

## 1 Summary

1.1 The ongoing need for people to sleep rough on the streets of the UK indicates an unacceptable societal failure. Recent homelessness projections commissioned by Crisis suggest that the scale of rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness is worsening. However, Crisis believes that homelessness can be ended for good and is developing a long-term plan this year to set out what needs to happen to end homelessness across Britain. There are specific challenges in Wales in rough sleeping but opportunities to take a lead in tackling it, drawing on the best evidence about what works.

## 2. Evidence of the scale and impact of rough sleeping

- 2.1 There has been a clear rise in recent years in rough sleeping in Wales. While the precise scale of the increase is unclear, research commissioned by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates an increase of between 16 to 30 per cent over the year to 2016.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 On average, it was estimated in England that preventing homelessness for one year would result in a reduction in public expenditure of £9,266 per person. The potential saving could be estimated as being as high as £796,000.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.3 People sleeping on the street in England and Wales are almost 17 times more likely to have been victims of violence. More than one in three people

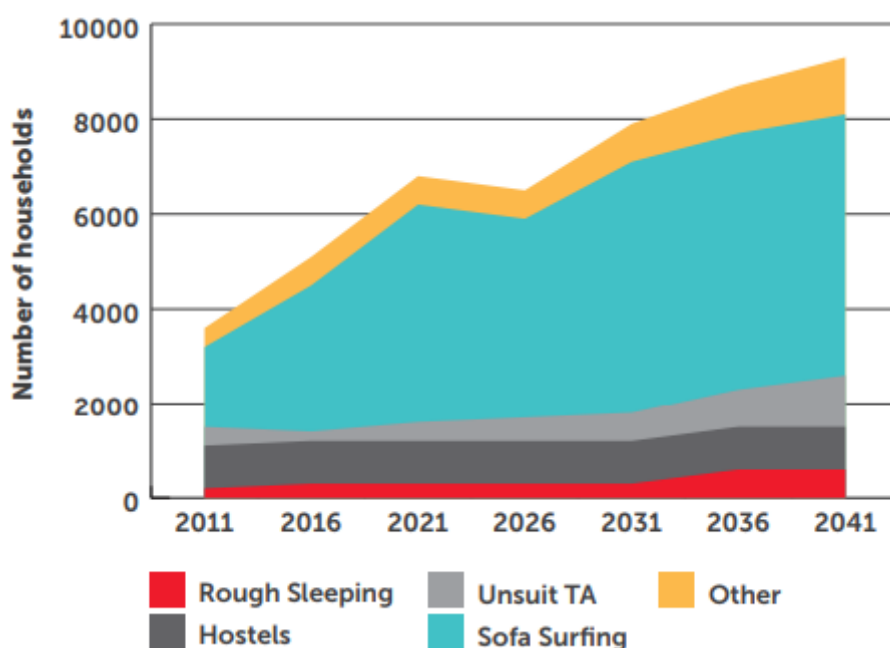
<sup>1</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. & Wood, J. (2017) *The Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis - <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/wales/the-homelessness-monitor-wales-2017/> There are further Welsh Government official figures for the year to 2017, to be published in early February after this paper was written. A Welsh Government action plan on rough sleeping is also expected around the same time.

<sup>2</sup> Pleace, N. & Culhane, D.P. (2016) *Better than Cure? Testing the case for Enhancing Prevention of Single Homelessness in England*. London: Crisis - [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20682/crisis\\_better\\_than\\_cure\\_es\\_2016.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20682/crisis_better_than_cure_es_2016.pdf)

sleeping rough have been deliberately hit or kicked or experienced some other form of violence while homeless.<sup>3</sup>

- 2.4 Research that projects future homelessness in Wales and Britain shows increases in rough sleeping and other types of homelessness:<sup>4</sup>

Graph 1: future projected homeless households by type in Wales



### 3. Comments on the committee's terms of reference points

#### Effectiveness of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act in preventing rough sleeping

- 3.1 The Crisis and Joseph Rowntree Foundation's latest homelessness monitor report for Wales found the "overwhelming consensus" is that the new prevention system brought about by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has had many positive effects in preventing homelessness. Around two-thirds of households are seeing their homelessness successfully prevented. However, the report estimated an increase of between 16 to 30 per cent in rough sleeping over the year to 2016.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.2 The monitor also found a wider group of households that are legally homeless but their problems are 'unsuccessfully relieved' by local authority assistance and furthermore they are deemed 'non-priority need' cases. In

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, B. & Albanese, F. (2016) *"It's no life at all": Rough sleepers' experiences of violence and abuse on the streets of England and Wales*. London: Crisis - <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/its-no-life-at-all-2016/>

<sup>4</sup> Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain*, London: Crisis.

<sup>5</sup> Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017, p57

2016-17 there were 1,233 households in this group. In one of the interviews that informed the monitor report a respondent said:

“the legislation isn’t designed to tackle those very complex, very difficult, very, very confusing cases that do exist, and it’s those people who are going to be through the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping.”  
*Voluntary sector key informant, 2017*

- 3.3 The legislation in Wales gives no right to housing for rough sleepers besides the requirement for local authorities to take ‘reasonable steps to help secure accommodation’. An international evidence review Crisis commissioned commented that “...the absence of a right to temporary accommodation and support for rough sleepers, as there is in Scotland, has proven to limit any positive impacts on rough sleepers”.<sup>6</sup>

#### Scale of rough sleeping in Wales and the adequacy of data:

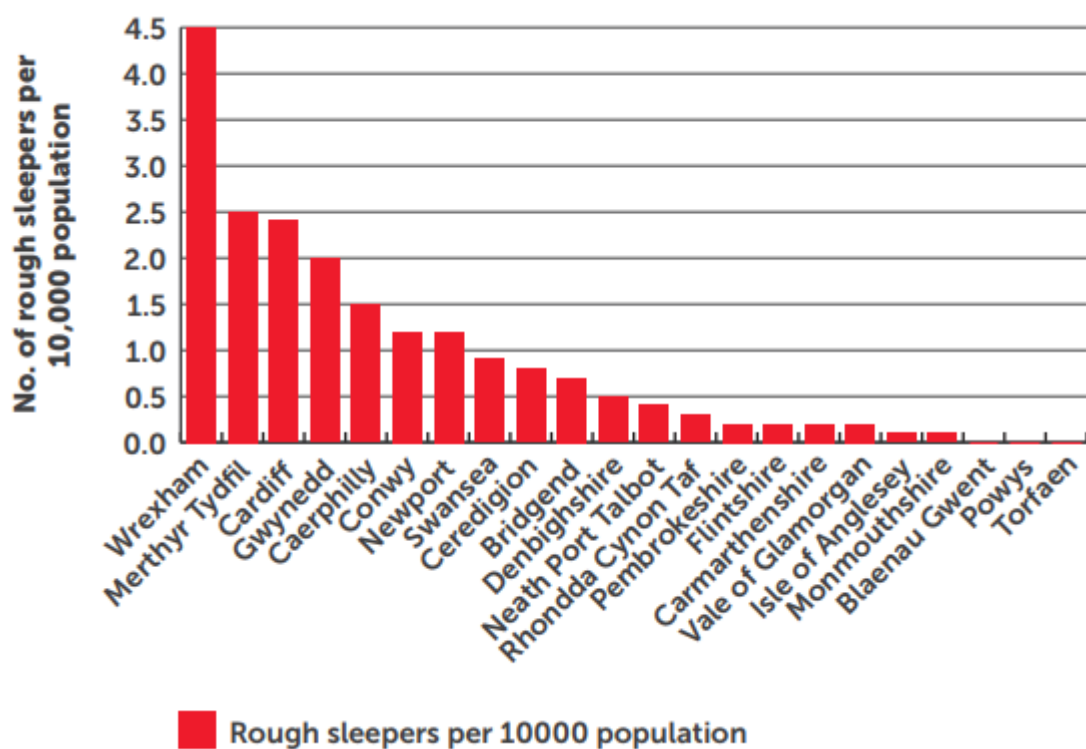
- 3.4 There is still a need for further data that are both timely and cover a wider a geographic area in Wales and that follows an individual through the homelessness system. This would help establish the true scale but also better understand what assistance the individual has had access to and the extent to which people are experiencing rough sleeping multiple times after receiving help and interventions to address their homelessness.
- 3.5 The local authority survey that informed the homelessness monitor report also found that just over half of authorities surveyed (10 out of 19) believed that rough sleeper numbers in their area had risen in the previous year.<sup>7</sup> See Graph 1 for the rough sleeping rate per local authority, using the data published in 2017 for the previous year, and Graph 3 for local authority perceptions of homelessness levels by broad rural/urban type.

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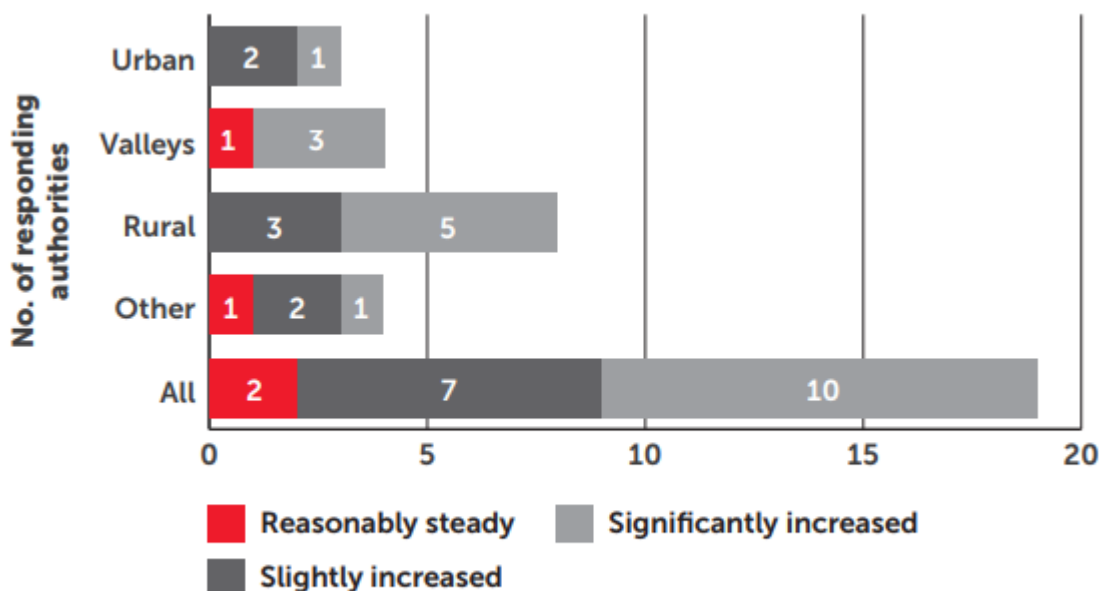
<sup>6</sup> Mackie, P., Johnsen, S., and Wood, J. (2017) *Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review*. Crisis: London, p.4

<sup>7</sup> *Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*, p.57

Graph 2: rough sleeping rate (per 10k population) by LA



Graph 3: Local authority perceptions on change in overall homelessness demand 2015–2017 – breakdown by LA type



Source: LA online survey

- 3.6 We note also that Welsh Government is working with The Wallich to develop a system for improved measurement of rough sleeping throughout the year, which will be very welcome.

Causes of rough sleeping and the apparent recent increases in rough sleeping

- 3.7 The lack of detailed data makes it difficult to fully explain the causes behind the apparent increase. However, the survey and interview work found a range of causes mentioned, for example:

*“An increase of European Economic Area (EEA) nationals [ineligible for mainstream welfare benefits], welfare reform, budget cuts to support services, [and] clients arriving from other boroughs due to lack of provision in their own area...”<sup>8</sup>*  
(Urban local authority respondent, 2017)

- 3.8 Looking forward, Crisis’ homelessness projection numbers published in 2017 found that all forms of core homelessness, including rough sleeping, were projected to get worse in the coming decades across Britain as a whole and in each individual nation.
- 3.9 The projections research found the most important driver of homelessness in all its forms is *poverty*. Other drivers include: availability and affordability of accommodation; the extent to which prevention measures are used; and the demographics of people experiencing homelessness. Using a series of ‘what if’ scenarios the research showed that cessation of welfare cuts and that focused prevention activity can make an impact on levels of core homelessness but this is limited if not accompanied by investment in affordable and accessible housing supply.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.10 Cymorth research into the causes of homelessness found that 33 per cent of homeless people surveyed stated their current homelessness was caused, at least in part, due to a health problem (including drug/alcohol problems although almost two-thirds of people reported using neither drugs nor alcohol).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Homelessness Monitor: Wales 2017*, p57

<sup>9</sup> Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain*, London: Crisis.

<sup>10</sup> Cymorth Cymru. (2017) *Health matters: the health needs of homeless people in Wales*.  
[http://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/files/1515/0108/8821/Cymorth\\_Cymru\\_Health\\_Matters\\_report.pdf](http://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/files/1515/0108/8821/Cymorth_Cymru_Health_Matters_report.pdf)

The effectiveness and availability of services including emergency accommodation; and the steps to prevent and tackle rough sleeping in Wales

- 3.11 Crisis has proposed a 'housing-led' model in which everyone experiencing or threatened with any kind of homelessness is resettled as quickly as possible into their own tenancies, with support provided where needed. Housing First is a central feature of this housing-led system.
- 3.12 Crisis commissioned a review of international evidence (around 500 published studies and interviews with 11 homelessness experts) by Cardiff University and Heriot-Watt University to look at what works to end rough sleeping.<sup>11</sup> The review suggests a new approach to rough sleeping with five key principles:
- *Recognise heterogeneity* – of individual rough sleepers' housing and support needs and their different entitlements to publicly funded support. Local housing markets and rough sleeper population profiles will also vary across the UK.
  - *Take swift action* – to prevent or quickly end street homelessness, through interventions such as No Second Night Out (NSNO), thereby reducing the number of rough sleepers who develop complex needs and potentially become entrenched.
  - *Employ assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer* – by actively identifying and reaching out to rough sleepers and offering suitable accommodation.
  - *Be housing-led* – offering swift access to settled housing including the use of Housing First
  - *Offer person-centred support and choice* – via a client-centred approach based on cross-sector collaboration and commissioning. Personalised Budgets are a good example of this.
- 3.13 Public and media discussion about emergency accommodation in Wales has often turned to homeless people's attitudes towards conditions in hostels and shelters. For example, one respondent in the Crisis/Joseph Rowntree Foundation homelessness monitor said:
- “...people sometimes don't like the emergency accommodation that's on offer, so some of the hostels... are quite scary environments, and quite often people say, ' Well I'd rather sleep on the streets than go in there because it's really dodgy.'...” (Voluntary sector key informant, 2017)

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<sup>11</sup> Mackie, P., Johnsen, S., and Wood, J. (2017) *Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review*. Crisis: London

3.14 While there is clearly a role for suitably used emergency accommodation the international evidence review for Crisis has observed that international homelessness experts conclude "...shelters should only have a role if stays could be limited to exceptionally short periods..."<sup>12</sup> Providing temporary accommodation for people with nowhere safe to stay is a key part of the current homelessness prevention system.

## About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We work in England, Scotland and Wales providing support for homeless people and campaigning for change. Our team in South Wales provides education, training and support for homeless people. We carry out research to understand homelessness in Wales and campaign for the changes needed to end it for good.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ending rough sleeping: what works?* p.xi