

Rt Hon John Healey MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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New data obtained from local authorities under the Freedom of Information Act have been published today by the BBC suggesting 28,000 people were sleeping rough across the UK over 12 months, of which nearly 25,000 were in England.

The Government's own figures, as published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in the latest publication 'Rough Sleeping Statistics: Autumn 2018, England', declare that the total number of people counted or estimated to be sleeping rough was just 4,677. You'll be aware that this data is gathered each year on a single night in the autumn.

In light of the new figures published today, it is clear that the use of the Government's own figures as the sole official measure of rough sleeping is seriously misleading as it dramatically undercounts the number of people sleeping rough.

You will know the long-standing concern about the Government's rough sleeping statistics, including from expert organisations and charities. For example, in 2018 the charity Crisis commissioned research which calculated that the number of people sleeping rough in England is more than double what Government statistics suggest.

The UKSA's own work in this area confirmed in 2015 that these rough sleeping statistics do not meet the standards required of National Statistics - trustworthiness, quality and value.

The Government's rough sleeping statistics are the sole statistics produced by Government on rough sleeping so they are naturally and inevitably assumed by the public to be an accurate portrayal of the scale of rough sleeping. This is clearly not the case, as the statistics are an unreliable undercount and are an unsound basis for public policy-making or debate. I would be grateful if you would investigate the flaws in these figures and how the Government's statistics could be improved so they better capture the level of rough sleeping in our country.

John Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Housing Secretary