

National Rough Sleeper Count, November 2016 – Experimental Statistics

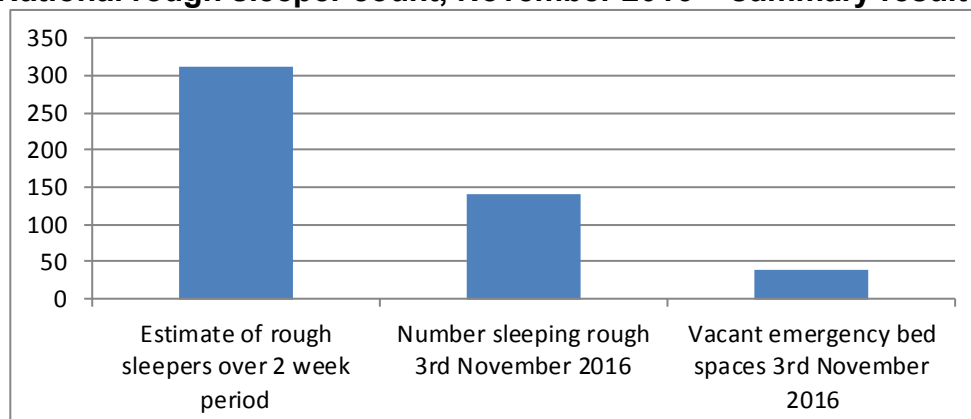
1 February 2017
SFR 23/2017

A national rough sleeper monitoring exercise was carried out by Local Authorities, in partnership with other local agencies to gauge the extent of rough sleeping across Wales. It consisted of a two week information gathering exercise in October 2016 (Phase 1), followed by a one night snapshot count on 3rd November 2016 (Phase 2).

A range of factors can impact on single-night counts of rough sleepers, including location, timing and weather. The November 2016 count is essentially a snapshot estimate and can only provide a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels on the night of the count.

These figures are separate from [statutory homelessness statistics](#) which provide 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.

National rough sleeper count, November 2016 – summary 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 10th and 23rd October 2016, local authorities estimate that 313 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period.
- Local authorities reported a total of 141 individuals observed sleeping rough in Wales between the hours of 10pm on Thursday the 3rd and 5am on Friday the 4th of November 2016 – the night of the count.
- Local authorities reported that there were 168 emergency bed spaces across Wales of which 40 (24 per cent) were unoccupied and available on the 3rd November, the night of the snapshot count.

About this release

This release presents the information provided by local authorities from the rough sleeper monitoring exercise carried out during October and November 2016. It also highlights the issues associated with periodic rough sleeper monitoring and their likely influence on the accuracy of the information on the levels of rough sleeping across Wales.

Direct comparisons cannot be made to previous rough sleeper exercises due to differences in timing, methodology and coverage.

In this release

Background	2
Methodology and coverage	3
Phase 1 (2 week estimate)	3
Level of engagement	7
Phase 2 (snapshot count)	8
Emergency bed spaces	13
Key quality information	15
Glossary	26
Further information	27

Background

The Welsh 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](#)". The need for more information on levels of rough sleeping across Wales has however continued.

During 2014, a Rough Sleeper Working Group (RSWG) developed a methodology to conduct a rough sleeping monitoring exercise which was then undertaken by local authorities. However the results were not published as coverage was not complete across all 22 local authorities.

In 2015, an annual monitoring exercise was introduced. The Welsh Government worked with local authorities to develop a suitable methodology and process. The methodology was further enhanced during 2016. [The 2016 guidance note and monitoring return form](#) used in this exercise.

The information presented in this release covers the rough sleeper monitoring exercise carried out across Wales during October and November 2016 and is based on the data provided by local authorities. The information is presented as experimental statistics as this is a new official statistic which is still undergoing evaluation.

We would welcome feedback on the content and format of this publication. Please provide your comments by email to: stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Methodology and coverage

The purpose of an 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.

As was the case last year, the 2016 exercise aimed to enable local authorities and their partners to identify rough sleepers in specific areas on a particular night but also to complement this with a two week data gathering exercise, which took place prior to the one night count, using information from a range of services in order to provide evidence of levels of rough sleeping over a longer time period. However, based on the intelligence gathered from the 2015 exercise, dates and timings were changed slightly to allow for improved coverage and to provide a more comprehensive picture of levels of rough sleeping across all local authority areas.

Further information on the issues associated with one night rough sleeper counts and a detailed summary of the methodology and coverage are provided in the Key Quality Information section of this release.

Results

Phase 1: 2 week information gathering exercise

The main aim of the initial phase of the 2016 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 then 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 between 10th and 23rd October 2016 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 of rough sleeping within each local authority area.

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

Table 1. Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period from 10th to 23rd October 2016 (a) (b)

Local Authority	Estimated Number of people sleeping rough over a two week period
Isle of Anglesey	1
Gwynedd	25
Conwy	14
Denbighshire	5
Flintshire	3
Wrexham	61
Powys	0
Ceredigion	6
Pembrokeshire	3
Carmarthenshire	3
Swansea	23
Neath Port Talbot	6
Bridgend	10
Vale of Glamorgan	2
Cardiff	85
Rhondda Cynon Taf	6
Merthyr Tydfil	15
Caerphilly	27
Blaenau Gwent	0
Torfaen	0
Monmouthshire	1
Newport	17
Wales	313

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 10 and 23 October 2016.

Based on the information gathered in the 2 weeks between 10th and 23rd October 2016 by local agencies, health organisations and other community service groups in contact with rough sleepers, local authorities estimate that 313 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period.

Direct comparisons cannot be made to the rough sleeper exercises carried out by local authorities in November 2014 and November 2015 due to differences in timing, methodology and coverage. However the estimate of the number of persons sleeping rough over a 2 week period in October 2016 was higher than that recorded in both November 2015 (240 persons) and November 2014..

The increase in the number of persons estimated to be sleeping rough over the two week period in 2016 may have been influenced by a number of factors including timing (the 2016 exercise was carried out over 2 weeks in October rather than November as was the case in 2015) and weather. A further factor may have been improvements to the methodology and approach based on the

experience obtained from previous exercises. This may have ensured that coverage was extended to allow for a more comprehensive picture of rough sleeping to be obtained.

At an individual local authority level, 11 of the 22 authorities estimated higher numbers of persons sleeping rough in October 2016 than was the case in November 2015.

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 85 followed by Wrexham with an estimated 61 persons sleeping rough. Caerphilly, Gwynedd and Swansea also reported relatively high estimates at 27, 25 and 23 rough sleepers respectively over this two week period.

Three local authorities, Powys, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen estimated that there were no rough sleepers within the area during this period whilst the Isle of Anglesey and Monmouthshire estimated just one rough sleeper (Table 1).

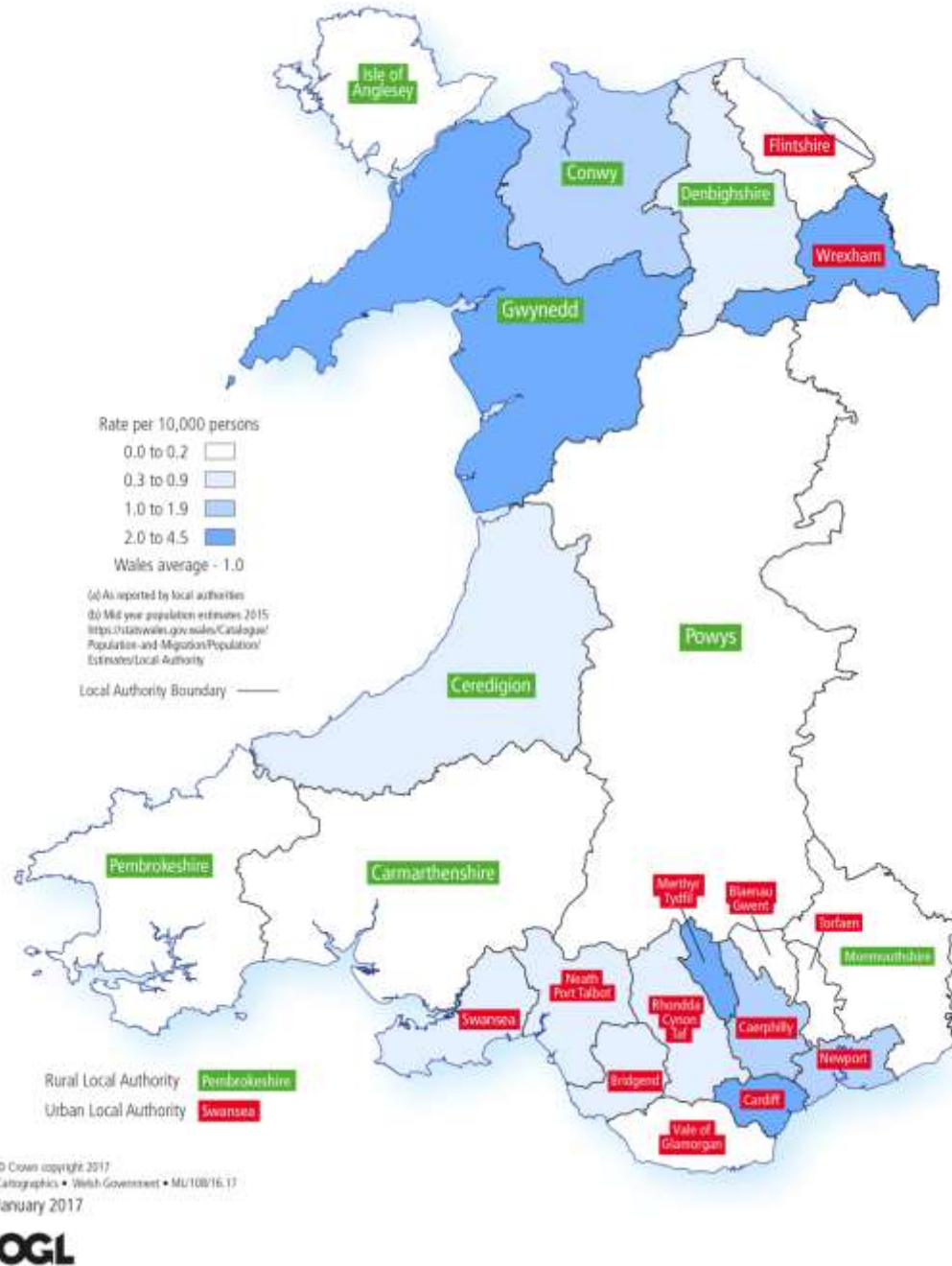
Further information on reasons provided by local authorities for any increases in the estimated number of rough sleepers recorded over these two weeks is provided in the Key Quality Information Section of this release.

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 2016 show that over this period a total of 2,250 households in Wales were threatened with homelessness within 56 days, 2,655 households were accepted as being homeless and, at 30 September 2016, 1,923 homeless households were in temporary accommodation across Wales. Further information at an individual local authority level is available on [StatsWales](#).

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 1: Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period (10th to 23rd October 2016) - Rate per 10,000 persons (a) (b)



To take into account the size of the population in the different local authorities across Wales, Map 1 above shows the number of estimated rough sleepers over the 2 week period in October 2016 per 10,000 persons. The total number of persons is taken from the latest mid-2015 population estimates for Wales¹.

¹ The mid-2015 population estimates, used within this release to calculate rates, were produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are available at the following link: <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates>

Cardiff had the highest number of estimated rough sleepers over the 2 week period (85 persons) but the highest rate was seen in Wrexham at 4.5 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons.

Wrexham was followed by Merthyr Tydfil, with a rate of 2.5 estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 persons, and Cardiff with a rate of 2.4 estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 persons.

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 localities with a consistent and relatively high concentration of rough sleepers.

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 10th and 23rd October 2016 (a)

Local Authority	Number of local authorities reporting using this agency/service in 2 week survey
Voluntary sector	18
Faith Groups	10
Outreach workers	19
Local residents or businesses	8
Police	19
Health Agencies	12
Substance misuse agencies	16
Drugs and Alcohol treatment Teams (DATT)	13

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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

Most of the local authorities reported that they had consulted with a number of local agencies and in 6 of the 22 authorities there had been engagement with all 8 of the possible agencies outlined on the data collection return. In Caerphilly however no local agencies were reported as being involved in the 2 week data gathering exercise and in Denbighshire only 'outreach workers' took part.

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

The one night snap shot count was carried out between the hours of 10pm on Thursday 3rd November and 5am on Friday 4th November 2016. In November 2015 the count times were from 11:00pm to 3 am but this time period was extended for the 2016 count following reports that in some areas, particularly city centres, rough sleepers may have been omitted from the count because they were not yet bedded down or about to bed down for the night.

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 bedded down 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. 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. Additionally, 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 141 individuals sleeping rough across Wales on the night of the count. This represents 45 per cent of the estimated total of 313 people thought to be rough sleeping over the two week period from 10th to 23rd October 2016.

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 Wrexham, Cardiff and Caerphilly.

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. Two of these 9 authorities, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, 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 (53 persons) and over the 2 week survey period (85 persons). This was followed by Wrexham who reported 27 people sleeping rough on the night of the count compared to an estimate of 61 over the previous two week survey period.

**Table 3. Estimated number of rough sleepers on night of count 3rd November 2016
(a)**

Local Authority	Estimated number of people sleeping rough between the hours of 10pm on 3 November and 5am on 4 November 2016
Isle of Anglesey	1
Gwynedd	3
Conwy	9
Denbighshire	2
Flintshire	0
Wrexham	27
Powys	0
Ceredigion	3
Pembrokeshire	0
Carmarthenshire	0
Swansea	16
Neath Port Talbot	0
Bridgend	5
Vale of Glamorgan	0
Cardiff	53
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2
Merthyr Tydfil	4
Caerphilly	4
Blaenau Gwent	0
Torfaen	0
Monmouthshire	0
Newport	12
Wales	141

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 2015 due to differences in methodology. However the overall number of persons recorded sleeping rough across Wales on the 3rd November 2016 was considerably higher than the number recorded in November 2015 (82 persons).

