



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local
Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF



Cllr Peter Mason

*Cabinet Member for Housing,
Planning & Transformation*

Ealing Council, Perceval House
14/16 Uxbridge Road, Ealing,
London W5 2HL



07814026781

peter.mason@ealing.gov.uk

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Dear Secretary of State,

The plight of rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic remains one of the most challenging aspects of both lockdown and recovery. During the pandemic, the London Borough of Ealing has experienced a 76% increase in rough sleeping. As a coalition of Ealing Council and community organisations supporting rough sleepers, we are writing to ask you for sustained action to end rough sleeping.

As a diverse London borough, we benefit from a strong network of voluntary, charitable, community and faith-based organisations which continue to support vulnerable people. However, the exponential increase in rough sleeping we have experienced, with Ealing now housing the largest group of rough sleepers without recourse to public funds in the country, has brought into sharp focus the challenges faced by London and other urban areas. The current arrangements for those sleeping rough remain both inadequate and very difficult to manage without huge community effort. It is for these reasons that we ask that this government removes the barriers that prevent any meaningful solution being found for rough sleeping, and crucially that you offer refugee status to those with no recourse to public funds.

Your government directed local councils to accommodate all rough sleepers at the start of the Covid-19 emergency, to protect both them and the wider community. We are grateful to the housing professionals and volunteer networks across our area who responded to this challenge and supported those at risk. Teams of professionals and volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure rapid support was available for rough sleepers in the face of huge demand.

Rough sleeping is often not a matter of choice; it is frequently the unintended consequence of complex personal circumstances. Rough sleepers can face a range of challenges from poverty and migration status to physical and mental health conditions. The complex circumstances and challenges faced by many rough sleepers cannot be addressed in a sustainable and meaningful way until the individual is accommodated and provided with enough stability for outreach and



specialist support to be delivered. For example, in this borough, Hope for Southall Street Homeless provides shelter and wraparound support towards a sustainable future throughout the year, responding to the complex needs of rough sleeping, chronic health needs and immigration issues.

During the COVID-19 crisis in Ealing, we have worked with 450 individuals who have been identified as rough sleepers or at serious risk of rough sleeping. Of these currently, 61 have no recourse to public funds; 80 are EEA nationals who are not exercising their treaty rights; 227 have been assessed as having medium to high needs; 47 are rough sleepers who were accommodated before the emergency in seasonal facilities; and 18 individuals have been identified as rough sleepers but have refused accommodation. Ealing Council, statutory services and the community have rallied to support every individual and there is now an unprecedented opportunity to do the right thing by some of the most vulnerable people in society and support rough sleepers to stay off the streets.

We estimate that accommodating rough sleepers and finding pathways of sustainable support for them will cost approximately £2.5m per year. Half of this would be accommodation costs. These costs cannot and should not fall to local authorities when they are the consequence of a failure by successive governments to adequately address the underlying causes of rough sleeping.

Without question, the hardest group to support under the current framework is those with no recourse to public funds. If it was not for the work of voluntary, charitable, community and faith-based organisations these people would be abandoned without any meaningful way out of the situation they find themselves in - which would be a damning indictment of this country.

If this government is serious about ending rough sleeping, now is the time to act. We ask that you:

- 1 Make financial support available to rough sleepers, so that they can be supported to sustain a life away from the street.

As a nation and a borough we have a strong track record of supporting refugees. Many rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds have in effect become refugees from COVID-19 as a consequence of the rules and arrangements provided by this government.

We therefore call upon you to give this cohort COVID-19 permanent refugee status, enabling them to receive the help and support they need, while professionals and community groups work with them to find sustainable and manageable long-term

solutions, including allowing them access to jobs and opportunities.

- 2 Suspend the right to rent scheme, so that individuals can legally live in accommodation and can access options away from sleeping rough. By providing COVID-19 refugee status, you would offer a legal route to renting for individuals who currently have no recourse to public funds.
- 3 Fund outreach, substance misuse and housing for those that need it most. This will break the cycle of deprivation and allow individuals to become economically independent or to be assisted to return to a place of their choice where they can be safe and support themselves.
- 4 Provide additional skills and employment funding for specific targeted activities with rough sleepers, so that those who can exercise their EEA rights are supported to become self-sufficient quickly and to contribute to the communities where they live. Many of those currently in this cohort are victims of the financial challenges and difficulties being faced by businesses up and down the country. They have limited employment rights and have been subject to unfair treatment at the hands of unscrupulous employers.

We endorse Dame Louise Casey's statement on 26 May when she invited local authorities, faith groups and charities to "build on the success of 'everyone in' and try to make sure (rough sleepers) don't go back on the street". You reinforced this in your address published on 31 May regarding the £3.8bn given to councils when you stated that "some people will need help to return to the private rental sector but others will need accommodation to be provided as it is a housing issue".

