

Dear Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP,

We are writing to you as representatives of homelessness organisations across England to congratulate you on being appointed as Chancellor of the Exchequer and to express our grave concerns about the impact of the rising cost-of-living on homelessness, and homelessness services. To ensure homelessness services can continue to provide meaningful and effective support to people experiencing homelessness, we are asking that you announce a funding uplift, in line with inflation, for homelessness and rough sleeping support in the 'Medium-Term Fiscal Statement' on 31st October.

Rising homelessness and stretched services

Everyone deserves a safe place to live and the support they need to keep it. As homelessness organisations we are committed to both preventing homelessness and supporting people out of it. Therefore, we are greatly encouraged by your previously stated belief that "housing is a basic human right." However, the rising cost-of-living is already pushing more and more people into homelessness across the country, while at the same time frontline services are becoming increasingly stretched.

The majority of homelessness services are commissioned through local government contracts. The Government allocated the funding for these contracts in October 2021, when inflation was just over 4%. Since then, it has more than doubled. Homeless Link, the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations, recently polled its members, receiving 77 responses from homelessness organisations across England. 86% of respondents agreed they are seeing an increase in people experiencing homelessness due to the cost-of-living crisis, while 92% agreed they're worried the rising cost of living will affect their ability to maintain service and support standards. Most concerning of all though, over one in four homelessness services agreed the cost-of-living crisis risks service closures.

The impact of inaction

In its 2019 manifesto, this Government made a commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024, a commitment that was reaffirmed by both Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak in their leadership campaigns. We support this commendable goal but, it's clear that without urgent Governmental action, we face a perfect storm over the coming months that will make meeting this target very difficult. The rising cost-of-living will push more and more people into homelessness, while at

the same time frontline services will be forced to scale back the support they can offer, or even close altogether.

You have spoken of the need to make “tough decisions” when it comes to public spending. As homelessness organisations, we have been down this road before. Recent history shows us that, when significant cuts to public spending are made, homelessness and rough sleeping increase. Indeed, between 2010 and 2017, during which the Government pursued an austerity agenda, rough sleeping rose by 168%, with 4,751 people sleeping rough on any given night in 2017. At the same time, the number of people who died while experiencing homelessness increased by nearly a quarter between 2012 and 2017.

While we are not at that stage yet, your government has worked hard to bring these numbers down for four years in a row, with the current situation seriously threatening to undo this good work. The latest CHAIN rough sleeping figures for London show that rough sleeping rose in the capital by 23% in April – June 2022 when compared with the previous year, with these figures only likely to worsen as the cost-of-living crisis continues.

An uplift to mirror the changing context

The stress and anxiety of homelessness spreads through people’s lives. Research shows it often leads to physical and mental health issues. It means people are less likely to be in work and can have a negative effect on children’s development. In extreme cases it can lead to death.

No one should have to experience this, but all the signs point to a potentially stark rise due to current economic conditions and past Government decisions that have led to paucity of affordable housing. To help homelessness services keep people’s homelessness as brief as possible in the face of rising costs and growing need, we are simply asking for you to increase the funding for homelessness services, as outlined in the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2021, in line with current levels of inflation.

We are not asking for anything beyond what was initially promised. The funding will make a huge difference, giving homelessness services across the country the resources to continue to prevent and end people’s homelessness. It will allow services to pay their staff, who continually show huge reserves of resilience and compassion, a more competitive wage. It will allow services to be proactive in supporting people within community settings and provide the person-centred, holistic support that we know is most effective in supporting people out of homelessness. Without the uplift, services will be operating under real terms cut at a time of

sharply rising demand, with many people bound to fall through the widening cracks as a result. Not only will this lead to a rise in homelessness and rough sleeping, it will also put extra strain on emergency services that are already struggling to meet demand.

You have taken on the role as Chancellor at a very difficult time, but real-terms cuts to homelessness budgets today will continue to be felt for years down the line, both by those pushed into insecurity and the public purse.

Yours sincerely,

Rick Henderson, CEO at Homeless Link

Ellie McNeil, Chief Executive at YMCA Together

Mark Simms, Chief Executive at P3 Charity

Amanda Dubarry, CEO at Your Place

Jasmine Basran, Head of Policy and Campaigns at Crisis

Rebecca Sycamore, Interim CEO at St Mungo's

Joe Heeney, Chief Executive at Resolve

Jean Templeton, Chair of West Midlands Combined Authority Homelessness Taskforce & CEO at St Basils

Martin Hancock, Chief Executive at Bournemouth Churches Housing Association

Dr Jan Sheldon, Chief Executive at St Martin's Housing Trust

Bill Tidnam, Chief Executive at Thames Reach

Lara Oyedele, President at the Chartered Institute for Housing

John Glenton, Executive Director of Care & Support Services at Riverside Housing Association

David Smith, CEO at Oasis Community Housing

Mike Barrett, Chief Executive at Porchlight

Jo Moore, CEO at Accommodation Concern

Mark Grant, Chief Executive at Action Homeless

Salma Ravat, Manager at One Roof Leicester

Chris Keating, CEO at Connection Support

Pauline Goubert, Chair of Trustees at HUG Bexhill and Rother Homelessness Unity Group

Fiona Humphrey, Chief Executive at Providence Row Housing Association

Jools Ramsey, Chief Executive at Ipswich Housing Action Group

Jayni Gudka, CEO at Unseen Tours

Jenny Travassos, Director of Housing Services at The Passage

Malcom Putko, Operations Director at Harbour Housing

Sue Shirt, Executive Director of Customer Experience at Stonewater

Tim Bissett, Director at St Martin's in The Fields

James Boulton, CEO at Wycombe Homeless Connection

Paul Roberts, Chief Executive at Aspire Oxford

Jo Carter, Interim CEO at Glass Door

Seyi Obakin, Chief Executive at Centrepoint