10 October 2019

Dear James

I am writing to you on World Homeless Day to provide the Committee with an update on current work that is underway to prevent, tackle and end homelessness and rough sleeping in Scotland and the progress we are making in delivering the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan.

I am pleased to let the Committee know that I have commissioned Crisis to establish a working group, chaired by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, which will consider options for a wide-ranging public sector duty to prevent homelessness. This group will work with a wide range of stakeholders from across the public and third sectors, as well as academics and others with knowledge of good practice and what works in prevention both in Scotland and elsewhere. The Group will make recommendations next year about how a prevention duty could be taken forward.

I am also pleased to confirm that following consultation earlier this year, the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 (Commencement No. 4) Order 2019 is being laid in the Scottish Parliament today. This Order takes forward the changes to intentionality and local connection legislation recommended by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), with the intention of removing barriers people face to getting the support they need when they experience homelessness.

From 7 November, when the Order commences, local authorities can exercise discretion about whether to assess homelessness applications for intentionality. Officials will work with local authorities to monitor the impact of these changes and ensure we are in a position to provide local authorities with the right support to deliver the changes.

Commencing the Order has no immediate effect on local authorities in relation to local connection. Instead, a process begins where, from the date of commencement, Scottish Ministers are granted the power by statutory order to modify referrals relating to local connection.
connection. Ministers are required to consult on and publish a Ministerial Statement within 12 months of the date of commencement on how the new power is to be used. Following the Ministerial Statement, a further Scottish Statutory Instrument (affirmative) is to be laid in the Scottish Parliament to implement the changes. Subject to the consultation, we anticipate that the local connection changes will be introduced 18 months after the date of commencement. This would mean changes to local connection in May 2021.

I also intend to publish an interim factual update of the statutory Code of Guidance on Homelessness on 7 November to coincide with the commencement of these changes. As set out in the updated Code, the updated legislation will enable local authorities to adopt a person-centred approach to assessing homelessness applications and I am confident that local authorities will find this change means they can local focus on providing the support people need when they need it. We will set out our plans to overhaul and re-write the Code of Guidance by the end of this year.

In terms of rapid rehousing, we have set up a sub-group of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy group to oversee the work around rapid rehousing transition plans. It is currently working on developing a monitoring framework to capture all this work as well as developing a basket of examples of practice that local authorities can determine if they could work in their own local authority area.

We have been corresponding and meeting with local authorities regularly on their rapid rehousing transition plans. This has meant that feedback to all 32 local authorities was given by the end of March 2019 on their first iteration and following this feedback local authorities have provided further information on their plans. 30 local authorities received feedback on 13 September on this. The two local authorities who did not receive feedback are Glasgow and Edinburgh who are still working through their approaches.

On funding, £32.5m has been announced to support Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) and Housing First. Scottish Government officials have continued to engage with COSLA officials since the announcement of the first year’s (2019/20) funding of £8 million for local authorities’ RRTPs in July 2019. A funding formula was used to distribute the initial funding based on the average number of homelessness assessments over a three year period. I am keen to move towards a plan based approach for funding in 2020/21 and 2021/22. Scottish Government officials are currently developing options which are being discussed with COSLA as we look to ensure that funding can be directed towards specific transformational aspects of a local authority’s RRTPs. We hope to be in a position to confirm funding with local authorities in December 2019.

The Housing First Pathfinder Programme across Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling has provided secure tenancies with the necessary wrap around support to the first 118 participants in the programme at end of August 2019 and shows a sustainment rate of 97%. The majority of other local authorities across Scotland are now using the learning from the pathfinder programme and giving consideration to starting their own Housing First programme during the implementation of their RRTP.

I have outlined above both funding and strategic interventions we are putting in place, but it is imperative that our programme of change, as set out in the Action Plan, works on the frontline. In order to help effect that change on the local frontline, it is vital we involve people with lived experience and frontline workers to help ensure that our plans to prevent and respond to homelessness work in reality. To that end, we are supporting Homeless Network Scotland, who are working in partnership with Cyrenians and Scottish Community
Development Centre to establish a Participation Programme, where a Change Team will
ensure those on the frontline help drive transformational change.

I am clear our goal is to end homelessness altogether. However, in the shorter term it is
important we work hard to provide the right type of support for people who are at risk of
experiencing the worst forms of homelessness particularly as it gets cold. Therefore, I would
like to inform the committee I have made additional funding of £164,000 available from the
Ending Homelessness Together Fund to support a range of programmes across Scotland,
which help people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, rough sleeping or homelessness.
These schemes have been identified to support priorities agreed for this year by frontline
practitioners. They build on learning from projects funded in previous years, a number of
which have now been mainstreamed by local authorities.

Local authorities have a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation to anybody they
believe to be at risk of homelessness. However, some people may find themselves rough
sleeping if they cannot access support at the right time, and some can find it difficult to seek
out or accept support. We know that people experiencing rough sleeping will have
backgrounds of significant trauma including domestic abuse, adverse childhood experiences,
bereavement, mental and physical ill health and substance use.

This extra support will help local authorities and organisations on the frontline working to
safeguard people in crisis. Outreach workers will be able to spend more time building
relationships with the people they see, concentrating on offering effective support which
takes account of each person’s circumstance. A breakdown of the funding interventions is
provided at annex A.

I will continue to update the Committee as the work progresses, and I hope this update is
useful.

Kind regards

KEVIN STEWART
### Annex A

**Winter interventions funding breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Night Shelter</td>
<td>£35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible emergency funding</td>
<td>£55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Edinburgh Council – link worker</td>
<td>£29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A peer worker model to work with people with no recourse to public funds rough sleeping in central Edinburgh</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate, print and publish basic information about rights and services available in a number of languages.</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for rough sleeping outreach services in rural Ayrshire</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£164,000</strong></td>
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