



Households  
in Temporary  
Accommodation

## All-Party Parliamentary Group on Households in Temporary Accommodation.

Minutes of meeting: Monday 25th April 2022, 14.00-15.30, hybrid meeting  
Portcullis House, Thatcher room

**Attendees (on panel):** Siobhain McDonagh MP, Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Alex Firth HRW, Karen Buck MP, Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

**Joint Secretariats:** Shared Health Foundation (SHF) and Justlife.

**Chair:** Siobhain McDonagh MP for Mitcham and Morden

### Introductions

**Siobhain McDonagh (SM)** opened the meeting by welcoming all the attendees, including non-parliamentarians who attended in person and virtually. SM then proceeded to make the following introductions:

- Thanked the joint secretariats Justlife and Shared Health Foundation (SHF) for all the hard work in forming and organising the APPG.
- Explained the purpose of the APPG on Households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) which is to improve the lives, health, and experiences of those living in TA, through campaign, advocacy, and investigations to solutions.
- Announced a Call for evidence, a survey created by the secretariats to collect live data on households who have lived or are currently living in TA. SM affirmed that this would be officially launched later in the meeting.
- The agenda of the meeting, presenting upcoming speeches from expert guest speakers Alex Firth (senior coordinator of Human Rights Watch), Fiona McLeod (former TA resident) and Eddie Hughes (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on Rough Sleeping and Housing). Followed by a Q&A to conclude meeting.

**SM** introduced and handed over meeting to lead secretariats:

**Alex Procter (AP)** thanked Siobhain McDonagh for her help in organising the meeting and went on to explain the role of Justlife:

- Justlife is a charity that works alongside those living in TA or Unsupported Temporary Accommodation (UTA) who are often referred to as hidden homelessness.
- Justlife works on creating strategies to prevent the hidden homeless them from falling into the homelessness and does this by providing healthcare, housing and wellbeing advocacy support.

**AP** moved on to explain that due to the sub-standards of TA and the negative impact it has on those living there, Justlife and SHF collaborated to form the APPG in the effort to create a national strategy that will improve the conditions and living experiences of TA residents.

**Sam Pratt (SP)** thanked all for attending and followed by introducing SHF to the panel:

- SHF is a not-for-profit organisation that develops and or funds grassroot projects aimed at positively impacting the lives of those living in deprivation. The organisation will act holistically on a clinical-led and evidence-based approach.
- SHF with help of its sister organisation Focused Care (FC) has assisted many families, children and pregnant women who have fallen into the homeless system, and has witnessed the appalling conditions of TA which homeless families are often placed in.
- Families including children living in TA will most likely suffer from poor mental and physical health.
- For these reasons an APPG was formed with Justlife.

Guest Speaker 1. Alex Firth, Senior Coordinator at Human Rights Watch

**Alex Firth (AF)** began his speech by stating that households in TA and with the lowest income are those that are in dire need of attention. AF then continued with the following:

- A quote by George Orwell in 1937 (a journalist and writer who in the 1930s documented the poor housing conditions of the working class) which addressed the high tolerance of the poor on the living state of social homes and how due to the shortage in available housing, Local Authorities (LAs) remained limited in providing liveable homes.
- Explained how the quote scarily parallels the housing conditions of TA today, despite the improvements we have seen in living standards within the 85 years passed since that quote was made.

**AF** moved straight onto the interviews he conducted during the research project for the HRW report, 'UK: Temporary Accommodation Violates Children's Rights' which he co-authored with the Childhood Trust. He described encountering many horrific housing conditions and hearing how these situations affected the households:

- Bed bugs and mouse droppings in cupboards
- Other pest infestations
- Mouldy damp walls resulting in breathing difficulties or chest infections most common with children
- Cold room due to mould as the windows must be kept open for ventilation
- Families sharing single bed properties or shipping containers
- Children missing out on school due to their living situation and often being out of borough

**AF** stressed that these poorly conditioned TAs were provided by LAs, but unlike in 1937, LAs are now able to make a home more liveable. The speech was then concluded with an urgency for a Framework on Standards. A strategy for LAs nationally to create adequate housing for all temporary homes.

