

London Assembly Housing Committee - 15 November 2023 Transcript of Agenda Item 6 - Temporary Accommodation in London – Panel 1

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): We now move on to our main item of business, which is a discussion on temporary accommodation (TA) in London. Joining us in the Chamber we have Jamie Thunder, Policy and Public Affairs Officer at Zacchaeus 2000 Trust (Z2K), Maria Morgan, Executive Director of Kineara Community Interest Company, Kwajo Tweneboa, social housing activist, who will join us, and Lucy Holmes, Creating Change Director at Groundswell.

Right. To the questions. To all of you, what is the biggest issue of concern in TA in London, and what have you been seeing and hearing on the ground? Perhaps we will start with Jamie.

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Thank you. It is very difficult to give one issue; they are all rather interlinked. Probably one of the single most common issues that we see is location of property. We see a lot of people being placed out of borough, particularly from central London boroughs, which can be a very long way from where they live, where they work, and where their children are at school. That causes a great deal of disruption and difficulty, particularly for more vulnerable households who might then also struggle to find the same access to healthcare and related support.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. Maria?

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): Hi. I would say the state of the TA that we are seeing, the level of disrepair, and the unsafe surroundings that young children and families are experiencing living in TA. Also, a growing concern is the number of private rented landlords who are taking back their properties. That is a growing issue that is happening and that is having another level of impact on accessible housing within the housing sector.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Just before I move on, when you say private landlords are taking back their properties, do you have a sense of whether they are selling them or renting them at a higher rent?

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): In terms of London Councils who has done a big piece of research on what is going on in TA across boroughs, that is something that is still being looked at and needs more exploring. What we see is that landlords are selling their properties, but that again is a piece of research that needs more investigation into where and what is happening.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. Finally, to you, Lucy.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Thank you. Groundswell as an organisation works primarily with single people rather than families with children, and so we are quite concerned at the increasing numbers of single people living with insufficient support in TA. We are focused very much on people's health and wellbeing. We are seeing increasing complexity of people's health challenges, and significant barriers people face to being able to access appropriate healthcare whilst living in TA. That is linked to two things. Primarily, they are the quality and appropriateness of the accommodation, and they are its temporary nature, the fact of it being TA, that gets in the way of people being able to thrive.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you all. We had a visit this autumn, in September [2023], to as a TA provider who was rated satisfactory, but it was clear that that puts them in the minority of providers in London in that band. Why are standards of TA so poor in your opinion, and do you think that standards are worse in London or better in comparison to other parts of the country?

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): I think that there is a high demand for properties and when you have a high demand for properties, the properties that are in the market have a lot of choice. There are a lot of people who need that property. I think there is something about demand as well. How you manage that demand?

Also, with the councils, they are dealing with such a housing emergency on all fronts. To put a demand on the private rented sector (PRS) to raise their standard puts them in the contrary: we need properties, but we do not want to put too much pressure on the market because if they withdraw their properties, which we see is happening, where are we left? Cost of living, cost of materials. There is a holistic issue that is happening that has an impact on the conditions of property, but the responsiveness of that is compromised on so many levels of what I have just described.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. Jamie?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Yes. Z2K only works in London, so I cannot really speak about the situation in other parts of the country.

One issue that drives poor standards is relating to the supply, but also the funding available to local authorities: the housing subsidy from central Government for TA, which has been frozen, I believe, since 2011. Obviously, combined with wider reductions in local authority spending power, that means that local authorities are looking for properties that are basically below market rate. Often the reason for that is quality, which is a sad fact. We have clients with disabilities where the council accepts that the property is not suitable for them and/or that it is in a state of disrepair, but they are not able to find an appropriate property for them. I think part of this is the way that funding works, which means that if you have poor-quality accommodation you can find somebody who will pay for it.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): The basic issue from your perspective, your organisation's, is that it is entirely driven by what is available at the price point that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) offers?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): The TA subsidy, yes.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): OK. Thank you. Welcome, Kwajo. I will give you some time to catch your breath. If we can come to Lucy, please, on the same question.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): There are lots of different things, in the way of people's health and wellbeing, which are of particular concern to us. Jamie mentioned the inappropriate accommodation that is often offered to people, particularly people with disabilities. I know it has also been raised to you in your call for evidence, the issue of local authorities not making suitable adaptations to properties because they are meant to be temporary, but the fact that people then stay in these properties for a very long time means that people are living without adaptations that could be relatively straightforward to put in place.

We have been calling for increased and enforceable regulation of standards within TA properties, and also better access to legal advice. People do not have access to advice that would allow them to push back when they are experiencing poor-quality accommodation.

There is an issue that Groundswell has been working on recently with University College London (UCL) that I think it is worth bearing in mind. It does not apply to all TA, but it is the issue of the change to permitted development rights (PDR) that took place ten years ago in 2013, which has allowed development and change of use from, for example, office or industrial buildings to residential. It is very difficult for us to track it and we do not know how much TA is being provided within the building's change of use through PDR, but this research we are doing with UCL has been raising quite a lot of concern around this.

Certainly, there are people living in not just poor-quality renovated properties, but in inappropriate locations. Jamie mentioned people being moved out of borough but often these PDR properties are in industrial areas. They do not have infrastructure. They do not have local amenities. There are issues with temperature control. People find it very difficult to keep those sorts of properties cool enough in hot weather, which has a big impact on your wellbeing. They have issues with noise from outside and from within buildings, if they are poorly insulated. There is quite a lot of evidence on this and more emerging, but we struggle to know how much of it exists and is being used for TA.

We have talked a little bit about the lack of move-on that is available and that is why people are staying in TA for long periods. That is something that is different within London. People in London are staying in TA longer than people who live in other areas of the country. But Groundswell works with people all over England and we hear very similar issues people are facing with their TA. I think it is the length of stay that really marks London out as particularly bad in this arena.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): How does it compare then, the length of stay in London compared to outside of London?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Shelter [housing charity] did some work, and they released their report, *Still Living In Limbo*, earlier this year. I believe they found that people in London were staying significantly longer. Sorry, Maria, go ahead.

