

**Subject:** URGENT: Housing Support for Kirsty Waite and Family

Dear Mr. Flinton,

Cc: Mr. Nic Harne, Mr. Andrew Rowe

I am writing to urgently request your intervention regarding the Council's failure to provide adequate housing support for Kirsty Waite and her family. This issue stems from the mass eviction faced by several families in Catterick Garrison earlier this year, as reported by the BBC on October 2nd (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5y524j3dlxo>). Ms. Waite's case has also been raised by Matthew Cooke, Chairman of Reform UK for Richmond and Northallerton (<https://www.reformuknorthyorks.uk/matthew-cooke-fights-to-house-local-resident/>).

For the past five months, Kirsty Waite and her family have lived in the Council-owned homeless centre George Nickling, enduring deeply inadequate living conditions. They are charged £297 per week for a single bedroom, shared by two parents and four children. Although a second room has recently been allocated for their elder sons, the situation remains dire, particularly for their 12-year-old son who has Autism. His Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) underscores the Council's duty of care, especially as he is now thriving at his school in Darlington, where consistency and routine are critical for his development.

This situation has been exacerbated by significant failures in Council decision-making, as admitted by Housing Officers in recent correspondence. These failures include:

**1. Delays Following the Unitary Council Amalgamation**

When you advocated for North Yorkshire Council's transition to a unitary authority, continuity and cost savings were promised (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-65140906>). However, Housing Officers have admitted that the restructuring has contributed to delays in rehousing the Waite family. The transition has resulted in widespread disruption and inefficiencies, undermining public trust and confidence.

**2. Cancellation of the Kier Contract**

The decision to terminate the Kier contractor in June 2023, responsible for void property works, has caused significant delays in returning vacant social housing to circulation. This ill-considered move has directly prolonged the Waite family's suffering, as critical repairs remain incomplete.

**3. Insufficient Resources for Void Property Repairs in Richmondshire**

The Council's failure to allocate resources for addressing void properties has further delayed the rehousing process. This lack of prioritization is shocking and unacceptable, particularly given the clear and immediate need for housing families like the Waites.

The Council's statutory obligation to meet the additional needs of children with EHCPs must also be emphasized. Relocating the family too far from Catterick Garrison risks destabilizing the education and well-being of Kirsty's autistic son, potentially violating these obligations.

As CEO of North Yorkshire Council, I am personally appealing to you to address this matter with urgency and transparency. I respectfully urge you to take the following actions:

1. Establish an in-house Void Properties Team for Richmondshire, led by an accountable head responsible for reducing turnaround times for vacant housing.
2. Initiate a temporary or emergency procurement process to expedite the repair and reallocation of void properties.

3. Conduct a survey of staff and residents to assess the impact of the transition to a unitary authority, ensuring accountability for the promised cost savings and continuity.
4. Take immediate, direct action to resolve the Waite family's plight, ensuring they are rehoused as a matter of priority and are not forced to endure another day—let alone Christmas—in their current conditions.

This is not just a question of operational failure; it is a matter of human dignity. The Waites' situation represents a critical test of the Council's capacity to fulfill its duty of care to its most vulnerable residents.

Please kindly acknowledge receipt of this letter and provide a full response no later than Friday, December 27th.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Cooke  
Interim Chairman, Reform UK Richmond and Northallerton