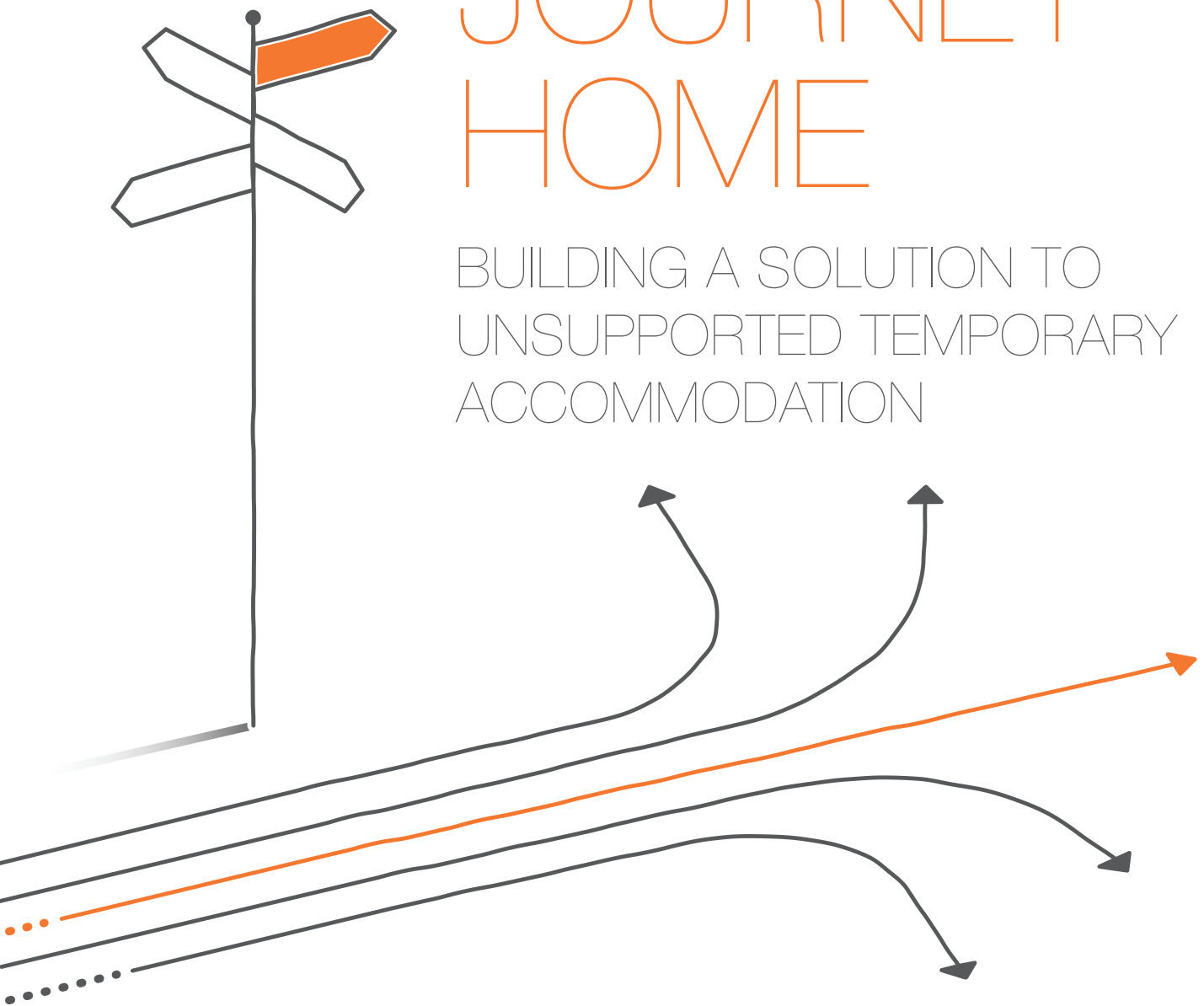


REPORT

THE JOURNEY HOME

BUILDING A SOLUTION TO
UNSUPPORTED TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION



Christa Maciver,
Charlotte Snelling,
Alex Fleming
and Bill Davies

December 2016
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ABOUT IPPR NORTH

IPPR North is IPPR's dedicated thinktank for the North of England. With its head office in Manchester and representatives in Newcastle, IPPR North's research, together with our stimulating and varied events programme, seeks to produce innovative policy ideas for fair, democratic and sustainable communities across the North of England.

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IPPR North
13th Floor, City Tower
Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BT
T: +44 (0)161 694 9680
E: north@ippr.org
www.ippr.org/north
Registered charity no: 800065 (England and Wales),
SC046557 (Scotland).

This paper was first published in December 2016. © 2016
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Christa Maciver is a project lead and researcher at Justlife.

Charlotte Snelling is a researcher at IPPR.

Alex Fleming was head of research and development at Justlife at the time this report was drafted

Bill Davies was a senior research fellow at IPPR at the time this report was drafted.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to colleagues Gary Bishop, chief executive officer of Justlife, and Ed Cox, director of IPPR North, for providing expertise and encouragement throughout this research and their detailed comments on the report drafts.

We are especially grateful to all the research participants who took time to speak to us about their experiences in UTA and their willingness to be so involved. We also want to especially acknowledge the five research participants who died over the course of this research.

The authors would also like to thank the LankellyChase Foundation for generously supporting this programme of work.

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Maciver C, Snelling C, Fleming A and Davies B (2016) *The journey home: Building a solution to unsupported temporary accommodation*, IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/the-journey-home-building-a-solution-to-unsupported-temporary-accommodation>

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1. INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS UNSUPPORTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AND WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

People who are single and homeless face an uphill struggle to secure the support and services they need in order to move into a permanent and stable home. In the absence of these services, many find their only option is to move into unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA), a form of insecure housing which may consist of a private hostel, bed and breakfast, emergency or temporary accommodation, short-stay HMO (house in multiple occupation) or guesthouse.

Unsupported temporary accommodation frequently falls short of the government's decent homes standard and often impacts negatively on the health and wellbeing of its tenants, many of whom are extremely vulnerable and face severe and multiple disadvantage. Inhabitants of UTA are typically licensed to live in the accommodation, are not tenants and are sometimes considered excluded occupiers. Therefore, residents have extremely limited rights within the properties. Often the physical condition of the accommodation creates an unsafe environment and the social conditions increase tenants' exposure to risk. Therefore, a clear strategy is needed to do the following.

1. Prevent people from moving into poor quality UTA in the first place.
2. Provide immediate support when people have no choice but to move into UTA.
3. Offer ongoing support to help people cope with living in UTA.
4. Find more secure accommodation for tenants as quickly as possible.

THE JOURNEY HOME PROJECT: KEY FINDINGS

Over the past three years, IPPR North and Justlife Foundation have been working to understand the lives of hidden single homeless households living in UTA in the North West and South East of England.

The experience of UTA tenants uncovered in our research has been both eye-opening and appalling, and represents just a snapshot of a problem of UTA that persists in most towns and cities across the country. We found concerning experiences ranging from poor physical conditions to unstable social environments. Our research has also highlighted the absence of a strong national policy framework to support the many hidden single homeless households living across the country.

Many local authorities are constrained by housing shortages and governed by rules that give priority to other types of household in particular need.¹

¹ Those automatically considered in priority need include families with dependent children, pregnant women, young adults leaving care and/or under the age of 18 years, and those made homeless by emergency circumstances.

As a result, single homeless households are often left with little support in securing a place in temporary accommodation and any support they may initially access falls away once they have been ‘placed’. They find themselves living without permanent tenancy status, in uninhabitable conditions, with few rights and no structured plan or help to move towards stable and secure accommodation.

Government data reports 6,520 households placed in bed and breakfast (B&B)² accommodation in the second quarter of 2016 (DCLG 2016). Shelter found in 1997 that although the government data reported only 7,660 individuals living in B&B accommodation, the number was actually 72,550 – almost 10 times higher than the official figure (Carter 1997). We have no reason to believe that the numbers are not still worryingly high.

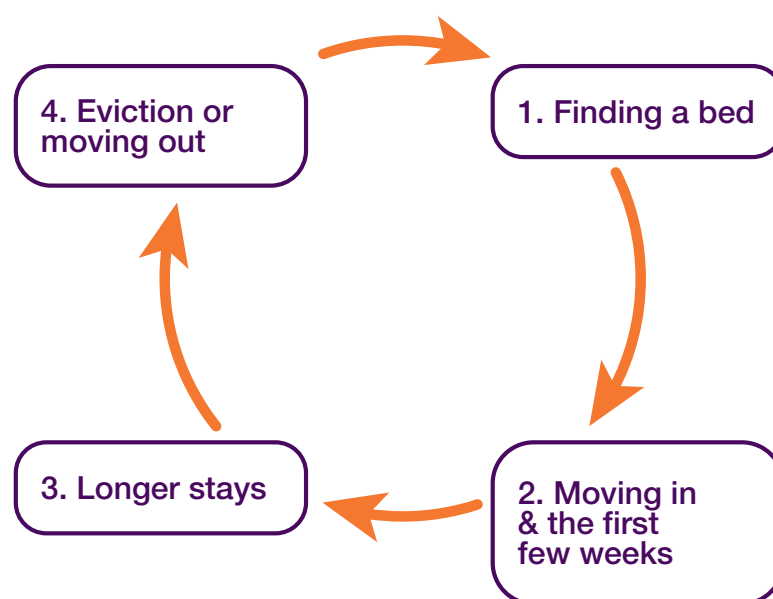
Stages in the journey through UTA

In order to affect change within a system that necessitates UTA as a housing option there needs to be a seismic shift in approach and investment. IPPR North and Justlife have identified four key stages of a person’s journey through UTA and have sought to develop a series of local measures to be adopted by local stakeholders – local authorities, voluntary sector organisations, and other connected parties – in order to begin shifting the current approach to UTA and to encourage interventions designed to break the cycle that sees marginalised individuals drifting through UTA.

