



Housing and Support Alliance, Rodney Chambers, 40 Rodney Street, Liverpool L1 9AA

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Letter to Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government,
The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
By email: greg.clark@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Copy to:
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith
Secretary of State for Community and Social Care, Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP
Secretary of State for Health, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chief Executive, Homes and Communities Agency, Andy Rose

22nd July 2015.

Dear Secretary of State.

Exemption from social rents provisions of Welfare Reform and Work Bill

We are leading providers of supported housing in England. We are writing to request confirmation that you will exempt providers of specialised supported housing from the social housing rents provisions of the Welfare Reform and Work Act. These provisions require registered providers to reduce rents by 1% per year for the next four years.

As you will appreciate, we are currently in the process of urgently reviewing our business plans for the coming year and we need to have certainty on this matter as soon as possible – this is of critical importance to our tenants who are among the most vulnerable members of our society. Without a definitive answer on this point we are simply unable to plan for future provision.

Specialised supported housing has long been recognised in guidance produced by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) as having significantly greater costs than mainstream social housing. For these reasons, rents for specialised supported housing are exempt from the HCA's rent guidelines that apply to social rents and affordable rents provided the criteria set out in that guidance are met. It would therefore be appropriate to continue that principle of exemption by confirming that the 1% rent reductions do not apply to this category of housing.

The consequences of not making this exemption would be catastrophic for people who need supported housing. We would not be able to develop the new housing solutions that are so desperately needed by vulnerable people currently in large, remote institutions or living with parents who are no longer able to cope. In hundreds of cases, we would be unable to renew private sector leases with head landlords which would mean our tenants would have to be moved to unacceptable emergency accommodation against their and their families' wishes.

We are committed to providing housing solutions for the thousands of people currently in long term placements in Assessment and Treatment Units. However, failing to provide the exemption would simply mean that we are largely unable to provide the supported housing in the community which these people so desperately need. This would entrench the lack of progress since the Winterbourne View scandal as noted by Sir Stephen Bubb last week.

Failing to make the exemption would also be more expensive for the tax payer who would have to fund highly expensive institutional provision instead of cheaper, community based solutions.

We welcome the briefing that DCLG has apparently given to the housing press (Inside Housing, 17th July) that specialised supported housing will be exempt from the social housing rents provisions of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill, and we look forward to your confirmation that this will be the case.

Yours Sincerely,



Alicia Wood, CEO
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On behalf of:

Housing and Support Alliance
Golden Lane Housing
Lets For Life
BeST Ltd
Frontline Associates Supported Tenancies
Dimensions
Care Housing Association
Egalite Care
Nottingham Community Housing Association
Reside Housing
Creative Support
Midland Heart