

The impact of living in temporary accommodation on children and their families

@BevanFoundation

@WendyDearden

Introductions

A bit about the Bevan Foundation ...

We are Wales' most influential think tank.

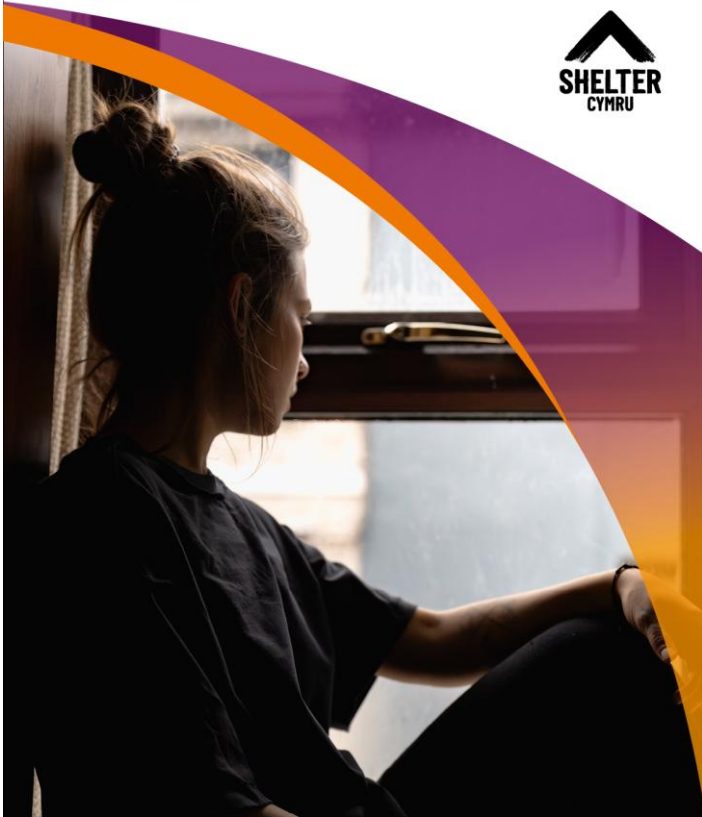
We develop lasting solutions to poverty and inequality.

A bit about me ...



Nowhere to call home:
Understanding our
housing crisis. Living in
temporary accommodation

