



Wrexham County Borough Council

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) for Rough Sleepers

September 2019

Document Control Sheet

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Appendix 1 – Access to Services, Food Availability for Homeless and Rough Sleepers

SECTION 1 – POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This policy outlines the measures that Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) and its key partners will put in place for people sleeping rough in Wrexham during severe weather. Severe weather is defined here as any single or multiple days where the overnight “feels like” temperatures are 0 degrees C or below.
- 1.2 This policy will ensure that WCBC can provide suitable accommodation quickly to prevent harm and loss of life to any persons sleeping rough during times of exceptionally cold weather.
- 1.3 WCBC has worked with both voluntary and statutory organisations that operate within the local authority area, in preparing this Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) and the following key partners will be involved in providing an appropriate response for people sleeping rough during periods of severe weather:
 - Tŷ Nos
 - The Wallich
 - Housing Justice Cymru
- 1.4 It is predicated that the SWEP will primarily cover the months of November to March.

Equality

- 1.5 WCBC aims not to discriminate and treat all people equally regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, disability or ethnic origin. We will also aim to comply with the Council’s Welsh Language Scheme and communicate bilingually in English and Welsh to all our customers.
- 1.6 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the 26 April 2018 for this document. The SWEP will be reviewed on an annual basis or sooner to reflect changes to legislation and local partnership landscape.

SECTION 2 – LEGISLATION & BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced a fundamental reform to homeless legislation which included placing a stronger duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness, allowing them to use suitable accommodation in the private sector. The Act is designed to help everyone at risk rather than just those in priority groups.
- 2.2 Welsh Government have made available to local authorities additional resources to support the change to a more prevention-focused approach, including availability of transitional funding to increase the capacity of emergency night provision for rough sleepers.

- 2.3 The Welsh Government's Code of Guidance of Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2016, recommends that all local authorities should have a written cold weather plan outlining its arrangements to give assistance in periods of cold and / or severe weather.
- 2.4 Every local authority should have a SWEP which is instigated when severe weather is forecast.

SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

What is Exceptionally Cold Weather?

- 3.1 There is no national or statutory set definition of what constitutes cold weather and each local authority is responsible for defining it. WCBC have decided that the trigger indicating severe weather provision, is a weather forecast predicting sub-zero temperatures or below. The temperature prediction will be taken from data provided on a daily basis by the MET Office.

Definition of Rough Sleeping

- 3.2 There is no strict definition for rough sleeping, but it is widely regarded as including people who are sleeping or bedded down in the open air and people in buildings or other places not designated for habitation such as tents, sheds or any other situations which are not designed for legal residency.
- 3.3 For the purpose of this policy, a rough sleeper will be any person sleeping rough on the streets in extreme cold weather conditions. There may be some people who decide to sleep on the streets and WCBC cannot force people into accommodation.
- 3.4 This SWEP will operate outside of the usual homelessness eligibility and entitlement to housing or temporary accommodation, for example those with no local connection will be placed under this protocol on the first night that they present.

Current Provision Emergency Bed Spaces

- 3.5 The following arrangement is currently available for those that are sleeping rough regardless of SWEP:
 - 16 bedspaces at Tŷ Nos (Night Shelter)
- 3.6 Housing Justice Cymru who are a non-denominational Christian housing charity currently working in Wales has recently commenced a pilot project in Wrexham. They have worked with a number of churches to provide a church led Night shelter on a rota basis for those sleeping rough during winter months.

- 3.7 When SWEP is triggered, there is an additional 6 bedspaces available at St John's which can be utilised along with the provision mentioned in points 3.5 and 3.6 above.
- 3.8 Housing Options staff will work in partnership with the above services to try and secure accommodation for any potential rough sleepers.

SECTION 4 – IMPLEMENTATION OF SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL (SWEP)

- 4.1 A member of the Housing Options team will check the MET Office website on a daily basis and if there is a report indicating there is the likelihood of imminent spell of severe weather forecast of zero degrees or below, they will after discussion with key partners, declare the SWEP be in operation. This will be done 3 days in advance every day. The Housing Options Lead will lead on monitoring the weather conditions for rough sleepers as provided by the MET Office on a daily basis to identify when the SWEP should be implemented and for what period.
- 4.2 A member of the Housing Options team will contact key partners advising that the SWEP has been implemented, how long it will remain in place and confirm availability of emergency beds. This will be monitored and reviewed on a daily basis.
- 4.3 All key partners are responsible for monitoring the weather conditions and preparing their services accordingly.
- 4.4 Once agencies have been informed that the SWEP is in operation, Outreach Workers will make every effort to relay this message to known service users who are sleeping rough or visit areas where it is known people are sleeping rough.
- 4.5 Any rough sleeper identified during this period can access the Housing Options Team for assistance either during office hours 01978 292947 or if Out of Hours contact Homelessness Services on 01978 264240.
- 4.6 The Housing Options team will try to accommodate those rough sleepers who do ask for assistance (regardless of local connection) by directing them to Tŷ Nos in the first instance, advising them that they may not necessarily be sleeping there but that staff there will advise them where they can go. Individuals must report to Tŷ Nos from 8:00 pm. Any rough sleeper, who presents themselves and is eligible, will be provided accommodation at Tŷ Nos, St John's or an alternative venue.
- 4.7 The Housing Options team will refer a number of rough sleepers / homeless to Housing Justice Cymru who meet their referral criteria.