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): There is some research talking about over six weeks, and that is emergency accommodation. Around about five years, I have heard from a school that we are working with. 20 percent of their families are living in TA, some living there for five years.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Basically, finishing school in TA. OK. Thank you.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): We know of people who are in our volunteer pool or clients we are working with who have been in TA for six, seven, eight or more years than that, which is a very long time when you also consider that people who live in TA might expect to be moved out of it with very little notice. Again, Shelter's research found a large proportion of people had been given only 48 hours' notice when they moved from their last placement. It is a very tricky position to be somewhere for a very long time but know that you might be moving with very little notice. The research that we have just done with people living in TA in London found that sense of 'it could end any minute' is a significant barrier to people putting down roots and engaging with the local communities, amenities in the area and local health services. That is why people stay registered with their GP in another borough or in another area, their dentist that they have had, or kids' schools.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you so much. If I could put the same question to you, Kwajo. We were just talking about a visit that we made as a Committee to a TA provider which met a satisfactory standard, but the question was why standards of TA are very often poor and whether or not, in your opinion, standards are worse in London than other parts of the country.

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): From my experience in regard to TA, absolutely. I would go as far to say it is an absolute disgrace, the conditions we have our temporary homes in, especially in London but beyond. I think it is a mixture of problems. I have witnessed it myself. I was in TA that happened to be a converted car garage only a few years ago, and I have spoken to many, many families in absolutely shocking conditions. The irony about TA is there is nothing temporary about TA, especially now. Things were difficult ten years ago or even 12 years ago when I started out and was in social housing having issues. Things are a lot worse now.

What is difficult about being in TA is those individuals are absolutely desperate. These are individuals who effectively would otherwise be out on the streets and homeless. I myself have had to turn up to local authorities with individuals or tenants who have been evicted, who are homeless, in order to prove that they have a case in order to be provided with TA. I have a feeling that is only going to increase because of the shortage of TA.

Then when they are provided with that TA, it is often poor quality. I often highlight cases of poor quality within social housing and many of those videos have been in TA. I have witnessed it myself in TA with damp, mould, and all of these sorts of other issues that you expect.

What is even more difficult for residents in TA is there is this feeling that you know it is unacceptable and you should not, as a human being, be placed in these conditions. In some cases, it is so obviously wrong and inhumane, not even fit for animals to be living in. But also, you realise you are in TA and what you do not want to do is be seen to be complaining in case for some reason you are kicked off that list, or for some reason you are not provided with social housing, or you become too much of a nuisance to those individuals that you are dealing with.

I think it is a mixture of problems. We know we have a housing crisis, not just in London but beyond. We also know we have a social housing crisis, which is extremely acute, but we often overlook this idea of TA and the role it has to play within the social housing crisis. It is absolutely huge. Like I mentioned, it is desperate and vulnerable individuals. By the point you are moved into TA you are probably already struggling with your mental health, perhaps even your physical health.

Look at the number of kids who are homeless in England, 131,000. Many of them will be in TA and many of them will be in London. It is not just the impact on individuals or individual adults within TA, it is the impact on the education of young kids, their physical and mental health. Yet for some reason, there is not enough support there. First of all, we do not have enough TA. Secondly, there is not enough support there for residents who are living in poor conditions in TA. They simply feel like they do not have a voice.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): OK. Thank you for that. I am going to ask you briefly the first question that we asked before you arrived, which relates to what you have just said. From your experience, what are the biggest issues of concern in TA that you have been seeing and hearing about? You have touched on a few things, but are there recurring issues?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): Yes, there is. The conditions, the disrepair within TA, and the lack of support for residents that feel like they want to complain. They too feel like they have not got enough support on their side. There will be many cases where people think they should just put up and shut up, quite frankly, and again I am speaking from first-hand experience with this. We have situations where people have been put in incredibly poor conditions in regard to, like I mentioned, a converted car garage. No human being should be in a converted car garage, and it was poorly converted at that. That was, what, [June] 2017, because I remember watching Grenfell [Tower fire] happening on BBC News the morning afterwards and thinking we should not be in these conditions. People in social housing and those that are homeless should not be living like this.

Also, there is the impact on their health and mental health. It is extremely bad within TA. Often when I speak to people, residents in social housing in poor conditions or TA, they are already suffering with anxiety and depression all brought on because of their living conditions. They are often worried about their jobs, whether they can maintain their jobs, but also their kids' education. There are a lot of kids, a lot of children who are having to live in these conditions.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. We are going to move on to Assembly Member Devenish, please.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, panel. In London, how does people's experience of TA differ at local level, including across boroughs, please?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Thank you. We do see some differences between boroughs. I think it would be fair to say that is broadly a difference between inner and outer London boroughs, which I think relates to the degree of pressure and the number of homelessness presentations in those different boroughs. But to a very large extent, all London boroughs have similar underlying pressures on their systems. They do not vary a huge amount borough to borough, in our experience.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you.

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): I think the same as Jamie. All London boroughs are feeling the pressure of the situation that we are in right now. The number of people who are needing to be housed and the conditions of TA are problems across London. We know that boroughs are spending a lot of money on TA. For that reason, these conversations are so important. It needs to be highlighted because of the conditions that people are living in.

I do not want to go off the question, but we have a family that was living in a rat-infested property. They had to move into a kitchen with their seven-month-old baby and the seven-month-old baby had to stay in their travel cot because they could not move around the accommodation. I have pictures of rats and mice in their food, and it stunted the baby's growth. We spent a lot of time trying to raise this. Eventually, the family was moved, and the development of their child is so different than what it was. He is running up and down, you cannot keep him still because he is moving, which he was not doing before. He had to stay in the kitchen in a cot because it was not safe. This is a child protection issue.

Tony Devenish AM: Kwajo?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): I want to lead on from on that point that Maria made because it is very, very valid and something that I have seen time and time again, especially within TA. On the question

about “Does it vary from borough to borough?” it does vary but I am not talking about from good to bad, I am talking about from bad to absolutely outrageously bad. I think that is a fair and accurate portrayal of what I have seen. Things will be a lot worse in London, of course, because it is the capital and we have so many more people here, but there are situations where people’s health and safety – like Maria’s situation – are directly put at risk because of the conditions they happen to live in within TA.

It is not only a TA or social housing crisis, I think we need to start looking at it as a human rights issue too, because everyone should have the right to live in a decent and safe home. When we are talking about rat-infested homes where families are having to move into their kitchen, or in my cases where people are living for ten years with cockroaches and all the other issues, damp, mould, having their health and safety directly put at risk because of the situation and conditions they are having to live in, we need to start addressing this issue as a human rights crisis rather than just a housing crisis and dealing with it individually.

