

£316 million government funding boost to tackle homelessness

- Homelessness Prevention Grant will support the homeless and those at risk of losing their home
- Councils will use the funding to help people find a new home, get help with evictions, or move into temporary accommodation
- Funding includes £5.8 million for those forced into homelessness by domestic abuse

Tens of thousands of people will be protected from homelessness as a result of a £316 million funding boost, announced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities today (21 December 2021).

The government's Homelessness Prevention Grant will support households in England who are homeless or at risk of losing their home. Councils will use the funding to help them find a new home, access support for unexpected evictions and secure temporary accommodation where needed.

The funding includes an additional £5.8 million to support people forced into homelessness by domestic abuse. This follows the landmark Domestic Abuse Act, which ensures councils give people who find themselves in this situation a "priority need" for assistance.

Funding will be allocated to all councils responsible for housing in England based on local homelessness need in individual areas.

This underlines the government's commitment to ensure people at risk of becoming homeless, across the country, get help more quickly. Since the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in 2018, over 400,000 households have been successfully prevented from losing their homes or supported into settled accommodation, with rough sleeping levels falling 37% between 2019 and 2020.

Minister for Rough Sleeping, Eddie Hughes MP, said:

I have seen first-hand the devastation of those who come face to face with homelessness, and my heart goes out to anyone in this situation.

The support we are announcing today is going directly to communities that need it most.

It will help thousands of people across England, with councils able to prevent homelessness before it occurs and put a roof over the heads of those who have lost their homes.

The Homelessness Prevention Grant, available for 2022/23, is on top of the

recently-announced £66 million to provide rough sleepers with safe and warm accommodation and drug and alcohol treatment services this winter, and £65 million support package for vulnerable renters struggling due to the impact of the pandemic. Overall, the government is investing £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

Government has also announced a £28 million funding boost to help rough sleepers get their COVID-19 vaccines and move into safe accommodation. The Protect and Vaccinate scheme will help to increase vaccine uptake among people who are homeless and sleeping rough, by supporting outreach work in shelters to educate people about the dangers of the virus, giving money to councils to provide safe and secure accommodation while their level of vaccination is increased and delivering mobile vaccinations.

Recent funding has enabled local councils across the country to deliver practical, on the ground support for homeless people.

Calderdale Council, in West Yorkshire for example, has used government funding to provide 25 units of self-contained flats and long term accommodation to help prevent homelessness and drive down the number of rough sleepers in the local area. These units offer a range of on-site support for residents including support on how best to 'Move on' and an NHS run Wound Clinic to treat emergency injuries and provide access to sexual health, drug and alcohol services.

Cllr Scott Patient, Calderdale Council's Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Resilience, said:

We understand the impact that rough sleeping and homelessness can have on individuals, families and communities. Everyone affected has their own story, and the circumstances can be very complex and distressing. We do all we can, working with local partner organisations, to offer people hope and a stronger future through support, advice and accommodation.

We have made significant progress, and every step we've taken has brought hope to those living street-based lifestyles, helping them to rebuild their lives. We know there is still more to do, and the financial support from the government helps us to make this happen.

One Calderdale service user is John, 49, who now has a long-term tenancy after a member of the public found him rough sleeping in a tent in the undergrowth in Sowerby Bridge, Calderdale.

John was assessed for a Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme-funded, long-term tenancy, but was nervous to take this on as he had never had his own home. He was offered reassurance around the support he would have to help him to sustain the tenancy. He wanted to remain close to his mum and a suitable property was identified to facilitate this. John was supported to open his first bank account, change the location of his prescription, contact utility suppliers and register with a new doctor.

Whilst having a tenancy was a huge leap for John, this was made easier with assistance from his support worker. Having his own property has given him a new lease of life and stability, and the platform where he can address his substance misuse. He has a blossoming relationship and he is able to live an independent life in the comfort of knowing that he has staff and support services around him should he need it.

John said:

From getting out of the tent in Sowerby Bridge and meeting the support services, I don't think I'd be here today. I feel alive, better, stronger in myself, more confident, no drugs. Without support I wouldn't be here.