

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

2025/26.

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR)

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol 2025/26

1. Background

The Ministry for Communities and Local Government directs local authorities to have plans in place to ensure that there is cold weather provision for any rough sleeper in our area to ensure that they can be brought in from the street. Our plans should include any rough sleepers on the streets in extreme cold weather including those without recourse to public funds such as Persons from Abroad.

The eligibility thresholds for accessing homelessness services are relaxed during periods of severe weather to try and ensure as far as possible that no one needs to sleep rough during such weather conditions.

LLR have considerable experience of dealing with rough sleepers and has historically held plans in case of severe weather not restricted to the extreme cold.

2. Purpose

2.1 There is a humanitarian obligation on local authorities to do all they can to prevent deaths on the streets, and for their partners and the public to support these efforts. Rough sleepers are especially susceptible to serious negative outcomes during periods of severe weather.

2.2 The aim of this protocol is.

- 1) **To ensure that those most vulnerable on the streets have respite in severe weather conditions and**
- 2) **To allow those groups who would not normally be offered assistance i.e., who are homeless with no support needs or who are homeless with no access to public services and funds to also have respite in severe weather conditions.**

3. Process

3.1 Local areas should have adequate provision to prevent rough sleeping at any time of year, however the winter period often presents greatest risks to people's health. It may also provide increased opportunities to engage with 'entrenched' rough sleepers and other hard-to-reach groups, as they may be more likely to accept support at this time of year.

The protocol aims to:

- To ensure that no one dies on the streets during severe weather.
- To ensure that every effort is made to engage individuals with support services during the winter months.

3.2 The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) will be triggered by extremes of temperature, usually very cold periods during the winter. (See appendix 1)

3.3 Who can access SWEP?

SWEP operates outside usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks that govern access to housing. It should be accessible to everyone, including all those who may otherwise be excluded from services including:

- people with no recourse to public funds.
- people who may have previously been banned.
- those with no local connection.
- those deemed not in priority need.

Targeting individuals should be based on need, not housing entitlement. Local Authorities work closely with outreach and all other agencies supporting people who are homeless, to identify and target people known to be sleeping rough (e.g., as opposed to sofa surfing, where support is needed but there is not an immediate risk of harm).

4 Priorities

4.1 Anyone currently on the street

An offer of off the street accommodation will be made to anyone currently on the street. This offer should as much as possible address any barriers that has previously stopped the individual from accessing support. For example, where a rough sleeper has a pet wherever possible suitable short-term accommodation that allow animals should be sourced

4.2 Targeted support to end entrenched rough sleeping.

The target group for interventions will in the first instance be with the known prolific rough sleepers and this will include additional opportunities to encourage those entrenched in a street lifestyle to not return to the streets.

Offers of support and help will be considered based upon the individual need managed by dedicated support workers. These will include:

- Emergency Accommodation.
- Move-on to accommodation solutions.
- Enabling employment opportunities where appropriate
- Access to Health Care.
- Targeted support to enable the transition from rough sleeping.

Support might include access to move-on accommodation, healthcare, education, employment, substance use services, benefits advice and creative/leisure activities. SWEP/winter provision often provides an opportunity to engage individuals who have been reluctant to accept support in the past, or people who are new to the streets, where a connection with services can avoid their situation getting worse.

Appendix One: Criteria for Invoking Severe Weather Policy

LLR have agreed to a tiered approach to support during periods of extreme weather informed by risk.

Severe Weather accommodation will be made available throughout the year whenever the following severe weather triggers are met.

Severe Weather Triggers

Cold Weather

Tier One

A tier one response will occur when

- Overnight temperature on any one-night falls to 0 degree Celsius or less in the SWEP area.

For practical purposes this will be based on the Met Office forecast across the following locations

- Leicester City
- Coalville
- Loughborough
- Melton Mowbray
- Oakham
- Market Harborough
- Hinckley

If at any time during the day in question the forecast suggests that a tier one response has been involved this will remain in force for the rest of the day regardless of subsequent changes to the forecast.

Access

The Rough Sleeping Co-Ordinator (for the county) / Homelessness Pathway Manager (for the city) will monitor for a tier one cold weather trigger and activate the severe weather policy.

If any of the locations above reach the trigger threshold, SWEP will be triggered locally only, not across all locations.

The Rough Sleeping Co-Ordinator (for the county) / Homelessness Pathway Manager (for the city) will send notifications and regular updates, on when the plan is invoked and similarly when it is stood down.

A tier one trigger for cold weather will apply to all verified rough sleepers known to the outreach team. The purpose of a common trigger is to ensure that a consistent approach is

applied to all individuals known to be on the street and to simplify the approach for outreach teams. Each LA should ensure that routes into off the street accommodation are clear and accessible in such situations.

Tier Two

When a tier two cold weather trigger is reached the offer should extend beyond those known to be on the street and include those at risk of rough sleeping.

The specific criteria to trigger a tier two response will be set locally and it is for each individual housing authority to both publicise their local approach, communicate when the threshold has been reached and ensure that partners are able to support those at risk of rough sleeping to access appropriate accommodation

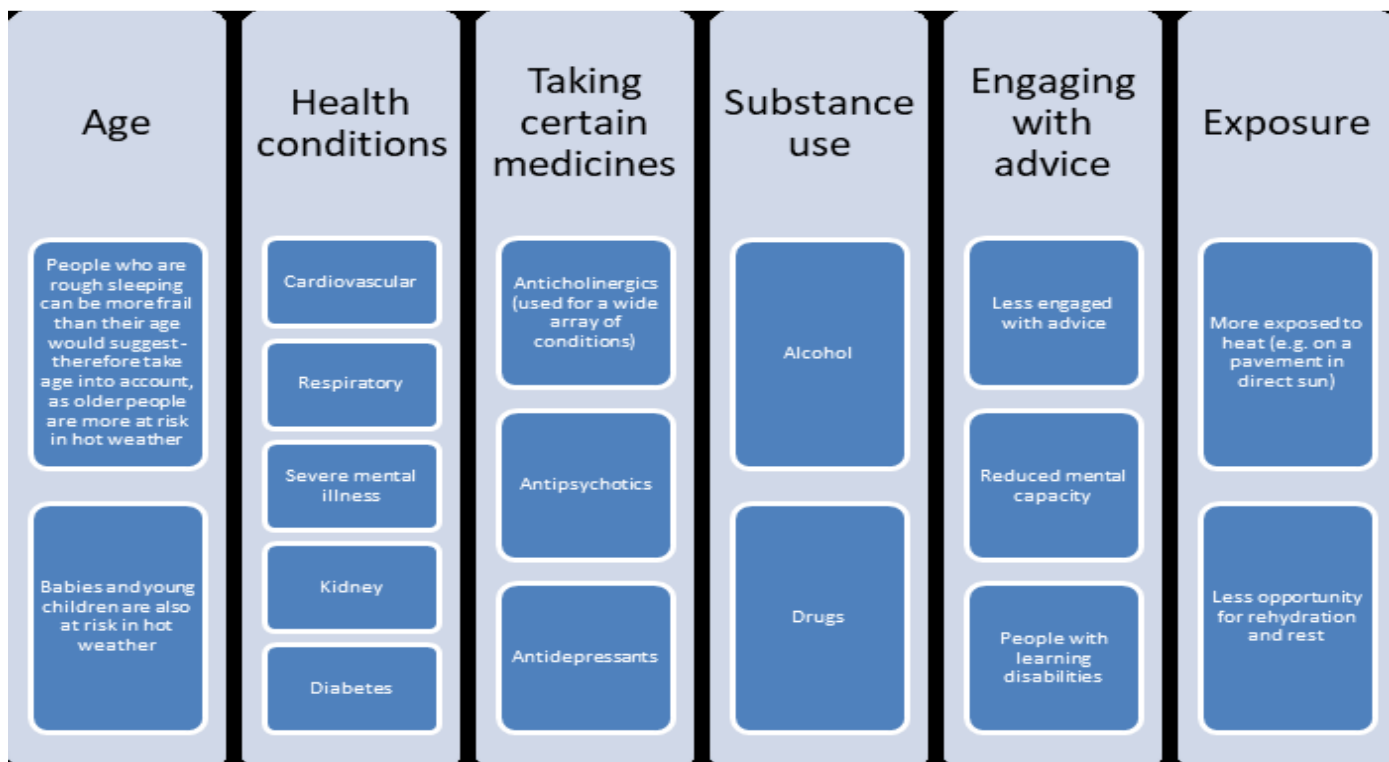
Leicester City Council's tier two trigger for cold weather will be extended beyond those known to be on the street and include those at risk of rough sleeping if overnight temperatures fall to 0 degree Celsius or less locally for 3 consecutive nights or more.

Heat Health Alerts

Where the UK Health Security Agency have issued a heat health alert then SWEP provision will be made available again through a tiered approach. As Heat Health alerts are issued at a regional level these will be consistently applied across the LLR

Tier One - Amber Alert

When an amber alert has been issued accommodation should be offered to those who are deemed most vulnerable based on the criteria set out by UKHSA reproduced below



Outreach services will work with LAs to identify which of the current on the street cohort fall within the criteria above

Tier Two – Red Alert

Where a heat health red alert has been issued then SWEP will apply to all rough sleepers known to be on the street. Individual local authorities will choose how to apply the policy to those they believe to be at risk of rough sleeping.

Other Severe Weather

There may be other circumstances where a response to severe weather in particular where red and amber weather warnings have been issued. Due to the wide variety of circumstances and potential impacts on those sleeping rough the participating LAs are encouraged to liaise closely with outreach teams as a targeted or bespoke response might be required based on individual circumstances.

In exceptional circumstances the severe weather provision may be activated outside of the weather triggers, this will be in isolated situations of a humanitarian nature.

Out of hours access

It is the responsibility of each authority to ensure that their out of hours processes support the objectives of this agreement.

Evictions

Each participating authority should review their procedure for evictions from emergency accommodation during severe weather.