

# Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for Rough Sleepers

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. In times of severe weather conditions, Monmouthshire County Council recognises that rough sleepers are particularly vulnerable to harm and death and it should therefore make provision to prevent this from happening.
- 1.2. As there is no strict definition of what counts as “severe weather”, Monmouthshire County Council will adopt a common-sense approach and put measures in place to identify any weather that could increase the risk of serious harm to people sleeping rough. Severe weather can include extreme cold, wind or rain.
- 1.3. This document sets out the arrangements that Monmouthshire County Council will put into place to ensure that people sleeping rough are not at risk of dying during extreme cold and severe weather and is known as the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).
- 1.4. The protocol defines a rough sleeper as:
  - 1.4.1. People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting in/on or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People bedded down in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”)

## 2. Purpose of the Protocol

- 2.1. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to move rough sleepers from the streets and in to a place of shelter if it is believed that they are at risk of dying due to sleeping rough during extreme cold and severe weather conditions.

## 3. When are the protocol arrangements triggered?

- 3.1. The Duty Housing Options Officer will check weather forecasts on a daily basis by using the [Meteorological Office website](#).
- 3.2. For periods of extreme cold the protocol is triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below for three consecutive nights for Monmouthshire.

3.3. For other forms of extremes of weather, for example wind and rain, the Council will take a pragmatic approach based upon meteorological warnings designated red and the likelihood of serious harm occurring because of extended periods of rough sleeping before triggering the protocol.

3.4. As soon as the protocol is triggered, the duty Housing Options Officer will contact the relevant organisations both external and internal agencies, to advise that SWEP is in place, with details of who to contact if they identify any rough sleepers.

#### **4. Who is eligible for Help?**

4.1. Any person sleeping rough on the streets in the extreme cold. This includes those without recourse to public funds such as A10 nationals from the EU accession states.

4.2. The rough sleeper must:

- be at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the course of the severe weather
- have nowhere to sleep indoors during the course of the severe weather (Indoors does not include cars, sheds or garages or any building not designed for habitation)
- agree to the assistance offered by the Council

4.3. Many entrenched rough sleepers may be wary of services and less likely to engage. The extreme cold weather increases the risk of death or serious illness to people who sleep rough. Given this, a refusal to accept assistance during this time may be grounds to trigger referrals to other services, such as for mental health assessments.

4.4. In rare circumstances we may refuse to accommodate someone if it is considered too high risk to place that person into B&B, for example, on the advice of police, probation or mental health services or when an individual is aggressive, violent or threatening violence. In such circumstances, this will be discussed with our Housing Options Manager and clearly recorded.

#### **5. Procedure**

- 5.1. If the rough sleeper meets the above criteria they will be offered emergency accommodation which is likely to be B & B accommodation for the duration of the severe weather.
- 5.2. Housing Options Team will manage the emergency accommodation bookings and will place rough sleepers they become aware of into emergency accommodation during the time that the SWEP is in operation. They can be contacted on 01633 644644 both during office hours and outside of office hours.
- 5.3. The accommodation will be confirmed before midday on a day to day basis.
- 5.4. The weather forecast will be checked daily and once the minimum temperature is predicted to have risen above zero degrees Celsius, emergency accommodation will no longer be provided.
- 5.5. On cessation of the protocol Housing Options will work with those who have been temporarily accommodated under the protocol to identify accommodation options and to minimise where possible people returning to the streets.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. The cost of providing emergency accommodation during the SWEP will be covered from existing Council resources although applicants will be supported to apply for housing benefit.

## **7. Monitoring and Review**

- 7.1. The following information will be recorded and used to monitor the extent of rough sleeping in the borough:
  - Number and composition of rough sleeper households.
  - Number of nights accommodated for each household.
  - The cost of emergency accommodation per night for each household.
  - This Protocol will be reviewed on an annual basis. This will be carried out in consultation with our key stakeholder partner organisations working with rough sleepers.