

Government must learn lessons from Covid-19 response and continue increased investment in homelessness services to avoid post-pandemic surge in rough sleeping – Kerslake Commission

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***** STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 0900hrs on TUESDAY 27 JULY 2021 *****

If the Government is to deliver its manifesto pledge of ending rough sleeping by 2024 it must continue the principles and funding of the 'Everyone In' initiative or face a post-pandemic surge in the number of people sleeping on the streets.

That is the conclusion of an influential independent group of political leaders, experts from the health, housing and homelessness sectors and people with lived experience, which has today (27 July) published the first of two reports examining the response to homelessness and rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The [Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping](#) chaired by the former head of the civil service Lord Bob Kerslake, has concluded the Government needs to maintain the additional funding that it made available during the pandemic – equating to £82m a year on top of its previous spending commitment - if it is to have any chance of achieving its pre-election promise to end rough sleeping by the end of this parliament.

The Commission was convened in March 2021 to examine the lessons from the public health emergency response to rough sleeping during the pandemic, and to understand how the significant progress made can be embedded in the longer term.

It analysed the cross sector response to Covid-19, and the Government's ['Everyone In' initiative](#), launched in March 2020, which saw local authorities directed to move people who were sleeping rough into emergency accommodation to protect them from the virus.

As a result, according to Government estimates, at least 37,000 people were provided with a Covid-secure place to stay, along with access to health and other support services. The policy has been credited as having saved hundreds of lives.

The Kerslake Commission received more than 100 evidence submissions from local authorities, from people with lived experience of homelessness and of sleeping rough, as well as from health, housing and homelessness organisations. It also commissioned two literature reviews into the emergency response.

Today's interim report, entitled ['When We Work Together – Learning the Lessons'](#) provides a comprehensive overview of this evidence and makes recommendations for the priorities and approaches needed to end rough sleeping which are targeted at the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review.

In total there are 22 recommendations. The key points of these are:

- The Government must capture and capitalise on the gains that were made as a result of its 'Everyone In' policy and the partnership working which flowed from it as a matter of urgency, and maintain the necessary funding
- The cross-sector, cross-departmental, momentum initiated by central Government at the start of the pandemic, married with the additional support and resourcing provided since, has clearly demonstrated that street homelessness can be ended
- Future funding streams made available to local authorities must be more flexible and have longevity if the prevention and long term support measures needed to end rough sleeping are to be effectively and appropriately implemented as determined by local need in a 'spend to save' approach
- That street homelessness is treated as a public health *and* housing priority which requires a cross-Governmental approach with co-ordination on both strategy and delivery, at all levels
- To prevent more homelessness and rough sleeping in the future we need to maintain the £20 uplift in Universal Credit and the change to local housing allowance, and
- Investing in better and more permanent solutions such as the Housing First initiative alongside the additional spend in temporary accommodation, with wrap around support is vital.

Commission Chair, Lord Kerslake, said: "The Covid-19 pandemic has been the biggest peacetime emergency this country has faced. It has impacted on every single one of our lives and taken a heavy toll, particularly on the most vulnerable.

"There will be many lessons to learn about the response to the pandemic, both from the things that went well and those that didn't. This Commission is about learning from a policy that, by common consent, did go well – 'Everyone In'.

"For me, the most important lesson is that with the right combination of Government support and collaboration across, and between, the key service providers, it is possible to end homelessness and rough sleeping."

Lord Kerslake explained that it was important the publication of the interim report was timed so it could help inform ministers' thinking and submissions ahead of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review expected later in the year.

He said: "The increased funding made available was an important factor in the success of 'Everyone In'. And we estimate that an extra £82m per annum, or 32% on top of the planned

increase in rough sleeping reduction spending, would be needed to maintain and build on the advances that have been made. Which is, I think, a small price to pay when you consider what can be achieved and the lives that could be saved.

“Reducing and preventing rough sleeping and homelessness is both the right thing to do and will reduce subsequent costs and pressures on health and other services.

“But it is not just the amount of funding that is important, but its flexibility. During the pandemic local providers were able to respond in the way that they thought best met the needs of those needing support. There is a vital need to retain this flexibility and have longer term funding, not annual settlements, so that service providers can properly plan ahead.

“If we fail to learn the lessons of 'Everyone In', all the signs from the Commission's work are that the situation will get worse not better, and homelessness and rough sleeping will increase. That would be an enormous lost opportunity for the Government to deliver on its rough sleeping commitment, and a personal tragedy for those affected.

“We are at a pivotal moment. I fervently hope that the Government does the right thing and takes forward the recommendations in this interim report.”

The Commission's Advisory Board is made up of 20 members with the secretariat function being provided by leading homelessness charity [St Mungo's](#).

St Mungo's Chief Executive Steve Douglas CBE, who advises the Commission said: “The spirit of collaboration and cross-party, cross-sector, cross-departmental working - particularly between health and homelessness – that we saw during to this public health emergency, has continued with this Commission.

“We have seen such a fantastic response from a wide range of organisations and individuals, including those with lived experience of homelessness who have taken the time to feed into its work and we want to thank everyone who has contributed their time, knowledge and expertise.

“Their input, and the expert chairing of Lord Kerslake, means this a truly comprehensive and considered piece of work. We fully support his call on the Government to take forward the recommendations.

“We at St Mungo's have seen the tangible positive difference that the work since the start of the pandemic has had on people experiencing homelessness, and we know it has saved hundreds of lives. We must not lose that momentum as we transition from lockdown.

“Right now we have a real opportunity to make our shared aim of ending rough sleeping a reality – we must take it.”

The Commission's final report will be published in September and will make an ambitious call for a longer term strategic response based on the principles that underpinned Everyone In.

To find out more about the work of the Commission visit www.commissiononroughsleeping.org

Notes to Editors

- For interview requests please email press.office@mungos.org or call 07713 266617. Audio / Video clips are also available. Please contact St Mungo's press team for more details.
- A full list of the members of the Kerslake Commission is [available here](#).
- A PDF copy of the full [Interim Report is available here](#). If you are accessing this before the embargo has passed you will need to use the password **WWWTLearning**
- The Interim Report recommendations are [available here](#) (same password).
- The Kerslake Commission's final report will be published in September and will focus on the strategies and the responsibilities of all parties to ensure delivery. It will pull together recommendations about how rough sleeping strategies are developed at different levels of government; how delivery of services and accommodation are commissioned at different levels; and how delivery happens, by whom and how it is then monitored. It will also look at the roles of central, regional and local government, housing, health and the voluntary sector. The Government made a [manifesto](#) commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024.
- According to research by [The Lancet](#), by bringing vulnerable groups into Covid-19 secure accommodation, the 'Everyone In' initiative saved at least 226 lives, prevented 21,092 infections, and avoided 1,164 hospital and 338 Intensive Care Unit admissions .
- [Government data](#) calculates that 37,000 people experiencing street homelessness were brought inside during the emergency response, with more than 26,000 people already having moved on into longer-term accommodation.
- The latest [Combined Homelessness and Information Network](#) (CHAIN) annual figures show there were 11,018 people seen sleeping rough in London during 2020/21 which is up from 10,726 the previous year. Of those people seen in 2020/21, 7,531 (68%) were doing so for the first time.