
The impact of homelessness on children and their development

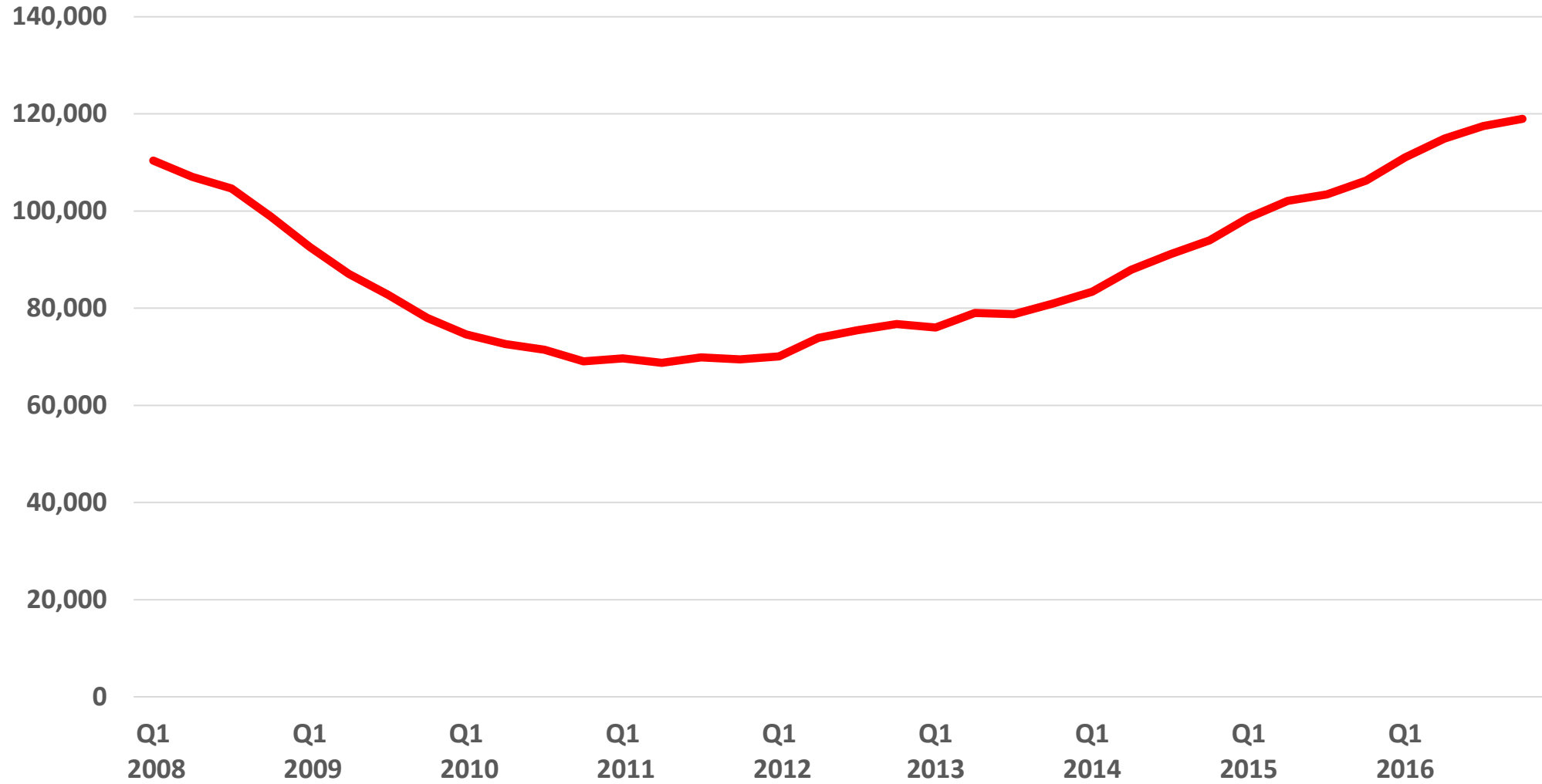
Marcus McPhillips
Shelter

The housing and homelessness macro context*

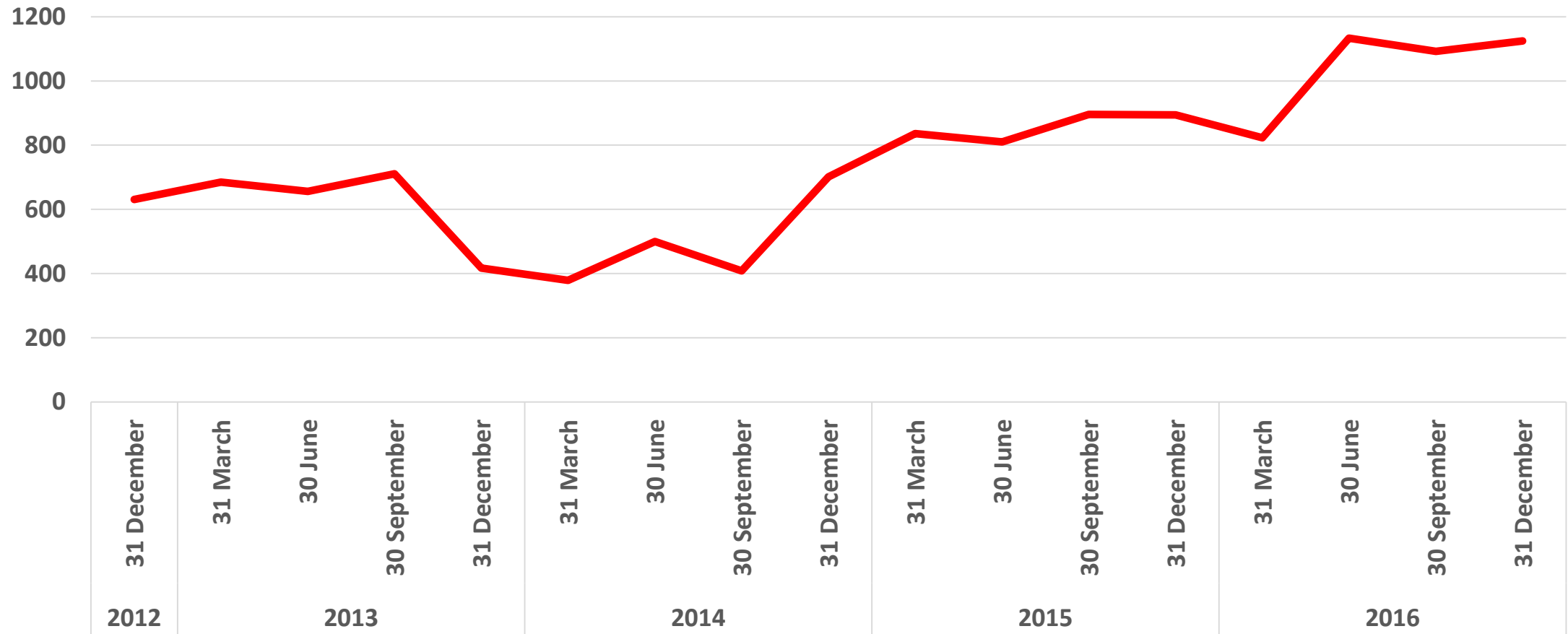
