

# Blog

## The Housing Quality Network

January 2021

### **Opinion: Let's make unprecedented the norm in 2021 to end homelessness**

**By Steve Douglas CBE, Chief Executive, St Mungo's**

The word of the year for 2020 for us at St Mungo's was unprecedented. We must make 2021, the year this becomes the norm.

The unprecedented *Everyone In* initiative during the height of the pandemic saw 29,000 people, according to government estimates, provided with secure, safe accommodation and immediate support, as needed, within the space of weeks. We managed 29 hotels during that period.

We saw what can be done when there is a concerted multi-agency response, with the right funding, to help people who are sleeping rough or experiencing other forms of homelessness. Health, local authority housing options and housing organisations providing support solutions all in the same room. Unprecedented levels of cooperation and collaboration. It works.

Looking ahead to 2021, this momentum should continue. St Mungo's, along with other charities recently called on the Chancellor to continue investing in homelessness services and he responded, with £150m new funding. The Government's further commitment to end rough sleeping and the affirmation that this issue is a priority is positive and welcomed, and it must be a focus for 2021, beyond one year settlements.

This money, in addition to that already pledged through existing programmes, will make a tangible difference to the lives of thousands of people.

There are however, other challenges still to overcome. The benefit system and local housing allowances do not work for the poorest or those just about managing; a recession will push many more into homelessness; and unless there is a solution after the eviction ban ends in Spring 2021, we will expect many to lose their homes.

We also see severe pressures on the local authority budgets that fund the essential support services that our clients need; and there is still not a sufficient supply of affordable homes to rent.

As we move towards a post pandemic recovery, we should work towards longer term solutions and multi-year settlements that align funding for homelessness and support services, through schemes such as the *Next Steps* and *Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programmes*.

These enable service providers to have the confidence to commit to long term projects which will deliver the level of support needed to help those with more complex needs break the cycle of homelessness and prevent people from returning to the streets.

St Mungo's, along with other homeless service providers, will continue to work with our partners in local and national Government, and with other homelessness charities and housing associations, to deliver those longer-term solutions needed. We've proved we can do it. The precedent has been set.