

# Dame Louise Casey to spearhead government taskforce on rough sleeping during pandemic

- New taskforce to advise Government on next steps of emergency response to support vulnerable rough sleepers during the pandemic;
- Team of experts to advise councils on plans to support rough sleepers into long-term, safe accommodation once lockdown is lifted – preventing the vulnerable from returning to the streets;
- Over 90% of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of the crisis have now been offered accommodation where they can self-isolate.

A specialist taskforce has been created to lead the next phase of the Government's support for rough sleepers during the pandemic.

Spearheaded by Dame Louise Casey, the taskforce will work hand-in-hand with councils across the country on plans to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets.

The taskforce will also ensure the thousands of rough sleepers now in accommodation continue to receive the physical and mental health support they need over the coming weeks while they continue to self-isolate from the virus.

Over 90% of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of the crisis have now been offered accommodation where they can remain safe during the crisis – helping protect themselves and others from contracting the virus.

This has been backed by £3.2 million in targeted funding to help councils get as many people off the streets as possible, with a further £3.2 billion additional funding for councils to help them continue to respond to the pandemic and support their communities – including their vital work helping those sleeping rough.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

By working closely with councils, charities, faith groups and health providers, we have offered accommodation to over 5,400 people who were sleeping rough at the beginning of the crisis: that's over 90% of known rough sleepers.

This national effort has potentially helped to protect thousands of lives.

As the country prepares for the next phase of the battle against coronavirus, Dame Louise Casey will spearhead a taskforce to

provide us with expert advice and knowledge to put in place a long-term plan to stop as many vulnerable people as possible from returning to life on the streets.

Dame Louise Casey said:

The storm of Covid-19 has affected us all in many, varied and sometimes deeply tragic ways – we know that it is a virus that does not discriminate. Due to the incredible efforts by people in local councils, charities, hotel staff and the public, many rough sleepers have been brought in and off the streets.

Much has been done, and there is much still to do. We have all had to respond to this crisis with a deep resolve but also innovation – in bringing people inside, there is now a real opportunity to address the health and social needs of these individuals and if we can stop them going back to the streets. This, like so much over the last few weeks, will take a huge national effort and I'm pleased to be able to be part of that.

Dame Louise Casey will report to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on this work.