

Adult Social Services and Housing

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) For Rough Sleepers



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1. Background

The [Governments Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018](#) was replaced in 2022 by the policy document '[Ending Rough Sleeping for Good](#)'. The new document is a 'whole system approach' to deliver:

- Better prevention
- Swift and effective intervention
- Extra help to aid recovery
- A more transparent and joined up system

Rough sleeping is the most extreme and visible form of homelessness and for many, they do not necessarily qualify under the homelessness legislation as eligible for housing assistance.

North Somerset Council has a humanitarian obligation and commitment to end rough sleeping and works with partners to link rough sleepers with the services and support that can help them find a way off the streets and into settled accommodation.

In times of extreme, cold and hot weather, rough sleepers are particularly vulnerable to harm and potential death when on the streets. This Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) sets out the arrangements that North Somerset Council will put into place to prevent this from happening during severe extended cold, hot and any other extreme weather.

This Severe Weather Emergency Protocol reflects relevant Government and Homeless Link guidance.

2. Purpose of the Protocol

This protocol seeks to 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 can access shelter if it is believed they are at risk due to sleeping rough during severe or extended cold weather.

The aim of the protocol is:

- To prevent loss of life.

- To ensure that every effort is made to engage with individuals during an extreme and/or cold weather period so they do not return to the streets.
- Support any rough sleepers in making the transition from the streets to maintaining housing.

3. Triggers for activating SWEP

- SWEP arrangements for cold or extreme weather are triggered when the temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below for three consecutive days. This is a minimum requirement - therefore extended cold or extreme weather locally can also trigger SWEP which will be determined by the Rough Sleeper Coordinator and/or the Homeless Prevention Manager (or their representative) having reference to the Met Office forecasts. This can include extreme wind/gales and excessive or sudden prolonged rain. An occasional forecast above zero following a series of sub-zero nights may also be considered.
 - SWEP arrangements for hot weather are triggered when the Met Office Heat Health Alert system (HHA) hits Amber. More details about the HHAS can be found in Appendix D of this document.
- The Met Office weather forecast will be checked daily before 10am during predicted periods of cold, severe or hot weather by the Rough Sleeper Coordinator and/or the Homeless Prevention Manager (or their representative). Once the minimum temperature is predicted to have risen above zero degrees Celsius, or the severe weather or heat wave has ended SWEP provision will no longer be provided unless extended by the Rough Sleeper Coordinator and/or the Homeless Prevention Manager (or their representative) e.g. provision may be extended if severe weather is close to a weekend or to allow further engagement if appropriate with rough sleepers.

4. Eligibility Criteria for SWEP Accommodation During Cold or Extreme Weather

The Council **will not** apply Part VII Housing Act 1996 criteria (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) that governs access to housing when deciding whether to provide accommodation to a person sleeping rough during the period of the SWEP.

This means that the individual concerned is not required (during this period) to demonstrate eligibility for assistance (including whether they have any recourse to public funds), priority need, intentionality or local connection.

- The individual must only:
 - Be sleeping rough during the course of the severe weather.
 - Have nowhere to sleep indoors during the course of the severe weather. (Indoors does not include cars, sheds or garages).
 - Agree to the assistance offered by the Council.
- Rough sleepers may include those who are:
 - Banned from services
 - Unknown to services
 - Not engaging
- And they may have:
 - A History of unacceptable behaviour (including ASB and addiction issues)
 - No local connection
 - No recourse to public funds
- A risk screening form (Appendix B) will be completed for the purpose of identifying and managing risk. **Risk screenings will not be used for the basis of exclusion.** At a later stage to assist with connection to services an individual assessment form will be completed with the rough sleeper

5. Procedure

Referrals for Accommodation

- **Within office hours**, the Rough Sleeper Outreach Service (hereafter Outreach Service) run by the YMCA and/or the Council's Homeless Prevention Team will both take referrals to the SWEP accommodation.
Contact details below.

- **Outside of office hours**, referrals to SWEP accommodation can be made through the out of hours service. Contact details below. #Accommodation during heat SWEP will only be provided for the most vulnerable

6. How to make a referral

Self-referrals, public and any partners who become aware of a rough sleeper should advise the Homeless Prevention Team as soon as possible by one of the following methods;

- Whilst the Town Hall remains restricted access please be aware that all agencies can refer anyone rough sleeping or you can signpost applicants via this link <https://northsomerset.housingjigsaw.co.uk/>
- **Email:** Outreach Service outreach@ymca-dg.org Or Homeless Prevention Team HP.Triage@n-somerset.gov.uk
- **Telephone:** during office hours: Outreach Service 01934 629787/07891 809004 or Homeless Prevention Team 01934 426330 Monday – Thursday 9am – 5.00 pm; Friday 9am – 4.30pm
- **Out of Office:** 01454 615165 Monday – Friday after 5.pm; Saturday & Sunday; Bank Holidays

7. Informing partners and role of outreach

- The Rough Sleeper Coordinator or his/her nominee will be responsible for checking the Meteorological Office website www.metoffice.gov.uk on a daily basis before 10am and will inform all other key partners when the SWEP has been activated. An email advising SWEP has been triggered will be sent to the key partners listed at Appendix A.
- Once SWEP has been triggered, the Outreach Service will proactively locate any known rough sleepers, liaising with any relevant external partners in the area. Assertive outreach may be suspended if the weather conditions are so severe that staff would be put at risk.
- The Outreach Service will verify where possible that the client has been rough sleeping and complete the Risk Screening Form (Appendix B). Evidence

should be gathered from any other agencies that have previously worked with the individual.

8. Other procedures

- Appropriate SWEP accommodation will be offered for the duration of cold and severe weather.
- Each client will be fully informed of any rules relating to the accommodation at referral stage i.e. behaviour, drug use, intoxication and asked to sign to confirm that they have understood and will adhere to them before booking in (Appendix C)
- As soon as possible following placement, the Outreach Service will refer clients to any agencies that can assist with food, toiletries, and clothing.
- Many entrenched rough sleepers may be wary of services and less likely to engage. Anyone refusing assistance will be provided with information about the health risks associated with severe weather, which are increased if using substances. If someone continues to refuse help in these circumstances it may be grounds to trigger referrals to other services, such as for mental health assessments, the Police and/or Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult Team. (Relevant legislation includes, sec. 136 of the Mental Health Act 2007 and Mental Capacity Act 2005 S5&S6)
- During Heat SWEP Outreach will increase welfare checks and distribute water and sunscreen. They will also focus on people who are rough sleeping and isolated from services e.g. out of town, those with additional health vulnerabilities, alcohol dependency, those who would struggle to keep themselves safe in the sun through lack of understanding, intoxication etc
- Outreach will work with partners such as Somewhere to Go to ensure daytime cover and cool places can be provided
- Rough sleepers who refuse assistance will have frequent welfare check visits where possible during the severe weather. This will include offers of support/assistance and a review of any assessments by any other services i.e. mental health.

- Where the young person is aged 16 or 17, an immediate referral should be made to the Homeless Prevention Officer (Young People) for a joint assessment with Children's Social Care.

9. The Accommodation We Use

- Somewhere to Go (STG) St Johns Hall, 4a Boulevard, Weston super Mare will provide overnight provision for the duration of SWEP.
- Where STG may not be suitable, for example due to previous anti-social behaviour or due to safeguarding concerns, a bed and breakfast placement will be secured

10. Move On

- Rough sleepers will be offered housing options and advice/assistance from the Homeless Prevention Team and the Outreach Service to deal with their longer-term issue of homelessness. Assistance may include:
- HOUSING OPTIONS
 - Homeless Application and any duties owed
 - Referral to Deposit Bond Scheme
 - Help with reconnection to an area where they have a local connection
 - Help with finding suitable accommodation
- SUPPORT PROVIDER
 - Registration with health services e.g. GP, Mental Health Team, and NHS Dentist etc.
 - Application for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit
 - Review of income (benefits check)
 - Review of debts (repayment plans)
 - Referrals to support agencies e.g. Citizens Advice, Addaction, Children or Adult Social Care Services etc.
- All rough sleepers placed into SWEP accommodation will be offered a referral to a support provider for ongoing support if appropriate. Some clients may not

agree to this but the offer of the referral will remain open should they change their mind.

- Although rare, if any incidents of antisocial behaviour or unacceptable behaviour occur during the time that SWEP accommodation is being provided, the Outreach Service or Homeless Prevention Team will review the assistance being provided. Supported housing providers and SWEP accommodation will not take people who are a risk to others therefore we will endeavour to source other accommodation providers if available.

11. Financial Implications

The cost of providing SWEP accommodation during the SWEP will be covered from the Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund together with any eligible claims for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (housing element).

12. Monitoring and Review

- The Homeless Prevention Team will develop a methodology for the number of people referred to SWEP services. This will involve regular liaison with Outreach Service and the numbers will include any rough sleepers who do not wish to engage.
- The information gathered on the monitoring 'spreadsheet' will be used to help further assess the extent of rough sleeping in the NSC area, and numbers returning to the street, including reasons for this and following the end of SWEP and allow the Council to plan effectively for future responses.
- Following the end of the severe weather period the Rough Sleeper Coordinator will review the findings and discuss these at the Street2Settled Homelessness Partnership, as well as with relevant stakeholders/colleagues within the Council.
- The SWEP will be reviewed (light touch review to update and amend any material changes) by the Rough Sleeper Coordinator annually or when central government guidelines/good practice requires consideration and/or implementation. This will be carried out in consultation with our key

stakeholder partner organisations working with rough sleepers in North Somerset as listed in Appendix A.

13. Feedback

We value your feedback and welcome both compliments and areas for development. You can send us feedback through our [website](#). If you have any concerns about any action or decision taken by Adult Social Services and Housing, you should initially talk to the person you normally talk to. You can also contact our complaints manager at:

Complaints Manager,

Adult Social Services and Housing,
Town Hall,
Walliscote Grove Road,
Weston super Mare,
BS23 1UJ

Telephone: 01275 882171

Email: complaints.manager@n-somerset.gov.uk

14. Accessibility

All North Somerset Council documents can also be made available in large print, audio, and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English. Please email asshsstrategyandpolicyteam@nsomerset.gov.uk or ring 01934 888 888.

Appendix A – List of key partners

Homeless Prevention Team

North Somerset Council
Post Point 17, Town Hall,
Walliscote Grove Road,
Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ
Tel: 01934 426330
Email: HP.Triage@n-somerset.gov.uk
Web: www.n-somerset.gov.uk

YMCA Outreach

2 Bristol Road-Lower,
Weston-super-Mare
BS23 2PN
Tel: 01934 629787
Email: outreach@ymca-dg.org
Web: www.YMCA-dg.org

Somewhere to Go

St John's Church Hall
4-6 Boulevard
Weston-super-Mare
BS231NA
Tel: 01934 641880
Email: is daymanager@somewheretogo.org and
Web: <https://www.somewheretogo.org>

Appendix B – SWEP Risk Assessment

Photo

Date of referral:
YMCA case worker:
Housing officer:

SWEP RISK ASSESSMENT

All questions contained in this questionnaire are strictly confidential and will only be shared with NSC, YMCA Outreach and Somewhere To Go staff and volunteers.

CLIENT DETAILS	
Name:	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary DOB:
Nationality:	Ethnic origin:
Languages spoken:	Contact Number:
Currently working? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Dog? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Currently claiming UC/PIP? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Name/description/ any risks?
Details:	

Full assessment complete? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date and time of full assessment:
Local Connection <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Local connection if not North Soms.....		

HEALTH

Any diagnosed mental health/LD needs? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Diagnosis:	Medication:
Self-harm? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	History of suicide attempts? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Details:	Details:
Any diagnosed physical health needs? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Diagnosis:	Medication/Mobility Aids:

SUBSTANCE MISUSE		
Drug Use <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Alcohol Use <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
List all substances used including misused prescription meds		
Drug/type of alcohol	How much on average?	Frequency Taken

Scripted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No WAWY Worker:		
Type of Scripted Medication:	Dosage:	Pickup:
IV drug user? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Risk of OD/ withdrawal <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Details:	

OFFENDING HISTORY			
Any current criminal convictions/open investigations? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Any violent offences (ABH/GBH/assault)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:	Any convictions for arson?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:
Any criminal damage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:	Any weapons convictions?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:
Any sexual offences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:	No lone working?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:
Current on probation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:	Prison sentences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Details:

Other agencies working with?

Yes No

Details:

Appendix C – SWEP Rules

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SWEP ACCOMODATION

This accommodation is provided to you under the following terms and conditions and by signing this agreement you have indicated your acceptance of them.

1. You must occupy the premises as your sole accommodation.

2. You must keep the premises in a clean and tidy condition and co-operate with the proprietor regarding all health and safety requirements.

3. The emergency accommodation may be withdrawn where it is found that you or anyone living with you have been involved in any of the following:
 - a. Assaulting and/or threatening and/or intimidating any other person
 - b. Allowing anyone who is not a resident to enter or occupy the accommodation
 - c. Causing nuisance within the premises or the neighbourhood, or otherwise behaving in an unreasonable manner
 - d. Deliberately causing damage to the premises
 - e. Using/supplying illegal drugs and/or consuming alcohol in the premises or the neighbourhood
 - f. Theft of any items belonging to the proprietor or to any other resident
 - g. Harassing any other person on the grounds of their colour, race, ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or religion
 - h. Using the premises for any other illegal purpose

4. Whilst occupying the accommodation you must respect other residents by not entering their room, knocking on their doors or disturbing them in any other way

5. If you vacate the accommodation you must return your keys to the landlord of the property.
6. This accommodation is during severe weather only and you will be informed when you are expected to vacate.

Appendix D - Heat Health Alert (HHA)

The heat-health alert (HHA) operates from 1 June to 30 September

The system is based on the Met Office forecasts and data. Depending on the level of alert, a response will be triggered to communicate the risk to the NHS England, government, and public health system.

Advice and information will be sent for the public and health and social care professionals, particularly those working with at-risk groups, after an alert is issued or updated. This includes both general preparation for hot weather and more specific advice when a severe heatwave has been forecast.

The platform aims to cover the spectrum of action from different groups. In general terms:

- Green (preparedness): No alert will be issued as the conditions are likely to have minimal impact and health; business as usual and summer/winter planning and preparedness activities.
- Yellow (response): These alerts cover a range of situations. Yellow alerts may be issued during periods of heat/cold which would be unlikely to impact most people but could impact those who are particularly vulnerable.
- Amber (enhanced response): An amber alert indicates that weather impacts are likely to be felt across the whole health service, with potential for the whole population to be at risk. Nonhealth sectors may also start to observe impacts and a more significant coordinated response may be required.

- Red (emergency response): A red alert indicates significant risk to life for even the healthy population

Useful link:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/heat-healthalert-service>