

What is Coronavirus and who's vulnerable?



Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a newly discovered virus that has spread to nearly every country in the world, causing a global pandemic.

Due to their inability to self-isolate, Covid-19 poses a particular risk to people experiencing homelessness, including those sleeping rough. As people sleeping rough will often possess physical health needs, including respiratory issues, it is vital that they're provided with the housing and support they need during the outbreak.

Across The Salvation Army's network of homelessness provision, including our outreach, accommodation-based, and floating support services, we have put in place a range of measures to ensure that people are safeguarded appropriately.

What is the Government doing about Coronavirus?

In the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Government has put in place a range of vital measures to support people who are homeless across the UK. These measures include:

- allocating £3.2 million's worth of emergency funding to help people sleeping rough self-isolate, as well as £1.6 billion for local authorities to respond to COVID-19 pressures, including homelessness;
- sending a letter to all local authorities in England, asking them to house everyone sleeping rough and find more permanent accommodation for those in night shelters;
- increasing the value of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, so that they cover the full rental costs of three in ten of the most affordable homes within a given area; and
- preventing further cases of homelessness by suspending evictions from private and social rented housing.



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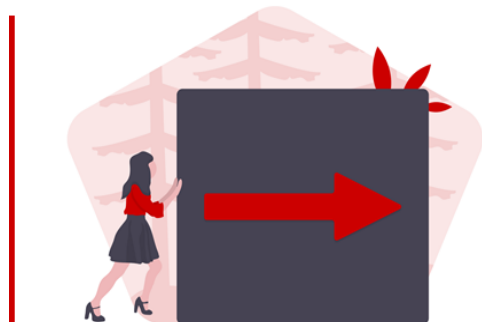
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What does the Government still need to do?

The Salvation Army welcomes the unprecedented steps taken by Government to reduce homelessness in recent weeks. However, to ensure that these measures are as effective as possible and to ensure that all people experiencing homelessness are supported through this testing time, The Salvation Army is asking the Government to:

- allocate dedicated funding to ensure that those who have been recently housed have access to the necessary support to help them sustain their new accommodation. This should include specialist person-centred support to help people manage any issues they're experiencing with things like mental and physical ill-health, addiction, and debt;
- remove all current eligibility restrictions around local connection and no recourse to public funds (NRPF), so that everyone who requires it is able to access housing and support; and
- remove the five-week wait for a first payment of Universal Credit by converting advance payments into a one-off grant. This will allow anyone requiring access to Universal Credit to help prevent homelessness, or meet the costs of their new housing, with immediate access to the financial support they require, without the need to worry about how this will be repaid in the future.

How can we sustain long-term progress?



The outbreak of Covid-19 has caused a radical shift in thinking about how best to support vulnerable people. As a result, we have witnessed the kind of swift and comprehensive changes that only concerted government action can bring about.

In recent weeks, the Government has made great strides towards achieving its target of ending rough sleeping. In particular, a combination of government and local authority action has led to the housing of significant

numbers of people who might not otherwise have been accommodated under current legislation. It is vital that this progress is maintained once things return to normal.

To achieve this, the Government should produce a transition plan, which will avoid people retuning to the streets for good. The Salvation Army's Homelessness Services Unit stands ready to provide its expertise by contributing to the Government's review of rough sleeping carried out by Dame Louise Casey, and to assist the Government in any other way necessary to see this shared ambition fulfilled.