

# South Wales Street Based Lifestyle Monitor 2016-17

**An analysis of people living street based lifestyles in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Bridgend between November 2016 and October 2017**



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# Executive Summary

## Context, Aims and Scope

- The Wallich runs Rough Sleeper Intervention Teams (RSITs) in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Bridgend. They provide hot drinks, food, and signposting to appropriate accommodation and support, to people living street based lifestyles in their areas of operation.
- The teams, as part of this work, collect data on the people with whom they engage.
- As such, the data from the RSITs can be used to build a quantitative picture of people living street based lifestyles in South Wales. People living a 'Street Based Lifestyle' are people who spend most of their time on the streets. This includes those sleeping rough, but also individuals who are spending time in emergency or temporary accommodation, or otherwise unsuitably housed.
- Other documents published by The Wallich<sup>1</sup> give a more complete picture of the context of homelessness and rough sleeping in Wales, as well as the scale of the problem – a problem recognised by policymakers across the political spectrum, third sector organisations, and, increasingly, the general public.

## Methodology

- Data gathered by the RSITs is entered into The Wallich's in-house system. By reporting from the system, we can build a picture of street based lifestyles in South Wales.
- This report continues from where previous reports on Cardiff and Newport finished; that is, the data comes from the period November 2016-October 2017 (apart from the findings that are clearly highlighted as being from April-October 2017).

## The Data

- Section three of this report presents data from Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Bridgend in sequence, before providing comparisons in a visual format.

## Analysis and Conclusion

- The results of the case studies allow some conclusions to be made. The number of people living street based lifestyles is rising in all the areas examined.
- Individuals living street based lifestyles are more likely to be male, with an average age of 40-42. The 36-50 age bracket is the most represented, although it is the largest. The youngest bracket, encompassing ages 16-17, is the least represented.
- The Wallich's data recording expanded, beginning in April 2017. As such, the following findings only cover the period from April to October 2017. Most individuals living a street based lifestyle are sleeping rough when they engage with The Wallich's RSITs.
- The number of individuals who had never previously been seen by an RSIT varies from 7% to 55% depending on the team.
- Client-contact ratios give some idea of how many times an individual is seen by an RSIT in a given period. Ratios range from 6.53 to 22.1.
- Readers of this report, and any member of the general public, can make their own choices regarding giving people they encounter in the street money, food, or even just a moment of their time. The 'StreetLink' service, with which The Wallich are a partner in Wales, exists so that an individual can report someone they see on the street. This data is passed to the relevant Local Authority, who can then follow up to see if they can help that person engage with support. Reports can be made to Streetlink via telephone on 0300 500 0914, a downloadable smartphone app, or the website<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>The Wallich, "Support that Saves", accessed January 11, 2018, [https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Support\\_that\\_Saves.pdf](https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Support_that_Saves.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>StreetLink, "Welcome to StreetLink", accessed January 11, 2018, <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

# Section One: Context, Aims and Scope

**The Wallich is a homelessness charity that works across Wales. By providing a range of support, it aims to get people off the streets, keep people off the streets, and create opportunities for people to realise their full potential.**

This South Wales Street Based Lifestyle Monitor, covering 2016-17, presents an up-to-date and in-depth picture of people living a street based lifestyle in various parts of South Wales, including the three major cities.

The Wallich runs Rough Sleeper Intervention Teams (RSITs) in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Bridgend and Wrexham. The Rough Sleepers Intervention Teams operate each morning on weekdays (and on weekends in Cardiff and Bridgend), providing hot drinks, food, and signposting to appropriate support and accommodation, supporting a swift exit from the streets. They operate primarily in the city centres of their respective locations, and visit areas where those living street based lifestyles are known to congregate or bed down. They also investigate new referrals, providing early intervention to individuals new to homelessness, making them aware of the help that's available.

While carrying out this work, the teams also collect statistics. This data is vital if we are to understand homelessness, rough sleeping, and street based lifestyles in Wales today. Our service users are more than numbers, but the more we understand about how many people need to use our services, and other services like them, the more able we are to make effective policy recommendations to influencers in both local and national government.

Welsh homelessness and rough sleeping is a problem recognised by many in the country: this has been explored and detailed in other documents published by The Wallich<sup>3</sup>. Representatives of local and national government across the political spectrum, third sector organisations, and indeed the general public, have all shown commitment to tackling these issues. Perhaps the clearest example of the political will in Wales to tackle homelessness is 2014's Housing (Wales) Act<sup>4</sup>, which prioritises the prevention of homelessness, and puts more emphasis on using the Private Rented Sector to provide accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. Similarly, Local Authorities are working in more innovative ways with organisations like The Wallich to provide solutions to homelessness and rough sleeping in their specific contexts.

This report focuses on providing a quantitative picture of street based lifestyles in South Wales. Other work The Wallich has done goes into more detail about the context of homelessness across the country, and the funding mechanisms organisations like The Wallich use to provide support services<sup>5</sup>. This Monitor is more like an extension of the monthly and quarterly RSIT reports published on The Wallich's website<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>The Wallich, "Support that Saves", accessed January 11, 2018, [https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Support\\_that\\_Saves.pdf](https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Support_that_Saves.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>"Housing (Wales) Act 2014", accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/contents/enacted>

<sup>5</sup>The Wallich, "Support that Saves", accessed January 11, 2018, [https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Support\\_that\\_Saves.pdf](https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Support_that_Saves.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>The Wallich, "Rough Sleeping Statistics", accessed January 11, 2018, <https://thewallich.com/rough-sleepers-statistics/>

# South Wales SBL Monitor 2016-2017

This report is the first that The Wallich has produced covering all the South Wales RSITs. We have produced two reports covering Cardiff for three years<sup>7</sup>, and a report covering Newport for two years<sup>8</sup>. That said, we have created quarterly reports for all our RSITs for at least the past year. By discussing Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Bridgend for the period covering November 2016-October 2017, we can provide an in-depth picture of street based lifestyles in South Wales. The Wrexham RSIT started operating relatively recently, and has a much more limited dataset. As such, it has not been included as part of this exercise.

This report does not make recommendations for helping those living Street Based Lifestyles, nor does it focus on policy suggestions, but rather aims to present an up-to-date and accurate picture of these lifestyles in the four focal areas. While readers might reach their own conclusions as to various solutions to what will seem to many as an increasingly concerning issue, this report presents the data before highlighting its particularly noteworthy aspects, based on the knowledge base The Wallich has developed. Some analysis of this type is included and, where appropriate, additional context about each area is provided.

## What is a 'Street Based Lifestyle' (SBL)?

People living a 'Street Based Lifestyle' are people who spend most of their time on the streets. This includes those sleeping rough, but also individuals who are spending time in emergency or temporary accommodation, or are otherwise unsuitably housed.

## A note on our service users

It must be emphasised that as an organisation, we do not view the clients and service users we engage with as mere numbers – whether they are clients that engage with our RSITs, or residents in our supported accommodation. However, as previously mentioned, the more we understand street based living in Wales, and the more data we can collect about it, the more informed our proposed solutions will be.

## Other sources of data

It is worth noting that the Welsh Government carries out its own research into homelessness<sup>9</sup> and rough sleeping<sup>10</sup>. The latter is most similar in nature to what this document is trying to achieve, although it is important to recognise that not all people living a street based lifestyle are sleeping on the streets, as our statistics will show.


The Welsh Government's methodology differs from ours, for logistical reasons. The methodology used to create this report is explained in more detail in the next section, but it is based on the fact that our Rough Sleeper Intervention Teams operate regularly and frequently. The Welsh Government carries out two annual counts, both in collaboration with Welsh Local Authorities. One of these takes places over the course of one night, while the other lasts two weeks. While the difference in methodologies is likely to lead to different results, our readers who are interested in developing a complete understanding of the statistical work in this area should also examine the Welsh Government data.

<sup>7</sup>The Wallich, "Cardiff Street Based Lifestyle Monitor 2013-2015", accessed January 11, 2018, <https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Cardiff-SBL-Monitor.pdf>; The Wallich, "Cardiff Street Based Lifestyle Monitor 2015-2016", accessed January 11, 2018, [https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Cardiff-SBL-Monitor-15\\_16.pdf](https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Cardiff-SBL-Monitor-15_16.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>The Wallich, "Newport Rough Sleeping Monitor 2013-2015", accessed January 11, 2018, [https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Newport-RS-Monitor-13\\_15.pdf](https://thewallich.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Newport-RS-Monitor-13_15.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>StatsWales, "Homelessness", accessed January 11, 2018, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>

<sup>10</sup>Welsh Government, "National rough sleeping count", accessed January 11, 2018, <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-rough-sleeping-count/?lang=en>



*Our service users are more than numbers, but the more we understand about how many people need to use our services, and other services like them, the more able we are to make effective policy recommendations to influencers in both local and national government.*



## Section Two: Methodology

**The Wallich's RSITs record information about the service users they engage with each day. This data is recorded using The Wallich's in-house system.**

By running reports in this system, we can generate the numbers, tables and graphs that appear in this document, covering each of the four South Wales RSITs. We can then make the comparisons that make up the following section, contrasting different variables from the different parts of South Wales.

This report continues from where previous reports on Cardiff and Newport finished; that is, the data comes from the period November 2016-October 2017 (apart from the findings that are clearly highlighted as being from April-October 2017).

### **A note on the different RSITs**

Some RSITs operate on a different timescale to others. While all the RSITs go out on weekdays, the Cardiff RSITs, for example, are funded to, or benefit from, volunteers to operate on weekends. The RSIT in Bridgend works six days a week. The remaining teams go out on a more fixed five-working-day basis. This will clearly impact the size of the dataset from the different areas; if, for example, Cardiff includes Saturdays and Sundays, while other RSIT teams do not operate on these days, Cardiff is providing more data.

There is anecdotal evidence from members of staff that work in our RSITs that different days, and events on those days, can affect total numbers. For example, Friday and Saturday nights tend to be more lucrative to individuals begging on the streets. Other large events can have the same effect.

To sum up, it is important for our readers to be aware of small differences in the datasets from each RSIT, and the potential effect these differences could have. Ultimately, when it comes to homelessness and rough sleeping, obtaining high-quality data is difficult at the best of times; it is our view that we should not let small variables like this affect a valuable exercise.

# Section Three: The Data

# Cardiff

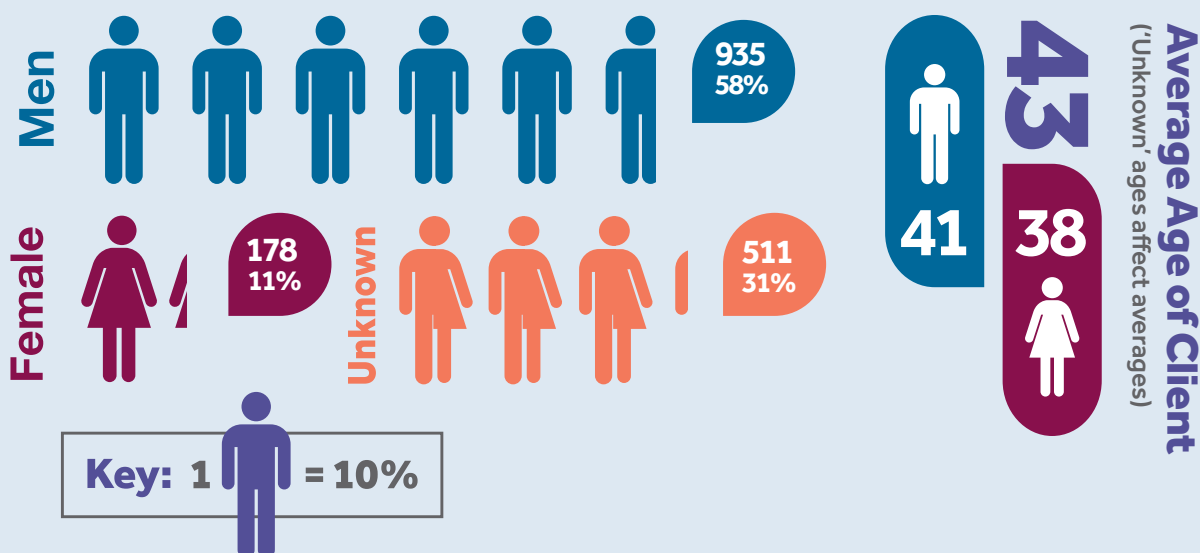
This data only refers the number of people who engage with our own Rough Sleeper Intervention Team, rather than the Local Authority's figures which represent data captured across all Rough Sleeper services.

From November 2016 to October 2017, the Cardiff RSIT recorded contact with **1,624** clients.



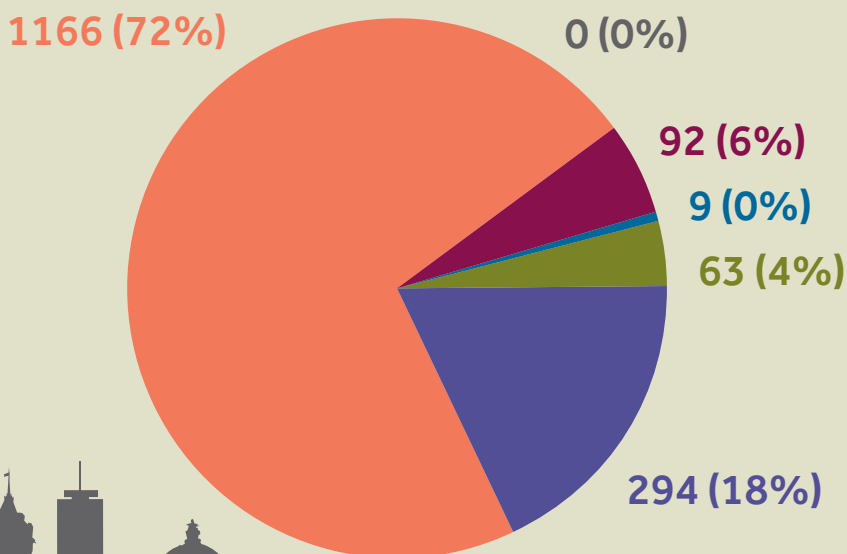
This is a **24%** increase compared with 2015-2016.

**Gender breakdown 2016/17: People Supported = 1,624**

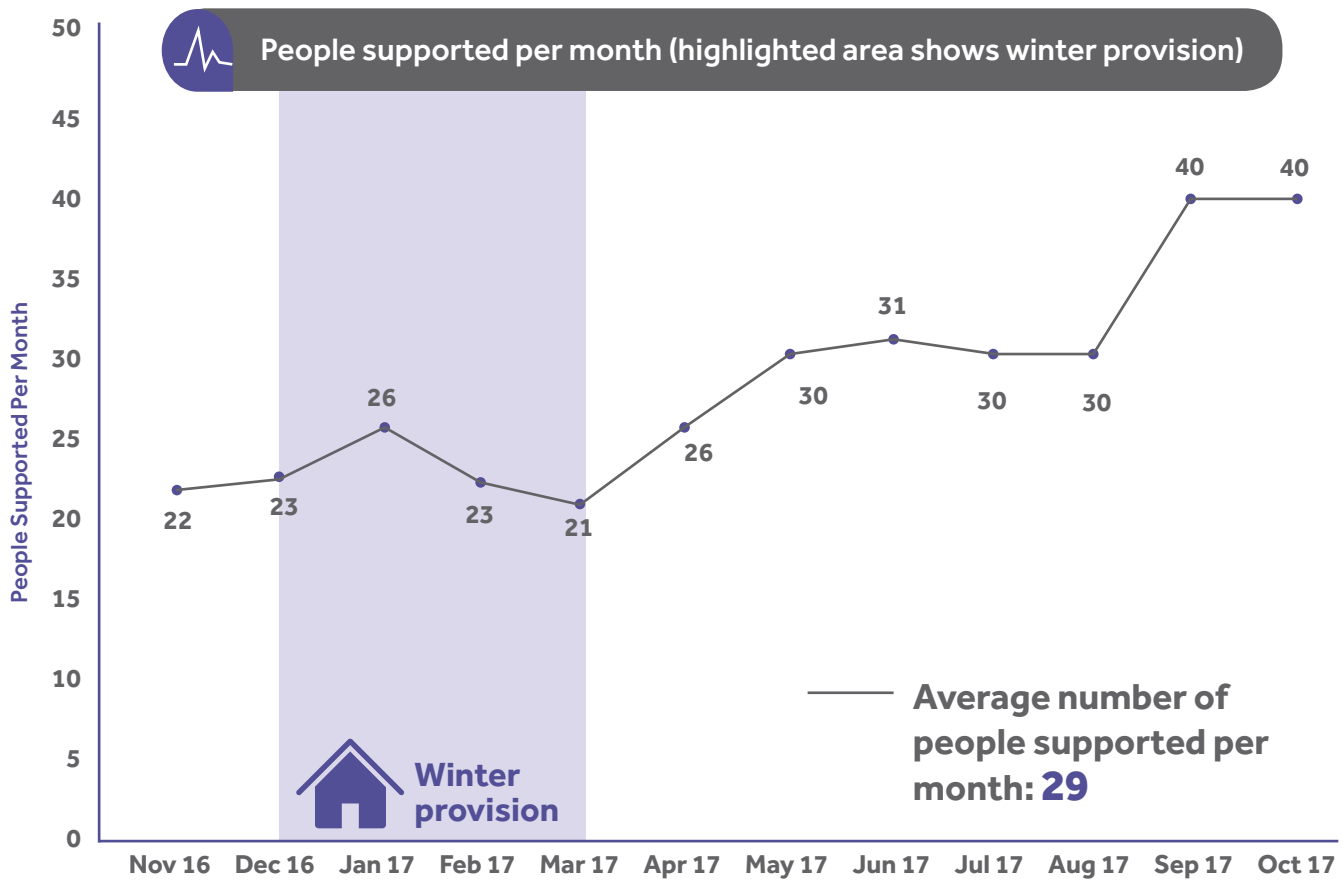


**Age breakdown**

- 16-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-64
- 65+







 April – October, rough sleepers, brand new clients, and contacts

People supported: **1,020**

Contacts: **6,657**

Ratio of clients to contacts: **6.53**



Total number of brand new contacts:  
**75 (7%)**



Total number of people sleeping rough:  
**1,001 (98%)**

*This data is only available for the period of April-October 2017 because of changes to our data collection.*

*The number of 'contacts' is the number of times the RSIT have offered support to individuals, and as such, the same individual might have been offered support several times. As such, the 'ratio of clients to contacts' gives a rough idea of how often individuals are seen.*

*'Rough sleeper' contacts refer to contacts with individuals we know were sleeping rough. Other contacts are likely to be vulnerably housed, sofa surfing, or living in hostels.*

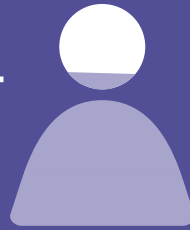
*'Brand new' contacts refer to contacts with individuals for the very first time. Note that 'brand new' and 'rough sleeper' contacts can overlap as individuals might fall into both categories.*

# Section Three: The Data

# Newport

This data only refers the number of people who engage with our own Rough Sleepers' Intervention Teams. Other services or organisations might record their own data; we track the number of people our RSITs make contact with.

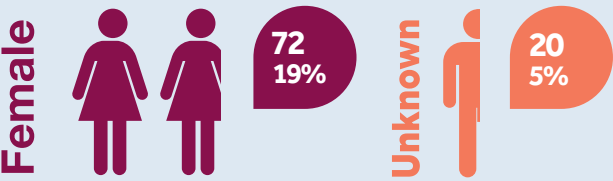
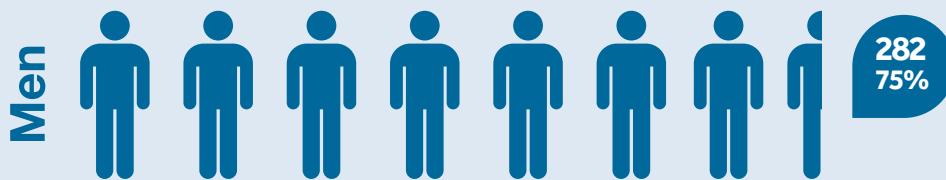
From November 2016 to October 2017, the Newport RSIT recorded contact with **374** clients.



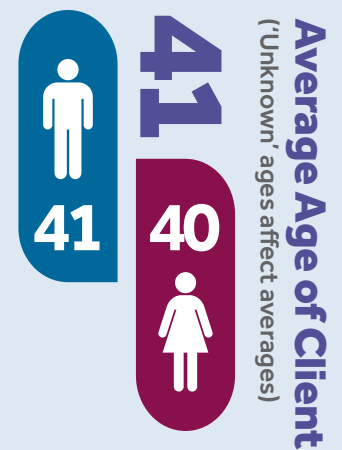
This is a **77%** increase compared with 2015-2016.



**Gender breakdown 2016/17: People Supported = 374**

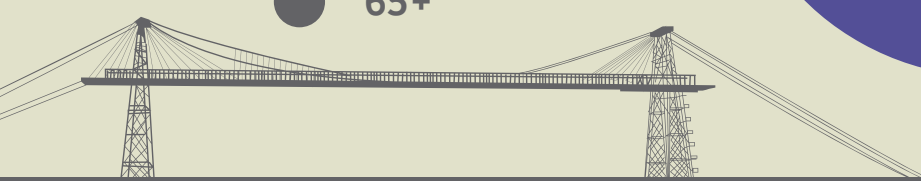
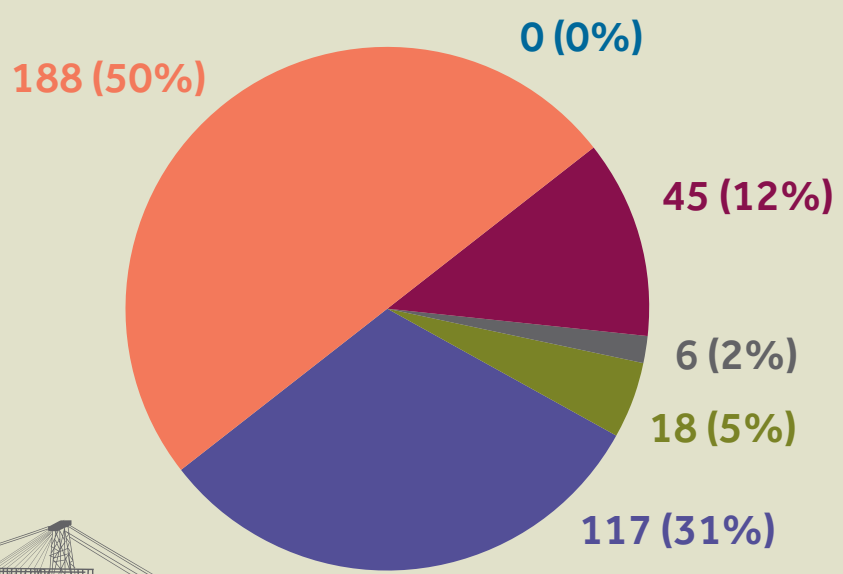


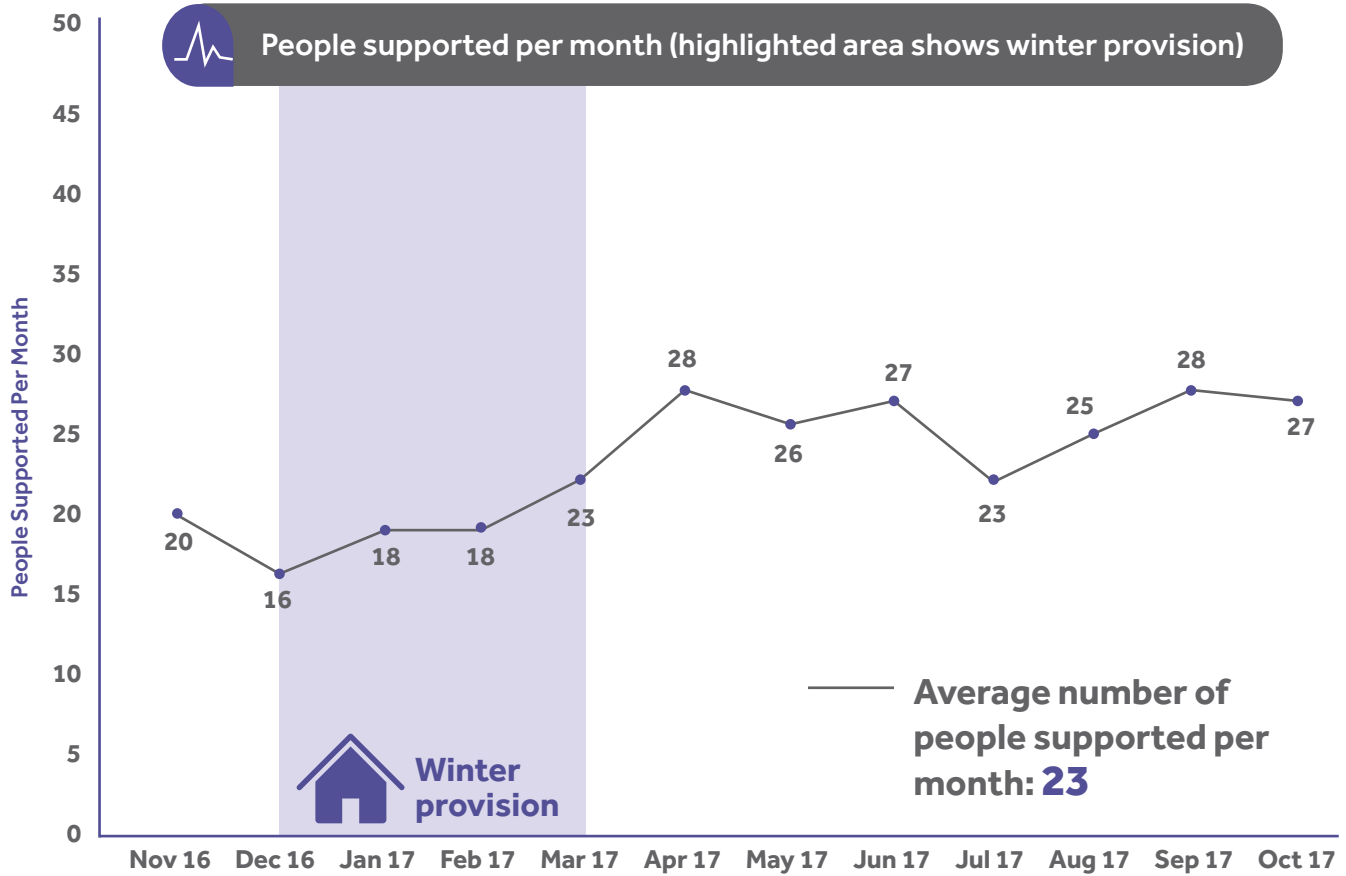
Key: 1 = 10%



**Age breakdown**

- 16-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-64
- 65+





April – October, rough sleepers, brand new clients, and contacts

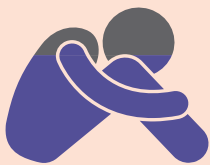
People supported: **207**

Contacts: **4,574**

Ratio of clients to contacts: **22.1**



Total number of brand new contacts:  
**62 (30%)**



Total number of people sleeping rough:  
**154 (74%)**

*This data is only available for the period of April–October 2017 because of changes to our data collection.*

*The number of 'contacts' is the number of times the RSIT have offered support to individuals, and as such, the same individual might have been offered support several times. As such, the 'ratio of clients to contacts' gives a rough idea of how often individuals are seen.*

*'Rough sleeper' contacts refer to contacts with individuals we know were sleeping rough. Other contacts are likely to be vulnerably housed, sofa surfing, or living in hostels.*

*'Brand new' contacts refer to contacts with individuals for the very first time. Note that 'brand new' and 'rough sleeper' contacts can overlap as individuals might fall into both categories.*



# Section Three: The Data Swansea

This data only refers the number of people who engage with our own Rough Sleepers' Intervention Teams. Other services or organisations might record their own data; we track the number of people our RSITs make contact with.

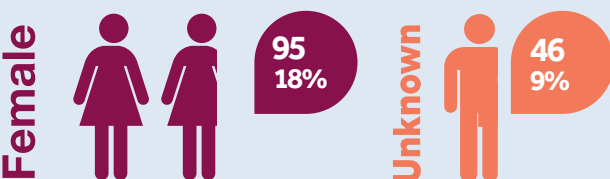
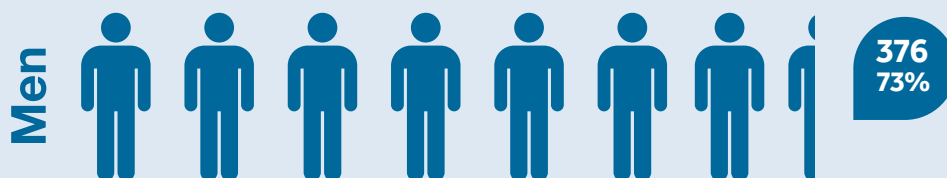
From November 2016 to October 2017, the Swansea RSIT recorded contact with **517** clients.



This is a **53%** increase compared with 2015-2016.



**Gender breakdown 2016/17: People Supported = 517**

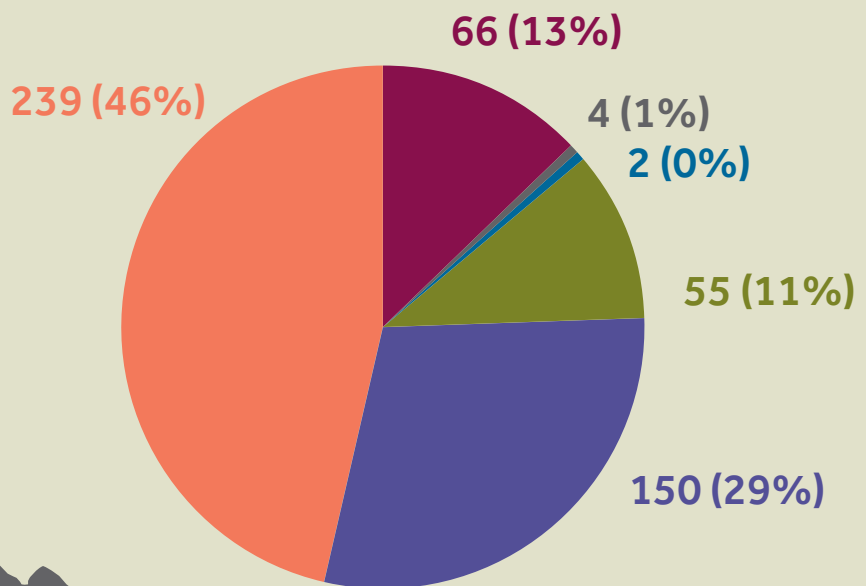


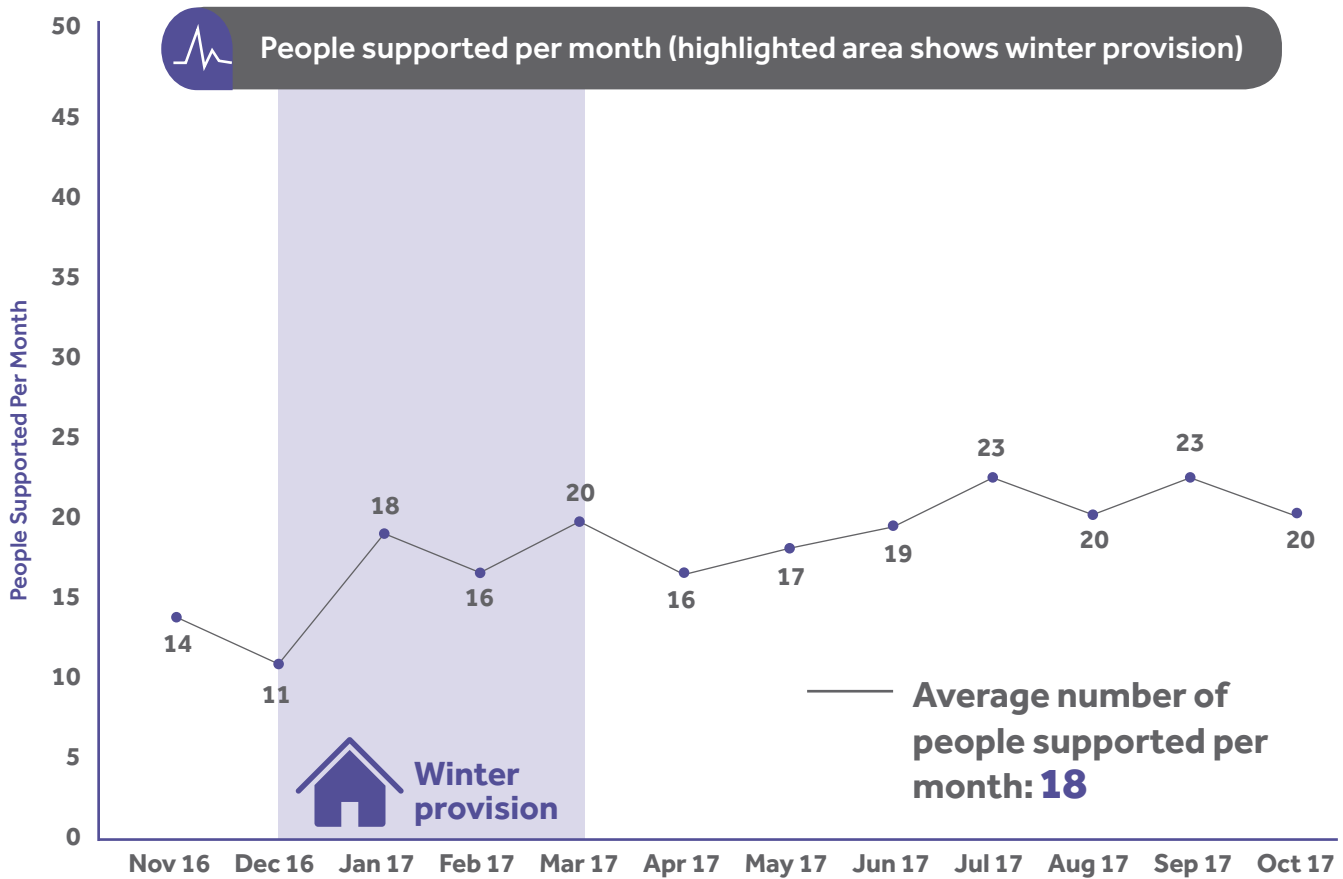
Key: 1 = 10%



**Age breakdown**

- 16-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-64
- 65+





April – October, rough sleepers, brand new clients, and contacts

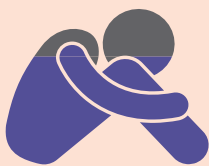
People supported: **305**

Contacts: **3,026**

Ratio of clients to contacts: **9.92**



Total number of brand new contacts:  
**87 (29%)**



Total number of people sleeping rough:  
**218 (71%)**

*This data is only available for the period of April-October 2017 because of changes to our data collection.*

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# Section Three: The Data Bridgend

This data only refers the number of people who engage with our own Rough Sleepers' Intervention Teams. Other services or organisations might record their own data; we track the number of people our RSITs make contact with.

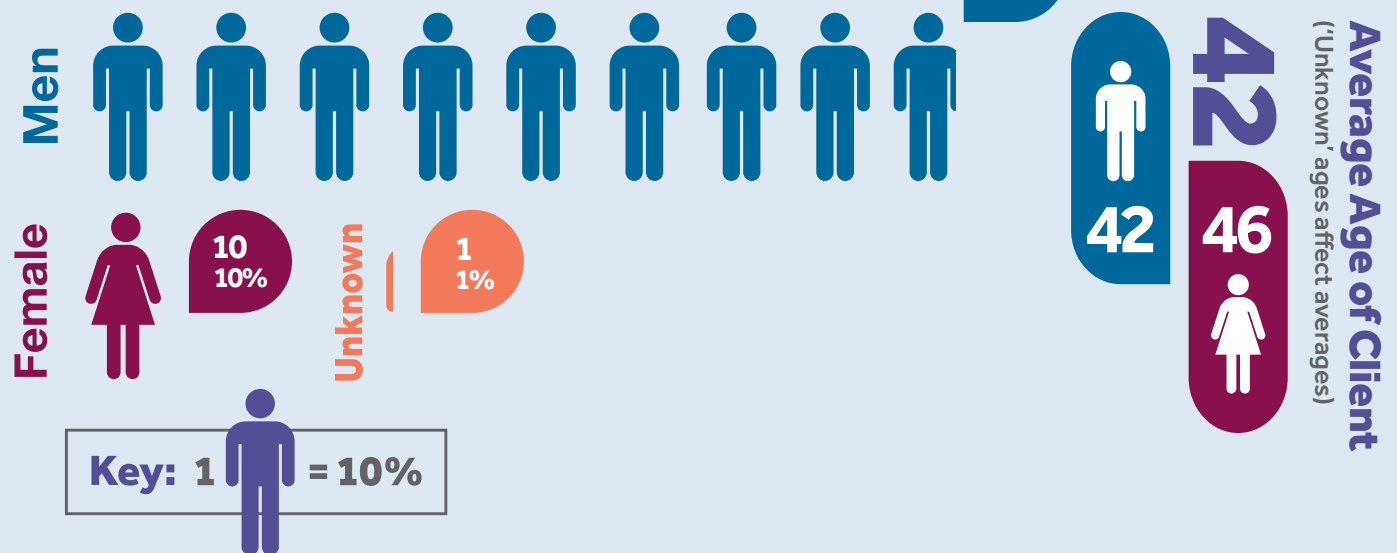
From November 2016 to October 2017, the Bridgend RSIT recorded contact with **96** clients.



This is a **37%** increase compared with 2015-2016.

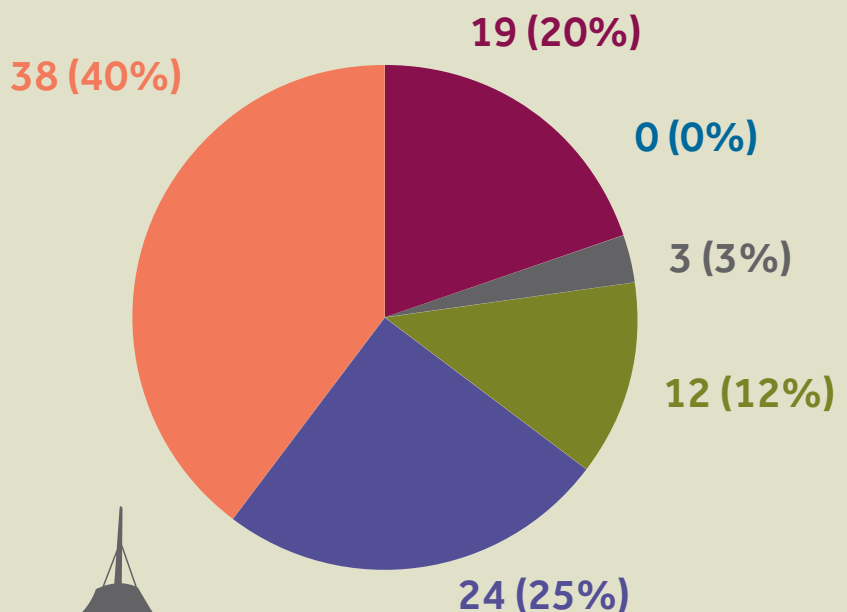


**Gender breakdown 2016/17: People Supported = 96**

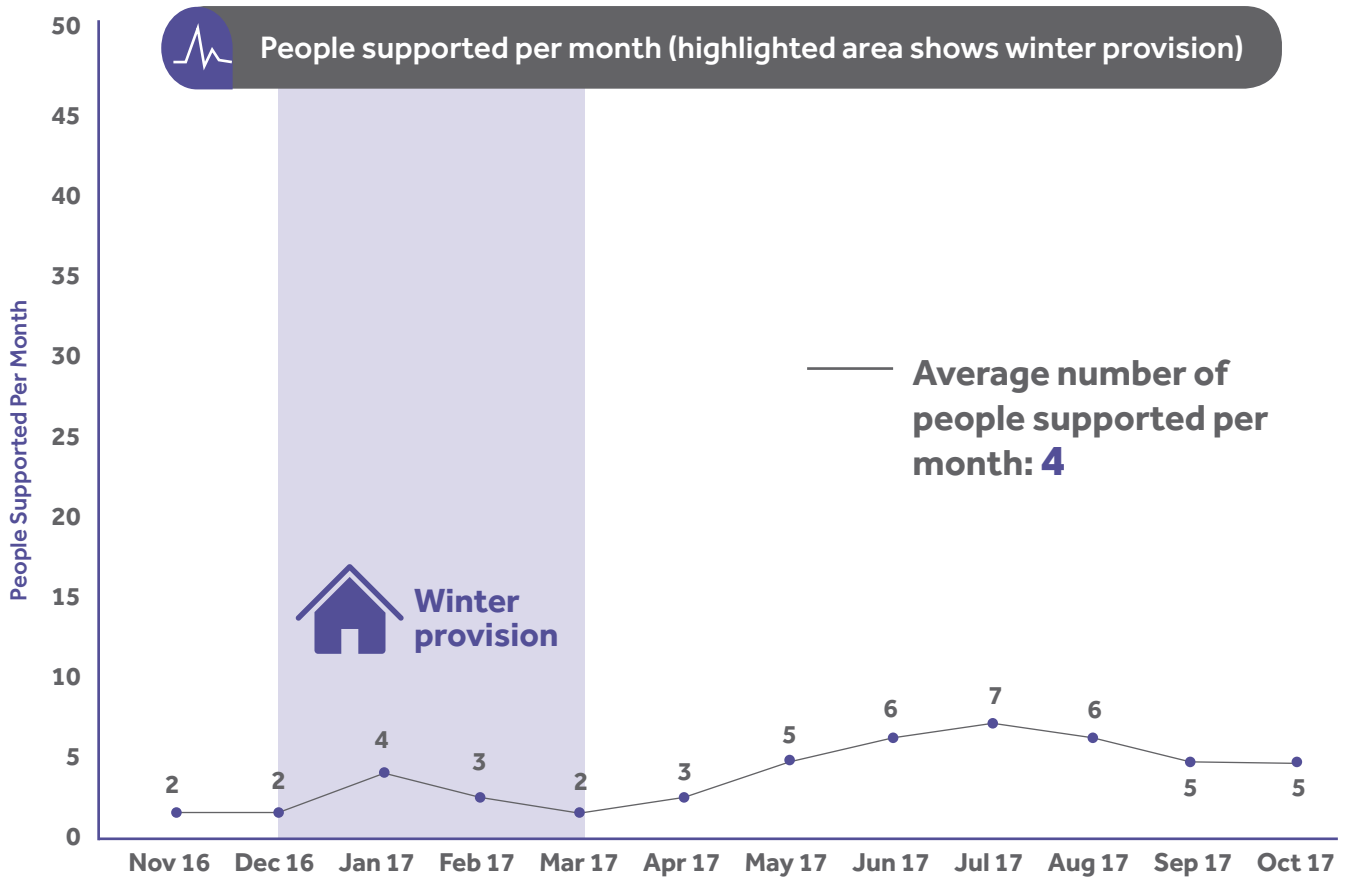


**Age breakdown**

- 16-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-64
- 65+







 April – October, rough sleepers, brand new clients, and contacts

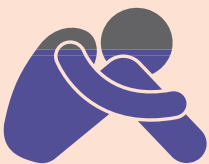
People supported: **64**

Contacts: **1,242**

Ratio of clients to contacts: **19.41**



Total number of brand new contacts:  
**35 (55%)**



Total number of people sleeping rough:  
**52 (81%)**

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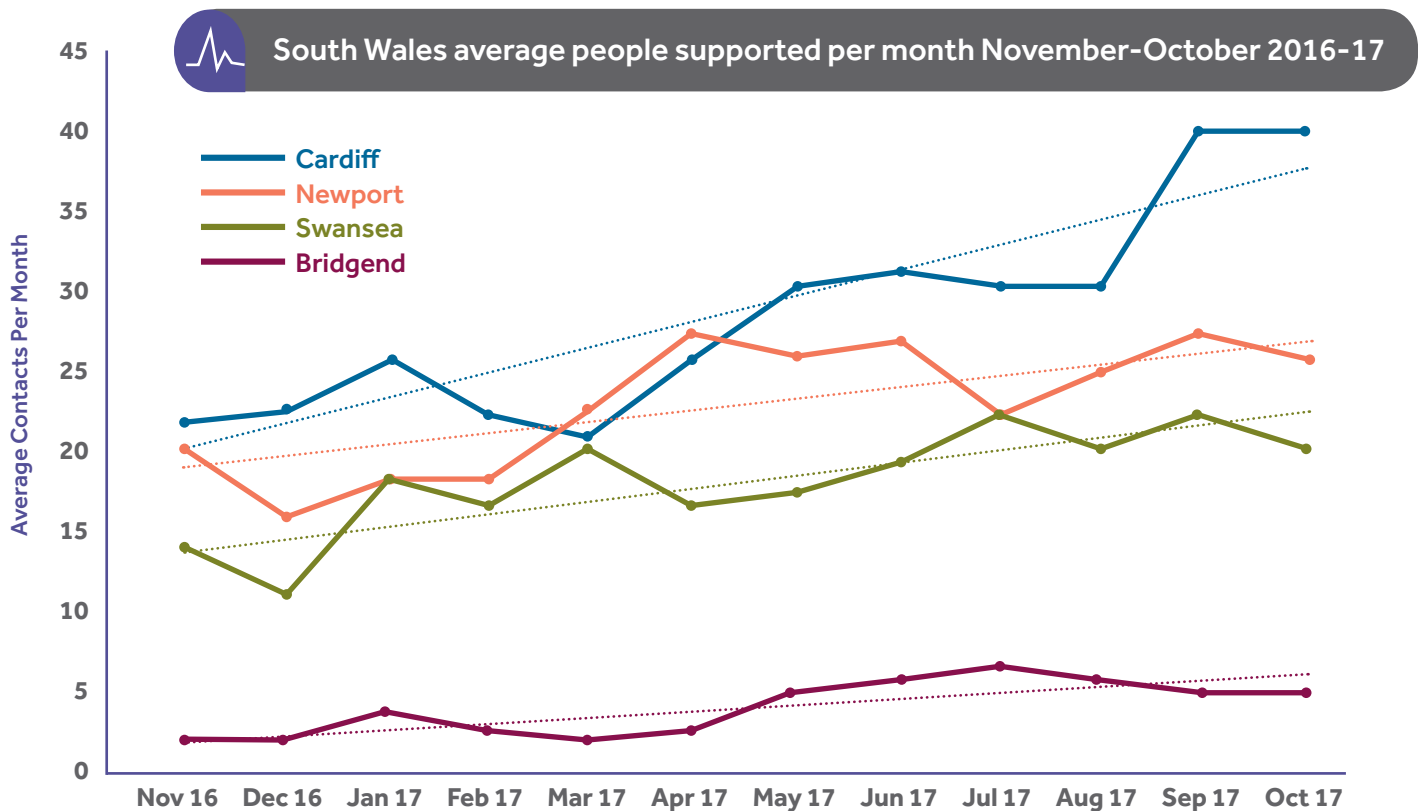
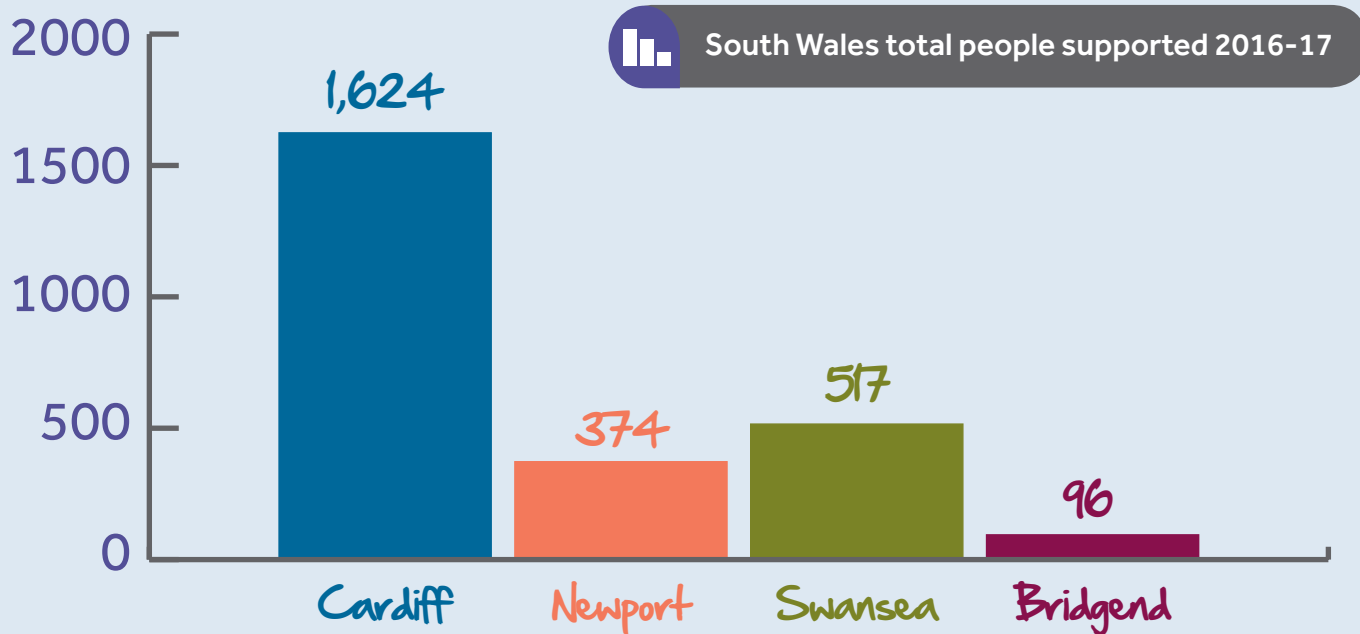
*'Brand new' contacts refer to contacts with individuals for the very first time. Note that 'brand new' and 'rough sleeper' contacts can overlap as individuals might fall into both categories.*

# Section Three: The Data

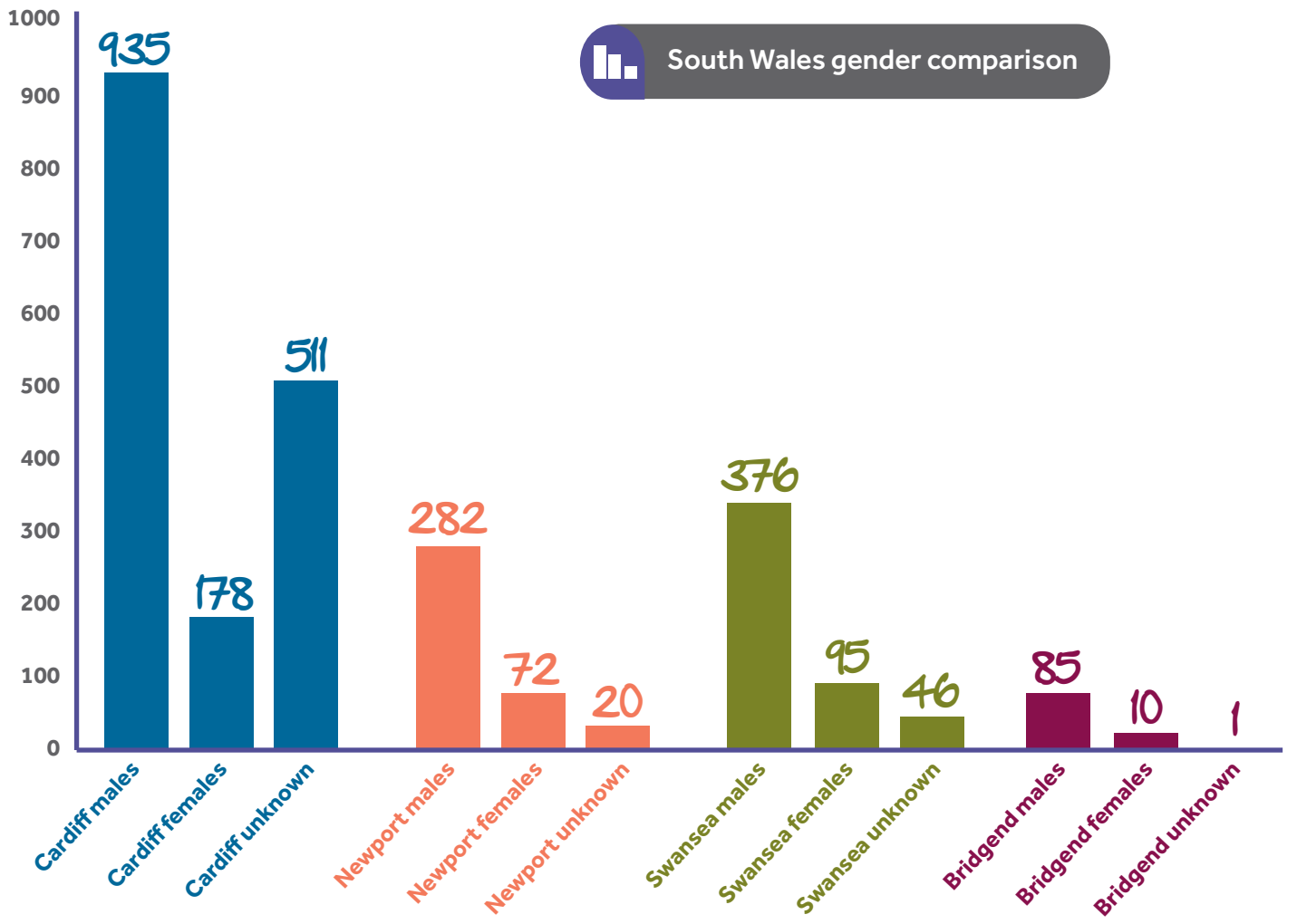
## South Wales Comparison

This data only refers the number of people who engage with our own Rough Sleeper Intervention Teams, rather than the Local Authorities' figures which represent data captured across all Rough Sleeper services.

Total people supported: 2,611, a **36% increase** over the 1,924 people supported in 2015-16

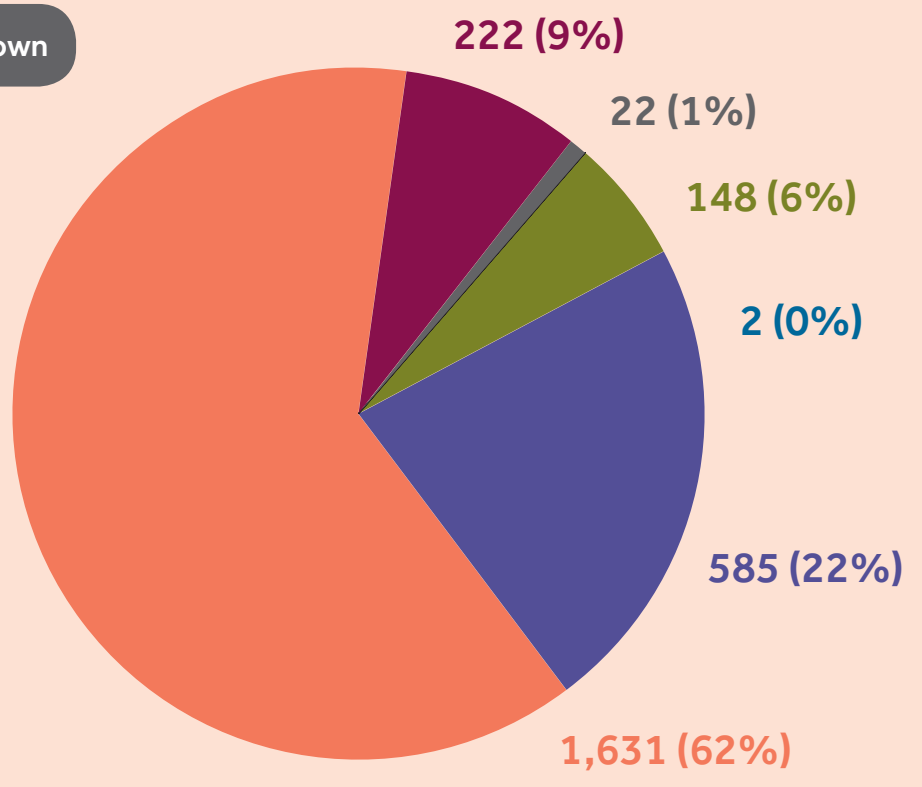


**South Wales gender comparison**



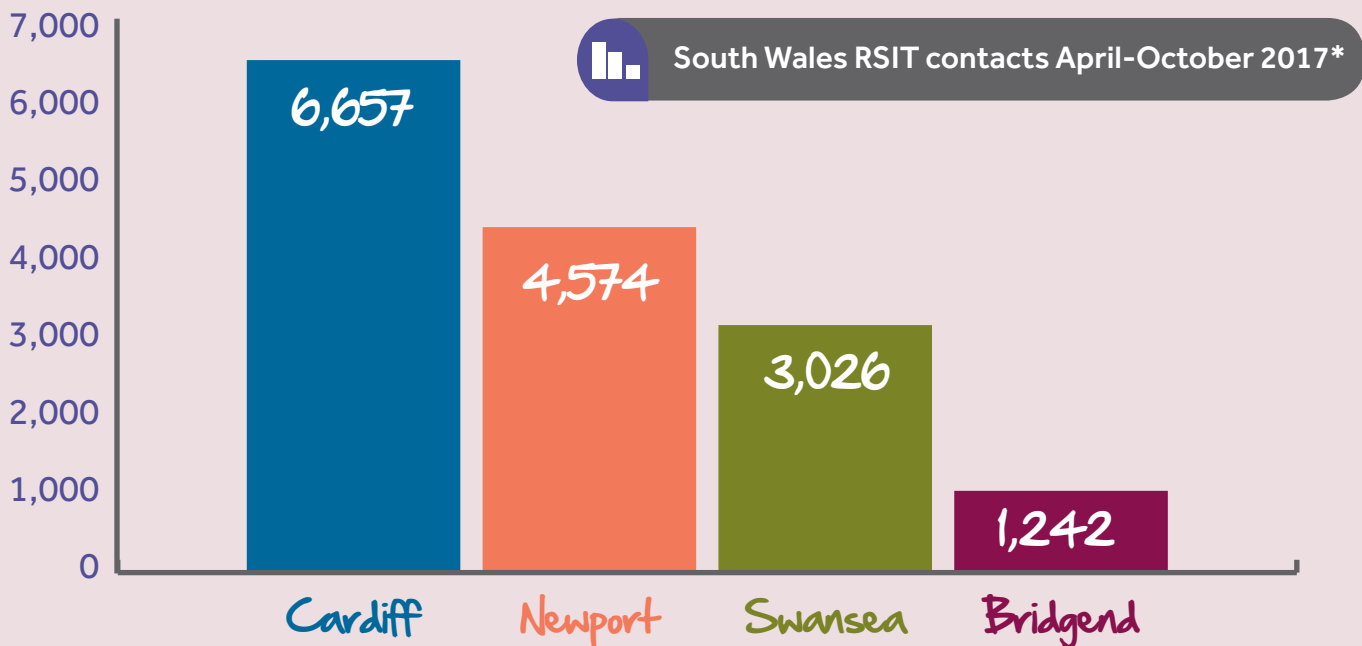
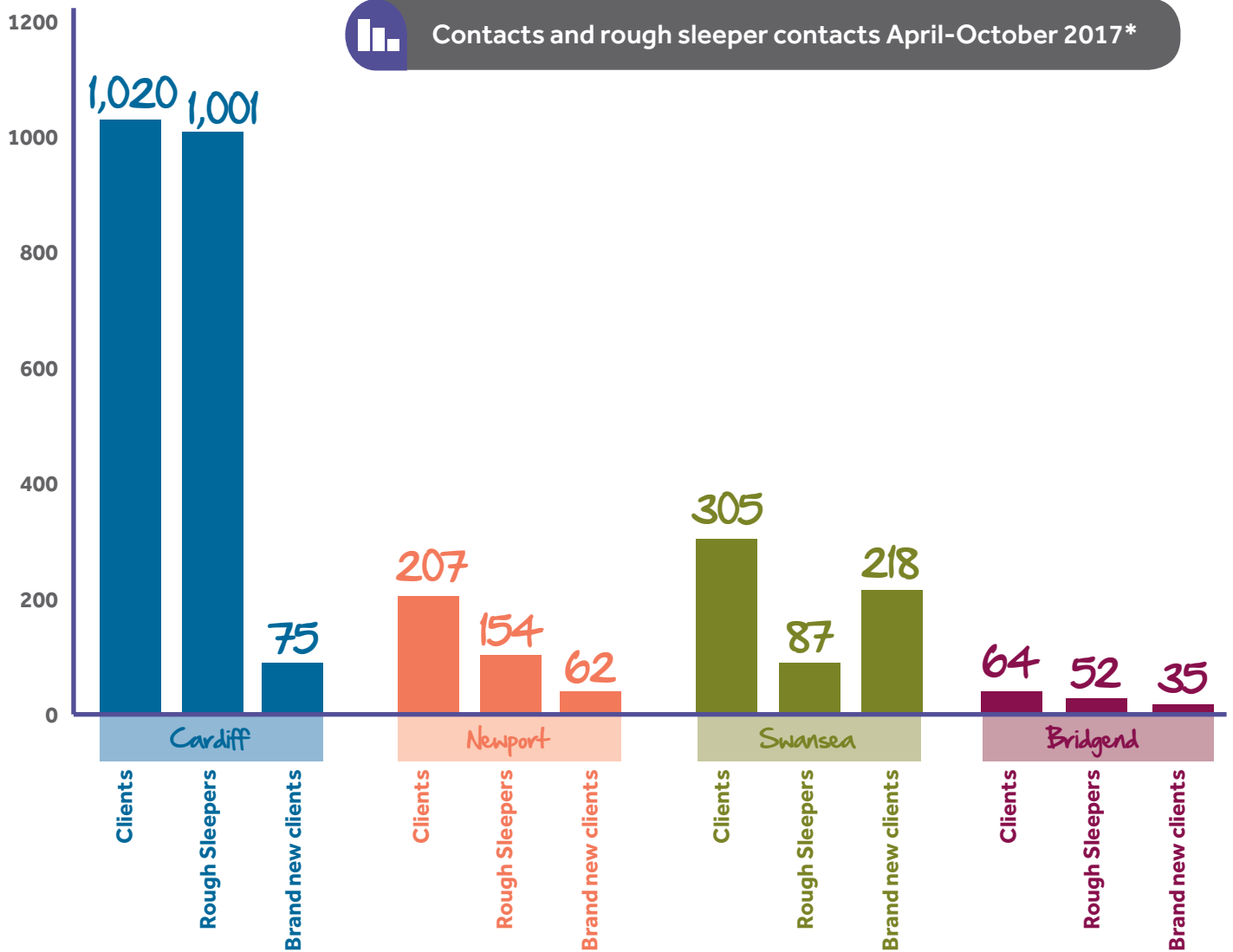
**South Wales Age breakdown**

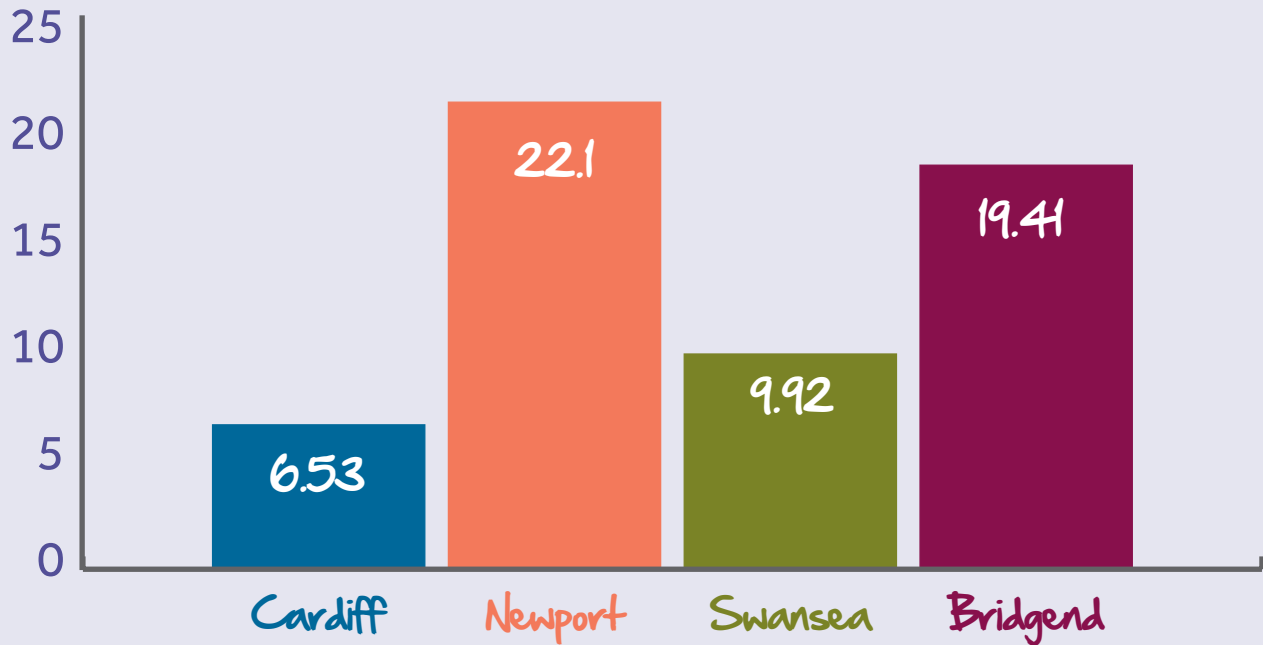
- 16-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-64
- 65+





# South Wales April-October 2017\*





*\*This data only available for the period of April-October 2017 because of changes to data collection.*

*The number of 'contacts' is the number of times the RSIT have offered support to individuals, and as such, the same individual might have been offered support several times. As such, the 'ratio of clients to contacts' gives a rough idea of how often individuals are seen.*

*'Rough sleeper' contacts refer to contacts with individuals we know were sleeping rough. Other contacts are likely to be vulnerably housed, sofa surfing, or living in hostels.*

*'Brand new' contacts refer to contacts with individuals for the very first time. Note that 'brand new' and 'rough sleeper' contacts can overlap as individuals might fall into both categories.*

# Section Four: Analysis and Conclusion

## Analysis

**Given that this is the first Street Based Lifestyle Monitor that deals with four areas, and that previous Street Based Lifestyle Monitors covered different time periods (the first Cardiff SBL covered two years, while the one prior to this covered fourteen months), an in-depth comparison of 2016-17 to the previous year is difficult.**

This is compounded by the difficulties associated with obtaining reliable data when it comes to people experiencing homelessness or vulnerable housing situations. Further investigation into specific aspects of the statistics presented here would be necessary to draw firm conclusions.

**By examining the statistics and graphs in the previous section, however, we can identify the following themes:**

- Contacts with people living street based lifestyles are rising
- Every Rough Sleeper Intervention Team (RSIT) has had more contacts than the 2015-16 period, with increases ranging from 24% to 77%
- It should be noted that 'winter provision' can affect the numbers of people engaged with by RSITs. These periods are marked on the line graphs for each team; during winter months, churches make spaces available for people to sleep. In very cold conditions, some organisations make additional bedspaces available (in Cardiff, for example, the Huggard Centre offers additional 'floorspace' during winter months). Because of this, numbers of RSIT contacts often drop, and are lower than they would be otherwise, although this varies by area. Anecdotally, our members of staff have long reported that numbers of people sleeping rough tend to be higher during summer, when the weather is warmer
- Individuals living street based lifestyles are more likely to be male, with males accounting for between 58% and 89% of team contacts; readers should bear in mind gender is not always known or recorded (people covered up and sleeping are not woken), but anecdotal evidence bears out a clear majority of males
- The average age of the individuals that make contact with RSITs ranges from 40 to 42
- The age group most represented in RSIT contacts is the 36-50 bracket (although it is the largest bracket in terms of age span)
- The age group least represented is the 16-17 bracket

**The following conclusions are drawn from data that covers only April-October 2017, when changes were made to our data recording:**

- Most individuals living street based lifestyles are sleeping rough when they engage with The Wallich's RSITs; they comprise from 71% to 98% of the total engagements in a given area
- The number of brand new individuals engaging with an RSIT (people who have never engaged with a Wallich RSIT service before) varies more, ranging from 7% to 55% for different teams, which might suggest entrenched rough sleeping is an underlying factor in certain areas, although this would require further investigation

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- The client-contact ratios give some idea of how many times an individual is seen by an RSIT in a given period. Ratios range from 6.53 to 22.1. These can lead to some interesting potential ideas: although Cardiff has the highest number of clients, it has the lowest client-contact ratio. In some ways, this is understandable – a bigger city will have a bigger group of people for the RSIT to engage with, and are likely to move around more. In Bridgend, which has the second highest client-contact ratio, there might exist a small group of individuals with whom the RSIT repeatedly engages. Again, our anecdotal evidence suggests this is the case

## Conclusion

As the analysis section has made clear, one must be cautious when drawing conclusions when it comes to data linked to homelessness, rough sleeping, and street based lifestyles. Sometimes, people deliberately try and hide for their own safety, or are wary of engaging with services, for a variety of reasons. The nature of these lifestyles means that people move around. Our Rough Sleeper Intervention Teams do their best to work with this context, but this should be noted.

However, the points made in the analysis provide a useful 'snapshot' of street based lifestyles in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Bridgend. The most striking fact is that the number of contacts our RSITs make is rising. This has been a recurring theme throughout our quarterly reports and monthly updates, but by looking at a year's worth of data, we have a clearer picture of the situation.

As explained at the start of this report, the aim here is not to suggest solutions or enter into policy discussions, but it would be a sin of omission not to suggest that the number of individuals living street based lifestyles is a problem that is worsening across South Wales. Without concerted efforts by a range of stakeholders, the situation is likely to deteriorate.

Other aspects of street based lifestyles remain consistent with other work we have done – the prevalence of men in our contacts, as well as the age group consisting of 36-50-year-olds. These aspects merit further investigation, so a better idea of cause and consequence can be formulated, with a view to reaching solutions. The statistics above align with the qualitative experiences of our frontline staff, working as part of the RSITs, and in our hostels and supported accommodation projects.

## What can YOU do?

Readers might be wondering what they should do if they see someone sleeping rough or otherwise seemingly engaged in a street based lifestyle. Providing money, food, or drink is a personal choice, and it is worth remembering that, sometimes, just spending some time talking can mean a lot to someone in a vulnerable situation.

In terms of more concerted action, readers can contact 'Street Link', an organisation that partners with The Wallich in Wales. By using Street Link, members of the public can report the location of an individual to the relevant Local Authority, who can then follow up, either using their own resources, or in concert with organisations like The Wallich. Street Link can be accessed via its website<sup>11</sup>, a downloadable smartphone app, or called on 0300 500 0914.

<sup>11</sup>StreetLink, "Welcome to StreetLink", accessed January 11, 2018, <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

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