



## **Winter Provision**

# **Helping Rough Sleepers During Bad Weather**

**Cambridge City Council**

**Winter 2024-25**

## 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.

Our arrangements are designed to make sure that when the weather gets bad there will be a warm, safe place available at night for anyone who would otherwise have to sleep out.

Historically, the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) has consisted of several communal spaces for people to sleep for the night, with the expectation that they will vacate the building the following morning. Although this accommodation has provided vital shelter to rough sleepers, the coronavirus pandemic has forced us to do things differently.

Following 2022/23 and 23/24's Winter Provisions and the successful outcomes that the partnership created, in particular for service users, a similar model is being used in Winter Provision 2024/25. It demonstrated the good work that could be achieved by providing a stable, sustained place to stay, alongside intensive resettlement support.

In 2023, a 3-year contract to provide Winter Provision was awarded to [It Takes A City](#). ITAC has provided Everyone In and Winter Provision successfully over the last few years, providing excellent outcomes for the City's rough sleepers. This year, 20 beds will be offered at Crossways. The provision is located on a single site, close to Cambridge city centre. Each resident will have their own room, with most residents having en-suite facilities.

Additionally, individuals housed will be able to retain their room beyond the end of a period of cold weather, with a greater emphasis on rapid resettlement.

This document explains how the Winter Provision will work.

## What assistance is provided under the protocol?

In normal circumstances, the period during which Winter Provision will operate is from the beginning of November until the end of March.

Winter Provision beds are available to people who are

- Verified as rough sleeping by the [Cambridge Street Outreach Team](#)<sup>1</sup>; and
- [Locally connected to Cambridge City](#).

The main provider of accommodation is It Takes A City (ITaC), who will offer 20 beds at the Crossways site (176 Chesterton Road).

Until 2021-22, Winter Provision beds were only available during periods of severe weather. This year:

- From 4 November 2024 to 29th February 2025, Winter Provision will be open permanently<sup>2</sup>. During this time, Crossways will be open to accept new residents. From the 1<sup>st</sup> March until the 31<sup>st</sup> March, the service remains open for current residents, but will not be accepting new residents.
- The expectation is the existing Crossways residents will be moved on rapidly into suitable longer-term accommodation, thus creating space for new rough sleepers. There will be circumstances where shorter-term accommodation is more appropriate, which would be determined on a case-by-case basis. An example of this might be temporary accommodation (via a homeless application) or Jimmy's.
- From 1 March to 31 March 2025, Winter Provision will close to new residents, except in the case of a period of severe weather that in previous years would have triggered SWEP (see Appendix Two).
- Any remaining residents will leave the Winter Provision on 31 March 2025; however, the service aims to move all residents on successfully before the provision ends.

Accommodation will be limited to those with a local connection to Cambridge City<sup>3</sup>. This is consistent with the current approach to prioritising beds at [Jimmy's](#) and the Street's to Home Service. Rough sleepers with no local connection to Cambridge will be supported to access accommodation in their local area, including signposting, the issuing of travel warrants, applying as homeless to their local authority and so on. Such individuals, and the agencies, local authorities and support groups assisting them, will be expected to cooperate fully with this.

<sup>1</sup>NB In exceptional circumstances, there may be an exemption from verification. For example, if that process was difficult because a person began work before CGL SOT begin their morning shifts. In this example other intelligence can be used to verify, such as regular attendance to Winter Comfort or police intelligence.

<sup>2</sup>NB – The continued availability of Winter Provision beds will depend on the provider's ability to move individuals on quickly from accommodation.

<sup>3</sup>NB – accommodation may be granted to individuals with no local connection anywhere, including non-UK nationals. In such circumstances, accommodation will be granted on the expectation that individuals will engage with resettlement plans (including to regularise their immigration status and/or voluntary return to their country

of origin where appropriate). Decisions on local connection will be determined by the local authority in line with the Reconnections Policy.

Statutory homeless advice, from Cambridge City Council's Housing Advice Team, will deliver a drop-in service to provide assistance to service users and agencies.

Rough sleepers will be expected to make use of Jimmy's when vacant beds become available, unless there is a clear written reason why they cannot access Jimmy's. If a person declines a bed at Jimmy's without a valid reason, we are likely to refuse a placement in Winter Provision. The same applies for those moving on from a Winter Provision bed at Crossways.

## How will Winter Provision work this year?

The Council's Winter Provision process will be overseen night-by-night by ITaC but a wide range of agencies will be involved, in particular the street outreach team (SOT) at [CGL Cambridge](#).

A flowchart can be found in Appendix One, but in brief:

- Anyone wishing to access Winter Provision will need to be verified as rough sleeping by the Cambridge Street Outreach Team
- Once they have been verified and assessed, they will be offered a Jimmy's bed if available.
- If there is no Jimmy's bed available:
  - They will be offered a Winter Provision bed if available
  - They will be added to a waiting list if a bed is not available (and will be offered a Jimmy's bed if this becomes available first).
- To offer a Winter Provision bed to a locally connected individual that has been verified, the SOT will email the council's Temporary Accommodation Team manager (TAT) ([katie.wood@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:katie.wood@cambridge.gov.uk)), copying in Housing Advice Partnership Manager ([simon.penn@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:simon.penn@cambridge.gov.uk)) and Support Services Manager ([chrisd@itac.org.uk](mailto:chrisd@itac.org.uk)). The services will then make a decision jointly to determine if a person can be booked into the service. Services and individuals need to understand that the Council and ITaC will need to take into account resources, risks (to staff and service users) and best use of limited resources. There will be a deadline of 7.30pm each night to book individuals into accommodation (with an absolute cut-off date of 9pm in the event of an emergency).
- For an individual to be accepted, there needs to be an up-to-date risk assessment completed and Support Needs assessment which must be completed on Inform.
- ITaC will then take responsibility for booking individuals into Winter Provision accommodation, supporting them for as long as they need the accommodation, and moving them into longer-term housing. Cambridge City Council commissioned 'Street's to Home' Service, led by Riverside, will provide

assistance to ITaC in finding and providing accommodation for move on from Crossways.

- Once booked in, an individual will have a period of 14 days to establish a move-on plan. This may include a statutory homelessness approach to the council. If no move-on plan has been established in this time (or if they refuse a reasonable offer of next-step accommodation, which could include TA), we reserve the right to end their stay.

## **What happens if Winter Provision is full?**

As with any provision of accommodation, Winter Provision beds are a finite resource. The council, ITaC and partner agencies will prioritise beds for locally connected and verified rough sleepers, and will work towards rehousing people rapidly, thus creating regular vacancies throughout the winter.

In the event that Winter Provision is full, and a particularly severe period of weather is forecast, ITaC may provide a 'sit-up' service for rough sleepers not accommodated elsewhere. The council (with its partners) will advise whether this service should operate on a case-by-case basis.

In the event of no accommodation being available during a period of severe weather, Cambridge City Council may arrange accommodation in a B&B and work with our local partners to provide bed spaces to cover the severe weather period. The generosity of our Street's to Home partners is greatly appreciated across the services, in providing beds to people that would otherwise be sleeping rough. B&B's and SWEP bedspaces with partners will be arranged on a 'one night only' basis, with options to be reviewed the following morning.

## **How will provision be paid for?**

This winter, Winter Provision is paid for by:

- A contractual grant from Cambridge City Council and housing benefit contributions from Cambridge City Council
- A grant from MHCLG
- Charitable donations to ITaC.

There will be no charge to the individual for using a bed, but people who are eligible to claim housing benefit will be expected to do so as a condition of their stay. ITaC will assist the individual to make a claim for housing benefit, with assistance from the Temporary Accommodation team. The accommodation is provided under a licence (permission to occupy) and can be withdrawn at any time.

## **How will people presently banned from hostel services be treated?**

Bans are always a last resort for homelessness service providers and are always open to review. However, it is possible that banned individuals will present for Winter Provision. People banned from Jimmy's or from Crossways may be admitted/re-admitted, but at the discretion of ITaC management. People whose behaviour is so extreme that they cannot be permitted any accommodation may be referred to mental health services, or the police informed, at the discretion of hostel staff.

### **Are there reasons why a person may not be accepted into Winter Provision?**

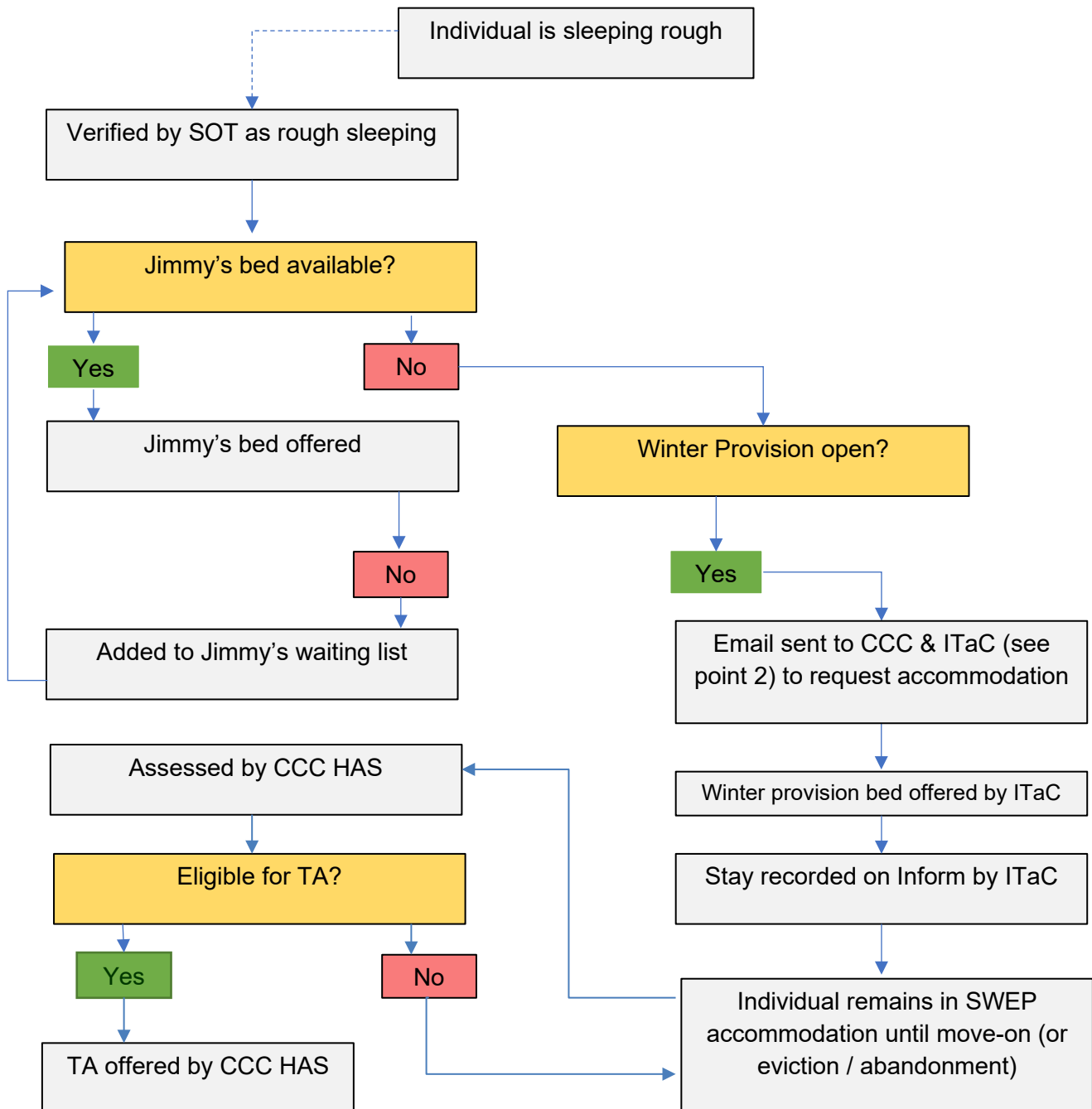
There will be reasons why individuals may not be able to access Winter Provision. This will only happen in exception circumstances. A full risk assessment must be completed by SOT Team prior to acceptance and a support assessment completed to allow ITaC staff to manage the Winter Provision.

For staff, volunteer, and service user safety, it may be that ITaC declines an individual into the Winter Provision. 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 Winter Provision (including [domestic abuse](#))
- Risk of arson
- High risk of Drug use and associated behaviours within the project.
- Previous failure to engage with services/ failure to accept move on accommodation

**Winter Provision is a non-statutory service, so discretion to place remains with ITaC and Cambridge City Council**

## Appendix One: Winter Provision Process



### Notes:

TA = Temporary Accommodation

SOT = Cambridge Street Outreach Team

HAS = Housing Advice Service

ITaC = It Takes a City

CCC = Cambridge City Council

## Appendix Two – Process for Triggering SWEP (1 November to 31 March)

### 1. What is severe weather emergency protocol?

The severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) runs in parallel with our Winter Provision. As the name implies, it is emergency provision to get people off the streets when severe weather threatens to put rough sleepers at particular risk. Despite our Winter Provision, accommodation provided under SWEP continues to have a part to play in the Council's range of services because:

- there may be no rooms available within our Winter Provision;
- a person may be barred from our Winter Provision (for example, have been evicted due to behaviour); or
- a person may not be eligible for Winter Provision (for example is not locally connected and refuses to seek help from the 'home' authority).

SWEP will keep these people safe until the weather emergency is over.

There is no statutory definition of 'severe weather', but most authorities, including Cambridge, set the basic trigger for opening emergency provision as being any period when the [Met Office](#) forecasts a temperature of zero or under for three successive days.

However, this council goes considerably beyond this minimum measure of provision, making accommodation available in, for example, periods of prolonged heavy rain or high winds and during long periods of cold and damp weather.

**As stated in section 1, Winter Provision will be open from 1 November to 31 March, regardless of the weather.**

### 2. How will the severe weather provision be initiated?

The Council's Housing Advice Partnerships Manager (or someone delegated by that officer) will monitor the Met Office weather forecast from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 31 March and will be responsible for making the decision to open and close provision, consulting with partner agencies (such as the Cambridge Street Outreach Team) where necessary.

Cambridge City Council will be in daily contact with ITaC throughout Winter Provision, so SWEP will be able to be called at the earliest opportunity. The decision to open will be made 36 hours before provision starts. This will ensure that agencies have a good chance to get the word out to all rough sleepers and ensure that accommodation providers have ample time to prepare to take people in.



SWEP may be called in addition to Winter Provision and will provide a renewed offer to those not eligible for Winter Provision, for example because of a ban, failure to take an offer of accommodation or unacceptable behaviour.

Once the decision to open provision has been made, the minimum period it will remain open will usually be three nights.

### **3. What happens when the severe weather goes on for longer than three days?**

If severe weather continues for longer than the initial three nights, it will be renewed on a day-by-day basis. The Council will inform agencies of the decision to continue or end provision with at least 36 hours' notice, when practical.