September 2024



Nowhere to call home:
The shortage of social
and community homes

October 2024

ewmpas



**Getting people out of
temporary accommodation
by boosting access to
social homes**

March 2025

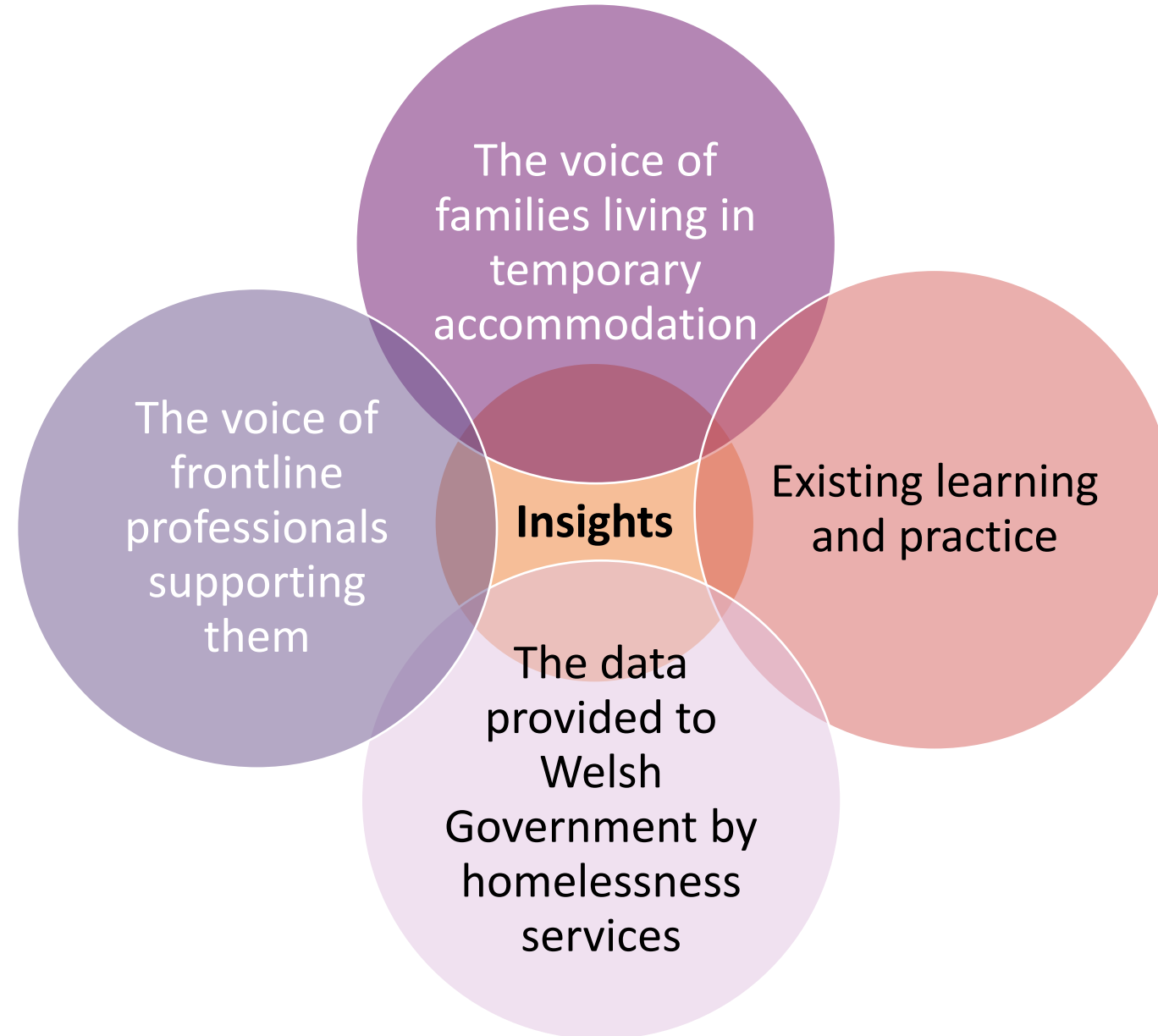


Things to say first ...

- Our research was about temporary accommodation provided by a local authority in accordance with their statutory homelessness duties.
- It captures the picture across Wales and is not focused on any one local authority.
- Temporary accommodation is an important lifeline at a time of crisis, but it can never be a place to call home.
- *“A housing report which isn’t about housing”*



