

From: Laura Caton, LGA Policy
Sent: 25 April 2018 16:41
To: Howard Sykes
Cc: Terry Stacy; Mark Norris, LGA Policy
Subject: Follow-up supported housing and refuge provision

Dear Councillor Sykes

Further to the conversation about supported housing and refuge provision at yesterday's Group Leaders' meeting, please find below an update on our policy work and position:

- In the Autumn Statement 2015, Government announced its intention to apply the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to social rents, including supported housing, with effect from 2018. The implementation date was subsequently deferred to April 2019. The LGA's February 2017 response highlighted significant concerns because the proposal failed to take into account the higher cost of this type of housing and the fact costs are less susceptible to regional variations. This posed a significant financial risk to councils and providers.
- On 31 October 2017, the Government published a new [consultation](#) and confirmed that the LHA rate would not apply to supported housing or wider social housing, which was [welcomed](#) by the LGA. The proposals include a new local ring-fenced grant for councils to commission short-term supported housing, including refuge provision. The Government will publish its response to the consultation this summer. Short-term supported housing is currently funding through the welfare system via Housing Benefit (HB).
- The LGA's February 2018 [response](#) broadly welcomed the proposals to strengthen local commissioning of short-term supported housing, although we did highlight the need for sufficient funding now and in the future and argued for a two-year transition period to properly prepare for and test the proposals. Our response was joint with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and based upon extensive consultation with the sector, including an event attended by over 40 councils in December 2017. We had a clear steer from councils and Community Wellbeing Lead members that the proposals were a significant improvement on the previous LHA proposal and would give councils greater flexibility to commission services locally.
- For refuge provision, this potentially gives councils the freedom to commission packages of services that includes emergency accommodation and reflects local need. Councils would likely continue to fund some refuge provision, but might also commission other forms of emergency accommodation such as safe flats which are more appropriate for families. More broadly we have argued for a greater use of domestic abuse funding to be used to help families stay in their own homes where it is safe to do so to minimise disruption for children, to provide wrap around services such as counselling for victims and interventions targeted at reducing offending particularly by repeat offenders to prevent multiple incidents.
- A number of organisations have lobbied against the proposed local grant for short-term supported housing, because of concern that councils will cut funding currently routed through HB. The most successful and prominent national campaign has been run by the national voluntary organisations Women's Aid and Refuge.
- In addition, confidential conversations with officials have suggested Ministers might be rethinking the proposals for short-term supported housing. In particular, we have heard that lenders have expressed significant concerns to Ministers about their ability

to continue investing in provision given concern about the sufficiency and longevity of the proposed local grant. If this is the case, then it clearly risks the whole reform.

- Alongside the supported housing consultation, MHCLG is carrying out an audit of all support services provided to victims of domestic abuse, including refuge provision. This is to get a sense about how well MHCLG money has been spent and how councils are delivering against the 2016 National Statement of Expectation. In addition, the Government's review of refuge provision is expected to be published in November 2018 and the supported housing reforms will need to dovetail with that review.

Although our current policy position is clear, we are aware that the situation is changing. As agreed yesterday, we will seek a further steer, initially from CWB Lead Members, in the light of the Oldham Council motion and wider developments, at their next meeting on 15 May. We will update you again after that meeting.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Best wishes
Laura

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From: Laura Caton, LGA Policy <Laura.Caton@local.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, 16 May 2018 16:48
To: Howard Sykes
Cc: Terry Stacy; Mark Norris, LGA Policy
Subject: Follow-up supported housing and refuge provision

Dear Councillor Sykes

Just to update that the Community Wellbeing Board Lead Members discussed supported housing and the Oldham Council resolution at their meeting yesterday.

Members noted the concerns raised in the resolution about the potential impact of the Government's proposed local short-term supported housing grant on refuge funding and provision. They asked officers to do further work on what an alternative approach for funding refuges might look like, in order to inform a fuller discussion in the near future.

As part of this, officers are speaking to Women's Aid on Friday understand their views on what an alternative approach might look like. We will then report back to Lead Members and seek a further steer on whether or not they wish to re-visit our existing policy position.

I will continue to keep you posted.

Best wishes
Laura