Justlife

How we define different forms of temporary housing for people experiencing homelessness

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Image source: The Households in Temporary Accommodation All Party Parliamentary Group

Temporary accommodation (TA)

TA is temporary housing for people who are experiencing homelessness while their local council helps them find a more permanent solution. People placed in TA often have few to no tenancy rights because the accommodation is intended to be a short-term solution. However, many live in TA for years and limited housing rights means they can be moved at short notice to another accommodation, and even be placed out-of-area.

Unsuitable temporary accommodation

The absence of regulation in TA means it is often unsuitable for people's needs. Many properties are unsafe, lack basic amenities such as hot water or a working cooker, and can be inaccessible for people with disabilities. To lift standards across the country, the APPG for Households in Temporary Accommodation recommends the establishment of a national regulator with powers to enforce minimum standards and intervene when they are not met.

Emergency accommodation (EA)

EA is where the council places people while determining if they are owed a main housing duty (a legal responsibility for the council to provide accommodation until permanent housing is found). EA is a form of TA that is intended to be used short-term, before longer-term TA is found. EA is typically a B&B, hostel, or hotel, rather than a house or a flat. Due to housing shortages in the TA system, EA often continues to be used as TA even after a duty is confirmed. Therefore, properties could be a mix of both EA or TA and this overlap leads to some local authorities using the terms interchangeably.

Unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA)

UTA is private accommodation in which households have few to no housing rights and have not been placed by the council. People living in UTA are often missed in official homelessness statistics and are not always considered homeless, even though they do not have access to safe, secure and settled housing. They are typically 'non-priority-need' with limited access to local authority support to find a home.

Other forms of hidden homelessness

TA provided by other departments

"Temporary Accommodation" or housing that is called and/or understood as TA can also be provided by other parts of local and national government. Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care can put individuals and families into TA under certain legal rules, but, even though this could sometimes end up in the same building as the TA discussed above, it would not show up in any statistics. Similarly, the Home Office can use some of the same buildings used as TA to house asylum seekers.

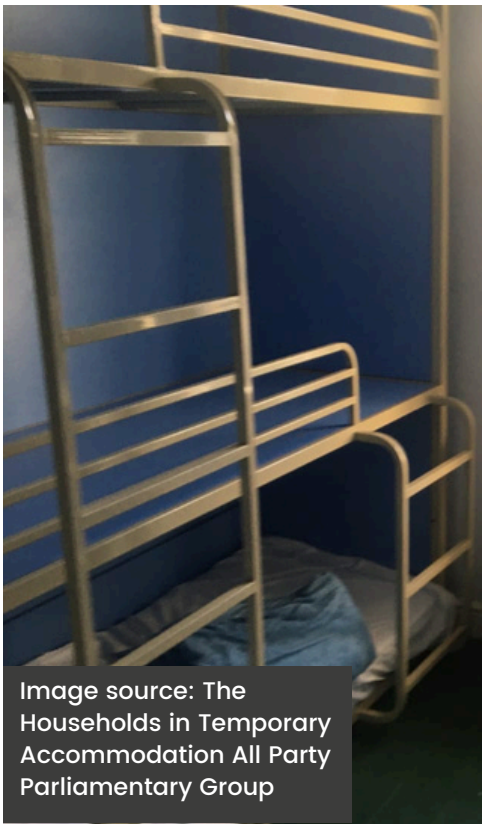

Image source: The Households in Temporary Accommodation All Party Parliamentary Group

Non-statutory TA

This refers to places where people experiencing homelessness usually end up staying when they do not meet the criteria for legal help from their local council", or when they have not gone through the typical process of presenting as homeless to their local authority. It could be independently run hotels/ hostels, squats or unsupported temporary accommodation. These non-official routes into different types of accommodation are all examples of hidden homelessness

Image source: The Households in Temporary Accommodation All Party Parliamentary Group

Sofa surfing

Sofa surfing is where someone is homeless but is staying with friends, family or acquaintances. There is no way of knowing how many people are or have been sofa surfing at any given time.

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About Justlife

Justlife is a national homelessness charity advocating for people who are living in temporary accommodation. Locally, in Brighton & Hove and Greater Manchester, we support people to improve their mental and physical health, and find a safe, stable home of their own. Nationally, we push for policy change to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness across the country.

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