



A pivot towards ending the crisis in TA for Londoners

Strategic research for Trust for London

Report by Leila Baker and Mary Carter

October 2025

Table of Contents

<i>From the authors</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Foreword.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Summary: What does ending the crisis look like?</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Findings</i>	<i>10</i>
1. <i>Finance and funding constraints are driving the crisis</i>	<i>10</i>
2. <i>Interim measures can aid long-term change.....</i>	<i>14</i>
3. <i>Sector-level changes can help end the crisis</i>	<i>16</i>
4. <i>Ecosystem leadership and governance to end the crisis.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Implications for Trust for London</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Appendix A: Research questions.....</i>	<i>32</i>

From the authors

We offer this report as a constructive contribution alongside others towards ending the TA crisis for Londoners. Our research has surfaced dilemmas and ideas for their resolution; and it has drawn out implications for what we can all do to help end the TA crisis but it's not our role to make policy recommendations.

We would like to acknowledge the conviction and commitment of all those we have discussed the issues with, and we are grateful for the time and candour we were allowed. We are also grateful to Trust for London, and in particular, Susie Dye, for recognising the importance of creating this thought space and allowing us to start the process. The research benefits from additional research by Albi Stanley and contributions from the Better TA alliance.

We will be looking for further opportunities to share the research and explore ways to support the Better TA alliance in negotiating an end to the TA crisis in London. Please feel free to contact us.

Leila Baker and Mary Carter, October 2025

Foreword

As part of our commitment to economic and social justice in London, including to tackling London's housing crisis, Trust for London is committed to working towards a consensus to end the crisis in temporary accommodation within the next decade.

This research is therefore a key step towards understanding where there is agreement, and what the role of the Trust and our stakeholders in the London voluntary and community sector might be in influencing such a consensus to bring about an end to the crisis.

We are grateful to the many experts who gave their time to the research, and to the researchers themselves for their diligence in listening, drawing out common threads and synthesising the elements of common ground. We are equally grateful to the partners in the Better TA initiative, who support and advocate for and with those who are living in TA, and somehow find time to share their insights with us.

The crisis has become so pervasive, the Trust's response can only ever feel partial. As the research shows, many of the levers that will bring about change are in the hands of others. Ultimately only a comprehensive Government strategy can put an end to it.

In that context, Trust for London has consistently committed to focusing on what's possible, and doing what we can. We are aided considerably in that by our co-funders, Oak Foundation, City Bridge Foundation, and Impact on Urban Health. This research is helpful in showing us some of the pressure points that are within reach. We will carefully consider it, to map our way forward.

Susie Dye, Grants Manager - Housing

Introduction

There can be no dissent from the view that temporary accommodation (TA) is in crisis. Spiralling bills, over-long stays, often in poor quality housing that lacks basic amenities, and families placed long distances from friends and family. It is currently a system that is damaging to everyone caught up in it: those needing help, those administering the homelessness system, and those providing support. Some groups of people are even worse served: in particular, people from Black and minoritised communities stay longer, are moved out of area more and get fewer allocations in social housing following homelessness¹.

The numbers show no signs of abating, with latest government figures putting the total at 131,140 households living in TA in March 2025, 11.8% higher than March 2024². The pressure is evident in tough decisions and more gatekeeping, bringing with them ever more litigation. Information is hard to come by and Freedom of Information requests have become a big part of research and journalism.

This is also a time of extensive policy change as seen in the plethora of government initiatives and strategies, new legislation and new funding. There are many live discussions and new research that has come on stream, all of which suggest that the crisis *can* be solved. There is also much evidence of creative problem-solving, often with councils working with housing associations and the for-profit sector.

It is timely, therefore, that Trust for London is looking to build on its work around TA over the past three and more years, and has identified a strategic goal to see cross-sector consensus on ending the TA crisis for Londoners by 2035: consensus by 2029, an end to the current crisis by 2035. This research report was commissioned to assess what it will take to make that happen, looking at the different analyses of the problem, the range of solutions that have been put forward and looking for points of agreement.

The intended audience for this research is Trust for London. We have drawn out implications where we see them, but our role is not to make policy recommendations. Rather we see this as a contribution to the discussion; we hope that it will be fuel for the Trust, Better TA partners and other London stakeholders to encourage coming together, commitment and action, building consensus to end the crisis. The report looks in particular at how and where civil society organisations can contribute to the change that needs to happen. There are many elements of this analysis that are beyond the power/remit of public and civil society organisations to change. They require government action and point to the need for **collective voice** and **collective campaigning**. They also point to the Trust's role as a **convenor of London stakeholders** and potential to **nurture civil society leaders**.

The research was carried out during June to August 2025 and comprised:

- Interviews and conversations with 30 people with an interest in ending the TA crisis, working in local and regional government, the voluntary and community sector, policy and research.

¹ Fitzpatrick, S, Bramley, G, McIntyre, J, Ayed, N & Watts-Cobbe, B. (2025) *Race, Ethnicity and Homelessness in the UK: Final report of a knowledge and capacity building programme*. [Last accessed 28 July 2025]; Iafrati, S., Clare, N. and Lawrence, H. (2025) *Moving on: The overrepresentation of Black and minoritised households in out of area housing placements in England*. Critical Social Policy, 2025, Vol 45(3), pp 406-425 [Last accessed 28 July 2025]; and Shelter (2025) *My colour speaks before me: How racism and discrimination affect Black and Black Mixed heritage people's access to social homes in England*.

² MHCLG (2025) *Accredited official statistics: Statutory homelessness in England: January to March 2025* [Last accessed: 28 July 2025]

- A rapid review of 65 items including policy and research reports, articles and webinar recordings with an emphasis on where these have made recommendations or shared commitment around long-term change in TA. These are listed in the References at the end of the report.
- A scan of recent government spending announcements and consultations to consider the changing national direction of travel around homelessness and housing policy.
- The research benefits throughout from the knowledge and expertise of the Better TA alliance and its partners whose views have informed the research design and analysis.

The research and interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Headline figures about the crisis in London

Figures from London Councils³ show that:

- London accounts for 56% of all homeless households in England. One in 50 Londoners are in TA; and one in 21 children – at least one homeless child in every London classroom.
- The number of homeless families placed by 27 London boroughs in B&Bs has risen 662% over the two years from April 2022 to April 2024. Despite there being a statutory limit on stays in this type of TA to six weeks, the number of families living beyond that limit has jumped by over 1,300% during the same period (from 114 to 1600).
- Boroughs' spending on TA has jumped 68% in a year (comparing 2022-23 to 2023-24). Boroughs' collective spend is around £114m each month – or £4 million every day.
- London boroughs collectively overspent their homelessness budgets by £208m in 2023-24 with 29 of London's 33 local authorities overspending their budget.

How we approached writing the report

The research captures a point in time before the impact of some very big-ticket items can be felt. In looking forward to 2035, conversations were wide-ranging and sometimes hypothetical – there is a lot of money, policies and strategies yet to land and be tested in reality. At the time of writing, it was not known what the forthcoming Homelessness Strategy or Autumn Statement would bring and what funding would be attached to the London Ending Homelessness Accelerator Programme; nor what the impact would be of the Renters' Rights Bill or whether/how the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law would apply to TA. The new Social and Affordable Homes Programme promised the delivery of 1.5m new homes, including 60% for social rent, with 30% of the money (£11.7bn) allocated to London, but how that plays out will take several years to understand.

This report benefits from and avoids duplicating the work of Justlife, Shelter and others⁴ that have brought together wide-ranging analyses of the challenges and visions for change. Instead, it concentrates on the potential, scope and conditions for cross-sector consensus and ending the crisis, and the role of civil society in this; and on surfacing dilemmas, not resolving them.

The report is a synthesis of what we found. We promised anonymity in our interviews so have not attributed any quotes or comments to individuals. We use 'participants' to refer to all those that gave an interview. Where we heard something from a particular sector we say so. We have generally adopted the

³ London Councils (2024) *London's homelessness emergency. Key facts, figures, and policy priorities for tackling the crisis* [Last accessed 2 July 2025]

⁴ See for example, Justlife (2025) *A Better Vision for Temporary Accommodation*; Shelter (2023) *Still Living in Limbo: Why the use of temporary accommodation must end*; [All-Party Parliamentary Group for Households in Temporary Accommodation](#)

distinction of 'public sector' and 'civil society'⁵ to broadly capture the perspectives reflected. We use 'council' and 'borough' interchangeably.

⁵ We have chosen to use 'civil society' in its broad sense to be inclusive of the full range of interested people, groups and organisations including those with lived experience as well as to distinguish between government and private sectors.

Summary: What does ending the crisis look like?

The research found that there is huge commitment on all sides to work towards change and to stop the damage and disruption caused by TA. All the participants across public and civil society organisations cared deeply about ending the crisis.

Ending the crisis for all

The consequences of the crisis for those who have lived through it should not be forgotten. Long stays in TA, very often meaning multiple moves by the household under the same statutory duty, will have damaged the prospects for many. Child and adult physical and mental health and development will be affected; educational achievement can suffer through long trips to school, and inadequate places to study or connect to the internet; job search and work prospects can also suffer. This will remain a challenge for all stakeholders to address and be mindful of, and should not be forgotten in the drive towards better housing options. This implies that ending the crisis necessarily involves working simultaneously to:

- Address today's problems: finding better alternatives to poor quality TA; moving those in it now, out of homelessness and into settled homes
- Reduce homelessness: stemming the need for emergency interventions
- Manage tomorrow's TA so that it remains short, safe and healthy.

What needs to change? The research has identified four areas for change

The research has identified four areas where change is needed if the crisis is to end. They are:

- **Funding and finance** need to open up options for change instead of constraining them. Current arrangements are anachronistic and contradictory and are driving the crisis.
- **Interim measures** must drive towards long-term change. At present, a focus on short-term fire-fighting is creating incoherent and suboptimal practice.
- **Housing interventions** must lead with ways to increase social rented tenancies, create a quality private rented sector offer, and bring TA back under the control of local authorities.
- **Leadership and governance** need strengthening to create a well-functioning homelessness and housing ecosystem that is capable of putting an end to the crisis.

The powers to make these changes sit at multiple levels. These are areas of consensus, where stakeholders could advocate for them, amplify each other and contribute to collective efforts.

How change will happen?

The research identified agreement around how change will happen:

- **Civil society leaders:** Needed to be supported to shape and then monitor early impact of policy change; communicate what good looks like to public bodies (at all levels); and call for action where needed
- **Long-term horizons:** The system needs to work on change for the long term, not just chase the numbers down without also creating systemic change. There may be a need to strengthen capability around foresight and scenario planning to support this.
- **Action oriented:** People in the system need to be willing to go ahead and try things out, while also drawing on available research, evaluation and peer learning and contributing to knowledge about what works.
- **Alert to interaction between different policies as well as their impact:** Using civil society (and others) ability to provide live intelligence to monitor the interaction of different policies for perverse outcomes and unintended consequences.

- **Racism and discrimination:** This will require pressure to be applied in multiple ways including council policy/practice, officer training, legal support. And keeping inequalities and injustices live in homelessness discourse and data.

The research has identified potential milestones

Getting going on addressing today's problems means finding interim measures that will help work towards ending the crisis as well as working towards long-term change. The research identified the following potential steps along the way:

- Working within the legislation and guidance, particularly, ending all breaches of the six-week limit on stays in B&B.
- Pushing for a national government response and coordination around inter borough issues i.e. out of area placements as well as competition for properties.
- Consistent reduction in TA stays through improved allocations and move-on pathways.
- Stabilisation of a high-quality, flexible TA stock responsive to demand.
- Recognition of social and private rented housing as viable tenures.
- Financial stability for local authorities avoiding crisis-level budget shortfalls.
- Cross-sector governance enabling coordinated action and accountability.

