



Home Office

The Lord Murray of Blidworth
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Migration and Borders

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
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Lord Alton of Liverpool
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

26 June 2023

Dear Lord Alton,

ILLEGAL MIGRATION BILL: HOUSE OF LORDS COMMITTEE STAGE

I am following up on the debate in the Lords during day two of Committee (Official Report, 5 June, column 1169) where I committed to write to you on the point of standards of accommodation for unaccompanied children.

Clause 15 of the Bill confers on the Secretary of State a power to provide or arrange accommodation and support in England for unaccompanied children. We are taking this power in response to the reality of the situation we currently face, namely the increasing numbers of unaccompanied children making the dangerous journey across the Channel in small boats, as well as Kent County Council's decision in July 2021 to stop taking these children into their care.

Whilst we continue to expect local authorities to meet their statutory obligations to children from the date of arrival, we have no option but to provide temporary accommodation for these young people to avoid clear safeguarding gaps. We have been clear that any time spent in Home Office accommodation by an unaccompanied child will be temporary whilst they await being transferred to local authority accommodation.


In terms of how this accommodation will look and operate in practice, you will be aware of Lord Stewart's comments during the day three debate on clause 15 (column 1550), where Lord Stewart noted that the Home Office is working closely with the Department for Education on the appropriate standards which should apply. Our intention is to ensure that whilst time in this accommodation is expected to be short (given the transfer power to move unaccompanied children into local authority care as per clause

16), we will be seeking to meet standards which are appropriate for the accommodation so that children are sufficiently supported and safeguarded.

I recently met the Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza, again to discuss the Bill and my officials have since engaged with her officials. We acknowledge their interest in working with us on accommodation standards and we will seek to engage with them further as work on this matter progresses.

I am copying this letter to Lord Scriven, Baroness Chakrabarti, Baroness Brinton, Baroness Bennett, Lord German, Lord Coaker, Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, Lord Paddick and Baroness Hamwee. I will also place a copy of this letter in the library of the House,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Murray of Blidworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

**The Lord Murray of Blidworth
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Migration and Borders**