

7th January 2010

Dear colleague

Re: Rough Sleepers - Severe Weather Emergency Provision

We wrote to all local authorities in England in November 2009 to remind them of the need to consider Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEPs) for rough sleepers. SWEPs set out the types of arrangements that local authorities should have in place to ensure people are not at risk of dying on the streets during cold weather. SWEPs arrangements are triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights.

Given the protracted period of extreme cold weather this winter, CLG is aware that in some areas, existing arrangements may be under strain because of the level of demand (for example, in London the Street Rescue Team had 294 individual requests in the week before Christmas – making it difficult for them to reach everyone in the required timescale.)

We want local authorities to take all possible steps to avoid unnecessary deaths on the streets.

If you believe someone is at risk due to sleeping rough during the extreme cold weather then you should take prompt action to ensure they have access to shelter. This may involve arrangements such as:

- Providing emergency B&B placements;
- Paying taxi fares so people can reach shelters that have been set up;
- Arranging to use communal rooms in hostels, day centres etc. to provide emergency shelter

CLG is aware that some local authorities will be facing additional burdens and costs in ensuring people are not at risk by remaining on the streets. If you think you will incur costs that cannot be covered from your homelessness prevention grant then **please contact us for advice** - to talk through the options and what support we may be able to provide.

Please err on the side of caution – and act to ensure people who are sleeping rough are not left outside at risk of dying from the cold.

Thank you

The Rough Sleeping Team

