

Family Voices 2026

Holding it together at home

Raising young children in London's housing crisis



Foreword

A message from our Family Champions Group

We are a group of mums from all walks of life, each with our own experiences and stories. While our paths as people and parents have been different, **we share the same hope for our children: to grow up in a safe, stable and loving environment where they can thrive.** We came together because we want every family and every child in London to have that opportunity. We believe it starts with a safe and secure home, and with people around who care, support and help you through tough times.

We know firsthand **what it's like to raise children in homes that are unsafe or unsuitable.**

Together, we've **shared experiences** of not having enough space for a baby to learn to crawl, moving six times in two years across multiple boroughs, and being forced to live in a single room because mould has taken over the rest of the home. We've seen the impact this can have on our children, and felt the worry, stress, and guilt that come with wanting to make things better but not always being able to. Even when we're doing everything we can, asking for help, chasing responses, and trying to find solutions, we often come up against barriers that leave us feeling unheard and powerless.

As we've listened to one another's stories, we've realised just how **many families are facing similar challenges.**

Parents work incredibly hard to create safe and secure homes for their children, but **too often the systems meant to help can make an already difficult situation even harder.**

Right now, too many families in London are living this reality. We hope this report helps people understand not only the scale of the housing challenges facing families with young children, but also the real impact they can have on parents, children and family life.

“We hope this report helps people understand not only the scale of the housing challenges facing families with young children, but also the real impact they can have on parents, children and family life.”

Family Champions 2026

Key findings

1. Families feel alone with their problems as they navigate a London-wide crisis

More than half (58%) of families supported across London are experiencing housing problems that are detrimental to their family life, including overcrowding, damp and mould, poor repairs, unsuitable homes and housing instability. These are not isolated experiences, but part of a wider housing crisis.

2. Families do not feel safe or settled in their homes

A quarter of children (25%) are growing up without enough space to play and move. 65% of parents described concerns about their children's development, sleep and safety, as well as the suitability of their homes. This rises to 77% among families with children with SEND.

3. Families are doing all they can, but feel powerless

Parents described spending significant time trying to resolve housing problems. They felt they were not getting a response, being taken seriously, or resolving issues. For 61% of parents, housing problems were harming their mental health, while 43% said they were making it harder to parent.

4. Families are also facing extreme financial hardship

Almost a third (32%) of families meet our definition of destitution. Families were making difficult choices to get by: 28% had used a food or baby bank, and 21% had skipped meals or eaten less. Housing problems often led to further costs, making it harder to provide for children.

5. Housing problems add to families' existing pressures

Some families face greater financial and housing hardship. For single-parent families, 46% meet our definition of destitution (compared to 17% of two-parent families). Housing problems affect 76% of parents with a disability or long-term health condition (compared to 45% of other parents). When children have SEND, nearly half (48%) reported safety concerns (compared to 25% of other families).

6. Home-Start stands alongside families, but cannot fix the housing crisis

Families value Home-Start's support, with 88% reporting improved mental health and wellbeing, 84% feeling better able to nurture their child's development, and 91% accessing further services. However, Home-Start's support can only go so far when families are facing complex housing challenges. We can not resolve the underlying issues. Families need safe, suitable, and stable homes.

Introduction

Raising a family without a safe and stable home

For many families across London, a safe and stable home is something they must fight for every day. Every child deserves a home where they can crawl, play, explore and grow. The early years lay the foundations for a child's development, learning, wellbeing and future outcomes (Health and Social Care Committee, 2026). Experiencing hardship during childhood can shape life chances long before adulthood. Growing up without essential needs being met can create stress, disrupt learning and narrow opportunities from an early age (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2026a).

London is facing severe and growing housing and homelessness pressures. Around 102,000 children live in temporary accommodation (London Councils, 2025), and over 700,000 live in poverty (Centre for London, 4in10 and Trust for London, 2024). Many families cannot afford the essentials they need to make their homes safe and suitable for children (The Childhood Trust, 2026; End Furniture Poverty, 2023). Together, these pressures make it harder for families with young children to thrive.

These figures tell only part of the story. Through weekly home visits, Home-Start staff and volunteers see the daily realities shaping family lives: families struggling to make ends meet, children without the space they need to play, parents navigating unsafe housing, and families living with the uncertainty of temporary accommodation.

Drawing on parents' lived experiences and the insights of Home-Start staff, this report details the realities of London's housing crisis and the pressures it places on families with young children. Many of the families we support already face poverty, poor mental health, single parenthood, insecure immigration status, domestic abuse and disability. Yet housing problems are creating a significant barrier to supporting family wellbeing.

When a family lacks a safe, stable, and suitable home, it affects every aspect of their lives, compounding existing challenges and profoundly impacting both parents and children.

We believe the lived experiences of families should be at the heart of the services and policies designed to support them. Parents know what is happening in their homes, what stops their children from thriving, and what needs to change. Their insights must help shape the solutions to London's housing crisis.

About this research

Each year, Home-Starts across London work with almost 7,000 families. Home-Start London is a network of local Home Start charities. We work together to strengthen support for families with young children across the capital and amplify family voices to drive positive change. We carry out annual research to better understand the pressures families face and how we can best support them. Our 2025 report highlighted the impact of money worries and identified housing as an emerging concern, with 44% of parents telling us they needed support with this (Home-Start London, 2025).

This year, we asked families to help shape the focus of our research. We established a Family Champions Group of 15 parents supported by London Home-Starts. Through conversations with the group, housing emerged as a significant issue that profoundly affects family life. Family Champions helped develop the research questions, informed the report's key messaging, and shared their lived experiences. Their voices are reflected throughout this report, including through direct quotes.

Our research methods

Home-Start London led this research, with support from local Home-Starts across London. Between May and September 2026, 360 families took part in our research. Our methods included:

- **Family Champions:** 15 parents supported by London Home-Starts initially shaped the research focus, with 10 remaining actively involved throughout the project. They shared their experiences and guided key decisions about our methods, analysis, research messaging, and presentation.
- **Parent survey:** 351 parents, with more than 630 children, responded. All had accessed Home-Start support in London within the previous year (1st April 2025 - 31st March 2026).
- **Parent interviews:** In-depth follow-up interviews with seven parents, exploring the impact of housing problems and their experiences of accessing support and services.
- **Parent photographs and drawings:** Following advice from our Family Champions, parents who opted in to the survey were invited to share photographs or drawings to visually communicate their housing challenges.
- **Staff focus groups:** Group discussions with 10 Home-Start staff exploring their experiences of supporting families facing housing challenges.



Our sample reflects the circumstances and the families supported by Home-Start, rather than the overall population of London. Participants were predominantly women (95%). They also reflect the diverse communities that Home-Start supports across London, with 27% identifying as White, 26% as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, 22% as Asian or Asian British, 7% as Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, and 11% who identified as another ethnic group (8% preferred not to say).

- **Single-parent families** (180 families with over 320 children, 51% of our sample).
- **Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities** (SEND, 35% of families in our sample, including 27% who are neurodivergent or have a learning difficulty or disability).
- **Parents experiencing mental health problems** (32% of our sample).
- **Parents with a disability and/or long-term health condition** (25% of our sample).
- **Parents who speak English as a second language** (25% of our sample).
- **Families of three or more children** (24% of our sample).
- **Families renting from a council or housing association** (36%).
- **Families renting from a private landlord** (30%).
- **Families living in temporary or emergency accommodation** (16%).



Our findings

1. Families feel alone with their problems as they navigate a London-wide crisis

More than half of parents and carers (58%) with children aged 0–5 supported by Home-Start in London are experiencing housing problems that are detrimental to their family life. This rises to 80% of families supported in Southwark and Lewisham, and 75% in Camden and Islington. This includes:

- Nearly three in ten families (29%) living in overcrowded homes.
- One in five (20%) living with damp, mould or pests.
- 16% living in temporary or emergency accommodation.

The situation is even more acute among the 124 families living in social housing. More than a third (36%) say their home is overcrowded and 28% are dealing with damp, mould or pests.

These figures show the scale of housing problems facing families supported by Home-Start, but they tell only part of the story. In our qualitative research, families described a much wider range of housing problems. They spoke about poor or incomplete repairs and specific problems with the condition of their homes, such as being unable to lock or open windows; a lack of furniture or space for toys; difficulty accessing their home or parts of it; and challenging sleeping arrangements. For those being moved regularly, or waiting for a suitable home, the uncertainty and disruption overshadowed problems with their current accommodation.

For many families, their housing problems felt deeply personal to their home and specific situation. They might be single parents, have experienced domestic abuse, be living in a hotel, or have a child with a disability. Some were housebound, simply because they could not physically carry a pram and a new baby up stairs. Worryingly, we heard parents minimise their families' difficulties and normalise their circumstances, because they were aware that others were facing even worse housing conditions. Serious problems felt like something they simply had to put up with, rather than something they had a right to resolve.

“I know I'm not in a bad situation because I know there are so many people that are worse off.”

Parent in housing association property, West London



Families are navigating a London-wide housing crisis

This map brings together a selection of the housing problems described by families. Each housing problem and set of circumstances is unique. However, we heard a common thread from families across the capital: poor and unsafe living conditions, limited space, homes that are not suitable for their families' needs, and housing instability. Families across London are facing many of the same challenges. Together, they are experiencing a London-wide housing crisis.



58% of families face housing problems that are detrimental to family life



2. Families do not feel safe or settled in their homes

For families, home should be a safe and secure place where children have space to play, sleep, grow and thrive. Yet for many families in our research, overcrowding, poor housing conditions, and unsafe or unsuitable homes make everyday family life a constant challenge, denying parents and children the safety, stability and security that every family deserves.

2.1 Children do not have space to play and grow

In our survey, a quarter (25%) of families say their children do not have enough safe space to play or move around. This rises to 32% of families living in temporary or emergency accommodation. Among families whose children do not have enough safe space to move and play, 37% said this was affecting their children's learning and development, compared with 23% of families experiencing housing problems overall.

For young children, having opportunities to move, explore and play is an important part of their development (Department for Education, 2023; Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood, 2021). The families we spoke to, who were living in overcrowded or unsuitable homes, highlighted how limited space was particularly detrimental for young children. They described raising children in tiny spaces no bigger than a disabled toilet, or watching their toddlers try to play in the narrow strip of carpet between a bed and a kitchen unit. Parents living in small or overcrowded homes described the challenges of creating enough space for young children to move, play and explore; constantly rearranging furniture and belongings, or packing things away each day to create enough floor space.

“I have babies that want to grow and do lots of activities, but there's no space. We have a table, but there's stuff on it. There's nowhere to put our things. I've tried to make the most of our space, but it's not enough. Sometimes I have to pack everything in a suitcase in the morning and put it behind a chair. Then I bring it back out when the children go to bed.”

Parent in council housing, East London

Limited space affects children's everyday routines, including sleep and hygiene, making family life more difficult. We heard from families with multiple adults and children sleeping in one room, where children could wake each other during the night and parents had little privacy. Parents described having 'no space to breathe' and feeling overwhelmed. One parent explained how overcrowding made it difficult to potty train her child:

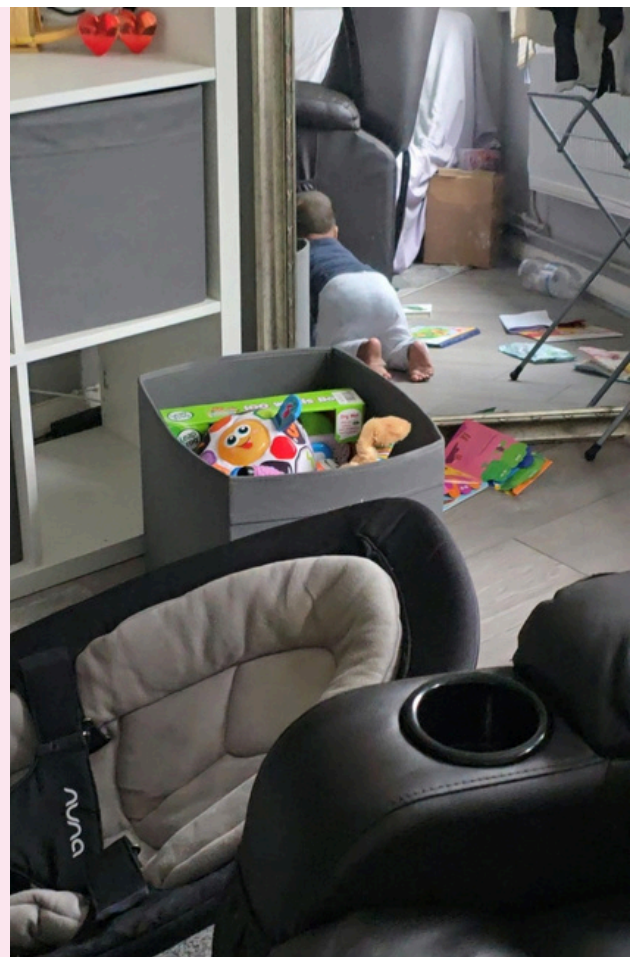
“It was a nightmare to potty train my number three, because my toilet is always busy. I have one toilet for six people, so I couldn't train him when he was ready, until I could take him to my sister's house.”

Parent in council housing, South London

Families also shared how a lack of space affected their children's ability to reach key developmental milestones, such as learning to crawl, walk, or toilet train. Some described holding their child back because it was not safe. One parent detailed how her active toddler started climbing on furniture because there was no floor space.

“My son is a very active boy. He's been trying to walk since he was 8 or 9 months old. But that was a huge challenge. Where is he walking in our flat? Nowhere. There's no space for him to walk, so he would try to get on top of tables, chairs, and climb the Kallax unit. I had to constantly grab him and put him back in his rocking chair, crying. It was so challenging.”

Parent in council housing, Central London



2.2 Families don't feel safe in or around their homes

For many families, their homes and the spaces around them do not feel like a safe place to bring up children. In our survey, 65% of parents experiencing housing problems said these were affecting their children. A third (34%) worried about their children's safety, and 30% felt that housing problems were affecting their children's health.

Mould, damp and pests

One in five families are dealing with mould, damp and pests (20%), rising to 28% of those in social housing. For these families, 55% said their children's health was being affected. In interviews, parents told us about the impact on allergies and asthma, as well as the constant worry about their children's health and safety. They also described going to great lengths to reduce the health risks to their children. This included preventing children from spending time in parts of their home with mould or evidence of pests. One parent shared how the family lived, slept and played in a single room to avoid the mould elsewhere, reducing their two-bedroom maisonette to a one-bedroom flat.

“We don't let her go upstairs. There's too much mould upstairs. We just play in the front room. We sleep in the front room. We do everything in the front room because this is where the mould is less.”

Parent in private rented housing, East London

Some parents described being in a constant state of vigilance. They were spending a great deal of time and energy trying to make their homes safer, even when they could not address the underlying causes. For this parent, the persistent presence of pests restricted where she and her son could safely spend time at home.

“I've had bugs in the cupboards, like pests. It's just awful. They've treated the bugs, but now they are back. They're in the walls, and they're coming into the property because the units in the kitchen have no backs. I've had to buy loads of plastic containers to keep all our food in...My son is very limited in where he can go, because when I find them, I'm like, ‘That's it! You can't go in that room’.”

Parent in a housing association property, West London

Navigating small spaces

Nearly three in ten families (29%) said they were living in overcrowded homes, rising to a third (36%) of those in social housing. For these families, 47% were worried about their children's safety. In interviews, parents explained the difficulties of managing daily life in spaces that were far too small, turning everyday household items like furniture into hazards and making it difficult to move around safely. For one family, the consequences were devastating.

“With six people in two bedrooms, we have so much stuff around; we can’t walk in the house. When my youngest was three weeks old, we fell over. He had a skull fracture. It was the worst experience that any mum could ever have. I was so scared to pick him up and walk in the house again.”

Parent in council housing, South London

Parents also shared significant challenges navigating their homes, particularly when carrying a pram or a young child up and down stairs. This was both physically demanding and, for some families, difficult to manage safely.



“The flight of stairs is very challenging for us because he has chronic lung disease as a result of being born extremely prematurely. He sometimes struggles when climbing up and down the stairs, and I also find it very difficult to carry his buggy up and down the stairs.”

**Parent in council housing
Central London**

Feeling unsafe around neighbours

For some families, concerns about safety do not stop at their front door. Parents described drug use and drug-related activity in their buildings, antisocial behaviour, and intimidating encounters with neighbours. This left them feeling unsafe and unable to relax in and around their own homes. For example, one parent described a frightening encounter with a neighbour, and how other neighbours confront her when her child plays outside:

“I had one neighbour who was high on drugs knock at my door at 5 o'clock in the morning, naked. I'm just not in the correct, happy, or safe space that I thought I would be in here... We're not able to play outside because of the neighbours...they complain and shout. It's very stressful living here.”

Parent in housing association property, West London

Another parent told of repeated complaints from neighbours about the noise from her children's everyday activities, including getting ready for school. A council investigation found no issues, but she still feels unable to let her children play freely. In these situations, parents feel anxious about coming and going from their homes and worried about what their children might be exposed to.



3. Families are doing all they can, but feel powerless

For many families, getting help with housing problems becomes a challenge in itself. 61% of parents said their housing problems were harming their mental health, while 43% said they were making it harder to parent. Discussions with parents and Family Champions showed how the practical and emotional work of trying to resolve problems can add to the pressures families are already carrying.

3.1 Housing problems are stressful and affect parenting

All of the parents we spoke to described spending many hours trying to resolve their housing problems. This included making phone calls, writing emails, completing forms, bidding for or looking for new homes, chasing repairs and asking other services to intervene. This was incredibly stressful, particularly as this took time and emotional energy away from their children. One parent explained the difficulty of balancing the time needed to find a new home while caring for her daughter:

“I am nonstop stressed out, and I'm not giving as much attention to my daughter because I'm trying to look for private rented houses that I can send to my housing officer. It's very difficult to juggle the time I have and split it between needing to find a home and care for my daughter.”

Parent in private rented housing, North London

Families living in temporary accommodation described this time as highly stressful. They experienced repeated moves across London, sometimes staying in each place for only weeks. Parents spoke of the disruption this caused their children, including the difficulty of finding new nursery or school places, or travelling miles to keep existing ones. For families facing immigration challenges, frequent moves created additional barriers. One parent explained how moving repeatedly made it difficult to find a referee who had known them for the three years required for a citizenship application, while forcing them to restart their English language course whenever they were assigned a new provider.

“We are always being moved from temporary accommodation. In two years, we’ve had to move six times. Every time I get an email from the housing officer, I feel so anxious. I’m a single parent with two kids and have no support. Every time we move, we don’t know the area, we need to find new schools and new friends – it has a big impact on my children.”

Parent in temporary accommodation, Central London

3.2 Families don't feel listened to, and the consequences can be serious

For some families, the difficulty was not only that their housing problems remained unresolved, but also how they were treated when they asked for help. In our survey, 26% of families experiencing housing problems said their landlord, council or housing association was not listening or taking action to resolve problems. This rose to 42% among families renting from a council or housing association.

Housing services across London are under significant pressure; many teams have faced cuts and are overstretched, with individual housing officers often doing their best to support residents. However, parents described repeatedly contacting housing services about serious problems, often without seeing meaningful action. Despite following the providers' procedures, they were left to keep chasing a response. This was particularly frustrating when forms were completed online and there was little communication about whether any action was being taken.

“I've tried my best. I've called the council, filled in the form, done what they told me to do, and I'm not getting any response back. It can be so frustrating.”

Parent in council housing, East London

Parents described contacting housing services and feeling that their concerns were not taken seriously. They felt they had to repeatedly explain their circumstances and were treated without empathy. This feeling of not being listened to was compounded when families had to report the same problem multiple times. Addressing mould was a particular challenge, with families describing a cycle of receiving temporary or inadequate fixes, and then having to report the problem again.

“Every time I speak to the council... I feel like they're already trying to back themselves up and defend themselves. I'm just another number. I feel like there's no sympathy or empathy in it anymore. Everything is just about legal requirements.”

Parent in council housing, Central London

For families already managing poverty, parenting and other pressures, having to repeatedly fight for help could add another layer of stress and emotional exhaustion. One parent described how repeated attempts to contact her housing association about a serious leak left her feeling as though her efforts were intentionally being blocked.

Parent in a housing association property, West London

Parent in council housing, Central London

Parent in private rented housing, North London

4. Families are also facing extreme financial hardship

Almost a third (32%) of families in our survey meet our definition of destitution (see page 20). This means they have been unable to afford at least two essentials needed to stay warm, fed, clean and safe in the past month. For families experiencing destitution, housing problems were more likely to be affecting family life: 74% said their housing problems were negatively affecting family life, compared with 58% of families overall. For these families, making ends meet can mean going without essentials, making difficult choices and constantly trying to stretch limited resources.

4.1 Parents are going without to give their children what they need

Parents are making difficult choices every day. For the families we surveyed:

- 28% had used a food or baby bank in the last month.
- 21% had skipped meals or eaten less.
- 22% had cut back on heating, lighting or electricity despite needing it.

Some parents were also rationing nappies and formula to make them last longer and ensure they could meet other essential costs. Among parents with a baby under 12 months, 15% said they had rationed nappies or formula in the previous month. This is consistent with findings from Little Village, a London-based charity supporting families with babies and young children, which found that 26% of families had resorted to rationing nappies (Little Village, 2025).

In interviews, parents described how the reality of living with an extremely limited income meant constantly weighing one essential need against another.

“You don't use too much toilet roll because we sometimes can't afford it, and the same with water. We squeeze ourselves for our needs, so we can provide for the kids. Sometimes it's not nice and pleasant, but you have to do it. You have no choice.”

Parent in council housing, South London

What do we mean by ‘destitution’ and extreme financial hardship?

Our definition of destitution is adapted from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2026b), which describes destitution as the ‘most severe form of material hardship’. It identifies families who have been unable to afford at least two essentials in the past month, including shelter, food, heating, adequate clothing and basic toiletries. We adapted this measure to better reflect the experiences of families with young children in the context of our survey. This included asking whether families had been rationing nappies or formula, and using food or baby banks. We also combined heating and lighting, because the survey was conducted during a warm month. This means our adapted classification is not directly comparable with JRF estimates of destitution.

Why destitution is important to understand in the context of housing

Housing costs are a major driver of poverty in London. In 2025, child poverty was 16% before housing costs and 31% after housing costs, according to Households Below Average Income (HBAI) figures. This was the largest increase of any region in England (Department for Work and Pensions, 2026). Research has also shown a strong relationship between poverty and homelessness (4in10, 2026). Families, and particularly single-parent families, face high risks of poverty, given the costs of housing, childcare and raising a child in London (Trust for London, 2026). Financial hardship and housing insecurity are closely connected for families. This is why it is important to understand and evidence the extent of both.

Why we decided to use the term destitution

We are acutely aware that ‘destitution’ is an economic term. It can carry stigma and is not typically used by families to describe themselves. We spoke with our Family Champions about whether the language of destitution reflected their experiences and circumstances, or whether other descriptions feel more relevant and appropriate. They felt we should use the term:

“It’s important to use this language and not to soften it up for people. As parents we use language all the time to make things seem less bad and to mask the reality but if we want to make an impact we have to say what it is we are really experiencing... It makes people feel uncomfortable but there needs to be more awareness of the realities of families’ lives.”

Family Champions

4.2 Making ends meet takes time, energy, and constant calculation

Parents also described carefully managing very limited household budgets and spending lots of time trying to stretch their money as far as possible. This could mean comparing prices across several supermarkets, closely monitoring every expenditure, prioritising which bills to pay, or making constant budget recalculations.

“I don't do shopping in one place. I go shopping at Lidl, Aldi, Tesco, Iceland, Morrisons... I have to go to 5, 6, 7, different shops just to see that I buy it as cheap as I can.”

Parent in council housing, East London

This constant calculation could be mentally draining, with parents describing how precarious everyday life felt. Many spoke of being acutely aware of how little room they had to absorb an unexpected cost or a change in income.

“You are incredibly aware you are only a whisker away from not being able to afford food; one paycheck away, one Universal Credit shift away. It's a very scary existence to live.”

Parent in housing association property, Central London

Housing problems could place further strain on already tight household budgets. Families described additional costs such as extra laundry, replacing belongings damaged by mould, and throwing away food affected by pests. For some families, these costs meant spending money they simply did not have, as one parent explained:

“I've had to buy loads of plastic containers to keep all my food in, but I don't have extra money to be able to do things like this. I've had to throw out loads of food, and that's literally throwing money I don't have into the bin.”

Parent in a housing association property, West London

4.3 Despite parents' best efforts, financial hardship limits family life

Despite their best efforts to prioritise their children, financial hardship limited what parents could pay for, restricting children's opportunities, home environments and everyday experiences. For one family, this meant making difficult choices about whether they could afford the costs associated with attending nursery, including providing a packed lunch.

“Sometimes we go without or we can't do certain things. It could be that we can't buy certain foods. It could be as simple as not sending her to nursery because I can't do a packed lunch, or not topping up the electric meter.”

Parent in private rented housing, North London

Financial hardship is not just about going without food, heating or other basic essentials. For many families, it also affects their children's ability to take part in everyday activities, socialise and access opportunities that support their development. Parents described having to say no to things their children wanted or being unable to afford activities they felt were important for their children. One parent explained how a lack of money meant having to avoid fun activities and swimming lessons:

“Sometimes she says, 'Mummy I want this.' Sometimes they want me to take them out, like to a fun fair. But by the time I pay the bills, done everything, I don't think I can afford it. I mean swimming lessons, she wants me to do swimming lessons for her. I can't afford this food for us, let alone swimming.”

Parent in council housing, East London

Many families also told us how they struggle to afford essential furniture and storage to make their homes more comfortable and safe. Yet when families lack basic furniture and décor, this can affect children's sleep, stress, development, social engagement, and education (Childhood Trust, 2026). For children, having a home that feels like their own can also support a sense of security, belonging and stability. This parent explained how repeatedly having to say no to her child made her feel worse about her financial situation, particularly when it came to decorating his room.

“My son at the moment is asking for a superhero bedroom, and I'm saying, okay, but not yet. 'Why?' 'Because I don't have the money'. Like it's so hard, he doesn't understand, but it's just a shame when you have to tell your children 'no' or 'not right now' or you can't do it. You feel like you're failing.”

Parent in a housing association property, West London

“That's where the heartbreak is, when it becomes so difficult to experience joy because you are so worried about money all the time. You're playing in the splash park and your son is filled with laughter and joy, and then you remember that you have to get back to the car, because you don't quite qualify for a blue badge and you can't afford to put any more time on that parking meter.”

