

SDR 13/2016 (R)

21 March 2016

National Rough Sleeper Count, November 2015 – Experimental Statistics - Revised

Maps 1 and 2 of this release have been revised due to errors identified in the calculation of rates. One of the figures shown in Table 2 has been revised following a further data validation exercise.

This is the first in a series of annual releases and covers the national rough sleeper monitoring exercise which was carried out in November 2015 by Local Authorities, in partnership with other local agencies. Its objective was to gauge the extent of rough sleeping across Wales via a two week information gathering exercise followed by one night snap shot count on 25 November 2015. There are a range of factors which can impact on single-night counts of rough sleepers, including location, timing and weather. The count carried out in November 2015 in Wales is essentially a snapshot estimate and can only provide a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels on the night of the count.

The release presents the information provided by local authorities from the monitoring exercise, and also highlights the issues associated with periodic rough sleeper monitoring and their likely influence on the accuracy of information on levels of rough sleeping across Wales.

The information will be used by the Welsh Government, homelessness agencies and other housing organisations to monitor trends in the overall level of rough sleeping across Wales. The information is also used to monitor the effectiveness of current policy, particularly progress against the [Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales](#) and [the Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) objectives and for future policy development.

Key results:

- Based on the information gathered by local agencies, health organisations and other community service groups in contact with rough sleepers in the 2 weeks between 2nd and 15th November 2015, local authorities estimate that 240 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period.
- Local authorities reported a total of 82 individuals observed sleeping rough in Wales between the hours of 11pm on Wednesday the 25th and 3am on Thursday the 26th November 2015 - the night of the count.
- Local authorities reported that there were 180 emergency bed spaces across Wales of which 19 bed spaces, (11 per cent), were vacant and available for use on 25th November 2015, the night of the snapshot count.

The information is released as experimental statistics as this is a new official statistic undergoing evaluation and therefore it is recommended that caution is exercised when drawing conclusions from the published data as the methodology is likely to be further developed. Once the methodology is assessed and the publication meets user needs, we will look to publish future releases as Official Statistics.

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1. Background

The Welsh Assembly Government has a long established objective to end the need for anyone to sleep rough by ensuring appropriate and accessible accommodation is available. The amount of information on the extent of rough sleeping in Wales however has been limited and where surveys have been carried out there have been inconsistencies in methods, timing and coverage. One night counts were carried out in March 2007 and March 2008 and the results were published in a statistical article "[National Rough Sleeping Count Wales](#)". These annual counts were then discontinued due to the burden placed on local authorities in responding and the general concern over the accuracy of the information they provided.

The need for more information on levels of rough sleeping across Wales however continued. The Ten Year Homelessness Plan published in July 2009 outlined the need for 'development of improved systems for monitoring and measuring the extent of rough sleeping, service outcomes and our success in eliminating the need to sleep rough'.

During 2014, the Rough Sleeper Working Group (RSWG) which includes members from Rough Sleepers Cymru, Welsh Government, Cymorth Cymru, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and the Local Authority Network developed a methodology to conduct a rough sleeping monitoring exercise. Local Authorities were asked to participate with the exercise. The main objective of this monitoring exercise was to gauge the extent of rough sleeping in Wales and to assist Welsh Government in the development of national policy and the improvement of services for rough sleepers at a local level.

The 2014 exercise was split into two phases. Phase 1 was carried out over a 2 week period chosen by the Local Authority during November 2014. This phase involved gathering local information from partners on persons who had been or were faced with sleeping rough that evening at the time of contact. Following the 2 week information gathering phase 2 was to conduct a one night snap shot count based on the information gathered at phase 1.

The results were collated by Welsh Government policy officials into a report of this one off information gathering exercise. The results were not published, however, as coverage was not complete across all 22 local authorities. There were also some issues regarding timing and methodology with point in time counts held on different nights by different Local Authorities making the data not comparable with the earlier counts carried out in 2007 and 2008. Despite this the figures did confirm there is a continuing problem which services need to address.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 which became law in Wales on 17 September 2014 puts more emphasis on Local Authorities working to relieve homelessness and prevent it from re-occurring. Identifying and engaging those who unfortunately sleep rough is the first part of the process. The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty is committed to understanding the level of rough sleeping across Wales.

The Rough Sleeping Working Group along with Welsh Government have examined how early interventions can be achieved to prevent people from becoming long term rough sleepers and during 2015 have further developed a methodology to conduct an on going annual monitoring exercise. This has included working with the data collection team and statisticians within the Knowledge and Analytical Services branch of Welsh Government to approve the count methodology, to develop a suitable annual data return for Local Authorities to complete following the exercise and to collate and verify the returns. The guidance note and monitoring return form used in this exercise are available at the following link:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/rough-sleepers-data-collection/?lang=en>

The information presented in this release covers the rough sleeper monitoring exercise carried out across Wales during November 2015 and is based on the data provided by local authorities. The information is presented as experimental statistics as this is a new official statistic undergoing evaluation and the methodology used will be reviewed and may be further developed.

2. Methodology and Coverage

The purpose of an on going annual rough sleeping monitoring exercise is to gain a better understanding of the scale of and trends in rough sleeping at a local and national level. There are significant limitations to the use of a single-night count in providing an accurate picture of the number of rough sleepers across Wales. The counts are snapshot estimates and can provide only a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels in particular areas on the night of the count. The 2015 exercise therefore aimed to enable local authorities and their partners to identify rough sleepers in specific areas on a particular night but also to support this with a two week data gathering exercise using information from a range of services in order to provide evidence of levels of rough sleeping over a longer time period

Further information on the issues associated with one night rough sleeper counts is available in the Key Quality Information section of this release.

The 2015 exercise was carried out in two phases. Phase 1 involved a two week intelligence gathering exercise carried out between 2nd and 15th November 2015. Local authorities were required to work with all relevant local agencies and services to conduct a questionnaire based survey among rough sleepers. The results of this survey were then used to provide an estimate of the number of people likely to be sleeping rough within each local authority area over the two week period. The data gathered was also used in order to inform and target Phase 2 of the exercise which was the one night count.

The one night snap shot count was carried out between the hours of 11pm on 25th November and 3 pm on 26th November 2015.

For the purpose of the count the following definition of a rough sleeper was recommended:

People sleeping, about to bed down(sitting in/on or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or "bashes").

This did not include people in hostels or night shelters, sofa surfers, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protests, squatters or travellers. Only those that were clearly bedded down or about to bed down at the time of the count were to be included

Local authorities were consulted on proposed dates by the Welsh Government to ensure that the activity would not take place on any night when unusual local factors may distort figures such as events, festivals or high levels of police activity. Start times were to be tailored to meet local circumstances such as cities and towns with busy night time economies.

In order to assess whether different or additional emergency provision might be needed at national and local levels, the local authorities were also asked to provide information on the number of emergency bed spaces¹ available in their area on the night of the count and the number of these which were vacant.

¹ Emergency bed space are direct access provision, night shelter or cold weather provision beds in churches, community centres, etc. but would not include Bed and Breakfast accommodation

The information gathered from the 2 week survey and the one night count was then used by the 22 local authorities to complete Tables 1 and 2 of the Welsh Government data collection forms. Responses were received from all 22 local authorities.

Further detailed information on the methodology used is available in the Key Quality Information section of this release.

3. Results

3.1 Phase 1: 2 week information gathering exercise.

The main aim of the initial phase of the 2015 rough sleeper monitoring exercise was to establish an estimate of the number of people thought to be sleeping rough within each local authority area over a two week period, how long they are sleeping rough and the type of rough sleeping they are experiencing. The information was to be used to both target and complement the subsequent one night count as well as helping local authorities and other relevant agencies to develop specific and appropriate support services.

The estimated number of persons sleeping rough obtained from the 2 week survey should not be regarded as conclusive and are based on the perspective of the homeless persons' responses to the questionnaires. However the information does provide a better understanding of the incidence and types of rough sleeping within each local authority area.

The results of the survey across all 22 local authorities are shown in the following table.

Table 1. Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period from 2nd to 15th November 2015 (a) (b)

	Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period
Isle of Anglesey	2
Gwynedd	26
Conwy	4
Denbighshire	20
Flintshire	5
Wrexham	31
Powys	2
Ceredigion	6
Pembrokeshire	2
Carmarthenshire	2
Swansea	19
Neath Port Talbot	3
Bridgend	6
Vale of Glamorgan	3
Cardiff	64
Rhondda Cynon Taf	3
Merthyr Tydfil	18
Caerphilly	10
Blaenau Gwent	0
Torfaen	1
Monmouthshire	5
Newport	8
Wales	240

Source: Annual rough sleeper counts and estimates returns from local authorities

(a) As reported by local authorities

(b) Based on information from local agencies/services on persons who are thought to have been sleeping rough over a 2 week period between 2 and 15th November 2015.

Based on the information gathered in the 2 weeks between 2nd and 15th November 2015 by local agencies, health organisations and other community service groups in contact with rough sleepers, local authorities estimate that 240 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period.

Direct comparisons cannot be made to the rough sleeper exercise carried out by local authorities in November 2014 due to differences in methodology and coverage. However the estimate of the number of persons sleeping rough over a 2 week period in November 2015 was similar to the number recorded over a two week period in November 2014.

There was considerable variation across the 22 local authorities however with the highest estimate for rough sleepers over these two weeks seen in Cardiff at 64 followed by Wrexham with an estimated 31 persons sleeping rough. Gwynedd and Denbighshire also reported relatively high estimates at 26 and 20 rough sleepers respectively over this two week period.

Blaenau Gwent was the only local authority to estimate that there were no rough sleepers within the area during this period whilst Torfaen estimated just one rough sleeper (Table 1).

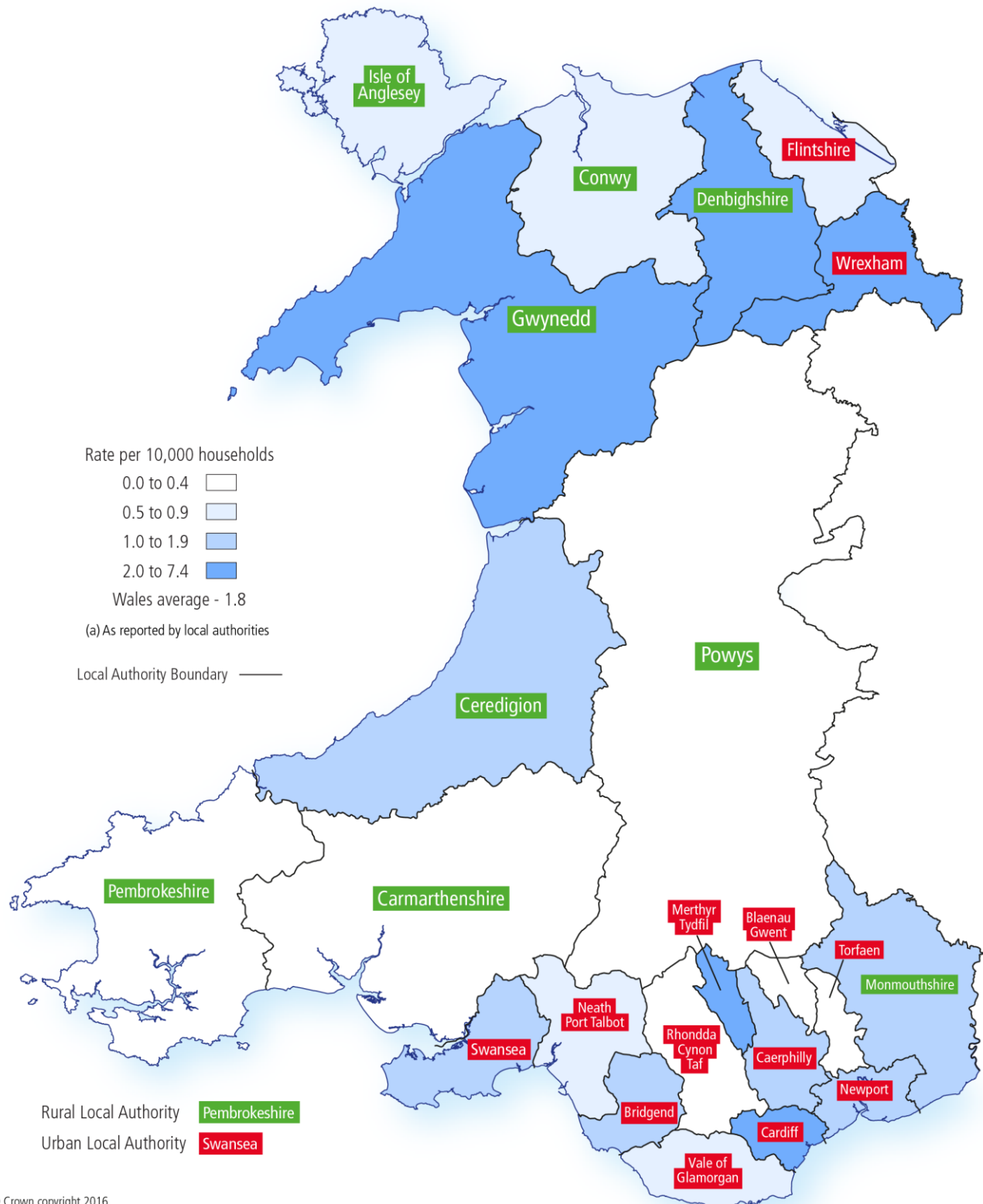
Direct comparisons can not be made with the statutory homelessness figures. Statutory homelessness figures do not include persons sleeping rough but cover information on the number of households applying to local authorities for housing assistance under the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Latest published figures on statutory homelessness for the July to September quarter 2015 show that over this period a total of 1,580 households in Wales were threatened with homelessness within 56 days, 1,585 households were accepted as being homeless and, at 30 September 2015, 1,935 homeless households were in temporary accommodation across Wales. Further information at an individual local authority level is available at the following link:

<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 1: Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period (2nd to 15th November) - Rate per 10,000 households (a) (r)



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(r) Map 1 revised March 2016 due to errors identified in the calculation of rates.

To take into account the size and number of households in the different local authorities across Wales, Map 1 above shows the number of estimated rough sleepers over the 2 week period in November 2015 per 10,000 households. The total number of households is taken from the latest mid-2014 households estimates for Wales².

Cardiff had the highest number of estimated rough sleepers over the 2 week period (64 persons) but the highest rate was seen in Merthyr Tydfil at 7.4 (r) rough sleepers per 10,000 households.

Merthyr Tydfil (r) was followed by Wrexham, with a rate of 5.3 estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 households, and Gwynedd and Denbighshire both with a rate of 4.9 estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 households. More than half (16 (r) authorities) of all local authorities had rates below the Wales average of 1.8 estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 households over this 2 week period.

3.2 Level of Engagement

Phase 1 of the exercise relied on the engagement of a wide range of organisations to help the local authorities in establishing the nature of rough sleeping in their area and in particular in developing a comprehensive understanding of any hotspots.

This engagement and information sharing was a vital part of ensuring that the one night snap shot count was successful in identifying people sleeping rough in each local authority area. The different levels of participation within each local authority will have directly impacted on the execution of the snap shot count and on the quality and accuracy of the information gathered.

Table 2 shows the number of local authorities who used each of the eight possible agencies/services outlined on the data collection return.

Table 2. Engagement with local agencies and services between 2nd and 15th November 2015 (a).

Local Authority	Number of local authorities reporting using this agency/service in 2 week survey
Voluntary sector	21
Faith Groups	14
Outreach workers	18
Local residents or businesses	11
Police	18
Health Agencies	11
Substance misuse agencies	15
Drugs and Alcohol treatment Teams (DATT)	14 (r)

Source: Annual rough sleeper counts and estimates returns from local authorities

(a) As reported by local authorities

(r) Revised March 2016 following a further data validation exercise.

Most of the local authorities reported that they had consulted with a number of local agencies and in 5 (r) of the 22 authorities there had been engagement with all 8 of the possible agencies outlined on the data collection return. In Rhondda Cynon Taf however only the 'voluntary sector' was involved in the data gathering exercise and in Caerphilly only 'outreach workers'.

² The 2014 household estimates, used within this release to calculate rates, were produced by the Welsh Government and are available at the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/household-estimates/?lang=en>

(r) Revised March 2016 following a further data validation exercise.

3.3 Phase 2. – Persons observed sleeping rough - one night snap shot count

The one night snap shot count was carried out between the hours of 11pm on Wednesday 25th November and 3pm on Thursday 26th November 2015. The results provide only a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels in particular areas on the night of the count. For the purpose of the one night count the following definition of a rough sleeper was recommended:

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting in/on or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”).

This does not include people in hostels or night shelters, sofa surfers, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protests, squatters or travellers.

Only persons who were clearly bedded down or about to bed down at the time of the count were to be included.

There are a range of factors which can influence the accuracy of any information provided including location, timing, weather and level of engagement with local agencies and services. Further detail relating to these issues is covered in the Key Quality Information section.

In order to reduce the impact of these issues as far as possible the following steps were taken as part of the monitoring exercise:

- Local authorities were consulted on proposed dates by the Welsh Government to ensure that the activity would not take place on any night when unusual local factors may distort figures such as events, festivals or high levels of police activity. A night in the middle of the week rather than on a weekend was chosen. Start times were to be tailored to meet local circumstances such as cities and towns with busy night time economies.
- Pre-count meetings were recommended to consider the outcomes of the 2 week survey, focus the count and plug any gaps in intelligence.
- Local authorities were advised to appoint co-ordinators to ensure there were adequate numbers to conduct the count and to liaise with other local agencies and services to gain any required permissions.
- Those conducting the count were advised to use the information gained from the 2 week survey to focus on areas where rough sleepers are known to sleep and areas where people are sometimes seen bedded down.

Local authorities reported a total of 82 individuals sleeping rough across Wales on the night of the count. This represents just over a third (34 per cent) of the estimated total of 240 people thought to be rough sleeping over the two week period from 2nd to 15th November 2015.

The number of rough sleepers recorded on the night of the count is likely to be lower than the estimate provided over a 2 week period as many who sleep rough do so intermittently, being in a pattern of moving from hostels to the streets and back again. Many rough sleepers may also choose places to sleep which avoid the risk of being detected. Despite very detailed guidance being provided, there could also be inconsistencies between local authorities in the way the count was carried out and in the criteria used for counting which may impact on numbers recorded.

The greatest differences between the 2 week estimate of rough sleepers and the number recorded on the one night count were seen in Cardiff, Gwynedd and Denbighshire. Both Gwynedd and Denbighshire recorded no persons sleeping rough on the night of the count compared with estimates of 26 and 20 rough sleepers respectively over the 2 week period.

The numbers for each individual local authority are shown in Table 3.

Of the 22 local authorities, 9 authorities reported no persons sleeping rough within their area on the night of the count. Only one of these 9 authorities, Blaenau Gwent, had also reported no rough sleepers over the two week survey period.

Cardiff reported the highest number of rough sleepers both on the night of the count (30 persons) and over the 2 week survey period (64 persons). This was followed by Wrexham who reported 17 people sleeping rough on the night of the count compared to an estimate of 31 over the previous two week survey period.

Table 3. Estimated number of rough sleepers on night of count 25th November 2015 (a)

	Estimated number of people sleeping rough between 11pm on 25th November and 3 am on 26th November 2015
Isle of Anglesey	0
Gwynedd	0
Conwy	5
Denbighshire	0
Flintshire	1
Wrexham	17
Powys	0
Ceredigion	1
Pembrokeshire	0
Cardiganshire	2
Swansea	5
Neath Port Talbot	0
Bridgend	6
Vale of Glamorgan	0
Cardiff	30
Rhondda Cynon Taf	1
Merthyr Tydfil	2
Caerphilly	3
Blaenau Gwent	0
Torfaen	0
Monmouthshire	1
Newport	8
Wales	82

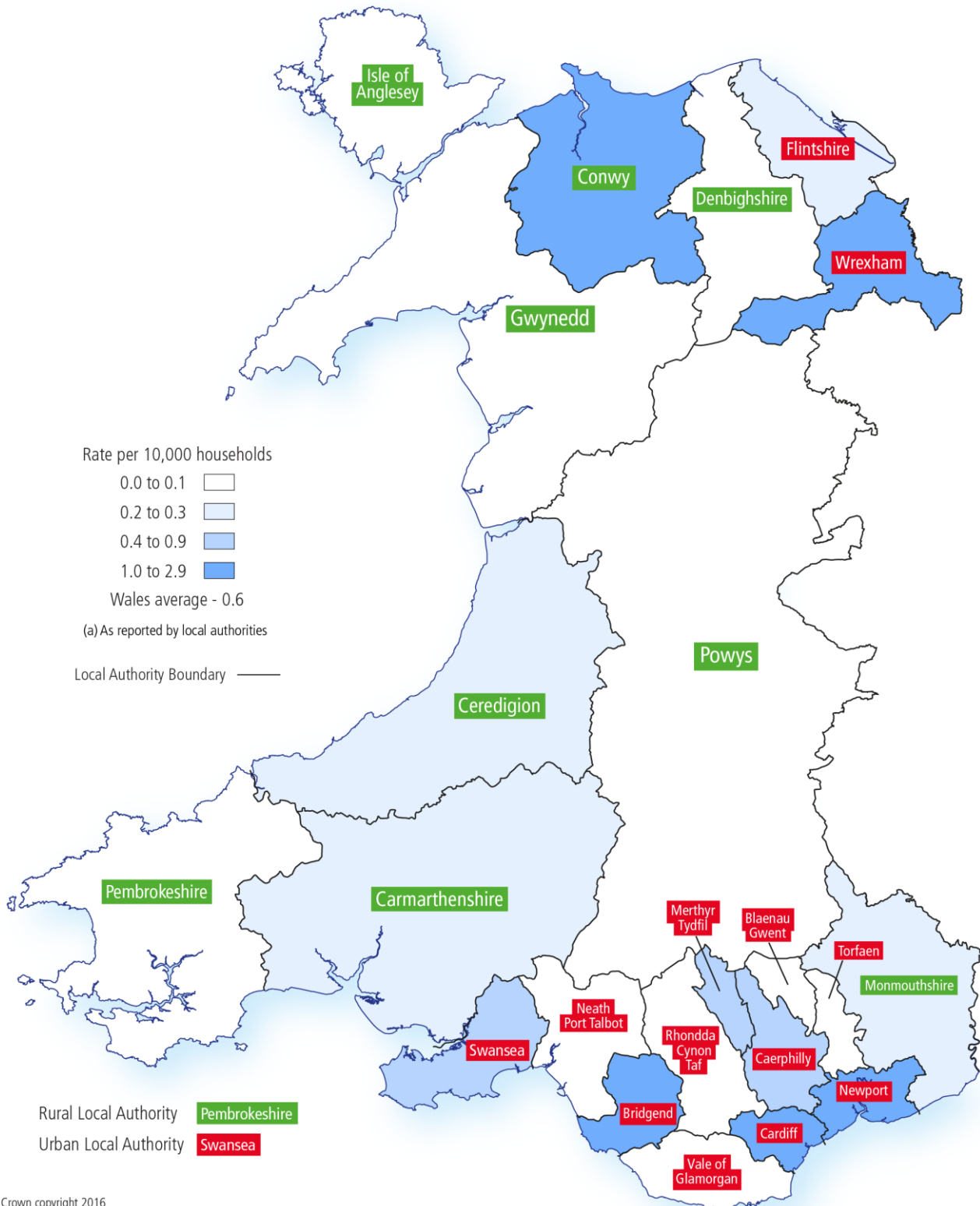
Source: Annual rough sleeper counts and estimates returns from local authorities

(a) As reported by local authorities

Direct comparisons cannot be made to the rough sleeper exercise carried out by local authorities in November 2014 due to differences in methodology and coverage. However the overall number of persons recorded sleeping rough across Wales on the night of count on 25th November 2015 was similar to the number recorded in November 2014.

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 2: Estimated number of rough sleepers on night of count
25th November 2015 - Rate per 10,000 households (a) (r)



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(r) Map 2 revised March 2016 due to errors identified in the calculation of rates.

To take into account the size and number of households in the different local authorities across Wales, Map 2 above shows the number of persons recorded sleeping rough on the night of the count per 10,000 households.

Wrexham (r) recorded the highest rate of persons sleeping rough on 25th November 2015 at 2.9 rough sleepers per 10,000 households, followed by Cardiff (r) with 2.0 rough sleepers per 10,000 households. The only other authorities with rates above the Wales average of 0.6 per 10,000 households were Newport (r), Bridgend, Conwy and Merthyr Tydfil (r).

(r) Revised March 2016 due to calculation errors.

