

Keep Our Doors Open

Toolkit for homelessness organisations
to write to their local MP



Homeless Link

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Introduction

Why it's time for the sector to act to Keep Our Doors Open

The rising cost of living is having a serious impact on homelessness organisations across the country. In most cases, homelessness services are having to run on funding commitments made before the current level of inflation was known, with local authorities not having the resources to uplift contracts in line with rising costs. Because of this, we know that many services are really struggling to make ends meet, affecting their ability to provide meaningful support to people experiencing homelessness. At the same time, many services are reporting that rising costs mean more and more people/households are in need of their support. With costs only likely to increase in the near future, we must act now to Keep Our Doors Open.

- Read our [Keep Our Doors Open campaign briefing](#)

The Autumn Statement

On 17th November 2022, the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt set out the Government's spending plans in the Autumn Statement. The statement offered a mixed bag of results, with a welcome announcement on uprating benefits. But, as local authority budgets face restrictions across the next three years, there is still much more that the homelessness sector requires to stay afloat.

- Read our [full analysis of the Autumn Statement](#)

Our ask

We want as many MPs as possible, from across the political parties, to write to the Chancellor calling for him to uprate homelessness spending in line with inflation. To facilitate this, we are asking our members to write to their local MP, asking their MP to take the above action.

- Read more about our asks of Government in our full [Policy Report](#)

Your local MP

MPs are always keen to hear from organisations delivering services in, or based in their constituency. They are also well aware of local housing and homelessness issues because it makes up a high proportion of their postbag. You may already have a good relationship with your local MP, or you may not even know who they are. Either way this toolkit gives you all the resources to write to your MP, outlining our shared concerns at the impact of rising costs and

the need for additional funding for the sector as a whole to continue support people out of homelessness.

In the document you will find the following:

- Key statistics from Homeless Link's research to use as evidence to support your organisation's concerns.
- Guidance on writing to your local MP.
- A template letter to help you contact your local MP

Do please copy us in to any letters that you send and also any replies you receive so we can monitor the situation across the country. Homeless Link are also very happy to offer any support needed, so please get in touch with **Nye Jones (Campaigns Manager)** at **nye.jones@homelesslink.org.uk**.

The statistics

When engaging MPs, it's important you have evidence to back up your claims, helping show that you are not facing issues alone and the wider societal impact of the problem at hand.

Below are some statistics from Homeless Link's recent research that show the national picture and can help in engaging your local politician. These statistics should be used to supplement the information you have within your own service.

Homeless Link members poll

Homeless Link recently sent out a poll to its members, receiving 77 responses from organisations across the country, with the key statistics below:

- 86% of respondents agreed they are seeing an increase in people experiencing homelessness due to the cost of living crisis.
- 92% agreed they're worried the rising cost of living will affect their ability to maintain service and support standards.
- Over one in four (27%) agreed the cost of living crisis risks service closures.
- 91% agreed the people they're supporting are struggling to pay their energy bills.
- Just 23% said they're able to pay staff a salary increase in line with inflation.

Workforce Survey

During May and June of this year, Homeless Link sent out a survey to its members exploring issues within the homelessness workforce. The survey received over 1,300 responses.

Key statistics are:

- Just 28% of respondents agreed frontline staff are appropriately paid.
- 61% of respondents agreed that it's hard to find high quality staff to work in the homelessness sector.
- 78% of respondents state that being under-staffed impacts their ability to provide meaningful support to people sleeping rough.
- 73% of respondents predict that the cost-of-living crisis will make it more difficult to recruit and retain staff.

Contacting your local MP

Finding your MP

If you don't know who your MP is, you can find out by putting in the postcode of your service into the [TheyWorkForYou website](#). If your service operates in more than one constituency you should feel free to write to all the relevant MPs, but make sure you explain that you have a service in their constituency.

Drafting a letter

The best way to contact an MP is by writing to them. In the Appendix is an example letter from a made-up organisation to a made-up MP, which you can use as a template to send to your local MP. But remember, this is just a template. The more you tell them about the local issues you are facing the more likely they are to respond and engage.

Additionally, doing some internet research around your MPs interests can also help personalise your approach. Looking up things like whether they're part of an All Party Parliamentary Group and/or whether they sit on a Select Committee, as well as what have they said in the past about homelessness can be very helpful. Useful websites include:

- [TheyWorkForYou](#) - records what MPs say in the commons and how they vote.
- [UK Parliament](#) - has details of membership of APPG's and Select Committee's

Joint letters

If you work closely with another, or multiple organisations within your local area, sending a joint letter signed by multiple organisations can be a great way to show that the issues services are facing are not confined to one organisation. Homeless Link are also happy to write jointly to MPs if organisations wish, so please get in touch with Campaigns Manager Nye Jones (nye.jones@homelesslink.org.uk) if this is of interest.

Sending your letter

Every MP has a public facing email address, which you can find on their profile page on the UK parliament website. However, these inboxes can receive a huge amount of correspondence,

meaning it can be slow for MPs to respond. MPs will also have an email for internal use so if you have this for your MP then send it to this address too, as well as copying in any of the MP's staff if you have their details.

You can either send the letter as an email or attach it as a Word document or PDF. You may also want to post your letter to your MPs constituency office as well, with many organisations finding this 'old school' method more effective in soliciting a response.

Following up

MPs are very busy and it can take a little while for them to reply at times. If you haven't received any response to your letter within two weeks then it is worth sending a follow up email enquiring about it to keep it on the MP's radar.

Appendix

Template MP letter

Dear Mr Richard Pugh MP,

I am writing to you from Homelessness Rothermead to share my concerns about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on my organisation and the wider homelessness sector, and to request that you write to the Chancellor on our behalf, outlining the need for further funding for the homelessness sector.

Homelessness Rothermead work across the Rothermead area in three locations, providing accommodation and support to people with a history of rough sleeping. On average, we support over 1,000 people each year, helping them find independent accommodation and reintegrate into the local community.

Over the past few months, we have been working hard to support people struggling due to the rising cost of living. But we are increasingly concerned about the impact of rising costs on our own organisation. While the Government's action to cap energy bills has helped, we are still dealing with a range of inflated costs including the cost of fuel, repair and building costs and the need to raise our staff's wages in line with inflation. The majority of our funding is through a contract with Rothermead council, which they have been unable to increase due to receiving no additional Government funds.

At the same time, we have seen a 40% increase in the number of people approaching us for support. Many are behind on their rents due to rising bills, with their incomes not able to keep up with these. I fear this number is only likely to increase further in the coming months.

I know we are not alone in experiencing these issues. The national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations in England Homeless Link, recently sent out a survey to its members, receiving 77 responses from services across the country. 86% agreed they are seeing an increase in people experiencing homelessness due to the cost-of-living crisis and 92% agreed they're worried the rising cost of living will affect their ability to maintain service and support standards, with more than one in four agreeing the crisis risks services closing all together.

I believe that, without financial assistance, my service and many others will have to scale back, their operations, or possibly even close completely, with people experiencing homelessness suffering as a result. In Rothermead this would lead to an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping, undoing the fall we saw during the pandemic.

I know that as a member of the APPG for Ending Homelessness, you care deeply about our shared goal of ending homelessness in England. Therefore, I would request you write to The Treasury outlining the urgent need for a funding uplift for commissioned homelessness services. Of course, I would also very much like to meet with you to discuss the local Issues we are facing and how we can work together to make sure Homelessness Rothermead and the wider homelessness sector has the resources to continue to house and support people over the coming months.

Kind regards,
Jane Doe, CEO at Homelessness Rothermead

What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

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Let's End Homelessness Together

