

# How to help a rough sleeper in Solihull

**A guide to implementing Solihull's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**



## What is the SWEP?

The 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 cold and severe weather.

Solihull has arrangements in place to prevent and respond to rough sleeping at all times of the year. The purpose of the SWEP however is to ensure that a place of warmth and safety is available for those people sleeping rough who are not normally eligible for services or who have a long history of sleeping rough and have refused previous interventions from housing options services / choose to continue sleeping rough.

## Why is it 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 returning to 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

## What are the aims of the SWEP?

The 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 eligible for assistance 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

## Who is involved in delivering the SWEP?

SWEP arrangements are part of the Rough Sleeper Protocol for Solihull. The main organisations involved in delivering the protocol are:

- Solihull Council
- Solihull Community Housing (SCH)
- West Midlands Police
- Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust
- Sustain
- Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS)
- Fry Housing Trust
- Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH)

The Rough Sleeper Protocol encourages anyone living or working in Solihull who has concerns regarding someone who may be sleeping rough to report their concerns. 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.

# Procedure Guide

## Stage 1 – SWEP arrangements are activated

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

The Met office weather forecast will be checked daily by the Council between October and March. Periods of cold or severe weather are defined as any time during which the night time temperature is predicted to reach zero degrees Celsius or below for one night or when there are sustained periods of snow, ice and any other inclement weather conditions which are likely to put the lives of people sleeping rough on the streets at risk.

The decision to activate SWEP will be made by SCH in consultation with the Council. All partner organisations signed up to the Rough Sleeper Protocol have provided details of an operational contact who will be informed by email when SWEP arrangements have been activated. The Council will also raise awareness of the SWEP procedures using other communication tools (e.g. local press, the Council's website, newsletters, briefings etc).

## Stage 2 – Rough Sleeper Identified

A rough sleeper could be identified through a report from either a member of the public or a partner organisation. The protocol sets out a specific role for the following services in actively identifying and referring rough sleepers in Solihull:

- Solihull Council – Neighbourhood Services & Town Centre Management Team
- Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS)
- Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust
- Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH)
- Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations who will be made aware of the process through Solihull Sustain
- West Midlands Police

The role of the above organisations will be particularly important in identifying rough sleepers and ensuring that they have been referred to relevant services during periods of severe weather.

Any known or obvious details about the rough sleeper should be noted. 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 them directly. This will avoid risk to the individual making the report and will ensure that rough sleepers are not approached numerous times by different organisations and people asking them the same questions.**

## Stage 3 – Rough Sleeper 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** – Report to Solihull Community Housing (SCH) on 0121 717 1515 (an emergency out of hours service is also provided on this number). Whilst the SWEP is in operation West Midlands Police have also agreed to treat any call they receive concerning a rough sleeper as a priority.

**Know or estimate rough sleeper to be aged 16 or 17** – Report to SCH on 0121 717 1515 or to Solihull Council's 16+ team on 0121 788 4200 (or out of hours 0121 605 6060). The young person will then be provided with emergency accommodation where they have nowhere else safe to stay and their longer term accommodation and support needs will be assessed as part of the 'Joint Protocol for the Assessment of Homeless 16/17 Year Olds'.

**Know or estimate rough sleeper to be aged under 16** – Report to Children's Social Work Services on 0121 788 4333 (or out of hours 0121 605 6060). Children's Social Work Services will make arrangements for an initial assessment to be carried out so that the relevant team can determine what action will be taken.

**Where the age of the rough sleeper is unknown** the report should be made to SCH on 0121 717 1515. SCH will then determine the age and circumstances of the rough sleeper and either respond themselves or make a referral to the relevant service.

## Stage 4 – Response to Rough Sleepers aged 18 or over

**For reports to the Police made during office hours** – The Police will treat any call they receive concerning a rough sleeper during the SWEP period as a priority. Having received a report of a potential rough sleeper the Police will investigate the report and where it is verified will contact SCH (0121 717 1515). Where necessary they will assist the rough sleeper to get to SCH offices to attend an emergency homelessness interview.

**For reports to the Police made out of office hours** – Having received a report of a potential rough sleeper the Police will investigate the report and where it is verified will assist the rough sleeper to get to the nearest place of warmth and safety. They will then contact SCH and explain the situation so that SCH are able to assess the rough sleepers circumstances and arrange emergency temporary accommodation. Wherever possible an assessment will be carried out over the phone and transport will be arranged to ensure that the rough sleeper is able to access the accommodation that is arranged for them. In cases when a face to face interview is required before a rough sleeper is placed in temporary accommodation the Police will support SCH in assessing and responding to any risks posed by the rough sleeper. The Police will also work in partnership with SCH to transport or arrange transportation to ensure that the rough sleeper is able to access the emergency temporary accommodation that is secured for them.

