Dear Chair,

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH: NEXT STEPS

On 20th December 2018, Simon Ridley wrote to the Committee setting out the key findings from the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping feasibility study which Alma Economics completed over the course of last year. Please find attached a note to update the Committee on how the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions, jointly plan to take forward the findings and recommendations from the report. I hope the Committee will find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Pocklington

JEREMY POCKLINGTON
CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH: NEXT STEPS

The key recommendation from Alma Economics' 2019 report on the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping was that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should develop a flexible suite of model(s) to predict future homelessness and rough sleeping trends and appraise policy changes. In line with the Government's commitment to tackle this issue, both departments will be taking forward work required to build such a model.

In addition to making this recommendation, the study also found that there is, generally, a limited existing evidence base (both external and government led) on the drivers and causes of homelessness and rough sleeping. The majority of research found through the study was qualitative in nature and comes from relatively small-scale surveys of homeless individuals, or staff working with them. There is also limited evidence available on how causes interact, the relative strength of different causes, and how the causes of homelessness changes over time.

In order to build the model, the evidence on the causes and drivers must be improved. Colleagues in MHCLG and DWP have been working together to assess how both departments can take forward a programme of research that achieves this. Following this consideration, we have agreed to take forward the following work which we will develop with the support of independent experts:

- an evaluation of the relationship between future policy changes and homelessness;
- data linking between MHCLG homelessness data through H-CLIC and DWP data-sets. One key data linking exercise we will undertake is between H-CLIC and Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) which will provide us with a source for detailed, case level, longitudinal information that would allow innovative research and analysis into the causal impacts of a range of factors on homelessness and inform the evaluation of future changes to welfare reform; and
- analysis of the relationship between homelessness and various population characteristics, economic variables and existing policy arrangements.

Following this analysis, work will begin to develop the predictive model. We estimate, from start to finish, this programme of work will take around two years to complete but can provide six-monthly updates on progress to the Committee if this would be helpful.

August 2019

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government