The four key stages, identified by our research, experienced by individuals living in UTA are illustrated in figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1

A typical journey: the unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA) cycle



Source: Rose et al 2016

² Bed and Breakfast accommodation is defined by Shelter as including ‘commercial hotels, guest houses, lodging houses and private homes’ (Carter 1997: 9). This type of accommodation is included in our definition of UTA, and therefore counting those in B&B accommodation is useful for determining quantity estimates for those residing in short-term insecure accommodation overall.

The detailed context and challenges facing tenants living in this kind of accommodation, as well as a series of recommendations aimed at changing the systems these tenants must navigate, are presented in the project's first two reports: *Not home: The lives of hidden homeless households in unsupported temporary accommodation in England* (Rose and Davies 2014) and *Nowhere fast: The journey in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation* (Rose et al 2016). Both are available on IPPR's website.³

ABOUT THIS REPORT AND PROJECT OUTPUTS

This is the third and final publication from our three-year research project.

The purpose of the report is to summarise our research findings and provide recommendations. It highlights the problems found within UTA and how these experiences present significant barriers to single homeless households ultimately seeking permanent accommodation and independent living. Our recommendations then demonstrate the ways in which current practice can and should be reformed to improve the experiences of people living in UTA and how they can be supported to move into more secure accommodation.

The report provides the backdrop for a toolkit that shares ideas, resources and practical strategies for implementing the recommendations locally to improve the lives of those living in UTA across the country. The toolkit includes a handbook (on the reverse of this report) and a wallchart that will be distributed with this publication. Both will form part of a wider online toolkit of resources available at Justlife's website.⁴

- ***The journey home: A handbook to setting up a temporary accommodation board.*** This handbook highlights the steps, questions, and good practice examples that organisations and groups will need to consider when setting up their own group or strategy to help improve the lives of those living in temporary accommodation.
- ***The journey home: Visualising the journey.*** This is a visual representation, presented as a wallchart, of the common experiences of individuals as they journey through UTA, and shows how the actions of others, and recommendations of our own, might help to support tenants at various points along the path.

This report is structured as follows:

- The next section briefly summarises our recommendations.
- The subsequent section breaks down the four stages of the UTA journey, describing the challenges experienced and expanding on our recommendations in each area.
- We then present a summary of the conclusions emerging from our research and signpost to further resources.

3 <http://www.ippr.org/big-issues/housing>.

4 <https://www.justlife.org.uk/research/the-journey-home-full-toolkit/>

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations specific to each of the four stages of the UTA journey build on the four central recommendations for policy and practice change published in this project's second report, *Nowhere fast* (Rose et al 2016), and highlight their potential for bringing about positive changes to the lives of homeless individuals.

Below and throughout this report, our recommendations have been colour-coded to indicate where a sub-recommendation or point links to one of these central recommendations.

Create temporary accommodation boards. These would consist of new formal, local bodies, established to bring together the activities of neighbouring housing authorities, public services and the homelessness sector to gather, share and monitor information about local bedspaces and the individuals living in them, to inform referrals and signposting towards appropriate accommodation.

Establish 'greenlists' and 'exclusion' lists. Temporary accommodation boards should create and maintain live greenlists of acceptable local bedspaces and exclusion lists of unacceptable bedspaces, using the data they gather and aggregate. These lists should be available to tenants and used to incentivise landlords to make improvements.

Develop a minimum, consistent set of standards. These standards will include: an agreed minimum conditions standard for the UTA submarket; a single tenancy agreement for local bedspaces, setting out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, details of services and service changes, and a named point of contact for tenants in the event that issues arise at the property; and a clear, safe and anonymous method of making complaints.

Provide appropriate in-tenancy support. Quality placement and in-tenancy support should exist to help individuals manage their stay and to prevent their cycling in and out of UTA. This should include 'warm handovers', where the person referring the individual accompanies the tenant to check the condition of their new home and provide support with paperwork and settling in.

We expand on these recommendations in the following chapter.

3.

THE UTA JOURNEY

STAGE 1: FINDING A BED

The challenges

When individuals become homeless, finding suitable accommodation, often at the last minute or late at night, is challenging, especially for single homeless households facing severe and multiple disadvantage. These individuals are often at the back of the queue when it comes to local authority support and it is not uncommon for them to be turned away by a housing team with little explanation of why and little or no support to help them address their homelessness. In research by Crisis, mystery shoppers attending local authority homelessness services received either inadequate or insufficient support in 50 out of 87 visits (Dobie et al 2014). No council wants this, but they are constrained by housing shortages and governed by rules that say they must give priority to other households in need.

These difficulties are compounded by the fact that 55 per cent of landlords say they are unwilling to let properties to households in receipt of housing benefit (Gousy 2014). Low income households are typically limited to the cheapest 30 per cent of rental properties (Clarke et al 2015), which lie at the margins of local housing markets. Therefore, the availability of properties for single homeless households with complex needs and in receipt of welfare support is even further restricted within these margins.

Options for single homeless households are therefore limited, especially when individuals are experiencing crisis. They often have no choice but to move into UTA, where conditions are extremely poor, there is little or no security of tenure and the help from local services is minimal at best. However, because this type of accommodation is unknown to the public in general, when an individual becomes homeless they will receive some type of support in finding a bed in UTA, even if it is simply in the form of information passed on by a friend. This was the case for our research participants. Table 3.1 shows how they found such accommodation.

It is also common for individuals to be placed into accommodation by neighbouring local authorities, local mental health teams and adult social care, even though we did not interview anyone placed by these organisations.

The wide variation in the journeys of tenants into UTA is problematic, not least because attempts to prevent individuals being referred to certain unacceptable forms of accommodation can be undermined when another organisation chooses to continue making such referrals. For example, there are reports that while certain local authorities were trying to limit or end referrals to accommodation deemed unsuitable, neighbouring local authorities were placing individuals across the boundary into that same

accommodation when no suitable accommodation was available in their own area (Irving 2015).

TABLE 3.1

How our research participants found unsupported temporary accommodation

Referral or signposting from...	No. of research participants
Referred by prison/probation	4
Referred by charity	5
Referred by local authority housing options team	10
Referred by local authority hospital discharge team	6
Referred by friend	5
Self-referred	8
Referred by police	2
Signposted by local authority	3
Signposted by charity	2

These challenges, combined with a ‘worker lottery’ – the significant differences seen in the quality of support between workers and the lack of choice around who can be seen – contribute to the variable nature of the information received by single homeless households. A lack of systems that accurately record the number of bedspaces in UTA also make it much more difficult to collectively identify and act in unison to address known problems. Where individuals are self-referring or are placed by the collection of alternative services and agencies working outside the local authority, there is a further lack of up-to-date, centrally held knowledge on who is occupying these bedspaces.

The evidence strongly suggests that stakeholders are not working together effectively, which then points to a need to act collectively to clean up this dark corner of the housing market. Local initiatives and activities – such as Manchester’s homelessness charter, Blackburn with Darwen’s MEAM project, and Sunderland’s environmental health officer⁵ – have begun to recognise this need for better joined-up working to facilitate coordinated activity and information-sharing.

Recommendations for reforming policy locally to support better placement

We recommend that local stakeholders collectively gather information regarding UTA such as: addresses, the quality of the accommodation, and the scale and flow of those using UTA. This information can be used to coordinate signposting and referrals in a manner that drives up standards by prioritising the highest quality accommodation, thereby incentivising other providers of UTA to improve their offer. It can also be provided to individuals referred or signposted into UTA, who require accurate information regarding the accommodation available in order to gain a greater sense of control over finding a bed.

⁵ Details of case studies can be found in the handbook accompanying this report.

Temporary accommodation boards (TABs)

Temporary accommodation boards are proposed new formal local bodies that would serve as place-based partnerships with the aim of improving the experience of tenants in unsupported temporary accommodation. These boards would bring together activities of neighbouring housing authorities, public services and the homelessness sector to address the challenges in finding a secure bedspace when faced with homelessness. Enactment of the bulk of our recommendations would flow out of the work of temporary accommodation boards as these bodies are central to ensuring effective local collaboration through their coordinating role. The handbook accompanying this report outlines suggested stages in setting up a temporary accommodation board and their potential effectiveness. It also provides details of a pilot board set up in Manchester.

The role of temporary accommodation boards in information-gathering should be as follows.

The first priority of temporary accommodation boards should be the gathering of intelligence about the number of bedspaces being used to provide shelter for single homeless households, recording how many homeless households are using them at any one time, and – where appropriate or necessary – recording the identity of these individuals. Local authorities will be critical players in carrying out these tasks.

Information gathered and held by temporary accommodation boards should be updated regularly and made accessible to all board members. Such information should include: the landlord's and/or managing agent's name, taken from publicly held HMO registers; accommodation type and suitability for different types of tenants; current weekly rents and service charges; property conditions; and tenant feedback. Much of the data collected and stored should already be publicly accessible. Due to potential data protection issues, storing tenant feedback or other sensitive data should be done only with agreed consent and signed data protection forms. Information should only be shared publicly if agreed by the board.

Once gathered, information should be used to help individuals involved in signposting and referral processes to make informed decisions about where to send people. As such:

Greenlists of accommodation that meets required standards should be compiled from the information held by temporary accommodation boards and shared among signposting agencies. At the same time, exclusion lists of unsuitable bedspaces should also be created, maintained and shared, in order to discourage agencies from using these properties as destinations for single homeless households.

STAGE 2: MOVING IN AND THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

The challenges

The first month of living in UTA is particularly challenging, especially in circumstances where individuals arrive at the accommodation on their own, without support and without any onward plan. Our research found that for most individuals the most help they received towards moving in was little more than a piece of paper with the accommodation's address and sometimes money for a bus pass.

Tenants arrive at their accommodation often to be greeted by a room not ready or fit for habitation. Many research participants reported issues of damp, poor hygiene, uncleanliness and infestations – all of which were noticeable within the first 24 hours. There were complaints of no bed, broken windows, soiled carpets, and blood or other stains on walls or mattresses. Safety was also an immediate concern for many, with 23 of our 45 research participants reporting having no lock on their door. This reality is made worse by the fact that tenants are often arriving to live in these environments for an unspecified amount of time and therefore struggle to see an end to the problems presented by their new accommodation.

In addition to the physical conditions, when tenants arrive they are faced with additional problems in setting up their accommodation. Many of our research participants raised the following issues:

- Confusion over having to sign 'a piece of paper' that appears to set out neither their rights nor responsibilities as tenants.
- Uncertainty from the outset about the cost of the service charge, and what exactly it covers.⁶ Respondents were paying between £0 and £35 per week, with that range sometimes found within the same property. There was a fear that if they did not pay, the accommodation offer could be withdrawn. Only five tenants reported having personally challenged the charge.
- Upon identification of a problem, not knowing who to contact when and where, other than another tenant in possession of the landlord's phone number.
- Signing housing benefit forms that had been already filled out by landlords or managers and not being clear on their rights over their financial support.

A tenant's feelings of insecurity are fuelled when they arrive in such a place: typically alone, with no support, and no one with whom to talk through things they need or to help them access the items that the accommodation might lack (often basics such as clean sheets or a towel). Rarely is there the opportunity to discuss with either the landlord or management the things that need to be addressed in order to make the room habitable. In our research, more than half of our participants – 27 out of 45 – felt that issues raised with the landlord would not be addressed, because the landlord 'never fixed anything'. This context makes reporting issues that need addressing all the more difficult.

⁶ The service charge is an additional charge usually levied on top of weekly rent (typically paid for out of the tenant's local housing allowance) to cover costs for items such as utility bills, breakfast, cleaning and laundry.

These issues, coupled with the reality that UTA has a high concentration of people with complex needs – including many individuals already experiencing stress and anxiety – all contribute to tenants feeling they have limited control over their environment. Even during these early weeks, those we spoke to reported a decline in their mental health and wellbeing.

Recommendations for reforming policy to improve support for the first month

A new approach to the placement of tenants is needed, especially as a majority of single homeless households moving into UTA are unrecorded and unknown.

We recommend that referring or signposting agencies should hold responsibility for the individual moving into UTA, ensuring there is proper support in place for the move itself while also making sure the responsible enforcement agency is aware of any substandard conditions identified in the property. Any issues of concern should also be reported to the temporary accommodation board.

In cases where tenants need immediate support or items, or have questions, these should be addressed at the time of bedspace allocation, and where necessary the referral or signposting organisation can prevent the placement from occurring where the property is clearly inappropriate. Acting in this way has the additional benefit of guaranteeing a more regular routine of checking that conditions meet stated standards.

As such, we recommend:

Wherever possible, those placing or signposting individuals to UTA should accompany the tenant in a ‘warm handover’, to ensure that a tenant has the basic things they need for their stay and access to ongoing support and information should they need it.

Each tenant should have a designated point of contact or support worker, depending on their needs, to facilitate this process.

The process of ‘warm handovers’ will also help to provide the temporary accommodation board with the critical information it needs to: inform greenlists and exclusion lists; inform property managers of the location of unacceptable conditions; and, where necessary, inform Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)⁷ enforcement decisions. We make the following recommendations.

The individual responsible for the ‘warm handover’ should confirm that the property is in an acceptable condition, using a set checklist, and that agreed licence agreements and paperwork are being used.⁸

⁷ The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a method of assessing housing conditions. It employs a risk assessment approach to enable risks from hazards to health and safety in dwellings to be minimised. The system applies to all dwellings, regardless of ownership.

⁸ Resources can be found online at ‘The journey home: The full toolkit’ on Justlife’s website: <https://www.justlife.org.uk/research/the-journey-home-full-toolkit/>

Where any specific issues with the accommodation are identified, these should be inputted into a database maintained by the temporary accommodation board, and fed back to relevant enforcement agencies and departments and to the landlord in question.

Temporary accommodation boards should be responsible for collectively designing a clear, standardised licence agreement for all local UTA. This standard agreement should be the only acceptable form for receipt of housing benefit, and should outline a clear set of rules and responsibilities for tenants and landlords.

STAGE 3: LONGER STAYS LIVING IN UTA

The challenges

Time spent living in UTA is rarely ‘temporary’. At the time of our research, most of our participants had lived in this type of accommodation for at least 12 months; one had lived in UTA for 36 years. However, the comparatively long duration spent in UTA does not tend to lead to stability, due to the poor conditions, constant concern about who else is living in the accommodation, poor management practices and insecurity of tenure. These problems are further compounded by systemic challenges within housing standards frameworks and enforcement powers.

An individual’s overall wellbeing is known to worsen where there are unsanitary conditions, buildings in need of repair and modernisation, and insufficient or substandard cooking or washing facilities. Our research participants frequently reported living without heating or hot water, damp caused by ignored leaks, and sharing their accommodation with rats and bedbugs. The stress of such an environment contributes to the deterioration tenants’ health; of the 45 tenants we interviewed, 38 reported deteriorating mental health and 21 worsening physical health.

Tenants living in UTA find themselves constantly concerned about the others living with them. Many have complex needs and are living with others with equally complex needs. This can mean life in UTA is chaotic with theft, violence and endemic drug and alcohol use. For tenants living without a working lock on their door, these factors make their situation even worse. Twenty-eight of our research participants reported being a witness to or experiencing violence. Individuals with histories of addiction found managing their addiction more challenging as a result of living with others who are drug- or alcohol-dependent. Thirteen of our research participants reported increasing their drug use while living in UTA, while 38 of the 45 reported that other people’s substance misuse was a nuisance.

Landlords and managers of UTA often also contribute to the difficulties of living in UTA. As discussed above, many tenants are subject to service charges of up to £35 a week, which are often arbitrary. These can place a significant financial burden on tenants, particularly those staying for prolonged periods of time, contributing to their financial marginalisation. Often landlords and managers are also seen to be bullying tenants, seeming to care about money only, and to disregard maintenance issues. There are limited opportunities to hold landlords to account, make complaints, or to feed back information. This results in

a further loss of control over tenants' own accommodation experiences and can lead to unsuitable properties and landlords continuing to be used without improvements being made.

The market does little to address these issues. Local authorities are concerned that, instead of improving conditions, clamping down on landlords will lead accommodation to close or, conversely, to improve to such a level that it will be let out at higher rents to a different, less vulnerable clientele. Both situations would significantly reduce the number of places available to single homeless households and so intensify the struggle to house these individuals. Unfortunately, even where there is a will among local authorities to take action on these issues, they may find themselves lacking the resources needed to enforce standards and inspection practices fully (Battersby 2012; Crisis 2014; Lucas et al 2013). Licensing fees, for example, can be used only to fund administration, not to pursue stronger inspection regimes.

The standards framework is patchy for housing generally, but especially so for UTA. All housing is in theory covered by the HHSRS, which allows councils to implement enforcement action when properties pose a risk to either tenants or neighbours (Davies and Turley 2014). What exists is largely technical in nature – i.e. refers neither to the tenant nor to the social environment – while the enforcement of HHSRS standards is limited, reactive and informal (Battersby 2012).

Tighter rules exist for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). For instance, there are strict rules about HMO fire safety and it is the responsibility of the landlord to ensure that these conditions are met, subject to HMO licence conditions. However, enforcement of standards in HMOs, hostels and B&Bs is again minimal. Evidence from Shelter reported only 487 landlord prosecutions in 2012 among a population of 1.2 million (CLG Committee 2013). As this is a largely unregulated environment, it would be useful to agree a common set of standards for accommodation. This could be achieved by temporary accommodation boards working with landlords to agree and apply a set of minimum standards expected of temporary accommodation both to improve conditions directly, through setting clear expectations, and to signal to landlords that where they fall repeatedly short of these standards, no further tenant signposting or referrals will be forthcoming.

It is therefore concerning that, as a whole, UTA fails in providing the stable and secure living arrangements that encourage individuals to establish local connections and make long-term plans such as securing employment or building relationships in a given location. Their lives retain an element of transience as a result.

Recommendations for reforming policy to strengthen inspection regimes and improve conditions

Crucial to improving conditions is a more effective system of licensing, inspection, and enforcement. This research, therefore, reinforces previous recommendations from IPPR North regarding area-wide licensing schemes (Davies and Turley 2014). We build on these to recommend the following:

Restrictions on the use of funds from licensing fees should be lifted, to finance not only schemes' administration but also inspection and enforcement procedures. For example, it should be possible to direct funds towards over-stretched environmental health teams.

Within the 'fit and proper' test,⁹ landlords must be expected to disclose any previous criminal offences while any landlords failing to meet necessary standards will need to transfer the management of the dwelling to a management agent approved by the local temporary accommodation board. This should minimise the chance of a property leaving the system.

A clear and straightforward complaints procedure is required that is easily accessed – for example, utilising existing local authority housing phone lines, free of charge, and anonymous.

Temporary accommodation boards must define minimum standards for service charges and use greenlists or exclusion lists to recognise where these standards are being met.

Central to making these processes work, tenants must be supported to play a key role in the activities of the temporary accommodation board. This can begin through the encouragement of tenant groups, which will provide a forum in which issues can be raised and discussed, experiences shared – both positive and negative, and information fed back to the temporary accommodation boards.

