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National Rough Sleeper Count, November 2019

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 2019 (Phase 1), followed by a one night snapshot count on 7th November 2019 (Phase 2). The November 2019 count is essentially a snapshot estimate and can only provide a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels on the night of the count. A range of factors can impact on single-night counts of rough sleepers, including location, timing and weather.

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.

2 week estimate (through information gathering exercise), of persons sleeping rough

Local authorities estimated that 405 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over 2 weeks between 14th and 27th October 2019.



Up 17% on 2018 with trends varying across authorities.

One night snapshot count of rough sleepers

Local authorities reported 176 individuals observed sleeping rough across Wales between the hours of 10pm on Thursday 7th and 5am on Friday 8th November 2019 – the night of the count.



Up by 11% on 2018 with trends varying across local authorities.

Emergency bed spaces

Local authorities reported 210 emergency bed spaces across Wales, an increase of 14% on the previous year. Despite this increase, the proportion of emergency bed spaces which were unoccupied and available on the night of the count was lower in 2019 (8%) than in 2018 and 2017 (both 18%).

About this release

This release presents the information provided by local authorities from the rough sleeper monitoring exercise carried out during October and November 2019. 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.

Comparisons with counts prior to 2016 should be treated with caution due to differences in timing, methodology and coverage.

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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. 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.

In 2015, an annual monitoring exercise was introduced. The Welsh Government worked with local authorities to develop a suitable methodology and process which was further enhanced during 2016 and remained unchanged since. [The 2019 guidance note and monitoring return form](#) used in this exercise are available on our website.

The information presented in this release is based on the data provided by local authorities.

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

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.

Rough sleepers are defined as persons who are sleeping overnight in the open air (such as shop doorways, bus shelters or parks) or in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks).

Further information is available in the [Key quality information](#) section.

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. A range of factors can impact on a single night count including location, timing and weather.

The methodology involved two separate phases which included a 2 week information and intelligence gathering period followed by a one night snapshot count. This process enables 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. The two week data gathering exercise, used information from a range of services including faith groups, outreach workers, the police and health agencies, 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 and a detailed summary of the methodology and coverage are provided in the [Key quality information](#) section of this release.

Data from the Rough Sleepers monitoring exercise is separate from the quarterly Statutory Homelessness data collection which collects 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 2019](#) show that over this period a total of 2,400 households in Wales were threatened with homelessness within 56 days and 2,919 households were assessed as being homeless. At 30 September 2019, 2,307 homeless households were in temporary accommodation across Wales which is the highest figure since the introduction of the legislation in 2015.. Further information at an individual local authority level is available on [StatsWales](#).

On 17 September 2019, [ONS published 4 cross-UK government products relating to homelessness and rough sleepers statistics](#). These publications form part of a cross-government project to improve the coherence of statistics produced on homelessness across the UK.

Results - Phase 1: 2 week information gathering exercise

The main aim of the initial phase of the 2019 rough sleeper monitoring exercise was to estimate the number of people thought to be sleeping rough within each local authority area over a two week period. 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 14th and 27th October 2019 should not be regarded as conclusive, however, the information does help to improve our understanding of the incidence of rough sleeping within each local authority area.

Table 1. Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period October 2017, October 2018 and October 2019 (a)

Local Authority	Estimated Number of people sleeping rough over a two week period		
	2017 (b)	2018 (c)	2019 (d)
Isle of Anglesey	4	6	5
Gwynedd	33	30	22
Conwy	20	10	21
Denbighshire	3	1	4
Flintshire	2	3	10
Wrexham	45	57	31
Powys	3	2	4
Ceredigion	12	15	25
Pembrokeshire	8	7	17
Carmarthenshire	4	3	0
Swansea	26	33	37
Neath Port Talbot	15	7	12
Bridgend	14	6	15
Vale of Glamorgan	0	1	1
Cardiff	92	100	92
Rhondda Cynon Taf	9	3	7
Merthyr Tydfil	8	3	6
Caerphilly	19	28	42
Blaenau Gwent	0	0	0
Torfaen	0	5	7
Monmouthshire	6	4	5
Newport	22	23	42
Wales	345	347	405

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 16 and 29 October 2017.

