

London Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2023

This document outlines what the Women's Census is and how it will happen in 2023. We will provide more detailed guidance nearer the time so that all services can fully plan their involvement.

Dates:

25th September – 1st October 2023

(The census is taking place over 7 days so that services who are open at the weekend can include any women they meet. We will not be asking anyone to do weekend work for the census where this is not already part of their service.)

What is the census?

Every year, data is collected about people who are rough sleeping in London and across the UK. Women are underrepresented in this data, despite research, lived experience and services telling us that women are some of the most vulnerable within the rough sleeping population.

Key data sources used to understand rough sleeping come from recording practices which are not adapted to women's patterns of homelessness. It follows that if services are then commissioned based on this data, they will not be meeting the needs of those who are not included in it.

The census aims to bring visibility to the experiences of women who are rough sleeping and may not be represented in data, policy or services. By using methods which consider gendered experiences, we aim to:

- Collect anonymised data to build a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences of rough sleeping;
- Use the findings to advocate for targeted support for women and inform policy and practice;
- Test, support and encourage good practice; and
- Help support services and sectors to forge links and share good practice to result in joined-up support for women.

Who is the census for?

The census is designed to collect information about women who experience very hidden and high-risk forms of homelessness, such as rough sleeping. Our census definition of rough sleeping (below) includes people who might not always be sleeping outside on the street.

The census is also designed for a wide range of services and sectors to take part. If your service sometimes works with women who experience homelessness, it's likely that some of the women you work with might be rough sleeping and can be included in the census. Your service might be a VAWG, health, drug and alcohol, migrant support service or a community group.

We encourage any service who supports women to get involved as this will give us the best idea of what's happening for women who sleep rough in London, and ensures your service and the women you support are represented.

We also know that many services across London are working so hard to support women who are homeless and rough sleeping: this is an opportunity to reflect this diversity of support within the data.

Some services might only work with a small number of women who meet the description – that's ok! Any involvement is helpful as women may be dispersed across a lot of services in London: if everyone takes part, we can get a real sense of this.

How will it work?

There are two components to the census in 2023.

1. Census survey

This is a short survey to be completed with women who have recently experienced rough sleeping. This helps us to hear directly from women themselves about their experiences.

Answers to the survey are gathered in three main ways, including:

- Services conduct the survey with women they support during census week;
- Services come together to host women's census sessions in their borough during the census week (e.g. in day centres or at other key local hotspots);
- Outreach teams conduct the survey on gender-informed shifts during census week.

2. Data meeting

After census week, local services will come together in each borough to submit basic data about the number of women they work with who are rough sleeping. This can help us get an anonymised, representative picture of women rough sleeping in each borough.

See below for a census outline and examples of how your service could get involved.

What support will be provided?

In the months leading up to the census, the webpage and mailing list will be updated with detailed guidance and all the resources required for the census. We will host training sessions in August with the opportunities to ask questions and the training will be recorded and uploaded to the webpage.

The census team can also meet you and your team to provide information and answer questions, or you can email us with any questions at womens.census@solacewomensaid.org.

Many boroughs will also have a Borough Lead who can support with any questions, help connect local services together and support planning for the borough's involvement in the census.

£5 incentive vouchers for women who complete the survey can be provided to outreach teams and any planned women's census sessions – unfortunately we aren't able to provide vouchers for all services across London. We can also arrange for volunteers to support outreach shifts and women's census sessions (if requested).

What will happen with the information collected?

The survey data will be collected anonymously. The census team will write a report which will outline the data and the findings. No personally identifying information will be shared.

The data and report can help illustrate the picture of women's rough sleeping in London and inform changes in policy and practice to help women in London get better, targeted support.

We will also feedback to boroughs about the numbers and experiences of women rough sleeping in their area. We hope that this will help local areas tailor their support.

To find out more, see the report produced from the [2022 census](#).

What will it say about my service?

The census is a coming together of a vast range of services across London who care about women who are rough sleeping. There won't be any data directly attached to your service, though where possible we would like to thank services in the published report.

This exercise does not work to highlight any particular service, but aims to overcome systemic practices which have meant that women have traditionally been undercounted; share and encourage good practice; and support services and sectors in developing links with each other.

Definition of women's rough sleeping – Census 2023

The London Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2022 found that women's rough sleeping is often:

Hidden: Women often avoid bedding down on the streets and will shelter/sleep in places that outreach are unlikely or unable to access as part of their routine shifts.

Transient: Women often stay on the move i.e. walking all night or moving locations regularly for safety reasons.

Intermittent: Women may sleep rough interspersed with other forms of dangerous hidden homelessness, such as sex working in exchange for a place to stay overnight or staying in flats belonging to unknown or unsafe people. They may make decisions about where to sleep/shelter on a night by night basis based on their assessment of risk and what options are available.

The 2023 Census is therefore defining women's rough sleeping as:

Having nowhere safe to stay at all: for example, sleeping outside on the ground or in a tent, sitting/sleeping in places which are open late or 24/7 (such as fast-food restaurants and hospitals), walking all night, sex working at night but not having anywhere to sleep during the day, using drugs in other people's accommodation at night but not having anywhere to sleep during the day, etc.

Women may not do this every night, and rough sleeping may be interspersed with other forms of hidden homelessness such as staying in accommodation belonging to unsafe/unknown people/perpetrators, staying in 'cuckooed' flats, or staying with friends/family/associates on a very insecure and transitory basis (e.g. nightly or weekly, or regularly being forced to leave immediately).

What do I need to do next?

Sign up to the mailing list! This will make sure you get all the up-to-date census information.

Can your service take part? If so, make sure it's in your service's calendar and let us know so we can support you as much as possible. There will be resources, training and meetings to attend over the coming months to help everyone as much as possible.

If you can help further, you might be interested in the following:

Can you help us spread the word in your sector? If so, we want to hear from you! You might know about some meetings which we could attend, or you might be able to share census information with different services.

Can you help to lead the census in your borough? This would involve getting services in your borough onboard with the census and supporting a joined-up local response, with support from the census team. Your support can really help to make the census as impactful as possible.

Contact us:

Keep checking our webpage for all the latest information:

<https://www.solacewomensaid.org/our-partnerships/london-womens-rough-sleeping-census-2023>

Email: Womens.census@solacewomensaid.org

Phone: 07483025214

Census 2023 Outline

July - September



Census planning

Services and outreach teams plan and prepare their census involvement, including reading the updated guidance and attending training in August/watching the recordings.

Planning can include connecting with the Borough Lead and, alongside other borough services, noting key hotspot areas, identifying key day centres and sites for census sessions, planning census outreach shifts (including any joint shifts), and requesting any volunteer support via the census team.

Outreach teams should plan their gender-informed shifts, using the guidance and intelligence from local services.

25th September - 1st October



Census week

Census outreach shifts in each borough, using gender-informed guidance. Survey conducted with women seen on shift.

Survey conducted with women attending services during census week.

Targeted census survey sessions in day centres and key borough hotspots (as identified in borough planning). Census team can provide support with vouchers for women taking part, and volunteer support where requested.

These sessions might be hosted at a day centre with in-reach support from other services, and might be planned as a health or wellbeing day, for example. Or, volunteers might be stationed at a local A&E service, or drug and alcohol service, or in a local transport hub. The locations and dates for census sessions are decided by the services in each borough.

October



Post-census meeting

Services attend a post-census meeting in their borough at which they can submit basic, anonymised data about the number of women they work with who are rough sleeping.

This meeting will be led by the Borough Lead with support from the census team. The census team will provide detailed guidance, template documents and data sharing agreements where necessary. All data submitted to the census team will be anonymous.

Examples of service involvement:

Homelessness day centre, women's centre, drug and alcohol drop in, etc:

As well as doing the survey with women who attend the service, you could host a census survey session on one day during the week, perhaps collaborating with other services to provide multi-agency support or a wellbeing day. Volunteers can be allocated to conduct the survey with women who attend and vouchers can be provided for that specific day.

This can be an opportunity to link up with other local services, or encourage women in the borough to attend your service's women-only session, for example.

A&E, homeless health GP practice, pop up health session/van, etc:

You could arrange with the Borough Lead and with local services that volunteers and vouchers will be allocated to your service on one day during the census week. You could put up posters to help explain and advertise what's happening. Volunteers could speak to as many women as possible who attend the service that day.

Clinicians and practitioners can suggest that women speak to one of the volunteers if they think that the survey might be applicable to them.

In-reach:

You could do the survey with women in organisations that you attend during census week; encourage the different organisations you work with to take part; or support organisations to deliver their women's census session, perhaps by providing in-reach services.

Outreach:

If you deliver outreach, but you're not the commissioned rough sleeping provider, you might want to conduct your own outreach and complete the survey with women you see on shift. Or, you might want to team up with the local rough sleeping outreach team and do joint shifts: this can support sharing of each other's expertise and can help provide capacity to the borough to reach as many people as possible.

Practitioners:

You could encourage or support your service to take part in the census, and/or you could volunteer to support outreach or women's census sessions during the week. You could also become a Borough Lead, or support the Borough Lead to connect up with different local services.