

Modular homes for people experiencing homelessness: Residents' experiences

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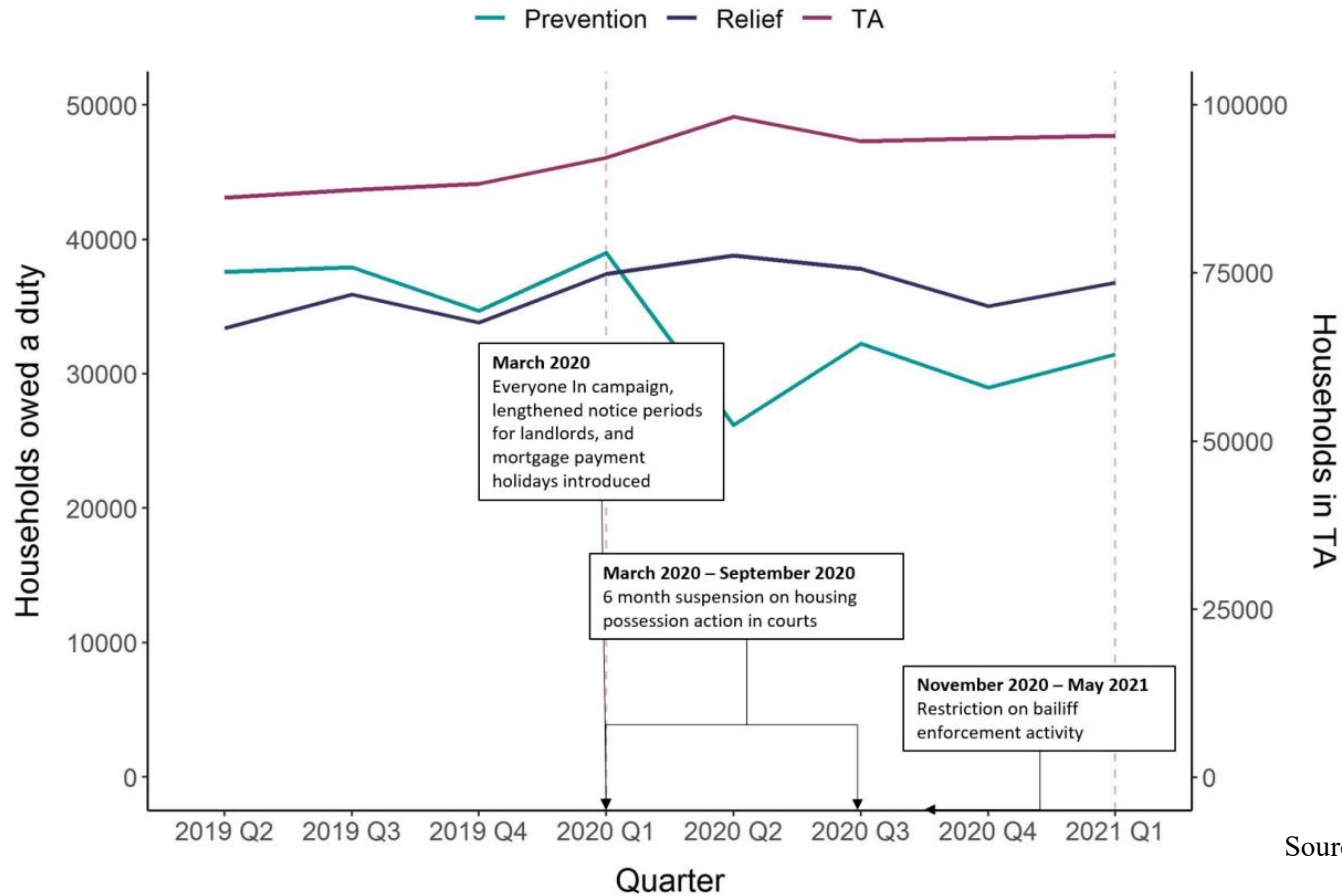
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Outline of presentation

- Background
- Temporary accommodation and homelessness – the literature
- Increasing spotlight on modular homes
- Study context
- Methodology
- Findings and implications
- Concluding remarks

Background

Figure 1: Trends in prevention, relief and temporary accommodation since 2019 Q2



Source: MHCLG, 2021

Temporary accommodation for households experiencing homelessness

- Temporary accommodation remains the main housing option for households experiencing homeless in England
- At the end of September 2021, 96,060 households lived in temporary accommodation (*MHCLG, 2021*)
- Forms of temporary accommodation used in England (*Wilson, 2022*)
 - Private sector rented housing
 - Social housing let on short-term tenancies
 - Hostels/refuge accommodation
 - Bed and breakfast accommodation
 - Supported lodgings and mobile homes

What we know about temporary accommodation and homelessness (1 of 2)

- Reduces rough sleeping and other forms of 'hidden homelessness' (Hostels) (*Busch-Geertsema & Sahlin, 2016*)
- Provides institutional support on: harm reduction, opioid substitution, residential detoxification and rehabilitation, counselling, managing finances, opportunities for education, training and employment (Hostels) (*Neale & Stevenson, 2013*)
- Offers opportunities for different friendships to develop (Hostels) (*Neale & Brown, 2017*)
- Positive relations with their families, professional service providers, other hostel residents, friends outside of the hostel and with current and ex-partners (Hostels) (*Neale & Brown, 2015*)

What we know about temporary accommodation and homelessness (2 of 2)

However:

- Lack of facilities for food storage, cooking & doing laundry (B&B hotels) (*Watts et al., 2018*)
- Imposition of rules such as curfews and restrictions on visitors (Hostels) (*watts et al., 2018; Mahoney, 2018*)
- There is difficulty in meeting Fitzpatrick & LaGory's four categories of 'spatial needs' - privacy, personal space, social interaction, safe and defensible space (Hostels) (*Neele & Stevenson, 2013*)
- There are concerns about quality and physical standards of temporary accommodation (Hostels) (*Mitchell et al., 2004*)

Innovation in temporary accommodation supply for people experiencing homelessness

These innovative projects are tackling homelessness around the world



Tiny homes, which can provide refuge for the homeless. Image: Karl JK Hadin/Unsplash

Source: World Economic Forum (2021)

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MMC News

Modular homes to help tackle nationwide homelessness

June 29, 2021



Source: Pbctoday (2021)

- Some have linked them to the tiny house movement which started in the US (c.f. *Mingoya, 2015, Evans, 2016*)
- In the UK, limited empirical insights exist on these modular homes and their ideological underpinnings

Study context and research questions

- Homelessness and rough sleeping are '**big issues**' for Cambridge (CCC, *Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2021-2026*).
- For every 1000 households, 6 were homelessness, 4 were threatened with homelessness.
- Between 2013 and 2019, 24 homeless people died per million of Cambridge's population (ONS, 2020).
- **Priority 6** of the Cambridge City Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2021-2026 stresses the need to 'expand the provision of **modular homes** and explore innovative accommodation to prevent and relieve single homelessness' (p.11).



Source: [Epsilon68, CC BY 2.0](#)

Research questions



- I. Do these modular homes make an impact on residents who occupy them?
- II. What are some of the crucial issues that deserve attention when considering modular homes as a new form of temporary accommodation?

Methodology

- Case study of Cambridge's first **six modular homes project**
- Partnership involving: Jimmy's Cambridge, Allia, New Meaning Foundation, Christ the Redeemer Church and Cambridge City Council
- 12 months longitudinal interviews with six residents selected to occupy the units
- Interviews with senior management at Jimmy's, 3 support workers, 2 local authority officials, 1 street outreach member, 2 project partners



Source: [Jimmy's Cambridge](#)

Findings: Areas of positive impacts

We found evidence of impact in the following areas:

- Drug and alcohol use
- Money management skills
- Employment and readiness for work
- Relationship management
- Sense of community and safety
- Intended housing trajectory

Findings - Positive impacts living in the modular homes (1 of 4)



Living here, oh everything is good! I can't say anything bad. It's got me off me drugs, got a roof over my head, it's got me back to work...can't say anything bad really. I've stopped using drugs altogether. There's nothing bad about the place. Everything's positive.



Since the last time we spoke, I have received some back pay which is quite a decent amount. I have given part of it to my daughter. I am not going to spend it all... I will save some and use part for myself.

Examples of positive impacts (2 of 4)



Before moving here, I barely spoke to my daughter. Now I talk to my daughter every week, twice a week. Living here has allowed me to make some improvements. I've been clean for 14 months. She's coming to see me here for my birthday in July.



We attended the Church's Christmas celebrations. It was a good feeling. Really nice people.

I get along well with everybody.

Examples of positive impacts (3 of 4)



The job I am familiar with is how to make cabinets and furniture and decorate houses. I want to work till retirement. I'm returning to my passion. I've got a goal; I've got a plan. I can't believe I'm saying that, but yeah...it's amazing really. – Resident



Well, living here is safe for me and I like it. I've got my own place, I can stay locked in to prevent any trouble from others, but the guys are generally nice so there's no trouble at all. We've got cameras around here and they help to keep us safe. – Resident

Examples of positive impacts (4 of 4)



Yeah, yeah, I can cook but not the level of a chef or anything. It is brilliant that I have my own cooker and fridge, so I can sometimes cook my meals. – Resident



I am not looking forward to being told where I am going to be put next after here. I hope the three-year limit will extend to five years. It will be difficult for me to move out, but if the next location is not outside Cambridge, then that will be fine. – Resident

Crucial issues and questions worth considering (1 of 2)

Potential problems with the reliance on meanwhile site:

- Available sites may not be easily accessible and key amenities including sewerage may be lacking.
- Possibility of reversing gains made.

Issues with lease arrangements for the site and specific conditions attached to the planning permission:

- Can residents continue living in the modular homes after the three years (either on the current site or at a new site) if they feel unprepared to move on into independent housing?
- Will those unable to move on be rehoused in mainstream temporary accommodation? (e.g., hostels)?

Crucial issues and questions worth considering (2 of 2)

Modular homes and long-term housing

- The need to include modular homes as part of the housing options offered for long-term independent housing.
- The need to challenge received wisdom around what is a house – radical housing, tiny homes movement, etc.

What makes modular homes different from:

- Other forms of temporary accommodation?
- What is their underlying philosophy and how are they different from Staircase and Housing First approaches?

Concluding remarks (1 of 2)

The findings suggest that:

- I. Provided with small self-contained modular homes with front-doors, coupled with on-site support service, people experiencing homelessness can make positive progress in different aspects of their lives.

- II. Not everyone who moves into modular homes would be able to naturally progress to long-term independent housing, irrespective of the housing type and support services provided. Efforts to ensure that residents do not experience recurring periods of homelessness.

Concluding remarks (2 of 2)

In terms of further research, insight into whether modular homes would work for:

- I. Different age cohorts (young people vs. older people)
- II. Different household characteristics (couples with/without children).
- III. Suitability of having more housing units on site (between 6 and 20 units).
- IV. Impact of different housing designs (e.g. multiple storeys) on sense of community, wellbeing and comfort.

Thank you for listening

Q & A

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