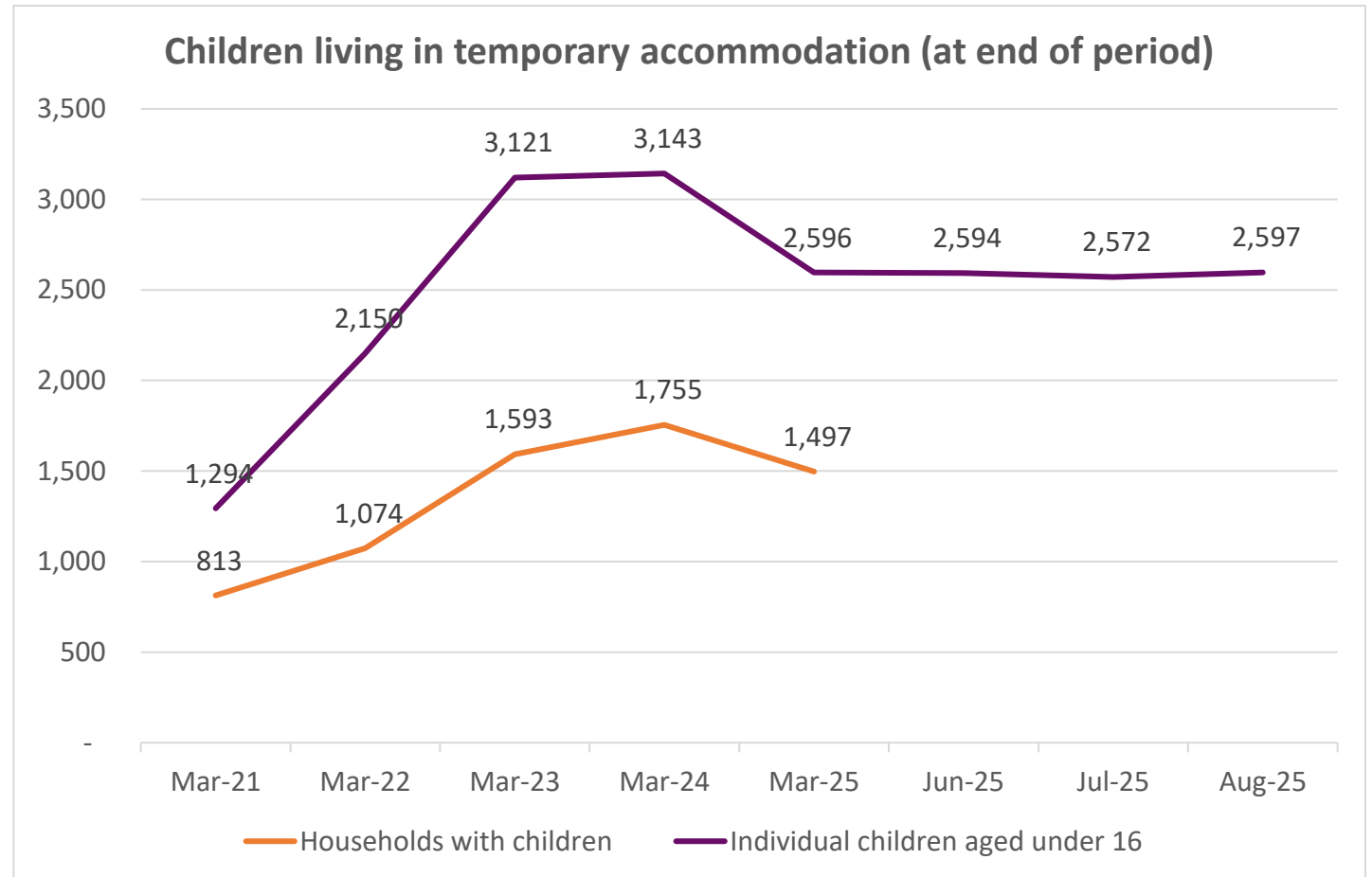
What we did



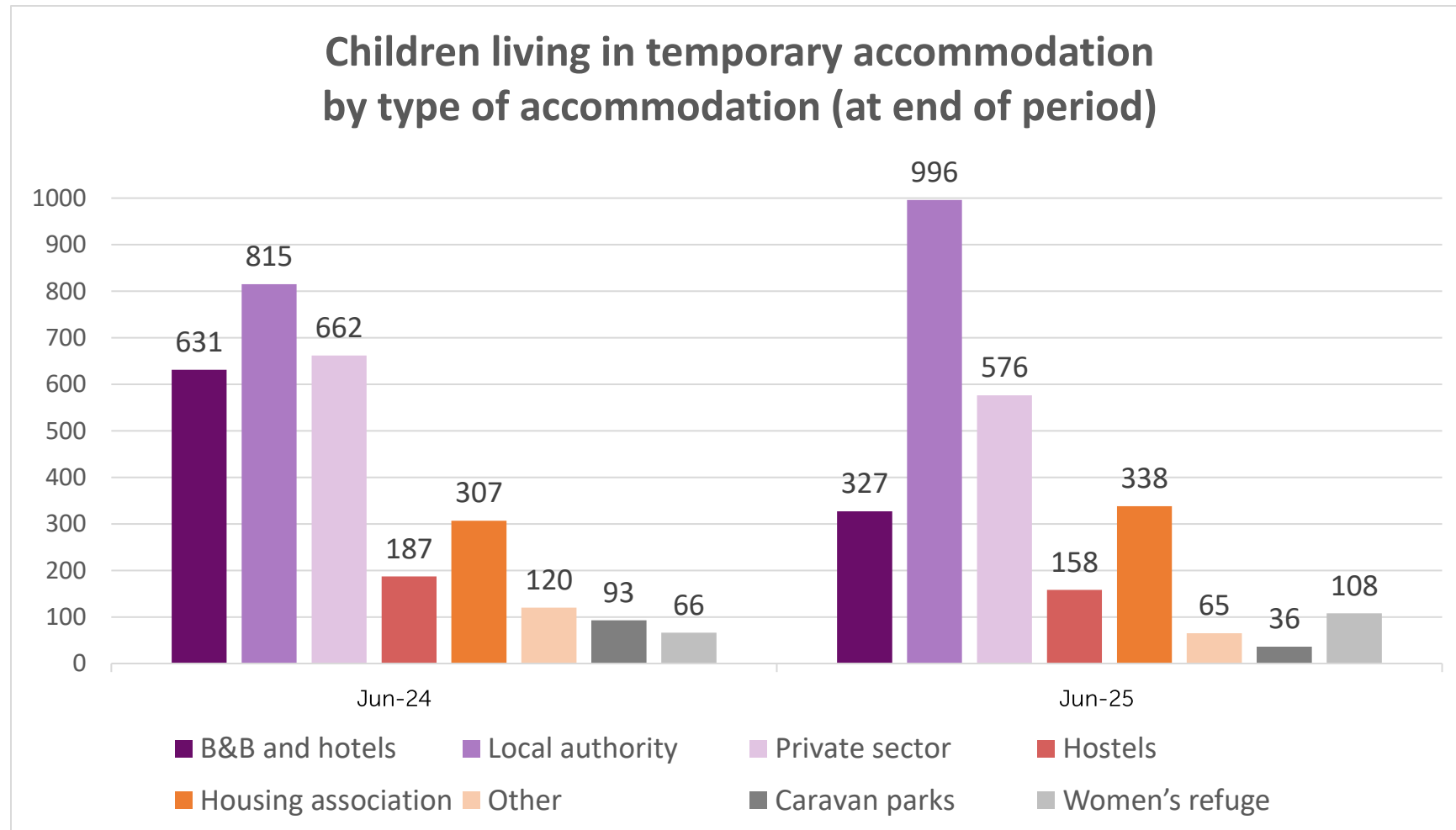
Children living in temporary accommodation

At end of August 2025:

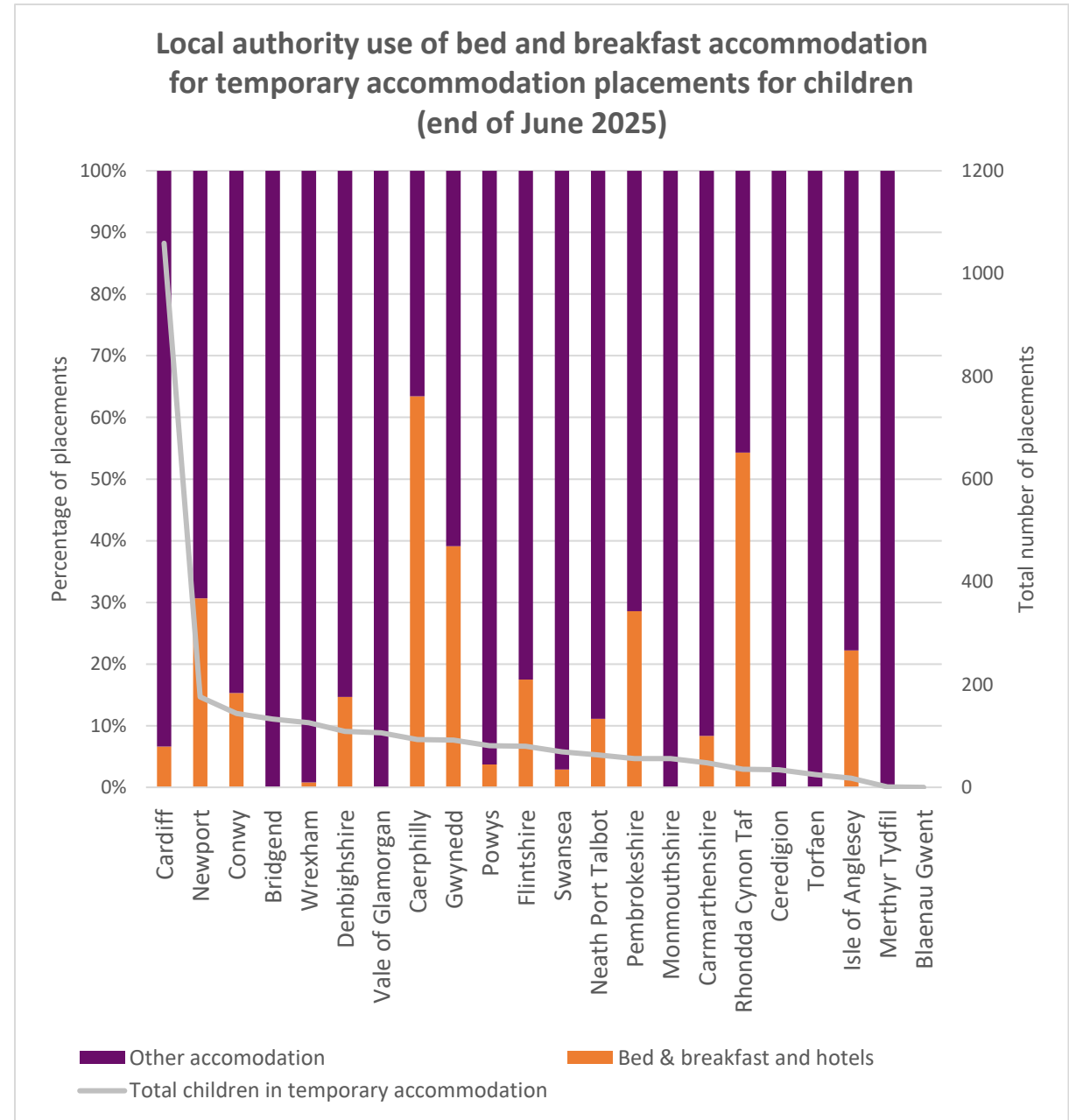
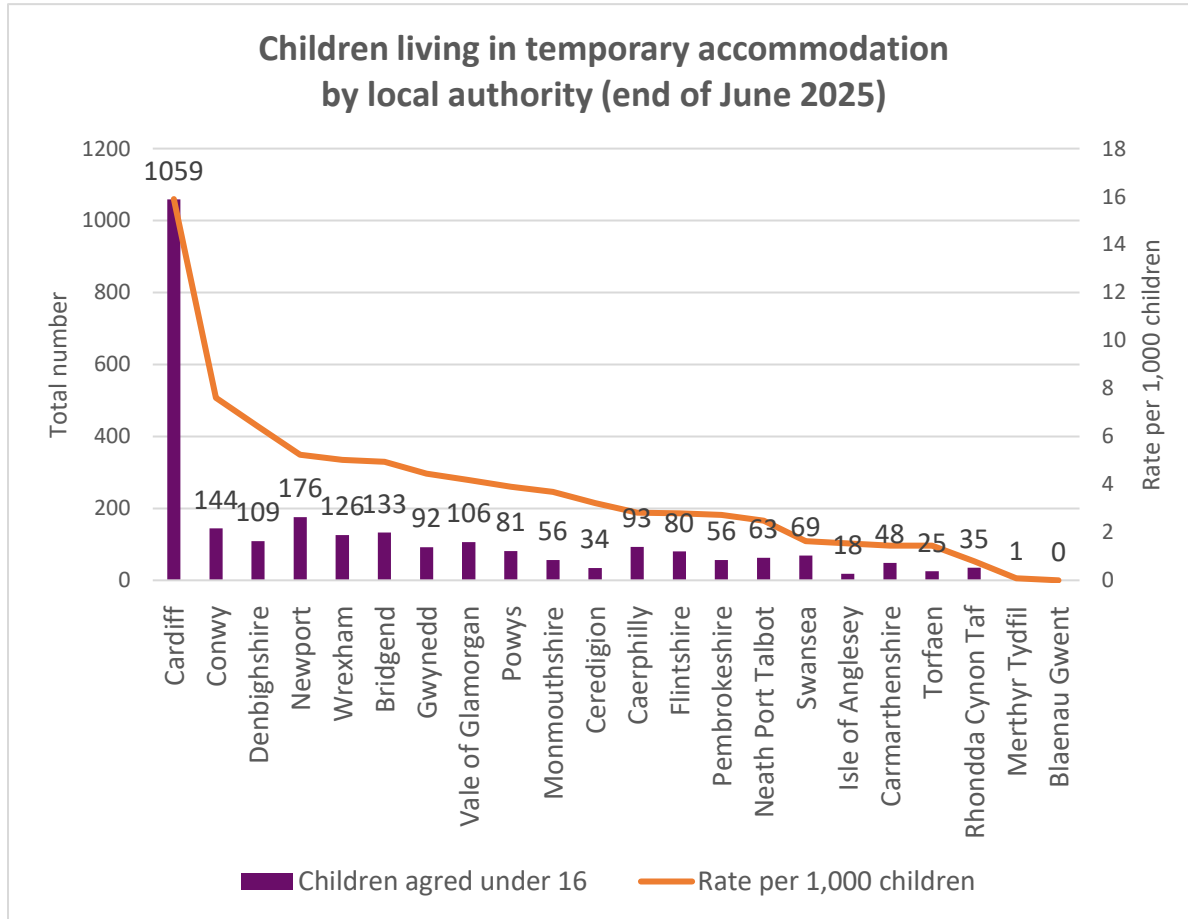
- 11,029 people in Wales living in temporary accommodation
- 2,597 were children aged under 16 (24%)



The accommodation used



Local authority level



The impact of temporary accommodation on children and their families



Child health



Learning
& development



Family life

Recommendations

- Removing the risk of serious harm
- Keeping life as normal as possible



Unexpected child deaths have occurred in temporary accommodation in Wales.

The Bevan Foundation have estimated that this is 1 or 2 deaths per year
- the equivalent of one in every 100 infant and child deaths

But we can only estimate this, as there are no clear data collection processes in place in Wales.

Public Health Wales review the data captured by the Death Review Programme to enable child deaths in temporary accommodation to be recorded and learnt from to inform future regulation.



The Council use one hotel which hasn't even got room for a travel cot. We're all so aware of SIDS and the fact that co-sleeping can increase the risk of that. Every infant needs a cot to sleep in.

Health visitor in conversation with the Bevan Foundation

Welsh Government ensure that no child under the age of two spends a night in temporary accommodation where a cot has not been provided.

We often see accidents happening because there's just not enough room for everything and everyone ... kids getting burned by hair straighteners is a common one unfortunately.

Health visitor in conversation with the Bevan Foundation

It amazing how a pile of things grow.... If you've got everything you need to have surrounding you in one room it can be a lot.

Support worker in conversation with the Bevan Foundation

Free, suitable, and secure storage options are available for the possessions of families as they enter temporary accommodation.

Sufficient storage is available in the accommodation itself to ensure that bedroom/living space does not become dangerously overcrowded.



Shelter Cymru case notes:

- one family who moved three times in five weeks
- two families moving through six different placements before securing permanent housing
- one family's children had to change schools four times in an eighteen-month period due to the family being moved.



Welsh Government enforce the six-week rule for stays in bed and breakfast accommodation and expand provisions to set a maximum on the number of times a family can be moved whilst in temporary accommodation.

One family had their temporary accommodation window smashed. The family boarded the window up, but it took the local authority a year to replace it. This resulted in the room being cold, damp and dark, minimising the family's living space further.

Shelter Cymru Peer Researcher



Welsh Government:

- prohibit the use of accommodation with Category 1 hazards.
- enforce the standards for bed and breakfast accommodation and expand to any type of landlord.
- review and reports upon the use and condition of temporary accommodation instead of delaying reporting until 2030

We could do so much more at school to provide support if we knew ... We'd understand why they weren't wearing the right shoes ...

Headmaster in conversation with the Bevan Foundation



This isn't about information sharing ... it's about child safeguarding. As public service bodies we need to get past the paperwork ...

Primary school staff member in conversation with the Bevan Foundation

Welsh Government include a “duty to tell” in the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill which establishes a notification system between local authority housing departments, schools and GP surgeries.

“They say she can go to a new school and make new friends, but she doesn’t make friends easily. She cried for a whole week about it ... she was bullied at her school because she was new, and she came from a different country. Why would they make her go again to a new school when she will be unhappy?”

Mother talking to Shelter Cymru Peer Researcher



Welsh Government require local authorities to provide free public transport passes for children placed in temporary accommodation that is more than 30 minutes’ safe walk from their current school. Shorter distances should be considered where a walking route to school would be unsafe.

With myself, trying to protect my children and not show the situation we are in, I was constantly on alert. If the phone went, I didn't want to answer it. What if they put me somewhere I can't go? Are they going to put me out on the street? I ended up on medication. I don't know how I'm still sane. I'm just lucky, I've had people supporting me. I've had days where I don't want to get up or go to work. It's had a big impact

Mother talking to Shelter Cymru Peer Researcher



Local authorities should ensure all families with children under 4 years of age who are placed in temporary accommodation are provided with Flying Start outreach support regardless of the type of accommodation they are placed in or its location. Direct referral mechanisms are agreed with homelessness services.



I feel like I am always telling my children to quiet down. Sometimes when they are playing they are loud, and I don't want to be told off for allowing the children to be noisy or messy.

I just wish there was somewhere to play outside. It is so hard for my son to let off steam and few chances for him to play with other children.

Play Wales engagement with families in temporary accommodation

Welsh Government prohibit the use of accommodation which does not provide a child with the means to play. Fund and provide suitable play packs for children living in temporary accommodation.

Recommendations

- *“We are doing the best we can”* but we need to be doing better.
- The Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations Bill is an opportunity for greater regulation
- Not about systemic change – just sensitive, proactive thinking to provide a protective and supportive place for homeless families to have as normal a life as possible.



Our future work...



Supply

Tenure change

Loss of stock

Strategic taxation

Demand

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Larger families

Households
needing
accessible homes

Want to find out more? wendy.dearden@bevanfoundation.org