- 4.8 WCBC has an arrangement with a local taxi firm and will arrange transport for individuals to accommodation if required. This cost will be recharged to WCBC for authorised journeys as a result of SWEP.
- 4.9 The service user must remain in the accommodation overnight until an agreed time and must agree to contact the Housing Options team the following day for interview and assessment for referral to appropriate services. Where individuals have no local connection with Wrexham, WCBC will assist to re-connect them with their local area in order that they can find a more permanent housing solution.
- 4.10 It is essential that best use is made of all available accommodation and it is important that all agencies work together to encourage service users to access this accommodation. Service providers may have their own criteria for accepting individuals and some may not accept those who have substance issues or have made threats of violence towards members of staff.
- 4.11 The following morning, staff from Tŷ Nos and St John's will communicate with the Housing Options team providing details of those who have attended.

Extreme Temperatures

- 4.12 During times of extreme heat, the Housing Options team at their discretion will provide sun cream, after sun and bottled water to The Wallich and Tŷ Nos for distribution to rough sleepers.

SECTION 5 – RISK ASSESSMENTS

- 5.1 Service providers will utilise their own Risk Assessments and will notify the out of hours Homeless Duty Officer if they are unable to accommodate an individual. The Duty Officer will have access to any known risks for specific individuals who present themselves as homeless and will use this information when placing them in suitable accommodation.

SECTION 6 – REFUSAL TO ACCOMMODATION

- 6.1 If an individual has breached the terms of an accommodation provider due to anti-social behaviour, threats of violence to staff, etc., that service provider can reserve the right to refuse entry to the premises, can contact the Police or refuse to provide accommodation. In such instances, WCBC will still provide support and offer sleeping bags which are available from Tŷ Nos.

SECTION 7 – SUPPORT SERVICES & WAYS TO HELP

- 7.1 Many rough sleepers are working with a number of agencies and services. Appendix 1 outlines the services currently available for access by those who are homeless and sleeping rough. The Housing Options team work with rough sleepers to identify and provide housing solutions as well as signpost individuals to relevant agencies.

- 7.2 If a member of the public has concerns about someone sleeping rough in England and Wales, they can use the website StreetLink www.streetlink.org.uk or StreetLink mobile app to send an alert and the details are then sent to the local authority or outreach services. In addition to this, people can also contact the Housing Options team during officer hours 01978 292947 or the Out of Hours Homelessness Service 01978 264240. This will alert WCBC or outreach services about people that members of the public have seen who may be sleeping rough and in need of assistance.
- 7.3 When information is received, efforts will be made to liaise with The Wallich who will ask Outreach Workers to contact individual(s) in order to offer them support and be considered for suitable accommodation.
- 7.4 WCBC will endeavour to raise awareness of the help available to rough sleepers in the event of severe weather through outreach services, social media, the Council's website, Association of Voluntary Organisations (AVOW) in Wrexham and local press and will promote the provisions outlined in the SWEP in the run up to winter.
- 7.5 Donations for Tŷ Nos are welcomed of clean sleeping bags or blankets from members of the public and these can be dropped off at The Foyer. Tŷ Nos currently issue gloves, blankets, sleeping bags and hot drinks to people who present on a nightly basis regardless of SWEP being implemented.

SECTION 8 – USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS / WEBSITES

Wrexham County Borough Council Homelessness Services:

Office Hours 01978 292947

Out of Office Hours 01978 264240

StreetLink www.streetlink.org.uk
0300 5000914

Shelter Cymru 0345 0755005 (9.30 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday)

Emergency Contact 999

Tŷ Nos (Night Shelter) Holt Road Open daily from 8 pm

Daytime Telephone Number (The Foyer) 01978 262222

Evening Telephone Number 01978 291274

Websites for more information:

Clwyd Alyn www.clwydalyn.co.uk

The Wallich www.thewallich.com

Rough Sleeper Outreach support workers are available from 8 am until 5 pm or 6 pm and throughout the weekend.

Support workers are available during 7.30 am to 5pm weekdays from the following services:

- The Wallich
- CAIS
- The Elms
- NACRO
- Drug Intervention Programme
- WCBC Housing Options team
- Housing Gateway
- Harm Reduction Services

The Community Hub (Crisis Café) at Salvation Army, Rhosddu is open every Friday morning from 9.30 am until 12 noon
Tŷ Croeso is available for bathing and laundry facilities – Monday to Saturday 8.30 am to 12.30 pm

Food Availability

Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday:

Breakfast - Tŷ Nos, Outreach service

Evening – Tŷ Nos, Soup Dragon 5 pm to 6 pm

Lunch Monday – Tŷ Croeso 1 pm to 2 pm

Lunch Tuesday – CAIS 12 noon to 1 pm

Thursday

Breakfast - Tŷ Nos, Salvation Army 9.30 am to 11 am, Outreach service

Lunch – Tŷ Croeso 1 pm to 2 pm

Evening - Tŷ Nos, Soup Dragon 4 pm to 5 pm

Friday

Breakfast - Tŷ Nos, Outreach service, Community Hub Salvation Army

Evening - Tŷ Nos, Soup Dragon 5 pm to 6 pm

Lunch – CAIS 12 noon to 1 pm

Saturday & Sunday

Breakfast – Outreach service

Saturday Evening – Trinity Church 6 pm to 6.30 pm

Breakfast and Evening Meal is provided for those accommodated at Tŷ Nos

Saturday Lunch Provision 12 noon – 4 pm Soup Dragon

Sunday Evening – Trinity Church 5 pm to 5.30 pm

Sunday Lunch Provision 11 am – 3 pm Soup Dragon