Implications

From the research findings we have drawn out five main implications that can inform the Trust's next steps with its strategic goal to see an end to the TA crisis for Londoners by 2035, and to see cross-sector consensus on how that happens by 2029. As authors of the research and co-facilitators of the Better TA alliance, we have committed to work on taking forward these implications. When we use 'we' it means the Better TA alliance of civil society organisations and ourselves as its facilitators.

We are noting that delivering social rented homes at scale and as a public good is needed to end the crisis. The alliance supports efforts to achieve this while its own focus is on the following.

1. **Positioning the Better TA alliance.** Our work is London and local. We offer access to an alliance, evidence and insights and capacity to organise those. We position civil society within the ecosystem of leadership and governance that's needed to end the crisis in TA. We see civil society as the first responders to the early impact of changes in borough policy and practice.
2. **Building cross-sector partnerships.** We will concentrate on priority points of influence where we can make a difference: e.g. through the London Councils/GLA London Ending Homelessness Accelerator Programme (EHAP), London Housing Panel, London Housing Directors, Cabinet leads and a number of larger civil society organisations.
3. **Tracking, documenting and reporting evidence systematically.** We will monitor the unintended consequences of out of area placement in general and with respect to racism and other forms of discrimination. We may also monitor other borough policy and practice based on the interests of the alliance or requests from our public sector colleagues.
4. **Advocating for boroughs to act collectively.** Civil society can push boroughs to join up with other boroughs where acting collectively will enable them to take back control of TA and its quality. This could cover priorities of the London Ending Homelessness Accelerator Programme around reviving the Inter Borough Accommodation Agreement (IBAA), and expanding Setting the Standard, as well as wider lobbying on funding/finance.
5. **Pushing for an affordable, well-managed private rented sector.** The private rented sector is an important part of a functioning housing system and we see a role for civil society in mapping out the options for achieving that. Landlords must be incentivised to offer a quality product that tenants can afford. Tenants need to know their rights. And measures should be in place that prevent rent arrears and evictions.

Findings

Part One of the report looks at how finance and funding arrangements are driving the crisis by constraining options for change. Part Two goes on to look at what interim measures are needed to curb the crisis while the housing intervention set out in Part Three begins to bring about longer-term change. Finally, in Part Four the report looks at the leadership and governance arrangements that will be required to achieve change in the complex ecosystem of housing and funding.

1. Finance and funding constraints are driving the crisis

Options to end the crisis in TA are constrained by some now familiar system blocks: an overall shortage in homes in social or private rented sectors (PRS) that people on low incomes can access or afford; demand for PRS increasing from all directions - by people who can't access social housing or can't afford to buy, and by other public bodies, particularly the Home Office; and the PRS available for TA shrinking as landlords leave the sector or shift to the higher end of the market⁶.

In this first Part of the research findings, the report looks at how funding and finance constraints are driving the crisis; and references the new central government framework for expanding social and affordable housing and changing how TA is funded.

The research found strong consensus that current finance and funding systems are:

- Contradictory and constrain instead of enabling options for change that can help end the crisis, including work on preventing homelessness
- Anachronistic and have failed to keep step with changes in the wider housing sector
- Full of known unknowns; the research was carried out at a point of flux with some government policies yet to be unveiled or decided.

There was also consensus that without changes to TA subsidy and housing benefit it is difficult to see how progress could be made.

A procurement crisis

The PRS is seen as both problem and solution and the freezing of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to 2024 levels, a particular challenge for Londoners. What happened after Covid eviction restrictions ended wasn't expected: *"[the PRS] stopped being a solution and started to really flip into being a generative demand ... we've been a little bit caught out by that"*.

Local authorities have been on the back foot in negotiations with private sector landlords, especially where they're in direct competition with Home Office providers offering higher rates. What they can pay is constrained by an outdated system⁷, anachronistic in a situation of limited options and statutory duties. Rates pinned to 2011 LHA rates don't address the rising cost of procuring TA and shift the burden to local authorities.

⁶ London Councils (2024) *London's homelessness emergency. Key facts, figures, and policy priorities for tackling the crisis* [Last accessed 2 July 2025]; Whitehead, C., Scanlon, K., Benton, E., Davies, A., Daly, J., Holford, W. And Brown, L. (2023) *Supply of Private Rented Sector Accommodation in London*, Savills and LSE Consulting. [Last accessed 30 July 2025]

⁷ For example, the housing benefit subsidy for B&B is pinned to the 2011 1-bed LHA rate, regardless of actual cost, size of the household being accommodated, or number of rooms being occupied. See Centre for Homelessness Impact (2025) *Spending on Temporary Accommodation: Is it Value for Money?* [Last accessed 24 July 2025]

The procurement crisis has created competition between local authorities as councils place families in other London boroughs and sometimes in other parts of the country. As these out of area placements have become common, they have created tensions between councils: participants talked about the impacts on stock available to them locally to house their own families; and of the harmful impacts on families being disconnected from friends and family, as well as schools, health providers and support/advocates from civil society organisations.

Participants also talked about needing to work around landlord requirements. For example, a well-known hotel chain limits stays to 28 days so families have to be moved around; or when a landlord decides that they want a property back. For people in TA these can happen at very short notice.

Impact of the funding crisis

The funding and finance of TA is described as an “*existential*” issue, pushing some boroughs to bankruptcy and stretching to the limit their capacity to deliver public services across the board.

As local authorities have used money earmarked for other purposes – the general fund, the Homelessness Prevention Grant and in some cases, their reserves - to fill the TA subsidy gap,⁸ it’s become a whole organisation problem not just one of housing and homelessness. It’s brought new thinking and collective resources, but challenging behaviours too.

“And they [councils] can be more ruthless, more single-minded, there can be advantages to that because they can mobilise some of their capacity to the solutions ... the cost of that is that you can end up in some short-term decisions, decisions which are around gatekeeping, long-term prevention.”

How data is helping councils adapt to the challenge

Good data, and good use of data, came up in many examples of ways that local authorities have found to overcome some of the challenges they face in addressing the TA crisis. All see the benefit of digging deeper into granular information around location, types, cost etc of TA stock as a way to drive operational change.

With better data councils were able to talk authoritatively and in more detail about decisions and solutions; tackle contentious issues such as out of area placements; and identify and support individual families. They were also able to use data to improve cooperation between services e.g. housing and Adult Social Care to coordinate assessments with housing placements; and encouraging earlier notice of homelessness so that prevention measures can be taken to stave off eviction from the PRS or, at least, make councils aware of what homelessness approaches are in the pipeline.

The work of London Councils to make data available through its dashboard has been welcome and has helped enhance cross-sector working. Participants expressed their frustration and some reservations about where/how data is gathered and analysed. A good appetite for moves towards a unified data system was reported, although with some reservations that the new centralised team will sit in the London Office of Technology and Information while rough sleeping CHAIN data sits somewhere else.

⁸ Essentially, the difference between what local authorities can claim through the DWP and what they have to pay out to cover the cost.

Future change – known unknowns

Government plans in and around the Comprehensive Spending Review 2025 could be transformative for TA, but much of the detail is still to be unveiled, decided or worked through. They are set out in the box below.

Funding

Fair Funding Review. Will move HB subsidy and Homelessness Prevention Grant into the Revenue Support Grant from 2026-27 using a new formula: Currently under consultation.

Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP); £39bn across England for 1.5m homes including 60% for social rent: London to receive £11.7bn.

Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Round 4 – £950 Million: Targeting TA; awaiting details.

Leveraging finance: range of initiatives to bring in private funding to boost housebuilding, including low interest loans for social and affordable homes.

Others

Local Government Outcomes Framework to set priorities and metrics. TA measures proposed are: number of households with children in TA; number of families in B&B over 6 weeks; percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented.

10 year **UK Infrastructure Strategy** bringing housing delivery within economic and social infrastructure. A new strategic body, The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA), to work with MHCLG including around procuring PRS short-term residential accommodation to address competition for asylum seekers housing.

Participants had most to say about the big announcement of the scale and social rent component of the new Social and Affordable Homes Programme. It was recognised as not being a quick or short-term solution and of limited help for the immediate crisis, but welcomed for its emphasis on social housing and the expectation that 60% will be for social rent. There were many questions raised:

- Whether £11.7bn over 10 years was enough to deliver at the scale needed; and even if it was, whether there are the necessary construction skills and planning system capacity that will be needed to deliver quality social rented homes at pace. Does inflation erode real-term value.
- Whether smaller providers might struggle to access funds in light of Homes England's preference for large strategic partners and the pressure to meet targets.
- Would there be a tension between meeting numerical targets and addressing specialist housing need?

Other questions were raised about addressing revenue gaps which hold back efforts to expand social housing or address TA pressures due to a lack of supported housing⁹. Will people who are not able to get supported housing face longer stays without proper support in TA.

⁹ Housing Associations stepping away from supported housing due to high financial risk of funding cuts for staffing/support (NHF: 75% cut in supported housing revenue between 2010–2020) and regulatory burdens.

There was a general sense that participants wanted to understand more about the risks or downsides of leveraged funding as well as the opportunities. They also wanted to understand more about the future relationships between local authorities, housing associations, private developers and private investors. There was uncertainty as to how much this will be used by housing associations and how risks in terms of quality and profitability would be managed.

2. Interim measures can aid long-term change

Ending the crisis meant creating more social rented tenancies, seeing numbers reducing consistently and getting TA back under the control of local authorities. Participants talked about creating a “*breathing space*” for themselves while they shifted from reactive to proactive, strategic approaches to change.

This Part of the report summarises the interim measures for change that were raised during the research. These interim measures needed to be intentional measures, being taken as part of a strategy (albeit the short-term stage of that strategy) and not reactive gatekeeping. Achieving them would require not only leadership and governance support but also changes and training around frontline officer practice.

Comply with and use statutory homelessness legislation and guidance

Participants from both sectors wanted to see local authorities find ways to get back to complying with legislation and following guidance. They were looking for two outcomes:

- No breaches of the six-week limit on stays in B&B accommodation.
- Housing needs assessments being carried out according to guidance and kept under review.

They did not, however, want change at any cost. Solutions driven by an urgent need to reduce costs can bring innovation but they can also bring **negative, unintended consequences**. Moving families out of the highest cost B&B into better alternatives is welcome, participants said but it wasn’t always a long-term solution: the bedspaces were simply used by other local authorities, Home Office providers, or as Unsupported TA for vulnerable single people. They also talked about the knock-on effect for support providers – where and how they reach people and deliver their services can also be disrupted.

Participants also wanted to see an increase in the allocation of social rented homes to people in TA. They discussed options to weight allocations to TA residents and clear the problem; or to use the allocation system to award more points for length of stay in TA. On the latter, Shelter has called for the guidance to be amended so that households who have spent a year or more in TA have an ‘additional preference’ for an allocation of social housing. The findings in this report would back up that call.

National and regional government responses to out of area placements

There was a strong consensus that it would need national and regional government intervention to overcome the challenges surrounding out of area placements and inter borough and borough/Home Office competition for properties. The Local Government Association’s (LGA) guidance was widely referenced but it is not mandatory.

In order to make progress, participants suggested that work was needed on collecting data on what is happening, training officers to ensure they fully understand the existing legislation and guidance, and measures taken to improve notification and safeguarding.

