

# Helping rough sleepers in Salford

## A guide to implementing Salford's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)



## **What is a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)?**

SWEP is a process that is put in place to ensure that people sleeping rough are not at risk of harm or, in the worst case, of dying during periods of extreme cold and severe weather.

Salford has arrangements in place to prevent and respond to rough sleeping at all times of the year. The purpose of SWEP however is to ensure that a place of warmth and safety is available, during severe weather conditions, for those people sleeping rough who are not normally eligible for statutory services. It also includes those people who have a long history of sleeping rough and have refused previous interventions from housing options and support services, or who choose to continue sleeping rough.

## **Why is SWEP needed?**

The government encourages all Council's to have SWEP arrangements in place. At the very basic level SWEP is in place to prevent harm and ensure that no one dies on the streets during cold and severe weather. However it also gives services the opportunity to engage with hard to reach individuals who have previously refused assistance so that every effort can be made to prevent them from maintaining a rough sleeping lifestyle.

## **Who does it cover?**

SWEP applies to anyone identified as sleeping rough on the streets during the period that it is in operation. The only conditions that must be met in order for a rough sleeper to qualify for assistance through SWEP are:

- They must be at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the course of the severe weather
- They must have nowhere available to them to sleep indoors during the course of the severe weather (indoors does not include cars, sheds or garages)
- They must agree to assistance
- They do not need to have an entitlement to public funds

## **What are the aims of SWEP?**

SWEP aims to:

- Prevent harm or death amongst anyone sleeping rough during severe weather
- Provide shelter for rough sleepers who under normal circumstances would not be owed a statutory duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, or who would not normally engage with services
- Prevent those accessing SWEP provision from having to return to the streets
- Assist people sleeping rough who use the SWEP provision to access other support services to meet their needs

## **When is SWEP activated?**

SWEP arrangements will be in place during any period of severe weather from the beginning of October through to the end of March every year.

SWEP arrangements are triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees celsius or below for three consecutive nights. Consideration will be given to implementing SWEP when exceptionally cold or inclement weather is forecast that falls short of this definition. This will include periods of extreme rain and/or wind.

Where possible, accommodation will also be provided where the night time temperature falls below 5 degrees. This is termed “Cold Weather Provision” and is resource dependant.

## **Who is involved in delivering SWEP?**

The main organisations involved in delivering the protocol are:

- Salford City Council
- Riverside Housing Association
- Greater Manchester Police
- Registered Local Providers and Landlords
- Salford Temporary Accommodation Providers

The Protocol seeks to encourage anyone living or working in Salford who has concerns regarding someone who may be sleeping rough to report their concerns through links on the Salford City Council website.

When SWEP arrangements are activated further awareness raising will be carried out to ensure that members of the public and partner organisations are urged to report concerns regarding people who might be sleeping rough. These will be

published through Salford City Council's intranet, external website and any newsletters issued during that period. These publications will ensure that partner organisations and members of the public are given clear and straight forward advice on how they can help rough sleepers during these periods.

## Procedure Guide

### Stage 1 – SWEP arrangements are triggered

From October to March inclusive Service Managers for Housing Choice and Support will be responsible for checking the three day forecast every day before 10:00am. The measurement will be taken from the BBC Weather Website (fed directly from the MET Office). This is the link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/m27>

Service Managers for Housing Choice and Support are responsible for making the decision to activate and deactivate SWEP. Once a decision has been taken it will stand until the following day's check. The service will be reviewed on a daily basis with a commitment made every morning to open for further nights based on the forecast for the next three days. A decision will be made at 10:00am on Friday morning as to whether SWEP will be activated over Saturday and Sunday that week.

The following people may authorise activation or de-activation of SWEP outside of the protocol:

Executive Management Team Salix Homes  
Head of Strategy and Enabling SCC  
City Mayor;  
Strategic Directors SCC;

As soon as the protocol is triggered, the Service Manager Housing Choice and Support will update Salford City Council to enable the internet to be updated.

The Council's website will provide details of who to contact if a member of the public comes across someone who is sleeping rough during the severe weather.

The Council's out of hours service will also be contacted to advise that SWEP has been triggered.