**For reports to SCH made during office hours** – The rough sleeper will either be assisted to attend the housing office at Chelmsley Wood for an interview or SCH will arrange for an officer to go to the rough sleeper on an outreach basis to carry out an interview. Where it is verified that the person is sleeping rough, has nowhere safe to stay and, where they agree to assistance, emergency temporary accommodation will be arranged.

## Stage 4 – Response to Rough Sleepers aged 18 or over

continued

**For reports to SCH 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 there is nowhere safe for them to stay and there is reason to believe that they are homeless and may be vulnerable the out of hours officer will either arrange emergency temporary accommodation over the phone or where there is a need to interview them will arrange to meet them within 1 hour for an interview at the nearest place of safety. In many cases the interview location is likely to be the nearest open Police Station.

Where an interview is carried out at a Police Station the Police will assist the out of hours officer to assess and deal with any risks posed by the rough sleeper. The rough sleeper will be interviewed and where it is verified that they have nowhere safe to stay and, where they agree to assistance, emergency temporary accommodation will be arranged. Assistance will also be provided to ensure that the rough sleeper is able to get to the accommodation that is arranged for them.

## Stage 5 – The Provision of Emergency Temporary Accommodation

SCH will arrange emergency temporary accommodation for anyone identified as sleeping rough when SWEP arrangements are in place. The accommodation is likely to be supported accommodation in Solihull, hostel accommodation in a neighbouring area (because there is no direct access provision in Solihull) or bed and breakfast accommodation which is also likely to be outside of Solihull. SCH will also make appropriate referrals to other organisations providing support as part of the wider Rough Sleeper Protocol (see separate summary document for the Rough Sleeper Protocol for details of the partnership arrangements that are in place to ensure holistic support is available to anyone sleeping rough in Solihull).

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 the relevant assessments and provide further support. SCH 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 whilst at the same time 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.

## 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 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 inclement weather conditions have ceased. When the decision has been taken to deactivate SWEP all partner organisations will be informed by email and 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 advice assistance to deal with their longer term issues of homelessness.

Where a rough sleeper does not have a local connection and has come from another area of the UK or another Country SCH will make the relevant enquiries and assist them to reconnect to their local community.

## Contact Details

This leaflet provides a summary of the procedure guidelines for SWEP arrangements which are included within the Solihull Rough Sleeper Protocol. For a full copy of the Rough Sleeper Protocol and related procedures please contact the Housing Strategy Team on 0121 704 8146 or via email on [housingstrategy@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:housingstrategy@solihull.gov.uk)

### Local Services

#### Housing:

**Solihull Community Housing** 0121 717 1515 (response available 24/7)

Solihull Community Housing will give advice on housing options and will seek to access temporary accommodation for a person sleeping rough

**Fry Housing Trust** 0121 706 0900

Provide temporary accommodation for men aged 18 or over who are at risk of offending (including Rough Sleepers). Will house rough sleepers on the day of referral if at all possible. Also able to provide floating support to anyone identified as sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough in Solihull.

#### **Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid**

0800 0732 606 (freephone) or 0121 622 5055 (local rate)

Provide specialist refuge accommodation and support for women fleeing domestic violence.

### Other Services

#### **Solihull Council**

##### – **Children's Social Work Services**

0121 788 4333

(or out of office hours contact the Emergency Duty Team on 0121 605 6060)

#### **Solihull Council**

##### – **16+ Team** 0121 788 4200

(or out of office hours contact the Emergency Duty Team on 0121 605 6060)

#### **Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS)** 0121 678 4730

##### **Daily drop-in service for drug users provided from:**

Middlewood House

15 Larch Croft

Chelmsley Wood

Solihull B37 7UR

#### **Solihull Council**

##### – **Adult Mental Health Social Work Teams**

For Working Age Adults (18 – 65)

Mental Health Team – North Solihull

0121 678 4950

Mental Health Team – South Solihull

0121 301 4800

Mental Health Team for Older People

(aged 65 and over) 0121 704 8111

#### **Solihull Healthcare and Walk in Centre**

0121 709 7711

Lode Lane

Solihull B91 2AE

#### **West Midlands Police**

Contact a Local Police Station via the switchboard on 0345 113 5000

If there is an emergency, always call 999.

For Police purposes an emergency is when:

- There is a danger to life
- There is a risk of serious injury
- A crime is in progress or about to happen
- An offender is still at the scene

#### **Citizens Advice Solihull Borough**

Chelmsley Wood Branch 0121 779 6707

Shirley Branch 0121 744 3238

Solihull Branch 0121 705 2212

#### **National Helplines:**

Shelter Housing Advice Helpline 0808 800 4444

Women's Aid & Refuge Helpline 0808 2000 247

Missing People Helpline 116 000

Message Home Helpline 116 000

Runaway Helpline 116 000

Childline 0800 1111

Samaritans 08457 909090