



Winter Provision (formerly SWEP)

Helping Rough Sleepers During Bad Weather

Cambridge City Council

Winter 2021-22

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 Provision (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. We are thankful to [Jimmy's Cambridge](#) for their work in delivering this. In recent years, the service has been augmented by the [Cambridge Churches Homelessness Project \(CCHP\)](#), who have provided additional communal sleep sites.

Although this accommodation has provided vital shelter to rough sleepers, the coronavirus pandemic has forced us to do things differently.

This winter's accommodation is more akin to the '[Everyone In](#)' emergency housing that the council and its partners provided from March 2020 to June 2021, albeit on a smaller scale. As well as aiming to provide accommodation that minimises the risk of COVID transmission, Everyone In demonstrated the good work that could be achieved by providing a stable, sustained place to stay, alongside intensive resettlement support.

This year, 20 beds will be on offer for people who need them, through the charity [It Takes a City](#). 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.

1. 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](#); and
- [Locally connected to Cambridge City](#).

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

In previous years, Winter Provision beds were only available during periods of severe weather. This year:

- From 1 November 2021 to 28 February 2022, Winter Provision will be open permanently¹. During this time, Crossways will be open to accept 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.
- From 1 March to 31 March 2022, 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 2022; 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 City². This is consistent with the current approach to prioritising beds at Jimmy's (the city's assessment centre and first-stage accommodation provider). 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 and so on. Such individuals, and the agencies, local authorities and support groups assisting them, will be expected to cooperate fully with this.

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. The same applies for those moving on from a Winter Provision bed at Crossways.

¹ NB – The continued availability of Winter Provision beds will depend on the provider's ability to move individuals on quickly from accommodation. See section 5 for further details.

² 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).

2. 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 (unless an exception request has been granted).
- 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, the council's Temporary Accommodation Team will refer the individual to ITaC's support services manager via Inform. 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).
- 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.
- Once booked in, an individual will have a period of 14 days to establish a move-on plan. This may include a formal 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, 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, ITaC may seek the permission of the Council to refer to B&B. This will be arranged on a 'one night only' basis, options to be reviewed the following morning.

3. How will provision be paid for?

This winter, Winter Provision is paid for by:

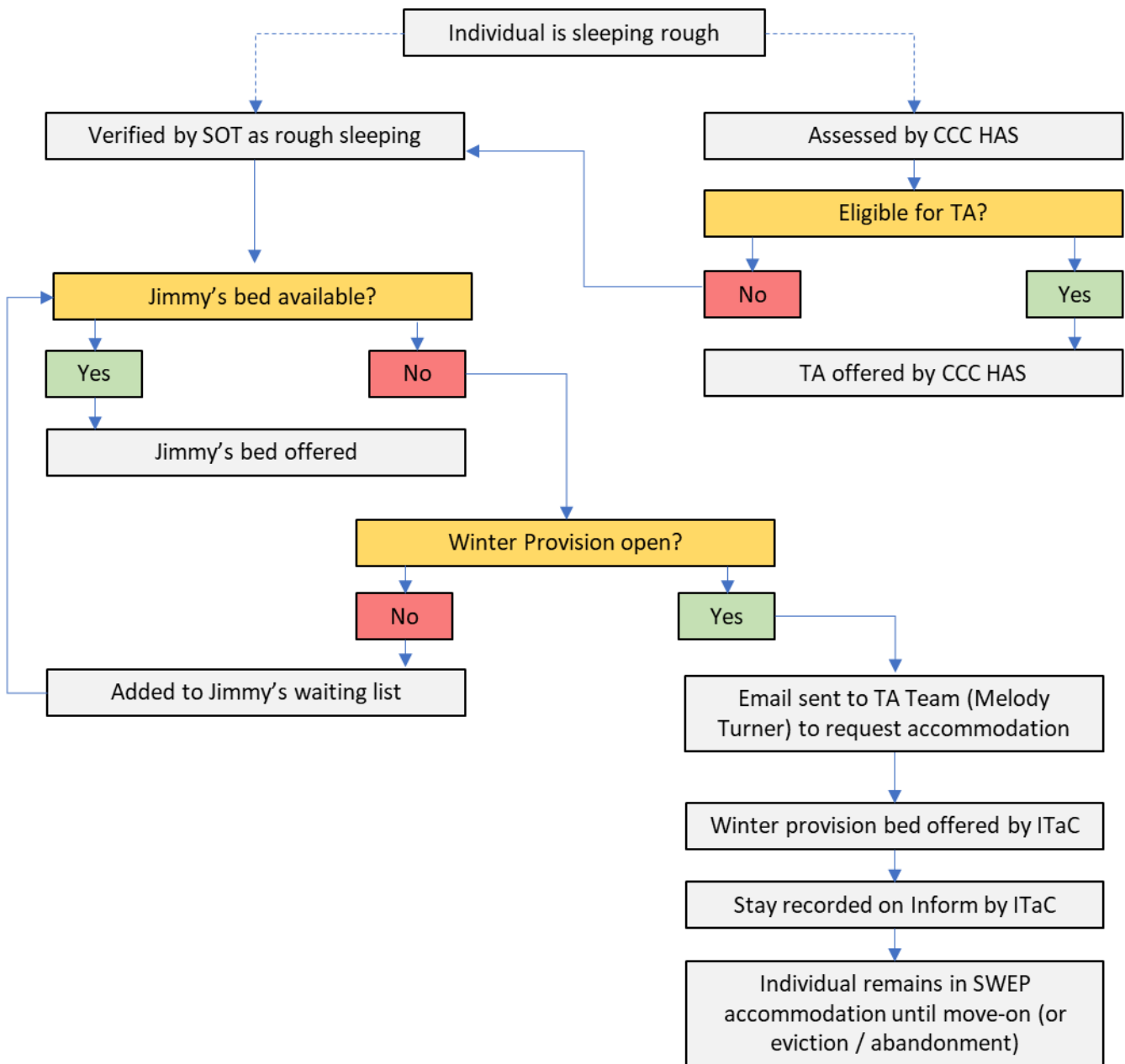
- A grant from the charity Homeless Link
- A grant from Cambridge City Council
- Charitable donations to ITaC.

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.

4. 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 staff. 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.

Appendix One: Winter Provision Process



Notes:

TA = Temporary Accommodation
 HAS = Housing Advice Service
 CCC = Cambridge City Council

SOT = Cambridge Street Outreach Team
 ITaC = It Takes a City

Flowchart for locally-connected rough sleepers only. Please refer to full guidance for details.

Appendix Two – Process for Triggering Winter Provision (1 to 31 March)

1. What is severe weather?

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 28 February, 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 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.

The decision to open will be made 36 hours before provision starts. This means, for example, that a decision to open on a Thursday evening will be made no later than 9am on the preceding Wednesday. This will ensure that agencies have a good chance to get the word out to all rough sleepers and also ensure that accommodation providers have ample time to prepare to take people in.

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

Any period of provision which includes a Friday night will normally be allowed to roll over to include the Saturday and Sunday nights. Additionally, when severe weather is forecast for any Saturday or Sunday, where possible SWEP starts on the Friday evening. These measures will make planning easier.

To ensure that providers and agencies know exactly what is happening, the Council will also let them know of borderline decisions to NOT call provision.

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.