1.0 Protocol Objectives

- To ensure that no one dies on the streets due to extreme cold weather.
- To ensure that every effort is made to engage with individuals accommodated during the extreme cold weather period so they do not return to the streets.

Refusal of Support

Some individuals may refuse shelter and support offered. Those individuals should be provided with information about the risks of cold weather on their health, especially if they are using substances. If someone continues to refuse help in these circumstances it may be grounds to trigger mental health services. Understanding the Mental Capacity Act 2005, in particular S5 and S6, and use of emergency powers under sec 136 of the Mental Health Act is vital, (see link below) as is working closely and persistently with mental health services. For guidance in identifying when mental health services should be involved please refer to the checklist attached to this protocol. 

http://www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/mental-health/Pages/Mentalhealth.aspx

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This protocol sets out the arrangements that Lambeth Borough Council will put into place to ensure that people do not die on the streets of Lambeth during extreme cold weather. Under this protocol, the Council will carry out prompt action to ensure rough sleepers have the opportunity to have access to shelter if it is believed that they are at risk during severe cold weather.

2.2 The Government and the Mayor's Office both have in place a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which places expectations on, and offers guidance to, local authorities around preventing rough sleeper deaths during extreme cold weather. Lambeth Borough Council wishes to be compliant with the expectations set out within this protocol. The trigger for the SWEP to be activated is when the Met Office forecasts three nights, or more, of weather at a minimum temperature of zero (or below zero) degrees Celsius in London. Local conditions such as wind chill and snow should also be considered.

2.3 The focus of SWEP arrangements should be on ensuring there is a humanitarian response to prevent rough sleepers dying from the cold while there is severe weather. It is expected that all rough sleepers, including those who would normally have no recourse to public funds, are provided with emergency accommodation away from the streets and these arrangements will often be made outside the usual eligibility/entitlement framework that governs access to housing. Targeting of particularly vulnerable individuals should therefore be done on the basis of need and not ongoing housing entitlement.

3.0 Local provision

3.1 To ensure that space is available, and appropriate support is provided, emergency accommodation will be in the form of camp beds, mattresses or chairs within communal spaces/spare rooms within existing hostels. Lambeth hostels that will be expected to operate SWEP beds are Cedars Rd (5 spaces), Graham House (2 spaces), Robertson St (2 spaces), South London Women’s hostel (2 spaces) and Stamford St (2 spaces). Hostels will be expected to manage space creatively to find the best possible solution. The Outreach team will be able to advise how many clients require access to these spaces and will negotiate access with the hostel managers. They will refer any difficulties or issues to the Street Population Commissioning Manager or ACS duty officer.

3.2 Some entrenched rough sleepers may be wary of these services and less likely to agree to be accommodated within them. In these cases it may be appropriate to offer time limited B&B provision. The Lambeth outreach team will be provided with a budget to facilitate this access.

3.3 The extreme cold weather increases the risk of death or serious illness to people who sleep rough. Given this, a refusal to accept accommodation during this time should lead to clear information being provided about the risks of cold weather on their health, especially if they are using substances. If someone continues to refuse help in these circumstances, and there is a serious risk to their own health, there will be grounds to trigger referrals to other services, such as for mental health assessments or mental capacity
assessments. The first point of contact within Lambeth should be the START mental health team or the local Police team.

4.0 Activation of the protocol

4.1 Lambeth’s outreach team will be responsible for checking the Met Office forecast on a daily basis and will inform, by 11am, the managers of Lambeth hostels, day centres and the street population commissioner, or in their absence the ACS duty staff member, that the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol needs to be activated.

3.2 Lambeth hostel providers will, on receiving this call, make arrangements to receive referrals under this protocol and confirm to the outreach team and Street Population Commissioning Manager (or ACS duty member of staff), how many rough sleepers they can accommodate by 1pm of the same day.

3.3 If the severe weather is predicted to occur at the weekend then Lambeth’s outreach team will inform hostels and others that SWEP will be activated on the Friday before the severe weather starts.

3.4 As soon as the protocol is activated the Street Population Commissioning Manager (or ACS duty member of staff), will organise for the Council’s website to be immediately updated to include details of who to contact if the public comes across someone who is sleeping rough during the severe weather. They will also contact the Council’s out of hours emergency duty team to advise them that the SWEP has been triggered.

3.5 The Street Population Commissioning Manager (or ACS duty member of staff), will inform other relevant council departments such as Community Safety and Housing that the protocol has been activated on the morning of activation and what this may mean.

4.0 Referrals

4.1 Right of referral to severe weather spaces in hostels will be limited to the Outreach Team and the Police. Any other parties seeking to gain access need to liaise with one or other of these bodies.

4.2 In the event that the Police bring someone into the service who does not have a local connection, the outreach team will reconnect them back to their former area of origin within existing protocols the following day.