Parent in a housing association property, Central London



5. Housing problems add to families' existing pressures

For families navigating financial hardship, disability, poor mental health, domestic abuse, temporary accommodation or other complex circumstances, housing problems compound existing challenges and make everyday life harder. Many families face multiple pressures simultaneously. For example, 32% of single parents also have a disability or long-term health condition, and 46% of single parents also have a child with additional needs.

Our research shows that the impact of housing problems is particularly acute among single parents, disabled parents, parents struggling with their mental health, and families where children have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). These groups were more likely than other families to report financial hardship, negative impacts from housing problems, and a greater need for support.

5.1 Single parents experience greater housing and financial pressures

Single-parent families make up 51% of the families who took part in our research, including 180 parents and more than 320 children. Their experiences highlight the disproportionate financial and housing pressures facing single-parent families.

Single-parent families are more likely to struggle financially

Almost half (46%) of single-parent families meet our classification of destitution, compared with 17% of two-parent families. Similarly, four in ten (40%) single-parent families have turned to food or baby banks for help in the previous month, compared with 17% of two-parent families. One single parent described the challenge of trying to provide for her child while being unable to work full-time:

“I don't get financial help from anyone but myself. Being a single mother with a two-year-old, I can't work full-time. It is a struggle.”

Parent in private rented housing, North London

More single-parent families are experiencing housing problems

The pressure was not only financial. Single-parent families were more likely to experience housing problems and to feel the effects. Three-quarters (75%) of single parents said their housing problems were negatively affecting them or their family, compared with 45% of parents in two-parent families. They were also more likely to live in overcrowded conditions (34%, compared with 24% of two-parent families) or with damp, mould or pests (25%, compared with 15% of two-parent families).

Financial and housing pressures can be particularly pronounced for single parents, who carry the practical, financial and emotional responsibilities of family life alone. Alongside these daily pressures, navigating persistent housing problems can leave parents feeling stretched and depleted, taking valuable time and emotional energy away from their children and family life.

“I've been trying to create time for my children, and you want to create time for yourself, and I also have to deal with this housing issue. It can be really draining...I have to pay the bills, being a single mum, the present mum, the working mum, the everything mum. Oh my God, it's draining.”

Parent in council housing, East London

Housing problems were also taking more of a toll on single parents' mental health. For those experiencing housing problems, 57% of single parents said these were harming their mental health, compared with 26% of parents in two-parent families.

These pressures can affect children too. Among single-parent families experiencing housing problems, 69% said they were seeing an impact on their children, including on their safety, health, sleep, wellbeing, behaviour, learning or development, compared with 57% of two-parent families.

“It's feeling trapped, and then it's feeling lonely as well. I don't know where to go, who to go to. He doesn't have grandparents; we don't have somewhere where we can just go and be away, where we can sort this out.”

There are times when I spend time with him, he's seeking my attention, and I'm pushing him away for an email, or chasing up because I'm not hearing back from the council. There are times where I've done it angrily and upset, and then I felt guilty, because he just wants his mum."

Parent in council housing, Central London

5.2 Parents with a disability and/or long-term health condition face additional housing and financial pressures

One in four parents in our survey (25%, 89 parents) reported having a disability and/or long-term health condition. Of these, three quarters (76%) said their housing problems were negatively affecting family life, compared with 45% of parents who did not report a disability or long-term health condition. Six in ten (60%) also said their housing situation was affecting their mental health, and 54% said it was affecting their children.

In interviews, parents described accessibility as a significant housing issue. For parents who struggled with stairs, particularly those with babies or young children, this could restrict their ability to get out of the home and carry out everyday activities.

“I’m also on PIP (personal independence payment) for my medical needs, and I’m currently going through a housing process to be moved...For my medical needs, I need a ground floor or somewhere with a lift. Where I’m living, it’s not medically suitable.”

Parent in private rented housing, North London

Half (50%) of parents who reported having a disability and/or long-term health condition met our definition of destitution (see page 20), compared with 25% of parents who did not report a disability or long-term health condition (32% overall). Families described how these financial pressures made it harder to manage the practical demands of family life. For example, one parent described having to choose between paying for a short bus journey and walking a longer distance to collect her son:

“I’ve got arthritis and endometriosis. I have to walk to pick up my son from nursery. It’s a 10-minute walk, but it’s difficult with my disability because I’ve got arthritis in my hips, so I have to give myself 45 minutes. I don’t have the money to get on the bus, which only takes four minutes.”

Parent in a housing association property, West London

5.3 Housing problems can exacerbate existing mental health problems

Housing problems were particularly challenging for the 32% of parents in our survey who were already experiencing mental health problems. More than three-quarters (78%) said their housing problems were negatively affecting them or their family, compared with 49% of parents who did not report mental health problems. They were also more likely to say their housing situation was affecting their mental health (63% compared with 42%).

Parents experiencing mental health problems were also more likely to be facing financial hardship, with almost half (47%) meeting our definition of destitution (see page 2), compared with 24% of parents who did not report mental health problems (32% overall). Four in ten (41%) had used a food or baby bank in the previous month (compared with 23%). While the survey cannot establish the direction of this relationship, interviews showed how living in poor housing conditions and waiting to find a suitable home could exacerbate mental health problems. One parent described the anxiety and distress she felt every day in her home whilst waiting for a resolution:

“I just want to get out of this space so I can grow. I feel like I’m shrinking every day, struggling with my thoughts and I have to be strong at the same time...it triggers my anxiety... You keep waiting, and you can’t see anything changing, and that contributes to the ill health you acquire in the process.”

Parent in private rented housing, East London

For another parent accessing mental health support, uncertainty about where she might be placed in temporary accommodation created additional anxiety. Being moved away from her existing community could mean losing access to her support network, with implications for her mental health:

“My housing officer has said she has 56 days to house me, or we will be going into temporary accommodation, which could be outside of London. My support system is in London. I have my family, my friends, my psychiatrist, my daughter's nursery, and my university course. I told my housing officer I don't care where I am in London, but I have to be in London because my mental health is really, really bad.”

Parent in private rented housing, North London

Reprint requests to: reprints@wiley.com or <http://www.interscience.wiley.com/jpages/0950-2688/reprints>

5.4 Housing issues feel more acute when parenting children with SEND

The impact of housing problems on children was particularly pronounced among families with children with additional needs. We use the term SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) broadly here, including children with suspected or diagnosed physical, sensory, developmental, neurodivergent or long-term health conditions that affect their learning, development, health or daily life. Parents of children with SEND made up 35% of our survey respondents (122 parents in total).

Three quarters (77%) of families with children who have SEND said their housing problems were affecting their children, compared with 57% of families without. They were also more likely to report specific housing challenges. Nearly a third (31%) of families whose children have SEND said they did not have enough space to play and move around, compared with 22% of those without. Overcrowding was also reported by 35% of families when children have SEND, compared with 25% of those without. It is also significant that 48% were fearful about their children's safety, compared with 25% of other parents.

