

Extra covid protections for rough sleepers and renters

- Extra support to house rough sleepers across all councils in England
- Ban on bailiff enforced evictions extended
- Confirmation of court support for landlords and renters and launch of mediation pilot

Extra support to help protect rough sleepers and renters from the effects of COVID-19 has been announced by the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick today (8 January 2021).

Backed by an additional £10 million in funding, all councils in England are being asked to redouble their efforts to help accommodate all those currently sleeping rough and ensure they are swiftly registered with a GP, where they are not already.

This will ensure they can be protected from the virus and contacted to receive vaccinations in line with the priority groups outlined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Councils will also be asked to reach out again to those who have previously refused help, given rising infection rates and the colder winter months.

Renters will continue to be supported during the new national restrictions, with an extension to the ban on bailiff evictions for all but the most egregious cases for at least 6 weeks – until at least 21 February – with measures kept under review.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

At the start of this pandemic we made sure that the most vulnerable in society were protected. This winter, we are continuing in this vein and redoubling our efforts to help those most in need.

Our ongoing Everyone In initiative is widely regarded as one of the most successful of its kind in the world, ensuring 33,000 people are safe in accommodation. We are now going further and focusing on GP registration of rough sleepers.

We are also extending the ban on bailiff evictions – helping to protect the most vulnerable renters.

Court rules and procedures introduced in September to support both tenants and landlords will remain in place and regularly reviewed. The courts will continue to prioritise cases, such as those involving anti-social behaviour, illegal occupation and perpetrators of domestic abuse in the social sector.

Landlords continue to be required to give 6-month notice periods to tenants until at least 31 March except in the most serious circumstances.

Councils will work closely with local health partners to ensure those sleeping rough are able to access the COVID-19 vaccine in line with the priority groups outlined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

This will be done through a GP, or by other means if mainstream provision is unsuitable, ensuring that the wider health needs of rough sleepers are addressed and assessed for clinical vulnerability to COVID, supporting them now and for the future.

Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis, said:

These renewed efforts to protect people who are homeless in the pandemic will save lives.

It was truly a landmark moment when, back in March, everyone on the streets was offered somewhere safe to stay. It's as important, if not more so, that today we see government leadership to protect all those sleeping rough. The highly infectious new strain of coronavirus alongside the cold weather makes this the most dangerous moment of the pandemic for those without a home.

What is very welcome here is the two-pronged approach – a continued commitment to getting everyone into safe accommodation but also now making sure people are registered with a GP so they can quickly access the vaccines. We know through our services that people facing homelessness often are not registered with a doctor's surgery. Addressing this issue will be a lifesaving intervention and a step towards ensuring people who are homeless are protected in the longer-term.

Steve Douglas CBE, Chief Executive of St Mungo's, said:

We and other homelessness charities called on government to provide an urgent and decisive response to support those sleeping rough who now face the double threat of severely cold weather and a continued health emergency.

We welcome this response and will work with our local authority and health partners to provide both the immediate accommodation and the health care advice that is needed to protect lives.

A new mediation pilot will further support landlords and renters who face court procedures and potential eviction from next month (February). It will offer mediation as part of the possession process to try and help landlords and tenants to reach a mutual agreement and keep people in their homes.

Helping to resolve disputes through mediation will enable courts to prioritise urgent cases, supporting landlords and tenants to resolve issues quickly without the need for a formal hearing. The mediation pilot will work within the existing court arrangements in England and Wales.

The protections for renters are on top of the comprehensive package of support the government has put in place to help households, including support for businesses to pay staff salaries and strengthening the welfare safety-net by billions of pounds.

This has helped to protect renters from the economic fallout of the pandemic by supporting them meet their outgoings, including paying their rent.

The government has also provided unprecedented support for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This £10 million investment builds on more than £700 million government spending on homelessness and rough sleeping this year alone.

Through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

Renters' additional information

The package of support is reducing the number of evictions as applications to the courts for possession by private and social landlords were down 86% between July and September 2020, compared to the same quarter in 2019. No repossessions were recorded between April and end September 2020 compared to 14,847 in the same period last year.

The government has changed the law in England to ensure bailiffs do not enforce evictions for 6 weeks until 22 February, with no evictions expected to 8 March at the earliest. This will be kept under review.

The only exceptions to this are for the most egregious cases – anti-social behaviour, illegal occupation, death of a tenant where the property is unoccupied, fraud, perpetrators of domestic abuse in social housing and extreme rent arrears equivalent to 6 months' rent.

[Guidance](#) to support landlords and tenants in the social and private rented sectors understand the possession action process and new rules within the court system in England and Wales is available.

For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

Rough sleepers' additional information

A recent study published by the Lancet showed that because of this response 266 deaths were avoided during the first wave of the pandemic among England's homeless population, as well as 21,092 infections, 1,164 hospital admissions

and 338 admissions to Intensive Care Units.

The government has allocated £91.5 million to 274 councils in September to fund immediate support and interim accommodation for vulnerable people, as well as the £10 million Cold Weather Fund for councils to help to keep rough sleepers safe this winter.

This is alongside over £150 million to bring forward 3,300 long-term homes this year alone, alongside £112 million funding of the Rough Sleeping Initiative this year.

Councils have also received £4.6 billion in unringfenced grants to help them to manage the impacts of COVID-19, which we have been clear includes their work to support rough sleepers.

Cotswold Water Park given greater protection by Natural England

- People and nature will be able to thrive side-by-side
- Park has gained national importance for its bird and plant populations

In a boost to Nature Recovery, all 177 lakes covering 2,000 hectares of the Cotswold Water Park have been given Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status.

Gaining the status will help Natural England work with all the owners and occupiers of the Park to protect and enhance its wildlife, while they continue to live, work, run businesses, and follow leisure pursuits there.

The Park was created and continues to expand as a result of mineral mining activity across Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire, and is a leading example of how people and nature can thrive side by side. Such sites have been especially important during the pandemic, providing places to connect with nature and spend time outdoors.

Wildlife and recreation do not just co-exist in the Park but in many cases are inter-dependent. Land specifically managed to meet the needs of leisure users also provides invaluable habitat that encourages wildlife to flourish, such as the sailing clubs which manage marginal areas as scrub, providing an excellent habitat for breeding birds.

Breeding birds in the Park include scarce species such as little egret, little ringed plover and nightingale, alongside large numbers of ducks of several species, mute swans, greylag geese, coot and herons. The scrub and reedbed are full of breeding warblers including reed, sedge and Cetti's warblers, blackcaps and willow warblers, and around 35,000 waterbirds are

present over the winter.

This expanded designation also ensures that Cotswold Water Park can play a key role in the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) recently announced by Natural England. The NRN Delivery Partnership brings together representatives from over 600 organisations to drive forward the restoration of protected sites and landscapes across England, helping to provide at least 500,000 hectares of new wildlife-rich habitat. Cotswold Water Park is a key link in the Nature Recovery Network and a great example of how working with a wide range of partners allows people to enjoy sustainable recreational activities while enhancing and creating rich habitats for nature.

Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

I'm delighted to announce that Natural England has granted SSSI status to the Cotswold Water Park. Places like this are ever more important in bringing people and nature together, and giving us that contact with wildlife that's so vital for our health and well-being. This extended designation is a testament to the efforts of the many bodies and individuals who have been involved in creating and managing the Water Park over many years, and living proof that some of our most important species can thrive hand in hand with homes, business and recreational activities. Special places like this form the vital backbone of a nature recovery network.

Paul Hazel, Chairman Cotswold Water Park Trust said:

The Cotswold Water Park Trust has worked for many years with its volunteers, land and lake owners and commercial operators, to try and protect and enhance the area's wildlife and habitats. The Trust is pleased, therefore, that Natural England has now formally recognised the significance of the Cotswold Water Park's biodiversity, and in particular its importance to breeding and wintering birds.

The Trust is particularly delighted that Natural England has formally acknowledged the part played in this success by a variety of stakeholders, including mineral operators, leisure providers and the public. It is crucial that the Cotswold Water Park moves forward as a balanced and sustainable example of how wildlife and people can successfully coexist, and that the public can continue to enjoy the benefits of living in, working in, or visiting this unique area. It is vital for all those who have an interest in the Cotswold Water Park to work together; the Trust hopes that Natural England will continue to work closely with all stakeholders so that progress towards achieving this vision can continue.

Notes to editors

The SSSI designation means the park and its wildlife have legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, so that Natural England must be consulted on any new proposals that could significantly affect the wildlife interest.

Cotswold Water Park (CWP) is a 40 square mile complex of 177 lakes formed by gravel workings along the upper River Thames on the borders of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire. There are 2 principal blocks of lakes: a larger one in the west centred on Ashton Keynes and a smaller eastern one centred on Fairford, with stepping-stones formed by recent workings in between.

Just 10 lakes covering 135 hectares within CWP were designated as being of Special Scientific Interest for their aquatic plants back in 1994. The park has since become of national importance for its bird and plant populations. The new designation covers all 177 lakes, protecting the large populations of breeding and wintering birds that live there, as well as the aquatic plants. As wildlife declines across the country, areas such as CWP are increasingly important to ensure sustainable populations can thrive.

Recreational activities are abundant across the park, including swimming, sailing, angling, water-skiing, paddle-boarding and windsurfing.

The notification process:

As of 7 January 2021, the extended SSSI covering all 177 lakes has been formally notified to landowners and occupiers and other interested parties. There will be a 4-month period in which anyone can make representations or object to the notification. If all objections are resolved or none are submitted, the designation will be confirmed. If there are unresolved objections the Natural England Board will hear all of these; they must then decide whether to confirm the designation (with or without reductions). If the notification is not confirmed within 9 months of the date of notification, the notification falls.

Representations can be made via:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england/cotswold-water-park>.

Moderna COVID-19 vaccine authorised by UK medicines regulator

- Moderna vaccine meets regulator's strict standards of safety, efficacy and quality
- The UK has ordered an additional 10 million doses of the vaccine, taking

its total to 17 million

- Doses available for UK from spring

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has been authorised for use by the medicines regulator.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has accepted the recommendation of the Commission on Human Medicines and authorised the Moderna vaccine following months of rigorous clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people and an extensive analysis of the vaccine's safety, quality and effectiveness.

The vaccine is 94% effective in preventing disease, including in the elderly. The government was one of the first to sign an agreement with the company to supply the vaccine on behalf of the UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

The government has agreed to purchase an additional 10 million doses of the Moderna vaccine on top of its previous order of 7 million, taking the total to 17 million. As agreed when the UK originally pre-ordered the vaccine, supplies will begin to be delivered to the UK from spring once Moderna expands its production capability.

The vaccine will be available for free and the government is working with the devolved administrations to ensure it is deployed fairly across the UK.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This is fantastic news and another weapon in our arsenal to tame this awful disease.

Through our vaccine delivery plan we have already vaccinated nearly 1.5 million people across the UK. The Moderna vaccine will boost our vaccination programme even further once doses become available from the spring.

While we immunise those most at risk from COVID, I urge everyone to continue following the rules to keep cases low to protect our loved ones.

Nearly 1.5 million people in the UK have already been vaccinated with the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccines, with more than 1,000 vaccination sites live by the end of the week across the UK to rapidly scale up the vaccination programme.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will submit updated advice on which groups to prioritise for vaccination before doses become available.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Vaccines are the key to releasing us all from the grip of this pandemic, and today's news is yet another important step towards ending lockdown and returning to normal life.

The UK was one of the first countries in Europe to sign a deal with Moderna, and I'm delighted our Vaccine Taskforce has secured an additional 10 million doses of their highly effective vaccine to protect the British public and save lives.

From the scientists and trial volunteers to our world-class regulators and clinicians, we are enormously grateful to everyone who has played their part in this national effort to defeat the virus and get our country back on its feet.