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*In 3 charts

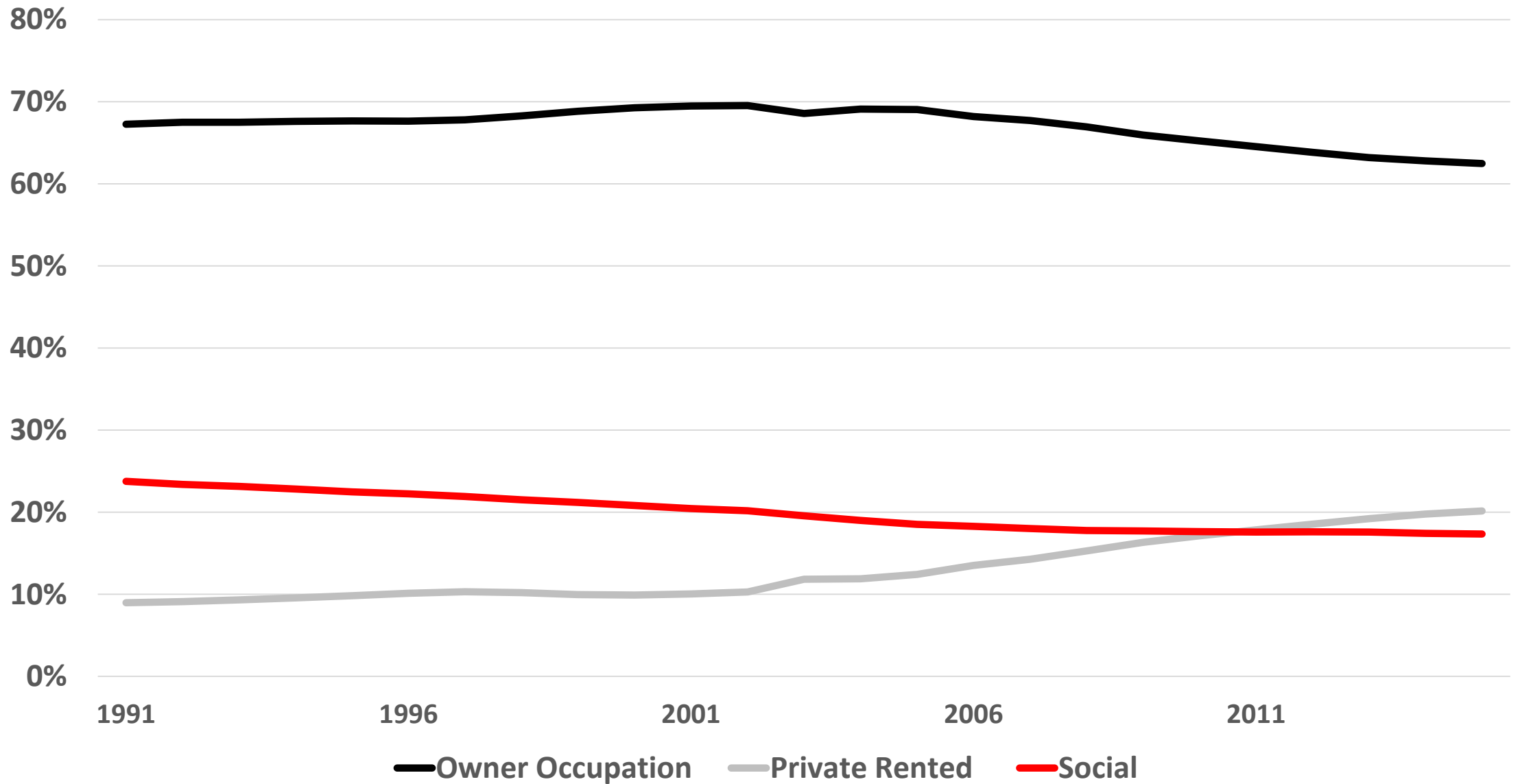
Number of homeless children in TA in England since Financial Crisis



