



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Luke Hall MP

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing

**Ministry of Housing, Communities
& Local Government**

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All Local Authority Chief Executives in England

www.gov.uk/mhclg

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Dear Chief Executives,

Moving onto the next phase of accommodating rough sleepers

Thank you all for the work you and your teams have undertaken in recent weeks to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular, for your work to support vulnerable rough sleepers to self-isolate. Providing accommodation offers to the vast majority of rough sleepers and people who were in communal sleeping spaces is a truly remarkable achievement which has saved lives.

It remains important to continue to help and support vulnerable people as the virus continues to pose a risk. As the risk reduces and we look towards easing the lockdown restrictions, we begin to enter the next phase of this endeavour and need to make plans for the future. We must continue to focus on ensuring accommodation and support arrangements can be managed safely to protect the most vulnerable, including those with complex needs. At the same time we need now to start planning the next steps for accommodating and supporting people to move on from emergency accommodation. We are doing so, and that is why we announced £433m of funding for accommodation for rough sleepers last weekend.

The Government also announced, on 2 May, the appointment of Dame Louise Casey to lead a Taskforce on the next phase of the Government's support for rough sleepers. Through the Taskforce, backed by our existing MHCLG Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Advisers, we will be working to support you during this next phase. As part of this work I am now asking that you put in place a plan of support for all rough sleepers accommodated in hotels and other forms of emergency accommodation during the response to the pandemic.

I understand that designing and delivering these plans represents another big challenge, and that many of you have begun this preparation. We currently have an opportunity for an unprecedented level of engagement with individuals who might otherwise be sleeping rough. Understanding people's needs now and planning the next steps will be crucial for continuing to save lives and supporting some of the most vulnerable people.

In particular, I ask that you consider the following points closely:

- That as the pandemic continues you continue to be health-led and, working with health partners to take a clinical health-led response to the ongoing risk of Covid-19 during the next phase. This population will contain some people who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, some of whom will need to continue to shield in line with clinical advice and in accordance with guidance which can be found here:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>.
 - <https://www.pathway.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19-Clinical-homeless-sector-plan-160420-1.pdf>

- That you work up your next steps plan with support from MHCLG. We, and the Taskforce, stand ready to work with you on this and that will require a full assessment of your cohort, the options you have available and where the pressures are
- You should carry out individual assessments and take decisions on who you can provide support to, which would include providing accommodation to vulnerable people sleeping rough.
- In terms of move-on accommodation all options need to be considered, we ask:
 - That you seek to encourage people, where appropriate and possible, to return to friends and family.
 - That you seek to find as many sustainable move-on options for people as possible. This should begin with an assessment of the availability of stock locally followed, where applicable, by work in partnership with Housing Associations to increase the supply of move-on accommodation available for your COVID-19 response, whether through acquisitions, repair and refurbishment or long-term leasing arrangements. Where appropriate, individuals should be supported to move into the private rented sector.
 - That, where sustainable move-on options aren't available, you put in place short term accommodation to ensure that people do not have to return to the streets whilst you work to find longer term options for them.
- Where appropriate moves into alternative accommodation can take place now. We ask that you seek to phase your move-on work so that you stagger exits from emergency accommodation as much as possible through the coming weeks.
- For some people a voluntary return to their country of origin may be the best outcome for them. Where an individual wants to return home, you can support them to do so.
- As ever, support for individuals ongoing physical and mental health is important. So we also ask that you seek to work with health partners to plan for continuity of care for people as they move out of emergency accommodation to support their ongoing physical and mental health, substance use, social care and housing needs.

Our expert Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Advisers have been working with your organisations during these challenging times to help support and shape your local plans. They will continue to do so and to work with your teams to agree how you might reconsider plans for existing funding, for example through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, to support this work now that the rough sleeping challenges you face have fundamentally changed.

We are asking for these initial plans to be set out by 11 June in a co-production process with our team. Where appropriate, you should start moving people into accommodation as soon as they are able to do so, following the completion of a joint housing, health and care plan. I know that several of you have already begun this planning in earnest and initial discussions have taken place.

I appreciate that these are challenging timescales and that your plans will develop over time – but we need this information so we can work with you to support your next steps work over the coming weeks.

Safety of your staff, those in the hotels and other accommodation and of residents will I know remain at the forefront of your minds. All organisations and people who work in homelessness, housing, health (including mental health) and social care have responsibilities to support people who are at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect (including self-neglect); to safeguard. We continue to ask that local authorities and partners adopt positive practice in safeguarding.

I do recognise that these are challenging times and that you may have accommodated people who would normally and otherwise be ineligible for support, making judgements based on risk to life. I wanted to take this opportunity to restate the government's position on eligibility relating to immigration status, including for those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). The law regarding that status remains in place. Local authorities must use their judgment in assessing what support they may lawfully give to each person on an individual basis, considering that person's specific circumstances and support needs. You will already be used to making such judgements on accommodating individuals who might otherwise be ineligible, during extreme weather for example, where there is a risk to life.

Many of you have also asked about funding. As you will be aware, the Government has announced an initial £3.2m fund for rough sleeping accommodation and services during the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, we have provided two subsequent rounds of £1.6 billion for local authorities to respond to COVID-19 pressures, including for services helping the most vulnerable, such as homeless people. We have also now announced that we have accelerated our commitment, made at Budget, to provide 6,000 units of accommodation for rough sleepers with 3,300 of these becoming available in the next 12 months. This will allow us to provide thousands more homes to be made available for vulnerable rough sleepers where they can get the support they need to recover from life on the streets. This unprecedented commitment is backed by £433m of Government funding, including a 37% increase in the total revenue support of the programme. We will continue to work with local government over the coming weeks to ensure you are managing as the pandemic progresses.

Thank you very much for everything you are doing to save lives and provide care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Hall', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'L' and a long, sweeping tail.

LUKE HALL MP