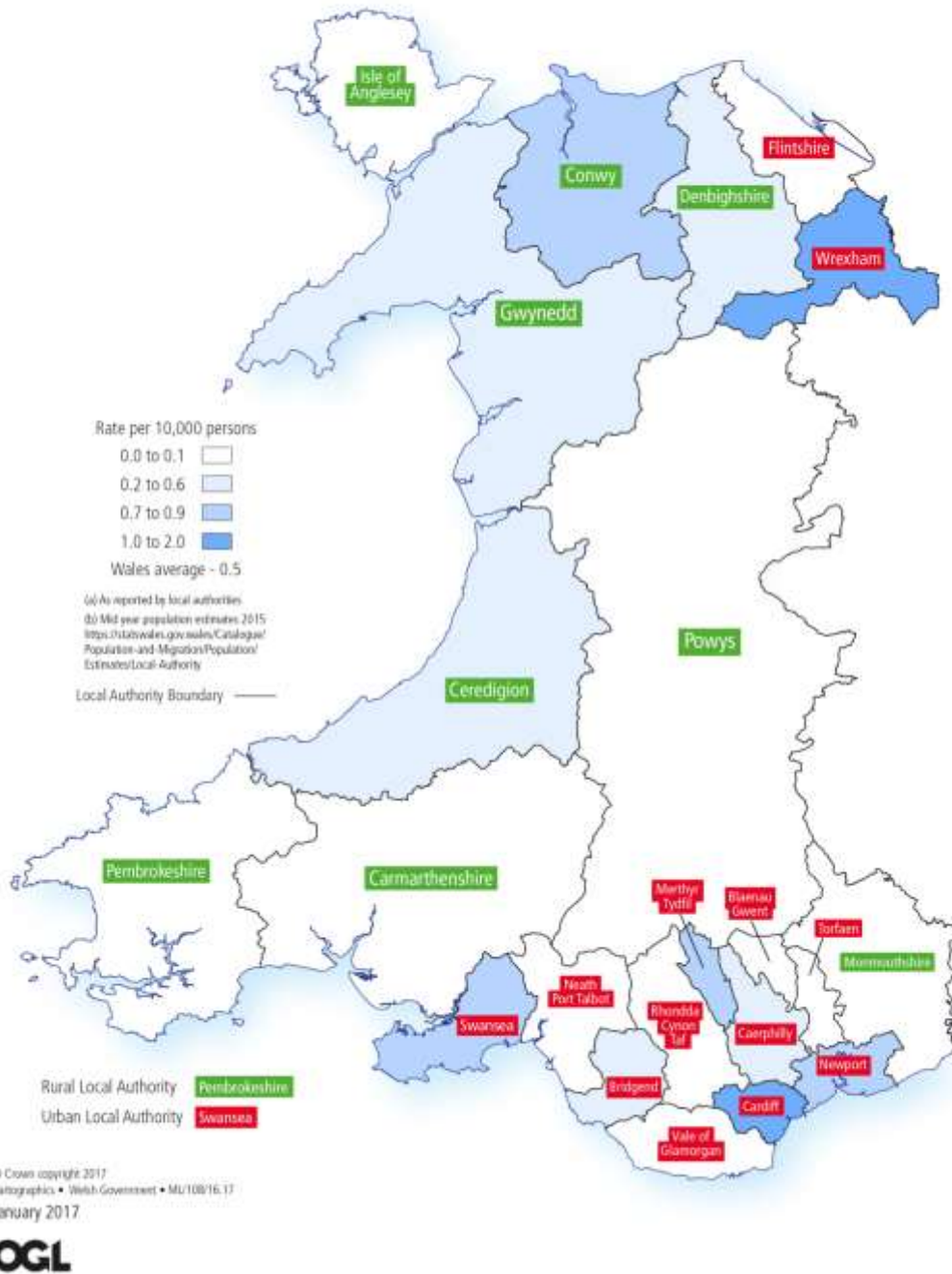
In 2016 the date of the count was brought forward to 3rd November to help alleviate any issues with weather conditions. The count timing period was also extended to cover the hours from 10pm to 5am rather than 11pm to 3am as in the previous 2 years. The latter change was based on intelligence gained from previous exercises which suggested that in some areas those sleeping rough had been missed from the count as they were not already bedded down or about to bed down prior to the 3am cut off.

These changes were designed to ensure that coverage was extended to allow for a more comprehensive picture of rough sleeping to be obtained.

Further information on reasons provided by local authorities for the increases in the estimated number of rough sleepers recorded over these two weeks is provided in the Key Quality Information Section of this release.

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 2: Estimated number of rough sleepers on night of count - 3rd November 2016 - Rate per 10,000 persons (a) (b)



To take into account the size of the population 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 persons².

² The mid-2015 population estimates, used within this release to calculate rates, were produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are available at the following link: <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates>

Wrexham recorded the highest rate of persons sleeping rough on 3rd November 2016 at 2.0 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons, followed by Cardiff with 1.5 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons. The 4 local authorities, Newport, Conwy, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea reported rates of persons sleeping rough above the Wales average of 0.5 per 10,000 persons.

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)

Local Authority	Total number of emergency beds	Total number of emergency beds unoccupied and available for use on 3rd November 2016
Isle of Anglesey	0	0
Gwynedd	0	0
Conwy	0	0
Denbighshire	7	3
Flintshire	1	1
Wrexham	16	0
Powys	1	1
Ceredigion	30	4
Pembrokeshire	0	0
Carmarthenshire	3	2
Swansea	1	1
Neath Port Talbot	1	1
Bridgend	0	0
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0
Cardiff (b)	70	26
Rhondda Cynon Taf	16	1
Merthyr Tydfil	0	0
Caerphilly	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	0
Torfaen	0	0
Monmouthshire	0	0
Newport	22	0
Wales	168	40

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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

Local authorities reported a total of 168 emergency bed spaces across Wales and of these 24 per cent (40 bed spaces) were unoccupied and available for use on 3rd November 2016, the night of the snapshot rough sleeper count.

