



Petitions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
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30 March 2020

Dear Robert

I am writing because of the enormous public interest in coronavirus, which has resulted in more than fifty e-petitions on coronavirus being published to date, signed by over two million people. We are receiving hundreds of petitions on coronavirus on a daily basis, which show there is a lot of anxiety and concern about the support available to people affected by the outbreak, and the Government's response to the outbreak.

Following the large number of petitions on coronavirus we asked the people who had signed these petitions what questions they most wanted answers to. On Wednesday we held an evidence session with representatives from the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Education, and the Department for Work and Pensions, putting many of these questions to Ministers and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

This was an extremely useful session, but the public also suggested a number of questions which are the responsibility of other Departments, including yours. I am therefore writing to ask you to respond to the following questions, which came through most strongly from our public engagement:

Support for homeless people

Stonepillow, a homeless charity, want to know what is being done to support homeless people?

Stonepillow, a homeless charity, have asked whether staff running essential community services such as hostels for the homeless counted as key workers?

Mind, a mental health charity, and Stonepillow, a homeless charity, have raised concerns that for drug-dependent clients in hostels, self-isolation is impossible. How can the charities running such charities protect such clients and access replacement drugs as needed?

Mind, a mental health charity, have asked what extra support or resources will you make available to ensure that everyone in society, especially those most vulnerable, has the access and skills to find accurate information online?

Support for local community organisations

The Good Things Foundation, a digital inclusion charity, have asked what support is being given to community organisations who work with vulnerable people to ensure that they can continue to provide their essential services?

Volunteers are crucial at a time like this, what measures are you taking to ensure that people in communities are supported to self-organise in a way that ensures that people are safeguarded against harm?

Council tax

What consideration is being given to working with local authorities to suspend council tax payments during the outbreak, to reduce the financial burden on households?

Given the constantly evolving nature of the current situation, I would be grateful if you could provide a response to the above by Friday 3 April, so we can make these available to the public as quickly as possible.

I hope we will be able to continue the dialogue as the situation progresses and particularly as the usual parliamentary mechanisms for raising these issues have become more restricted. This might involve further sessions with Ministers and officials, and asking your Department to provide updated answers to the public's latest questions at regular intervals.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Catherine". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'C'.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair of the Petitions Committee