The NHS has decades of experience in rolling out successful widespread vaccination programmes and is putting into place extensive preparations for the roll-out of the Moderna vaccine ahead of the spring.

The Moderna vaccine will be deployed through similar methods:

- hospital hubs for NHS and care staff and older patients to get vaccinated
- local community services with local teams and GPs already signing up to take part in the programme
- vaccination centres across the country, ensuring people can access a vaccine regardless of where they live

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

The NHS is pulling out all the stops to vaccinate those most at risk as quickly as possible, with over 1,000 vaccination sites live across the UK by the end of the week to provide easy access to everyone, regardless of where they live.

The Moderna vaccine will be a vital boost to these efforts and will help us return to normal faster.

Through the Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 367 million doses of 7 of the most promising vaccines so far. To date, the government has invested over £230 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine. In the Chancellor's Spending Review, published on 25 November, it was announced that the government has made more than £6 billion available to develop and procure successful vaccines.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said:

The highly effective Moderna vaccine is another impressive success for science and is another testament to the hard work of researchers and selfless clinical trial volunteers.

This vaccine will save lives once doses become available, but it is crucial we all continue to follow the rules to protect each other until enough people have been protected.

Interim Chair of the government's Vaccines Taskforce Clive Dix said:

This is another important milestone in our efforts to end this pandemic, and I would like to thank those in the government's Vaccine Taskforce who have worked so hard to negotiate agreements with vaccine developers.

A key objective for the Vaccine Taskforce is to ensure we have a range of vaccines to deliver to the UK population. The addition of the Moderna vaccine to the UK's portfolio is important to reach that goal.

The Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are being rolled out to priority groups. The [full prioritisation list can be found here](#) and is as follows (in order of priority):

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3. All those 75 years of age and over
4. All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
5. All those 65 years of age and over
6. All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
7. All those 60 years of age and over
8. All those 55 years of age and over
9. All those 50 years of age and over

Vaccination will be managed by the health services in each nation:

- NHS England and NHS Improvement
- NHS Wales
- NHS Scotland
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland

Through the government's Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 367 million doses of 7 of the most promising vaccine candidates, including:

- BioNTech/Pfizer for 40 million doses
- Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses
- GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses
- Novavax for 60 million doses
- Janssen for 30 million doses
- Valneva for 60 million doses

UK vaccine manufacturing

The UK government invested £100 million to fund a state-of-the-art manufacturing innovation centre in Braintree, Essex, in collaboration with the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, to accelerate the mass production of a successful COVID-19 vaccine in the UK. Due to open in December 2021, the centre will have the capacity to produce millions of doses of vaccines each month, ensuring the UK has the capabilities to manufacture both vaccines and advanced medicines, including for emerging diseases, far into the future.

The government has also provided £4.7 million funding to the Catapult to ensure that the UK has the best skills and expertise in vaccine manufacturing and advanced therapies.

The government has created the UK's first dedicated Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC) and accelerated its development with £93 million of investment. This investment will rapidly accelerate the construction of the facility, enabling us to bring it online sooner. It will also have expanded capability for advanced vaccine process development, fill and finish and bulk manufacture. In addition, the facility's capacity will be significantly increased to be able to respond to this pandemic. Once open, it will be able to manufacture 70 million vaccines doses in just 6 months – enough for the UK population. Located in Oxfordshire, the centre will be the UK's first not-for-profit organisation established to develop and advance the mass production of vaccines. This will boost the UK's long-term capacity against future viruses.

While VMIC is being built, the government established a Rapid Deployment Facility with £8.75 million of investment to manufacture at scale.

The government has made a multi-million-pound investment in a manufacturing facility in Scotland, creating a major UK vaccine facility and to support rapid scale-up if its candidate is successful. This unique facility will

establish a permanent UK capability to manufacture inactivated viral vaccines – one of the most proven, widely used vaccine formats. It is one of few Biosafety Level 3 (BSL3) containment facilities in Europe and has the capacity to produce up to 200 million doses of COVID-19 viral vaccines in 2021.