4.3 SWEP referrals should arrive at the hostel by 9.30pm if at all possible (though later admittance for those found later in the night should be assured) and leave by 9.30am the following day. Advice and information on local day centres should be provided and follow on case work occur to find a more lasting end to the individual’s rough sleeping episode should take place wherever possible. This will be the responsibility of the outreach team rather than the hostel accommodating the individual.

4.4 On arrival at the hostels, rough sleepers will provide their name and DOB. This will be cross referenced with the list provided by the referring agency. Anyone arriving to the premises whose name does not appear on the list will be refused access.

4.5 When activated, the SWEP provision will be open for a minimum of a three-day period even if temperatures rise before this point. This allows the outreach workers time to work with the individual to find a more lasting solution.

4.6 Some rough sleepers have partners and will want to be accommodated as a couple. In emergencies, single or double rooms could be used for couples or B&B can be considered. Being part of a couple will not be a reason for not being accepted for SWEP accommodation.

4.7 Some rough sleepers may have dogs and, unless there is a valid reason, hostels are expected to accept dogs for a short period. Having a dog will not be a reason for not being accepted for SWEP accommodation.

4.8 Any anti-social behaviour should be dealt with according to the hostels’ normal polices and procedures but eviction should be a last resort and must be authorised by the Street Population Commissioning Manager, or, in their absence, another ACS manager.
4.9 Where possible, hostel vacancies will be prioritised for local rough sleepers accessing severe weather provision, recognising this may be a unique opportunity to motivate a rough sleeper who may have been previously reluctant to access accommodation and engage with services.

5.0 Monitoring and Review

5.1 Details of those accessing the severe weather accommodation (in hostels or in B&Bs) should be recorded by the outreach team and passed on to the Street Population Commissioning Manager at the end of the severe weather period for analysis (including personal details, support needs, risk issues, housing history, reasons for not being in accommodation, etc.). This should be accompanied with a narrative report highlighting any concerns with the activation of the protocol, what worked well and any lessons to learn to improve the response in the future. This will be shared with the Mayor’s Office as well as used locally.

5.2 This protocol will be reviewed by the Street Population Commissioning Manager on an annual basis each March. This will be carried out in consultation with our key stakeholders.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth Street Outreach Team (SORT) Tel 0870 383 3300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lambeth ACS Street Population Commissioner (C Ritchie) Tel 0207 926 7539</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lambeth ACS Duty Officer Tel 0207 926 7520</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lambeth out of hours service emergency service Tel: 020 7926 1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council website <a href="http://www.lambeth.gov.uk">www.lambeth.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>START CMHT Tel:020 3228 5900</td>
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Spires day centre, Streatham Tel: 020 8696 0943
8 Tooting Bec Gardens
London SW16 1RB

Webber St day centre, Waterloo Tel: 020 7928 1677
6-8 Webber Street
London SE1 8QA

Ace of Clubs day centre, Clapham Tel:020 7720 2811
St Alphonsus Road
London SW4 7AS

Lambeth Severe Weather Protocol checklist (START Mental Health Training Unit)

Below are some questions to ask when dealing with rough sleepers who are refusing to come inside during the cold weather. The list is not exhaustive but gives some pointers as to whether further action is needed or not.

1. Age

2. Physical condition- chest infections, head injuries, diabetes, heart problems?

3. Uses alcohol or drugs? * Drug or alcohol use can cause blood vessels to dilate which causes faster loss of body heat.
4. Does the person have bedding? If not the day centres can sometimes provide sleeping bags. You can also use the Vicars relief or Samaritan funds.

5. Does the person have appropriate clothing? Hat scarves and gloves reduce loss heat significantly. Second hand clothes are available at some of the day centres. You can also use the Samaritan or Vicars Relief funds.

6. Is the sleep site sheltered and dry?

7. Is the person accessing hot food and drinks? If not provide info re the day centres. Petty cash can also be used to provide hot food/ drinks

8. Is the person using a daycentre? Find out why not and signpost as necessary

9. Is the person known to services? (not just mental health - may be known to Social Services)Also check on CHAIN and EPJ. Duty worker to try different ways of inputting name into EPJS- e.g. swap names around; search under first letters* of each name; date of birth- do any of the names appear similar? Email all START - Team member may have heard something about this person/remember the name/seen them when out and about.

10. How long has the person been sleeping rough?

11. What reasons does the person have for refusing to come in- can they give a rational explanation? Do they understand the risks? Do they have the mental capacity to make the decision? Can the mental capacity act be used?

12. Does the person appear to be mentally unwell? Can the Mental Health Act be used? Sec 2, 4 or 136

13 Is the person showing any signs of hypothermia?

**Early stage**
Pale and cold skin
Temperature 35 or below
Uncontrollable shivering
Low energy level

**As progresses**
Confused
Loss of judgement
Difficulty moving
Weakness
Stumbling
Memory loss

**Last stage**
Shivering stops
Drowsy
Loss of co-ordination
Slurred speech
Listless and indifferent
Shallow breathing
Weak pulse
Dilated pupils
Unconscious