

Severe Weather Responses 2017-18

Survey of winter provision for people sleeping rough

Let's end homelessness together

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The Innovation and Good Practice Team

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Introduction

Purpose of this report

Following the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) and extended winter provision of 2017-18, Homeless Link conducted a survey of those local authorities and voluntary sector providers who planned and delivered this provision. This survey asked for information on the following:

- Type of provision that was made available
- Clients accessing the service and the support they received

In this report we outline the key findings from this survey. Challenges and good practice learned each year can be found in the related guidance: www.homeless.org.uk/swep

Definitions

- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP): provision triggered by forecast of freezing, near-freezing or otherwise severe weather conditions.
- Extended winter provision: additional services provided over an agreed period of time e.g. every night from November to February.

Limitations of the data

This year, we received responses representing 194 SWEP and extended winter provision services. Where two respondents returned results about the same SWEP, responses were merged. While this is a large number of services across England, it should be noted that we did not receive information from every service, and the results are based on a self-selecting sample of projects that responded.

To be included in next year's survey, please email: tasmin.maitland@homelesslink.org.uk

Type of provision

We asked specific questions about the type of services that were provided during the winter of 2017-18. This section provides an overview of the findings.

Regional breakdown

The regional breakdown in Figure 1 shows the number of services that responded to our survey. It is not representative of the actual number of services provided across the country.

Figure 1: regional breakdown of responses

Region	Number of responses 2016-17	% of responses	Number of responses 2017-18	% of responses
East Midlands	3	3	13	7%
East of England	15	13	26	14%
London	20	17	30	16%
North East	3	3	7	4%
North West	11	9	23	12%
South East	32	27	43	23%
South West	6	5	18	10%
West Midlands	15	13	17	9%
Yorkshire & Humber	13	11	9	5%
Total	118	100%	186	100%

Base: 186

Type of provision (SWEP or extended winter provision)

Figure 2 shows that most (92%) of the services represented were identified as SWEP – this is a slight increase compared to the previous year when 87% of services were identified as being part of SWEP. The proportion of services identifying as ‘extended provision’ was slightly higher than last year at 29%.

Figure 2: type of provision offered

Type of provision	No. of services 2016-17	% services	No. of services 2017-18	% services
SWEP	103	87%	178	92%
Extended winter provision	25	21%	57	29%
Other	7	6%	16	8%
Total	118	-	194	-

Base: 194. Respondents could select more than one option

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Figure 3 shows when respondents' services were available. All services represented gave an answer to this question. Just under one third (31%) of services opened when there was a forecast of three consecutive nights below freezing and a further 29% of services stated that they open throughout the winter months. Over a quarter (28%) opened when there was a forecast of severe weather conditions, regardless of the temperature or it being an extended period of bad weather. Another quarter (24%) opened when there was a forecast for at least one night below freezing. Around the same number (23%) returned 'other' responses.

Figure 3: when provision was open

Opening criteria	No. of services 2016-17	% services	No. of services 2017-18	% services
Only when there was a forecast of 3 consecutive nights below freezing	44	37%	60	31%
Open throughout winter months (e.g. Nov-March)	21	18%	56	29%
When there was a forecast of any severe weather e.g. yellow weather warnings, close to/feels like freezing*	29	25%	54	28%
When there was a forecast for at least one night below freezing	-	-	46	24%
Other (please specify)	24	20%	44	23%
Total	118	100%	194	100%

