



## **The hidden costs of homelessness**

How the cost of living in temporary accommodation is pushing families deeper into poverty

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## Executive summary

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“How do some people deal with the extra costs [of living in temporary accommodation] ? Well some people don't. They go without.” - Citizens Advice adviser

Temporary accommodation is a vital lifeline to the record numbers of people we're helping with homelessness. But with demand growing, the costs of housing homeless people in their area are [piling pressure on local councils](#). This is the sharp end of the housing crisis. High costs push councils to house more and more families in unsuitable, unsafe accommodation, often far from where they live. Our frontline insights from over 100 advisers and 200 cases show this is in turn driving high costs for people who have already had their lives turned upside down.

Temporary accommodation should provide short-term housing while more permanent accommodation is found. But many people find themselves trapped for years, facing costs that stretch their budgets, push them into debt and, ultimately, make it harder for them to leave and find a settled home.

Our advisers' insights show that people face high costs at every stage of accessing and living in temporary accommodation:

- **Moving in and setting up** - Increasing reliance on out-of-area placements mean families often have to travel a long way to reach accommodation, leaving their community and support networks behind. Families then face significant start-up costs once they've arrived to make the accommodation liveable and safe - from buying basic white goods to carrying out repairs to remove health hazards.
- **An even higher cost of living** - The daily cost of living in temporary accommodation is high and stretches tight budgets further. Shortfalls in local authorities' funding mean households face high rent costs, while other essentials like food and transport cost more. Mounting living costs negatively affect all areas of people's lives, from work prospects, to children's education, and access to healthcare.
- **No way out** - These extra costs, and the failure of support systems to provide enough help, push families into debt, making it very difficult for them to leave temporary accommodation and secure a settled home in either the social sector, or the increasingly unaffordable private rented sector.

## Recommendations

The Government has promised to 'fix the system', acknowledging that the numbers trapped in temporary accommodation are unsustainable. In the long term, the Government's Affordable Homes Plan should increase much-needed social housing, enabling more people to secure affordable settled homes. The Renters' Rights Bill, if successfully implemented and enforced, will also offer more security to private renters.

But there's more the Government can do quickly to address the harms experienced by families living in temporary accommodation right now. The upcoming **Child Poverty Strategy**, **Homelessness Strategy**, and the **Autumn Budget** provide vital opportunities to do so.

Our insights show action is needed to:

- **Strengthen preventive measures** to reduce the number of people made homeless. Government could start to address this by uprating Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to the 30th percentile in the Autumn Budget, and improving support for advice and early intervention in the Homelessness Strategy.
- **Address poor standards** in temporary accommodation, by implementing the extension of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and Awaab's law to temporary accommodation as soon as possible. Government could also consider ways to work more closely with local authorities to improve the quality of temporary accommodation.
- **Provide better support with the extra costs** families living in temporary accommodation face. This could include more support for local authorities to keep homeless households in their local area, and to reduce the cost of accommodation to households.

Tackling the high costs facing people living in temporary accommodation is crucial to prevent further financial harm to those at the sharpest end of the living standards crisis. Our advisers' testimony is clear - action is needed to prevent families living in temporary accommodation being pushed deeper into poverty, locked out of securing a settled home, and experiencing disruption to their education, work, health, and social relationships.

## Introduction

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In the last few years we've helped record numbers of people facing homelessness. Last year we saw 400 people every day. This is just one symptom of the housing crisis, where a lack of social housing and affordable private rented properties puts thousands at risk of homelessness.

The Government is taking some steps to address this. The Renters' Rights Bill, if implemented and enforced effectively, will bring more security for renters, and reforms like longer notice periods will give people longer to look for somewhere new to live if they're evicted. In the longer-term, plans to boost the supply of homes for social rent will enable more people to access secure and affordable homes. Both of these will go some way to reducing homelessness.

But there is more to do, especially on affordability - with private rents spiralling by 6% in the last year - one of the biggest drivers of homelessness. In the meantime, many people who lose their homes are forced to turn to temporary accommodation to keep a roof over their heads. We've seen a 68% increase in people coming to see us in the last year for advice on temporary accommodation, compared to the year 2021/22.<sup>1</sup>



### What is temporary accommodation?

Local authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to people who are homeless and meet certain eligibility criteria, until they are able to access a settled home or the local authority's duty to them is otherwise ended. Someone is eligible if they have a priority need, for example they live with dependent children or are at risk of domestic abuse, and are not intentionally homeless.

Temporary accommodation can be provided through properties owned by the council, but with the need for homelessness support skyrocketing, councils increasingly rely on bed & breakfasts, hotels, and private sector rented properties too.

Local Authorities can access funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to provide Housing Benefit for those living in temporary accommodation, but this is capped at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates as of 2011. But the cost of private renting has risen sharply since then. This means in practice many councils have to supplement the cost of delivering temporary accommodation through their wider budgets, and many also require people living there to contribute towards rent costs.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the people coming to our local offices for help with a temporary accommodation issue for the period 1/7/2024 - 30/6/25, compared to the 1/7/2021-30/6/22

Temporary accommodation is a vital safeguard for people who would otherwise have nowhere to go. But it's also expensive. The system has come under fire in recent years for the cost burdens it places on local councils,<sup>2</sup> and indirectly tax payers. Councils are under severe pressure, spending millions on housing that is in many cases far away from people's networks, poor quality, and in some cases, unsafe. Meanwhile, some unscrupulous private companies turn a profit by providing poor quality temporary accommodation.

What is less well documented is the **cost of living in temporary accommodation**. From moving to the property, making it livable, keeping up with bills, and then trying to move out, people face high costs at every turn. These costs often come at a time when household budgets are already stretched, and can push people further into hardship, and further away from a settled home.

These costs are almost impossible to avoid. Even if the property offered doesn't meet people's needs or they'd struggle to afford it, it can be very risky to refuse an offer of temporary accommodation. If the council deem the property suitable they might consider their statutory duty discharged and not offer an alternative. Refusing risks leaving people to find and fund accommodation without local authority support, or face sleeping rough.

We gathered insights from over 100 advisers, and reviewed 200 cases, to explore the additional costs facing families living in temporary accommodation.

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<sup>2</sup> Accessed July 2025,  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/spending-review-ps76-million-funding-gap-councils-temporary-accommodation-budgets>

## Costs at every turn

Families face a range of extra costs at every stage of moving into, living in, and leaving temporary accommodation

### Laura's story



#### 1. Losing her home

Laura and her 2 children were made homeless 3 years ago after falling into rent arrears. With nowhere else to go, they were forced into the temporary accommodation system.



#### 2. Unstable Moves Through Temporary Housing

Over the next 18 months, Laura was moved between 3 different temporary homes, never knowing how long they could stay or where they would go next. Every time they moved they faced having to sort out new contracts for their bills and had to pay moving costs.



#### 3. Forced to Move in 48 Hours

They were in their third property when one day Laura was told she had just 48 hours to move to new temporary accommodation. It was completely unfurnished, without even a bed or cooker. Laura asked for more time before the move but her request was refused.



#### 4. Sleeping on the Concrete Floor

It was winter and the flat was freezing, with no carpets, curtains, or heating. With no furniture, Laura and her 2 young children slept on a duvet placed directly on the bare concrete floor.



#### 5. Spending to Survive

Laura needed to make the flat liveable and safe for her family. She came to Citizens Advice for help and we supported her to secure a £600 furniture voucher. While this helped cover some of the cost, it wasn't enough. Even with the voucher she had to spend £1,245 of her own money on essentials - cooker, fridge, beds, and bedding. This pushed her deeper into financial crisis.



#### 6. Mounting costs

These unexpected costs, and the higher cost of food and transport while living in temporary accommodation, left her struggling to cover everyday expenses. The mounting pressure of these costs forced Laura to take out a Universal Credit budgeting advance and depend on food bank and fuel vouchers to keep her family fed and warm. Accessing advice to secure this support was a lifeline for Laura, but it shouldn't be necessary.



#### 7. Harms to health

Laura had pre-existing health conditions which have been made worse by their poor living conditions. The stress of the situation and many moves is also impacting her and her young children's mental health and wellbeing.



#### 8. Still in Crisis

Today, Laura is still living in that same flat, caught in a cycle where her health conditions prevent her from finding suitable work while caring for her children. With only limited income, the family remains stuck with no way out.



## 1. Moving in and setting up

Families face high costs from the very beginning of their time in temporary accommodation - even before they've arrived.

"Even before you get there, there are enormous costs both financially and mentally"  
- Adviser

### Getting to the accommodation

Just getting to the accommodation in the first place can be expensive. High demand and low supply of properties has resulted in many local authorities moving people to accommodation outside of their local area, sometimes many miles away. When people are placed in hotels, these can often be in remote areas which are hard to access by public transport. This was the case for Afia.

Afia and her children were made homeless and needed accommodation for that night. They went to the council and had to wait a long time before being offered temporary accommodation. Eventually, at 5:30pm they were given an address - but it was far away. Afia and her family would have to take a train to get there but had no money for the tickets and the council hadn't helped her with the cost of the fare. So late in the day, Afia had limited options. She had to plead with the train staff to let her family onboard to travel to the accommodation.

"I cannot think of a recent example where anyone has been placed anywhere near their borough." - Citizens Advice adviser

### The poor quality of temporary accommodation also means many families face extra costs

Advisers highlighted that once families arrive at their temporary accommodation they commonly face start-up costs as many properties are not safe, suitable, or equipped for them to live in. Currently, safety and quality protections like the Decent Homes Standard don't apply to temporary accommodation, and many people move into homes where there isn't furniture, basic white goods, or flooring. There is a common practice amongst providers of removing all furniture, fittings, and appliances when a property is vacated. While some furniture or appliances might need to be removed, safety tested, or deep cleaned between tenants to ensure health and safety standards, this blanket approach can be unnecessarily wasteful, and mean families are forced to use limited funds or be pushed into debt to buy essentials to make the home they have been placed in liveable.

**“People who are homeless often just have nothing, nothing in the kitchen. It's miserable moving into a new house and there's nothing there... you can't cook anything, you have no plates. It's obvious that we need to be providing these things. It's a really big problem and much more miserable than people realise. You take for granted that you'll have carpet on the floor, curtains, glasses in the cupboard...” - Citizens Advice adviser**

In some cases, temporary accommodation is hazardous and so families are forced to spend or borrow to get to a basic level of safety. **Polly's story** is a stark example of this.

**Polly** and her toddler went to their local council for help when they were made homeless. After making the long journey to their temporary accommodation, Polly got there to find most of the balusters on the stairs were missing. The stairs were also incredibly steep, making the property very unsafe for Polly's toddler. Polly tried to get the bannisters fixed but this was taking too long, and so she applied for loans and a Universal Credit (UC) budgeting advance to pay for the repairs herself. Having to remove this serious health and safety hazard left her in debt and facing deductions from her UC to repay the advance, which meant she received less than she needed to cover her remaining essentials.

Temporary accommodation, especially in hotels and Bed & Breakfasts, is often very small and lacks space for families to put their belongings. Many have to pay for separate storage facilities, which puts a further burden on their budgets. Others sell their furniture and white goods to avoid storage costs, but this creates extra costs later on when they are moved to new unfurnished accommodation and have to buy these goods again.

When asked about extra costs for our clients living in temporary accommodation:



**Nearly half** of advisers reported that clients often face **extra costs** for **basic furniture** items like beds and mattresses.



**41%** of advisers said it's **common** for people to face **additional costs** for **large household appliances**, such as washing machines and fridges.



**7 in 10** advisers reported that clients in temporary accommodation **often** face **additional expenses** for **storing their personal belongings**.



## 2. An even higher cost of living

The extra costs don't stop once families have arrived, unpacked, and made their accommodation liveable. Our insights show that people in temporary accommodation are paying more for ongoing essential living costs, including rent, bills, food and transport.

### Rent and bills

A key factor stretching budgets and pushing people further into the red is the **cost of temporary accommodation itself**.

When a household moves into temporary accommodation, they need to apply to their local authority for Housing Benefit to get support with rent costs. This is the case even if they previously received the housing element of UC. This is the first barrier - **nearly half of our advisers report helping people who didn't know or hadn't been told they had to make a new application**, resulting in periods of not receiving any housing support. This underlines how a lack of advice can increase the costs people face. Holistic, joined up support plays a vital role in ensuring people know what help is available and how to access it.

Once a housing benefit application is submitted, advisers also report there can be delays in assessments and case mismanagement, further setting back access to vital support. Even when support is in place, it's often not enough. There's a significant shortfall between the cost of providing temporary accommodation and the money provided by central government to cover it.<sup>3</sup> Councils have to make up this shortfall where they can from Homelessness Prevention Grant funding and Discretionary Housing Payments. Often, the rest is made up by those living in temporary accommodation. This results in families, many of whom might have become homeless due to unaffordable rents in the first place, having to pay significant amounts towards accommodation.