Half (51%) of parents whose children have SEND said their housing situation was making parenting harder. This compares to 39% of parents whose children did not have additional needs. Parent interviews helped to show how these additional pressures play out in everyday family life. They highlighted how important it was for their children to have a safe, quiet and predictable space of their own, giving them somewhere to play independently and regulate their emotions. For those living in overcrowded or unsuitable housing, finding this space can be difficult. One parent described how the lack of space in her home was affecting both her daughter's and her own wellbeing.

“In our studio flat, my daughter doesn't have enough space to play, and it's creating an overwhelming environment for her, which obviously is going to have an impact on your mental health, because there isn't any breathing space... Sometimes she'll lock herself in my small tiny kitchen to play because she wants to play by herself. Obviously, seeing that as a mother is not very nice.”

Parent in private rented housing, North London

6. Home-Start stands alongside families, but cannot fix the housing crisis

With 58% of families saying that housing problems are negatively affecting their family life, there is a clear need for support that helps families navigate these pressures. Home-Start provides families with trusted relationships, practical support and connections to other services, helping parents feel less alone and better able to manage difficult circumstances.

Our research shows the value of this support, while also highlighting its limits. Home-Start can stand alongside families, help them access support and advocate on their behalf, but it cannot resolve the underlying housing problems that many families are facing. The following sections explore how Home-Start support makes a difference to families, and the increasing demands placed on staff when housing problems remain unresolved.

6.1 Families value having someone stand alongside them

Home-Start volunteers visit families weekly in their homes, giving parents the chance to build a trusted relationship over time. For the families we spoke to, having someone who listens without judgement and understands their difficult circumstances can help them feel less alone. Some Home-Starts also help families to connect with others through the groups they offer. In our survey, 40% of families accessed group support, such as playgroups, parenting courses or peer-support sessions, while 30% took part in family events, trips or days out. These activities can foster a sense of belonging. One parent described why the nature of this regular support mattered to her.

“My son is three. You don't really have adult conversations. So it's nice to have someone to talk to when you're feeling low on energy and when you're with your child. The volunteer comes over on a Wednesday and has a play with him, and she has a talk with me, or we go to the playgroup. Just being there, it was good. The volunteer was just very natural, very real, very down to earth. They weren't playing a role. They were there because they wanted to be there, not because it was their job.”

Parent in housing association property, Central London

“Home-Start will always be dear to my heart. I had three kids under three (with special needs), and I had no family around to help. Home-Start helped me through the journey of managing my kids, my home, and it emotionally helped me to manage and be present for my kids. If it wasn't for Home-Start, I seriously don't know where I would be today.”

Parent in owner-occupied housing, South London

A group of children and adults are gathered on a large, colorful, patterned rug in a room. A woman is holding a book, and a child is playing with a toy car. Other children are playing with blocks and toys on the rug. The room has a wooden floor and a red table in the background.

Parent in private rented housing, South London



The benefits of Home-Start’s support also extend to children. In our survey, parents reported that Home-Start’s support helped their children to:

- Have more opportunities to play (68%).
- Try new activities and experiences (53%).
- Play with other children (36%).
- Develop their speech and communication (23%).

Together, these forms of support give families something that can be difficult to find when life feels overwhelming: a regular connection and reassurance that they do not have to manage everything alone. One parent described how attending a regular Home-Start playgroup supported her wellbeing, while also helping her daughter develop social skills:

“The Monday play group is like a smiling start to the whole week. My baby loves to see the other kids and plays with them. She has learnt sharing and caring. I get uninterrupted time with her in an otherwise busy life, where I can interact and enjoy time with other kids and parents too. It has definitely made me more friends and a reason to avoid Monday blues.”

Parent in owner-occupied housing, North London



6.2 Holistic support helps families access other services

For many families, Home-Start is a bridge to accessing further support. In our survey, 91% of families said that Home-Start helped them to access additional services. This included local children's centres and Family Hubs (46%), food and baby banks (30%), mental health support (28%), and support from other charities (25%). In interviews, parents highlighted how Home-Start staff and volunteers consistently encouraged them to access other services and community-based support.

“They were always advising me to go to the children’s centre, for like one hour, two hours so that I’ll be able to, you know, get out of the house, because I was going through a mental breakdown during that time.”

Parent in council housing, East London

Parents shared how Home-Start helped them feel more confident and proactive in accessing other services and support. Many had previously encountered barriers to seeking help, including negative experiences with services, shame or fear about disclosing their circumstances, and having lost hope that services could or would help them. One parent explained how she was simply used to managing on her own, but Home-Start helped her see the positive side of accessing support.

“I learned through Home-Start that, yes, we can take help. We can't change the situation, but this help is making me learn how to deal better with my situation. You know, I was not taking any help, always running it by myself. I’m learning. Home-Start makes us feel a little bit more comfortable in that.”

Parent in council housing, South London

For many families, Home-Start’s signposting made a tangible and significant difference to family life. One parent described how a referral to a charity transformed everyday life in her overcrowded home.

“The volunteers referred me to a charity that fixed the bedroom for the kids. She saw I needed support and put my name down, and it really helped. They came to my house, painted my kids' bedroom, gave the kids a bunk bed and the baby a cot. My kids really, really love it. Before, we were all sleeping in one bed. Now I'm not just like a crazy canned fish.”

Parent in council housing, East London

Home-Starts across London often give families access to opportunities and experiences that might otherwise be out of reach, often through donations from local businesses. For example, one parent described how this support helped her family at Christmas time.

“They gave me a £30 voucher for ASDA around Christmas time. That was absolutely amazing because it was like, oh my gosh, I don't have to worry about getting a few bits and bobs. They also sent us four tickets to go to a local theatre. I was able to bring my sister and my niece. That was something I wouldn't have been able to do, something Christmassy, and it was really lovely. That's a memory for my son. We were talking about it for weeks after.”

Parent in a housing association property, West London

Support needs in the coming months

When we asked families what support they expected to need in the coming months, emotional support to manage difficult circumstances was the most common response (41%), followed by help with food and other essentials (36%) and housing support (34%).

These needs were particularly pronounced among some of the families facing the greatest pressures. Single parents were more likely than two-parent families to expect to need help with food and essentials (49%, compared to 23%) and housing support (43% compared to 26%). Among parents with a disability or long-term health condition, 50% expected to need emotional support and 49% housing support. In addition, 60% of parents struggling with their mental health expected to need more emotional support to manage difficult circumstances over the coming months.

For many families, emotional support and practical help are closely connected. A parent may need someone to listen, but also someone who can help them find a food bank, understand their housing options, attend a children's centre, or get debt advice. The value of Home-Start lies in its ability to respond to each family's individual needs and see their situation holistically.

6.3 Challenges when supporting families with complex housing issues

Home-Start's role is to provide holistic, relational support to families with young children who are going through tough times. But when a family's housing situation is unsafe, unsuitable or insecure, it can be difficult to focus on anything else. Parents may then find it harder to progress in other areas, such as social connection, child development and parenting. As a result, housing problems can take up a significant part of Home-Start's work, particularly when families have nowhere else to turn.

Staff described supporting families through complex housing problems, including regular moves in temporary accommodation, unsuitable living conditions and homes that raised safety concerns. Housing issues were often intertwined with other challenges, including disability, SEND, insecure immigration status, domestic abuse and mental health difficulties. One staff member described supporting a family where limited English made it difficult to understand what options were available:

“I am currently supporting a family in a studio flat. The mum has a six-month-old, a two-year-old, and a four-year-old, all sleeping in one really tiny, cramped space. I really feel there should be a review, but she just couldn't understand that there is a way to get out of the flat, there is a system. She speaks limited English, and it was really complicated to explain to her.”

Home-Start staff member

Home-Start staff explained how they were increasingly providing housing support and advocacy alongside their wider work with families. This included contacting housing officers, helping families understand their options, writing supporting letters and emails, and raising concerns when housing conditions posed risks to children. In some cases, staff became more directly involved when families struggled to get a response from housing services. One parent described how this support helped her resolve serious problems with a leak, damp and mould:

“I was trying to get it sorted by myself, but no one was listening to me. I just went round in circles until I got to Home-Start. They started coming out and doing home visits. They gave me so much information regarding what I need to do. They helped with writing emails, which really made a difference because when you get a professional, they seem to listen. My landlord got a bit scared by the home-visits. That's when things started to get done.”

Parent in private rented housing, Central London

“Yesterday I went to a family for an initial visit. We got out of the lift to see a man completely naked and acting erratically. The mum lived next door and ushered us in really quickly. The child's having nightmares, saying, ‘stop the monster’. I now have to think: is it even safe to put a volunteer there? ... I will need to talk to the safeguarding trustee and the senior safeguarding lead. What should be an hour-long visit has already created at least six hours of extra work.”

This staff member also explained that escalating the situation could have resulted in the family being moved out of London, away from their support network. While this was an exceptional situation, staff shared examples of families facing serious housing issues that required significant staff involvement beyond the regular volunteer support model.

“We obviously try our best to advocate. But I think there's an expectation from families that we'll get a response from housing, and it's not the case. Getting a response is just as hard for us as it is for the families. Then we're also managing the frustration from families and navigating the housing system. It's like we're the middleman, and we're not getting anywhere.”



When housing problems remain unresolved, Home-Start can provide vital emotional and practical support, but staff cannot address the underlying housing issues themselves. The time and effort involved in supporting families with these problems can also take staff away from other areas of support, including parenting and child wellbeing. One staff member described her frustration at being unable to provide more support around these core areas:

“As a Home-Start Coordinator, I think the issue is that the basic housing situation of each family takes away from the work that we actually are aiming to do. Supporting families with parenting, their mental health, or children's development. I don't believe I'm meeting those needs because there's always a housing situation or something to do with money that's in the background.”

Home-Start staff member

These experiences show the limits of what Home-Start can achieve when housing services do not respond, cases are not reviewed when family circumstances change, or repairs fail to resolve the underlying problem. While Home-Start provides vital support to families navigating housing challenges through advocacy, practical guidance and emotional support, it cannot replace the responsibility of housing providers and local authorities to provide safe, suitable and secure homes. The findings point to the urgent need for wider change across London’s housing system, amid the wider housing crisis and rising levels of child poverty.



Our recommendations

1. Ensure families can access trusted support when facing housing difficulties

Families need access to trusted support to help them navigate housing difficulties. Rooted in local communities, voluntary sector organisations are often accessible and trusted sources of help. By building strong relationships with families, organisations like Home-Start provide holistic support that responds to individual needs and circumstances, while reaching those who are most isolated and least able to access support. They fill gaps where statutory services are stretched and provide early intervention before problems escalate. Through these trusted relationships, voluntary sector organisations also help ensure that lived experience informs the design and delivery of services. Sustainable funding and greater recognition are needed to ensure the voluntary sector can continue to meet rising demand and provide support where it is needed most.

2. Improve and enforce housing standards

Every child deserves a safe place to grow. Families in London should not live in overcrowded or unsafe conditions, whether in private rented housing, social housing, temporary accommodation or emergency accommodation. Despite [Awaab's Law](#) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2026a) coming into force for social housing last year, many families are living with damp, mould or pests. These protections also do not yet apply consistently across other types of accommodation. Minimum housing standards in London must be strengthened and consistently enforced, with a focus on families with babies and young children, whose health, wellbeing and development are profoundly affected by poor housing conditions.

3. Increase the supply of affordable, family-sized housing

While increasing overall housing supply is essential, policymakers must ensure new housing reflects the needs of London's families. This requires clear targets for family-sized homes within housing strategies, including the [London Plan](#) (Greater London Authority, 2021). More affordable, family-sized homes are needed to tackle overcrowding, reduce reliance on temporary accommodation, and ensure children have the space and stability to thrive. Without enough family-sized housing, more families will continue to be forced to leave their communities in London or live in unsuitable conditions.

4. Develop a more joined-up and responsive housing system for families

Families need a housing system that is easier to navigate and more responsive. Too often, families feel lost in a complex, impersonal system, leaving them feeling unheard and frustrated. This takes time away from their children and reduces their capacity to manage everyday parenting demands. Greater transparency, accountability and timely communication on options and rights are needed within London's housing support system. Housing providers and Local Authority housing teams should work more closely with health, early years and family support services such as Home-Start, so housing issues are identified earlier and responded to quickly, without families having to continually repeat their concerns. The new temporary accommodation notification duty (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2026b) for Local Authorities to inform health and educational settings when placing a family in temporary accommodation is a positive step to build on. Its implementation should be supported and monitored alongside wider collaboration across London.

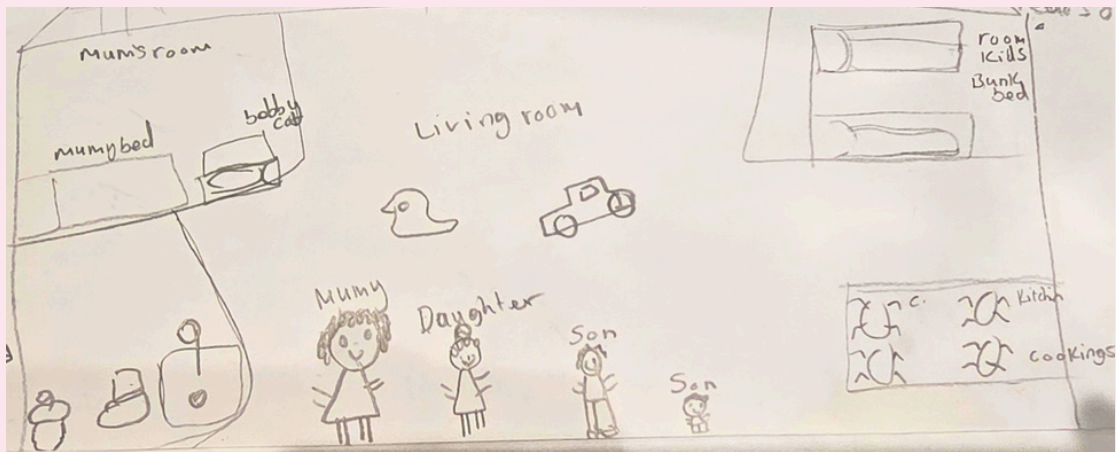
5. Strengthen training and support for practitioners

Families experiencing housing difficulties often face significant stress and trauma. Housing support should therefore be accessible, responsive, and compassionate. Practitioners working with families across London need a stronger understanding of housing rights to identify problems earlier, provide effective advice and signposting, and help prevent homelessness. They also need training, informed by lived experience on the specific difficulties faced by families with young children, as well as the impact of trauma on family wellbeing and engagement with services. Finally, all frontline staff and volunteers working with families in difficult circumstances must have access to ongoing wellbeing support, recognising the emotional demands of their work.

6. Prioritise tackling child poverty

Poor quality, unaffordable housing and homelessness are intrinsically linked to poverty. To secure every child's right to a warm, safe and comfortable home, the Government, GLA and local councils must continue to prioritise tackling child poverty. We welcome the Government's [Child Poverty Strategy](#) (Department for Work and Pensions, Cabinet Office and Department for Education, 2025) and its decision to scrap the two-child limit but urge it to go further and faster. Urgent action to tackle child poverty in London must include uprating Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile annually and lifting the benefit cap, so that parents are not forced to choose between paying their bills and meeting their children's basic needs. This should be backed by a sustainable, long-term hardship fund to help families struggling to afford essential household costs and prevent them from being pushed deeper into poverty.

Parent in council housing, South London



Child in private rented housing, South London

References

- **4in10 (2026)** Towards a child poverty free London: priorities for action. Available at: <https://www.childpovertylondon.org/action-plan-overview>
- **Centre for London, 4in10 and Trust for London (2024)** Tackling child poverty in London: How London can respond to the national Child Poverty Strategy. London: Centre for London. Available at: <https://centreforlondon.org/publication/child-poverty-london/>
- **Childhood Trust (2026)** Housed but not homed: addressing the critical impact of furniture poverty and poor home conditions. Available at: <https://childhoodtrust.org.uk/update/housed-but-not-homed-the-childhood-trust-warns-of-the-impact-of-empty-shell-tenancies-on-childrens-development/>
- **Department for Education (2023)** Development matters. Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2/development-matters>
- **Department for Work and Pensions (2026)** Children in low income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2022-to-2025/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-financial-year-ending-2025>
- **Department for Work and Pensions, Cabinet Office and Department for Education (2025)** Child Poverty Strategy. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/child-poverty-strategy>
- **End Furniture Poverty (2023)** The extent of furniture poverty 2026. A public health crisis. Available at <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/The-Extent-of-Furniture-Poverty-2026.pdf>
- **Home-Start London (2025)** Holding it together: Money worries and emotional strain. London families share their experiences. Available at: <https://home-startlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Holding-it-together-May-2025.pdf>
- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2026a)** Awaab's Law: Guidance for social landlords - Timeframes for repairs in the social rented sector. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awaabs-law-guidance-for-social-landlords/awaabs-law-guidance-for-social-landlords-timeframes-for-repairs-in-the-social-rented-sector/content/uploads/2024/11/RFCEC_BCCS_Report_and_Appendices.pdf



- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2026b)** Temporary accommodation notification duty. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-accommodation-notification-duty>.
- **Greater London Authority (2021)** The London Plan, 2021. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/london-plan/london-plan-2021>
- **Health and Social Care Committee (2026)** First 1000 Days: a renewed focus. Fifth Report of Session 2024–26. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmhealth/802/report.html>
- **Little Village (2024)** Impact Report. Available at: <https://wp.littlevillagehq.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/RLTV57-Impact-Report-2024-5.pdf>
- **London Councils (2024)** London’s homelessness emergency. Key facts, figures, and policy priorities for tackling the crisis. Available at: <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2024/emergency-warning-issued-london-homelessness-hits-new-records>
- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2026a)** Falling through the cracks: how childhood hardship shapes life chances. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/social-security/falling-through-the-cracks-how-childhood-hardship-shapes-life-chances>
- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2026b)** UK Poverty 2026. The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2026-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>
- **Centre for Early Childhood (2021)** Big change starts small. The Royal Foundation. Available at: https://centreforearlychildhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/RFCEC_BCCS_Report_and_Appendices.pdf
- **Sensory Lives (2026)** ‘It’s Like Torture’: Life in Temporary Accommodation for Neurodivergent Children and their Families. King’s College London, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Households in Temporary Accommodation, Shared Health Foundation, Justlife & Autistica. Warnock, R., Brickell, K., & Keast, M. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18742/PUB01-238>.
- **Trust for London (2026)** Poverty is up in London, but not in the rest of the country. Why is London an outlier? Available at: <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/news/why-poverty-up-london/>



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the **Home-Start London Family Champions Group** for generously sharing your time, ideas, perspectives and experiences. Your care, compassion and commitment to ensuring families are heard and supported has been fundamental to this report.

We are deeply grateful to **all the families who shared their experiences** for this research. Thank you for your honesty, openness and thoughtful reflections, and for giving us your time.

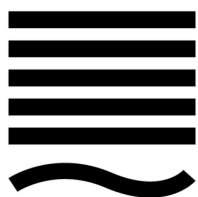
Our appreciation also goes out to the **staff at local Home-Starts across London** for their support, involvement and insights. Your knowledge, experience and dedication to supporting families are invaluable.

Finally, we are incredibly grateful to our **voluntary and community sector partners** for their guidance and collaboration. We look forward to continuing to work together to improve support for families in London.

This report was written by Nissa Ramsay and Sian Koskela, guided by Home-Start London's Family Champions Group.

Supported by

This research would not have been possible without the support of City Bridge Foundation and The National Lottery.



**CITY BRIDGE
FOUNDATION**



Supporting families across London when they need us most

All parents need support at times, and Home-Start is here for families when they need it most. We work alongside parents, offering flexible, holistic support tailored to each family's needs. Through our trained volunteers and skilled staff, we provide support in families' homes, local groups and communities.

Home-Start London is the capital's network of local Home-Start charities, working together to strengthen support for families with young children. We build partnerships, increase our reach and impact, and amplify the voices of families to drive positive change.

Find out more about what we do and how you can get involved [here](#) or email us at: info@home-startlondon.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1161629

www.home-startlondon.org

