



A SUMMARY DOCUMENT

HOUSING OUR HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS



CHALLENGES FOR COUNCILS IN ACCOMMODATING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

The LGA's report **Housing Our Homeless Households** responds to rising concern amongst local authorities about the increasing homelessness pressures being faced across the country. Many councils are finding it difficult to provide suitable accommodation for families facing homelessness at a cost that is sustainable.

Councils want to end homelessness by preventing it happening in the first place. The number of households in temporary accommodation has been rising consistently since the economic crisis.

There are around 77,240 households in temporary accommodation, including 120,540 children. This is a 25 per cent increase in London (now 54,280 families), and 52 per cent increase outside of London (now 22,950 families) since 2014.

Homelessness funding has been sustained and increased over the last several years, and recently received a further boost from the introduction of the flexible homelessness support grant, which presents an opportunity for councils to innovate in reducing the reliance on temporary accommodation, although within significant affordability constraints in many areas.





The picture for local government is difficult and changing fast. Some councils are losing millions of pounds per year on temporary accommodation and many others are facing challenges in needing to find more accommodation to meet rising homelessness demand.

The bulk of our report looks at what local authorities are doing to meet the challenge. In many cases it is very impressive.

Housing Our Homeless Households involved councils and a number of other organisations including the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), London Councils, Greater London Authority (GLA) and others.

The result is a rich and wide ranging journey through local government practice across different councils around the country, with supporting documents to help other councils replicate or adapt the activity.

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CHALLENGES FOR COUNCILS IN ACCOMMODATING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

Ultimately, the long term affordability of accommodation for low income households is a fundamental challenge that must be addressed at a national level in order to reduce homelessness, and a widening gap between areas where households on low incomes can and cannot afford to live.

Whilst activity by councils may make a real difference, it can only help up to a point if the fundamental position continues to worsen.

The problems faced in accommodating homeless households have reached a point where a concerted effort by both national and local government is needed if a serious impact is to be made.



**Net council
spend on temporary
accommodation
has almost tripled from
£50 million in 2009/10
to £146 million
in 2015/16**



WE SPOKE TO 11 LOCAL AUTHORITIES

London Borough of Brent

Brighton & Hove City Council

Bristol City Council

London Borough of Camden

London Borough of Croydon

London Borough of Lewisham

London Borough of Newham

South Norfolk Council

Teignbridge District Council

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Trafford Council



LOCAL AUTHORITY PRACTICE

We worked with a range of different councils including London boroughs with very high homelessness demand but also with some more rural authorities with much smaller operational scale, but who are nevertheless doing great things that similar authorities, and some cases much larger authorities, could learn from.



Between 2009 and 2016 there has been a quadrupling of homelessness acceptances due to loss of an assured shorthold tenancy





READ THE FULL REPORT TO FIND OUT ABOUT...

**London Borough
of Brent's property
company 'I4B'**

**South Norfolk District
Council's Help Hub,
anticipated to make
a saving of £1.2 billion
Norfolk-wide over the
next decade**

**Teignbridge District
Council and their work
on youth homelessness**

**London Borough of
Lewisham's Ladywell
modular development to
prevent out of borough
referrals**

**How the London
Borough of Tower
Hamlets reduced their
number of families
in B&Bs for more than
six weeks from 174 to
zero in 15 months**



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCILS

Councils are doing much that is making a real difference. There are several examples in the report of councils reducing temporary accommodation against the rising trend, massively reducing the use of B&B accommodation and saving themselves millions of pounds in the process.



Some of the areas of work where councils may find they have scope to do more, and which are explored in some detail in the report, include:

- Working better and smarter with private sector landlords and agents, with a developing and responsive service offer.
- Working with households at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness and to address the other issues like debt and barriers to employment which reduce resilience against a housing crisis.
- Providing effective resettlement and tenancy sustainment services to homeless households placed in the private rented sector (PRS).
- Making effective use of the Localism Act powers to end a homelessness duty in the private rented sector.



Local and national government now spends £2 million a day on temporary accommodation



- Working with other authorities to maximise the market power of councils to procure accommodation at a reasonable price.
- Working with a micro focus to avoid B&B placements and end them quickly when they occur.
- Converting buildings to temporary accommodation and developing new build hostels and local housing allowance (LHA) rent PRS accommodation.
- Developing new accommodation supply in the general fund through establishment of local authority companies and the establishment of joint ventures.
- Investing in the purchase of accommodation by the council or their partners to benefit from housing capital growth and long term controlled rents.
- Planning ahead to understand medium term supply and demand trends and making provision to meet those demands.
- Making creative use of allocations policies to maximise homelessness prevention.
- Investigating innovative construction techniques such as re-deployable modular housing.
- Working creatively with partners inside and outside the local authority.



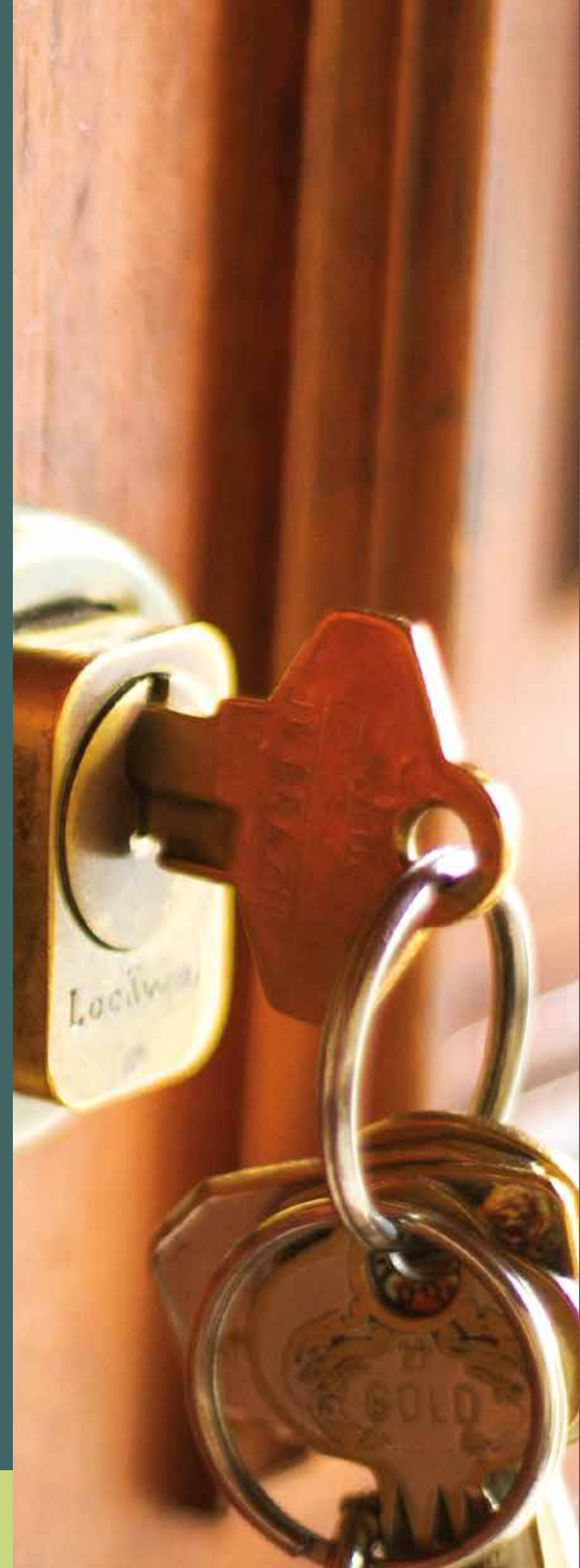
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

In order to create a climate where local authorities have a better chance to succeed, there are important measures that government could take without fundamentally compromising its reform agenda, and without a massive increase in spending.



We recommend the following measures, which government could take relatively quickly and relatively inexpensively compared to the scale of the challenge. Central government should consider:

- Using its balance sheet to make cheaper finance available to local authorities and their partners seeking to acquire homes for the use of homeless households at scale.
- Adapting Universal Credit to ensure that housing related benefits are paid promptly for households in temporary accommodation and for households placed in the PRS by local authorities, and to reduce the likelihood of homeless households being placed in overcrowded accommodation.





- Exempting temporary accommodation from the overall benefit cap so that there is somewhere that families who are unable to work can live while councils work with them to get into employment without costing councils large amounts of money.
- Providing financial incentives to private sector landlords willing to let to households nominated by a local authority.
- Ensuring that LHA does not fall further behind rental inflation by ending the current LHA freeze, and as a minimum pegging LHA to consumer price inflation (CPI) in the future.
- Reconsidering the decision to apply the shared accommodation rate of LHA to single people under 35 in social housing and temporary accommodation, so that those in greatest need can be accommodated.
- Ensuring that supported accommodation for homeless households is protected as a priority in the current DCLG and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Supported Accommodation Review. Twenty thousand homelessness preventions and reliefs per year are made into supported housing, and it is crucial that this is able to continue.
- Making it clear that minimum revenue provision requirements should not apply when councils are purchasing residential property which will appreciate in value over time.
- Working with mortgage lenders to end the prohibition in many buy to let mortgages of letting properties to households in receipt of housing benefit or Universal Credit, as this currently prohibits those landlords from working with local authorities to prevent homelessness.

**Read the report
to find out more about
what councils are
doing to house their
homeless households at**

**[www.local.gov.uk/
temporary-accommodation](http://www.local.gov.uk/temporary-accommodation)**





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