

The Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing Street
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17 December 2021

CC: Baroness Hallett

Dear Prime Minister

Covid-19 Public Inquiry

We welcome Government's commitment to holding a public inquiry into the UK response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We know too well the devastating impact that rough sleeping and inadequate housing has on people's health, and therefore, how people in this situation were exceptionally vulnerable to Covid 19, as well as victims of domestic abuse whose home is not a safe place. We therefore believe that the terms of reference for the inquiry should include a focus on homelessness and housing, as well as domestic abuse, to provide a useful guide for future responses.

As you know, people experiencing street homelessness are among the most vulnerable in society from a health perspective. Given this, your Government's Everyone In scheme reduced transmissions, reduced hospital and ICU admissions and, crucially, saved lives. With many nations not having had such a clear approach as this, we believe the lessons learnt from the Everyone In initiative will be of global use and that casualties of future public health emergencies could be mitigated for people experiencing homelessness if these insights are captured and used for future proofing response procedures.

We would also like to see the inquiry investigate the impact on the ability for renters to stay safe while living in overcrowded housing, which doubled for private renters during the pandemic. As the Covid-19 Marmot review identified, "housing conditions are directly related to risk of infection and mortality from Covid-19." We have seen in our services the difficulty renters found to stay safe in their home as arrears were built up during the pandemic through no fault of their own. While there are positive lessons to learn from early action taken to suspend evictions, we are sure useful insights will be made via the inquiry on what worked well and what we can learn from for the future.

We also believe that much could be learned about the health impacts from those forced to isolate with their abuser during the pandemic. This, combined with survivors facing increasing barriers to accessing statutory services and unprecedented demand on specialist services forced even more survivors to choose between street homelessness or staying with their abuser and avoiding this in the future will be essential.

We welcome the announcement of Baroness Hallett as the inquiry chair and look forward to engaging with her in the public consultation on the terms of reference as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



Kate Henderson, National Housing Federation

Farah Nazeer, Women's Aid

Polly Neate, Shelter

Jon Sparkes, Crisis

Gavin Smart, Chartered Institute of Housing

Daniel Fitzpatrick, Hodge Jones & Allen, on behalf of Refuge and Porchlight