



The handout distributed before the meeting gives you a brief history of the Forum and it highlights our growing concern about the uncontrolled spread of effectively unregulated supported housing schemes or Exempt Accommodation across our city. Over 90% of these schemes are non-commissioned and, apart from failing to provide adequate support to vulnerable people, they are also having a devastating effect on many neighbourhoods and communities.

Structure of presentation

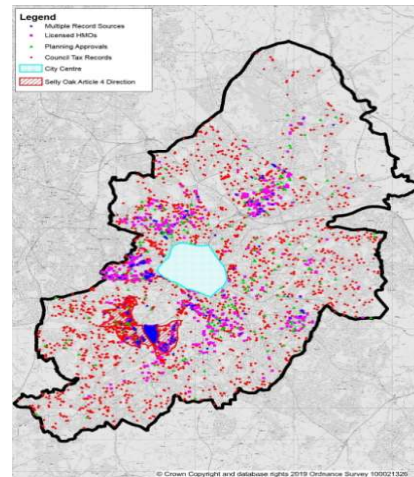
1. Mapping EA across the city
2. Case studies from different local areas
3. Overall position and key recommendations

Photo - Birmingham Live - Broken people and landlords raking in millions - scandal of Birmingham's 'goldmine' hostels - Jane Haynes
Politics & People Editor 18 DEC 2020

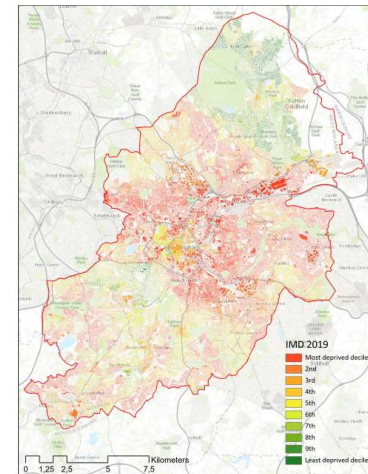
In our presentation, I will start by describing the role that community groups played in exposing full impact of Exempt Accommodation and this is highlighted in our six case studies. We will close by arguing for fundamental reform and we will offer some interim recommendations

Until 2019 the focus was predominately on HMOs

HMO distribution 2019



Deprivation 2019



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About three years ago, community groups across the city became aware of the Exempt Accommodation phenomenon and of the impact it was having in many areas. Prior to that many groups had been concerned - and continue to be - about the better management and control of HMOs. These maps show the distribution of HMOs in 2019 and show how this correlates with areas of deprivation. But just as development of HMOs began to be under better control, communities began to realise that many HMOs were being converted to Exempt Accommodation, thereby avoiding these controls

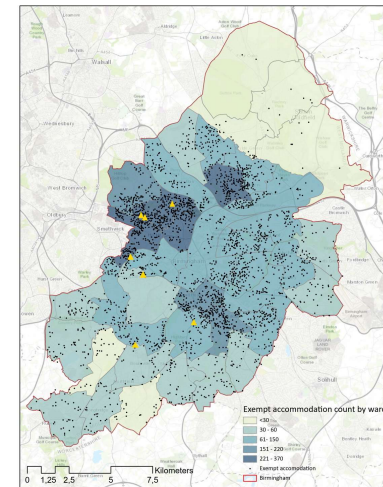
Awareness of the spread and impact of Exempt Accommodation began to develop

Detailed mapping of EA in March 2021 was a critical breakthrough and became an important tool for local action

A new map is in production to illustrate recent trends

01/09/2022

Birmingham
Exempt accommodation by ward



Fol March

 = Denotes location of Residents' Groups featuring in this presentation.

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The rapid growth and spread of Exempt Accommodation appeared to have taken the City Council by surprise, and no-one seemed to fully understand why and how this was occurring. It was only when we used a Freedom of Information request to generate a map of all Exempt Accommodation HB claims by postcode that a full picture emerged. This map had a significant effect on awareness of the extent of Exempt Accommodation and it reinforced the case for concerted action.