Liverpool City Council: Best Value Inspection

It is a matter of public record that Merseyside Police have for many months been conducting an investigation which has resulted in a number of arrests made on suspicion of fraud, bribery, corruption and misconduct in public office, both in December 2019 and in September 2020. Further arrests were made on 4 December 2020 in connection with offences of bribery and witness intimidation. This investigation involves a significant connection to Liverpool City Council.

On Monday 7 December the Secretary of State met with officers from Liverpool City Council at his request and was given a range of assurances about the steps taken to improve governance in the Council. This was followed up with a [letter sent to Liverpool City Council on 8 December](#) seeking written assurances, including on the steps the council has taken to improve governance and to ensure that the council is operating properly and in line with its Best Value Duty. Liverpool City Council submitted their response on Friday 11 December.

On 17 December the Secretary of State [announced the appointment of Max Caller CBE](#) to carry out an inspection of Liverpool City Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty in relation to the authority's planning, highways, regeneration and property management functions and the strength of associated audit and governance arrangements.

A letter informing the council of the Inspection was also sent on the day of the announcement.

On 7 January Mervyn Greer and Vivienne Geary were appointed as assistant inspectors.

CMA to investigate Google's 'Privacy Sandbox' browser changes

The investigation will assess whether the proposals could cause advertising spend to become even more concentrated on Google's ecosystem at the expense of its competitors. It follows complaints of anticompetitive behaviour and requests for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to ensure that Google develops its proposals in a way that does not distort competition.

Third party cookies currently play a fundamental role online and in digital advertising. They help businesses target advertising effectively and fund free online content for consumers, such as newspapers. But there have also been concerns about their legality and use from a privacy perspective, as they allow consumers' behaviour to be tracked across the web in ways that many consumers may feel uncomfortable with and may find difficult to understand.

Google's announced changes – known collectively as the 'Privacy Sandbox' project – would disable third party cookies on the Chrome browser and Chromium browser engine and replace them with a new set of tools for targeting advertising and other functionality that they say will protect consumers' privacy to a greater extent. The project is already under way, but Google's final proposals have not yet been decided or implemented. In its recent market study into online platforms digital advertising, the CMA highlighted a number of concerns about their potential impact, including that they could undermine the ability of publishers to generate revenue and undermine competition in digital advertising, entrenching Google's market power. More information can be found in the [CMA's Online platforms and digital advertising final report](#).

The CMA has been considering how best to address legitimate privacy concerns without distorting competition in discussions of the proposals with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), through the [Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum](#). As part of this work, the CMA has been engaging with Google to better understand its proposals. The current investigation will provide a framework for the continuation of this work, and, potentially, a legal basis for any solution that emerges.

The CMA has received complaints including from Marketers for an Open Web Limited, a group of newspaper publishers and technology companies, which allege that, through the proposals, Google is abusing its dominant position.

Given the importance and potential impact of Google's proposed changes, the CMA was already considering the Privacy Sandbox, in conjunction with the ICO and Google. Given the concerns raised by the complainants, it has decided that this work should be conducted in the context of a formal investigation.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA said:

As the CMA found in its recent market study, Google's Privacy Sandbox proposals will potentially have a very significant impact on publishers like newspapers, and the digital advertising market. But there are also privacy concerns to consider, which is why we will continue to work with the ICO as we progress this investigation, while also engaging directly with Google and other market participants about our concerns.

The CMA has an open mind and has not reached any conclusions at this stage as to whether or not competition law has been infringed. The CMA will continue to engage with Google and other market participants to ensure that both privacy and competition concerns can be addressed as the proposals are developed.

Today's announcement follows the CMA's advice to Government, via the Digital Markets Taskforce, on the need for a new regulatory regime for digital markets. As it continues to work with Government on these proposals, the CMA will use its existing powers to their fullest extent in order to protect competition in these markets.

More information can be found on the [investigation into Google's Privacy Sandbox browser changes case page](#).