

Placement of People across Local Authorities Boundaries

Dear Mayor of London and Leaders of London Boroughs

Please see attached a letter agreed by the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives Group and sent from the Leaders of the County, District, City, Borough and Unitary authorities in Essex and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.

It concerns the placement of families and individuals across Local Authority boundaries to meet housing need and specifically the placement of people by London Boroughs in Essex.

Regards

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Clerk to the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives Group

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Head of Leadership Support and Community

☎ [] ✉ [] [@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:@tendringdc.gov.uk) 🌐 [www.tendringdc.gov.uk](http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk)

Tendring District Council, Town Hall, Station Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 1SE

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# ESSEX LEADERS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES



To:  
Mayor of London  
Leaders of all London Boroughs

14<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Dear Sir / Madam

We are writing to you in our capacity as the Leaders of the Local Authorities in Essex and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.

We are writing to express our concerns around the placement of families and individuals across Local Authority boundaries to meet housing need and specifically the placement of people by London Boroughs in Essex.

The use by London Boroughs of homes outside of London presents a number of housing and safeguarding issues relating to homeless households placed out of area, including:-

- Fewer private homes for rent or to buy are available for local people in housing need. The significant deficit of good quality affordable housing is being exacerbated if nothing is done to prevent the forced or “financially encouraged” out migration from London;
- Whilst we are well aware that the placing authority has a duty to assess the impacts and to advise the receiving authority that it has placed an applicant in that authority, knowing that they have been placed is somewhat irrelevant to the social and economic issues which that applicant may be bringing to the district. Equally many of the individuals who are out migrating are not placed but are being financially “assisted” which means that they have “voluntarily” relocated to a cheaper rent area;
- For many high rent areas, the financial viability test will mean that people will have to be placed in lower rent areas or the applicant will be placed into immediate financial hardship

Chief Executive  
Ian Davidson

Leader of the Council  
Councillor Neil Stock OBE  
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Minicom: 01255 475566



by the host authority. This leads to an inevitable migration of housing applicants from high rent areas to low rent areas, many of whom will be unable to continue working due to the distance from their new home to their workplace and considerable social disruption to their support networks;

- Families deprived of their local and family support networks that are placed in unfamiliar surroundings will face significant challenges and may not be able to maintain their employment thereby becoming an increasing burden on support agencies and the state; Those that become unemployed will be competing with existing residents for the few jobs that exist locally or become an immediate burden on the localised welfare support systems;
- Many of the families who are moving have had their benefits capped as a consequence of large numbers of dependent children. The effect on school rolls, social services and other support services can be significant when large unplanned numbers of children move into an area;
- An over-representation of moved households require advice and have a lack of understanding about which authority the households access services from.
- Risks of placing households in inappropriate areas or buildings leading to wider safeguarding risks especially to children;
- There is poor information sharing between placing and receiving authorities around the movement of households and the needs of individuals; including information for housing, adult and children's services and the police. It was noted that two tier arrangements provided additional complexity around notifications;
- In some areas a disconnect has been identified between numbers of notifications and actual movement;
- There have been difficulties in engaging with the appropriate officers in the London Boroughs (LBs);
- Concern about the fitness of some private rented housing households are placed in and potential for management concerns identified locally to be unknown to placing authority.

It is clear from recent ONS figures that there is already a drift from central to outer London Boroughs of new claimants and it is inevitable that a ripple effect will follow of claimants being pushed out into the home county areas, many of which already struggle with their own difficulties. Many areas close to London already contain significant deprivation and the prospect of further migration of those forced out of London due to welfare benefit changes is not going to assist us in dealing with the issues we already face.

Councils have no existing powers to do anything about another Council purchasing or renting private property in the area, although clearly such activity could significantly distort the local market. Nor do Councils have any power to prevent financial assistance being provided by one Council to encourage residents affected by the reforms to move to another lower rent cost area.

Discussions have previously been had with representatives from London authorities to consider solutions to the issues identified above and focussed on the following key areas:-

- Improving communications and relationships;
- Managing the process better and sharing learning;
- Addressing policy challenges;
- Seeking a common agreement on the rate being paid; and
- Improving Regional coordination.

Three key principles were developed:-

- Each Borough to notify the receiving authority;
- Actions should not destabilise the local rental market;
- Children at risk are not to be placed out of the borough unless as a last resort. In these circumstances this should not be a permanent placement and that they be brought back in Borough at the earliest opportunity.

We feel that this issue is sufficiently important to prompt the need for a renewed focus on the problem. London authorities and Safeguarding representatives are urged to positively engage in discussions to find solutions focussed on minimising safeguarding risks to children and vulnerable adults and to jointly managing our housing markets to the best effect.

We do also recognise that some of the solutions can only be achieved with the support of Government or through changes of legislation and welfare reforms and we would also welcome engagement with yourselves on proposals where joint lobbying of Government can take place.

Yours faithfully

**Councillor Andrew Baggot**  
**Leader, Basildon Borough Council**

**Councillor Graham Butland**  
**Leader, Braintree District Council**

**Councillor Louise McKinlay**  
**Leader, Brentwood Borough Council**

**Councillor Norman Smith**  
**Leader, Castle Point Borough Council**

**Councillor Roy Whitehead**  
**Leader, Chelmsford City Council**

**Councillor Mark Cory**  
**Leader, Colchester Borough Council**

**Councillor Chris Whitbread**  
**Leader, Epping Forest District Council**

**Councillor Mark Ingall**  
**Leader, Harlow District Council**

**Councillor Adrian Fluker**  
**Leader, Maldon District Council**

**Councillor Terry Cutmore**  
**Leader, Rochford District Council**

**Councillor Neil Stock OBE**

**Leader, Tendring District Council and Chair of Essex Leaders and Chief Executives**

**Councillor John Lamb  
Leader, Southend Borough Council**

**Councillor Rob Gledhill  
Leader, Thurrock Council**

**Councillor Howard Rolfe  
Leader, Uttlesford District Council**

**Councillor David Finch  
Leader, Essex County Council**

**Roger Hirst  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Leaders of Essex councils and the Police, Fire and  
Crime Commissioner for Essex**  
C/o: [REDACTED]@tenderingdc.gov.uk

**Our ref:** MGLA141218-0768

**Date:** 15 JAN 2019

Dear Councillors Baggot, Butland, McKinlay, Smith, Whitehead, Cory, Whitbread, Ingall, Fluker, Cutmore, Stock OBE, Lamb, Gledhill, Rolfe, and Finch and Mr Hirst,

## **Re: London boroughs' use of homes outside London for homeless households**

Thank you for your letter of 14 December 2018 about London boroughs' use of homes outside London for homeless households and the pressure that this places on your localities and their services. I appreciate your concerns for the families affected by the huge increase in homelessness that we have seen in recent years.

As you may know, monitoring by London boroughs indicates that, in the first quarter of the current financial year, only eight per cent of all temporary accommodation placements were outside London. While I do not have any direct control over the ways in which London boroughs meet their statutory responsibilities to assist homeless households, the law is clear that London boroughs' statements of housing policy must be "in general conformity" with my London Housing Strategy.

In that strategy, I have set out clearly my expectations of councils where they have no choice but to place homeless households in other areas. These are that councils should:

- meet their obligations to inform other local authorities;
- have in place clear policies around the provision of accommodation for homeless households, which prioritise the most vulnerable people for the most local accommodation; and
- provide households placed in other areas with information and support that will help them to settle there.

I understand that colleagues from London boroughs and the Local Government Association have been in contact with you around issues of communication and rates. I am very willing to play a part in these conversations if you feel that would be helpful.

As my Housing Strategy also makes clear, I am committed to working with London boroughs to help them improve the accommodation options they are able to offer to homeless households. To this end, I part-funded the feasibility study of options for closer collaboration between London boroughs in procuring private rented accommodation for homeless households, and I am pleased that the 'Capital Letters' initiative to enable collaborative procurement of private rented housing has resulted from this work.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

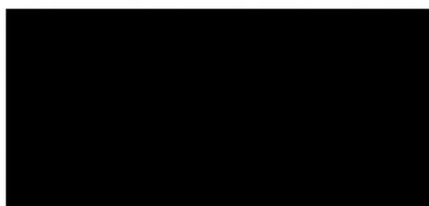
I am pleased to be supporting London boroughs by investing £11 million in the PLACE (Pan-London Accommodation Collaborative Enterprise) initiative. This will provide high-quality precision-manufactured homes that London boroughs can lease and place on meanwhile sites, to provide accommodation for homeless households who might otherwise be placed away from their local area. I would expect such meanwhile sites to normally be within the boroughs that are participating, and so I hope this will help with more local placements.

However, as I am sure you will agree, any real and lasting reduction in the number of homeless households London boroughs place in other areas, and the numbers of households becoming homeless in the first place, requires action from the Government.

To address these root causes of homelessness, Government Ministers must invest more in new homes for social rent; overhaul the private rented sector to make it more secure and affordable; and reverse the welfare reform measures that have left huge gaps between the cost of most private rented accommodation in London and the help to cover rents that the benefits system provides.

I hope that we can work together to impress on the Government the need for these changes.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London