Number of families in B&B accommodation for more than 6 weeks (excluding those pending review)



Trends in Tenure since 1991



Social housing decline: A problem of history?

- **1.5 million fewer social homes in 2008 than in 1980**
- However, if the proportion of all homes which were social homes had stayed the same since 2008, we would have 98,000 more social homes more today.
- The number of homeless families in temporary accommodation currently stands at 60,240 (as of Q4 2016).

Lack of access to private rented sector

I was given a four page A4 booklet that had lists of estate agents and landlords in it and I called over hundred different people. My phone bill went up to £120 from calling them. And **they ALL said, 'no DSS, no children'**

Over a third of landlords surveyed by Shelter/YouGov in 2015 said they are unwilling to, or would prefer not to, let to a household with children.

Historic Research

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The impact of homelessness upon children's health and educational attainment

Vostanis et al. (1998) with Shelter funding:

- **Children who have been homeless are more likely to suffer from mental health problems** than other children, even after being rehoused
- Over 80% of head teacher respondents to survey reported that homelessness had an impact on children's educational progress.

The impact of homelessness upon children's health and educational attainment

NatCen and Shelter (2013):

- Academic studies show **frequent moves associated with insecure housing can be detrimental to children's health and development.**
- For example, several studies find that **moving is associated with lower educational attainment by late adolescence** (Astone and McLanahan, 1994; Hagan et al., 1996)

Research Strand 1:

The Green Book

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Green Book

50 Years On

The reality of
homelessness
for families today

Shelter
at 50

Introduction

In 1966, Shelter's founder Des Wilson published a ground breaking report to show the true picture of homelessness among families in Great Britain and support Shelter's launch in 1966. Due to its cover it was known simply as 'The Green Book'. In 2016 – our 50th anniversary – we re-visit this question. While the situation has improved greatly since 1966, our research has found that previous reductions in homelessness and improvements to people's housing are now being reversed.

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Research methodology (included)

- Analysis of administrative datasets on homelessness, repossession activity, and benefit levels.
- Data on homeless families supported by social services departments.
- Semi-structured interviews with fifty homeless families to collect case histories.
- Semi-structured interviews with twenty council and voluntary sector stakeholders in three areas of England.
- A survey with one hundred Shelter frontline workers.
- An online survey of more than 8,000 people in England

“Last week she had three exams. **She says ‘I can’t learn in here’ so now she just stays at school till late.**

Sometimes, if she has an exam, I go out, just walking around at night with the baby”

Interviews with 50 families: Early Years development

One mother spoke about not feeling it was safe to wean her baby as **she couldn't sterilise bottles and equipment.**

Three other parents mentioned not being able to maintain their children's developmental progress, for example **not having space for young children to practice walking.**

Even **one child missed a year of infant school** as they moved too far from their previous home and were unable to secure an alternative school place.

