



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Jeremy Pocklington CB**  
Permanent Secretary

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Dame Meg Hillier  
Public Accounts Committee Chair  
**By email**

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Dear Dame Meg,

I wanted to address an outstanding action from the Starter Homes hearing in November 2020 that “The Department should write to us within three months to explain how it is addressing the problems of homelessness, rough sleeping, and families in temporary accommodation.” As you know, we updated the Committee on progress to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping at a dedicated hearing in January 2021 and there will be a further opportunity to discuss these issues at the recall hearing on 1 November 2021.

### Recent progress

As you know, the Government has made considerable progress in the last few years on our commitment to end rough sleeping. The Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot for 2020 (published on 25 February 2021) showed there were 2,688 people estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night, which is a 37% decrease from last year and the third consecutive annual reduction from a peak of 4,751 on a single night in 2017. In London, the snapshot showed people sleeping rough also fell by 37%, which is the largest decrease seen in London since the time series began in 2010.

This has been possible thanks to the infrastructure we had already put in place and our efforts, together with those of local partners, during the pandemic. Our flagship Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), first launched in 2018, provided the foundations for the response. The RSI provides frontline support, including outreach services to provide immediate help from the street, emergency accommodation and longer-term provision including support to sustain tenancies. It was shown to reduce rough sleeping by 32% compared to the counterfactual. We have provided £202m investment through the Rough Sleeping Initiative this year (2021-2022) – more than 80% above the £112m provided last year – funding up to 14,500 bed spaces and 2,700 support staff across England.

When the pandemic began, this existing infrastructure enabled the quick and effective mobilisation of our 'Everyone In' response supported by our team of expert advisers who offer support, guidance and challenge to local authorities to drive their performance and who worked intensively with areas to shape their responses. The latest published data shows that by the end of January 2021, over 37,000 people have been helped since the start of the pandemic, including over 26,000 helped into longer-term

accommodation and 11,000 in emergency accommodation. According to research by UCL and published in the Lancet, preventative measures taken by the Government may have avoided 21,092 infections, 266 deaths, 1,164 hospital admissions and 338 intensive care (ICU) admissions of homeless people.

### Preparing for winter and beyond

We are preparing carefully for the additional risks that the cold weather and ongoing risks from Covid can pose to those sleeping rough over the winter. Within this year's RSI we asked all local authorities to plan for winter and any other surge provision required. This is on-top of a range of year-round services to make sure there is always a pathway off the streets. We also recently announced increased funding for the Homelessness Transformation Fund, which is funding faith and community providers to provide self-contained and better quality models which focus on move-on accommodation. The fund now totals £3.8m. We continue to work closely with local authorities to ensure they have the right resources to meet any pressures this winter.

Our aim is to support as many rough sleepers as possible into long-term, stable accommodation. Our £433 million Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme will provide 6,000 move-on homes, available as long-term assets, and accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping or who have a history of sleeping rough.

For those with more complex needs, we have funded a number of Housing First initiatives to provide stable, affordable accommodation and intensive wrap-around support to help them recover from complex issues and sustain their tenancies. In May 2018, we launched the £28 million Housing First pilots in the West Midlands (WMCA), Greater Manchester (GMCA) and Liverpool City Region (LCRCA). The Housing First pilots are now in their fourth year and have supported over 1,050 of the most entrenched and cyclical rough sleepers across 23 local authorities, and over 860 people have been provided with accommodation over its lifetime. Four evaluation reports have been published and we will use the findings of our evaluation, together with our experiences from the three pilots, to inform next steps and any further expansion.

We are also working closely across Government to tackle the range of issues that can cause rough sleeping and prevent people from returning to a more stable position. This year we are delivering £52 million for substance misuse treatment services for people sleeping rough, building on £23 million in 2020/21. This will fund evidence-based drug and alcohol treatment and wraparound support to improve access to treatment, including for those with co-occurring mental health needs. DHSC also recently announced £16m to improve out of hospital discharge support for those experiencing homelessness, and MoJ currently fund dedicated housing specialists in 20 resettlement prisons and a temporary accommodation scheme, providing transitional accommodation for up to 12 weeks for those leaving prison at risk of homelessness, in five probation regions.

### Homelessness and temporary accommodation

More widely, our focus is on seeking to prevent homelessness as far as possible. As you will know, the Homelessness Reduction Act was introduced to transform the culture of homelessness service delivery. Local authorities and other public bodies must work together to actively relieve people of their homelessness or prevent homelessness for people at risk, irrespective of whether they are a family or single person, the reason they are at risk, or if they have a local connection to the area. Our published review of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act shows that the service has improved for those who would previously have had limited support, particularly single households, and that more people are receiving help both earlier and for longer. Since the Act came into force, over 375,000

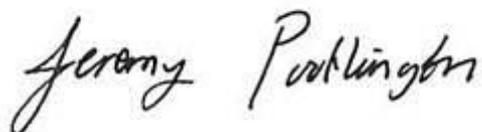
households have had their homelessness successfully prevented or relieved through securing accommodation for more than 6 months.

To support local authorities to prevent homelessness and provide temporary accommodation where eligible, we have provided £310 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2021/22. This is an increase of £47 million compared to the previous year and gives local authorities control and flexibility to manage homelessness pressures and support those at risk. We also put in place evictions protections for renters during the pandemic to help keep people in their homes, including financial help for those struggling to pay rent, longer notice periods and a ban on evictions.

The latest published homelessness statistics show that there has been a 6.1% decrease in the number of families in temporary accommodation, with 59,120 families in temporary accommodation as of 31 March 2021 compared to the same quarter in 2020. The number of families in temporary accommodation is at the lowest level since 2016. The next quarterly statutory homelessness statistics will be published today.

We have also recently announced that a further £65 million will be made available to local authorities in 2021/22 through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The additional funding will support local authorities to help vulnerable households with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless, including helping households to find a new home.

The Spending Review settlement set our overall funding envelope for the next three years, with multi-year funding enabling us to drive further efficiencies and service improvements. We are happy to discuss this further or respond to future recommendations following the 1 November hearing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Pocklington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**JEREMY POCKLINGTON**