We should be dealing with TA separately to the social housing crisis because look how much money we are spending in London alone on hotels. Tenants are having to be moved every 28 days or expected to move every 28 days, with their belongings, from hotel room to hotel room, hotel to hotel. How can people expect to function? Long-term solutions need to be created now because clearly, we are failing, and we are wasting a lot of money in doing so.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you. What has your experience been on engaging with a) local authorities – I think we have partly covered that – b) TA providers, and c) health authorities, please, as part of your advocacy and campaign work?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Thank you. First, I echo what the others have all said about differences across London boroughs, with one slight caveat, which does relate to the health focus and, to some extent, local authorities of your question.

One of the things we have observed through research we have done is that the prevalence of mental health problems among people living in TA, compared to people experiencing other forms of homelessness including rough sleeping, is pretty similar. A second point is that the support available to people living in TA is patchy at best, very poor in a lot of cases, or non-existent. But we observe that people who have come through a rough sleeping pathway, who have that experience of sleeping rough in London, tend to have better support in place, particularly in those boroughs in London that have very high numbers of rough sleepers. They have specialist inclusion health practices and increased levels of floating support, for example, compared to people who have come through other routes. That is something that I think is a slight difference we can observe. Some boroughs are just better positioned to deliver this kind of support.

You asked about our experience of dealing with health authorities. I think this is an area of real opportunity, actually, as we see the establishment and maturation of the Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), with their Integrated Care Boards underneath them. They are at different levels of maturity, I think it is fair to say, but there is a real opportunity around the creation of inclusion health plans. People experiencing homelessness are part of inclusion health groups, which includes other groups of people as well. There is a big difference, as I say, in the provision of specialist healthcare services across different boroughs, but ICSs cover a footprint which in most cases covers both inner and outer London boroughs. The way they are divided up, I would hope, lends an opportunity for that intra-borough learning, led by the ICSs. The provision of inclusion health plans again I would see as an opportunity, if the ICSs indeed consider people living in TA as they do that work.

Our experience of working with local authorities on this – and I will defer to others with more experience – is that the commissioning system is challenged. We saw some evidence recently from the National Council for

Voluntary Organisations showing that charities who provide services on a commission basis, as do Groundswell, are essentially subsidising local authorities. We are operating a lot of our services at a loss. It is indicative, I think, of the system and the problems we are all facing. I do not have experience of working with TA providers so I will hand over to others on that. Thank you.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you. Kwajo?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): I will just share with you one example that I had, and that was this year [2023]. I will not name the local authority, but someone reached out to me, someone I know quite well. They were having issues trying to get their local authority to listen to them and provide them with TA because they were effectively homeless and had nowhere to sleep. What happened was I then had to travel to a different part of London to go there with them.

I walked in, I did not tell them that I was coming, and as soon as I walked into this local authority there was a stand and there were two individuals that worked for the council behind that stand. I went up to them and I asked them, "Could I speak to someone in your Homelessness Team, or could I speak to someone in your Housing Team?" to which they responded, "The individuals in our homelessness team are currently working from home and have been from the start of the global pandemic". Like I said, this was at the beginning of the year. Members of the Housing Team were only in on a few days during the week, and the day that I came in, it was not the case. But what they did have was two phones on a table in the far corner of the reception area with a directory list and a list of numbers. They told us to look on that and there will be a number on there we can phone, which we did.

We were there for absolutely hours sitting there and time was ticking by. I knew that at 5pm everyone would sign off and go home at the end of the day, and the individual I was with will not know where they are going to be putting their head to sleep at night. That is when I started to get a bit frustrated, I did start tweeting about it and a councillor came down. But before that, I spoke to the security that were there. It was getting close to the time when everyone would be signing off and I said, "What happens when we get to 5pm?" They turned around and said they were advised to point anyone that is waiting for a call back in the direction of the police station to wait for that call back at the end of the day.

For me, that said everything it needed to. On the one hand you have individuals who are homeless, asking to be provided with somewhere to sleep at night, and on the other hand you are being told that they will be pointed in the direction of the police station and hope that they get a call back. I think that is everything wrong with the way in which we provide TA and housing, not just in London but in this country. There have been several occasions where that has happened, where I have had to show up at local authorities, and it is not until I do that things start changing, things start moving and the individuals I am with are spoken to like human beings.

As much as it is an issue with funding, I think it is an even bigger issue with attitudes, especially within local authorities. Often when we are talking about TA and social housing, we talk about housing associations, but it is exactly the same in TA. The attitudes with which we are treating individuals who are declaring themselves homeless really need to change first and foremost. That costs nothing.

It says a lot - and we have seen it in recent days - when a local authority thinks it is acceptable to destroy tents belonging to homeless people and put them in the back of bin lorries. You can only imagine how they are treating people who come in to declare themselves homeless who do not have advocates on their behalf. It is not all staff members, I think that is fair to say, but even if it is one or two staff members there is a problem

there. We need to start looking at the culture towards those declaring themselves homeless and what we are doing to help them behind the scenes.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you. Maria?

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): The councils and local authorities are in a hard, difficult position. The crisis that is at their doorstep every day is a lived reality for our colleagues working within housing.

Kineara is currently working with a council and the project is about how we prevent vulnerable people living within the PRS from becoming homeless, to try to be an advocate for the tenant but also understand what is going on for the landlords. The challenge with that is because there is so many people who need housing, the local authorities are really always on fight mode. They do not have a chance to sit back and look at: how do we think strategically? How do we use the funding that we have? They need more funding. But how do we use what we have in a preventative way? They are firefighting all the time.

In that relationship that we are having with the council we are trying to say, "OK, how can we help you to think prevention?" There are a lot of grassroots organisations that are doing a lot of preventative work but as Lucy said, they are subsidising what the council is meant to be doing under the prevention. Because the council is fighting this battle of finding housing and supporting people who have a duty to be housed, that strategic, preventative strategy and way of thinking is lost in the immediate issues that they are facing. I would say that is the challenge that the council has. Then you have the people in the middle who are suffering because of the breakdown of structure within housing.

