

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 In the event of severe weather rough sleepers are at particular risk of harm and potentially death. Eastleigh Borough Council is committed to mitigating this risk by ensuring that rough sleepers in the Eastleigh borough are given appropriate housing options during severe weather.

2. The Purpose of this Protocol:

- 2.1 This Protocol is in place to ensure that Eastleigh Borough Council takes appropriate action to prevent the occurrence of death or serious illness, through the provision of shelter, to rough sleepers who are at risk in extreme weather conditions.

3. SWEP Trigger:

- 3.1 There is no single definition of severe weather. Any weather conditions that increase the risk of harm to people sleeping rough can be classed as severe. This could include extreme cold, wind, snow, rain or heat.
- 3.2 The historic guidance is for SWEP provision to be triggered when the temperature is forecast at zero degrees or below for three consecutive days. However, Eastleigh Borough Council will take a flexible and empathetic approach to the offer of assistance during severe weather taking into account the impact of wind chill, rain, snow and heat.

4. Eligibility Criteria:

- 4.1 When offering assistance under SWEP, the eligibility criteria as set out in Part VII of Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) will not be applied. Any person, regardless of eligibility, priority need, intentionality or local connection will be provided with assistance if they:
- Are at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the course of severe weather conditions;
 - Have nowhere to sleep indoors or have inadequate shelter (such as vehicles or sheds) during the course of severe weather conditions; and
 - Agree to engage with assistance offered by the Local Authority
- 4.2 If Eastleigh Borough Council identifies any rough sleepers who are not willing to engage with assistance offered during SWEP and considers the person to be at increased risk of death or serious illness as a result, this could be indicative of a mental health issue and referrals to other services such as Mental Health and Adult Services may be completed.

5. SWEP Procedure:

- 5.1 Training on Eastleigh Borough Council's SWEP Protocol will be given on a periodic basis to all frontline Housing Case Management Officers and other statutory and voluntary agencies.
- 5.2 If Eastleigh Borough Council is notified of a rough sleeper either by way of self referral, another agency or a member of the public, a Housing Case Management Officer or the Out of Hours Duty Officer will make contact with the rough sleeper and will make an assessment as to whether the trigger conditions for SWEP apply, seeking guidance from a Housing Specialist if required.
- 5.3 If satisfied that the conditions for SWEP are met, a booking of emergency accommodation will be made. Eastleigh Borough Council will endeavour to ensure the booking is available until the period of severe weather has ceased. However, during busy periods, the rough sleeper may be required to move to an alternative emergency accommodation placement.
- 5.4 During Eastleigh House office opening hours, a Housing Case Management Officer will arrange and book emergency accommodation placements under SWEP. Outside of office opening hours, the Out of Hours Duty Officer will arrange the booking until the next working day and the rough sleeper will be asked to present to Eastleigh Borough Council during office opening hours.
- 5.5 Throughout the duration of the placement, the weather conditions will be monitored on a daily basis using the approach outlined in Section 3 of this Protocol. Once Eastleigh Borough Council is satisfied that the period of severe weather has ceased, the rough sleeper will be notified that their emergency accommodation placement will be terminated. The rough sleeper would be expected to leave the placement the day after they are notified of the termination of the placement.
- 5.6 All rough sleepers will be given the opportunity to meet with a Housing Case Management Officer to explore their longer term housing options and will be offered further support and/or accommodation referrals where appropriate. The Housing Case Management Officer will complete any relevant referrals with the rough sleeper.
- 5.7 As with all emergency accommodation placements, if at the point of booking or during the booking it is identified that the rough sleeper poses a risk to themselves or other residents in emergency accommodation, the suitability of the placement will be reviewed. In addition, anti-social behaviour and unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated within emergency accommodation. If it is assessed that the emergency accommodation placement is not or is no longer appropriate, Eastleigh Borough Council will explore alternative ways to prevent rough sleeping taking into account the identified risks.

6. SWEP Financial Implications:

- 6.1 Rough sleepers placed in emergency accommodation will be signposted to complete a Housing Benefit application. A Housing Benefit Case Management Officer can assist with the application if required.
- 6.2 Any costs of an emergency accommodation placement under SWEP not covered by Housing Benefit will be covered by existing Council resources.
- 6.3 If a rough sleeper is unable to arrange travel or has insufficient funds to travel to their emergency placement, Eastleigh Borough Council will consider assisting with a travel warrant through the Local Welfare Allowance.

7. Statistical Monitoring:

- 7.1 Eastleigh Borough Council will record all placements under SWEP in order to monitor the levels of rough sleeping in the borough. The following information may be collected for these purposes:

- Name
- Contact details
- Demographic data (gender, date of birth, ethnicity, nationality)
- History of rough sleeping
- Cause of homelessness
- Dates of emergency accommodation placement
- Total cost of emergency accommodation placement
- Outcome following SWEP

8. Contact:

- 8.1 Any persons known to be rough sleeping should be reported to Eastleigh Borough Council immediately. The contact details are as follows:

Address: Eastleigh Borough Council
Eastleigh House
Upper Market Street
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 9YN

Telephone: 023 8068 8000

Email: housing@eastleigh.gov.uk

Out of Hours: 023 8068 8000