

16th October 2020

Kelly Tolhurst, MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Kelly Tolhurst,

We are pleased to welcome you to your new role as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping & Housing at MHCLG at what is a crucial window of opportunity for ending rough sleeping and preventing homelessness. The Government's strategic leadership with 'Everyone In' and the initial response to COVID-19 was most welcome, and we need this leadership and commitment to continue so that the opportunity to end homelessness is not lost.

Homelessness is more than a rough sleeping problem. The total number of households in temporary accommodation in December 2019 was over 88,000, the majority of these households with children. 128,340 children were housed in temporary accommodation, which is the equivalent of **455 primary schools' worth of children**. We are storing up huge problems for future generations if we do not take this opportunity and tackle homelessness now.

The National Federation of ALMOs is the membership body for local authority arms-length housing organisations (ALMOs). We represent 29 ALMOs across the country managing just under 400,000 council homes. A number of our members have responsibility for the delivery of homelessness prevention and relief services on behalf of their parent local authorities.

We recently published our [best practice report on homelessness](#), *Can social housing rebalance the homelessness equation?* which explores the structural causes of homelessness and the best practice work that ALMOs are doing in the areas of prevention and relief. We provide 11 in-depth case studies from areas as diverse as Newcastle, Barnet, Wolverhampton and Cornwall, all of which demonstrate the value of prevention, the need for strong local partnership working and strategic leadership, and innovation on the ground.

While the triggers for homelessness are individual (e.g. a relationship breakdown, eviction), the causes of rising levels of homelessness are structural: a scarcity of genuinely affordable housing, increasing reliance on an insecure and unaffordable private rented sector, austerity cuts to wraparound community services and local authorities, and the widespread prevalence of domestic abuse.¹ Added to this, some well-defined groups of people are more likely to become homeless, including care leavers and prison leavers. We will not achieve the government's pledge to end rough sleeping by the end of this parliamentary period without an integrated strategy across a number of policy areas.

¹ For those households owed a homelessness duty by their Local Authority in 2019, 9% reported that they were at risk of or had experienced domestic abuse.

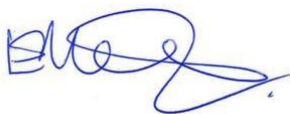
Key policy adjustments from the government that could greatly assist local authorities and ALMOs in their duty to tackle homelessness, include:

- At least 90-100,000 new socially rented homes a year to make sure that everyone has a home that they can genuinely afford. Building these homes in the social housing sector would also guarantee their residents the wraparound housing support some may need to help maintain tenancies and improve their life chances, so preventing further homelessness.
- Regulation of the private rented sector should be adjusted to stop it being a route into homelessness. Section 21 evictions should be banned, and the government should implement their proposed reforms within the PRS as soon as possible;
- Urgent welfare reform is needed to remove its current triggers of homelessness: permanent lifting of the LHA rates to reflect the true cost of rent; scrapping the Benefit Cap; and reform of Universal Credit so that it is not a barrier to maintaining a home;
- Long-term, sustainable and sufficient funding is needed to develop prevention and relief strategies, with built-in monitoring and evaluation to show they work. This includes long-term funding for those with complex needs through Housing First projects.

We would be keen to meet with you and your advisers to expand on these points and discuss with you how the Government can best support our members work on preventing and tackling homelessness.

We should be grateful if you could let us know when might be best for a meeting by either replying to this email or by ringing our Policy Director, Chloe Fletcher on 07526171033.

Yours sincerely,



Eamon McGoldrick

Managing Director, National Federation of ALMOs