Over 50%  
of advisers

said that an issue they saw when helping clients was that **housing benefit didn't cover the full cost of temporary accommodation**, and so clients had to **make up the shortfall**.

Some families also face having to pay overlapping household bills for different properties, particularly if they are moved between properties at very short notice and don't have time to cancel or transfer bills. This puts them at higher risk of falling into arrears, either by not being able to afford to pay or not knowing that money is still

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<sup>3</sup> The amount local authorities receive from DWP to cover Housing Benefit was capped in 2011, yet the cost of private renting has risen sharply since then.

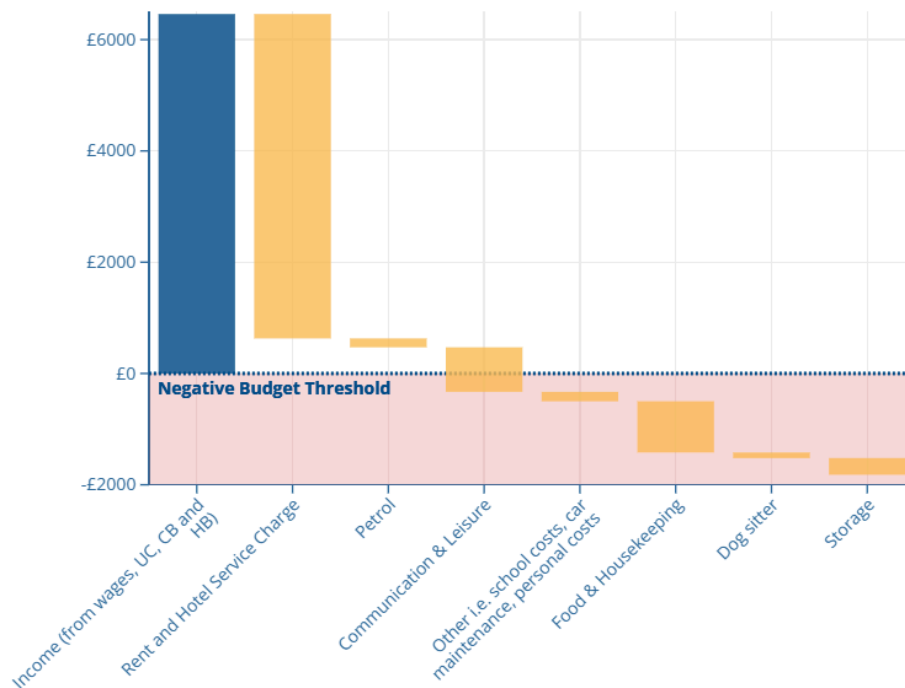
owed. For a bill like council tax, this debt can escalate rapidly as one missed payment renders a household liable for the whole year's bill.

## Ivy's story

**Ivy** and her husband have been living in hotel accommodation for the past 4 months, with their 4 children. Ivy's husband works full-time and their income is topped up by Universal Credit and Child Benefit. They also receive Housing Benefit, which is meant to help cover the cost of temporary accommodation - but in their case, it barely covers half of the rent and hotel service charge, leaving a £2,800 shortfall every month. They're forced to use their other income to cover this, leaving even less for the families' other essentials.



The **additional costs don't end there**. The hotel doesn't allow pets, so they have to pay for a sitter for their dog, and with no space in the hotel room for their furniture they also rent a storage locker. Ivy is left with just £230 a month for food, school supplies, transport and other essentials for the family of 6. This is not enough, especially as there are no cooking facilities in the hotel, so the family has to rely on takeaways for meals, which also adds to their costs. The strain of living costs on their budget has pushed them into arrears for some household bills and they've had to borrow money from friends and family.



Without the extra costs of temporary accommodation, Ivy's family would be able to cover their essentials with their income and have some money left over to begin to pay off their debts. But as it is, they are **£2,260 short every month**, which adds to their existing debts on household bills like Council Tax. Over time, this shortfall is going to push Ivy and her family deeper into debt, making it harder for them to get back on their feet. The chart above shows Ivy's income (blue), and essential expenses (yellow).

### An even higher cost of living

Many families find that their basic essentials go through the roof while living in temporary accommodation. Advisers reported the **cost of food** is a huge issue. Some families find that they can't access kitchens or cooking facilities, forcing them to rely on takeaways. Even where there are kitchens, many don't have fridges or proper storage, so people have to shop for food every day. Many are forced to rely on smaller, often more expensive, supermarkets because of the location of their accommodation.

