

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) 2018-2019

1.0 Protocol objectives

- 1.1 Ensure that **all** rough sleepers have access to accommodation during severe cold weather to prevent anyone dying on the streets.
- 1.2 Support and encourage rough sleepers, whilst in cold weather provision, to access longer term accommodation.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) sets out the arrangements we will put into place to ensure that rough sleepers have access to emergency accommodation during extreme cold weather.
- 2.2 Under this protocol, the Council, partner agencies and commissioned services will carry out prompt action to ensure all rough sleepers have the opportunity to access shelter.
- 2.3 SWEP will be activated when the Met Office forecasts weather at a temperature of zeros degrees Celsius, or below. Local conditions such as wind chill, rain and snow will also be considered.
- 2.4 The focus of SWEP arrangements is on ensuring a humanitarian response to prevent rough sleepers dying from the cold or other severe weather conditions. It is expected that **all** rough sleepers, including those who have no recourse to public funds, have a dog or wish to be accommodated as a couple, are provided with emergency accommodation, irrespective of usual eligibility/entitlement criteria.

3.0 When individuals refuse support

- 3.1 Extreme cold weather increases the risk of death or serious illness to rough sleepers. It can be difficult for outreach teams to persuade rough sleepers to access emergency accommodation. St Mungos outreach have regular contact with individuals that refuse support and accommodation, this includes, but is not limited to, the health risks associated with severe weather, especially where individuals are using substances or have pre-existing health conditions.

If an individual continually refuses to accept accommodation but is clearly at risk, they may

- be suffering from a mental illness or;
- lack the capacity to make an informed decision.

The screening tools below can be used to help identify if an individual lacks capacity or has signs of a mental disorder. In either of these situations a referral to the Advice and Assessment Team may be necessary.

In the case of an emergency you should contact the police or ambulance services.

Familiarise yourself with sec136 Mental Health Act 1983 and when to request an **emergency** mental health assessment. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/20/section/136>

Support services	Contact details
Police or ambulance service	Tel: 999
Streetlink	Tel: 0300 500 0914
St Mungos Outreach	Tel: 020 7426 9610
Mental Health Advice and Assessment team	Tel: 020 3317 7300 / Email: cim-tr.PBMHS@nhs.net

3.2 The following are questions to ask when dealing with rough sleepers who are refusing to come inside during the cold weather. The list is not exhaustive but provides an indication as to whether further action is needed or not.

- ✓ What is the decision to be made and why does it need to be made now?
- ✓ Is their reason to believe that the person may lack mental capacity to make the decision due to know or suspected mental health issues, learning disability, brain injury, dementia or intoxication?
- ✓ Has sufficient information been given to the person to help them understand their decision?
- ✓ Have all practical steps been taken to support the person to make the decision?
- ✓ Does the decision appear to be unwise, eccentric or odd?
- ✓ Is it felt that the person is free from external pressures to make their decision?

3.3 Mental Capacity Screening Tool

If the person is unable to demonstrate their ability in one or more of the points contained in the table below they may lack capacity.

- ❖ Can the person understand in simple language the information involved in making the decision?
- ❖ Can they retain the information long enough to make the decision?
- ❖ Can they use or weigh up the information to make a decision?
- ❖ Can they communicate their decision, by talking, sign language or other means?

Then ask;

- ✓ Does the person, on the balance of probabilities, have the capacity to make the specific decision at this particular time?
- ✓ What action should be taken?
- ✓ How have you ensured that the action taken is in the best interest of the individual?
- ✓ Is the person showing signs of mental disorder to the extent that they need admission to hospital for assessment or treatment?
- ✓ Is the person presenting a risk to their own or another's health or safety?
- ✓ What other support or interventions have already been offered?
- ✓ Are there any relatives, carer's or other services known and involved?

For the complete screening tools and guidance please follow the following link
<http://www.pathway.org.uk/services/mental-health-guidance-advice/>

Other Issues to consider;

- How long has the person been sleeping rough, are they constantly moving from place to place?
- Level of isolation
- Monitoring arrangements
- Are they in receipt of benefits?
- Current physical and mental health- chest infections, head injuries, diabetes, heart problems?
- Use of alcohol or drugs. Drug or alcohol use can cause blood vessels to dilate which causes faster loss of body heat.
- Does the person have bedding?
- Does the person have appropriate clothing? Hat scarves and gloves reduce loss heat significantly.
- Is the sleep site sheltered and dry?
- Is the person accessing a day centre and have access to hot food and drinks?
- Is the person known to services?
- What reasons does the person have for refusing to come in, can they give a rational explanation? Do they understand the risks?

- Indicators of hypothermia

Early stages

Pale and cold skin
 Temp 35 or below
 Uncontrollable shivering
 Low energy levels

As progresses

Confused
 Loss of judgement
 Difficulty moving
 Weakness
 Stumbling
 Memory loss

Last stage

Shivering stops
 Drowsy
 Loss of co-ordination
 Slurred speech
 Listless and indifferent
 Shallow breathing
 Weak pulse
 Dilated pupils

4.0 Activation of the protocol

- 4.1 SWEP will be activated when the Met Office forecasts zero degrees Celsius, or below. Local conditions such as wind chill, rain and snow will also be considered. For 2018-19 the Greater London Authority (GLA) will trigger SWEP for all London boroughs.
- 4.2 By 11.00a.m, the borough's Rough Sleeping Lead will inform the following agencies that the SWEP needs to be activated:
- St Mungos Outreach Team and Projects
 - LBI Out of Hours
 - Shelter from the Storm
 - Islington Council Housing Aid Team
 - Streets Kitchen
 - The Manna
 - Margins at Union Chapel
 - Islington neighbourhood policing teams
 - ASB team
- 4.3 If severe weather is predicted for the weekend then SWEP will be activated on the preceding Friday.
- 4.4 When activated, SWEP provision will be open for a minimum of three days, even if temperatures rise before this point. This will allow the Outreach Team time to work with people to find a longer term solution.
- 4.4 As soon as the protocol is activated the borough's Rough Sleeping Lead will inform the Housing service and the Out of Hours emergency team. They will also ensure that the Council's web pages advise members of the public who to contact if they see a rough sleeper during the cold weather.
- 4.5 The Rough Sleeper Lead will keep all agencies updated with an estimated end date for SWEP and will notify all agencies when SWEP is deactivated.

