

Pan-London SWEP activation procedure 2021-22

This document details the process which will be followed for activation of SWEP in London during winter 2021-22. It should be read alongside the GLA's 'London SWEP Guidance 2021-22' document.

Note that 'activation' refers to opening of SWEP shelter to new referrals, not whether shelter remains available to those already booked in (see the "In for Good" principle). 'Deactivation' relates to closing of SWEP to new referrals only, and is not a directive for those already booked in to be asked to leave.

Forecasting and advanced warnings

GLA officers in the rough sleeping team already monitor weather forecasts throughout the winter as a matter of course. In addition to manual monitoring, from November to March the Met Office provides daily bespoke 3-day forecasts to the team.

The procedure (below) includes a daily deadline of midday for activation of SWEP for good reason; services take time to mobilise, and safe effective mobilisation is not always possible at short notice. However, the principles of SWEP activation are reliant on accurate forecasting of temperatures.¹ It is recognised that the situation could arise where measured temperatures are significantly different to those forecast, or where the forecast temperature changes significantly at short notice – mitigation for these circumstances has been included in the below.

In the event that measured temperatures are significantly higher or lower than those that were forecast there is, unfortunately, little that can be done as this will only become apparent retrospectively. If it is found that this occurs frequently or the impacts of this phenomenon are severe, this will be taken into account when reviewing the current SWEP process and alternative triggers may be considered. A decision was taken by the Life off the Street Core Group to retain existing triggers for 2021/22.

SWEP activation procedure

Preparation

1. GLA will provide all local authorities with this procedure document and separate SWEP guidance.
2. GLA will request SWEP details of all local authorities, including planned provision, and key contact details.

Monitoring

3. GLA officers will monitor daily temperatures using a bespoke 3-day Met Office forecast².

¹ Met Office overnight minimum temperature forecasts are accurate to within $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ 86.5% of the time.

² The temperatures forecast in these bespoke reports commonly differ slightly from the temperatures forecast for the same boroughs on the Met Office's website or app. The bespoke reports provide a more accurate forecast for each specific area and are therefore used to inform activation and deactivation.

4. If the forecast is for temperatures of 0°C or below within the next three days in any part of London, the GLA will send an advanced warning email to London boroughs.
5. If the daily Met Office report (received at 07:30 every morning) forecasts a minimum temperature of 0°C or lower anywhere in London within the next 24 hours, GLA officers will activate SWEP for all of London (go to step 9 for activation).
6. If the daily Met Office report (received at 07:30 every morning) forecasts a minimum temperature of 2°C or lower but above 0°C, this will prompt a specific additional round of manual checks by the team at 11:59 and again at 16:30 on that day³.
7. If the forecast temperature has fallen to or below 0°C by 11:59, GLA officers will consider whether the forecast of 0°C is localised or widespread.

If localised, GLA will

- contact those specific boroughs affected to notify them that they should activate SWEP locally
- confirm that overflow SWEP will be available to them if local SWEP capacity is full

If widespread, GLA will

- activate SWEP for all of London (go to step 9 for activation)

8. If the forecast temperature is still above 0°C at 11:59 but has then fallen to or below 0°C at the 16:30 check (and so after the midday deadline for normal activation), officers will consider whether the forecast of 0°C or below is localised (one or two boroughs) or widespread.

If localised, GLA will

- Contact those specific boroughs affected to alert them of the changed forecast
 - i. Explain the reasons that pan-London activation was not triggered
 - ii. Request that they take reasonable steps to activate SWEP locally,⁴ acknowledging that this may result in less robust provision than would be possible with adequate notice
 - iii. Confirm that overflow SWEP will be available
- Mobilise overflow SWEP as far as is possible at short notice

If widespread, GLA will

- Contact all boroughs to alert them of the changed forecast
 - i. Explain the reasons that pan-London activation was not triggered
 - ii. Request that they take reasonable steps to activate SWEP locally, acknowledging that this may result in less robust provision than would be possible with adequate notice
 - iii. Confirm that overflow SWEP will be available
- Mobilise overflow SWEP as far as is possible at short notice

³ In the event that these conditions are met on a Friday the following procedure will apply throughout the weekend.

⁴ This could include, for example, targeted outreach for those known to be most vulnerable.

Activation

9. If the forecast temperature has fallen to or below 0°C before 11:59 the GLA will trigger a pan-London activation of SWEP.⁵
10. GLA officers will email the SWEP contacts network with an alert that SWEP has been activated. Steps 6 and 7 notwithstanding, this will be done by midday at the latest.⁶
11. The lead contact from each borough, or a nominated deputy, will confirm receipt of the alert and activation of local SWEP plans by return email to the GLA.
12. Lead contacts in each borough will be responsible for cascading activation notification to local services and partners.
13. If the temperature has fallen to 0°C on a Friday, or it is forecast on a Friday that temperatures will drop to that level during a weekend or bank holiday, SWEP will normally be activated until the morning of the next working day, regardless of any changes in temperature.
14. Only in very exceptional circumstances, such as unusually large variations in temperature over the weekend, will the GLA activate or deactivate SWEP during a weekend or bank holiday. GLA officers will make every effort to consult with boroughs before this is actioned.

On-going activation

15. This process will repeat, with daily alert messages confirming that SWEP remains active as long as minimum forecast temperatures remain at or below 0°C in any part of London. Daily confirmations from borough leads are not required.

Deactivation

16. If the forecast is for minimum temperatures above 0°C in all parts of London, the GLA will take the decision to deactivate SWEP across all of London
17. GLA officers will email the SWEP contacts network with an alert that SWEP has been deactivated, and a reminder of the “In for Good” principle. This will be done by midday.

If a council opens local SWEP earlier, or for longer, than pan-London activation this is of course welcome, local leads are simply requested to notify GLA.

⁵ In instances where temperatures are close to 0°C and other factors are in play, such as heavy snowfall or ‘feels-like temperatures’, GLA may also activate SWEP. In any marginal or unconventional situations GLA may consult with those borough leads who can be contacted before making a decision on activation or deactivation. In the unlikely event that temperatures reach 0°C and no lower in one isolated location and are not expected to be near 0°C in any other part of the capital in the near future GLA may take the decision not to activate SWEP at a pan-London level.

⁶ If no alert is received by midday it should be assumed that SWEP is not being activated, however in conditions that are considered marginal a message to confirm that SWEP is not being activated may be sent.

This procedure has been developed alongside services and local authorities and should be incorporated into local SWEP plans. Where an element of this procedure conflicts with local SWEP planning the authority is encouraged to contact the GLA at the earliest opportunity (roughsleepingcommissioning@london.gov.uk).