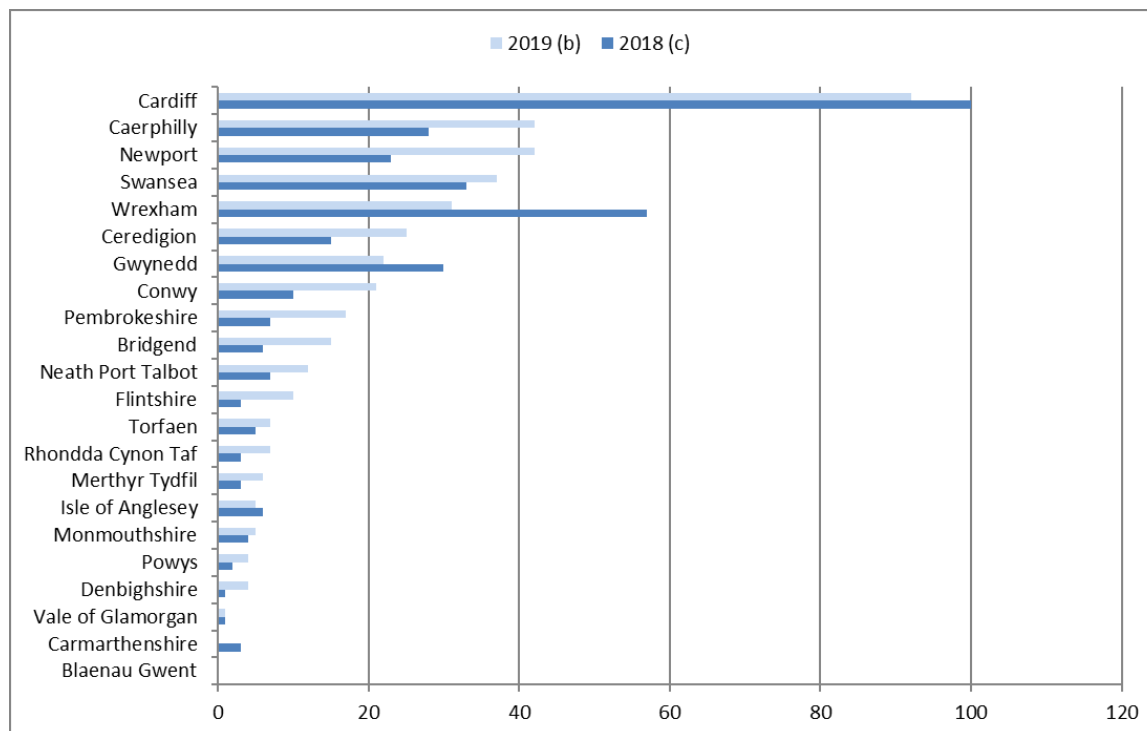
(c) Based on information from local agencies/services on persons who are thought to have been sleeping rough over a 2 week period between 15 and 28 October 2018.

(d) Based on information from local agencies/services on persons who are thought to have been sleeping rough over a 2 week period between 14 and 27 October 2019.

Based on the information gathered in the 2 weeks between 14th and 27th October 2019 by local agencies, health organisations and other community service groups in contact with rough sleepers, local authorities estimate that 405 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period.

This is an increase of 17 % on the previous year (58 persons) and the largest year on year increase since this collection began.

Chart 1. Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period in October 2018 and 2019 (a)



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 14 and 27 October 2019.

(c) Based on information from local agencies/services on persons who are thought to have been sleeping rough over a 2 week period between 15 and 28 October 2018.

As was the case over the last three years, there was considerable variation across the 22 local authorities in the number of persons estimated to be sleeping rough in October 2019. There was a reported increase, compared with October 2018, in the number of rough sleepers reported in Caerphilly and Newport with many other local authorities also reporting increases. However, reductions were reported in five local authorities with Blaenau Gwent reporting zero rough sleepers again.

The highest estimate for rough sleepers over these two weeks continued to be seen in Cardiff (despite a decrease of eight persons since 2018) at 92 persons with Caerphilly and Newport reporting the second highest estimate at 42 persons each. This is an increase of 14 persons (50 %) for Caerphilly and 19 persons (83 %) for Newport

Swansea, Wrexham and Ceredigion also reported relatively high estimates at 37, 31 and 25 rough sleepers respectively over this two week period. For Swansea this represented an

increase of 12 % on the previous year and for Ceredigion an increase of 67 %, whilst in Wrexham numbers were down by 46 % (26 persons) on the previous year.

Reasons provided for the increases reflected both on the ground changes as well as improved engagement resulting in better quality data.