The map is now 15 months out of date, and we are about to produce a new one. We know that over this period, the size of the Exempt Accommodation sector has slowed, although it is still massively over inflated. But we are aware of two worrying trends. Firstly, the market is now even more dominated by non-compliant providers, with the largest Reliance and Concept between them housing over 50% of all claimants and still expanding. I must admit we find it baffling that they can get away with this. Secondly, providers are increasingly using smaller family houses in suburban areas to get around planning controls.

On the map you will see several yellow triangles. These are the areas covered by our case studies.

Top 20 Wards (out of 69) for EA density in Birmingham

64% of Exempt Accommodation in Birmingham is within these 20 Wards

1. Stockland Green - 249 (6%)	11. Erdington - 112 (2.7%)
2. Aston – 216 (5.2%)	12. Acocks Green - 105 (2.5%)
3. Soho & Jewellery Quarter - 207 (4.9%) ▲	13. Handsworth Wood - 105 (2.5%)
▲ 4. North Edgbaston - 194 (4.6%)	14. Alum Rock - 97 (2.3%)
5. Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East - 175 (4.2%)	15. Lozells – 93 (2.2%)
6. Sparkhill - 168 (4.0%)	▲ 16. Moseley – 91 (2.2%)
▲ 7. Handsworth - 159 (3.8%)	▲ 17. Bournbrook & Selly Park – 88 (2.1%)
8. Holyhead - 136 (3.3%)	18. Bordesley Green – 87 (2.1%)
9. Gravelly Hill - 133 (3.2%)	19. Small Heath - 87 (2.1%)
▲ 10. Birchfield - 127 (3%)	20. Perry Barr – 84 (2%)

This slide shows the top twenty wards affected by Exempt Accommodation. I believe that you have just visited Stockland Green at the top of the list. Our case studies, which are highlighted, cover a cross-section of the other wards and they will show you just how widespread the problems associated with Exempt Accommodation are.

Westminster Rd Area: May 18 2022



May 2022, in our area -

Unspoilt and cheerful



But just next door - The signs of E.A



Spreading - causing stress and despair

I have lived in the Westminster Road area for 36 years. It has always been a mixed area with families living alongside people in shared houses, mainly occupied by working men with the owner normally living in the property as well. Despite some housing problems, the area has always had a strong community - but in the last five years all this has changed as more and more properties have been converted into run-down and squalid Exempt Accommodation

Westminster Road Area – Cockroaches



Cockroaches are a direct health risk to humans, causing:

- food poisoning
- salmonella,
- staphylococcus and streptococcus.

Prevention advice includes strict cleanliness and
“Keep bins covered, clean, and emptied regularly”



These tenants don't even have bins

1. The most obvious sign of houses used for Exempt Accommodation is the accumulations of rubbish and the fly tipping outside them.
2. This attracts vermin - rats and now, cockroaches, which started in one Exempt property, are now spreading house to house up one street.
3. We see so many hungry tenants on the street, many of them are drug dependent and begging. These people need a hub for proper support, not a 17-year-old girl handing out a food-bank voucher once a week

Westminster Road Area

No co-ordination. Where to turn for help?



4. Exempt Accommodation is putting a huge strain on our local services. Waste disposal, medical, fire, police, and ambulance services, all stretched to breaking point. Tenants of Exempt Accommodation find it impossible to get on doctor's list, so the tenants are forced to go straight to hospital. They are not on the voters' register. No-one knows they exist.
5. Action to tackle Exempt Accommodation is uncoordinated. I spend so much time sending emails here there and everywhere. And when action is taken it seems the real crooks behind Exempt Accommodation just move on - the police, in pursuing offenders, are not going high enough up the chain.
6. There is also a feeling that a lot of people have their fingers in the pie. We need to know, who is raking off the money associated with Exempt Accommodation. Who owns and controls all of these properties, are they paying taxes, how far does the corruption go?
7. People in who have lived in the area for many years have had enough. Now, those who can, are fleeing. Those left behind are helpless and depressed. This is impoverishing the neighbourhood of capable people, able to help out their neighbours. Families can't buy houses to be near each other now. Instead, the Exempt Accommodation vultures move in and continue their destruction of our neighbourhood and the community.