About health and housing, I am on the Future of London Health and Housing Impact Network and there is a growing understanding of the impact of insecure housing on people's health. In the work that we are doing, we know that 90 percent of the people we work with struggle with high anxiety and depression, leading to physical health [issues], because of the insecurity of TA and the conditions that they are living in. There is a great conversation happening with health and housing and I think it needs to grow, but also there needs to be more investment, I would say, in grassroots organisations that are in the position where we can do preventative work and also work at the frontline to support our colleagues within the council. I think there needs to be work in that. That is something that I have been advocating and I am sure my colleagues have as well.

Tony Devenish AM: Jamie?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): I particularly echo what Kwajo was saying. Our advisers, clients, and others with lived experience that we speak to report real difficulties in contacting local authorities, simply getting someone on the phone, and we also found we often have to formally challenge a local authority to get a right decision, which takes time, resource and often expertise. Our clients also tell us that people often get spoken to better if they have an adviser with them or if an adviser is making the contact, which, first of all, simply does not need to be the case. Secondly, it means that we find that people ask us to make quite straightforward contact with the council that they could, quote/unquote, "self-serve" if they felt like they would get a reasonable hearing. That is a culture issue.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Chair.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you to all of you. Can I maybe zoom us out a little bit and think about the world, if you like, of TA, but the actual physicality of it? You have people, like you said, who come in through a homelessness route - sorry, street homelessness or rough sleeping - and then you

have people who are on the housing waiting list, who are in their TA for however many years waiting for permanent accommodation. But for me, anyway, the stories that you have told have been about standards and about conditions, and I just wonder what suggestions there are around greater advocacy for fixing those standards. We have done some scrutiny here about the PRS, but I think we intentionally left TA to one side, although obviously everybody here on this panel knows that TA and PRS is basically the same house, is it not? It is just a question of who gets it first. Then there is that point about affordability.

I just wonder what changes you would want to see or feel like you have seen through either your advocacy or maybe your policy work - Jamie and Lucy, in your case - that your organisations might have done. Perhaps if I start with Lucy, and then we will go this way this time around.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): I might also zoom out a bit and leave the others to talk about the specificity of conditions and the client-facing advocacy. Something that we have been fighting for, for years and years and years, since Groundswell began in the 1990s, is for people who are living this to be properly involved in finding the solutions. We see the most recent National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline on integrated care for homeless people very clearly setting out expectations around people with lived experience of homelessness being involved in all aspects from design and planning problem specification through to delivery and evaluation of interventions. I would like to see far more of that across London for people living in TA: well-supported, well-resourced opportunities for people to get involved.

When we see, for example, the Temporary Accommodation Action Groups (TAAGs) set up, where people who live in the same physical accommodation are supported to get together, we see huge change happening not just in terms of relationships with the providers but for those people. That feeling of being engaged, active, and advocating for improvements to your own situation is very important. I would say that is a very significant area, involving people with lived experience who are living in TA and finding solutions.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): OK. What shape does that take, though? You are talking about design of service, but in practical terms what does that look like? Everybody is chasing the same number of properties and they are not the best, to be polite, unless it is maybe a new build. I do not know if I am misunderstanding what you are saying.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): It starts with working with local authorities who are commissioning and delivering not the built accommodation, but who are operating the pathways and commissioning providers, support providers working with landlords. It is right through, from that point at the local authority commissioning level. We see boroughwide TA groups where people are getting together to advocate *en masse*, doing a bit of collective work to highlight problems and suggest solutions that are hyperlocal and hyper-contextualised to their situation, with that insight that you will not always get from people who are within the system.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. Kwajo?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): It is a very interesting question. I have to say it is really sad that six and a half years after Grenfell and a few years after the death of Awaab Ishak we are having to even have this conversation about the conditions and standards of our homes that we are providing people, especially young kids.

Zooming out, it is the issue that is at the forefront of this crisis, I think: conditions but also attitudes. Those are the things that need to change as quickly as possible, because ultimately, we are again putting people's

lives at risk in their own homes, and it is meant to be a safe space. I talk about their lives; not just their physical health but their mental health, as discussed.

Like I mentioned earlier, we are spending so much money on the likes of hotels to put people in TA. That will only increase as demand increases. We know what the state of housing is like around the rest of the country in the PRS with section 21s [evictions]. We can only expect that demand for TA is going to increase. At what point do we go back to the drawing board and think, "We need to reallocate the money that we are spending, we need to find a more long term-solution and spend this money more effectively"? Not just thinking about that but also within local authorities too, how are we spending this money? Where is this money being allocated to? Could we be spending this money more efficiently? Could we maximise the way in which we are spending it?

But ultimately the thing that costs nothing is attitude and culture, and if things are really going to change that is what needs to change first and foremost. It should not have taken Grenfell for lessons to be learnt, and I have to say, six and a half years on, I am not convinced lessons really have been learnt from what it is that I am seeing: the way in which residents are spoken to, the way in which the homeless are treated and spoken to at the worst points of their lives. Any of us can say that none of us would want to be in those situations. As Jamie mentioned earlier, it is not until there is an advocate there speaking on their behalf, who knows what it is that they are talking about, that they actually are treated like human beings. That is a shame. It should not be happening within our local authorities when we are dealing with some of the country's most vulnerable individuals, especially when they are facing homelessness. Those are the things I think that can change.

In regard to TA as a whole, yes, I know that local authorities are very much strapped for cash and the ultimate solution is going to come from central Government and funding our local authorities. They have had cuts over the last 13 years that have been absolutely detrimental and are causing what it is that we are seeing now. That is the ultimate goal. That is what is really going to change things. But there are things that local authorities can do and there are things that the Mayor can do to ensure that the way in which people in those desperate situations are treated is changed.

There also need to be higher expectations of those that are providing TA. How are we monitoring the conditions that they are letting out to residents? We are handing over X amount of cash, and I know some of these TA providers will be absolutely rubbing their hands together because of the demand for TA. Are we asking them or setting an expectation for the homes that they are providing, again, for some of the city's most vulnerable individuals? If we are not, that is the most immediate change that I think needs to happen. We cannot just be handing money over to these organisations to provide TA. Yes, we need TA, but we need safe, decent TA that is not putting the lives of those living in those homes or those hotel rooms at risk.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): OK. Thank you. Do hold that thought about what Mayor and local government can do, I will come back to that. Welcome, Assembly Member Lord Bailey. I will complete this section and then hand over at the break. Maria, you are next.

