Dear James

I am writing to provide the Committee with an update on a number of recent announcements about work that is underway to prevent, tackle and end homelessness and rough sleeping in Scotland and the progress we are making in delivering on the work that was set out in the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan, published in November 2018.

A consultation was launched by the Cabinet Secretary at the Housing First Conference on 22 May 2019 on improving Temporary Accommodation Standards. This consultation is seeking views on taking forward the commitments we made in the Action Plan on transforming temporary accommodation. It also includes a set of questions to support partner organisations to help ensure a wide range of views from those with lived experience of living in temporary accommodation are captured.

The consultation seeks views on extending the seven-day restriction on time spent in unsuitable temporary accommodation to all people experiencing homelessness. It will also produce new advisory standards for temporary accommodation, which we aim to publish later this year. Finally, it will consider what a legally enforceable temporary accommodation standards framework should look like. This consultation closes on 14 August 2019, when further analysis will be undertaken.

We published a consultation paper on 31 January 2019, which sought views on the commencement of the Local Connection and Intentionality provisions in the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003. This closed on 25 April 2019 and the consultation paper, an analysis of the consultation responses and a summary of our future plans, was published on 10 July 2019 and can be viewed here.
It is our intention to bring a commencement order to the Scottish Parliament for the Local Connection and Intentionality provisions in November this year. This would bring the intentionality provisions into force immediately but, for local connection, would begin a process where the Scottish Government is required to consult on and issue a Ministerial Statement within 12 months on how these new powers are to be used. Subject to the outcome, this would be followed by laying a further Scottish Statutory Instrument in the Scottish Parliament to implement the changes.

The consultation paper also sought views on narrowing the definition of intentionality to focus on instances of applicants ‘deliberately manipulating’ the homelessness system. There are currently no provisions in legislation for the definition to be changed but we will consider the responses to the consultation and engage further with local authorities and others as we consider the options for taking this proposal forward.

On 17 July 2019, I announced a change to the funding that will be made available to all Local Authorities to implement their Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs). Following a thorough review of the local authorities’ RRTPs by the Scottish Government, and in recognition that a successful transformational move to rapid rehousing and Housing First by default will require sufficient resources, I agreed with Councillor Whitham, COSLA’s Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, to increase the funding allocation for the implementation of the RRTPs from the initially committed £15 million to £24 million.

The funding distribution of the initial £8 million for 2019/2020 from the £24 million allocation was agreed by COSLA Leaders on 28 June 2019, following consideration by the joint Scottish Government and COSLA Settlement Distribution Group (SDG). A joint letter was issued to all 32 Local Authorities to advise them of this change and their allocation.

We will continue to monitor the impact of any changes we introduce on individuals experiencing homelessness, local authorities and third sector providers using evidence from current data collections, and we publish this data regularly. I will also set out plans for further engagement and possible research to help more fully understand the impact of the changes. I will update the Committee further as this work progresses.

I hope the Committee finds this information helpful, but please let me know if there are any further questions related to this work.

Kind regards

KEVIN STEWART