Handsworth Ward Case Study – Antrobus Road Residents' Action Group



Alleyways

Health, environmental and fire risks

These are local alleyways used by adults and children going to school, going home, to work, and to the shops. They're seconds away from residential streets which have concentrations of EA – largely the currently non-compliant providers. There's toxic waste, drug paraphernalia and a complete failure to care for the environment - the worst effects of landlords and managing agents who take no social responsibility. There are regular fires in these alleyways - with risk to local residents - and the fire service is frequently called out.

Handsworth Ward Case Study – Antrobus Road Residents' Action Group

- **An example of an Exempt property in our street: a history of consistently unsafe management.**
- In March 2020 during the lockdown, the house was forcibly entered by police in a major operation with dogs looking for an escaped prisoner. Several vehicles and officers attended.
- Later in the spring, police attended again.
- Next the house was occupied by a family of very young unsupervised children and a social worker recommended their removal.
- Next the property was occupied by tenants using it as a party house and they were subsequently removed.
- Next there was a notice on the door saying the property was empty.
- Next the property was occupied again and there was an incident of a knife attack involving a visitor and residents in the house. We were told that the perpetrators (residents) had run away. A large knife was recovered. 3 police cars, a police van and an ambulance attended.



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An EA example This is a specific example of a non-compliant EA provider – still trading at the same address. The effects on residents - is a weary expectation that this is out of control and will continue.

With the scale of police resources needed for EA callouts, last year local police were even trying to run their own pilot - trying to get plaques on the doors of EA properties with contact details - and to stop inappropriate placements in the same house.

Handsworth Ward Case Study – Antrobus Road Residents' Action Group

These
Streets Are
Made for
Walking



Our Birmingham City Council funded project, working
with police, fire service and council on Antrobus Road
But is it just a sticking plaster?

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These Streets Are Made For Walking – our Birmingham City Council funded project.

This is our current project. Local residents are working actively with police, fire service and council to do something about fly-tipping and rubbish. We hope we're making a difference.

But is it a sticking plaster? We have written to all 11 providers that we know of in the road - and just 2 have replied.

Active residents are time-rich and have to be very knowledgeable about who to refer problems to. It's house by house reporting and no sense of real overall control. Just as one house is identified as EA, another one appears. With yet another loss of a family home.



Exempt Accommodation in the road = 70 plus individuals, often with Mental Health illnesses, drug or alcohol dependency in a Road that is only 150 metres long.

We have over many years suffered from all the problem you have heard about so far and will hear about from others, Drugs, Anti Social Behaviour, Rubbish, Vermin.

Handsworth Wood Ward Case Study – Endwood Court Road



We started out **worrying** about the Exempt Accommodation residents and **still do**, but as the numbers have increased **alarmingly**, we now also **worry** about ourselves, our and our family's personal safety, our wellbeing, our mental health.

I don't want to talk about the **awful**, the machete attack, the screaming in the middle of the night, I want to talk about the **mundane**.

The daily grind of living on a Road like ours which can be exhausting and changes how you approach your every day.

Can we let our children play outside and is it safe for our teenagers to walk down the Road?

Will we be acknowledged with a smile, foul language or even worse an unfounded accusation by EA residents?

Which bins will spill over onto the street this week, to feed the ever-growing rat population?

Should we befriend EA residents and challenge their inappropriate behaviour?

Will the next house for sale become yet another Exempt Accommodation?

Handsworth/Handsworth Wood –

Not just a tale of two streets – Overconcentration of EA kills local businesses

College Road, B20



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Somerset Road B20 (round the corner)



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It also has wider community implications, the increased pressure on already stretched services, Doctors, Police, Social Services, Housing.

We are losing local shops as they cannot sell their goods without a local community, or afford the security personnel needed to protect their staff. **Frustration** and Despair have turned into **Anger** at your Broken System. Firstly, it was with the Local Council, but as we learn more it is with Central Government.

North Edgbaston Action Team (NEAT)

How we evolved

- Set up NEAT four years ago to address crime in area
- Our aim was to bring local residents together to address a number of issues and concerns.
- Working with the local police team and our councillors, we established Streetwatch.
- We soon realised that much of the increase in crime and disorder was due to the number of HMOs that were being converted into Exempt Accommodation.



North Edgbaston Action Team (NEAT)

'Chaos on the streets in Rotten



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- We set up a WhatsApp group as a way to communicate and report crime.
- Incidents of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, loud music, fly tipping,
- Much of this seems to be down to the chaotic and unsafe conditions in many of these EA properties - where people with serious problems are dumped randomly and left to get on with it
- Almost every day the police are called out to EA properties and ambulances have to pick up injured victims

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North Edgbaston Action Team (NEAT)

Taking action



01/09/

- Residents have worked tirelessly with the police and with local councillors to put pressure on the providers of EA. And we have had a few isolated successes
- But just when we get action against one EA property, another one pops up. It is very dispiriting
- The Council is now more aware of the problems - but it still seems to take ages to get them passed up the chain of command
- And the local police team is understaffed, with a continual turnover.
- ***More needs to be done. In each vicinity, there should be a cap on the numbers of EA properties, tighter regulation and control on landlord/agents, more resources to tackle anti-social behaviour and wider powers for the police.***

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Langleys Road & Oak Tree Lane Bordering Bournville



Acorns
Childrens
Hospice

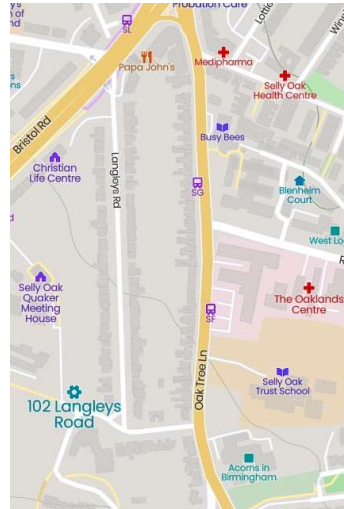
Selly Oak
Trust
School –
Special
Needs



Langleys Road – 9% HMO/EA



Oak Tree Lane – 62% HMO/EA



Langleys Road & Oak Tree Lane –
Bordering Bournville

It isn't just an Inner City issue!

Residents do their best to try and help the people who live in the HMO/EA houses. But they can't substitute for proper support workers or housing management.

- The occasional carton of milk soon translates into constant requests for food or money.
- This leads to friction and more complaints.

This is a cancer, rife in parts of the inner City – fast spreading to leafy residential areas. HMOs are surreptitiously turned into Exempt accommodations.

Residents do their best to try and help the people who live in such houses. However they can't substitute for proper support workers or housing management. The occasional carton of milk soon translates into constant requests for food or money. This leads to friction and more complaints.

No respect for tenants either. They need professional help / guidance and shouldn't be mixed in houses turned into bins for misfits. A dead body was found in such a house.

Local residents are very fearful. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH !

Langleys Road & Oak Tree Lane – Bordering Bournville

House A on Oak Tree Lane opposite Children's hospice.

"Loud music Car engine revving Drug taking inc needles found on our drive

Drug dealing

Rubbish being thrown onto our flat roof (still an issue) Inc human poo and used sanitary towels stuck to window cills

Prostitution Drunken behaviour inc knocking on our front door at all hours

Fights in the street including threatening people with iron bars (to mention this is opposite a children's hospice) which stopped traffic.

Threatening a cyclist who was delivering a Parcel with being set on fire

Threatening the older lady on Langleys Road

Vandalised cars on our drive

Being verbally threatened myself on the phone by the landlord"

House B – Langleys Road

"Well this week hasn't been great with our new neighbours. It's clear some don't stay very long, as one girl has already moved out and new people in.

We had an awful night Tuesday only getting less than four hours sleep.

Arguing on the drive and in the street, people staying there that shouldn't be, and posting loud music after midnight. I messaged the housing officer and she came to see us. I showed her our camera footage and she said she would issue the people concerned with written warnings.