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): There are wider issues that are impacting housing: the need to build more social housing, which is going to take a while, the need to have regulation of rent, and the need to raise LHA rates. There are so many things that are impacting where we are in terms of our housing position. It is important to acknowledge the context that we are in and that whatever we are talking about today, in terms of things that we could do now, is impacted by the wider context that we are living in. Whatever we do now, is it sustainable to hold the wider conversation that we need to be having to ensure that we are creating sustainable housing, and that people can afford to pay and there is affordable

housing, whatever that looks like? Before I look at that question, I just wanted to bring into the room the wider context that we are in and the impact that it has.

In terms of conditions, one of the things that is going to be really helpful is to have somebody -- when there was disrepair in TA, the example I gave with the family living in a rat and mouse-infested property, trying to get the landlords and the local authority to come out took about six months. We came in and had to push it up to director level. We as an organisation had a challenge trying to find out who we need to speak to come and look at this situation, much less somebody else who is not in in this field having that issue. A direct connection where somebody can get help and support would be helpful.

The other thing is about standards. Setting the Standard is doing that for studio flats and bed and breakfasts. Can that standard grow across all TA provision? Having that standard from another body helps the local authority not to take on that conversation because, as I said previously, they are in a bind. They need TA but because a lot of TA is now being taken, a lot of landlords are taking back their property, they are in a catch-22 situation. I think having an organisation to be able to ensure that standards are set and adhered to is going to be really helpful as well.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. Jamie?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Thank you. I would like to start by echoing what Lucy said about the importance of co-production and involving people with lived experience. We have a project specific to the City of Westminster, which is funded by Trust for London, looking at the experience of people placed in TA by that borough. We are also a part of the Westminster TAAG that is run by Justlife [homeless charity], which also has good engagement with that local authority. Both of those are explicitly bringing the experiences of people with lived experience into that process.

As you would expect, conditions and standards come up a lot there. Part of that is conditions at the point you move in. What is the property like? Do you have a choice? Do you feel like you have a choice? Also, when an issue develops when you are in that TA, what is the process? Do you know who you need to contact to get the repair done? Is the repair done? We have heard stories, particularly where a TA is managed by a private landlord, of landlords who appear to be exploiting the system, taking money from the council to fix repairs and either doing a poor job or not doing a job at all. There is an issue about the original condition of properties that are procured for TA but also around ongoing maintenance and the resolution of issues that develop during somebody's time in TA, which, as I think we have all said, can be years.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Before I move on to my next question, we have heard a lot about, and you have very eloquently put forward, what the issues are, but it would be good when we get to the end of this section to think about what proposed solutions you have.

If I can move on, as you all know, the Mayor does not have a statutory responsibility for TA. Nevertheless, we as a panel are interested in what more can be done about addressing issues in London around TA. The London Housing Panel set out some recommendations in 2021, which included the need to set up a commission. Some of those also covered using the London model of the PRS to lobby the Government for more powers around TA, and to look at opposing PDR conversions because those are not appropriate. If there was a Londonwide strategy, what would be helpful to set out as its priorities? I am going to start with Kwajo.

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): Why we do not have a Housing Commissioner, I really do not know. It is about time we started treating housing as the priority that it is. We are in this crisis because we

have not treated it as the priority that it is. I think there should be statutory responsibility, especially for TA, because it is at crisis point now.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): For the Mayor of London?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): Yes. Also, I know we have what is known as the Decent Homes Standard, but it is not a decent standard at all. There absolutely should be something set up that states responsibilities for those providing homes and the expectation that it should be set at, to make sure these homes and TA that are being provided are fit for human habitation and free from disrepair.

There were a few things I was thinking of. There needs to be more power to hold these providers to account when things do go wrong, or they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing. There should be expectations set with local authorities across the city when it comes to standards and culture. That should happen as soon as possible because things really need to change in that sense before we start worrying about all of the other areas to build on. There was a final thought that I had but it has slipped out of my mind.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): OK. We can come back to that if you do remember it. Thank you. Next, please.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Thank you. It is such an interesting question because, of course, so many of the solutions that we are all calling for are nationally set. I did want to mention that there is huge alignment in our sector between voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and individuals like yourself. We are all calling for the same stuff. We are banging on that drum. Did you want to just finish your point?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): Very quickly, yes, because I will forget it again.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Go for it.

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): I just wanted to say, in terms of decisions being made around TA and housing, it is imperative that when we are making future decisions the right people are sat around the table, and that includes people currently at the receiving end of any policy or lack of policy. I am talking about people in TA, people currently struggling and people with lived experience. There is no better way of creating informed policy than having those individuals in the room and around the table too. Otherwise, what is the point? We are hoping that we find solutions, but it is not until we speak to them that we make sure that policies are correctly informed.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): I am glad to let you say that because I agree. One of the interesting things about strategies is the significant impact they can have on the culture that we have talked about several times, the setting of principles and expectations of how we treat people who are living in TA and the standards we expect. I welcome the leadership the Mayor has shown around rough sleeping and the support for the forthcoming Charter to End Rough Sleeping in London. We have seen some really good work in that area and if we could map some of that across to TA, I think that would be very positive.

Some specific things. Absolutely, the strategy should set out a very clear expectation for involving people with lived experience in designing the strategy in the first place and its attendant solutions, but also in local design and delivery, right down to that hyperlocal level. I echo the point about enforceable standards and

Maria's point earlier about whether there is an organisation that leads on that, or it is set out in the strategy itself.

There is an opportunity for some work around data and problem profiling. We are here very much representing our clients and our colleagues who are working in this sector and experiencing it, but there are some real gaps in data. Earlier, I mentioned that gap around understanding which PDR converted properties are being used for TA in London. Some sort of working group and deeper dive into the world of data and what there is a need for would be very helpful as a place to start.

