
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
(by email)

21 July 2022

Dear Dame Meg,

OSR review: support for people rough sleeping in England management information

I am writing regarding the publication of new DLUHC data on support for people rough sleeping in England¹, which the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has now reviewed against the pillars of the Code of Practice for Statistics. I thought the Committee would want to be aware of our findings, which were published yesterday^{2,3}, following discussion of the need for better data to inform planning to end rough sleeping in England in your 2021 report: *COVID-19: housing people sleeping rough*⁴.

OSR welcomes the publication of these data. They offer enhanced insights into the numbers of people supported into emergency, and longer-term move on accommodation. A new monthly snapshot series also fills a longstanding gap for year-round rough sleeping estimates. OSR also supports the aims set out in the bulletin to: *'provide a fuller picture of the dynamic and seasonal nature of rough sleeping'... 'driving better outcomes through increased data and transparency'*. This approach is very much in line with OSR's published guidance on intelligent transparency⁵. However, we find that the value of these data would be enhanced by DLUHC analysts publishing them as official statistics and at more timely and regular intervals throughout the year.

OSR has previously carried out various pieces of work to support the trustworthiness, quality and value of homelessness and rough sleeping statistics in England. These include, most recently, a full National Statistics assessment of DLUHC's Statutory Homelessness

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/annex-a-support-for-people-sleeping-rough-in-england-2021-not-official-statistics>

² <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/ed-humpherson-to-sandra-tudor-support-for-people-rough-sleeping-management-information>

³ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/ed-humpherson-to-jeremy-pocklington-support-for-people-rough-sleeping-management-information>

⁴ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmpubacc/934/93402.htm>

⁵ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/regulatory-guidance-for-the-transparent-release-and-use-of-statistics-and-data/>

statistics in 2021⁶; a compliance check of DLUHC's rough sleeping snapshot statistics in 2020⁷, and an intervention earlier that year, to set out our expectation that when rough sleeping data is used publicly by ministers or officials, they should be made equally available to all in an accessible form⁸. We have also intervened to seek assurances around the comparability of rough sleeping statistics following many local authorities changing their data collection approach between 2017 and 2018⁹, and in response to the Rough Sleeping Initiative evaluation¹⁰, which investigated these concerns.

Notably, our 2015 assessment of DLUHC's statutory homelessness and rough sleeping statistics¹¹ required the statisticians to make urgent improvements to present the statistics in their proper context and provide a more coherent picture of homelessness¹². These findings also informed their complete redevelopment, following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017¹³. And given the public and emotive nature of homelessness and the rough sleeping topic, we have also carried out a number of interventions in response to public requests around the presentation or use of these statistics^{14,15,16,17}.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss either this latest review, or any of our previous work to support improvements to homelessness and rough sleeping evidence; my team and I are also very happy to answer any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

⁶ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/assessment-of-compliance-with-the-code-of-practice-for-statistics-statistics-on-statutory-homelessness-in-england/>

⁷ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/mark-pont-to-sandra-tudor-compliance-check-of-rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england/>

⁸ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/ed-humpherson-to-jeremy-pocklington-management-information-on-rough-sleepers/>

⁹ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/comparability-of-rough-sleeping-statistics/>

¹⁰ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/rough-sleeping-initiative-evaluation/>

¹¹ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-on-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-in-england-department-for-communities-and-local-government/>

¹² <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-statistics/>

¹³ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/response-on-changes-to-statutory-homelessness-statistics/>

¹⁴ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/response-on-statutory-homelessness-statistics/>

¹⁵ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/rough-sleeping-statistics/>

¹⁶ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/homelessness-statistics-3/>

¹⁷ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/statistics-on-housing-and-homelessness/>