



'I won't last long in here':

Experiences of unsuitable temporary accommodation in Scotland

October 2018

Ben Sanders with Beth Reid



Together
we will end
homelessness




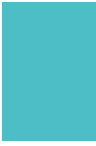




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Foreword

Homelessness should only ever be rare, brief and non-recurrent. Spending any time in unfit emergency accommodation is detrimental to health, well-being and is socially isolating for those who experience it. Yet in Scotland we continue to see people regularly housed in unsuitable Bed and Breakfast (B&Bs) and unsupported hostel accommodation for prolonged periods of time. People are trapped in unsuitable temporary accommodation because there isn't enough permanent housing for everyone.

New research from Crisis provides a timely insight into the impact that this type of accommodation has on the lives of those that have no choice but to stay there. Last year, Crisis launched *A Life in Limbo*, a campaign calling on the Scottish Government to equalise the Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation Order which currently limits the use of this type of accommodation to one week for pregnant women and families. A change in this law would ensure that nobody is left to languish in accommodation that isn't fit for long-term living for more than seven days. The campaign was a direct response to the experience of many Crisis clients who have spent prolonged periods of time in B&Bs in Edinburgh and the 'Aye We Can' research which reported B&B accommodation as universally unsuitable.

As part of the recommendations for the Scottish Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, Kevin Stewart (Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning) has accepted in principle that the law should be equalised. This welcome commitment must now turn into action to legislate as soon as possible.

This new evidence draws on the experiences of 74 people across Edinburgh, East Lothian, Glasgow, Midlothian, Aberdeenshire and Highland. It shows the shocking conditions people are living in and the detrimental impact it has on living a normal everyday life. Eighty-eight per cent of people reported experiencing depression and three quarters of people said they were not allowed visits from family or friends. Perhaps more concerning was the lack of access basic facilities such as a kitchen, fridge or a washing machine. Nearly half of the people we spoke to said they had no access to a kitchen with over half of this number saying this meant they regularly skip a meal.

In light of the findings the Scottish Government must legislate so that no one has to live in unsuitable accommodation for more than seven days. Local authorities must also urgently ensure that people housed in unsuitable temporary accommodation receive proactive support to enable them to move on with their lives.

There is an opportunity for the Scottish Government to act now. As a priority they should amend the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order in this parliamentary calendar to end the use of UTA for more than seven days for any homeless household. Local authorities must also embed systems and practices in place, such as housing advice and Critical Time Interventions, to form the foundations of the Forthcoming Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. Temporary should mean temporary and nobody should feel unsafe where they live. Unsuitable should mean nothing more than simply unacceptable.



Jon Sparkes
Chief Executive, Crisis

Executive summary

Homelessness should only ever be rare, brief and non-recurrent. On occasion, temporary accommodation (TA), such as furnished flats, may be necessary to accommodate people until a permanent solution can be found. But in several areas of Scotland homeless people are regularly being housed in emergency accommodation for prolonged periods.

This type of accommodation, which includes Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) or hotels, is not an adequate housing option. Indeed, the title of the Scottish Government's own legislation, The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014, calls it unsuitable. People are often left without access to support, basic facilities and are subjected to living restrictions such as curfews.

Last year, Crisis launched *A Life in Limbo*, a campaign calling on Scottish Government to equalise the law to ensure nobody is left to live in unsuitable temporary accommodation (UTA) for more than seven days.

The Scottish Government has accepted in principle that this needs to change, through the recommendations of their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group¹, which was commissioned to provide recommendations on ending

homelessness and transforming temporary accommodation in September 2017.

Yet since our report a year ago, Scottish Government statistics have shown a nine per cent increase (2017/18) in the number of people 'living' in unsuitable temporary accommodation (UTA) than in the previous year. Fewer people are leaving this type of accommodation than previously: 4,730 households entered B&B last year but only 2,510 left, meaning more people are being trapped in inappropriate living conditions.

This report highlights the experience of people in the seven Scottish council areas with the highest use of UTA (Edinburgh, East Lothian, Glasgow, Midlothian, East Dunbartonshire, Aberdeenshire and Highland). Of the 109 people surveyed for this research, the majority (74) had experience of UTA, primarily B&B or hotels.

The report looks in detail at how long people spend in UTA in each council area and the reasons why people move on from UTA before permanent housing is found. However, the most shocking results are around the conditions people experience and how prolonged stays in UTA make them feel. For example:

Living an everyday life

- Sixty per cent of people were subject to a curfew
- Three quarters of people said they were not allowed visits from family or friends
- Eighty one per cent of people with restrictions on visitors found their relationships had worsened
- Pets were prohibited for eighty four per cent of respondents
- Forty five per cent of people said they had no access to a kitchen with over half of this number saying this meant they regularly skip a meal.

Feeling safe and well

- Eighty four per cent of respondents stated that they sometimes or often felt isolated because of their living situation
- Over half reported feeling unsafe with many saying that the anti-social – and, at times, criminal – behaviour of other residents contributed to this unease
- Six out of ten people said living in UTA had a negative impact on their drug or alcohol use
- Eighty eight per cent of respondents reported experiencing depression

Planning for the future

- Nine out of ten people surveyed who had spent time in UTA said they felt their future was uncertain

There are available alternatives to UTA that would prevent people being stuck living in limbo. Research commissioned by Crisis shows that councils could save £29 million in 2018 alone by supporting people in more appropriate forms of temporary accommodation.² Other options might include helping people to access alternative temporary accommodation such as supported lodgings, or permanent accommodation in the private rented sector through rent deposit schemes, as well as solutions for people with complex needs such as Housing First. These interventions can be tailored to local conditions and, of course, the best solution is always to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place.

This report demonstrates the detrimental impact long stays in emergency accommodation have on people. As the Scottish Government seeks to transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland, now is the time to end the prolonged use of unsuitable accommodation for all homeless households.

The Scottish Government must legislate within this parliamentary year, so that no one has to live in unsuitable accommodation for more than seven days.

1 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (2018) *Transforming the use of Temporary Accommodation in Scotland An interim report on the activity of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group* <https://beta.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2018/05/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group-interim-report/documents/36232fb2-5237-4a27-b0bf-da126ec2a624/36232fb2-5237-4a27-b0bf-da126ec2a624/govscot:document/>

2 Crisis (2018) *A Life in Limbo: the costs of unsuitable temporary accommodation for homeless people in Scotland* https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239092/1804_a_life_in_limbo_costings_summary.pdf

Recommendations

1. As a priority Scottish Government should amend the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order in this parliamentary calendar (2018-19) to end the use of UTA for more than seven days for any homeless household.
2. Local authorities must develop plans to meet the legislative requirements, rapidly rehouse homeless households and prevent homelessness whenever possible, so that unsuitable temporary accommodation is only ever used in emergency situations.
3. Local authorities must urgently ensure that people housed in UTA receive proactive support to enable them to move on with their lives.

Introduction

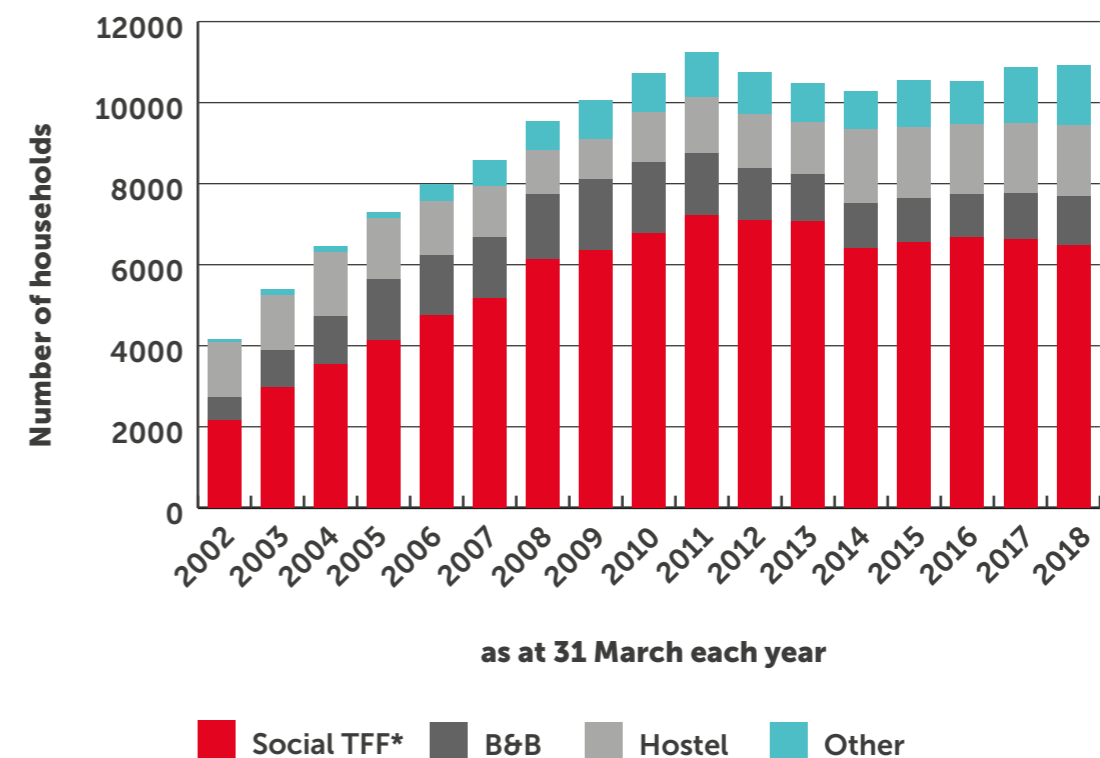
1. Introduction

1.1 Temporary accommodation in Scotland

In September 2017, Crisis' launched the campaign, *A Life in Limbo*, calling for a legally enforceable time limit of seven-days for anyone placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (UTA) across Scotland. The campaign was a direct response to the experience of many Crisis clients who have spent prolonged periods of time in Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) in Edinburgh.

Over the last 15 years, the use of temporary accommodation (TA) of all types has dramatically increased with the extension of entitlement to non-priority households. However, a lack of permanent housing options has led to increasing numbers of people staying in temporary forms of accommodation for longer periods while they wait for a settled home to become available.

Figure 1. Homeless households in TA in Scotland – at end of financial year 2018



Source: Table 20: Homelessness in Scotland 2017-18, Scottish Government

*TFF = Temporary furnished flat

TA takes a range of forms in Scotland. Most households are placed in furnished flats similar to those council or housing association tenants might have. Others live in accommodation or hostels that have support designed to help them with particular needs they might have, such as mental health difficulties. This type of short-term accommodation is deemed as suitable for longer-term living if required.

However, many councils rely on the extended use of their emergency accommodation provision to fill their TA requirements. For example, hostels with no support included or B&B accommodation, with either shared or no basic living facilities, such as kitchens or laundry. This type of accommodation is not suitable for long-term living. This is what we mean by UTA. Councils are already prohibited from housing families in this type of accommodation for more than seven days,³ however, this requirement does not extend to all homeless people.