Base: 194

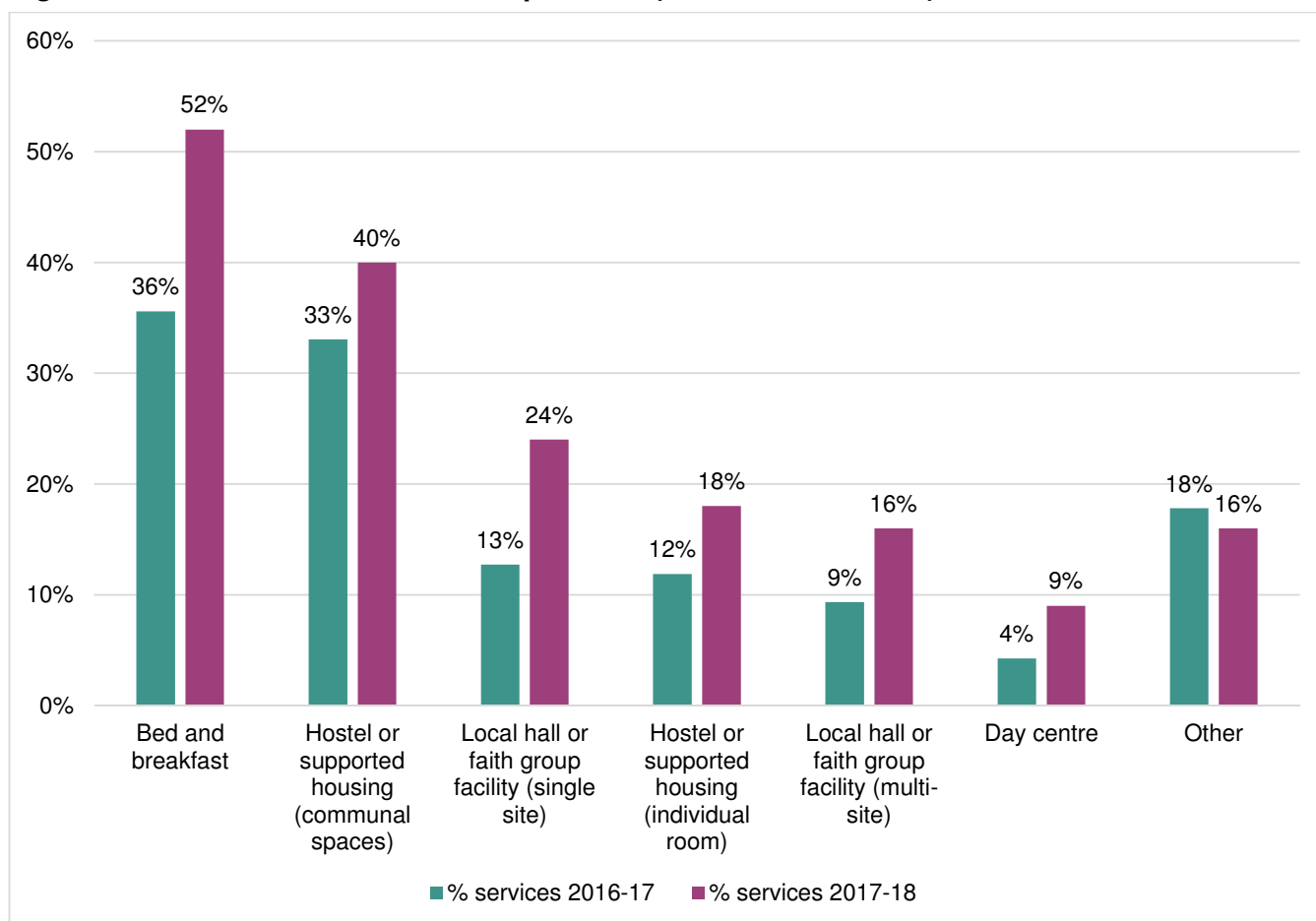
* 2016-17 question wording: When there was a forecast of very cold, stormy or otherwise adverse weather

Where accommodation was provided

Figure 4 shows the type of accommodation used for SWEP and extended winter provision in 2017-18 by survey respondents. Several services offered more than one type of accommodation. The figures do not relate to the number of bed spaces.

In line with the two previous years, the most commonly identified forms of accommodation were Bed & Breakfast and communal spaces within hostel and supported housing projects. However, this year Bed & Breakfast was the most commonly identified type of accommodation, whereas previously this had been communal space in existing projects.

Figure 4: where accommodation was provided (number of services)



