More Than A Number

Families' experiences of temporary accommodation, health and wellbeing in North Lanarkshire



Brenda Lochrie, Chloe MacDonald, Jane McKay, and Demi Avery

October 2026

Contents

About our project 1
Peer research process and timeline 1
- What is peer research? 1
- Who we are and how we worked together 2
- Peer research programme timeline 2

Our research and participants 5
- Why temporary accomodation? 5

Research aim and questions 5
- Research questions 5

Research methods 6
Data analysis 6
Our participants 7
- Workshop participants 7
- Interview participants 8
- Research limitations and notes 8

Key messages from research 9
Changes we want to see 18
What's next for our project? 18
- Planned events and activities 18

Contact 19
Information, advice and support 19
- Housing 19
- Families and children 19
- Mental health and wellbeing 20
- Benefits and money 20
- Other organisations/support 20

The views, opinions, and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position, policies, or views of the affiliated institution, organisation, funder, or any associated parties. Any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

About our project

We are Brenda, Chloe, Jane, and Demi, four mums with experience of living in temporary accommodation (TA) with young children in North Lanarkshire. Between September 2025 and September 2026, we worked with the Poverty Alliance and One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) to plan and carry out peer research with other parents in North Lanarkshire who had similarly experienced TA. The research was part of a broader project on health inequalities, funded by the Health Foundation and led by the Scottish Health Equity Research Unit (SHERU) at the University of Strathclyde.

Through our research, we wanted to understand what it's like for different kinds of families in TA and how living in TA affects family health and wellbeing. We also wanted to know parents' views on what needs to change to improve the health and wellbeing of families in TA. We spoke with parents in a workshop and interviews between April and May 2026. In this report we present our key findings.

We have called this report More Than a Number because families living in TA are not just statistics. Behind every number is a real family, story, and set of lives affected by housing insecurity and in many cases health and wellbeing issues. Through this research we wanted to give families in TA a voice and contribute to positive change in this area.

We would like to thank the parents who shared their experiences with us, as well as the OPFS team for supporting the project, and all those who shared feedback and comments to strengthen the work and report.

Peer research process and timeline

What is peer research?

'Peer research', sometimes called 'community research', recognises the expertise of those closest to the 'problem' or 'issue'. Peer researchers bring a valuable perspective through their lived experience, and, in peer research projects, peer researchers lead on designing and carrying out all aspects of the research, including choosing the research questions and methods and analysing data.

Being a peer researcher can offer community members an opportunity to:

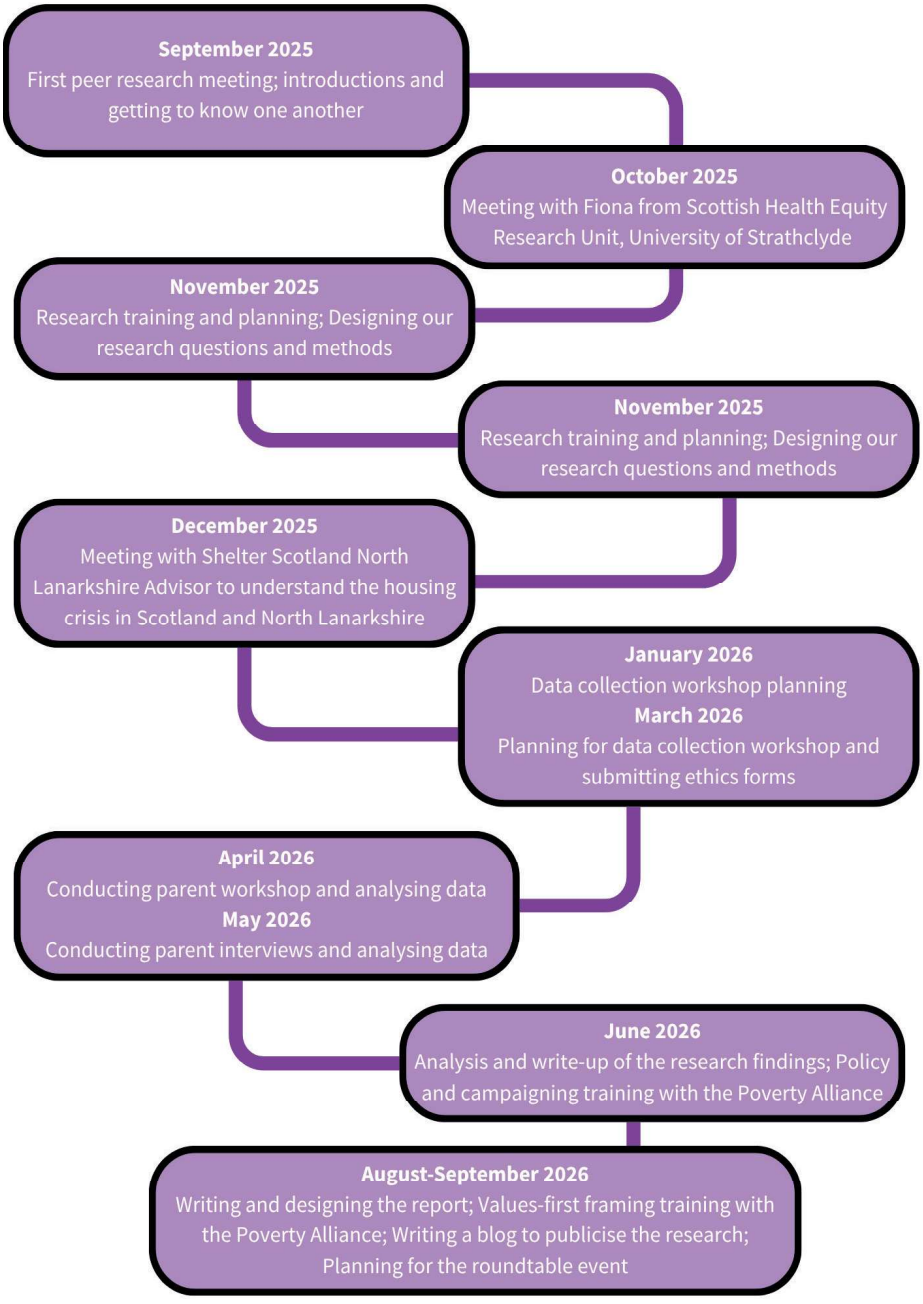
- Increase their knowledge of a topic, problem or issue
- Contribute to finding solutions to problems or issues affecting their

communities
- Meet new people, gain new skills and experiences, and grow in confidence
- Prepare for other opportunities, including voluntary and employment roles

Who we are and how we have worked together

We (the peer researchers) are mums with experience of living in TA with young children. Between us, we have also experienced Women's Aid refuge TA, long-term health conditions, and caring for children with additional needs. The timeline below shows what the peer research programme has involved and what we have achieved as a group since September 2025.

Peer research programme timeline



Although we had met each other and the OPFS team before, through OPFS activities and programmes, we started working together with Margaret (McTaggart) from OPFS and Lauren (Wilks) from the Poverty Alliance when we started the peer research programme in September 2025.

We first spent time getting to know one another and discussing our own experiences with housing and health, and the housing and health related issues other families in our communities were experiencing. We used modelling clay to express our ideas and experiences, and we realised we (peer researchers) had all experienced living in TA with our children.

Images 1 and 2: Modelling clay notes from a peer researcher discussion about experiences of living in temporary housing and how this affects family health and wellbeing



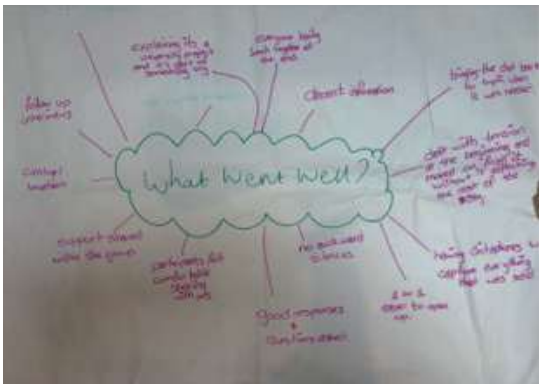


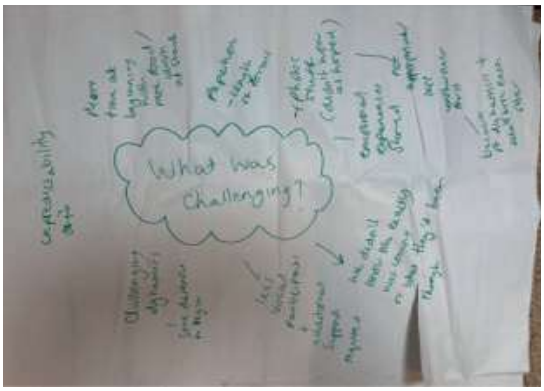
In subsequent sessions, we continued to reflect on our experiences while also undertaking training with Lauren (on research methods and research ethics) and planning and carrying out our research. At each session, we ate lunch together and shared stories and experiences to get to know one another better and build trust.

We also had the opportunity to engage with others outside the group, including Alex Eadie, a Shelter Advisor who supports families with housing issues in North Lanarkshire, and Fiona McHardy from SHERU at the University of Strathclyde. Fiona spoke about the wider SHERU project and housing and health policies and issues in Scotland.

We then organised and carried out the data collection workshop and interviews and, afterwards, reflected on what had gone well and what we had found challenging.

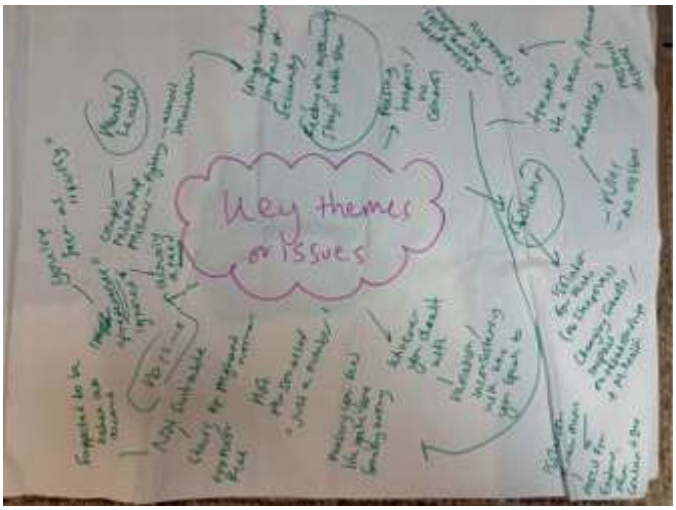
Images 3 and 4: Flip chart notes from a peer researcher discussion about the data collection workshop and interviews





We analysed the data we had collected as a group, pulling out key themes and quotes, as well as identifying changes that could help to make things better for families in TA. Lauren took away notes and wrote up the report, sharing drafts with the group to edit and develop.

Image 5: Flip chart notes from a peer researcher analysis session



Towards the end of the project, we undertook policy influencing training with Ralph Hartley from the Poverty Alliance, which helped inform who we wanted to share the research with and how we wanted to do this.

Being a peer researcher and carrying out this research has given us a voice with those that make decisions. It's been eye-opening to see how bad things are and it's made us hungry do more. On a personal level, it's given us the chance to get out of our comfort zone and do something for ourselves, away from home and our kids.

Our research and participants

Why temporary accomodation?

Temporary accommodation (TA) should be safe and suitable for everyone, including families with young children, and it should also be temporary. But we know that, across Scotland, many households, including some families with young children, are being housed in unsuitable spaces such as hotels/B&Bs, and that stays in TA are also often too long.[1]

North Lanarkshire has a lower number of households living in TA, compared to Edinburgh and Glasgow, [2] and the average length of stay is also shorter in North Lanarkshire [3]. But the experience is still often extremely difficult for families, with long-lasting impacts on health and wellbeing.

As peer researchers, we know first-hand how it feels to be in TA with young kids, and the difficulties and health and wellbeing issues families in TA can face. We also know the types of changes that could help improve the health and wellbeing of families in TA and how urgently these changed are needed.

Research aim and questions

We wanted to explore families' experiences of temporary accommodation (TA), and the health and wellbeing impacts of living in TA for families in North Lanarkshire. Our aim was to focus on parents who had lived in TA with young children (under five) in the last five years (since 2021). We also wanted to understand parents' views on the changes needed to help improve the health and wellbeing of families in TA.

Research questions

1. How does living in TA affect the health and wellbeing of families with young children?
2. What changes could help to improve the health and wellbeing of these families?

---

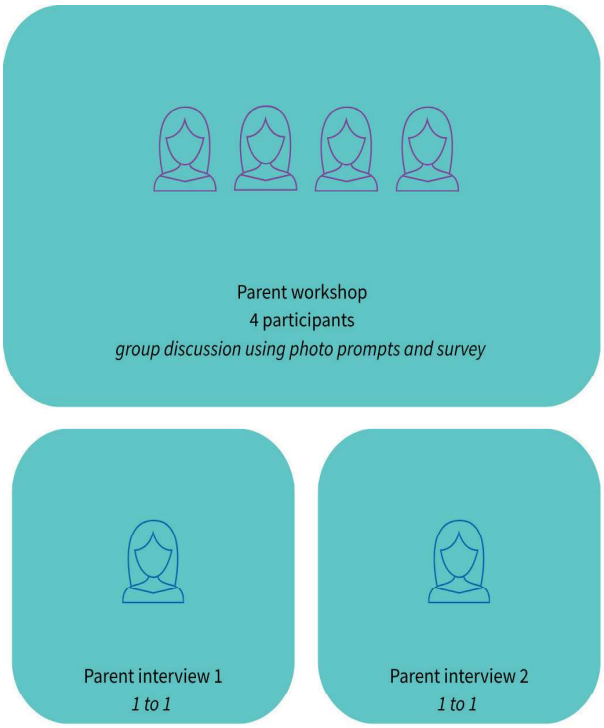
1 The average length of stay for a household in Scotland is 237 days. Scottish Government, 2026: Homelessness in Scotland: 2025-26 - gov.scot. See also: Svirydzenka, N., M. Lakhanpaul & J. Williams, 2025. In their own words: Children's experiences in TA. Shelter Scotland, De Montfort University, and University College London. March: Shelter Scotland – In Their Own Words, Children's Experiences in TA.

2 Scottish Government, 2026 Homelessness in Scotland: 2025-26 - gov.scot.

3 Ibid.

Research methods

We spoke with six parents (mums) across one participatory group workshop and two one-to-one interviews between April and May 2026.



We also shared a short confidential survey with workshop participants to understand more about them and their families, and we used photographs to engage participants in discussion. One of these photographs, and some of our own reflections and experiences, have been included in the report.