There was much in the pipeline that was welcomed: that London Councils and the LGA are revisiting the LGA guidance on out of area placements; that London Councils is working on reviving the Inter Borough Accommodation Agreement (IBAA); and that there is a proposal for the extension of Setting the Standard to cover TA in the private rented sector.

A few outliers and anomalies that need resolving

There was considerable disquiet about people being placed in TA on estates earmarked for regeneration that are in serious disrepair; and in properties that have been converted under permitted development rights that are severely unsuitable. The governance of these programmes was felt to have lost control of

their quality and redress was at best opaque. Suggestions included giving TA residents the same 'right to return' as other tenants on regeneration estates.

Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness and reason why people are in TA. Participants said that victims of domestic abuse often leave the shared home and become homeless while the perpetrator stays housed. Often it won't be safe for the woman to stay in the shared home. But where it would be safe and appropriate, participants felt a more flexible approach could be possible.

Additional help with strategy could be offered to boroughs with high numbers in TA. There were different views on holding regular borough wide case panels to look at ways to move specific households out of TA, but where boroughs had made progress they had introduced regular weekly meetings and oversight boards to proactively plan ways to consistently reduce numbers in TA.

A note on targets. While setting targets for reducing the numbers in TA may be appealing, there were a number of reasons why participants in both sectors advised against this. First, they said that when numbers were successfully cut in 2004-10, not enough attention was paid to the changes needed in the system that could prevent them from rising again. Second, past attempts to cut numbers had led to perverse and /or unintended outcomes where people were moved out of one type of accommodation (in order to meet a target) into something worse.

3. Sector-level changes can help end the crisis

Much has been written about housing supply, the importance of reflecting the diverse needs of Londoners and ways in which diversification of supply can help ensure the right homes are built in the right places¹⁰. This report doesn't go back over that. Instead, it draws out what a future sector might need to look like, highlighting three housing interventions that can help end the crisis. These interventions are arguably systemic – while some individual roles (such as planning leads, or Government ministers and civil servants) have relevant formal powers, getting voter and political buy-in for them is a bigger task.

This Part of the report begins by looking at how social rent as a public good can put our responses to homelessness and housing need back on track; then it looks at why and how quality private rented accommodation will need to be a part of the solution; and, finally, why and how councils must take control of the cost and quality of their TA. The research findings suggest a need to push forward on all three of these driven by a vision of seeing a net increase in social rented homes that will enable boroughs to consistently reduce homelessness the use of TA.

Summary of approaches to housing delivery being used to help end the crisis

a. Council-owned or leased TA - using council-owned properties and leasing private properties on long term leases (including 10year+1 day leases so that costs fall in Housing Revenue Accounts rather than from the general fund).

b. Modular and 'meanwhile' housing - using modular construction and temporary structures on vacant land as interim housing.

c. Repurposed and empty homes - bringing long-term empty properties back into use as TA or for move-on accommodation – example from previously used sheltered housing; using acquisition and repair; engaging with landlords.

d. Pooled funding - councils and registered providers are pooling funding around disposals to ensure that there is no net loss of social housing stock. If a registered provider's property is not up to safety/EPC standards and would cost too much to improve, the local authority is given the first refusal to buy it and use it for TA/dispersal/exempt accommodation.

Most councils are using more than one of these approaches and are aiming to both expand their control of TA and reuse it as social housing if necessary.

"If we can get into a cycle of acquiring properties that are already vacant, bring them up to scratch, bring forward investment capital to go out there and acquire properties that generate an income/return that you can recycle, you can see a slowly expanding portfolio of owned assets. If we get the levels right that could reduce the reliance on leases in the long run, an escape route out of that never ending cycle of leasing".

¹⁰ See for example, London Housing Panel (July 2024) *Discussion note on the costs and benefits of a net increase in the supply of social rented homes in London*
https://trustforlondon.org.uk/documents/669/Discussion_Note_Summary_FINAL.docx [Last accessed, 30.07.25]

Social rent is a public good

Expanding the supply of social housing is widely recognised as “*a crucial way to address inequality and poverty and boost the economy*”¹¹. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there was absolute consensus that delivering social rented housing at scale is what’s needed in order to ease the pressure on the homelessness and TA system. Participants welcomed the scale of the new Social and Affordable Homes Programme and its emphasis on social rented homes.

Some participants also felt that they were seeing a return to social rented homes being seen as a public good that should be protected; also, as a tenure that could be aspirational instead of the tenure of last resort that carries a stigma.

Participants also discussed ways to avoid net losses of social rented homes and maximise net gains, as follows:

- Critically, the research points to the need to revisit some difficult conversations about succession rights, incentivising downsizing and vacancy chains in general including learning from research and from boroughs that already have very strict measures around succession.
- Suspending the Right to Buy altogether for existing as well as new homes (government has announced that there will be no Right to Buy for 35 years on new build).
- Pushing for even more collaboration between local authorities and housing associations particularly around measures to avoid net losses due to disposals; and joined lobbying to government to iron out anomalies.

Finally, **programmes to acquire and lease previously privately owned properties** were welcomed. Ideally these would be on long leases¹² and would factor in from the start ways to convert them to be used for social rent in the long term. Mainly participants seemed to favour the *use of the property* being ‘flipped’ from TA under a licence to a social housing tenancy in order to add to net gains in social housing. It might sometimes be appropriate to do this while keeping the same residents in the property but not if it would lead to people remaining in unsuitable homes.

A London (or national) private rented sector strategy is needed

London does not have a private rented sector strategy and by inference also lacks a strategy around making the sector’s accommodation suitable and affordable for homeless households. It is also unclear, and there were different views about, where responsibility lies for governance and strategy around private renting in London. Some participants argued that the GLA is London’s strategic authority and so should be leading strategy development around private renting. Others felt that the GLA (and Mayor) lack the necessary powers and policy levers to achieve change and so those participants tended to suggest there needs to be a national strategy.

Regardless of where governance and strategy sit, it was fairly widely thought that there is little recognition that the PRS, or at least the part available for TA, is shrinking and of the impact that is having on homelessness. There was consensus that the PRS will continue to be part of the current homelessness system and its shortcomings need addressing. The research found broad agreement that when numbers in TA were reduced in 2004-10 PRS rents were more affordable, that private TA does not represent value for money and that the current state of the PRS is both part of the problem and of the solution. Even with

¹¹ Shelter (2025) [Safe as houses: why investment in social housing is great for us and our economy](#) [Last accessed, 30.07.25]

¹² Where a council leases private sector homes for 10 years plus one day they are allowed to account for the costs in their Housing Revenue Account (HRA) instead of their general fund.

large numbers of social rented homes being committed to, they will take time, and accommodation in the PRS is an essential part of the jigsaw to end the crisis in TA in the meantime.

Four broad points were made:

- **Support and incentivise private landlords** to offer good quality homes that people on low incomes can afford; that can allay concerns about the impact of the Renters' Rights Bill, Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law which are reportedly fuelling their exits from the sector; and that can contribute to effective prevention strategies. In one example work with landlords helped to provide a council with longer notice of eviction, enabling them to offer prevention support or at least know that a homelessness application was in the pipeline. This means addressing some of the barriers that landlords have raised such as payment delays and complex administration systems as well as putting in place tenancy support to alleviate reservations about how properties will be maintained.

Civil society organisations and local authorities shared examples of successful, relational work with private landlords to boost quality and availability for homeless households through incentives, support and other ways to remove risk in exchange for quality. Crisis in particular are working nationally to join with landlords providing support to their tenancies, including to prevent eviction.

- **Managing expectations.** There was a need for *"a refreshed conversation about private renting"* that would help manage expectations among households about what type of accommodation they were likely to be offered and how soon; and also address some of the downsides of accepting a PRS tenancy such as being removed from the housing register. Could people be held on the housing register as is already the case in some boroughs or even rewarded? Participants in both civil society and public sector organisations said that it helped if they worked together so that people were receiving the same message from everyone about what they could realistically expect. However, this did not remove the need to ensure people were aware of their rights and received proper needs assessment, also need measures to ensure suitability and that people understand their situations and housing status.
- **Rights and legal advice for tenants** and residents will be important if the PRS is to be a part of the solution. This includes support for households moving into the PRS instead of waiting for an offer of social rented housing as well as in tenancy support. Reliance on the PRS implies a need for legal advice to be available to households as well as measures to report and address racism and discrimination.
- **Dialogue and relationship development between local authorities, housing associations and private landlords** in local, subregional and pan London to collectively work through how to make best use of the housing stock. This will need working through with membership and infrastructure bodies as well as individual institutions and then enshrined in a London-wide as well as subregional and local strategies. This will require political will and leadership as well as clear strategy, and governance.

Looking to the future, there was some caution about the likely impact of the Renters' Reform Bill, Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law – generally feeling it will be positive in the long term and that they're much-needed measures to sort out quality and standards, but they may cause short-term pain. There was some nervousness about landlords leaving the market when procurement is still so tight; and that once the date for the last s.21 eviction is set there would be a rush into an already overloaded homelessness system.

Local authorities need control over the cost, quality and suitability of TA

Currently, many local authorities do not and/or are unable to control the quality and suitability of the TA they provide. Provision is fragmented and much of it sits in the for-profit sector without sufficient regulation, inspection and management.

Options to achieve change put forward included:

- **Councils will ideally own and manage their own TA.** This would make them, as one London borough put it “*Masters of our own destiny*” able to use both their TA and their social housing stock flexibly. Owning their TA wasn’t being put forward as a panacea for quality TA. Even boroughs that do own their TA have struggled in the current crisis.
- Pan London system for inspections in the form of proposals to **extend the remit of Setting the Standard** to include all TA in the private rented sector make sense and appeared to have broad support. This is backed up by wider calls for mandatory inspections¹³.
- There is no coherent **governance of so-called ‘meanwhile housing’ projects** such as modular housing, refurbishment of vacant properties or temporary structures on vacant land. While these kinds of interventions were not unwelcome, participants felt that there needed to be more attention paid to their quality, compliance and also to how they help and possibly hinder progress on a net increase in social rented homes. Participants asked how do we responsibly incorporate these interventions which could lead to someone being more comfortably and safely accommodated today but fails to give them security of tenure or add to the net social rented homes in the long term?

Permitted development was picked out as particularly problematic: there was a lack of clarity because of the different classes of buildings as to which regulations and policies apply, new proposals around regulation had failed to materialise, and civil society groups were reporting “*extreme unsuitability*” in these properties. Overall, it was very easy for temporary or ‘meanwhile’ accommodation to slip through the net in terms of regulations¹⁴.

- **Cooperation between local authorities and housing associations** operating in their area was a hallmark of projects to increase available TA. This was about making best use of the sum total of available housing locally and included action such as jointly identifying empty or vacant properties and joining up around disposals. Successful cooperation meant being willing to look at and what would motivate a housing association to get involved as well as finding ways to manage differences in council and housing associations’ priorities, systems and duties.

¹³ See, for example, UK Parliament (2025) *England’s Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation. First Report of Session 2024–25* which recommended that local authorities should be carrying out mandatory inspections of housing before it is first used as TA, and whenever new residents are placed in the property.

¹⁴ TCPA (2024) [Permitted development, housing and health: a review of national policy and regulations](#) [Last accessed, 30.07.25]

4. Ecosystem leadership and governance to end the crisis

This final Part of the report looks at the leadership and governance that will be required in order to achieve consensus and an end to the crisis. It puts forward the idea of ecosystem leadership and governance as a way to hold the complexity of ending the crisis; and then looks at the specific role of civil society in this. It concludes by considering the responsibility of leaders towards those whose lives and prospects have been affected by their experience of TA.

