

Resolution Date: 09 June 2020
Resolution Title: Everybody In

The government's decision to end dedicated funding for emergency accommodation during the Corona Virus pandemic will have a devastating impact on rough sleepers. Instead of offering extra funding Housing Minister Luke Hall has written to local councils asking them to put in place plans to support rough sleepers as the lockdown restrictions are eased. His total ignorance of homelessness issues is illustrated in his suggestion that people who have been rough sleeping should be asked to move in with friends or family.

Unite members in homelessness organisations have worked long hours on the front line to get people off the streets while ministers have sat in their comfortable homes and offices. Now they are being told to work at emptying the hotels that have been filled with former rough sleepers without adequate 'move on' accommodation, or the time needed to resettle people. By the end of the month thousands will be back on the streets unless this move is halted.

Since 2010 the total spent by local authorities on homelessness services has dropped by £1bn in total. This has led to massive cuts to homelessness support. For example ten years' ago there were 43,655 bed spaces in accommodation services aimed at getting people off the streets. Now there are only 34,900.

The government's commitment to £52 million over four years for visiting support to 16,666 rough sleepers is hopelessly inadequate compared to the scale of the task. That is to accept for a moment the government's current rough sleeping figures. Before the pandemic, official statistics claimed that just 4,266 people were sleeping rough. In February, the BBC reported that 28,000 slept rough. If we are to prevent a wave of homelessness, providing quality services and accommodation for those in need is vital.

We have publicised the issue through our website and social media feeds. This has been supported by the Unite's national website and social media. We commit to continue to campaign on this issue.

This Branch calls for:

- Extension of current funding for a further 6 months to allow time for new arrangements;

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- For a programme to convert homeless hotels to replace the 9,000 bed spaces lost since 2010;
- No return to the streets! - For every person in COVID 19 emergency accommodation to receive a suitable offer of permanent accommodation;
- Reversal of the cuts to homelessness services implemented since 2010;
- Reverse local government cuts and to support councillors who fight for 'no cuts' needs-based budgets; and
- Increase in supply of genuine affordable social housing to rehome those in need and prevent future waves of homelessness.