

Rough sleepers to be helped to keep safe this winter

- Government announces £10 millions Cold Weather Payment for councils to help to keep rough sleepers safe this winter
- Additional £2 million will go to faith and community groups to help them get rough sleepers into accommodation
- This is on top of over half a billion pounds the government is already spending to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year alone
- Guidance on safely reopening shelters to save lives will also be published

Rough sleepers and those at risk of becoming homeless will be helped to keep safe this winter through a package of support, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced today (13 October 2020). This will give local areas the tools and funding they need to protect people from life-threatening cold weather and the risks posed by coronavirus.

Today's announcement includes:

- A new £10 million Cold Weather Fund to support councils get rough sleepers off the streets during the winter by helping them to provide more self-contained accommodation.
- An additional £2 million for faith and community groups to help them provide secure accommodation for rough sleepers.
- Comprehensive guidance to the sector, produced with Public Health England, Homeless Link and Housing Justice to help shelters open more safely, where not doing so would endanger lives.

These measures will help councils build on their existing plans to protect people over winter which have been supported by the £266 million Next Step Accommodation Programme – the aim of which is to keep people safe and ensure that as few people as possible return to the streets.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

“As we approach winter, we are focusing on the best way to protect rough sleepers from the cold weather and coronavirus.

“The funding and guidance I’m announcing today will mean that working with councils and community groups, some of the most vulnerable people in society are given support and a safe place to stay this winter.

“The government is spending over half a billion pounds to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year alone and working with our partners, some of the most vulnerable people in our society have been helped into accommodation or other support during the pandemic and we are accelerating plans for thousands of new homes.”

Kelly Tolhurst, Minister for Housing and Rough Sleeping said:

Winter is clearly a dangerous time for people who sleep rough. These extra measures will help to protect this vulnerable group from life-threatening cold weather, as well as the risk of contracting COVID-19, and also provide them with support into move-on accommodation.

The work councils, providers, and the NHS has done since the start of the pandemic has saved lives and through this extra funding we will continue help them to rebuild their lives, part of our commitment to end rough sleeping for good.

Kathy Mohan from Housing Justice said:

Cold weather shelters in this country are predominantly staffed by volunteers and often operate on tiny budgets. These are people motivated purely by the desire not to walk by on the other side of the street while someone is affected by homelessness in their community. During the first wave of the pandemic shelters reacted phenomenally, working around the clock until they were able to safely transfer guests to self-contained accommodation.

We are pleased the Night Shelter Operating Principles are here and more than 150 organisations who provided night shelters in the last year have the facts they need to make tough decisions on their operations this winter.

Rick Henderson, Chief Executive of Homeless Link, comments:

People should not be facing a choice between the cold streets or an unsafe night shelter. Traditional night shelters should only open as a last resort if self-contained accommodation is not a possibility.

We welcome the operating principles published today, which will help make shelters open as safely as possible if they do become a necessity. We ask that local areas adhere to these principles in order that people sleeping rough can be supported safely in line with COVID-19 guidance.

We welcome the new £2 million Transformation Fund, which we will be administering to provide funding to voluntary and community sector groups to transform spaces and make more self-contained emergency accommodation locations available. This funding will be essential to groups that usually operate on extremely tight budgets, enabling them to provide appropriate support for people sleeping rough over the winter.

During the pandemic, the government has worked closely with local authorities and charitable organisations to offer vulnerable people safe accommodation and support. This year, the government has committed half a billion pounds for rough sleeping and homelessness. Allocations for 3,300 additional homes this year for rough sleepers across the country will also be announced soon, giving people a place to call their own, and to rebuild their lives away from the streets, part of the government's commitment to end rough sleeping once and for all.

Public Health England, Homeless Link, Housing Justice, councils and representatives from the shelter sector have been involved in developing the shelter operating principles, so that if shelters do reopen, they can do so as safely as possible, providing communal facilities only if there is no other alternative.

- The Cold Weather Fund was first launched in 2018. The fund was used to enhance accommodation provision such as access to the private rented sector, provide space in existing supported housing projects and fund more emergency accommodation for rough sleepers. These aim to quickly support vulnerable people off the streets through the winter.
- The government has made clear that no one should be without a roof over their head, which is why we have committed to end rough sleeping within this Parliament. This demonstrates our commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in society.
- We have provided £4.8 billion to help councils to manage the impacts of COVID-19, which includes their work to support homeless people, including £3.7 billion which is not ringfenced, and over £1.1 billion specifically to support social care providers.
- Also, we have accelerated plans – backed by £433 million over the next four years – which will deliver 6,000 additional homes for former rough sleepers across the country.
- On 18 July, we launched the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). This makes available the financial resources needed to support councils and their partners to prevent these people from returning to the streets. The NSAP is made up of 2 sources of funding: £161 million to deliver 3,300 units of longer term move-on accommodation within the next 12 months (part of the £433 million total); and on 17 September we announced the allocation of £92 million of funding to pay for interim support to ensure that people do not return to the streets.
- The Greater London Authority has received an NSAP allocation of £19 million which is specifically designed to support the move on of people

and to provide some “off the street” accommodation options for people currently sleeping rough.

- We are supporting these efforts as part of our landmark commitment – backed by over half a billion pounds this year – to break the cycle of homelessness and end rough sleeping for good.
- See further information on the [night shelter operating principles](#).