



OUR STRATEGY



OUR UTAG:N STRATEGY

The Unsupported Temporary Accommodation Group Network (UTAG:N) has been created by Justlife Foundation to ensure those living in unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA)¹ find their stay to be as short, safe and healthy as possible. This national network is made up of place-based groups of individuals and organisations across England who both work together in localities to improve the lives of hidden homeless in UTA, while also sharing learning, practice and data on a national scale.

The network is founded on our belief that a strategic focus on both local and national action will bring lasting impact in this area. In the short term by firmly placing well resourced and fit for purpose UTA into mainstream plans and strategies to end homelessness.

In the long term, we hope there will no longer be a need for UTA within the sector because of improved access to safe, secure and settled homes.

¹ Definition in 'Glossary of Terms'

WHY?

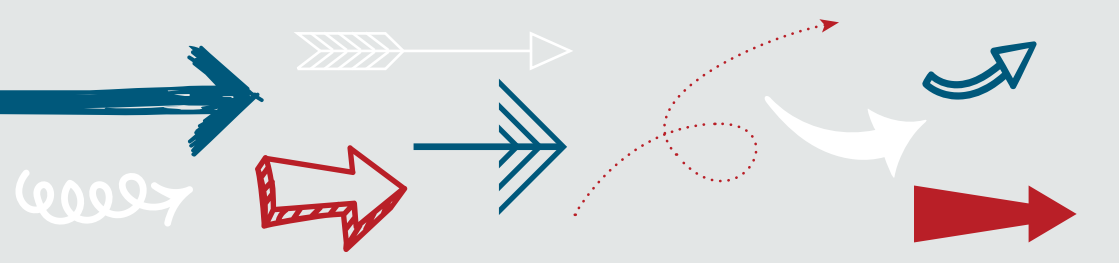
We know that every time we do not act, another person **suffers** in UTA. They suffer with **deteriorating** mental and physical health, become victims of **crime**, **lose control** of their own life, drop off the bottom rung of the housing ladder or **die prematurely**.

Those who live in unsupported temporary accommodation are largely **ignored** – either because their existence is denied, we are frozen by the gravity of need and lack of resource or because we do not have enough 'evidence' of what it is really like to live in unsupported temporary accommodation.

We believe this **unacceptable situation** can only be **solved** through the strength of **partnerships** and **collaboration** across sectors.

GOAL

TO ENSURE NOT ONE PERSON OR FAMILY BE LEFT HIDDEN AND IGNORED IN UTA ANYWHERE IN THE UK; AND THAT ALL STAYS ARE AS SHORT, SAFE AND HEALTHY AS POSSIBLE.



THE LANDSCAPE AND THE FUTURE

We estimate there are upwards of 51,500 households stuck in substandard UTA across England². Many of these households are single-homeless adults unknown to local authorities and often completely missed in official statistics. The majority of these individuals are not owed a statutory duty and are not officially 'placed,' but signposted there or end up self-referring into the accommodation. UTA is used in many localities as a 'housing solution' by services—adult social care, hospital discharge teams, mental health teams, third sector organisations—to house individuals who have limited options.

Those who end up in UTA face a very bleak reality, for an unknown or unspecified amount of time, with deteriorating mental and physical health, poor social environments, drug dealing and illegal money lending. Life in UTA can even result in early death. UTA is likely to be in every town and city across England and despite the growing number of initiatives and commitments to tackle homelessness around the UK, there remains a small amount of attention and resource placed on it. Those living in UTA are forgotten and ignored because they are not seen as homeless, but simply as private

tenants in substandard housing. The reality is, however, that the majority are technically homeless, living as licensees in accommodation where they have no rights, little security and under the constant threat of immediate eviction.

The increased focus on homelessness nationally, although not specifically focused on UTA, coupled with the reality of austerity, suggests cross-sector partnership and collaboration are seen as viable solutions to gaps in provision. This is the perfect time to bring together stakeholders of UTA—residents, landlords, local authorities, charities, referral organisations, environmental health, police, fire, etc—to collectively provide local solutions to alleviate challenges faced by those living in UTA. This is increasingly important due to the lack of available suitable accommodation and the growing numbers of homeless households, meaning more and more households could be forced to live in substandard UTA. Increasing numbers will face this bleak reality of deteriorating health and exacerbation of vulnerability for the foreseeable future.

The future does not need to look like this. We need to no longer ignore this hidden homeless population and find cross-sector, collaborative solutions that will ensure a more positive future where stays in UTA will be as short, safe and healthy as possible.

²Maciver, C. 'Lifting the lid on hidden homelessness: A new analysis.' Justlife Foundation, April 2018. justlife.org.uk/research/recent-publications

HOW?

The UTAG:N is composed of local Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAG)³ committed to reaching the network's goal, by adhering to the following principles:

Network Principles:

- 1 EQUAL COLLABORATION
- 2 EQUAL INCLUSION
- 3 RELATIONAL
- 4 LEARNING
- 5 SOLUTION FOCUSED

If we do not adhere to these principles and work to build trust across sectors and experiences, we run the risk of repackaging ineffective solutions that are not working for those stuck living in UTA.

THE PRACTICALITIES

Each Temporary Accommodation Action Group will look different, depending on the local situation, membership and maturity. As a footing each TAAG should agree:

- A common terms of reference
- Common stages of work
- A common measurement mechanism

These will ensure a level of consistency across the network. All of these resources are freely available on our website:

www.justlife.org.uk/resources

If you want to know more or would be interested in Justlife's Research and Policy team coming to your area to run an initial stakeholder workshop, do not hesitate to contact us directly at: UTAGN@justlife.org.uk

³Definition in 'Glossary of Terms'. Maciver, C. 'Lifting the lid on hidden homelessness: A new analysis.' Justlife Foundation, April 2018. justlife.org.uk/research/recent-publications

1 EQUAL COLLABORATION

Members agree to work equally together to address issues, solve problems, act wisely and celebrate victories. All members are equally valid and contributions heard with empathy and openness.

2 EQUAL INCLUSION

Every member's contribution in both the national network and local action groups is of equal importance and value, whether they are currently homeless in UTA, working for local authorities, or private landlords.

3 RELATIONAL

The Network and local TAAG are built on positive relationships between members at both a local and national scale.

4 LEARNING

The Network and local TAAG are committed to learning about UTA, reflecting on their activities and innovating for change while sharing their learning locally (through locally relevant groups) or nationally (through the work of the wider Network).

5 SOLUTION FOCUSED

We are all committed to test new ideas to address current challenges, but are equally committed to NOT lay blame, but work equally with all stakeholders to achieve success.



GETTING TAAGS TO WORK FOR YOU



There are key steps to follow when setting up a Temporary Accommodation Action Group, all of which are discussed in greater detail in a handbook—‘The Journey Home: Setting up a Temporary Accommodation Board’⁴—published in 2016, with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) North. The five key steps are summarised below, which are followed by an example case study.

The five key steps to setting up a TAAG are as follows:

1 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

The context of UTA often differs by bedspace, local policy frameworks and local housing markets. Variables also include availability of bedspaces, tenant support services and levels of reinforcement and regulation. It is important that each of these factors be accounted for in the establishment of a TAAG.

2 CHOOSING THE MEMBERSHIP

The membership should be as open as possible. However, it should include key stakeholders who have the power and resources to create change as well as residents of UTA.

3 MEETING REGULARLY AND IDENTIFYING A ‘DRIVER’

The TAAG should meet regularly to agree a programme of ongoing action to ensure momentum is continued. In addition, it is vital that a chairperson or organisation is identified to drive the work of the TAAG forward.

4 PRODUCING AN AGENDA

This agenda will underpin the ongoing actions of the TAAG. We suggest three simple objectives based on issues raised by UTA tenants through our research:

- a. Identifying Bedspaces
- b. Addressing the standard of accommodation
- c. Supporting tenants and landlords

5 DECIDING THE LIFESPAN

Ideally, as the social and physical environments in UTA are addressed, the need for a TAAG will diminish. Each area will look different, therefore we recommend once significant progress has been made, each TAAG will decide on its own lifespan.

