



Counts & Estimates Toolkit 2018

Count forms and resources

Let's end homelessness together

Homeless Link, Minories House, 2-5 Minories, London EC3N 1BJ | 020 7840 4430
www.homeless.org.uk | Twitter: @Homelesslink | Facebook: www.facebook.com/homelesslink

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Full toolkit available at:

www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/counts-and-estimates-evaluating-extent-of-rough-sleeping

Where to count – challenges to consider

Rural areas

It is logistically more difficult to carry out a single night count in large rural areas than in urban areas. The area to cover is greater and there is 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 their own and they may be spread out over a large area. In such authorities, those carrying out the count cannot cover all possible sites and will have to concentrate on locations where people are most likely to be found sleeping rough, and on local knowledge. 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. Where resources make it difficult to carry out a count, local authorities should consider whether an estimate will produce a more accurate figure. A spotlight count can be used as one of the intelligence sources to inform an estimate, as long as it happens on the night chosen for the estimate.

Urban areas

In cities and large towns, it is easier to carry out a single night count, as those people sleeping rough will be concentrated within a relatively small area and may congregate in groups for safety/community. However, there may be other challenges. 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 people actually sleeping rough. It may therefore be appropriate for the count to start later - in the early hours of the morning. There are also safety issues involved in entering some of the possible locations for rough sleeping, such as derelict buildings and building sites.

Under-representation of particular groups

There has been historic concern that a number of groups risk being underrepresented in rough sleeping figures¹. For example, women are often hidden homeless and undercounted in rough sleeping counts. Women are particularly vulnerable to assault and exploitation when sleeping rough and, as a result, tend to use more secluded or (perceived) secure locations to sleep when living on the streets². Likewise, women may be more likely to sleep in the day to avoid the greater perceived risks of sleeping during the night. Counters, for understandable safety reasons, are often not permitted to go into 'risky' areas (e.g. some dark alleyways or unlocked doorways), but these are the places in which the most vulnerable are likely to have concealed themselves. The involvement of police in street counts can be helpful in this situation, as long as any engagement is approached sensitively.

Under-representation of people sleeping rough on public transport

Counts are likely to miss people sleeping rough using public transport as a place to sleep. Particularly in the winter and in metropolitan areas, a significant proportion of people are likely to take refuge on buses, trains, trams or tubes for warmth³. Some services have formed partnerships with providers of public transport in order to carry out outreach work on public transport so that people sleeping rough can be identified and referred into services; this work over the year can be built on to support the count (or inform an estimate). It is likely that people on buses or trains will be double counted as they move across local authority boundaries, so these individuals will usually fall outside the definition used for the snapshot count, unless comprehensive cross-boundary information sharing is in place.

Transitional public spaces

¹ Communities and Local Government (2008) *Rough Sleeping 10 Years On: From the streets to independent living and opportunity* - Executive Summary, p4. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919150326/http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingdiscussionresponse>

² Jones, A. (1999) *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Experiences of Homeless Women* produced by Centre for Housing Policy (University of York) and Crisis.

³ McAdam, R (2017) *Help for London's rough sleepers*. Available at: <http://www.24housing.co.uk/news/help-for-londons-rough-sleepers/>

Homeless Link became aware during last year's counts that outreach teams are seeing increasing numbers of people in transitional public spaces such as hospital waiting rooms, stations and on public transport. People using these spaces aren't always included under the definition of rough sleeping, because they are not bedded down, and are instead there for safety as a sit-up space overnight. In this situation it can be hard to know for sure who is homeless and, often, it isn't possible or desirable to approach everyone. This year, Homeless Link's Verifiers will ask Coordinators about anyone seen who did not meet the definition but falls into this 'grey area' of the definition. This will inform future work.

Squats

Squatters are excluded from the definition of rough sleeping. However, there have been cases where it is unclear whether a sleep site falls under the definition of a squat or under the definition of 'buildings or other places not designed for human habitation', for example people in derelict buildings. If there is any doubt about whether a site is a squat, please speak to Homeless Link for further guidance on a case by case basis. It is not safe to enter these sites during a count so, where a rough sleeping site of this nature is identified, Coordinators will need to use the estimate process to include these people. The Fire Service may be able to assist with safety interventions as part of ongoing support and engagement.

