



# **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) & Procedure for Rough Sleepers**

**November 2017**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Hart District Council is committed to working with partners to ensure that in severe weather conditions no one has to sleep rough within the district. In times of extreme and / or cold weather, rough sleepers are particularly vulnerable to harm and potentially death and so the Council recognises that it should make provision to prevent this from happening.
- 1.2 This Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) therefore sets out the arrangements that Hart District Council will put into place to ensure that people are not at risk of harm on the streets in Hart during extreme cold weather.

## **2. The Purpose of Protocol**

- 2.1 This protocol will ensure that the Council takes the necessary steps to avoid deaths on the streets by carrying out prompt action to ensure that all known rough sleepers have the opportunity to have access to shelter if it is believed that they are at risk due to sleeping rough during severe cold weather.

## **3. Trigger for putting the protocol into place**

- 3.1 SWEP arrangements are triggered when we have excessive weather conditions. As there are no strict definitions of what counts as extreme weather Local Authorities should proactively identify any severe weather that could increase the risk of serious harm to rough sleepers. This includes extreme cold, wind and rain.
- 3.2 The weather forecast for Hart during periods of cold weather will be checked daily on the Meteorological Office website [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk).

- 3.3 As soon as the protocol is triggered, the Council will contact its voluntary and statutory sector partners by email to advise that the SWEP is in place, with details of who to contact if they identify any rough sleepers.
- 3.4 The Council's website will be updated immediately to include details of who to contact if the public comes across someone who is sleeping rough during the severe weather.
- 3.5 The Emergency out of hours contact centre will be notified when SWEP is activated and again when closed.

#### **4. Eligibility Criteria**

- 4.1 The Council will not apply Part VII Housing Act 1996 criteria (as amended) that govern access to housing when deciding whether to assist a person sleeping rough during the period of the SWEP. This means that the individual concerned is not required in this case to demonstrate eligibility for assistance (including whether they have any recourse to public funds), priority need, intentionality or local connection
- 4.2 The individual concerned must only:
  - Be at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the course of the severe weather.
  - Has nowhere to sleep indoors during the course of the severe weather. (Indoors does not include cars, sheds or garages).
  - Agrees to the assistance offered by the Council.
- 4.3 Many entrenched rough sleepers may be wary of services and less likely to engage. The extreme cold weather increases the risk of death or serious illness to people who sleep rough. Given this, a refusal to accept assistance during this time may be grounds to trigger referrals to other services, such as for mental health assessments.

## **5. Procedure**

- 5.1 If the rough sleeper meets the above criteria they will be made one suitable offer of emergency accommodation for the duration of the severe weather.
- 5.2 Within office hours, the Council will manage the securing of emergency accommodation. Outside of office hours, contact should be made with the out of hour's service who will place rough sleepers into emergency accommodation during the time that the SWEP is in operation. The out of hour's service can be contacted on 0845 6770678.
- 5.3 The accommodation will be confirmed before midday on a day to day basis.
- 5.4 All clients placed into emergency accommodation when the SWEP is in operation will be referred to Homegroup so that appropriate services for ongoing support can be arranged where necessary.
- 5.5 The weather forecast will be checked daily and once the minimum temperature has been predicted to have risen above zero degrees Celsius or severe weather conditions have subsided emergency accommodation will no longer be provided.
- 5.6 The rough sleeper will be offered advice and assistance to deal with their longer term issue of homelessness.
- 5.7 Although rare, if any incidents of anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour are shown during the course of the time that emergency accommodation is being provided, the Engagement and Support Manager will review the assistance being provided to see if there are any alternative ways to prevent rough sleeping during the severe weather whilst at the same time managing the risks.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The cost of providing emergency accommodation during the SWEP will be covered from existing Council resources.



## **7. Monitoring and Reviewing**

7.1 The following information will be recorded and used to monitor the extent of rough sleeping in the borough:

- Number and composition of rough sleeper households.
- Number of nights accommodated for each household.
- The cost of emergency accommodation per night for each household.

7.2 This Protocol will be reviewed by the Engagement and Support Manager on an annual basis