Cardiff reported the highest number of emergency bed spaces (70), of which 26 were unoccupied and available on the night of the count. Ceredigion reported the next highest number with 30 emergency bed spaces available in the authority though only 4 of these were unoccupied and available on the night of the count.

In 8 local authorities who reported rough sleepers on the night of the count, there were no unoccupied and available emergency bed spaces. In addition, in 3 local authorities the number of unoccupied and available bed spaces was insufficient for the number of rough sleepers reported.

Key quality information

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

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

2. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Policy and operational context

3. 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](#).
4. [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 sleep rough is the first part of the process. An aim of the law is to ensure people who are homeless or facing homelessness receive help as early as possible and the Welsh Government is committed to understanding the level of rough sleeping across Wales.
5. Over the last three 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 2016 further developed the methodology used in conducting an annual monitoring exercise.

Users and uses

6. 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

7. 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.

Methodology

8. Information on the methodology is provided throughout the body of the release. Additional detailed information is given below.

9. The methodology 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

10. 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 10th to 23rd October 2016 among all relevant local agencies and services who work with rough sleepers. This phase of the exercise relied on the engagement of a wide range of organisations to help the authorities in establishing the nature and extent of rough sleeping across their area.

11. 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; it was subsequently checked and 'blind tested' by Community Development Cymru. A copy of the supplementary guidance for completing the 2016 Rough Sleeper Count surveys is available on the [data collection form](#).

12. Local authorities were allowed to add to this questionnaire for their own information gathering purposes if required.

13. 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.

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

14. 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 10pm on Thursday 3rd November and 5am on Friday 4th November 2016. 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.
15. 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.
16. Extensive guidance was provided on carrying out the one night count. This is available along with the [data collection return](#).

Definition

17. The definition of a rough sleeper is provided on Page 8 of this release.

Conducting the count

18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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.

21. 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

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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. Local; authorities were also asked to record on Table 2 the number of different local agencies and services used during the 2 week information gathering exercise. These could include any or all of the following:

- Voluntary sector
- Faith Groups
- Outreach workers
- Local residents or businesses
- Police
- Health Agencies
- Substance misuse agencies
- Drugs and Alcohol treatment Teams (DATT)

Emergency bed spaces

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. On Table 1 of the data collection return, local authorities were asked to report both the number of emergency beds within their area on the night of the count and also how many of these were unoccupied and available for use by those found sleeping rough.

Issues with single-night counts

28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. here 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, using local knowledge, to concentrate on locations where people are most likely to be found sleeping rough. 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:** Whilst it is easier to carry out a single-night count in cities and large towns because 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 areas.

Timing

34. If not chosen carefully, 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. For this count, local authorities were consulted on proposed dates prior to the count date being established. The guidance provided for the counts also permitted some flexibility in start and finish times in order to reduce the potential impact of local circumstances such as the late bedding down of rough sleepers in busy city centre areas.

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 on 3rd November 2016 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 localities with a consistent and relatively high concentration of rough sleepers. 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 and Third sector organisations, 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.

Administrative data quality assurance

38. This release has been scored against the UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance matrix. The matrix is the UK Statistics Authority regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data. The Standard recognises the increasing role that administrative data are playing in the production of official statistics and clarifies what producers of official statistics should do to assure themselves of the quality of these data. The toolkit that supports it provides helpful guidance to statistical producers about the practices

they can adopt to assure the quality of the data they receive, and sets out the standards for assessing statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

39. The matrix assesses the release against the following criteria:

- Operational context and administrative data collection
- Communication with data supply partners
- Quality assurance principles, standards and checks applied by data suppliers
- Producer's quality assurance investigations and documentation.

40. The data collection 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.

41. 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.

42. 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

43. 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.

44. 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.

More detailed quality information relating specifically to this release is given below.

Quality

45. The information is released as experimental statistics as this is a relatively 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.

Accuracy

46. 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 similar exercises carried out in November 2014 and November 2015 when checking and validating the data received from the local authorities.

47. The estimate of the number of persons sleeping rough over a 2 week period in October 2016 was higher by around 28 per cent than that recorded in November 2014 and 30 per cent higher than November 2015. As the methodology adopted for the 2016 monitoring exercise differed to that applied in 2014 and 2015 the results are not strictly comparable.

48. The increase in the number of persons estimated to be sleeping rough over the two week period in 2016 may have been influenced by a number of factors. The local authorities who showed the largest percentage changes were contacted to confirm the figures they had provided and where possible to provide an explanation for the increase in the estimated numbers reported. The explanations provided in response included:

- An increase in the promotion and use of Streetlink in the run up to the count and over the 2 week period. Streetlink is a website, app and phone-line launched in January 2016 which enables members of the public to send an alert when they see someone sleeping rough to the nearby services that can help.
- Improved information relating to potential rough sleeping locations was obtained including knowledge of those sleeping rough in tents and other unauthorised encampments.
- Greater engagement with the rough sleeper community in the completion of questionnaires.
- More local services available and an improved network of knowledge from monitoring exercises in previous years.

The number of persons reported sleeping rough on the night of 3rd November 2016 was 72 per cent higher than the number reported on 25th November 2015. In November 2014 not all local authorities completed a one night count. In 2016 the date of the count was brought forward to 3rd November to help alleviate any issues with weather conditions. The count timing period was also extended to cover the hours from 10pm to 5am rather than 11pm to 3am as in the previous 2 years. The later change was based on intelligence gained from previous exercises which suggested that in some areas those sleeping rough had been missed from the count as they were not already bedded down or about to bed down prior to the 3pm cut off.

These changes were designed to ensure that coverage was extended to allow for a more comprehensive picture of rough sleeping to be obtained. The local authorities who showed the largest percentage changes were contacted to confirm the figures they had provided and where possible to provide an explanation for the increase in the estimated numbers reported. The explanations provided in response included:

- Improved weather conditions compared with November 2015 leading to higher number sleeping out on the streets and less take up of emergency bad weather provision
- More counting teams employed on the night of the count than was the case in previous years.
- The timing of the count led to increased figures and included those who were not recorded on previous counts as not observed bedded down.
- Improved intelligence around exact locations of those sleeping rough

Revisions

49. This release contains the final estimates of the number of persons sleeping rough across Wales for both the 2 week period from 10th to 23rd October and for the period between 10 pm on 3rd November and 5am on 4th November 2016.

50. 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.

51. 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.

52. Revised data is marked with an (r) in the statistical release. We also follow the [Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy](#).

Accessibility

53. A full set of results from the rough sleeper monitoring exercise including information by individual local authority is available to download from our [StatsWales interactive website](#).

Coherence with other statistics

Statutory homelessness

54. 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.

55. 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. The latest published information on statutory homelessness covers the July to September quarter 2016 and is available at the following links:

[Welsh Government website: Homelessness](#)

[StatsWales website: Homelessness](#)

Population estimates

56. The population estimates used within this release to calculate rates are the mid-2015 population estimates for Wales published on 23rd June 2016 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Mid-year population estimates relate to the usually resident population. Further information can be found via the following link:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/mid-year-estimates-population/?lang=en>

StreetLink

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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.

Related statistics for other UK countries

England

60. In England, since 1998, rough sleeping has been measured by street counts in areas with a known or suspected rough sleeping problem.

61. Local housing authorities report their annual rough sleeping count or estimated figures by completing the rough sleeping statistical return. The guidance and statistical return are available via the [Gov.UK website](#).

62. The latest [published statistics on rough sleeping in England](#) are for Autumn 2016.

Scotland:

63. 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'.

Northern Ireland:

64. In Northern Ireland statistics on homelessness including rough sleeping are sourced from the [Northern Ireland Housing Executive \(NIHE\)](#).

Glossary

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.

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 eliminate 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](#).

Further Information

The document is available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-rough-sleeping-count/?lang=en>

Next update

Annual release February 2018

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to:

stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Open Government Licence

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated.

