

COUNCIL SPEND ON TEMPORARY HOUSING NOW FIVE TIMES MORE THAN IN 2011/2012

NEWS DESK (04 May, 2017) HOUSING MISC

"We're seeing a real shortage in supply of affordable temporary accommodation and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find any places in Southwark," cabinet member for housing said



HASL Protest against unsuitable temporary accommodation

Southwark Council spent over £10m on temporary accommodation for people threatened with homelessness last year, Becky Morton writes...

The increasing numbers facing homelessness combined with a shortage of affordable housing means the cost of temporary accommodation has been steadily growing.

accommodation. On its website Southwark Council admits people may need to stay in temporary accommodation for over a year due to the shortage of social housing.

Councils have a duty to provide housing for those faced with losing their home who are “priority need”, including families, pregnant women, and vulnerable individuals.



The Aylesbury Estate: one site where empty homes have been used for temporary accommodation

People may be placed in temporary accommodation whilst a homelessness application is processed or until more suitable housing becomes available.

Housing may be run by the council or a private landlord and could be a flat, hostel or bed and breakfast. However, a shortage of affordable housing means Southwark Council is increasingly being forced to use expensive B&Bs to meet demand.

Over £9m of council spending on temporary accommodation last year was on B&Bs.

Government guidance states councils should avoid using B&Bs except in an emergency, when people should be moved to more suitable housing as soon as possible. It stresses B&Bs are unsuitable for families as they often have shared facilities and limited space. By law they should not be placed there for more than six weeks. However, at the end of 2016, 165 families were living in B&Bs provided by Southwark Council for over the six-week limit.

Elizabeth Wyatt, a member of campaign group Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth (HASL), said: "These families have already endured the terrible experience of homelessness, but their nightmare continues with unsuitable temporary accommodation which impacts every aspect of their lives.

"At our last meeting one woman was in tears because of the stresses her family are facing in temporary accommodation in Mitcham. Her children's long journey to school is negatively impacting on their education and well-being and the mother was struggling to attend her college classes as well."

HASL said another case involved a family being moved to Croydon, with their young daughter facing a three hour round-trip to school. The girl was unable to attend weekend lessons in Spanish, which is spoken by her family, whilst her mother faced a longer and more expensive commute to work.



Cllr Stephanie Cryan, cabinet member for housing

Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Southwark Council's cabinet member for housing, said: "We're seeing a real shortage in supply of affordable temporary accommodation and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find any places in Southwark.

"This is why, long term, we hope to reduce then cease to use B&B and private hostels and find more suitable temporary homes just outside the borough."



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