



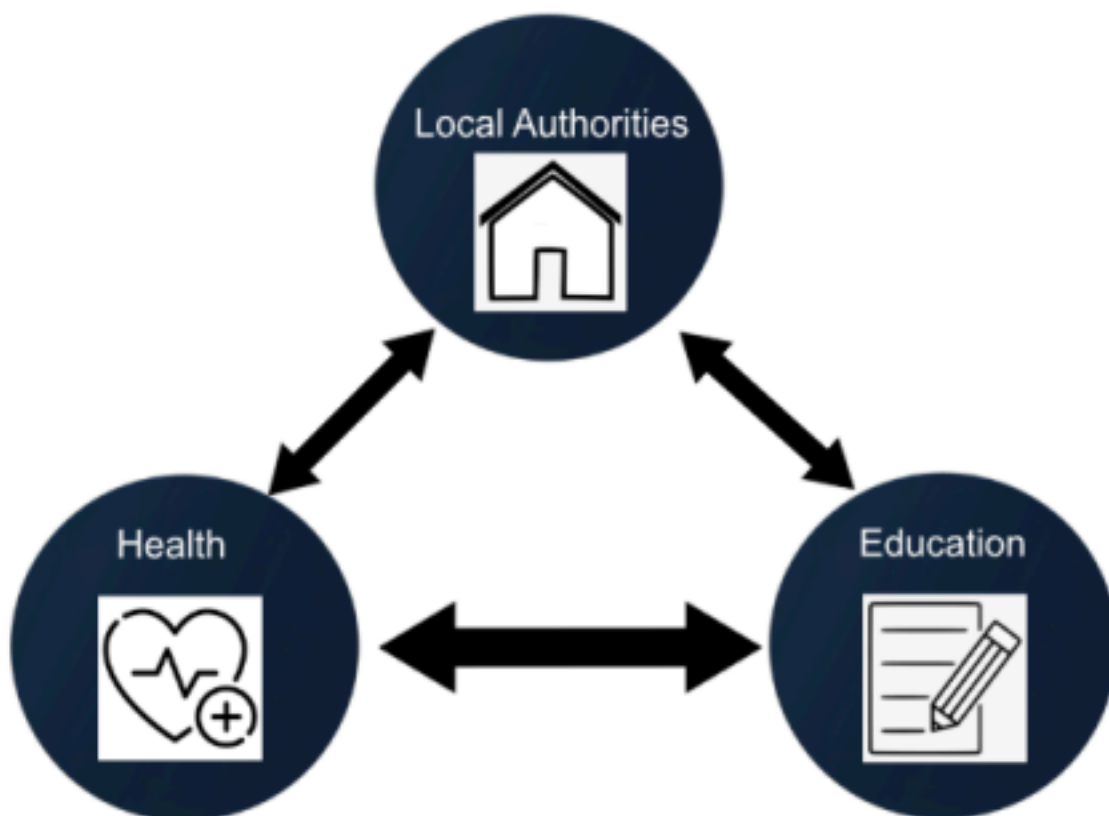
**Shared
Health
Foundation.**

Reducing the Impact
of Poverty on Health.

Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty:

The Schools' Toolkit

This document is a best practice guide to aid the implementation of the upcoming statutory duties for local authorities to put into place a consent-based notification system to alert schools, health visitors, and GPs when a child moves into temporary accommodation. This builds on existing legal duties for local authorities, such as S208 notifications between authorities for out of area placements. This expands these duties to involve wider support systems in health and education settings, both inside and outside the council area.



The SAFE Protocol introduces a new requirement within the statutory homelessness duties for Local Authorities (LAs). It requires LAs to notify a child's school, GP and health visitors when they move into Temporary Accommodation (TA). This measure has been brought forward through an amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act (2026), aligned with the Government's Child Poverty and Homelessness strategies. It marks an important step toward better coordination between housing, health, and education services, helping to ensure that professional support is in place for children experiencing homelessness.



Shared Health is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to reducing the impact of poverty on health. We operate a frontline service in Oldham supporting families living in temporary accommodation, providing access to advice, information, laundry facilities, and essential items such as nappies and baby formula. Through this direct work, alongside wider research projects and partnerships, we have seen first-hand the significant and long-term effects that growing up in temporary accommodation can have on a child's health and education.

Data from the National Child Mortality Database shows that between 2019 and 2025, 104 children died where temporary accommodation was identified as a contributing factor. Tragically, 76 of these children were under the age of one. These figures underline the urgent need for improved systems of support and information sharing.

When families are effectively connected to relevant services, a more holistic approach to support can be given. Fundamentally, lives can be saved when the right professionals are alerted at the right time.

