

Insights into the use of modular and container temporary housing to address homelessness

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INTRODUCTION

- Investigates self-contained modular units & converted shipping containers providing temporary accommodation (TA)
- Funded by the Centre for Homelessness Impact
- Aim of the research:
 - Provide an overview of current modular & container housing provision in the UK and to begin to explore whether such housing projects are an effective way to address housing needs for people experiencing homelessness.
 - Provide a basis for future evaluation of the different schemes and for research on their impacts

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

- Literature (e.g. Harris et al., 2020; Rugg, 2016) on the reasons behind the increasing need for TA:
 - the supply of genuinely affordable housing
 - Intensification of demand for PRS + increase in rents and termination of leasing agreements
 - A raft of changes to welfare provision (including benefit cap)
 - Lack of investment in large-scale social housing construction

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

- Neoliberalisation of access to housing (Beswick et al., 2019)
- Non-traditional building methods and the flexible re-adaptation of vacant space can alleviate the housing crisis (Harris et al., 2020)

EMERGENCE AND GROWTH

- Increasing demand for suitable TA
- To provide an alternative form of TA, a number of LAs, social enterprises and charities have introduced modular & shipping container self-contained housing units
- The number of schemes has increased considerably in the last couple of years but little research conducted to evaluate them.

RESEARCH METHODS

- Desk-based internet search for existing evidence and publications about the use of modular & container housing
- 19 local authorities across the country who are involved in modular & container schemes contacted to fill in the gaps
- Some of the housebuilders, manufacturers, consultants and social enterprises involved in the projects, and DLUHC were contacted for further information and informal conversations.

FINDINGS 1/4

- The schemes are diverse
- 33 schemes in 22 LAs using modular/ container housing
- From the 33 identified schemes, six are made from shipping containers and 27 are modular housing.
- These schemes provide a total of 808 units of accommodation, 427 units to accommodate families and 381 units to accommodate single tenants.

FINDINGS 2/4

- Key characteristics- typologies
 - The construction method used (modular/container)
 - The number of units on an individual site (under 20 units/20 units and over)
 - The cohort housed by the scheme (families/singles)
- Other characteristics
 - Size of units
 - Land ownership of the site
 - Onsite facilities and support
 - Conditions of entry

FINDINGS 3/4

Type	Construction method	Size of scheme	Cohort housed	Number of projects identified	% Of projects identified
A	Shipping container	Under 20 units on site	Families	0	0%
B	Shipping container	20 units and over on site	Families	4	12%
C	Shipping container	Under 20 units on site	Singles	0	0%
D	Shipping container	20 units and over on site	Singles	2	6%
E	Modular	Under 20 units on site	Families	3	9%
F	Modular	20 units and over on site	Families	5	15%
G	Modular	Under 20 units on site	Singles	14	43%
H	Modular	20 units and over on site	Singles	5	15%

FINDINGS 4/4

- 6 schemes (18%) are constructed from converted shipping containers and 27 (82%) are modular units.
- Shipping container schemes, with an average of 40 units on a site, tend to be larger in scale than modular schemes, with an average of 20 units on a site.
- 12 schemes (36%) are for families and 21 schemes (64%) are for single households. But, out of a total of 808 units, 427 units (53%) are for families and 381 units (47%) for single tenants.

EXAMPLES 1/4

- Hill Foundation 200 (Types G- under 20 units & H- 20 units or more)
- SoloHaus prototype
- 24m² internal living environment
- six schemes so far, in Cambridge, Southend-on-Sea, Ipswich (type G, under 20 units on the site) and Haringey (type H, 20 units or more on the site)

EXAMPLES 2/4

- Centrepont's Independent Living Programme (Type H)
- Housing young people aged 16 to 25
- 300 new modular homes across London and Greater Manchester
- LB of Southwark-planning permission in Feb 2021
- 35 self-contained modular studio flats with communal facilities

EXAMPLES 3/4

- Social Bite (Type G)
- In Scotland, Edinburgh
- 11 two-bedroom prefabricated houses with a community hub built on vacant, council-owned land

EXAMPLES 4/4

- Malachi Place (Type G)
- LB of Redbridge
- Homes for 56 people
- Made of shipping containers
- Temporary planning permission for five years

POTENTIAL BENEFITS 1/2

Speed of construction

- Meath Court in 24 weeks
- Hill's SoloHaus in seven days

Relative low costs

- Little robust cost data available
- Unit costs £35,000 to £75,000

Quality of life

- Varies, shaped by individual, scheme and support related factors

POTENTIAL BENEFITS 2/2

Move on support

Good use of under-utilised land

Portability of the units

Collaboration

- Onsite or floating support
- Efficient use of brownfield & disused sites
- Temporary use of sites waiting for development
- Can be transported to site as completed units and moved to new sites
- Collaborations between several actors which allows for the local community to come together to take action

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS 1/2

- 1** Space standards and quality of design
 - Concerns about shipping container schemes to house families with children
- 2** Length of tenancy
 - Intended to be for no longer than 2 years, but there are examples where tenancies were extended beyond the intended maximum length
- 3** Access to appropriate land
 - With utilities and services. Absence of internet connection
- 4** Location of the site
 - Distance from local amenities and services

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS 2/2

5 Access to finance

- Reliance on in-kind support and donation; limiting conditions of some funding schemes

6 Stigma and local opposition

- Concerns about a change in the character of the area

7 Complexity of provision

- Multiple actors are involved, uncertainty about the future of the schemes with a temporary planning permission

8 Lack of robust evidence

- Lack of evidence about costs, resident experiences, and the outcomes and impacts of the schemes

CONCLUSIONS

- A diverse range of provision across. Variations in the unit construction type and size, the number of units on a site and the type of households housed.
- Schemes are relatively new and there is a lack of evidence about costs, resident experiences, and the outcomes and impacts of the schemes: further research and evaluation would be beneficial.

UPCOMING EVENT

- Tuesday 24 April, 3-4pm, online:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/can-modular-and-container-housing-help-end-homelessness-tickets-305770837807>
- Confirmed speakers for this event include:
 - Dr Katy Karampour and Dr Gemma Burgess, Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research at the University of Cambridge
 - Guillermo Rodriguez-Guzman, Head of Evidence & Data at the Centre for Homelessness Impact
 - Andy Winter, Chief Executive of Brighton Housing Trust
 - Mark Allan, Chief Executive of Jimmy's Cambridge

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