



*1 Draft - Prime Minister 1* *of Mr Ingham*

*You agreed reluctantly that Mr Heseltine could announce these conclusions to the House.*

*Housing*

2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB

COVERING CONFIDENTIAL

*Have you any comments on this draft Statement?*  
*No.*

My ref:

Your ref:

*WH*  
*25/3*

25 March 1982

*The Secretary of State*

In the memorandum I circulated to H Committee colleagues under cover of my letter of 8 February to the Home Secretary, seeking their agreement to our conclusions of the review of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, I undertook to clear with those who have a direct interest the text of the statement to be made to the House announcing the completion of the review. The Prime Minister has indicated that she would be content for the conclusions set out in the memorandum to be announced.

I should be grateful for any comments on the attached draft, which I propose should take the form of a reply to an inspired written question. I should like to give the reply before the Easter Recess and should be grateful therefore for your response by Thursday April 1st.

I am copying this letter and its enclosure to Willie Whitelaw, George Younger and Norman Fowler for their comments also. I am also sending a copy to the Prime Minister and the Chief Whip, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*John King*

*MHE*

MICHAEL HESELTINE

*(Draft approved by the  
Secy of State and signed  
in his absence)*

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards  
Secretary of State for Wales

PROPOSED STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT CONCLUSIONS ON THE REVIEW OF THE HOUSING (HOMELESS PERSONS) ACT 1977

Suggested Question

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be announcing the outcome of his review of the Homeless Persons Act.

Suggested Answer

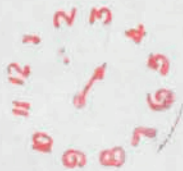
The review has now been completed. After full and careful consideration the Government have decided that there should be no amendment of the primary legislation at this stage. However, they recognise the concern which has been expressed about some aspects of the operation of the Act. They are satisfied that these can largely be met by the following measures which have been, or will be, taken:

- a) To ensure that authorities are clear about the extent of their duties, the ways in which they may fulfil them, and the very wide discretion they have to deal with abuse, the Government intend to tighten the Code of Guidance. We shall consult those principally concerned about the amendments which will cover more fully such matters as intentional homelessness.
- b) The problems associated with authorities' responsibilities towards council tenants who become homeless through rent arrears will be alleviated by the discretion given to benefit officers to pay the rent element of supplementary benefit direct to local authorities and by the proposed new Housing Benefit Scheme which will in most cases cover the full rent and rate liability in respect of the 1½ million or so tenants in Great Britain in receipt of supplementary benefit.

- c) As far as the financial burden on authorities is concerned, housing management costs arising from housing applications from the homeless which may be debited to an authority's Housing Revenue Account are reckonable for housing subsidy. In addition, net expenditure falling outside the HRA is eligible for rate support grant. On capital account because the operation of the Act imposes greater cost burdens on some authorities than on others, and in order to reflect more accurately the demands placed on authorities by the homeless, we have agreed with the local authority associations in England a revised homelessness indicator for the 1982/83 HIP allocations.
- d) A number of measures we have initiated to increase the availability of short-term rented accommodation and of low-cost home-ownership opportunities as well as our substantially increased expenditure on hostel accommodation, will be of benefit to those who are in non-priority groups for the purposes of the Homeless Persons legislation including single homeless people. We do not propose to extend the priority groups.
- e) Recent decisions in the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords have established that there are safeguards in the Act against abuse by those who are intentionally homeless whether they are already in this country or whether they come from abroad. It is therefore important that immigrants should make proper arrangements for their accommodation before they arrive in this country. To stress this we have accordingly revised the texts of leaflets issued by our embassies overseas to prospective immigrants. There have also been changes in the immigration rules since the 1977 Act which have the general effect of making

it necessary for those who wish to obtain admission of their dependents to the UK for settlement to be able to demonstrate that they can accommodate them without recourse to public funds in accommodation that they own or occupy themselves.

15 MAR 1982





2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

25 March 1982

*Dear Alan*

My Secretary of State wrote to yours earlier today about the review of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act enclosing a copy of the proposed statement.

Unfortunately the last paragraph was omitted from the draft, it should read as follows "In addition to the measures outlined, we shall continue to monitor the Act's operation."

I am copying this as before.

*Yours  
D A E*

D A EDMONDS  
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

WM 7/4

Housing



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

7 April 1982

Dear Michael

REVIEW OF THE HOUSING (HOMELESS PERSONS) ACT 1977

You copied to me your letter of 25 March to Nicholas Edwards about the conclusions of the review of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 which you set out in the memorandum attached to your letter to me of 8 February.

Subject to any comments our colleagues may have on the text attached to your letter of 25 March, you may take it that you have H Committee approval for the proposed Question and Written Answer.

I understand, however, that Francis Pym takes the view that the Question ought not to be answered until after the Easter Adjournment. You will no doubt be discussing with him what day after the Adjournment might be suitable.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and to members of H Committee and the Attorney General, together with a copy of your letter of 25 March to those members of H Committee to whom it was not sent.

*John*  
*Letter*

The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, M.P.

- a
- Miss Kipper
- Mr. Hyde
- Ms Lutter
- Ms R652
- Mr. Soden
- Mr. Scoble
- Mr. Wainwright
- Mr. Baxendale

CONFIDENTIAL

7 APR 1982







*Answer wh*  
*SLH*

NEW ST. ANDREWS HOUSE  
ST. JAMES CENTRE  
EDINBURGH EH1 3SX

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for the  
Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
LONDON  
SW1P 3EB

5. April 1982

*Dear Michael,*

Thank you for letting me have with your letter of 25 March a copy of the statement your propose to make about the Review of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

I think it is important that your statement should make clear that it relates to England and Wales only. I suggest the addition to the proposed question of some words to that effect.

It would then seem best that at Item (b) the figure for the number of tenants in receipt of supplementary benefit should also be on an England and Wales basis.

Copies of this letter go to recipients of yours.

*Yours sincerely,*

*George.*

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5 APR 1964

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY  
ALEXANDER FLEMING HOUSE  
ELEPHANT AND CASTLE LONDON SE1 6BY  
TELEPHONE 01-407 5522 EXT

*Norm*

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment  
Department of the Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
LONDON SW1

*Wh  
5/4*

*Aug 1st 1982*

*Dear Michael*

PROPOSED STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT CONCLUSIONS ON THE REVIEW OF THE HOUSING  
(HOMELESS PERSONS) ACT 1977

I have only one comment on the draft answer you circulated on 25 March. That relates to sub-paragraph (b) of the answer, on rent arrears. I do not think it is helpful to refer to the benefit officer's discretion to pay the rent element of supplementary benefit direct since that is of very longstanding. I suggest instead we should place the emphasis on the housing benefit arrangements and make a reference to the continuation of benefit officers' powers to continue to make deductions for arrears. The redraft I would suggest is as follows:-

"The problems associated with authorities' responsibilities towards council tenants who become homeless through rent arrears will be alleviated by the proposed new housing benefit scheme which will in most cases cover the full rent and rate liability in respect of the 1½ million or so tenants in Great Britain in receipt of supplementary benefit. The present powers of benefit officers to make a deduction from supplementary benefit towards past arrears will continue under the new arrangements."

I am copying this letter to recipients of yours.

*Norm Fowler*

NORMAN FOWLER

- 2 APR 1982

