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Dear Jeremy,

It has been brought to my attention that there were a number of instances in December 2016 when my Department referred to the statistic that statutory homelessness acceptances are less than half the 2003 peak, without including the words 'statutory' and 'acceptances'. When referring to this statistic the Department should always make absolutely sure that the words 'statutory' and 'acceptances' are included.

Baroness Greender raised this issue and her subsequent correspondence with the UK Statistics Authority during the Second Reading Debate on the Homelessness Reduction Bill, on 24 February 2017. I have written to Baroness Greender, copied to all Peers, apologising on behalf of the Department for the occasions when the statistics were referred to without being framed in the correct context.

I would like to extend this apology to you, as in response to your Oral Question on 31 January 2017 on the steps the Government is taking to tackle the growing problems of homelessness and rough sleeping, I inadvertently referred to the number of homeless people having halved since 2003, without being clear that this statistic refers only to statutory homelessness acceptances.

This misquote was not a deliberate attempt to mislead, but it could and should have been avoided. As I explained to Baroness Greender, the Department has since reviewed its internal processes and is putting in place stronger systems to ensure that the right checks are made and the correct context is always provided when using homelessness statistics in the future.

I am copying this letter to all Peers who participated in the Oral Question on 31 January and will place a copy in the House Library

LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH