

Mark Prisk MP
Minister of State for Housing and Local Government
Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

16 April 2013

Dear Mark,

I am writing further to the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the allocation of social housing to migrants.

The Localism Act provides councils with new flexibilities to put in place allocation policies that reflect local priorities and to support them to manage the growing pressure on the housing waiting list. This is the right approach and those powers are being used to good effect by councils. For the small number of councils where this is a particular issue, many are using the powers to give priority to people who have a strong local connection to the area. It is crucial that the government builds on this approach by ensuring that any new guidance does not establish a one size fits all local residency test but instead enables councils to make appropriate decisions based on local circumstances.

It should be for the local authority to determine the approach to allocations rather than a blanket national policy. Clarity is also needed on how this policy links with the wider housing framework. Failing to do so will lead to uncertainty regarding the housing assistance available and who is eligible for it. It will also mean that in some circumstances a local authority may be required to place persons owed the main homelessness duty in appropriate accommodation, regardless of whether they had been a resident in that local authority area and in cases where a local connection to another local authority cannot be established.

I would be happy to discuss these issues further and the LGA would be keen to assist and comment on draft guidance at an appropriate stage of development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Jones', written over a horizontal dashed line.

Councillor Mike Jones,
Chairman, LGA Environment and Housing Board