

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref MB/CS/2948/14

Lord Freud
Minister for Welfare Reform
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9DA

Ministers@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

15 July 2014

Dear 

During a question about discretionary housing payments in the Senedd on the 2 July, I was told of a particularly disturbing case in Cardiff. I believe this matter exemplifies the concerns that I have expressed to you previously.

Below is a *potted* history of this tenant's circumstance to show you how your welfare reforms are impacting on real people in the real world. It is also worth considering the timeframe. This radical downturn in his fortunes has only happened since the introduction of the bedroom tax and most importantly; through no fault of his own. This is his case:-

This tenant has been a good tenant of a Registered Social Landlord three bedroom property for 17 years. He was living with his disabled adult son and because of the bedroom tax was deemed to be over accommodated by one bedroom. The house was fully adapted because two of his three sons and his late wife were all disabled. He did as your Government suggested and made efforts to downsize via a swap with a family who were under accommodating their property. However, because he lived in an adapted house the swap was refused by his landlord because the *other* family did not require the adaptations.

Furthermore, he was told that he would have to pay the bedroom tax using the "care" component of his Disability Living Allowance. He twice applied for Discretionary Housing Payment and was twice refused.

Eventually, he panicked because of his increasing debt and relinquished the tenancy and went off to live with a friend. His son went to live with a girlfriend. When his new living arrangements broke down, he became homeless and is now in a YMCA Hostel.

This particular example covers all aspects of the points that I have raised with you previously i.e. treatment of disability incomes, adapted properties and the vagueness of the discretionary housing payments guidance. However, on all previous occasions you have chosen not to support any of my suggestions and have advised that...'*local authorities have broad discretion to administer their schemes in line with local priorities.....each case must be decided on its own merits and decision making must be consistent through the year...*'.

It appears that Cardiff City Council was acting within the guidance provided to them by your Department. I suggest that had this been *played out* in other parts of Wales or the UK that this family would have remained together, not fallen into debt and would be looking forward to the 18th year in their home. You must agree that discretionary housing payments are a postcode lottery, which surely you can not condone.

Incidentally, Cardiff City Council was one of the three Welsh local authorities who did bid for and receive additional in-year funding – they received £150,000. Furthermore, they also received and fully utilised an additional £233,000 which Welsh Government made available to them for discretionary housing payments purposes.

I look forward to your comments on this matter and I sincerely hope that you give further consideration to my earlier proposals. I wrote to you on 23 May 2014 (MB-CS-1980-14) about related matters and a copy is attached for your information. My officials have been advised that you will be responding to my earlier correspondence very shortly.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the Secretary of State for Wales and Ms Jenny Rathbone AM.

Yours sincerely,



Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration