SWEP AND EXTENDED WINTER PROVISION
ENGAGING ROUGH SLEEPERS IN WINTER
SWEP AND EXTENDED WINTER PROVISION

PRODUCED BY
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INTRODUCTION

There is a humanitarian obligation on all local authorities to do all they can to prevent deaths on the streets caused by winter weather. This includes the cold, but also conditions such as extreme wind and rain. The aim of this guide is to support local authorities and local agencies to provide appropriate responses for people sleeping rough throughout the winter months and especially during severe weather.

Local areas should have enough adequate provision to prevent rough sleeping at any time of year, however the winter period often presents greatest risks to people’s health. It also provides increased opportunities to engage with entrenched rough sleepers and other hard-to-reach groups, as they may be more likely to accept support at this time of year. Therefore this guide has two aims:

- To ensure that no one dies on the streets due to severe weather.
- To ensure that every effort is made to engage individuals with support services during the winter months.

This guide will help you to establish whether your local area requires a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) only, or whether you could benefit from more robust ‘extended winter provision’. It includes information on issues such as risk, staffing and effective partnership working, to ensure you can write and implement an effective extreme weather protocol. We have also included information on recent case law around eligibility for Housing Benefit which may affect funding of services in the future (see page 7). This guide has been put together in line with the No Second Night Out standard.

LAST YEAR’S PROVISION

Homeless Link has produced a report reviewing provision during the 2012-13 winter months. This report can be found here: [http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/SWEP-CWP](http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/SWEP-CWP). The report describes how agencies experienced a significant increase in demand for provision in 2012-13, especially from certain groups of service users such as young people, people with no recourse to public funds and non-UK EEA nationals. With upcoming changes to welfare provision and the introduction of the ‘bedroom tax’ (under-occupancy charge), along with funding cuts and recent case law around Housing Benefit eligibility (see page 7), many services are concerned about their ability to meet demand during winter 2013-14. This reveals the need for agencies to start planning well ahead of the winter months, involving a creative approach to fundraising and a commitment to building effective partnerships.

During 2012-13 there were some particularly prolonged and late periods of severe weather, with the latest period of extreme cold lasting well into April. Many agencies struggled to keep their services open this late due to exhausted funds and shortages of staff. This again highlights the importance that agencies plan well ahead for all possible eventualities, and that they are fully prepared to provide services at any point when the need arises.

Good practice examples from 2012-13 are included throughout this guide to help you.

WHAT IS SEVERE WEATHER?

There is no strict definition of what counts as ‘severe weather’. Local authorities should proactively identify any weather that could increase the risk of serious harm to people sleeping rough and put measures in place to minimise this. This includes extreme cold, wind and rain. It is important not to presume when, or in what form, severe weather will occur.

Cold: extreme cold can cause serious health problems and death for those who are exposed to it overnight or for long periods of time. Historically, SWEP provision has been triggered when the temperature has been forecast at zero degrees or below for three days. However, a common sense approach should be taken – an
occasional forecast above zero in a series of sub-zero nights or the impact of rain, snow and wind chill should also be considered. There are also benefits to opening provision for temperatures above zero that can be equally harmful, and for maintaining this provision over longer periods. These benefits are discussed throughout the guidance.

Wind: high winds can be problematic and lead to an increased risk of injury through uprooted trees, falling walls, and blown-off roofs and other debris. Where there are common sleeping sites, local authorities should consider the risk of extreme wind and gales on these sites and the potential resulting harm.

Rain: excessive or sudden prolonged rain can lead to flooding and landslides. Those sleeping under bridges, on river banks and near the sea, streams and canals, may be particularly at risk, but this can also extend to other areas including near drains. As well as increased risk of drowning, extreme rain can result in health problems from being wet and loss of important belongings such as identification.

