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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove**

The Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
(via email)

18 April 2019

Dear Lord Bourne,

I am contacting you about a Lords debate on rough sleeping on 1 April 2019. You said then that between 2017 and 2018 the number of rough sleepers in England had decreased by 19 per cent in areas receiving funding as part of the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). You also said that overall the number of rough sleepers was showing a downwards trend.

You may be aware that I wrote on 25 March to John Healey about these statistics, in a letter copied to the Secretary of State and the head of statistics for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).<sup>1</sup>

We concluded that there was a significant change between 2017 and 2018 in the method many local authorities used to record the number of rough sleepers in their areas, and that this was particularly apparent for areas receiving RSI funding.

MHCLG could have done more to acknowledge and explore this apparent methodological change and its possible impact on estimates for RSI areas, in the published statistics. We currently await greater clarity from MHCLG about what is driving this change in approach, its relationship to RSI funding, and the extent to which it may have affected the comparability of the series.

We welcome MHCLG's plans to publish an impact evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative later this year which may improve understanding in these areas. The clear demand for statistics to inform current debates on rough sleeping highlights the need for MHCLG to publish its conclusions as soon as possible.

Until MHCLG provide greater clarity, we believe MHCLG's latest rough sleeping statistics should not be used to draw firm conclusions about recent trends in rough sleeping and cannot yet support public claims about the success of the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

I am copying this letter to James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Sandra Tudor, Head of Profession for Statistics.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir David Norgrove**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/response-on-rough-sleeping-statistics-in-england/>