STAGE 4: MOVING OUT AND MOVING ON

The challenges

Only four of our research participants had no desire to move out of UTA, and of these just one called the accommodation 'home'. The vast majority of UTA tenants aim to find more secure and stable accommodation that they can consider 'home'. Unfortunately, all too often tenants have little control over this process.

The insecurity of tenure, lack of clarity over rights and an inevitable sense of powerlessness can negatively impact on individuals' mental health and make the experience of living in UTA even more distressing (Credland 2004). It is common for evictions to be made without warning, for unsubstantiated reasons and with immediate effect, although in the case of some of our participants, they were evicted for seemingly legitimate reasons, such as substance misuse or behavioural issues. However, often decisions are made on arbitrary grounds or relating to unavoidable illnesses, and even in response to tenants having made complaints or reported physical problems with the property. Eighteen of our 45 research participants said they were in constant fear of eviction. One participant had been evicted 13 times over a 16-month period, to be housed repeatedly in UTA. Tenants were also frequently moved

⁹ The 'fit and proper' test is a condition of HMO licensing, designed to 'ensure that those responsible for operating the licence and managing the property are of sufficient integrity and good character' (DCLG 2010: 24). Examples of 'wrong doings' that could prevent a licence from being granted include unlawful discrimination, contravening landlord and tenant law, committing offences involving fraud, violence, drugs, or sexual offences (ibid).

between various UTA, or once evicted fell into a cycle of sofa-surfing and rough sleeping before returning to UTA. All these factors exacerbate the multiple disadvantages individuals already face, and thus create obstacles to their securing a longer-term housing option.

Individuals seeking to move out of UTA by their own choosing, into a more suitable long-term option, therefore, continue to face the same challenges that led them into temporary accommodation in the first place. The private rental sector, for example, usually demands both a deposit and advance rent, plus references, credit history and proof of employment in order to agree a tenancy. Such demands, especially in the context of significant rent inflation, can make private renting simply not an option for these tenants.

Compounding these barriers to moving out of UTA are the practical difficulties encountered in finding and expressing interest in alternative accommodation options. Having regular access to the internet, for example, is important for searching for properties and keeping in contact with potential landlords and agents. Housing benefit restrictions imposed by landlords can also exclude many people from applying for particular properties. Figures vary but there are suggestions that as many as 55 per cent of landlords are reluctant to let their accommodation to individuals receiving housing benefit (Gousy 2014).

Social housing offers an alternative but the chance of securing a place can be quite remote due to declining local authority stock, growing waiting lists and the fact that many households often accumulate rent arrears, which prevents individuals from accessing further social housing. The priority and banding process in theory should support those most in need to access social housing and yet single homeless households, as compared to families with children, often believe their likelihood of being housed is so small that they do not bother to register.

Support workers have also reported that individuals with complex needs can be prevented from applying for social or supported housing in cases in which their support needs – for example, substance misuse – are ongoing or considered too great a risk to successfully maintain their accommodation. Yet remaining in unsupported temporary accommodation can often hinder rehabilitation efforts, as described above.

With appropriate support, however, individuals can secure more sustainable and appropriate accommodation. Of the 45 participants in our research, by the end of the research period two had moved into housing association accommodation, seven into housing in the private rental sector, and nine into supported accommodation. The experiences of our participants suggest that such moves are nearly always made through accessing the help of voluntary-sector support agencies. However, the voluntary sector is reporting significant challenges, with a large backlog of cases, limited resources, and issues with the supply of available accommodation options (Homeless Link 2014, 2015). Of our participants, there are also 27 for whom more secure and supported accommodation has not been found, demonstrating the struggles still being faced.

Recommendations for reforming policy to support sustained and positive outcomes

Policy must address both the problem of UTA tenants experiencing frequent evictions and the obstacles tenants face when trying to move out of the system and into secure, long-term housing.

To reduce the insecurity of tenure, which remains a key feature of England's UTA, we recommend the following:

No eviction should be carried out without a pre-eviction written warning being issued. This should be sent both to the tenant and the tenant's named support worker so that both are aware of the landlord's concerns and can devise a plan for changing the unwanted behaviour accordingly. Where the warning appears unjustified or the tenant wishes to challenge an accusation, this procedure will provide an opportunity for discussion ahead of any eviction, with the support worker available to facilitate this where necessary. This should be written into the locally agreed, standardised tenancy agreement.

Where landlords are found to be repeatedly issuing evictions without a pre-eviction written warning, or without legitimate complaint, they should be added to local exclusion lists.

Supporting tenants to pursue and sustain a place in alternative accommodation makes an important contribution to the tenant's journey as they seek to gain more control over their housing situation. Therefore, we recommend the following:

Tenants should be able to access support from a support worker for up to six months after leaving UTA, to gain advice on managing accommodation budgets and responsibilities, and the help of early interventions where potential problems are identified. The aim is to help prevent a tenant returning to temporary accommodation.

Local housing associations should be included on temporary accommodation boards to involve them in decision-making and the design of services offered to single homeless households.

4.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING A SOLUTION

Over the course of this three-year research project we have witnessed some positive steps in supporting UTA tenants, which, as case studies of good practice in the handbook accompanying this report demonstrate, present lessons to inform further improvements to services. However, the reality is that 16 of our 45 research participants are still yet to move into secure accommodation and the number of single homeless households nationally is increasing (Fitzpatrick et al 2016). The amount of current provision and its nature are simply not sufficient to address ongoing concerns about the accommodation options available to single homeless households and the lived experiences of tenants in UTA.

Experiences of homelessness vary from person to person, and individuals' journeys in and out of UTA are unique reflections of personal circumstances, the local support on offer, and their initial interaction with services, which can determine the path their journey follows subsequently. This research has nevertheless identified four key stages which all individuals are likely to go through. At each of these stages, there are practical solutions that at the very least can improve people's experiences – both in terms of the processes and the accommodation on offer – while in the longer term, they can help break the UTA cycle of drifting in and out of the system, unable to find a permanent and stable home. These solutions can be adapted and enacted at a local level to address the opportunities and challenges specific to particular geographical areas, and draw on the resources, contacts and expertise of homeless charities, local authorities and other agencies through partnership working.

Central to this work is our recommendation of the creation of temporary accommodation boards. These will facilitate the coordination of partners across a local area as well as the involvement of UTA tenants themselves in working towards the ultimate aim of improving the UTA journey. Involvement of all parties, including tenants, is vital in ensuring all aspects of experiences of UTA are addressed – from safety and security to hygiene, from physical and mental wellbeing to financial guidance. It is also crucial that tenants are empowered through this process to retain as much control as possible over their lives and accommodation in challenging circumstances. Through temporary accommodation boards, further recommendations can be implemented to support the development of greenlists and exclusion lists, minimum standards and appropriate in-tenancy support programmes.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The 'Journey home' toolkit provides the guidance and information organisations will need to set up their own temporary accommodation board, drawing on examples from areas where these structures and practices are starting to become established and are having a positive impact. Central to this toolkit are a new handbook on setting up a temporary accommodation board and a wallchart that provides a visual representation of an individual's journey in and out of UTA and the stages at which interventions can be made. Both of these accompany this report, while further resources – such as a move-in checklist, templates for letters to landlords, and example license agreements – can be found online at: <https://www.justlife.org.uk/research/the-journey-home-full-toolkit/>.

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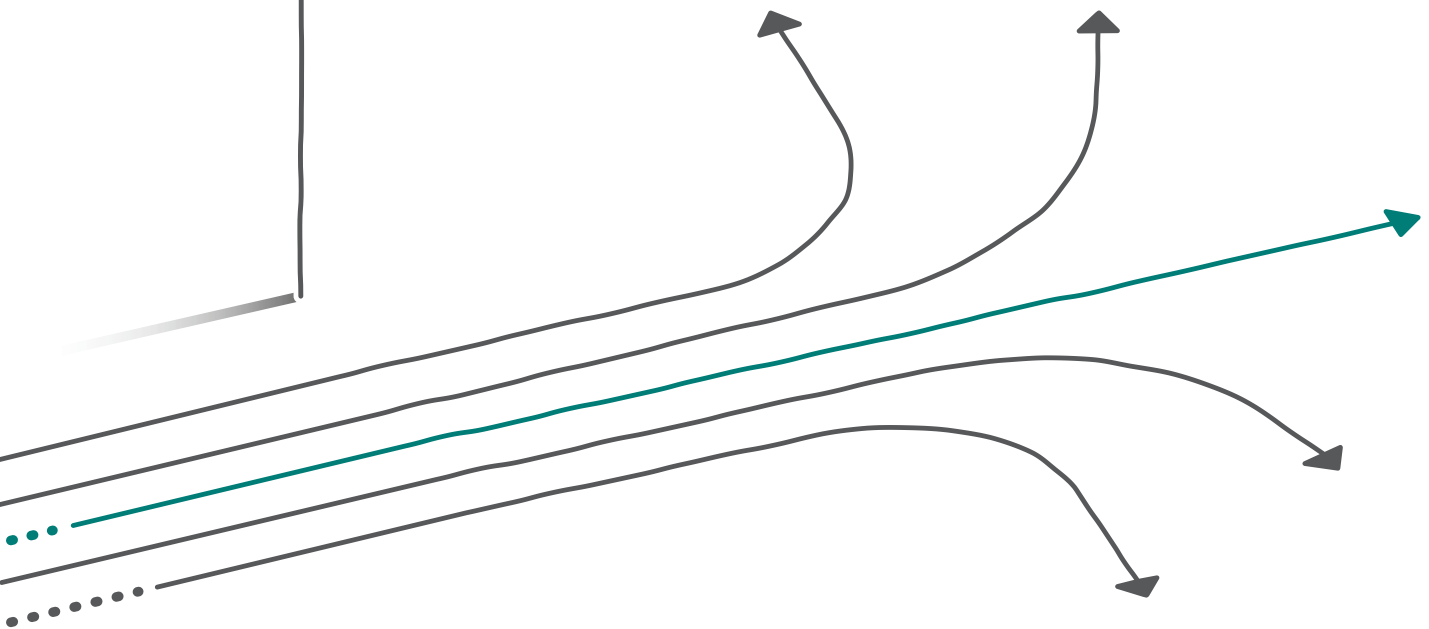
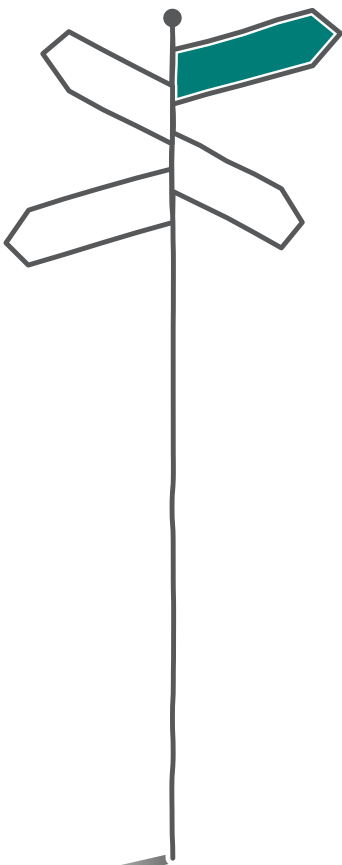
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REPORT

