Dear Meg,

HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

On the 20th December 2017 the Public Accounts Committee published its Homeless Households report. It was recommended that the Department writes to the PAC by December 2018 explaining what reductions have been made across all measures of homelessness. Please find attached annex A, which is a note from the Department that outlines these reductions.

In the report, the PAC also recommended that the Department for Work and Pensions write to the committee to set out what work it has undertaken to identify any elements of welfare reform that are having an impact on homelessness, and what steps it has taken to mitigate them. Please also find attached annex B, which is a note that MHCLG and DWP have written collaboratively that provides the information requested.

SIMON RIDLEY
ANNEX A

The Department for Communities and Local Government should by the end of 2018, write to the Committee to explain what reductions have been made across all measures of homelessness

On 13 December 2018 the Department published statutory homelessness statistics for April to June (Q2) 2018. These data are the first set of statistics since the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), on 3 April 2018, and the first statistical release using Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) data.

Both the HRA and H-CLIC represent complex system changes which will take time to bed in. As a result of this, these data sets were published as experimental official statistics and are not directly comparable with previously published figures. The Department’s analysts and our Homelessness Advice and Support Team have, and will, continue to work with local authorities and IT suppliers to maximise H-CLIC data returns, and to improve data quality. Therefore, the data are provisional figures, and will be revised in the next publication.

This quarter’s figures are based on full or partial returns for 322 out of 326 local authorities (98% response rate). The impact of missing data for the four local authorities that did not provide returns differs by data type. Complete temporary accommodation data was provided by 299 (92%) local authorities. The temporary accommodation data for the remaining 27 local authorities was estimated using the previous quarter’s returns, and the quarter-on-quarter change observed in groups of local authorities.

The following is a summary of the headline statistics, which give an early indication of the impact of the HRA:

- Between 3rd April and 30th June 2018, 58,660 households were owed a new statutory homeless duty;
- Of these 33,330 households were owed a new prevention duty and 25,330 households were owed a new relief duty;
- Between 3rd April and 30th June 2018 local authorities accepted 6,670 households as being owed a main homelessness duty;
- On 30th June the number of households in temporary accommodation was 82,310, up 5% from 78,540 on 30th June 2017, and up 71% on the low of 48,010 on 31 December 2010;
- Of the 10,540 households whose prevention duty ended between the 3rd April and 30th June 2018, 6,700 households or 64% had secured their existing or alternative accommodation for at least 6 months;
- Of the 7,230 households whose relief duty ended between 3rd April and 30th June 2018, 4,100 or 57% of households had secured accommodation for at least 6 months;
- Combined, prevention and relief duties ended for 10,800 households by securing accommodation for 6 months or more;
- The number of households with dependent children in B&B accommodation fell 3% from 2,640 to 2,560 between June 2017 and June 2018;
- The number of households with dependent children in B&B accommodation over six weeks fell 25% from 1,200 to 900 in the same period;
- The most common support need identified was a history of mental health problems which was reported by 12,700 of households with support needs.
ANNEX B

The Department for Work and Pensions should, by the end of 2018, write to the Committee to set out what work it has undertaken to identify any elements of welfare reform that are having an impact on homelessness and what steps it has taken to mitigate them.

To deepen our understanding of the impact of welfare reform on homelessness and rough sleeping, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions jointly commissioned a feasibility study into researching the wider causes of homelessness, including households’ experience of the welfare system as well as other factors such as housing affordability or relationship breakdown.

The feasibility was completed by the independent supplier, Alma, and was comprised of three strands which included:

- a rapid evidence assessment on the causes of homelessness in the UK;
- a critique of existing models of homelessness and homelessness projections; and
- identification of options for developing a predictive, quantitative model or suite of models on homelessness.

The study recently reported and recommended that we develop a flexible suite of models to predict future homelessness trends and appraise policy changes. We are working with the ministerial teams across the Department for Work and Pensions and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to decide how best to take this work forward. Following their consideration, we will write back to the Committee setting out our plans for next steps.