

Housing, Communities and Local Government
Committee

England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation

First Report of Session 2024–25

HC 338

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

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Summary

This report focuses on the sharp end of England's housing crisis: the rising demand for temporary accommodation provision among families, which is seeing dire outcomes for homeless children and unsustainable cost pressures for some local authorities. **Over 164,000 homeless children are currently living in temporary accommodation across England—the highest number on record.**

Temporary accommodation is intended to be short-term housing to support vulnerable households with shelter and security when they become homeless, until they can find more settled accommodation. Yet we were concerned to hear cases of temporary accommodation provision which was completely unsuitable for families, with egregious hazards including serious damp and mould, excessive cold, and mice infestations. Temporary accommodation is frequently overcrowded. Older children must share beds with their parents or siblings, and babies do not have space to crawl or learn to walk due to lack of floor space. Some temporary accommodation sourced by local authorities is of such poor quality that it may pose a severe risk to children's health. **It is shocking that in the last five years temporary accommodation has been a contributing factor to the deaths of at least 74 children, of whom 58 were under the age of one.**

For many families, life in temporary accommodation is far from 'temporary'. Some families are placed in temporary accommodation for years without an offer of a more settled home, due to the chronic shortage of social and affordable housing. This same shortage has led many local authorities to use B&Bs and other accommodation with shared facilities, meaning families are often forced to live out of suitcases, uncertain as to when they may be required to pack up and move without notice. A growing number of families are also being placed in B&Bs for prolonged periods unlawfully, as local authorities are failing to adhere to the statutory six-week limit on such placements. **We were alarmed to hear examples of families housed in temporary accommodation sharing communal facilities with strangers with a history of domestic abuse, posing a potential safeguarding risk to children.**

Local authorities' monitoring of their temporary accommodation provision is inconsistent and inadequate. There is currently no requirement for local authorities to carry out any inspections of the quality of their temporary accommodation. **We recommend that local authorities should be**

carrying out mandatory inspections of housing before it is first used as temporary accommodation, and whenever new residents are placed in the property.

Rising demand for temporary accommodation has led some local authorities to resort to relocating families, placing them in temporary accommodation 'out-of-area'. Out-of-area placements have a devastating impact on families, leaving them far from their extended family, friends, and support network, and causing disruption to children's education. Some local authorities are falling short of their legal duties with regard to out-of-area temporary accommodation, by failing to notify the host local authority appropriately when placing residents. **The Government should introduce a new requirement for local authorities to notify the host authority before they make an out-of-area placement.**

The Government must bring about a more joined-up approach between public services to support families experiencing homelessness. Schools, GPs, and other public bodies may be unaware when children in their care become homeless or change school due to a move into temporary accommodation. This prevents schools from offering additional support which homeless children may require. **The Government should establish a formalised notification system, so that a child's school and GP are alerted when they move into temporary accommodation.** This should be introduced alongside a focus on improving data reporting and sharing between public services, to fully understand the health and educational impacts of temporary accommodation on children.

Temporary accommodation costs are adding to the unprecedented financial strain facing local authorities across the country. **Local authorities spent around £2.29 billion on temporary accommodation in 2023/24, while London boroughs alone spend a combined total of £4 million per day on temporary accommodation.** Local authorities in Greater Manchester spend over £75 million per year on temporary accommodation rents. Whilst we welcome the Government's decision to increase homelessness funding for 2025/26, including a £192.9 million uplift to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG), the Government must consider how this funding is allocated to bring about more effective homelessness prevention. The Government should also extend its support for local authorities to acquire their own temporary accommodation stock to reduce reliance on extortionate B&Bs and nightly paid accommodation, and evaluate the link between welfare reforms and homelessness, particularly regarding its decision to re-freeze Local Housing Allowance rates.

In short, there is a crisis in temporary accommodation in England. At its centre are homeless children and their families, who are too often voiceless, out of sight, and stuck in completely unsuitable accommodation. Ultimately,

the crisis in temporary accommodation is a symptom of England's wider housing crisis. We reiterate the conclusion of our predecessor committees: that a failure of successive governments over decades to deliver enough new homes is to blame for the current shortage of affordable housing across all tenures. As a long-term solution to the crisis in temporary accommodation, the Government must fulfil its ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes during this Parliament. However, there is an urgent need for further interventions to support families living in temporary accommodation immediately. We hope that our recommendations will provide effective proposals on how the Government may go further to offer this support, including in its forthcoming strategy on ending homelessness. **We believe the Government must publish its strategy on ending homelessness by July 2025—before the summer recess.** This will ensure the Government, homelessness organisations, and local authorities can make meaningful progress towards tackling the crisis in temporary accommodation during this Parliament.

1 Introduction

What is temporary accommodation?

1. Local authorities are obliged to provide temporary accommodation to some people experiencing homelessness until they are able to find a permanent place to live. In England, local authorities have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to eligible homeless households, including those in a priority need category, until they make a final offer of longer-term housing.¹ The priority need category is set out in legislation, and include:
 - people with dependent children who are residing with them, or might reasonably be expected to reside with them;
 - all 16 and 17 year-olds;
 - 18 to 20 year-old-care leavers; and
 - pregnant women.²
2. Temporary accommodation is not a housing tenure of its own. Rather, local authorities source temporary accommodation from a mixture of private rented properties, short-term social housing lets, and sometimes properties owned by local authorities themselves. The shortage of affordable housing across all tenures in England has seen a reduction in the number of suitable properties which local authorities can use as temporary accommodation. In the private rented sector, rents increased by 9% in the 12 months to December 2024.³ Meanwhile, high demand for social housing means that 1.33 million households are currently on local authority waiting lists.⁴ The shortage of affordable housing in England has forced several local authorities to rely heavily on nightly paid accommodation, such as hotels and Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs), as temporary accommodation.⁵

1 Housing Act 1996, [section 188](#); Shelter, [Final offers of housing when homeless](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

2 Housing Act 1996, [section 189](#); The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 SI [2002/2051](#); House of Commons Library, [Households in temporary accommodation \(England\)](#), p.8

3 Office for National Statistics, [Private rent and house prices, UK: January 2025](#)

4 MHCLG, [Social housing lettings in England, tenants: April 2023 to March 2024](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

5 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.43

3. Local authority spending on temporary accommodation has also risen rapidly. Recent provisional estimates indicate that in 2023/24 local authorities spent a combined £2.29 billion on temporary accommodation, an increase of 29% on the previous year.⁶ The District Councils’ Network has highlighted that total district council spending on temporary accommodation increased by 228% in just five years, from £66 million in 2017/18 to £216 million in 2022/23.⁷
4. Alongside adult social care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), temporary accommodation is one of the most significant financial pressures facing many local authorities.⁸ London boroughs in particular are now spending a combined total of £4 million per day on temporary accommodation, around 75% of their spend on housing.⁹ Greater Manchester Local Authorities spend over £75 million per year on temporary accommodation rents, of which only 42% is recoverable via the welfare benefits system.¹⁰ The cost of homelessness services and temporary accommodation has led at least one local authority—Eastbourne District Council—to apply for “exceptional financial support”.¹¹ Councillor Hannah Dalton, Housing Spokesperson for the District Councils’ Network, has said that the current cost pressure on local authority finances due to temporary accommodation spending is “fundamentally unsustainable”.¹²

Our inquiry

5. We chose to focus on the sharp end of England’s housing crisis by launching a short, focussed inquiry on *Children in Temporary Accommodation* in October 2024, as our first inquiry of this Parliament. In recent years, rising housing costs and the shortage of affordable housing across England have seen an alarming rise in the number of families forced into homelessness and temporary accommodation. In many cases, children living in temporary

6 MHCLG, [Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2023 to 2024 individual local authority data - outturn](#) (accessed 27 February 2025); Crisis, [Council spending on emergency accommodation tops £2.2bn](#) (accessed 27 February 2025); Shelter, [Homelessness bill doubles in five years to £2.3bn](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

7 District Councils’ Network, [Surge in children in temporary accommodation sparks concern](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

8 See, for example: Oral evidence: The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance (11 February 2025), [Q1](#) (Jonathan Carr-West), [Q9](#) ([Aileen Murphie](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

9 London Councils, [London’s homelessness emergency](#) (October 2024), p.4; [Q28](#) (Councillor Grace Williams)

10 Hannah Courtney-Adamson (Head of Strategic Housing (People) at Rochdale Borough Council) ([CTA0012](#))

11 Oral evidence: The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance (11 February 2025), [Q9](#) ([Aileen Murphie](#))

12 [Q29](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

accommodation will see immense negative impacts on their development, wellbeing, education, and health. Our inquiry has aimed to shine a light on those families experiencing homelessness across England, and to consider what more the Government could do to support children in temporary accommodation, whilst minimising the financial pressure on local authorities.

6. We held two oral evidence sessions for this inquiry. In the first, we heard from representatives from Crisis; St Mungo's; the Shared Health Foundation; and CARIS Families, who shared their experience of supporting families experiencing homelessness and living in temporary accommodation. In the second, we heard from Rushanara Ali MP, the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy, and Penny Hobman, the Director for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We also had the opportunity to ask questions related to our inquiry in a recent evidence session with the Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Deputy Prime Minister, and Sarah Healey CB CVO, the Department's Permanent Secretary. Though we did not issue a full call for evidence, we are grateful to have received 16 submissions from several homelessness organisations, housing stakeholders, and local authorities. This inquiry took place alongside our parallel inquiry into *Rough Sleeping*, which gave us an opportunity to consider other forms of homelessness and to meet and hear from those with lived experience.¹³ We would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have taken the time to provide evidence to our inquiry.
7. The new Government has been clear that it recognises the scale of the housing crisis in England. In December 2024, in an answer to our Chair, the Rt. Hon. Keir Starmer MP, the Prime Minister, said:

We are in a housing crisis; you are absolutely right. The way out of that crisis is actually to ensure that we have got a sufficient number of homes—roofs over people's heads—in all the areas that are needed. That is one of the major drivers of the housing crisis that we are in, and it is why we have been clear in our ambition to build 1.5 million homes over the period of this Parliament and, within that, to make sure that there is a significant number of affordable homes. I completely accept the definition of a housing crisis; we need to make sure that we have the wherewithal to get out of that crisis.

8. We support the Government's ambition to increase housebuilding drastically during this Parliament which will be the long-term solution to addressing the shortage of housing in England, including for homeless families in

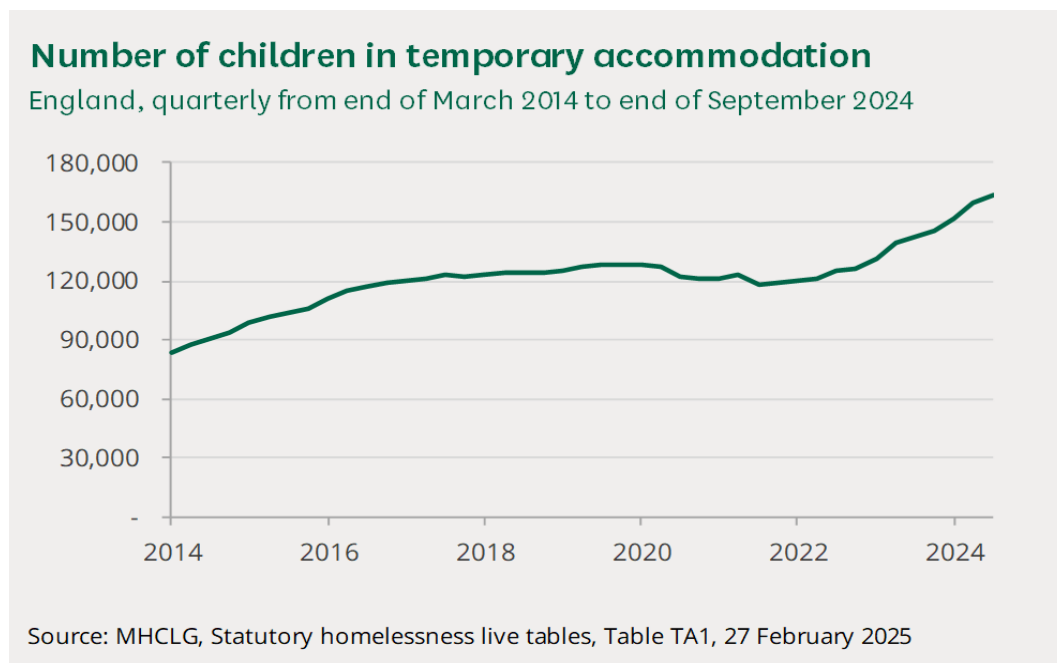
13 Letter from the Chair to the Secretary of State and Minister for Homelessness and Democracy regarding Rough Sleeping Inquiry: Findings and Recommendations, [11 February 2025](#)

temporary accommodation. However, the Government must recognise that those families currently experiencing homelessness cannot wait years longer in temporary accommodation for those homes to be built—they also need immediate responses from the Government. We hope that our recommendations in this Report will offer some of those and inform the Government’s forthcoming strategy to end homelessness for good.

2 Growing up in temporary accommodation

Children in temporary accommodation

9. Currently, over 80,000 families with children are living in temporary accommodation across England.¹⁴ This includes over 164,000 children growing up in temporary accommodation—the highest number on record.¹⁵ Whilst homelessness affects families across England, the use of temporary accommodation is most concentrated in London and the South East. Almost 90,000 children are currently living in temporary accommodation in London.¹⁶ London Councils, the representative body for local government in the capital, estimates that 1 in 21 children in London lives in temporary accommodation, equivalent to “at least one homeless child in every London classroom”.¹⁷



- 14 MHCLG, [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)
- 15 MHCLG, [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)
- 16 London Councils, [‘Emergency’ warning issued as London homelessness hits new records](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)
- 17 London Councils, [London’s homelessness emergency](#) (October 2024), p.4

10. Whilst temporary accommodation should be providing short-term stability and security for vulnerable families, in some cases those families face being moved between temporary accommodation provision frequently. Several local authorities rely heavily on private accommodation let on a nightly basis, such as hotels, and require families to pack their belongings and move every few weeks, with little or no notice.¹⁸ We heard cases of children going to school and returning to a different home repeatedly, and about the anxiety this causes while children are trying to learn.¹⁹
11. Despite its name, families' time in temporary accommodation is too often far from 'temporary' and is instead a longer-term housing arrangement. As of March 2024, 16,790 families had been in their temporary accommodation for over five years.²⁰ In London, over 60% of households with children in temporary accommodation have been there for two years or more.²¹ According to the Centre for Homelessness Impact, a charity which researches homelessness in the UK, families in temporary accommodation in the London Borough of Hackney currently face a predicted wait of up to 10 years for more settled accommodation.²²

Poor quality temporary accommodation

12. In 2019, a report by the then Children's Commissioner for England described much of the temporary accommodation into which children are placed as "simply inappropriate places for a child to be growing up".²³ The report highlighted instances of families housed in appalling conditions in some temporary accommodation, including "office block conversions, in which whole families live in single rooms barely bigger than a parking space, and shipping containers which are blisteringly hot in summer and freezing in the winter months".²⁴

18 [Q10](#) (Dr Laura Neilson); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); The Magpie Project; 4in10 London's Child Poverty Network ([CTA0006](#))

19 [Q11](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

20 MHCLG, [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2023–24](#), Additional temporary accommodation breakdowns, 31 March 2024 (accessed 27 February 2025), Table TA4c; National Housing Federation ([CTA0008](#))

21 [Q2](#) (Francesca Albanese)

22 Centre for Homelessness Impact, [Temporary Accommodation in England: is it Value for Money?](#) (November 2024), p.64

23 The Children's Commissioner for England, [Bleak Houses – Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England](#), p.2

24 The Children's Commissioner for England, [Bleak Houses – Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England](#), p.2

13. Evidence to our inquiry suggests that the use of completely unsuitable temporary accommodation to house families persists today. Some of the most frequent issues of poor-quality accommodation that we heard of during our inquiry include:
- **Serious hazards:** Several organisations shared with us cases of local authorities placing families in accommodation with serious damp and mould, excessive cold, and pests.²⁵ Crisis, a national charity for people facing homelessness, highlighted instances of parents feeling unable to let babies crawl or play on the floor because of mice infestations.²⁶
 - **Overcrowding:** Children in temporary accommodation frequently experience severe overcrowding, with several family members living, studying, and sleeping in one room.²⁷ In some cases, children are having to share a bed with their parents, with younger or older siblings, or sleep on the floor.²⁸ The lack of floor space also impacts on children’s development because, as Rebecca Walker, Director of CARIS Families explained to us, “Children cannot develop their gross motor skills. They do not have the space to learn to crawl, learn to walk”.²⁹
 - **Poor maintenance:** We heard several cases of accommodation with broken facilities in communal areas, including faulty plumbing and broken furniture. Additionally, accommodation with shared toilets, sinks, and showers can have poor hygiene standards and are sometimes out of order, leaving residents without access to personal hygiene facilities.³⁰
 - **Lack of adequate facilities:** Temporary accommodation is not always self-contained. Families frequently lack or must share limited kitchen, laundry and personal hygiene facilities with other residents in the building. Many families in B&B temporary accommodation find they are unable to cook their own healthy meals and may rely on eating out

25 See, for example: Shelter ([CTA0001](#)); Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); National Housing Federation ([CTA0008](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#))

26 Crisis ([CTA0011](#))

27 [Q22](#) (Rebecca Walker); Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ([CTA0004](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); National Housing Federation ([CTA0008](#)); School-Home Support ([CTA0009](#)); Citizens UK ([CTA0010](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

28 Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); The Magpie Project; 4in10 London’s Child Poverty Network ([CTA0006](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

29 [Q22](#) (Rebecca Walker)

30 Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

or ordering takeaways.³¹ Temporary accommodation frequently lacks internet access or the space for a desk or table, meaning children are unable to do homework in their accommodation.³² Francesca Albanese, Director of Policy and Social Change at Crisis, shared the case of “a child doing their homework on a cardboard box”, as they did not have space for a desk in their temporary accommodation.³³

14. Shelter, a charity which offers housing advice and campaigns for policy change, told us that “families are living in dangerous, slum-like conditions”, and highlighted that among households in temporary accommodation:

- 75% of households report living in poor conditions;
- 68% of households have inadequate access to basic facilities, such as cooking, Wi-Fi, or laundry facilities; and
- 35% of parents say their children do not have their own bed.³⁴

15. Local authorities have clear statutory duties regarding provision of suitable temporary accommodation for families.³⁵ Yet the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman highlighted to us examples from its casework where local authorities had fallen short in their duties. These cases included:

- a disabled child and their family who spent three years in temporary accommodation which could not accommodate essential specialist equipment to relieve pain when eating, drinking and sleeping. A medical professional said this had caused irreversible long-term impacts on the child’s health;
- two disabled children left without suitable accessible temporary accommodation, who had to be accommodated by children’s services in a residential school and spent 52 weeks continuously living apart from the family; and
- a family fleeing domestic abuse who were placed in mixed-sex accommodation with a shared bathroom.³⁶

31 [Q22](#) (Rebecca Walker); [Q23](#) (Dr Laura Neilson); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

32 [Q11](#) (Francesca Albanese); Shelter ([CTA0001](#)); Capital Letters ([CTA0002](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); The Magpie Project; 4in10 London’s Child Poverty Network ([CTA0006](#)); School-Home Support ([CTA0009](#)); Citizens UK ([CTA0010](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

33 [Q11](#) (Francesca Albanese)

34 Shelter ([CTA0001](#))

35 See, for example, Housing Act 1996, [section 206\(1\)](#)

36 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ([CTA0004](#))

Impact on children's health and development

16. In many cases, these wholly unsuitable conditions are having a detrimental impact on children's health and development. In a survey by Shelter, 57% of parents reported temporary accommodation having a negative impact on their children's physical or mental health.³⁷ The Shared Health Foundation also told us that poor quality temporary accommodation may result in health conditions in children such as:

- respiratory illness,
- skin problems,
- gastro-intestinal issues,
- higher rates of accidents,
- sleep deprivation,
- depression, and
- anxiety.³⁸

17. Shockingly, temporary accommodation has been a contributing factor to the deaths of at least 74 children in the last five years.³⁹ Of these children, 58 were under the age of 1.⁴⁰ Dr Laura Neilson, a practising A&E doctor and CEO of the Shared Health Foundation (which co-produced the research), told us that:

If we look at child mortality rates in some of the most affluent parts of the country, they parallel Norway and the Scandinavian countries. If you look at child mortality in the poorest areas of our country, they parallel edge-of-warzone countries. Children in temporary accommodation have really high mortality rates.⁴¹

Despite evidence pointing to an alarming link between temporary accommodation and child mortality, there is insufficient reliable data to understand the full picture of the health impacts of poor-quality temporary accommodation on children. Collaboration between local housing and

37 Shelter ([CTA0001](#))

38 Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#))