THE JOURNEY HOME

SETTING UP A TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION BOARD



Christa Maciver,
Charlotte Snelling,
Alex Fleming
and Bill Davies

December 2016
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ABOUT IPPR NORTH

IPPR North is IPPR's dedicated thinktank for the North of England. With its head office in Manchester and representatives in Newcastle, IPPR North's research, together with our stimulating and varied events programme, seeks to produce innovative policy ideas for fair, democratic and sustainable communities across the North of England.

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IPPR North
13th Floor, City Tower
Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BT
T: +44 (0)161 694 9680
E: north@ippr.org
www.ippr.org/north
Registered charity no: 800065 (England and Wales),
SC046557 (Scotland).

This paper was first published in December 2016. © 2016
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Christa Maciver is a project lead and researcher at Justlife.

Charlotte Snelling is a researcher at IPPR.

Alex Fleming was head of research and development at Justlife at the time this report was drafted

Bill Davies was a senior research fellow at IPPR at the time this report was drafted.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to colleagues Gary Bishop, chief executive officer of Justlife, and Ed Cox, director of IPPR North, for providing expertise and encouragement throughout this research and their detailed comments on the report drafts. We are also grateful to Peter Cooke and Karen Cassidy who provided us with invaluable details from the Making Every Adult Matter programme in Blackburn, as well as to Christine Oats and Helen Aitchison for their input about work in Sunderland.

We are especially grateful to all the research participants who took time to speak to us about their experiences in UTA and their willingness to be so involved. We also want to especially acknowledge the five research participants who died over the course of this research.

The authors would also like to thank the LankellyChase Foundation for generously supporting this programme of work.

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Citation

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:

Maciver C, Snelling C, Fleming A and Davies C (2016) *The journey home: Setting up a temporary accommodation board*, IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/the-journey-home-building-a-solution-to-unsupported-temporary-accommodation>

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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

IPPR North and Justlife's ambition is to empower local areas to tackle the issues highlighted and worsened by the existence of unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA). Our aim is to harness local will, resources, knowledge and lived experiences to bring about lasting positive change for tenants of UTA.

This handbook outlines practical steps on how to enact the recommendations set out in the *Journey home* final report, and in particular what to consider when setting up a local temporary accommodation board (TAB). Throughout our research, we have learned from geographical areas already working towards change for tenants of UTA, and from the many existing activities that support our recommendations. From these findings and a TAB pilot carried out in Manchester, led by IPPR North and Justlife, we present good practice examples of how to improve UTA locally and suggest ways in which our recommendations might be tailored to local circumstances.

The five steps, detailed in the next section, are as follows.

1. Understanding the context
2. Choosing the board membership
3. Meeting regularly and identifying a 'driver'
4. Producing an agenda
5. Deciding the lifespan

FIVE STEPS TO SETTING UP A TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION BOARD

STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Unsupported temporary accommodation largely houses single homeless households who are deemed non- or low-priority by the local authority. It is, in theory at least, short-stay accommodation. It is, in theory at least, short-stay accommodation in which residents have limited rights or security of tenure. UTA is commonly host to substandard social and physical conditions. Homeless households living in UTA generally lack formal structures to support them to find permanent accommodation.

These factors are common to UTA across England, and yet throughout this project it has been clear that the context of single homelessness and temporary accommodation differs from place to place and that organisations and local authorities refer to similar issues in different ways. For instance, unsupported temporary accommodation may cover the following bedspaces in England: B&Bs, guesthouses, homeless hostels, private hostels, private hotels, emergency accommodation and short-stay HMOs (houses in multiple occupation).

The context of UTA differs not only by type of bedspace, but also by local policy frameworks and local housing markets: for instance, through differences in approach to council gatekeeping, signposting and referral-making for single homeless households. Variables also include availability of bedspaces, tenant support services, and levels and methods of enforcement and regulation. Each of these factors needs to be accounted for in establishing a TAB (as discussed below).

STEP 2: CHOOSING THE BOARD MEMBERSHIP

A temporary accommodation board is a place-based collaboration between local partners designed to create understanding of the situation of UTA within their own geographical area, and to enable those partners to address the issues facing those living in UTA, by harnessing the local will and resources of individuals and organisations that are involved in providing for single homeless households.

The headline objective for any TAB should be simple: to keep tenants' stay as short, safe and healthy as possible.

The membership of the TAB should be as open as possible but should include key stakeholders who have the power and resources to make changes. These include the following:

- local authority housing and homelessness officers (across a combined authority where appropriate)
- current tenants of UTA

- health services
- mental health services
- substance misuse teams
- fire services
- police
- environmental health teams
- local housing providers, such as housing associations and ALMOs (Arm's-Length Management Organisations)
- third sector organisations involved in referrals, placement and support.

It is vital that members of the board always include current or former tenants of UTA. Their lived experience provides crucial insight into current accommodation-related issues as well as the potential for real-time feedback on changes implemented by the TAB.

Each local TAB collaboration may find the need to widen its membership on a rolling basis to include other stakeholders who could unlock change for single homeless households. These could include: officers and public services from other neighbouring local authority areas, probation and prison housing services, other local homeless charities, registered social landlords and localised health services such as GPs. Practicable, political involvement would also be useful, and therefore where appropriate we recommend the occasional input of councillors and/or MPs, as these elected members represent the communities in which UTA is located. These stakeholders can also prove persuasive in advocating for change.¹

When considering membership to the board, the following key questions should be asked:

1. Which particular local UTA challenges need to be addressed?
2. With the above in mind, which relevant organisations/people/voices should be represented on a local board in order to address these challenges effectively?
3. Does the group combine a good level of understanding of what's happening on the ground with strategic decision-making power?
4. Are there current UTA tenants on the TAB? If not, how can they be involved?

The importance of tenant involvement

Tenant involvement is critical to the success of a TAB. Tenants have the most current insight into issues within unsupported temporary accommodation and how these affect their health and wellbeing. They also often want to speak about the barriers UTA presents to them while

¹ It should be noted that we have not mentioned inviting landlords or managers of UTA to sit on temporary accommodation boards. Tenants, services and local authorities frequently have fragile relationships with landlords, and while we recognise that there are landlords and managers doing a satisfactory job, our research found that many of the inadequate social and environmental issues in UTA are caused or exacerbated by unscrupulous landlord or management practices. Therefore, their involvement in TABs may not always be appropriate. The complexities of dealing with unscrupulous landlords of UTA are exacerbated by the fact that local authorities do not want to lose the bedspaces this accommodation offers to some of the most hard-to-house people; UTA tenants do not want to lose their accommodation either as it is frequently their only option; and services do not want to jeopardise their clients' accommodation. Therefore, they are careful not to antagonise landlords. However, it is crucial that a TAB seeks to build relationships with landlords and managers of UTA and invites them to join the TAB if this is deemed appropriate.

trying to move into stable accommodation. The communication of their firsthand experiences is vital because without it, the extent of the problems that exist within the accommodation would remain largely unknown, even to the relevant enforcement organisations.

One tenant involved in the current TAB pilot in Manchester said:

'You have to experience it to know what it's like... I've seen it from both sides: I was a caretaker so have seen it from the owner side and from living there, so it helps to make sure that both sides are there... Hopefully [the TAB] will bring in a lot of change and safety [for people in UTA].'

Tenant-members also provide a grounded approach to change because they understand that the actions of the TAB will affect their daily lives. Therefore, they will not tolerate talk of change that is not followed up with action. Their involvement will also provide regular assessment of the effectiveness of initiatives for change, given the fact that they are living in the accommodation in question. The opportunity to contribute to the board is also empowering and makes change feel tangible for both tenants and the other members of the TAB.

Another tenant involved in the Manchester pilot told us:

'Makes me feel on top of the world knowing I'm contributing and helping out the best I can, and that it's not just me but others [are contributing] too... When I speak to the general public now, they don't know what's going on but I can get the word out.'

The success of tenant involvement is reliant on the addressing of power imbalances that may exist on this type of board. Most individuals living in UTA may not have attended meetings of this nature before and, understandably, may feel nervous and uncomfortable in taking part. Relationships between tenants and other board members must be built prior to the first TAB meeting, which should support tenants to feel empowered by reassuring them that their voice is valued in a situation that could otherwise be intimidating; this can partly be achieved by providing them with information beforehand on what to expect.

