



Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer MP
Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London
SW1A 2AS

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Dear Council Leaders,

CC: Chief Executives, LGA, WLGA, COSLA and SMPs

It was good to see so many of you at the webinar on 6 June. My ministerial colleagues and I are grateful for your continued commitment to support legally resettled Afghans out of bridging hotels and into settled accommodation.

The Government remains committed to ending access to HMG funded bridging accommodation and to support this cohort into sustainable forms of accommodation, and the need to act is increasingly acute. The first Notices to Quit will expire on 29 July and the final tranche will expire on 31 August. Despite these hotel end dates fast approaching, many people remain in hotels. There is an urgency to increase the rate at which people are able to move into more sustainable longer-term accommodation. Local authority caseworking teams should now be finalising their plans for households to move on from bridging accommodation.

As announced today in my Written Ministerial Statement, there are some very specific instances in which households will be eligible for further interim HMG funded accommodation. Firstly, we will make arrangements for households where councils have provided appropriate evidence that a member of the family requires ongoing medical treatment which can only be undertaken within the council area. Further detail will be shared this week.

Secondly, **HMG will provide interim accommodation to households who have been pre-matched to, and accepted a firm offer of suitable settled accommodation before their Notice to Quit has expired, and where that property will be ready for move-in before the end of December 2023.** The eligible properties will be those available through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) or other social housing, a Service Family Accommodation (SFA) property or property offers made specifically by developers for this cohort via the Homes Partnership model. For this additional time period to the end of the year the accommodation offer from HMG will be reduced to room only; this HMG funded interim accommodation will be withdrawn if and where local authorities are unable to meet the agreed move-in date of a pre-matched home. Further detail will be set out in guidance to be issued this week.

Increasing housing supply

The commitment to provide HMG funded interim accommodation for 'pre-matched' households ready for move in before the end of 2023 reflects the significant uplift in property supply coming

onstream through the LAHF as well as through MOD's SFA offer in the coming months. The LAHF will provide over 1,000 affordable homes for Afghan families across England of which up to 500 homes are expected to be available this year. For SFA, the MOD has committed to ensuring that all properties offered are at move-in standard by 30 November 2023, and will be working with local authorities to ensure that homes are leased in the same timelines.

All councils should take up the offer of LAHF and SFA properties and to pre-match households in bridging accommodation where properties will be available before the end of 2023 as soon as possible. To support with this, I have attached details of the LAHF round 1 properties local authorities have agreed to deliver and SFA locations and will be publishing guidance on the process for pre matching this week. This written documentation will be supported by engagement with officials and Strategic Migration Partnerships.

End of notice period processes

HMG will cease funding bridging accommodation for the Afghan cohort at the end of notice periods for those who are not eligible for further interim accommodation, as outlined above. Over the coming weeks, Home Office officials will continue to carry out targeted engagement with bridging councils and hotels to ensure that there is a well-managed process for the end of notice periods. In the event that households have not secured settled accommodation and they are not eligible for any further HMG funded interim accommodation, local authorities will be able to draw on the additional homelessness funding of £9,150 per household and the £28pppd for wraparound support made available by central government for up to six months. There is more detail on homelessness applications available in the Q&A.

Funding package

It is crucial that collectively we redouble our efforts to support as many Afghan individuals and families as possible to secure settled accommodation by the end of their notice period. I would like to emphasise again the significant funding package (totalling £35m) made available by central government to local authorities to use flexibly according to their extensive local knowledge and help address the barriers I know exist to accessing the private rental sector. The approach to how this funding is used will rightly differ according to the local context and pressures and in my visits to hotels across the country in recent weeks, I have been heartened to see some excellent examples of councils using the funding innovatively - to offer deposits, furniture, rental top ups and rent advances. I strongly encourage all councils to draw on this and to share best practice through your networks. We know local authorities have asked for a simplified summary of the funding, and I have attached again a summary of the funding available. We also heard the ask for a short document which explains how the resettlement funding packages across different cohorts work together, and I have also attached this.

The funding package includes £2.4m to support councils with bridging hotels to boost their caseworking support. We encourage you to draw on this and further intensify your role in the joint caseworking function to support individuals. Home Office Liaison Officers, Local Authority Engagement teams in both the Home Office and the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, and officials from the Department for Work and Pensions are all available to help.

Next steps to share more information

Please do continue to feed back to us and ask questions, I have attached a comprehensive Q&A

which we will continue to develop. I will be attending a second Ministerial webinar with Council Leaders across the UK on 20 July. You will shortly receive a calendar invitation to this. The Home Office and officials in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, will also be working closely to support those councils that have bridging accommodation in their area. We will keep colleagues in the Scottish and Welsh Governments apprised of those discussions as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JM', with a small dot at the end.

**RT HON. JOHNNY MERCER MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS**