

Keep Our Doors Open

Toolkit for homelessness organisations
to write to their local MP ahead of the
Spring Budget



Homeless Link

Introduction

A funding uplift to Keep Our Doors Open

Homelessness and rough sleeping are on the rise. At the same time, homelessness services are struggling to stay afloat as prolonged inflationary pressures take their toll. We are now seeing examples of services having to scale back their work, and fears some may even close down all together, at a time when more and more people need their support. Additionally, the Government plans to significantly reduce the support available for non-domestic energy bills from April, leaving services that are not on fixed tariffs facing potentially eye watering rises in their energy bills.

This situation is clearly unsustainable, with the real threat of services closing down. Therefore, we need a funding uplift in line with inflation to Keep Our Doors Open.

The Spring Budget

On 15th March, the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt will outline the Government's spending plans in the Spring Budget. This represents a major opportunity to push for the funding uplift the sector badly needs, but only if we in the homelessness sector can make our ask heard in the next few weeks.

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 in the Spring Budget. To facilitate this, we are asking our members to write to their local MP, asking them to take the above action. The more MPs that write to the Chancellor, the better chance we have of getting the resources the sector needs.

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.
- An example and template letter to help you contact your local MP.

The evidence

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.

2022 Annual Review

Between September and November 2022, Homeless Link conducted a major survey of the homelessness sector. The questions focused on the impact of rising costs on services, receiving 356 responses from organisations across the country.

Key statistics are as follows:

- Nearly half (47%) of the organisations surveyed agreed that the rising cost of living, including increases to energy bills, means their organisation risks service closures.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents (64%) agreed that a lack of inflationary increase in their funding would make services unviable.
- Nearly one in five (19%) of respondents agreed that their service has already reduced services to meet the rising cost of living.
- Nearly half of respondents (48%) said their service has supported more people due to the cost of living crisis.

Contacting your local MP

Your local MP

MPs are always keen to hear from organisations delivering services who operate in their constituency. They are also usually 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 as an organisation within their constituency, you are best placed to outline our shared concerns around the impact of rising costs and the need for additional funding for the sector.

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, as well as a template for you to use to write your own letter[s]. 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 MP's 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 they have 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 Committees.

Joint letters

If you work closely with other 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, with many organisations finding this 'old school' method more effective in soliciting a response.

Do please copy us into 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.

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

Example 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 outlining the need for further funding for the homelessness sector in the upcoming Spring Budget.

Homelessness Rothermead work across the Rothermead area in three locations, providing accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness. On average, we support over 1,000 people each year, providing accommodation to around 60 people at any one time, while helping them find independent accommodation and reintegrate into the local community.

Over the past six months, we have seen a steady increase in the number of people who need our support due to the rising cost of living, with our service working hard to meet this need. But we are increasingly concerned about the impact of rising costs. These include the cost of fuel, repair and building costs and the need to raise our staff's wages in line with inflation. At the same time, the Government's decision to greatly reduce the support available for non-domestic energy bills from April will be devastating for us, with a predicted rise in our energy bills of over 200%.

The Government outlined funding for homelessness support in the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review, when inflation was a fraction of what it is now. 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.

Without a funding uplift we will have no choice but to scale back our services. For example, we will have to give up the lease on one of our main accommodation projects which houses over 30 people. Either these people will return to homelessness, or Rothermead Council will have to place them in emergency accommodation at great expense.

We are not alone in experiencing these issues. Homeless Link, the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations in England, recently sent out a survey to its members, receiving 356 responses from services across the country. Nearly half (47%) agreed that the rising cost of living, including increases to energy bills, means their organisation risks service closures. Meanwhile, nearly two thirds of respondents (64%) agreed that a lack of inflationary increase in their funding would make services unviable, while nearly one in five (19%) of respondents agreed that their service has already reduced services to meet the rising cost of living.

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 in the upcoming Spring Budget to keep our doors open.

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

Template MP letter

Dear **(Insert MP name and title)**,

I am writing to you from **(insert organisation name)** 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 outlining the need for further funding for the homelessness sector in the upcoming Spring Budget.

(Insert description of what your organisation does – see example above)

(Insert localised examples of the impact of rising costs on your organisation’s work – see example above)

The Government outlined funding for homelessness support in the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review, when inflation was a fraction of what it is now. The majority of our funding is through a contract with **(insert local authority)**, which they have been unable to increase due to receiving no additional Government funds.

Without a funding uplift we will have no choice but to scale back our services. **(Insert local example of the impact of this – see example above)**.

We are not alone in experiencing these issues. Homeless Link, the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations in England, recently sent out a survey to its members, receiving 356 responses from services across the country. Nearly half (47%) agreed that the rising cost of living, including increases to energy bills, means their organisation risks service closures. Meanwhile, nearly two thirds of respondents (64%) agreed that a lack of inflationary increase in their funding would make services unviable, while nearly one in five (19%) of respondents agreed that their service has already reduced services to meet the rising cost of living.

I know that **(insert MPs connection to homelessness.)** Therefore, I would request you write to The Treasury outlining the urgent need for a funding uplift for commissioned homelessness services in the upcoming Spring Budget to keep our doors open. I have also attached Homeless Link’s MP Briefing which provides further information on the pressures facing 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 **(insert organisation name)** and the wider homelessness sector has the resources to continue to house and support people over the coming months.

Kind regards,

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**

