

# WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

**Designing Solutions to London's  
Temporary Accommodation  
System, 6 October 2016**

BENJAMIN IRVINE | OCTOBER 2016

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# Chair's foreword



The RSA is glad to have been able to gather a cross section of housing stakeholders, the Department for Communities and Local Government and Policy Lab to explore solutions to this acute expression of the housing crisis in London.

The workshop identified fruitful areas for experimentation for councils and their partners to prevent and relieve homelessness. We also hope it contributed to building a shared vision for a more fundamental shift in housing policy, as well as helping to build a case for how the key agencies in London could go about creating change.

We're proud to have organised this event with the support of Trust for London and I hope the RSA is able to continue to play a convening role as we explore ways to reverse the rise in families living in temporary accommodation.

Matthew Taylor  
Chief Executive  
The RSA

## **Briefing: Designing solutions to London's temporary accommodation system**

Prior to the workshop the RSA produced a briefing providing an overview of the trends behind the numbers of families in temporary accommodation in London and the policy context. This can be referred to for more detail on some of the issues discussed here. The key points identified included:

- Rising rents and insecure tenancies in the private rented sector are a growing cause of homelessness. At the same time policy is encouraging the use of the private rented sector both for temporary accommodation and also for finding settled accommodation to discharge the main duty.
- A combination of an overheated private rented sector and a number of providers moving towards offering more expensive, nightly paid, emergency accommodation has increased costs.
- Total spending on temporary accommodation by London boroughs was £663m in 2014/15 with boroughs meeting a quarter of these costs from general funds. Boroughs are often using incentive payments to landlords to supplement the level of local housing allowance that is available for temporary accommodation.
- Councils are increasingly being driven to place households out of area.
- Families in temporary accommodation suffer from poor physical and mental health and poor education and employment outcomes due to poor conditions, uncertainty, a lack of control, school moves and travelling long distances.
- Boroughs have responded by: collaborating to contain the costs of nightly paid accommodation; focusing on prevention; setting up wholly owned housing companies to buy or develop homes for affordable rent; setting up social lettings agencies and co-investing with impact investors to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation.

Full briefing available at: [www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/designing-solutions-to-londons-temporary-accommodation-system-briefing](http://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/designing-solutions-to-londons-temporary-accommodation-system-briefing)

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# 1. Summary

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On 6th October 2016 the RSA and Policy lab held a one-day workshop to explore solutions to the number of households in temporary accommodation in London. The workshop brought together senior housing officers, registered providers, homelessness charities, social enterprises and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It was supported by Trust for London.

The objectives were:

- To collaboratively develop a view of the dynamics of homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation provision in London.
- To develop an insight into the needs and experiences of users.
- To develop ideas for new interventions that could transform the system by addressing the causes of homelessness and ensuring emergency support is a last resort that is both affordable and supportive for families.
- To explore ways central government might support London boroughs to reduce homelessness. This included but was not limited to, how grant funding that will replace the temporary accommodation management fee (that councils currently receive through the housing benefit system) will be distributed.
- To identify knowledge gaps for further research.

The day was structured in two parts with the morning dedicated to mapping the system and developing an in-depth understanding of the experiences of users to identify their needs. This was used to define a set of specific challenges for temporary accommodation in London. In the second half of the workshop participants heard from initiatives that have demonstrated success and potential to improve outcomes for homeless households before generating and developing ideas for new solutions.



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# Evidence presentations

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**Val Keen** from the Housing and Homelessness team at DCLG introduced the Departments view on local authority practice and homelessness prevention. She stated that the government advocates broad “end-to-end” strategies for reducing homelessness; including prevention, intervention to prevent crisis and effective recovery from homelessness. She welcomed the focus of the workshop on temporary accommodation provision “that sit’s at the fulcrum of that crisis prevention”. DCLG has recently been in consultation with stakeholders on how best to distribute the grant programme that will replace the temporary accommodation management fee from April 2017. She reiterated that local authorities will be given more than equivalent funding directly under the new funding programme and confirmed that the resource would flow to the areas of greatest need. She acknowledged that for many boroughs the funding would have to be used to meet existing temporary accommodation commitments but hoped that a grant scheme might offer some scope to apply the funding more flexibly and upstream towards effective prevention.

**Dr Julie Rugg** from the University of York Centre for Housing Policy offered some reflections on the intrinsic contradictions of temporary accommodation policy, based on her research into the costs of temporary accommodation to London boroughs, and the unintended consequences that may arise from interventions. She emphasised:

- London is a very different context to the rest of the UK and may require a distinct approach to providing and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.
- The private rented sector is not one thing but multiple niche and localised markets. The niche temporary accommodation market in London is hidden, very strategic in reacting to policy changes and well aware of the constraints councils are under when procuring emergency accommodation. These providers need to be brought into conversations with councils and government.
- Any subsidy must be used carefully to avoid falling prey to capture or skewing the rental market. This includes the devolved temporary accommodation management fee or any additional resources.
- The key crisis facing temporary accommodation is the inadequate level of Local Housing Allowance (LHA). Without changes here, any private rented sector tenancy that a council arranges is potentially unsustainable.
- In her view, increasing the length of tenancies, while beneficial will not on its own address the problem of the end of shorthold tenancies as a cause of homelessness.
- Some council investment in housing is motivated by potentially competing objectives. Development by council-owned housing companies and joint public and private investment in properties for temporary accommodation is intended to both increase access to properties for temporary accommodation and reduce costs whilst also generating a return. She asked: “Are we investing in housing to deliver affordable housing supply? Or investing in housing to raise money to then build affordable housing? When are cross-subsidy ideas useful and when are they working towards competing goals?”
- Temporary accommodation interventions tend to be mediation schemes to facilitate access to the private rented sector. This mediation is necessary. However, what’s needed is to think through the structure of how this mediation can be achieved most effectively. At present, rather than making the market more accessible, the system is creating tenancies that are more expensive, and leaving affected families with feelings of lack of control and vulnerability.
- 20 percent of costs are being paid for by tenants who are working, but they are not being supported to become independent; rather they are forced to depend on the council for their accommodation.
- There is a need for more rigorous research and evaluation of the kinds of schemes and solutions that are being implemented, including the costs involved and the numbers of tenants.

**Deborah Garvie**, Senior Policy Officer at Shelter presented on how efforts to prevent homelessness should be moved upstream, from preventing an immediate crisis, to forms of targeted and strategic prevention. Crisis prevention activities include services provided to those threatened with homelessness and may include direct intervention to

save the home or help with rehousing. Targeted prevention includes forms of early intervention for particular groups, based on an understanding of why they are at risk. Strategic prevention attempts to address structural causes of homelessness. She emphasised:

- Most homelessness prevention and relief is at the crisis or pre-crisis stage, despite the fact that the Homelessness Act 2002 requires councils to take a long term and strategic approach to prevention and develop a prevention strategy.
- Housing affordability can be seen as a structural cause of homelessness and addressing it should be part of strategic prevention. By 2020 the four year freeze to LHA will leave families in four fifths of the UK with a gap between the support they need to pay rent and the maximum entitlement. Housing benefit is a key prevention tool. The lower benefit cap which will take effect from November 2016 will see affected families lose £100 per week in benefits placing them at significant risk of homelessness.<sup>1</sup>
- There are many forms of upstream prevention that all have a role to play including: setting up systems to identify tenants at risk of homelessness, dealing with arrears early, tenancy sustainment schemes and

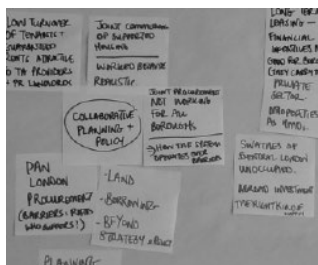
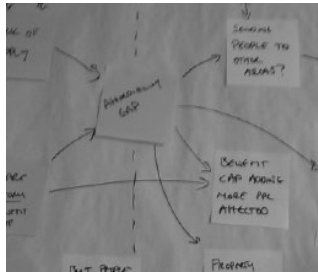
1. Butler, P. and Arnett, G. (July 2015) [Lower benefit caps 'will exclude poor families from large parts of England'](#) The Guardian

There was consensus that the “affordability gap” between the LHA and market rents was a serious issue both as a driver of homelessness presentations and also for the ability of councils and providers to provide temporary accommodation. There has been a freeze in housing benefit subsidy for temporary accommodation since 2011. Registered social landlords who provide temporary accommodation by leasing private properties are seeing their supply line dry up, larger landlords with multiple properties are no longer making them available and they are increasingly having to deal with small landlords. The management fee is often not sufficient to cover the real costs of property maintenance and tenancy management. We heard that: “Without action on the level of local housing allowance, and quickly, it is possible that [a major registered provider] may have to withdraw.”

Mark Billings, Benefits and Housing Needs Operations Manager at Hackney Council, emphasised the broader issue of total housing supply: “London’s growing, we simply don’t have the properties. The number of affordable properties we have is shrinking, Hackney is now unaffordable for those on low or nil incomes.” He added that “There are 14,000 households in Hackney on the council’s waiting list and there is simply not enough affordable accommodation to meet the demand.”

# Exploring the Evidence

In order to build up an idea of the temporary accommodation system, participants chose one key insight or piece of evidence and mapped the system around it, asking: “What or who causes it? And what does it lead to?” Many people used the affordability gap as a starting point for exploring the multitude of other factors.



- Factors contributing to general housing demand and constraints on housing supply included: “land banking”, barriers for smaller housebuilders and the role of ‘buy to let’ in increasing demand for properties as an investment without increasing supply. An “unbalanced economy” that is “London centric” and “a low wage economy” were also noted as key structural factors.
- The benefit cap will likely result in more families presenting as homeless.
- Out of area placements are placing pressure on outer London boroughs.
- The Housing and Planning Act will further reduce the stock of social housing.
- Motivations for different actors were identified: housing associations as providers of temporary accommodation look to address the underlying causes of homelessness in a way that private landlords do not, but their provision is more expensive; small private landlords are motivated by pension-style returns.
- Quality issues with temporary accommodation tend to prevail because it is only when properties are rejected by other sectors of the lettings market that they are made available for this market.
- There are barriers to mobility for households including support networks, schools and employment, but households are also dis-incentivised to voluntarily move to another area due to the risk of losing the local connection requirement which is part of eligibility for council support.
- Low turnover of tenants and guaranteed rents are important incentives for landlords and potential temporary accommodation providers.

## Understanding user’s experiences

During 2016 Policy Lab conducted interviews with 11 homeless people, as well as three service providers in Oxford, Newcastle and Essex to understand people’s experience better and how homelessness can be prevented.

Kyna Gourley shared these video ethnographies of homeless households in temporary accommodation. Participants in the videos described how they had become homeless, their experience of living in temporary accommodation and of housing options services.

### **Risks and resilience**

People's backstories revealed what Policy Lab termed 'personal risk factors' which made them less resilient and more vulnerable to homelessness. Such factors included a lack of skills and knowledge as a result of not previously living independently. In other cases a lack of financial independence from partners and family members, coupled with relationship breakdown, was key to households becoming homeless.

Conversely participants in the study also demonstrated 'personal protective factors' that made them more resilient and better able to manage their situations. These factors included an orientation towards goals which galvanised them to achieve a more positive outcome. For many households this was their children's wellbeing. Participants also described taking steps to actively preserve a sense of identity, self and home, maintaining a positive mindset and having positive support networks to turn to.

### **Everyday experience**

The videos provided an insight into the everyday experience of living in temporary accommodation including: a lack of space for children to play; a lack of privacy with hostel staff frequently coming into the bedroom; parents and older children sleeping in the same room; eating a poor and expensive diet with no or inadequate access to cooking facilities; older children not telling their friends where they are living out of shame; and living in a state of permanent uncertainty, with "no breathing space", not knowing what will happen next.

### **Experience of services**

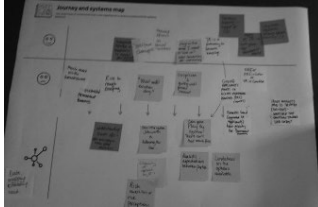
A recording of a housing options advice session showed the value of the housing adviser providing legal advice and mediating with the landlord to give the tenants more time to look for an alternative tenancy, as well as offering help with the upfront costs of a deposit, rent in advance and agency fees.

Households' experiences of housing options services included feeling that they were "treated as a liar" despite bringing evidence. A single mother described being threatened with a withdrawal of support if she did not accept her and her children being placed in a hostel with problem drug and alcohol users.

A housing options worker described the difficulty of accessing properties in the immediate area and the bind that housing options teams are in when the law says they have to house people but they lack options in social housing and the private rented sector. The advice worker described how advice sessions frequently result in an emotional exchange when households are presented with the prospect of only receiving an offer of accommodation out of the area.



# The user journey and the underlying system components



Participants chose one person from the film and plotted their journey over time, including the factors that caused them to become at risk of homelessness, their experience of services, their experience of temporary accommodation and their potential recovery.

At each point participants were encouraged to draw out the system components: the actors and institutions involved and their motivations or characteristics which underlie and help to explain each event.

A lack of information and knowledge was identified as a key reason households did not seek assistance earlier. It was also a key source of distress whilst spending time in temporary accommodation. A system which tells households to seek advice early but may later tell them assistance cannot be provided until the day of eviction is also confusing for users.

The dynamics of the rental market and the causes of the lack of affordable housing supply were also explored.

## Challenge setting

Based on the insights from users' experiences and the different system components, workshop participants attempted to frame the key challenge. Defining the challenge in a specific way was important to establish which actors are involved and what methods could be used to change it. Three clusters of questions emerged around advice and support, alternative types of accommodation and the location of new affordable housing supply. Ultimately groups settled on four challenges:

- 1. A lack of knowledge contributes to uncertainty. How can we support people to be equipped and empowered to solve their own housing crisis?**
- 2. How can we prevent people from getting to crisis point and presenting to the council?**
- 3. How can we provide or increase alternative housing and alternative forms of supply?**
- 4. How can we achieve sufficient genuinely affordable housing locally?**

Interesting challenges which were not explicitly pursued included: how can we...

- ...recreate family support in its absence?
- ...provide "social shared" accommodation targeted at under 35-year-olds?
- ...get government to take a longer term view about the value of investment in housing?

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# Inspiration presentations

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Participants heard from four inspirational initiatives to improve outcomes for homeless households in temporary accommodation that have already demonstrated successes or have significant potential.

## Real Lettings Property Fund/Real Lettings

### Connell Grogan, Resonance / Amy Cripps, St Mungo's

The Real Lettings Property Fund combines investment from social investors and local authorities to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation and help people at risk of homelessness to become more independent. The local authority nominates tenants who would otherwise be in temporary accommodation and Real Lettings (a social lettings agency run by St Mungo's) manages the tenancy. Local authorities pay a placement fee and tenants are encouraged to save for a deposit, take steps towards employment and develop resilience against future homelessness.

- Total invested: £60m
- Type of properties: 51 percent ex local authority / 42 percent purpose built private development
- Number of households housed: 289, predominantly single parent families
- Benefits: creation of a portfolio of suitable move-on accommodation in the area, potential to lever in private investment, better progression and outcomes for vulnerable tenants

More information: [reallettings.com](http://reallettings.com), St Mungo's, Resonance (2016) [Real Lettings property fund social impact report, third year \(2015/16\)](#)

## An Introduction to Homeshare

### Heather Nielsen, Shared Lives Plus

Shared Lives Plus is the UK network for Shared Lives and Homeshare. In a Homeshare, someone who needs a small amount of help to live independently in their own home provides a spare room and shared facilities free of charge to someone with a housing need who can provide around 10 hours a week of support or companionship.

Support tends to be domestic help (shopping, cooking, cleaning etc) and cannot include personal care.

Homeshare coordinators recruit, carefully match and monitor Homeshare arrangements.

People who currently benefit from Homeshare include: older people living alone, students, care leavers, single parents, people with long-term health conditions and adults with learning disabilities. Homeshare is mutually beneficial for both parties and can have significant wellbeing benefits for all involved.

Schemes tend to be most successful where accommodation is expensive and there are good transport links. Good links with commissioners are also key to growth. Barriers to the growth of Homesharing include few householders coming forward and elderly householders getting in touch only when their care needs are too extensive.

- Number of UK Homeshare schemes: 22
- Number of people supported: 250

More information: [homeshareuk.org](http://homeshareuk.org), Shared Lives Plus (2016) [Homeshare sector report](#)

## PLACE/Ladywell: High Quality Temporary Homes on Vacant Land

Jeff Endean and Osama Shoush, Lewisham Borough Council



There are over 1,700 Lewisham homeless households in temporary accommodation, an 89 percent increase since 2011. During that time, the number of affordable properties to let has decreased by 44 percent. The growth in homelessness and the reduction of affordable housing results in many households placed in nightly paid temporary accommodation, often out of the borough. Increasing the supply of high quality affordable temporary accommodation in Lewisham is therefore a priority.

