



Department for Levelling Up,
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Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 9 December to The Chancellor, The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, about evictions in the private rented sector. I have been asked to reply as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

Thank you for writing to sharing the London Assembly's concerns about evictions in London. The Government took decisive action to protect tenants during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, through banning bailiff evictions, extending notice periods and an unprecedented package of financial support to help renters to pay their rent.

There is evidence to suggest that these measures worked. Fewer households have been assessed as homeless since the beginning of the pandemic, there are fewer rough sleepers and fewer possession claims are now being made to court. Ministry of Justice statistics show that, in England and Wales, reported applications to the courts for possession by private and social landlords between July and September 2021 were down 64% compared to the same quarter in 2019, and repossessions by county court bailiffs were down by 35%. Similar reductions can be seen in London boroughs. There was also over a 40% reduction in households owed a homelessness duty following the end of an assured shorthold tenancy in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20.

I should also emphasise that many of the repossessions which took place between July and September 2021 are likely to have been cases which could not progress whilst the restrictions on the enforcement of bailiff evictions were in place last year. In these cases, landlords had been waiting for several months to obtain possession of their properties and some repossessions will relate to cases which began prior to the pandemic and will be as a result of anti-social behaviour or breaches of tenancies. It is right that landlords are once again able to obtain possession in these cases where they had valid legal grounds to do so.

The restriction on the enforcement of bailiff evictions was an emergency measure and could only ever be temporary. However, we have retained the power to reintroduce longer notice periods until March 2022 if needed. To protect renters, bailiffs must provide at least 14 days' notice of an eviction and they will not carry out an eviction if they are made aware that anyone living in the property has Covid-19 symptoms or is self-isolating.

The Government recognises that some private renters have rent arrears built up because of the pandemic and that vulnerable households may need additional support. We have provided an additional £65 million, through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, for local authorities to help vulnerable households with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless. This money can be used flexibly to work with private landlords to prevent evictions or offer financial support for people to find a new home.

Furthermore, significant support remains available to renters through the welfare system. Local Housing Allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms, meaning Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase in the rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, £140 million in Discretionary Housing Payments funding for 2021/22 has been made available for local councils in England and Wales to distribute.

In addition to this funding, the Government has responded to the pressures many households face with their living costs by introducing a new £500 million Household Support Fund, which provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England. The funding is primarily being used to support households with the cost of essentials, although councils have flexibility to best address local needs. At least 50% of the funding is reserved for households with children. More information about this fund is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils>

I trust this information is helpful and I thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours ever,



EDDIE HUGHES MP