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SFR 7/2018

National Rough Sleeper Count, November 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 2017 (Phase 1), followed by a one night snapshot count on 9th November 2017 (Phase 2). The November 2017 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 of persons sleeping rough

Local authorities estimated that 345 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over 2 weeks between 16th and 29th October 2017.



Up by 10% on 2016

One night snapshot count of rough sleepers

Local authorities reported 188 individuals observed sleeping rough across Wales between the hours of 10pm on Thursday 9th and 5am on Friday 10th of November 2017 – the night of the count.



Up by 33% on 2016

Emergency Bed spaces

Local authorities reported 233 emergency bed spaces across Wales, of which 42 (18 per cent) were unoccupied and available on the night of the snapshot count (9th November 2017). For 10 local authorities who reported rough sleepers on the night of the count, there were no unoccupied and available emergency bed spaces.

About this release

This release presents the information provided by local authorities from the rough sleeper monitoring exercise carried out during October and November 2017. 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. Following on from the one night counts carried out in March 2007 and March 2008, during 2014 a Rough Sleeper Working Group (RSWG) developed a methodology to conduct a rough sleeping monitoring exercise to be undertaken by local authorities in October and November 2014. Whilst the monitoring exercise took place, 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 which was further enhanced during 2016 and remained unchanged for 2017. [The 2017 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. In previous releases the information was presented as experimental statistics however it has been decided that it is appropriate for the experimental statistics label to be removed and to publish the 2017 information as official statistics for the reasons outlined below:

- The methodology has been developed and enhanced since 2015 and has remained consistent over the last two years.
- We have an established data collection and validation process in place and there is full coverage across all 22 local authorities in Wales.
- When publishing the information we are transparent about the limitations of the data and apply necessary caveats.
- In response to general feedback, we have improved the usability of the statistics with the provision of year on year comparisons. We will continue to work with policy colleagues and key stakeholders to assess requirements and encourage feedback.

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.

As was the case last year, the 2017 exercise asked local authorities and their partners to identify rough sleepers in specific areas on a particular night. This was also complemented with a two week data gathering exercise, which took place prior to the one night count. 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.

Based on the intelligence gathered from the 2015 exercise, dates and timings were changed slightly in 2016 to allow for improved coverage and to provide a more comprehensive picture of levels of rough sleeping across all local authority areas. The methodology remained unchanged for the 2017 exercise though dates were changed slightly

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 2017 show that over this period a total of 2,187 households in Wales were threatened with homelessness within 56 days, 2,712 households were accepted as being homeless and, at 30 September 2017, 2,088 homeless households were in temporary accommodation across Wales. Further information at an individual local authority level is available on [StatsWales](#).

Results - Phase 1: 2 week information gathering exercise

The main aim of the initial phase of the 2017 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 16th and 29th October 2017 should not be regarded as conclusive and are based on the perspective of the homeless persons' responses to the questionnaires. 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 2016 and October 2017 (a)

Local Authority	Estimated Number of people sleeping rough over a two week period	
	2016 (b)	2017 (c)
Isle of Anglesey	1	4
Gwynedd	25	33
Conwy	14	20
Denbighshire	5	3
Flintshire	3	2
Wrexham	61	45
Powys	0	3
Ceredigion	6	12
Pembrokeshire	3	8
Carmarthenshire	3	4
Swansea	23	26
Neath Port Talbot	6	15
Bridgend	10	14
Vale of Glamorgan	2	0
Cardiff	85	92
Rhondda Cynon Taf	6	9
Merthyr Tydfil	15	8
Caerphilly	27	19
Blaenau Gwent	0	0
Torfaen	0	0
Monmouthshire	1	6
Newport	17	22
Wales	313	345

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.

(c) 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.

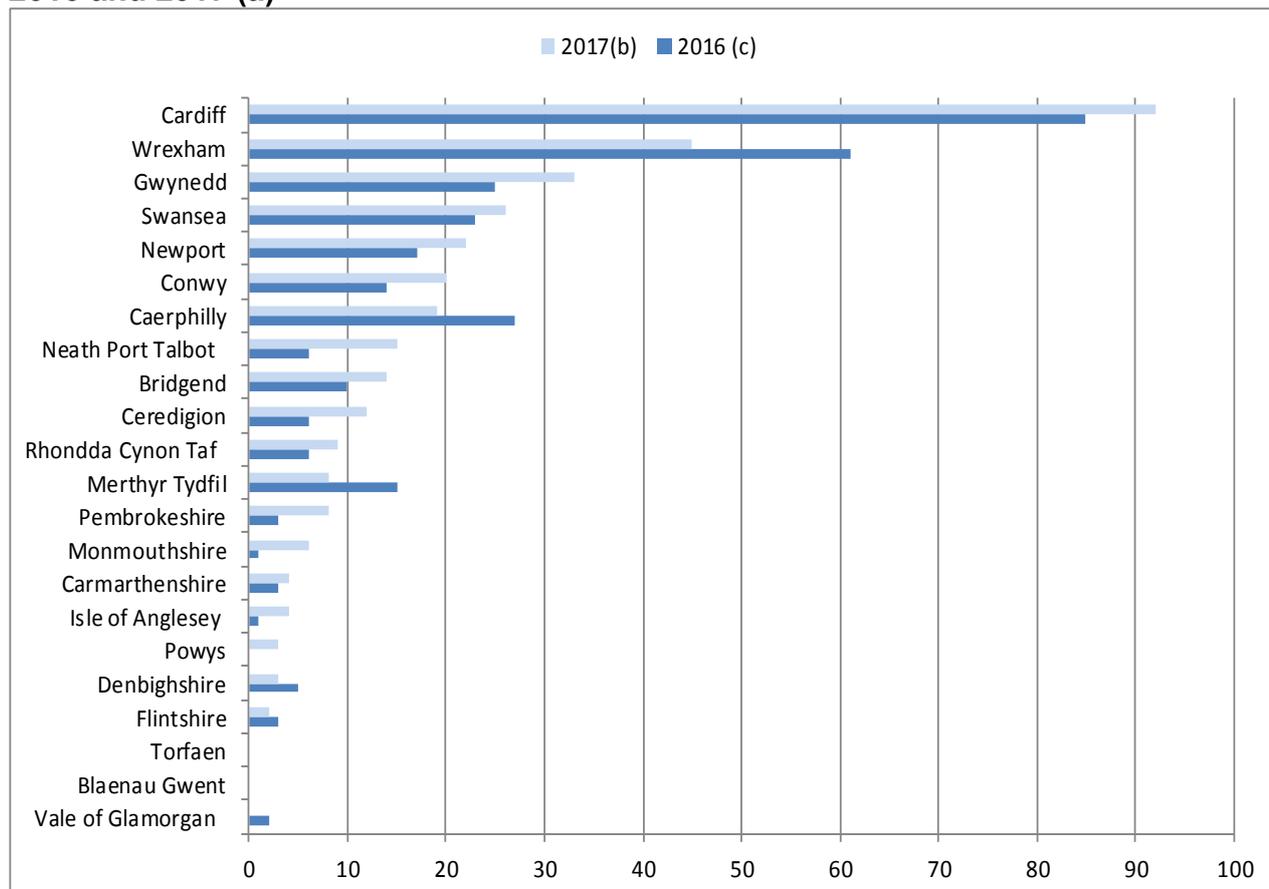
Based on the information gathered in the 2 weeks between 16th and 29th October 2017 by local agencies, health organisations and other community service groups in contact with rough sleepers, local authorities estimate that 345 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period.

This is an increase of 10 per cent (32 persons) compared with the exercise carried out in October 2016.

The increase in the number of persons estimated to be sleeping rough over the two week period in 2017 may have been influenced by a number of factors, including improved mechanisms for identifying rough sleepers in some local authorities. The methodology and approach for the Rough Sleepers Count remained unchanged between 2016 and 2017, however, some local authorities reported the introduction/extension of outreach services, which lead to improved intelligence on rough sleepers.

Direct comparisons cannot be made to the rough sleeper exercises carried out by local authorities in 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 2017 was also higher than that recorded in November 2015 (240 persons).

Chart 1. Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period in October 2016 and 2017 (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 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 10 and 23 October 2016.

As was the case last year, there was considerable variation across the 22 local authorities, with the highest estimate for rough sleepers over these two weeks seen in Cardiff at 92 persons. Despite a decrease of over a quarter (26 per cent) compared with the previous year, Wrexham continued to be the local authority with the second highest estimated for rough sleepers over the 2 week period in October 2017 at 45 persons.

Gwynedd, Swansea and Newport also reported relatively high estimates at 33, 26 and 22 rough sleepers respectively over this two week period.

Three local authorities, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan all estimated that there were no rough sleepers within their areas during this period. For Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen this was also the case in October 2016 ([Table 1](#)) ([Chart 1](#)).

14 of the 22 authorities estimated higher numbers of persons sleeping rough in October 2017 than was the case in October 2016 ([Table 1](#)) ([Chart 1](#)).

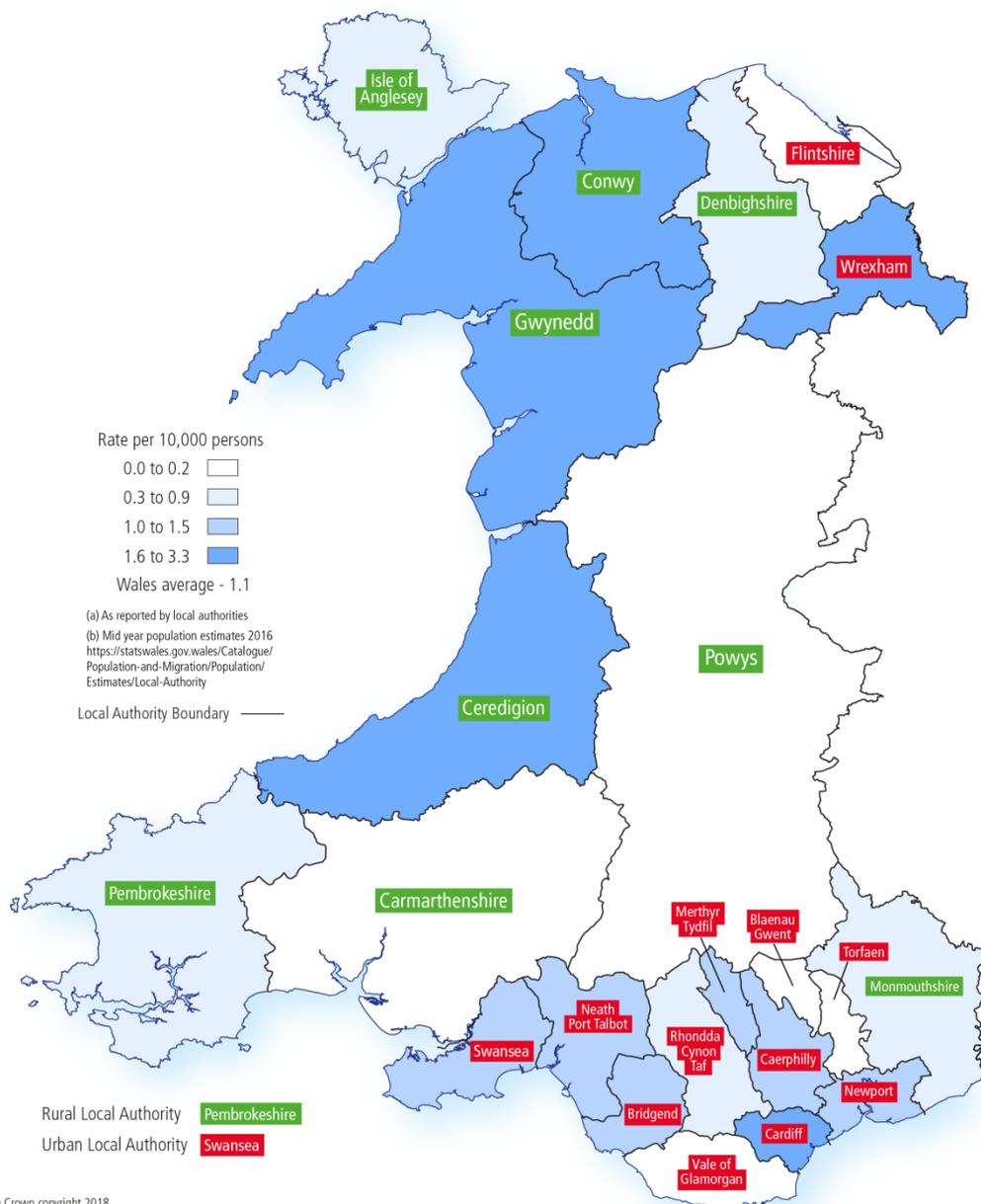
The largest increase in the number sleeping rough in October 2017 compared with the previous year was reported in Neath Port Talbot with 9 more persons than in October 2016. This was followed by Gwynedd and Cardiff (increases of 8 and 7 respectively). The reasons for increases varied from local authorities and included increases in intelligence, expansion of Outreach Services and known increases in rough sleeping in specific areas.

There were decreases however in 6 local authorities. The largest decrease was reported in Wrexham with 16 less estimated rough sleepers in the two weeks in October 2017 than in the previous year. Again the reasons for the decrease between 2016 and 2017 varied from area to area, but included engagement with long-term rough sleepers through various projects and initiatives

Further information on reasons provided by individual local authorities for any increases in the estimated number of rough sleepers recorded over these two weeks is provided on Page 24 in the [Key quality information](#) section of this release.

National Rough Sleeper Count

Map 1: Estimated number of people sleeping rough over 2 week period (16th to 29th October 2017) - Rate per 10,000 persons (a) (b)



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January 2018



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 2017 expressed as a rate per 10,000 persons. The total number of persons is taken from the latest mid-2016 population estimates for Wales¹.

¹ The mid-2016 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).

Although Cardiff had the highest number of estimated rough sleepers over the 2 week period (92 persons), the highest rate was seen in Wrexham at 3.3 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons.

Wrexham was followed by Gwynedd, with a rate of 2.7 estimated rough sleepers per 10,000 persons, and Cardiff with a rate of 2.5 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 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 and October 2017 (a)

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

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.

In both 2016 and 2017, most of the local authorities reported that they had consulted with a number of local agencies. In October 2017, 7 of the 22 authorities engaged with organisations in all 8 of the categories outlined on the data collection return.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf only 'Outreach workers' were reported as being involved in the 2 week data gathering exercise.

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 9th November and 5am on Friday 10th November 2017. Though a different date, this is the same day of the week and the same extended time period that was used in the November 2016 one night count. The time period for the count was extended in 2016 following reports that in some areas, particularly city centres, rough sleepers may have been omitted from the November 2015 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. 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 2016 and 2017 (a)

Local Authority	Estimated number of people sleeping rough between the hours of 10pm and 5am	
	2016 (b)	2017 (c)
Isle of Anglesey	1	4
Gwynedd	3	3
Conwy	9	10
Denbighshire	2	0
Flintshire	0	1
Wrexham	27	44
Powys	0	0
Ceredigion	3	13
Pembrokeshire	0	2
Carmarthenshire	0	1
Swansea	16	21
Neath Port Talbot	0	3
Bridgend	5	4
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0
Cardiff	53	53
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2	2
Merthyr Tydfil	4	8
Caerphilly	4	1
Blaenau Gwent	0	0
Torfaen	0	0
Monmouthshire	0	0
Newport	12	18
Wales	141	188

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

(a) As reported by local authorities.

(b) Between the hours of 10pm on 3 November and 5am on 4 November 2016.

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

Local authorities reported a total of 188 individuals sleeping rough across Wales on the night of the count. This was an increase of a third (33 per cent, 47 persons) on the previous year.

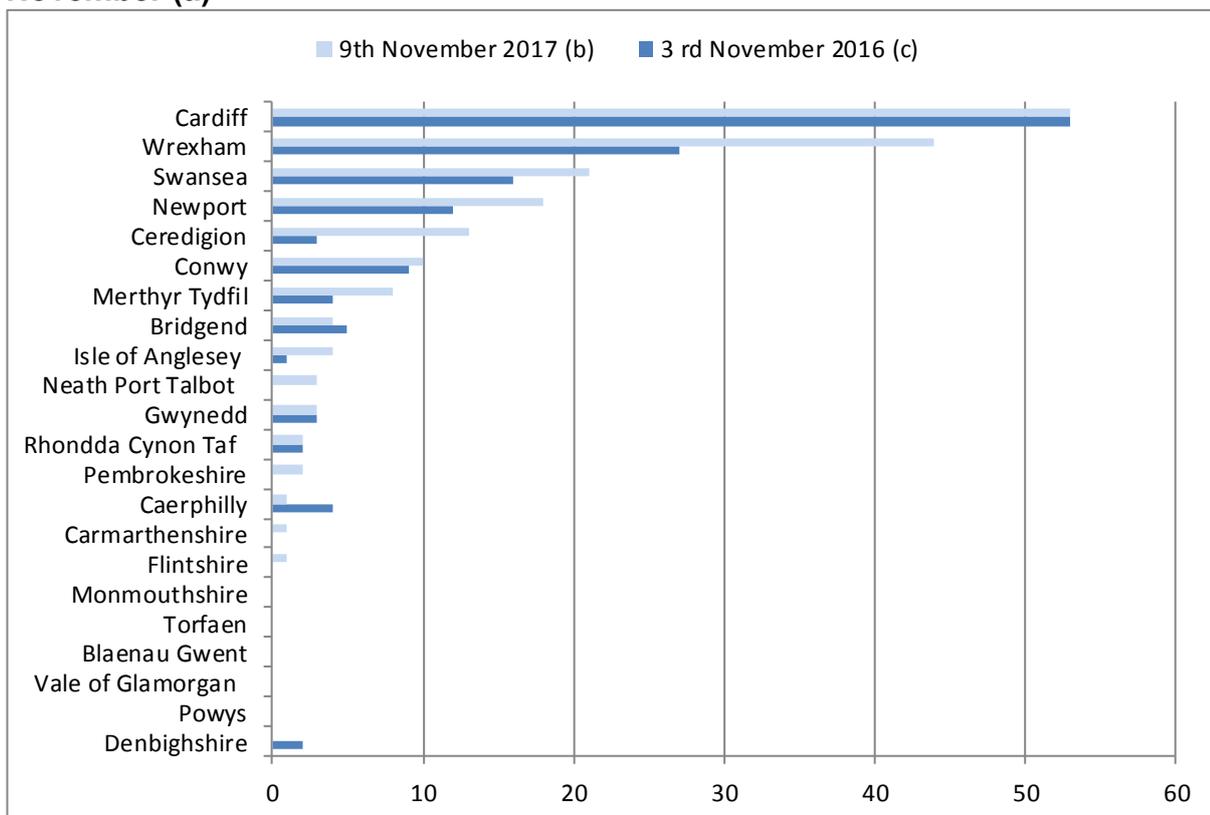
Cardiff reported the highest number of rough sleepers both on the night of the count (53 persons) followed by Wrexham (44 persons). Cardiff and Wrexham were also the authorities reporting the highest number of rough sleepers over the previous two week survey period. This was similar to the position in 2016.

Of the 22 local authorities, 6 authorities reported no persons sleeping rough within their area on the night of the count compared with 9 authorities in 2016. Three of these, the Vale of Glamorgan, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, had also reported no rough sleepers over the two week survey period.

The increase in the number of persons observed sleeping rough on the night of the count may have been influenced by a number of factors. Whilst the same methodology was applied to the count in both years, the increase may be partly due to improved intelligence on the location of rough sleepers following the introduction or extension of outreach services. The largest increases between 2016 and 2017 were seen in Wrexham, Ceredigion and Newport

Further information on reasons provided by individual local authorities for any increases in the numbers observed sleeping rough is provided on Page 24 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 9 November and 5am on 10 November 2017.
- (c) Between the hours of 10pm on 3 November and 5am on 4 November 2016.

Whilst Cardiff did not report an increase on the previous year in the number of persons observed sleeping rough on the night of the count, they did however record an operation by South Wales Police prior to and during the period of the count which targeted anti-social behaviour and street begging in and around the city centre and which may have impacted on the numbers with individuals changing locations and going further out of the city centre.

The number of individuals sleeping rough on 9th November represents 54 per cent of the estimated total of 345 people thought to be rough sleeping over the two week period from 16th to 29th October 2017. This compares with 45 per cent in 2016.

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

The greatest differences between the 2 week estimate of rough sleepers and the number recorded on the one night count were seen in Cardiff (39 fewer rough sleepers in snapshot count) ,followed by Gwynedd with 30 fewer and Caerphilly with 18 fewer ([Table 1](#) and [Table 3](#)).

Further information on reasons provided by individual local authorities for this difference is available on Page 25 in the [Key quality information](#) section.

Wrexham recorded the highest rate of persons sleeping rough on 9th November 2017 at 3.2 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons, followed by Ceredigion with a rate of 1.8 rough sleepers per 10,000 persons and Cardiff with a rate of 1.5. Wrexham had also reported the highest rate of persons sleeping rough on 3rd November 2016.

In all, 7 of the 22 local authorities reported rates of persons sleeping rough above the Wales average of 0.6 per 10,000 persons. This compares to just 4 local authorities with rates above the Wales average in November 2016.

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.

Local authorities reported a total of 233 emergency bed spaces across Wales and of these 18 per cent (42 bed spaces) were unoccupied and available for use on 9th November 2017, the night of the snapshot rough sleeper count. This is an additional 65 emergency bed spaces across Wales since November 2016 when there were 168 emergency bed spaces of which 24 per cent (40 bed spaces) were available for use.

Cardiff reported the highest number of emergency bed spaces (88), of which 14 were unoccupied and available on the night of the count. This was followed by Ceredigion with 25 emergency bed spaces and Rhondda Cynon Taf and Newport both with 23 emergency bed spaces though all of these emergency beds were occupied on the night of the count.

In November 2017, for 10 local authorities who reported rough sleepers on the night of the count, there were no unoccupied and available emergency bed spaces which is 2 more authorities than in November 2016.

In addition in 3 local authorities in November 2017, Cardiff, Conwy and Neath Port Talbot, whilst there were bed spaces available, the number was insufficient for the number of rough sleepers reported.

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 night of count	
	2016	2017	2016 (b)	2017 (c)
Isle of Anglesey	0	0	0	0
Gwynedd	0	0	0	0
Conwy	0	8	0	8
Denbighshire	7	7	3	0
Flintshire	1	0	1	0
Wrexham	16	16	0	0
Powys	1	2	1	2
Ceredigion	30	25	4	0
Pembrokeshire	0	9	0	9
Carmarthenshire	3	4	2	2
Swansea	1	1	1	0
Neath Port Talbot	1	1	1	1
Bridgend	0	6	0	6
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	0	0
Cardiff	70	88	26	14
Rhondda Cynon Taf	16	23	1	0
Merthyr Tydfil	0	20	0	0
Caerphilly	0	0	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	0	0	0
Torfaen	0	0	0	0
Monmouthshire	0	0	0	0
Newport	22	23	0	0
Wales	168	233	40	42

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.

Key quality information

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)

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

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](#).

[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.

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. The methodology developed in 2016 has remained unchanged for the 2017 exercise.

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. For further information on the users and uses please refer to the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#).

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 would include a 2 week information and intelligence gathering period followed by a one night snapshot 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.

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 16th to 29th October 2017 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 2017 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.

Pre-count meetings were recommended to consider the outcomes of the survey, provide information to focus the snapshot count and plug any gaps in intelligence.

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 9th November and 5am on Friday 10th November 2017

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](#).

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 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.

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.

Emergency bed spaces are 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.

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 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.
- 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. The weather on 9th November 2017 was typical for the time of year.

d) 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 Official 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 2017 exercise was the same as that used in 2016, when checking and validating the data received from the local authorities comparisons could also be made for the first time with the previous year. Reference was also made to the information from similar exercises carried out in November 2014 and November 2015.

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 16th and 29th October 2017, local authorities estimate that 345 persons were sleeping rough across Wales over this period. This is an increase of 10 per cent (32 persons) compared with the exercise carried out in October 2016.

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 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 comments provided are outlined below:

- The largest increase in the number sleeping rough in October 2017 compared with the previous year was reported in Neath Port Talbot with 9 more persons than in October 2016. This increase was mainly due to improved information on rough sleepers with the introduction of a Rough Sleeper Outreach Service which was active during this period but had not been available in the previous year.
- This was followed by Gwynedd where there was an increase of 8 persons, mainly due to increases in persons sleeping rough in tents in and around the Bangor area.
- In Cardiff there were an extra 7 persons compared with October 2016 mainly due to improved intelligence on rough sleepers and an expansion of the Outreach services.

The number of persons reported sleeping rough on the night of 9th November 2017 was 33 per cent higher than the number reported on 3rd November 2016. The local authorities who showed the largest increases 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 comments provided are outlined below:

- The largest increase was seen in Wrexham with 17 persons (63 per cent) more than in November 2016. This increase was mainly due to improved intelligence obtained on the location of those sleeping rough.
- This was followed by Ceredigion with reported 10 persons (over 300 per cent) more than the previous year mainly due to an increase in the number of rough sleepers from outside the authority as well as a reduced availability of emergency beds.

The number of individuals sleeping rough on 9th November represents 54 per cent of the estimated total of 345 people thought to be rough sleeping over the two week period from 16th to 29th October 2017. This compares with 45 per cent in 2016. The local authorities showing the largest difference between the number of rough sleepers s estimated over the two week period and the number observed on the night of the count were contacted to confirm the figures they had provided and where possible to provide an explanation for the difference. The comments provided are outlined below:

- In Cardiff there were 39 less rough sleepers observed on the night of the count than during the two week survey period. Cardiff recorded that an operation by South Wales Police prior to and during the period of the count which targeted anti-social behaviour and street begging in and around the city centre may have impacted on the numbers with individuals changing locations and going further out of the city centre.
- In Gwynedd, only 3 persons were observed sleeping rough on the 9th November 2017 compared with an estimated 33 rough sleepers in the two week survey period. The difference was mainly due a large number of rough sleepers located in unsafe wooded areas not covered by the count. There was also evidence in the form of bedding for a further 10 rough sleepers within safe areas but as they were not observed bedded down or about to bed down they were not included in the count.
- Caerphilly reported 18 less on the night of the count than during the 2 week survey period. This was mainly due too most of the regular rough sleepers included within the 2 week period in October being either sofa surfers or persons bedding down in remote places that could not be checked on the one night count for safety reasons.

Revisions

This release contains the final estimates of the number of persons sleeping rough across Wales for both the 2 week period from 16th to 29th October and for the period between 10 pm on 9th November and 5am on 10th November 2017.

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 2016 and is available at the following links:

[Welsh Government website: Homelessness](#)

[StatsWales website: Homelessness](#)

Population estimates

The population estimates used within this release to calculate rates are the mid-2016 population estimates for Wales published on 22nd June 2017 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. 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

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 2017 and were published on 25 January 2018.

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 \(NIHE\)](#).

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 2019

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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