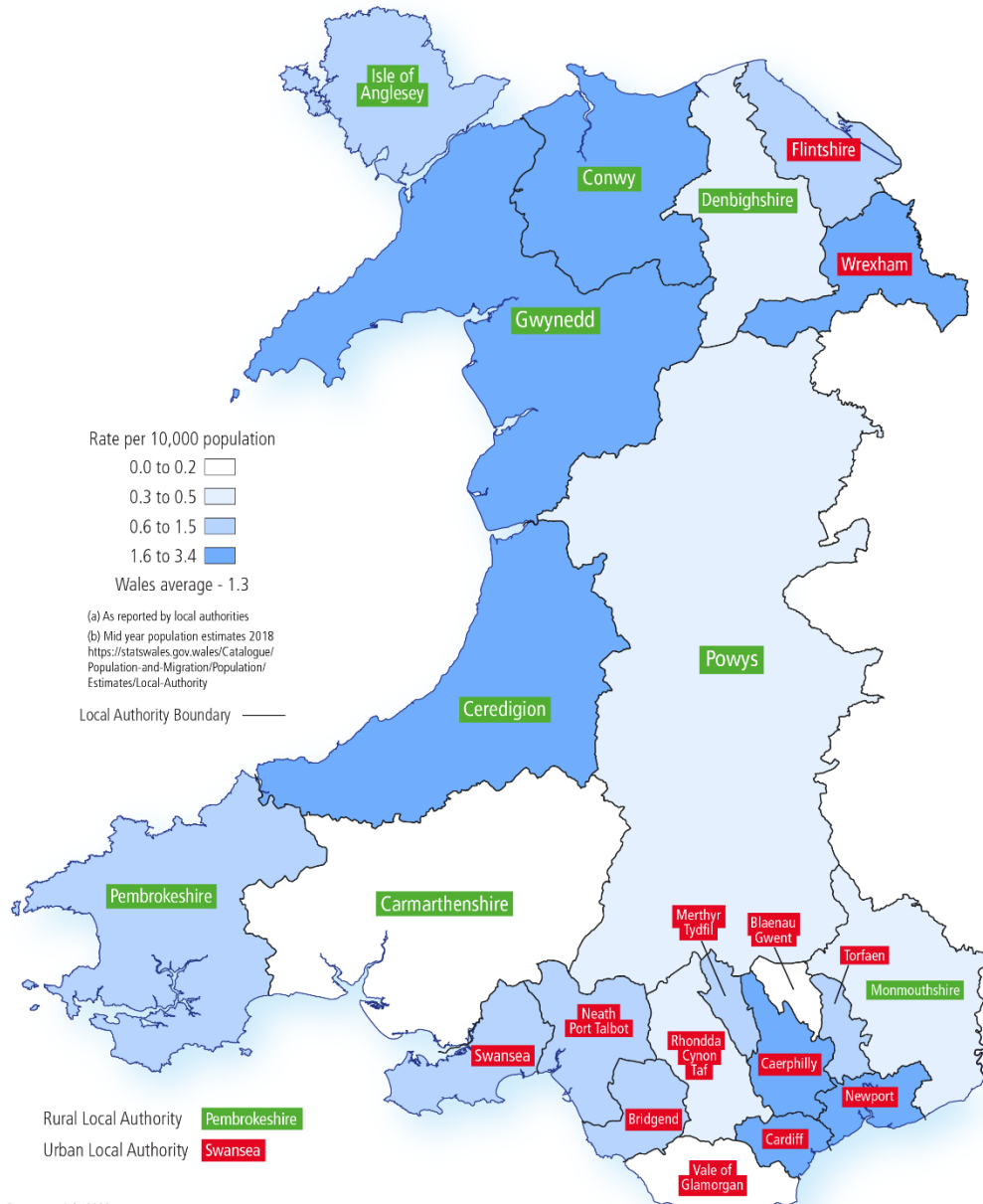
In the five authorities that reported decreases the largest was reported in Wrexham with 26 fewer rough sleepers reported in October 2019 than in October 2018. Cardiff and Gwynedd both reported eight less rough sleepers while Carmarthenshire had reductions of three persons (leading to an estimate of zero rough sleepers) and the Isle of Anglesey saw a reduction of one.

Reasons provided for the decreases included improved multi-agency work reducing levels of rough sleeping and difficulties in obtaining up to date or accurate information from agencies working on the ground.

Two local authorities (Blaenau Gwent and Carmarthenshire) reported no estimated rough sleepers within their areas during October 2019, with Vale of Glamorgan reporting one person. ([Table 1](#)) ([Chart 1](#)).

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 1: Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period (14th to 27th October 2019) - Rate per 10,000 persons (a) (b)



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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 2019 expressed as a rate per 10,000 persons. The total number of persons is taken from the latest mid-2018 population estimates for Wales¹.

¹ The mid-2018 population estimates, used within this release to calculate rates, were produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are available from [StatsWales](https://www.ons.gov.uk).

While Cardiff reported the highest number of estimated rough sleepers over the 2 week period (92 persons), the highest rate was seen in Ceredigion at 3.4 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons.

Ceredigion was followed by Newport with a rate of 2.7 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons, and Cardiff with a rate of 2.5 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 phase 2 (one night snapshot 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 snapshot 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 categories of agencies/services outlined on the data collection return.

Table 2. Engagement with local agencies and services over 2 week period October 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 (a)

Local Authority	reporting using this agency/service in 2 week survey			
	2016 (b)	2017 (c)	2018 (d)	2019 (e)
Voluntary sector	18	16	15	16
Faith Groups	10	11	11	11
Outreach workers	19	20	18	18
Local residents or businesses	8	12	12	13
Police	19	19	22	21
Health Agencies	12	12	12	11
Substance misuse agencies	16	16	17	16
Drugs and Alcohol treatment Teams (DATT)	13	12	11	10

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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

(b) Between 10th and 23rd October 2016.

(c) Between 16th and 29th October 2017.

(d) Between 15th and 28th October 2018.

(e) Between 14th and 27th October 2019.

During the last four counts, most of the local authorities reported that they had consulted with a number of local agencies. In October 2019, 21 authorities engaged with the police whilst only 11 of the 22 authorities engaged with faith groups or health agencies. Six local authorities engaged with all eight of the categories outlined on the data collection return, five authorities engaged with seven categories.

Results - Phase 2 – Persons observed sleeping rough - one night snapshot count

The one night snapshot count was carried out between the hours of 10pm on Thursday 7th November and 5am on Friday 8th November 2019. Though a different date, this is the same day of the week and the same time period that was used in the previous three years.

The results provide only a very broad indication of rough sleeping levels in particular areas on the night of the count. As previously stated for 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 and local Outreach teams were consulted if there was any doubt.

There are a range of factors which can influence the accuracy of any information provided.

Further detail relating to these issues and steps taken to minimise the impact is covered in the [Key quality information](#) section.

The results of the single night count across all 22 local authorities are shown in the following table.

Table 3. Estimated number of rough sleepers on night of count 2017, 2018, 2019 (a)

Local Authority	Estimated number of people sleeping rough between the hours of 10pm and 5am		
	2017 (b)	2018 (c)	2019 (d)
Isle of Anglesey	4	3	1
Gwynedd	3	3	0
Conwy	10	7	4
Denbighshire	0	1	2
Flintshire	1	3	4
Wrexham	44	24	21
Powys	0	1	0
Ceredigion	13	2	9
Pembrokeshire	2	3	4
Carmarthenshire	1	0	0
Swansea	21	18	19
Neath Port Talbot	3	2	7
Bridgend	4	5	7
Vale of Glamorgan	0	1	1
Cardiff	53	64	57
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2	0	1
Merthyr Tydfil	8	1	0
Caerphilly	1	4	6
Blaenau Gwent	0	0	1
Torfaen	0	2	3
Monmouthshire	0	0	5
Newport	18	14	24
Wales	188	158	176

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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

(b) Between the hours of 10pm on 9 November and 5am on 10 November 2017.

(c) Between the hours of 10pm on 8 November and 5am on 9 November 2018.

(d) Between the hours of 10pm on 7 November and 5am on 8 November 2019.

Local authorities reported a total of 176 individuals sleeping rough across Wales on the night of the count. This was an increase of 11 % (18 persons) compared with the previous year, and was six % lower than in the 2017 count. However, trends varied across local authorities.

The 2018 count was impacted by severe weather in parts of Wales. Between 2018 and 2019, increases in Newport (10 persons) and Ceredigion (7 persons) contributed to the overall Wales increase.

Ceredigion saw an increase of seven persons mainly due to adverse weather conditions on the night of the 2018 count leading to a lower than expected number of rough sleepers. The 2019 count is likely to be a more accurate representation of total rough sleepers in the area.

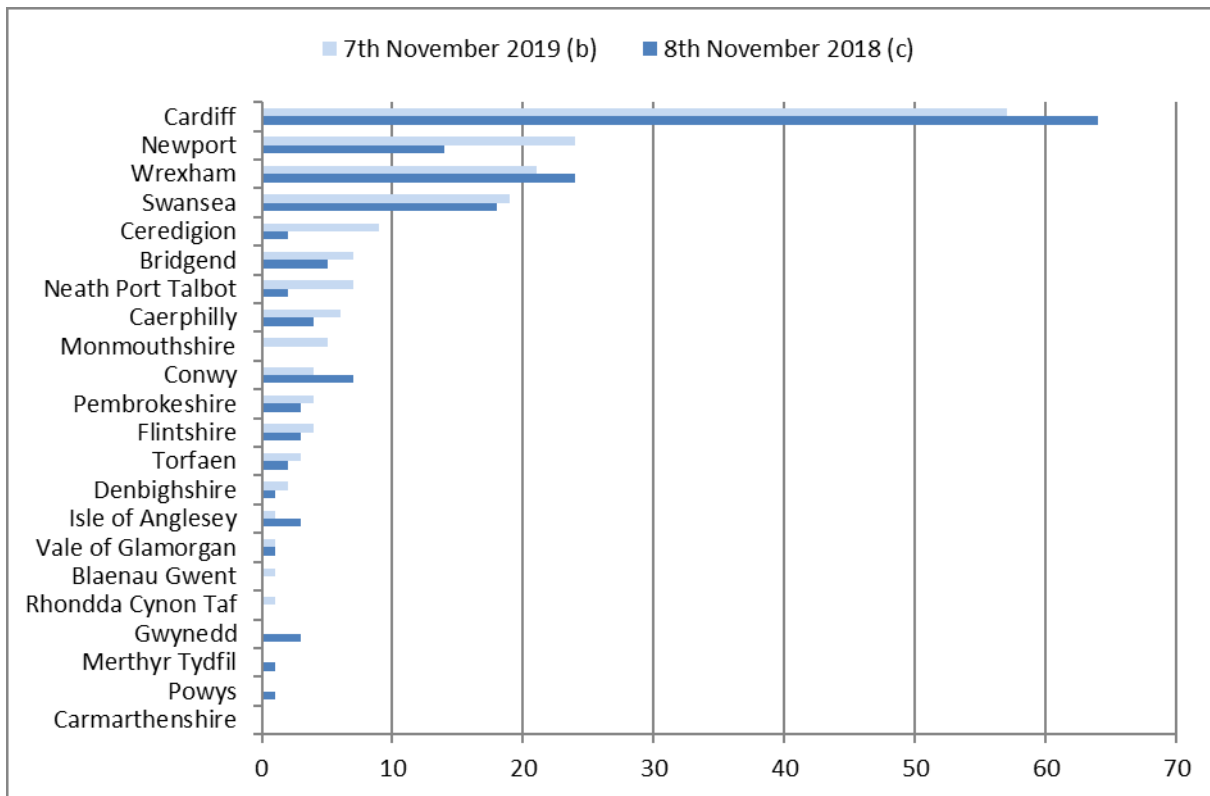
Cardiff continued to report the highest number of rough sleepers on the night of the count (57 persons), Newport, recorded the second highest at 24 persons with Wrexham third highest at 21 persons. Cardiff and Newport were also the authorities reporting the highest number of rough sleepers over the previous two week survey period.

An increase in the number of rough sleepers on the night of the snapshot count was reported in 13 of the 22 local authorities. This could be due to adverse weather conditions and flooding that occurred in some areas during the night of the 2018 count making an accurate count harder to conduct. The highest increase in persons was seen in Newport where 24 rough sleepers were observed compared to 14 in 2018 ([Table 3](#)).

Of the 22 authorities, four (Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Powys and Merthyr Tydfil) reported no persons sleeping rough within their area on the night of the count which is the same number of authorities as in 2018 (with Carmarthenshire being the only authority to report no persons sleeping rough in 2018 and 2019). Only one of these, Carmarthenshire, also reported no rough sleepers over the two week survey period.

Further information on reasons provided by individual local authorities for any increases and decreases in the numbers observed sleeping rough is provided on Page 26 in the [Key quality information](#) section of this release.

Chart 2. Number of people observed sleeping rough on night of snapshot count in November (a)



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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

(b) Between the hours of 10pm on 7 November and 5am on 8 November 2019.

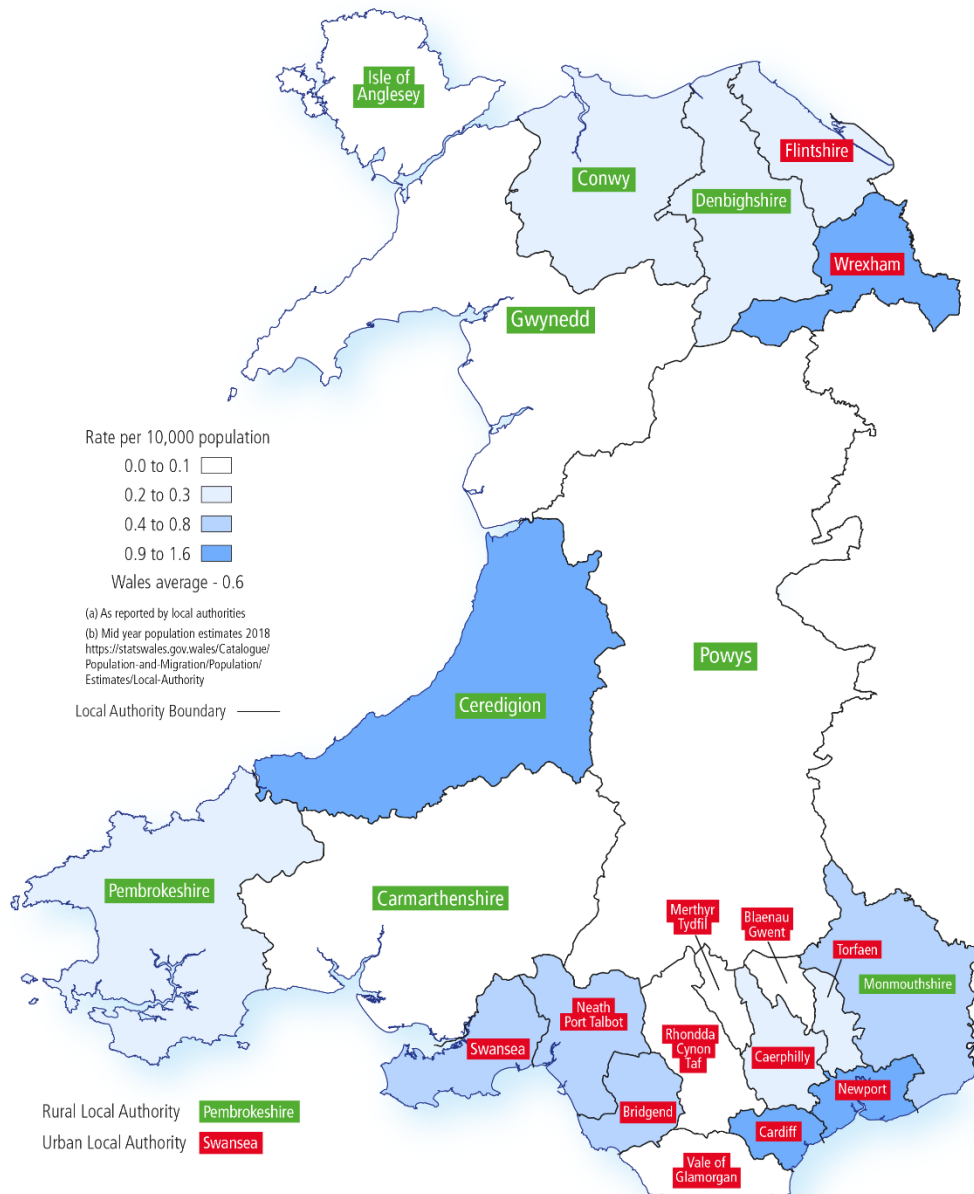
(c) Between the hours of 10pm on 8 November and 5am on 9 November 2018.

The number of individuals sleeping rough on 7th November 2019 represents 43 % of the estimated total of 405 people thought to be rough sleeping over the two week period from 14th to 27th October 2019. This compares with 46 % in 2018 and 54 % in 2017.

The number of rough sleepers recorded on the night of the count can 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.

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 2: Estimated number of rough sleepers on night of count - 7th November 2019 - Rate per 10,000 persons (a) (b)



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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 expressed as a rate per 10,000 persons².

² The mid-2018 population estimates, used within this release to calculate rates, were produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are available from [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.wales).

Newport and Cardiff recorded the highest rates of persons sleeping rough on 7th November 2019 at 1.6 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons, followed by Wrexham with a rate of 1.5 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons and Ceredigion with a rate of 1.2

5 of the 22 local authorities reported rates of persons sleeping rough above the Wales average of 0.6 per 10,000 persons, this is the same number of local authorities seen in 2018 and two less than 2017.

Emergency bed spaces

For the purpose of this count, **emergency bed spaces are defined as 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 or any controlled access provision.** 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.

For the November 2018 and 2019 exercises, local authorities were also asked to record details of any other form of emergency provision specifically for (people at risk of) sleeping rough which had not been recorded under emergency bed spaces as they were not direct access provision.

Examples of **other emergency provision** include Night Stop, controlled access night shelters, hostels and any other controlled access accommodation available through Gateway assessment services but not already recorded. **It would not include Bed and Breakfast accommodation nor any direct access provision.**

Further information is available in the [Key quality information](#) section of this release.

Local authorities reported a total of 210 emergency bed spaces across Wales in November 2019 compared with 184 in November 2018 and 180 in November 2017.

It should be noted that as a result of the extension of the guidance on emergency beds and the clarification of the definition of direct access provision, comparisons between 2018 and previous data should be treated with caution.

Despite an increase in the number of emergency beds, the proportion of emergency bed spaces which were unoccupied and available on the night of the count was lower in 2019 (8%) than in 2018 and 2017 (both 18%).

Cardiff reported the highest number of emergency bed spaces (114), which accounted for over half (54%) of the Wales total. However, none of the emergency bed spaces in Cardiff were unoccupied and available on the night of the count. Newport reported 36 emergency bed spaces (all occupied) and Wrexham reporting 16, four of which were unoccupied on the night of the count.

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

Yearly

Local Authority	Total number of emergency beds				Total number of emergency beds unoccupied and available for use on night of count			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016 (b)	2017 (c)	2018 (d)	2019 (e)
Isle of Anglesey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gwynedd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conwy	0	0 (r)	0	2	0	0	0	0
Denbighshire	7	7	8	8	3	0	3	2
Flintshire	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Wrexham	16	16	16	16	0	0	0	4
Powys	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Ceredigion	30	25	5	6	4	0	0	0
Pembrokeshire	0	9	14	10	0	9	14	6
Carmarthenshire	0 (r)	0 (r)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swansea	1	1	2	6	1	0	1	0
Neath Port Talbot	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Bridgend	0	6	10	10	0	6	5	2
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiff	70	88	101	114	26	14	8	0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	0 (r)	2 (r)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	0	0 (r)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caerphilly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monmouthshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newport	22	23	26	36	0	0	0	0
Wales	149 (r)	180 (r)	184	210	37	32	33	16

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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

(b) On the 3rd November 2016.

(c) On the 9th November 2017.

(d) On the 8th November 2018.

(e) On the 7th November 2019.

Of the 18 local authorities who reported rough sleepers on the night of the count, 9 did not have any emergency bed spaces, 5 recorded emergency bed spaces but none were available on the night of the count and 2 (Wrexham and Bridgend) had unoccupied emergency bed spaces but fewer than the number of recorded rough sleepers. The remaining 2 local authorities had a higher number of available emergency bed spaces than rough sleepers (Pembrokeshire and Denbighshire).

Swansea provide 30 additional controlled access bed spaces that fall outside of the 'Emergency bed spaces' definition. These were fully occupied on the night of the count.(r)

(r) Text revised on 6 February 2020

Key quality information

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

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 the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

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

Whilst statutory homelessness prevention is a national indicator, the statistics on rough sleeping 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

Part 2 of [The Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#), which commenced in Wales on 27 April 2015, places duties on Local Authorities to ensure people who are homeless or facing homelessness receive help as early as possible.

In October the Welsh Government published its [Strategy for preventing and ending homelessness](#). The strategy will be supported by an annual action plan and annual progress report – the first of action plan, supported by the work of the Homelessness Action Group, will be published later this year.

Users and uses

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 of interest to the public and media and are used in 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.

There are a variety of users of these statistics including national and local government, researchers, academics and students.

Methodology

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

The methodology involved 2 separate phases which included a 2 week information and intelligence gathering period followed by a one night snapshot count. This process enables 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.

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 as outlined in detail below. 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.

Phase 1 – The 2 week survey

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 14th to 27th October 2019 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.

The data collected was then used to inform where to target the one night count and to provide a more detailed understanding of rough sleeping in each area. A copy of the supplementary guidance for completing the 2019 Rough Sleeper Count surveys is available on the [data collection form](#).

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

Local authorities were encouraged to use a unique identifier in order to prevent any double counting of individuals. The information on the estimated number of rough sleepers obtained as a result of the questionnaire based survey was to be entered in the data collection return and provided to the Welsh Government.

Phase 2 - Snapshot one night count

Following the 2 week data gathering exercise local authorities were asked to carry out a one night snapshot count of rough sleepers in their area between the hours of 10pm on Thursday 7th November and 5am on Friday 8th November 2019.

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.

Whilst it is not intended to be an accurate record of everyone in the area with a history of rough sleeping, a one night snapshot count can be an effective means of estimating the scale of the problem and provide a means of monitoring progress towards eliminating the need to sleep rough over a period of time.

Extensive guidance was provided on carrying out the one night count. This is available along with the [data collection return](#).

Conducting the count

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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)

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 as outlined in detail below. In order to reduce the impact of these issues as far as possible the steps as outlined above under ‘Methodology’ were taken as part of the monitoring exercise.

Emergency bed spaces

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.

For the purposes of this count, Emergency bed spaces are defined as direct access provision, night shelter or cold weather provision beds in churches, community centres, etc. but would not include Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

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.

For the November 2019 exercise, the definition of ‘emergency bed spaces’ did not change. In the November 2018 exercise, an additional clarification of ‘direct access provision’ was provided, which may have lead to some local authorities interpreting the emergency bed definition slightly differently.

For the November 2018 and 2019 snapshot counts, local authorities were also asked to record details of any other form of emergency provision specifically for (people at risk of) sleeping rough which had not been recorded under emergency bed spaces. Examples of other emergency provision include Night Stop, controlled access night shelters, hostels and any other controlled access accommodation available through Gateway assessment services but not already recorded. It would not include Bed Breakfast accommodation nor any direct access provision which should always be recorded under emergency bed spaces.

Limitations of single-night counts

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.

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.

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.

A range of factors which can influence the accuracy of any information provided as outlined below:

a) Location

- 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.
- 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.

b) Timing

- If not chosen carefully, the date 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.

- 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.

c) Weather

- 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.
- On the night of 8/9 November 2018, there were severe weather conditions across Wales including very heavy rain and also flooding in some local authority areas. This would have had a major impact both on the number of persons sleeping rough and on the ability of those carrying out the count to do so accurately and effectively.

Engagement with partners

- 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 snapshot 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 snapshot count and on the quality and accuracy of the information gathered.

Administrative data quality assurance

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 Statistics.

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.

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.

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.

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

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. There has been no imputation of the data shown in this release.

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

Accuracy

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 snapshot count. As the methodology used in the 2019 exercise was the same as that used since 2016, when checking and validating the data received from the local authorities comparisons could also be

made with the previous two years. Reference was also made to the information from similar exercises carried out in November 2014 and November 2015.

2 week survey:

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 14th and 27th October 2019, local authorities estimate that 405 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period. This is an increase of 17 % (58 persons) compared with the exercise carried out in October 2018. Based off of comments made by local authorities this is likely due to the following reasons:

- Better methodology and intelligence for collecting data on rough sleepers meaning there is an increase due to a better understanding of where, and having the resources, to locate these persons.
- The weather was considerably better across many parts of Wales compared to 2018 so the count was easier to conduct
- Reasons provided by the individual rough sleepers included, declining assistance, loss of interim accommodation, EU nationals not eligible for services and affordable housing options not being accessible.

Snapshot count

Following the 2 week data gathering exercise local Authorities were asked to carry out a one night snapshot count of rough sleepers in their area between the hours of 10pm on Thursday 7th November and 5am on Friday 8th November 2019

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.

Whilst it is not intended to be an accurate record of everyone in the area with a history of rough sleeping, a one night snapshot 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.

Extensive guidance was provided on carrying out the one night count. This is available along with the [data collection return](#).

The number of persons reported sleeping rough on the night of 7th November 2019 was up 11 % (18 persons) on the number reported on 8th November 2018. The severe weather conditions experienced in many local authorities on the night of the count in November 2018 may have affected the count as the latest count is more in line with the snapshot count of 2017.

Revisions

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.

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.

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

Accessibility

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

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.

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 2019 and is available at the following links:

[Welsh Government website: Homelessness](#)

[StatsWales website: Homelessness](#)

Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales, 2013-2018

In October 2019, ONS published a report on ['Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales, 2018'](#) which includes figures on deaths registered in the years 2013-2018

For the purposes of this work deaths of people where there was evidence that they were homeless at or around the time of death were identified from the death registration records held by ONS. In addition a statistical method called capture-recapture modelling was applied to estimate the most likely number of additional deaths of homeless people which were recorded in the data but not identified as homeless people.

Population estimates

The population estimates used within this release to calculate rates are the mid-2018 population estimates for Wales published on 26th June 2019 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:

[Welsh Government website: Mid year estimates of the population](#)

StreetLink

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.

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.

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. A 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

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

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](#).

The latest [published statistics on rough sleeping in England](#) are for Autumn 2018 and were published on 31 January 2019.

Scotland:

[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:

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

Cross UK-government work

On 17 September 2019, ONS published 4 cross-UK government products relating to homelessness and rough sleeper statistics. These publications form part of a cross-government project to improve the coherence of statistics produced on homelessness across the UK.

- [UK Homelessness: 2005 to 2018](#)

An analytical article focusing on homelessness, which brings together existing government data sources from across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to assess UK comparability and coherence.

- [Interactive tool for homelessness](#) (beta version)

An interactive tool that allows users to explore how homelessness is defined across the four UK countries and explore an applicant's process through the four UK countries' homelessness systems.

- [Improving homelessness and rough sleeping statistics across the UK](#)

This article describes initiatives across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to improve statistics on homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK, up to and including Census 2021.

- [The emerging picture of UK homelessness and rough sleeping](#)

A National Statistical blog which brings together the publications and how they interlink.

Glossary

Direct access

Direct access provision is commonly understood as provision which accepts people at the door.

Hostels, night shelters are where the person can self-refer / present and be allocated a bed for the evening.

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.

Gateway services

A Gateway service usually acts as single point of assessment, from which homeless people get referred to hostels or housing. As such people can access emergency provision but would have to go through this formal process in the first instance.

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 2016](#).

Further information

The document is available at:

<https://gov.wales/national-rough-sleeper-count>

Next update

Annual release February 2021

We want your feedback

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

stats.housing@gov.wales

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