Last night was even worse. I was woken up at half one with very loud music playing and loud voices, seemingly from a get together in the front room. Four people who don't live at the house we're there and at about three o'clock an argument started between one of the occupants and one of the visitors. This carried on outside in the road until they started fighting. The occupant was punched in the face and fell to the floor. We called the 24 line at the housing twice to report all this and I will email it in to the police this morning. Two girls left the property and walked up the road. I don't know if they live further up."

Moseley Community Development Trust - What it's like living in EA

Poor standards of care and inadequate housing

- People thrown together (sometimes women with men) not knowing who they are sharing a house with
- High turnover of 'support' workers- ie. 10 in one year
- No private spaces to meet health workers or family
- Witnessing drug use and violent behaviour
- Appalling housing conditions, including...
 - Damp and mould
 - No electricity, gas or hot water
 - Faeces on walls



Moseley Community Development Trust

What it's like living in EA

Incompetent and corrupt providers

- Instant offers of accommodation (but no accommodation for people with dogs)
- Backdated licence agreements (if one is provided at all)
- Falsified support plans
- Service charges paid in cash with no receipts (or taken from benefits paid directly into landlord accounts)
- Tenants used as low or unpaid workers
- Women asked for sex in return for money, food or better accommodation

Moseley Community Development Trust

What next?

- Honest conversations
- Regular inspections of properties
- Independent, skilled support workers
- Improved partnerships
- Services that are accessible to the people who need them
- Homes, not rooms

*Anji Page, Neighbourhood, Outreach Worker, Moseley Community
Development Trust, anji@moseleyexchange.com*

Summary of the effects of EA on local residents across Birmingham

Crime, Waste, Pests, Mental Health/Stress, Families moving out, Houses for Sale becoming Exempt, Reduced Local Amenities, No sense of control over our environment and our lives, Vulnerable Residents, ASB, Pressure on Emergency Services, Badly maintained properties, Falling House Prices, Fragmented Community Cohesion, Parking, Isolation.

As presented by many organisations to you, the above affects all the residents – EA and all other residents.

A pervading sense of hopelessness

Residents need changes to the law pertaining to EA, to enable us to build a thriving, cohesive communities and to reduce the cost to the Council, NHS, Police, HB.

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Overall position

- **Non-commissioned Exempt Accommodation is a fundamentally flawed way of providing supported housing,** which needs to be replaced as soon as possible.
- **All supported housing should be commissioned by Local Authorities,** funding for support must be ring-fenced and all providers accredited
- A new system will take time to establish, so in the meantime, **the existing system needs urgent and immediate reform.**
- We are in general supportive of the recommendations made by Birmingham City Council to the Inquiry. **However, we have some additional comments/recommendations**

Recommendations

1. Local Authorities should **establish inter-agency and multi-disciplinary teams** (as per the Pilot) to manage the provision of EA working to agreed national and local targets on the supply and quality of provision.
2. Local Authorities must have **sufficient powers to tackle the distribution and oversupply of EA**; this includes ensuring that planning and licensing regulations apply to Registered Providers.
3. The HB regulations for EA should be revised to include **powers to refuse or withdraw benefits from providers that fail to meet specified standards** for care and for the quality of accommodation (including meeting health and safety standards, the Decent Home standard etc.)
4. **The Regulator of Social Housing must be more robust in regulating EA providers** (and the new powers and responsibilities in the *“Social Housing Regulation Bill”* must incorporate this). The Regulator must ensure that when EA providers are found to be non-compliant **any growth is suspended until satisfactory remedial action is taken.**
5. The current system of EA is wide open to corruption and criminality. Police investigations in the West Midlands have exposed some of this, but **there is a need for a much higher-level investigation involving both HMRC and the National Crime Agency.**
6. In Birmingham, **decommissioning EA is a major challenge both to reduce the supply and when failed providers are closed.** This will require additional national resources and integrated action by the Council and the Regulator of Social Housing.

Questions & Discussion

Summary of the effects of EA on local residents across Birmingham

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