



Tamworth Borough Council

Housing Solutions

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)
2015

1.0 Protocol Objectives

- To ensure that no rough sleepers health and wellbeing is affected on the street due to extreme weather conditions.
- To ensure that every effort is made to engage with individuals accommodated during the extreme weather period so they do not return to the streets.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This protocol sets out the arrangements that Tamworth Borough Council will put in place to ensure that rough sleeper's health issues are not exacerbated by, or lives endangered by, extreme weather conditions. Under this protocol, the Council will carry out prompt action to ensure that Rough Sleepers have the opportunity to have access to shelter if it is believed that they are at risk during severe weather conditions.
- 2.2 Central Government has in place a Severe Emergency Weather Protocol (SWEP) which places expectations on, and offers guidance to, Local Authorities around protecting Rough Sleeper during severe weather. Tamworth Borough Council wants to be compliant with this protocol. The trigger for SWEP to be activated is when the Met Office forecasts a minimum temperature of zero (or below zero) degrees Celsius in Tamworth. Local conditions such as wind chill, snow and other forms of extreme weather where the temperature does not fall below zero degrees should also be considered. This protocol will run inclusively from October 1st to March the 31st, although adverse weather outside these dates could also trigger SWEP where appropriate.
- 2.3 The focus of SWEP arrangements should be on ensuring there is a humanitarian response to prevent Rough Sleepers from experiencing worsening health conditions or fatalities during spells of severe weather. It is expected that all Rough Sleepers, including those who have no recourse to public funds, are provided with emergency accommodation away from the streets and these arrangements are made away from the usual eligibility/entitlement that governs access to housing. Targeting of individuals should be therefore based on need, not on housing entitlement.

3.0 Local Provision

- 3.1 Tamworth Borough Council in line with the Governments No Second Night Out initiative wants to ensure that no one needs to sleep rough on the streets.
- 3.2 In line with the Government Protocol Tamworth Borough Councils Severe Weather Emergency Protocol will be triggered from the

first night temperatures are forecast to drop below zero and will then be monitored on a day by day basis. SWEP may also be activated if weather is deemed severe by the MET office, even if temperatures do not fall below zero degrees. Where weather is severe but temperatures are not forecast to drop below Zero, the decision to activate SWEP will be made by Tamworth Borough Councils Housing Solutions Manager or in their absence the Senior Housing Solutions Officer.

- 3.3 Rough Sleepers may make contact with Tamworth Borough Council asking for assistance or could be approached by the Rough Sleeper Team, Police, Community Wardens and any other agency, and offered accommodation in time limited Bed and Breakfast provision.
- 3.4 When a Rough Sleeper is reported via services such as Street Link or found by services and the offices are closed then the Out of Hours process can be accessed, by using the out of hours contact team on 01827 709709 and the select the option that says "If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness".
- 3.5 There may be instances where Rough Sleepers refuse the shelter and support offered. Those individuals should be provided with information about the risks of cold weather on their health, especially if they are using substances. If someone continues to refuse help in these circumstances it may be grounds to trigger the safeguarding procedure. The adult Safeguarding team can be contacted on 0845 604 2719 in working hours, or 0845 604 2886 for out of hours. In an emergency situation always dial 999. There may also be issues around mental capacity of the Rough Sleeper, to make the decision to remain on the streets. Understanding the Mental Capacity Act 2005, in particular Section 5 and Section 6, and use of emergency powers under S136 of the Mental Health Act are vital, as is working closely and persistently with mental health services (See links below) when this may be an issue.

<http://www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/moneyandlegal/legal/Pages/MentalCapacityAct.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/mental-health/Pages/Mentalhealth.aspx>

4.0 Activation of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

- 4.1 Tamworth Borough Councils Housing Solutions Team will be responsible for checking the Met Office forecast on a daily basis and the HSM/Senior Housing Solutions Officer will inform the Housing Solutions Team and the Head of the Strategic Housing Service and whoever holds the on call phone by 2pm that the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol needs to be activated. An

email alerting colleagues and partners to the activation of SWEP will also be sent. (See Appendix 1 for full list.)

- 4.2 Bed and Breakfast accommodation will be contacted and information about room availability will be shared, to ensure that rough sleepers can access accommodation as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- 4.3 In the event that the severe weather warning is to be activated at the weekend temporary accommodation will be contacted on a Friday to discuss how many beds are available and who will be accessing accommodation.
- 4.4 The website will not be up dated advising members of the public that the SWEP procedure is currently in place. However rough sleepers can still be identified via the out of hour's phone or the rough sleeper team.
- 4.5 Out of hours teams will be advised that SWEP is in place.

5.0 Referrals

- 5.1 Any partner agency can refer in to the SWEP provision.
- 5.2 Rough Sleepers without a local connection can still be accommodated under SWEP provision; where there is a local connection to another area Tamworth Borough Council will work with the Rough Sleeper to reconnect them to their local connection area. If there is no local connection for example a rough sleeper from outside the UK, Tamworth Borough Council will assist the rough sleeper with options for reconnection, where appropriate.
- 5.3 Rough sleepers can access SWEP provision out side usual hours, via the out of ours number, so there is no "closing time" to access accommodation.
- 5.4 Rough Sleepers accessing SWEP will need to complete a SWEP monitoring Form (Appendix 3) either over the phone or in person when accessing SWEP accommodation. The name of the rough sleeper will be passed over to the temporary accommodation provider so they know who to expect.
- 5.5 SWEP will be activated for one night initially, and will be reviewed on a day to day basis.
- 5.6 On the day after SWEP is activated or on a Monday if SWEP was activated during a weekend, the duty Housing Solutions Officer should arrange to visit the service user(s), who have been accommodated under SWEP. This should be done at a reasonable time, and in a place that is suitable for both the Housing Solutions Officer and the service user(s) accommodated under SWEP. Work should include whether the service user (s) requires further assistance, or if they would like to make a homeless application a referral to Brighter Futures may also be suitable if the client is presenting with Multiple and Complex needs.
- 5.7 Rough sleepers presenting as a couple are not exempt from SWEP provision, and can access accommodation the same as a

single person, and may be kept together where possible and if deemed safe to do so, after assessing the risk and needs of the couple.

- 5.8 Rough sleepers with a pet, can still access SWEP provision as animals could be temporarily accommodated at a local animal rehoming service, subject to availability.
- 5.9 The temporary accommodation agreement sets out the terms and conditions of their stay, and rough sleepers will be expected to sign this prior to any stay, where possible. (see appendix 2 Temporary Accommodation Occupancy Agreement)

6.0 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 Details of those accessing the severe weather accommodation should be recorded on the SWEP spreadsheet and passed to the Housing Solutions Policy Officer at the end of the severe weather period for analysis (this information should include personal details, support needs, risk issues, housing history, reasons for not being in accommodation) This should be accompanied by a narrative report highlighting any concerns with the activation of the protocol, what worked well and any lessons learned to continuously improve the offer to Rough Sleepers in future periods of severe weather. This information may be shared with the Director of Housing and Health and the Portfolio Holder for Housing. (see attached Appendix 3 SWEP Monitoring Form)
- 6.2 This Protocol will be reviewed at the end of each severe weather period on an annual basis during April.