While a number of standards relating to housing exist, they are of varying relevance to households in TA.⁴ Recent research⁵ raised concerns about the significant issues of quality and appropriateness in relation to some hostel use and B&B forms of TA. In particular, the challenging 'social environment', 'rules and regulations' in place and mismatch between support needs and support provision were noted. The quality of buildings was also highlighted as a concern and there was a consensus across stakeholders in the research that

B&B accommodation is 'by far the least good quality and appropriate form of TA, with access to food storage, cooking and laundry facilities especially problematic'.⁶ These findings were reinforced by the Aye We Can consultation, which spoke to over 400 people around Scotland to inform the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group.⁷

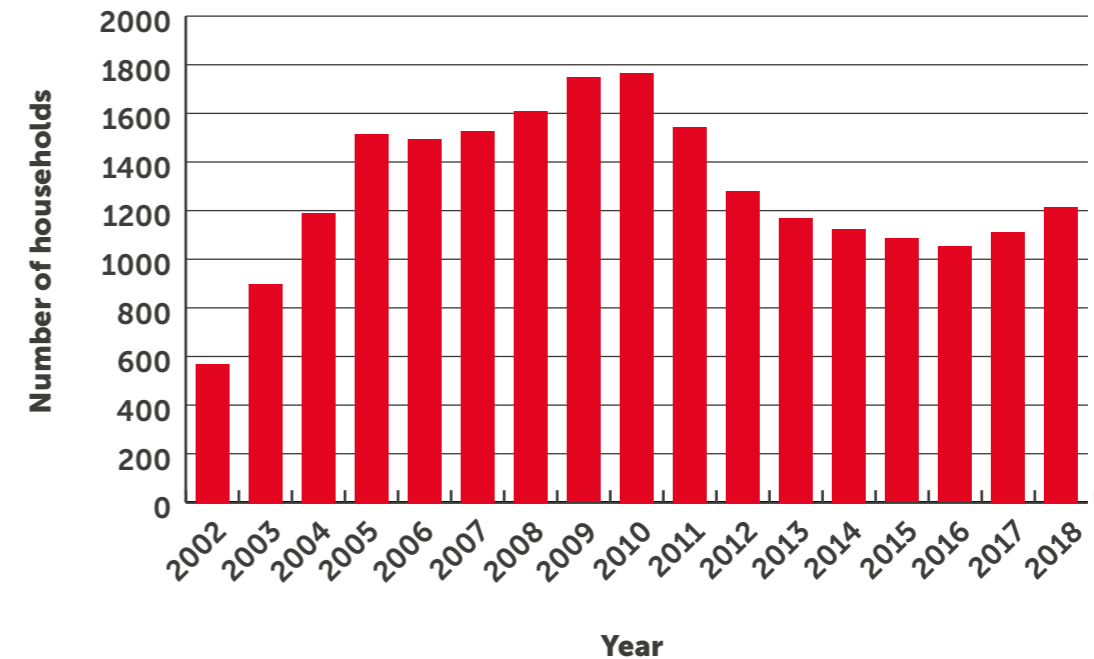
Our first report, *A Life in Limbo – the use of prolonged unsuitable accommodation for homeless people in Scotland*,⁸ set out in detail the issues with TA as we see them, the prevalence of UTA, and what needs to change to ensure no homeless person in Scotland has to stay for extended periods in accommodation which is considered unsuitable.

Some councils have eliminated the use of UTA altogether, but in other areas a large proportion of single people and childless couples are spending longer in B&Bs and hostels⁹ and these numbers have started to increase year-on-year. During 2017/18, 4,730 households entered B&B accommodation, while only 2,510 left that type of accommodation.¹⁰ There are now 1,215 people in B&B at any one time, compared to 1,113 last year 2016/17 (9% increase).

The economic cost

Not only is there a human impact to stays in UTA but there is also an economic cost to the public purse. Recent research commissioned by Crisis, undertaken by PWC, estimated that £29m in public funds would be

Figure 2. Overall number of households in B&Bs in Scotland 2001-2018



Source: Table 20: Homelessness in Scotland 2017-18, Scottish Government

saved this year if all single people predicted to live in UTA were moved to more suitable accommodation within seven days. On average, a homeless person currently spends 38 days in UTA so moving them on after seven days would save around £800 each time someone is moved on to more suitable housing for the remaining 31 days.¹¹

1.2 Political context

Homelessness has been rising up the political agenda, including the challenge of tackling the growth in TA. As a result, in the 2017 Programme for Government, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced the creation of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) chaired by Jon Sparkes (Crisis' Chief Executive) with a specific remit to transform the use of TA in Scotland as a specific output.¹²

In February 2018, the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee published a report of its year-long inquiry into homelessness in Scotland. It referenced Crisis' call to change the law so that all homeless households were protected from having to stay in unsuitable accommodation for long periods. The Committee stated that "no person should be accommodated in unsuitable accommodation" and recommended that as a priority the law should be extended so that young people spend no more than seven days there.¹³

Legislation to tackle the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation was originally created in 2004 to ensure that homeless families were only placed in suitable accommodation, with adequate facilities for washing, toileting and cooking and which was usable 24

3 Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness in Scotland 2017/18* <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/06/9554>

4 Shelter Scotland & CIH (2010) *Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation*. https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/322677/Temporary_Accommodation_Guidance.PDF/_nocache

5 HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE. <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf>

6 *ibid.*

7 http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/Aye_We_Can_Final_Report_2018-1.pdf

8 www.crisis.org.uk/limbo

9 HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf> p. 90

10 Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness in Scotland 2017/18*, table 26

11 Crisis (2018) *A Life in Limbo: the costs of unsuitable temporary accommodation for homeless people in Scotland*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239092/1804_a_life_in_limbo_costs_summary.pdf

12 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/ministerial-statement-on-homelessness-september-2017/>

13 Local Government and Communities Committee (2018) *Report on Homelessness*, 6th Report, 2018. Scottish Parliament <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/LGC/2018/2/12/Report-on-Homelessness/LGCS52018R6.pdf>

hours a day.¹⁴ Amendments to this legislation mean that the maximum legal time a family or pregnant woman can stay in this kind of accommodation is 7 days. The purpose, rightly, was to protect children, but 14 years on this has created a two-tier system, and in some parts of the country this is the most common form of temporary accommodation for single homeless households. Having scrapped categories of priority in accessing statutory help to resolve homelessness, we continue to prioritise some people over others in the provision of accommodation while they wait for their homelessness to end.

Shortly after the Committee's report, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) published its proposals to transform TA. This included a recommendation that the seven-day restriction on the use of UTA apply for all homeless households.¹⁵ The recommendation to extend the legal restriction has been accepted in principle by the Scottish Government, along with all the other recommendations of the Action Group. The report recommends that to achieve this, local targets for ending its use are incorporated into new five-year plans to move to a model of re-housing people as rapidly as possible for those areas where it is most challenging. These plans, known as Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, are to be published by the end of 2018.¹⁶ As local authorities develop their plans to rehouse homeless people quickly and transform temporary accommodation, a new restriction on the use of unsuitable accommodation

must accompany this to give legal underpinning to the targets and drive change.

With the number of people in B&B increasing by 9% in the past year,¹⁷ there is still significant work to be done in the short-term to reduce the reliance on unsuitable accommodation. The context of the local housing market is a central driver behind the type of TA used in each council area, often in combination with other factors including local leadership and partnerships.¹⁸ Where there are high pressurised housing markets, housing outcomes are generally worse for the most vulnerable people. Many councils who rely more on the use of UTA operate in this context.

While the context of local housing markets influence TA use, there are a number of options and means through which people could be prevented from spending long periods of time in UTA. Prevention of homelessness must always be the starting point, and adequately staffing and resourcing preventative services can help to ensure personalised housing advice and assistance is readily available to people threatened with homelessness. Early intervention allows people to quickly access support, such as welfare advice or mediation, or move to alternative housing across a range of tenures without requiring TA.¹⁹

Empowering frontline staff with personalised budgets can allow swift interventions to prevent individuals needing emergency accommodation. Support to access a wider range of

permanent housing options might include dedicated resources for schemes helping people on low incomes into the private rented sector, such as rent deposit services or social lettings agencies, and setting up clear pathways and protocols by which working homeless people can access Mid-Market Rent. It may mean working with social landlords locally to generate a more substantial commitment of social lets for homeless people. A further option is to explore ways in which shared housing may be a more affordable and less isolating option for some people, such as Nightstop or supported lodgings as temporary solutions, or shared housing solutions where appropriate. For people with complex needs, Housing First has been shown to be an effective model, providing rapid access to permanent housing with wrap-around support.²⁰

All of these options have resource implications, but there are clear savings to be made in adopting them. Research commissioned by Crisis shows that councils could have saved £29 million in 2018 alone by supporting people in more appropriate forms of temporary accommodation,²¹ while investing in prevention services saves £2.72 for every £1 invested.²²

As this report goes on to show, living in UTA has a devastating impact on those living there. Urgent action is needed in this parliamentary year to prevent this, and give parity to all homeless people so that no one has to live in limbo in UTA for more than seven days.

1.3 The research

Crisis commissioned Qa Research to conduct a survey of homeless/formerly homeless people who were living in or had recently (in the last 12 months) lived in UTA in Scotland.

20 Crisis (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis; Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (2018) *Transforming the use of Temporary Accommodation in Scotland*

21 Crisis (2018) *A Life in Limbo: the costs of unsuitable temporary accommodation for homeless people in Scotland*. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239092/1804_a_life_in_limbo_costings_summary.pdf

22 Crisis (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis.

Questions informing the research and survey were:

- What is the experience of living in UTA like for single homeless people?
- What were the circumstances that led individuals to live in UTA (B&Bs, lodging houses or unsupported hostels)?
- How long are people living in UTA?
- What are the consequences of living in UTA, sometimes for prolonged periods, in terms of the impact on moving on from homelessness and other areas of their lives i.e. finding/maintaining work, personal relationships, health and mental well-being?

The aim of the survey was to speak to a cohort of 100 people across seven Local Authority areas in Scotland that are known to have the highest use (mixture of proportionate and absolute highest use) of UTA. This would enable Crisis to augment and deepen its understanding of the experience of living in this type of accommodation and make the case to political representatives for the urgent need to amend the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014.

At the end of the fieldwork 109 people with lived experience of TA had completed the survey across the seven Local Authority areas. The table below summarises the use of TA across the seven areas selected. The scale of TA and B&B use varies significantly between local authority areas in Scotland with some not using B&Bs at all but some where B&Bs accommodate a high proportion of those in TA. The areas for this research were selected on the basis of relatively

14 Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) Order 2004. This legislation was subsequently amended in 2014 and then again in 2017, which reduced the maximum length of stay in this type of accommodation from 14 to 7 days.

15 HARSAG (2018) *Transforming the use of Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: An interim report on the activity of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*. Scottish Government. <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group-interim-report/HARSAG%20-%20Q3%20recommendations%20report%20FINAL%2029%20May%202018.pdf?inline=true>

16 *ibid.*

17 Scottish Government (2018) *Homelessness in Scotland 2017/18*

18 HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf>

19 Scottish Government / CoSLA (2016) *Housing Options Guidance* <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00494940.pdf>

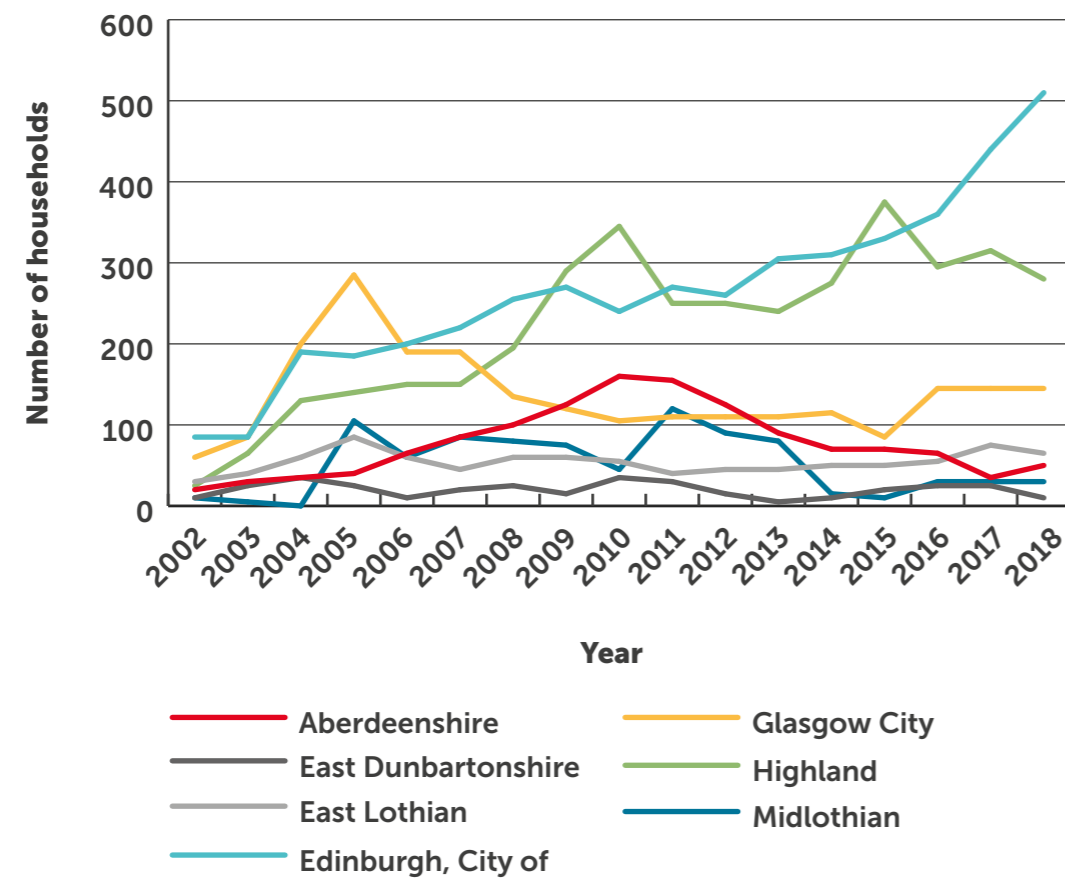
Table 1. Summary of TA use in case study areas as of March 2018

	31 March 2018					B&B as proportion of total %
	Social TFF*	Hostel	B&B	Other	Total	
Aberdeenshire	295	45	50	0	395	13
East Dunbartonshire	90	15	10	75	185	5
East Lothian	295	30	65	5	400	16
Edinburgh, City of	365	305	510	200	1,380	37
Glasgow City	1,285	395	145	325	2,150	7
Highland	140	20	280	170	610	46
Midlothian	290	125	30	0	420	7
SCOTLAND	6,479	1,737	1,215	1,502	10,933	11

Source: Table 20 & Table 26: Homelessness in Scotland 2017-18, Scottish Government

*Temporary Furnished Flat

Figure 3. Use of B&B UTA across case study areas between 2002 and 2018



Source: Table 20 & Table 26: Homelessness in Scotland 2017-18, Scottish Government

high use of B&Bs and where use over time has either increased or fluctuated (see chart below for long-term trends in B&B use).

1.4 Report structure

The report starts by exploring the levels of UTA experienced amongst the research cohort, the length of time spent there, and, if they have, the reasons for leaving it. It then moves on to explore the experience of living in UTA. Finally, the report focuses on the consequences of being in UTA in relation to homelessness ended, demonstrating the need for urgent legislative change to end the use of UTA. The report concludes with recommendations for the Scottish Government and Scottish local authorities.

Current experiences

2. Current experiences of unsuitable temporary accommodation

Of the 109 people spoken to for the survey, the majority (68%/74) were in UTA i.e. in B&B/hotels. The remaining were in a hostel/supported units, women's refuges. (8%/9), temporary/scatter flats (17%/18), private hostels (6%/7) or in a private sector lease (1%/1). As explored above, in the introduction, even though these latter types of TA are deemed suitable it was notable that two-fifths (39%/11) of those surveyed who lived in these types of TA said it was not suitable for them. This was mainly because although support should have been there they did not experience any. The rest of the report and analysis focuses on the responses of these 74 respondents in B&Bs/hotels.

There was some variation of numbers interviewed across the case study areas with Edinburgh (71%/10), Glasgow (61%/22), Highland (73%/8) and Midlothian (100%/11) featuring the highest rates of UTA experience.²³

2.1 Time spent in UTA

The case study areas where respondents spend longer periods of time in UTA were Edinburgh, Glasgow, Midlothian and Highland.

At the time of taking the survey a third (37%/27) were still living in UTA. Of these respondents still in UTA, 30 per cent (8) had been there for four to six months and 15 per cent (4) there for six months to one year.

Those that had already left UTA, almost another quarter (23%/17) had been there for between one to three months. A fifth (18%/14) had been there for between four months and a year. There were also three respondents who had been in UTA for over a year.

To give this some context, according to Scottish Government figures the average length of stay for a single homeless person in B&B accommodation in quarter 3 of 2017 was 37.9 days. Analysis shows that average length of time households stay

Figure 4. Number of respondents in B&B or hotel



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

in B&Bs has fallen overall by about 20 per cent over the three-year period to 2016-17.²⁴

2.2 Reasons for leaving UTA

Almost seven out of 10 (68%/50) respondents did not stay in their UTA until permanent accommodation was found. There was regional variation across the case study areas with those in Edinburgh and Aberdeenshire proportionally more likely to leave UTA before permanent accommodation was found.

The survey found that people leave for a range of other reasons. A quarter (28%/14) of people with experience living in UTA said they had been asked by their landlords to leave early.

Other reasons given focused on the negative impact living in UTA was having/had on their well-being. For example, 10 per cent (5) left as they were too far away from friends and family. 12 per cent (6) said they left because the behaviour of other residents made them feel unsafe in the accommodation.

Respondents explained that often this was also because of drug taking or dealing on the premises. The same number and proportion said they left because the accommodation was in poor condition.

"I was robbed a few times – didn't feel safe."

"...it was like a big smack den, but on a street level rather than house level. There must be 30 people in temp... 50% are using drugs. In fact, the staff were using cocaine in the kitchen with residents so what can you do. I started using drugs there as well - due to my mental state and my environment I went downhill."

The problem of drug use was a widespread complaint amongst many respondents.

²³ As East Dunbartonshire returned zero respondents with B&B experience this area was removed from any further analysis and discussion.

²⁴ HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf> p. 70

"I owned my home and business, I lost everything. I've never been homeless before, never been to a homeless accommodation before. I got sent here, there was a guy dealing drugs upstairs, all sorts of junkies coming in and out the house, someone kicking my door in..."

Respondents also gave other reasons for leaving UTA. These included being exhausted and frustrated with being moved regularly by the council, getting ill and having to stay in hospital. Others explained that the rooms they had within the accommodation were not secure, meaning that personal goods and money was sometimes stolen.

"...you can be told – you're going today. They can just swap you to another place. Another guy had to move from here – he relapsed as he got a B&B full of drug users. It would be better if they just said: this is your room and you are going to be here for 10 weeks. You can't build a life if you don't know where you're going to be."

Living situation

3. Living in unsuitable temporary accommodation

The poor and variable standard of TA is well documented,²⁵ as is the long-term impact on the health of those that live in it.²⁶ The Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee Report on Homelessness concluded that there was a "mixed picture" of quality in TA across Scotland.²⁷ The HARSAG report on TA found many with experience of UTA had strongly negative views about the quality and appropriateness of B&B accommodation particularly on the sharing of various facilities.²⁸ The overall findings from the survey reinforce this existing evidence about the poor conditions of the UTA in which people are expected to stay.

However, while these issues come across strongly in the findings

there were also instances where respondents expressed relief at being placed in temporary accommodation because they had a roof over their head which was safe, dry and warm. In some cases the accommodation exceeded their expectations.

"I also feel relieved – to get space and time to think so that's been a good thing."

3.1 Access to facilities

For others surveyed with less positive experiences, one of the biggest challenges faced was not being able to access basic facilities such as a kitchen, fridge or a washing machine. The sharing of these facilities with others was a common practice, but could

25 IPPR (2016) *Nowhere fast: The journey in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation*. London: IPPR <https://www.ippr.org/publications/nowhere-fast-the-journey-in-and-out-of-unsupported-temporary-accommodation>; Bulman, M. (2017) 'Councils condemned after illegally placing homeless families in damp, infested accommodation'. in *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/council-accommodation-homeless-families-illegal-conditions-a8111206.html>; Bol, D. (2018) 'Edinburgh council to lift safety of 'terrifying' homeless housing' in *Edinburgh Evening News* <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/our-region/edinburgh/edinburgh-council-to-lift-safety-of-terrifying-homeless-housing-1-4751116> ;

26 Shelter (2004) *Sick and Tired The impact of temporary accommodation on the health of homeless families*. London: Shelter. http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/48465/Research_report_Sick_and_Tired_Dec_2004.pdf

27 Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee (2018) *Report on Homelessness*, SP Paper 279. <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/103620.aspx>

28 HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf>

often come with its own challenges; such as restrictions in the times when people could access the facilities. Moreover, while sharing and accessing facilities was problematic, it was also clear that the conditions of these facilities and rooms people stayed in was variable.



45%

had no access to a kitchen in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Almost half (45%/33) of respondents in UTA had no access at all to a kitchen and one third (34%/25) had no access to a fridge. This has obvious implications for how people maintain a healthy diet and store food safely. Sharing a kitchen (47%/35) was also common, as was sharing a fridge (42%/31), and this could make meal preparation or cooking challenging.

"I struggle sharing a kitchen with so many people, and the time restrictions. Every time I buy milk or cheese, they disappear. I have to keep it all on my window ledge. Some people take ages in the kitchen and don't clear up. I understand why they shut it - my room's near and it's noisy. Since I've been here my diet has gone downhill - all dry food and rubbish. Not eating fresh food and enjoying a good diet is one of the worst things about the accommodation - and I'm spending more having a bad diet."

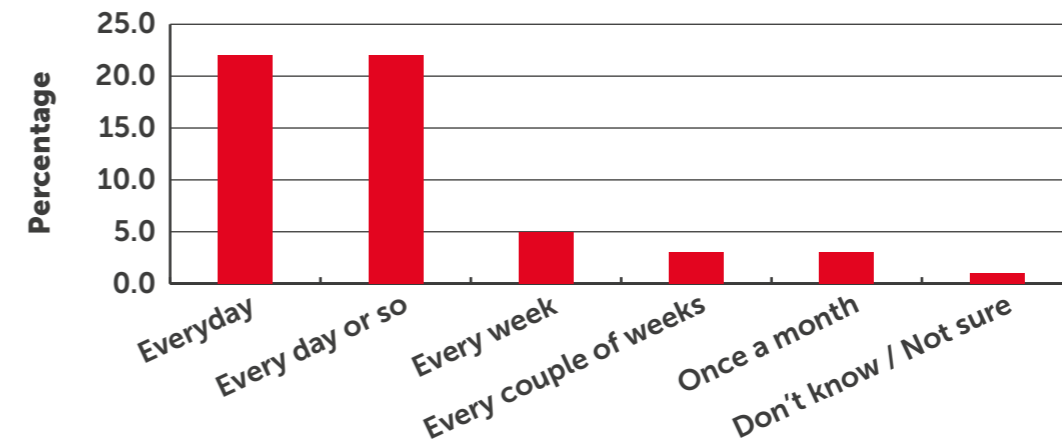
Lack of access to a kitchen or a fridge was highest for those residents in UTA in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeenshire. The consequence of no access to a kitchen or issues around sharing one meant that over half (55%/41) of those spoken to had gone without meals. For two fifths (39%/16) this happened on a daily basis. The same proportion (39%/16) said it occurred 'every day or so'.



4 out of 10

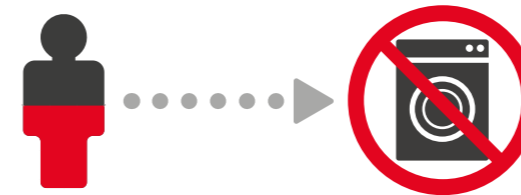
of those without access to a kitchen **went without a meal** on a daily basis.

Figure 5. How often did you go without a meal because of a lack of/unable to access cooking facilities?



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=41)

Keeping clothes clean and maintaining personal hygiene was also a problem. Almost half (47%/36) had no access to laundry facilities while a similar proportion had to share (43%/32) access. Sharing a bathroom was common amongst those in UTA (95%/70). There were obvious consequences to the problem of access to laundry and washing facilities for residents in terms of keeping themselves and clothes clean, particularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow where this was most prevalent.



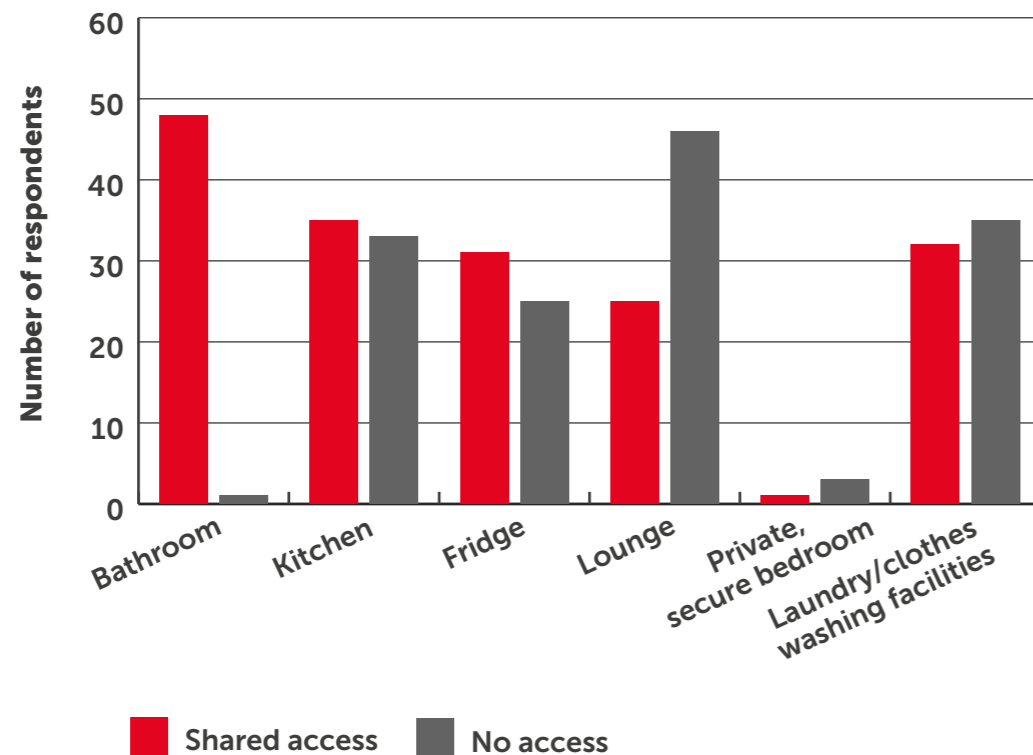
47%

Almost half **had no access to laundry facilities** whilst in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

"There's no washer you can use and the laundrette's expensive. I usually wash my clothes in the sink."

"Since I've been working for nearly three weeks and I'm finding the B&B quite difficult to stay at. No kitchen, fridge and the location is also causing a problem."

The latest issue I've got is that when I finish work (kitchen porter) late and I don't get home till 11.30pm and we are not allowed to have showers after 10.30pm. I have eczema and its broken out very badly in the last week or so. It's not healthy to be washing dishes at a nice restaurant with open sores. It's a vicious circle with the heat at work and it's a very dirty/greasy job, but I do like it and want to try and stay there."

Figure 6. Access to amenities in UTA

Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

The experience of living in UTA was further made difficult for residents by over half (62%/46) not having access to a lounge or somewhere they could relax that was not their bedroom.

3.2 Standards of living

While lack of access to particular facilities while in UTA was a problem for a large proportion of respondents, it was clear from the survey findings that for some there remained many other significant issues with the quality of their accommodation. The combination of which could contribute to residents' poor well-being.

"That mess on the floor there is someone's breakfast they spilt before I got here six weeks ago. There is a Hoover but it's blocked. I'm not cleaning it. I went into the kitchen for breakfast – there's not a single bowl, the coffee and tea have gone, the place looks as if it's been attacked. Every door has a hole in it where it's been kicked in; every lock's been crowbarred open; every carpet's got a cigarette burn. It's not exactly dirty but it's scruffy, not looked after, tired. I just eat toast, and sweets. I've lost 2 stone. I'm grey and thin. I can't live like this."

3.2.1 Physical conditions of UTA

Both the Homelessness Code of Guidance²⁹ and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing³⁰ set out a number of standards that apply to TA. This includes the physical state of properties used as TA. Findings from the survey show that for some people living in UTA, the physical quality of properties was open to question and adds weight to the concerns already raised about the state of TA and in particular the quality of B&Bs.³¹

Just under half (49%/36) of respondents explained that there was poor heating and draughts through windows and doors in their accommodation. There was, however, considerable variation in terms of experience of this across the case study areas. For example, those in UTA in Glasgow (86%/19) experienced this the most whereas those in Midlothian, East Lothian and Highland less than one in 10 respondents cited this as a problem.

The presence of damp and mould was a feature of UTA in almost two-fifths (35%/26) of respondents' experiences with it more prevalent for residents in Highland, Glasgow and Edinburgh properties.

Cramped living conditions, including sharing facilities with others, was reported for four out of 10 (38%/28) respondents in UTA and a similar proportion (32%/24) said their living space (i.e. their bedroom) was too small.

The presence of trip hazards, bald carpet or cracked tiles, featured in 34 per cent (25) of respondents with UTA experience.

"I was moved into a room here with en-suite, but I took an asthma attack... ambulance/hospital within a couple of days of being in there due to mould in the bathroom."

3.2.2 Quality of living conditions

While there were issues with the physical condition of the properties, there were also other areas where respondents had problems, for example the quality of fittings and spaces within properties.

Bad smells was one such complaint for almost half (45%/33) of those with UTA experience. As with some of the previous issues, this was highest for those in Glasgow and Highland.

Unhygienic cooking facilities, alongside dirty living conditions was a feature of some respondent's UTA experience. This correlates with the presence of vermin (rats, mice, cockroaches) reported by 14 per cent (16) of those surveyed.

"This place is so bad, absolute filth bucket and it's freezing so I sleep in my clothes. Also with my health conditions not been taken into consideration, it's as if the council has done this on purpose to put me under so much stress and affect my stability."

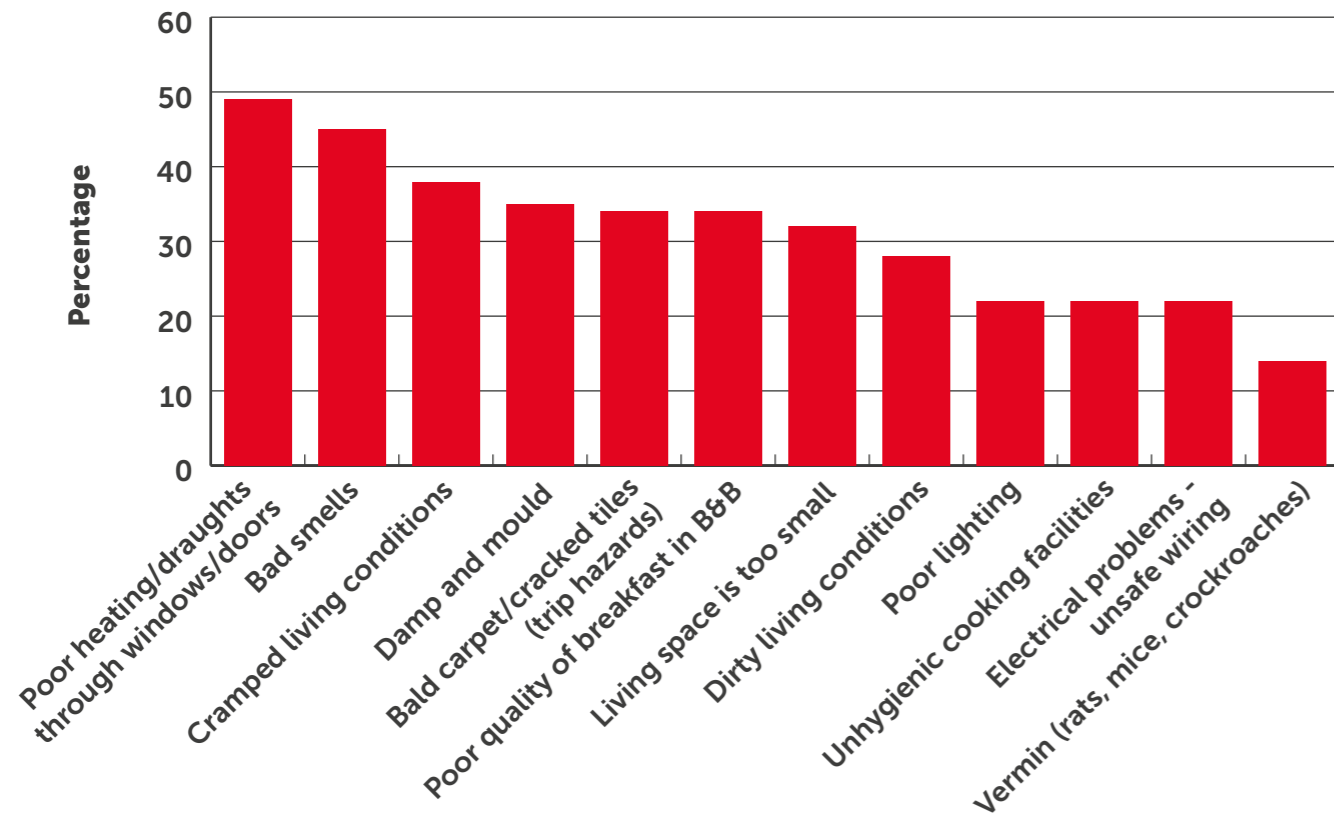
Other problems that respondents flagged in the survey, which contribute to making the experience of UTA potentially dangerous, included electrical problems (unsafe wiring) and poor lighting in the property.

29 MHCLG (2018) *Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities*. London: MHCLG <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-17-suitability-of-accommodation>

30 DCLG (2004) *Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation in England*. London: DCLG https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15652/HMO_Lic_landlords_guide.pdf

31 Glasgow Homelessness Network (2018) *Can we fix homelessness in Scotland? Aye we can Final Report*. Glasgow: Crisis, The Scottish Government, GHN, SHEIN http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/Aye_We_Can_Final_Report_2018-1.pdf

Figure 7. While in UTA did you experience any of the following (yes)?



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

The experience of those without access to particular facilities while in UTA could be made worse by poor conditions of the spaces they encountered: for example, damp, poor heating and bald carpets.

While a sizeable proportion of respondents did report poor quality accommodation this was not always the case across the case study areas. For instance, within some areas respondents expressed their relief at being placed in accommodation that was of good standard and that while they had to share some amenities it was better than where they had been.

"My initial impression compared to what I had prepared myself for exceeded expectations... the facilities were good, everyone's quiet, nobody has tried to get into my room or used drugs in the communal areas ...yes it's worn out and there's a hole in the door with Sellotape over where someone's punched it, but it's safe and warm. So yes I do feel grateful and relieved."

Security and well-being

4. Security and well-being

Alongside the varying quality and standard of UTA respondents experienced, there were also issues around how safe and secure they felt when living there. In some cases, this was a result of the specific restrictions people encountered while living there that could make it hard to maintain normal routines. These could compound the already difficult circumstances they found themselves in. As previous research shows, poor housing is linked to and associated with poor well-being as well as physical and mental health issues.³² Consequently, these survey findings lend weight to this existing body of evidence.

4.1 Feeling safe

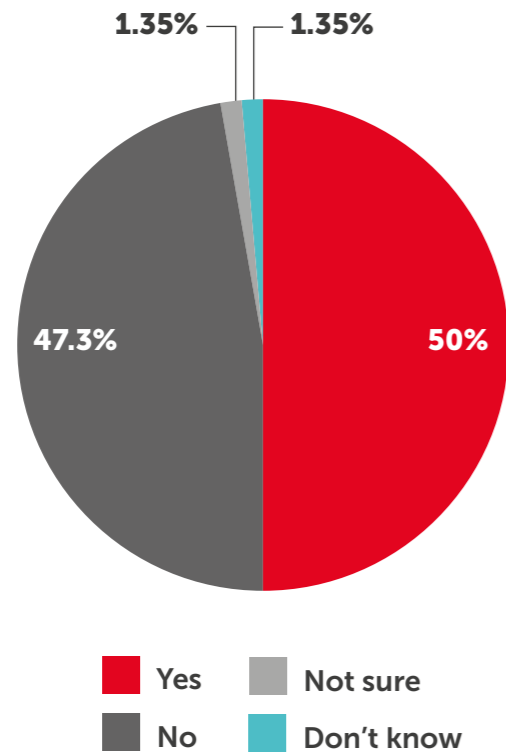
Recommended guidance on the standard of TA in Scotland states that residents should feel safe and that their belongings are secure.³³ Yet for many people surveyed this wasn't found to be the case.

"You worry every time someone leaves: who are they going to send next? We had a couple using drugs in the room next door and were noisy and aggressive, I don't do drugs and felt unsafe with that."

32 Mental Health Foundation (2016) Mental Health and Housing. Policy Paper London: MHF, Centre for Mental Health, NSUN, Mind, Rethink https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/Mental_Health_and_Housing_report_2016_1.pdf; Bentley, R., Baker, E., Simons, E., Simpson, J, A., Blakely, T. (2018) The impact of social housing on mental health: longitudinal analyses using marginal structural models and machine learning-generated weights in International Journal of Epidemiology <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyy116>; Mental Health Network (2011) Housing and Mental Health Briefing Issue 233. NHS Confederation and NHF http://www.nhsconfed.org/~media/Confederation/Files/Publications/Documents/Housing_MH_021211.pdf

33 Shelter Scotland & CIH (2010) Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/322677/Temporary_Accommodation_Guidance.PDF/_nocache

Figure 8. When living in UTA did you ever feel unsafe?



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

"A few of us did tell the manager and they were asked to leave ... but then we got [someone else], and in some ways she's even worse - chapping your door all the time, your head is bursting listening to her and being around her –paranoid then aggressive. You don't know what's coming next."



50% +

Over half of unsuitable temporary accommodation residents **feel unsafe.**

Over half (50%/37) of those surveyed said they felt unsafe when living in TA.

"I try to just stay in my room. I don't use the kitchen but you bump into people going to the toilet. This week we thought we had a good bunch but then someone flipped–wielding a knife about the place. It blew me out the water. I've been in the Army so I think can cope. But you shouldn't have to cope when you're at your lowest level."

The overriding reason for residents in UTA feeling unsafe was the behaviour of the other residents they have/had to live alongside. For eight out of 10 (78%/29) respondents, the criminal behaviour of other residents on site (i.e. drug dealing) lay behind their feeling unsafe. Those in Glasgow, Aberdeenshire and East Lothian reported the highest rates of this.

This was followed by almost seven out of 10 (65%/24) respondents also reporting other forms of anti-social behaviour such as knocking on bedroom doors or being asked for money. The threatening behaviour of other residents caused over half (60%/22) of those cases where people felt unsafe.

"There was never any manager as he lived somewhere else. People just did what they liked really, the rules were just on paper. Alcohol and drugs were a problem. I was 16 and started using drugs there because everyone was – that shows you how bad it was. My room was broken into all the time and I had a lot of my belongings stolen. Lots of bad memories. I left there 'cause my room wasn't safe."

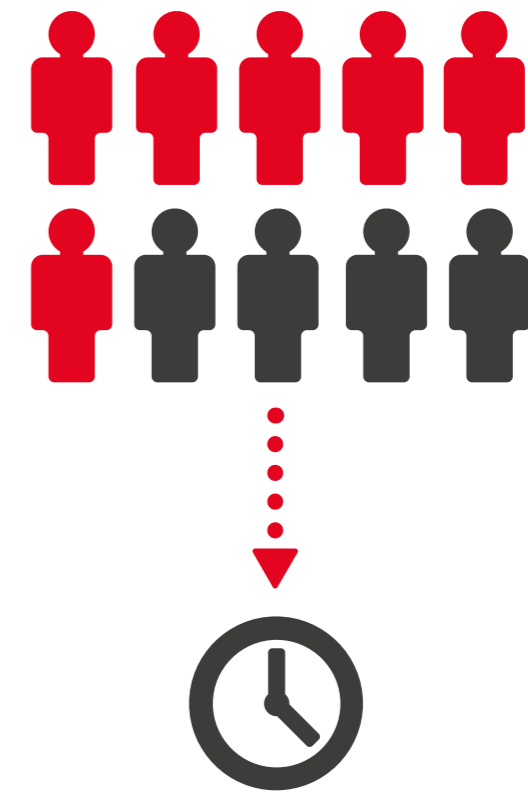
Staff not intervening to prevent the anti-social behaviour of other residents was a problem for over a third (35%/13) of those surveyed and another third (32%/12) said that the lack of security to their room served to exacerbate the feeling of an unsafe environment. Poor lighting experienced by a fifth (14%/5) would only have served to make residents of UTA feel more insecure. Compounding these problems was that fact that over half (57%/21) of those feeling unsafe in their accommodation struggled to sleep because of noise continuing through the night.

As already noted, for some people being in UTA, while not an ideal situation, was better than the circumstance they had been in previously. Sometimes this was to do with the good rapport that could be built between residents who would look out for one another and provide mutual support. However, this was vulnerable to disruption in particular with the high turnover of residents that could alter the convivial atmosphere.

"We're all guys over 40 in here, so thankfully everyone's quiet and we all have respect for each other. I've heard the person before me broke into people's rooms, kicked doors in, stole money. I've also heard a lot about the house up the road so I think, I'm lucky I wasn't put in there. You do think, if I get moved, they could put in someone who'll interrupt everyone else or worry that if one of them goes will they send someone who plays loud music, goes in your room or pushes drugs?"

4.2 Restrictions in UTA

Restrictions on movement and constraints on visitors was a common feature of the experience of those in UTA. This could contribute to the overall feeling of being unsafe as explored above. The use of such restrictions in TA, and B&Bs in particular, needs to be understood within the wider context in which TA is used. For example, when local authorities provide TA they have to be mindful of the wider community in which it sits. Curfews and the other sorts of restrictions, discussed below, can help to appease negative community concerns and also the challenges of communal living. Furthermore, restrictions are often in place to try and ensure the safety and well-being of residents by preventing access to those that might abuse the premises.



6 out of 10

people in unsuitable temporary accommodation **were subject to a curfew.**

The presence of a curfew was a feature of over half (60%/44) of respondents' UTA experience. One respondent described having to conform to the restrictions as:

"Prison. It's like being in prison but harder. Being told what to do. You get no help."

All of those with UTA experience in Edinburgh faced curfews, as did almost three-quarters (86%/21) of those in Glasgow. Outside of those areas the use of curfews was much lower. While curfews constrain the free movement of residents there were also restrictions on who could visit people staying in UTA. This ban on friends or family visiting was particularly difficult for those people with children.

Three quarters (74%/55) of respondents reported a ban on visits by family or friends. Edinburgh and East Lothian respondents experienced the highest rates of this form of ban. The consequence of this restriction was described by parents surveyed as compromising their relationship with their children:



34 The impact on ability to move on is explored more below.

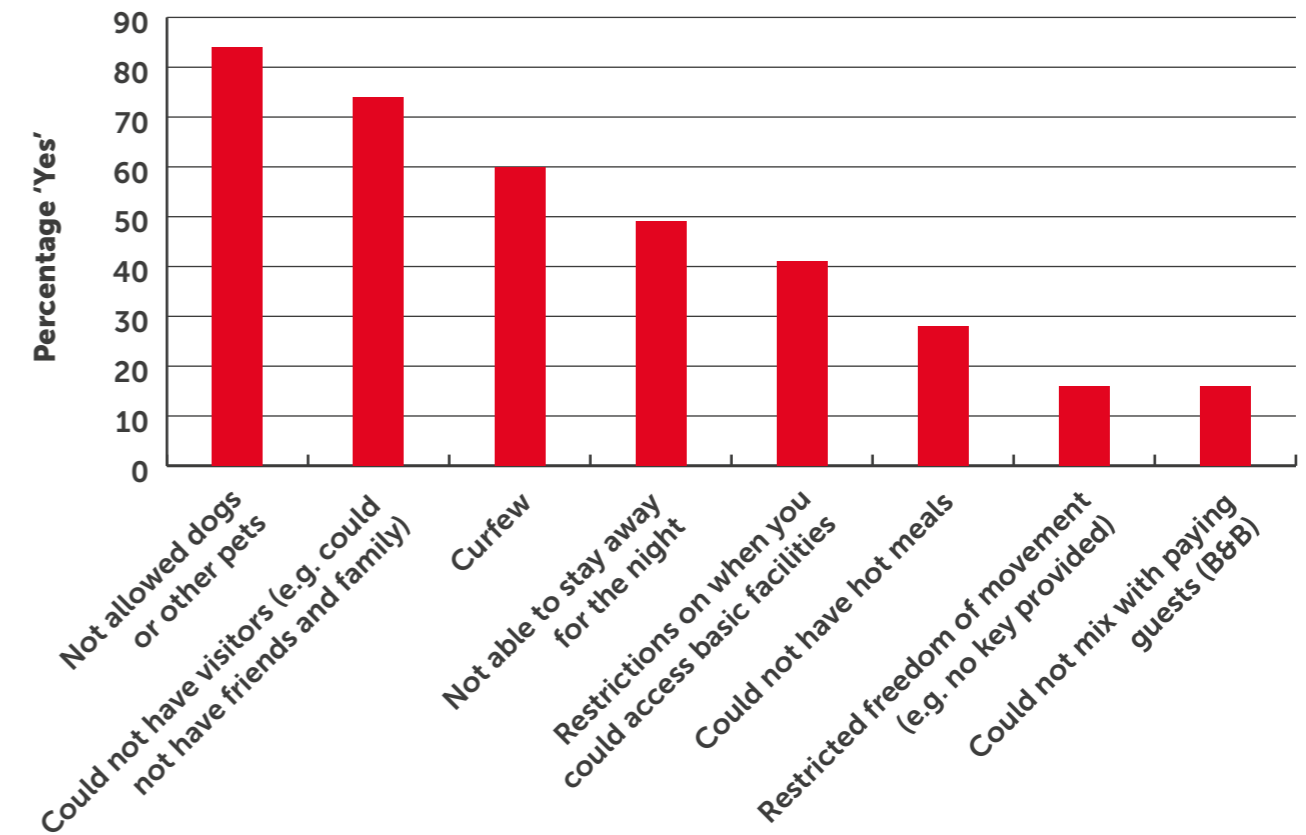
"I live for my kids...they can't visit me here and that's the lowest I've ever been when they told me I was coming here. I have no money to take them somewhere and nowhere to go with them, we just have to walk round in the rain or sit in my friend's car with a bag of chips. I have to keep explaining to them what's happening. One of them isn't speaking to me. I feel the council's playing God with my life putting me here."

For others – particularly young people in UTA – restrictions impinged on what they felt were the normal lifestyles they should be living given their age.

"I'm an 18-year-old laddie, I want to be able to go out with my pals... It's natural for someone of my age and it's not natural to have to be in at midnight ... I left my room key at my pal's one night and got booked out the next day – the rules are ridiculous as this is years of my life spent like this."

It was not just curfews and restrictions on visitors that respondents reported. Over two-fifths (49%/36) said they could not spend the night away from their room which could limit their movements. For a third of respondents (41%/30) restrictions on access to basic facilities (bathroom, laundry, kitchen) meant it was hard to go about daily practices such as ironing clothes and preparing for job interviews or flat viewings, which has an obvious consequence on the ability to move on from homelessness.³⁴

Figure 9. Were there any restrictions to what you could do when in UTA?



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

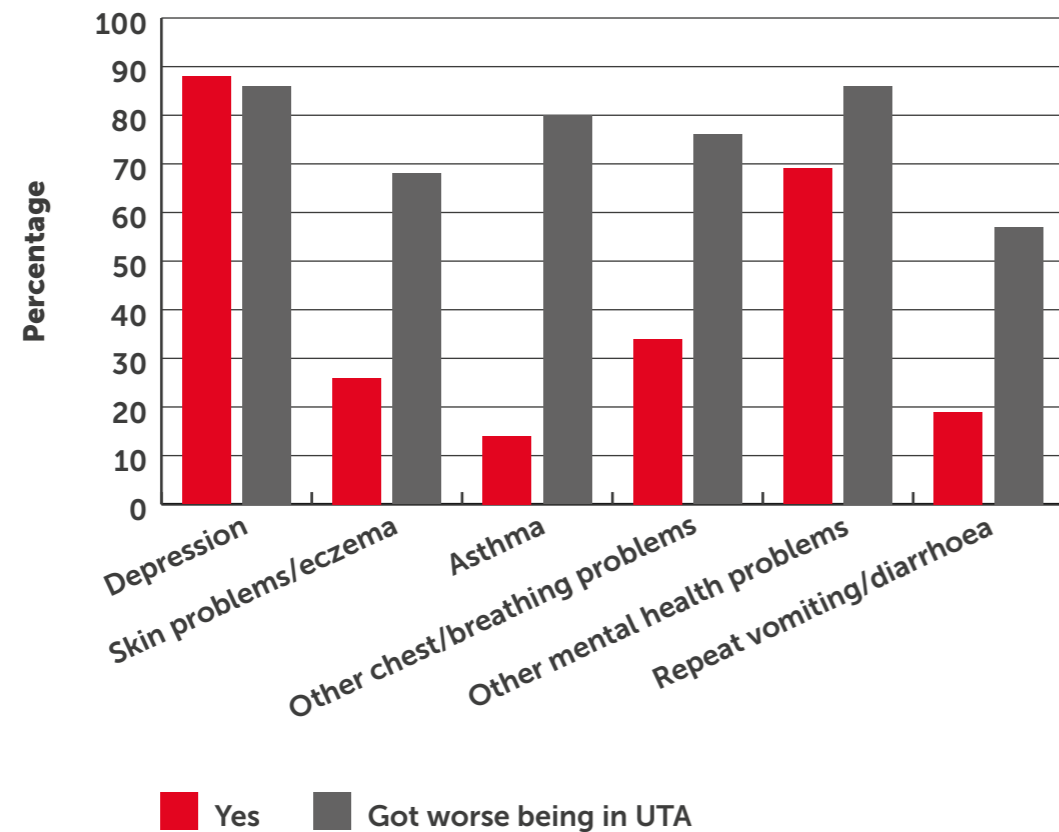
"I managed to get an interview for a job. There is no iron here. How am I supposed to go to an interview, let alone look presentable for work or flat viewings? Also, in every other place I have been there has been basic items to help with everyday living. I've informed them, but as usual, just ignored. If I end up missing this interview on Friday because I'm unable to look smart and presentable for work and flat viewings then I may as well buy a tent and go to England and sit in a field until I get a place or pass away through trying. Just fed up with it all. Never in my wildest dreams would I imagine this is how I'd have been treated."

The prohibition of pets in UTA was the most widely experienced restriction with eight out of 10 (84%/62) people reporting such a ban. For some people having to give up their pets was a 'gut-wrenching' experience and put them in a dilemma as to whether they should accept the accommodation. Existing research demonstrates the strong attachment homeless people can have to their pets and the benefits this can bring in terms of mental and physical well-being.³⁵ However, this attachment is well-known to cause potential difficulties when it comes to trying to find and move into accommodation.³⁶

35 Kidd, AH., Kidd, RM. (1994) Benefits and liabilities of pets for the homeless in *Psychological Report June 74* (2Pt 1): 715-22 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8058851>

36 Singer, RS., Hart, LA., Zasloff, RL. (1995) Dilemmas associated with rehousing homeless people who have companion animals in *Psychological Report Dec 77* (3 Pt 1): 851-7 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8559923>

Figure 10. Have you experienced any of the following and if yes, what impact has UTA had?



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (Have you experienced n=74, Got worse n=% of those answering Yes)

4.3 Health and well-being

The experience of residents of UTA arguably contributed to some of the health issues reported in the survey. Respondents were asked about a range of health issues and whether these had got worse since being in UTA and if they had improved once (or if) they had moved out of UTA. In all cases, well over half of those reporting an issue said it had got worse since being in UTA. The survey findings below clearly identify the negative health and well-being implications resulting from stays in UTA.

The majority (88%/65) of respondents reported experiencing depression and for almost nine out of 10 (85%/55) people it had got worse since they were in UTA.

“The first night I arrived, the manager wasn't there and a resident let me in. He says “Hi, I'm X, what drugs do you take?” I got in the room and sat on the bed crying. Looking back, I maybe should have done more to help myself but I had had a breakdown and was so depressed.”

Furthermore, two-thirds (69%/51) of respondents reported other mental health problems which for 86 per cent (44) had got worse since being in UTA.

Table 2. Worsening health against presence of poor building conditions

	(% did health worsen against is X building condition present (Y/N))					
	Damp & Mould		Dirty living conditions		Poor heating/draughts	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Skin problems/eczema	57	80	78	60	92	29
Asthma	86	67	100	33	86	67
Other chest/breathing problems	75	77	85	67	81	67
Repeat vomiting/diarrhoea	67	50	67	50	63	50

Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

“It messes with your head, constantly changing address. Messes up your money. Worst of all, it's very, very lonely. I had a great childhood. But now I have no family left. I have no friends – only associates. Everyone doing drugs. I'm more chaotic, my brain's dead, I've lost weight and I've just deteriorated.”

In over three-quarters of cases (76%/19) where someone reported chest or breathing problems (34%/25) the conditions were exacerbated by living in UTA. Those that had skin problems/eczema (26%/19), repeat vomiting/diarrhoea (19%/14) and asthma (14%/10), as with other ailments, in the majority of cases reportedly got worse after living in UTA.

The survey findings showed a clear correlation between poor living conditions and worsening health conditions. Table 2 shows the impact of poor living conditions on worsening health conditions, against the health conditions of those without those living conditions. In nearly every

case the presence of poor living condition increased the likelihood of a health condition worsening. For example, 86 per cent of those who experienced damp and mould reported a worsening of their asthma compared to 67 per cent of those who reported worsening asthma but no damp and mould. Poor heating and draughts were also much more likely to contribute to skin problems.

The negative impacts outlined above, are not the only consequences of stays in UTA. For many respondents it was also clear that stays in UTA and the experiences it brought had a numbers of consequences for people trying to make progress with their lives. These are explored more in the next section.

Impact and moving on

5. Impact of living in unsuitable temporary accommodation

"I feel I'm going down, down, down. Sometimes I wonder, how am I going to get through this? At times I just want to shut myself away in a corner. At times, I just want to do away with myself at night."

The primary purpose of TA is to provide immediate emergency accommodation when an applicant for homelessness assistance has nowhere to go. It then provides a place to stay while a decision is made on their application and settled accommodation is found. It is also a means through which appropriate measures can be put in place to meet particular support needs.³⁷ TA is meant to be a short-term arrangement/fix between homelessness and settled housing but according to the most recent figures, in Scotland on average a household spent 97 days in TA in 2016/17.³⁸ However, these figures can hide the experience of many people, including Crisis clients, who are left in TA for much longer periods.

The focus of this report is specifically on unsuitable TA and equalising the time limits within *The Unsuitable Accommodation (Scotland) Order* for families and households with children to all homeless people. The rest of this chapter explores the impacts on those in UTA and shows the negative consequences prolonged stays can have for people in terms of looking for/maintaining employment, personal relationships, the use of addictive substances and, finally, the variable support they received in finding a new home. So, while TA can be an important first step out of homelessness, it is clear more needs to be done to ensure UTA does not hinder anyone's progression by creating new, nor entrenching old, problems.

5.1 Looking for/maintaining employment

A secure job or having some form of ongoing regular employment not only provides structure to one's life but also helps in the search for and subsequent securing of more settled accommodation. Yet, for over a third

(39%/29) respondents, being in UTA has had a negative impact on their ability to look for work.

Moreover, being in UTA had for almost a fifth of respondents (18%/13) negatively impacted on their ability to continue with any training, course or groups they were attending such as employment support programmes.

"If I got the late shift I'd be back after 10pm. Not being able to get something to eat would be hard so I've just done earlies and said no to the extra work."

"My life was in X [town], my friends and my work was there. It was only a casual job with occasional shifts in a pub but at the time it was my only source of income. I got put here, it was all there was and I needed a roof that night. I got told I could be here eight months. I tried to keep up the work but it's two buses and if one was late I missed my connection, my wages didn't cover the fare, the bus also doesn't go late when you finish the shift. I'm struggling on Universal Credit and have a lot of debts, I just gave the job up."

The survey results showed similarly working and being in UTA is hard. Being placed somewhere that was far away could mean getting to and from work was difficult and took too long. For almost a third (31%/23) of respondents being in UTA had had a negative effect of their ability to secure or maintain work.

"My ability to look for work [is hard] because of sleep deprivation."

5.2 Relationships

"I feel embarrassed being here. I'll keep it to myself. I only told my brother and he wasn't impressed. I just want to get a job and get the f* out of here."**

As explored above, some of the restrictions that UTA places on individuals means that it can be hard for those staying there to regularly see friends and family. It was the case that for 65 per cent (48) of respondents' relationships with friends and family were negatively affected. The main factor in this was the restrictions such as curfews and not being able to have visitors. For example, 58 per cent of those who had to abide by curfews in their accommodation experienced worsening relationships compared to 42 per cent of those without curfews. Unsurprisingly the rates were even higher for those affected by restrictions on visitors: 81 per cent of those with visitor restrictions had worsening relationships with others compared to 39 per cent of those without those sorts of restrictions.

Feeling ashamed of being in TA was something that 59 per cent (44) of respondents said was true of them. Feeling ashamed of their circumstances only makes it more understandable that, for some, withdrawing from others would be a means of managing this.

"Well there's a bus stop right next to the hotel. When I get off the bus, if it sits there and I go in here, all of the people on the bus know you're homeless."

It is then perhaps not surprising that the majority of respondents (84%/62) reported that they sometimes or often felt isolated from others as result of being in UTA. The survey also showed that those that had restrictions on friends and family visiting had the

³⁷ HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf> p. 14

³⁸ Ibid.: p. 70

highest rates of isolation (87% with restrictions versus 73% of those without).

Isolation and infrequent contact with friends and family led to some seeking solace in alcohol or drugs as a means of coping with the isolation.



84%

feel isolated in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

"I've missed loads of appointments cause I can't see my kids. Then I just self-destruct in my room doing nothing, not responding to anyone, or I go on a binge."

5.3 Addictions

"I'd got my drinking under control but when I came in here, back to square one, sitting in the room drinking with others, it becomes a cycle, you're all in a cycle."

For almost six out of 10 (58%/43) respondents being in UTA had a negative impact on their alcohol or drug use. Almost three-quarters (70%/52) of respondents reported having an alcohol or drug dependency issues at some time in the past.

"When I was in here the first time, I was 17, I was offered 'gear' and everything else. I made it clear I wasn't interested and didn't want to be asked again. But you know they call this road 'smackhead central'. It falls down to you as a person – are you emotionally and psychologically strong enough to say no?"

In the wider context of Scottish homelessness, an increasing feature has been the growing proportion of applicants and those accessing TA with complex needs and vulnerabilities. Homelessness statistics show that the proportion of assessments where an applicant has one or more support need increased from 34 per cent in 2012/13 to 44 per cent in 2016/17.³⁹ In relation to addictions issues, between 2007 and 2017 there has been a 35 per cent increase in TA use by those with substance misuse (or offending) issues.⁴⁰

5.4 Getting the support

"I feel I was just chucked in here three years ago, and I don't have any idea if I'll ever get housed. I don't think you get any information in B&B. I want my own house, I know I will need huge support with it though, as just now it's a task to even keep on top of my room."



9 out of 10

people in unsuitable temporary accommodation **feel the future is uncertain**

For nine out of 10 (92%/68) respondents who had spent time in UTA the future felt uncertain. In the context of the issues explored above – poor standards, exposure to crime and anti-social behaviour, restrictions, and health implications – it is perhaps not surprising that people should be unsure about their futures.

There was a clear demand for housing support: three-quarters (78%/58) of those surveyed felt it would be beneficial for them to spend time with someone talking through what housing options they had. Nevertheless, just one in three (34%) people received help to find permanent accommodation. Those respondents who did not receive

any support for finding permanent accommodation were much more likely to feel uncertain about the future compared to those that did receive support.⁴¹

Receiving support, and gaining an understanding of what housing possibilities there are, was viewed as important by respondents in helping them to move on with their lives. Yet almost half (47%/33) of people surveyed felt they did not have a good understanding of what their future housing options were to enable them to move on from their current situation.

Given that 89 per cent (66) of respondents declared that they needed support with finding permanent accommodation, combined with the fact that over half (54%/40) did not receive any, goes some way to explaining the uncertainty about the future.

"Unless you know about it, you get no support. You don't know what you could get because nobody tells you. I was lucky – I was in hospital when X (support worker) came to see me, got me Social Work and told me about what I am entitled to and helped me to get the ball rolling with things."

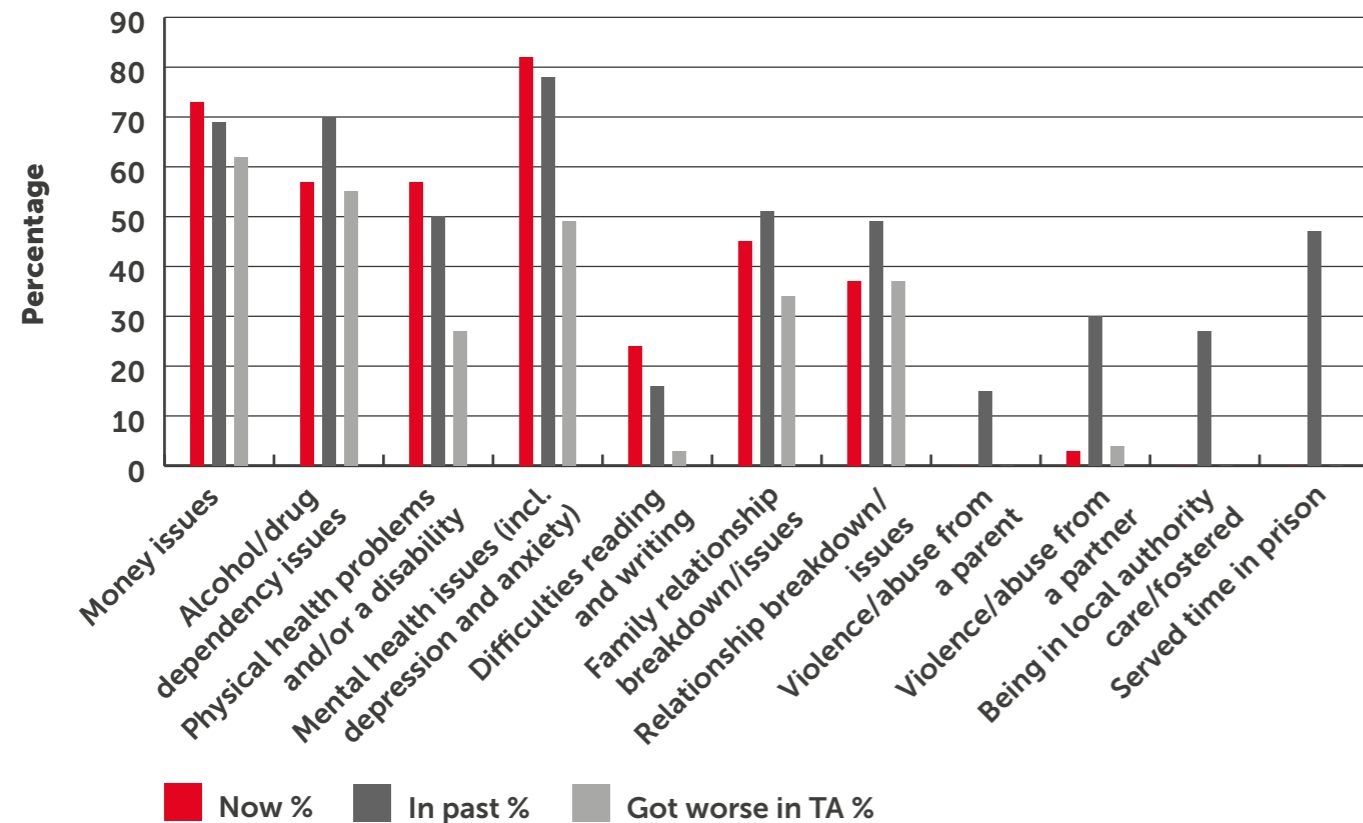
However, this was not the only area in which people in UTA felt unsupported. A fifth of respondents (20%/15) reported wanting support to find employment while only a fraction (7%/5) of those received it. As noted above, it was also clear that having to share or indeed having no or limited access to facilities such as laundry and bathrooms could cause problems in terms of preparing and being presentable for job interviews.

