



Research, Policy and Communications 2022

A summary of our achievements and successes

Introduction

The work of Justlife's Research, Policy and Communications (RPC) team has grown exponentially in the last year. As we interact with an increasing range of organisations and individuals through our national work, Justlife continues to establish itself as a go to source of evidence, data and knowledge around temporary and emergency accommodation (TA/EA).

From 2020, the pandemic necessitated us to think more creatively about the delivery of our work programme. As the RPC team adapted to new ways of working, including offering "hybrid" access to all meetings and events, we have been able to reach new audiences across the country and beyond. It has allowed us to spend time developing relationships in geographical areas we previously might not have considered due to travel cost and time. We have also reconsidered methods of research and trialled new approaches to data collection. These new ways of working have been tried and tested in the last year and have become rooted in our practice.

This report is a summary of our work and key achievements and successes of 2022.



Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAGs)

- 4 continuing TAAGs in Hackney, Brighton, East Sussex and Manchester
- 5 new London TAAGs
- A new Pan-London TAAG Network
- An early stage TAAG in Bristol

Currently, the network includes four active Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAG's) in Brighton, East Sussex, Hackney, and Manchester. A new TAAG in Bristol is launching after months of work bringing together key stakeholders, including landlords, local councillors, LA Officers (housing and homelessness directorates) and the voluntary sector. Christian Action Bristol has been instrumental in connecting us with local grassroots groups.

We have secured funding from Trust for London's "Better Temporary Accommodation" initiative and are launching 5 new TAAGs across London working with local strategic partners (including Shelter, The Magpie Project, Cardinal Hume Centre and Notting Hill Genesis), to identify key Borough specific issues.

They will join the Hackney TAAG to form a pan-London network for sharing information, solutions and ideas in a whole new approach for our TAAG network.

We have been trialling new ways of working with the TAAG methodology in order to have greater impact and involve more people. In Manchester, the TAAG has evolved from a single group into a "networked" approach, using the TAAG methodology across a number of groups and forums that we convene, chair, or support including a Landlord forum with 38 members, a collaborative lived experience voice group piloted by Rebecca Long-Bailey MP and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Households in TA (APPGTA) and a TAAG for providers of CAS3 probation accommodation and support. All these groups feed into the overall learning of the Greater Manchester area and the National TA network.



TAAG Survey

We conducted a survey to ascertain the effectiveness of the TAAG's. Responses were overwhelmingly positive and confirmed that the TAAG's are valued by temporary accommodation providers, charities and local authorities. Some of the themes that emerged from the survey were:

- A constructive, problem-solving space.
- A place to bring your concerns/questions and hope to get answers.
- Somewhere for conditions to be highlighted and improved.
- A space for learning and accessing training.

"It has clearly improved building quality and greatly improved liaison between landlords and services."

- East Sussex TAAG member

"I feel that the TAAG has been a really important forum for sharing learning and shining a light on the issues in. We have been able to have greater influence to achieve change as a group, particularly through building support for the temporary accommodation Charter (that the local authority has adopted)."

- Brighton TAAG member

Our members with lived experience have also reported back how important their involvement in TAAG work has been in helping them progress. One member now works for a national homeless charity supporting lived experience voice and has been instrumental in brokering a partnership with Justlife for further TAAG work in London. Another has begun to participate in wider Research & Policy work for Justlife, taking part in interviews, and joining paid co-production projects to help us review our funding and structural procedures.

The Temporary Accommodation Network

We coordinate the **National Temporary Accommodation Network**, the national network that TAAG groups feed learning and best practice into. The aim of this network is information sharing between TA stakeholders resulting in experiences of temporary accommodation being shorter, safer and healthier. It is a forum where participants can collaborate and build partnerships for future activity.

Our network's **bi-monthly newsletter "Lifting the Lid"**, which has a distribution list of 337, shares information, research and news stories related to temporary accommodation. Each issue features spotlights on work done by other organisations. Feedback we've received from external contributors has been very positive, with one contributor getting in touch to say within minutes of an edition of the newsletter going live, she'd had 2 people get in contact to participate in her research.