### Stage 2 – How a Rough Sleeper is identified

A rough sleeper could be identified through a report from either a member of the public or a partner organisation. The protocol requests an enhanced commitment from the following services to actively identify and refer rough sleepers in Salford for additional support during periods of severe weather:

- Salford City Council – including Adult Social Care Teams, Neighbourhood Teams, Salford Housing Option Point, Supported Housing Teams, Emergency Duty Team
- Greater Manchester Police
- Salix Homes, City West Housing Trust and all local Registered Providers
- Salford Probation
- Salford Temporary Accommodation Providers
- Voluntary, Charitable and Faith groups

The role of the above organisations will be particularly important in identifying rough sleepers and ensuring that they have been referred to appropriate services during periods of severe weather. A rough sleeper can be notified to Salford's Supported Tenancies Team on 0161 607 1620 or via Streetlink at: <http://www.streetlink.org.uk/tell-us-about-a-rough-sleeper>

Any known or obvious details about the rough sleeper should be noted by the contacting person/agency. This includes their gender, estimated age, any obvious vulnerabilities they might have, the location they were identified at or last seen in and whether it is thought that they are new to the street or a long term rough sleeper.

**Please note – members of the public and partner organisations wanting to report rough sleepers are advised not to approach the person directly. This will avoid risk to the individual making the report, reduce anxiety of the rough sleeper and will ensure that rough sleepers are not approached numerous times by different organisations and people asking them the same questions.**

### **Stage 3 – After a Rough Sleeper is reported**

A different response will be activated where a rough sleeper is under the age of 18. Where the age of the rough sleeper is known or can be reasonably accurately estimated reports should be made as follows:

#### **Know or estimate rough sleeper to be aged 18 or over:**

Between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday please report to Salford Housing Options Point on 0161 607 1620 or via e-mail to [SupportTen@salford.gov.uk](mailto:SupportTen@salford.gov.uk)

Between 4.30pm and 8.30am Monday to Friday and 4.30pm Friday to 8.30am Monday an emergency out of hours service is operated on 0161 794 8888.

### **Know or estimate rough sleeper to be aged 16 or 17:**

Report to Children's Services on 0161 603 4222, via e-mail to [worriedaboutachild@salford.gov.uk](mailto:worriedaboutachild@salford.gov.uk) or make a referral via secure at <http://www.salford.gov.uk/secureupload.htm>

Between 4.30pm and 8.30am Monday to Friday and 4.30pm Friday to 8.30am Monday an emergency out of hours service is operated on 0161 794 8888.

The young person will be provided with emergency accommodation. They will then have an assessment of their support and accommodation needs by Children's Services. This will start with an initial assessment by a social worker and, where safe to do so, will involve mediation with a family member or carer to try and facilitate a return to a family environment. Alternative support and accommodation options will be explored as part of this assessment.

### **Know or estimate rough sleeper to be aged under 16:**

Report to Children's Services on 0161 603 4222, via e-mail to [worriedaboutachild@salford.gov.uk](mailto:worriedaboutachild@salford.gov.uk) or make a referral via secure at <http://www.salford.gov.uk/secureupload.htm>

Children's Services will make arrangements for an initial assessment to be carried out to determine the most appropriate action to be taken.

### **Where the age of the rough sleeper is unknown:**

The rough sleeper should be advised to contact or a report should be made to Salford Housing Options Point on 0161 607 1620 or via e-mail to [SupportTen@salford.gov.uk](mailto:SupportTen@salford.gov.uk). SHOP will then seek to determine the age and circumstances of the rough sleeper and either respond themselves or make a referral to an appropriate service.

## **Stage 4 – Response to Rough Sleepers aged 18 and over**

### **For reports to SHOP made during office hours:**

The rough sleeper will likely be advised to attend at SHOP at 7 Wesley Street, Swinton, M27 6AD for an interview. If the rough sleeper is at the office of a partner organisation then a telephone assessment can be undertaken. Where it is reasonable to believe that the person is sleeping rough, they have nowhere safe to stay and they agree to assistance then the officer will attempt to arrange emergency temporary accommodation.

SHOP will follow this up the following day by arranging for a Housing Options Officer and/or Supported Tenancies Officer to interview/assess the rough sleeper. The

intention will be to assist the rough sleeper into accommodation and/or accessing necessary services such as health, Department of Work and Pension support.

### **For reports to Emergency Duty Team (EDT) made out of office hours:**

The needs of the rough sleeper will be assessed over the phone either by talking to the referral agency or where possible the rough sleeper directly. Where it is reasonable to believe that the person is sleeping rough, they have nowhere safe to stay and they agree to assistance, then emergency temporary accommodation will be sought.

EDT will send notification to SHOP of any placement made out of hours. SHOP will then follow this up the following day by arranging for a Housing Options Officer and/or Supported Tenancies Officer to interview/assess the rough sleeper. The intention will be to assist the rough sleeper into accommodation and/or accessing necessary services such as health, Department of Work and Pension support.

## **Stage 5 – The Provision of Temporary Accommodation**

SHOP or EDT will seek to arrange emergency temporary accommodation for anyone identified as sleeping rough when SWEP arrangements are in place. During SWEP 2017/18 the accommodation is likely to be at SASH which is run by Riverside Housing Association. This project is based on Leicester Road, Higher Broughton and can meet the needs of males, females and couples. Where possible, placements here will be made for a number of nights, even when SWEP is not expected to extend beyond that night. This will enable the support staff at this project the opportunity to work with the rough sleeper to explore accommodation options to prevent a return to the street. It will also provide some available time to address issues such as health and financial difficulties.

On occasion it may not be possible to place at SASH. In these circumstances a placement will be sought into Bed and Breakfast accommodation or a temporary placement at an alternative supported accommodation project. Attempts will be made for this temporary accommodation to be in Salford, however on occasion this accommodation may be in an alternative local authority area.

The SHOP Temporary Accommodation Officer and Supported Tenancies Officer SWEP will ensure that the rough sleeper completes a housing benefit application form to cover their period of occupation. These officers will help the rough sleeper to provide verification for this claim and will also assist them to claim personal benefits that they may not be receiving.

The SHOP Temporary Accommodation Officer and Supported Tenancies Officer SWEP will ensure that a letter is issued to the rough sleeper to advise them that their placement is temporary and could end at short notice if the weather goes above zero/ceases being defined as severe by the Service Manager Housing Choice and Support.

The SHOP Temporary Accommodation Officer and Supported Tenancies Officer SWEP will cancel SWEP placements in B&B accommodation and send out cancellation letters to placements once SWEP is deactivated. They will also inform housing benefit that occupation has ceased. They will liaise with the rough sleeper to ascertain whether any further assistance and support can be provided.

The Supported Tenancies Officer SWEP will liaise with Housing Benefit to ensure that the claim is progressed and that the likelihood of payment is maximised.

SHOP will also make appropriate referrals to other organisations, providing support as part of a wider response to the issue of rough sleeping.

## **Risk Management**

If any incidents of anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour occur during the time that emergency temporary accommodation is being provided the Police will be contacted (if appropriate) along with any other agencies that are either providing support to the rough sleeper or who could carry out relevant assessments and provide further support.

SHOP will review the situation jointly with relevant partners and determine whether any other form of shelter could be provided during the time that SWEP is in place. This will be taking into account issues around managing the risk associated with the rough sleeper. Whilst every possible attempt will be made to find suitable shelter, in rare incidences where the risk is unmanageable, some rough sleepers may have to be barred from provision under SWEP.

SHOP staff must ensure that the terms of this agreement are made clear to the rough sleeper, providing information verbally and in writing. Most importantly the rough sleeper must be made aware that this accommodation will only be provided during the extreme weather conditions. However further advice and assistance will be available to them to try and help them to find long term accommodation and access other services.

## **Stage 6 – SWEP arrangements are deactivated**

The operation of SWEP arrangements will be reviewed on a daily basis with a decision being made every morning (as per stage 1) as to whether arrangements will be in place for a further night. SWEP arrangements will normally be deactivated when the minimum night time temperature is predicted to rise above zero degrees celsius for two or more consecutive nights or when severely inclement weather conditions have ceased. When the decision has been taken to deactivate all forms of communication will be updated accordingly.

Once SWEP arrangements have been deactivated emergency temporary accommodation will no longer be provided. The rough sleeper will be offered housing options and assistance to deal with their longer term issues of homelessness. Where



existing placements can be maintained by the housing provider, outside of the local authority's responsibilities, then this would be encouraged.

Where a rough sleeper does not have a local connection and has come from another area of the UK or another country, SHOP will make the relevant enquiries and assist them to reconnect to their local community if that is their preference.

## Financial Position

The cost of providing emergency accommodation during SWEP will be covered from existing Council resources. Such costs will try to be recovered through the submission of housing benefit claims for any accommodation provided.

## Monitoring

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

- Number, age, gender and nationality of rough sleeper households;
- Number of nights accommodated for each household;
- The cost of emergency accommodation per night for each household

## Review

This Protocol will be reviewed by the Service Managers Housing Choice and Support on an annual basis. This will be carried out in consultation with key stakeholders and partner organisations working with rough sleepers.

This leaflet provides a summary of the procedure guidelines for SWEP arrangements. For further information please contact Rachel Connelly or Jane Anderson on 0161 607 1620. Updated information will be loaded onto Salford City Council's website at [www.salford.gov.uk/](http://www.salford.gov.uk/)

Salford Housing Options Point delivers advice and assistance on a range of housing issues. This includes mortgage repossession, rental deposit schemes, housing options and housing support. They can be contacted at SHOP, 7 Wesley Street, Swinton, Manchester, M27 6AD, by telephone on 0161 607 1620 or via e-mail at [SupportTen@salford.gov.uk](mailto:SupportTen@salford.gov.uk).