Participants were recruited through OPFS and peer researcher networks. We shared flyers inviting parents with current or recent experience of living in TA with young children to take part in a group workshop or one-to-one interview.

The workshop was organised at a local church, with an on-site creche so that parents could bring children along. Snacks and lunch were also provided. We wanted the workshop to feel relaxed and supportive so that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

The two interviews were held at the OPFS offices in Motherwell. This was a familiar, comfortable space for these participants. All participants received thank you vouchers and travel expenses and interview participants were also offered a contribution towards care costs. After the workshop and interviews, signposting information (with free national helplines and information about advice and support services) was also shared with participants.

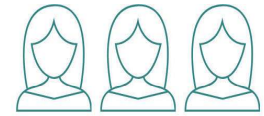
Data Analysis

As noted above, we analysed data as a group, pulling out key themes and quotes, as well as identifying changes that could help to make things better for families in TA. Lauren took away notes and wrote up the report, sharing drafts with the group to edit and develop.

Our participants

Workshop participants

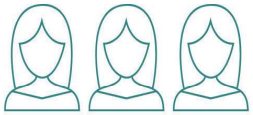
Four women (mums) took part in the group workshop. Their survey forms were not completed fully but from the responses received we were able to understand the following about the group:



18-24



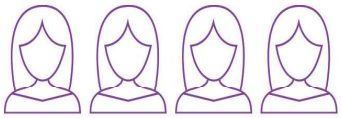
35-44



Motherwell & Wishaw



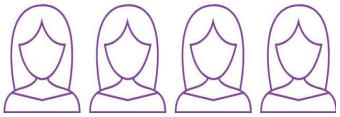
Bellshill & surrounding villages



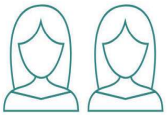
Has a disability/long-term health condition



Child/other adult in the household has a disability/long-term health condition



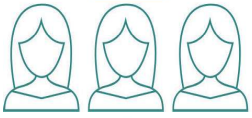
White ethnicity



Council social housing



Moved to TA in last few weeks



Reported they had been in TA in 2025 and 2026 (one had left a week earlier, one still living in TA with three kids)



Living in council social housing, was pregnant with her first child and had moved out of Women's Aid TA a week earlier

Interview participants

Noor (*pseudonym*)	Danielle (*pseudonym*)
Mother of one	Mother of two
Left the family home in South Lanarkshire after experiencing domestic violence; sought TA with her young son in South Lanarkshire	Returned to Scotland from England with her children after her marriage ended
Experienced delays accessing TA and pressure to accept accommodation she considered unsafe; spent a night in her car and several others in different hotels before moving into Women's Aid TA	Experienced confusing, inconsistent information when applying for TA in North Lanarkshire from England; experienced uncertainty around TA arrangements when she and her two children moved back to Scotland
Moved from Women's Aid TA into a permanent tenancy in North Lanarkshire	Secured a three-bedroom house that met her family's needs and was able to keep it as her permanent home

Research limitations and notes

The findings in this report reflect the experiences of a small group of families in North Lanarkshire. They are intended to highlight issues and priorities rather than represent all families in TA across the local authority or Scotland more broadly. One of the interview participants, Noor (pseudonym), also shared her experience of being in TA in South Lanarkshire, not North Lanarkshire, disclosing this detail in the interview (it is possible that a language barrier prevented us from being able to understand this earlier). We did not feel it was appropriate to ask Noor to stop sharing her experience, and we have also decided to include her account in the report because it offers important insights, with learning for other parts of Scotland, including North Lanarkshire. In this report, we use participants' real words, as they were spoken, but we have changed all participant names and some participant details to protect their identities.

Key messages from the research

Difficulties accessing temporary accommodation (TA) make what is an already stressful and overwhelming experience for parents even harder.



Parents' experiences with housing officers are inconsistent, with parents sometimes experiencing empathy and support and other times feeling unsupported and disrespected.



More compassion is needed around pets, storage, and the rules given to families in TA.



TA is frequently unsafe or unsuitable for families with young children.



Moving into in TA and to new areas causes significant upheaval, involving new logistical challenges and costs, while also contributing to isolation.



Moving into and living in TA negatively impacts parents' and children's mental health and wellbeing, with long-lasting consequences.



Women's Aid TA is viewed positively but support can be improved for parents and families moving from refuges, as well as other types of TA, into permanent accommodation.



Difficulties accessing TA make what is an already stressful and overwhelming experience for parents even harder



The parents we spoke to explained that becoming homeless and moving into TA – often following the end of a relationship or domestic abuse – was one of the most difficult, overwhelming, and isolating things they had ever experienced.



Photo (left) chosen by participant during workshop.

"He looks lost. He doesn't know what to do […] I think that's how most people feel when they're put in that situation. It's very overwhelming. Trying to get things together, you're trying to make sure you don't forget essential things, like, yeah, it makes you feel very isolated and alone in that moment, I think, and helpless"

– Sarah, workshop participant

Barriers to accessing TA made this experience yet more difficult, resulting in heightened levels of stress and worry. Danielle, who had been living in England when her marriage ended, described months of phone calls with different North Lanarkshire Council housing officers who all told her different things.

She was told by one housing officer that she did not meet the criteria for TA, since she had family in North Lanarkshire that she could stay with, and, later, when she and her two children travelled back to Scotland, believing TA or permanent accommodation would be waiting for them, she was asked by a different housing officer if she had sorted her TA herself.

"One lady told me, I promise you, will have TA or a permanent offer by the time you get here. I was like, okay, that's fine, I know I can travel, I can get on the plane, I can do that. Stayed with my sister for a couple of days, and then I got up there and phoned the council because nobody had phoned me, and the lady says, I never forget, she says to me, right, so have you sorted your TA then? I went, what do you mean? Like, how am I supposed to sort TA? I don't even know where to start with that"

– Danielle, interview participant

Danielle was subsequently offered TA properties that were far from her family and support system, which she said 'was kind of the whole point of moving from England', and two flats from the general list in 'really, really bad areas', but, luckily, the 'perfect' temporary home, on the same street as her sister, then became available. Danielle and her children moved in, and she later

successfully campaigned to keep the house permanently. She reflected on how lucky she had been that this house had become available, but also how she had 'made it happen', and that it had been a 'long fight' to get where she was, with a permanent home that met her family's needs.

Noor described a very difficult and traumatic experience accessing TA in South Lanarkshire, involving spending time at a police station, sleeping in her car and multiple hotel stays with her young son, before entering a Women's Aid refuge. She described how she was taken to the police station after her husband had become violent during an argument, and how she was then taken to a flat which was 'very dirty, half furnished' with a broken door. She was also pressured by a Council housing officer to accept a different property in an area she felt unsafe and 'scared'. It was not clear in her account why she had not been able to enter a refuge immediately, given the safety concerns she experienced.

When Noor chose to sleep for a night with her son in her car, which she considered to be safer than accepting the flat offered to her by the Council, a housing officer told her this was placing the child at risk and indicated that they would inform social work. The only kindness she was shown during this time was by a police officer whom she described as Asian and who brought her food and offered for her and her son to wait in the police station until a hotel room could be arranged.

Noor reflected how the process of accessing TA had been incredibly difficult, but how she had coped by remaining focused on staying strong for her son:

"When I am like in these all situations, I'm stressed, mentally disturbed, but when I see my son, so definitely I need to strong or I just forgot my stress or everything. I just need to focus on my son here"

– Noor, interview participant

Parents' experiences with housing officers are inconsistent, with parents sometimes experiencing empathy and support and other times feeling unsupported and disrespected



Inconsistency of support from housing officers was a key issue identified by parents in the research. Danielle and Sarah both shared positive experiences of engaging with housing officers. Danielle said that after she returned to Scotland and spoke with the housing officer noted above, she spoke with another who was 'brilliant', 'really, really nice, really friendly' and who apologised for what had happened. Sarah, a mother of three who had

who apologised for what had happened. Sarah, a mother of three who had recently moved into TA, described how support from one Council homeless officer had enabled her to cope the first night after she and her children had left the family home: 'If it hadn't been for her being so kind and compassionate that night, I think I'd have genuinely had a breakdown' (Sarah, workshop participant).

Both women had, however, experienced a lack of empathy and support from different housing officers at different times, with these more negative interactions leaving them feeling unsupported and disrespected.

Danielle recalled the 'arrogant' tone of the housing officer who had asked her, after she and her children had moved back to Scotland, if she had arranged her own TA. She said she spoke to her as if she 'was expecting something for nothing' – 'like as if I was asking for something completely ridiculous.'

Sarah spoke about feeling she was 'just a number' in some of the more negative phone calls and interactions she had had with housing officers:

"You're just turned into a number, which is just another homeless number to them, and I get that they've obviously got hundreds of people to do with, but it doesn't feel personalised. It's not personal to each person in the slightest"

– Sarah, workshop participant

Sarah and others, including Tracy – a workshop participant – agreed that what was missing in many interactions was awareness or better yet, lived experience of homelessness.

"It's easy to sit there and look down on other people when you're on 80 grand a year and you've got a mortgage and you've got two cars [...]. Like, you don't have to put yourself in my shoes, whereas if you were to go to the council and you were to actually have a worker that has been homeless, you know, has been through, yeah, you find that, it's dealt with like that [clicks fingers]"

– Tracy, workshop participant

Consistency of support was also highlighted, with Sarah noting that the compassionate and kind housing officer she had met was only there the first night and she had not 'seen or heard from her since.'

More compassion is needed around pets, storage and the rules given to families in TA



In terms of the broader system, participants wanted to see more compassion around pets, storage, and the rules families are given when moving into TA. They described how it had been 'heartbreaking' to have to give up much-loved family pets, especially after already suffering so much loss, with children with additional needs finding this especially difficult to process.