³⁹ HARSAG (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University, Social Bite and I-SPHERE <http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Social-Bite-TA-Study-2018.pdf> p. 14

⁴⁰ Ibid.: p. 49

⁴¹ 98% of those that received no support to find housing felt uncertain about the future compared to 80% of those that received support.

Figure 11. Personal circumstances of respondents in UTA



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

"I don't want to be here ... I feel I'm going to lose the plot. I could take another stroke if my stress levels go up any more. Nobody's helping me, there's no support. Since [another resident] came in, I am worse. There's always new things to worry about."

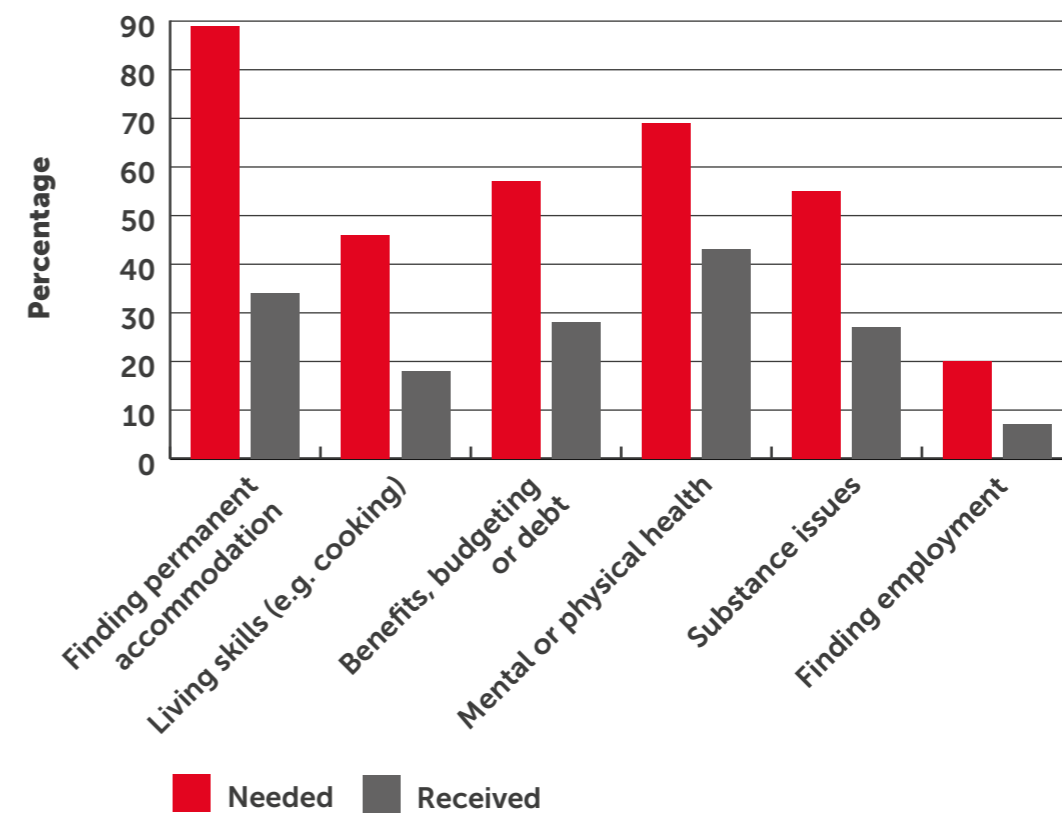
There were other examples of respondents who wanted support with various aspects of their lives – for example, benefits, budgeting or debt (57%/42); tackling substance abuse (55%/41) support for mental or physical health (69%/51) or support with living skills such as cooking (46%/34) – yet in a large proportion of all cases such support was not available.

Without support in these, and other matters, the ability of people who are living in UTA – many of whom are already struggling with a range of

vulnerabilities (relationship breakdown, money issues, escaping violence, for instance – see Figure 11) – to move on and find permanent housing and progress with work or find work is increasingly compromised.

"You get up some days and think, what are you supposed to do now? Get out of your bed and just sit on your bed? I see some people sit in their rooms and hardly go out. It's hard to get used to one room. It can have a domino effect – you feel down and fed up, then you feel lonely, if I feel lonely, I'm more likely to use. If I use I go back to square one. It's really lonely and very isolated. I can't make the changes I need to – well I can but it's hard."

Figure 12. What support did you need in UTA and did you receive it?



Source: survey of people living in UTA in Scotland (n=74)

While support was in limited supply, it was clear that respondents welcomed it when it came. The merit of receiving support when it was provided was clear. For example, for those who received support in finding permanent accommodation, almost seven out of 10 (68%/17) felt they had a good understanding of their future housing options compared to just 30 per cent (12) of those that did not. Those who received housing support also felt more certain about other aspects of their future.

"If you had regular contact from them you'd know what was being done on your behalf and that would help."

"Some contact would help – to know you have not been just forgotten about, and fallen through the cracks. One letter in three months is all I've had."

So, while TA can provide an important first step out of homelessness, providing a roof over the head for many, living in unsuitable conditions can also lead to new problems and entrench existing issues which can then become barriers to leaving homelessness behind.⁴²

"Yes of course it affects you mentally. You wake up sometimes, you think "what's my purpose in life? Sitting here looking at four walls?"

⁴² This echoes the concerns of the Local Government and Communities Committee Report on Homelessness that TA can sometimes mean people "leaving worse than when they came in" and TA sometimes being "a replication of the adversity that has brought them into our services in the first place": Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee (2018) *Report on Homelessness*, SP Paper 279. <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/103620.aspx> p. 40-41

Conclusions

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Across the UK, those with experience of chronic homelessness describe UTA as distressing and at times intolerable.⁴³ The evidence gathered in this survey reinforces and expands on this position.

The predominant form of UTA explored in this report was B&B or hotel accommodation which is in keeping with the definition outlined in The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2014. A third of people stayed in such accommodation between one to six months. Some reported stays of over a year. This is too long and it is telling that almost seven out of 10 people surveyed left their UTA before permanent accommodation was found.

This research exposes the untenable experience of spending prolonged periods of time in UTA. While some people reported satisfaction with their accommodation, experiences of little or no access to facilities and amenities is widespread meaning many people are going without meals and maintaining personal hygiene can be difficult.

Nobody should feel unsafe where they live, yet this is the experience of many of the people in this survey. Most respondents felt isolated from friends and family with large numbers experiencing depression and other mental health issues. Support should also be available for those who need it, yet many of the people surveyed said that help with housing needs, access to employment, living skills and health needs was not available.

Being subject to restrictions such as curfews, preventing visits from friends and families and exclusion of pets is contrary to the Scottish Government's move to expand homelessness support to all households. Prolonged stays in UTA cause uncertainty and cause people to question their ability to cope.

Temporary should mean temporary and unsuitable should mean nothing more than simply unacceptable. Yet

people are trapped in UTA because there isn't enough permanent housing for everyone. The Scottish Government has accepted all 70 of the recommendations made by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group to transform the homelessness system in Scotland, including the use of temporary accommodation. These include the recommendation for a five-year transition period for local authorities to move to a rapid rehousing model, removing the need for long term stays in any form of temporary accommodation. However, this will take time to implement, and people need help now. Therefore, we make the following recommendations to Government and local authorities:

Recommendation 1:
As a priority Scottish Government should amend the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order in this parliamentary calendar (2018-19) to end the use of UTA for more than seven days for any homeless household.

This would ensure there is a legal requirement placed on all local authorities; limiting the time any person experiencing homelessness can be placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

People want to move on with their lives, yet almost all the people interviewed for this report felt that being left in UTA for long periods of time meant they were living a life in limbo, preventing them from moving on from their homelessness.

TA provides a valuable safety net as an interim intervention before people can find a permanent home. However, by living in unsuitable and, at times, inhumane conditions, this research demonstrates UTA increasingly creates new problems and entrenches old ones. Relationships are being broken, rather than built. Goals of securing

work are hampered instead of realised. And people feel vulnerable and threatened rather than safe and secure. While rapid rehousing plans will soon come into effect, it is paramount that we do not let people seeking to move on from homelessness languish in unsuitable living conditions. Legislating for a time limit of seven days for use of UTA must be enacted as an immediate priority for government.

Recommendation 2:
Local authorities must develop plans to meet the legislative requirements, rapidly rehouse homeless households and prevent homelessness whenever possible, so that unsuitable temporary accommodation is only ever used in emergency situations.

There are alternatives available now to long-term use of UTA including help to access the private rented sector, social lettings agencies and preventative measures including housing advice to stop people losing their homes as well as more intensive models such as Housing First and Critical Time Intervention for people with more complex needs. These measures should form the foundations of the forthcoming Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, and be put in place to support the implementation of a strengthened restriction on the use of unsuitable accommodation. Crisis has published a plan to end homelessness⁴⁴ which sets out further details of interventions that make the difference in ending homelessness.

Restricting the use of UTA to seven days for all homeless people can mean people move through the homelessness system more quickly and get on with their lives, but this can only be done if appropriate support is also put in place.

⁴³ McMordie, L. (2018) *Chronic Homelessness in Temporary Accommodation Placement in Belfast*. Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University and I-SPHERE; <https://ihurerblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/chronic-homelessness-draft-v2-0.pdf>; IPPR (2016) *Nowhere fast: The journey in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation*. London: IPPR https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/nowhere-fast_Jan2016.pdf; The Poverty Alliance (n.d.) *Out of jail but still not free Experiences of temporary accommodation on leaving prison*. Epic Research Briefing No. 2. Glasgow: The Poverty Alliance <http://www.povertyalliance.org/userfiles/files/EpicBriefingNo2AW.pdf>

⁴⁴ Crisis (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis.

Recommendation 3:

Local authorities must urgently ensure that people housed in UTA receive proactive support to enable them to move on with their lives.

All local authorities who use unsuitable temporary accommodation must ensure that residents receive proactive provision of 1:1 support to mitigate the worst impacts of this accommodation type on people's lives and their personal progress and enable them to move on from homelessness. Dedicated, assertive support ensures individuals understand and can explore their own housing options and access other services – such as employability, volunteering, mental health support or education. This makes it less likely that they report feelings of isolation, loneliness and hopelessness, and more likely they retain or build up the networks, skills and resilience required to make a success of future housing.

Next Steps

This report puts forth a compelling case to end excessive stays in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Legal reform is a crucial first step make this a reality. Join our 'A Life in Limbo' campaign by visiting www.crisis.org.uk/limbo. Call on the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, to reform the Homelessness Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order within this parliamentary year, to ensure nobody is forced to live A Life in Limbo.

**Join our campaign at
www.crisis.org.uk/limbo**

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**Together
we will end
homelessness**