⁴ This publication can be found online at Justlife’s website: [justlife.org.uk/research/recent-publications](https://www.justlife.org.uk/research/recent-publications)



MANCHESTER CASE STUDY

The following is a case study of how a TAAG was first established in Manchester:

The Manchester Unsupported Temporary Accommodation Action Group (UTAAG) was established in 2016 as part of Manchester's Homeless Charter – 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 UTA) to be a significant issue, citing a lack of safety as well as poor living conditions resulting in deteriorating physical and mental health for residents, many living in UTA for years without any support. These concerns were echoed by frontline workers, from both homelessness and housing sectors, which lead to the creation of the UTAAG in order to improve the lives of people living in UTA.

Current membership includes:

- **Representatives from Manchester City Council Departments**
Including Homelessness Services, Environmental Health, Housing Compliance and Enforcement, and Revenues and Benefits
- **The DWP**
- **Voluntary sector organisations** that provide support and signpost people into UTA
- **Current or recent individuals living in UTA** or have done in the past
- **The Fire and Rescue Service**
- **Local Councillors**
- **Landlords of UTA**
- **The National Probation Service, Housing Associations**, supported housing schemes and the private rented sector.

Locally this group is working on specific actions to improve residents' experiences of UTA and to create a positive collaborative environment for services to work together.

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- **Co-produced** the 'living' UTA Strategy, which was asked of the UTAAG by Manchester City Council, with the view to embed into the City's wider homelessness strategy.
- **Identified** three main areas and subsequent actions to improve within UTA in Manchester. These include: Raising Standards, Improving Co-ordination and Collaboration, Providing Effective Support to Landlords.
- **Developed** an informal 'greenlist' of acceptable UTA, through conversation about the quality, conditions and management practices within UTA currently known and used by members of the UTAAG.
- **Developed** a partnership with the National Probation Service to improve support offered to those placed in UTA by the Probation Service.
- **Developed** a Landlords Forum to enable landlords to express their concerns and to provide support to landlords on key areas.
- **Developed** a Residents Group to provide a safe space for residents to come together, share their experiences and influence areas of focus for UTAAG.
- **Empowered** UTA residents to feel their voice and contributions is valued equally to that of other Action Group members.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- **Compiling** a list of all UTA properties and bedspaces used within Manchester, which highlights further gaps in knowledge of conditions and support available.
- **Working** with Housing Compliance on the re-licencing of HMO's to improve living conditions and management practices within UTA.
- **Developing** a standard licence agreement for all landlords of UTA to use with new residents.
- **Improving** co-ordination and collaboration between services within Manchester by holding a UTA awareness event, in order to bring services working together on current issues within UTA.
- **Developing** Landlords Pack and Residents Pack to provide both landlords and residents with a 'one stop shop' of information on where to go for support and what to do next on specific issues.
- **Developing** an online rating system for UTA properties to inform residents on what to expect before they arrive.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Unsupported Temporary Accommodation (UTA)

Unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA) includes insecure tenancies in Bed & Breakfasts, guesthouses and HMOs inhabited by people who cannot access secure tenancies. The individuals living in this accommodation are typically single homeless households, under license agreements, supported by housing benefit (moving towards Universal Credit) but with very limited rights and can often be evicted at a moment's notice.

It is 'unsupported' due to the limited access to statutory or non- statutory support to find alternative accommodation.

This accommodation exists in every town and city across England. Those who access UTA either do not go through the Local Authority or have been turned away because the local authority is not legally bound to rehouse them. Options are limited at this point and many feel their only choice is between UTA and rough sleeping. However, once an individual enters UTA they often are no longer considered homeless due to having a roof over their head and end up ignored within the current homelessness system.

Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAG)

Temporary Accommodation Action Groups are locally driven collaborations between relevant stakeholders of unsupported temporary accommodation brought together to address issues such as:

- Conditions
- Map regional bedspaces
- Implement minimum standards
- Improve referral and support practices
- Implement any other locally relevant changes
- Influence narrative around commissioning for people in UTA.

Relevant stakeholders include:

- Environmental Health
- Fire Service
- Third Sector organisations
- Police and relevant local authority representatives
- Drug and alcohol services
- Mental health teams
- Probation services
- Landlords and residents.





Contact Justlife's Research and Policy team if you are interested in finding out more or would like to be a part of our network:

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