



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Rt Hon Therese Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
6-12 Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA Caxton House

17 May 2022

Dear Therese,

Data on exempt accommodation

The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee has contacted the Department for Work and Pensions requesting data on exempt accommodation for each year from December 2015 to December 2021, for each English local authority. This would be an expansion of the information previously provided to the Perry Barr Housing Action Group as a freedom of information request in February 2019, which focused on seven English cities.

Officials at DWP have informed us that they have: *“identified an issue with the way supported housing is recorded on Local Authority systems which leads to an undercount in the Specified Accommodation caseload. Our view is that the information we hold on exempt accommodation only paints a partial picture, and so is not of a sufficient quality to support publication. For this reason we are unable to provide the Committee with this information as we should only provide information that we are content to be published.*

DWP have recently made investments to deliver improvements to Local Authority systems, which are designed to give us better Housing Benefit data on exempt accommodation. These will take effect from April 2022, although it should be noted that they are targeted at new claims and so will take some time before data quality improvements will be seen for the entire stock of exempt accommodation.

As your email notes, we have previously provided information in response to an FOI. However FOIs are subject to lower data quality guidelines than Committee requests. As such, it is standard practice to answer the FOI with suitable caveats where there are concerns over data quality (assuming an answer can be prepared within cost limits).”

The Committee is pleased that actions are being taken to improve the quality of data available. In the meantime, and to provide insight for the Committee’s inquiry, we would be content to receive the lower quality data with the appropriate caveats, and therefore request that it be sent to us as soon as possible.



**Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities
Committee**

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts'.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee