

Homeless Link



# Snapshot Estimates

Completing a count-  
based estimate

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### Definition of rough sleeping



People sleeping, about to bed down  
(sitting on/in 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”)

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### Who does the definition of rough sleeping not include?

Not included are people:

- in hostels, shelters, squats, campsites, Traveller sites, organised protest sites
- sofa surfing
- sleeping on public transport
- sleeping in locations not visible during a count-based estimate
- known to sleep rough sometimes, but not seen bedded down on that night

The purpose is to record a single night snapshot. Not all forms of homelessness are included. Not every individual seen by services during Oct-Nov will be included.



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### Working in partnership with other agencies

The agencies you work in partnership within your local authority area could include:

- Outreach teams
- Hostels, day centres, night shelters
- Housing department
- Police
- Community safety teams
- Park rangers
- Specialist services e.g. for women, young people, the LGBTQ+ community
- Faith groups, soup runs, street pastors, parish councils
- Advice agencies, libraries
- Housing associations
- Social services
- Health & mental health services
- Refuse collectors, town centre management, local retail security, street wardens



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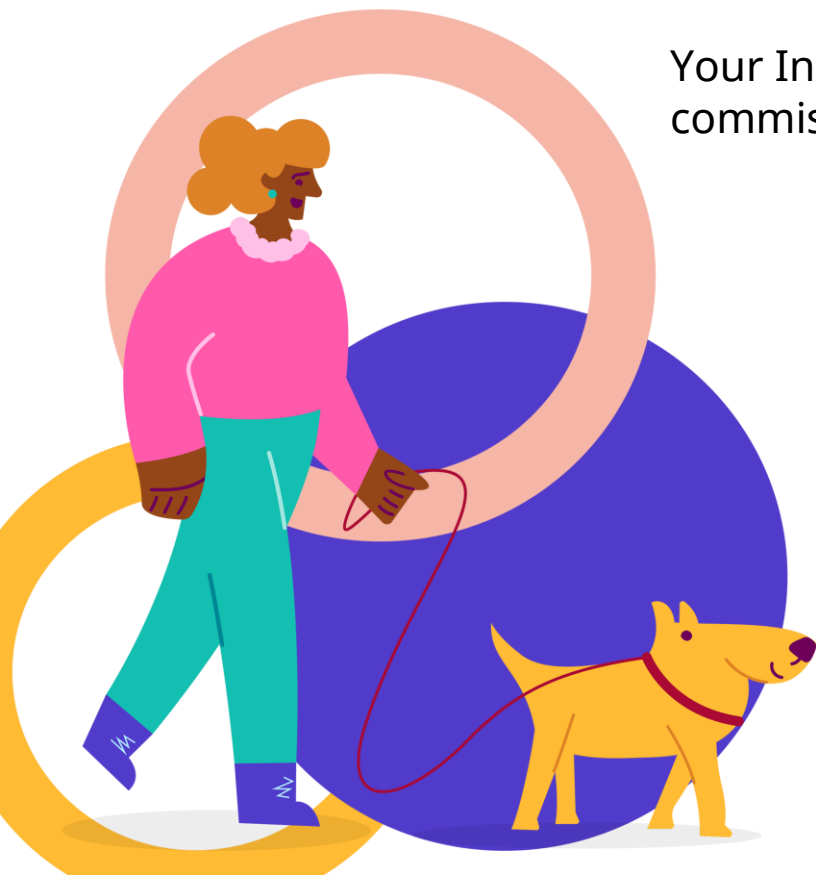
### Involving Independent Partners

For successful Quality Assurance, you must involve at least one Independent Partner in collecting the rough sleeping figures for your area.

Your Independent Partner is someone who is not commissioned or funded by the local authority, e.g.

- Community groups
- Faith groups
- Soup kitchens
- Volunteers from the public, e.g. doctor, teacher
- Non-commissioned charities e.g. hospices
- Other services on a case-by-case basis

There is a separate short video in the toolkit explaining everything you need to know about Independent Partners.



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### Quality Assurance

- From 2025 onwards, Quality Assurance for all count-based estimates will take place remotely.
- Homeless Link QA Verifiers are either staff, associates, or volunteers.
- They are recruited and trained by us.
- Sample Quality Assurance forms are available on the Toolkit web page
- Remote Quality Assurance will now take place in two parts. An initial conversation prior to the count night. And separate conversations, by phone or online, with the local authority lead or count coordinator, a partner agency, and the independent partner, following the count night.



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### Some top tips

- Always use format “night of (x) into morning of (x)” to avoid confusion about dates.
- If you have any questions about the process or think there might be disagreements among local partners, talk to Homeless Link – [verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk)
- Communicate with Homeless Link if any issues arise (including severe weather, ad hoc mass events etc.) as this will affect your ‘typical’ night.
- Only include data from your chosen ‘typical’ night.
- Ensure relevant data sharing protocols are in place to allow information & intelligence to be shared.
- Sample data sharing agreement on the Toolkit web page.

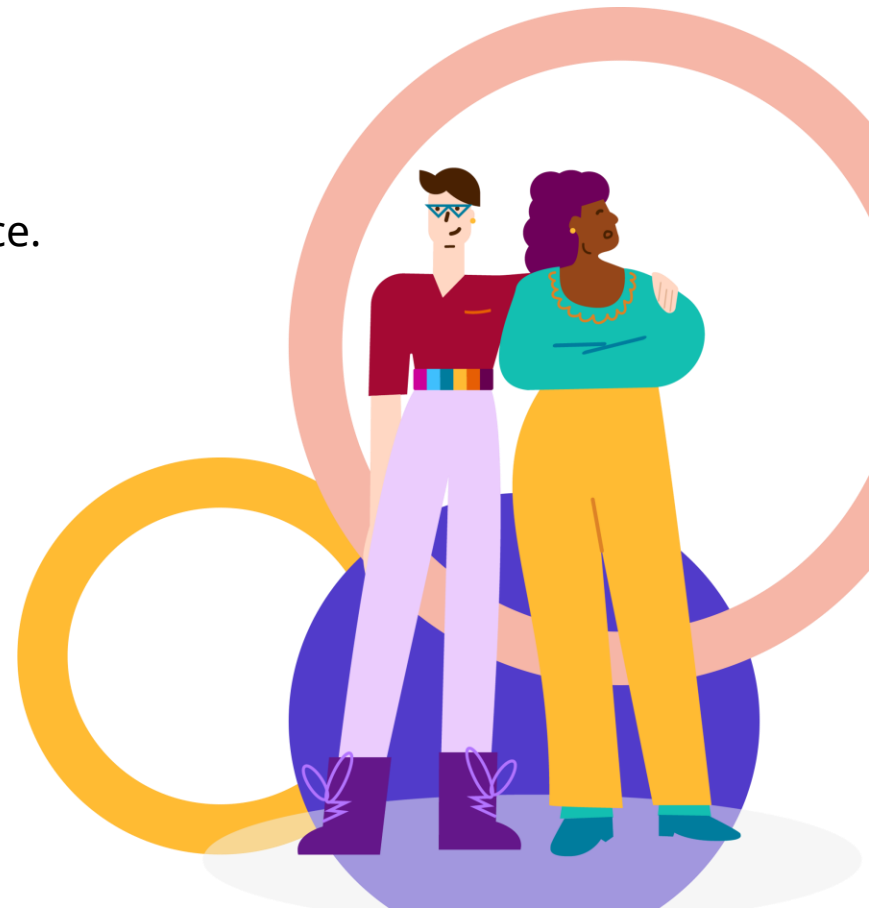


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### Some more top tips

- Always refer people back to the definition of rough sleeping.
- Decline requests from local media to join the count.
- Read and follow the latest public health advice.





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### Things to do a few weeks in advance of your count

- Appoint a count coordinator.
- Allow at least 6 weeks to plan your count.
- Liaise with your partners and neighbouring local authorities.
- Identify your independent partner(s)
- Set a date for your count
  - Choose a 'typical' night between 1st Oct - 30th Nov
  - Only share this on a 'need to know' basis
  - Avoid disruption e.g. festivals, busy Friday nights, sporting events, charity sleep-outs that might affect rough sleeping
- Email Homeless Link to confirm the date and arrange a Quality Assurance Verifier:  
[verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk)
- Set up a DELTA account for submitting your data or check you have access to your account.

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### **Some more things to do a few weeks before your count**

- Make contingency plans in case the count can't go ahead for whatever reason.
- Agree Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) contingency plan if in force on the night of the count e.g. re-schedule or submit an estimate.
- Ask for volunteer counters – outreach, police, park rangers, voluntary sector, council staff.
- Map local area, work with outreach or other intelligence to identify hotspots and where count teams will go on the night. Consider asking people with experience of rough sleeping where they think people might be bedding down.
- Identify issues with access (e.g. parks, stairwells, car parks) and ask police, park rangers, security firms etc. for access during the count.

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### Things to do two weeks before your count

- Meet with your Homeless Link Quality Assurance Verifier, by phone or online, to talk through your plan for the count and complete part one of the Quality Assurance process
- Make arrangements with the Independent Partner and one other partner agency to speak with the QA Verifier in the days following the count.
- Confirm your local counters, get contact details, addresses and plan travel arrangements.
- Send 'Briefing for Street Count Team and Volunteers' to each counter with instructions on where to meet, timing of the count and what transport will be arranged.
- Notify police of the count.
- Agree a plan for people found sleeping rough on the night e.g. access to a hub, night shelter, B&B, or other emergency accommodation.

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### Things to think the week of your count

- Check for any local restrictions and contact Homeless Link immediately if your count will not be able to go ahead.
- Book taxis to/from the count as needed for safety of all participants.
- Print a map for each count team showing their count area and hotspots.
- Prepare kit for counters e.g. torch and mobile phone, alarms and reflective jackets/armbands if using.
- Produce packs for counters: map, pens, definition of rough sleeping, H&S checklist, rough sleeping count forms, ID letter, any relevant local services info, language chart, data protection statement.

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### Things to think the week of your count (cont)

- Assign counting teams; we recommend around 3 people per team to avoid crowding any individuals found.
- Ensure each count team is led by a knowledgeable and experienced worker or volunteer.
- Assign the independent partner(s) to the team that will be first back to the count base.
- Consider having at least one mobile team to respond to issues arising during the count e.g. to take any individuals found sleeping rough to assessment/shelter.
- Assign at least one person to remain at the count base (usually the count coordinator) to respond to queries and check in with teams.

\*Individuals should not attend the count if they are unwell\*

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### **The night of your count**

- Check availability of emergency accommodation/assessment hubs.
- Ensure each counting team has a pack, torch and mobile phone.
- Deliver the health & safety briefing for counters. The safety briefing is crucial: take your time, answer questions.
- Agree check-in times with teams during the count.

**Your count must not begin before midnight, but it must be completed before the daytime economy opens up**

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### The night of your count

- As each counting team returns, the team lead brings their form to the Count Coordinator who will then review the form and ask for any clarifications. The Independent Partner(s) should observe this process.
- Once all teams have returned, the count coordinator totals the demographic data (including unknowns) and informs the independent partner of the final figure.
- Check that everyone has a safe route home.
- In the working days following the count, the Quality Assurance Verifier will talk separately with the count coordinator, a partner agency, and the independent partner in order to complete the Quality Assurance process and then send the form to Homeless Link for review and sign-off.
- Once checked and signed off by Homeless Link the project coordinator will send it to the local authority lead.
- The Local Authority can then submit their data to MHCLG using the DELTA online system, no later than the first Friday in December

# Snapshot Estimates Questions?



If you have questions about completing your count-based estimate you can:

- **Email** the Rough Sleeping Snapshot Estimate Coordinator:  
[verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk)
- **Phone** the Rough Sleeping Snapshot Estimate Coordinator:  
07958135579
- Attend one of the weekly **live Q&A sessions**: dates and times and booking links will be sent out in the weekly information updates to LA Leads and Count Coordinators
- Find comprehensive information on in the **Rough Sleeping Snapshot Estimates Toolkit** webpage on the Homeless Link website



# Homeless Link

## What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

**[homeless.org.uk](https://homeless.org.uk)**

**[@HomelessLink](https://twitter.com/HomelessLink)**