In addition to the direct risk associated with severe weather, local authorities should work alongside other local statutory and voluntary services to identify and mitigate against actions taken during severe weather that can increase risk for those sleeping rough. For example, people may choose to sleep in riskier places, such as in bins, where they can find cover. They may also enter buildings or property illegally, or increase their substance use as a coping mechanism.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The table below is to help local authorities decide on the best response to support homeless people during winter months and severe weather periods. The more flexible and responsive agencies can be to individual needs, the more likely they will be to engage people in support and help them off the streets for good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>When and who</th>
<th>Who the service is most appropriate for</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Possible barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe Weather Emergency Protocol</td>
<td>Only when forecast of 3 days below zero degrees</td>
<td>Very entrenched rough sleepers who have previously refused all offers</td>
<td>Prevents deaths on the street</td>
<td>Responsive to temperature fluctuations, so logistical issues as services open and close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided by local authorities, often in partnership with existing voluntary sector services</td>
<td>People with no recourse to public funds, or not eligible for other support</td>
<td>Opportunity to engage with people who may have become entrenched</td>
<td>Can mean a rushed and less effective response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funded by the local authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can be simple extension of existing services and therefore low cost</td>
<td>Very little time to provide long term solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol AND extended winter provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>When and who</th>
<th>Who the service is most appropriate for</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Possible barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe Weather Emergency Protocol AND extended winter provision</td>
<td>For an extended winter period not dictated by temperature</td>
<td>Very entrenched rough sleepers who have previously refused all offers</td>
<td>Prevents deaths on the street</td>
<td>May require more staffing and funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local authorities and voluntary sector partnerships, faith based groups</td>
<td>People with no recourse to public funds</td>
<td>Allows longer-term engagement to provide sustainable move-on</td>
<td>May create an increase in demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extended provision often exists independent of local authority funding</td>
<td>People who are new to the streets who are particularly vulnerable and eager to receive support</td>
<td>More stable</td>
<td>May develop a dependence on services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Capitalises on an increased desire to engage from rough sleepers</td>
<td>May encounter local resistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS
PREVENTING DEATH DURING SEVERE WEATHER

Every local authority should have a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which is instigated when the temperature is forecast to drop to zero degrees (or below) for three consecutive nights. This should be implemented on the first night of the forecast. This is an attempt to define ‘severe weather’ but a common
sense approach should be taken – an occasional forecast above zero in a series of sub-zero nights or the impact of rain, snow and wind chill should also be considered in relation to ‘severe weather’. This applies equally to local authorities where rough sleeping may not usually be an issue. An adequate policy will ensure that your local authority can provide suitable accommodation quickly to prevent harm and death due to severe weather conditions should the need arise. For ideas about emergency accommodation provision please visit our website at http://homeless.org.uk/emergency-accommodation.

Developing and implementing SWEP
A SWEP should be set up for all local authorities in partnership with the voluntary sector, utilising homelessness grants and local authority funds to ensure a humanitarian response is provided. It is important that authorities work with partner organisations to review and amend their SWEP after each winter. If you require any further assistance in writing a SWEP please contact Laura McCullagh at Homeless Link (laura.mccullagh@homelesslink.org.uk). Example documents are included at http://www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action-SWEP-CWP.

Services should use the Met Office weather forecast. The local authority should be responsible for monitoring this and ensuring the SWEP is activated and suitable provision is available. A rough sleeping or homelessness coordinator is the most likely person to take the lead on implementing SWEP. The SWEP needs to be agreed and decided by the end of September to ensure partners are prepared.

Humanitarian response
Please note that SWEP should be applied responsibly to prevent death at all times; 3 consecutive nights at zero or below is the minimum requirement. Local authorities should consider factors such as wind chill, snow coverage and duration of extreme weather when looking at provision. Preventing deaths on the streets is the aim of the protocol, so if this demands more beds and a longer response the local authority should do everything it can to prevent harm to individuals.

Who should receive SWEP assistance?
SWEP operates outside usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks that govern access to housing. It should be applied to all those who may otherwise be excluded from services, including people with no recourse to public funds, people who may have previously been banned and those with no local connection. Targeting of particular individuals should be on the basis of need and not on-going housing entitlement. Where possible authorities should work closely with outreach teams to identify and target those that are known to be rough sleeping. Requiring rough sleeper verification may be a useful way of ensuring that those in most need receive assistance first, however a flexible approach should be adopted (individuals should not be sent back onto the streets to get verified in severe weather conditions). Bearing in mind the high risk that some of these clients may present, it is crucial that personnel operating SWEP are suitably trained and resourced to deal with risk appropriately.

EXTENDED WINTER PROVISION
FINDING LONGER TERM SOLUTIONS THROUGH INCREASED ENGAGEMENT

Many organisations open emergency access accommodation independently throughout the severe weather period. These often operate continuously between the months of November and March (although it should be remembered that severe weather can arise outside this period) and are commonly run by faith-based groups opening church halls and community centres on a rotation model. Some local authorities also decide to operate extended winter provision, or work in partnership with voluntary agencies to provide this service. A cooperative approach is essential to ensure that people receive a consistent message and that services are not duplicated.
GOOD PRACTICE IN SWEP AND EXTENDED WINTER PROVISION

Communication
Simple and effective communication is essential. The public should be made aware of StreetLink, a telephone line and website available across England which enables the public to alert local authorities about rough sleepers in their area. Referrals can be made by calling 0300 500 0914 or visiting www.streetlink.org.uk. You could also advertise a local telephone number and a statement along the lines of: “No-one needs to sleep rough - [insert name] local authority will ensure everyone has access to shelter. If you are concerned call this number.” This is easier to disseminate than details of different arrangements. Use local newspapers, social media and email networks to communicate clearly with as many people as possible.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
Many authorities and voluntary agencies delivering winter provision employ a designated ‘coordinator’. This person acts as a single port of call for partner agencies and other interested parties and can reduce cases of confusion / mis-communication.

Coordinated responses
Good practice in delivering SWEP and extended winter provision requires cooperation and partnership working across agencies both within the borough and more widely e.g. while reconnection to areas where individuals have a local connection may present better opportunities for move-on, individuals should not be reconnected to another area if that area is not operating SWEP. Local authority Housing Options/Homelessness services should usually take a lead in coordinating SWEP, but voluntary sector providers, outreach services, police, health services, food banks, neighbouring councils, No Second Night Out, faith groups and mental health services should all be involved.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
Some Local Authorities provided joint SWEP provision and joint commissioning of outreach teams with neighbouring boroughs.

During severe weather it is important to act swiftly to concentrate efforts for those most at risk. Avoid lengthy referral procedures to enable quick action. One way to ensure responses are effective and targeted is to set up a ‘Task and Targeting group’ in advance of opening severe weather provision. This group should seek to identify individuals at risk and decide on the best approach and procedures between services. A protocol should be agreed by all agencies involved. Please see the good practice guides at http://homeless.org.uk/specialist-interventions and http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/taskandtargeting for more information.

Where No Second Night Out (NSNO) is in operation, this should be the first ‘port of call’ for all eligible individuals. Anyone not eligible for NSNO should be offered assistance through SWEP / extended winter provision. If NSNO is at full capacity or individuals reject NSNO assistance they should still be offered shelter under SWEP. The service providing SWEP should reinforce the NSNO offer and encourage individuals to accept support.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
One NSNO provider had representatives based at the local SWEP service to take referrals when it was open.
Recording, monitoring and sharing data

Capturing the demographic and support needs of individuals accessing SWEP and extended winter provision will allow local authorities and providers to plan effectively for future responses. Recording information can be tricky in chaotic environments, but is necessary to demonstrate the work that services are doing. Sharing information between services can save time and resources. The more information that can be collected about clients’ needs the more effective future provision can be. As a minimum, services should collect information on:

- Names and contact numbers (if clients have them)
- Demographic data: gender, date of birth, nationality, ethnicity
- Whether the clients are verified rough sleepers
- The amount of previous contact clients have had with services
- Where clients move on to when they leave the services

Use of B&B accommodation can create additional difficulties when trying to monitor clients’ move-on – procedures that take account of these difficulties should be developed, such as requiring B&B staff to ask people where they are moving on to when they book out.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:

- Revised referral and assessment procedures, often in conjunction with earlier opening times, meant that several providers were able to complete more comprehensive risk assessments and offer more targeted support
- Several providers utilised Homeless Link’s template monitoring form and monitoring and evaluation tool, which enabled comprehensive data collection.

We have produced a template monitoring form and monitoring tool that can help you collect and record information effectively. These are available at [http://www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action-SWEP-CWP](http://www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action-SWEP-CWP). You may also want to consider using an ‘information sharing agreement’ – a template can be found within our Task and Targeting guidance available here: [http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/Task&Targeting_toolkit.pdf](http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/Task&Targeting_toolkit.pdf)

For more information on effectively capturing and using data, please visit: [http://www.homeless.org.uk/critical-mass](http://www.homeless.org.uk/critical-mass).

Accommodation type

Whether providing SWEP or extended winter provision agencies should make the most of existing resources, for example using day centres and communal rooms in hostels and day services and community resources. Mattresses on floors, armchairs and camp beds are not ideal, but can be used as emergency accommodation in this instance. B&Bs can be expensive and offer inadequate opportunities for engagement, move-on and monitoring, and should often be avoided if other options exist. They do however, present a flexible solution in rural areas and smaller authorities, and are sometimes favoured by the hardest to reach clients. It is important therefore, to be responsive to individual needs and offer as wide a range of accommodation options as possible. When planning SWEP and/or winter provision agencies should check that they have suitable accommodation for different groups e.g. women, couples, young people, and people with dogs. Outreach and support needs to be integrated with any type of accommodation provision.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:

- One housing association invested heavily in providing high quality SWEP accommodation. This was designed with the comfort and well-being of service users in mind and included new beds, high quality smoking shelters, dog kennels and free access to veterinary care.
One authority had built strong relationships with B&B owners and trained B&B staff in working with the client group. B&B staff were committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for service users, such as putting on Christmas entertainment and dinner.

**Rural areas**

In rural areas, or areas with no history of rough sleeping, it may appear that there is little need to devise a SWEP. However, implementing a SWEP is about preparing for a potential change in circumstances. It is important that small or isolated local authorities either work with neighbouring councils to devise cross-authority solutions or provide solutions themselves. It should not be policy simply to refer people to larger areas, when provision could be made available locally. This may mean accessing spaces that are not traditionally used. In some instances rural areas have used guest houses, pubs and church halls to house rough sleepers in extreme weather.

**Funding and resources**

SWEP and extended winter provision should be paid for from the existing homelessness grant or other local authority funds. Some services have managed to claim Housing Benefit for individuals using SWEP / winter provision, however please see information below for an update on recent case law. If Housing Benefit is agreed, agencies should work closely with the Housing Benefit team to ensure that applications are processed quickly and delays do not prevent access to beds.

Using a diverse range of funding streams can often leave a service more resilient to the threat of cuts, and local authority funding is often supplemented by voluntary donations and organisational funding streams. Services can also appeal to businesses / members of the public for ‘in kind’ donations. These resources can be maximised by advertising for specific items that are needed such as toiletries, food and travel vouchers. It is important to start putting plans in place for funding early, well before the winter period and often as soon as the previous year’s services have closed.

**PLEASE NOTE: Housing Benefit**

may be used as a means of funding for some SWEP / winter provision, however recently, several such services have had their Housing Benefit withdrawn. This is as a result of a tribunal ruling that a night shelter in one area did not offer ‘a home’ for its service users and therefore did not meet the eligibility criteria for Housing Benefit. While the Government believes that Housing Benefit can continue to be paid to users of the majority of shelters so long as the person’s circumstances meet the Housing Benefit rules, local interpretations of the case law have varied. It is advisable that services consider how they might adapt to ensure that they are aligned to the criteria that the case law sets out. This may present an opportunity to make improvements and offer better provision for clients. We advise that services contact their local Housing Benefit departments as soon as possible to discuss local responses to the ruling. For more information please see the Homeless Link briefing available here:

http://homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/team/night-shelter-uncertainty-must-not-prevent-support

**Effective responses and examples of good practice:**

- One authority negotiated with local public transport providers who agreed to accept travel tokens from SWEP clients.

- Several services used successful social media campaigns to increase donations from members of the community.

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1 http://homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/team/night-shelter-uncertainty-must-not-prevent-support
2 http://homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/team/nightshelter-update-law-hasn%E2%80%99t-changed
Staffing and volunteers
Committed and trained staff are essential during the winter period and teams need to be flexible with a good knowledge of the sector. A combination of paid staff and volunteers often works best.

- Volunteers should be fully trained in areas such as risk assessment, professional boundaries, challenging behaviour, mental health and drug and alcohol use. Try to utilise volunteers’ skills appropriately and offer a range of tasks according to levels of experience and skills. Tasks for less skilled volunteers could include cooking, cleaning, sorting out bedding, providing social and well-being activities.
- If volunteers are to carry out any one-to-one support they should have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check – see this link for more information: https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview
- Developing schemes such as befriending and mentoring programmes can allow routes for ex-service users to volunteer with structure and support.
- You may need to recruit volunteers who speak relevant languages.
- Volunteers should not be put at risk and a clear induction, supervision and support pathway should be put in place.

