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1. Introduction

In accordance with GLA guidelines, the City of London operates a SWEP programme during winter months. The approach references good practice advised by the GLA and occurred simultaneously with City of London operating an 'Everyone In' policy due to national lockdown and COVID-19 guidelines.

The aim of this document is to review the processes of SWEP in 2021/2022 and highlight the varied factors which impacted the approach and provision offered in the City of London. Such reflection being imperative to plan the next occurrence of SWEP and arrange appropriate and effective provision for individuals facing homeless in City during extreme weather conditions.

For 2021/22, all data is derived from CHAIN rather than local systems or a combination of local systems and CHAIN.

2. Provision

Throughout the entire winter period 2021 - 2022 the City Outreach team were able to utilise funds made available to them from the City of London to make off the street offers to clients of hotel bookings over and above the SWEP remit. There were 29 such placements made which did not happen during SWEP periods. These bookings were made and managed by the City outreach team. While offering an 'off the street offer' to those in need, significantly reducing those rough sleeping in the City of London during the winter, this provision also affected the numbers 'Accepting' SWEP offers in this report as those who would have accepted SWEP under normal circumstances may have already accepted offers of accommodation and therefore are not included in this report.

City SWEP 2021/22 consisted of the following measures:

- 1 spaces at Great Guildford St (Southwark)
- 1 space at Crimscott St (Southwark)
- 1 spaces at The City Lodge
- 4 spaces at CAS 'City Assessment service' (Carter lane YHA) / CIE 'City Inn express'
- Ad-hoc Travelodge placements made by outreach on the night of the SWEP period.
- Extra and flexible outreach shifts ensuring at least one shift every 24hrs during SWEP period
- TA and assessment bed placements post SWEP
- Pan London SWEP beds

SWEP was activated every night the temperature was expected to be zero degrees in any London borough. All activations were initiated by the GLA and followed by local arrangements. On more than one occasion City and GLA SWEP was sustained or extended for operational reasons, rather than according to the weather forecast. For example, this is due to when SWEP ends on a 'non-working' day. All clients placed in SWEP were done so under the in for good principal, which ensures clients are given a further offer of accommodation before the provision ends.

3. Activity

SWEP was activated eight times during 2021/2022 the same number of SWEP periods as 2020/2021 but significantly covering only 15 nights compared to 42 nights in 2020/2021. The SWEP periods were mainly centred on cold weather periods during January.

SWEP activation - deactivation	Nights
26/11/2021 - 29/11/2021	3
21/12/2021 - 22/12/2021	1
05/01/2022 - 06/01/2022	1
13/01/2022 - 14/01/2022	1
17/01/2022 - 18/01/2022	1
20/01/2022 - 21/01/2022	1
17/02/2022 - 21/02/2022	4
01/04/2022 - 05/04/2022	3
Total Nights	15

SWEP was offered 101 times to 60 individuals. The offer was accepted 21 times and declined on 80 occasions. 45 people declined to access SWEP at some point during the season. Reasons given for declining SWEP included needing to be with/wait for someone, needing to beg, not wanting to travel, and not feeling cold/vulnerable (it should be noted that inner London temperatures were significantly warmer than outer London at times) and concerns that coming into accommodation and potentially returning to the streets their resilience to

the cold would then lessen. The outreach team also noted possible mental health needs and persistent non-engagement as reasons for people not accepting SWEP offers.

Due to the cold weather and the primary offer of SWEP being a stay in a local hotel (Travelodge), there was a large uptake from clients with lower support needs and individuals who were new to the street. However, there were individuals who despite frequent attempts and offers, continued to refuse offers of SWEP accommodation. Individuals who consistently refused SWEP accommodation mainly were those identified being on the 'Living on the Streets' cohort. To combat this, the City Outreach team persistently attended and offered the provision and attended with Doctors of the World and RAMHP to help advocate and try to decipher if there were any barriers to individuals accessing provisions. This saw success, with 9 LOS clients accessing accommodation during the winter months (50% of the clients to be housed under SWEP 2021 -22).

Length of SWEP stay

Length of stay *	
1 night	11
2 nights	0
3 nights	1
4 nights	0
5 nights	1
+6 nights	3

*Only nights SWEP was active.

