

Far from Home: Improving Temporary Accommodation for Global Majority Families in Ealing



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To cite this report:

Taylor, G (2025) *Far from Home: Improving Temporary Accommodation for Global Majority Families in Ealing*. Golden Opportunities, Skills and Development, London. Available at: <https://www.gosad.org.uk/report>

FOREWORD

Homelessness and housing insecurity are worsening at an alarming pace across London. At GOS&D, we see first-hand how the housing crisis—especially the deterioration of standards in temporary accommodation—is affecting the lives of the most vulnerable Londoners. As demand grows, our work becomes more complex, and like many charities nationwide, we are working with severely overstretched resources. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to the principles of dignity, fairness, and compassion in all we do.

This report would not have been possible without the generous support of Trust for London, whose funding enabled us to explore the lived realities of temporary accommodation in depth. Their continued investment in addressing housing injustice has made it possible for grassroots organisations like ours to amplify the voices of families too often left unheard.

We are proud to have had Gill Taylor as our lead researcher. Gill brought not only a wealth of experience and insight gained from working across the statutory and voluntary sectors, but also a deeply thoughtful and creative approach to the research. Her sensitivity in engaging with families and her clarity in articulating their realities have made this report powerful and grounded in truth.

As part of this work, we are publishing our Dignity in Temporary Accommodation Charter. We will also be championing the ‘5 Basics’ campaign—a collaborative initiative, supported by Trust for London, that GOS&D has contributed to. The campaign calls on councils, landlords, and national government to ensure that every temporary accommodation placement guarantees five amenities essential to family life; A place to cook; Somewhere to wash clothes; Reliable, free Wi-Fi; Accessible, free storage; Clear information about rights and responsibilities.

At GOS&D, we work directly with homeless and insecurely housed families, offering practical support to ease the daily struggles families face while navigating a fragmented and overburdened system. Through this work, we have seen both the

immense hardship and the remarkable resilience of those determined to rebuild their lives against the odds.

This report sheds light on the systemic injustices that disproportionately affect families from global majority backgrounds. It has long been recognised—through both research and practice—that structural racism creates formidable barriers for global majority families when seeking and securing support. These are not abstract issues—they are experienced daily by the families we support.

The findings are shaped by the lived experiences of parents, children, and individuals enduring deeply unsuitable, overcrowded, and poorly maintained temporary accommodation—often far from schools, work, and vital support networks. Although the research captures just a small sample, the themes reflect a widespread crisis.

We offer this report in the hope that our local authority colleagues, elected representatives, and fellow community organisations will listen to the voices it amplifies and take seriously the recommendations it puts forward. Tackling homelessness—and improving the quality, availability, and dignity of temporary accommodation for global majority families—requires collective, cross-sector action. It calls for fairness, inclusion, and above all, an unwavering commitment to justice in how we work, both with families and with each other.

Finally, I offer my deepest gratitude to the families who courageously shared their stories to inform this work, and to my dedicated team at GOS&D who continue to serve our community with tenacity, empathy, and resolve. We stand together in calling for urgent change—and we hope this report, and the movements it supports, will be a catalyst for exactly that.

Sharmarke Diriye

Managing Director – Golden Opportunities, Skills and Development (GOS&D)

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This report brings together insights from a brief research project exploring the experiences of families placed in temporary accommodation by London Borough of Ealing.

The research was commissioned by GOSAD, as part of their involvement in Trust for London's [Better Temporary Accommodation for Londoners](#) initiative, in recognition of the lack of discrete research concerning Global Majority¹ families.

An independent researcher, Gill Taylor, was invited to listen and learn from families and frontline community sector staff, with the aim of identifying opportunities to improve collaboration and working practices between the local authority and community sector partners.

Temporary Accommodation is in Crisis

This research has been conducted during a time of unprecedented pressure on temporary accommodation. The current demand for TA far outstrips available supply and this is significantly affecting the quality, cost, location and appropriateness of accommodation. Recent research by London Councils² tells a worrying story of deepening poverty and inequality in the capital:

- 1 in 50 Londoners are now homeless, which equates to 1 child in every classroom
- 169,363 Londoners currently living in TA (83,500 children)
- 781% increase in the number of households in B&B accommodation for longer than the statutory 6-week maximum (compared to the same period in 2022)
- At least 55% of London households in TA are from non-white backgrounds, compared to 15% for the rest of England.

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/global-majority>

² <https://beta.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news/2023/one-50-londoners-homeless-housing-disaster-unfolds-capital>

The current supply crisis has been triggered, in part, by private landlords withdrawing their properties from the market, which allows remaining landlords to demand higher rents and to get away with poorer standards. Rates set out in the pan-London [Inter-Borough Temporary Accommodation Agreement](#) (IBTAA) and those set by Local Housing Allowance rates, have not changed since 2020 despite a significant increase in rental costs. This creates a highly challenging environment for Councils procuring TA placements. Councils are expected to fund the rising costs of temporary accommodation from their general fund budgets, with inadequate support in policy or resource terms from central government, despite the escalating number of people in need. The election of the labour government in July 2024 brought small promise around future housing and homelessness policy, but at the time of writing there has been no significant policy development brought forward to address the national housing emergency.

