
Director General for Regulation

Jeremy Pocklington
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
(by email)

2 June 2020

Dear Mr Pocklington

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION ON ROUGH SLEEPERS

In a [statement](#) on 18 May we set out our expectation that when management information is used publicly by ministers or officials to inform Parliament, the media and the public, it should be available to all in an accessible form, with appropriate explanations of context and sources. We have seen repeated use of figures relating to rough sleepers and homeless people which the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) should ensure are published in a format which is available to all, with definitions and limitations explained.

During the Government's [daily coronavirus press conference](#) on 18 April the Communities Secretary announced that [plans to protect rough sleepers](#) had resulted in over 90 per cent being offered safe accommodation. A [press release](#) from MHCLG that same day put the number of rough sleepers helped during the pandemic as being over 5,400. We have seen these figures repeated several times, including in MHCLG press releases and in response to a [written parliamentary question](#) on the 18 May.

A further [MHCLG press release](#) on the 26 May quoted a figure of nearly 15,000 rough sleepers having been housed in emergency accommodation since the beginning of the pandemic, and later in the same press release the term 'almost 15,000 homeless people' was used.

We have seen these figures continue to be used and picked up widely in the media.

Currently, none of the underlying data and associated limitations have been published by MHCLG. We understand that you are intending to publish details of these data and would urge you to do so as soon as possible.

We appreciate the challenging environment your department is operating in and the need to manage the demand for up-to-date information. Given the impact that COVID-19 is having on the rough sleeping and homeless communities and the clear media and public interest in these figures, there is likely to be a continuing need for this information. Decisions on use of data such as those on rough sleeping, and the best approach to publication, should be informed by advice from your department's head of profession. A lack of transparency risks undermining public trust in the data, as well as the organisation producing the data.

To minimise confusion, the terms 'rough sleepers' and 'homeless' should also be clarified when referring to the numbers of people who have been housed in emergency accommodation, including whether the figure of 15,000 includes the wider homeless and rough sleeping population.

I am copying this letter to Sandra Tudor, Head of Profession for Statistics at MHCLG, and William Wragg MP, Chair of the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation