

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

**STILL
LIVING
IN
LIMBO**

**WHY THE USE OF
TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION
MUST END**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

PEOPLE TOLD US THAT:

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

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

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ISN'T TEMPORARY

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

LIFE IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IS PROFOUNDLY UNSTABLE AND UNCERTAIN

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

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

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

PEOPLE FEEL TRAPPED AND POWERLESS TO IMPROVE THEIR SITUATION

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

PEOPLE TOLD US THAT LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION:

ENTRENCHES POVERTY AND HOUSING INSECURITY

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

IS VERY BAD FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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

DEVASTATES CHILDREN'S LIVES

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

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

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



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

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

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

FIRST AND FOREMOST, TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION SHOULD BE BARELY USED

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

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

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

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MUST BE TIME-LIMITED

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

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



TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MUST BE WELL-MANAGED

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

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

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION MUST BE PERSON-CENTRED

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

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



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

We believe that home is everything.

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