

Housing Special Interest Group – Update on exempt accommodation

Following our meeting on Tuesday, we have received an update on Department of Work and Pensions/Communities and Local Government plans for exempt accommodation.

There will be no change to the definition of exempt accommodation, it is however intended to bring in primary legislation to amend the regulations related to the definition to stop the widespread abuse (particularly in the homeless/chaotic lifestyles sector) of the system that Lord Freud believes is a significant problem. It is unlikely that legislation will be enacted until after the General Election, and possibly won't even be drafted before then. It is unclear when, how or if there will be any consultation about the wording.

There will be short-term widening of the scope of exempt accommodation to protect tenants in such arrangements from being subject to bedroom tax and the Universal Credit (UC) cap. It will also protect people with Personal Budgets as the wording around "funded by a public body" will include PBs.

This widening is intended to cover a period between now and the drafting of the primary legislation mentioned above and the outcome of a consultation paper to be issued on the administration of exempt accommodation post UC full implementation. It is not anticipated that this paper will propose tight criteria for administration as this is viewed to be a matter of local interpretation. The intention is only for it to allow an agreement to be reached on which of three funding structure options would be most appropriate

1. Impose a base rent cap in UC and have any top-up administered by Local Authorities
2. Transfer the entire exempt budget to Local Authorities
3. Not known at this stage

There doesn't appear to be any indication of when and how this paper will be launched.

Department of Health are not involved in discussions related to any of the above.