39 Shared Health Foundation, [Child Mortality in Temporary Accommodation 2025](#)

40 Shared Health Foundation, [Child Mortality in Temporary Accommodation 2025](#)

41 [Q21](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

healthcare professionals is inconsistent because, as Dr Neilson highlighted, the NHS does not currently collect data on the housing circumstances of A&E admissions or GP referrals.⁴²

18. We also heard evidence of significant impacts of homelessness on children’s education. According to Shelter:

- Almost half of children in temporary accommodation must move schools, with one in five (22%) having to move multiple times. Often, this is due to being placed in temporary accommodation in a different local area;
- 52% of children in temporary accommodation have missed days of school due to their housing situation. Of these children, more than one in three (37%) have missed more than one month of school;
- One in four parents (28%) say their children are finding it hard to make or keep friends as a result of living in temporary accommodation.⁴³

In 2019, the then Children’s Commissioner highlighted that temporary accommodation’s impact on younger children’s early education may be especially overlooked, as “initial educational development might be delayed, risking them falling behind at the very beginning of their education and finding it difficult to catch up”.⁴⁴

19. School-Home Support, an education charity which supports families whose children are frequently absent from school, said that inadequate housing was a “major risk factor” for persistent absenteeism.⁴⁵ It outlined that for some families in temporary accommodation and facing financial hardship, attending school is “simply not a priority”, and highlighted the case of a family referred to the charity after a child’s attendance fell to just 24%.⁴⁶

42 [Q11](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

43 Shelter ([CTA0001](#)); Shelter, [Still Living in Limbo: Why the use of temporary accommodation must end](#), (accessed 27 February 2025), p.52

44 The Children’s Commissioner for England, [Bleak Houses – Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England](#), p.13

45 School-Home Support ([CTA0009](#))

46 School-Home Support ([CTA0009](#))

20. CONCLUSION

The appalling conditions in some temporary accommodation in England are utterly shameful. We are concerned that issues of poor-quality temporary accommodation continue to persist, even though it is now over five years since the then Children’s Commissioner described these conditions as “simply inappropriate places for a child to be growing up”. Conditions in temporary accommodation are too often unfit for habitation, and risk having a serious detrimental impact on children’s development, wellbeing, and health. It is particularly shocking that in the last five years temporary accommodation has been a contributing factor to the deaths of at least 74 children, of whom 58 were under the age of one.

21. CONCLUSION

During our inquiry we have also heard that, for many families, life in temporary accommodation is far from ‘temporary’. In some cases, families spend years in temporary accommodation, stuck in limbo without the stability of permanent accommodation and knowing that their local authority may require them to move with little notice. The shortage of affordable housing across England means families face growing social housing waiting lists for a permanent home, with over 1.3 million households currently on local authority housing registers. Not only are we in a housing crisis, but we are also in a temporary accommodation crisis too.

Code of Guidance on temporary accommodation

22. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (the Department) issues statutory guidance to local authorities regarding temporary accommodation through the Homelessness Code of Guidance.⁴⁷ The Code of Guidance sets out that local authorities should consider the homeless applicants’ needs in their temporary accommodation, including:

- Space and arrangement;
- Medical needs, including physical accessibility needs;
- Social considerations, including any risk of violence, racial or other harassment, or domestic abuse in a particular locality;

⁴⁷ MHCLG, [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), Chapter 17

- Space for a cot where the household includes children under 2 years old. The local authority should also “consider what support is available for the provision of a cot”; and
- Education, including by minimising disruption “at critical points in time such as leading up to taking GCSE (or their equivalent) examinations”.⁴⁸

23. Whilst local authorities must have regard to this statutory guidance, we heard evidence of inconsistency in the extent to which local authorities monitor the quality of their temporary accommodation provision.⁴⁹ The National Audit Office (NAO) has highlighted that the Department does not routinely collect data on the quality of temporary accommodation across England.⁵⁰ The Chartered Institute of Housing argued that the lack of national oversight and formalised monitoring of temporary accommodation quality has led to “[reliance] on the individual culture, political climate and capital funds of each local authority”.⁵¹

24. Hannah Courtney-Adamson, Head of Strategic Housing (People) at Rochdale Borough Council, told us that her local authority inspects its provision “as standard practice for any new accommodation and it is reviewed every 12 months”.⁵² However, Councillor Hannah Dalton, Housing Spokesperson for the District Councils’ Network, highlighted that “with the rapid number of placements we have to make, along with the reduced environmental health capacity that many councils have, it is a real struggle [to carry out regular inspections] at times”.⁵³ The Shared Health Foundation argued that the Department should introduce mandatory local monitoring of temporary accommodation quality.⁵⁴

25. When we asked what the Department is doing to ensure local authorities adhere to its Code of Guidance, Rushanara Ali MP, Minister for Homelessness and Democracy, highlighted the Government’s current programme of legislation, including its plan to introduce the Decent Homes Standard in the private rented sector through its Renters’ Rights Bill.⁵⁵ She added that “If there are major gaps [in enforcement], those are ones that

48 MHCLG, [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), Chapter 17, paras 17.4–17.6, para 17.12, para 17.55

49 See, for example: Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); Citizens UK ([CTA0015](#))

50 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.9

51 Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#))

52 [Q37](#) (Hannah Courtney-Adamson)

53 [Q37](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

54 Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#))

55 [Q59](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

the inter-ministerial departmental group will need to look at”,⁵⁶ referring to a new cross-government group which is developing a strategy on ending homelessness (see Chapter 5). Penny Hobman, the Department’s Director for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, added that the Department’s civil servants “work very closely with local authorities to provide a support and challenge role and to share good practice and innovation to try to help them improve standards [...]”.⁵⁷

26.

CONCLUSION

Some local authorities are not taking sufficient account of the needs of children and families when making decisions on temporary accommodation placements. Many local authorities do not carry out any regular inspections of the conditions in the accommodation they use to house families. This is unacceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government must require all local authorities in England to carry out mandatory inspections of housing before it is first used as temporary accommodation, and whenever new residents are placed in the property. All local authorities should publish annual reports online to set out an overview of the main findings of these inspections. The Government should provide additional funding, in line with the new burdens doctrine, to local authorities to ensure that they can carry out and report on these inspections.

56 [Q61](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

57 [Q59](#) (Penny Hobman)

3 Bed & Breakfast temporary accommodation

Families living in Bed and Breakfasts

27. The shortage of social housing units to use as temporary accommodation has led many local authorities to rely heavily on Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs), hotels, and other nightly paid accommodation to house homeless residents. According to the latest Department statistics, 5,400 households with children were living in B&B temporary accommodation—a rise of 15.4% in the 12 months to September 2024.⁵⁸
28. The Department recognises that B&B temporary accommodation is not suitable for households with children, and states in its Code of Guidance that “living in B&B accommodation can be particularly detrimental to the health and development of children”.⁵⁹ In 2019, the then Children’s Commissioner described B&B temporary accommodation as being unsuitable for families because in most cases:
- They are not self-contained: the bathroom is shared with other residents in the building;
 - They often have no cooking facilities or only a kitchen shared with other residents;
 - Other residents may include vulnerable adults, such as those with mental health or drug abuse problems, creating intimidating, potentially unsafe environments for children.⁶⁰
29. During our inquiry, Dr Laura Neilson, CEO of the Shared Health Foundation, emphasised the psychological strain on families in B&Bs, especially when accommodation providers require families to move frequently.⁶¹ She told us that families will sometimes be told to leave their nightly paid

58 MHCLG, [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

59 MHCLG, [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), Chapter 17, para 17.34

60 Children’s Commissioner, [Bleak houses: Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England](#) (August 2019), p.8

61 [Q11](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

accommodation and wait to be allocated another room later that day, and “are left to roam around and work out what to do”.⁶² Francesca Albanese, Director of Policy and Social Change at Crisis, highlighted that families placed in B&Bs also lack access to support services that may be available in other types of temporary accommodation.⁶³

30. For those local authorities which choose to avoid making B&B placements, this comes at a higher financial cost. Chris Hancock, Head of Housing at Hastings Borough Council, told us that his local authority does not use B&Bs as temporary accommodation for families and seeks to house them in higher quality private sector properties within the borough.⁶⁴ However, that this had contributed to acute financial pressure, with the Hastings Borough Council spending £6.8 million—almost 40% of its £18 million budget for 2024/25—on temporary accommodation alone.⁶⁵
31. Several stakeholders highlighted that nightly paid temporary accommodation is usually a far more expensive option for local authorities.⁶⁶ The Centre for Homelessness Impact highlights that in 2023/24, local authorities spent around £700 million on commercial hotels and B&Bs, representing around 30% of the £2.29 billion total spending on temporary accommodation.⁶⁷

Safeguarding

32. The Department’s Code of Guidance states that:

When securing accommodation for families with children housing authorities should be mindful of their duties under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to discharge their functions with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.⁶⁸

33. However, we heard evidence of some local authorities placing children in B&B temporary accommodation with potential safeguarding risks. Some organisations working with homeless families warned of the risks

62 [Q7](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

63 [Q11](#) (Francesca Albanese)

64 [Q32](#) (Chris Hancock)

65 [Q27](#) (Chris Hancock)

66 See, for example: [Q2](#) (Francesca Albanese); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#)); Greater Change ([CTA0016](#))

67 Centre for Homelessness Impact, [Temporary Accommodation in England: is it Value for Money?](#) (November 2024), p.39

68 MHCLG, [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), Chapter 17, 17.55

associated with families living in temporary accommodation with kitchens and bathrooms that are shared with other residents.⁶⁹ Dr Neilson expressed concern that:

[...] we are releasing a lot of people from prison with no pathway for accommodation and they are ending up in the same accommodation as families. Most of our families are relatively young women and children who often come from domestic violence backgrounds and are often very vulnerable.⁷⁰

- 34.** Rebecca Walker, Director of CARIS Families, shared her experience working in two London boroughs, where one mixes single adults and families in the same building, and one does not. She described the difference as “night-and-day”, as “families feel much safer” in buildings shared only with other families.⁷¹ She also highlighted concerns that some temporary accommodation providers have introduced no-visitor policies due to “chaotic goings-on, mainly as a result of the single adults”, which can leave families isolated from their friends and support network.⁷² Some stakeholders argued in written evidence that the Code of Guidance should be strengthened to outline local authorities’ safeguarding duties regarding temporary accommodation more clearly.⁷³
- 35.** Penny Hobman, the Department’s Director for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, told us that “We [the Department] expect local authorities to meet what is in that code of guidance [...] We think that the code of guidance is really clear”.⁷⁴ The Minister for Homelessness and Democracy added that “Local authorities should not be hanging around for changes. There is existing provision and they need to follow it. If there are gaps, I am sure that this Committee will make sure that the inter-ministerial group takes those points on board”.⁷⁵