Advisers also report that most people find their **energy bills rise**, often due to poor insulation or disrepair. Some even find household bills are replaced by a fixed service charge, meaning they can't reduce their energy use to lower their bills, and are not eligible for support like fuel vouchers as they're not the account holder. One adviser told us that in their area the council has housed families in converted office blocks. Because of the metering arrangements the people living there pay the council for their energy, rather than the supplier directly. This means that they aren't able to switch suppliers so

can't reduce bills by shopping around. The energy they use is also not subject to the price cap, risking their costs spiralling when fuel prices rise.

**"In places that are damp and mouldy, energy costs are higher, laundry costs are higher, clothes and bedding frequently need to be thrown out" - Citizens Advice adviser**

Families who are placed far away from where they previously lived, or in remote locations without public transport links, face additional **transport costs**, either through extra fuel for their car, or having to use taxis if they don't have one. Completing essential daily tasks, like going to work, taking children to school, or food shopping become a lot more expensive and a bigger drain on already stretched budgets. This is the case for Hassan and his family.



**Hassan** lives with his partner and children in the south of England. They were given a Section 21 eviction and had to leave their home. With nowhere to go, they were homeless. The council placed Hassan's family in a hotel which was not only in another local authority, but in the middle of the countryside, away from amenities and transport links.

Staying in this accommodation is putting a huge strain on the family's finances as they are facing higher fuel costs for their car, and there's no option to take cheaper public transport. Hassan has to commute over 50 miles to get to work and to take their children to school every day.

The adviser who helped Hassan said: **"It's just money going up in smoke."**

The extra time and cost it takes to travel to work when moved out of area can make it very **difficult for people to keep their jobs**. This is the case for Sam.



**Sam** is a single parent to 2 young children. His family were placed in temporary accommodation outside of the London borough where they lived, a long journey away from his work and the children's school.

Sam's children are young, so he needs to take them to school, but the extra travel time means he now can't drop the children off and get to work on time.

Sam is consistently late to work and is now at risk of losing his job. Not only will this result in an immediate loss of earnings, but being dismissed could impact Sam's chances of securing another job and income in the long term.

Sam isn't alone. Our advisers describe people frequently having to leave and re-enter employment, creating periods of reduced or no income and restricting opportunities for them to progress at work. This has knock-on impacts on people's earning potential, and their financial resilience to manage the extra costs of living in temporary accommodation.

"I remember talking to one person who had moved borough [...] then he was moved back to the area after a while. He had to change jobs both times. **The act of quitting a job and then re-looking for work, there would have been a loss of income in between.**" - Citizens Advice adviser

### Extra costs for some are higher than others

Some families already face a higher cost of living, for example if they have children, or someone in the household is disabled. Once in temporary accommodation, they can find it harder to manage the increased pressure on their budgets, and the impacts can be more severe.

### Working parents and children

Working parents can lose child care support networks when moved to temporary accommodation. Without relatives or friends nearby who can provide informal, low cost, and emergency childcare, there will be more occasions when parents can't work and lose much needed income.

Amongst people coming to see us about temporary accommodation, 29% are single parents, and 15% are couples with children.

As we saw in Sam's story, parents can struggle with the extra costs of taking their children to and from school. This can have detrimental consequences for their **education - 62%** of advisers reported that these extra costs are leading to **children having to move schools**. This disrupts their education, especially if families have to move around between several different temporary accommodation placements.

Our advisers highlighted a particularly detrimental impact for children with additional learning needs who need to attend specialist schools.

"I have spoken to one family with a child with additional education needs who were placed out of area with no access to their own transport [...] **it took 2 months to establish that a taxi would be organised to take them to school.** It's very difficult to get into these schools in the first place then their world falls apart and they are moved a long way away and they can't get there." - Citizens Advice adviser

## Disabled people and people with health conditions

Disabled people or those with health conditions are also disproportionately impacted by the cost of living in temporary accommodation. They are more likely to need to attend medical appointments back in their home area and have to shoulder the additional travel costs involved. These costs are increased by the fact that public transport can be particularly challenging to use for people with disabilities or health conditions, necessitating the use of taxis, which only adds to their costs.

In some cases, the cost of travelling to get to medical appointments can be prohibitive, as in Yana's case.



