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Dear Hitu

Thank you for your letter of 16 April about social housing and migrants.

The Government is determined to tackle the widespread perception that the way social housing is allocated is unfair and that the system favours foreign migrants over local people and the Armed Forces. That is why we announced our intention to issue new statutory guidance, pressing councils to use their new allocation flexibilities in the Localism Act to ensure that only those with a well-established local residency or local associations qualify for taxpayer-subsidised social housing.

We want councils to retain the flexibility to design schemes which take account of local priorities and local circumstances, and the guidance will make this clear. It will also make clear that we expect councils to take proper account of special circumstances, such as the need to protect those fleeing violence, by making provision for appropriate exceptions.

We plan to issue the guidance in draft for consultation and will, of course, ensure that the Local Government Association has the opportunity to comment.

By giving councils the freedom to end the homelessness duty with private rented accommodation, we have already broken the link between homelessness and social housing.

However, I would like to clarify that the guidance will have no effect on a person's eligibility for homelessness assistance; neither will it change the rules around local connection in this context. Where a homeless applicant has no local connection with any district in Great Britain, the duty to secure accommodation will continue to rest with the housing authority that has received the application.

MARK PRISK MP