Six-week limit on placements

- 36.** Since 2003, the law has specified that local authorities may only use “B&B accommodation” as temporary accommodation for families “where no accommodation other than B&B accommodation is available” and only for

69 See, for example: [Q8](#) (Rebecca Walker); Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); CARIS Families ([CTA0014](#))

70 [Q7](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

71 [Q8](#) (Rebecca Walker)

72 [Q8](#) (Rebecca Walker)

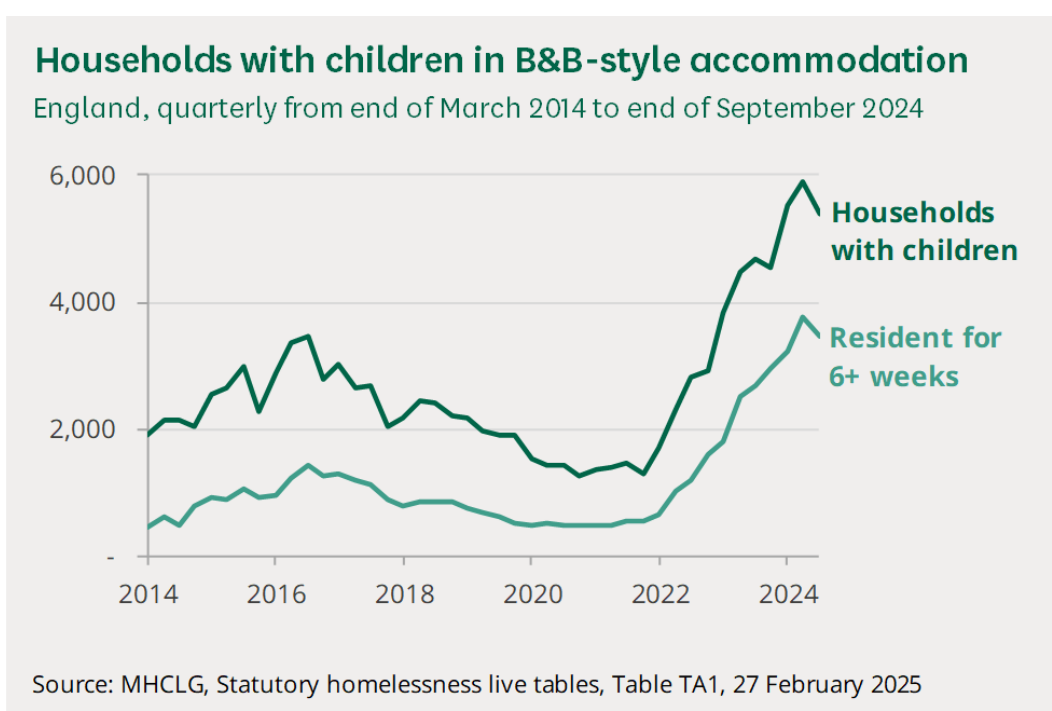
73 See, for example: Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); CARIS Families ([CTA0014](#))

74 [Qq83–84](#) (Penny Hobman)

75 [Q84](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

a maximum of six weeks (known as the “six-week limit”).⁷⁶ The Department’s Code of Guidance also explicitly states that local authorities should use B&Bs for households with children “only as a last resort and then only for a maximum of 6 weeks”.⁷⁷

- 37.** Since early 2022 there has been a marked increase in the overall use of B&Bs as temporary accommodation, and in the number of households with children in B&B accommodation unlawfully beyond the six-week limit. As of September 2024, 3,470 households with children placed in B&B temporary accommodation had been there for more than six weeks.⁷⁸ Whilst this is down by 8% from 3,770 households in the previous quarter,⁷⁹ this figure has risen significantly in recent years as shown in the graph below:



- 38.** Several stakeholders told us that there is currently a lack of effective sanctions for those local authorities which routinely breach the six-week limit.⁸⁰ The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman shared with us

76 Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 SI [2003/3326](#); “B&B accommodation” is not necessarily premises advertising itself as a “B&B”, but covers all accommodation containing several premises with shared facilities, subject to certain exceptions

77 MHCLG, [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), Chapter 17, para 17.35

78 MHCLG, [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

79 MHCLG, [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024](#) [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

80 See, for example: [Q14](#) (Dr Laura Neilson); Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ([CTA0004](#)); The Magpie Project; 4in10 London’s Child Poverty Network ([CTA0006](#))

that those homeless families that do take the time to pursue a complaint with the Ombudsman may not see the financial compensation they are entitled to, even when their complaint is upheld. In one such case, a local authority placed a family in B&B accommodation for 19 weeks, leading the Ombudsman to recommend a financial remedy for those affected. The Council responsible has since refused to pay the compensation, arguing that the national housing crisis means that going over the limit is “unavoidable” and that making the payments recommended would be “disastrous for local councils, setting a precedent that could cost them around £130m”.⁸¹

39. The Department can also restrict funding to local authorities for breaches of the six-week limit. The Department’s Director for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping explained to us that any local authority that has more than five families in B&B temporary accommodation beyond the six-week limit has to develop a B&B elimination plan, as a condition for some homelessness grant funding.⁸² However, Councillor Hannah Dalton, Housing Spokesperson for the District Councils’ Network, argued that “financial penalties are counterproductive for district councils”, as this “simply diverts money away from the prevention and support services”.⁸³
40. Some stakeholders questioned whether the current legislation which imposes the six-week limit is fit for purpose. CARIS Families, an organisation which supports families living in hostel temporary accommodation in London, highlighted that some hostels are not covered by the six-week limit on B&Bs. It emphasised that “multiple-occupancy hostels we work in have shared bathrooms and kitchens and are, as such, not that different to B&Bs,” however, “there is no time limitation on the use of such hostels with shared facilities”.⁸⁴
41. The Minister for Homelessness and Democracy told us that the recent rise in families being placed in B&Bs is “not acceptable, but that is what we have inherited”.⁸⁵ When asked whether the six-week limit is fit for purpose, she emphasised that officials are “working closely with local authorities” and other stakeholders to “reduce some of the immediate barriers that are there where we are able to, without the bigger interventions that will take longer”.⁸⁶ Regarding some hostels not being subject to the six-week limit,

81 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ([CTA0004](#))

82 [Q67](#) (Penny Hobman)

83 [Q41](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

84 CARIS Families ([CTA0014](#)); note that “B&B accommodation” excludes that provided by local housing associations and voluntary organisations

85 [Q70](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

86 [Q70](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

the Minister said “we do not have plans to amend the regulations to remove family hostels and assessment centres, but we are going to continue to take a close interest in and look at this”.⁸⁷

42. After our oral evidence session, the Minister wrote to us to outline that:

Where an individual feels that the council has applied their statutory duties incorrectly, they can raise a challenge in the courts or bring their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Where the Ombudsman finds fault with the council’s actions, they can recommend action to put that fault right, to prevent recurrence of that fault, and to compensate the complainant financially [...].⁸⁸

43. CONCLUSION

The shortage of social housing in England has led local authorities to rely on using B&Bs and other accommodation with shared facilities as temporary accommodation, which are inappropriate and potentially unsafe environments for children to grow up in. The Government already requires that families are only housed in B&Bs as a “last resort”, yet there has been a striking rise in the number of families placed in B&B temporary accommodation for more than six weeks unlawfully. We have heard evidence of children being moved from B&B to B&B; families being asked to leave their room and wait for their next nightly placement; and a family being placed in B&B accommodation for 19 weeks. For too many families, the legal six-week limit on families being placed in B&B accommodation is meaningless, as their local authority does not adhere to it and there are no effective sanctions for breaches.

44. CONCLUSION

We are disappointed in the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy’s response that vulnerable families living in B&Bs should be expected to “raise a challenge in the courts or bring their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman” when local authorities do not fulfil their statutory obligations.

87 [Q71](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

88 Letter from the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy to the Chair regarding Children in Temporary Accommodation and Rough Sleeping Inquiries, [14 February 2025](#)

RECOMMENDATION

If the Government believes that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is the most suitable avenue for redress when local authorities fail to adhere to their statutory duties regarding temporary accommodation, the Government must work with the Ombudsman to review its resourcing, statutory jurisdiction, and powers, so that it can investigate all complaints of unsuitable temporary accommodation and take appropriate action with haste.

45.**CONCLUSION**

We are alarmed to hear examples of families housed in temporary accommodation that included spaces shared with single adults with a history of domestic abuse. This is completely inappropriate and poses a potential safeguarding risk to children. Currently, there is no explicit ban on placements of families in accommodation with single adults, and we do not believe that the Code of Guidance goes far enough to ensure the wellbeing of children and families at safeguarding risk.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government must update the Code of Guidance to clearly demonstrate local authorities' foremost duty to mitigate safeguarding risks when making decisions on placements for families with children. The Government should work with local authorities to bring an end to placements of families in temporary accommodation with kitchens or bathrooms shared with single adults housed in the same building.

46.**CONCLUSION**

The use of the term "B&B" in legislation means that the law does not prevent families being placed in similarly inappropriate accommodation, such as some hostels, which are not always covered by the six-week limit.

RECOMMENDATION

In its response to this Report, the Government should set out its assessment of whether the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2023 is fit for purpose; and whether updating legislation and the Code of Guidance to refer to "non-self-contained accommodation" rather than "B&Bs" would enhance protections for families placed in temporary accommodation with shared facilities.

47.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government's forthcoming strategy on ending homelessness must set out a clear plan to end placements of families in temporary accommodation with shared facilities, starting by reducing and eliminating placements of over six weeks.

