what should this legislation look like? Firstly it should include regulation on the minimum expectations our participants listed, meaning there must be guarantees for the following:

- Cleanliness
- Freedom from damp & mould
- Security
- Sufficient space
- Housing Rights
- Cooking Facilities
- Other facilities

Importantly, our participants argued that any legislation affecting TA should be co- produced with people who have lived experience of homelessness:

> *"[If we] Involve tenants in decisions about their homes and neighbourhoods, [We] can improve living conditions and satisfaction."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The Magpie kitchen campaign, for example, should be looked at when producing legislation, as it's a campaign grown and launched by people with lived experience of homelessness.

Professionals working in the homelessness sector should also be consulted, as we can rely on their expertise, and previous work on establishing standards, to create effective legislation. For example, one of our participants working in the sector suggested expanding 'Setting the Standard':

> *"We want to see the remit of setting the standard...which currently is limited to hostels of bed and breakfast. We want to see that extended to other forms of temporary accommodation."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Setting the Standard provides for guidance on standards, and an inspection service for specific kinds of TA in London. The guidance provides instruction on things like health and safety, amenities, and sufficient space.[68] There is also the five basics coming out of Trust For London's Better TA initiative, which is a campaign demanding, at a minimum, provision of the following: storage, WiFi, information, laundry and kitchens or cooking facilities.

Rather than write the legislation in full within this report, we recommend that our participants' expectations, the examples of existing campaigns and projects coming from people within the sector, and the expertise of those with lived experience, are all considered when writing up specific standards for temporary accommodation. By doing this we can create legislation for TA which is more easily enforced, and which aims to raise conditions in temporary accommodation to a good standard.

[68] *Standards and Guidance Note for StS Inspection Officers and Local Authorities (2022). https://commissioningalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Setting-the-Standard-Guidance-and-Standards- Revised-14-November-2022-V12.7.pdf*

3.2 Enforcing standards

Our participants also laid out how we can improve enforcement of standards, both for those rules that currently exist, and any future regulation of temporary accommodation. Most important for our participants was the need to make complaints easier to make, and the need to establish an independent regulator which can oversee temporary accommodation.

Complaint Procedures

Many of our participants described how residents of TA often don't know the best way to make a complaint about conditions, even where regulation does exist:

> *"So having routes to complain…because there obviously are those, but the problem is when people go into temporary accommodation, we struggle to get a hold of the people who are in charge of that. And so when they're moving [into TA], they don't know who to bring any issues to. So having like a really clear set standards of what should be there and what to do in those situations."*

(Research participant)

There are existing routes to make a complaint. For example, you can turn to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. However, beyond the Ombudsman not having strong powers of enforcement to begin with, this process is often not advertised to residents of TA. Our participants also stressed that, even when they are informed of the process, they're often not given a timeline for responses:

> *"There should be some checks and balances. If someone complains about something, there's no response. Like if [someone] complains: "there's mold!", "okay, we'll sort it out", we don't know the time limit...definitely get a time: "okay, in seven days your issue can be resolved", and in seven days, it must be resolved. So there should be some time limit."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

There was also a feeling that current residents of TA can often avoid making legitimate complaints, for fear of reprisal from their landlord:

> *"When a complaint is made, don't sweep it under the carpet, or worse, hold tenant responsible and punish them for making the complaint."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

So we need to establish a complaints mechanism which is clearly laid out to residents, which includes a timeframe for action which landlords are held to, and which allows residents to complain without fear of backlash.

We can act now by clearly informing tenants of their current rights to complain, based on the 'suitability' criteria laid out in the Housing Act 1996, either to the local authority or to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Where local authorities are fulfilling their duties during the assessment of a homelessness application, they should also be making them aware of their right to complain when accommodation is unsuitable.[69]

However, even if we make the processes clear to people, these are relatively weak routes to complain through. Local authorities are incentivised, due to their lack of available stock, against acting on complaints. We can't rely on local authorities to regulate themselves, particularly when we have a serious housing shortage. The Ombudsman, while independent, has little enforcement power and its guidance is not written into law.

We will, then, need legislation to improve enforcement. With the Decent Homes Standard, Local Authorities will have greater powers to regulate TA, and will be assisted in improving their own accommodation. The DHS would, if brought over TA, establish for residents a legal basis to make complaints. We would, however, still be in a position where local authorities were regulating themselves.

Passing legislation which specifically creates legal standards for temporary accommodation, would solve many of the problems our participants highlighted. We could establish a clear complaints procedure, which included timelines for responses, and protected against backlash from landlords. Importantly, this legislation would give us an opportunity to create an independent regulator for TA, which could act over both local authority accommodation, and privately run TA.

[69] *Housing Act 1996*

Independent Regulator

Many of our participants wanted to see TA regulated by a body which acts independently of the local authority. Some suggested that temporary accommodation be registered with the regulator of social housing, an idea which has been supported by MPs in the past.[70] However, this wouldn't account for the proportion of TA which is privately owned.

