



Street Outreach
Team
Cambridge



ST. ANDREW'S STREET
BAPTIST CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE

Hot Weather Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

June 2024

Introduction

Cambridge City Council and its partner agencies are committed to doing all we can to protect the health and ensure the wellbeing of rough sleepers during periods of severe weather.

People sleeping on the streets are at high-risk during periods of hot weather and there can be severe impacts on their health and well-being. Rough sleepers can find it very difficult to cool down. They might be exposed to intense heat, sleeping on hot tarmac or in direct sun, with little shelter or access to water. People sleeping on the streets might have health conditions or addictions. Alcohol and some drugs are dehydrating, which can lead to individuals getting ill quickly.

Historically, the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) has consisted of support during cold weather only, with several communal spaces for people to sleep for the night, with the expectation that they will vacate the building the following morning.

Following the introduction of Crossways, the winter provision project between It Takes a City, Cambridge City Council and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, we now have a dedicated accommodation provision during the winter months.




As the climate continues to change, severe hot weather events are becoming more frequent and intense. It's crucial for Cambridge City Council and our partners to have comprehensive plans in place to protect rough sleepers during the summer, when temperatures become very hot. This document provides a detailed overview of the key steps involved in preparing for and responding to hot weather emergencies.

SWEP Hot Weather Alert System

Cambridge City Council will provide an alert system based upon a traffic light system, for ease of understanding for services, the public and rough sleepers.

The following below is a definition of the traffic light system.

Alert	What this means
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 Red	A Red emergency response is a significant risk to life health event for vulnerable rough sleepers
 Amber	An Amber enhanced response has the potential for the most vulnerable to be at risk and a coordinated response is required
 Green	Unlikely to impact most people

Alert response

Cambridge City Council’s Housing & Homelessness Initiatives Team will monitor for heat-health alerts through the summer months and activate the appropriate response when alerted. When an amber or red alert is issued, Cambridge City Council will contact all relevant providers and partners to notify them of the activation. The responses are set out below:

Green alert

Enhanced Outreach provided by Cambridge City Council and the CGL Street Outreach Team, which will include signposting and if applicable distributing resources—water, sun cream, hats—health assessments and welfare checks if needed.

Amber alert

As per Green Alert, plus the following support from our partners –

- [St Andrew's Street Baptist](#) will be open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday and can provide water/squash, ice, tea and coffee, access to toilets, and a cooler place for respite out of the sunshine
- [Jimmy's](#) are open throughout for people to fill up water bottles

- [Wintercomfort](#) will have longer opening hours on Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8am to 4pm. Water/squash, ice, tea and coffee, access to toilets, and a cooler place for respite out of the sunshine.
- [CGL Street Outreach Team](#) will provide additional outreach when applicable. They will take a summer kit bag routinely on shift with supplies such as hats, sunglasses, sun cream, bottled water, and electrolytes.
- [Cambridge City Council](#) to purchase and store hats, sunglasses, sun cream, bottled water to support services to ensure they do not run out of supplies. Cambridge City Council to promote the opening of SWEP on social media channels and website, however details of the services to be managed by the Street Outreach Team to ensure that services are for rough sleepers and the vulnerable, and to ensure services do not become overwhelmed. Email to all services to ensure that they have supplies.
- [It Takes a City](#) staff to provide evening outreach services if needed

Red alert

As per Amber alert however the following additions –

- Targeted outreach by the Street Outreach Team, It Takes a City and Cambridge City Council staff
- Accommodation offered to the most vulnerable, which is determined by the City Council and Street Outreach Team, for the period covering the red alert. Accommodation is provided regardless of recourse to public funds.

How will the Hot Weather SWEP be initiated?

The Council's Housing Advice Partnerships Manager (or someone delegated by that Officer) will monitor the Met Office weather forecast throughout the summer and will be responsible for making the decision to open and close the SWEP provision, consulting with partner agencies (such as the Cambridge Street Outreach Team) where necessary.

Most services within this protocol will be open throughout the hot weather regardless of whether SWEP is called, however this protocol is ensuring a coordinated response to help the most vulnerable.

Hot weather is usually more predictable than cold weather, so a 3-day notice period will be provided to services that an Amber or Red alert has been called. If services are unable to open, then this gives the Council time to prepare for alternative support.

This will also ensure that agencies have a good chance to get the word out to the targeted rough sleepers and ensure that accommodation providers have ample time to prepare to take people in.

SWEP will provide a renewed offer to those not eligible for the usual routes of support, for example because of a ban, failure to take an offer of accommodation or unacceptable behaviour.