Ecosystem leadership and governance

Participants agreed that the right leadership and governance is critical to ending the crisis. The range of players involved; the scale and complexity of the crisis; and the tensions surrounding it – these all point to the need for a sophisticated approach to leadership and governance.

A large number of players were discussed operating at national, regional, subregional and local levels; in governance, leadership and management roles; across the public, private and civil society sectors; working on housing, finance and funding as well as health, social care and support.

Figure 1: Four main leadership groups discussed by research participants and the roles they could play



The Figure above describes four main groupings that participants talked about most and what they said about the roles they could play. All the parties needed to be open to new ways of working with one another, and, in particular to think through relationships with **private investors, developers and**

landlords as well as business employers. Some participants said that **systems design and (adaptive) systems management** capability were also critical for operationalising change.

One way to think about this multi-dimensional picture of players, complexity and tensions is through the lens of ecosystem leadership and ecosystem governance. In brief, this requires that leaders in different parts of the system recognise the need for an ecosystem response to ending the crisis *and* understand that they can play a role in that response alongside others¹⁵. It encourages leaders to focus on connecting up different parts of the system and to look beyond their team or organisation and therefore requires them to pay attention to one another's aims, priorities, constraints etc. The London Housing Panel is one example of how this can work in practice – see box below.

Example of cross sector collaboration between civil society and public bodies

The [London Housing Panel](#) plays the role of critical friend to the Mayor and GLA. As such the Panel operates in a nuanced 'inside-outsider' space, and takes a **collaborative, consensus-building approach to changemaking**. Its authority is grounded in its diverse membership, which brings lived experience and frontline expertise, as well as the founding support of the GLA and TfL. The members and chair have the chance to speak directly to key politicians and policymakers, and the LHP plays a **strategic influencing role as well as successfully amplifying individual members' concerns**.

Its work has resulted in **concrete changes**, from better sharing of housing data to improved accessibility standards, and has contributed to a growing consensus that only **social housing provision** can end the TA crisis.

A longer case study document and information about the Panel is available on request.

Civil society can help lead change

There was consensus that civil society has an important and ongoing role to play alongside the public and business sectors in leading change. At the same time, participants in the public sector acknowledged that they didn't always find it easy to keep partnerships with civil society on track when they were struggling themselves with the complexity of the crisis. And civil society participants commented on the continuing rise in the need for litigation as a tool to enforce basic rights already enshrined in law.

Public bodies tended to emphasise the role of civil society in holding them to account and talked about how civil society could aim to speak with one voice about what needs to change and how. They were also increasingly looking to civil society to help them communicate difficult policy decisions such as what kinds of property people could expect to be offered and programmes to move people into private tenancies.

Civil society organisations recognised those roles but also discussed what more they could bring to leadership and governance of the wider ecosystem (see Figure 2 below for the range of roles expressed in the research). They were ideally placed, particularly smaller groups and charities, as 'first responders'¹⁶ to spot the early impact of policy change and feed that back. In order to do this effectively civil society

¹⁵ Jochum, V. and Baker, L. (2024) *The Future Charity Chair: A Research Project*, London: Bayes Business School

¹⁶ Dyson, C., Baker, L. and Rees, J. (2018) *The Value of Small*, London: Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales notes the role of small and medium-sized charities 'often the first to respond to new and emerging needs, particularly those playing out at a 'hyper-local' level that haven't yet come to the attention of public bodies or other charities'.

leaders need a 'a seat at the strategy table' so that they can help bring data to bear on strategy in a timely fashion and be a part of determining how to respond.

Figure 2 shows the range of roles for civil society as expressed in the research

To be part of leadership and governance for change	To shape and contribute to change mechanisms	To help translate policy concepts (e.g. prevention) into practice	To support people in TA using strengths-based approach	Trusted to drive lived experience engagement and support policy transitions
To be a conduit to manage applicants' expectations	To provide live intelligence to guide and monitor policy change	To participate in data collection, monitoring and evaluation	To hold councils to account and give their candid views	To build relationships with local private landlords

In order for civil society to become embedded in leadership and governance of change, they needed to be resourced appropriately (backfilling leadership pay, remuneration for time etc) and to have multiple points for engagement depending on capacity (London, subregional, local) with regular and one-off opportunities.

The future system must be sensitive to inequalities

In the introduction, the report notes the consequences of the crisis for those who have lived through it and how that should not be forgotten. The ecosystem response to the crisis will have to build in the needs and circumstances of people who have been badly affected by their experience of TA. That means being mindful of inequalities in the housing system and of other inequalities that are common among people experiencing homelessness. In particular poverty and racial inequality as well as people affected by domestic abuse.

Implications for Trust for London

Stays in temporary accommodation continue to rise in London and the harm that can cause is well documented. This research was commissioned in order to look at what it will take to end the crisis in London. It makes an assumption that it will take the efforts of many players to achieve change – an ecosystem of leadership and governance – and starts with removing the barriers to change created by a contradictory system of finance that is well past its sell by date. There is much to celebrate in terms of creative and viable housing interventions that can help, many of them robustly evidence-backed. But progress is slow and piecemeal; change in individual boroughs is positive but it can't end the crisis.

We need political will as well as follow-through in the form of policy and guidance shaped with civil society. We have used civil society in a deliberate way to be inclusive of all forms of activity and organising – people, groups and organisations including lived experience of homelessness – that can together help bring about change. The findings point to a range of ways that civil society can help achieve interim and long-term change whilst mindful that this is a public policy and public law matter that must be led by those responsible.