4 Out-of-area temporary accommodation

Demand pressures

48. Local authorities' use of temporary accommodation varies widely across England. London boroughs account for 56% of all temporary accommodation use, though this has fallen from 65% in March 2020.⁸⁹ In recent years the greatest increases in the use of temporary accommodation have occurred outside of London. Analysis by the Centre for Homelessness Impact found that between 2020 and 2024 the use of temporary accommodation rose by:
- 9% in London,
 - 50% in the South East of England,
 - 73% in the South West, and
 - 216% in the North East.⁹⁰
49. The law requires local authorities to secure temporary accommodation in their own district "so far as reasonably practicable".⁹¹ Demand pressures in some areas have forced local authorities to place homeless residents in temporary accommodation outside their local authority area. This is known as an "out-of-area placement".
50. Several written evidence submissions emphasised the dire consequences of families being moved away from their extended family, friends, and support network to accommodation outside their local authority area.⁹² The distance of these placements can be significant: the cases we heard included a family from Camden being placed in North Manchester, and a family from

89 Centre for Homelessness Impact, [Temporary Accommodation in England: is it Value for Money?](#) (November 2024), p.27

90 Centre for Homelessness Impact, [Temporary Accommodation in England: is it Value for Money?](#) (November 2024), p.59

91 Housing Act 1996, [section 208](#)

92 See, for example: Shelter ([CTA0001](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); The Magpie Project; 4in10 London's Child Poverty Network ([CTA0006](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#))

Oldham being placed in Hastings.⁹³ In March 2025, it was reported that Enfield Council is considering buying properties in Liverpool to use as temporary accommodation due to a shortage of affordable accommodation in the borough.⁹⁴

51. The Chartered Institute of Housing highlighted that families face additional transport costs to visit their friends and extended family, or travel to school or work, when placed out-of-area.⁹⁵ Hannah Courtney-Adamson, Head of Strategic Housing (People) at Rochdale Borough Council, suggested that out-of-area temporary accommodation is more likely to be of poor quality, as the placing local authority lacks a detailed understanding of the property, neighbourhood and landlord—information which the host authority may hold.⁹⁶ A local authority planning an out-of-area placement is not currently required to consult the host local authority before it makes the placement, only after the placement is complete.

Data and monitoring

52. Since 2018, local authorities collect and report quarterly case-level data on all homelessness applications to the Department (including where temporary accommodation is used) in Homelessness Case Level Information Classification data, known as “H-CLIC”.⁹⁷ However, local authorities are not currently required to submit more detailed data on how out-of-area placements are used. In July 2024, the National Audit Office (NAO) found that whilst the Department holds data on the number of households placed in out-of-area temporary accommodation, it does not collect data on where those households are placed and their outcomes.⁹⁸ Therefore, the NAO recommended that the Department should consider how it might improve its data collection on out-of-area placements and publish this data.⁹⁹

93 [Q15](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

94 BBC News, [London council to buy Liverpool City Region houses](#) (accessed 12 March 2025)

95 Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#))

96 Hannah Courtney-Adamson (Head of Strategic Housing (People) at Rochdale Borough Council) ([CTA0012](#))

97 MHCLG, [The Homelessness Case Level Information Collection \(H-CLIC\)](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), pp.3–5. Note, H-CLIC replaced the “PIE form”, which was used to report homelessness data prior until April 2018

98 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.29

99 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.13

- 53.** Currently, the law requires the placing local authority to notify the host authority of the placement within 14 days of the accommodation being made available to the applicant.¹⁰⁰ Despite this requirement, Hannah Courtney-Adamson told us that:

[...] it is fair to say local authorities do not do that consistently and it is not regulated. Compliance is not measured. We do not submit that information to central Government with our data and so the Government are not measuring us on that.¹⁰¹

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Housing Spokesperson for the District Councils' Network, suggested that "A mandatory notification system would help us to ensure that councils are alerted when families are placed in their areas by other authorities. That does not currently happen".¹⁰²

- 54.** The Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State at the Department, told us she recognised that local authorities are spending "huge sums of money" on out-of-area placements which result in worse outcomes for homeless residents.¹⁰³ The Secretary of State also told us that she "wrote to local authorities reminding them of their duties in terms of out-of-borough placements" in November 2024.¹⁰⁴ Sarah Healey CB CVO, the Department's Permanent Secretary, added that the Department will "say a bit more about [out-of-area placements] in the long-term homelessness strategy that we are publishing later this year [2025]".¹⁰⁵
- 55.** Rushanara Ali MP, the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy, told us that "There needs to be better communication between the boroughs that are placing families out of borough. They have that duty and we will continue to monitor the situation". However, the Minister later clarified in a letter to us that:

MHCLG, in its stewardship function, does not have a formal role in monitoring compliance. Councils are accountable to their local electorate, and we expect local authorities to comply with their legal requirements.

100 Housing Act 1996, [section 208](#)

101 [Q42](#) (Hannah Courtney-Adamson)

102 [Q42](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

103 Oral evidence: The Work of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (7 January 2025), [Q9](#) (Angela Rayner MP)

104 Oral evidence: The Work of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (7 January 2025), [Q32](#) (Angela Rayner MP)

105 Oral evidence: The Work of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (7 January 2025), [Q33](#) (Sarah Healey CB CVO)

MHCLG collects and publishes information on LA [local authority] performance, and where concerns are reported, our preference is to work in partnership with councils and explore any challenges they face in fulfilling their statutory duties.

56. We asked the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy why the Department does not require local authorities to submit data on how far they place families outside their area. She told us only that the Department wants to see local authorities “prioritising keeping people in their localities. [...] However, we also recognise that, in certain circumstances, because of a shortage, local authorities do not have the option of housing people locally”.¹⁰⁶ She also emphasised local authorities’ current legal duty to inform the host authority within 14 days of making an out-of-area placement.¹⁰⁷

Notification system

57. The distances of out-of-area placements frequently require children to change schools, which stakeholders highlighted is disruptive to children’s learning and educational attainment.¹⁰⁸ Regarding children placed out-of-area, the Department’s Code of Guidance provides that:

Before a family that includes a school age child is placed out of district, the housing authority should liaise with the receiving authority and make every reasonable effort to ensure arrangements are or will be put in place to meet the child’s educational needs. [...] ¹⁰⁹

Whilst local authorities must notify host local authorities when they place homeless residents in temporary accommodation out-of-area by law,¹¹⁰ the Code does not currently stipulate that local authorities should notify other public services when a child becomes homeless.

58. Several organisations suggested that local authorities should be required to alert schools and GPs whenever a child becomes homeless—regardless of whether they are placed in local temporary accommodation or out-of-area—so that public services are able to offer joined-up additional support

106 [Q77](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

107 [Q77](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

108 See, for example: Shelter ([CTA0001](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); The Magpie Project; 4in10 London’s Child Poverty Network ([CTA0006](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#))

109 MHCLG, [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#) (accessed 27 February 2025), Chapter 17, para 17.56

110 Housing Act 1996, [section 208](#)

where required.¹¹¹ Dr Laura Neilson, CEO of the Shared Health Foundation, argued that a notification system would allow schools to adopt a “more reasonable approach for things like behaviour codes and being late [...] We know that children and families don’t tell schools themselves. They feel so ashamed that they just hide it”.¹¹²

59. In response to the proposal of a national notification system, the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy said “Anything that can be done to ensure that there is proper communication and information sharing between councils needs to happen. I will look closely at that example”.¹¹³

60. **CONCLUSION**

Out-of-area temporary accommodation placements have a devastating impact on families, leaving them far from their extended family, friends, and support network, and causing disruption to children’s education. There is a lack of reliable data on how out-of-area placements are currently used, as local authorities are not required to report detailed information to the Department on the outcomes for families. Whilst we understand the Department’s preference to take a “partnership approach”, we believe it must undertake more formalised monitoring of local authorities’ use of out-of-area placements.

61. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must improve the quality of data on local authorities’ use of out-of-area placements. It should require all local authorities to report to the Department quarterly on instances of out-of-area placements as part of their H-CLIC data report, including the distance of placements, why out-of-area placements were used, and the type of accommodation used for households placed out-of-area. The Department should consider ways of making H-CLIC data more publicly accessible, such as through an online homelessness data dashboard, to support local authorities to better understand homelessness pressures in their area, and to improve public awareness.

111 See, for example: Shared Health Foundation ([CTA0003](#)); Dr Hannah Fairbrother (Senior Lecturer in Public Health at University of Sheffield) ([CTA0005](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#))

112 [Q12](#) (Dr Laura Neilson)

113 [Q83](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

62.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government must issue guidance to discourage local authorities from acquiring properties outside of their authority boundaries to use as temporary accommodation. Where this is not possible, the local authority must notify prospective host local authorities before it purchases any properties out-of-area. The Government should consult on introducing a limit on the distance of all out-of-area placements.

63.

CONCLUSION

We are deeply concerned to hear that several local authorities may be falling short of their legal duties regarding out-of-area placements, particularly the requirement to notify the host authority after placements are completed. There is currently no requirement for local authorities to notify a prospective host authority before it makes an out-of-area placement, meaning opportunities to mitigate the impacts of these placements on families and host authorities may be missed.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should update the Code of Guidance to require local authorities to notify the host authority before they make an out-of-area placement. This will ensure local authorities are co-operating and sharing local expertise effectively, to ensure suitable accommodation and support is available to families placed out-of-area, and to mitigate the impacts on host authorities.

64.

CONCLUSION

Currently, schools are not always notified when a pupil becomes homeless or changes school due to a move into temporary accommodation. This prevents schools from offering additional support which those children may require. Similarly, GPs are often unaware that families are experiencing homelessness, leaving an incomplete picture of the health impacts of homelessness on children

RECOMMENDATION

As the Government seeks to establish 'consistent identifiers' for children through its Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, it should ensure that these can be used as a formalised notification system, so that a child's school and GP are alerted when they move into temporary accommodation. This should be introduced alongside a focus on improving data reporting and sharing between public services, to fully understand the health impacts of temporary accommodation on children.

65.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should provide an update on its efforts to connect homelessness data with data from other public services, including health data, to take a more holistic approach to understanding the drivers of homelessness in England. It should also consider how it may improve data collection and reporting of the housing circumstances of A&E admissions and GP referrals, and of school absenteeism, to improve understanding of how temporary accommodation impacts children's health and education.

5 The Government's strategy to end homelessness

Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

66. In November 2024, the Government announced the launch of an Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping (“the Inter-Ministerial Group”), chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP.¹¹⁴ The Government announced that the Inter-Ministerial Group would:

[...] bring together ministers from across Government to drive progress on the development of our strategy to get back on track to ending homelessness, making sure we are working across government, and in partnership with local authorities and Mayors, to tackle the root causes.¹¹⁵

67. Housing and homelessness stakeholders have reacted positively to the potential of the Inter-Ministerial Group to bring about greater collaboration between government departments to address the underlying causes of homelessness.¹¹⁶ Hannah Courtney-Adamson, Head of Strategic Housing (People) at Rochdale Borough Council, cited asylum dispersal accommodation as an example of a lack of joined-up working across government, as the Home Office is “in direct competition” with local authorities to bid for accommodation.¹¹⁷
68. The Inter-Ministerial Group will be advised by an expert group of homelessness organisations. Emma Haddad, Chief Executive of St Mungo’s and a member of the expert group, told us the Inter-Ministerial Group “has to be cross-government because so many people’s routes cross different

114 [Inter-Ministerial Group on Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures 2024/25 Funding](#), HCWS194, 6 November 2024

115 [Inter-Ministerial Group on Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures 2024/25 Funding](#), HCWS194, 6 November 2024

116 See, for example: [Q3](#) (Emma Haddad); [Q20](#) (Francesca Albanese); [Q31](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton); [Q47](#) (Councillor Grace Williams)

117 [Q37](#) (Hannah Courtney-Adamson)

areas of Government policy or public policy”.¹¹⁸ She added that the expert group will be “looking into different topics further and pulling in other people with lived experience and expertise”.¹¹⁹

- 69.** The output of the Inter-Ministerial Group will be a strategy on ending homelessness, which Rushanara Ali MP, Minister for Homelessness and Democracy, told us will be published later in 2025, “following the conclusion of phase 2 of the spending review”.¹²⁰ So far, the Inter-Ministerial Group has not published any minutes from its meetings or detailed updates on the progress of this work. The Minister indicated that such updates would not be forthcoming, emphasising that the Group “is an internal government inter-ministerial group, but we look forward to publishing a report”.¹²¹
- 70.** In February 2025, in response to our request for further information, the Minister confirmed in correspondence to us that the Group had so far met twice, with all invited government departments in attendance for both meetings, except HM Treasury which was absent from the first meeting.¹²² However, she did not confirm which Ministers or officials were in attendance to represent each government department. The Minister also provided us with a copy of the Inter-Ministerial Group’s Terms of Reference, which states that the Group will “meet regularly as required”.¹²³ The Terms of Reference outlines the Group’s policy scope as set out below.

118 [Q3](#) (Emma Haddad)

119 [Q3](#) (Emma Haddad)

120 [Q53](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

121 [Q51](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

122 Letter from the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy to the Chair regarding Children in Temporary Accommodation and Rough Sleeping Inquiries, [14 February 2025](#)

123 Letter from the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy to the Chair regarding Children in Temporary Accommodation and Rough Sleeping Inquiries, [14 February 2025](#)

Policy scope of the Inter-Ministerial Group

The strategy will consider homelessness and rough sleeping and therefore will consider a range of policies including:

- Supply of, access to and security of quality affordable housing and to specialist accommodation such as supported housing and Housing First.
- The affordability of private renting.
- How to deliver effective statutory homelessness support including increased focus on prevention.
- Funding and local capacity to deliver non-statutory support services including outreach, mental health and substance misuse services.
- Regulatory levers to address imbalances in the market for procuring temporary accommodation.
- Specific proposals to support cohorts at particular risk of homelessness and rough sleeping including prison leavers, care leavers, those leaving the asylum system, those with no recourse to public funds, those leaving hospital, and veterans.

Source: Letter from the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy to the Chair regarding Children in Temporary Accommodation and Rough Sleeping Inquiries, [14 February 2025](#)

71. CONCLUSION

It is essential that the strategy to end homelessness has buy-in across all government departments and local authorities, and so we welcome the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping to bring about this collaboration. It is vital that all invited government departments engage fully in the preparation of the strategy. The strategy must build on the previous work of homelessness organisations and independent reports, in order to agree the specific actions and funding commitments which will bring about significant progress towards ending homelessness during this Parliament.

72. RECOMMENDATION

In its response to this Report, the Government should provide:

- an update on the work of the Inter-Ministerial Group to date;

- the dates and attendance of any Inter-Ministerial Group meetings since January 2024;
- the names of each Minister or job title of each official who attended each Inter-Ministerial Group meeting from November 2024 to present; and
- an update on the Inter-Ministerial Group’s focused engagement with children and families, and how this will inform the forthcoming strategy.

The Government should publish updates on the Inter-Ministerial Group’s work after each of its meetings, including a summary of what was discussed.

73. RECOMMENDATION

The Group should consider how Awaab’s Law will be extended to temporary accommodation. The strategy on ending homelessness must clearly outline how all accommodation providers will be expected to fulfil this new requirement. Once Awaab’s Law is in force in temporary accommodation, the Government must require local authorities to provide homeless residents with information about their rights and the complaints process.

74. RECOMMENDATION

The Group should also consider whether the current balance of responsibilities for homelessness policy between local authorities and central government is compatible with a national strategy on tackling homelessness. The strategy on ending homelessness must address how government ministers will take ownership of and be held accountable for progress towards ending homelessness and delivering on the commitments in the strategy.

75.

RECOMMENDATION

The Group should publish its final output, a strategy on ending homelessness, by July 2025—before the summer recess—so that the Government, homelessness organisations, and local authorities have sufficient time to start implementing the strategy and making meaningful progress towards ending homelessness during this Parliament. The Inter-Ministerial Group should continue to meet at least quarterly after the strategy is published and should publish quarterly updates on the strategy’s implementation. As part of each quarterly meeting, the Group should review the Government’s quarterly homelessness statistics and consider any changes to the strategy that may be required in light of the data.

A focus on prevention

76. Much of the evidence we received emphasised the need for an increased focus on prevention, especially concerning the affordability of private renting. Stakeholders stressed that preventative approaches not only bring about better outcomes for families facing homelessness, but also ensure best value for public money.¹²⁴
77. Local authority representatives agreed that the current cost of temporary accommodation in some authorities is completely unsustainable.¹²⁵ Councillor Hannah Dalton, Housing Spokesperson for the District Councils Network, highlighted that “the housing benefit subsidy covers just 38% of the costs, which means that councils have an average shortfall of around £1.1 million. That is fundamentally unsustainable [...]”.¹²⁶ Councillor Grace Williams, Housing Spokesperson for London Councils, told us that temporary accommodation now makes up 75% of spending on housing in London councils, and that those councils “simply cannot sustain housing” under such financial pressure.¹²⁷
78. The Minister for Homelessness and Democracy highlighted to us that £450 million has been allocated to the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, which “supports local authorities to obtain better quality temporary accommodation for homeless families”.¹²⁸ Some stakeholders suggested that local authorities should receive further funding to acquire their own temporary accommodation, which they could keep at a higher

124 See, for example: [Q20](#) (Francesca Albanese); [Q29](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); National Housing Federation ([CTA0008](#))

125 See, for example: [Qq26-27](#) (Chris Hancock); [Q29](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

126 [Q29](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

127 [Q28](#) (Councillor Grace Williams)

128 [Q63](#) (Rushanara Ali MP); [Q63](#) (Penny Hobman); [Temporary Accommodation: Costs](#) PQ 4781, 9 September 2024

standard under their own control.¹²⁹ Crisis argued for targeted empty homes investment that “brings homes back into use specifically to relieve homelessness”.¹³⁰ We recently heard evidence that housing associations are reluctant to take on new affordable homes built by developers under planning obligations, which are sitting empty.¹³¹ Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, highlighted that new affordable homes are often fitted with gas boilers that may need retrofitting to meet new environmental standards in the near future, which has made housing associations reluctant to buy new stock.¹³²

79. Local authorities mainly fund their statutory homelessness duties through a combination of:

- The Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG);
- The Housing Benefit Temporary Accommodation Subsidy, which local authorities reclaim from the Department for Work & Pensions to cover expenditure incurred by paying Housing Benefit; and
- The Local Government Finance Settlement.¹³³

In July 2024, a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) described the funding landscape for tackling homelessness as “complex, fragmented and sometimes uncertain”.¹³⁴ Despite its name, the NAO found that “a significant portion of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is used to fund the provision of temporary accommodation, particularly in areas of poor affordability, rather than being spent on prevention work”.¹³⁵

80. In November 2024, the Government announced an additional £233 million of additional spending on homelessness, including a £192.9 million uplift to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG).¹³⁶ As part of the Government’s aim “to shift back into prevention first”, it announced that 49% of the HPG funding will now be ringfenced for “prevention, relief and staffing activity”.¹³⁷

129 See, for example: [Q27](#) (Chris Hancock); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); London Borough of Tower Hamlets ([CTA0013](#))

130 Crisis ([CTA0011](#))

131 Oral evidence: [Housing Associations: Development and Financing](#) (14 January 2025)

132 Oral evidence: [Housing Associations: Development and Financing](#) (14 January 2025), [Q20](#)

133 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.11

134 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.11

135 National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), HC 119, p.11

136 [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Allocations Announcement 2025/26](#), HCWS336, 18 December 2024

137 MHCLG, [Homelessness Prevention Grant 2025–26: technical note](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

London Councils has raised concern that this may worsen financial pressures on those local authorities which currently rely on HPG funding to deliver temporary accommodation provision—London boroughs currently spend around 80% of their HPG funding on temporary accommodation.¹³⁸ Sarah Healey CB CVO, the Department’s Permanent Secretary, told us that the ringfence was introduced because “until we can get funding to be a bit more upstream and less downstream on homelessness, we are simply going to see increased numbers in temporary accommodation and children, in particular, which we know is a specific, severe problem in London”.¹³⁹

Local Housing Allowance

81. In England, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) sets the maximum amounts of housing support claimants of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit can usually get for private rented homes of different sizes.¹⁴⁰ In the 2023 Autumn Statement, the then Government announced an end to a four-year cash freeze in LHA rates. Prior to this, LHA was last set at the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2020.¹⁴¹ In October 2024, alongside the Autumn Budget, Liz Kendall MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, announced the re-freeze of LHA rates from April 2025.¹⁴² This means that income support for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants will not rise in line with private rents, which rose by 9% in the 12 months to December 2024.¹⁴³
82. There was widespread agreement among stakeholders that the Government’s decision to re-freeze LHA rates will put some families in the private rented sector at risk of homelessness and may increase demand for temporary accommodation.¹⁴⁴ Francesca Albanese, Director of Policy and Social Change at Crisis, encouraged the Inter-Ministerial Group to “look at LHA again to make sure the private rented sector is affordable”, as well as “other short-term fixes” to address the shortage of affordable housing.¹⁴⁵ Councillor Hannah Dalton highlighted that the LHA freeze will compound local authority funding pressures, outlining that, in her own authority of

138 London Councils, [Boroughs’ finances ‘stuck in survival mode’](#) (accessed 27 February 2025)

139 Oral evidence: The Work of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (7 January 2025), [Q34](#) (Sarah Healey CB CVO)

140 House of Commons Library, [Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\): Help with rent for private tenants](#), p.4

141 House of Commons Library, [Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\): Help with rent for private tenants](#), p.4

142 [Social Security](#) HCWS175, 30 October 2024

143 Office for National Statistics, [Private rent and house prices, UK: January 2025](#)

144 See, for example: [Q2](#) (Emma Haddad); [Q4](#) (Rebecca Walker); [Q14](#) (Francesca Albanese); [Q29](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton); Shelter ([CTA0001](#)); Capital Letters ([CTA0002](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#)); National Housing Federation ([CTA0008](#)); Crisis ([CTA0011](#))

145 [Q14](#) (Francesca Albanese)

Epsom and Ewell, “in the last six months, temporary accommodation has gone up from £90 a night to over £130 a night and we have to cover the gap between LHA and the actual cost”.¹⁴⁶

- 83.** Rushanara Ali MP, the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy, told us that the decision not to raise LHA rates came in the context of “a massive challenge around the financial environment that we have inherited”.¹⁴⁷ On 6 February 2025, the Rt. Hon. Sir Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister, told our Chair in correspondence that:

Several factors were considered in this decision, including rental data, the impacts of LHA rates and the wider fiscal context. The LHA rates were increased in April 2024 at a cost of approximately £7 billion over five years. At Autumn Budget we prioritised targeting support to households most in need, by investing £1 billion to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) and maintain the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) scheme.

