



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Luke Hall MP
Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing

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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email dated 19 June to the Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP, on behalf of your constituents about homelessness and rough sleeping. I appreciate how important this matter is to your constituents and I am grateful to you for contacting this department on their behalf. I am replying as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

Thanks to the hard work of local authorities, agencies and the homelessness sector, nearly 15,000 vulnerable people have been housed in emergency accommodation, including hotels, since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown period, according to returns from local authorities to MHCLG. This includes people coming in directly from the streets, people previously housed in shared night shelters and people who are at risk of rough sleeping during the pandemic. This is a truly remarkable achievement, and one which all organisations involved should be proud.

To support this work, we have now provided councils across England with over £3.7 billion to manage the impacts of COVID-19, including supporting homeless people.

The Government's next priority is to ensure that as few people as possible return to the streets. In recognition of the immense challenge and opportunity, the Government asked Dame Louise Casey to spearhead a specialist Taskforce to lead the response to COVID-19 and our next steps. Working hand in hand with local authorities and agencies from across the homelessness sector, the taskforce will develop and lead on the next steps of the Government's response to rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 24 May, the Secretary of State announced plans for thousands of long-term, safe homes to support many of the vulnerable rough sleepers who have been supported during the Covid-19 pandemic. Here, vulnerable rough sleepers taken off the streets during the pandemic can get the specialist support they need to rebuild their lives.

This unprecedented commitment – the biggest of its kind since the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative began – will be backed by £160 million in 20/21 to inject 3,300 new units of accommodation this year, part of 6,000 in total. In addition to accelerating this capital spend for investment in housing stock, the government is also increasing the revenue support of the total programme by 37% (£53m) over the four-year lifetime of the programme to make sure that rough sleepers have the support they need to stay off the streets for good. Homes England, in partnership with MHCLG, have pledged to work hand-in-hand with leading

Housing Associations and local authorities to fast-track thousands of units of longer-term accommodation for rough sleepers.

However, we are going even further. On 24 June we also announced that we are providing local authorities with a further £105 million to enable them to best support the nearly 15,000 people placed into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This commitment will help to ensure that as few of these people as possible return to the streets. The funding will cover a range of interventions, from moves into the Private Rented Sector to procuring interim accommodation such as hotels or student accommodation. This takes the overall amount spent on rough sleeping and homelessness this year to over half a billion pounds.

Furthermore, we are supporting pilots of the Housing First model across three areas - Greater Manchester (GMCA), West Midlands (WMCA) and Liverpool City Region (LCRCA) - underpinned by £28m of MHCLG funding. Since its launch, our expert advisers have been working closely with each of the three pilot regions to closely monitor and support progress. The government committed to expanding Housing First in its latest manifesto and we will use the outcomes from our three pilots to inform next steps for the programme.

The Government is also supporting those at risk of homelessness, with an introduction of over £6.5 billion through the welfare system. Local Housing Allowance rates have been increased to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April. This significant investment in the LHA benefits over 1m households who will see an increase in support of on average £600 this year. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. There is already £180m in Discretionary Housing Payments for Local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in 2020/21 including an additional £40m to tackle affordability pressures in the private rented sector.

The Government is aware of concerns about those with no recourse to public funds experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis. The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended. Local authorities already regularly make decisions on accommodating individuals who might otherwise be ineligible, where there is a risk to life, for example during extreme weather. Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question. The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times. Local authorities should use the funding they have been provided to support people who are sleeping rough and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

Once again, I appreciate how important this matter is to your constituents and I am grateful to you for writing in on their behalf. We will continue to focus on delivering support to those who are most vulnerable from this pandemic, and hope these measures further demonstrate our commitment to end rough sleeping by the end of this parliament



LUKE HALL MP