**Yana** and her husband were moved into temporary accommodation out of their area when their home was deemed overcrowded.

At this time, Yana was undergoing intensive cancer treatment and had to go into hospital at least once a week. But the hospital was now too far away from where they'd been placed and Yana had no way to get to her appointments, as she couldn't afford a taxi.

Unable to make the journey, Yana stopped receiving cancer treatment.

The extra cost burdens of living in temporary accommodation can also have a broader **impact on families' physical and mental health**. Being moved far away from home means needing to change GP, dentist, and mental health support channels. It also disrupts social and support networks. Many families find maintaining social relationships difficult and lose connection to their local community, especially if placed far out of their area, or in hotels or B&Bs where visitors often aren't allowed. Many advisers raised this 'cost of isolation' faced by families, and particularly the detrimental impact this has on the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people if they are unable to socialise and form relationships.

**77% of  
advisers  
reported**

that these extra costs are leading to **social isolation: not seeing family, friends, or doing activities outside work and school.**



### 3. No way out: how extra costs prevent families leaving temporary accommodation

All these costs can make it very difficult for people to leave temporary accommodation and find a settled home.

#### Debt and arrears

Many households are pushed into **debt** trying to meet high essential living costs. Amongst our advisers, **79%** reported that clients were getting into debt with friends and family to manage the extra costs of living in temporary accommodation, while **over half** said clients were using credit, overdrafts, or other borrowing. Given that stays in temporary accommodation can be long, most commonly over 5 years for families with children, levels of problem debt can spiral and cause long term financial harm.

This is the case for Rhys and his family. Their story shows how the hidden costs of temporary accommodation can pull families back into financial hardship, even when they are trying to recover.

#### Rhys' story

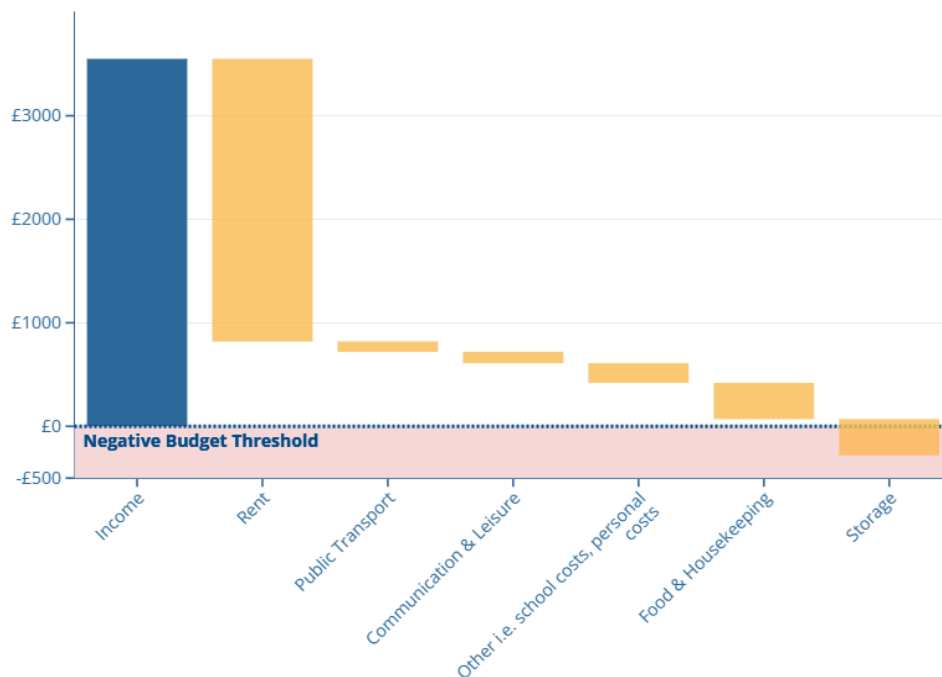
**Rhys** is a single parent who has been living in temporary accommodation with his 2 children for over a year. Rhys has long-term health issues which make it difficult for him to work, so their only income is from Universal Credit, child Benefit, and housing benefit.

The high cost of temporary accommodation means that there's a shortfall between the money Rhys receives in housing benefit and the cost of his rent. Rhys has to cover this from his Universal Credit which is meant to cover the families' other essential living costs.

On top of this, Rhys has to pay £350 each month to store the family's furniture until they have a permanent home. After these extra costs, Rhys' family is left with **just £470 for food, transport and all other essentials**. This is not enough.

**Before moving into temporary accommodation** the high cost of living pushed Rhys into debt and rent arrears. He entered a Debt Relief Order (DRO) to manage these. But since moving into temporary accommodation, his debts have mounted further. The extra costs he faces mean he's **short of £280 each month** and has been forced into further borrowing to cover daily living costs. This will add to his debt and make it even harder for him to resolve them and find a way forward.

The chart below shows Rhys' income (blue) and essential expenses (yellow)



Advisers also raised that many people have to take out Universal Credit (UC) budgeting loans to help with the cost of moving into temporary accommodation. These loans are repaid through deductions from UC, making high living costs even harder to manage and putting them at greater risk of getting into further debt.

Amongst our advisers, half reported that clients living in temporary housing were falling into **arrears on household bills**.

This is particularly the case with rent, often due to shortfalls in housing benefit. **Over half of advisers said they have at times seen clients falling into arrears with their temporary accommodation rent**, including 16% who said they see it frequently. Advisers also reported that often it's not made clear to people that housing benefit doesn't fully cover their accommodation costs and that they need to make up this shortfall, leading them to fall into rent debt. While accessing the right advice and support early can help people manage the costs of living in temporary accommodation, shortfalls are often so high that budgets just still don't add up.

Falling into rent arrears in temporary accommodation can have severe consequences; including eviction and an end to the local authority's duty. But beyond that, being in rent arrears is a common blocker to families leaving temporary accommodation. Getting into arrears in their previous home is often the reason people end up homeless and in temporary accommodation in the first place. If these arrears aren't cleared, or arrears are built up from temporary accommodation itself, this can prevent people from bidding for social housing, and de-prioritises them on the social housing register. It is

also highly unlikely that households with rent arrears, other debts, or poor credit history would be accepted for a property in the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

One of our advisers said “people are then in an awful, awful situation as they couldn't afford the previous rent but [those previous rent arrears] are now a complete barrier and will keep people where they are [in temporary accommodation]. ”

So families are trapped in expensive, inconvenient, and poor quality temporary accommodation, with other housing options out of reach. **Nearly 70%** of advisers said they see previous rent arrears posing a barrier to people in temporary accommodation being offered social housing at least some of the time. At the same time, even with specialist debt advice, it's almost impossible for families to clear arrears while facing the additional costs of living in temporary accommodation.

### **Affordability of settled housing**

On top of rent arrears and other debts, moving into the PRS is rarely an option for families in temporary accommodation. Providing a significant deposit and rent upfront is very challenging when budgets are so stretched by living in temporary accommodation. Our advisers also report that private landlords rarely accept applications from people receiving benefits, which most people living in temporary accommodation do, despite this being illegal.

The most significant barrier to securing a property in the PRS is that rents are **simply too high**. While private rents have rocketed in recent years, increasing more than 6% in the 12 months to June this year, support with housing costs for those on a low income has fallen far behind. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has been intermittently frozen since 2016, creating a significant shortfall between the amount received and actual rent. Wages have also consistently not kept pace with rent costs. Now, even people on median incomes are struggling to cover rents, let alone those in temporary accommodation who are likely at the lower end of the income scale.

Meanwhile, securing a social rented property is incredibly difficult. Waitlists are at a 10 year high, with 1.33 million households on local authority housing registers and wait times for family sized social housing exceeding 100 years in some areas. All this means people living in temporary accommodation are often left with no clear route out.

## Conclusions & recommendations

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Temporary accommodation is a crucial lifeline for thousands facing homelessness. But funding it puts huge pressures on councils, and the accommodation itself is often poor quality, not suitable, and anything but temporary. All of this - as our insights show - drives high costs for people at every stage of accessing and living in temporary accommodation. Families can find their essential costs skyrocketing, while the systems set up to support with these costs lag behind. This clearly impacts people's finances, but also their work or schooling, health, and ultimately their ability to leave temporary accommodation and find a settled home.

The government has taken steps to start to address these issues. In the long term, successfully implementing the Affordable Homes Plan will increase much-needed social housing, enabling more people to secure affordable settled homes. The Renters' Rights Bill will also offer more security to private renters.

But there is more that could be done, and opportunities to do so. The upcoming **Child Poverty Strategy**, **Homelessness Strategy**, and the **Autumn Budget** provide vital opportunities to address the harms experienced by families living in temporary accommodation. Confronting these issues is in line with the Government's missions to tackle child poverty, homelessness, and boost living standards. Reducing the number of families in temporary accommodation and the hardship they face while living in it should be a key measure of these strategies' success.

From our insights, it's clear that action is needed to **strengthen preventive measures** to reduce the number of people made homeless, **address poor standards** in temporary accommodation, and **provide better support with the extra costs** families living in temporary accommodation face.

### 1. Prevention

A boost to support with rents could help **prevent** families becoming homeless and needing to move into temporary accommodation in the first place. The Government can start to address this by **uprating Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to the 30th percentile** at the Autumn Budget.

Keeping LHA frozen at a time of soaring rents significantly limits the support available to help families with the high private rent costs which are driving homelessness and the increased demand for temporary accommodation. Unfreezing LHA could also make more private rented properties affordable for families on lower incomes, helping them to leave temporary accommodation and move into a settled home.

The Homelessness strategy also provides an opportunity for the Government to explore options to **improve support for advice and early intervention**. This could include:

- Strengthening the capacity of local authorities and civil society to provide early, holistic advice to people who are at risk of becoming homeless, to get upstream of people's problems and reduce the demand for temporary accommodation.
- Joined up support for people while living in temporary accommodation, so people know what help is available to manage extra costs and how to apply for it. For example, more support with Housing Benefit applications could prevent families missing out, or experiencing delays in receiving this crucial support. More accessible and available advice and advocacy would also support people to challenge temporary accommodation placements where they are unsuitable or unsafe.

## **2. Improving standards**

There are also opportunities for the government to **improve poor standards** in temporary accommodation. This would mitigate harm to the health of families, and ensure people don't face extra costs to buy food, remove health hazards, and make the accommodation liveable.

- We welcome Government's extension of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and Awaab's law to temporary accommodation. It's essential that these reforms are implemented as soon as possible to prevent further acute harm, and are monitored and enforced to ensure compliance.
- Government could consider other ways to improve the quality of temporary accommodation, and work closely with local authorities to support them to improve standards. For example, developing sustainable ways to keep white goods and furniture in temporary accommodation between tenants.

## **3. Support with high costs**

While reducing costs is key, families in temporary accommodation also need more effective support with the costs they currently face.

As our insights show, the biggest cost is the accommodation itself. While we welcome the Government's steer for local authorities to spend more of their Prevention Grant on prevention rather than emergency support, there is a risk that this could increase the shortfall between temporary accommodation costs and the financial support received, increasing the amount families have to pay.

The Government should explore options to provide more support to families living in temporary accommodation, which could include:

- Up-rating support for local authority provision of temporary accommodation, currently frozen at 2011 LHA rates. This could help resource councils to meet the expense of providing this safeguard, and reduce the accommodation costs passed on to families living there. This would also mitigate the risk of people falling into rent arrears for their temporary accommodation and the knock on effects this has on their chances of securing a social home.
- Exploring ways to simplify the systems in place for people in temporary accommodation to access support, for example the interaction between UC housing element and Housing Benefit.
- Better support for councils to keep families in their local area, reducing the extra travel costs and impacts on work, schooling, health and social relationships of being moved far away.



## Methodology

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Citizens Advice's network of 240 local offices provides advice and support to people across England and Wales on a range of issues, including housing, benefits, and debt. Last year we helped more than a quarter of a million with a housing issue.

This report draws on our unique frontline data and insights.

### **Budget planners**

Ivy and Rhys' stories are anonymised budget planners completed by our specialist debt advisers with people in problem debt. These assessments record individuals' income, expenditure and debt. Names and personal details have been changed to protect anonymity.

### **Evidence forms**

We analysed 200 evidence forms - short, anonymised summaries of cases completed by advisers at local Citizens Advice offices - to understand the impact of costs faced by people living in temporary accommodation. Case studies in this report are also drawn from these evidence forms. Names and personal details have been changed to ensure anonymity.

### **Adviser insights**

The statistics in this report are drawn from a survey of 167 advisers in June 2025. Questions on temporary accommodation were answered by between 90-164 advisers. We also conducted a workshop with 10 frontline advisers to gather in depth insights and quotes.

# **We Are Citizens Advice - the people's champion.**

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

We are here to help everyone who needs it with practical advice you can really trust. Our national charity and network of local charities offer confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free.

**[citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk)**



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