A child's education can be profoundly affected by housing instability. A report by the Children's Commissioner found that only 10% of children who move more than ten times during their school career achieve more than five GCSEs. Some families living in temporary accommodation may move this frequently within a single year. The unstable nature of temporary accommodation means it is difficult for families to put down roots. From our experience, children are often disengaging from education due to homelessness-related factors, including being placed out of area or at significant distances from their school, increasing travel time and financial pressures.

Where families are placed in B&Bs or hotel accommodation, they may not have access to laundry facilities. This can leave parents unable to wash school uniforms, creating further barriers to school readiness. These circumstances can lead to reduced school attendance and missed learning opportunities, with long-term consequences for educational attainment, employment prospects and future life chances.

However, when schools are informed that a child is experiencing homelessness, they can take a compassionate response, and implement practical steps to support homeless students and their families through their homeless journey. We have seen examples of schools purchasing washing machines for families to use, offering access to Wi-Fi, and arranging transport vouchers from school budgets to help pupils remain engaged and connected to their education. These relatively simple interventions can have a transformative impact.



Furthermore, parents are often unlikely to disclose their homelessness to services themselves. There are many reasons for this, including feelings of shame, guilt and stigma, as well as fear about the consequences of their situation, particularly when children are involved. As a result, vital support can go unnoticed or delayed. Enabling local authorities to notify schools and GPs directly helps to overcome this barrier, ensuring that professionals are aware of a family's circumstances and can provide timely and appropriate support.

Clear processes around consent should underpin the protocol to ensure that families understand how their information will be shared and feel confident that it is being used appropriately, and in their best interests.

The data gap

A further benefit of the notification protocol is the opportunity to significantly improve data collection. At present, much of the data linking homelessness with health and educational outcomes remain incomplete or fragmented. While there is strong anecdotal evidence that children experiencing homelessness face poorer school attendance and reduced educational attainment, the lack of consistent quantitative data makes it difficult to fully understand the scale of the problem or to drive meaningful systemic change.

For example, we currently do not have clear figures on how many children are missing school specifically because of living in temporary accommodation. Similarly, there is limited data on the prevalence of health conditions, such as respiratory illnesses, among children living in temporary accommodation. We only count what we care about.

The notification protocol creates an opportunity for more effective cross-departmental data sharing between housing, health and education services. This will help ensure that the experiences and outcomes of children experiencing homelessness are accurately recorded, analysed and communicated to policymakers. Stronger evidence will allow for better-informed decision making, leading to more effective policy responses and, ultimately, improved outcomes for children in temporary accommodation.

The Single Unique Identifier (SUI), also set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, represents an important step forward in cross-departmental data sharing between local authorities, health teams, and education. Children are best supported and safeguarded when professionals work together seamlessly, with the right information available at the right time. We urge local authority housing teams to utilise the SUI for homeless children, in addition to health, education and social services colleagues.



Step by Step guide for school to implement the protocol:

The following good practice guide is not about introducing additional duties or creating new layers of responsibility. Similarly to Operation Encompass, it is there to recognise and celebrate the strong and compassionate practice that already exists across schools and service. The aim is to apply those same principles of good safeguarding, communication, and inclusion with particular focus on children and families experiencing temporary accommodation.

By making small and intentional adjustments, we can help maintain stability and belonging for pupils whose circumstances may otherwise disrupt their education. Essentially, this guidance is about what we already do well, but with this vulnerable group firmly in mind.

Appoint a notification and 'temporary accommodation' champion	Once a notification is received, schools identify a named member of staff responsible for coordinating the school's response. This could be the Designated Safeguarding lead, Pastoral lead, or Attendance lead. Champions should: • Act as the single point of contact for the family • Liaise with the local authority, housing officers, and internal staff • Ensure actions are tracked and reviewed
Strengthen information sharing	On receipt of the notification, schools should review the child's pastoral, safeguarding, attendance, and SEND records to identify any vulnerabilities that may be exacerbated by the move. Relevant information should be shared to: • The Senior Leadership team and/or Middle Leadership team • Class teachers and form tutors • Teaching Assistants and Pastoral staff • Attendance officer • Key support staff, where appropriate Further, school should ensure that receiving staff understand: • Recent moves the family have done • Current housing circumstances of the family/child • And known triggers or successful strategies to engage the child/family • Any existing support plans (ISP/EHCP/CP/Early Help) When needed, use translation services to ensure that families understand the full range of support available. Further, provide information of support via a range of media (text/email/phone/face-to-face/printed support pack)