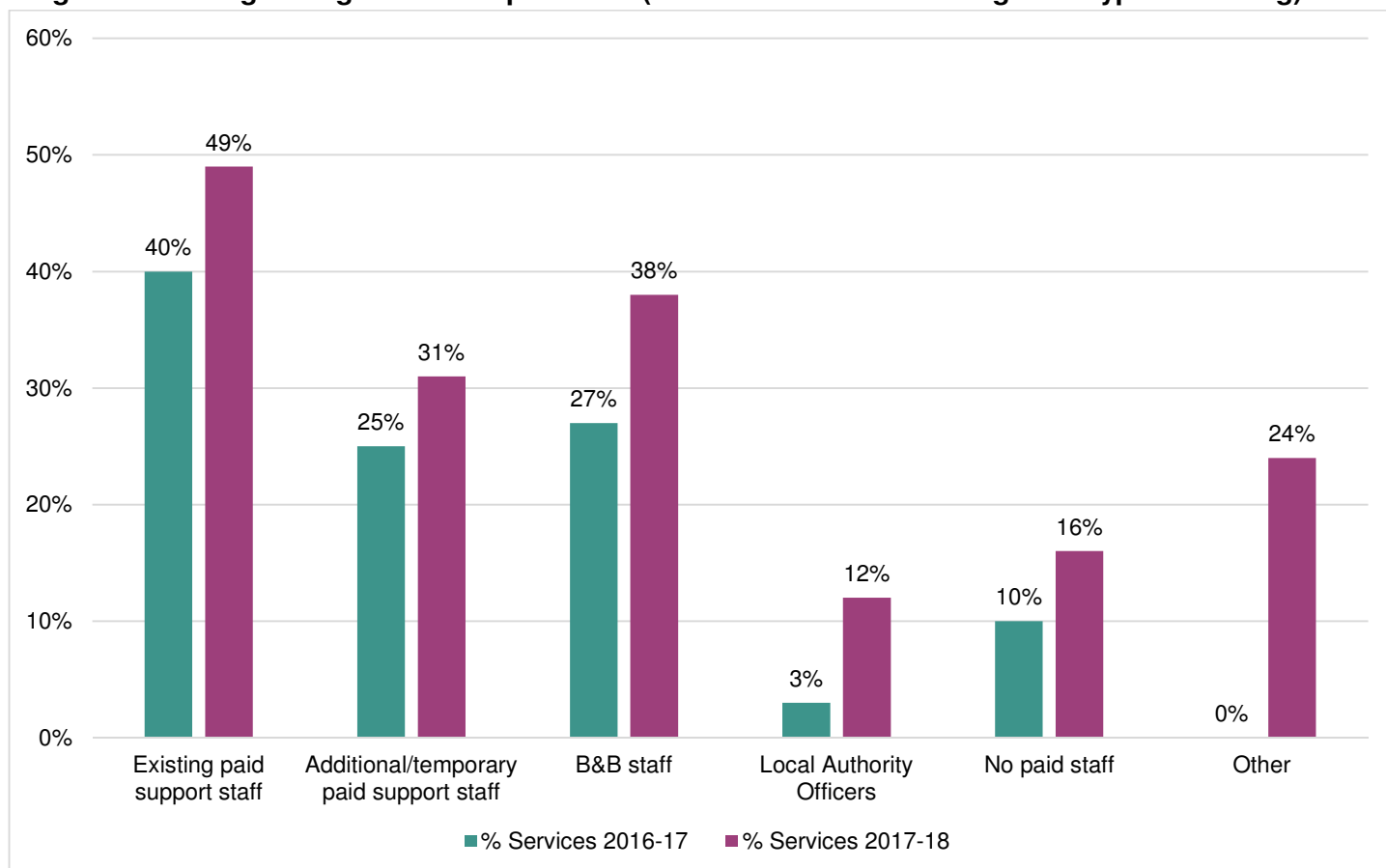
Base: 152

Location	No. of services identifying this type of location 2016-17	% services	No. of services identifying this type of location 2017-18	% services
Bed and breakfast	42	36%	79	52%
Hostel or supported housing (communal spaces)	39	33%	61	40%
Local hall or faith group facility (single site)	15	13%	36	24%
Hostel or supported housing (individual room)	14	12%	27	18%
Local hall or faith group facility (multi-site)	11	9%	24	16%
Day centre	5	4%	14	9%
Other	21	18%	24	16%
Base	118	-	152	-

Staffing

The most common staffing provision was through existing paid support staff (49%). Nearly a third (31%) of respondents identified that additional paid/temporary staff assisted with provision in 2017-18 and 38% of provision was staffed fully or in part by employees of bed and breakfast provision. The proportionate contribution of bed and breakfast staff was up from 12% in 2015-16 to 27% last year and 38% this year – a significant sustained increase.

Figure 5: staffing arrangements for provision (numbers of services using each type of staffing)



Source of staffing	No. of services identifying this type of staffing 2016-17	% services	No. of services identifying this type of staffing 2017-18	% services
Existing paid support staff	47	40%	75	49%
Additional/temporary paid support staff	30	25%	47	31%
B&B staff	32	27%	58	38%
Local Authority Officers	4	3%	18	12%
No paid staff	12	10%	24	16%
Other	-	-	37	24%
Base	118	100%	153	100%

Base: 153

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Figure 6 shows that 53 (38%) of projects stated that they used volunteers, around the same as the 34% last year.

Figure 6: use of volunteers

Did the service have volunteers assisting	No. of services in 2016-17	% services	No. of services in 2017-18	% services
Yes	35	34%	53	38%
No	68	66%	87	62%
Total	103	100%	140	100%

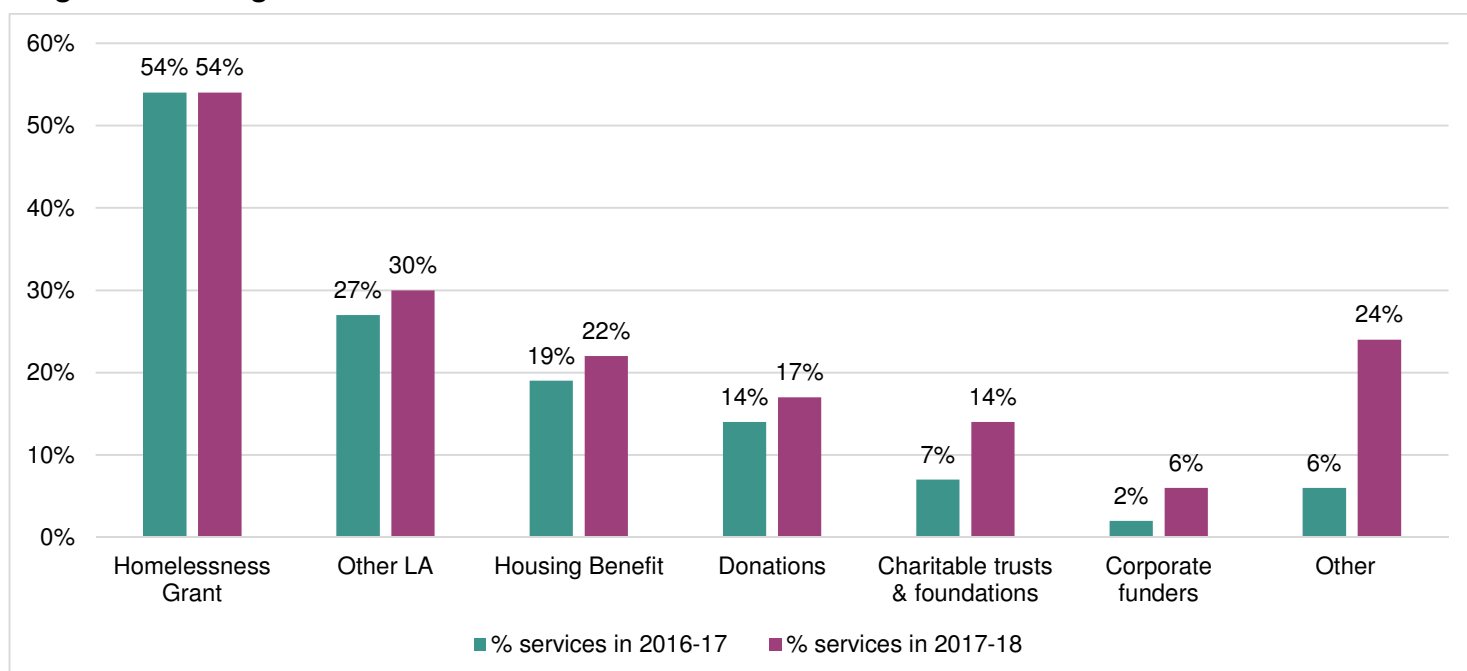
Base: 140

Funding

Figure 7 below shows the different types of funding used by services. In line with last year, the most common source of funding for services responding was from the Homelessness Grant (54%). 30% reported funding from another local authority source of funding. Just over one fifth of services responding (22%) claim Housing Benefit for their severe weather provision. The proportion of services receiving some funding from private donations, e.g. individual donations and church groups, was 17%.

Of the 136 people who responded to this question, the majority (64%) said their funding has remained about the same compared to 2016-17. (This was fewer than in last year's survey, when (83%) said their funding had stayed the same.) A quarter (26%) of people stated that they had seen an increase in funding (up from 14% the year before), while one in ten (10%) saw a decrease in funding when compared with the previous year (up from 5% in last year's survey).

Figure 7: funding of services

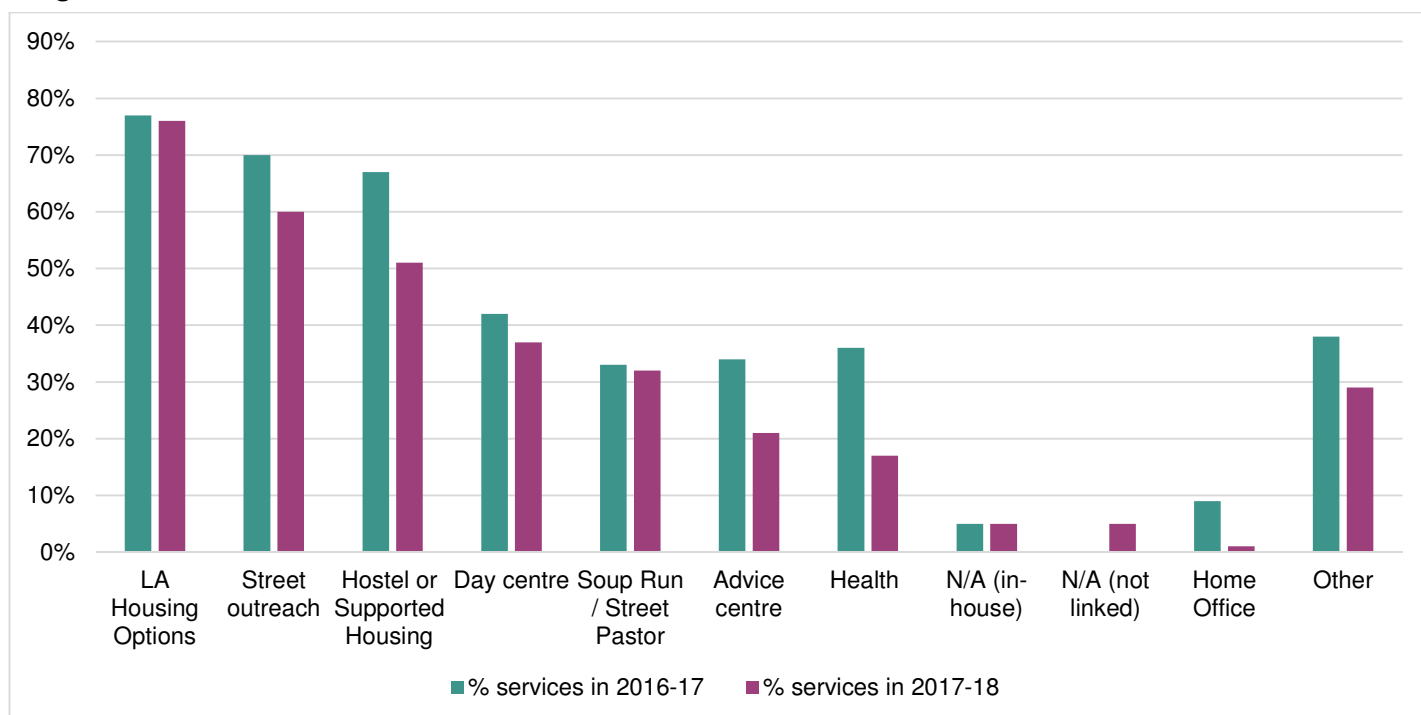


Funding method	No. services in 2016-17	% services	No. services in 2017-18	% services
Homelessness Grant	53	54%	82	54%
Other local authority funding	26	27%	45	30%
Housing Benefit	19	19%	33	22%
Donations e.g. private individuals and church groups	14	14%	26	17%
Charitable trusts/foundations	7	7%	22	14%
Corporate funders	2	2%	9	6%
Other	6	6%	36	24%
Base	98	-	152	-