PLACE/Ladywell is an innovative and award-winning development that utilises vacant council land to provide high-quality temporary accommodation for 24 homeless families who would otherwise be in expensive and unsuitable, nightly-paid temporary accommodation. PLACE/Ladywell was created as a re-deployable development which will initially remain on site for four years. It helps to combat the current housing crisis in London and the UK through providing temporary accommodation at LHA rates.

The ground floor also hosts an enterprise hub that combines affordable work space with business support, a community café and a film screening room. Local small businesses are supported to grow, creating employment and gaining investment. Together these new uses of the area also create an economically active environment to enrich and drive regeneration.

- Cost per unit: £156,000
- Payback period: 8 years
- Benefits: Innovative construction method: built in six months, quiet, heat and sound insulation, lightweight

More information: [lewisham.gov.uk/regeneration/PLACE/Ladywell](http://lewisham.gov.uk/regeneration/PLACE/Ladywell)

## Systems change for unsupported temporary accommodation

**Gary Bishop and Christa Maciver, Justlife**

Justlife Foundation works with single homeless households living in unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA) in Manchester and Brighton, these households are typically not-statutorily homeless and living in private hostels, bed-and breakfast accommodation and short-stay houses in multiple occupation. Justlife has been working with a total of 11 different local authority areas to determine the extent of the problems of UTA nationally. They have carried out 45 in depth interviews and 13 user journeys. Of the 45 people interviewed 23 had no lock on their door, 14 were victims of a crime and 39 experienced worsening mental health whilst in UTA.

Justlife has been trialling a series of low-cost recommendations for increasing standards in UTA and improving outcomes through Temporary Accommodation Boards (TABs). A TAB has been established in Manchester comprising UTA users, local authority representatives, mental health teams, environmental health, and referring voluntary sector organisations. The board gathers and monitors information about local bed spaces to inform referrals and signposting towards appropriate accommodation. The TAB has created a live 'greenlist' of acceptable local bed spaces and an 'exclusion list' of unacceptable bed spaces.

Justlife recommends the establishment of formal TABs at the city level. These could agree a set of minimum standards for the unsupported temporary accommodation submarket and a single license agreement for local bed spaces, which sets out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, details of services and service charges, and a named point of contact for tenants in the event that issues arise. Tenants could be supported to make complaints, including by allowing them to reclaim, via rent repayment orders, a proportion of the housing benefit previously paid to their landlord.

Justlife also recommends that in-tenancy support is needed to prevent people cycling in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation and should include 'warm handovers', where the person referring the individual goes with the tenant to check the condition of their new home and provides support with paperwork and settling in.

More information: Davies, B. Maciver, C. and Rose, A. (2016) [Nowhere fast: The journey in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation](#) IPPR

## Idea generation

Participants formed groups around the four challenge questions identified. In order to prompt people to push the boundaries and come up with different sorts of ideas we used 'change cards', which pose hypothetical scenarios, and encourage particular 'thinking states' including being optimistic, resourceful and aware of other worlds. Questions included:

- What would it look like in Camden versus Barking and Dagenham?
- What would we do if people were our only resource?
- What would we do if we had to do it for the whole world?
- What might it look in 2040?
- What if legislation and regulation were not allowed?
- What would Airbnb do?

We asked people to write down as many ideas as possible resulting in reams of ideas on post it notes across the areas of behaviour change, service redesign, private rented sector regulation, D.I.Y. solutions, tax incentives and disincentives, types of investment and planning policy. Groups discussed, sorted, discarded and combined these into the sketched ideas below.

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# Ideas

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How can we support people to be equipped and empowered to solve their own housing crisis?

## Teach knowledge and life skills for avoiding homelessness in schools. Including tenancy agreements, financial literacy and housing rights.

### Key insights

A lack of knowledge of housing rights and procedures in housing support is contributing to people not knowing what will happen to them. In a crisis situation people need to be better equipped to know their housing options and how to cope.

### What's required to bring it forward?

A commitment by government and teachers to dedicate a programme of learning focussing on developing a set of life skills around housing.

### Risks

- Securing adequate funding.
- Ensuring training is targeted and effective.
- Making this learning engaging and fun.

### Vision of success

- Knowledge is power.
- Fewer people accessing services at crisis point.
- People have knowledge of the support available and access the right forms of support.
- People have a clear understanding of what to expect from local housing services and barriers of understanding are broken down.

How can we prevent people from getting to crisis point and presenting to the council?

## Preventing crisis homelessness through early action and reform of the private rented sector to make it more a stable and affordable.

### Key insights

- Most homelessness is caused by the end of assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector.
- Most households in temporary accommodation are single parent households and so can only earn one income.

### What's required to bring it forward?

- The creation of stable tenancies in the private rented sector through a minimum five-year rental contract with in-tenancy rent increases limited to inflation and no break clause that the landlord would be able to use to ask the tenant leave early (tenants should be able to leave the tenancy early without a penalty by providing sufficient notice).
- Improved access to early advice, information and legal advocacy, including at times that fit around peoples work commitments. Online forms of support can complement helplines and drop in centres which mainly operate during working hours.
- Ensure access to sheltered housing for people with more complex support needs. Decommissioned accommodation units on hospital grounds represent underused public assets that could be used for supported housing.

### Risks

Costs of advice and support (most local authorities have reduced spending on non-statutory housing support services considerably.)<sup>1</sup>

Over-reliance on the private rented sector - regulation could mean landlords pull out of the market and it collapses.

### Vision of success

No homelessness. If people lose their home because of personal factors, such as health or relationship breakdown they are able to access another home without council support.

Housing costs no more than a third of local average incomes.

1. Garvey, K. (2016) '[The axe of council cuts is falling on support for homeless people](#)', Shelter policy blog

## How can we provide alternative types of housing and increase alternative forms of supply?

### “Deal lettings” public sector unlocks land to build affordable homes

Co-invest public land and direct the delivery of multi-tenure developments through a pan-London vehicle. The uplift in land value will be captured and used to make the housing affordable without a central government subsidy. This is a financing model similar to Shelter’s co-submission to the Wolfson economic prize in 2014.<sup>1</sup>

#### Key insights

Good practise exists through the Real Lettings model, where investment is sought from both the private and public sector in order to acquire affordable private rented properties that can be accessed by local authority housing teams. Whilst this scheme makes more properties available at an affordable rent, it does not contribute to additional property supply. This new scheme intends to use this investment – whether land or financial – to build new homes. Place/Ladywell provides evidence of councils’ ability to commission construction on vacant public land.

#### What’s required to bring it forward?

- Land.
- Political will and a shared mission.
- Institutional investors.
- Pan-London cooperation to create one vehicle for the delivery of multi-tenure developments including family homes, houses in multiple occupation and modular homes.
- Developments could be commissioned or delivered directly.

#### Risks

- 33 boroughs wanting 33 different outcomes. Uncertainty over the allocation of funding and building across boroughs.
- Density questions in an already crowded capital.
- Securing buy-in if the scheme does not immediately give boroughs access to this accommodation.
- Planning constraints.
- Time constraints.
- Risk of going over budget.
- If social rent properties are developed these would be subject to right to buy making benefits from affordable homes potentially short-lived.

#### Vision of success

- A mass release of public sector land and an increase in supply of affordable and social rent rented homes.
- London boroughs working together.
- No one in temporary accommodation.

1. Shelter (2014) [Shelter submission to the Wolfson economics prize 2014](#)

## How can we achieve sufficient genuinely affordable housing locally?

# Empowering councils to acquire underused land to build more homes

### Key insights

- A lack of housing supply, and specifically a lack of affordable housing, is the underlying cause behind the growth of the use of temporary accommodation. And a lack of supply of land is a key factor in the undersupply of housing.
- Non-residential land (industrial, agricultural, greenbelt) is of much lower value than residential land.
- Much non-residential brownfield land is currently underused and could provide more homes, but when planning permission is given land owners/developers benefit from the value uplift – not the community.

### What's required to bring it forward?

New powers of compulsory purchase for UK local authorities akin to the power of eminent domain in the US. This would enable local authorities to issue compulsory purchase orders for non-residential land at existing use value and then to fund the development of affordable housing through the uplift in land value.

### Risks

The government reportedly believes such legislation would be in conflict with EU law.<sup>1</sup> There is some evidence supporting the introduction of equivalent legislation. Arrangements in Germany and the Netherlands currently enable local authorities to acquire land for infrastructure and housing development at, or close to, existing use value.<sup>2</sup>

### Vision of success

1. The legal impediment in EU law would be Article 1 Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights, 'The right to property'.

2. See: Aubrey, T. (2016) ['Bridging the infrastructure gap: Financing infrastructure investment to unlock housing'](#) Centre for Progressive Capitalism



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# Conclusion

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The ideas presented here offer four ways to tackle homelessness through action on prevention, creating stability in the private rented sector and innovative methods for potentially increasing affordable housing supply without public subsidy. None are a “fix” on their own but they were all selected based on key insights from an attempt to interrogate the many components in the system together.