Case study: Establishing the Manchester temporary accommodation board

The Manchester TAB was established in 2016 as part of Manchester's homelessness charter² – a vision to end homelessness in the city, created through collaboration between individuals experiencing homelessness in Manchester and the voluntary, private and public sectors, following a significant rise in homelessness. Homeless households in Manchester identified B&Bs (a form of unsupported temporary accommodation) to be a significant issue, citing a lack of safety as well as criminal and health issues within these premises. These concerns were echoed by frontline workers from both the homelessness and the housing sectors.

² More information on the Manchester homelessness charter can be found at the Street Support website: <https://streetsupport.net/>

In May 2016 Justlife formed a temporary accommodation board as part of the homeless charter's initiative to address B&Bs and substandard accommodation in the city. Within the charter, this group is called the B&B Action Group. Current membership includes: representatives from Manchester city council departments including homelessness and temporary accommodation, environmental health and revenues and benefits; the NHS homeless mental health team; four voluntary sector organisations that provide support and signpost people into UTA; six individuals who are currently living in UTA or have done in the past; and the fire service. Justlife is aware of the need to broaden the reach of the board's membership and is working to include substance misuse services, the police and social housing representatives in order to bolster expertise and decision-making power.

The Manchester TAB has so far achieved the following:

- Identified all properties and bedspaces used as UTA across the city, which highlighted further gaps in knowledge of current conditions and costs. TAB members have now committed to compiling that information.
- Developed an informal greenlist of acceptable UTA, through conversation about the quality of UTA currently known and used by members of the TAB.
- Developed a prototype of an online rating system for UTA, assessing its effectiveness for giving control back to those living in UTA.
- Set up working groups to positively engage landlords of UTA across Manchester.
- Improved communication and collaboration between services. For example, mental health teams have been asked to stop placing their clients in some of the worst UTA in the city, but instead to go through the local authority's brokerage team to find acceptable bedspaces.
- Empowered tenants to feel their voice is valued equally to that of other board members. At meetings, tenants' share of spoken involvement and inclusion has equalled that of non-tenant members.

Suggested action

- *Map key stakeholders of unsupported temporary accommodation in the local area to identify who should be involved in the TAB. This could be done by first identifying the local challenges within UTA that need addressing and then determining who has influence to make specific changes concerning those issues.*

STEP 3: MEETING REGULARLY AND IDENTIFYING A 'DRIVER'

TABs should meet regularly to collectively agree a programme of ongoing actions for improving the lives of single homeless households living in unsupported temporary accommodation. Initial meetings should be held as frequently as necessary but the frequency should take into account the additional pressures each member will have from their

existing roles. We recommend meetings are held quarterly once the TAB has gained momentum.

At the outset, it is important to appoint a chair person/organisation for the group who is able to drive the agenda and actions, and organise meetings and administration. The role of this ‘driver’ is vital for the success of the TAB. The driver will ensure meetings are convened, that the TAB has a common understanding of the issues and a common agenda, that actions are clearly identified and assigned, and that tenants of UTA are included in the process on an equal footing with other board members. Without a chair driving these core practicalities of the TAB, it is likely the group will not be effective in making change.

We recognise that to achieve the above activities and functions, an investment of time is needed, especially by the driving organisation or individual. We recommend exploring funding options to contribute to this role, in situations where that is an option and would ensure the smooth running of the TAB. However, while the driver is necessary for pushing forward agendas and keeping the group focused, the success of the TAB is reliant on the strength of equal collaboration between members, which will be developed by meeting regularly.

Suggested actions

- *Establish a driving organisation/member to chair TAB meetings.*
- *Identify whether or not funding is necessary for the success of the TAB by assessing the input needed to drive actions through to outcomes.*

STEP 4: PRODUCING AN AGENDA

We recommend that a TAB sets out a simple three-part agenda of objectives as a starting point. These agenda points reflect all the issues raised by UTA tenants during the course of IPPR North and Justlife’s three-year research study (2013–16). They could be expanded to reflect specific local circumstances.

The overarching objectives are:

1. Identifying bedspaces
2. Addressing the standard of accommodation
3. Supporting tenants

These are detailed further below.

Objective 1: Identifying bedspaces

Key questions

- Who is living in the UTA?
 - Where is the UTA?
 - How are people travelling there?
 - How long are they staying?
 - What are these places like?
-

There is no systematic recording of accommodation used by both priority and non-priority single homeless households, nor of the physical or social conditions of bedspaces.

A key role of the TAB should be the systematic recording of bedspace data. This should include location of bedspaces and, at a minimum, the name of the landlord and managing agent, their contact details, the type of accommodation, the type of licence agreement used, and the number of individuals living in the property.

An array of evidence shows that accommodation used for and by single homeless households tends to be of low quality. IPPR North and Justlife's research with UTA tenants echoes this. In addition to monitoring the number of local bedspaces, having information on the physical and social conditions within properties is critical for ensuring that living conditions are tolerable. This should be informed by tenants and existing local data drawn from any Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) monitoring via environmental health and fire inspections carried out in UTA.

Further questions and points to consider

- Who has existing data³ (even if partial) on local bedspaces? Where and what are the clear omissions from current recording procedures?
- How can recording systems be updated regularly?
- Local authorities have lists of licensed HMOs in their area, and may also have lists of non-licensed HMOs.
- Local revenue and benefits teams will also have housing benefit data, including individuals living in hostels and B&Bs, and individuals on licence agreement.
- Fire services are responsible for inspecting HMOs, and their data and knowledge can be used to contribute to local databases.
- Although public services will hold some official data, many issues go unreported. Therefore, tenants and frontline workers are most likely to have a good knowledge of the locations of short-stay bedspaces in the area, and of the environmental and social conditions within dwellings.

Objective 2: Addressing the standard of accommodation

Key questions

- To what extent are current UTA dwellings in the area covered by housing regulations?
 - What would a minimum set of standards for all local UTA dwellings consist of?
 - How should these be implemented and by whom?
-

Basic property standards exist in all accommodation across the housing market, governed by the poorly enforced HHSRS (Battersby 2012; Davies and Turley 2014).

³ Environmental health teams will hold data on known problem dwellings in an area but the extent of this data will be dictated by the extent to which tenants have come forward with complaints.

The policy framework for managing housing conditions locally is patchy at best, and the dwellings used for UTA often fall through the cracks, in part because of the reluctance of tenants with little security of tenure to report problems, but also because local authorities with few environmental health resources are ill-equipped to deal with the scale of housing problems in their areas.

Nevertheless, housing standards can be promoted by driving tenants towards good properties in the first place, limiting signposting and referrals to substandard accommodation. This action should be underpinned by a minimum set of acceptable standards for UTA, developed into a simple and concise standards document, which should be agreed by the local authority, landlords and TAB. These standards should be informally monitored when someone is placed, by the placing agency visually taking note of the state of the property in reference to the minimum standards agreed and set by the TAB. They could be based on the exemplar standards documents contained in the online toolkit; these have been developed by IPPR North and Justlife out of our work with UTA tenants in the North West and South East of England and from consulting with frontline workers and local authorities.⁴ Both are written in Microsoft Word and are editable. The two documents consist of the following.

- **Set of minimum standards**, to be agreed on by the TAB. We recommend that TABs develop relationships with landlords to secure voluntary sign-up to these minimum standards. Standards documents should be available to all tenants at all times and should clearly state how to report an issue and to whom. The ability to report anonymously is crucial.
- **Tenant checklist**, to support the recording of property conditions during the first visit, with a follow-up set of questions available for prolonged stays. We suggest that either a tenant or placing organisation completes the checklist during a ‘warm handover’ when the tenant arrives at the UTA, and then the placing organisation inputs the information into a database held centrally by the TAB.

It is proposed that the feedback from the existing local data (already collected by environmental health teams or revenues and benefits offices) and tenant checklist responses is used to inform greenlists (of acceptable UTA) and exclusion lists (of unacceptable UTA), and therefore future signposting/referral decisions, as well as enforcement activities. It is hoped also that it will encourage landlords to ensure that the essential conditions and items listed on the checklist are provided before the tenant arrives, and maintained where possible throughout their stay.

Case study: Getting landlords to sign up to minimum standards in Blackburn

Blackburn with Darwen has around 550 bedspaces of UTA located in privately-run houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) of five bedspaces or more. For some time, the properties had a patchy reputation in

⁴ The ‘Journey home’ full toolkit can be found on Justlife’s website: <https://www.justlife.org.uk/research/the-journey-home-full-toolkit/>

terms of the poor physical and social environment. Members of the council's housing service decided something needed to be done to improve the quality of the accommodation and the experience of its tenants. They determined to do this, working alongside public health, health outreach, safeguarding, community safety, drugs and alcohol services, housing benefit services, the voluntary sector and user groups.

This multi-agency team visits the properties regularly in order to build relationships with each of the landlords and see the condition of the properties firsthand. As a result of this engagement, some of the properties began to improve. The relationships developed with landlords also ensured that when the local authority wrote its own standards, building on existing HHSRS minimum standards, all the landlords of UTA willingly signed up. These standards ensure continued improvement in service quality as well as guaranteeing access to the properties by floating support workers.

Further questions to consider

- What recording of quality, if any, happens at the local level?
- Can any environmental health and fire data be fed into a TAB database?
- Are official HHSRS metrics needed to drive enforcement activity?
- What metrics can be used to monitor social conditions?
- What criteria would warrant inclusion on a local greenlist of approved UTA?
- How can local landlords be incentivised to sign up to providing minimum standards?

Suggested actions

- *Utilise the editable minimum standards and checklist documents in the resource pack.*
- *Refer to the existing legal standards, the HHSRS system and HMO standards, links to which are provided in the resource pack.*
- *Hold greenlist and exclusion list information within the TAB and use it to improve the life chances and living situation of UTA tenants, even if local authorities may be reluctant to do so for legal reasons.*
- *Look for innovative ways to implement the minimum standards. (See case study below from Sunderland.)*

Case study: Creative enforcement and use of licensing in Sunderland

Sunderland city council had five properties used as unsupported temporary accommodation and licensed as houses in multiple occupation. These properties housed both individuals placed by the local authority and individuals who found their own way into the accommodation. The properties were widely known to be problematic for the area due to their poor social environment and the vulnerable adults living within them.