At the end of these stays, often SWEP placements were continued but with a new timeline event on CHAIN. This is demonstrated in high volumes of these records in the table below:

Post-SWEP Destination	Frequency
Assessment Centre	5
Bed & Breakfast	2
NSNO staging post	2
Temporary Accommodation	2
Supported Housing	1
Crisis at Christmas	3
Sleeping rough/Returned to streets	5
Night Shelter	1
Grand Total	21

The above table is data directly pulled from CHAIN which is inputted by Outreach staff. 5 clients (23%) went from SWEP accommodation stays to Assessment centre bedspaces, these were at CAS City assessment service at the start of the winter period and City Inn Express

towards the end of the winter period. Both these accommodations were provided by Providence Row housing association.

Unfortunately, out of the 18 records of SWEP accommodation timelines, 5 clients (23%) returned to rough sleeping. Further analysis into these records shows that this was due to 2 clients evicted for smoking in their rooms, and 3 clients abandoning before they could be placed elsewhere in the CoL pathway.

4. Demographics

Gender of Clients accessing SWEP	Frequency
Female	0
Male	21
Total	21

The above table shows that 100% of SWEP records were for male clients. Studies show that in an analysis of rough sleeping in England in 2020, “14% of total number of rough sleepers individuals were female” (HomelessLink, 2020). For London specifically, it was estimated that female rough sleepers were 109 out of a total of 703 of the rough sleeping population (15.5%). Therefore, the statistics of female rough sleepers in City of London accessing SWEP was well below that of the general population. It should be noted however that research has highlighted that women are more likely to be ‘hidden homeless’ rather than street homeless, for example sofa-surfing (Crisis, 2008).

Ethnicity of Clients accessing SWEP	Frequency
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	1
Black or Black British - Other	1
White - British	14
White - Irish	1
White - Other	2
Total	21

Regarding ethnicity of clients accessing SWEP, the above table shows that 2 out of the 21 records are that of “White-Other” (9.5%). All clients of this cohort were of European origin. This has slight contrast to that of the wider London rough sleeping population analysed by Homeless Link (2020) where it was estimated 270 out of 714 individuals (37.815%) rough sleeping in London in 2020 were of EU nationality. Due to national policy changes regarding immigration and withdrawal from the European union, individuals in this client group face unique challenges. Specifically, that to remain in the UK it is possible in some cases that they must have full time employment to pay for accommodation as they may not have access to state benefits.

The below table investigates this further, detailing how many individuals in the SWEP cohort had recourse to public funds or not:

Recourse to Public funds status	Frequency
No	4
Not known	1
Yes	16
Total	21

In the SWEP cohort, 3 out of 21 records were of clients who did not have recourse to public funds (14.2%). Over an eighth of total clients were therefore limited in their move-on options, as they were not able to apply for housing benefit to cover housing costs. This was extended to difficulty in general living costs and personal budgeting as they were not able to apply for Universal Credit either due to lack of eligibility.

To support all clients regardless of immigration status, the City of London corporation provided hot meals and food vouchers for individuals housed in emergency accommodation, and the delivery of this provision was facilitated by the City Outreach Team and the Mobile Intervention Support Team (MIST). Support to access employment was also provided with referrals to employment services, CV writing support and help in applying for jobs. Clients were also supported in accessing pan-London day centre provisions where clients could receive extra help with their general needs.

5. Support Needs

Clients who declined SWEP

The table below shows a more detailed breakdown of the recorded support needs of individuals who declined SWEP.

Support needs of Individuals who Declined SWEP	Count
All three no	4
Drugs and mental health	7
Alcohol only	3
Alcohol, drugs and mental health	6
Alcohol and drugs	1
Alcohol and mental health	3
Mental health only	10
Drugs only	2
Nothing recorded	9

The most common support need of individuals who declined offers of SWEP was 'Mental Health only'. This demonstrates that mental health needs may contribute to ambivalence towards SWEP. The City Outreach team already hold a close working relationship with the RAMHP team and conduct joint outreach shifts every week. This is an important team in

engaging with hard-to-reach clients who experience mental health issues as a support need. As the most frequent support need type of clients who declined SWEP as an emergency accommodation provision this highlights a specific area of focus for the next season of SWEP 2022/2023. This is a continuation of the findings from 20/21.

Clients who accepted SWEP

The table below shows a more detailed breakdown of the recorded support needs of individuals who accepted SWEP.

Support needs of Individuals who accepted SWEP	Count
All three no	1
Drugs and mental health	5
Alcohol only	0
Alcohol, drugs and mental health	6
Alcohol and drugs	2
Alcohol and mental health	2
Mental health only	2
Drugs only	2
Nothing recorded	1

Rated Level	Alcohol Support Needs	Drugs Support Needs	Mental Health Support Needs
No Need	10	2	3
Low	3	2	3
Medium	5	8	7
High	0	2	2

The above table demonstrates that across the different areas of support needs, many clients had no need or low need. This suggests that clients with more complex or higher needs were less likely to accept offers of SWEP accommodation. Continuing the findings of last year's SWEP report and highlighting an area of focus for the 2022/2023 season of targeting hard-to-reach clients and individuals with higher support needs. Details of this may be achieved is noted in section 9 of the present report: "Recommendations for 2022/2023".

6. Support Provided

To support the clients accessing accommodation through the SWEP period, the City Outreach Team worked in conjunction with the Mobile Intervention Support Team (MIST). The Outreach team held the role of locating clients who were rough sleeping in City and offering SWEP placements, and following acceptance of accommodation, supporting joint casework with MIST and recognising appropriate move-on options for clients.

Support included the following areas of focus:

- Access to health services including primary care and registration with GP, Turning Point and RAMHP Mental Health services
- Application and management of benefit claims
- Application to immigration services and support of EUSS claims
- Application to supported housing projects and Private Rented Sector pathways
- Reconnection and resettlement
- General wellbeing and independent living skills

7. Findings

This report has reflected on the processes and protocols of which the SWEP 2021/2022 period held, and the clients who accessed this provision in the City of London.

Key findings of this report include the following:

- 1) Clients who have more complex or higher needs were less likely to accept offers of SWEP accommodation
- 2) The most common support needs of individuals who declined offers of SWEP was 'Mental Health only'.
- 3) The high number of rough sleepers already accommodated prior to SWEP periods as a result of the pandemic response may have contributed to fewer SWEP placements in 2021 /22

8. Stakeholder feedback

Megan Nash (Manger of CIE, Providence Row) Worked at CAS 'City Assessment service' (Carter lane YHA) and CIE during Winter 2021/22

"I would say that it went quite well! We were alerted when the weather was at the temperature for SWEP to be activated. We did not always have beds available but when we did it was communicated to the outreach team.

The outreach team were good at notifying the team when planning to bring people in and were very quick to complete risk assessments".

9. Recommendations for 2022/2023

Recommendations for the SWEP season of 2022/2023 consider the learnings of the present report.

For individuals who are new to rough sleeping in the City of London, the Outreach team are recommended to prepare them in their understanding of SWEP and that emergency accommodation may be offered at any moment during cold weather. Preparation work will also take place in general assessments for new rough sleepers with aim to reduce obstacles of potentially having to collect information on the day of SWEP being called and deciding what accommodation offer is most appropriate to need.

This report highlighted that the main cohort of individuals who decline SWEP are those who have 'mental health only' as their support need. The most appropriate SWEP provision for this group is supported hostel bed spaces, with a priority being CIE as they can move into assessment beds when available. SWEP should be used as a time for rapid assessment to facilitate progression through the City housing pathway. In the lead up to the SWEP period, it is recommended that the Outreach team continue complete groundwork in preparing clients readiness to accept SWEP. This would include recognising who currently in the cohort are in this category of support need, ensuring their risk assessments and Common Assessment Tool documents are completed, and linking the clients in with the RAMHP team for assessment of their mental health needs.

Ideally for all clients accessing SWEP, In-Reach support would be provided by MIST to be able to provide increased service for hard-to-reach clients to sustain their accommodation. This provision would also support clients with no recourse to public funds to engage with employment and therefore enabling access to accommodation options during their assessment period. Assessment by MIST will consider current and potential ability to work and immigration status as well as other support needs to enable management of expectations of accommodation options and inform decisions around what is offered to clients in their Credible Offer.

References

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