Identifying High-Risk Groups & Targeted Outreach

Anyone can become unwell when the weather is hot. However, People sleeping on the streets are at high-risk during periods of hot weather and there can be severe impacts on their health and well-being. Rough sleepers can find it very difficult to cool down. They might be exposed to intense heat, sleeping on hot tarmac or in direct sun, with little shelter or access to water. People sleeping on the streets might also have health conditions or addictions. Alcohol and some drugs are dehydrating, which can lead to individuals getting ill quickly. Partner agencies have a close working relationship and knowledge of individuals that are sleeping rough, even if engagement with services is intermittent. This knowledge involves understanding if someone who is rough sleeping has particular risk factors that could mean they are more vulnerable during periods of hot weather.

Accommodation will be provided during a red alert for those with -

- Serious underlying health conditions
- Reliance of certain medications, e.g. those that need to be refrigerated.
- Serious mental health needs
- People who are using drugs and alcohol with one of the above

The Street Outreach Team will be completing additional outreach walks with a summer kit bag. If they come across a person that is likely to suffer serious detriment if sleeping rough, they will make contact with the Housing Advice Partnerships Manager and the Housing Officer for Temporary Accommodation for a placement.

It Takes a City and Cambridge City Council staff will also be providing outreach services to help target individuals, to ensure all targeted rough sleepers are found and assisted.

The Council's budget for SWEP covers the whole year, including Crossways winter provision. The Housing Advice Partnerships Manager will need to monitor the SWEP budget to ensure that there is a balance between this new resource and covering the winter provision/ SWEP. Hotel placements are discretionary and will only be made available for rough sleepers assessed to be most at risk. Although it is desirable to provide accommodation for all rough

sleepers during Hot Weather SWEP, the Council is not in a position to do so and maintaining a balance between the hot and cold weather must be done to ensure we can provide SWEP during the winter months.

Monitoring Weather Conditions and Forecasts

The alert system will remain fluid throughout the summer, generally between June and September, with decisions being made by the Council's Housing Advice Partnerships Manager (or someone delegated by that officer). The UK Health Security Agency matrix will be used to assist the Council in the decision-making process.

Ensuring Adequate Supplies and water refilling stations

The Council will secure spare supplies of hats, bottled water, suncream etc and ask service providers if they need any top ups of supplies when sending out the email to services.

We are aware that rough sleepers may not wish to access services, so they should be advised of using the [Refill](#) app if they have a phone that is capable of downloading an app. As part of its campaign to reduce the use of single-use plastic water bottles, Refill has set up a network of refill stations throughout the city – where people can refill water bottles for free rather than buying a new one.

Cambridge City Council staff within the Housing & Homeless Initiatives Team will have access to the Refill app on their work phones.

Participating organisations and businesses display a Refill sticker in their windows. There are around 55 places in Cambridge that have signed up, including public drinking water such as the fountain on Parker's Piece.

Communicating with the Public including social media

Front line services, along with the Housing Advice Service, will be provided with an email up to 3 days before SWEP is going to be called. The public will be informed via social media, including a link to [Streetlink](#) using 'What Three Words' to allow accurate information to be provided to the Street Outreach Team.

Information about individual services provided will not be included within the social media posts to ensure services prioritise available cool spaces for those most at risk, and also to allow people to provide assistance via Streetlink. This allows services to target individuals, not let staff run around in hot weather trying to find people and to do assessments for placements.

Are there reasons why a person may not be offered into accommodation during a red alert?

The offer of accommodation will be for those deemed 'high risk'. There will be reasons why individuals that are deemed high risk for the purposes of SWEP, but may not be able to access accommodation. This will only happen in exceptional circumstances. A full risk assessment must be completed by SOT Team prior to acceptance to allow Cambridge City Council staff to manage the emergency accommodation.

For staff, volunteer and service user safety, it may be that Cambridge City Council declines an individual into the SWEP accommodation. Examples may include, but are not limited to –

- Risk of violence or abusive behaviour, or actual violence or abusive behaviour, towards staff or individuals using SWEP (including domestic abuse)
- Risk of arson
- High risk of Drug use and associated behaviours within the project.

If a person is not accepted into accommodation, then a plan to ensure their safety will be devised by partners and implemented.

SWEP is a non-statutory service, so discretion to place remains with Cambridge City Council. Each partner agency also reserves the right to withdraw services if an individual's behaviour becomes unmanageable. There is a legal obligation to look after the health and safety of staff and volunteers, of which their safety is paramount.

Monitoring and Public Sector Equality Duty

The Hot Weather Severe Weather Emergency Protocol will be monitored during the summer period and updated yearly.

All decisions for support and placements will be made ensuring that the Public Sector Equality Duty is completed, with due regard to any possible disabilities.