When we are talking about strategies in particular, there is an opportunity again for working very closely with health and health systems, ICSs and at a more local level. I think a well-designed strategy that sets that expectation could be very helpful, again, in some of that cultural leadership and that convening power that the Mayor has. I think that is probably it for me. I will let my colleagues step in.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Before I hand over, Lord Bailey would like to come in.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Thank you and excuse my catastrophic diary mix-up. You spoke earlier on about the Mayor having some statutory responsibility for TA. How would that work, in view of fact that it is local councils that have statutory responsibility for housing people?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): It is interesting. The Mayor perhaps should be allowed to have more involvement when it comes to oversight and decision making, and have oversight of any wider policy decisions. Like I mentioned earlier, the main thing is standards for me, and attitudes. TA, I think, should be separate to the rest of social housing because of how big the crisis in that specific area is, and it is only set to continue growing. As Mayor of London, I think he should have direct involvement in that. What the specifics of that look like I do not know, but as Mayor of London and because of how big and immediate the crisis is within TA he absolutely should have involvement, oversight and say over what happens directly with TA.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Interesting. Just one small question. You may not be able to answer this, Lucy, but it is just a thing. People often talk about national responses and what the Government should be doing and all the rest of that, and the Mayor, and indeed the Greater London Authority can have some stake in that conversation. The question that Government always asks the Mayor but he often fails to answer is just how much. Do you have any figure for what would be needed to bring TA up to any liveable level? Is it £10 million a year? Is it £10 billion a year? Is there any ballpark figure?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): No, I am not the person to answer that. However, I would imagine Shelter would probably have that at their fingertips right now.

For us, a lot of this issue about standards is about regulation rather than purely investment. Some of the national things we talk about are things like the LHA, because these are things that are making it very difficult for local authorities to source high enough quality provision. Maria mentioned earlier that the vast demand means that it is a landlord's market. People are given what they are given and local authorities, to a great extent, have to take what they can get. That other lever of regulation, standards and enforcement could help to rebalance it a little bit, without purely that investment. But I am sure there will be people with that number at hand who will be queuing up behind me to tell you what it is.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you for that. I am keen that we allow Jamie and Maria to answer that question, and then we will come to Assembly Member Berry.

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Thank you, yes. Regarding a Londonwide Strategy, I think the immediate priorities would be, as others I have said, around culture and co-ordination, particularly when it comes to out-of-area placements. These figures, I think, are from December last year [2022] but at that point, 82 percent of all out-of-borough placements in England were households that had applied to London local authorities. The need for that co-ordination is stark, particularly when you are talking about people being moved from their support networks and their healthcare providers, particularly if they have long-term health conditions or disabilities.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Are you suggesting that number would be lower if there was better co-ordination?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): No, I am saying that very often there is an issue where people are moved out of area and struggle to continue accessing the health and support that they need, and greater co-ordination between the sending and receiving local authorities could help make that easier. It is never going to be an easy position to be in, to be moved out of borough, of course, but at the moment a lot of people find it is very challenging to maintain maybe regular health appointments, for example, or GP access or whatever the case may be.

I think it was Lucy who mentioned the convening power. Where there are issues that are within national Government's control, there is a role for the Mayor in co-ordinating a cohesive, single voice of London boroughs. TA is a problem across the country, but it is very acute in London, and I think there is a real role for amplifying that upwards.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you. We will come to you, Maria, and then Assembly Member Berry, who has the last two questions in this section.

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): The housing crisis is not a one-party problem and I think there is definitely a need for a cross-governmental department that looks at the housing crisis to come together and really think about what we need to do to address the emergency that we are in. I think we are beyond crisis.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Can I just interrupt you, just to clarify? When you say cross-government, do you mean national Government or in the context of London government? If London, as Assembly Member Lord Bailey was saying, are you suggesting local authority or at the Mayor of London level?

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): National.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): National, OK.

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): Yes. In terms of the local authority, yes, they do have the power, but it is giving money to an establishment that has a lot of crises that they are dealing with. The money comes in and it is absorbed in dealing with what the crisis is right now. As I said before, the space to think preventatively and the space to look up, to look at, "How can we resolve this? How can we use our preventative powers? What can we do?" They do not have the capacity to do that.

I think there is a need for the Mayor to have powers. Now, what does that power look like? We talk about 'power' but what does that mean? That power needs to be to enable Londoners to carry out what they think they can do to help, at the local community level. You have policy, but how does that work in practice and who is monitoring how that is working in practice? There needs to be that thinking.

Also, on the ground, a clear pathway around where responsibility lies when somebody comes into the local authority or their council and says, "I have disrepair and I have been waiting for six months, I have been waiting for a year for the damp, the mould and infestation and all of that condensation to be resolved. Now it is impacting my mental health. Now it is impacting my health". We need a clear pathway of how that is addressed, because there is none. I would say they are the three elements.

Sem Moema AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Thank you very much. Assembly Member Berry.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. We have already slightly asked about solutions. No, it is fine because the previous questions did lead in that direction. I want to drill down on a few specific things that have been raised, to get a bit more clarity in terms of recommendations. Lucy, you have talked quite a lot and quite well about health and health authorities, the health and safety issues, and the idea that the new ways that the health service is being organised might be an opportunity here. I hear that strongly. I have just stopped being a local councillor after quite a long time and I had a case that went on for a very long time, where somebody from my borough was housed in a second borough. That home was TA and was in a dreadful state. Trying as a councillor from one borough to liaise with the Environmental Health Officers from another borough was very difficult. That kind of integration or some point of reference would have been so helpful to me in that particular case. I know that there are many different scenarios that you could talk about there.

I also know that the Environmental Health Officers themselves have started to warn about how they are picking up the pieces when the Housing Teams are -- I will not say forcing, but people feel absolutely obliged, as Kwajo said, when you come in and you have nowhere to stay that night, to accept whatever is offered. Then a day or so later you realise that it has rats, and it has mould, and you are raising it with the Environmental Health Officers instead. People are accepting councils renting properties that are in disrepair already. That is a difficult one because you are talking about Environmental Health Officer in a different borough than the council that did the renting. You said that the health authorities are still in the process of maturing. More specifically, what would you like to see in terms of organisation there? They might have as much trouble as any local councillor might in trying to intervene.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): I hesitate a little bit because one of my answers to this is that this is about resource, and this is about 'resource-starved' services. Here is an example of a problem that we see a lot: people who are moved from one area to another, who have been on a mental health waiting list for ages, and when they move area, they are taken off that list and go to the bottom of the list in the new area. That is a problem that is, at its root, caused by the fact that there are very long waiting lists. If the waiting lists were not that long, we would not be fiddling around trying to make sure that someone could be moved from this position on a waiting list here into another area's waiting list. That is at the bottom of a lot of it.

The issue of who is the appropriate person to be supporting with some of these is also interesting. When you mention Environmental Health picking up the pieces because they are on the ground, they are in the area where the person is currently living and a problem that should not have occurred in the first place is now happening, we see the same in health. We see a lot of people living in TA more commonly using accident and emergency than the rest of the population. There is a question there. Are they struggling to access primary healthcare provision in the area that they are currently placed in? That issue of who in what area is picking up

those pieces is one that maps across Environmental Health to health, and I am sure to lots of other statutory agencies.

We have talked about the out-of-borough a bit. Jamie's point about handing over is not necessarily about numbers. That is a problem of supply and demand. However, it is about experience. It is about what happens to people once they have moved. Are they able to access good quality support? Often not, because their floating support worker or whoever is attached to the local authority that they belong to, not where they are living.

Siân Berry AM: Yes, exactly. That is where they go when they have a repair issue, but it is very difficult.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Exactly. How we resolve that I genuinely do not know. One of the things that we do as an advocacy organisation - we deliver homeless health peer advocacy - is work with people in the area where they live. When we are commissioned by a particular borough, we do not have to support their clients elsewhere, we work in that footprint. Therefore, support provision that can work within a footprint where they are commissioned but with people who live in that footprint, not who are owned by that local authority, is a very useful model. Our health advocates will work with people to help them to access primary healthcare or appropriate healthcare. It is a really significant one. I am not sure if I have answered your question in its entirety or if there is any follow-up.

Siân Berry AM: Within the health service, are you seeing any moves towards, in a more integrated way, working with the various bits of housing within that area? Obviously the out-of-borough placements may or may not be still within the same health area, but they might be. If they are, are they making moves towards doing anything?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): The most important thing is the creation of inclusion health plans, and we are seeing some really, really good-quality work on that in London and elsewhere. We have been doing a big bit of work with the King's Fund and Pathway, two other health-focused organisations, to support ICSs to write good-quality inclusion health plans. We very strongly encourage them to include people living in TA in those plans.

Again, there is a convening piece. Historically, having worked in the homelessness sector for a long time, there has been difficulty engaging with health locally and health has been the partner that is not always at the table. I do have optimism that with the creation of ICSs and as they bed in, we will see health being more active and even in a leadership role, addressing some of the issues that they have within their areas.

Siân Berry AM: We are a committee that makes recommendations to the Mayor, by and large. At a mayoral level the Mayor does have a health inequalities remit. He should be checking in and working with the health authorities on their inclusion health plans to make sure that TA is considered. Would that be the sort of thing that we might say?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Yes, I think that that would be very, very useful, and also encouraging them, in his convening powers and soft influencing powers, to make sure that they are involving people with lived experience because that is very strongly recommended by NICE. The health authorities are all very well aware of that but may not all be doing it to the same degree.

Siân Berry AM: We have heard that loud and clear. Great. Can I move on to talk about the issue that Jamie and Kwajo both raised, which is a very good point, the attitudes, and the gatekeeping that you witnessed, Kwajo, when you went in and there was no one available to talk? There was a phone that may or may not call

you back. That is essentially gatekeeping in the hope that that person might go away and find somewhere else to stay. Sorry, that is quite a cynical view, but I think there is an element of that. The attitudes issue is something that you have both highlighted is resource-light and something that the Mayor could be involved in. Is that something that you would both suggest we recommend?

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Yes, I think so. Culture is a hard thing to regulate, but yes.

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): I would say on that, absolutely there has to be a better standard set because, like you mentioned, it is gatekeeping. There are a lot of situations where even those who are homeless and show up to local authorities, because we do not have enough resources and we do not have enough funding, the criteria are so hard that there are many who are turned away. They just do not get access to TA. Then if you do, you have to jump through so many hoops just to get there and you are spoken down to a lot of the time. I absolutely do believe that should be a standard set by the Mayor and expectations across all local authorities.

Before I forget, on the subject of health and housing - this might be outside of the Mayor's remit - something that I have suggested to Government is that there needs to be a tighter unification between housing and health because there is a direct correlation between the two. Any decisions made or big decisions made by the Government in regard to housing should always take into consideration the impact on residents' health. The facts and statistics are there, the fact the NHS last year spent £1.4 billion looking after people living in poor conditions, the fact the NHS spent £34 million looking after people living in homes with damp and mould is a clear example of why there needs to be a tighter relationship between health and housing, especially when it is impacting the lives of so many kids.

There are loads of situations, and I have seen it myself, where medical professionals, headteachers, educational professionals, have written to providers of housing, TA, local authorities, on behalf of families, kids, individuals, and these professionals are lucky if they even get a response to their concerns. That should not be the case. There should be a higher expectation and an expectation that local authorities and housing professionals should be listening to concerns being raised by medical professionals and educational professionals too, because it simply is not good enough and continues to put the lives of not just adults but kids at risk too.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much. Again, that certainly tallies with my experience as well. The other thing that I want to raise relates to the lack of data that Lucy has talked about as well. It is also potentially an outcome of all the difficulties in getting help and the difficulties in having your voice heard. It is in terms of outcomes from the perspective of people in minorities, whether that is disabled people or people of colour or anyone else who might not be listened to because of their identity. Do you have any data to suggest that there are unequal outcomes in this respect? Again, that comes under the Mayor's remit. I suspect the answer is no, but if you did have any data or anywhere that we might look for data on these outcomes in terms of gaining access to TA or improving the quality of it. I am looking at Jamie because he is very keen to speak.

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): I have my finger on the button, but I am going to say no, I am afraid, Assembly Member Berry.

Siân Berry AM: I thought that the answer might be no. I really have tried to find the data myself.

Jamie Thunder (Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Zacchaeus 2000 Trust): Absolutely. One thing that I would add is that there are intersectionalities here and you are right to mention disability and race. But I would also say that the underlying commonality among people in TA is poverty. That is itself a feature that

often means that people are not listened to. You would find that underlying the whole piece. I would be very interested if anyone does have any data.

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): I am sure in the back of my mind there was some data in regard to TA and kids from minority backgrounds. I can see if I can try to find that data. A situation or scenario is a school in south London where there are around 300 kids who attend there currently and half of them are homeless. That is a mixture of TA but half of them are homeless. That in itself shows the scale of the issue. Perhaps we do need to look for more data or creating more data to support that. There are situations like that happening across the city and across the country too.