While we welcome that support and the sentiment, we stress our strong view that rough sleeping cannot be solved simply through housing provision. Rough sleeping is a complex and multi-faceted challenge comprising competing deprivations and, fundamentally for those with no recourse to public funds, barriers caused by legal status. Until we collectively work to break down these barriers, we will never achieve our shared goal of keeping rough sleepers off the streets.

When your Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Luke Hall MP visited Southall and met with Hope for Southall Street Homeless, he was able to see for himself the work being done to find a lasting solution to rough sleeping. However, without funding and this government taking the necessary steps to address the legal and structural barriers rough sleepers face, that solution will remain out of reach.

In the interest of our communities and these desperately vulnerable rough sleepers, we ask that you respond urgently to this request and support councils across the country to do the right thing. As Covid-19 restrictions begin to relax and the financial pressures emerging from the pandemic become more acute, it is vital that your government provides urgent leadership and support to enable us to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to end rough sleeping.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Peter Mason

Cabinet Member for Housing,
Planning & Transformation,
London Borough of Ealing



Cllr Julian Bell

Leader,
London Borough of Ealing



Father Gerard Mitchell, S.J.

Chair of Trustees, Hope for Southall
Street Homeless; Parish Priest,
St Anselm's Church, Southall

Eddie Allette, St George's Church, Southall

Jackie Ashmenall, Churchwarden, Christ the Saviour Church, Ealing

Fred Ashmore, Clerk, London Quakers

The Rev'd Dean Ayres, Associate Rector of Acton

Michelle Bailey, Managing Director, Empowering Action & Social Esteem Ltd; Project Manager,
Hanwell Big Local

Rev'd Rachel Bending, Minister of Kings Hall Methodist Churches, Southall, Superintendent
Minister of Ealing Trinity Circuit of the Methodist Church, Ecumenical Borough Dean

Rev'd Michael Bolley, Vicar, Holy Trinity Church, Southall

Rev'd Anne Bookless, Curate, St Mary-the-Virgin, Norwood Green

Rev'd Dr Dave Bookless, Priest-in-Charge, St Mary-the-Virgin, Norwood Green

Kryisia Carr, Pastoral Coordinator, Ealing Abbey

Dr Deesha Chadha, Co-chair Faiths Forum for London, Interfaith Representative, Hindu Forum of Britain

John Coleby, Director, Caritas Westminster

Father Richard Collins, Vicar, Christ the Saviour, Ealing

Susan Crawley, Trustee, Hope for Southall Street Homeless

Sean Curtin, Christ the Saviour, Ealing, Leadership Team

Sr Silvana Dallanegra rscj, West London Development Worker, Caritas Westminster

Fr. Justin Dodd, St Barnabas, Ealing

Rev'd Idina Dunmore, Curate, St John's Church, Southall

Rev'd Wilson Gill, Vicar, Emmanuel Church, Southall

Fr Timothy Gorham OSB, Monk and Priest, Ealing Abbey

Robert Heppe, Pastor, New Life Masih Ghar

Father Ambrose McCambridge OSB PP, Parish Priest, Ealing Abbey

Rev'd Sue McCoan, Minister, St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Ealing

Rev'd Warren McNeil, Greenford Baptist Church

Fr. Wilson Masih, Christ the Redeemer Church, Southall

Medical Mission Sisters, Hanwell

John Murphy, Secretary, Hope for Southall Street Homeless

Deacon Lemia Nkwelah, Minister, Ealing Trinity Circuit London District Methodist Church

Fr. Liam O'Donovan, Assistant Priest, Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Church, Greenford

Rev'd Steve Paynter, Vicar, St Mary's Ealing; Ealing Church Winter Night Shelter

Rev'd Dr Anna Poulson, Vicar of St John's Church, Southall Green

Canon Mark Poulson, Canon for Interfaith Relations, St Paul's Cathedral

Rev'd Christopher Ramsay, Vicar of St George's Church, Southall

Rev'd Simon Reed, Vicar, Parish of the Ascension & St Mary's, Hanger Hill

Deborah Saville, Director, Ealing Abbey Counselling Service

Don de Silva, Buddhist Chaplin and University Mentor

Navraj Singh, Joint General Secretary, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall

Paul Southey, St George's Church, Southall

Barbara Tilley, Chief Executive, Ealing & Hounslow Community Voluntary Service

Father George Thayrian, Assistant Priest, St Anselm's Church, Southall

Mrs Linda Ward, Church Leader and Co-Chair West London Leaders

cc Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary