

Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government
2 Marsham St
Westminster
London SW1P 4DF

28th May 2020

RE: An open letter calling for the government to extend the 'Everyone In' policy

Dear Secretary of State,

This letter has been written by local community-led groups and charities across England. We have provided essential services throughout the pandemic, working closely with people who are homeless both within the emergency provision and with those left on the streets or in inadequate accommodation. We are deeply concerned about the Government's reported decision to end the 'Everyone In' policy and the continued provision for homeless people.¹

We are also very concerned about the risks associated with vastly reduced winter provision and about the significant population - in particular those with No Recourse to Public Funds - that remain substantially at risk during the pandemic despite the huge effort made by all to accommodate people.

We note your announcement of 24 May of measures to support those rough sleepers currently accommodated to move on to sustainable, long-term housing.² While the language used shows positive ambition, much of your statement recycles previously announced pre-COVID-19 lockdown pledges, such as 6,000 new housing units.³ In addition, the majority of the funding announced was already announced at budget, albeit accelerated. This announcement did not clarify whether the Everyone In policy was actually coming to an end or not. It did not confirm if the new units would be available for use by those who have not been able to access the current available provisions, thus remaining street homeless. The announcement also did not address the question of support for people with No Recourse to Public Funds. Finally, it made no mention of people who will become homeless in the future and how they might be accommodated.

What is needed is a far more substantial allocation of funding to local authorities, with a guarantee that central government will fund all shortfalls which are leaving rough sleepers on the streets, and urgently assist local authorities in acquiring sufficient housing for all.

This need for the Government to urgently provide substantial funds on a long-term basis, as well as clarify and amend its instructions and guidance to Local Authorities, is crucial. On

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-52637283>

²

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/6000-new-supported-homes-as-part-of-landmark-commitment-to-end-rough-sleeping>

³ <https://www.bigissue.com/latest/the-big-issue-breaks-down-rishi-sunaks-budget/>

26th March, the Homelessness Minister, Luke Hall MP, issued his directive to local authorities to 'bring everyone in' during the ongoing coronavirus crisis.⁴ Specifically, his directive stated that 'it is imperative that rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless persons are supported into appropriate accommodation by 29th March'. Although councils have continued their efforts to meet the Minister's directive, it has never been met in full: many people continue to sleep on the streets or have become newly street homeless.

Nonetheless, the principle of 'Everyone In' was, and remains, correct. Homeless members of society need to be able to access secure and safe accommodation during the pandemic, both for their own health and safety and for our wider public safety but this principle should reach far beyond public health measures. It is the principle of a fair society.

We therefore urge that, if the goal of the government is to end rough sleeping then the Everyone In policy must be extended so that **all** people experiencing homelessness are able to access safe and secure accommodation for the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

This provision should include funding and support for the sector to problem solve winter provision. Pre-pandemic, the vast majority of people sleeping rough have been accommodated through the winter shelter network from November - March each year. We are now facing the risk of a humanitarian disaster as the shared winter shelter spaces commonly used will not meet public health requirements.

This stark reality demonstrates that the impact of COVID-19 on our homeless population reaches far beyond the months of lockdown. In this crisis, a failure to protect the most vulnerable constitutes a failure to protect us all. With shelters being closed, the winding down of the 'Everyone In' scheme with no robust alternative in place would mean our buses, our A&E waiting rooms, and our high streets becoming crowded with those who have nowhere else to go. This risks a spike in infections, posing a grave danger to the health of rough sleepers, and all other members of our society. A long-term commitment is essential to save lives.

To this end, sufficient funding should be provided to Local Authorities immediately.⁵ Neither the £3.2 billion the Government released to Local Authorities for their overall Covid-19 response, nor the £3.2 million dedicated to provisions for rough sleeping, nor the allocated funds mentioned in your most recent statement are sufficient for municipal governments to do the urgent work of protecting residents from the ongoing crisis at hand.⁶ It is crucial that additional funds, beyond the budget, be released for Local Authorities to procure further accommodation stock, to finance long-term welfare support, and to pay for the training and the recruitment of homelessness outreach workers and charity staff.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-minister-hall-to-local-authorities>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-52395398>

⁶ Written Evidence submitted by London Borough of Enfield and its Homelessness Prevention Board <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3489/pdf/>

It is also of critical importance that the Government clarify that those without regularised immigration status will not be removed as a result of taking up temporary accommodation, and that data held by Local Authorities or their contractors will not be shared with the Home Office without consent. The No Recourse to Public Funds condition should also be removed so that everyone can access housing support, regardless of immigration status. Funding should be allocated towards supporting homeless people with NRPF, who make up a large percentage of all rough sleepers.⁷

In addition to funding, and following the MHCLG's Inquiry into the impact of coronavirus on homelessness, rough sleepers, and the private rented sector, we echo the Committee's recommendation that the Government must also provide guidance clarifying councils' use of discretion in lifting the No Recourse to Public Funds condition, so that homeless people can access vital accommodation support.⁸ No one should be punished for trying to protect their own safety and the safety of the wider public, particularly as the mechanisms of the current immigration regime directly contravenes leading scientific recommendations for an effective Coronavirus response.⁹

Local Authorities must have the funding, legal authorisation, and government guidance needed to allow them fulfil the "in for good" principle: the understanding that, once service users initially engage with homelessness services, they will be guaranteed the long-term housing support needed to avoid returning to the streets. To this end, the Everyone In policy should not be abandoned, but instead, extended.

Yours sincerely,

Haringey Migrant Support Centre, London
Museum of Homelessness, national
The Rt. Rev the Lord Bishop of Salisbury
Albert Kennedy Trust, national
The Big Issue Foundation, national
Emmaus UK, national
London Renters Union, London
The Simon Community, London
Oxford Homeless Project, Oxford
Street Treats, Manchester
West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network, Leeds
Sanctus St Mark's, Stoke on Trent
Streets Kitchen, national
Solidarity Shelters, national
The Outside Project, London
Homeless Support Project, Manchester

⁷ Written evidence submitted by the Association of Housing Advice Services and the North London Housing Partnership <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3448/pdf/>

⁸ https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmcomloc/309/30905.htm#_idTextAnchor006

⁹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30971-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30971-5/fulltext)

The Pavement magazine
Voices in Exile, Brighton
Hope Housing, Bradford
Sussex Homeless Support & Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition, Brighton
Denis Tully, CEO, Emmanuel House, Nottingham
Institute of our Lady of Mercy, Leeds
Society of St James, Southampton
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, London
Northampton Hope Centre
Union Chapel, London
Street Storage, London
With One Voice, International
Barnsley Rough Sleeper Project, Barnsley
Jon Beech, Director, Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network
The Margins Project, London
Kalayaan, London
The Tricky Period, London
Positive Action for Refugees, Leeds
Project 17, London
No Accommodation Network, national
The Solace Community, Wolverhampton
Thousand 4 1000, Brighton
Greenwich Winter Night Shelter, London
Rev David Britton, Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter, London
The Bromley Homeless Shelter, London
London Jesus Centre, London
Labour Homelessness Campaign
ACORN, national
Paper Cup Project, Liverpool
The Night Shelter, Coventry
The Robes Project, London
Surviving the Streets, Hastings
Migrant English Project, Brighton
Birmingham Community Hosting Network, Birmingham
Renewed Hope Trust, Surrey
Metro, London
Public Interest Law Centre, London
Quaker Homeless Action
St Werburghs Medical Practice for the Homeless, Chester
Campbell Hall Homeless Drop In, Boughton, Chester
Homeless Support Project, Manchester
Neighbourhood Food Larder, Warrington, St Helen's and Leigh
Myriad Foundation, Manchester
Lola's Homeless, Newham, London
Feed Manchester, Manchester
Spotlight Outreach, Manchester

Chester Cathedral

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark

The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark

The Venerable Alastair Cutting, Archdeacon of Lewisham and Greenwich

Ruth Martin, Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of Southwark

Pepys Community Forum, London