Therefore we propose that a truly independent regulator is created, whose sole duty is to regulate standards in temporary accommodation. As many of our participants suggested, this regulatory body should require landlords of TA to apply for and maintain a license:

> *"[Providers need] licenses to provide TA with strict criteria of how the property should look and be maintained."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The bill we've proposed, creating standards for TA, would be a perfect opportunity to create this body. The bill could list and describe the standard of housing that TA must meet, and establish the regulator to ensure these standards were met. The body would need strong powers of enforcement, so that residents had recourse to challenge the poor condition of their accommodation.

[70] *Ella Jessel (2023). Regulate temporary accommodation through social housing bill, MPs urge. Inside Housing. https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/regulate-temporary-accommodation-through-social-housing-bill-mps-urge- 79780*

In conclusion, the following is a summary of our policy proposals:

1. **Apply the Decent Homes Standard to temporary accommodation as soon as possible. This would bring a stronger legislative foundation for enforcement of standards in TA, and would meet some of our participants expectations**
2. **Use the review into the DHS to strengthen it, providing for stronger means of enforcement. This should include stronger criteria to class a property as decent**
3. **Pass new legislation which establishes legal standards specifically and solely for temporary accommodation, and which embraces the expertise of people with lived experience, as well as people who work in the housing and homelessness sector**
4. **Better inform residents of their rights to complain under current rules, and establish a better complaints procedure through the new legislation**
5. **Use this new legislation to establish an independent regulator for temporary accommodation**

4. Better supporting homeless households

People staying in temporary accommodation are often at their most vulnerable during their period of homelessness. Whether they're fleeing domestic violence, have fallen into rent arrears, or have been kicked out of their family home, people experiencing homelessness will often have a greater need for quality support than those who have a permanent home to rely on. Despite this, the system of support on offer to TA residents is insufficient. Some of our participants with lived experience felt that those who ran their accommodation, even when that accommodation was meant to be supported, did not give due regard for their needs:

> *"Nine times out of ten, landlords are just in it for the money and offer no support"*
>
> *(Research participant)*

This is a particular concern in exempt accommodation where, according to Crisis, "too often residents are not being effectively supported to sustain their tenancies/licences or move on from homelessness into a settled home."[71] However, it's not only accommodation-based, exempt support offers which are failing those experience homelessness. Statutory support services do not always offer adequate support to those in temporary accommodation. Homelessness services at local authorities, in part because of insufficient funding, staffing, and training, can fail in their duties to support homeless households.[72] Health, social care, and education services can be unequipped to appropriately tailor their support to the needs of homeless households, particularly as they're often unaware when those they support are experiencing homelessness. Clearly the support on offer is poor, but often it's not even accessible for residents of TA, particularly when they're placed out of their original local authority area, separating them from services and networks of support.

Our participants identified the barriers to a quality support package for residents of TA, and offered solutions on how to break those barriers down. Participants wanted to see out of area (OOA) placements reduced, or mitigating policies employed where reduction wasn't possible; they wanted support made more accessible by increasing accommodation-based services and concentrating services in one place; they also wanted to improve the quality of support offered to homeless households by funding more support workers who were better paid and better trained, and by bringing as much TA as possible 'in house.'

[71] *Sarah Rowe (2021). Crisis Policy Briefing: Tackling problems with non- commissioned exempt housing October 2021. P.2 https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246160/crisis-policy-briefing-exempt-accommodation.pdf.*

[72] *Dobie, S., Sanders, B. and Teixeira, L. (2014). Turned Away The treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20496/turned_away2014.pdf.*

4.1 Out of area placements

Of the 127,890 households currently living in temporary accommodation, 41,000 (32%) have been placed outside of their original local authority area.[73] That is according to the latest quarterly figures released by the government, but earlier research by the University of Nottingham suggests this figure could, as a result of underreporting by local authorities, be higher.[74] It's a growing trend, and it will continue to grow without serious intervention. Our participants who have been placed in TA outside of their original area, described the emotional impact this had on them:

> *"Moving to new place is so depressing…already definitely everybody has some experienced traumas. You're already going through these. And going to a new place to manage all your own is so stressful."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Many respondents saw an out of area placement as so potentially damaging to their wellbeing, that they'd accept a lower standard of housing, if it meant remaining in their original area.

> *"I'm being placed in one bedroom, just a little bit outside of my borough… I'm not a hundred percent happy, but at least it's still reasonable…Rather than sending me to Newcastle, or Nottingham, where I have a 3 bedroom, but I'm depressed."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

---

[73] *Statutory homelessness in England*

[74] *Dr Steve Iafrati, Dr Nick Clare & Helen Lawrence (2023). Out of Area Housing Policy Brief 2023. The University of Nottingham. p.4. https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/out-of-area-housing-policy- brief.pdf [Accessed 7 May 2025].*

So why do people living in TA find being placed out of area so difficult, even more so than living in poor quality housing? One key issue for our participants was the loss of a sense of community, and the feelings of social isolation that go along with it.

> *"I've built a community of friends and, you know, going to a new place to start all over is very difficult."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Any period of homelessness can be a socially isolating experience, even when remaining in one's local area. The uprooting nature of entering a period of homelessness, as well as the stigma associated with it, can alienate people from the society around them. These feelings of social isolation and exclusion are only worsened when households are moved geographically further from friends, family, and the community they've become familiar with. Not only do those moved out of area have to deal with the stigma associated with homelessness, with the loss of their normal way of life, they also have to process these things without easy access to friends and family that might support them. One result of this trend is the growing mental health crisis that we're currently seeing in temporary accommodation, where a vast majority[75] are suffering with depression, anxiety, and other signs of mental ill-health.

On top of feelings of isolation, many participants discussed the disruption out of area placements cause for households needing access to essential support services. For example, two of our participants who were experiencing homelessness, and were moved out of their original area, described having to fund a 2 hour round trip to access their child's regular speech therapy, as this service was not provided in the new area their family was moved to.

Moving out of area can not only disrupt support, it can remove it altogether. One participant described the difficulty they had in accessing the health service at a time of need:

> *"My old GP removed my name and my son's name from their record. Now when my son actually got sick and we needed support, I have to find another GP. Now this GP is not ready to take my name in because they say you are already registered [with the original GP]"*
>
> *(Research participant)*

So, what can we do to address these problems? How can we ensure that there is a continuity of care for residents of TA, and that we limit the social isolation that out of area placements cause? Our participants gave a variety of policy proposals.

[75] *Justlife. (n.d.). How does temporary accommodation impact people's health and wellbeing? https://www.justlife.org.uk/our-work/knowledge-hub/how-does-temporary-accommodation-impact-peoples- health-and-wellbeing.*

A New Placements Policy

Some of our respondents wanted to see councils avoiding out of area placements altogether, to mitigate the negative impact these can have:

> *"[We need] robust legislation regarding the ability of local authorities to place families in Temp Accom. This legislation should uphold family rights to be accommodated in a way that does not have undue impact on children's ability to attend school and all household members' ability to engage with essential services."*

(Research participant)

The defence of current placement policy, from a local authority perspective, is that this all boils down to supply of stock. If one local authority area has a severe problem with homelessness, but doesn't hold the appropriate stock to meet the needs of those needing housing, they will be forced to move people out of area. In this sense, its perhaps unsurprising that roughly 80% of OOA placements are delivered by London councils,[76] given the levels of homelessness compared to available stock within the capital.

However, research by the University of Nottingham has found that OOA placements aren't always necessary, even where short supply is an issue: "What we are seeing is a pattern of local authorities moving households out of area whilst at the same time receiving sometimes comparable numbers from other local authorities. For all the authorities."[77]

The research shows many OOA placements by London councils are to other local authority areas within the capital, who are themselves placing similar numbers of people in other boroughs. This isn't to suggest that low supply of TA has no impact on councils within London or elsewhere; we know that London councils are having to place people further afield, to areas which have a greater stock. However, Nottingham's research does indicate "a lack of co-ordination regarding OOA placements".[78]

Consequently, so that we may realise our participants' proposal to reduce the numbers of people moved OOA, we propose that central government work with councils to "develop a co-ordinated strategy which recognises how OOA placements can be reduced."[79] There should be a collaborative review into the current processes for OOA placements, to identify where they are unnecessary, and begin to reduce them. If we can lower the numbers of people being placed OOA through this co-ordinated strategy, we can combat social isolation, and limit the disruption in support.

Whilst we conduct this review and work on bringing the numbers down, we should be looking at ways to mitigate the toll on families already living away from their local area.

---

[76] *Gov.uk (2025). Tables on Homelessness: Detailed Local Authority Level Tables: April to June 2025 (Revised). https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=246c1e23-65e0-43d1- 8c05-705aed46ce6e&utm_content=immediately#statutory-homelessness-live-tables*

[77] *Steve Iafrati (2024). News - Where do the households go? Study investigates out-of-area housing crisis. University of Nottingham. https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/study-investigates-out-of-area-housing-crisis*

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] *Ibid.*

A Notification System

One way to mitigate the impact of OOA placements is to employ a notification system. Many respondents discussed the need for greater collaboration between services offering support. Some explicitly mentioned the need to improve the current system of notification between local authorities and support services when moving households out of area.

> *"{Local authorities should] notify schools/GPs/children's services/support services that people are homeless."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation is currently campaigning on the need for such a system of notification,[80] particularly with relation to core services like health and education. The SAFE campaign, if successful, would place a legal duty on local authorities to notify GPs and schools when a child has become homeless. The hope is that such a system would allow services to better tailor their support to the needs of homeless households.

As it relates to OOA placements, this notification system would ensure that local authorities placing people out of area are required to notify local services of the homeless status of the incoming household. Collaboration between these services and the council would be encouraged, to make sure the appropriate care and attention is given to the incoming homeless household. Employing this protocol would go some way towards preventing households getting lost in the system. There would be improved continuity of support, and hopefully therefore less isolation for those moved out of area.

However, this proposal is still a stopgap; a temporary solution designed to mitigate the worst excesses of the current homelessness crisis. Ultimately, OOA placements are too potentially traumatic to continue. Even if we're able to notify support services that an incoming household is experiencing homelessness, and therefore allow those services to tailor their support to that household, there are still great risks. Our participants have described how retelling your story, retriggering old traumas, and rebuilding trust with new support workers, are all concerns when moving out of area.

Therefore, a notification system should be employed in the meantime, but we propose that work continue to be done to drastically reduce the numbers of people being placed out of area, including by building housing, and coordinating the placements strategy.

[80] *Households in Temporary Accommodation APPG. (2025). SAFE Protocol – APPGHTA. https://householdsintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk/safe-protocol/*

Signposting

Although a system of notification is needed to improve continuity of support, local authorities can't reasonably be expected to notify any and all local support services, in every instance. The support needs of those experiencing homelessness are greater, on average, than someone in settled housing. Someone experiencing homelessness might need access to more than a GP or school. They might also need access support with housing-related issues or addiction for example. These support needs are also subject to change, and local authorities aren't currently funded or staffed to ensure all possible services offering support are notified.

However, we can improve systems of signposting, to help TA households help themselves. The majority of our participants raised the current approach to signposting as an issue.

> *"People don't know what support is out there... they're kind of left to it and they don't have anyone that they can contact or anyone that they can ask. So there might be more support available than they're actually taking."*

(Research participant)

This isn't only an issue for people living out of area; even if a household remains in their local area, they're almost guaranteed to need access to new and different support services when they enter a period of homelessness. However, a lack of signposting is particularly damaging when households are entirely unfamiliar with the area they've been placed.

Participants provided practical ways to improve signposting, including many mentioning the need for provision of an informational pack or booklet, which could layout which services are available and how to access them, whenever a household moves into new temporary housing.

> *"[We need] a regular newsletter to help residents in TA find the support services they need."*

(Research participant)

This is already established practice for some housing teams, but isn't mandated across the board. Updating the homelessness code of guidance to mandate informational booklets for all homeless households would go some way to improving the experiences of all those in TA, and particularly those who have been placed in a new local authority area.

Importantly, our participants stressed that signposting should be accessible. For some, reading a thick booklet filled with support services and their contact information, won't actually improve their access. Some respondents suggested a multi-media approach, including informational videos and face to face signposting, to allow everyone to benefit.

Our participants agreed that proper signposting must become standard practice, so that we can prevent feelings of isolation, and guarantee a continuity of care for all those in TA. We propose that *all* local authorities follow their legal duty to signpost under s.179 of the Housing Act 1996,[81] which states that "Each local housing authority in England must provide…information and advice on…any help that is available from the authority or anyone else, whether under this Part or otherwise, for persons in the authority's district who are homeless or may become homeless." Those councils that are yet to meet this duty can begin by producing booklets or packs which detail the availability of local support services.

However, this is again a stopgap when placing people out of area. Participants expressed concern that, even if signposted toward relevant services, they would still feel insecure about their placement. There was a feeling among participants with lived experience, that you can never settle in a new area, as 'you don't know when you'll be moved again'. This means households moved out of area are disincentivised from engaging in signposting, due to a mistrust between them and local authorities. The solution again, is to move away of OOA placements altogether, and look to guarantee continuity of support within one's original area.

[81] *Housing Act 1996*

Subsidising Travel

Some respondents raised the need to provide free travel for people placed outside of their local area:

> *"If a household with a child has been placed out of area and it's not feasible for whatever reason to switch schools, then the council should consider reimbursing some of those travel costs."*

(Research participant)

In the case of our respondents who were accessing speech therapy for their children, they were having to pay substantial amounts of money for travel there and back. These costs were unavoidable; the development of their children's speech was too important for cost to become a barrier. However, it put additional strain on an already difficult financial situation. If we were to subsidise travel costs for people in TA, we would mitigate the impact of any OOA placements on already struggling homeless households. As our participants correctly pointed out, these subsidies aren't only needed for those placed out of area.

> *"Any homeless child ought to be treated in the same way...If you are a child in a homeless family, then you get [travel support]...we don't have to assess whether you're living far from school or whatever."*

(Research participant)

This approach is echoed by the APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation, who propose "A seamless system that allows people experiencing homelessness access to free local transport whilst in TA, from when they are owed a duty to refer."[82] This would ensure that all placed in TA have equal access to the support they need.

Our participants are right to raise subsidised travel as a fair solution to mitigate the impact of out of area placements; it's relatively low cost and would improve people's ability to access support when placed out of area in particular. It should be looked at by government, and as a sector we should be campaigning on it.

[82] *Alex Procter. (2023). APPG Group of MPs Calls For Regulation of Temporary Accommodation. Justlife https://www.justlife.org.uk/news/2023/appg-for-households-in-temporary-accommodation-to-campaign-for- national-regulator-to-improve-standards*

4.2 Accessing support

Even for homeless households who are able to remain in temporary accommodation within their original area, there exist other barriers to accessing support. Our participants raised 3 main barriers:

- A lack of accommodation-based support
- Segmented support hubs
- Digital exclusion

Accommodation Based Support

Many of our participants raised the need for an increased focus on offering support within people's accommodation, either through an increase in supported temporary housing where support workers are based on site, or through outreach and floating support.

> *"An ideal would be to have either floating support workers, from local authorities or from organizations that run TA, going out and being available to people regularly and being contactable on, on the phone or via email or whatever else, and in person. Or, ideally, on site. Anywhere where we're saying: 'this is temporary accommodation', the ability to go down and knock on a window or an office door and have somebody there who you can speak to."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Participants described various reasons why someone might need to access support within their accommodation. People with physical disabilities may find it difficult to travel to and from support centres frequently. People with learning disabilities, or those on the autism spectrum, might also face difficulties in accessing support out in the community. One participant described how trauma can impact someone's ability to leave their home and access support elsewhere:

> *"It's also about recognizing the significant trauma that most people who are in a situation of homelessness are facing, which can make things like appointments very difficult to attend... So I think stuff that is based in the accommodation that can sort of be there and work flexibly understanding people's needs"*

(Research participant)

Unfortunately, there have been cuts to accommodation-based services, as local authorities struggle with overall budget cuts from successive central governments. The Supporting People programme previously gave councils substantial, ring-fenced funding for housing-related support services. The result was a wide-ranging system of support for those experiencing, or at risk of, different forms of homelessness. This system included accommodation based services. For example, the number of households receiving floating support shot up to 106,892 within the first year of the programme.[83]

The removal of this ring-fenced budget, and the establishing of a significantly reduced 'Formula Grant' for local authorities, has led to the decimation of this system of support. Although the specific current number of households receiving floating support is unknown, we do know that spending on housing related services fell by 46% between 2010 and 2017, and cuts have only continued since.[84] We also know that funding for floating support services fell by roughly £16m between 2013 and 2018. The result is many in TA are receiving little or no accommodation-based support.

---

[83] *DCLG (2008) Research into the effectiveness of floating support services for the Supporting People programme Final Report http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/ floatingsupportresearch.pdf*

[84] *The National Audit Office (2018) Financial sustainability of local authorities 2018 https://www.nao.org.uk/wp- content/ uploads/2018/03/Financial-sustainabilty-of-local-authorites-2018.pdf*

Annual Funding for Floating Support Services 2013-14 — 2017-18

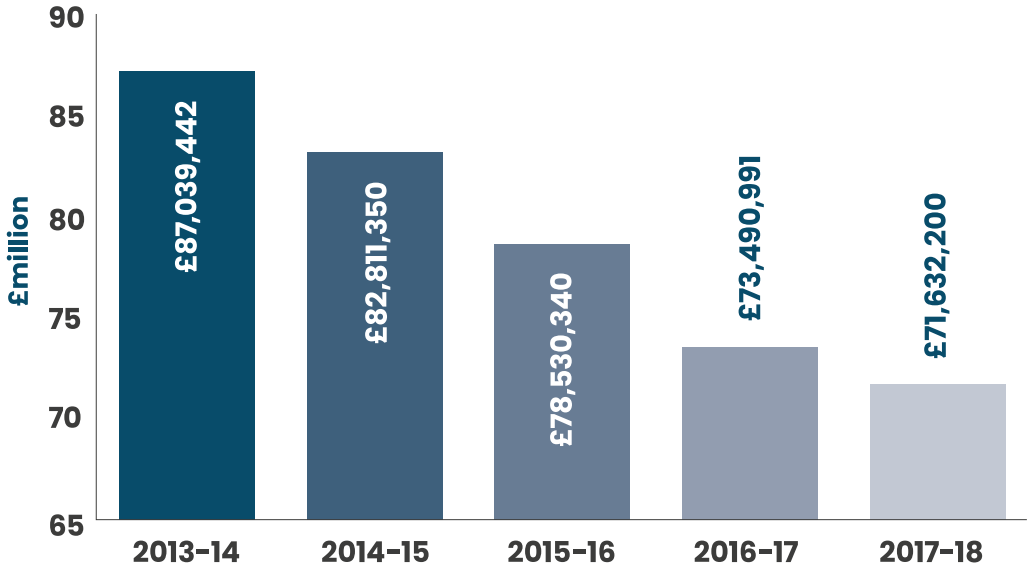


Figure 4: Chart showing the fall in funding for floating support between 2013 and 2018, based on FOI requests by St Mungos[85]

Our participants see the natural solution as bringing back ring-fenced funding, whatever we label it:

> *"This is one of our instances in which [we're] advocating for ring-fenced funding. So funding specific to support and supported accommodation, pretty much in a similar vein to supporting people."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

If we can re-fund things like floating support, or expand on supported temporary housing, we can ease the struggles of living in TA, while giving people the best chance to find settled accommodation. One way we could fund this expansion of accommodation-based support is to close the TA subsidy gap, meaning the difference in what councils pay upfront for temporary accommodation,[86] and what they can reclaim from the Department for Work and Pensions. Currently the amount they can reclaim, from non-council TA, is set at 90% of 2011 LHA rates. Updating this figure and closing the gap could save councils hundreds of millions, and allow them to fund a re-expansion of accommodation-based services. This should be looked at by central government.

[85] *St Mungos (2018) Home for Good: The role of floating support services in ending rough sleeping. St. Mungos. p.21. https://thinkhouse.org.uk/site/assets/files/1496/stmungo.pdf/*

[86] *Debdipto Biswas & Maria Stavridou (2024). The Local Housing Allowance rate and temporary accomodation reimbursement process. BisImpact. https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-housing-allowance-rate-and-temporary-accomodation-reimbursement-process*

> *"When you go in there, it's not a case of now you've gotta go 10 miles that way and now you've gotta wait for a letter for an appointment there. It's all in one place. And I think that that sort of hub model of availability to people...that's the sort of thing that we need everywhere."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Such a model has been designed and advocated by Common Ambition in Brighton. The idea for a Homeless Health Hub,[87] designed by and for people with lived experience of homelessness, arose because of various issues identified early in Common Ambition's work. One key challenge theme they identified was the number of barriers to accessing support which exist for people in TA. The Hub is, in part, an attempt to break down these barriers.

More than offering access to health services, the Hub would be a space for a range of statutory and non-statutory services to come together under one roof. People will have access to phones and computers, and an information hub will be available to signpost people to other services. Importantly, it will act as a community hub, allowing people experiencing homelessness a safe space to be, whether their visiting to access services or not.

The Homeless Health Hub is a good example of the 'one-stop-shop' model which participants discussed. While Common Ambition continue to build this project, and work with Brighton & Hove City Council to get it off the ground, other local authorities should begin working with the third sector to design similar models.

A system of community hubs would cut barriers to accessing support for people experiencing homelessness. Those who can't, or don't wish to receive support in their accommodation, would no longer need to travel across their town or city to access services. It's something that should be seriously looked at by local authorities.

---

[87] *Brighton & Hove Common Ambition. (2023). Resources - Brighton & Hove Common Ambition. https://www.bhcommonambition.org/resources/#homeless-healthcare-hub*

4.3 Quality of support

Whilst we need to make support more readily available for those in TA, we also need to ensure it's of a high standard. Our participants described how the current system of support does not adequately meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

> *"There needs to be a really big focus on good quality support... it needs to be more hands-on. I think that light touch support, which is what we're seeing, which is: somebody goes in, has a conversation for half an hour, ticks some boxes and leaves. How effective is that? I'm not quite sure."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The same budget cuts which we've described previously have affected all elements of the support package offered to people in TA. Instead of housing officers managing the advised 30 cases, many are managing hundreds.[88] These housing officers are paid poorly, and often lack the training that would allow them to deal with clients sensitively and appropriately. Housing teams don't have time to offer support tailored to the individual, as they're constantly processing more cases. Local authorities are often forced to rely on private TA landlords, where the quality or even existence of support cannot be guaranteed. The result is a population of people trapped in TA, who feel isolated and ignored:

> *"Sometimes all you need is someone to listen, be non-judgmental, and try their best."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Our participants had a number of policy proposals which might improve the quality of support offered to people. Their suggestions included:

- Funding more support workers, on better pay
- Trauma-informed training for support workers
- Bringing TA 'in house'

---

[88] *Adella Whittingham (2024). City council cuts homelessness officer caseload in half. Inside Housing. https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/city-council-cuts-homelessness-officer-caseload-in-half-87590*

Funding Support Work

Housing officers, at local authorities and housing associations, are at breaking point. One participant described the effect budget-cuts are having on providers:

> *"A number of local authorities have handled budget gaps over the years of austerity by, effectively, vacancy management. So, you have vacancies in your team, and you just hold those vacancies to save money. Then TA demand spikes. And what you then realize is that the caseload for your officers goes to like 80, 90, 100, 120 - when it should be 20 or 30. So there's an easy win. You recruit, you recruit heavily, you resource heavily."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

Anecdotally, we at Justlife have heard of individual housing officers managing more than 300 cases. This is a problem for both staff and those they support. A recent survey by Inside Housing[89] showed 44% of housing officers were concerned about their workload. According to the magazine, 'respondents wrote about working long hours above and beyond their contract'. Many respondents felt the heavy workload was effecting their ability to offer quality support. This isn't healthy for support workers, and it's damaging the wellbeing of the people they support.

Many of our participants with lived experience described a fraught relationship with their housing officer/s:

> *"You keep emailing your housing officer, no one is responding...they never do anything."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

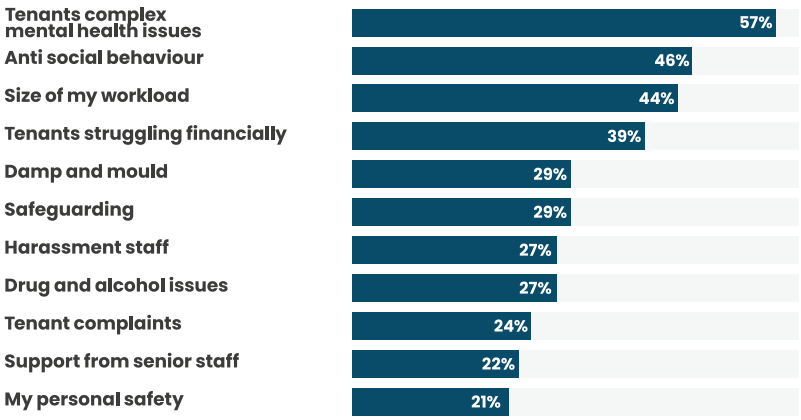


Figure 4: Chart from Inside Housing's Management Survey (2025), showing the issues housing officers worry about most in their work.[90]

[89] *Katharine Swindells (2021). Revealed: housing officers' top priorities. Inside Housing. https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/revealed-housing-officers-top-priorities-91191*

[90] *Ibid.*

It's not only housing officers who are struggling. The third sector is shrinking, with budget-cuts similarly affecting their ability to offer all forms of support for people experiencing homelessness. Facing their own cuts, local authorities have had to slash funding to vital services, such as was threatened by Hampshire County Council, who have thankfully reversed a decision to cut £2m funding to two-saints,[91] who offer a range of housing services.

A natural remedy to issues arising from budget cuts, is to refund in areas which have been affected. Clearly the rearranging and subsequent cutting of a ring-fenced budget for housing-related support (Supporting People), has meant councils have had to limit spend on employment and pay, as well as on contracting support from the third sector. Many participants agreed that we need to fund more support workers. Some others argued that housing officers also need to be paid better wages, to ensure quality support is offered:

> *"Employ better qualified people to work with marginalised communities; enumerate them adequately otherwise they won't come."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

But can we afford to refund councils to the extent that's needed to address the crisis in support? The new Labour government have made it clear that fiscal responsibility is their guiding principal; where does spending on homelessness services fit into this? After all, it's no small amount of money needed to address the current gap for support services; the Supporting People programme was a £1.8b fund when it was first introduced in 2003, and that's without adjusting for inflation and the explosion of the problem since.

Ultimately, we must invest to save in the future. Crisis' 'Everybody In' report showed how committing finances to end homelessness, will in fact save the state money in the long run.[92] The general idea is that if we invest money in housing, and in the support required to get people into settled accommodation, we'll save in the future on the costs required to keep people in TA; costs which are crippling local authorities up and down the country.

It's not only directly supporting people with housing that can save the government money. If Labour commit to funding other third sector services, to address problems with addiction, health, or more specialist forms of support, then people in TA stand a better chance of getting themselves into settled accommodation. We should be investing in people and investing to save in the future.

Therefore, we propose the reintroduction of a ring-fenced budget for housing-related support, and further funding for services offering relevant support outside of housing. It's encouraging to see the government commit extra funding to the Prevention Grant. However, if there isn't sufficient funding to hire more housing officers, reduce current officers' caseloads and increase their pay, there will be little space for support workers to actually practice their preventative duties. Further, with only 49% ring-fenced for prevention,[93] the budget is susceptible to being spent yet again on the daily costs of keeping people in TA. We need enough ring-fenced funding to allow housing officers to practice prevention, as well as enough to manage their cases with the sensitivity each household deserves. We also need to fund third sector support services to help people reach their full potential, and find settled accommodation.

---

[91] *Turner, E. (2024). Council secures Two Saints funding contracts until 2026 - Two Saints. Two Saints. https://www.twosaints.org.uk/council-secures-two-saints-funding-contracts-until-2026/*

[92] *Ending Homelessness.*

[93] *MHCLG (2024). Homelessness Prevention Grant 2025-26: technical note. GOV.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-grant-allocations-2025-to- 2026/homelessness-prevention-grant-2025-26-technical-note*

Trauma-informed Training

While participants called for funding jobs and pay for support workers, both within the council and the third sector, they also recognised a need for a more trauma informed approach to supporting people in TA:

> *"Councils need a more trauma-informed, empathetic approach."*

(Research participant)

Our participants described the difficulty local authorities have in working to a trauma- informed model, as one of lack of capacity, as well as poor training:

> *"There's no capacity within local authorities to take care of these needs...there's a high turnover, they're often not very well trained, they work in extremely difficult circumstances... [I've] observed some very rude housing officers, but these people are also operating in very unbelievable circumstances."*

(Research participant)

Again, it's an issue of funding. The ring-fenced budget we've called for must be adequate enough to mandate trauma-informed training across the homelessness support sector. Hopefully extra funding can help us realise what is really a simple and reasonable ask from our participants with lived experience:

> *"Sometimes all you need is someone to listen, be non-judgmental, and try their best."*

(Research participant)

Bring TA 'in-house'

Our participants identified the private provision of TA, including supported temporary housing, as a significant barrier to people accessing quality support. There was a particular concern that private providers are identifying their TA as exempt accommodation, allowing them to bypass limits on rent charges, without providing the necessary support to meet the criteria of proper exempt accommodation.

> *"We're really familiar with people having experience of TA where the provider argues there is an element of support there, and what that actually means is there is a mobile number given to someone, [its] answered by the person who owns that property, and unless it's about you wanting to pay your rent, the person just isn't interested at all."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

The result of this rogue landlordism is a population of people in TA, who have been identified as in need of support, not receiving what they're entitled to, while a private housing provider profits from tax-payer money. This was seen by our participants as something which should be legislated against as soon as possible:

> *"I think there should be a huge crackdown on anyone who abuses the system. If you're claiming thousands and thousands of pounds from the local authority to provide support accommodation, and you're not doing it, then in my view, that should be a criminal offence."*
>
> *(Research participant)*

This is an easy win if the government want to improve support for people in TA. However, our participants went further, having doubts on whether private landlords can ever provide the quality of support that councils or registered providers can supply:

> *"The where and how the household is placed in TA has a direct correlation to the kind of support they receive. If they can be placed in TSH (Temporary Social Housing) through an RP, support is a requirement of that. Therefore, that seems like a very sensible route to increase…Because support is built into that model. Local authorities as well…would tend to offer more support than if it was through private landlords where it's not really a requirement."*

(Research participant)

This speaks to a larger point: if we're looking to control the quality of support people are receiving in TA, we need to control the housing which people are placed in. In allowing private providers to own and run TA and the support that's provided, we lose visibility and knowledge of who is being supported and how.

We understand that councils are already buying up stock to use as TA:

> *"We've gone on an active property purchase program buying ex-Right to Buy properties to use as temporary accommodation for homeless households…within the last three years we've bought about 500 ex-Right to Buy properties and we've planned to buy about another 200 plus over the next two years."*

(Research participant)

This is a model could be replicated by local authorities, and which national government could assist councils in replicating. It's not a cost-free option, but if we can begin to divert some funds away from the use of privately provided TA, particularly rogue landlords using exempt accommodation to make a profit, we can bring more TA in house and ensure quality support.

Ultimately more government oversight and quality control for the support people in TA receive is a positive. That is not to say that there are no positive examples of the private provision of support; there are plenty of good actors in the sector. However, our current approach relies too heavily on private providers, particularly those who exploit rules around exempt accommodation. There should be a shift towards bring temporary accommodation 'in house'.

In conclusion, we have a number of policy recommendations:

1. National government should work with councils to better coordinate a placements policy for people in TA, avoiding situations where 2 councils are placing and receiving a similar number of people

Whilst we're reducing OOA placements, we can put policies in place to mitigate the impact for households, such as:

2. Employ a notification system, which places a duty on local authorities to notify support services when a household becomes homeless, particularly GPs and schools
3. Improve our approach to signposting, enforcing the duty for local authorities to signpost under s.179 of the Housing Act 1996. This can include, but is not limited to, mandating the provision of information packs or booklets for people moving into TA
4. Subsidise travel for everyone experiencing homelessness
5. Re-fund accommodation-based, and floating support services, to allow people who need it, the ability to access support in their own home. Do so through a ring-fenced budget for housing related services, similar to supporting people, which is funded through closing the temporary accommodation subsidy gap
6. Support local authorities to establish more community hubs, following something similar to Common Ambition's Homeless Health Hub model, giving people in TA the option of accessing support in one place in the community
7. Combat digital exclusion, by providing people with a variety of routes to accessing their support, instead of moving access to essential services entirely online
8. Use new ring-fenced budget for housing-related services to both hire more housing officers on better pay, as well as fund third-sector support services
9. Improve training for housing teams at local authorities, funded by the new ring-fenced budget, and focussing on a trauma-informed approach
10. Fund councils to bring as much TA as possible in house, and legislate against rogue landlords who profit from rules around exempt accommodation

Conclusion

With temporary accommodation in its current state, where hundreds of thousands of households are living in unfit conditions with insufficient support to help them thrive, it can be difficult to envisage a future when we can be proud of the system we've created for those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness. While we wait to see the numbers of homeless households rise with each quarterly update, it can be hard to imagine a better vision for temporary accommodation.

However, this report provides at least some of the steps we can take to make temporary accommodation a safety net to be proud of. Our overarching goal as a society committed to ending homelessness, should be to drastically reduce the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation. We've shown how we can do that, by increasing the supply of social and affordable housing, and focussing on preventative measures such as welfare and rental reform, as well as preventative support targeted at common drivers of homelessness.

While we're working on bringing these numbers down, we should be striving to improve living conditions for those still relying on TA. The government urgently need to recognise and address the appalling conditions that too many households in TA have to live in. A positive first step is to bring the Decent Homes Standard over temporary accommodation, but in the long-term, we need a new act of parliament which creates enforceable standards specifically for TA. On top of improving standards, we need to better support those in temporary accommodation. We have to radically reduce the numbers of people being placed to live outside of their local area, improve access to support for both those placed in and out of area, and create a better quality support package for households which acknowledges the trauma that so many have been experienced.

Tackling these problems will cost money in the short-term. Government will need to invest to reduce homelessness and improve the experiences of people in TA. However, as has been demonstrated within this report and by others, tackling homelessness will have both social and economic benefits in the long-term. Short-sighted fiscal policy has contributed to the crisis, and it's imperative that lessons are learnt on the importance of investing in people if we're to get out of it.

These steps are backed by the expertise of those we consulted who either work in the sector and see the problems first-hand, or have experienced life in temporary accommodation themselves. Our recommendations are also supported by decades of research by others in the third sector and elsewhere, who have identified the crisis in TA and committed time and resources to trying to offer solutions. Hopefully this report can serve as means of consolidating some of those solutions, and using them to influence decision makers into action.

Justlife

Justlife
1479-1489 Ashton Old Road
Manchester
M11 1HH

justlife.org.uk

Justlife Foundation Ltd 7517887 Registered Charity 1140822