

30 October 2008

To all local authorities

SEVERE WEATHER PROVISION FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS

In advance of any severe weather across the country this winter, I am writing to remind you that you should have plans in place to ensure that there is cold weather provision for any rough sleepers in your area to ensure that they can be brought in from the street. Your plans should deal with any rough sleepers on the streets in extreme cold weather including those without recourse to public funds such as A10 nationals from EU Accession States.

Many local authorities already have considerable experience of dealing with rough sleepers and their plans will be well advanced in the case of cold weather. However, there are many boroughs where rough sleeping historically has not been an issue. Therefore, it is important for these authorities that plans are in place.

Authorities should work closely with the voluntary sector who may have local intelligence on any problems. Other common tactics include:

- brokering emergency places with hostels in their area
- encouraging a flexible approach by hostels to maximise referrals and minimise evictions
- negotiating with day centres to stay open at night if required
- identifying other suitable accommodation that might be used as a night shelter
- publicising contact phone numbers which the public can use to report rough sleepers
- partnership arrangements with neighbouring boroughs (e.g. Nightstop arrangements)

The object should be to identify sufficient additional spaces to ensure those most vulnerable, who are sleeping on the streets, are able to get some provision.

Usually practice dictates that the trigger for severe weather provision will be a weather forecast predicting three consecutive nights, or more, of a minimum temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower.

If you would like any advice on the issue, could you contact jose.espineira@communities.gsi.gov.uk (tel: 0207 944 3601)

Yours sincerely,

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Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Policy

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