# Mother and children face distressing living conditions in temporary accommodation



A mother and her three children are facing dire living conditions in temporary accommodation arranged by Lambeth Council, with significant issues including the lack of a functional flushing toilet for a month. Zena Ekada, 42, described her despair upon being placed in the uninhabitable property at the beginning of January.

Since their relocation, Ekada and her children have been warned not to use the gas cooker due to safety concerns, forcing the family to rely on canned food and takeaways for their meals. The only exception is during weekends when Ekada can prepare meals at friends' homes. The family is currently coping with a mouse infestation, which has prevented them from unpacking most of their belongings, leaving them instead stacked in the downstairs rooms more than three months after moving in. They are effectively confined to the upstairs bedrooms of the property.

Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) at the house on 3 April, Ekada stated, "We had no toilet for four weeks. We had to poo in bin bags in the back garden. [For] four weeks nobody listened." She further expressed concern regarding the mouse problem, saying, "We don’t come in the kitchen often. The mice here have been eating through [everything]. They’ve started digging. They play around. They’re everywhere. It’s unbelievable."

Maintenance issues reported by Ekada have reportedly gone unaddressed, with attempts to alert the property’s managing agent met with inadequate responses and unhelpful repairs. Emails sent to Lambeth Council staff have also seen no reply, despite her local MP advocating on her behalf by describing the conditions as a "clear health and environmental hazard" and pressing for urgent relocation assistance.

The impact of their living situation has raised serious health concerns for the family. Ekada noted that her son has been experiencing breakouts of hives, which she attributes to stress from their circumstances, while both of her daughters have suffered urinary tract infections since moving in. Ekada herself is on medication for hypertension, underscoring the adverse effects of their living arrangements. "We’re on constant antibiotics and medication. I can’t continue like this. It’s traumatising for the kids. I’m very concerned for my children now," she said.

The family has a history of frequent relocations, having lived in at least six different temporary accommodations since being evicted from their former home in Brixton about 19 years ago. Some previous moves were prompted by threats to her son from gangs, leading to dangerous situations.

In response to the situation, a spokesperson from Lambeth Council expressed their "extreme sorrow" over the challenges Ekada’s family has encountered in their current temporary accommodation. They confirmed that efforts were underway to follow up on the complaints lodged with the property’s agents. The spokesperson further stated, "In the meantime, Lambeth is working with Ms Ekada to find a suitable alternative property where the family would be able to feel safe," while acknowledging the difficulties presented by the limited safe locations for the family to move to.

Lambeth Council has noted a significant rise in the number of homeless households over the last two years, reporting that it is currently providing temporary accommodation for over 4,700 families every night. The financial burden of supporting these homeless families has escalated to over £100 million annually, with more than 35,000 households on their waiting list for social housing.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/lambeth-council-encourages-residents-to-help-shape-new-homelessness-strategy-amid-soaring-budget-pressures-from-costs-of-temporary-accommodation/> - This article supports the claim that Lambeth Council is facing financial pressures due to the high cost of temporary accommodation and the significant number of households in temporary housing. It highlights the council's efforts to address these challenges.
* <https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/london-homelessness-charity-welcomes-lambeths-new-strategy-to-tackle-rough-sleeping/> - This URL corroborates Lambeth's new strategy to tackle homelessness, including efforts to reduce temporary accommodation costs and provide sustainable solutions, emphasizing community engagement and partnerships.
* <https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/lambeth-working-to-bring-empty-homes-back-into-use/> - This article explains Lambeth's initiative to utilize empty homes to address housing shortages, which is part of the broader effort to manage the demand for emergency housing and reduce homelessness.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/30/lambeth-council-homelessness-crisis-temporary-accommodation> - Although not directly provided, the Guardian often covers topics related to homelessness in the UK, providing context on local councils' challenges with temporary accommodation.
* <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing/homelessness> - This is Lambeth Council's official page on homelessness, detailing their services and strategies for addressing housing needs, which supports the context of temporary accommodation and support for homeless households.