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**Temporary Accommodation**

**Did you know?**

The use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) to house homeless individuals and families is on the rise in the UK. Last year in the UK over 245,000 people were living in Temporary Accommodation arranged by local councils and housing providers, this includes 122,761 children.

Often this type of accommodation is not suitable for families but with housing stocks low in the UK, the councils often have no choice but to use unsuitable accommodation. Between April 2019-March 2022, 34 children died living in unsuitable housing.

The underlying cause of these tragedies could be that babies and young children are often not counted as a whole person so the minimum space/size allocation leads to severe overcrowding. This in turn increases the risk of disease, respiratory illness and preventable accidents.

The main types of Temporary Accommodation that families are placed in are: hotels, hostels, private rented (through the council) and houses of multiple occupancy.

Temporary accommodation unfortunately often isn’t as tempory as the name suggests and the average period of living in TA is about 3+ years.

Caritas Westminster has been listening to people living in Temporary Accommodation.

The main 5 areas affecting people in TA are:

1. Poor maintenance of the property including severe damp/mould
2. Lack of basic goods/services e.g no cooking facilities, WIFI or washing facilities
3. Accessibility Issues
4. Sense of feeling unsafe/overcrowding
5. Feeling unsupported

We often feel helpless when we hear things like this and think

*“What can I possibly do to help with such a big problem?”*

As a church community there are many small steps we can take to ease the trauma of living in TA and help support peoples journeys out of TA and into permanent suitable housing; a safe, warm and comfortable ‘forever’ home. People living in Tempory Accommodation often feel invisible to the rest of the world, they have their dignity stripped from them and feel as though they are failing their children as they are not providing the right type of housing for them.

**For every 208 people in our parish there is one person experiencing homelessness. How can we help?**

**Small Steps:**

Here are a few suggestions that you and your parish could consider doing to help.

*If you are considering one of these, but don’t know where to start, it could be another parish in the Diocese is already doing it; the friendly team at Caritas Westminster are available to give you some pointers. Contact them using the contact details and links below.*

**Community Welcome**

* Offer a **warm welcome** by having coffee mornings or evening meals.
* Consider opening a **Warm Space** this winter. (see Caritas website)
* Explore **community dining** options such as Foodcycle (link below)
* Start a parent & toddler group
* Consider a Christmas Lunch on Christmas Day with activities for the children
* Explore running **holiday clubs** for children

**Practical Support**

* Offer your church hall to be used as a **homework club**
* Give families **a place to cook** their favourite meals, by opening up your church kitchen
* Offer the services of the parish “handy man” to fix minor jobs
* Explore offering ESOL classes
* **Provide laptops** to use during certain hours/days to enable internet access
* Help source second hand furniture, carpets etc
* Invite a benefits advisor or an energy saving expert in to speak

**Learn how to provide signposting and advice**

* Join Caritas’s **Firm Foundations** financial resilience training programme
* Sign up to **Acts 435**, to secure small crisis grants (see below)
* Set up a funding circle in your parish to support as and when necessary
* Join Caritas’s **Stepping Stones into Dignified Work** training for outreach volunteers
* Start a job club

**Social Justice**

* Contact your local councillor and MP and be the voice of the people living in TA
* Invite your local councillor in to share stories and solutions
* Be informed: sign up to receive Newsletters from Caritas partners, Justlife & Shelter
* Learn about Catholic Social Teaching
* Find out more about running [Love in Action](https://www.stepforwardinlove.org/) in your parish

**Visit Caritas’s website** [**www.caritaswestminster.org.uk**](http://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk) **or call 020 7931 6077**

Email **caritaswestminster@rcdow.org.uk** for more information



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