

# Herefordshire Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

## CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Aims
3. Service Provision
  - 3.1 Activate Service
  - 3.2 Relocation
  - 3.3 Emergency Shelter Provision
  - 3.4 Temporary Accommodation

### Section 1: Introduction

Every Local Authority has a duty to have a protocol in place to provide appropriate support during severe weather. This protocol focuses on providing emergency accommodation throughout the winter months. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) will come into force when the temperature is forecast to drop to zero degrees (or below) for three consecutive nights.

This protocol gives rough sleepers access to accommodation and support during periods of exceptionally cold weather when SWEP is activated.

Discretion will be used when deciding upon the criteria for SWEP on the impact of occasional forecast above zero in a series of sub-zero nights.

Members of the public are encouraged to report any incidents of rough sleeping to: StreetLink [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) 0300 500 0941.

### Section 2: Aims

SWEP has two main aims:

1. To prevent loss of life due to severe weather conditions during the winter months.
2. To ensure that every effort is made to engage individuals with support services during the winter months and then actively encourage that engagement to continue.

### Section 3: Service Provision

The Housing Solutions Team will take the lead on SWEP and will be responsible for checking the five day forecast every day before 10am. The measurement must be taken from the BBC Weather Website (fed directly from the MET Office). The decision will be made on the forecast for the next three nights and reviewed daily before 10am.

SWEP will be deactivated when a forecast predicts two or more consecutive nights of a temperature of one degree Celsius.

The Housing Solutions and Homepoint Lead Officer will be notified when SWEP is activated or deactivated by 11am.

### 3.1 Activate Service

Every service user will have a risk assessment if accessing the Winter Shelter carried out by the Winter Shelter staff. Any service user placed directly by the Housing Solutions Team will have a risk assessment undertaken by the Temporary Accommodation Team.

Allocation of appropriate accommodation will be made by the Accommodation Lead Officer and the Housing Solutions and Homepoint Lead Officer. The accommodation will be at the Winter Shelter or temporary accommodation available for SWEP.

The Winter Shelter is only open to male service users. Temporary Accommodation available to male and female service users consists of 1 single 'sit up service room', 1 'no keys' room and provision of rooms in leased accommodation. Service Users with No Recourse to Public Funds will only be referred to the Winter Shelter.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker will report any case to the appropriate support agencies i.e. Mental Health Services, where a service user puts his or her self at significant risk during SWEP through refusal or disengagement with support and/or accommodation.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker will build and strengthen cross agency and cross partnership working with neighbouring authorities and organisations, identifying any individuals at risk and recording, monitoring and sharing data where appropriate.

### 3.2 Relocation

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker will provide relocation opportunities for those with no local connection.

Those service users with No Recourse to Public Funds will only be referred to the Winter Shelter and an assertive relocation service will be provided by the Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker. The service user will be informed of their housing options and linked in with relocation and potential sources of support.

### 3.3 Emergency Shelter Provision

Access to emergency accommodation provided through SWEP will be available regardless of local connection status.

Access to the Winter Shelter will be limited to 18 rough sleepers, (due to the restrictions of the accommodation used by the Winter Shelter provider), who have been verified as currently sleeping rough by the Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker.

Terms of agreement to occupy the Winter Shelter are given to every service user at interview or approach.

The limit is to ensure that the Winter Shelter is managed safely by a team of 2 staff, assisted by volunteers.

The Shelter will open at 9pm and close at 8am the following morning. The Winter Shelter will offer direct access, to male service users, for one night only. The Winter Shelter will only accommodate at each approach there will be no advance bookings.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker will be responsible for updating the list of service users accessing the Winter Shelter and email the list daily to the Housing Solutions and Homepoint Lead Officer.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker will maintain a full list of service users who have been accommodated via SWEP and forward to the Accommodation Lead Officer, the list will include name of service user and their length of stay.

An initial assessment of risk and needs will be undertaken by the Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker. The plan will help develop a short term support plan for the individual service user and access suitable accommodation. The Rough Sleeper Outreach Workers understanding of entrenched rough sleepers needs helps to ensure that they sustain their accommodation while the SWEP is in place.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker will continue to work with service users until they are resettled or relocated. Service users will have access to medical services whilst accessing the Winter Shelter.

It will be the responsibility of St Peter and St James' Churches to ensure that the Winter Shelter insurance policy is sufficient to cover the services of the Winter Shelter.

The Winter Shelter will operate a no dog policy.

The Winter Shelter operates a no drugs or alcohol policy.

### 3.4 Temporary Accommodation

Female service users requiring assistance during out of office hours will be able to contact the Housing Solutions Team's 'out of hours service'. Male service users will be accommodated by the Winter Shelter which offers direct access for one night only, any additional nights are subject to verification.

If the Winter Shelter is at full capacity additional accommodation may be offered in a 1 single 'sit up service room', a 'no keys' room or rooms available in leased accommodation, by the Housing Solutions Team with approval of the Accommodation Lead Officer or the Housing Solutions and Home Point Lead Officer.

The 1 single 'sit up service room' is for placements made out of hours if identified as a rough sleeper and a risk assessment considering the safety of the placement completed. The room is linked to a support service and only used for short time occupation.

The 'no keys' room is used for 'out of hour placements' and maybe used to facilitate female rough sleepers who are unable to access the Winter Shelter. The room can occupy two service users and is self-contained. Identified rough sleepers would be monitored daily being booked in and out of the accommodation.

Rooms in leased accommodation will also be made available for female rough sleepers during the operation of SWEP.

Service users will be made aware verbally of the terms and conditions of the agreement of occupying temporary accommodation. The service user will be made aware that the accommodation is being provided under SWEP and will only be provided during the extreme weather conditions and will end at short notice if the weather goes above zero.

The Accommodation Lead Officer (or the Temporary Accommodation Team), Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker and the Housing Solutions and Homepoint Lead Officer will be responsible for ensuring any placements in temporary accommodation are cancelled when the weather goes above zero/gets warmer. Every service user accommodated under the SWEP provision will be contacted on a daily basis advising of Herefordshire's Council's decision to accommodate.

Housing Benefit Claims will be completed for all those accessing the Winter Shelter or Temporary Accommodation.