"My daughter, broke her heart. My daughter and my son are both going through, and being diagnosed, they think my daughter's ADHD. My daughter, broke her heart… sorry [become upset], she's sitting in her room hugging her cat's rocking, like, mum, we can't leave, mum, we can't […] Yeah, and you can't explain to them why they don't understand, you know what I mean?"

– Sarah, workshop participant

Parents also criticised the basis of the no-pets rule, which they understood to be about hygiene and allergies, believing that proper deep cleaning of properties between occupants would be a better solution to these concerns.

In terms of storage, Danielle explained that despite numerous phone calls to North Lanarkshire Council, she received no information regarding the storage of her belongings until a week before she moved back to Scotland, when she had thought to ask about this, and after she had arranged and paid for storage privately. Others noted that there are strict rules around what can be stored by the Council, while peer researchers mentioned that the Council does not always take proper care of people's belongings, which is, again, interpreted as a lack of respect and care for families.

Additionally, participants discussed their frustrations with the list of rules they were given when entering TA, explaining how these made them feel they were being punished.

They questioned the rule around having no overnight guests unless given permission from the Council, with Sarah explaining how she felt her kids could not have friends sleep over, and Tracy recounting how, when her mum came to visit from England, she either had to hide her or tell her she couldn't stay with her. For both women, this rule represented a lack of understanding about, and compassion for the isolation they and others in TA were experiencing:

"My son, yeah, goes without families, do you know what I mean? It's how do you explain this to my mum when she's coming all the way from England, oh, sorry, you're going to go over, you have to go back home because the council won't let you stay in the spare bedroom that I've got, do you know what I mean, for two nights"

– Tracy, workshop participant

The rule about needing to stay in the property at all times and telling the Accommodation Officer if they want to take stay elsewhere overnight, was also criticised, with parents explaining how this prevented them from taking trips with their kids. They also shared that they worried about their young kids making noise, because of the rule about not causing a nuisance or distress to others/neighbours: 'it puts a lot of pressure on you as a person, knowing that all it takes is for a neighbour to phone and make a complaint' (Sarah, workshop participant).

Participants thought that, instead of giving families a list of rules, they should be provided with a welcome pack with a more supportive tone and message of support, as well as helpful information about support services and helplines.

TA is frequently unsafe or unsuitable for families with young children



At the start of project, we (peer researchers) spoke about a range of problems and health issues associated with unsafe or unsuitable TA, including children's asthma worsening and requiring hospitalisation due to high levels of mould and new mothers being housed in top-floor 'scatterflats' (commonly-used term for TA) where they feel isolated and scared, and where they have to lug prams up multiple flights of stairs

Participants too described properties that were unsafe or unsuitable, including, again, high-rise 'scatterflats' and buildings/areas where they felt unsafe due to drug use and anti-social behaviour, including, as one participant described, a neighbour 'chasing people with knives'.

Location A, where Sarah and her children, as well as one peer researcher, had been taken, was identified as a place families with young children should not be housed.

"You can imagine the absolute panic in my face. I've been picked up from Croy and dropped off [at Location A] and told me we'll deal with you here. I'm freaking out. I'm going, you can't put me somewhere like this. My kids, like, I know this family's that's been put in here before. You can't put me in here with three kids on my own.

It's high-rise flats. Basically, it's secure. The staff live in 24/7, but it's the kind of place grown men get put"

– Sarah, workshop participant

Participants also spoke about dirty flats and flats with broken and faulty appliances, as well as their worries about keeping young children safe and warm in these properties. Sarah explained how she and her children had had to spend their first night in TA in a property with 'no gas' and 'no heating' as the boiler was broken. They had had to sleep with their jackets on to stay warm. The flat they were in at the time of the workshop was in a similarly poor state when they moved in. Sarah had had to 'hoover and scrub' the sofa and the carpet was covered in pet hair. The toaster also didn't work and every time she put the kettle on, the electricity went off.

Moving into in TA and to new areas causes significant upheaval, involving new logistical challenges and costs, while also contributing to isolation



For participants, the move into TA not only meant moving to a new, temporary home or several different homes, often in different areas, it also disrupted and caused issues for their wider lives, involving new logistical challenges and costs, while also contributing to isolation.

Noor described driving 25 minutes each way to drop her son off at nursery while living in the Women's Aid refuge, and being thankful for having a car so she could do this; while Sarah, who was living in TA at the time of the workshop, was paying for taxis so her children could keep attending the same school. Neither woman knew how long she'd be in TA for, or where they'd end up, and both were focused on minimising the disruption to their children's lives as much as possible.

Sarah had also paid £100 for a new Wi-Fi connection to be set up in her TA property. Her younger kids had only been able to take a handful of toys with them into TA, and having Wi-Fi installed meant they could watch their favourite TV shows and play games. Her eldest daughter, who had been experiencing anxiety and had been sent home from school several days in a row, also needed Wi-Fi for speaking with her friends and her dad, as well as for homework.

Sarah argued that having Wi-Fi set up and ready to use would make a huge difference to families in TA, particularly given the few possessions they were likely to have with them and the isolation they were likely to be experiencing. She also saw this as something that should be included in the Council's 'duty of care' to families.