For more information on supporting volunteers please see our quick guide at http://www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action-SWEP-CWP or more comprehensive guidance available here: http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/managingvolunteers

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
- Several services recruited client volunteers from nearby hostels who had personal experience of rough sleeping. This proved invaluable in engaging with some of the most hard-to-reach individuals.
- One service improved their application procedure for volunteers this year, which included completion of full DBS check, interviews and a comprehensive training programme.

All volunteers were recruited in advance of the service opening and given 3 days training covering practical considerations about running a shelter, as well as information on health and safety and maintaining professional boundaries.

Engaging people in support
Most of the individuals accessing SWEP / winter provision will have additional support needs as well as their immediate need for shelter. All services providing accommodation should also offer support. This may include support to access move-on accommodation, health care, education, employment, substance use services, benefits advice and creative / leisure activities. SWEP / winter provision often provides an opportunity to engage individuals who have been reluctant to accept support in the past, or people who are new to the streets where it is important that they are linked in with services before their situations worsen. It is important that support is provided by experienced staff and that a range of flexible options are offered.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
- One authority using B&B accommodation provided free transport to collect service users in the mornings and take them to a local day centre to access support.
- One service introduced a ‘Breakfast Club’ this year, allowing people to stay longer in the mornings and supplying a hot breakfast. This provided greater opportunity to engage people in support and led to improved move-on outcomes.
• Employing staff and volunteers who could speak the same languages as their clients led to increased engagement with support in some services.

While individuals should always be encouraged to accept the support that is provided, this should not be made obligatory. Some people may not feel ready to accept support, and this is a position that should be respected. It is more important that risks of immediate harm are reduced by people receiving shelter.

People refusing shelter
Services often report difficulties in persuading some individuals to access accommodation. These people should always be provided with information about the health risks associated with severe weather, which are increased if they are using substances. If someone continues to refuse help in these circumstances it may be grounds to contact mental health services. Understanding the Mental Capacity Act and working closely and persistently with mental health services can bring about appropriate responses. For more information working with mental health services please see our website http://www.homeless.org.uk/mental-health-guide. Working with the Police can be helpful to foster good working relationships around mental health and risk. A case study around effective working with the Police can be found here: http://www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action-SWEP-CWP.

Effective response and example of good practice:
Several districts provided continued monitoring and support to rough sleepers who refused to accept shelter. Outreach teams made frequent visits with provisions and information about services. Individuals were always encouraged to access SWEP facilities even if they chose not to sleep in the shelter.

Again, it is important to be flexible and offer a range of accommodation options if possible. Certain individuals or groups may not feel comfortable sharing communal floor space, and alternatives should be made available wherever possible e.g. a separate room for women or young people. Information about all aspects of the provision e.g. rules, opening times, availability of food should be fully explained to individuals at the referral and booking in stages. This will hopefully avoid instances of ‘no shows’ or of abandonments, which can mean that beds are left empty when other people have been turned away.

Logistical considerations
Project logistics such as the times of day that services will open and close, when people can be booked in and how people can be referred are all areas that need to be fully considered and planned well in advance of the winter months. It is important that clear procedures are put in place with processes communicated effectively to staff, volunteers, partner organisations and potential service users. A disorganised and inconsistent service can create unnecessary frustration and lead to ineffective support and unnecessary risks. Opening services early in the evening can provide more time for booking in, assessing risk and providing support. Similarly, later checkout times, with links/transport to day services can offer greater opportunity to engage service users in support. While policies and procedures should be in place, a degree of flexibility to accommodate individual needs will often be appropriate. Staff should make decisions based on their assessment of need and risk. We have created a planning checklist to remind agencies of the areas they need to consider when planning their service. This can be found here: http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/SWEP-CWP

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
• One service introduced a lunchtime booking in slot. This allowed staff to fully assess and explain the service in a more relaxed and less chaotic environment.

