

**Analysis of 2 week
National Rough Sleeper
Count Questionnaires
November 2017**



CLILC • WLGA

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Background

This report analyses the questionnaires completed during the 2 week information gathering exercise of the Welsh Government rough sleeper count with every person who presented to services which work with rough sleepers.

The questionnaire (*Click [here](#) to view a copy*) was developed for the count by the Welsh Government Rough Sleeper Working Group (RSWG); a group of Welsh Government officials, Local Authority and third sector representatives, as well as academics. The homelessness Network was consulted on regarding the contents of the questionnaire prior to it being finalised. The purpose of the questionnaire was to allow Local Authorities to develop a picture of the cohort of people sleeping rough in their area and assist the Local Authority in developing services and responses for people presenting as sleeping rough. It can also help to provide a national picture of the cohort of people sleeping rough at that time.

Of the 345 incidences of rough sleeping which were recorded during the 2 week count 334 questionnaire responses were received for analysis. Where no questionnaire was received this was mainly due to that fact that a person presented to services had accommodation or they did not want to take part. Questionnaires were received from the following Local Authorities as compared to the previous year:

Local Authority	Questionnaires returned 2016	Questionnaires returned 2017
Anglesey	0	4
Blaenau Gwent	0	0
Bridgend	12	14
Caerphilly	27	18
Cardiff	85	92
Carmarthenshire	0	4
Ceredigion	6	12
Conwy	0	1
Denbighshire	12	9
Flintshire	0	1
Gwynedd	14	34
Merthyr Tydfil	13	8
Monmouthshire	1	6
Neath Port Talbot	1	15
Newport	0	22
Pembrokeshire	5	8
Powys	0	3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	0	15
Swansea	21	22
Torfaen	0	1
Vale of Glamorgan	2	0
Wrexham	61	45
Total	261	334

2016 was the first year this exercise was carried out and it is a positive achievement this year that all the Local Authorities who received questionnaires were able to return them.

All LAs who carried out questionnaires this year submitted them for analysis and only the following Local Authorities had nil responses:

Blaenau Gwent
Vale of Glamorgan

The questionnaires were completed based on the responses from the individual being questioned and none of the information given was corroborated.

Analysis of Questionnaires

Of those who had completed questionnaires 307 (92%) stated that they had slept out the previous night and 31 stated that they not slept out the previous night. This is compared to 87% of those interviewed in 2016. 23 people (7%) stated that they slept out as part of a couple or family unit.

When asked for how long they had currently been sleeping rough 90 people (27%) stated that it was in the region of days, compared to 23% in 2016, 52 (16%) in the region of weeks, compared to 14% in 2016, 121 (36%) in the region of months, compared to 17% in 2016, and 34 (10%) in the region of years, compared to 28% in 2016. 37 individuals didn't state for how long they had been sleeping out for.

Period slept out for:	Number 2016	Percentage 2016	Number 2017	Percentage 2017
Days	60	23%	90	27%
Weeks	37	14%	52	16%
Months	45	17%	121	36%
Years	73	28%	34	10%
Didn't state	12	18%	37	11%

17 (5%) of the individuals questioned stated that they did have some form of tenancy.

For 63 individuals (19%) this was their first incidence of sleeping rough, compared to 15% in 2016, but for 263 (79%) of the people questioned they stated that they had slept rough on at least one other previous occasion, compared to 85% in 2016. Of the 338 people questioned 291 (87%) said they would like support to stop sleeping rough.

Having identified in 2016 that we were missing information on gender the following gives the breakdown of males and females who presented as sleeping rough:

Male	274	82%
Female	52	16%
Not given	8	2%

Of these 8/52 females (15%) were sleeping rough with a family member compared to 7% of whole group. (15 males slept rough with another family member).

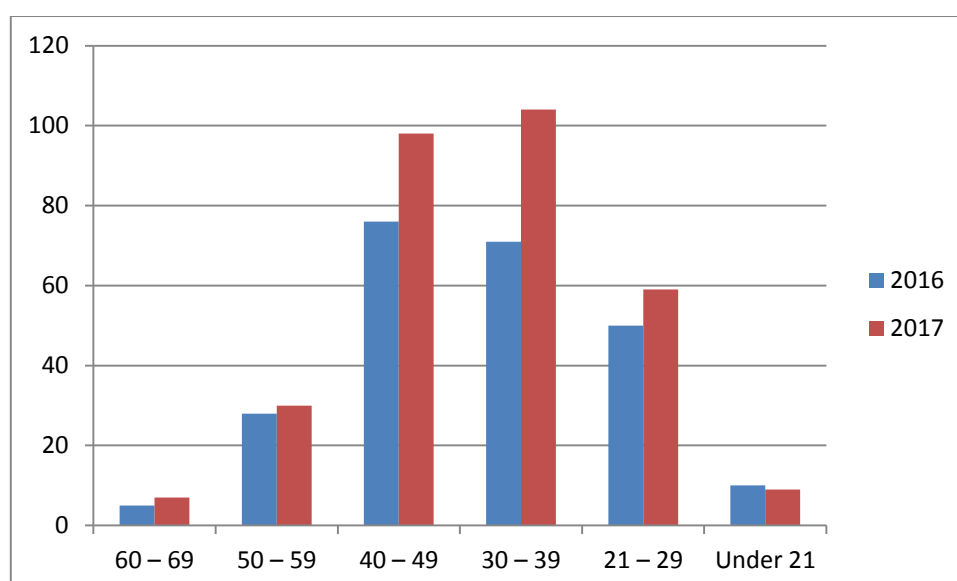
Further analysis of responses from females was carried out and it was found that they came from the following localities:

Type of LA	Number of females	Number of LAs
Urban	29	4
Semi-rural	21	6
Rural	2	2

From the date of birth information collected the ages of those interviewed are as follows:

Age range	Number in 2016	Number in 2017
60 – 69	5	7
50 – 59	28	30
40 – 49	76	98
30 – 39	71	104
21 – 29	50	59
Under 21	10	9
Not given	21	26

The vast majority of individuals presenting are between 21 and 50 years of age. The number of individuals seen who are under 21 has fallen slightly this year compared to 2016. Those in the upper age ranges have increased slightly. Further investigation into these particular groups may be useful.



Age ranges of those interviewed during the 2 week count

For the first time as part of the questionnaire individuals were asked why they were sleeping rough and what they believed had made them homeless in the first instance. There were many reasons given but they can be basically categorised as follows:

Reason stated for sleeping rough this time:

Reason for sleeping rough this time	Number
Abandoned accommodation (temp and settled)	11
Accommodation unsuitable	4
Choice	14
Couldn't access services	9
Death of family member	2
Discharge from hospital	1
Domestic abuse	3
Evicted	28
Evicted from temporary accommodation	30
Evicted from supported accommodation	3
Family breakdown	21
Fleeing violence	4
Financial issues	2
Loss of accommodation (various reason)	28
Loss of employment	2
Mental health	1
NFA/Nowhere to go/Ran out of options	50
No recourse to public funds	9
Relationship breakdown	35
Release from custody	45
Relocated / Moved area for various reasons	10
Substance misuse	4
Didn't say	18

It can be seen from the above figures that many people state that being evicted from or losing their accommodation is the reason for sleeping rough on this occasion (104). This includes a range of accommodation options including temporary and supported accommodation. It is also clear that many individuals have exhausted all other options including sofa surfing and ended up sleeping rough (50). Relationship and family breakdown is also a common reason for people finding themselves sleeping rough (56). Despite the "National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate" there are still a large number of people sleeping rough who have recently been in custody (45). It is hoped that the recent Welsh Government commissioned research by Glyndwr University will shed some light on what the reasons for this might be. Domestic abuse and fleeing violence (7) although smaller numbers are of concern as are mental health, substance misuse, death of a family member and discharge from hospital as it might be assumed that these individuals may fall into a priority need category.

Individuals were also asked to identify what they thought was the initial reason for them becoming homeless. The reasons given are as follows:

Reason for loss of last settled accommodation	Number
Abandoned accommodation	7
Choice	4
Entry or release from custody	43
Death of family member (Inc. child)	9
Domestic abuse	4
Evicted (various reasons)	57
Family breakdown	43
Financial reasons	7
Left care	3
Left local area	11
Loss of job	5
Loss of tenancy	20
Mental health issues	3
NFA	9
No recourse to public funds	6
Relationship breakdown	59
Release from MH unit/Hospital/Social care	3
Repossession	1
Substance misuse	19
Threats outside the home	4
None stated	17

Loss of accommodation due to eviction (57) or other reasons (20) was again one of the main reasons. Family (43) and relationship breakdown (59) were also stated many times as the initial reason for homelessness. Again entry or release from custody is a large reason for people becoming homeless. There are a few, but some worrying, reasons such as domestic abuse, threat of violence, leaving care, or death of a family member (including one individual who stated death of a child) given as the initial reason for becoming homeless and several who stated financial issues as the reason.

Those interviewed were asked about their previous life experiences with regards to potential priority need categories. Again, these results are based on the individuals' responses. The responses are as follows:

Previous history	Number in 2016		Number in 2017	
Care	13	(5%)	54	(16%)
Custody	85	(33%)	140	(42%)
Armed forces	3	(1%)	9	(3%)
Care and Armed Forces	2	(0.8%)	1	(0.3%)
Care and Custody	8	(3%)	37	(11%)
None	149	(57%)	158	(47%)
Didn't say	1	(0.4%)	6	(0.8%)

In 2016 it was not known what the time lapse was between the above incidences and the incidence of sleeping rough and so the questions were modified in 2017 to identify

those who had been released from custody within the last 3 years and what the timing of this was. Of those who provided this information 67 (20%) stated that this was within the previous 12 months and 33 (10%) stated that it was in the previous 3 months.

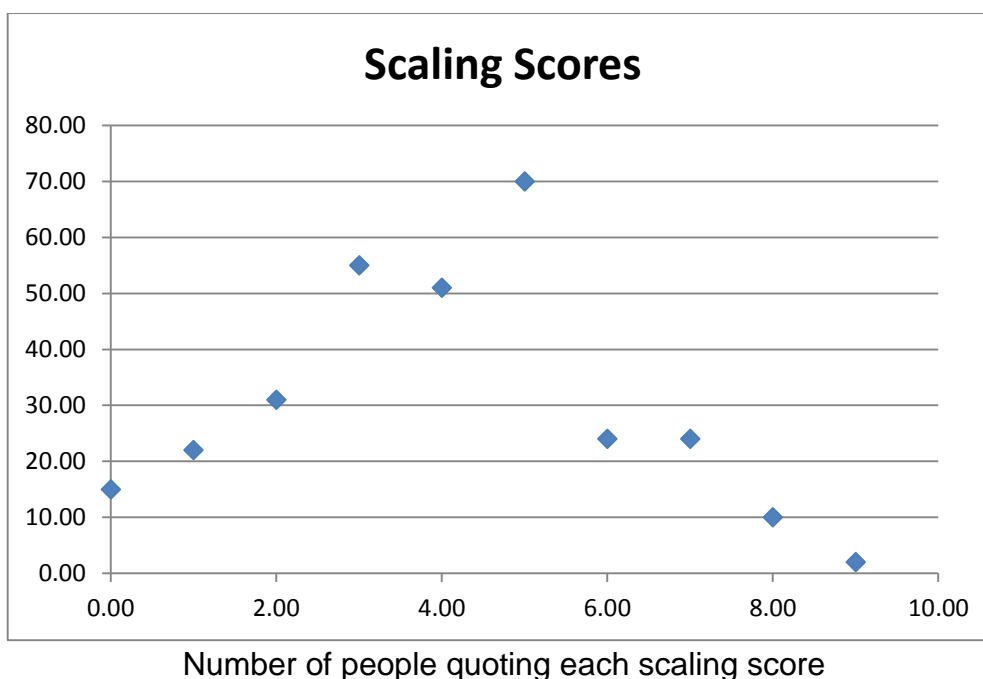
Of the individuals questioned 66 (20%) stated that they had previously been discharged from hospital to no fixed abode, compared to 15% in 2016. 26 (8%) stated that this was within the previous 12 months. This is despite the introduction in 2014 by Public Health Wales of the Hospital Discharge Protocol for Homeless People in Wales.

Of those asked 142 (43%) disclosed that they had had a mental health diagnosis, compared to 40% in 2016. 17 (5%) stated that they had experienced a mental health issue within the last year 14% in 2016, 41 (12%) between 1 and 3 years ago, 15% in 2016, and 46 (14%) over 3 years ago, 11% in 2016. 38 people (11%) didn't specify the time frame in which the mental health incidence had occurred. 52 (15%) stated that they did not want to disclose their mental health history, 33% in 2016 with 132 (40%) stating that they had never had a mental health diagnosis, 28% in 2016. It is important to note that this is the individual's own response and is not corroborated by medical evidence. Of those disclosing a mental health condition 61 (18%) stated that they were currently on medication, 21% in 2016, and 76 (23%) stated that they had previously been hospitalised due to their mental health, 25% in 2016.

For the first time this year questions around physical health were also asked. 23 (7%) people stated that they had a physical health condition diagnosed within the past year, 16 people (5%) stated they had a condition diagnosed between 1 and 3 years ago and 25 (7%) over three years ago. 24 people (7%) stated that they had a physical health condition but didn't specify a time frame and a further 51 (16%) individuals did not wish to share this information. 76 (23%) people stated that they were receiving some sort of medication or support for a physical health condition.

As part of the questionnaire individuals were asked to rate how well they felt on a scale of 0-10:

Scaling score	Number	Percentage
0	15	4%
1	22	7%
2	31	9%
3	55	16%
4	51	15%
5	70	21%
6	24	7%
7	24	7%
8	10	3%
9	2	3%
Didn't state	28	8%



Following on from recommendations identified after the 2016 questionnaire it was felt that more needed to be understood about where people who were sleeping rough originated from. People were asked the following regarding their ethnicity and nationality. The responses are as follows:

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	310	93%
Black	3	1%
Asian	0	0
Mixed	3	1%
Other	0	0
Undisclosed	18	5%

The table below shows the stated nationalities of those questioned. 265 people (79%) stated that they had a nationality within the UK and Ireland. Of the remaining people asked the vast majority didn't state their nationality.

Nationality	Number	Percentage
British	155	47%
Welsh	88	26%
English	17	5%
Irish	4	1%
Asian British	1	0.3%
Czech Republic	1	0.3%
Polish	8	2%
Portuguese	2	0.3%
Zimbabwean	1	0.3%
Didn't state	55	16%

Following on from the 2016 exercise it was also felt that more needed to be understood about individuals' local connection to the area they were presenting in and/or where people had previously been living. For this purpose, people were asked to say what their last settled address had been. Of those questioned 202 (60%) stated that their last settled address was in the Local Authority in which they were presenting.

Local connection	Number	Percentage
Local connection in presenting LA	202	60%
Local connection in another LA in Wales	39	12%
Local connection in rest of UK	25	7%
Connected to Europe	8	2%
Connected to Rest of the World	0	0
Didn't state	60	18%

Conclusions

- There has been a 22% increase in the number of questionnaires completed during the two week count compared to 2016. This shows that more people are accessing services because they are street homeless and need help, but also, that Local Authorities and other services are getting better at engaging with people who are rough sleeping.
- It is good to see that the number of people who state they have been sleeping rough for "years" has decreased. However, those who state they have been sleeping rough for "months" has increased dramatically.
- As in the previous year the vast majority stated that they would like help to stop sleeping rough. This ranges from signposting to accommodation providers and providing financial support to providing a home and support to deal with additional issues such as substance misuse or mental health problems.
- The majority of people sleeping rough are male. Of those females who are sleeping rough most are in urban or semi-urban Local Authorities. This may highlight a need for female specific services in these areas.
- As last year most of the people questioned were 40 years old or over. It is still concerning that there are young people sleeping rough in particular individuals who are under 21 years of age.
- It can be seen from the figures being evicted from or losing their accommodation is the reason for most people sleeping rough on this occasion. This includes a range of accommodation options including temporary and supported accommodation. It is also clear that many individuals have

exhausted all other options including sofa surfing and ended up sleeping rough. Relationship and family breakdown is also a common reason for people finding themselves sleeping rough.

- Despite the “National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate” there are still a large number of people sleeping rough who have recently been in custody. It is hoped that the recent Welsh Government commissioned research by Glyndwr University will shed some light on what the reasons for this might be.
- Domestic abuse and fleeing violence although smaller numbers are of concern as are mental health, substance misuse, death of a family member and discharge from hospital as it might be assumed that these individuals may fall into a priority need category.
- As in the previous year a large number stated that they had been in custody. This question was clarified for this year’s questionnaire to specify a period in custody during the previous three years but the figures are still high.
- A large proportion also stated that they had been in care in the past and a significant number stated that they had experienced both care and custody. This might affect how we develop and deliver services for care leavers in the future.
- A large number of those questioned stated that they had been discharged from hospital to no fixed address and went back to sleeping rough. More work needs to be done between hospital wards and housing options teams to ensure that the Hospital Discharge Protocol is followed when a homeless person is being discharged from medical care.
- Despite very few people stating that mental health issues were the reason for them becoming homeless or sleeping rough a high proportion of those questioned identified some sort of mental health issue. Many also stated that they were still receiving medication and or support for this. 43% disclosing a mental health diagnosis, yet alone those who do not have a diagnosis but have a mental health condition. There may be a need for a different or further question regarding mental health to understand which issue came first; homelessness or mental health problems.
- The large number of individuals experiencing some form of mental health issue justifies the involvement of CMHT at an early stage in order to assess and support these individuals. It might also mean that a different type of approach is needed to work with those sleeping rough. There is good practice of this taking place in Wales.
- A large number of individuals also stated that they had a physical health condition and some were still receiving medication and/or support for this. Of these receiving some form of support it would be useful to understand how they are accessing this whilst street homeless.

- Most people rated their feeling of wellness at 5 or below. It might be useful in future years to compare this with some kind of control group to see how this might differ.
- No question was included to ascertain whether individuals had pets which stayed with them. This may be a question we include in future questionnaires.
- For the first time information was collected regarding ethnicity and nationality. The vast majority were white and from somewhere within the UK. All other people who stated a nationality came from within Europe.
- The majority of people also tended to sleep rough in the area to which they had a local connection. Where this was not the case the person was often from a neighbouring Local Authority or a near one within Wales.

Recommendations following the questionnaires

- Work with LAs who had a very low or very high number of responses to ensure this is an accurate reflection of what is happening in the LA.
- Share questions with Street Homeless Information Network (SHIN) to influence their data collection system
- Work with Local Authorities to identify ways to prevent young people from becoming rough sleepers.
- Work with LAs who are piloting Housing First type interventions to share good practice and mainstream this response.
- Assist LAs to implement the actions within the Welsh Government Rough Sleeper Action Plan.
- Work with commissioners and support providers to provide successful responses for those fleeing abuse and violence.
- Share good practice in implementing the “National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate” and continue to develop relationships with Prison Link Cymru CRC and NPS to assist those leaving custody as early as possible.
- Implement any recommendations in the Welsh Government commissioned, Glyndwr University research looking at accommodating prison leavers.
- Work with landlords to develop earlier identification of those who may be struggling with rent or ASB to reduce eviction levels.
- Ensure all caseworkers within LAs have attended at least Day 1 of the PATH training programme in order to affect culture change.

- Identify and share good practice in assisting people experiencing relationship/family breakdown to prevent homelessness.
- Identify and share good practice in assisting people with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Work with Welsh Government to improve relationships with health services and implementing the Hospital Discharge Protocol.