Prepare and support child, immediately	Following the receipt of a notification, school should check in with the child, discreetly, and try to develop an understanding of how the move has affected them. Where appropriate, provide practical support with travel planning and bus routes. With consent, consider engaging in-school friendship networks to help the child maintain social connections and reduce the risk of isolation. If the move requires the child to transfer to a new school, developing a transition passport can support continuity. The passport should outline the child's strengths, interests, and needs, enabling staff in the receiving school to build an informed understanding and provide appropriate support from day one. Providing access to quiet space, wellbeing tools and child-centred 'transition first aid kits', could assist the child in regulation, during potential turbulent times. Considering opportunities such as: • Lunchtime clubs • Drop-down days to familiarise teachers with children and vice versa • Creative or collaborative projects to build relationships and reduce potential for isolation
Be flexible with attendance, punctuality, and behaviour	Schools retain their statutory duties around attendance. For pupils living in temporary accommodation, schools should apply these duties with an understanding of the practical barriers families may face, such as long journeys, overcrowded living conditions, or unpredictable routines. Where lateness is directly linked to these factors, schools should respond supportively and avoid punitive measures, keeping the register open for the maximum allowable time and working with families to reduce barriers to regular attendance. Using the Pupil Premium or Hardship Fund to provide targeted support, such as catch-up sessions or mentoring, can help address the learning gaps that may arise from a child's housing situation and reduce the risk of developmental regression. Offering temporary adjustments to a child's timetable can help ease the disruption caused by moving into temporary accommodation. For example, a slight tailoring of the school day, provision of spaces for schoolwork/homework, and the provision of breakfast on arrival.



Meet basic needs	After notification, check whether the family needs support with the following essentials: • Access to breakfast clubs or emergency food parcels • Spare uniform, PE kits, or laundry support • Access to school Wi-Fi or devices, if connectivity in temporary accommodation is limited These small interventions can have a significant impact on children and families – potentially reducing stress and improving attendance.
Support social and emotional wellbeing	Using a culturally adapted matrix of need (Appendix 1) to understand the child's current level of need allows school to provide the necessary support in place. Further conduct a wellbeing assessment, as recommended by the Child Outcomes Research Consortium, and map the child within the iThrive framework (or similar) to ensure a needs-led approach. Use a graduated approach to care and continuously monitor the child's needs post-notification receipt.
Admissions, Advocacy, and liaison with the local authority	Where the notification indicates a change of school may be required, advocate for: • Keeping siblings together • Minimising unnecessary school moves • Flexibility around documentation – recognising families may not have immediate access to records Schools should use the Duty to Collaborate and work with the local authority to ensure the continuity of the child's education is priority
Connect families to support	Schools should use the notification as a prompt to signpost families to the full range of support they are entitled to. This includes providing clear national and local guidance on services such as Early Help, housing officers, local charities, and wider community support. Completing an income assessment with the family may also be beneficial, as it can highlight opportunities for income maximisation and ensure families are accessing all available financial support.



	Information about relevant support pathways should be embedded across safeguarding, SEND, and mental health policies so that staff can respond consistently and confidently. Schools may also wish to offer additional forms of practical and relational support, such as: • Coffee mornings • Parent support groups • Peer networks for families in similar situations These approaches help reduce stigma, strengthen trust, and ensure families feel connected and supported during periods of housing instability.
Provide a clear transition timeline (if a school move is likely)	If the notification suggests a school transfer is imminent, schools should consider providing the child with a <i>transition booklet</i> to prepare the child for change and help reduce anxiety around it. Potential content of the <i>transition booklet</i>: • Key dates • Maps and photos • Staff contacts • Testimonials from pupils • Travel information Where appropriate, liaise with the receiving school to share relevant information and support a smooth transition for the child. This may include arranging a facilitated visit to the new school to help the child and family prepare for the move.
Support the family through the transition	Families in temporary accommodation often feel overwhelmed, during the temporary accommodation journey. Providing clear, accessible information can reduce the stress experienced, when navigating their homelessness journey. To assist the family through the transition, schools should ensure there is a named contact available for them, both in the sending school and receiving school. Good practice would lead schools to also providing a transition support pack, which includes entitlements, government support, local services, and housing welfare guidance.



Case studies

Manchester:

Manchester implemented the protocol in early 2025 and is currently issuing notifications to schools only. Overall, feedback from Manchester has been positive. Schools have consistently reported that awareness of a pupil's housing instability significantly enhances their ability to provide timely and appropriate support.

For example, one school purchased washing machines specifically to enable students experiencing homelessness to wash their uniforms. This addressed a practical but significant barrier to attendance for families living in B&Bs or hotel accommodation without access to laundry facilities.