Better TA Initiative

The Better TA initiative is a funding partnership between Trust for London and Oak Foundation. The initiative has funded 11 organisations with the shared aim to make stays in Temporary Accommodation (TA) as short, safe and healthy as possible. They seek to achieve this by strengthening the voices of Londoners with experience of TA and organisations working with them, building the capacity and connections of organisations working to create change and, by improving access to support for people living in TA.

The funded partners who make up the Better TA Initiative (so far) are:

- 1. Golden Opportunity Skills and Development (GOSAD)**
2. South-West Law Centre/Croydon Citizens Advice Bureau
3. Creating Ground
4. London Gypsies and Travellers
5. Groundswell
6. Central Hill Residents Assoc
7. Justlife
8. Magpie Project

9. London Renters Union

10. Positive East

11. Z2k

Five Basics Campaign

Confronting the crisis head on, Trust for London and the Better TA Initiative have recently initiated the 'Five Basics' Campaign, which brings together grassroots groups, people with lived experience and allies who want every London borough to make temporary accommodation fit for family life, not mere survival.

The campaign is asking councils, landlords and national government to guarantee five basic amenities in every temporary accommodation placement:

- **A place to cook** – safe kitchen facilities for proper meals.
- **Somewhere to wash clothes** – affordable, on-site or nearby.
- **Reliable, free Wi-Fi** – vital for work, school and support.
- **Accessible, free storage** – space to keep vital belongings safe and avoid families starting from scratch when moving on.
- **Clear information** – open and timely communication on rights, repairs and the path to a permanent home.

The campaign makes the point that these are not luxuries, but basic requirements for a liveable life. Securing them is the first step towards the campaign's wider goal: keeping stays in temporary accommodation short, safe and healthy for the 1-in-50 Londoners currently trapped there.

In recognition of the complexity and pressure facing everyone involved in supporting people experiencing homelessness, we have sought to identify opportunities for change that can be realised in an environment of heightened financial and political pressures. Nonetheless, the urgent need to build social housing, to reinvest in vital public services and to tackle the harmful effects of landlordism remain of paramount importance.



RESEARCH BRIEF

Aims

Our research took place between April and November 2024 and the following priorities were initially identified:

- Understanding the experiences of homeless families from Global Majority backgrounds living in Temporary Accommodation
- Understanding if and how race, religion and culture influence families' experiences of homelessness
- Identifying opportunities to improve the support offered to families by local authority teams
- Identifying opportunities to improve local cross-sector collaboration so that families can access timely and sensitive support
- Highlighting good practice and opportunities to strengthen it

Methodology

To identify local strategic priorities, practice commitments and multi-agency approaches around TA, our enquiry included a desktop analysis of local and regional data, policy and strategy around homelessness.

The desktop analysis was followed by eight semi-structured interviews with families currently living in temporary accommodation organised for them by Ealing Council. All interviews took place to GOSAD's offices where families felt comfortable in familiar surroundings. A translator supported four of the interviewees to participate.

Interviews explored each families current living situation, the help they were (or were not) offered and some of their views on what could be improved to help future families. All eight families were being supported in some way by GOSAD and that is how the researcher was put in touch with them.

As well as interviews with families, three interviews were held with GOSAD staff who are working directly with families. These were all held by phone.

In addition to 1:1 conversations, we held a multi-agency collaborative workshop in August 2024. The workshop brought together local authority staff, elected members, community organisations and families living in temporary accommodation to discuss local issues and explore priorities for improvement and change.

Lived Experience Involvement

This report shares insights from local data as well as from eight families living in Temporary Accommodation. At the inception of the project, we explored several approaches to the research, including methods that did not interview families and those that did not share their stories. However, families were very keen to talk about their experiences and felt that together their voices could be a more powerful catalyst for change.

Everyone involved in the research participated voluntarily and gave their consent for our conversations to be shared. All names and some details have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved. Images used are for artistic purposes only and do not present an accurate likeness of anyone involved in the project.

HOMELESSNESS IN EALING

London Borough of Ealing, like the majority of local authorities in England, is grappling with significant challenges related to the housing, homelessness, and rough sleeping experiences of local residents.

Housing & Homelessness

Ealing Council manages more than 24,000 social homes, but for over a decade the number of new social lets they are able to make each year is falling significantly³. Like many London boroughs, demand for social homes far outstrips supply, and it is estimated that more than 7500 households are currently on the Council's waiting list⁴. In addition, more than 4000 households approach the council for homelessness assistance each year, with approximately three new households accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty⁵ by the Council every day.

On any one night in the Autumn of 2023 (most recent publicly available data), 2541 households were living in temporary accommodation arranged for them by the Council.

Several factors contribute to homelessness in Ealing. Economic hardship is a primary driver, with housing costs⁶ in most areas of the borough far outpacing income growth for many residents. The borough's poverty rate is above the London average and further exacerbates this issue, making it challenging for low-income families to afford stable housing, to repair their homes or to access activities and opportunities that improve wellbeing. Other issues, such as overcrowding and the insecurity of private-sector tenancies are also playing a significant role in the growing number of households in need of homelessness assistance from the Council.

³ <https://ealing.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s9064/Homelessness%20in%20Ealing.pdf>

⁴ https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201102/finding_a_home/21/applying_for_a_council_home/2

⁵ Meaning being found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, according to the duties and entitlements outlined in the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

⁶ <https://ealing.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s9065/Appendix%201%20Analysis%20of%20Rents%20in%20Ealing.pdf>

Rough Sleeping

Recent data about rough sleeping in the borough indicates a concerning rise, reflecting broader trends across London. In the autumn of 2023, Ealing reported an estimated 53 individuals sleeping rough on a single night, marking a 121% rise on the same time in the previous year. This surge is among the highest in London, and Ealing has the third highest number of people rough sleeping in the capital⁷, behind only Westminster and Camden.

Health disparities further compound the harms of rough sleeping. According to Ealing Council's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025, approximately 90% of individuals sleeping rough in the borough experience mental health issues, alcohol dependency, or substance misuse, often concurrently.

Local Strategies and Priorities

Housing Strategy

The housing issues facing Ealing households, and the challenges and opportunities facing the Council in meeting them, have been explored in the development of a new five-year Housing Strategy for the borough, '*Great homes, better lives: Our housing strategy for Ealing*⁸' which is due for publication in the coming months.

Ealing Council has delivered a net increase in new social homes, the highest in London in 2022/23. The strategy sets out further commitments to build new homes and to increase the range of homes available. Importantly, the strategy makes commitments to creating neighbourhoods where people want to live, preventing homelessness and improving the quality of accommodation.

Key components of Ealing's approach, as described in the Housing Strategy and elsewhere are:

- **Early Intervention:** Aligning with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the council is committed to intervening at the earliest stage to prevent homelessness and support community resilience and wellbeing.

⁷ <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/rough-sleeping-borough/>

⁸ The draft strategy is available to read here:

https://www.ealing.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/19753/draft_housing_strategy_for_ealing_2024_to_2029.pdf

- **Investment in Housing:** In a significant move to combat homelessness, Ealing Council has approved a £150 million⁹ plan to acquire properties for use as temporary and move-on accommodation for homeless households.
- **Utilization of Empty Properties:** The council's Empty Property Strategy¹⁰ focuses on bringing vacant properties back into use to "improve the environment, reduce nuisance and increase the supply of decent and affordable housing for households in housing need."

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

One of the Housing Strategy's commitments is to deliver a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2025, which is in draft form for consultation at the time of writing (May 2025).

It's expected that prevention will be a central feature of the new strategy, as will responding to the crisis in temporary accommodation and the increasingly complex needs of those rough sleeping. GOS&D plays a key role in the Ealing Race Equality Commission (EREC), acting as Chair of the Housing Subgroup which have set out a series of recommendations and a blueprint for racial equity in homelessness. It is hoped that the forthcoming homelessness strategy will not only make universal commitments to prevent and respond to homelessness more effectively but will also fully respond to recommendations made by the EREC, by making explicit and measurable commitments to drive out racial inequity.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The current Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25, outlines plans to enhance health outcomes and reduce access barriers; it is hoped this priority will be carried forward into the next strategy and that a refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment will be developed alongside it¹¹. More broadly, the "*Together in Ealing - Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 to 2028*" emphasizes a system-wide

⁹ <https://www.ealing.gov.uk/news/article/2222/council-to-invest-150million-to-help-tackle-homelessness>

¹⁰ <https://www.ealing.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/717/empty-property-strategy.pdf>

¹¹ The most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) about homeless households in Ealing was conducted and published in 2015

approach that tackles complex issues such as homelessness, food insecurity, and child poverty. It recognises that the “building blocks’ of health and wellbeing extend beyond the delivery of health services and initiatives and into the structural heart of communities.

Together in Ealing outlines the following key commitments:

- Putting communities at the heart of everything we do by having a culture of listening and learning from community conversations and developing new models of working with our local communities
- Ensuring systems and structures leave no one behind and promote healthier opportunities to all
- Working with partners to develop a shared practice in improving the building blocks of health by tackling the root causes of inequalities

The strategy advocates for collaborative efforts between statutory and voluntary partners to address the root causes of health inequalities, aiming to improve overall health and wellbeing in the community through a population health focus.

In conclusion, the strategic priorities of both Ealing Council and the North West London Integrated Care System reflect that tackling homelessness requires a multifaceted cross-sector approach, combining housing solutions with integrated health and social care support. Importantly local strategies recognise that structural change is needed to make progress towards health and housing equity. However, delivering racial equity and understanding the experiences of global majority people remains largely under-developed, with limited alignment with the EREC’s work and an absence of tangible commitments to action on racism. It is hoped that this report, and the forthcoming Homelessness Strategy can bridge that gap.

CASE STUDIES

The following eight case studies were written following conversations with families currently living in Temporary Accommodation arranged for them by Ealing Council.

Interviewees were adults from Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan who are accessing support from GOSAD. Besides two, all interviewees were women and all but one had dependent children living with them.

Their experiences bring the realities of the housing emergency to life, highlighting the resilience and tenacity that homeless families must develop to cope with the barriers they face when navigating complex systems. Beyond this, our conversations were warm, funny and hopeful and I was struck by the generosity, mutual support and camaraderie between the people I spoke to, their families and community networks they are part of.

These stories were not shared to illicit sympathy or shock. They were shared with the explicit hope that when families with lived experience of homelessness and community organisations speak in unison, it could activate much needed change that previous efforts have not brought to bear.

Abass

Abass lives with his wife and their five children. They became homeless in 2017 and spent a year in one property, then two years living in a hostel before moving into a private-sector leased property in Northolt, where they still live. Abass isn't sure who his landlord is, but they've lived in the house for nearly five years. Sadly, the family don't feel they are any closer to a permanent home than when they moved in.

Abass has three children with disabilities. His 18-year-old son, Mohdin, is both mentally and physically disabled, using a wheelchair to move around and needing constant care to keep him safe and calm. Abass is his sons' main carer, helping him with personal care such as dressing and washing, sleeping next to him on the sofa every night and advocating for him with professionals.

The bathroom in their home is unsuitable for Mohdin; he can't get into the room in his wheelchair, and nothing is adapted. Abass can't lift Mohdin anymore, so he is forced to wash him just outside the bathroom door using a bucket. Abass tells me that he knows this is humiliating for his son and thinks it must violate his human rights. He has been trying to get the council's Children's Services dept to come and assess the home for almost two years and to help him understand what support will be available for Mohdin when he reached 18 – this never happened, and Abass feels completely abandoned. He tells me he is getting older, and it's becoming increasingly difficult for him to lift and move his son; he knows they need help.

The pressure of their living situation has taken a toll on Abass marriage. Abass had to stop working to look after his son and his wife has to take responsibility for their three youngest children. Abass says talking about marriage problems is difficult for him, and he doesn't know where to turn for help that would be sensitive to his religion and culture. Their eldest son goes to work and provides a vital source of income for the family, but Abass knows he will move out soon and start his own family. He doesn't know how they will cope then.



Aiza

Aiza, a single mother from Pakistan, is raising five children aged 25, 24, 23, 21, and 19. She has lived in a four-bedroom private-sector temporary accommodation property since 2018. The house has severe damp issues and black mould, which Aiza says the landlord repeatedly paints over but does nothing to resolve in the long-term. The house doesn't have a downstairs toilet or shower, making daily life difficult for her 21-year-old disabled son.

Her 21-year-old son is learning disabled and autistic, and lives with epilepsy and chronic mobility issues. He requires a ground-floor bedroom and bathroom or an adapted property with a lift but at the moment Aiza is helping her to navigate the house by herself. Recently, he had a seizure and fell down the stairs. Although he was not seriously injured, the incident was terrifying for Aiza.

Her 19-year-old son is also autistic, and although his needs are less complex than his older brothers, Aiza is a full-time carer to both her sons. Aiza worries that the family rarely have the time to enjoy each other's company, and that her older children often avoid being at home, because the living situation is so unsuitable, and everyone is stressed.

Despite her son's needs and her significant caring responsibilities for them, Aiza receives no social care input and no allocated social worker. She has never been assessed as a carer by the Council's Adults Social Care Department, and she was unaware that she may be entitled to Carer's Allowance and other forms of support to help her manage the additional needs of her family.

Aiza knows she has to advocate for herself if she wants to get a permanent and suitable home. After several years of asking the Council for help in finding her family a home, she tells me she has recently taken the initiative to write to her MP about her situation. She feels immense pressure in caring for her family alone and is deeply disappointed that the Council's Housing Dept could have done more to help her by referring her for support from Adults Social Care and by using their power to get her landlord to deal with the mould issues properly. She found out about GOSAD by word of mouth and wishes the Council had connected her with them earlier.



Amina & Rashid

Amina and Rashid have been living in temporary accommodation for the past two years with their 10-year-old daughter. Amina proudly tells me that her daughter excels in school and is well-loved by her teachers. The family are originally from Afghanistan.

The family has been living in a cramped studio flat, with no dedicated space for their daughter to focus on her schoolwork, not even a desk. The whole family share a single space to sleep, eat, play and study. Amina and Rashid worry about the long-term impact on their daughter's education and on all of their wellbeing.

One of the most challenging aspects of their situation is the long commute their daughter takes to school. Every day, she has to take four buses to get to school, which takes two hours there and again to get home. The family hopes to secure permanent housing in Ealing to move closer to the school but is willing to relocate to Hillingdon or Hounslow if necessary.

Rashid is employed, and the family is doing their best to remain financially stable. However, they are paying £350 per week for their studio flat, which they find unfair, given that it is not even their permanent home, and they have no idea when they may be asked to move. The financial strain is making it difficult for them to afford basic things, to save money or plan for the future.

Amina and Rashid feel abandoned by the system. They don't have an allocated housing officer, leaving them with no clear point of contact for assistance and uncertainty if anyone is looking at their situation. They have not been offered accommodation, nor referred to services that can support them to understand their rights and entitlements for housing, welfare and other help. The lack of communication and transparency from the Council has left them feeling hopeless and frustrated.

Amina wonders if they are being overlooked because they are immigrants from Afghanistan. She worries that her family is perceived as a burden, rather than as people working hard for a better future. Despite these challenges, she and her husband remain determined to provide a good life for their daughter. Rashid continues to work hard to support the family, but without stable housing, their future remains uncertain.



Blessing

Blessing lives in temporary accommodation, in a 3-bed flat secured by the Council by private-sector lease. She's lived here for two years with her children, who are 7, 5, 3 and 1 years old respectively.

Two of her sons are autistic and one is only able to go to school for 3 hours per day until he starts at a special education school in the new year. This means most of her day is spent making journeys to and from school or at home with three of her children. She is really proud of her children and is happy that, after a long process, her two sons will both be in schools that can meet their needs very soon. She wishes they had a garden because she read it can help autistic children to have somewhere to release their feelings.

Blessing tells me that the whole family have respiratory problems due to damp and cold. She says the property is old and poorly maintained, it's impossible to keep the house warm and nothing ever gets properly dry. She has informed the landlord about this several times, who says it's the Council's responsibility to fix. He is now avoiding her calls and texts. She says the council have been to the property once, took several pictures of the worst affected areas but have since not been back to the property or got in touch to let her know what they will do about the issue.

Blessing says she thinks it should be clearer what temporary accommodation residents can expect from their landlords and who exactly their landlord is. She thinks that landlords should have to communicate more when someone reports an issue with a property, and that damp and mould issues should be a priority when there are children in a home.



Muna lives in a hostel with her 2-year-old daughter. When we meet, she is almost nine months pregnant with her second child.

She and her daughter have their own bedroom but share cooking and bathroom facilities with 6 other households of single women and small babies. Muna describes the hostel as a stressful place because everyone living there is sad and struggling. She talks about her anxiety at night because of the crying and shouting she can hear from other rooms.

Muna says that she has consistently paid her weekly service charges since moving in, so was very shocked to hear she was in £6,000 arrears after living there for six months. She can't understand why the on-site staff didn't help her, or even let her know, she needed to make an application for Local housing Allowance when she moved in, or why they didn't notice the issue sooner when the arrears could have been backdated. Although she was supported to secure a £3,000 Discretionary Housing Payment to contribute to paying off the debt, she still has £3,000 to repay and has no idea how she will do this.

The hostel has a problem with damp and mould; Muna thinks that is partly because the rooms are tiny, and every woman is storing her belongings in her room because there is nowhere else for them in the building and the cost of separate storage is inaccessible. Her son is suffering with eczema and asthma as a result of the damp, and she thinks other children living at the hostel are also experiencing this. She said the staff told her to get rid of some of her things, but she can't afford to replace it when she finds permanent housing, so she doesn't see this as a viable solution.

The issue with damp, her son's health and the arrears have left Muna feeling very anxious and stressed about the future.

Now that she is almost ready to give birth the Council have agreed that the hostel room is no longer suitable, and she requires a 1-bedroom property. However, her arrears are making moving on a problem and she's not sure what will happen next. She appreciates the support and connection she gets at GOSAD and thinks more should be in place to help single mothers living in temporary accommodation, so they know their rights and obligations and don't feel so alone.



Sa'dia lives with her six-year-old son, Maheer, in a temporary accommodation studio flat in Ealing. They have been living there for six years, since just after Maheer was born.

Maheer is autistic, and Sa'dia recently worked with GOSAD to ensure he is receiving the support he needed at school. He now has a statement confirming his special educational needs, but neither he nor Sa'dia receive any support from children's social services.

She tells me that her main concern is the safety of their home for Maheer. He does not understand what is and isn't safe and has burnt himself on the cooker multiple times when she has gone to the bathroom. Sa'dia worries that a studio is not a safe environment; Maheer cannot keep himself safe from fire, heat, and sharp objects and Sa'dia can't watch him every single second.

Maheer doesn't have many friends in the neighbourhood and can't go out and play on his own. The studio is just one room and has no access to outdoor space, so Maheer is often alone in the flat with her. Sa'dia feels very isolated, with no family nearby and very few friends. Her mental health has suffered significantly due to constant worry about her son's needs.

She spoke to her GP about her concerns, who wrote a letter on her behalf to the council about her housing situation, but it did not seem to make any difference. Sa'dia also struggles with communication, as she cannot speak or read English, relying on a translator to assist her when we are talking. The Council are aware of this, but they send all letters to her in English and have never checked if she understands what they are telling her, nor asked if she would benefit from an interpreter.

Sa'dia says she doesn't mind relocating within London, or nearby, but is worried about her wellbeing and safety if moved to an area where she does not know anyone. She has experienced racism in London of course, but she has heard stories from other families who have been "sent away", and fears being without a support system or community if her family becomes a target.



Zuri is 60 years old. She has faced significant challenges over the past year following an accident that forced her to stop working. Having worked since childhood, she finds it difficult to adjust to life without employment and wants to be busy. The unexpected change in her health and mobility has not only impacted her ability to work but also her sense of independence and well-being.

Zuri lives in a private rented studio, in temporary accommodation (TA) organised by the council in Southall. While she is grateful for accommodation that's local, the studio isn't a long-term solution and doesn't meet her new need for accessible accommodation.

Zuri is grateful that her adult son, who lives in a shared house nearby, has stepped in as her carer. He assists her daily with shopping, cleaning, cooking and running errands. However, Zuri is aware that her son's responsibilities as her carer have caused him to put his own life on hold. When we were talking, she was unaware that there is support available for her son as a carer, which could offer additional financial and practical assistance.

Zuri tells me that unlike a lot of people she knows she would be happy to leave London and move to Southampton, where she has a friend. She would want her son to move with her and thinks the Council should help with that as it would benefit them too, by freeing up properties in the borough for other people. She has heard that securing a bungalow out of London may be easier, which would give her much more independence at home, but she hasn't been given any information about older people's accommodation in or out of London and didn't know that about the Seaside and Country Homes scheme.



