

Guidance for non-outreach services

London Women's Census 2022



This guidance was created by SHP, Women's Development Unit (Solace and The Connection at St Martin's), and St Mungo's with the support of PraxisCollab.

BACKGROUND

Why is there a need for a women's census?

Research, lived experience and the experiences of services tell us that women are some of the most vulnerable within the rough sleeping and homeless population, yet we also know that women are under-represented in rough sleeping statistics and provision. Key data sources used to understand rough sleeping come from street count figures based on recording practices which are not adapted to women's patterns of homelessness. It follows that if services are commissioned based on this data, they will not be meeting the needs of those who are not captured in this data.

How can the survey be part of the solution?

The Life Off the Streets women's workstream has been tasked with organising a women's census which aims to better capture data about the extent of women's rough sleeping. The census has the support of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Councils and the Life Off the Streets Core Group.

The methodology used will differ from the normal rough sleeping snapshot count in recognition of the fact that women sleep rough less visibly and are less likely to come into contact with outreach teams as a result. This is the first undertaking of its kind on this scale and the aim is to gather more accurate data, in order to demonstrate the need for a strategic commitment to ending women's rough sleeping.

We know that women are less likely to come into contact with outreach services and also homelessness services for a wide range of reasons, including different patterns of homelessness and rough sleeping, because homelessness services are often accessed primarily by men, and due to lack of trust in services. Where women do access these services, it is likely to be at a later point. Women may therefore be more likely to access services which can support with other needs and where they may feel safer or have fewer or different access barriers. In this census, we are therefore asking such services to take part.

What will the census consist of?

The census will take place across a full working week ~~19th-23rd September~~. **Please note, the date of the census has changed and is now being delivered across the week of 3rd -7th October.**

With support from as many organisations as possible from across London, the census will consist of the following:

- A simple, anonymised survey to be completed by services likely to encounter women who are rough sleeping (e.g. day centres, women's services, drug and alcohol services, health services).
- Gender-informed outreach shifts across all participating London boroughs.
- Data collection from StreetLink and Housing Options.

The census is supported by researchers at PraxisCollab. Their expertise will ensure data can be analysed effectively, help minimise double counting and make recommendations for further work in this area.

GUIDANCE

Who should conduct the survey?

Women experiencing rough sleeping often become known to rough sleeping and outreach services at a late stage, for example following extended experiences of homelessness and rough sleeping, and when needs are often higher. Women can also lack trust in services, in particular statutory services, and may therefore be more likely to access support for needs other than homelessness or approach different types of services where they may feel safer. In order to better gain a picture of women's rough sleeping, it is therefore important to involve a wider range of services.

We are asking services from all London boroughs to take part in the survey, and for a range of services to take part, including homelessness support services, VAWG services, health teams, drug and alcohol services, community groups including faith groups and food banks, and migrant support services. Services do not need to be delivering homelessness support to take part and may instead be providing support for respondents' other needs.

The service should conduct the survey with respondents, rather than sending the survey link to potential respondents. This is important to ensure consistency of data collection and minimise double counting.

When should the survey be conducted?

The survey should be conducted throughout the census week, 3rd-7th October. Services should offer the survey to women who may be experiencing rough sleeping and use their service during that week, either in person or on the phone. Services should conduct the survey throughout the week during the service's usual opening times (whether during the day or night).

NB. Included in the survey is a question to ask if respondents have already taken part in the survey during the week to help minimise double counting where possible.

Who should services do the survey with?

The methodology of this census recognises that women who are rough sleeping may not be physically bedded down in a sleeping bag or visible during the night. We therefore aim to reach out to a broader range of women whose rough sleeping patterns and circumstances may look different.

Women's rough sleeping can be complicated and often not linear – for example, women may have a hostel bed space but spend some time sleeping rough with a partner, because they feel unsafe in the hostel or for other reasons. They may even have their own tenancy but not feel able to return to it due to certain risks or other reasons. Some women may be alternating between rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness or insecure housing e.g. sofa surfing, or staying with a dangerous partner.

The research survey will include introductory text and ask a clear, clarifying question of all women so they can determine whether or not the survey is relevant to them. By using this, workers will not need to determine someone's exact circumstances in order to proceed.

Depending on the service and your usual interactions with service users, workers may wish to enquire more gently about a service user's circumstances before introducing the census and offering to complete the survey with them. This could include talking about housing and homelessness more broadly, or introducing the census as a piece of research which the service is mentioning to all women.

The survey will include an introduction to be used by those disseminating the survey, for example:

'We are conducting research to get an accurate understanding of women's experiences of rough sleeping and improve support and services for women. By sleeping rough we mean having nowhere at all to go at night: for example sleeping outside on the ground or in a tent, sleeping in a doorway or stairwell,

sitting/sleeping in places which are open late or 24/7 (such as fast-food restaurants, bus and train stations), walking all night, sex working at night but not having anywhere to sleep during the day, travelling on transport all night, staying in derelict buildings. You might not do this every night, but it might be something you do on and off or have done within the last 3 months.

We have 10 short questions to ask you, if you did want to take part in the survey. It takes less than 5 minutes to complete and taking part is entirely voluntary.

Your data will be anonymised and you don't need to tell us your name. Researchers will collect the results and write a report about the numbers of women who were recorded in this survey. We will use this information to help improve support and accommodation services for women who are rough sleeping. If you wish to take part.

Thank you.

Is this something applies to you/your circumstances? [Y/N] Are you currently or have you recently been rough sleeping? [Y/N]

When did you last sleep rough? Last night/within the last week/1month/3 months]

What will the survey be like and how will the survey be done?

The survey will be on an online survey platform so workers can access it easily via smartphone or tablet when they are with women. Workers will be given a written explanation of the intention of the research to read through with women, which will make clear that participation is entirely voluntary, there are no identifying questions and the resulting research will be completely anonymised. Once the information has been given to the woman, she will decide if the survey is relevant for her and if she wants to take part.

The survey link will be available to access from the census website just before census week. Workers should conduct the survey with respondents, rather than providing the link to the respondent.

We suggest nominating a single point of contact for the service to ensure all relevant census information is downloaded and shared amongst all service staff and to ensure that all workers are able to offer the survey to all women service users. All workers conducting the survey should have read this guidance and have a full understanding of what the census is for and who should be included.

Depending on the type of service, services may also wish to nominate a particular person to conduct the survey with respondents. Other service staff could discuss the survey with service users, for example, and ask them to complete the survey with the nominated colleague.

The survey questions are being finalised by researchers, and are likely to include the following themes:

- Age on last birthday (this will not record DOB)
- Where they stayed the previous night
- Ethnicity
- Duration and frequency of homelessness
- Sex and gender
- Services they are accessing
- Whether they have already been asked these questions by someone else this week

NB. Anyone who identifies as a woman should be offered the opportunity to take part in this survey. Those who identify as non-binary and feel the study's gender themes are relevant to their experiences should be

offered the opportunity to take part in this survey. To note, the survey will include questions on sex and gender identity to increase specificity of the data collected and enable respondents to record their identity.

The question themes have been carefully selected from a range of possible options. Each option has been evaluated with the aim of achieving a careful balance of data quality, sensitivity and specific research needs of the women's census.

We hope that this census will begin to provide insights and evidence of the experiences of women who are rough sleeping, including the way different identities intersect with those experiences.

As well as asking women to complete the survey, what other information should workers have with them?

Discussing the survey with women may bring to light information or risks about a service user which were previously unknown to the service. Regardless, some women may wish to do the survey only and may not wish to discuss their circumstances further. Some women, however, may need direct assistance and advice and may not have discussed these circumstances with anyone before. You may also have concerns about a person's safety.

Services should follow any usual practices in providing information, advice and support, and safeguarding measures. This can be done following or before the survey, depending on the service users' wishes, needs or level of risk.

Appropriate support and advice may involve completing referrals to other services, using Duty to Refer processes, carrying out safeguarding practices or other useful forms of support. Services should remember to inform service users about any safeguarding processes they need to enact and secure consent for any processes or referrals which require it. Services should also consider where they may be able to take further action to support service users within their role, perhaps through working closely with other agencies, following up referrals made, or writing letters of support.

With the service user's permission, services may also be able to make a StreetLink referral as applicable.

Some service users may wish for or require limited support such as signposting to relevant local services. Services should use existing knowledge, and we suggest having details available for the services in your area and borough as listed below. A template for filling in local service information can be downloaded from the census webpage.

- Contact details and map to local day centre/advice service
- StreetLink self-referral information
- Local Housing Options department information
- Useful numbers to call – National Domestic Abuse helpline, Samaritans, Police non-emergency, NHS 111
- Local VAWG and women's services, including domestic abuse support service, local Rape Crisis service, and Ascent advice helpline for the area (Solace or Women and Girls Network)
- Immigration advice service information
- Welfare benefits contact information
- Crisis team contact number (borough specific)
- Mental health support via text message details (text SHOUT to 85258 free confidential 24/7 messaging mental health support service)

Services should as usual make use of telephone translators (such as LanguageLine) where needed to make sure that all women are able to fully participate in this survey. Any support we may be able with translation through specialist services for example, will be detailed on the census webpage in census week.

NB. The distinction between information taken for the service's purposes and information taken for the census via the survey should be made clear to ensure any women taking part are aware of where their information is being recorded and how it will be used.

What about CHAIN?

If CHAIN recording applies to your team, please read the separate outreach guidance on the census.

What support will be offered to workers and volunteers taking part in the gender-informed outreach shifts?

We would ask that all workers and volunteers taking part in the census through delivering the survey watch a recorded training session, whether they have previous experience or not. This will include:

- An overview of the census work, why and how women's homelessness looks different to men's and the additional risks women face when rough sleeping.
- Guidance about how to collect good quality, standardised data using the survey template as well as data collection FAQs.
- A brief overview of the other issues women experiencing homelessness are likely to also be affected by (mental ill health, VAWG, substance use etc).
- An overview of the impact of trauma on clients and the staff who support them. This will include an overview of trauma-informed interactions, guidance for dealing with any issues that arise on shift, guidance on keeping workers safe emotionally and a suggested debrief process for the end of the shift.
- Signposting to training and resources if people want to find out more.

Visit the census webpage to register for the session or watch the recording. <https://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/womens-census>

What happens after census week?

The surveys should be completed in real time with each woman/immediately after the interaction.

All the survey results recorded will go to the census team and on to PraxisCollab, the researchers who are analysing the data gathered for the women's census. Relevant data from CHAIN will be provided in aggregate or pseudonymised form. The researchers will use this to prepare a report which will include findings and recommendations from the census.

This piece of work would not be possible without the time, commitment and effort of everyone involved. On behalf of the Life off the Streets women's workstream, we would like to say a huge thank you to all staff, volunteers and services who are taking part in the census activity.

Further details:

Please sign up to the census mailing list to ensure all updates, resources and relevant forms for the census reach you, including the final report once published: <https://forms.office.com/r/Dfkey1UUiE>

Census webpage: <https://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/womens-census/>

Contact address: womens.census@cstm.org.uk