



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

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To: Local Authority Chief Executives

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As you know, this Government is committed to ending rough sleeping and we have taken huge steps, working with you all, to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. Through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation. This has been an unprecedented achievement in the midst of the many challenges that COVID-19 has brought to bear and is one which is the result of so much hard work and commitment from local authorities, your partners and the wider homelessness sector.

Our work to support rough sleepers never stopped and in November we asked all local authorities to update plans for rough sleepers to make sure people sleeping rough had somewhere safe to go over the winter. We provided additional funding through the Cold Weather Fund to all local authorities and targeted support through the Protect Programme to support local authorities with higher numbers of rough sleepers to meet the specific challenges they faced with the introduction of new national restrictions in November. However, given the new variant of COVID-19 that is driving infection rates, and the Prime Minister's announcement of a new national lockdown, it is clear we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that people who sleep rough, who we know are vulnerable to this disease, are kept safe and that we do everything we can to protect the NHS.

It is for this reason that I am asking you to redouble your efforts to help those currently sleeping rough to be accommodated. This means you should (subject to individual assessments) make offers of safe and appropriate accommodation to people who are rough sleeping now. This will include people who may have previously been offered accommodation but rejected it or left accommodation, and individuals new to rough sleeping who require help to move on from rough sleeping. As part of this, we also expect you to carry out a rapid assessment of need for everyone that you accommodate and consider interventions for those new to rough sleeping. Importantly, you should seek to make sure everyone brought in, where they are not already, is registered with a GP – to make sure their health needs are addressed, supporting them now and in the future, and ensuring they are factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on Covid vaccine prioritisation. Local authorities should work with their local health partners to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness are able to access the vaccine by other means if mainstream provision is unsuitable, when they fall into one of the JCVI priority groups.

You will also need to consider the needs of those who might otherwise be ineligible for support as a result of immigration status. The law on eligibility relating to immigration status remains in place. Local authorities must use their judgement 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 no doubt currently be making similar judgements on accommodating otherwise ineligible individuals in the face of extreme weather.

I know you will also be thinking about your workforce and how to protect them at this crucial time. Frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 are on the JCVI priority list for vaccination. Local authorities are encouraged to look at those working in homeless settings for whether they meet this criteria, referring to NHS guidance on the vaccine deployment in social care workers.

We have already been working with you closely through the Protect Programme to ensure robust support is in place for rough sleepers until the end of this financial year. It is our understanding that this funding, along with the conversations we have held with you, will enable you to respond to these new challenges and ensure all those who you are lawfully able to assist has an offer of accommodation. However, if you are struggling to provide people sleeping rough with the necessary support or would like to discuss any of the matters above further, please contact our team of Rough Sleeping advisers or contact rsi-y3@communities.gov.uk if you have any questions.

In terms of funding from April, as part of your Rough Sleeping Initiative allocation, we let you know last month will be at least as much as you received last year. MHCLG adviser teams are already working with you on this and will work with you to understand how the funding and work we are supporting align on the ground. We have already confirmed to you (in the letter of 30 December) that there will be no reduction in overall funding for RSI 2021/22 compared with RSI 2020/21. We can also confirm that we will guarantee continuation funding for existing interventions for the period April to June 2021. We will work with you on your proposals for funding for the rest of year which we hope to confirm by May or sooner subject to your capacity to take forward those discussions with us.

There is much to be proud of in how local government has responded to COVID-19, but our work on rough sleeping stands out. Indeed it is widely regarded as amongst the most impressive responses of any major country. Today I'm asking you to work with us and redouble our collective efforts, with a particular focus on GP registration as a precursor to vaccination to further protect the vulnerable. I'm incredibly grateful for your hard work and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP