

SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL (SWEP)

SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL (SMBC)

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1. Introduction

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) ensures that appropriate responses are made for people sleeping rough during periods of severe weather, who under normal circumstances would not be owed a statutory duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, or who would not normally engage with services.

Official guidance for SWEP sets out a minimum requirement that arrangements should be triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights (with SWEP plans being implemented on the first night of the forecast). This is effective between 1st October and 31st March each year. However, there is no single definition of severe weather for the purposes of triggering emergency accommodation – therefore any conditions that increase the risk of harm to people sleeping rough can be classed as severe. This includes extreme cold, wind, snow, rain and even heat.

The protocol aims to minimise risks to these individuals during periods of severe weather and provides an opportunity to engage with hard-to-reach groups and signpost them to appropriate support services. The Council encourages anyone who has concerns regarding someone who may be sleeping rough in SMBC to report their concerns.

2. Eligibility Criteria

SWEP will operate outside usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks. Anyone identified as sleeping rough will be referred to Solihull Community Housing (SCH) who will then arrange emergency temporary accommodation, regardless of priority need or eligibility. This means any people identified sleeping rough during periods of severe weather will not be required to demonstrate eligibility for assistance (including whether they have recourse to public funds), priority need, intentionality, or local connection. However under certain circumstances it may only be

possible to provide emergency temporary accommodation to those who are not eligible whilst SWEP arrangements are in place. As soon as SWEP is deactivated emergency accommodation may no longer be provided.

The only conditions any identified rough sleeper must meet in order to qualify for assistance through SWEP are:

- They must be at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the course of the severe weather
- They must have nowhere available to them to sleep indoors during the course of the severe weather (indoors does not include cars, shed or garages)
- They must agree to assistance under the SWEP procedure

Statutory Providers will use this opportunity to try and engage individuals who are sleeping rough in the Borough with accommodation and other support services.

3. Risk Management

If any incidents of anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour occur during the time that emergency accommodation is being provided to a rough sleeper the Police will be contacted (if appropriate) along with other signatory organisations that will be able to carry out the relevant assessments and / or provide further support. The Housing Options Manager at SCH or relevant scheme managers will review the assistance being provided to see if there are any alternative ways to prevent rough sleeping during the SWEP whilst at the same time managing the presenting risks. In rare incidences SWEP clients may have to be barred from provision if the risk is unmanageable.

4. Refusal of Accommodation

Many entrenched rough sleepers may be wary of services and less likely to engage. However, extreme weather increases the risk of death or serious illness to people who sleep rough. Continued refusal to accept assistance during severe weather conditions may therefore provide grounds to trigger referrals to other services, such as mental health services, to safeguard the individual.

If someone continues to refuse help a referral will be made to Adult Social Care through the One Front Door service (0121 704 8007 in office hours or 0121 605 6060 for the emergency duty team) to determine whether the individual has care and support needs and if so whether a safeguarding duty applies because they are experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or harm and because of their care and support needs are unable to protect themselves.

5. When is SWEP activated

In Solihull SWEP arrangements will be in place during any period of cold or severe weather throughout the year. This protocol will be flexible based on empathy for people sleeping rough in severe weather, rather than sticking to a fixed approach. We shall consider factors such as wind chill, snow coverage and duration of extreme weather when considering SWEP activation.

Cold: During periods of cold weather periods SWEP will be activated when the night time temperature is predicted to reach 0°C or below for one night or more.

Heatwave: temperatures forecasted at 25°C or above for more than 2 consecutive days SWEP will also be activated, however in extreme circumstances when temperatures are due to be 30°C or more for one day SWEP will also be activated. The Council will also work with its partners to establish cool, shaded, or indoor areas where rough sleepers can take shelter from the heat if required.

Any other inclement weather conditions including snow, ice, rain and high winds or other weather conditions which are likely to put the lives of people sleeping rough at risk, SWEP will be activated. It will be up to the SCH Homelessness and Housing Options Team to determine when the conditions have been met to operate SWEP.

6. SWEP Procedure

Any partner organisation or member of the public who identify a rough sleeper / potential rough sleeper should contact StreetLink on 0300 303 5000 SCH or 0121 717 1515 (which offers a 24 hour service) or in an emergency the Police and other emergency services as appropriate)

- I. Refer to the [flowchart](#) process which outlines what support is available to an individual when SWEP is activated.
- II. Upon placement – either SCH or St Basils will be informed of the client placed and they will contact the individual to complete a full assessment.
- III. If eligible for assistance they will be supported to find longer term accommodation
- IV. Should the individual refuse support to move on / not eligible for assessment the accommodation may only be available until SWEP is deactivated.

7. When is SWEP deactivated

SWEP arrangements will normally be deactivated when the minimum night time temperature is predicted to rise above zero degrees Celsius for two or more consecutive nights or when incremental weather conditions have ceased. Once SWEP arrangements have been deactivated emergency temporary accommodation may no longer be provided.

8. Partner Organisations

A detailed SWEP contact list will be maintained by SCH which includes contact names and emails for all individuals needing to be informed about SWEP arrangements. The Council's rough sleeper co-ordinator will also work with the Council's Communications Team to link information about identifying and reporting rough sleepers. Other key messages / information about severe weather will be added on to the Council's website and to raise awareness of the issue and via other communication tools.

9. Monitoring & Reviewing

This protocol will be reviewed annually by the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in consultation with key partners.

Accountable Officer: Sophie Perrett, Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator

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APPENDIX A FLOW PROCESS: SWEP & EXTENDED WINTER PROVISION