"I understand they've got a duty of care to make sure you're in the house and you're safe. But that shouldn't be where it ends. It shouldn't just be like, there you go, because [...] the council didn't take us to our house, nothing. I got given a set of keys at Airth Court, put in a taxi with my three kids and on you go"

– Sarah, workshop participant

Parents said that work was the 'last thing' they were thinking of when living in TA, with Danielle and others explaining how they had been in 'survival mode', focused on their children and managing the day-to-day fall-out of moving into TA. Sarah also explained how she'd had to give up a job she 'loved' as a weekend hotel housekeeper when she had moved into TA, as her eldest daughter no longer felt safe watching the younger children by herself (they had moved into TA because of a violent incident with a neighbour). She also said that finding a weekend childminder had 'proven impossible'.

Moving into and living in TA negatively impacts parents' and children's mental health and wellbeing, with long-lasting consequences



The insecurity and day-to-day reality of living in TA, as well as the often-traumatic circumstances leading up to families moving into TA, combined with barriers to accessing it and a lack of compassion from some housing officers and in the system more generally, can have a deep and lasting impact on families' mental health and wellbeing.

For parents, their main, immediate concern when living in TA was, understandably, their children's safety, health, and wellbeing. Parents described how children had been severely impacted by the move into TA, as well as how they had tried to support their children during this time.

As mentioned, Sarah's eldest daughter was still recovering from the incident that had led to their family entering TA, and she was scared to be at home without her mum. She had been sent home from school several days in a row due to her anxiety and Sarah was torn about whether to keep sending her, even though she was 'just getting into third year'. Sarah's younger two children were, as noted, in the process of being diagnosed with additional needs, and had taken the move, and having to give up much-loved pets, very hard.

For Danielle's two children, the move back to Scotland and into TA had been 'very different' to the moves they had experienced previously. Before, they'd moved 'as a family to another very certain situation', with secure housing and schools already organised. The move back to Scotland and into TA was uncertain and 'very sad', having followed their dad's sudden decision to leave. The children had had to adapt to new schools in a new country, which had entailed a certain amount of 'culture shock', and the general uncertainty of

waiting for TA and then a permanent home, had been 'hard for them'.

Participants' accounts also highlighted the impact living in TA had had on them, as parents and people. Accessing and moving into TA was, as noted already, 'overwhelming' for parents, with barriers, including inconsistent information from housing officers, making this even harder. Living in TA also affected their mental health and wellbeing.

Tracy, who had been in TA in England and Scotland, said that living in TA had been 'rough' for her and her partner, affecting both of their mental health. They had often argued in front of their infant son and nearly split up. Her partner had also been prescribed medication.

Danielle had felt like 'superwoman' when living in TA. She had been 'in fight mode', determined to find a safe and secure home for her family, but after her TA property became her permanent home and Christmas had passed, her mental health 'took a massive dive' and she felt awful. It also took her a long time to recover.

"It was as if like living on adrenaline for like a year and a half completely. I've been in fight mode for a year and a half and then all of a sudden after we'd got the house and Christmas was over and everything, it's like everything just felt flat. I was like, oh my God, just exhausted and it takes a while to get build back up"

– Danielle, interview participant

For Tracy, too, there were long-lasting impacts, in her case of feelings of insecurity and fear.

"Even when we got the keys to our own property, like in our own head, because we'd been put through all this shit, like being bounced from place to place, even in our head, we even now don't think that we're going to be there for the rest of our lives [...] I feel like, you know, in a year, Council's going to take it off me, or, I've still got stuff in boxes because I feel like I need to be ready for when I've got to move again. Do you know what I mean? And I feel like that's not fair on, you know, your kids, because at the end of the day, I want my boy to grow up and feel certain and feel like he's at home"

– Tracy, workshop participant

Women's Aid TA is viewed positively but support can be improved for parents and families moving from refuges, as well as other types of TA, into permanent accommodation



Two participants who had experienced Women's Aid TA spoke positively about this. Noor described her Women's Aid flat as 'nicely furnished' and

'comfortable', and how she and her son had missed this flat after they had moved out and into their own, permanent social housing flat.

Rachel, who was pregnant with her first child and had left her Women's Aid refuge a week prior to the workshop, recounted how living in the refuge had helped her to get the support she needed after fleeing domestic abuse. It was not clear what forms of support she had meant, but other participants spoke about the importance of receiving support with navigating social security, bills, and their new roles as single mums after moving into TA.

While these accounts of Women's Aid TA were encouraging, some areas for improvement were identified. Rachel explained that it had taken weeks for her permanent flat to be ready, with repairs needing to be carried out and carpets fitted, and so she had been heavily pregnant when she moved in. Before this, she was also offered a top-floor flat, which was, for reasons noted earlier, unsuitable for a soon-to-be/new mother.

Rachel also described struggling to carry heavy boxes and bags the day she moved out of the refuge, heavily pregnant, with her mum and dad not being allowed inside to help; and she noted that the support she had been receiving from Women's Aid would soon end now that she was no longer in the Women's Aid 'system'.

Noor, too, faced challenges after leaving her refuge, describing how her new, permanent flat was only half-furnished, with no washing machine and no curtains, and that only some rooms had proper flooring/carpets. She also explained how she needed support with paying bills and managing her son's expenses.

We know from our own and other families' experiences that these challenges relating to half-furnished Council properties and managing bills/money as new single mothers do not affect those moving out of refuges only, but also parents/families moving out of TA more generally. They highlight the need for ongoing access to support for families leaving TA and suitable social housing that meets families' needs.

Changes we want to see

- Families are provided with a person-centred service based on dignity and respect, and improve quality and consistency of support for families in TA through trauma-informed and homelessness training for housing officers
- Involved agencies communicate and cooperate fully to ensure families can access safe and appropriate TA quickly
- Families are allocated safe and suitable TA that meets their needs
- Current policies and procedures relating to pets and storage are reviewed to ensure a more compassionate approach to supporting families in TA
- Families in TA receive a welcome pack with a supportive tone and message of support, as well as information about support services and helplines
- Wi-Fi is installed and ready to use in all TA properties as standard
- Opportunities are increased for families to keep TA properties as their permanent homes where these properties meet their needs
- Parents and families have ongoing access to support when leaving TA, including refuges and more general forms of TA

What's next for our project?

Planned events and activities

It's important to us that this research reaches those who have the power to help improve things for families in TA.

We are planning to share our research and recommendations in a roundtable event bringing together representatives from North Lanarkshire Council, Motherwell and District Women's Aid, OPFS, and SHERU at the University of Strathclyde.

We welcome suggestions for other people or groups that we should speak to or other actions we could take to share the research.

Contact

sheru@strath.ac.uk

Information, advice and support

Housing



North Lanarkshire Council Homeless Support
If you are worried about your housing situation or would like more information, you can call your local housing office. To get help outside normal hours, Freephone 0800 953 2424.

Emergency Housing Help from the Council (other areas)
You can contact the council at any time of day or night. They have a legal duty to help you. Find your council's homeless team. Check out Shelter Scotland's advice if the council refuses to help you.

Motherwell & District Women's Aid
01698 321 000. Specialist support for those in a harmful situation or concerned about someone else. Mon to Thurs 8.30am to 4.30pm and Fri 8.30am to 1pm. You can also email: Email: info@mdwa.org.uk

Shelter Housing Emergency Helpline
0808 800 4444 (9am – 5pm, Mon to Fri. Closed bank hols. Calls are free from UK landlines and most mobile networks). Helpline if you are homeless, are worried about losing your home in the next two months or are at risk of harm or abuse in your home. Online housing advice: https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice; Online chat service: online chat service.

Families and children



One Parent Families Scotland Lone Parent Helpline
0808 801 0323 (9.30am – 4pm, Mon to Fri). Confidential service for any single parent needing information or advice. Lone Parent online chat service: Lone Parent Helpline - One Parent Families Scotland (opfs.org.uk)

Children 1st ParentLine Scotland
0800 028 2233 (9am – 9pm, Mon to Fri, 9am – 12 noon, weekends). For anyone caring for or concerned about a child. Start a webchat or browse website: www.children1st.org.uk/parentline.

Mental health and wellbeing



If you're having mental or emotional health problems outside your doctor's regular hours, you can: call NHS24 on 111 or go to the NHS 24 website at https://www.nhs24.scot/

Breathing Space
0800 83 85 87 (24 hours at weekends, from 6pm Fri and 6pm – 2am, Mon to Thurs). Helpline for anyone feeling down, depressed, worried or anxious.

Samaritans
116 123 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Helpline offering emotional support, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

Benefits and money



Citizens Advice Scotland Helpline
0800 028 1456 (8am – 6pm, weekdays). Helpline offering advice around employment, housing, debt, benefits and consumer issues. Web chat: https://www.cas.org.uk/get-advice/money-talk-team

Other organisations/support

AMINA – The Muslim Women's Resource Centre
0808 801 0301 (10am – 4pm, Mon to Fri). Helpline is a listening ear and signposting service for Muslim and BME women across Scotland. It is free from mobiles and landlines and will not appear on your phone bill. All calls are strictly confidential and non-judgemental.

Rape Crisis Scotland
08088 01 03 02; Text: 07537 410 027 (5pm – midnight, every day). Supports people of all genders living in Scotland aged 13+ who have been affected by sexual violence. It doesn't matter what happened or how long ago, and you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to. Email at: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline
0800 027 1234 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Helpline for anyone affected by abuse, including friends or family members supporting someone affected by abuse. There is also a translation service if English is not your first language. Records of calls will not appear on phone bills. Email at: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk



the POVERTY ALLIANCE

WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY



Scottish Health Equity Research Unit

Insights, analysis and action on the socio-economic factors that shape health



University of Strathclyde Glasgow



The Health Foundation



One Parent Families Scotland

changing lives, challenging poverty