COLLABORATIVE INSIGHTS

Interviews with GOSAD Staff

Qualitative interviews were undertaken with three members of GOSAD's frontline support team. The aim of the interviews was to understand their experiences of working with the local authority to support families and to identify opportunities for positive change.

A recurring theme in all three interviews was **communication barriers**, with staff expressing frustration over slow responses, unclear points of contact, and inconsistent information from different council departments. They expressed a sense that Council officers experienced them as a problem, rather than as a resource or collaborator. They shared examples of how communication issues resulted in missed opportunities to support families, duplication of actions and delays in completing much-needed repairs and property moves.

Another significant challenge was **bureaucratic obstacles**, including complex application processes, lack of access to translation services and translated materials and poor information sharing between local authority teams and departments. Additionally, they felt that frontline and community sector expertise was not always valued in decision-making, risk assessment or support planning, even though they often had more contact with families than most of professionals.

A third concern was **limited resources and funding**, which makes it difficult to provide sustained support and threatens the continuation of many community organisations in the borough. Staff noted that both the council and community organizations were stretched thin, leading to gaps in service provision and increasing professional tensions. Despite these challenges, interviewees emphasized their commitment to building stronger partnerships with the Council, to make the best use of available resources, and to work more flexibly and creatively where possible.

Dignity in TA Event

In August 2024, GOSAD organised a half-day multi-agency event to explore opportunities to improve collaboration. The event was lived experience led, arising because families wanted the opportunity to share their experiences with professionals to bring to life the urgency of real change.

The event welcomed 36 participants, including local authority officers from Public Health, Housing and Equalities teams, community sector workers, Cllr Louise Brett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Safe and Genuinely Affordable Homes, and 20 residents with lived experience of homelessness and temporary accommodation.

The event commenced with a presentation of the preliminary findings emerging from this research. This was followed by a presentation from Susie Dye, Grants Manager at Trust for London, who spoke about the broader housing and homelessness emergency and the work of the Better TA Initiative that the Trust supports.

A series of roundtable discussions formed the second half of the event. Working through a series of discussion points, participants shared their personal and professional experiences. In what became a very moving session, previously homeless families spoke about the widespread health impacts of living in TA, of horrendous living conditions and the tensions created by enduring financial pressures. Many families spoke about the effects on their children, mentioning respiratory issues, mental health concerns and negative impact on education outcomes.

Attendees explored how the absence of simple courtesies, follow-up calls and email replies from staff was experienced as a lack of care and concern, deepening mistrust and increasing the isolation many families experience. Some families reported discrimination and racism in their TA placements and a sense that their cultural needs weren't always understood or were considered burdensome.

This event was a significant milestone, providing a rare platform for individuals with lived experience of TA in Ealing to share their challenges and aspirations with Council officers and local politicians. It also facilitated direct engagement between policymakers and frontline practitioners, breaking down perceived barriers and bringing to life tangible opportunities for improvement.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Communication & Information

This research highlights that families in temporary accommodation, especially those who are not fluent English speakers, often aren't aware of the range of housing options, legal entitlements and local services available to them. Families shared that important letters are always sent in English, using complex terminology that is difficult to understand and sometimes feels threatening in tone.

Community sector staff are not kept sufficiently informed about developments in individual cases, do not have established pathways to escalate concerns or resolve professional differences with Council managers and must chase multiple times for email replies and returned phone calls. As a result, they feel compelled to contact solicitors, MPs and elected Members to move a situation forward for a family at risk, which in turn increases professional tensions and provides no long-term improvement.



Multi-Agency Working

For the families and frontline workers, we spoke to, health, social care and employment needs were major factors in their experience of homelessness. However, many families felt that agencies and teams were not working together. Critical to families with disabled members,

was the relationship between housing and social care (Children and Adults), especially in respect of assessing the suitability of temporary accommodation and/or making adaptations needed to make placements liveable for long periods.

Community sector staff described feeling their interactions with the Council were reactive and transactional, rarely mutually beneficial and often somewhat tense and lacking warmth.

Health

Research now clearly indicates that living in temporary accommodation can have lifelong effects on good health. All the families involved in this brief research were experiencing poor and worsening health; some felt this directly resulted from their living conditions in temporary accommodation, others had pre-existing health issues but felt these had worsened whilst in TA.

Research participants with lived and professional experiences spoke about the lack of communication between statutory partners. They pointed to information sharing issues, lack of understanding about health conditions and diagnoses, limited shared planning for the housing needs of people receiving specialist treatment and issues registering for health services in new areas.

Cultural Sensitivity

The nature and scope of this research brought a necessary focus on the discrete

experiences of homeless families from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Whilst most families did not feel they had experienced direct discrimination or unfair treatment as a result of their racial, cultural or religious identities many pointed to issues with accessing information in their own languages, to gaps in the cultural competency of statutory agencies and to not having been told about specialist support from culturally competent organisations like GOS&D when it could have been most beneficial.

Property Inspections

For several of the families we spoke to, the condition of their temporary accommodation was a cause for serious concern in their lives. They spoke about making repeated requests for repairs, property inspections and ultimately, for accommodation that was suitable for the health and care needs of their families. Many were unsure who was responsible for the upkeep of their accommodation and what their rights were as TA tenants/licensees whilst others described a direct relationship between the condition of their homes and the health of their family. Frontline staff described how difficulties in

accessing information from the Council about timelines for inspection visits and repair work eroded trust and confidence between professionals and families in TA. In at least one case, the poor condition of accommodation was linked to child safeguarding concerns, which should be of concern to the local authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

The Better TA Initiative is currently funded to continue until 2025 but GOS&D's support of families in TA will continue as business as usual should funding not be renewed.