3.4 Emergency Bed Spaces

Emergency bed spaces are direct access provision, night shelter or cold weather provision beds in churches, community centres and similar establishments but would not include Bed and Breakfast accommodation. In order to assess whether different or additional emergency provision might be needed at national and local levels, the local authorities were asked to provide information on the number of emergency spaces available in their area and on how many of these were available on the night of the count. The information on emergency bed provision as reported by the individual local authorities is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Emergency bed provision by local authority (a)

		<i>Number</i>
	Total number of emergency beds	Total number of emergency beds unoccupied and available for use on 25th November 2015
Isle of Anglesey	0	0
Gwynedd	0	0
Conwy	0	0
Denbighshire	7	2
Flintshire	0	0
Wrexham	16	2
Powys	2	2
Ceredigion	42	1
Pembrokeshire	0	0
Carmarthenshire	3	2
Swansea	1	0
Neath Port Talbot	1	1
Bridgend	0	0
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0
Cardiff	70	3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	26	5
Merthyr Tydfil	0	0
Caerphilly	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	0
Torfaen	0	0
Monmouthshire	0	0
Newport	12	1
Wales	180	19

Source: Annual rough sleeper counts and estimates returns from local authorities

(a) As reported by local authorities

Local authorities reported a total of 180 emergency bed spaces across Wales and of these 11 per cent (19 bed spaces) were unoccupied and available for use on 25th November 2015, the night of the snapshot rough sleeper count.

Cardiff reported the highest number of emergency bed spaces (70) of which only 3 were unoccupied and available on the night of the count. Ceredigion reported the next highest number with 42 emergency bed spaces available in the authority though only 1 of these was available on the night of the count with the remainder all occupied.

In 7 local authorities who reported rough sleepers on the night of the count, there were no unoccupied and available emergency bed spaces and in 3 local authorities, the number available were insufficient for the number of rough sleepers reported.

4. Key Quality Information

1. In addition to the information below, further information can be found in the [Housing Statistic Quality Report](#) which is available on our website.

Methodology

2. The purpose of an on going annual rough sleeping monitoring exercise is to gain a better understanding of the scale of and trends in rough sleeping at a local and national level over time to inform local and national responses to the issue.
3. During 2015, the Rough Sleeping Working Group along with Welsh Government policy officials and the Homelessness Network considered options for collecting information on levels of rough sleeping across Wales. Carrying on from the work done in 2014, a methodology was developed for conducting an on going annual monitoring exercise. This included working with the data collection team and statisticians within the Knowledge and Analytical Services branch of Welsh Government to approve the count methodology, to develop a suitable annual data return for Local Authorities to complete following the exercise and to collate and verify the returns. The guidance note and monitoring return form used in this exercise are available at the following link:
4. The agreed approach involved 2 separate phases which would include a 2 week information and intelligence gathering period followed by a one night snap shot count. This process would enable local authorities and their partners to identify rough sleepers in specific areas on a particular night but also to support this with data from a range of services over a longer period to provide a more comprehensive picture of the incidence of rough sleeping across each local authority area.

Phase 1 – The 2 week survey

5. In order to inform and complement the one night count, local authorities were asked to conduct a questionnaire based survey over a two week period from 2nd to 15th November 2015 among all relevant local agencies and services who work with rough sleepers including local community police officers.
6. The data collected would then be used to inform where to target the one night count and to provide a more detailed understanding of rough sleeping in each area. The questionnaire was designed by Denbighshire County Council Housing and Supporting People Teams, and checked and 'blind tested' by Community Development Cymru. A copy of the supplementary guidance for completing the 2015 Rough Sleeper Count surveys is available at the following link:
7. Local authorities were allowed to add to this questionnaire for their own information gathering purposes if required.
8. A unique identifier was to be used in order to prevent any double counting of individuals. The results of the questionnaire based survey were to be entered in the data collection return and provided to the Welsh Government.
9. Pre-count meetings were recommended to consider the outcomes of the survey, provide information to focus the snap shot count and plug any gaps in intelligence

Phase 2 - Snapshot One Night Count:

10. Following the 2 week data gathering exercise local Authorities were asked to carry out a one night snap shot count of rough sleepers in their area between the hours of 11pm on Wednesday 25th November and 3am on Thursday 26th November 2015. Prior to this, Local authorities were consulted on proposed dates by the Welsh Government to ensure that the activity would not take place on any night when unusual local factors may distort figures such as events, festivals or high

levels of police activity. Start times were also to be tailored to meet local circumstances such as cities and towns with busy night time economies.

11. Whilst it is not intended to be an accurate record of everyone in the area with a history of rough sleeping, a one night snap shot count can be an effective means of estimating the scale of the problem and provide a means of monitoring progress to eliminating the need to sleep rough over a period of time.
12. Extensive guidance was provided on carrying out the one night count. This is available along with the data collection return at the following link:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/rough-sleepers-data-collection/?lang=en>

Definition:

13. For the purpose of the count the following definition of a rough sleeper was recommended:
14. *People sleeping, about to bed down(sitting in/on or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”).*
15. This does not include people in hostels or night shelters, sofa surfers, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protests, squatters or travellers.
16. Only persons who were clearly bedded down or about to bed down at the time of the count were to be included as research has found that in many areas people seen drinking in the street or begging (even if they have a blanket or a sleeping bag) are not necessarily sleeping rough.

Conducting the Count

17. Co-ordinators were appointed to ensure there were adequate numbers to conduct the count and to liaise with other agencies to gain any necessary permissions. Those conducting the count were advised to use the information gained from the 2 week survey to focus on areas where rough sleepers are known to sleep and areas where people are sometimes seen bedded down. Where possible, the areas covered were well known to the teams and individual counters and they were advised not to enter areas they felt were unsafe without support from the police.
18. Co-ordinators were advised to divide the area being counted into segments, agree exact boundaries, so that areas are not double counted or missed, and provide relevant maps to the teams carrying out the count. Mobile counting teams in cars could be used to cover outlying areas whilst the co-ordinator would be responsible for dealing with queries and checking with counting teams during the night.
19. Counters were required to carry identification and a letter from the local authority explaining their purpose and were to be given full safety instructions including how to respond to emergencies, when to leave an area, and how to deal with any aggression or anger from rough sleepers or others.
20. If rough sleepers were supported with any intervention such as information on the availability of emergency beds or other services available for rough sleepers in the local area they were still included within the count.

Recording the data:

21. Local authorities were asked to make a form available to those carrying out the count for recording information on each individual found to be sleeping rough. The form was to be completed on the night of the count and returned to the count co-ordinator for verification. It

should include as much information as possible on the location of people sleeping rough which could be of use with the future planning of services.

22. As details of individual rough sleepers are confidential the information was to be stored and shared in line with the protocol of the local authority (or the agency coordinating the count), which may include information sharing arrangements with relevant local services.
23. The information gathered from the 2 week survey and the one night count was then used by the 22 local authorities to complete Tables 1 and 2 of the Welsh Government data collection forms.

Emergency Bed Spaces

24. In order to assess whether different or additional emergency provision might be needed at national and local levels, the local authorities were asked to provide information on the number of emergency spaces available in their area on the night of the count and the number of these which were vacant.
25. Emergency bed space are direct access provision, night shelter or cold weather provision beds in churches, community centres, etc. but would not include Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
26. Local authorities were asked to provide on Table 1 of the data collection return both the number of emergency beds within their area on the night of the count and also how many of these were available for use by those found sleeping rough.

Issues with single-night counts

27. There are significant limitations to the use of a single-night count in providing an accurate picture of the number of rough sleepers across Wales. The counts are snapshot estimates and can provide only a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels in particular areas on the night of the count.
28. A low number of rough sleepers identified by the count may not automatically mean low levels of rough sleeping or that rough sleeping is not an issue within that area. The issues described have been collated based on feedback on the experience of this and other previous counts in Wales, as well as findings from counts carried out in England and Scotland.
29. A single-night count cannot record everyone in an area with a history of rough sleeping nor can it distinguish between those who sleep rough on an isolated occasion and those who are sleeping rough over a continuous period of time. Many who sleep rough do so intermittently, being in a pattern of moving from hostels to the streets and back again. Many rough sleepers choose places to sleep which avoid the risk of being detected. Despite guidance being provided, there could be inconsistencies between local authorities in the criteria used for counting.
30. In order to provide evidence of levels of rough sleeping over a longer time period, the local authorities were required to carry out a two week intelligence gathering exercise prior to the actual snapshot count using information from a range of services who work with rough sleepers in their area.
31. There are a range of factors which can influence the accuracy of any information provided as outlined below:

Location

32. **Rural and coastal areas:** It is logistically more difficult to carry out an accurate single-night count of rough sleepers in large rural and coastal areas than in urban areas. The area to cover is greater and there are a wide range of possible locations for people sleeping rough from hillsides and woods to tents, caves and beach shelters. In rural areas there are more likely to be individual people sleeping rough on sites on their own and these may be spread out over a large area. In such authorities those carrying out the count cannot cover all possible sites and will be forced to concentrate on locations where people are most likely to be found sleeping rough and on local

knowledge. There also may be people sleeping rough on private property such as barns or on farm land which cannot be accessed without prior permission, and so are excluded from the count.

33. **Urban areas:** In cities and large towns while it is easier to carry out a single-night count, as those sleeping rough will be concentrated within a relatively small area and tend to congregate in groups, there are other issues. There may be people out on the streets having left late night pubs and clubs which can make it difficult to assess the number of actual rough sleepers. There are also safety issues involved in entering some of the possible locations for those sleeping rough such as derelict buildings and building sites. There are problems obtaining accurate numbers in areas where rough sleepers may move across local authority boundaries particularly if the street counts are carried out at different times within neighbouring boroughs.

Timing

34. The date chosen for the count may conflict with local events involving high levels of police activity such as sports matches and carnivals. This will cause those sleeping rough to move on temporarily and thus distort the findings. The day of the week chosen for the count may also influence the results as key days, such as benefit collection days, may give a false picture of the average rough sleeper levels in the area. The start and finish times chosen for the count may also influence the results by the mistaken inclusion of those on the streets but not sleeping rough and the exclusion of those rough sleepers who are not yet bedded down. People seen late at night drinking in the street or begging are not necessarily sleeping rough and can be a particularly significant issue in busy city centre areas.
35. Local authorities were consulted on proposed dates prior to the count date being established and the guidance provided for the counts permitted some flexibility in start and finish times in order to minimise these difficulties.

Weather

36. The weather is a major factor influencing the number of people sleeping rough on any given night. Severe weather conditions will force many people who normally sleep rough to use a night shelter or hostel or to 'sofa surf', that is, rely on a friend to provide shelter for the night. These would be excluded from the count and thus distort the level of rough sleeping shown. Bad weather will make it more difficult for those carrying out the count to gain an accurate figure as rough sleepers may be forced to shelter in locations which are difficult to access or insecure. The weather in November 2015 was typical for the time of year.

Engagement with Partners

37. The exercise relied on the engagement of a wide range of organisations to help the local authorities in establishing the nature of rough sleeping in their area and in particular in developing a comprehensive understanding of any hotspots. This engagement and information sharing was a vital part of ensuring that the one night snap shot count was successful in identifying people sleeping rough in each local authority area. Whilst some Local Authorities engaged with a wide ranging number of agencies including health, police, Third sector as part of phase 1 of the exercise others may only have had engagement from one agency. The different levels of participation within each local authority will have directly impacted on the execution of the snap shot count and on the quality and accuracy of the information gathered.

Policy and operational context

38. This release shows information about the estimated number of persons sleeping rough across the 22 local authorities in Wales both over a two period between 2nd and 15th November 2015 and over one night from 11pm on the 25th November to 3 on 26th November 2015. The release also provides information on the number of emergency bed spaces available on the night of 25th November 2015 and on how many of these were vacant.

39. The information is of importance to the Welsh Government in monitoring the effectiveness of current policy, particularly progress against the strategic aims to address rough sleeping as outlined in the [Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales](#) (Page 16). The [Programme for Government 2011-2016](#), which is the current government programme, also outlines the Welsh Government commitment to build on the ten-year Homelessness Plan and continue to invest in vulnerable people and to avert homelessness.
40. [The Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) which became law in Wales on 17 September 2014 puts more emphasis on Local Authorities working to relieve homelessness and prevent it from re-occurring. Identifying and engaging those who unfortunately sleep rough is the first part of the process. The main objective of the law is to ensure people who are homeless or facing homelessness receive help as early as possible and the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty is committed to understanding the level of rough sleeping across Wales.
41. Over the last two years, the Welsh Government have worked closely with the Rough Sleeping Working Group (RSWG), which includes members from Rough Sleepers Cymru, Welsh Government, Cymorth Cymru, Welsh Local Government association (WLGA) and with the Local Authority Homelessness Network. They have examined how early interventions can be achieved to prevent people from becoming long term rough sleepers and during 2015 further developed a methodology to conduct an on going annual monitoring exercise.

Data source and coverage

42. The figures shown in this Statistical Release are based on an annual statistical return completed by local authorities in Wales. They are based on the results of a two week information gathering exercise and a single night snap-shot count of individuals observed sleeping rough. They also cover the number of emergency beds available on the night of the count and the number of these which were vacant.
43. It does not include any information on statutory homelessness which covers actions taken by local authorities to prevent or relieve homelessness under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
44. Information was collected via Excel spreadsheets which are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data. Copies of the current Rough Sleeper data collection forms are available at the following link: [Data Collection form](#).
45. The November 2015 collection achieved a one hundred per cent response rate.

Users and uses

46. The data in this Statistical Release form the basis of evidence on rough sleeping in Wales and may be used by ministers and officials in the Welsh Government in the formulation and monitoring of policy and for performance monitoring. The data are used for international comparisons and for answering Assembly Questions, ministerial correspondence, Freedom of Information Act cases and queries from the public. Local housing authorities are both providers and users of the statistics and use the data extensively in order to plan services, allocate resources, monitor performance and benchmark against other authorities. The voluntary sector also uses the statistics to monitor and evaluate housing policy and for campaigning and fundraising purposes.
 - Generally the information is used for:
 - Monitoring trends in rough sleeping
 - Policy development
 - Advice to Ministers
 - Informing debate in the National Assembly for Wales and beyond
 - Geographic profiling, comparisons and benchmarking

47. There are a variety of users of these statistics including national and local government, researchers, academics and students. For further information on the users and uses please refer to the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#).

Administrative Data Quality Assurance:

48. Data are collected from local authorities via Excel spreadsheets. These are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data. The spreadsheets allow respondents to validate some data before sending to the Welsh Government. Respondents are also given an opportunity to include contextual information where large changes have occurred (e.g. data items changing by more than 10% compared to the previous year). This enables some data cleansing at source and minimises follow up queries.
49. Local authorities are notified of the data collection exercise timetable in advance. This allows adequate time for local authorities to collate their information, and to raise any issues they may have. There is guidance in the spreadsheet, which assists users on completing the form.
50. Examples of validation checks within the forms include year-on-year changes, cross checks with other relevant data tables and checks to ensure data is logically consistent

Validation and Verification

51. Once we receive the data, it goes through further validation and verification checks, for example:
- Common sense check for any missing/incorrect data without any explanation;
 - Arithmetic consistency checks;
 - Cross checks against the data for the previous year;
 - Cross checks with other relevant data collections;
 - Thorough tolerance checks;
 - Verification that data outside of tolerances is actually correct.
- If there is a validation error, we contact the local authority and seek resolution. If we fail to get an answer within a reasonable timescale, we will use imputation to improve data quality. We will then inform the organisation and explain to them how we have amended or imputed the data. The method of imputation and the affected data is highlighted in the 'quality information' section of the first release.
52. More detailed quality information relating specifically to this release is given below.

Quality

53. The information is released as experimental statistics as this is a new official statistic undergoing evaluation and therefore it is recommended that caution is exercised when drawing conclusions from the published data as the methodology is likely to be further developed. Once the methodology is tested and assessed, and the publication meets user needs, the release will be assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
54. More generally, Welsh housing statistics adhere to the Welsh Government's [Statistical Quality Management Strategy](#), and this is in line with the European Statistical System's six dimensions of quality, as listed in Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Further detail on how these are adhered to can be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#), which covers the general principles and processes leading up to the production of our housing statistics. The report covers various topics including definitions, coverage, timeliness, relevance and comparability.

Symbols

55. The following symbols may have been used in this release:
- negligible (less than half the final digit shown)
 - . not applicable
 - .. not available

- ~ not yet available
- * disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication
- p provisional
- r revised

Accuracy

56. Local authorities completed data collection forms with built in guidance and some primary validation. On receipt of the data collection forms, the data collection team undertook a series of secondary validation steps to ensure that the data was complete and internally consistent. This included a comparison of the data provided for each local authority for the 2 week survey period with the data provided for the one night snap shot count. Reference was also made to the information from a similar exercise carried out in November 2014 when checking and validating the data received from the local authorities. However, as the methodology adopted for the 2015 monitoring exercise differed to that applied in 2014 the results are not strictly comparable.
57. Copies of the data collection forms can be found on the website: [Data Collection forms](#).

Revisions

58. This release contains the final estimates of the number of persons sleeping rough across Wales for both the 2 week period from 2nd to 15th November and for the period between 11pm on 25th November and 3am on 26th November 2015.
59. The data shown in Map1 and Map2 of this release were revised in March 2016 due to calculation errors in the rates shown on the original maps. This resulted in the local authority with highest rate of estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 households over the 2 week period being revised from Cardiff to Merthyr Tydfil (7.4) and in the number of Local Authorities with rates below the Wales average of 1.8 being revised from 15 to 16. This also resulted in revisions to the rates for persons sleeping rough on 25th November 2015 per 10,000 households. The rate for Cardiff was revised from 2.9 rough sleepers per 10,000 to 2.0 and the authorities with rates which were above the Wales average of 0.6 per 10,000 households were revised to exclude Caerphilly and include Newport and Merthyr Tydfil.
60. Following a further data validation exercise, the figure shown in Table 2 for the number of local authorities engaging with Drugs and Alcohol Treatment Teams (DATT) was revised from 15 to 14. The figure shown for the number of local authorities engaging with all 8 of the possible agencies outlined in the data collection return was also revised from 7 to 5.
61. Revisions can arise from events such as late returns from a local authority or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information and resubmits this. Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes. In these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release.
62. Where changes are not deemed to be significant i.e. minor changes, these will be updated in the following year's statistical release. However, minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to that next release.
63. Revised data is marked with an (r) in the statistical release. We also follow the Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy, details of which are available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/statement-of-compliance/revisions-errors-postponements/?lang=en>

Accessibility

59. A full set of results from the rough sleeper monitoring exercise including information by individual local authority is available to download from our Stats Wales interactive website at the following link: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>

Coherence with other statistics

Statutory Homelessness

59. The Welsh Government collect and publish quarterly data on statutory homelessness covering local housing authorities' activities under homelessness legislation, collected through the quarterly homelessness statistical return.
60. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 became law in Wales on 17 September 2014 and included a number of changes to homelessness legislation aimed at reducing levels of homelessness, by placing its prevention at the centre of local authority duties to help people at risk. The new legislation was introduced on 27 April 2015 and replaced the previous legislation, Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, which had come into force in January 1997. The data collected and published on statutory homelessness from April 2015 onwards has changed in order to reflect the new legislation.
61. The focus of the new homelessness legislation is help for all eligible households either to prevent or end a period of homelessness. The data are not comparable with data previously collected on statutory homelessness, as local authorities will now be providing statistics on those cases where homelessness has been successfully prevented⁴ or relieved⁵.
62. The latest published information on statutory homelessness covers the July to September quarter 2015 and is available at the following links:
<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness/?lang=en>
<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>
63. The information collected and published on statutory homelessness does not include any information on rough sleepers. It covers actions taken by local authorities under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in respect of households who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness and apply to the authority for assistance. Copies of the statutory homelessness data collection forms are available for reference at the following link:
<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/homelessness-data-collection/?lang=en>
64. The information shown in this release covers people sleeping rough only and does not include any data on statutory homelessness.