Tents

People in campsites or other recreational settings, or sleeping in tents as part of an organised protest, do not fall within the definition of rough sleeping. However, a person sleeping in a tent elsewhere may meet the rough sleeping definition "actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments)". Count Coordinators should consider what access they need in order to count people sleeping tents and whether this can be achieved safely, particularly where the tents are on private land or in woodland. Counters – where possible those with experience of outreach or other support work – will need to establish how many people are in a tent by calling out; the tent itself cannot be assumed to contain one or more people. If access to areas where tents are pitched is not possible, Coordinators should use the estimate process (supplemented by a count as necessary).

Charity sleep-outs

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of charity sleep-out events taking place during the same period as the rough sleeping counts. While the sleep-out itself will fall outside the rough sleeping definition, there is the potential that this sort of event could disrupt local patterns of rough sleeping, meaning that it's no longer a typical night. Local authorities should check in with charity partners, and look out for local promotion of sleep-out events, in order to avoid clashing dates. If there is an unavoidable clash, the count verifier will need additional information about the sleep-out (especially its location in relation to rough sleeping sites) before they can verify if it was still a typical night.

Count risk assessment

Risk area	Actions to manage risk
Travel to and from the base of operations at unsocial hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count Coordinator books and pays for taxis in advance to/from the base of operations, as needed. • Count Coordinator checks that everyone due to take part signs in and out of both the initial meeting and debriefing sessions. • Count Coordinator ensures that times of access to the base of operations are clearly communicated and that verifier/counters are not waiting outside for the building to open.
Counters working at night in dispersed and isolated areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count Coordinator ensures that the Health & Safety checklist is read and understood by each counter. • Counters work in pairs and remain with their count partner at all times. • Where possible, a counter with local knowledge and/or experience providing support is included in each pair. • Each pair of counters has a mobile phone (charged and with credit) with essential contact numbers e.g. for the base of operations. • Count Coordinator issues additional mobile phones as necessary at the start of the count. • Count Coordinator has a contact mobile phone number for each pair of counters. • Counters have a map with their counting area clearly marked. • Times are agreed at the start of the count for counters will be back at the base of operations. If anyone fails to return, the Count Coordinator contacts police to locate them. • The Count Coordinator may also agree telephone check-ins during the count – these should be initiated by counters to avoid noise nuisance when the team is near people who are sleeping
Counters entering dark, unknown or high risk areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Count Coordinator gathers local intelligence prior to the count and gives clear instructions about any high risk areas to be avoided, and marks them on the maps. • Counters are issued with torches / visibility clothing / panic alarms • Counters are responsible for assessing risk and ensuring their safety during the count – counters should not go into any area that they feel is unsafe and should never be alone. • Counters check mobile phone reception periodically and move quickly out of areas where the signal is poor. • The Count Coordinator makes pre-arrangements to access hard-to-reach areas (e.g. work with park wardens, private security or car park teams, procures keys to stairwells, or has police accompaniment for particular sites).

Risk area	Actions to manage risk
Counters find unknown people sleeping rough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counters instructed never to shine a torch in anyone's face. The Count Coordinator gives guidance on whether to wake people – usually only experienced staff. Counters assess risk before and during each interaction and move away if they feel unsafe. Counters carry information cards/leaflets to leave with people, so they know where to seek help next day.
Counters find themselves or others in a situation of immediate concern/risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counting teams agree a code word to let colleagues know if they feel uncomfortable or at risk in a situation. If possible, move away from the incident and find a safe location from which to call. Call the police for assistance. Once in a safe location, call to report the incident to the Count Coordinator.
Concerns about the health of someone on the streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call an ambulance. Counters can do this as a concerned member of the public and do not have to approach the person unless they feel confident and safe to do so.
A person sleeping rough is under 18 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call the Count Coordinator for advice on contacting out of hours Social Services and/or Police to safeguard the child, and remain with/near the child until support arrives.
Counters being challenged about their activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Count Coordinator issues an ID letter explaining the count. Counters carry ID at all times. Police (and, where appropriate, private security companies and other partners) are made aware that the count is taking place.
Counters waking people in the open / in tents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an individual is not known, where it is safe to do so and the counter is experienced in outreach/support work, they should attempt to wake each individual to record their details. Counters should not stand over people as they attempt to wake them. Counters should not touch people who are sleeping to wake them – politely speak or call to them. Counters should stand several paces back, with a second counter further back. Counters should not open tents, instead call out and then ask each person in the tent to respond. It may be helpful to request the assistance of the local police in waking individuals who counters are unable to wake.

Health & Safety Checklist for counters

DO

- ✓ Ensure you have signed in and given your telephone number to staff at the base of operations
- ✓ Ensure that you have your work ID with you and an ID letter about the count given to you. You should produce this if you are stopped, e.g. by police or security guards while conducting the count
- ✓ Ensure you have the telephone number of the base of operations and/or the Count Coordinator
- ✓ Ensure you have a fully charged mobile phone, with enough credit to make calls
- ✓ Ask any questions, if you are unsure about anything, before you go out
- ✓ Be aware of your safety, and the safety of others, at all times during the count
- ✓ Agree a code word with your team to let them know if you feel uncomfortable or at risk in a situation
- ✓ Contact the Police if you come across any sort of trouble, for you, your team or others
- ✓ Call an ambulance if you think someone sleeping rough is seriously unwell. You can do this as a concerned member of the public. You do not have to approach the person if you don't feel confident to do so
- ✓ Call the Coordinator to request Social Services and/or Police support if a child is sleeping rough and stay with/near them until help arrives
- ✓ Keep in regular contact with base of operations and follow the briefing instructions
- ✓ Inform base of operations immediately of any incidents, and of any delays in carrying out the count
- ✓ At the end of the count report back to base of operations, sign in with the coordinator, and return all forms, phones, maps and equipment
- ✓ Confirm with the count coordinator that you have transport home or require a cab
- ✓ Sign out with the count coordinator before leaving the building

DON'T

- X Split up from your team/partner whilst conducting the count
- X Approach anyone who is displaying aggressive or violent behaviour
- X Shine your torch in anyone's face or wake people using physical contact
- X Go into derelict buildings/squats/building sites if no prior planning has taken place to get support from the police or other agency
- X Go into any areas (dark alleys, underground car parks, parks etc) where you or your fellow volunteers do not feel safe. Note down the areas you do not enter, if you suspect it may be a site for rough sleeping
- X Stand over or touch anyone as you wake them
- X Open tents
- X Use alcohol or an illegal substance prior to undertaking a count
- X Go home from the count without speaking to the Count Coordinator

Your safety is paramount

Do not put yourself or any member of your team at risk

Notes for counters

This document is for people participating in a rough sleeping count. Everyone taking part should read these notes.

Each year local authorities carry out either a count or an estimate in order to arrive at a single figure for the number of people sleeping rough on a particular night, as well as basic demographics on gender, age and nationality. This data is submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to help inform the national picture of rough sleeping, and is usually published in January/February.

There is currently no national mechanism for recording every person who sleeps rough in England. The snapshot methodology aims to get as accurate a representation of the number of people sleeping rough as possible, while acknowledging that each process has its limitations. The evaluation method is chosen to meet the local context: counts are based on visible rough sleeping, and evidence-based estimates on a range of sources for rough sleeping.

The count is a snapshot of the number of people seen sleeping rough in any given area on a particular night between 1st October and 30th November. It does not record everyone in the area with a history of rough sleeping, however it can be an effective means of gauging the scale of the problem and monitoring progress over time.

An estimate is an evidence-based assessment that records, as a single figure, the number of people thought to be rough sleeping in the local authority area on a typical night between 1st October and 30th November, following consultation with local agencies.

The definition of rough sleeping

Only people who fall into the Government's definition of rough sleeping, as seen by counters, are included in the count total. The definition is:

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").

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or Travellers.

It does not include people who were rough sleeping in the area on a previous night or earlier in the evening but who were not there at the time of the count. It does not include people wandering around or empty sleeping sites.

'Bedded down' is taken to mean either lying down or sleeping. 'About to bed down' includes those who are sitting in/on or standing next to a sleeping bag or other bedding. The intention is to establish that they are or will be rough sleeping on the night of the count. Research has found that in many areas people seen drinking in the street or begging (even if they have a blanket or a sleeping bag) are not necessarily sleeping rough and they should not be included unless they are clearly bedded down or about to bed down at the time of the count.

All those who fall into this definition should be counted, regardless of nationality or eligibility for public funds, and including people whose faces are covered and are not woken.

Homeless Link became aware during last year's counts that outreach teams are seeing increasing numbers of people in transitional public spaces such as hospital waiting rooms, stations and on public transport. People using these spaces aren't always included under the definition of rough sleeping, because they are not bedded down, and are instead there for safety as a sit-up space overnight. In this situation it can be hard to know for sure who is homeless and it often isn't possible or desirable to approach everyone. This year, Homeless Link's Verifiers will ask Coordinators about anyone seen who did not meet the definition but falls into this 'grey area' of the definition. This will inform future work.

Who takes part in the count?

The local authority is responsible for managing the whole process of estimating or counting the number of people rough sleeping.

The local authority can delegate the detailed management of the process to a **Count Coordinator**. They are the main contact for counting teams, with responsibility for ensuring that counters are fully briefed and equipped for the count and that a consistent approach is taken to arrive at the single figure.

An **independent verifier**, trained and supported by Homeless Link, will be responsible for verifying that the count has been carried out safely in accordance with guidance, and that the definition of people sleeping rough has been applied uniformly. They may also act as a counter.

Other local agencies who work with people sleeping rough will have an active role in planning and carrying out the count, such as defining the geographic areas of the count and providing volunteer counters.

In some areas, team coordinators will each be responsible for a defined geographic area of the count and for supervising counters in that segment on the night of the count.

You, the **counters**, will work together in pairs or small groups to check locations in a defined segment and systematically make a record of each person found sleeping rough on that night.

Carrying out the count

1. Start and finish times

Start times should be tailored to meet local circumstances. The earliest permitted start time is midnight. It is highly recommended that in cities and towns counts start at 2am so that people who bed down later in busier areas are still counted. Counts should be completed by 5am but may be conducted after dawn in rural areas where the majority of people are sleeping rough away from built-up and well-lit areas. In most cases, if appropriate intelligence has been gathered and enough volunteers recruited, counts will take no more than 2 to 3 hours. It's advisable to eat before starting your count and take water and a snack with you, as you could be walking for several hours.

2. The area where you will carry out the count

It is not necessary to cover every street or park in a local authority area. With the limited resources available the count coordinator will focus efforts on areas that people are known to use while sleeping rough, and other potential sleep sites. These areas are identified through prior local intelligence gathering.

Count coordinators will divide the area into segments and produce maps with boundaries clearly marked to show the areas to be covered by separate teams of counters. Wherever possible, the areas covered should be well known to counters. If you are unclear about the exact area you are covering, make sure you raise this with the coordinator before leaving the base of operations.

3. Briefing and debriefing

All counters should attend an initial meeting and debriefing at a base of operations in a safe venue, such as a local authority building or day centre. The count coordinator will explain the purpose of the count and how the process will work.

You will be given a map showing individual streets and parts of streets that you will be covering. You will also be provided with an identification letter describing what you are doing. The Coordinator will have gathered intelligence ahead of the count to identify sites where people might sleep rough. This could include private land such as hospital or college grounds. The Coordinator will confirm if access to these areas has been arranged. Areas that are not readily accessible on the night of the count, whether public or private, should not be counted. Make a note of any area that could not be checked.

4. Safety considerations

Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that those involved in a rough sleeping count are safe at all times. They should balance the need to keep people safe with the need to gather as much accurate information about people sleeping rough as possible.

Counters are responsible for reading and following the Health & Safety Checklist, which forms part of this toolkit.

Arrangements will be made in advance by the Coordinator for your safe transport home, by taxi if necessary. Depending on the location of the base of operations and how late the count starts, the organisers may need to provide safe transportation to the venue as well.

5. Interventions on the night

Local authorities should make prior arrangements so that an emergency response is available for people found on the count who express the desire to move away from rough sleeping. This could be emergency beds or an assessment hub. Where immediate provision is not available, people sleeping rough should be given information about local services in order to access support at the next available opportunity.

6. Recording the data

- On the night of the count, counters should record people rough sleeping on the Rough Sleeping Count Form. Copies of this form will be provided on the night or can be downloaded from: www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/counts-and-estimates-evaluating-extent-of-rough-sleeping
- Counters should record each individual person on a separate line on the form rather than simply write totals on the form, as this can't be verified as an accurate record. Alongside the single figure of people sleeping rough, basic demographic data on gender, age and nationality will be aggregated and sent to MHCLG. Individual data is not shared.
- The single figure and demographic data are submitted to MHCLG using the DELTA online system. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to submit their data by 14th December 2018.
- Information about each person sleeping rough may be recorded from previous knowledge of the person and their sleeping site.

- If an individual is not known, and where it is safe to do so, the counter should attempt to wake each individual to record their details. If it is not possible to do this, gender and an estimate of age can still be recorded from observations where the person is visible. Even if the counter cannot observe, or establish, any details about the individual (for example because they are unable to wake them and they are covered up) they should still record them individually. It may be helpful to request the assistance of the local police in waking individuals who counters are unable to wake safely, bearing in mind that people might not appreciate being disturbed.
- It is important to try and establish the identity of a person sleeping rough on the night of the count as this will help with follow-up and referrals following the count. However, note the data protection rules below.
- If people sleeping rough are supported with any intervention on the night of the count (including referral to No Second Night Out assessment provision, use of the emergency services or referral to cold weather or other emergency provision) they should still be counted as bedded down at the point the count was undertaken and recorded within the single figure.
- As Counters are likely to come across people who do not speak English as their first language, a language ID chart for people to point at their preferred language can be found on the Refugee Council Website. Copies should be provided for all counters:
http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk/top_navigation/Language_ID_chart.htm
- Details on individuals should be kept strictly confidential and not revealed to anyone outside of the count. It is important to give as much information as possible on the location of people sleeping rough to help with planning services in future.
- Rough Sleeping Count Forms must be completed on the night of the count, shown to the Verifier and returned to the Count Coordinator on return to the base of operations.

7. Data sharing

- As part of the count, it must be made clear to individuals that they are providing their personal details (name, date of birth) voluntarily, and are not obliged to provide them. If a person refuses to give their personal information, they can still be recorded as sleeping rough, and demographic information including gender, nationality, and ethnicity can be recorded.
- The Count Coordinator should provide you with copies of a data protection statement on the night of the count, in case it is requested or to assist you to answer any questions.

8. Checking the results

A debriefing meeting will be held on your return from the count and the Verifier will ask about your team's count. Counters should return the forms to the Coordinator, including those with a nil count. The debriefing meeting will check that all areas were covered and that there was no double counting. It's also an opportunity to add any further information about individuals seen bedded down who are known to other workers.

If you have any concerns about how the count was conducted, or how decisions were made to include or exclude individuals, please speak to the Homeless Link Verifier on the night or contact Homeless Link at the earliest opportunity following the count: verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk

9. Avoiding publicity

Please keep information about the time and date of the count confidential. Publicity can worry some people sleeping rough and they may avoid their usual areas on the night if they know a count is taking place.

Homeless Link code of conduct for count verifiers

Introduction

Counts are verified to ensure that they have been carried out safely and in accordance with the Homeless Link toolkit. Verifiers are trained and supported by Homeless Link.

Count verifiers are associates, employees or representatives of Homeless Link or its partner voluntary sector organisations, and are acting as representatives of Homeless Link.

It is important that Homeless Link's good reputation is maintained and that our members, partners, stakeholders and the public can rely on all people representing Homeless Link to act with respect and integrity and in keeping with our values. Homeless Link therefore believes that the conduct of its representatives should be of a high standard. The purpose of this code is to provide clear guidance on the standards expected from everyone.

No code of conduct can cover all circumstances that may arise. The code tries to emphasise positive standards of performance and behaviour rather than making a list of rules or possible breaches. However, all representatives should be aware that breaches of the code will be investigated and action will be taken where considered appropriate.

Verification of rough sleeping counts

- Verifiers must deliver verification of the count, as set out in the toolkit, to a high standard
- Ensure conduct reflects Homeless Link's equal opportunities policy and that they are in line with the aims and mission of Homeless Link
- Ensure you have fully read and understood the current definitions and toolkit
- Speak to Homeless Link's Counts & Estimates Project Manager and the Count Coordinator at the relevant local authority before the night of the count and brief them afterwards by sending the completed Count Verification Form.
- Notify Homeless Link's Project Manager if you have any problems communicating with the Count Coordinator or confirming the details of the count.

Expenses

- Verifiers are either acting in a voluntary capacity or are employed by Homeless Link to verify the count. The local authority does not pay the verifier for their service, other than travel from the count.
- Homeless Link will pay expenses for verifiers and, where agreed in advance, reimburse their time. The Local Authority is expected to arrange and pay for verifiers' travel back from the count e.g. taxi to home/hotel.
- Where the verifier requires time off following the count this should be agreed in advance between the verifier and their line manager where they are employed. It is not the responsibility of Homeless Link.

Attendance and cancellation

- Verifiers must confirm the date, time and venue for the count in advance with the Coordinator and notify Homeless Link if this has not been done two weeks before the count.
- Verifiers are expected to arrive earlier than other counters, at a time agreed with the Coordinator, to talk through the plan for the count. Punctuality is expected, barring exceptional circumstances.
- Verifiers must ensure that they make every effort to attend the count once agreed with Homeless Link and the local authority. If they are unable to attend due to serious unforeseen circumstances, then they must inform the local authority and Homeless Link at the earliest possible opportunity so that an alternative verifier can be found.

Violence, harassment and bullying

Homeless Link will not tolerate any of the following forms of behaviour:

- Acts of violence, threatening behaviour, verbal abuse or malicious cruelty by any employee towards a colleague, representative of a member agency or working contact.
- Bullying, defined as unwanted behaviour that a person finds intimidating, undermining, belittling, embarrassing, humiliating or offensive and which is unacceptable by normal standards and is disadvantageous to the individual. Bullying may be persistent or an isolated incident.
- Harassment, a form of bullying which is usually motivated by a dislike on the part of a perpetrator of one or more perceived characteristics of the victim. Harassment is defined in discrimination legislation as 'unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the complainant's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment for the complainant'. This would include harassment on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, gender reassignment, or any other grounds.

Honesty, integrity and avoidance of conflicts of interest

- High standards of integrity and honesty are expected at all times. This includes being truthful and honest when asked appropriate questions about any matters which have a bearing on you as a representative of Homeless Link.
- Documents and records should be completed truthfully and accurately.
- Authority should not be abused in relation to a colleague, client or applicant for Homeless Link's positions. You should not use your official position improperly for private gain or for the gain of relatives and associates.
- Conflict of interests arises when a representative has a financial or personal interest, kinship or relationship, or engages in any activity (paid or unpaid) which could:
 - enable him/her to secure some personal advantage (other than salary) or advantage for a close relative as a result of his/her representing Homeless Link;
 - influence his/her judgement in relation to the performance of his/her duties on behalf of Homeless Link. This includes making decisions that are not in the interests of Homeless Link;
 - influence their ability to make a contribution to the work of the organisation;
 - inhibit free discussion;
 - give the impression that Homeless Link has acted improperly; or
 - have an impact on the reputation of Homeless Link.

For a conflict of interest to arise, the advantage does not have to be realised. You have a duty to be aware of and declare any interests or potential conflict of interests and to take steps to resolve any conflicts that may arise.

- You should not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your verification activity.

Alcohol and drugs

- You should not be under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs during the count and verification process. Representatives on prescribed medication should inform the local authority if they have been prescribed medication which may affect their performance or other people's safety. There may be times when verifiers need to use non-prescription medication such as painkillers or anti-histamines, in which case you are responsible for exercising caution in taking such medication and making sure that the performance of your duties or the integrity of Homeless Link is not detrimentally affected.
- Taking or possessing illegal drugs whilst carrying out verification duties is prohibited.

Health and safety

- It is the statutory duty of all representatives to take reasonable care for their own and colleagues' health and safety and to co-operate with the local authority, to enable its statutory duties to be performed. Full health and safety guidelines should be made available to you.
- It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with and comply with the Health & Safety guidance in the toolkit for the count.

Diversity and equality

- Homeless Link wholeheartedly supports diversity and the principle of equal opportunities and as such opposes all forms of unfair discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, age, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, Aids or HIV status, current or past experience of homelessness, marital status or disability. This is not an exhaustive list.
- We expect all representatives to create an environment which is supportive of everyone and does not illegally or unfairly discriminate against any employee or client on the grounds of that person's race, gender, marital status, religion, disability, age, sexuality or HIV status, or any other form of unfair discrimination.

Confidentiality

- Details of individuals should be kept strictly confidential and not revealed to anyone outside of the project team. The verification form must be completed on the night of the count and returned to the count coordinator within 24 hours.
- Please keep information about the time and date of the count confidential. Publicity can worry some people sleeping rough and they may avoid their usual areas on the night if they know a count is taking place, and not be counted as a result.

FAQs for count verifiers

Who should lead on planning a count?

Each local authority should have a lead responsible for managing the process. They may delegate the detailed management to a Count Coordinator, who might be the local authority rough sleeping coordinator, Housing Options manager or outreach team leader.

The role of the Verifier is to observe the count and ask questions, not to take responsibility for how it is organised. Additional support/guidance in planning the count can be requested from Homeless Link in advance of the count, but will only be provided in a small number of cases and not by volunteers.

What if there are unusual circumstances that may impact on numbers?

Unusual and unforeseen circumstances may impact on numbers. Unusual circumstances could include extreme weather conditions – such as activation of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), heavy rains or flooding – or manmade events such as riots or protests.

If the planned count coincides with unusual circumstances, in particular the operation of SWEP, the Count Coordinator in consultation with the Verifier and Homeless Link's Project Manager may decide on one of the following courses of action:

- Postpone the count – it must still take place before 30th November
- Proceed with the count and submit an estimate based on actual numbers counted plus only those that have been placed into formal Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provision on the day of the count by the local authority and would otherwise have been sleeping rough (if an estimate is submitted on the basis of a count alongside actual number placed in SWEP, information is checked to ensure that only those that would otherwise have been rough sleeping on that night are counted).
- Submit an estimate based on a single typical night where cold weather provision or SWEP are not in force, in which case the Coordinator needs to follow Homeless Link's guidance on the Estimates process.

What contact should I have with the local authority prior to the count?

Verifiers are trained and supported by Homeless Link. We ask that local authorities or the Count Coordinator contact Homeless Link one month before the planned count date to book a verifier. We ask that the local authority provides you with information about the date, time and location of the count at least 3 weeks prior. We suggest that you clarify the exact date with the local authority to avoid misunderstanding, always using 'night into morning' to ensure clarity (e.g. night of 15th into morning of 16th October). If you do not hear from the local authority, please inform Homeless Link: verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk

Should I count on the night?

It is helpful if the Verifier doubles up as a counter to observe the way the counting is carried out. However, if the verifier is counting, then the Count Coordinator must ensure that the segment you are assigned to is local to the meeting/debriefing venue so that you are in the first team to return. The Verifier must be present to observe receipt of the Rough Sleeping Count Form from each returning count team. You should remind the Coordinator of this requirement prior to the night of the count and check on arrival – it is often overlooked and makes it harder to do a full verification.

How should counting take place in areas that are difficult to access?

Local authorities are asked to plan ahead to gain access to non-public areas (e.g. hospital or college grounds, parks, building stairwells) on the night of the count if these are places where people may be bedded down. In previous years some local authorities have reacted to intelligence and obtained keys to areas such as stairwells where people were likely to be sleeping, which led to a thorough and robust examination of these areas. This is an issue that the Verifier should raise with the Count Coordinator either prior to or on the night of the count to ask what action has been taken. The Count Coordinator should involve the police or other local partners, such as park rangers, to gain access to areas and ensure a robust count.

If areas cannot be accessed, but there appears to be evidence of rough sleeping from other sources (i.e. encampments in rural areas or derelict buildings), then you may want to recommend that the local authority seeks advice from Homeless Link about whether the local authority should plan in advance to produce an estimate that will be a more accurate figure. If this information comes to light during the count, take notes and consult Homeless Link before submitting your verification form to the local authority Coordinator.

If an intervention takes place for someone sleeping rough on the night, are they still counted?

It is strongly recommended that prior arrangements are made to ensure that emergency beds or access to an assessment hub are available for people found on the count who express the desire to move off the streets. If people sleeping rough are supported with any intervention on the night of the count (including referral to No Second Night Out assessment provision, use of the emergency services or referral to SWEP or other emergency provision) then they should still be counted as bedded down at the point the count was undertaken and recorded within the single figure.

When do I fill out the Count Verification Form?

You should note the single figure and demographic data (see form below) on the night, along with key information about the process. Although you will be asking questions and observing on the night of the count, we advise that you finish completing the Count Verification Form the day following the count, to allow you to reflect on the process.

You should return the completed form to the Count Coordinator in order to verify that the count has been carried out safely and in accordance with this toolkit, and that the figure is an accurate reflection of people sleeping rough seen on the night of the count. Copy it to the Homeless Link Counts & Estimates Project Manager: verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk

What should I do if I have any concerns about the conduct of the count or the accuracy of the single figure?

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the count, please raise this with the Count Coordinator on the night if you feel comfortable doing so. Record your concerns on the Count Verification Form and discuss the issue with Homeless Link's Counts & Estimates Project Manager before submitting the form.

Count Verification Form 2018 - verifier use only

1. This form should be completed and returned by the Homeless Link Verifier to the Local Authority Count Coordinator and Homeless Link's Counts & Estimates Project Manager on the day after the count:
verifiers@homelesslink.org.uk
2. The Local Authority Count Coordinator must submit their verified single figure and demographic data - as shown below - to MHCLG using the DELTA online system by 14th December 2018.
3. Verifiers should provide as much detail as possible based on conversations with the coordinator and counting teams, their observation of the count, and any local knowledge. Extend the form as needed.

Local authority		
Homeless Link Verifier		
Date of count		
Time of count (start - finish)		
Single figure of rough sleepers counted		
Demographic breakdown Please note the reason(s) why information could not be confirmed	Gender	
	Women	
	Men	
	Third gender	
	Not known / prefer not to disclose	
	Age	
	Under-18	
	18-25	
	Over 25	
	Not known / prefer not to disclose	
	Nationality	
	UK national	
EU national (excluding UK)		
Non-EU national		
Not known / prefer not to disclose		
Were there any gaps in the data? If yes, note why	Y/ N	

<p>How many people were found in transitional public spaces (such as hospital waiting rooms, stations, public transport) who did not meet the definition?</p> <p>Please describe the locations and note why they didn't meet the definition</p>	<p>Details:</p>
<p>Why did the LA decide to carry out a count, as opposed to an estimate involving local partners?</p>	<p>Details:</p>
<p>Was this year's methodology different to last year?</p> <p>Please note the reasons for any change, and its impact.</p>	<p>Yes / No <i>delete as appropriate</i></p> <p>Details:</p>
<p>Did any activity, incidents or circumstances affect the count?</p> <p>Please describe any issues.</p>	<p>Yes / No <i>delete as appropriate</i></p> <p>Details:</p>
<p>Was the count carried out in accordance with the guidance and definition, including involvement of independent partners and access to all known rough sleeping sites?</p> <p>Please note any issues or examples of good practice.</p> <p>Did anyone with lived experience take part? Give details.</p>	<p>Yes / No / Partly <i>delete as appropriate</i></p> <p>Details:</p>
<p>Are you able to confirm that the count was carried out safely and in accordance with the toolkit?</p> <p>Please note any concerns or good practice.</p>	<p>Yes / No / Partly <i>delete as appropriate</i></p> <p>Details:</p>

<p>How does this year compare with 2017?</p> <p>What measures has the LA put in place to respond to rough sleeping? What impact have they had?</p>	<p>Details:</p>
<p>Were there any non-Local Authority funded services, such as night shelters, open during the count?</p> <p>How many people were housed by services not funded by the Local Authority?</p>	<p>Yes / No / Not sure <i>delete as appropriate</i></p> <p>Details:</p>
<p>Based on your conversations and observation, what would make a difference to reduce or end rough sleeping in this area?</p>	<p>Details:</p>

EU countries:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Republic of Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- UK