• One service reported staying open until a Monday despite being programmed to close on a Sunday. This allowed better coordination with other support services operating during the week.
Managing risk and challenging behaviour
Relaxed eligibility criteria for SWEP / winter provision can increase risk in many ways: large shared spaces, unfamiliar facilities, clients who are banned from services, clients that you have little information about or individuals that usually have difficulty with engaging can all present risks. Individual risk assessments, although brief, do need to be completed. This should be for the purpose of identifying and managing risk, rather than for the basis for exclusion. Assessment should ask clients about violence, harm to self or others, drug and alcohol use, housing history and history with other services. An example form can be found at http://www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action-SWEP-CWP. Evidence should be gathered from any other agencies that have previously worked with the individual. Having a relationship with the Police can mean that checks can be done quickly. If clients present with high risks this should not be seen as a reason for exclusion, but an opportunity to put measures in place to make the space as safe as possible.

Health and safety regulations around buildings and staffing should operate in line with standard procedures. Policies around controlled substances, alcohol use, working with vulnerable adults and offenders should be in place and adhered to. Alcohol and substance misuse can be a key area of concern for services operating during severe weather and, while it should not be a barrier to support, suitable agencies with the experience and resources to deal with such risks should be involved in the delivery of the service. Please view our hostel handbook for policies and advice around risk. http://handbooks.homeless.org.uk/hostels/journey/riskassessment

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
• One service described the positive impact of a more rigorous implementation of rules regarding intoxication. Each client was fully informed of the rules at referral and asked to sign to confirm that they understood them before booking in. This led to a large reduction in incidents.

Services can reduce the risk of challenging behaviour by creating a pleasant, comfortable and safe environment. Offering food, activities and entertainment, as well as ensuring that staff and volunteers display a welcoming and non-judgemental attitude can help people relax and interact positively with others, reducing feelings of unease and incidents of aggression.

Effective responses and examples of good practice:
• One provider described the efforts they made to make service-users feel comfortable and safe – each was accompanied to the accommodation by their referral agency, given a tour, induction and helped to settle in.

Insurance
Always check that your insurance policy covers the activity in the space you are using. Most organisations providing severe weather interventions already work with people sleeping rough, so existing insurance is likely to provide adequate cover. Unless there is change of use with regards to a building or space, changing your policy may not be necessary. If you are using a church or a town hall you may need to check what, if any, restrictions your policy has. Serious incidents can happen in temporary provision, so make sure you are adequately covered. Most companies can insure spaces relatively quickly, so this need not be a barrier to offering support.

Move on
Routes out of emergency provision into hostels, private rented, social housing, and specialist accommodation need to be in place so that people do not return to the streets. As well as saving lives, one of the key aims of offering shelter is to support people in making a transition from the streets. It is important that barriers to move on are identified early on, and that authorities / agencies work with providers to remove these barriers. Suitable options should be considered for all groups of people, particularly those that may be especially difficult to place such as people displaying high levels of risk and/or vulnerability; those with no recourse to public funds; or those with pets that they are unwilling to part with. Effective partnerships with support
agencies, outreach teams and neighbouring authorities can be essential in supporting clients into stable accommodation. Reconnection to different boroughs or countries can offer sustainable solutions for many people - to read more about how this works and resources to help you please see: www.homeless.org.uk/reconnection. For more information about working with people who have no recourse to public funds please see our guidance here: http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/NRPF

Effective responses and examples of good practice:

- One authority made a commitment to finding move-on accommodation for all service-users before asking them to leave their SWEP provision. Provision was kept open until all placements had been made.
- One hostel allowed SWEP clients to access its pre-tenancy training course. Working with partners to find rent deposits for hostel residents meant that hostel spaces were freed up for severe weather clients.
- The use of starter tenancies and assistance via various bond schemes allowed the majority of SWEP clients in one district to move on to suitable accommodation.

Health services
People can become very unwell when sleeping rough in low temperatures. SWEP and extended winter provision should aim to involve health services to identify individuals that need treatment. An awareness of the spread of infectious diseases should be included in risk assessments. Linking with local GPs and drop-in facilities at day centres will help you to manage individuals’ health. People can be referred to GPs as temporary patients, however advocacy from providers may be required to ensure this happens. See also our guidance for day centres on preparing for winter: http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/winter-daycentres

Effective responses and examples of good practice:

- Several services arranged for health professionals such as GPs, nurses, dentists and podiatrists to be present on site. This allowed interventions that individuals would not otherwise have accessed, and led to positive health outcomes.