

Telephone Number: 0121 626 6060
wmpcc@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk



Our reference: 2021-00334



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP,
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government

Sent by email to:
robert.jenrick@communities.gov.uk

12 March 2021

Dear Robert,

For over a year we have been calling on the government to increase regulation of exempt accommodation.

The lack of regulation of this type of accommodation has had a significant impact on our local communities with a rise in crime and anti-social behaviour areas where there is a significant number of exemption accommodation. This is not an issue that is unique to Birmingham and cities across the country are facing similar challenges.

There is an increased use of exempt accommodation around prison releases causing increased ASB/Crime within a location. We have identified through the pilot that whilst probation services have protocols in place for accommodation these are not always followed consistently outside of the West Midlands. Inconsistencies in practice leads to a call around of Exempt Providers to find accommodation even if individuals are not from an area and don't want to go to that area they end up being sent anyway – for Birmingham this means we end up with 20/30 individuals being released because probation services can't find accommodation locally.

Such practice also leads to exempt accommodation providers being able to 'tout for business' directly with Prisons.

Local Authorities have no powers over exempt accommodation and this means that there is a greater demand on the police and Council. We need to have national protocols in place in regards to prison releases especially in regards to out of city placements. We have identified that some exempt 'landlords' have links to Serious Organised Crime Groups and these landlords are exploiting the most vulnerable. We have evidence that shows there is touting taking place at some prisons to ensure that certain people are released into certain accommodation

The majority of the tenants are vulnerable people and we have seen them being subjected to modern slavery, recruited for county lines or used to shop lift and commit minor crimes. This is extremely concerning that vulnerable people are being put at risk of exploitation.

In Birmingham there is a strong partnership between the police force and local authority to tackle the issues caused by exempt accommodation. We have set up a multi-agency partnership group, meeting regularly to deal with the issues, we have seconded a police officer to specifically address

the organised crime element and the police respond to issues in the local community through our Neighbourhood Policing Unit.

Whilst we welcome the commitment from the Government to support the pilot programme, without strong regulatory powers for Local Authorities, to deal with this issues, there will continue to be significant strain on our resources.

We are urging you to give Local Authorities the power to control the growth in this type of accommodation and enable councils to refuse on grounds of oversupply in specific areas and enable stringent checks on individuals and companies setting up exempt accommodation. There must also be stronger definitions and detail in the Benefit regulations especially in relation to the quantity and quality of support being provided. Finally we are calling on you and the Government to deliver on the white paper commitments in relation to RSH consumer standards regulation.

We hope that you will seriously consider the asks in this letter and implement greater regulation of this sector. A lack of regulation is harming local communities and we urge you make changes as soon as possible.

We are happy to meet with you to discuss our concerns further and we look forward to your swift response.

Yours sincerely



David Jamieson
Police and Crime Commissioner



Sharon Thompson,
Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods.



John Cotton,
Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety & Equalities.