

# Rough Sleeping Snapshot Estimates 2021 FAQ

Some common scenarios and how to broach them

**Produced by**  
National Practice Development Team

**Acknowledgements**  
With thanks to MHCLG

**Published**  
September 2021

## Let's end homelessness together

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

© Homeless Link 2020. All rights reserved. Homeless Link is a charity no. 1089173 and a company no. 04313826.

## Count Based Estimate and Spotlight Count Scenarios

### What about individuals who are known to sleep rough but not seen bedded down during the street count?

#### Scenario 1

A group of counters return from their patch, including members of the local outreach team. They have not counted any rough sleepers on the patch. The outreach team, who are familiar with the area, expected to see one particular client at his regular site. The outreach team ask if they can go out a little later to see if this particular rough sleeper has bedded down.

- Yes, the count team could go out again to revisit the sleep site if they are able to return before the last count group return,
- However, remind the counters that unless an individual is seen bedded down they cannot be counted - refer back to the rough sleeping definition
- Think about whether there has been any pre-count activity e.g. by police or street cleaning moving rough sleepers on or clearing sleeping sites. Was the person the outreach team expected to see moved on earlier in the evening?
- Consider the timing of the count, perhaps starting later in future could give a better chance of counting people when bedded down, e.g. 2am – 4am, rather than starting at midnight

#### Scenario 2

A group of counters return and report a row of tents in their patch. They have included 5 people on their form because they spoke to them a few times earlier in the week. They didn't make contact with people in the tents during the count because they were worried one person might become aggressive.

- Information gathered outside the count can't be used in place of seeing, or making contact with, people on the night
- Tents cannot be counted as a proxy for people who are not seen but presumed to be sleeping in them
- However, people in tents don't have to be seen. But they must speak to the counting team in order to be included
- If the team knew that there was a safety risk, this should have informed the choice of approach
- An evidence-based estimate might have been appropriate if there was clear evidence who was in the tent but it wouldn't be safe to make contact during the night

## Homeless Link

### What about people seen bedding down after the count?

All count teams are back at the base and their count forms have been reviewed. One of the counters goes home, and calls shortly after to say they have seen 2 more people bedded down who weren't there earlier during the count.

- The count has to have a finish time and the extra 2 people can't be included as the count has ended
- The people might already have been included in the count at a different site
- It may be that the count started too early if people were not yet bedded down
- Consider the timing of the count, perhaps starting later in future could give a better chance of counting people when bedded down, e.g. 2am – 4am, rather than starting at midnight

### What if someone's characteristics aren't visible?

A count team finds someone who is covered up and doesn't wake in response to them. The person is breathing regularly. They can't work out gender, age or nationality.

- There is no requirement to wake people and people's need to rest should be respected!
- It's completely fine to record the person's demographics as 'not known'
- The Police could be asked to wake the person if necessary and if there are safety concerns?
- Ideally, an outreach team will look for them again next day to offer support

### What if SWEP is activated on the chosen 'typical night'?

On the "typical night" SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) is active and provision is available for all rough sleepers to come in off the streets.

- Conducting counts and/or estimate meetings earlier on in the snapshot estimates period - e.g. during October - may reduce risk of SWEP being active
- The count should be cancelled or rearranged. It could be unsafe to send count teams out in severe weather, and with SWEP activated it is no longer a typical night
- If the count *does* take place, the count figure can be used as intelligence for an evidence-based estimate. An estimate figure can be submitted for those counted and those accessing the SWEP provision

### What if individuals are seen and accommodated that evening, but before the count begins?

Counters decided to visit areas before midnight, and therefore before the start of the count, as part of a 'pre-count' to see who is out. Some individuals were found sleeping rough during this 'pre-count', were offered emergency accommodation and they accepted this offer. Others moved-on to sleeping sites that were hidden and inaccessible to the outreach team.

- Counts should not start before midnight and no one seen before this time would not normally be included in the snapshot estimate figure
- However, any individuals accommodated during a 'pre-count' may be required to be included in your final figure as they would have been counted if found later that night

## Homeless Link

- If outreach teams usually contact individuals during earlier evening ‘pre-counts’ because they are not visible at night, for example, then an evidence-based estimate including a spotlight count would be appropriate
- Pre-count activity creates a risk of disruption and Homeless Link may refuse to verify your count if it becomes clear that people who were sleeping rough during the pre-count are no longer visible (i.e. the pre-count moved them on, whether intentionally or not).

## What if the Count Coordinator is unwell / has to self-isolate?

The count has been planned and all preparations are in place for the ‘typical’ night. However, the count coordinator has suddenly had to [self-isolate](#).

- Consider changing the date of your ‘typical’ night chosen – if there is still time during the allocated October/November period
- A deputy coordinator can take over, as long as they are fully prepared and able to safely deliver the count
- Or, change your approach to an evidence-based estimate if you are unable to change the ‘typical’ night date and there is nobody else to deliver the count safely.

## What about individuals in emergency accommodation?

‘Everybody In’ style accommodation, or similar emergency accommodation, is operating on the ‘typical’ night. Individuals have been housed in this style of accommodation and a partner agency asks if these individuals should be counted towards the snapshot figure.

- These individuals will not be counted towards the final snapshot figure
- Only those individuals found rough sleeping on the ‘typical’ night or those individuals thought to be rough sleeping will be counted towards the final figure
- This information is collected separately.

## What if there’s another lockdown / local restrictions?

A local Covid 19 restrictions/lockdown will be in place on the ‘typical’ night and could continue until 30 November. The count coordinator is concerned that it might not be possible to be verified by Homeless Link. What should you do?

- Consider changing your ‘typical’ night to a later date in the October/November period – taking into account possible length of lockdown
- If a new date is not possible, or the lockdown has continued until the new date, Homeless Link will verify remotely
- If remote verification is not possible due to insufficient evidence, then you may be unverified - MHCLG will note the impact of COVID-19 in the statistical release
- We will note on the verification form if your area was experiencing a local lockdown

## Homeless Link

### What if a volunteer is feeling unwell?

A volunteer counter reports mild symptoms that could be COVID-19. They are unsure if they have COVID-19 or a cold. They ask if they are still able to attend the count as they want to be a part of the process.

- The volunteer must not attend the count, even if symptoms are mild.
- The volunteer counters must follow government guidance on self-isolation
- The counters must also follow government guidance on testing
- The count coordinator must review the counting teams and ensure that there are enough individuals to cover the mapped out area on the 'typical' night
- Organise reserve teams to cover anyone who becomes unwell or needs to self-isolate.

## Evidence-based Estimate Meeting Scenarios

### What if partner agencies aren't able to provide evidence for the estimate meeting?

A number of partner agencies are not currently operating due to COVID-19, but they attend the online estimate meeting. During the online estimate meeting, the partner agencies explain that they have no current evidence about who is sleeping rough.

- Remind partner agencies leading up to the night on what intelligence/evidence is required for the estimate meeting
- Ask partner agencies to raise, at the earliest opportunity, if they are not operating and will not have this intelligence
- Invite partner agencies who will still be operating and will have robust intelligence (this could include outreach, council refuse teams, local businesses)
- If the LA and/or Homeless Link decide there is insufficient evidence to complete the process, then there might not be a final figure or the final figure might be unverified.

### What if we don't know where an individual is bedding down?

A homelessness service attends the estimate meeting with a list of individuals known to rough sleep and are accessing their services. Some of the individuals identified have not disclosed their sleeping sites.

- Remember that people have good reasons for sleeping in hidden locations and shouldn't be forced to do so
- Think about what circumstantial evidence there is that someone is having to sleep rough (habits, luggage, use of other services)
- Promote StreetLink before the 'typical' night and look at referrals to identify rough sleeping hotspots
- Engage local agencies, services and businesses to find out about rough sleeping hot spots which can be considered alongside voluntary sector intelligence during the estimate meeting

### What if an individual has a current tenancy?

An individual identified during the estimate meeting is found to hold a current tenancy. Should they be excluded from the estimate figures?

- Look at what evidence there is to suggest that the individual was rough sleeping rather than in their property on the night of the estimate. Were they seen bedded down? Were they with known associates/friends?
- Check the definition of rough sleeping and take into account the time they were seen as they might be involved in street activity but not sleeping rough
- If, on the chosen typical night, the individual was seen bedded down, as per the definition of rough sleeping provided in the Snapshot Estimate Toolkit 2021, they should be included in the final estimate figure.

### How do we evaluate the evidence at an estimate meeting?

A homelessness organisation presents a large list of individuals at the estimate meeting but without robust evidence that those identified are currently rough sleeping. What evidence can be used to establish if they were sleeping rough on the chosen typical night?

- Clarify in advance with partners what evidence is needed at an evidence-based estimate meeting for the meeting to be productive (see Rough Sleeping Estimates Toolkit 2021 p.25 'Evidence of Rough Sleeping')
- Can services ask clients for more information on sleep sites ahead of the estimate night?
- Is there a list of hostel residents and people turned away by hostels/shelters on that night?
- Were there any hotspot counts/visits on the night of/morning after estimate, including by park wardens
- Can the police or probation service provide intelligence on who was in custody that night and therefore not rough sleeping?
- Are other support services able to contribute intelligence?
- Can further evidence can be sourced following the estimate meeting but before a verification call?



## **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.

## **Let's end homelessness together**

Homeless Link  
Minories House, 2-5 Minories  
London EC3N 1BJ

020 7840 4430

[www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk)

Twitter: @Homelesslink

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/homelesslink](https://www.facebook.com/homelesslink)

© Homeless Link 2020. All rights reserved.  
Homeless Link is a charity no. 1089173 and  
a company no. 04313826.