This report concludes by setting out:

- Implications of the research for the Trust's strategic goal to end the crisis
- The role of the Trust and the civil society organisations it supports

Implications of the research for the Trust's strategic goal to end the crisis

From the research findings we have drawn out five main implications that can inform the Trust's next steps with its strategic goal to see an end to the TA crisis for Londoners by 2035, and to see cross-sector consensus on how that happens by 2029. As authors of the research and co-facilitators of the Better TA alliance, we have committed to work on taking forward these implications. When we use 'we' it means the Better TA alliance of civil society organisations and ourselves as its facilitators.

We are noting that delivering social rented homes at scale and as a public good is needed to end the crisis. The alliance supports efforts to achieve this while its own focus is on the following.

1. **Positioning the Better TA alliance.** Our work is London and local. We offer access to an alliance, evidence and insights and capacity to organise those. We position civil society within the ecosystem of leadership and governance that's needed to end the crisis in TA. We see civil society as the first responders to the early impact of changes in borough policy and practice.
2. **Building cross-sector partnerships.** We will concentrate on priority points of influence where we can make a difference: e.g. through the London Councils/GLA London Ending Homelessness Accelerator Programme (EHAP), London Housing Panel, London Housing Directors, Cabinet leads and a number of larger civil society organisations.
3. **Tracking, documenting and reporting evidence systematically.** We will monitor the unintended consequences of out of area placement in general and with respect to racism and other forms of discrimination. We may also monitor other borough policy and practice based on the interests of the alliance or requests from our public sector colleagues.
4. **Advocating for boroughs to act collectively.** Civil society can push boroughs to join up with other boroughs where acting collectively will enable them to take back control of TA and its quality. This could cover priorities of the London Ending Homelessness Accelerator Programme around reviving the Inter Borough Accommodation Agreement (IBAA), and expanding Setting the Standard, as well as wider lobbying on funding/finance.
5. **Pushing for an affordable, well-managed private rented sector.** The private rented sector is an important part of a functioning housing system and we see a role for civil society in mapping out

the options for achieving that. Landlords must be incentivised to offer a quality product that tenants can afford. Tenants need to know their rights. And measures should be in place that prevent rent arrears and evictions.

The role of the Trust and the civil society organisations it supports

Achieving the changes discussed in this report requires sustained collaboration, strategic leadership and governance, data-driven policymaking, and investment in housing supply and support services. The power and responsibility for delivering them sits in multiple places:

- Some things are beyond the power of either civil society organisations or the public sector to change but what they can do is join forces and **push government for change together**;
- Some things are within the power of **civil society organisations' allies** in the public sector so it is possible to **strengthen relationships** with them and campaign for change; and
- There are some things that **civil society organisations** could do themselves and then the role of funders like the Trust could be to help equip them to do them.

This report looks in particular at how and where civil society organisations can contribute to the change that needs to happen. They point to their ability to

- **Voice:** Bring live intelligence about the impact, unintended consequences and interaction of new policies into spaces where TA strategy is being developed and implemented. For example, around the Decent Homes Standard, Awaab's Law and Renters' Rights Bill.
- **Campaign:** Come together and campaign collectively for changes that require regional or central government intervention. For example, TA Subsidy, LHA rate, social rented homes delivery.
- **Convene:** Working with Trust for London's role as a convenor to help build collective action by London stakeholders. For example, to push for a private rented sector strategy.
- **Civil society:** Building civil society leadership skills and capacity to work with government and public sector at all levels; including frontline practice. For example, around cultural competencies.

In practice, that requires a combination of support for civil society organisations (see Figure 3 below) together with essential work of the Trust (and its agents) in facilitating collaboration within and between sectors; commissioning research; and staying tuned into the wider housing policy and practice landscape.

Figure 3: Types of civil society activity that need supporting

Leadership capacity: Backfill posts (and secondments?) to be able to work at regional and subregional levels (because achieving change means working beyond borough).	Evidence: Mobilising research, evidence and live intelligence to be a part of shaping policy, to hold to account and monitor the impact of policy change, and drive change.	Legal advice, representation and outreach: There will continue to be a strong need for all three of legal advice, representation and outreach, particularly while so much policy change is also taking place.	Campaigning: Long-term change will take time, core campaigning and advocacy work will remain critical, and familiar challenges like handling insider/outsider politics will continue.	Leadership skills: There will continue to be a need for support with leadership skills and development if we want civil society including people who have experienced homelessness to a part of driving change.
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Closing remarks

This report has brought together an analysis of what needs to change, how that change needs to happen and five key implications for what comes next. It was written at a point in time when future policy was uncertain and therefore stops short of making policy recommendations that may be superseded.

Our findings are encouraging in the sense that there is a great deal of consensus already; the findings are challenging because it's collective action at every level that's needed. Our focus will be on change that improves the lives of people affected by homelessness and temporary accommodation. That means working simultaneously to:

- Address today's problems: finding better alternatives to poor quality TA; moving those in it now, out of homelessness and into settled homes
- Reduce homelessness: stemming the need for emergency interventions
- Manage tomorrow's TA so that it remains short, safe and healthy.

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Appendix A: Research questions

The research addressed the following questions:

1. What does ending the TA crisis in London look like from different perspectives, what are the routes to getting there that have been identified and how might they work in practice?
2. Given this range of perspectives, what could a shared analysis and therefore a shared commitment, look like. What are routes to getting there and how might that work in practice?
3. If we jump ahead to 2035 and look back, what might be the key milestones we'd hope to see in order to achieve this shared commitment for change?
4. Where is change already being achieved in terms of people's experiences of TA, practice and policy? And what does that tell us about prospects for future change?
5. Thinking about different policy areas within housing and planning that might help achieve change, what policy areas would have the most impactful change within the policy space?
6. What is the strategic role of voice and what are the limits to what voice and collaboration between communities and public policy can achieve in this space?
7. Where does racism and discrimination manifest in relation to TA experiences, practice, policy? And what does that tell us about how to go about challenging it?