Services worked with

Figure 8 shows the range of services that the respondents worked with for referral, support and move on. As in last year’s survey, in 2017-18 over three quarters (76%) of those responding identified the Local Authority Housing Options team as an organisation they work with. The next most popular responses were street outreach (60%) and hostel and supported housing providers (51%). 37% of services worked with day centres and 32% with soup runs and/or street pastors. There was a considerable decrease in the number of organisations identifying that they work with health services – from a third (36%) last year to 17% this year (going below 2015-16’s level of 22%).

Figure 8: services worked with



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Type of partner service	No. services 2016-17	% services	No. services 2017-18	% services
Local Authority Housing Options Team	71	77%	119	76%
Street outreach	64	70%	93	60%
Hostel or Supported Housing	62	67%	80	51%
Day centre	39	42%	57	37%
Soup Run and / or Street Pastor	30	33%	50	32%
Advice centres e.g. Citizen's Advice, law centres	31	34%	32	21%
Health services	33	36%	26	17%
Not applicable - provision was part of a larger organisation with in-house expertise	5	5%	8	5%
Not applicable - provision wasn't linked to other agencies	-	-	8	5%
Home Office e.g. Immigration Compliance Enforcement	8	9%	1	1%
Other comments	35	38%	45	29%
Base	-	-	156	-

Clients accessing the service

Numbers of clients

In table 9 below we show the number of clients reported as using SWEP and extended winter provision in 2017-18 by our survey respondents. 145 respondents provided data on client numbers, accounting for 6,502 people accessing provision during the 2017-18 period (this compared with last year: 86 services accounting for 2,793 clients; and the year before 60 services responding accounted for 1,835 clients).

Note that this data does not show the total number of people in the different regions who used provision, just the number reported to us by our survey respondents

Figure 9: overall number of clients accommodated by the services responding, 2017-18

Region	No. of services with this data, 2016-17	No. of clients reported, 2016-17	No. of services with this data, 2017-18	No. of clients reported, 2017-18
East Midlands	3	57	10	215
East of England	11	472	21	847
London	11	325	20	1053
North East	2	31	5	91
North West	4	92	19	1150
South East	29	662	36	1577
South West	3	163	9	253
West Midlands	11	506	15	640
Yorkshire & the Humber	12	485	10	676
Total	86	2,793	145	6,502

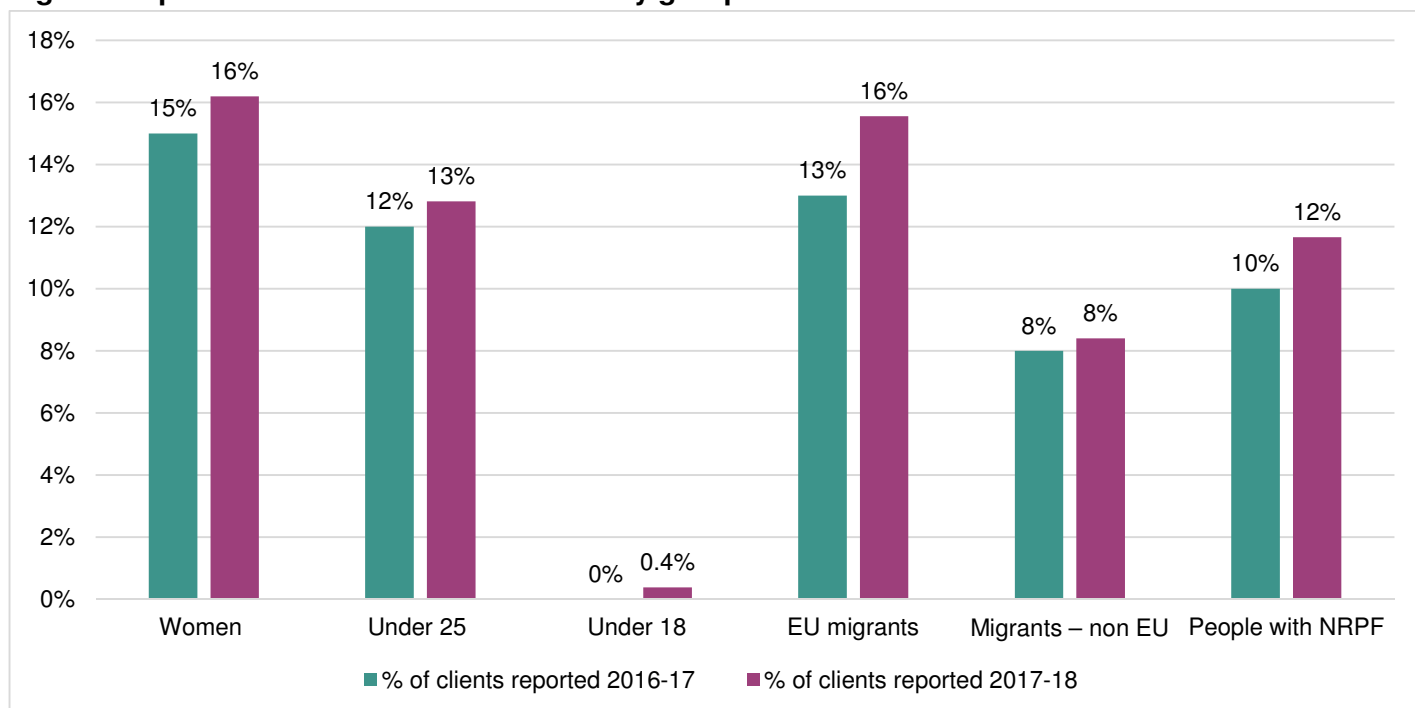
Who is accessing support?

In our survey, we asked respondents to comment on some specific client groups of interest: women, those under 25 years old, EU migrants, migrants from other parts of the world and those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). The number of people in these groups is relevant to the planning and provision of services – for example highlighting that there was a proportion of people with NRPF for whom Housing Benefit could not be claimed. The number of services providing data on each of these questions varies so in figure 10 a ‘base number’ is shown for each client group.

1,040 women stayed in the shelters responding to this question, representing 16% of their client group overall. 940 clients were identified as being EU migrants (16%), and an additional 8% were migrants from outside of the EU. Overall, 12% of those included had NRPF which would mean that Housing Benefit could not be claimed for their bed space. 13% of clients represented were under 25 years old, and one in 250 (0.4%) were under 18.

Even though more than twice as many clients were reported on this year, the variation with last year’s results was 3% or less for each special interest group (as it also was the year before, 2015-16).

Figure 10: profile of clients accommodated by groups of interest

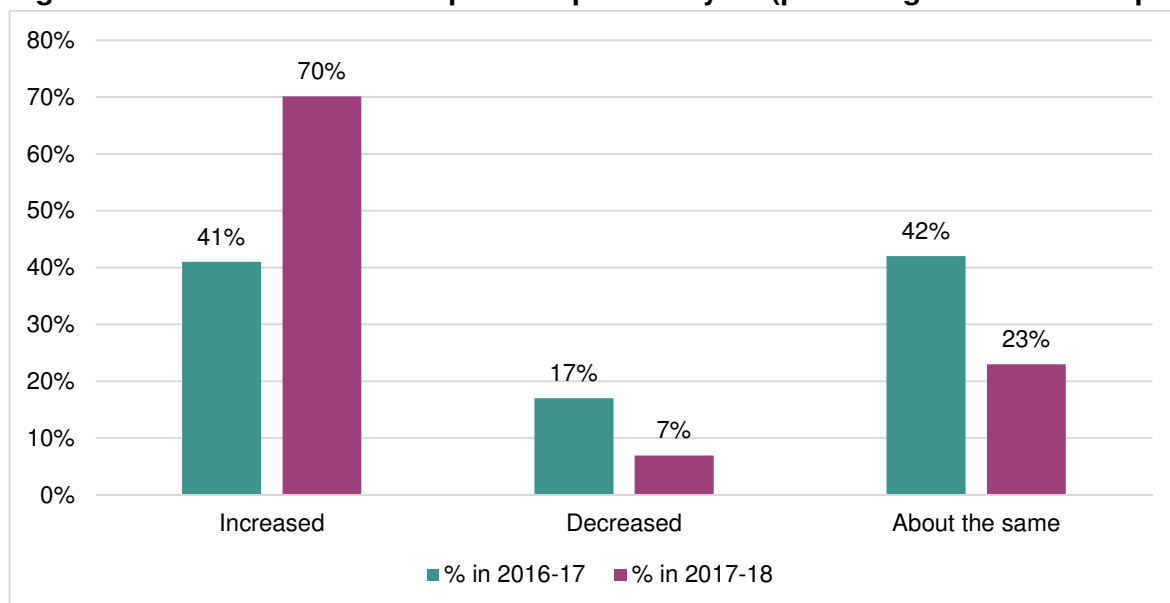


Client group	No. of clients reported 2017-18	Overall no. of clients among services providing data on this group 2017-18	No. of services reporting, 2017-18	% of clients in this group among those answering 2017-18	% of clients 2016-17
Women	1040	6424	140	16%	15%
Under 25	801	6251	135	13%	12%
Under 18	23	6056	136	0.4%	-
EU migrants	940	6044	136	16%	13%
Migrants – non EU	499	5940	138	8%	8%
People with NRPF	644	5523	133	12%	10%

Level of demand

Respondents were asked how the demand for services in 2017-18 compared with the previous year. Of the 144 services who responded, seven in ten (70%) said demand had increased. This is significantly higher than in the previous two year’s survey (where 41% and 42% said demand had increased for 2015-6 and 2016-7 respectively), suggesting a spike in demand over the last year. 7% said there had been a decrease in demand compared to the previous year (lower than 17% in last year’s survey).

