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# Helping People who are Sleeping Rough in Lincolnshire

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



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**This document is intended to give a general guide to how the Lincolnshire District Councils will operate their SWEP services. As each district is very different there may be some small differences between the areas. Please refer to each District Council's website for more specific and timely information.**

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

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

The seven Lincolnshire Districts have 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 safety is available during severe weather conditions for those people sleeping rough who may not normally be 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 Councils to have SWEP arrangements in place. It is not a statutory duty. 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 individuals who have previously resisted engagement with health, wellbeing and support services.

## **Who does it cover?**

To ensure a humanitarian response in severe weather, SWEP operates outside of the usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks that govern access to housing. Therefore, SWEP will target particularly vulnerable individuals on the basis of need and not on-going housing entitlement. It is applied to people who would otherwise be excluded from services, including those:

- with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and Non-UK EEA Nationals



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- who have previously been excluded, banned or evicted from accommodation due to their behaviours
- with no local connection
- without rough sleeper verification who have not previously had contact with outreach services and/or support

## What are the aims of SWEP?

SWEP aims to:

- Prevent harm or death amongst anyone sleeping rough during severe weather
- Provide shelter for people sleeping rough 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?

Each district council is responsible for making the decision to activate SWEP in its own area. The guiding principles are that SWEP arrangements will be in place during any period of severe or extreme weather.

SWEP arrangements are usually 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, inclement or extreme weather is forecast that falls short of this definition, this could include periods of extreme heat, rain and/or wind.

## Who is involved in delivering SWEP?

The main organisations responsible for delivering the protocol are:

- Boston Borough Council
- City of Lincoln Council
- East Lindsey District Council



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- North Kesteven District Council
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- West Lindsey District Council

In all cases the district councils work closely with various partners including;

- P3 Street Outreach Team
- Lincolnshire Police
- Registered Local Providers
- Voluntary and charitable organisations
- Private landlords
- Health services

When SWEP arrangements are activated, 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. Arrangements will be published through various platforms and could include the district councils' intranet, external website and various social media platforms. This will ensure that partner organisations and members of the public are given clear and straight forward advice on how they can help people who are sleeping rough during these periods.

## Procedure Guide

### Stage 1 – SWEP arrangements are triggered

From October to March each district council will be responsible for checking the three day forecast every day before 10:00am. The measurement will be taken from the Met Office website. This is the link: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

Each district council is responsible for making the decision to activate and deactivate SWEP in their area. 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 by 10:00am on Friday morning as to whether SWEP will be activated over the weekend.

When the protocol is to be triggered, the district council will inform the P3 Street Outreach Team by 10.00 am that day and will ensure that their website and other appropriate social media are updated. Each district has an agreed list of key contacts that will be notified when SWEP is activated or deactivated.



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Each 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.

Each 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

From October, where possible, the Street Outreach Team will agree with each district a list of known people sleeping rough who may need to access SWEP provision highlighting those known to be at particular risk. This is to ensure that emergency accommodation and provision under SWEP can be provided to those who are known to have respiratory diseases or difficulties; are most vulnerable; or are least likely or able to protect themselves from the elements. This list will be updated at least monthly during the winter season (weekly in areas of high levels of rough sleeping).

A person sleeping rough could also be identified through a report from 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 Lincolnshire for additional support during periods of severe weather:

- Lincolnshire County Council
- Lincolnshire Police
- All local Registered Providers including supported housing providers
- Probation
- Voluntary, Charitable and Faith groups

The role of the above organisations will be particularly important in identifying people sleeping rough and ensuring that they have been referred to appropriate services during periods of severe weather. A person sleeping rough can be notified to P3s Street Outreach Team on 0808 281 0280.

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



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### Stage 3 – Response to reported Rough Sleepers

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 district council will attempt to arrange emergency temporary accommodation.

The district council will arrange for a Housing Options Officer to interview/assess the service user the following day. The intention will be to assist them into accommodation and/or access necessary services such as Health, Department of Work and Pensions, support, etc.

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

The needs of the person sleeping rough will be assessed over the phone either by talking to the referral agency or where possible the person themselves. 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 the housing team of any placement made out of hours. This will then be followed up the following day by arranging for a Housing Options Officer to interview/assess the service user. The intention will be to assist them into accommodation and/or accessing necessary services such as Health, Department of Work and Pensions, support, etc.

### Stage 4 – The Provision of Temporary Accommodation

Each district council will seek to arrange emergency temporary accommodation or shelter for anyone identified as sleeping rough when SWEP arrangements are in place. This will enable the opportunity to work with the person 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. Accommodation will vary between districts depending on available placements.

Each district will ensure that the service user completes a Housing Benefit application form (where applicable). The officers will help them to provide verification for this claim and will also assist them to claim personal benefits that they may not be receiving.



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## 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 service user or who could carry out relevant assessments and provide further support.

Each district will review the situation jointly with the Street Outreach Team and other relevant partners to determine whether any other form of shelter could be provided during the time that SWEP is in place. This will take into account issues around managing the risk associated with the service user. Whilst every possible attempt will be made to find suitable shelter, in rare incidences where the risk is unmanageable, some people may have to be barred from provision under SWEP.

Each district must ensure that the terms of this arrangement are made clear to the service user, providing information verbally and if possible, in writing. Most importantly they 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 5 – 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. Each district council will inform the Street Outreach Team and their list of key contacts by 10.00 am that day.

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

Where a person who is sleeping rough does not have a local connection and has come from another area of the UK or another country, each district will make the relevant enquiries and assist them to reconnect to their local community if it is safe to do so.



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## Financial Position

The cost of providing emergency accommodation during SWEP will be met from existing district council resources. Such costs will be recovered through the submission of Housing Benefit claims where applicable for any accommodation provided. In circumstances where Housing Benefit is not possible the cost will not pass to the client. Eligibility for Universal Credit is not a requirement for accessing SWEP accommodation.

Transport may be provided for the individual if they are unable to walk to the accommodation secured for them if it is not a reasonable distance or they do not have the funds to pay for public or private transport. The council will arrange and pay for this travel. If the placement is arranged through the out of hour's emergency service they will also arrange this provision where appropriate.

## Monitoring

The following information should be recorded where possible and used to monitor the use of SWEP and the outcomes achieved for those rough sleepers accessing the service.

- Number, age, gender and nationality of the service user
- Number of nights accommodated for each service user
- The cost of emergency accommodation per night for each service user
- Exit outcome for each service user

Each District should collate this information and ensure it is utilised to review SWEP provision throughout the winter and particularly in April each year. This will enable any improvements or changes in practice to be identified for the following year.

## Review

This Protocol will be reviewed by the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategic Partnership on an annual basis. This will be carried out in consultation with key stakeholders and partner organisations working with people who sleep rough.



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**South Holland District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01775 761161  
Housing Advice/Needs: contact via SHDC  
Switchboard: 01775 761161

**North Kesteven District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01529 308308  
The Safe as Houses and Housing Options: contact via  
NKDC switchboard: 01529 414155

**West Lindsey District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01427 613960  
The Housing & Communities Team and Home Choices Team  
contact via WLDC switchboard: 01427 676676

**East Lindsey District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 07766 776447  
Housing Advice: 01507 613126

**Boston Borough Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01205 362151  
Housing Advice/Needs: 01205 314555

**South Kesteven District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01476 590044  
Housing Advice/Needs: contact via SKDC  
switchboard – 01476 406080

**City of Lincoln Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01522 534737  
For housing advice contact the Property Shop:  
01522 873777  
Private Sector Housing team: 01522 873787