To measure the impact of this publication we ran a survey asking people to tell us how they used the newsletter:

"I catch up on any new research, find out what new projects are going on and share everything with my colleagues "

"Opportunity to share our research findings with the Justlife community when it is published"

We asked people to tell us what content they find useful to read about in our work, and the overwhelming feedback was **lived experience, statistics and opinion pieces around TA** - informing our focus for future editions.





Events, workshops and talks

We run events and have spoken at other organisation's events across the country as an expert voice on issues ranging from Out of Area Placements, to TA and disability, to TAAGs

- Hosted the annual online **National Temporary Accommodation** Conference with guest speakers from a number of organisations, researchers, local authorities and people with lived experience. The 2022 theme was "how research translates into impact" which was attended on-line by over 100 people.
- Talked at **events across the country**, including the University of Southampton South East Homelessness Community of Practice, Cardinal Hume Centre and the Arch Health Conference.
- Established the **Brighton & Hove Homelessness Research Forum**, a regular meeting space for universities, organisations and community groups carrying out homelessness research to develop critical mass, network, exchange ideas, develop joint research funding proposals and look at ways to amplify the lived experience voice. We have 58 members of this group and are currently developing a searchable research interest and need database so that we can promote the Brighton & Hove research and expertise offering clearly. This is part of a wider effort to engage with academic institutions and build bridges between academia and community groups.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Households in Temporary Accommodation (APPGTA)

This year the APPGTA was launched. We are co-secretariat of the APPG alongside Shared Health Foundation, an Manchester-based organisation supporting equitable access to healthcare and improved living standards. The cross-party group brings together MPs, policymakers and organisations from across the sector and political spectrum to drive change and bring much-needed focus to TA in national conversations.

- 3 public meetings
- 1 online 2 hybrid
- Over 240 attendees
- Attendees have included politicians, journalists, academics and people from a number of different sectors and those with lived experience.





In April the APPG launched a national call for evidence in order to get a sense of what life in TA is like for people right now. 81 people took part, and a summary of our findings were:

- A clear and consistent story that people's stays in TA are not fit for their needs.
- The majority of the residents who took part/were cited had been in their TA for longer than 1 year
- While the stories we heard were varied in many ways, there were some strong recurring themes, which we've grouped into 5 "clusters":
 - Poor Maintenance
 - Lack of Basic Household goods/services
 - Accessibility Issues - A number of people had disabilities and their TA was highly unsuitable for their physical, emotional or mental health needs.
 - Sense of "Unsafety" - 3 main categories of feeling unsafe: due to other residents, not having physical security in place e.g., locks, or the environment being adverse to their specific needs (e.g., DV, families, gender based needs)
 - Feeling Unsupported - both in specific practical housing needs (e.g., no help with repairs/complaints) or wider experience of homelessness (e.g., not knowing how to access support services).

Speakers have included a Hackney TAAG member and Shared Health client, both with lived experience of TA, researchers, the Head of Housing for Manchester, MP Sarah Owen, then Shadow Minister for homelessness, and MP Eddie Hughes, former Minister for Rough Sleeping & Housing.



Evidence Creation

Throughout the last year we have carried out a number of **qualitative research projects** to help us understand the systemic context we work in, and the impact of multiple disadvantage and co-occurring conditions (from a perspective of intersectionality) on people living in TA.

The resulting reports have been shared widely with the aim of raising awareness of and conversations around these issues and ultimately triggering policy change (through the APPG). All the reports can be found on the Justlife website.

A number of key themes had arisen from our previous research which we felt needed exploring in greater depth:

- Disability in TA
- Out of Area Placements
- Intersectionality and TA
- Evaluating different approaches to support provision in TA

Disability in TA

We conducted interviews with people living in temporary accommodation with disabilities, having discovered by chance that 37% of the sample interviewed for our 2020 Covid 19 TA research had a disability compared to 21% of the general population, indicating a previously unrecognised correlation. Themes that emerged were:

- Poor upkeep of facilities, for example there may be a lift but it wasn't working.
- Being placed in a room that quite obviously wasn't fit for their needs, for example up several flights of stairs for someone with mobility issues.
- An absence of simple assistive technology such as handles and fire door retainers, which could make a big difference to people.
- Feeling unable to ask for any help or adaptation to the properties.
- In this and our COVID-19 report, we recommended that disability should be mainstreamed across all levels of housing and homelessness services, specifically as part of the discussion around strategy, programming and funding of social housing and temporary accommodation.





Out of Area Placements

As part of our research, we have published and shared statistics, trends and issues around Out of Area placements and the APPG policy plan will be calling for a national review of the system.

Our local front-line team in Brighton secured funding to pilot an out of area placement support worker to support clients placed in TA outside Brighton. At the end of the pilot, we carried out an evaluation to ascertain the impact of the post. We interviewed clients who had been placed out of area about their experiences of the placement and the support received.

Three main concerns about the experience of Out of Area placements were voiced in the interviews:

- being far from support networks and support services
- not being given a choice in their placement
- not knowing how long they were going to be there leading to them feeling forgotten about

The support worker helped the clients with a broad range of needs, from filling out forms for PIP or Universal Credit applications, accompanying them to health and other appointments back in Brighton, sorting out essentials such as bedding and shopping, picking up medicine, encouraging positive interests such as creative writing, and just keeping them company. In addition, eight of the 19 clients were supported to move back to Brighton.

“Just the fact of having her made my anxiety less” (Out of area client).

This report includes recommendations for Local Authorities placing people Out of Area has been widely referenced and shared across local/national media.



Intersectionality and TA

Intersectionality is a relatively new concept in the homelessness sector.

We are beginning to understand that the lives of the people we work with do not necessarily conform neatly into preconceived ideas and the sectoral dividing lines we have constructed. We know that many people experiencing homelessness have more than one identity that impacts how they experience the system. Homelessness services tend to think in boxes, but the reality is rarely one of neat categories.

We carried out an in depth interview with a person experiencing homelessness in TA who had experienced multiple disadvantages as he worked towards securing a permanent home. Although the interviewees story is extraordinary, the fact that it is multifaceted is not. Identities and experiences intersect to make each individual experience unique. The homelessness system is geared to looking for a box that clients can fit neatly into, preferably quickly. But people cannot be understood without telling the whole story; it all feeds into each other. Intersectionality will be a major focus of our research in the new year



Evaluation of support models in TA

We carried out a piece of work, funded by Fair Housing Futures, to understand the difference in outcomes for people who had intensive support in TA compared to an ‘arms-length’ approach. Arms-length work was defined as the provision of information or tenant packs, visits to properties and signposting whereas intense support was relational in nature and required multiple appointments and engagement from the client.

Whilst we witnessed most impact where support was intensive we also saw huge benefit to arms-length support, such as clients being able to locate local services such as food banks themselves. The project also involved engaging with landlords through relationship building and the creation of “landlord packs”. We concluded that there was no one size fits all approach to support and there should be flexibility in place to provide the appropriate support for wherever the person is at.

Future research areas

Over the next year, we hope to create further partnerships and grow our capacity to carry out research, particularly around intersectionality. We have secured 3 years funding from the Oak Foundation which will help us realise our Theory of Change, particularly around bringing lived experience of homelessness to the heart of everything we do. Our recently appointed Lived Experience Lead will play a key role in future research into TA experiences for people facing multiple disadvantage. Particular areas of interest already identified include:

- Amplifying lived experience voices in discussions and systems change about TA
- Race and experiences of racism in the TA system
- LGBTQ+ experiences of TA
- Exempt Accommodation
- No Recourse to Public Funds

We are discussing research placements within our team for master's and PhD students from the universities of Brighton, Sussex, Canterbury Christ Church, and Birmingham which will bring additional research capacity to our team and offer students on the ground insights into the issues of TA which are underrepresented in academic studies.



The Research, Policy and Communications Team

We are a small but highly dedicated team, working in a systems thinking, intersectional and trauma informed way to carry out research, evaluations, and policy work all aimed at producing evidence and recommendations to help make stays in TA short, safe and healthy.

We're always keen to connect and collaborate, hear about other work going on and join in conversations. If you'd like to find out more or just say hello please get in touch with us.

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Special thanks to David Paylor,
Network Development Worker who
has now left the project

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