

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

4th Floor, Fry Building

2 Marsham Street

London SW1P 4DF

Date: 2 October 2019

Dear Mr. Jenrick,

In June, the Mayor of London joined council leaders and homeless charities in writing to the outgoing Prime Minister about the unprecedented recorded levels of rough sleeping in the capital that continue to rise at an alarming rate. The letter urged the Prime Minister specifically to provide urgent help for non-UK nationals who are sleeping on the streets by:

- reversing changes made in 2014 that restricted benefit entitlements for EEA nationals;
- prioritising the resolution of complex immigration cases, alongside fully funding adequate legal advice and support; and
- increasing funding for specialist employment services to enable non-UK nationals who can work to find secure paid employment.

We urgently need to be able to help non-UK nationals, so we welcome the Cold Weather Fund 2019-20. We recognise that the temporary suspension of statutory restrictions will enable EEA nationals who are sleeping rough to access homelessness services for a limited time. However, we are still concerned that this is not a long-term strategy to address rough sleeping among non-UK nationals.

We are particularly concerned that the Home Office's approach to the development of the Rough Sleeping Support Service (RSSS) has eroded trust with organisations supporting the most vulnerable migrant groups. Enforcement is not a solution to rough sleeping and GLA-commissioned services will have no part in it. Policies that meet the needs of non-UK national rough sleepers must be co-designed with sector partners from the outset and be built on mutual trust and understanding.

Building this trust will require you to address the specific concerns of partners, including that:

- the immigration advice sector does not have the capacity to meet the extraordinary demand for their services;
- early drafts of the RSSS policy suggested charities and local authorities could re-collect information under 'public task' to refer clients into the RSSS. This would

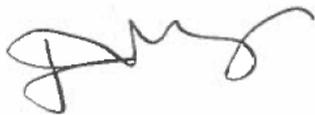
MAYOR OF LONDON

fundamentally undermine hard-earned trust built between organisations and their service users - the latter would be wary that services are working on behalf of the Home Office and, therefore, as an extension of the hostile environment;

- Home Office policies are contributing to non-UK national rough sleepers being stuck in immigration limbo. High application fees, slow and poor decision making, and routes to settlement that require multiple costly applications for limited leave to remain risk people overstaying their leave to remain in the UK; and
- a heavy-handed approach to enforcement and the lack of public trust in the Home Office will prevent disadvantaged Londoners from accessing the EU Settlement Scheme as they are entitled to, putting them at greater risk of destitution and homelessness.

We would welcome a conversation to discuss how to better meet the needs of non-UK national rough sleepers, as you suggested in your letter dated 11 July.

Yours sincerely,



James Murray

Deputy Mayor Housing and Residential Development



Debbie Weekes-Bernard

Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement

cc: Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for the Home Office