# **Heatwave Plan Delivery Framework**

Responding to hot weather in Southwark, including additional actions to be taken during COVID-19

June to September 2022

**Health Protection** 

Southwark Public Health

6th June 2022







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#### INTRODUCTION

The evidence about risks to health from heatwaves is extensive; excessive exposure to high temperatures can kill. In one ten day period in England in August 2003, there were nearly 2000 extra deaths reported, the majority of which occurred in older people, including in care homes. Since that time we have had a significant heatwave in 2006 (when it was estimated that there were about 680 excess deaths) and a less severe one in 2009, that still resulted in an estimated 300 excess deaths.

Excess deaths are not just deaths of those who would have died anyway in the next few weeks or months due to illness or old age. There is strong evidence that these summer deaths are indeed 'extra' and are the result of heat-related conditions.

Timely preventative measures can reduce excess death rates. In contrast to deaths associated with cold weather, the rise in mortality during a heatwave occurs very quickly and within one or two days of the temperature rising. So the window of opportunity for effective action is very short and preparedness is essential.

Evidence from an evaluation published in 2021 by the Policy Innovation & Evaluation Research Unit at the London School of Hygeine and Tropical Medicine found that, despite the Heatwave Plan for England existing since 2004, public knowledge of the risks of heat to health, and the measures taken to mitigate it remains poor, especially among the Over 75s, who are some of the most vulnerable to high temperatures. Local authorities, health and social care providers and the voluntary and community sector can help improve this by delivering clear messages about heat health risks and mitigations during the Summer months when temperatures are highest.

#### AIM OF THE DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

This document supports the London Borough of Southwark in its responsibilities and outlines the processes and arrangements in place across Southwark to deliver the actions outlined in the UKHSA Heatwave Plan for England<sup>1</sup>.

The first Heatwave Plan for England was published in 2004. It aims to prepare for hot weather – to alert people and prevent the major avoidable effects on health during periods of severe heat in England. It recommends a series of steps to reduce the risks to health from prolonged exposure to severe heat for:

- the NHS, local authorities, social care, and other public agencies
- professionals working with people at risk
- individuals, local communities and voluntary groups

#### **Objectives of the delivery framework**

- To describe the Met Office Heat Health Watch alert system and how it is delivered and cascaded across Southwark
- To outline the roles, responsibilities and actions to be taken of those in receipt of Heat Health Watch alerts
- To provide supporting guidance and signposting to resources.

#### **PLAN ACTIVATION**

Level 1 of this plan will be activated annually in line with the Met Office Heat Health Watch Service on the 1 of June until the 15 September, after which the risk of a heatwave is very low. Any raised alert (level 2, 3 or 4) will be communicated to key staff (Appendix D) in the Council and CCG for onward cascade to operational teams and staff in direct contact with vulnerable people.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england

#### **HEAT HEALTH WATCH**

A heat health watch alert system operates from 1 June to 15 September each year. During this period, the Met Office may forecast heatwaves, as defined by forecasts of day and night-time temperatures and their duration. The heat-health watch system comprises five main levels (Levels 0 to 4) outlined in the table below:

Level 0	Long term planning – all year
Level 1	Heatwave and summer preparedness – 1 <sup>st</sup> June – 15 <sup>th</sup> September
Level 2	Heatwave is forecast – alert and readiness – 60% risk of heatwave
Level 3	Heatwave action – temperature reached
Level 4	Major incident – emergency response – in the event of severe or prolonged heatwave
	affecting sectors other than health

A heatwave is declared when threshold temperatures are reached, and for London this is:

32° during the day and 18° at night over two consecutive days

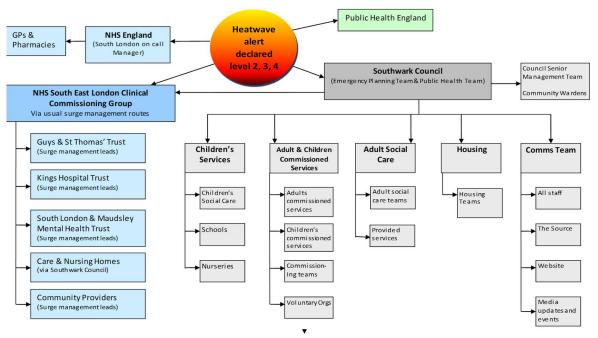
#### THE SOUTHWARK HOT WEATHER CASCADE

The Southwark Hot Weather Alert Cascade supports the London Borough of Southwark in its responsibilities around heatwave alerts and actions, and works alongside the CCG alert systems. The document does not replace existing climate change adaptation arrangements or major incident plans and should be read in conjunction with these. It clarifies arrangements around:

- the alert cascade for heat health watch alerts, and
- actions to be taken at each level (there is specific guidance for health and social care professionals and care home staff)

Met Office Alerts will be directly received by leads within the Public Health Department and Emergency Planning team during office hours, and they will forward alerts to key local leads for onward cascade (Appendix D), according to the Southwark cascade flowchart below.

The key local leads are responsible for ensuring the relevant information goes to individuals and teams as well as commissioned services and that actions are being undertaken as outlined in the guidance.



The alert cascade will be initiated in Southwark if the Met Office declares Levels 2, 3 or 4

#### SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

Actions to be taken at each heatwave alert level and by each organisation or staff group are clearly laid out in the full plan and associated guidance<sup>2</sup>. There is also guidance for schools as well as leaflets and posters and other resources for organisations and individuals.

Action cards (Appendices A-C) summarising the key actions to be taken at each heatwave alert level have been produced as a quick and easy reference guide to assist those who need to take action:

- Commissioners of health and social care and local authorities, and
- Health & Social Care Staff in all settings (community, hospitals and care homes)
- Community, voluntary sector and individuals

There are additional actions to be taken in 2022 due to COVID-19. All actions should also consider current COVID-19 specific guidance: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

#### **HEAT RELATED ILLNESSES**

The main causes of illness and death during a heatwave are respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Additionally, there are specific heat-related illnesses including:

- heat cramps caused by dehydration and loss of electrolytes, often following exercise
- heat rash small, red, itchy papules
- heat oedema mainly in the ankles, due to vasodilation and retention of fluid
- heat syncope dizziness and fainting, due to dehydration, vasodilation, cardiovascular
- disease and certain medications
- heat exhaustion (more common) occurs as a result of water or sodium depletion,
- with non-specific features of malaise, vomiting and circulatory collapse, and is present
- when the core temperature is between 37°C and 40°C. Left untreated, heat exhaustion
- may evolve into heatstroke
- heatstroke can become a point of no return whereby the body's thermoregulation
- mechanism fails. This leads to a medical emergency, with symptoms of confusion;
- disorientation; convulsions; unconsciousness; hot dry skin; and core body temperature
- exceeding 40°C for between 45 minutes and eight hours. It can result in cell death,
- organ failure, brain damage or death. Heatstroke can be either classical or exertional
- (eg in athletes)

Air pollution such as ozone and particulate matter (eg PM10, PM2.5) also increases the level of cardiovascular-related deaths, as fine particles have been shown to enter the blood stream via the lungs and affect the heart.

Whatever the underlying cause of heat-related symptoms, the treatment is always the same – move the person to somewhere cooler and cool them down.

### **INDIVIDUALS MOST AT RISK**

There are certain factors that increase an individual's risk during a heatwave. These include:

- Older age: especially over 75 years old, or those living on their own who are socially isolated, or in a care home
- Chronic and severe illness: including heart conditions, diabetes, respiratory or renal insufficiency,
   Parkinson's disease or severe mental illness. Medications that potentially affect renal function,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england

- the body's ability to sweat, thermoregulation (eg psychiatric medications) or electrolyte balance (diuretics) can make this group more vulnerable to the effects of heat
- Infants are vulnerable to heat due to immature thermoregulation, smaller body mass and blood volume, high dependency level, dehydration risk in case of diarrhoea
- Homeless people (those who sleep in shelters as well as outdoors) may be at increased risk from heatwaves. Higher rates of chronic disease (often poorly controlled), smoking, respiratory conditions, substance dependencies and mental illness are more frequent in homeless populations than in the general population. These risk factors increase the risks of heat related morbidity and mortality, on top of social isolation, lack of air conditioning, cognitive impairment, living alone and being exposed to urban heat islands
- People with alcohol dependence and drug dependence often have poorer overall health and increased social isolation which can increase their risk of heat stress
- Inability to adapt behaviour to keep cool such as having Alzheimer's, a disability, being bed bound, drug and alcohol dependencies, babies and the very young
- Environmental factors and overexposure: living in urban areas and south-facing top-floor flats, being homeless, activities or jobs that are in hot places or outdoors and include high levels of physical exertion, children and adults taking part in organised sports (particularly children and adolescents)