It is hoped that the following recommendations will support GOS&D and Ealing Council in their joint efforts to make temporary accommodation stays as short, safe and healthy as possible. Each of the five recommendations below includes practical suggestions, which can be implemented at low or no cost, to bring about collaborative cross-sector change.

These recommendations should be considered alongside the Trust for London 'Five Basics Campaign'¹² and the GOS&D Dignity in Temporary Accommodation Charter (attached at Appendix 1).

1. Improve Access to Information

Improving timely access to accurate and relevant information about individual case progression and about legal entitlements and local support would significantly improve the lives of families in TA. Improving the flow of information between the Council and community organisations would also enable community organisations to reduce the burden of communication on Council officers and enable well-informed advocacy support.

Some practical ways this could be improved include:

- Creating factsheets, in a range of languages, about legal entitlements to housing support, free school meals and other relevant initiatives and making them available online and in hard copy

¹² <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/research/a-long-way-from-home-improving-the-experiences-of-people-in-temporary-accommodation/>

- Improve the information available online, again in a range of languages, about the boroughs sheltered housing offer, the Town and Country Homes Scheme, Homefinder UK and local rent deposit schemes.
- Create a single point of contact for community organisations working with homeless families so that calls and emails can be monitored and responded to in a planned and streamlined way
- Establish a fortnightly case updates meeting where community organisations and the Council can come together to share information and concerns in a planned and resource-effective way
- Consider co-developing a Charter, that describes what families can expect from the Council in respect of information about their case, the attitudes and approach of staff and their rights to make complaints or ask for decisions to be reviewed.

2. Embed Culturally Competent Support

A household's experience in TA is not only about where it's located, it's about the support available to settle into a new community or neighbourhood and to address the issues that led to homelessness in the first place. Community organisations like GOS&D are especially well placed to support global majority households with requirements around language, culture and religion, and other to support those households seeking gender and/or sexuality informed support.

Community organisations are also perfectly placed to offer tenancy sustainment support, and to share information with council officers about issues they may not be aware of, including about repairs, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding concerns.

Some of the ways to do this could include:

- Conduct a brief review of the cultural competency training completed by frontline Housing Options and other relevant staff, to ensure they feel confident and equipped to respond to cultural differences, religious needs and experiences of discrimination. Make racial equity in

homelessness a strong feature in the forthcoming Homelessness Strategy, embedding the commitments made by the Ealing Race Equality Commission¹³.

- Make better use of Personal Housing Plans to explore families' holistic needs, using the PHP to make and monitor referrals to relevant local organisations such as GOS&D
- Involving GOS&D and other local organisations in PHP meetings and discussions, so that Plans are collaborative, holistic and rooted in the community support offer in the borough
- Consider exploring a service level agreement between the Council, GOS&D and other relevant organisations, with relevant funding as appropriate, so that they can provide ad hoc translation support in a respectful and appropriate way for families in need.

3. Commit to Resolving Repairs and Property Management Issues

Issues with the condition and repair of TA properties is a significant factor in the negative experiences of homeless families and tensions between professionals. Improving communication and establishing more routine approaches to inspecting properties and holding landlords to account would make TA placements more stable and reduce the health impacts of homelessness.

Some practical steps could include:

- Ensure that every homeless household with a disabled family member is given information about Occupational Therapy Assessments and Aids and Adaptations support that might be available to them.
- Establish an information sharing agreement between GOS&D and the Council in respect of repairs and maintenance issues in TA placements.
- Ealing Council to explore opportunities to implement relevant aspects of Awaab's Law¹⁴ into their TA provision as well as in their general needs homes.

¹³ https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201068/equality_and_diversity/2768/race_equality_commission

¹⁴ <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/awaabs-law/>

- Create a single point of contact to respond to enquiries about TA repairs and maintenance concerns, allowing community organisations to share information with families about contractor visits and inspections, timescales and delays etc.

4. Strengthen Multi-Agency Practice

Homelessness is complex, with overlapping legal rights and entitlements and the involvement of multiple agencies making it important to work together to reduce the burden on vulnerable families and to make best use of resources. At the moment, opportunities for joint meetings and action planning are rare and inconsistent, resulting in information sharing issues and missed opportunities to manage risk collaboratively.

Prioritising the involvement of social care and health services, in both homelessness prevention and relief activities, could significantly improve the quality of life of homeless families whilst living in TA and mitigate the lasting negative consequences of homelessness.

Some opportunities to explore could include:

- The Housing Options Team to establish a fortnightly 'case updates meeting' where community organisations and the Council can come together to share information and concerns in a planned and resource-effective way
- The Housing Options team to trigger a multi-agency professionals meeting for every homeless family with complex needs, especially those with disabled members, within their first month of living in TA and then at regular intervals as useful thereafter.
- The Council to create an escalation pathway for organisations to share disagreements with Council decisions or want to raise concerns about changing or escalating risk affecting a family. This should be aligned with existing 'Resolving Professional Differences' procedures used in Children's and Adults Services.

- The Council to consider establishing a multi-agency Homeless Families Forum in the borough, that comes together a couple of times each year to share good practice, explore new ways of working and provide feedback to the Council and other statutory partners about emerging issues and changing needs.

5. Develop a Culture of Mutual Respect

Councils and VCS organisations have different roles, powers and permissions and this can create tension and frustration when relationships aren't built on mutual respect and reciprocity. Participants told us they wanted more equitable relationships with Council officers and wanted to feel like their voices and expertise were valued.

As well as the suggestions in earlier recommendations, some ideas for bringing this to life include;

- Create more opportunities for statutory and community partners to meet and talk to each other informally.
- GOS&D to explore hosting an Open Day to celebrate their work, share information about the support offer and get to know local partners and colleagues in person
- Consider establishing a Temporary Accommodation Action Group (TAAG) to give community organisations a stronger voice
- Consider hosting a Multi-agency Community of Practice where practitioners supporting vulnerable families can come together and share good practice and ideas for working differently.

CONCLUSION

This concise report provides an overview of both the challenges and opportunities that exist in improving temporary accommodation outcomes for homeless global majority families in Ealing.

It is evident that with individual, local and national challenges this complex and urgent, innovative thinking, collaboration, and creativity are more important than ever. Therefore, despite limited resources and the growing urgency of the national housing crisis, cross-sector collaboration in Ealing is essential and must be given the time and energy it needs to develop and embed. Everyone involved in the research expressed their commitment to making that happen.

This research, particularly the accounts of currently homeless families, sheds light on the harsh realities of living in temporary accommodation and the resilience needed to navigate increasingly complex bureaucratic barriers. Their experiences underscore the urgent need to prioritize dignity, care, effective communication, and cooperation, underpinned by cultural competency and recognition of the need for structural transformation. It is hoped that this report will galvanise efforts to bring about meaningful cross-sector action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With gratitude to everyone who participated in this brief research project, including GOS&D staff, Ealing Council officers and elected Members, and the Trust for London.

Particular thanks are extended to the families and individuals who shared their experiences of TA during this project, in interviews and as part of project events.

Credit to Benji Human for the report artwork. <https://benjihuman.com/artist>



GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT

Dignity in Temporary Accommodation: A Charter Developed by Residents with Lived Experience

Preamble

Temporary accommodation is a vital safety net for individuals and families experiencing housing crises. However, all residents deserve to live with dignity, respect, and fairness, regardless of their circumstances. This charter represents the voices of residents with lived experience of temporary accommodation and calls for collective action from Ealing Council, housing associations, private rental sector stakeholders, and other stakeholders to uphold the principles outlined below.

Core Principles

1. Respect for Human Dignity

- a. Temporary accommodation must provide a safe, clean, and habitable environment that respects residents' basic rights and well-being.
- b. Residents should be treated with compassion, empathy, and respect by all professionals involved in their housing journey.

2. Safety and Security

- a. All temporary accommodation must meet legal health and safety standards, including secure locks, functioning smoke alarms, and hazard-free living conditions.
- b. Residents must feel safe from anti-social behaviour, harassment, and neglect, with clear mechanisms to report and address concerns.

3. Timely Repairs and Maintenance

- a. Maintenance issues must be addressed promptly to prevent prolonged discomfort or harm to residents.

- b. A transparent and accessible system must be in place for reporting and tracking repair requests.

4. Access to Basic Amenities

- a. All accommodations must include access to essential utilities, such as running water, electricity, heating, and cooking facilities.
- b. Clean and functional bathroom facilities must be provided, with adequate privacy.

5. Transparent Communication

- a. Residents must receive clear, timely, and honest communication about their housing situation, including rights, responsibilities, and timelines for relocation.
- b. Translation and interpretation services should be made available for those who need them.

6. Fair and Due Diligence in Placements

- a. Councils and housing associations must carry out thorough due diligence when selecting temporary accommodation placements to ensure suitability and fairness.
- b. Placements must take into account residents' specific needs, such as proximity to schools, medical facilities, and support networks.

7. Support Services

- a. Residents should have access to support services, including advice on finding permanent housing, managing finances, and accessing health and education services.
- b. Special consideration must be given to vulnerable residents, such as families with young children, disabled individuals, and those with health needs.

8. Accountability and Resident Engagement

- a. Housing providers must be held accountable for the quality and management of temporary accommodations.
- b. Residents must have opportunities to provide feedback and be involved in decisions that affect their living conditions.

9. A Pathway to End Temporary Accommodation

- a. Local authorities must prioritise long-term solutions to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation.
- b. Collaborative efforts between councils, housing associations, and the private rental sector should focus on increasing access to affordable, permanent housing options.

Commitment to Dignity

This charter calls on Ealing Council, housing associations, the private rental sector, and all relevant stakeholders to affirm their commitment to these principles by:

- Signing this charter as a public declaration of their support.

APPENDIX 1 – Dignity In Temporary Accommodation Charter

- Taking tangible steps to improve the quality of temporary accommodation in alignment with the outlined principles.
- Working towards long-term solutions to eliminate the need for temporary accommodation.
- Regularly reviewing progress in collaboration with residents to ensure continued accountability.

By working together, we can ensure that every individual and family in temporary accommodation is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.