In an innovative effort to address these issues, funding was received for an environmental health officer to focus on these five properties. The officer would work creatively, following a partnership approach with landlords of UTA, using enforcement regulation only where required. This partnership approach consisted of regular, monthly contact with the landlords of UTA at their properties to monitor and drive up housing standards through the use of HMO licensing and/or Housing Act powers, including management regulations. It also would assist hostel owners in supporting vulnerable tenants by developing formal links between departments – for example, revenues and benefits and ‘Access to Housing’ – while also liaising and coordinating the work of external support agencies.

Sunderland city council also changed its licensing for these properties to include safeguarding as one of its conditions, requiring the landlord to receive training from the local authority in the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.

These innovative approaches have ensured better support both for vulnerable adults living in this accommodation and for the landlords.

Our research found that tenants were often rushed into signing very basic documents that primarily secure housing benefit against the rent. These agreements do not equate to a licence agreement and contain little useful information in terms of the rights or responsibilities either party might have, or any clear statement of where additional service fees are being charged, and what the fees were for. A standardised agreement developed with landlords would help to clarify tenants’ rights and responsibilities, even if they are staying under the limited protection of a licence agreement. At a minimum, a standardised agreement should include contact details for landlord or manager, local authority housing teams, and a clear statement detailing the rent, the service charge and services this pays for, and the responsibilities of the tenant towards the property and to other tenants.

Further questions to consider

- How can tenants be involved in writing the area-wide standard licence agreement?
- Why might landlords object to a standard licence agreement and what can be done about this?
- How can landlords be supported to provide accommodation for vulnerable tenants?

Suggested actions

- *Use the editable standard agreement in the resource pack, adapting it as necessary.*
- *Get input from tenants about the rights and responsibilities they think they have or would like to have.*

Objective 3: Supporting tenants: Recording individual journeys and flagging risk

Key questions

- What support (if any) is already in place?
 - What support is needed?
 - Who is best placed to provide support?
 - How are tenants being helped to move on from UTA?
 - What can different housing option providers do?
-

The most complex part of the TAB's work will be monitoring individuals moving in and out of unsupported temporary accommodation. This is critical for the identification of individuals at risk of repeat cycling in and out of UTA, but also for enabling the flagging of at-risk individuals who arrive at properties not suitable for their needs.

Some data on individual journeys exists, including benefit data, local authority data (on individuals who have been accepted as homeless) and data recorded by numerous voluntary sector organisations. With the cooperation of the Department for Work and Pensions and local revenues and benefits teams, there is significant potential for capturing data on the journey of individuals through UTA. For example, once an exclusion list of dwellings has been created by a local TAB, local revenues and benefits officers could flag to the TAB when an individual has claimed for housing benefit against that dwelling, and act accordingly if they think the individual is likely to be at risk while living there.

Further questions to consider

- What data is accessible? What is missing? (For example, voluntary sector databases may not record self-referrals.)
- Does the TAB need to create its own, new data collection system?
- How can the TAB be sure any database is kept up to date?
- Will the data flag when an individual moves into a risky property?
- What are the data protection obstacles to making this work?

A critical problem with parts of this sector is the 'parking' of individuals in UTA. In IPPR North and Justlife's research, people who identified that they had been placed by an organisation – charities, hospital, prison, probation, mental health services, local authority or police – also reported being given no onward support or referral to such support from the placing agency. Organisations frequently utilise UTA for hard-to-house people, without any plan to provide in-tenancy support or eventually to move them out of UTA and into stable, permanent accommodation.

Not all tenants want or need support with their health, employment status or housing situation. But many do. We therefore recommend that, at a minimum, 'warm handovers' for the tenant take place to ensure that the property is in an acceptable condition and, ideally, that each tenant has a

designated point of contact or support worker, according to their needs (see boxed text below).

Warm handovers

UTA tenants participating in the IPPR North and Justlife research regularly reported feeling unsupported, lost in the system and unaware of where to access support. Many spent years in this situation, with deteriorating mental and physical health, before accessing a support service.

Warm handovers could go some way to avoiding this situation. They involve the placing agency/organisation taking the tenant to the property, whereupon organisation will check the accommodation with the tenant using the checklist (detailed above) and assisting the tenant to report any issues. If either party plans to terminate support, the placing organisation will also introduce or refer the tenant to onward support by physically accompanying them to an initial meeting, formal or informal. This onward support option could be structured support or an open-access day centre, depending on the tenant's needs and service availability. Where possible, a rehousing plan should be drawn up, at the earliest opportunity.

Further questions to consider

- How prevalent are warm handovers?
- What resourcing would be required for more warm handovers to take place?
- What support services are already in place and working?
- How should the need for ongoing support be determined and who would do this?

There are excellent examples of good practice from around England in providing support to UTA tenants. Three examples are presented in the following boxes. Updated good practice examples will be stored in the online toolkit at Justlife's website.

Case study: Good practice in supporting tenants – Justlife

Justlife provides support to individuals living in unsupported temporary accommodation in Manchester and Brighton, who otherwise would be left to navigate complex systems on their own. Justlife workers offer help in making housing referrals, dealing with benefits issues as well as supporting individuals with other general health and wellbeing needs. For tenants, often the simple knowledge that they have a safe place where they can go and be heard makes a difference. The support is very person-centred, recognising that each individual is more than just the sum of their 'needs' and that they need to be treated as such. Justlife also provides creative engagement services including political

engagement, art projects and exercise sessions – all of which contribute to the holistic person-centred support.

One Justlife service user reported the following:

'It gives me a reason to come out.... It gives me something to focus on, you know. Like I don't have to think, Oh, what's the point in carrying on because I'm just going to be depressed tomorrow and the next day and the next day. But then I think, well Justlife is over there, I can just go to Justlife, you know, and a better atmosphere. Better people than where I am, you know. Because if I didn't come to Justlife, I would just be stuck in that room.'

Case study: Good practice in supporting tenants – Changing Lives Sunderland

Sunderland's private hostels were notorious for providing poor-quality housing, with no support, poor social environments, financial and physical exploitation of tenants; modern slavery was alleged to take place in some. Ultimately, the state of this accommodation was causing people to die.

The charity Changing Lives was commissioned to work with individuals living in UTA in Sunderland. The work it does is holistic, acknowledging individuals' needs taking into account each person's health and wellbeing. The support it gives includes providing in-reach work (to tenants within their UTA accommodation) and welfare support, identifying unmet health needs, and providing trauma-informed care⁵ and social engagement activities. The project has had a positive impact on the private hostel tenants. Fewer people are dying and the tenants are recounting fewer stories of exploitation. The concern is now that Changing Lives is the only organisation working within this environment in the North East, and withdrawing support after a certain amount of time could disrupt any progress made. The charity believes that support is key for individuals stuck in UTA who are entrenched within the homelessness system, otherwise they will be forgotten and forced to continue living in a situation that could end up killing them.

Case study: Good practice in supporting tenants – Blackburn MEAM

The public health team at Blackburn with Darwen council identified that a number of the 50 most frequent A&E attendees in the area lived in unsupported temporary accommodation. The same individuals were also recognised as having poor mental and physical health,

⁵ Hopper et al (2010: 81) define trauma-informed care within homelessness services as being: '... grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, [and emphasizing] physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, [creating] opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.' (<https://www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/icmh/documents/ShelterfromtheStormTrauma-InformedCareinHomelessnessServicesSettings.pdf>)

for getting involved in a range of chaotic behaviours and acquisitive crime, and for causing a range of concerns to the community, the local authority and partner agencies. This prompted public health to look at ways of providing enhanced case management involving in-tenancy support to individuals living in UTA.

The approach taken in Blackburn with Darwen was developed with support from the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) national coalition. The initial project focused on vulnerable individuals with multiple and complex needs who were either living in unsupported temporary accommodation in the form of HMOs, or were at risk of homelessness or of rough sleeping. Three MEAM workers were hired via a commission involving the local Families, Health and Wellbeing Consortium, which brings together a number of local voluntary, community and faith sector organisations. The workers had a range of complementary vocational experience (including gender-specific for females with complex needs) to enhance the person-centred support and advocacy created for individuals living in this type of accommodation. The approach was found to be useful for individual clients rather than providing higher impact short-term outcomes overall, helping those individuals to navigate the complex and diverse system of various agencies with greater confidence while also taking back some control and responsibility for building their own improved outcomes. In addition to the paid staff, the provision also included the use of volunteers with lived experience. The intention is to use more volunteers as the project progresses, including some of the people who have received support from MEAM, who represent a crucial asset for helping others turn their lives around.

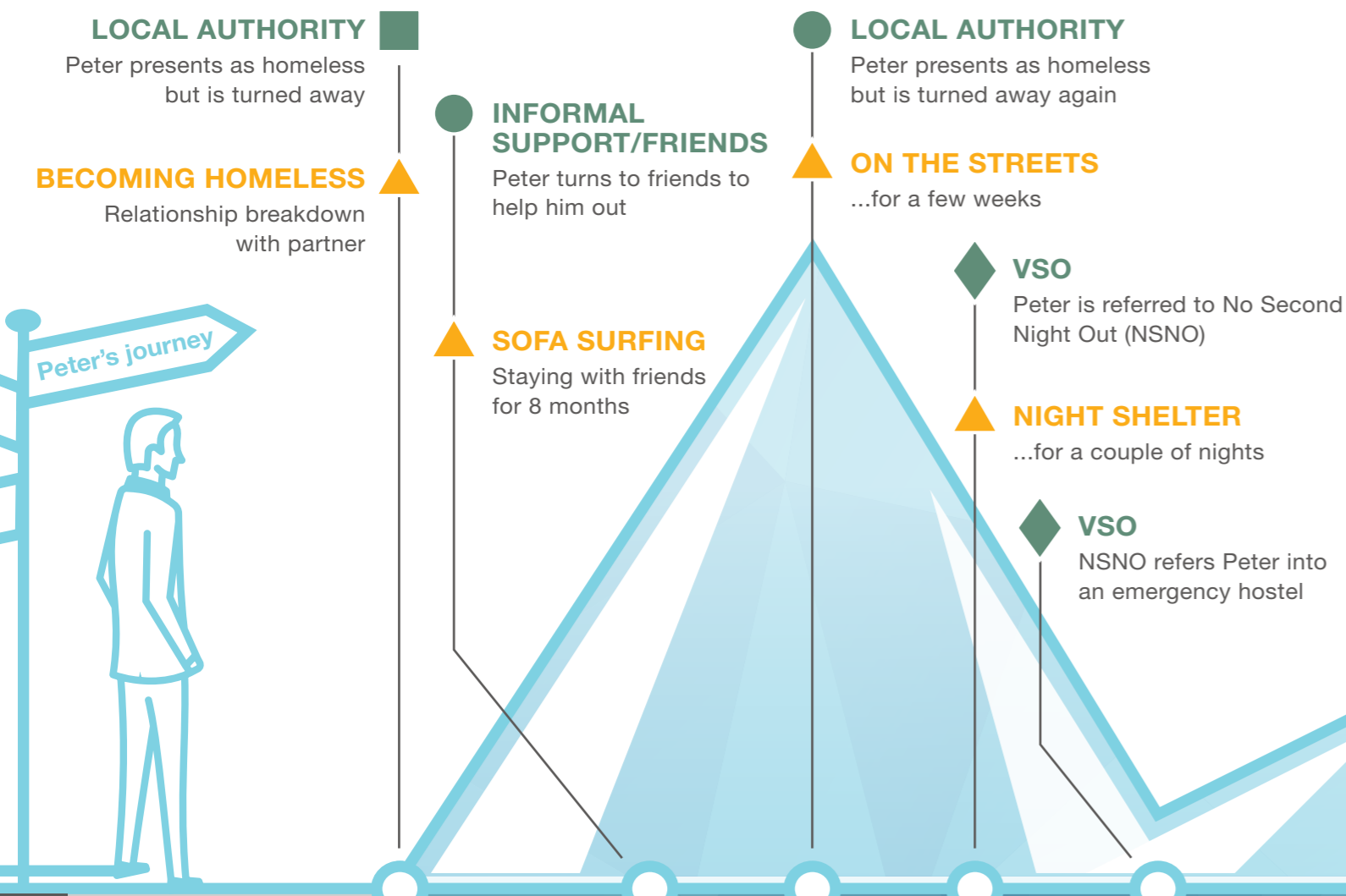
This project has been largely successful in its aims: building trust and relationships between the project workers and individuals in UTA; providing an opportunity to improve relationships and the responsibility of private the landlords involved using the Care Act 2014 as a lever; supporting individuals through regular engagement with relevant services and wider community networks; learning from the experiences disclosed; and reducing cost pressures on public services.

STEP 5: DECIDING THE LIFESPAN

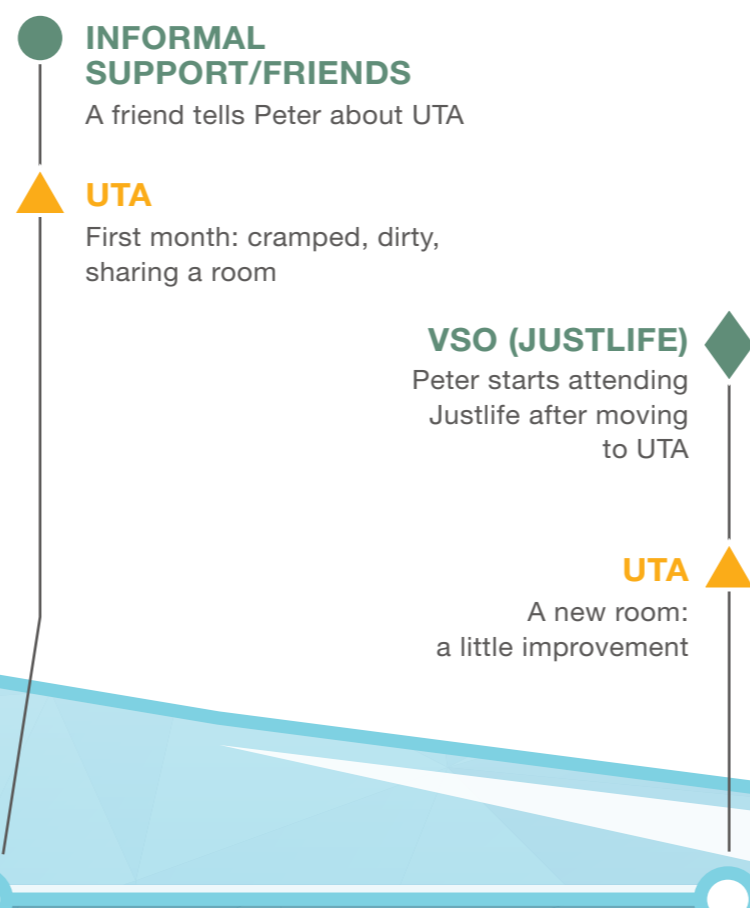
Ideally the need for a TAB will diminish as the social and physical environments within unsupported temporary accommodation improve, following the board's input, positive engagement with landlords, and the development of viable alternatives to UTA. Or in some cases the methods of collaboration presented in TABs will become so embedded in the system that they will be natural practice. The reality will look different for each local area, thus each TAB will need to decide on its own lifespan, once it has seen noticeable improvements. We therefore recommend that this decision is guided by unfolding events rather than an imposed arbitrary time frame, as this will encourage the continuation of collaboration to address issues if and when they arise in the future.

PETER'S JOURNEY

STAGE 1: FINDING A BED



STAGE 2: MOVING IN & THE FIRST MONTH



STAGE 3: LIVING IN UNSUPPORTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION



STAGE 4: MOVING OUT & MOVING ON



LOSS OF CONTROL & DETERIORATING MENTAL HEALTH

BACK AT HOME
Back with partner but relationship breaks down again after a few weeks

30 PEOPLE
had no access to a kitchen, or felt the food was poor

27 PEOPLE
had witnessed or experienced violence

14 PEOPLE
were victims of crime

33 PEOPLE
wanted to be rehoused but were constantly waiting

QUOTES:

- "I went to the housing so many times but it is just demoralising because you think, 'What's the point in you trying?' - I mean, I've worked all my life, paid my taxes all my life, I'm not doing anything wrong."
- "I felt I couldn't rely on my friends forever - they were beginning to get sick of me."
- "We were both sharing a room... just a box room, single bed in it. Cold, damp everywhere. No heating at all."
- "It's supposed to be a B&B, now all [the landlord] buys is a loaf of bread and a pack of eggs every two days... Don't forget, there are 10, 11, 12 people living in there."
- "We are not a priority within the housing association. I mean, I've got a housing number, but when I bid for flats I've got no chance. It was 4 or 5, but it's gone up now so it's a lot harder."
- "I got these red marks all over my skin and all that, since I moved in there. Now, bites, bugs, whatever."
- "I do feel threatened where I'm living. I don't even really know around here."
- "I'm better because I'm out of places like that. In there it's so demoralising, it makes you feel so low."
- "I was drinking a lot of alcohol, but since I've moved here, I'm doing my college work. I'm just enjoying life a lot more than I was when I was there."

TABLE: How people found a bed in UTA

Prison/probation	4
Referred by charity	5
Referred by local authority housing options team	10
Referred by local authority housing discharge team	6
Referred by friend	5
Self referred	8
Police referred	2
Signposted by council	3
Signposted by charity	2

"I called in to Shelter and I saw someone there... They mentioned [UTA] and phoned the manager. I had no money to get there, I didn't know where I was going, and Shelter gave me £5 for the key... So I got the £5 and the manager was just sitting there on the settee when I walked through the door."

23 PEOPLE
had either no lock or a broken one on their door

"But in there I don't even drink, because I could be sleeping and someone could come in and attack me whilst I'm sleeping and kill me in there. With that lock, my life is completely on the line. I don't feel secure at all."

27 PEOPLE
felt that nothing was ever fixed in the property

"There should be something done against landlords what have properties as squalid as that - horrible, damp, cold, freezing, people are freezing. There is an old fella in there and he sits down with a blanket and just waits for his tea all day. It's not good, it's not good at all."

22 PEOPLE
felt that their physical health deteriorated

"You know you pay a certain amount of contribution on top of whoever pays the rent - what for? No hot water... the place was in disrepair, it wanted shutting down and redoing properly. There were no real facilities... The beds were terrible, I mean literally you couldn't sleep on them properly, they were a sort of £10 mattress."

38 PEOPLE
felt that drug and alcohol use was endemic and problematic

"To be honest with you you're better off on the streets, because your life is different there, you can walk away from the drugs, from the drink, but in there you can't because it's everywhere... You walk in the place and the weed is stinking the place out so even if you weren't a druggie you're gonna come out a druggie."

34 PEOPLE
felt that management was either bad, intimidating or bullying

"If you don't pay your rent, you're out. You've got a very unsympathetic landlord who wants his rent every two weeks. And if you don't pay it, you're out boy. You've not got stability, you've not got your own place."

4 PEOPLE
didn't want to move

"To me it's home, it's a roof above my head, it's better than being on the street... But to me it's my home, that room is my home."