Schools have also supported families by arranging transport to and from school and by offering flexibility around arrival times where pupils are travelling longer distances from temporary accommodation. Feedback highlights that schools can provide a wide range of practical and pastoral interventions for children living in temporary accommodation, but this support is only possible when they are informed of the child's circumstances.

In 2025, Manchester Council provided monthly data detailing the number of notifications issued and the proportion of families who did or did not provide consent. While overall annual figures indicate that consent was given in the majority of cases, closer analysis of the monthly data reveals a more nuanced trend.

Consent rates were consistently higher during school term time. However, consent declined significantly during, or immediately prior to, school holiday periods. In some holiday months, the number of families withholding consent exceeded those agreeing to notification.

This pattern presents a challenge to the effectiveness of the notification system. For schools and GP practices to provide timely and appropriate support, they must first be aware that a child has moved into temporary accommodation. Lower consent rates during holiday periods risk delaying this awareness and, consequently, access to essential services.



Rochdale: Feedback from Rochdale has been overwhelmingly positive. The Housing Team reports that the system is straightforward to use and has now become embedded as standard practice. They have also highlighted that families have responded positively to the additional support, noting improved access to healthcare and education services as a direct result.

Healthcare

Rochdale has been able to facilitate targeted support to families placed in temporary accommodation (TA) by proactively notifying GP practices of a family's homelessness status. This has helped secure repeat prescriptions and maintain scheduled appointments without disruption. In addition, GP practices were provided with guidance developed by Shared Health Foundation outlining best practice in supporting homeless families. As a result, several families have been able to remain registered with their existing GP despite being placed in TA outside of the usual catchment area, ensuring continuity of care during a period of instability.

Education

The notification protocol has also contributed to improved school attendance among children living in TA. Schools and the Local Authority (LA) have worked collaboratively to provide practical support, including travel arrangements and greater flexibility around drop-off and pick-up times.

In one case involving a family fleeing domestic abuse, the protocol played a vital safeguarding role. By informing the school of the family's circumstances, the council enabled adjustments to the child's school hours, preventing the perpetrator from accessing the child at drop-off and pick-up times. More broadly, schools have been better equipped to support pupils experiencing homelessness by offering safe spaces, breakfast and after-school club places, and ensuring children remain included in social activities with their peers. These measures have also provided valuable childcare support for parents during an already challenging time.

The protocol has further strengthened joint working between Housing and Education departments within the council. This has streamlined processes for school and nursery registration and facilitated access to bus passes where needed. By coordinating support in this way, the council has reduced administrative pressures on parents who may otherwise struggle to navigate these systems without Local Authority assistance.



The evidence is clear: when housing, health and education services work together, children experiencing homelessness are far better protected. The SAFE Protocol offers Local Authorities a practical and achievable way to ensure that the right professionals are alerted at the right time. By embedding simple notification processes and prioritising informed consent, councils can help ensure that no child's needs go unseen because they are living in temporary accommodation. We urge all Local Authorities to adopt and implement the SAFE Protocol as standard practice, strengthen collaboration across services, and commit to improving the data and systems that support children in temporary accommodation. Every notification represents an opportunity to intervene early, provide stability and compassion, and ultimately protect the health, education and future life chances of some of the most vulnerable children in our communities.

Shared Health offers training, guidance and support to Local Authorities in addition to this document. Please email contact@sharedhealth.org.uk to book training, if you require further information or have any questions.



Appendices:

Appendix 1.

Domain	Tier 1: Thriving	Tier 2: Emerging needs	Tier 3: Complex needs	Tier 4: Acute needs
Learning and engagement	Attends regularly and progresses well	Occasional gaps and needs catch up	Frequently absent and disengaged	Refusing school and significant regression
Emotional wellbeing	Expresses emotions appropriately	Shows signs of anxiety or low mood	Persistent distress and needs support	Crisis-level distress and is showing signs of self-harm or trauma indicators
Relationships and social life	Positive peer and adult relationships	Some isolation or conflict	Struggles to connect and is withdrawn	At risk of exploitation, bullying, or abuse
Home and environment	Stable housing and basic needs are met	Some instability or overcrowding	Living in TA or unsuitable housing	Homeless, unsafe, or at immediate risk of becoming homeless
Parental/carers support	Supportive and engaging	Stressed but responsive	Overwhelmed and needs support	Absent, hostile, or unsafe caregiving
Voice and agency	Feels heard and involved	Sometimes unsure or passive	Rarely consulted and feels powerless	Silenced or fearful, unable to express needs