- 84.** However, evidence to our inquiry points to a false economy in re-freezing LHA rates, whereby some families are no longer able to afford private rents; are put at risk of homelessness; and potentially end up living in costly temporary accommodation. As the Chartered Institute for Housing summarised, “a household is far more expensive to support once they are homeless, compared with subsidising their income”.¹⁴⁸
- 85.** In March 2025, the Government announced a package of major welfare reforms, which it described as “the biggest reforms to employment support in a generation”. The Welfare Reform Green Paper outlines the Government’s plans to:
- reintroduce reassessments for people on incapacity benefits who have the capability to work;
 - target Personal Independence Payments to claimants with higher needs; and
 - delay access to the health element of Universal Credit until someone is aged 22.¹⁴⁹

Some of these proposals are subject to consultation. It is possible that these reforms combined with the re-freeze of LHA rates could compound the financial impact on some low-income households at risk of homelessness.

146 [Q29](#) (Councillor Hannah Dalton)

147 [Q88](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

148 Chartered Institute of Housing ([CTA0007](#))

149 HC Deb, 18 March 2025, [col 186](#); Gov.UK, [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working](#), CP 1297

Delivering more affordable housing

86. Throughout our inquiry, stakeholders and Ministers highlighted the shortage of social and affordable housing as a root cause of homelessness. The Rt Hon. Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State, told us that the Government had “tried to take a number of measures to prevent homelessness and to ensure that we can deal with the root cause of the problem”, including increasing homelessness grant spending, but highlighted that the long-term solution is to increase housing supply, as “the real elephant in the room is that we just do not have enough homes”.¹⁵⁰ Emma Haddad said that the biggest challenge for the frontline services that St Mungo’s provides is “finding places to help people to move on [...] predominantly because of the drastic shortage of social housing”.¹⁵¹ The Minister for Homelessness and Democracy added that the Government is “determined to make sure that we have an increase in social and affordable housing as we focus our attention on the housebuilding programme”.¹⁵² However, when we asked Matthew Pennycook MP, the Minister for Housing and Planning, how many new homes delivered during this Parliament will be for Social Rent—the most affordable housing tenure—he told us that “I cannot give you that figure [...] although we will, again, have more clarity as we progress through the Parliament”, particularly after the Spending Review settlement.¹⁵³

87. CONCLUSION

We welcome the Government’s decision to increase homelessness funding for 2025/26, including the £192.9 million uplift to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). However, the decision to ringfence 49% of HPG funding for activities to prevent and relieve homelessness may be a detrimental, one-size-fits-all approach towards the pressures facing some local authorities. The ringfence may leave a gap in the funding of those councils which rely heavily on the HPG to fund temporary accommodation, at a time when local authorities are facing acute financial pressures.

150 Oral evidence: The Work of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (7 January 2025), [Q5](#) (Angela Rayner MP)

151 [Q2](#) (Emma Haddad)

152 [Q100](#) (Rushanara Ali MP)

153 Oral evidence: Planning for 1.5 million new homes (10 November 2024), [Q17](#) (Matthew Pennycook MP)

88. CONCLUSION

We are also concerned that the Government's decision to re-freeze Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates from April 2025 will undermine the impact of additional homelessness grant funding. We have seen compelling evidence that this is a false economy. Re-freezing LHA rates is likely to leave many families unable to afford rising private sector rents, placing them at risk of homelessness and relying on temporary accommodation. It is far more expensive for local authorities to support families once they are in temporary accommodation.

89. RECOMMENDATION

MHCLG and the Department for Work and Pensions must use the Inter-Ministerial Group as an opportunity to evaluate the link between welfare reforms and homelessness, particularly regarding LHA rates. We agree with the Government on the principle that, as far as possible, homelessness funding should be directed towards preventing homelessness in the first place. The Group should consider how best to move towards this preventative model while ensuring there are no unintended consequences for local authorities. Specifically, it should consider the impact of the 49% ringfence of HPG funding for prevention on local authorities that are currently spending a high proportion of HPG funding on temporary accommodation.

90. CONCLUSION

Local authority owned housing for temporary accommodation is a more cost-efficient means of providing higher quality temporary accommodation for families in the long term. It is unacceptable that some affordable homes are currently sitting empty while families are stuck in temporary accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should extend its support for local authorities to acquire their own temporary accommodation stock through the Local Authority Housing Fund, including by acquiring empty affordable homes delivered through planning obligations. These new homes should be acquired within the local authority's own area as far as possible. The Government should also consider the issue of empty affordable homes as part of its forthcoming long-term housing strategy with regard to the investment barriers, such as environmental requirements, which are preventing housing associations from taking on new social housing stock.

91.

CONCLUSION

The Government clearly recognises the scale of the homelessness crisis in England, and we welcome the scale of the Government's ambition to tackle it. We welcome the Government's target to deliver 1.5 million new homes during this Parliament, however, as the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy outlined, we must not lose focus on the need for social and affordable housing to alleviate the crisis in temporary accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government must ensure that social and genuinely affordable housing forms a substantial proportion of its 1.5 million target, given the importance of these tenures to ending homelessness in England. In the forthcoming long-term housing strategy, the Government must set out how the national housing target will be achieved by tenure, including a target for Social Rent homes to promote genuinely affordable housing as part of the housing mix. The Government must also recognise the urgent need for immediate interventions, as outlined in this Report, to improve temporary accommodation provision and to support families into more settled homes.

Conclusions and recommendations

Growing up in temporary accommodation

1. The appalling conditions in some temporary accommodation in England are utterly shameful. We are concerned that issues of poor-quality temporary accommodation continue to persist, even though it is now over five years since the then Children’s Commissioner described these conditions as “simply inappropriate places for a child to be growing up”. Conditions in temporary accommodation are too often unfit for habitation, and risk having a serious detrimental impact on children’s development, wellbeing, and health. It is particularly shocking that in the last five years temporary accommodation has been a contributing factor to the deaths of at least 74 children, of whom 58 were under the age of one. (Conclusion, Paragraph 20)
2. During our inquiry we have also heard that, for many families, life in temporary accommodation is far from ‘temporary’. In some cases, families spend years in temporary accommodation, stuck in limbo without the stability of permanent accommodation and knowing that their local authority may require them to move with little notice. The shortage of affordable housing across England means families face growing social housing waiting lists for a permanent home, with over 1.3 million households currently on local authority housing registers. Not only are we in a housing crisis, but we are also in a temporary accommodation crisis too. (Conclusion, Paragraph 21)
3. Some local authorities are not taking sufficient account of the needs of children and families when making decisions on temporary accommodation placements. Many local authorities do not carry out any regular inspections of the conditions in the accommodation they use to house families. This is unacceptable. (Conclusion, Paragraph 26)

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government must require all local authorities in England to carry out mandatory inspections of housing before it is first used as temporary accommodation, and whenever new residents are placed in the property. All local authorities should publish annual reports online to set out an overview of the main findings of these

inspections. The Government should provide additional funding, in line with the new burdens doctrine, to local authorities to ensure that they can carry out and report on these inspections. (Recommendation, Paragraph 26)

Bed & Breakfast temporary accommodation

4. The shortage of social housing in England has led local authorities to rely on using B&Bs and other accommodation with shared facilities as temporary accommodation, which are inappropriate and potentially unsafe environments for children to grow up in. The Government already requires that families are only housed in B&Bs as a “last resort”, yet there has been a striking rise in the number of families placed in B&B temporary accommodation for more than six weeks unlawfully. We have heard evidence of children being moved from B&B to B&B; families being asked to leave their room and wait for their next nightly placement; and a family being placed in B&B accommodation for 19 weeks. For too many families, the legal six-week limit on families being placed in B&B accommodation is meaningless, as their local authority does not adhere to it and there are no effective sanctions for breaches. (Conclusion, Paragraph 43)
5. We are disappointed in the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy’s response that vulnerable families living in B&Bs should be expected to “raise a challenge in the courts or bring their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman” when local authorities do not fulfil their statutory obligations. (Conclusion, Paragraph 44)

If the Government believes that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is the most suitable avenue for redress when local authorities fail to adhere to their statutory duties regarding temporary accommodation, the Government must work with the Ombudsman to review its resourcing, statutory jurisdiction, and powers, so that it can investigate all complaints of unsuitable temporary accommodation and take appropriate action with haste. (Recommendation, Paragraph 44)

6. We are alarmed to hear examples of families housed in temporary accommodation that included spaces shared with single adults with a history of domestic abuse. This is completely inappropriate and poses a potential safeguarding risk to children. Currently, there is no explicit ban on placements of families in accommodation with single adults, and we do not believe that the Code of Guidance goes far enough to ensure the wellbeing of children and families at safeguarding risk. (Conclusion, Paragraph 45)

The Government must update the Code of Guidance to clearly demonstrate local authorities' foremost duty to mitigate safeguarding risks when making decisions on placements for families with children. The Government should work with local authorities to bring an end to placements of families in temporary accommodation with kitchens or bathrooms shared with single adults housed in the same building. (Recommendation, Paragraph 45)

7. The use of the term "B&B" in legislation means that the law does not prevent families being placed in similarly inappropriate accommodation, such as some hostels, which are not always covered by the six-week limit. (Conclusion, Paragraph 46)

In its response to this Report, the Government should set out its assessment of whether the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2023 is fit for purpose; and whether updating legislation and the Code of Guidance to refer to "non-self-contained accommodation" rather than "B&Bs" would enhance protections for families placed in temporary accommodation with shared facilities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 46)

8. The Government's forthcoming strategy on ending homelessness must set out a clear plan to end placements of families in temporary accommodation with shared facilities, starting by reducing and eliminating placements of over six weeks. (Recommendation, Paragraph 47)

Out-of-area temporary accommodation

9. Out-of-area temporary accommodation placements have a devastating impact on families, leaving them far from their extended family, friends, and support network, and causing disruption to children's education. There is a lack of reliable data on how out-of-area placements are currently used, as local authorities are not required to report detailed information to the Department on the outcomes for families. Whilst we understand the Department's preference to take a "partnership approach", we believe it must undertake more formalised monitoring of local authorities' use of out-of-area placements. (Conclusion, Paragraph 60)
10. The Government must improve the quality of data on local authorities' use of out-of-area placements. It should require all local authorities to report to the Department quarterly on instances of out-of-area placements as part of their H-CLIC data report, including the distance of placements, why out-of-area placements were used, and the type of accommodation used for households placed out-of-area. The Department should consider ways of making H-CLIC data more publicly accessible, such as through an

online homelessness data dashboard, to support local authorities to better understand homelessness pressures in their area, and to improve public awareness. (Recommendation, Paragraph 61)

11. The Government must issue guidance to discourage local authorities from acquiring properties outside of their authority boundaries to use as temporary accommodation. Where this is not possible, the local authority must notify prospective host local authorities before it purchases any properties out-of-area. The Government should consult on introducing a limit on the distance of all out-of-area placements. (Recommendation, Paragraph 62)
12. We are deeply concerned to hear that several local authorities may be falling short of their legal duties regarding out-of-area placements, particularly the requirement to notify the host authority after placements are completed. There is currently no requirement for local authorities to notify a prospective host authority before it makes an out-of-area placement, meaning opportunities to mitigate the impacts of these placements on families and host authorities may be missed. (Conclusion, Paragraph 63)

The Government should update the Code of Guidance to require local authorities to notify the host authority before they make an out-of-area placement. This will ensure local authorities are co-operating and sharing local expertise effectively, to ensure suitable accommodation and support is available to families placed out-of-area, and to mitigate the impacts on host authorities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 63)

13. Currently, schools are not always notified when a pupil becomes homeless or changes school due to a move into temporary accommodation. This prevents schools from offering additional support which those children may require. Similarly, GPs are often unaware that families are experiencing homelessness, leaving an incomplete picture of the health impacts of homelessness on children. (Conclusion, Paragraph 64)

As the Government seeks to establish 'consistent identifiers' for children through its Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, it should ensure that these can be used as a formalised notification system, so that a child's school and GP are alerted when they move into temporary accommodation. This should be introduced alongside a focus on improving data reporting and sharing between public services, to fully understand the health impacts of temporary accommodation on children. (Recommendation, Paragraph 64)

14. The Government should provide an update on its efforts to connect homelessness data with data from other public services, including health data, to take a more holistic approach to understanding the drivers of homelessness in England. It should also consider how it may improve data

collection and reporting of the housing circumstances of A&E admissions and GP referrals, and of school absenteeism, to improve understanding of how temporary accommodation impacts children's health and education. (Recommendation, Paragraph 65)

The Government's strategy to end homelessness

15. It is essential that the strategy to end homelessness has buy-in across all government departments and local authorities, and so we welcome the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping to bring about this collaboration. It is vital that all invited government departments engage fully in the preparation of the strategy. The strategy must build on the previous work of homelessness organisations and independent reports, in order to agree the specific actions and funding commitments which will bring about significant progress towards ending homelessness during this Parliament. (Conclusion, Paragraph 71)
16. In its response to this Report, the Government should provide:
 - an update on the work of the Inter-Ministerial Group to date;
 - the dates and attendance of any Inter-Ministerial Group meetings since January 2024;
 - the names of each Minister or job title of each official who attended each Inter-Ministerial Group meeting from November 2024 to present; and
 - an update on the Inter-Ministerial Group's focused engagement with children and families, and how this will inform the forthcoming strategy.

The Government should publish updates on the Inter-Ministerial Group's work after each of its meetings, including a summary of what was discussed. (Recommendation, Paragraph 72)

17. The Group should consider how Awaab's Law will be extended to temporary accommodation. The strategy on ending homelessness must clearly outline how all accommodation providers will be expected to fulfil this new requirement. Once Awaab's Law is in force in temporary accommodation, the Government must require local authorities to provide homeless residents with information about their rights and the complaints process. (Recommendation, Paragraph 73)

- 18.** The Group should also consider whether the current balance of responsibilities for homelessness policy between local authorities and central government is compatible with a national strategy on tackling homelessness. The strategy on ending homelessness must address how government ministers will take ownership of and be held accountable for progress towards ending homelessness and delivering on the commitments in the strategy. (Recommendation, Paragraph 74)
- 19.** The Group should publish its final output, a strategy on ending homelessness, by July 2025—before the summer recess—so that the Government, homelessness organisations, and local authorities have sufficient time to start implementing the strategy and making meaningful progress towards ending homelessness during this Parliament. The Inter-Ministerial Group should continue to meet at least quarterly after the strategy is published and should publish quarterly updates on the strategy’s implementation. As part of each quarterly meeting, the Group should review the Government’s quarterly homelessness statistics and consider any changes to the strategy that may be required in light of the data. (Recommendation, Paragraph 75)
- 20.** We welcome the Government’s decision to increase homelessness funding for 2025/26, including the £192.9 million uplift to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). However, the decision to ringfence 49% of HPG funding for activities to prevent and relieve homelessness may be a detrimental, one-size-fits-all approach towards the pressures facing some local authorities. The ringfence may leave a gap in the funding of those councils which rely heavily on the HPG to fund temporary accommodation, at a time when local authorities are facing acute financial pressures. (Conclusion, Paragraph 87)
- 21.** We are also concerned that the Government’s decision to re-freeze Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates from April 2025 will undermine the impact of additional homelessness grant funding. We have seen compelling evidence that this is a false economy. Re-freezing LHA rates is likely to leave many families unable to afford rising private sector rents, placing them at risk of homelessness and relying on temporary accommodation. It is far more expensive for local authorities to support families once they are in temporary accommodation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 88)
- 22.** MHCLG and the Department for Work and Pensions must use the Inter-Ministerial Group as an opportunity to evaluate the link between welfare reforms and homelessness, particularly regarding LHA rates. We agree with the Government on the principle that, as far as possible, homelessness funding should be directed towards preventing homelessness in the first place. The Group should consider how best to move towards this preventative model while ensuring there are no unintended consequences

for local authorities. Specifically, it should consider the impact of the 49% ringfence of HPG funding for prevention on local authorities that are currently spending a high proportion of HPG funding on temporary accommodation. (Recommendation, Paragraph 89)

- 23.** Local authority owned housing for temporary accommodation is a more cost-efficient means of providing higher quality temporary accommodation for families in the long term. It is unacceptable that some affordable homes are currently sitting empty while families are stuck in temporary accommodation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 90)

The Government should extend its support for local authorities to acquire their own temporary accommodation stock through the Local Authority Housing Fund, including by acquiring empty affordable homes delivered through planning obligations. These new homes should be acquired within the local authority's own area as far as possible. The Government should also consider the issue of empty affordable homes as part of its forthcoming long-term housing strategy with regard to the investment barriers, such as environmental requirements, which are preventing housing associations from taking on new social housing stock. (Recommendation, Paragraph 90)

- 24.** The Government clearly recognises the scale of the homelessness crisis in England, and we welcome the scale of the Government's ambition to tackle it. We welcome the Government's target to deliver 1.5 million new homes during this Parliament, however, as the Minister for Homelessness and Democracy outlined, we must not lose focus on the need for social and affordable housing to alleviate the crisis in temporary accommodation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 91)

The Government must ensure that social and genuinely affordable housing forms a substantial proportion of its 1.5 million target, given the importance of these tenures to ending homelessness in England. In the forthcoming long-term housing strategy, the Government must set out how the national housing target will be achieved by tenure, including a target for Social Rent homes to promote genuinely affordable housing as part of the housing mix. The Government must also recognise the urgent need for immediate interventions, as outlined in this Report, to improve temporary accommodation provision and to support families into more settled homes. (Recommendation, Paragraph 91)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 25 March 2025

Members present:

Florence Eshalomi, in the Chair

Lewis Cocking

Chris Curtis

Mr Gagan Mohindra

Joe Powell

Sarah Smith

England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation

The following declaration of interests relating to this inquiry were made:

5 November 2024

Mr Lee Dillion declared an interest in that he is a member of the APPG Temporary Accommodation and is a unitary councillor.

Naushabah Khan declared an interest in that she used to work for St Mungo's.

Draft Report (*England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 91 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the first Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 1 April at 9.30 am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 5 November 2024

Francesca Albanese, Executive Director of Policy and Social Change, Crisis; **Emma Haddad**, CEO, St Mungo's; **Dr Laura Neilson**, CEO, Shared Health Foundation; **Rebecca Walker**, Director, CARIS Families [Q1-24](#)

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Housing Spokesperson, District Councils Network; **Councillor Grace Williams**, Housing Spokesperson, London Councils; **Hannah Courtney-Adamson**, Head of Strategic Housing (People), Rochdale Borough Council; **Chris Hancock**, Head of Housing, Hastings Borough Council [Q25-47](#)

Tuesday 21 January 2025

Rushanara Ali MP, Minister for Homelessness and Democracy, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; **Penny Hobman**, Director for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [Q48-108](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee’s website.

CTA numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	CARIS Families	CTA0014
2	Capital Letters	CTA0002
3	Chartered Institute of Housing	CTA0007
4	Citizens UK	CTA0010
5	Citizens UK	CTA0015
6	Courtney-Adamson, Hannah (Head of Strategic Housing (People), Rochdale Borough Council)	CTA0012
7	Crisis	CTA0011
8	Fairbrother, Dr Hannah (Senior Lecturer in Public Health, University of Sheffield)	CTA0005
9	Greater Change	CTA0016
10	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	CTA0004
11	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	CTA0013
12	National Housing Federation	CTA0008
13	The Magpie Project and 4in10 London’s Child Poverty Network	CTA0006
14	School-Home Support	CTA0009
15	Shared Health Foundation	CTA0003
16	Shelter	CTA0001

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

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Number	Title	Reference
3rd Special	The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector: Government Response	HC 762
2nd Special	Disabled People in the Housing Sector: Government Response	HC 761
1st Special	The finances and sustainability of the social housing sector: Regulator of Social Housing response	HC 457