

MAYOR OF LONDON



**London Housing
Directors' Group**

To:

Rt Hon. Michael Gove
Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities

Re: London's growing homelessness crisis

We are writing to register our collective alarm about London's growing homelessness crisis and call on the government to take urgent action. Although homelessness has been growing nationally for some time the most recent homelessness statistics have revealed that the number of households living in temporary accommodation is now at its highest point since 2005. And while the homelessness crisis is a national problem, it is most acute in London, where London households in temporary accommodation account for almost 60% of the England total. At the same time London is now facing an unprecedented crisis in procurement and supply of temporary accommodation. We include in this, all forms of temporary accommodation provided by local authorities discharging their homelessness duties, by the Home Office or under the Children Act.

We want stays in temporary accommodation to be as short, safe and healthy as possible. Temporary should be temporary, with people moving into suitable settled homes as soon as possible. What should be a stepping-stone back into suitable, settled homes can instead prove damaging to health and wellbeing. We are united in calling for change and willing to work together in a whole-London effort that improves the experience of all households in temporary accommodation. But we can't do that without action from government to address the severe challenge of sourcing suitable temporary accommodation and securing affordable homes, in particular social rented homes, for homeless households to move into.

We set out below some of our key concerns and proposals for action.

Prevent homelessness – Invest in the next generation of social rented homes

- Long-term investment in new and existing social rented homes is the only way to bring down the numbers in temporary accommodation and address housing inequalities in London.
- We want government urgently to work with local authorities to address the current supply crisis and bring forward more and better quality temporary accommodation to improve the experience of homeless households and bring down costs to authorities.
- Long term, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels are too low. Raising them will mean fewer people become homeless and make it easier for councils to source temporary accommodation.
- We want to see an immediate increase in Discretionary Housing Payment funding to support local authorities through the current crisis.

Raise standards – Regulation must be the government's responsibility

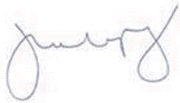
- Standards in temporary accommodation are inconsistent and often poor. A lack of amenities to cook, do laundry, access the internet or allow children to play safely are affecting child health and development.

- We need new, enforceable national standards for temporary accommodation that are consistent with decent homes standards and will apply to all properties being used for temporary accommodation regardless of who owns them; and regardless of immigration status.
- Location of temporary accommodation matters to all homeless households and it is important for them to stay close to their networks and support. Councils' efforts to make this possible are currently significantly undermined by the difficulties securing affordable temporary accommodation. We want better understanding about the impact of removing minority and marginalised communities from informal networks that do not exist elsewhere.

Children in temporary accommodation – Our hope

- We want to be able to place all children housed in temporary accommodation under the Children Act or homelessness legislation in accommodation that has a kitchen where meals can be prepared.
- We are committed to working towards everyone in temporary accommodation having a named person and contact information in the local authority to get in touch to report issues.
- We are committed to working towards developing a manual in every borough that helps families settle in, know where to get advice and other support, including informal community groups and networks.

Signed:



Tom Copley
Deputy Mayor of London for Housing
and Residential Development



Dinah Roake
Chair of the London Housing Panel




Joanne Drew and Jamie Carswell
Co-chairs of the London Housing Directors' Group