A key insight from this process is that in order to transform the temporary accommodation system in London, establishing a shared goal will be essential. The stated purpose of a system is rarely the same as what the system actually does as it absorbs and translates the actors’ different motivations.

The ultimate purpose for government and London boroughs is ideally to prevent homelessness and ensure access to decent housing for residents, with temporary accommodation providing emergency relief and support to households to help them recover from a shock. The purposes which guide boroughs’ actions might be slightly different: to meet their legal duties whilst reducing costs, for example. The principle that boroughs have a duty to house people in their local area seems to have been allowed to slip, although the law would seem to uphold it.<sup>1</sup> Across London if boroughs could agree to a shared principle and purpose on the extent to which they are aiming to prevent and relieve homelessness within London, it would be a considerable step towards the ambitious forms of coordination and cooperation suggested above.

Similarly, with the potential introduction of a homelessness prevention duty on the horizon,<sup>2</sup> which would rightly focus councils’ attention on preventing homelessness before it occurs, government needs to ensure other aspects of legislation and policy enable councils to tackle the structural causes of homelessness, as well as providing adequate resource to fulfil any new duties meaningfully through advice, support and targeted prevention.

1. [Nzolameso vs Westminster City Council \[2015\] UKSC 22](#) and Douglas, D. (2015) [Landmark case tightens rules on out-of-borough placements](#) Inside Housing.

2. The Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17, has passed its second reading in parliament on 28th October 2016. The government confirmed it would support the bill’s progress through parliament on the 24th October 2016. Local government and their representative organisations had been reluctant to fully support the bill in the absence of a long term national strategy that will allow councils to deal with the extra duties owed, but it’s understood they are now close to. Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17. Available at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/homelessnessreduction.html>

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# Areas for further research

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## **What is happening to people who are moved out of area or discharged into the private rented sector?**

Participants suggested a need to measure the long term socioeconomic impacts of greater numbers of people living in temporary accommodation. The practice of out of borough placements is also relatively unprecedented and there does not appear to be a clear way to track outcomes for households placed out of London. Equally it does not appear to be known whether instances of repeat homelessness are higher as a result of homelessness duties being discharged through tenancies in the private rented sector since 2011.

## **A rigorous comparative evaluation**

Whilst the diversity of small scale responses to move people out of poor quality temporary accommodation indicates healthy experimentation there is little information on many initiatives. There is arguably a need for a rigorous comparative evaluation of the kinds of schemes and solutions that are being implemented to assess their effectiveness and viability, including the costs and the numbers of properties and households involved.

## **What is the public cost?**

There was a consensus that the current situation in London is unsustainable and significantly more resource is likely required through an increase in the LHA or grant funding. Establishing the full cost to the public purse may be necessary. In 2004 Shelter estimated the total additional cost to the public purse of using temporary accommodation as opposed to affordable housing at £500million, the number of households in temporary accommodation in England was then nearing its peak of 101,000.<sup>3</sup> The estimate was based on comparison of the needs of currently homeless households compared with those of recently homeless households in social housing. Additional rent related expenditure was £300m. £200m in costs was associated with out of school provision for children and additional sickness and worklessness. Establishing the full additional public cost once again, both to boroughs and to the exchequer, could help make the case for stronger action on increasing access to stable and affordable housing in London. This action could be on increasing new affordable supply, expanding the social housing stock or regulation of the private rented sector.

3. Mitchell, F. (2004) [Living in limbo](#) Shelter

### **What could London councils do to increase the amount of new build housing that is affordable?**

There is clearly a need to increase the amount of either social or private rented housing that is within LHA rates. Barriers to the ambitious proposals on increasing housing supply included a lack of knowledge and confidence in councils in directing housing developments as well as legal uncertainty about the feasibility of this particular strategy for acquiring brownfield land. Action to increase the knowledge and confidence of London councils to commission affordable housing development on their own sites using innovative building and financing methods would be welcome.

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Trust for London is an independent, endowed charitable organisation whose mission is to reduce poverty and inequality in London. Given the significance of housing costs in contributing to poverty in London, the Trust works to tackle London's housing crisis on three fronts: by contributing to the evidence base; funding policy and campaigning work, and by investing in alternative housing solutions.

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