National Strategic Indicators

65. The National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) are used to measure the performance of local authorities at a national level and focus on key strategic priorities. National Strategic Indicators HHA/013 collects information on the percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months. These figures will differ from the information shown in this release which covers the estimated number of people sleeping rough over a 2 week period and on a single night. The data for the National Strategic Indicators can be found on the Stats Wales website:
<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Local-Government/National-Strategic-Indicators-of-Local-Authority-Performance>

⁴ 'Homelessness Prevention' is where a local authority takes positive action to provide housing assistance to someone who considers him or herself to be at risk of homelessness in the near future, and as a result the person is able to either remain in his or her existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation providing a solution for at least the next 6 months.

⁵ Positive action to prevent homelessness cannot be taken once the authority is satisfied that someone has become homeless (for example, the authority has notified the person of a decision under section 73 that they are homeless). However, following the notification under Section 73 that an applicant is homeless, positive action to relieve homelessness can be taken if an applicant is eligible and homeless.

Household Estimates

66. The 2014 household estimates, used within this release to calculate rates, were produced by the Welsh Government. The household estimates are estimations of historic household numbers. They are produced by making assumptions about household size and composition and applying these assumptions to the mid-year population estimates. Further information can be found via the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/household-estimates/?lang=en>

StreetLink

67. StreetLink is a website, app and phone-line which enables members of the public to send an alert when they see someone sleeping rough to the nearby services that can help. It was launched in Wales in January 2016. Referrals are coordinated through Local Authorities who are sent the details provided by callers so they can help connect the person to local services and support. The person reporting the rough sleeper receives details of the action taken by the authority in response.
68. The Welsh Government has funded the expansion of the service to Wales and it is delivered in partnership by the charities Homeless Link and St Mungo's Broadway. The Wallich is the Wales partner for StreetLink, providing a Welsh-language service to callers, supporting promotion of StreetLink in Wales and receiving many of the referrals.
69. The aim of StreetLink is to link vulnerable rough sleepers with services which can help them and allow members of the public to engage with the issue of homelessness in a positive and proactive way. The further aim is to enable more accurate data about the numbers of people sleeping rough across Wales to be recorded. Further information is available at the following link:

<http://www.thewallich.com/streetlink-for-rough-sleepers-launches-in-wales/>

Related statistics for other UK countries

England:

70. In England, since 1998, rough sleeping has been measured by street counts in areas with a known or suspected rough sleeping problem. Local authorities had been asked to conduct an annual count if they estimated there were more than ten rough sleepers in the area. In June 2010, to supplement the counts, local authorities that had not conducted a street count were asked to provide an estimate of the number of rough sleepers on a given night. Results of the June 2010 estimates and a time series of rough sleeping counts since 1998 are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-total-street-count-and-estimates-2010>
71. A public consultation on evaluating the extent of rough sleeping was run over the Summer 2010, and new guidance for local authorities was published in September 2010: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2014>
72. Local housing authorities report their annual rough sleeping count or estimated figures by completing the rough sleeping statistical return: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244149/Rough_Sleepers_Local_Authority_Form_Autumn_2013.xls
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluating-the-extent-of-rough-sleeping--2>

The latest published statistics on rough sleeping in England are for Autumn 2014 and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2014>

Scotland:

73. The Scottish Government publishes figures on the number of households applying for assistance under homelessness legislation who say they have slept rough the previous night or have

reported their housing situation as 'long term roofless'. The latest annual figures are published here: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/7213>

Northern Ireland:

74. In Northern Ireland statistics on homelessness including rough sleeping are sourced from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Further information is available at the following link: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/homelessness_information

5. Glossary

Emergency Bed Spaces

Emergency bed space are direct access provision, night shelter or cold weather provision beds in churches, community centres and similar establishments but would not include Bed and Breakfast accommodation .

Hostels

Hostels include shared accommodation, owned or leased and managed by either a local authority, registered social landlord (housing association) or non-profit making organisation including reception centres and emergency units.

Rough Sleepers

For the purpose of the one night count the following definition of a rough sleeper was recommended:

People sleeping, about to bed down(sitting in/on or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”).

This does not include people in hostels or night shelters, sofa surfers, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protests, squatters or travellers.

Only persons who were clearly bedded down or about to bed down at the time of the count were to be included.

Snapshot One Night Count

A rough sleepers' count is a snapshot of the number of rough sleepers in a local authority area on a particular night. Whilst it is not intended to be an accurate record of everyone in the area with a history of rough sleeping it can be an effective means of estimating the scale of the problem and provide a means of monitoring progress to eliminating the need to sleep rough over a period of time

Statutory Homelessness

Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, which came into force in January 1997, placed a statutory duty on local authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Authorities must consider all applications from people seeking accommodation or help in getting accommodation. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 became law in Wales on 17 September 2014 and included a number of changes to homelessness legislation aimed at reducing levels of homelessness, by placing its prevention at the centre of local authority duties to help people at risk. The new legislation was introduced on 27 April 2015 and replaced the previous legislation, Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

From April 2015, the statutory homelessness form collects data from Welsh local authorities on the discharge of their responsibilities under the new homelessness legislation and advice on these duties is given in the [Homelessness Code of Guidance revised 2015](#).

6. Further information

Further information is available from the Housing Statistics web site:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/?topic=Housing+and+regeneration&lang=en>

A full set of homelessness data including information by individual local authority, some of which was previously shown in the additional tables, is available to download from our StatsWales interactive website at the following link:

<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>

We actively encourage feedback from our users. If you have any comments please e-mail us at:

stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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