



Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) Surrey Heath Borough Council Winter 2024/2025

Background

There is a humanitarian obligation on Local Authorities to do all they can to prevent deaths on the streets caused by winter weather.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) previously set the trigger for the provision of SWEP as **'a weather forecast predicting at least three consecutive nights of temperatures at or below zero degrees Celsius'**. While this criteria is the minimum requirement and is still used as the trigger guidance advises that a common sense approach should be taken so SWEP may extend its operation beyond this, taking into consideration other weather conditions such as the effect of wind chill factor or severe flooding in order to minimise risk of death or serious harm to rough sleepers.

SWEP Aims

1. To ensure that no one suffers serious harm or dies on the streets during periods of severe winter weather.
2. To ensure that emergency accommodation is accessible to anyone, including people not normally eligible for services and people with no recourse to public funds.
3. To ensure that every effort is made to engage individuals with support services during winter months.

SWEP Accommodation

The Council will in the first instance refer anyone with a Surrey Heath local connection to the Emergency Accommodation Service (EAS) in Camberley operated by The Hope Hub. If the EAS is at maximum capacity the Council will provide a form of nightly paid accommodation for periods when SWEP is in operation.

Winter 2024/2025

Surrey Heath Borough Council
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Weather Monitoring and Initiation

1. Weather will be monitored using the Met Office website during the winter months.
2. If the temperature criteria, 3 consecutive nights at zero or below, is met, SWEP will be activated. It will run until the temperature reaches zero or above again.
3. If the temperature criteria are not met but the forecast suggests that the temperature will feel like zero or below for three consecutive nights or that there may be another reason to operate a decision will be made by the Housing Services Manager or Housing Solutions Team Manager whether to activate the protocol. It will not be automatically activated based on a feels like temperature.

SWEP Process

1. The Housing Solutions Team will be notified at 9am whether SWEP will be operating. This decision will be made by either the Housing Services Manager or Housing Solutions Team Manager. In the absence of these two officers the Senior Case Officer will determine whether SWEP needs to be operating.
2. The Housing Solutions Team will seek to contact rough sleepers and explore emergency housing options as well as dealing with direct approaches. This could be with friends and relatives and could be facilitated with the use of Homeless Prevention Grant e.g. as a goodwill payment to the host or to arrange travel. People known to be sofa-surfing will not be offered accommodation as they are not classified as rough sleepers.
3. The Hope Hub will be contacted in the usual way and any referrals made before 2.30pm will be considered for a same day sign-up by The Hope Hub. The Hope Hub will risk assess any referrals and will notify the Case Officer if a referral is to be refused as early as possible. This will allow the Case Officer to seek another form of accommodation.
4. Clients making enquiries about accommodation from outside of the Surrey Heath area, with no recognised local connection, will be advised not to travel to the area, instead directed to contact the Local Authority in which they are currently located.
5. Clients presenting for SWEP who have a local connection elsewhere will be supported to reconnect to their home area at the earliest opportunity, where it is safe for them to return.
 - Clients who present before 4pm will be offered reconnection.



- Clients who present after 4pm, and who are not able to return to their home area in time for accommodation to be offered, will be offered one night in an emergency nightly paid placement and supported to reconnect the next morning. No further accommodation will be provided beyond the first night.
 - Clients from neighbouring boroughs/counties will not be offered reconnection after 4pm if they can reasonably travel to their home area in good time for assistance to be obtained.
 - Clients with a local connection elsewhere who decline reconnection support will not be offered alternative accommodation.
6. Out of hours and at weekends the Duty Service can be contacted in the usual way through the Council's out of hours service. Out of hours nightly paid accommodation will be arranged until the next working day for those people with a local connection to the Surrey Heath area.
 7. If a rough sleeper refuses SWEP accommodation, the Housing Solutions Team will keep a record of the refusal. Where there are concerns about the mental or physical well-being of a client refusing accommodation the Duty Officer at CMHRS or Adult Social Care will be contacted as appropriate.
 8. All SWEP clients who are eligible will be assessed under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 and appropriate advice, support and referral offered.
 9. SWEP clients with a local connection will be referred to The Hope Hub to assess what support can be provided to reduce the likelihood of them returning to the streets. Consideration should also be given to support needs of the client and appropriate referrals made to other relevant agencies.

Placement Cost

1. Any placement made will incur a cost. An agreement will be sent to the client and this will need to be signed and returned to the Case Officer making the placement.
2. Clients entitled to recourse in the UK will be supported to submit a Housing Benefit application to see if they qualify for financial assistance to cover some of the placement cost.
3. An ineligible service charge will remain the responsibility of the client and this will be explained at the time the accommodation is offered.



Monitoring & Review

1. Data will be collected on the use of SWEP to inform the response to severe weather in the future and will be fed back to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
2. This protocol will be reviewed on an annual basis.

