

Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 4972 Email clgcom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk

Marcus Jones MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

11 December 2017

Dear Marcus,

Draft Homelessness Code of Guidance

Thank you for taking the time to provide evidence to the Committee on 27 November regarding the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the Draft Homelessness Code of Guidance and the Government's wider efforts to tackle homelessness. As you acknowledged during the meeting, this is an issue the Committee have held a close interest in over recent years, and we will continue to do so as the Act is implemented in 2018.

During the meeting, you said that you would provide further detail regarding the evaluation of the Housing First pilots in West Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool. We look forward to receiving further information in due course.

In the context of the Department's open consultation on the Code of Guidance, I would encourage you to take account of the evidence and concerns raised by our first two panels – Shelter, Crisis, the Local Government Association and London Councils – during the oral evidence session on 27 November. Please find enclosed a copy of the transcript from the meeting which I hope will feed directly into your consultation.

In particular, Crisis told us that they were concerned that the Draft Code of Guidance did not reflect the spirit of the Homelessness Reduction Act, and that changes were required to encourage a culture change within authorities to ensure homelessness is prevented at an early stage, and all people are treated with empathy, dignity and respect. After the evidence session, Crisis wrote to the Committee outlining several examples where the Draft Code should be changed to better reflect the intention of the legislation. For example, they highlighted the guidance on eligibility for assistance (Chapter 7), and argued that there was too great a focus on those who are not eligible for assistance, as opposed to making more positive statements about what assistance people are eligible for. Please find enclosed a copy of the additional information from Crisis, which has also been published on our website.

In addition, the Local Government Association and London Councils told us that the funding announced by the Government for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act was highly likely to be insufficient. London Councils told us that they estimated London alone would need £77 million a year to implement the Act, but that the Government's proposals would leave a gap of around £67 million each year. It is important authorities have the funding they need to meet their new prevention responsibilities under the Act. As such, we would be grateful if you could provide us with further information as to how the Government has estimated the costs and savings likely to arise from the implementation of the Act, including the underlying calculations used.

The Committee asks that these concerns be considered as part of the Government's consultation and looks forward to seeing this reflected in an updated Homelessness Code of Guidance in the New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and a period at the end.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Communities and Local Government Committee