### The Launch of the Call for evidence

**SM** announced the official launch of the 'Call for evidence' at 14.15 and declared that the evidence collected from the survey will be shared at the next APPG meeting.

### Guest speaker 2. Fiona McLeod, former resident of TA

**Fiona McLeod FM** briefly introduced her involvement with Justlife TAAG network and began sharing first hand experiences of her former life as a TA resident. She described having to share a small hotel room with her adolescent son for 5 years, way beyond the length of time in a TA should be. She moved on to highlight the difficulties both she and her son faced being out of borough, the inability to get to certain destinations such as school or work and the non-existence of Wi-Fi. FM described how all these situations came to negatively impact the physical and mental wellbeing of them both, especially the mental health of her son, whose social and educational development was affected.

### Guest speaker 3. Angie Ouattara, Focused Care Practitioner for SHF

**Angie Ouattara AO** introduced herself as a FC Practitioner for SHF and midwife of 20 years. AO proceeded to provide insight on her experience assisting women living in TA and described the barriers of health inequalities that led them to poverty:

- Complications because of traumatic experiences and fleeing domestic violence were one of the main reasons that led pregnant women or women to living in TA.
- Women during post perinatal phases were often placed in shared and unsuitable accommodation which posed serious health risks

- The inability to navigate the health and appointment systems and the inaccessibility to the internet made their stay in TA worse and isolating.

**AO** further detailed the difficulties women encountered setting up documentation while living in TA, such as lack of photo ID or banking statements. AO moved on to conclude that by improving access to health, mental and housing services; registering people to the local GP of the TA; and providing support throughout appointments that would have most likely have been missed would ultimately solve the issues mentioned above. However, AO stressed that this could only be achievable if the issue was acknowledged nationally.

#### Guest speaker 4. Eddie Hughes, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping and Housing

Eddie Hughes joined the meeting at 2:30pm in person.

**Eddie Hughes (EH)** began his speech from his department's perspective on issues of TA and the prospective plans to solve them. Some of the plans are referenced in the government's White Paper on Levelling Up. The aims included:

- A £11.5 billion investment into Affordable Housing Programme - constructing enough social homes to meet the demand.
- A new 'Statutory decent homes standards' for private and public housing.
- Reducing non-decent properties by 2030.
- A new Landlord licensing scheme and National Landlord Register to prevent landlords in the private sector from raising rents, going rogue and prevent continuation of section 21 no faults evictions. (Name and Shame Landlords scheme).

**EH** addressed that TA should be a stepping-stone for households rather than a destination and pledged that the DLUHC will commit to ensure shorter and healthier stays in TA, adding that as an absolute minimum, TA should not pose any risks to the health and wellbeing of its residents.

**EH** concluded his speech adding that it is recognised that the government may overlook problematic issues surrounding TA and hidden homelessness. Before inviting the Q&A, EH informed the panel that anything which could not be answered by him or his team during the Q&A will be seriously investigated.

**SM** opens the Q&A

#### Questions from the panel

**Karen Buck (KB) MP for Westminster North** addressed the following:

- Households in TA are housed under licences not under a tenancy agreement
- Statutory requirements around standards of PRS accommodation will not apply to TA

**KB** asked:

Q: Will the government make changes to enforce standards in TA?

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle (LRM)** addressed the following:

- There's confusion on who is accountable for where Households are placed
- LAs should be held responsible for households but are bearing the brunt of the demand with lack of housing supply and are relying on Landlords to make the allocations.
- Households placed out-of-borough or in unsuitable TA as a result

**LRM** asked:

Q: Who has the responsibility to place Households in accommodation and will the government help LAs to support the Households they allocate?

