

Kerslake Commission evidence submission

Chelmsford City Council

1. Thinking about the response to rough sleeping during the pandemic, which measures, policies, practices or joint working do you think worked well and why?

Support from MHCLG to encourage hotel chains to open up - we couldn't have got everyone in without this. Setting up a local resilience forum that had a sub-group for homelessness / rough sleepers also helped improve joint work between housing authorities and other agencies in particular health and police

2. In contrast, which measures, policies, practices or joint working do you think have not worked well and why?

Confusion over whether those who subsequently became homeless were to be dealt with under HRA / Pt VII Housing Act including the duty to prevent homelessness, or to bypass this and accommodate under powers regardless of recourse to public funds, priority need, etc. This has led to confusion with other agencies as to why powers were not used before to accommodate some rough sleepers and also to problems providing move-on for those ineligible through Housing Register and especially for those who may have been intentionally homeless and refused by local landlords

3. Please describe the specific challenges, and opportunities, in the next phase of the Everyone In programme and helping people to move on from hotel accommodation.

Everyone was provided with allocated Housing Options Officer as soon as accommodated to help make plans for move-on, identifying where this may be more difficult (see above) and we assumed hotel would withdraw from providing accommodation by end of July giving a deadline to work to. This helped focus attention on planning and implementing pathways and we want to maintain this approach now all are accommodated in supported accommodation to maintain an ongoing supply to meet newly arising need. Many other agencies failed to realise how great the need for support was for some, accommodation alone is often not the solution for many rough sleepers.

4. And finally, what do you think needs to be put in place to embed the good work that developed during the pandemic, or improve upon it?

Sustainable revenue funding for providing support in supported accommodation that includes accommodation provided in some cases by housing charities as well as Registered Providers, something like a return to the Supporting People programme 20 years ago but with services commissioned and controlled by local housing authorities who understand

both the need locally and the problems for accommodation providers trying to deliver services within LHA rates, or with long-term commitments in return for capital funding with only short-term revenue.