



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

9th April 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Rough Sleeping Accommodation During the Covid-19 Outbreak

I would first like to pay tribute to the outstanding work that the two local authorities in my constituency, Westminster City Council and the Corporation of London, are doing to help residents and businesses during the covid-19 emergency. I also appreciate the support your department is currently providing councils across England.

One of the most urgent issues for councils to address at the start of the lockdown and response to the emergency was to ensure as many rough sleepers as possible accepted the offers of accommodation. We have certainly seen outstanding efforts in my constituency with a growing number of constituents commenting to me that they have seen a major improvement on the numbers of people sleeping on the streets. There is, as expected, remains a small cohort of rough sleepers who remain on the streets, but I am fully aware of the efforts being made to support this group of very entrenched and damaged individuals.

While the strategy of housing rough sleepers in hotels during the pandemic is welcomed by myself and my constituents, I would be grateful if you would update me on the plans for when we begin the recovery phase, hopefully in the non-too distant future. I am aware that other London boroughs and the GLA have chosen to house large numbers of rough sleepers in hotels in my constituency. I know of one borough which has housed nine rough sleepers in a Westminster hotel without any wrap around care and expected Westminster City Council to take on responsibility for them. I am relieved to inform you this has now been resolved. Every borough must play their own part in these difficult times.

In the City of London, I understand that the GLA has commissioned 200 hotel bedrooms for rough sleepers from across the capital. I believe that the GLA is covering the cost of the wrap around care. However, I do share the growing concerns of local constituents that there must be a plan in place to move these people into long term support in alternative accommodation, ideally in their home local authorities.

As the pandemic continues and the lockdown is extended beyond the initial three weeks, I hope and expect that the MHCLG funding to local authorities will continue to pay for the extra accommodation, namely hotel rooms, for as long as councils are expected to house them. I know the initial short-term funding has been welcomed by my two councils, which are housing more rough sleepers than any other in the country.

I would therefore be extremely grateful if your department would address my following issues:

- Assurance that councils will continue to be fully funded for the hotel and other accommodation they are using to house rough sleepers during the pandemic, and that this funding is extended if the lockdown is extended into the spring and early summer.
- Confirmation that MHCLG officials are working with councils on medium- and long-term recovery plans to support those in this temporary accommodation following the lifting of the lockdown and that they will not expect host local authorities to pick them up, particularly without the extra funding that will be required, thereby avoiding a cliff edge approach to the support at the end of the lockdown.

Yours sincerely,



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