**Rebecca Long Bailey (RLB)** addressed the following:

- Local councils do not have the capital funding to procure TA
- As a result, property developers and landlords are buying multiple properties and converting them to HMOs (Housing multiple occupants)

**RLB** asked:

Q: Will the government invest in securing more supported accommodation to meet the demand?

**Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)** asked the following:

Q: LAs have lost a large amount of social housing through the Right to Buy Scheme. Does the Government plan to give discretionary powers to LAs to freeze or refuse applications for Right to Buy?

### Questions answered by **EH**

**EH - KB:** I do not have the answer right now, but my team and I will investigate your query.

**EH - LRM:** The Local Authorities hold duties to prevent people from falling into homelessness and are responsible for providing the households suitable accommodation as part of their duty-to-REFER. Although we are aware that LAs look to the PRS to meet the demands of housing supply which can include inappropriate allocation for Households. The House of government however plans to introduce New Powers to LAs to better manage their local supported housing market which will meet the needs of its residents should LAs want it.

**EH – RLB:** Houses in multiple occupation play a vital part in the housing market and often provide affordable and safe accommodation, especially for the communities that they serve. However, where a HMO poses a risk to the wellbeing of their inhabitants and or its local area, we devolve local councils robust powers to regulate standards and management of HMOs. If necessary, local planning authorities can also create limitations on the rapid growth of HMOs by requesting to remove the national permitted development right.

Additionally, the government will introduce £20 million funding towards supported accommodation enabling LAs to procure and sustain good social housing.

**EH – GMCA:** I do not have the answer right now, but my team and I will investigate your query.

**EH** left APPG meeting at 3pm. His team continued to answer the following questions below

#### Questions from the virtual audience

**Jack Shaw** addressed and asked the following:

- Two decades ago, less than 1 in 10 households were placed outside their area, some of them many miles away
- Now it is 1 in 4 households.

Q: Are there any plans to address out of area TA placements directly?

**Molly Bishop, GMCA** addressed and asked the following:

- There is a permanent need for some quality TA that is well suited to recovery and decent living.

Q: Will the government consider the 'Finnish' example of investing in the transformation of hostel and BnB accommodation into evidence-based quality accommodation (self-contained)?

**Housing Programme Director at Crisis, Fay Greaves (FG)** Will DLUHC be developing a definition of 'minimal and rare' for statutory TA provision?

Questions answered by **EH's** team:

**EH's Team – JS:** While LAs aim is to secure permanent accommodation for Households, the time spent in TA ensures households are receiving the help they need and are not without a roof over their head.

The homeless code of guidance sets out that LAs at first point of duty-to-refer should try to place households within their local area. The LA should also establish links with schools, doctors, and other key services of support. However, if this is not possible, the LA have a duty to place the household as close as possible to the original local area and any placements out of LA area should be as a last resort. If any LA place a household into TA out of the local area, they are therefore required by law to notify the LA of the placement to ensure there is no disruption with employment, school, or transportation.

**EH's Team – MB, GMCA:** The government has made clear that the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, most especially for families with children is inappropriate and unlawful and we are determined to stop this practice. The government is fully committed to fully enforcing the Homeless Reduction Act and including assisting LAs to support households to move out of TA, especially such as B&Bs and hostels.

The government will also be investing £11.5 billion into the infrastructure of new social housing, under the Affordable Homes Programme which will include delivery of new supported housing, which will take away to pressure of B&B placements. Alongside these measures, the DLUHC will also provide £20 million towards the Supported Housing Improvement Programme based on the clear successes of the Supported Housing pilots that were able to drive up the quality of accommodation and support to its residents. The programme will be a vital part of the improvement in quality for some of the poorest affected areas.

Funding for this three-year programme will be open to bids from all LAs.

**EH's Team – FG:** We do not have the answer to this right now, but the team will investigate your question.

**SM concluded the meeting at 15:30**