Interviews with 50 families: Mental health impact

Parents reported **children being more tearful and anxious.**

And **most of the parents interviewed felt that their children's mental health had been affected** by living in temporary accommodation

Parents described **children being more withdrawn, isolating themselves from friends and acting up.**

Interviews with 50 families: Lack of space

Half of the 50 families we spoke to in 'contained' accommodation lived in just one room. **Two thirds of the parents had to share beds with their children.**

Life was generally easier to manage than in shared accommodation

Interviews with 50 families: Detrimental impact on social development

Parents reported that losing their home was affecting their children's friendships.

Many families described that a big issue was that **their children could no longer invite friends over or have sleepovers.**

Others noticed that **children were ashamed of their living situation and concealing it from friends.**

‘He’s becoming a recluse. He said
“Mum, do you know everybody
when they leave school, they go
home. **Where do I go?”**”

Interviews with 50 families: Over proximity

“ I need to change my sanitary wear in private, I need to get dressed in private, I need a minute to cry in private. **I can't do everything in front of that little boy, it's affecting him.** I need a private moment, life's too difficult... The heat. The noise from upstairs.

Research Strand 2:

20 interviews with families
who had been in Emergency
Accommodation

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Five years ago – 5,731 children were living in this type of shared accommodation.

Now there are 12,903 - more than double.

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20 interviews: Impact on physical health and child development

Half of parents felt that their children's physical health had been affected.

For younger children, impacts ranged from speech, toilet training and bed wetting, to setbacks in learning to walk.

'(A health visitor) said it set him back from walking as when I was in my flat he was able to move around but when we got here he had to stay in a cot'

Mum 24

20 interviews: Impact on mental wellbeing

‘He became really bad **hitting his head on the wall, biting himself, ripping his hair out.** There was nothing I could do because I couldn’t make the room any bigger’

Mum 30

17 of the 20 groups of parents felt that their children’s mental health had been affected by living in emergency accommodation.

20 interviews: Impact on education

More than half of families felt that their children's education or development had been affected.

School provided important social support – but teachers felt ill equipped to help with complex housing issues.

'It affected her school work big time. She's started her GCSEs and had **nowhere to do her homework or to study.** Her schoolwork really suffered

Mum 34

20 interviews: Over proximity

All families lived in rooms with fewer beds than people.

My daughter is fifteen and she's always been used to her own room. **Having to share a bed with your mum. It's just degrading.** She didn't tell any of her friends.

Mum 34

20 interviews: Witnessing events they shouldn't

- Half of parents said that their children have seen things they shouldn't.
- Children had seen their parents be physically attacked by other residents, had been spied on by other residents and witnessed many scary incidents.

There's a lot of drugs... One time **he said Mummy I heard a woman on the phone saying 'I'm going to set fire to your face'**. She was saying this and my son was hearing it. I was so upset.

Mum 31

Shelter Services:

An example from Hackney
Family Services

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Hackney Family Services: Overview

The HFS delivers a range of interventions to resolve problems linked directly and indirectly to sustaining a home.

The HFS brings together the strengths of existing and developing partnerships, drawing on expertise and support from services in the community and the sector, securing contractual partnerships with local specialist services to provide a 'supply chain' of interventions for Shelter clients.

The logo for Shelter, featuring the word "Shelter" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

Hackney Family Services: Overview

- In addition to four family support workers, there is an advice, guidance and support worker embedded into the programme providing housing advice to additional families within the London Borough of Hackney.
- Each family is assigned one key support worker who manages their case. This allows the build-up of up of trust between families and the support worker.
- The HFS uses a model of intensive regular support, gradually reducing over time to build family autonomy and control.

Hackney Family Services: Evaluation by NEF

- 14 in-depth interviews with HFS clients and four in depth interviews with professionals were used to create case studies to represent the service activity.
- **Children's behaviour and education was also an issue identified by all families**, and was fully resolved in nearly half of cases.
- The service has supported or is supporting a total of 91 families as of June 2015, and provided advice to 404 families in that same time.

For more information on Shelter services offer, contact Oliver Gray

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Upcoming Research:

20 Interviews with English GPs
and 3,500 public survey

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Campaign launch on 19th April on the impact of housing issues on mental health.

The report will reveal the extent to which people in England are suffering a deterioration in their mental health because of housing problems, and are seeking help from their GPs.

We have interviewed 20 GPs across England and conducted public polling with 3,500 people about the impact of housing problems.

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20 GP interviews:

London (4),
Manchester (4)
Birmingham (4)
Bristol (3)
Sheffield (3)
Newcastle (2)



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Thank you

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