Figure 11: level of demand compared to previous year (percentage of services reporting)



Base: 142

People turned away

We asked survey respondents whether they had to turn any individuals away over the winter. Out of 157 who responded 106 (68%) said they did not turn anyone away (slightly less than the 72% in last year’s survey), while 42 (27%) turned at least one person away (around the same as the 28% last year).

35 services specified how many people they had had to turn away. 20 services turned away one to three people, nine turned away ten people and four turned away 11 or more people.

This data has limitations: last year, one respondent pointed out that when the service is full, referring agencies are informed and do not send new referrals through; it may be that demand information does not always reach the shelters themselves. This is more likely to be the case for Winter Shelters than for SWEPS, where provision is usually made for everyone willing to come inside in precarious weather conditions.

Figure 12: people turned away

Number of people turned away	No. of services 2016-17	No. of services 2017-18
None	-	2
One to three people	13	20
Four to ten people	10	9
11 – 20 people	2	1
21 – 30 people	-	2
Over 30 people	-	1

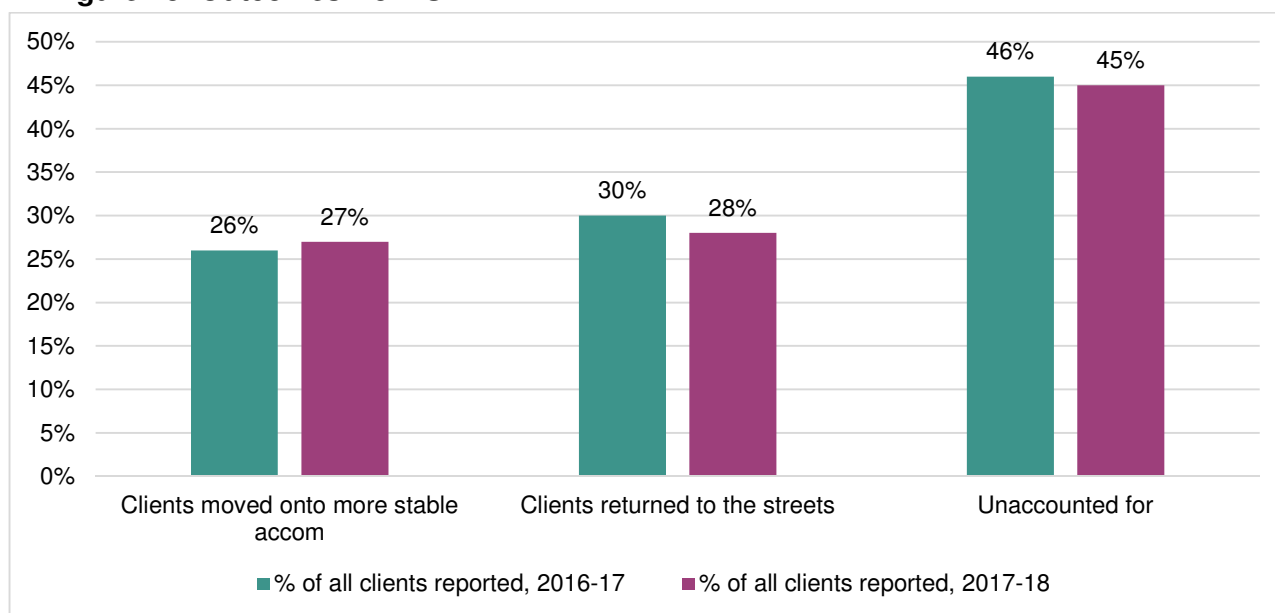
Reasons given for having to turn people away were not having enough bed spaces (14 services), one or more clients being assessed as too high risk to accommodate in this setting (29 services), the service not being able to meet the clients’ needs (9 services), and practical issues such as not being able to accommodate a dog (9 services).

Outcomes from SWEP and winter provision

145 services provided a figure for the number of people they accommodated in 2017-18. The total was 6,502 people. Services were asked to identify numbers of people they knew went on to more stable accommodation from the SWEP and the number who returned to the streets. In total, across 126 services responding, 1,735 people were known to have moved on from the SWEP/extended winter provision to more stable accommodation. Across 117 services responding, 1,847 were known to have returned to the streets.

Overall, this represents a fairly even split between clients who moved to more settled accommodation (27%) and clients who returned to the streets (28%). Data on the outcome of the shelter stay was not provided for just under half (45%) of those identified as staying in the shelters. Figures should be treated with some caution as different services may apply different ways of monitoring these outcomes – for example, some may assume a return to the street for those who did not access settled accommodation, while others only record a return to the street if this is confirmed with subsequent contact.

Figure 13: Outcomes from SWEP



	No. of services reporting	Overall no. of clients reported by these services	Clients reported with this outcome	% of all reported clients, 2017-18	% of all reported clients, 2016-17
Clients moved onto more stable accommodation	126	5146	1753	27%	26%
Clients returned to the streets	117	5390	1847	28%	30%
Unaccounted for	(145)*	(6502)*	2902	45%	46%

*Totals used for numbers of clients unaccounted for are the total number of clients reported, for whom outcomes were not reported.

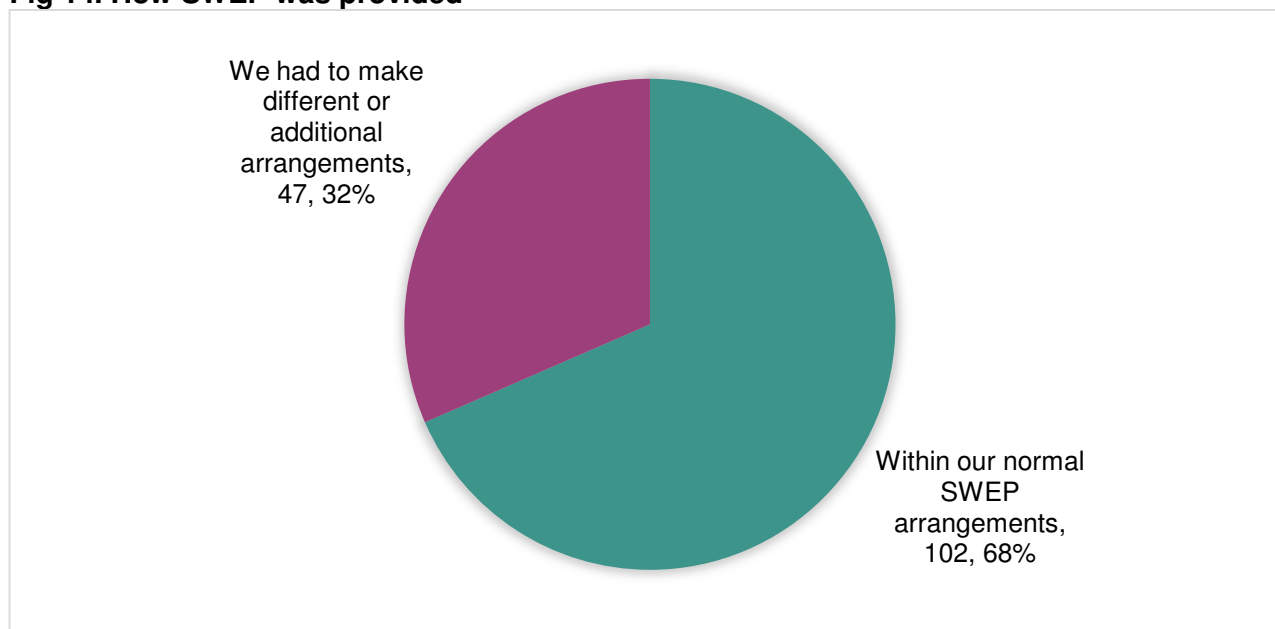
Exceptionally Severe Weather, 26 February - 4 March 2018

This year we asked respondents about the week of snow, ice and freezing temperatures from 26th February to 4th March 2018. A total of 140 services reported the number of clients that had accessed SWEP during the cold weather week. In total this amounted to 2,084 clients seen in this single period.

As Figure 14 shows, of the 149 who respondents, just over two thirds (68%) provided SWEP through their normal arrangements, and just under a third (32%) had to make different or additional arrangements. These different or additional arrangements included:

- creating extra capacity through extra bed spaces (often in B&Bs, church halls, hostels and day centres) and additional staffing
- extending opening hours (e.g. opening shelters during the day and at weekend when they would normally close)
- extending the planned dates for SWEP
- changing the usual protocol for SWEP to give greater flexibility e.g. offering SWEP again to those who had refused, welcoming dogs, using a more flexible temperature/weather trigger.

Fig 14. How SWEP was provided



	No. of services	%
Within our normal SWEP arrangements	102	68%
We had to make different or additional arrangements	47	32%
Total	149	-

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As Figure 15 shows, over half of services who responded publicised SWEP via the council website during this period, and just under half publicised SWEP via social media. Just over a quarter (26%) publicised it on local media, while around seven in ten (69%) publicised via voluntary partners and the same proportion (71%) via statutory partners such as the police.

Fig 15. Publicising SWEP during this period

	No. of services	%
Council website	79	53%
Social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook	73	49%
Local press/radio/TV	39	26%
Via voluntary partners e.g. day centres and soup runs	103	69%
Via statutory partners e.g. police	106	71%
No publicity	10	7%
Other	29	19%
Base	150	-

Of the 136 services that responded, one third (32%) made full information publicly available, including contact number, shelter location, and referral routes. 38% made a phone number and where to go for local referrals publicly available, while 18% made only a local phone number available. 12% only publicised contact details for StreetLink¹.

Fig 16. Publicising SWEP during this period

	No. of services	%
Full details - contact number, shelter location, referral routes etc	43	32%
Local referral info - phone number and where to go to be referred	52	38%
Local referral info - phone number only	25	18%
StreetLink only	16	12%
Base	136	-

Resources

Guidance on Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and Extended Weather Provision

www.homeless.org.uk/swep

Housing Justice Shelter Quality Mark

www.housingjustice.org.uk/housing-justice-quality-mark

For further information on this report please contact: tasmin.maitland@homelesslink.org.uk

¹ www.streetlink.org.uk/



What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England. We work to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Let's end homelessness together

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