

*Tendring*  
*District Council*



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**SEVERE WEATHER  
EMERGENCY PROTOCOL  
(SWEP)  
November 2020**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

Rough sleeping is the most extreme and often the most visible sign of homelessness, and the government is committed to get people sleeping rough off the streets.

One of the Governments commitments is that no rough sleeper should have to spend a second night out (Vision to end Rough Sleeping No Second Night out July 2011) and in August 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published 'The Rough Sleeping Strategy' which sets out the Governments vision to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end rough sleeping by 2027.

Tendring District Council shares this vision and by using funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government through the Rough Sleeper Initiative fund, the Council is working in partnership with Anglia Care Trust to provide an outreach service to support and assist those sleeping rough into accommodation, and to access other services they may need.

The Council is committed to working with partner agencies to link rough sleepers with the services that can help them to find a way off of the streets and into settled accommodation. However, in times of extreme and cold weather, rough sleepers are particularly vulnerable to harm and death.

The Council had traditionally reported that there was not a significant problem with rough sleeping in the Tendring area but that it did occur. Estimates submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have only provided data based on an estimate on a given night during the year

## **2. WHAT IS SWEP?**

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) ensures a temporary response is made to people sleeping rough during times of heightened risk, who under normal circumstances would not be owed a statutory duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

It provides those people sleeping rough with temporary shelter when there is an increased risk of death due to the weather. This response is co-ordinated by the Council and they will also work closely with local agencies and voluntary groups.

Severe weather includes when temperatures fall near or below freezing, and also when high temperatures hit around 25c or over and it then can become a challenge for those sleeping rough to find drinking water and cool spaces to sleep.

Although there is no legal requirement for the Council to adopt a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), there is an expectation that local authorities will have procedures in place to get people off the streets in times of extreme weather.

This Severe Weather Emergency Protocol sets out the arrangements that Tendring District Council (TDC) and partner agencies will put in place to ensure that all rough sleepers have the opportunity to access accommodation so that they are not at risk on the streets during severe weather.

### 3. TRIGGER FOR SWEP

There is no statutory definition of severe weather or no statutory trigger for implementing SWEP.

Each Council at their own local level will trigger SWEP and previously it was triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below for three consecutive nights or the issuing of an amber or red weather warning.

This revised protocol supports that SWEP is triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below throughout the full length of a single night. During periods of cold weather the forecast for the Tendring district will be checked daily on the Meteorological Office website <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

Local conditions such as prolonged periods of heavy rain, flooding, snow on the ground, severe wind and other extreme weathers will also be considered as possible triggers.

During occasions of extreme hot weather people sleeping rough may find it hard to source drinking water and sun protection which then increases the risk of dehydration, sunburn and sunstroke. As this need will be greater during daytime hours the Council will look to work with partner agencies in the provision of water or sunscreen and guidance rather than initiating SWEP.

The weather forecast for the Tendring district will be checked daily during periods of cold weather on the Meteorological Office website at [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk).

### 4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

SWEP operates outside the eligibility criteria for housing assistance set out by the Homelessness Reductions Act 2017 and Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

A person sleeping rough will not be required to demonstrate eligibility for assistance (whether they have recourse to public funds), priority need, intentionality or local connection. A person will be offered assistance when s/he:

- Has been sleeping rough in the Tendring District, and has been identified as doing so by the Outreach Workers.
- The person concerned must be at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the period of the severe weather.
- Some people are unsure of services and sometimes reluctant to engage with the Council so the person must also to the assistance that is being offered. The person won't be forced to accept the offer of help however, we have to understand that severe weather increases the risk of harm to people who sleep rough, and if repeated refusals are made during severe weather conditions it may provide grounds to trigger additional support from other services such as mental health services or Adult Social Services to safeguard the person.
- Has nowhere available to sleep indoors during the period of the severe weather and this does not include within vehicles, sheds or garages.
- The person must not pose a risk to accommodation providers or other residents because of a history of violence or other offences which include verbal abuse

against any individual. If a person is considered too high a risk by any professional agency which could be the police, probation, and mental health services for example or a person is aggressive, violent or threatens violence then in these circumstances the Council's Housing Solutions Team may make the decision not to provide accommodation.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT**

Should any incidents of anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour occur during the time that emergency temporary accommodation is provided, if appropriate the Police will be contacted along with any other agencies that are currently supporting the individual(s) concerned or agencies who would be carrying out assessments and further support.

## **6. PROCEDURE**

Once the protocol is triggered, the Council will contact its voluntary and statutory agencies and partners and advise that the SWEP is in place along with details of who to contact if any rough sleepers are identified.

All SWEP situations will be communicated to the Salvation Army and other local churches in their capacity to provide services to rough sleepers. This will be done by the Housing Solutions Team along with Anglia Care Trust and their outreach workers.

All key partner agencies will be informed by Anglia Care Trust through community groups and open emailing. All partners are encouraged to use their own communication networks to notify people of SWEP activation.

To aid communication the Council's website will be updated immediately to include details of the service being provided.

If a rough sleeper meets the above criteria they will be offered temporary accommodation for the duration of the severe weather.

The Housing Solutions Team will ensure that every effort is made to engage with the person accommodated during SWEP so that they do not return to the streets, and this engagement will involve working with partner agencies and voluntary organisations.

## **7. ACCOMMODATION TYPE**

At the present time, this accommodation will usually comprise of either a hotel room or a room in another establishment which has separate sleeping spaces. Depending on the property some rooms may have en-suite shower rooms and/or toilet facilities, and may have the use of communal kitchen facilities.

Under the current COVID restrictions no shared sleeping spaces will be provided.

The accommodation will be provided on a day to day basis.

The Council will manage temporary accommodation bookings both during and outside of office hours.

## **8. WHAT HAPPENS OUTSIDE OFFICE HOURS?**

Any person sleeping rough who wishes to be provided with accommodation that night under SWEP needs to contact the Housing Solutions Team before 5pm if possible. If they are unable to do so they must contact the out of hours service by 8pm in order to be placed in accommodation the same night. If they contact the Council after 8pm they will need to wait until the following day and contact the Housing Solutions Team to have a full assessment and accommodation that night if SWEP has been continued.

Any person accommodated under SWEP out of hours will be advised to contact the Housing Solutions Team on 01255 686456 by 9am the following morning so they can be assessed

The Council's out of hours service (Careline) can be contacted by telephoning 01255 222022. Careline will then contact one of the Housing Solutions team and pass the details to them to respond to the caller.

Members of the public and agencies who are concerned about someone sleeping rough can visit the Streetlink website and complete a referral form

[www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk)

0300 500 914

Or the details can be emailed through to the Housing Solutions Team using the email address [housingoptions@tendingdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@tendingdc.gov.uk)

## **9. REFUSING ACCOMMODATION**

The extreme cold weather increases the risk of harm to people who sleep rough but if a person refuses the offer of accommodation during this time the Housing Solutions team will:

Provide clear information on the risks of cold weather on their health

Consider if there is a possibility that the person is not capable of making an informed decision and it is appropriate for the Housing Solutions team to make a referral to Adult Social Care or the Crisis Mental Health Team.

If the accommodation is refused, the Housing Solutions team will inform the Outreach Workers.

## **10. HOW LONG DOES SWEP LAST?**

It is up to the Council to decide the time scale. The provision of SWEP accommodation will be reviewed on a daily basis with a decision being made by the Housing Solutions & Allocations Manager as to whether arrangements will be in place for a further night. The weather forecast will be checked daily and some provision may be for a single night and close as soon as the weather improves slightly.

When the decision has been made to end SWEP all partner agencies will be informed by email and all forms of communication will be updated

The Council can make a commitment to continue providing accommodation for those accommodated under SWEP to ensure that they do not return to rough sleeping. Therefore all persons accommodated as a result of the SWEP will need to attend an appointment with the Housing Solutions Team and this appointment will be conducted via the telephone or in person. This is so their housing needs can be fully assessed along with identifying any other support needs.

If they fail to attend their appointment, the offer of accommodation will be withdrawn.

If they do not have a connection with the Tendring district, the Council where possible, will support a person to reconnect to their local area.

Although rare, if there are any incidents of anti-social or unacceptable behaviour during the time that the temporary accommodation is provided, the Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager will review the assistance being provided to see if there are any alternative ways to prevent rough sleeping during the severe weather whilst at the same time managing the risk.

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of providing temporary accommodation during the SWEP will be covered from the Council's existing resources. However such costs may in some instances be recovered through the submission of a Housing Benefit claim for the emergency temporary accommodation provided by the Council if the person has recourse to funding.

## **12. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The following information will be recorded and used to monitor the extent of rough sleeping in the district:

- Number, age, gender and nationality of each rough sleeper
- Number of nights accommodated for each rough sleeper
- If they are new to the local area
- The cost of emergency accommodation per night for each rough sleeper

This protocol will be reviewed by the Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager on an annual basis.