Siân Berry AM: Lucy, you mentioned, and I thought it was really interesting, that in terms of the homelessness services, you are more likely to get health support alongside help getting a roof over your head. As I understand it, the Mayor's team does support the homelessness services across London. There is some funding and support that goes out to those homelessness charities and providers to allow for that to happen. Is that something that you would recommend also happens in the case of people in TA?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Ultimately, what it boils down to for me is that it ought to be person-centred. There are so many people in TA, and they are not all the same and do not all have the same needs. People who come through the rough sleeping route very often will have - a dreadful phrase - "complex needs". There will be multiple disadvantages and often very significant problems that have arisen during that period of rough sleeping, with often very significant barriers to engaging. The services that are provided, the specialist services, often do a great deal of in-reach or outreach. They are very, very hyperflexible in their approach and psychologically informed.

I am a big fan of saying that if you make a service good for the people with the greatest need then it works better for everybody, but there is a limit to how flexible all services can be for everybody living in TA. My point in recognising that disparity is that for the vast majority of people living in TA there is no additional support. The support that is provided is inconsistent or very, very light touch and it is not doing the job that is needed. It is not person-centred, it is not flexible, and it is not tailored. The nature of rough sleeping services is that they do tend to at least aspire to that. I would like to see a greater degree of psychologically informed services, trauma-informed services, and person-centred work within that whole sector and for the support services that are offering support to be better resourced so that workers have lower caseloads and can get around the people who they are supporting.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you. Lucy, you also mentioned that sometimes people are moved at very, very short notice. What is behind that? Surely the landlord who wants to reclaim their home needs to give more notice than that to the local authority. Is there a lack of communication going on there?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): I genuinely do not know. That comes from Shelter's work that it published earlier this year [2023], *Still Living in Limbo*. It surveyed more than 1,000 households still living in TA and a very high number of those had had fewer than 48 hours' notice when they moved from their last placement to their current one. I cannot tell you what the reason was for all for those moves but it is certainly worth drilling into.

Siân Berry AM: Maria, do you have any insight into that? The terms on which local authorities are getting these homes from landlords, the landlords cannot be able to give them such short notice at the authority level, can they?

Maria Morgan (Executive Director, Kineara Community Interest Company): As Lucy is saying, there are multiple reasons and that needs to be investigated more. We do know that a lot of landlords are taking back their properties because they want to sell, or they want to move back into their properties. In terms of the contract and arrangements between the landlords and the council, that is something to look into. We know that section 21 [evictions, under the Housing Act 1988] does not help. It is happening at a fast rate and there needs to be an investigation of why and how that is being able to happen.

Siân Berry AM: We can ask further questions as part of our work. Kwajo?

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): Yes, in terms of that and in terms of evictions too, there needs to be a conversation around local authorities' expectations. In many cases you are told - and I have heard it many times - that if a landlord is evicting you and you know that you are going to need support from the local authority because there is nowhere else that you can go, there have been cases where they have been told to wait and hold on as long as possible, to have the bailiffs come and knock on their door and turf you out on the street, and then show up to the council, because of this idea of making yourself intentionally homeless. If you decide to leave early, you are in fact making yourself intentionally homeless. You have to wait until you are at the absolutely worst point and worst situation, when you have a bailiff kicking you out on to the street, before you show up at the council, in order to get access to its support.

That should not be the case. Why are we telling people that? It is not just the fact that you are going to be made homeless but the fact that you have to embarrassingly wait for bailiffs to knock on the door, turf you out onto the streets and change the lock, before you can drag all of your belongings down to the local authority, beg them for help and hope that someone and their good nature will provide that support. That should not be the case and conversations should be happening around that and our expectations.

Siân Berry AM: Theoretically, people have 54 days. They can go to the council when they know that it is going to be within 54 days. That new duty does not seem to kick in until people are literally on the street.

Kwajo Tweneboa (social housing activist): You are literally told that you are making yourself intentionally homeless and by that point they are not required to help you, as opposed to if you are showing up after being kicked out and you are given a letter to say that you are homeless.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): Very quickly, just to finish that point, I suspect that this is not all about landlords taking back properties, but it is also about local authorities having access to a more appropriate property or needing a property back for some reason to give to somebody else. I suspect that there is a bit of churn going on where people are moving between TA placements not because they have a permanent home and not because the landlords have removed it but because of some reason the local authority has for needing to move people between placements.

Siân Berry AM: We will have to ask some more questions about that, Chair.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM (Chairman): We will do. Before I say thank you to our guests for their great contribution, just one little thing, Lucy. If you listen to everybody speak, we can all agree that there is a crisis. Emergency is where we are at; we are beyond crisis. We can all agree with that. However, you talked about health teams and some of the work that they are doing and their change. It seems to me that some of this is going to need big structural change. The advantage, it would seem, that the health team has is that it has a national history, do they not? It is a national organisation and much of their conversations talk about how it does things nationally. Do you feel that we, when dealing with TA, need to get beyond the local-authority silo, the London-based silo?

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): It is tough one. I am not sure that health has always benefited all that much from that, because health systems can be extremely siloed, and the commissioning groups and the ICSs still have that to a degree. It is not perfect over there.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM (Chairman): It has national systems, do they not? The form to apply for a thing looks the same here as it does in west London or east London, whereas local authorities have very different approaches because of their local areas.

Lucy Holmes (Creating Change Director, Groundswell): It is the age-old question of how locally contextualised you want to be. When I talk to local authorities around the country, there is a bit of a sense that they are all a unique snowflake and that they are all very, very different and want to understand what is going on in their area. That goes right down to neighbourhood level. You will have a uniqueness to each area, and you need to be listening to what happens in that area and having that flexibility is very valuable.

At a national level, some of these things, like how you regulate standards, are a debate. It is whether your principles say that centralised control leads to consistency, which people so badly need, or whether then you hamstring a local area's ability to respond to very specific local needs. There is a values judgment in that. I am a fan of listening to people who are living in those situations, and they will have very, very localised, contextualised concerns. But undoubtedly there are national levers that can be pulled here. We have certainly mentioned things, the LHA and those bigger policy levers, rather than standardisation perhaps.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM (Chairman): Thank you. That brings us to the end of this section. I would like to thank all our guests for your contribution today.

[The meeting adjourned at 3.22pm, recommencing at 3.32pm.]