

Newcastle's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for Rough Sleeping

Winter 2020/21

1. Purpose of this document

This Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) describes our routine arrangements for responding to people who are sleeping rough, and the additional arrangements that will be put in place to protect people when there are 'severe weather conditions'.

The SWEP has been updated for Winter 2020/21 to take into consideration the current Government [guidelines and restrictions](#) relating to Coronavirus and our public health focused approach to responding to the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic we have provided an offer of accommodation or reconnection to accommodation in their area of connection to people who are rough sleeping. The offer of accommodation includes people who have no recourse to public funds.

To respond to the likely increased demand to access short-term relief (temporary) accommodation, the Council has agreed with the city's specialist homeless accommodation and support providers for additional accommodation capacity to be available during the SWEP. Access to accommodation available under the SWEP will be managed through the Housing Advice Centre (HAC) and the Emergency Homeless Officer (EHO), see below for details. The coordination of services will be led by the Council's Rough Sleeping Coordinator.

This SWEP includes arrangements for a single offer of a safe place to stay for people sleeping rough, including those without recourse to public funds or those who have no local connection to Newcastle, although our response will include helping individuals to return to their areas of connection, where it is safe to do so. The single offer of a safe place to stay may be "sit-up" in one of the homeless accommodation services.

The Council works with [Street Zero](#) partners to respond to the following questions:

- **What is the trigger for severe weather provision?**

When the weather is predicted by the MET office to be an actual minimum temperature of 0°C or lower for 3 consecutive nights, this will trigger the need to ensure that all people verified as rough sleeping are made a single offer of accommodation or reconnected to accommodation in the area they came from. The night time temperature and forecast will be monitored by the Rough Sleeping Coordinator (readings will be taken from the MET office website) who will issue an alert on the Council's website and via email to the providers that the SWEP is to be enacted; in their absence the Temporary Accommodation Manager will do this.

- **Who qualifies for help under the SWEP?**

An individual who has been verified as sleeping rough by either Changing Lives' Street Outreach Team, Northumbria Police or Newcastle City Council.

- **What can you do if you are concerned about someone sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness?**

If you are worried that someone might be at risk of homelessness please:

Phone: 0800 1707 008

Email: housingadvicecentre@newcastle.gov.uk

If you see someone who you think may be rough sleeping please:

Phone: 0191 278 3899

Email: roughsleeping@newcastle.gov.uk (This public reporting line is not an emergency response service and if there are serious concerns about a person's immediate health or welfare then contact should be made with the emergency services)

More information is available here: [What to do if you see someone sleeping rough](#)

2. Below is information about how we routinely respond to rough sleeping

Our all year-round routine response is to try to make sure no one sleeps rough by:

- preventing people from ending up on the streets by supporting people at risk and trying to manage the transition from institutions e.g. prison, hospital and the care system
- managing problems in hostels that can result in exclusion, eviction or abandonment
- where we fail to prevent rough sleeping, we offer short-term relief accommodation and, or reconnection to the person's area of connection, so that no one has to sleep rough
- contacting people sleeping on the street, through our outreach team and offering access into accommodation and support and care services
- where it is not possible to end the person's rough sleeping the outreach team will maintain contact and continue to offer accommodation and support
- working in partnership to coordinate responses to the unmet complex health and care needs that are often the obstacles to the person being accommodated

Our routine accommodation and support for people sleeping rough:

Accommodation: The Council commissions and manages supported accommodation for homeless people. This includes single rooms for people who are literally homeless, in addition we pay our commissioned accommodation providers to keep rooms empty to respond to unpredicted crisis homelessness. Access to all supported accommodation is coordinated through HAC during office hours and the EHO out of office hours – see contact details below.

Housing Advice Centre (HAC): If you are concerned about anyone at potential risk of homelessness you should contact HAC, who will then contact them to offer advice and assistance and work with them to develop a plan to prevent or relieve the risk of homelessness or, if it is safe for them to, to assist their return to their area of connection.

The Housing Advice Centre building is currently closed for face-to-face advice until further notice, to help to reduce the risk of spreading Coronavirus, therefore all contact with the Housing Advice Centre must be either via phone or email:

Phone: 0800 1707 008 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 12 noon and 1pm to 4.30pm)

Email: housingadvicecentre@newcastle.gov.uk

Out of office hours

An emergency homelessness telephone service operates from 5.30pm – 8am Monday to Friday and 24 hours on Saturday and Sunday.

Phone: 0800 1707 008 and press 2 for the operator and ask for the Emergency Homeless Officer

Rough Sleeping Reporting Line: we operate a 24-hour reporting line for anyone to call and advise the Council if they know of or think that someone is rough sleeping by emailing roughsleeping@newcastle.gov.uk or phoning 0191 278 3899. The Council will then notify Changing Lives' Street Outreach Team who try to contact the person to determine their circumstances and offer advice and support.

Please note that this is not an emergency response service and if there are serious concerns about a person's immediate health or welfare then contact should be made with the emergency services.

Changing Lives' Street Outreach Team: provides street outreach, which includes searching for people sleeping rough, responding to alerts received via the rough sleeping reporting line and helping people rough sleeping to take up offers of accommodation and to help them engage with services like Jobcentre Plus, health and care support. The team go out every day Monday to Sunday from 6:30am to 8am, and on a Monday to Friday basis will also carry out outreach throughout the day to further engage with people. The team are based at the City Road Drop-in.

City Road Drop-in: at 1 City Road, NE1 2AF (phone: 0191 2325699) is open:

- Monday – Friday 8am-12 noon for open access drop in, and 1pm-3.30pm for appointments only
- Weekends 8am to 12 noon for open access drop in

To maintain a COVID secure environment, there is a maximum capacity of 2 clients permitted into the drop-in at any one time. The drop-in provides showers, laundry facilities, food, access to accommodation, advice and support to help people to stop sleeping rough.

3. Additional SWEP Arrangements:

Accommodation: during a severe weather period there should be no evictions from the Council's commissioned services without a same day move on plan in place and the Housing Advice Centre being informed. Safeguarding alerts and or missing persons notifications should be made for anyone who has abandoned accommodation to return to sleeping rough.

'Sit up': the Council has agreed with our specialist homeless accommodation and support providers, that they will provide safe 'sit-up' spaces in addition to their short-term relief accommodation. Sit-up provision will be delivered in a COVID secure way to ensure there are no shared spaces to reduce the risk of transmission of Coronavirus. Access to these spaces will be co-ordinated via the HAC in office hours and the EHO out of office hours.

Changing Lives' Street Outreach Team: street outreach will start at 6.30am and will take place Monday to Friday until approx. 12.30pm, engaging with people rough sleeping and supporting them to take up offers of accommodation and to engage with other services. On a Saturday, Sunday and on Bank Holidays outreach will take place from 6.30am to 8am.

City Road Drop-in: will operate extended opening hours from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday and will continue to be open from 8am to 12.30pm on a Saturday, Sunday and on Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas Day and New Year's Day). One to one appointments are also available Monday to Friday throughout the day until 5pm and until 12.30pm on a Saturday, Sunday and on Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas Day and New Year's Day).

The reduced capacity at the drop-in of 2 people at any one time will also apply during SWEP.

Adults' Social Care: During the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic we are offering accommodation to people with no-recourse to public funds who would otherwise be homeless. When the Public Health guidance changes we will update the SWEP accordingly. In normal circumstances Adults' Social Care will make rapid social care needs assessments of residents where there is thought to be a care and support need or that the person has. Where this cannot happen on the same day the person has been found they will be accommodated via the HAC/EHO until the assessment can be started the following day.

Coordination: the Council and Changing Lives' Street Outreach Team will liaise to coordinate an offer of accommodation for people sleeping rough and will work with Street Zero partners to coordinate responses to care and health services in the severe weather.

You can find out more about how Newcastle responds to homelessness on line, here:

- [What to do if you see someone sleeping rough](#) – information for the public
- [Housing and homelessness prevention](#) – information for professionals and volunteers
- [Newcastle's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025](#) – executive summary and the full strategy