

## Homelessness update

### Purpose of report

For information.

### Summary

This paper updates members on the LGA's homelessness lobbying and improvement work following the COVID-19 crisis. It provides background for a presentation from the MHCLG Homelessness Director, Penny Hobman.

### Recommendation

That the Board note the update

### Actions

Officers will take action as directed

**Contact officer:** Priya Thethi  
**Position:** Adviser  
**Phone no:** 07464652600  
**Email:** Priya.Thethi@local.gov.uk

## Homelessness update

### Background

1. In March 2020, [Luke Hall MP wrote to councils](#) to ask them to safely accommodate everyone sleeping rough or in high-risk shared accommodation. The Everyone In programme has since resulted in councils accommodating 29,000 people, almost 19,000 of whom have been moved into more permanent housing.
2. We have consistently welcomed this initiative, which has [potentially prevented 21,000 infections and 266 deaths among the homeless population](#).
3. To resource this work, government provided councils with £4.7 billion of unringfenced funding prior to the Spending Review - this emergency funding was intended to address pressures across the full range of council services.
4. In May, the Government launched its [Next Steps Accommodation programme](#), which aims to deliver a total of 6000 units of move-on accommodation for people in emergency accommodation. £241 million has been allocated to councils for this financial year to deliver 3300 units, part of a total of £433 million over the lifetime of this parliament.
5. On 13 October, the Government launched [£12 million of funding for winter night shelter provision](#), £10 million of which will be allocated to councils. On 5 November, [it launched the Protect programme](#), which will allocate £15 million to councils with high levels of rough sleeping, to support ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for people sleeping rough.
6. The 2020 Spending Review announced £151 million of new revenue funding, which will fund frontline services through the Rough Sleeping Initiative as well as councils' statutory homelessness services. [We welcomed this funding](#), but expressed disappointment that the Spending Review has maintained local housing allowance at its current rate, and that it did not take the opportunity to lift the No Recourse to Public Funds condition.

### **LGA position and lobbying**

7. The LGA's position has been informed by regular discussions with its officer sounding board (the Homelessness Officers' Policy Network) as well as with partners in the wider homelessness sector.
8. Our initial response to the COVID-19 crisis is set out in [our response to the Housing, Communities and Local Government \(HCLG\) Select Committee](#), which was published in May 2020.
9. We broadly welcomed the Everyone In measures, which had already seen thousands of people given safe accommodation and support. However, we also highlighted concerns from councils about a lack of operational clarity, including a lack of guidance on multi-agency work with the health sector, and on delivering their duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.
10. We also highlighted concerns about a lack of strategic clarity around the long-term prospects for the Everyone In programme, which created very high expectations for councils' delivery without the corresponding resources or support. We called for clarity on the Government's plans for supporting people in emergency accommodation, additional funding for councils to enable them to continue their support for people new to rough sleeping, and a greater focus on homelessness prevention measures in light of the economic impact of COVID-19. These concerns were reiterated in a letter sent by the EEHT Board chair to the Minister for Homelessness, Luke Hall, in June 2020.
11. In May, the Government announced its Next Steps Accommodation Programme, followed by the Winter Fund and Protect Programme in October and November respectively.
12. We welcomed these funding programmes, which collectively will enable councils to identify move-on accommodation for 3300 of the 29,000 people accommodated under Everyone In, as well as providing vital resources to tackle upcoming pressures from winter and the new national COVID-19 restrictions.
13. However, we are concerned that, in light of the ongoing public health risks, many councils have continued to accommodate people sleeping rough after the initial national lockdown period ended. MHCLG survey data on Everyone In suggests that, between May and September 2020, an additional 15,000 people were accommodated by councils, including people coming in directly from the streets, people previously housed in unsafe night shelters, and people who had become vulnerable to rough sleeping during the pandemic.

14. During this period, councils have experienced significant financial pressures: LGA analysis of MHCLG survey data shows that the additional spend by councils on homelessness and rough sleeping services as a result of COVID-19 is projected to be £250 million in 2020/21. [LGA analysis prior to the Spending Review](#) also showed that the overall funding gap facing councils in 2023/24 will be at least £5.3 billion – a result of COVID-19 pressures as well as the pre-existing financial pressures on councils' services.
15. These pressures are likely to increase over winter: [the Winter Night Shelters guidance, published by MHCLG on 13 October](#), states that councils are expected to use self-contained accommodation to house people sleeping rough over winter. This is likely to have cost implications for councils over and above previous years' expenditure, as the supply of winter accommodation will be restricted to more expensive, self-contained accommodation. Last year, the government made £13 million available for cold weather provisions, compared to £12 million in 2020/21 (£10 million of which will be allocated to councils).
16. In light of these new, higher expectations for winter provision, the continued flow of people into homelessness and rough sleeping, and the significant pre-existing pressures on councils, we are concerned that councils will not have sufficient funding to safely accommodate people over the coming months.
17. These concerns have been set out in our upcoming response to the HCLG Select Committee inquiry into the impact of coronavirus on private renting and homelessness. The LGA's Chief Executive also raised our concerns in a letter to the Homelessness Minister in November, following his attendance at a meeting of the Government's Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel.
18. In our submission to the Spending Review, we called on Government to address the significant global funding gap facing councils' services. We also called for a much greater focus on homelessness prevention to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19, including the lifting of the No Recourse to Public Funds condition, more resource for local welfare funds, and a step-change in affordable housing provision.
19. The Spending Review addressed some of these asks. However, we continue to call for more long-term funding, channelled through councils' core settlement, to allow councils to commission flexible, upstream prevention services with partners in the wider public sector.
20. We are currently supporting MHCLG officials to design next year's Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding round, in consultation with a wide range of homelessness and housing officers – this will be called the Rough Sleepers' Accommodation Programme.

### **LGA improvement support**

21. Alongside our lobbying work, we have been supporting councils' homelessness services to respond to the COVID-19 crisis through our sector-led improvement offer.
22. In June, we worked with Local Partnerships to publish [a briefing for councils](#) on identifying move-on accommodation and support for people in emergency accommodation.
23. We followed this up by commissioning Local Partnerships to produce a [briefing on the lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the pandemic](#), which was published on 19 November.
24. On 1 December, we launched our Next Steps Accommodation Programme peer support offer at an event attended by the Homelessness Minister. This offer was developed in partnership with MHCLG, and will provide access to peer challenge and learning for the councils which have received NSAP funding. Support sessions will begin in January 2021, and conclude in March 2021. We will then publish a further report summarising the lessons learnt from NSAP delivery.

### **Implications for Wales**

25. Homelessness is a devolved responsibility.

### **Financial implications.**

26. The LGA has funded its improvement work through its Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG.

### **Next steps**

27. Members' views are sought on the positions set out in the paper, and on MHCLG's proposed response.