5.0 Access and referrals

- 5.1 All referrals must be made via the Outreach Team, neighbourhood policing teams, The Manna, Streets Kitchen, Margins, the Police, the Out of Hours service or via Streetlink to the SWEP coordinator at swepreferrals@islington.gov.uk.
- 5.2 Individuals referred who do not have a local connection will be reconnected to their area of origin the following day by the Outreach Team.
- 5.3 SWEP referrals should arrive at the hostel by 9.30pm (though admittance for those found after this time should also be assured) and leave by 9.30am the following day. It is good practice to provide SWEP referrals with breakfast and details of local day centres.
- 5.4 On arrival at the shelter, rough sleepers will be expected to provide their name and date of birth. This will be cross referenced with the list provided by the Outreach Team or Police. Anyone arriving whose name does not appear on the list will be checked with the referring agency and if not known, refused access.
- 5.5 Any anti-social behaviour should be dealt with according to the accommodation providers normal policies and procedures, but eviction should be a last resort and must be authorised by the Borough's Rough Sleeping Lead, or, in their absence, the Housing Solutions Manager.

6.0 Move On

- 6.1 Islington will work towards the 'In for Good' principle, meaning that once someone has accessed SWEP shelter they are not asked to leave again, regardless of the temperature rising above 0°C, until a support plan is in place to end their rough sleeping.

- 6.1 All attempts should be made by the Outreach Team to motivate SWEP clients to engage with services. It is the responsibility of the Outreach Team to lead on this.
- 6.3 When a SWEP client agrees to be accommodated or reconnected, a referral should be made to the appropriate service by the Outreach Team. Where possible the SWEP bed should be offered until a placement/reconnection is available.

4.0 Local provision

4.1 Islington Council's local provision will be hosted by:

- St Mungos Holloway Road (2 spaces)
- St Mungos Barnsbury Road (2 spaces)
- St Mungos 155 Tufnell Park Road (2 spaces)
- Sapphire Housing – Bethany House (1 female space)
- Shelter from the Storm (4 spaces)
- Peabody – Southwood Smith (2 spaces)

To ensure that space is available, and appropriate support provided, projects will be expected to manage space creatively. Emergency accommodation may be in the form of camp beds, mattresses or chairs within communal spaces and spare rooms.

- 4.3 Once capacity is reached within our own provision, we will use the Pan-London SWEP provision funded by the Greater London Authority.
- 4.4 In special and exceptional circumstances, such as mobility, health or personal issues, it may be necessary to offer time limited temporary accommodation provision. This will be accessible via the Borough's out of hours emergency service (020 7527 2000 operating from 6.00 p.m. to 9.00 a.m.).

5.0 Pan-London Overflow SWEP provision

The GLA pan-London overflow SWEP accommodation is currently provided by St Mungo's. This will be opened when any borough's SWEP provision reaches capacity or when the temperature drops to 0°C in Westminster. Once capacity is full within any local authority's individual SWEP accommodation, pan-London SWEP will be made available for referrals from that borough.

The SWEP coordinator for an area has the responsibility for notifying St Mungo's at swepmanagers@mungos.org and the GLA at roughsleepingcommissioning@london.gov.uk when their emergency accommodation will be opened and when it is close to capacity so that overflow accommodation may be required. Where there is capacity within the borough's own emergency provision, it is expected that all rough sleepers will be accommodated there, rather than in the pan-London beds. Where possible, notification of planned opening should be made by midday to allow pan-London provision to prepare.

5.0 Monitoring and review

- 5.1 Details of those accessing severe weather accommodation should be recorded by the Outreach Team and passed on to the Rough Sleeping Lead at the end of the severe weather period for analysis. This should be accompanied with a narrative report highlighting any concerns with the activation of the protocol, what worked well and any lessons learned to improve the response in the future. This will be shared with Homeless Link and any other interested parties. Information required includes:
- Names and contacts numbers
 - Gender, date of birth, nationality and ethnicity
 - Primary support needs, including any specific physical health issues, which will better inform local healthcare needs of those on the streets
 - Length of time rough sleeping
 - Any previous contact with services
 - Where they move on to at the end of SWEP

A useful monitoring form can be found at: www.homeless.org.uk/swep

These details should be sent to the Rough Sleeping Lead 5 days after SWEP is deactivated. This should be provided together with a commentary on what went well, any concerns and lessons learnt. This is to enable changes to be made in order to make improvements in the future. This will be shared with interested parties including Homeless Link.

- 5.2 This protocol will be reviewed by the Rough Sleeping Lead on an annual basis in consultation with key stakeholders.

Useful Contact Details	
Outreach Team (St Mungos)	Tel: 020 7426 9610
Rough Sleeping Lead (Georgina Earthy)	Tel: 020 7527 3360
Street Population Coordinator (Sarah Turley)	Tel: 020 7527 4135
Streetlink	Tel: 0300 500 0914 www.streetlink.org.uk
Switchboard/ Out of hours emergency service	Tel: 020 7527 2000
Website	www.islington.gov.uk/roughsleeping