In a moderate heatwave, it is mainly the high-risk groups mentioned above who are affected, however, during an extreme heatwave such as the one affecting France in 2003, fit and healthy people can also be affected.

#### **HEAT AND COVID-193**

#### Potential risks:

- Potential increase in adverse outcomes amongst the same population groups affected by both high temperatures and COVID-19. For example, older people and those with comorbidities such as cardio-respiratory diseases
- System-level risks related to concurrency of impacts. For example, increased demand on social care services to prevent both heat and COVID-19 related harms
- Indoor overheating risk may be higher than in previous years as more residents spend more time at home despite end of formal shielding, and working from home is more common.

We still have much to learn about how coronavirus (COVID-19) affects the body, but both heat and COVID-19 infections put a strain on the heart and lungs, the kidneys and are linked with inflammation in the body. Clinical vulnerabilities that have been linked with worse outcomes from COVID-19 that are also risks for heat related harms are:

- high blood pressure
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- heart and lung conditions (cardiovascular disease)
- conditions that affect the flow of blood in the brain (cerebrovascular disease)
- kidney disease

#### Higher risk groups:

Specific populations at increased risk of exposure to heat due to the context in which they live include:

- Homeless people (whether sleeping rough or in shelters)
- People resident in specific institutional settings (e.g. prisons, barracks, inpatient psychiatric units)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Adapted from <a href="https://khub.net/documents/135939561/318085211/Heat-health+risks+and+COVID-19%2C+Actions+to+prevent+harm.pdf/004fe5f5-edfe-2ed7-d4be-f276a6609ffa?t=1591956206316">https://khub.net/documents/135939561/318085211/Heat-health+risks+and+COVID-19%2C+Actions+to+prevent+harm.pdf/004fe5f5-edfe-2ed7-d4be-f276a6609ffa?t=1591956206316</a>

 Some occupations, workplaces and schools-particularly those involving significant manual exertional, heat generation (e.g. cooking, some manufacturing roles) and in buildings prone to overheating and without air conditioning.

Some of these settings have restrictions in place to reduce COVID-19 transmission – additional considerations will be needed to ensure that plans are in place should a heatwave occur

#### **KEY PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGES**

#### Stay out of the heat:

- keep out of the sun between 11.00am and 3.00pm
- if you have to go out, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a hat and light scarf
- avoid extreme physical exertion and wear light, loose-fitting cotton clothes

## Cool yourself down:

- have plenty of cold drinks and avoid excess alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks
- eat cold foods, particularly salads and fruit with a high water content
- take a cool shower, bath or body wash or sprinkle water over the skin or clothing

#### Keep your environment cool:

- keeping your living space cool is especially important for infants, the elderly or those with chronic health conditions or who can't look after themselves
- place a thermometer in your main living room and bedroom to keep a check on the temperature
- keep windows that are exposed to the sun closed during the day, and open windows at night
- if possible, move into a cooler room, especially for sleeping
- electric fans may provide some relief, if temperatures are below 35°C

#### Look out for others:

- keep an eye on isolated, elderly, ill or very young people to ensure they are able to keep cool
- ensure that babies, children or elderly people are not left alone in stationary cars
- be alert and call a doctor or social services if someone is unwell or further help is needed

#### If you have a health problem:

- keep medicines below 25 °C or in the refrigerator (read storage instructions on the packaging)
- seek medical advice if you are suffering from a chronic medical condition or taking multiple medications

#### If you or others feel unwell:

- try to get help if you feel dizzy, weak, anxious or have intense thirst and headache; move to a cool place as soon as possible and measure your body temperature
- drink some water or fruit juice to rehydrate
- rest immediately in a cool place if you have painful muscular spasms (particularly in the legs, arms or abdomen), and drink oral rehydration solutions containing electrolytes
- medical attention is needed if heat cramps last more than one hour, if you feel unusual symptoms or if symptoms persist

#### **KEY NATIONAL RESOURCES & GUIDANCE**

**HEATWAVE PLAN FOR ENGLAND 2022** 

#### **HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE**

<u>SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE BEFORE AND DURING A HEATWAVE: FOR CARE HOME MANAGERS AND STAFF</u>

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE BEFORE AND DURING A HEATWAVE: FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

#### **SCHOOLS & EARLY YEARS**

<u>LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN AND THOSE IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS DURING HEATWAVES:</u>
<u>FOR TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONALS</u>

#### **PUBLIC & VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

BEAT THE HEAT: STAYING SAFE IN HOT WEATHER

BEAT THE HEAT: KEEP COOL AT HOME CHECKLIST

**BEAT THE HEAT: POSTER** 

## **APPENDICES**

## **ACTION CARDS FOR:**

- Commissioners of health & social care & local authorities
- Health & Social Care staff in all settings (community, hospitals and care homes)
- Community, voluntary sector and individuals

## **KEY LOCAL LEADS**

Contact list

## **Heatwave Action Card**

#### Commissioners of health & social care & local authorities4

#### Level 1: Heatwave and summer preparedness

#### 1 June to 15 September

- Work with partner agencies, providers and businesses to co-ordinate heatwave plans ensuring vulnerable and marginalised groups are appropriately supported
- Work with partners and staff on risk reduction awareness (eg key public health messages see overleaf), using a variety of methods to maximise dissemination
- Ensure care homes are aware of the plan, including the <u>'Supporting vulnerable people before and during a heatwave advice for care home managers and staff' toolkit</u>, and are engaged in preparing for heatwaves
- Ensure hospitals and other health and social care professionals are aware of the plan, including the <u>'Supporting vulnerable people before and during a heatwave advice for health and social care professionals' toolkit, and are engaged in preparing for heatwaves
  </u>
- Continue to engage the community and voluntary sector to support those most at risk
- Ensure other institutional establishments (e.g. schools) are aware of heatwave guidance, in particular the <u>'Looking after children and those in early years settings during heatwaves: for teachers and professionals'</u> quidance.
- Ensure organisers of large events take account of possible heat risks

#### Additional actions for 2022:

- Work with partner agencies, providers and businesses to raise awareness about the concurrent risk of hot weather and COVID-19
- encourage partners to sign up to the heat-health alert system
- ensure care homes and hospitals are aware of the heatwave plan and are preparing for heatwave as a concurrent risk with COVID-19
- engage the community and voluntary sector to support communities to help those most at risk, especially those who are socially isolated
- work with partners to facilitate equitable & flexible access to green public spaces during hot weather

## Level 2: Heatwave is forecast – alert and readiness

#### 60% risk of heatwave in two to three days

- Communicate public media messages especially to 'hard to reach' vulnerable groups
- Communicate alerts to staff and make sure that they are aware of heatwave plans
- Implement business continuity plans
- Increase advice to health and social care workers working in the community, care homes and hospitals

#### **Level 3: Heatwave action**

#### Heatwave trigger temperatures reached

- Media alerts about keeping cool
- Support organisations to reduce unnecessary travel
- Review safety of public events
- Mobilise community and voluntary support

#### **Level 4: Major incident – emergency response**

Central government will declare a Level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged heatwave affecting sectors other than health and if requiring coordinated multi-agency response.

Continue actions as per Level 3 unless advised to the contrary.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Adapted from the UKHSA Heatwave Plan: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england</a>



## **Heatwave Action Card**

## Health & Social Care staff in all settings (community, hospitals and care homes)<sup>5</sup>

#### **Level 1: Heatwave and summer preparedness** 1 June to 15 September

#### Professional staff (all settings):

- Be familiar with the principles and core elements of the national Heatwave plan, in particular <u>the advice for Health and Social Care professionals.</u>
- Identify high-risk individuals on your caseload and raise awareness of heat illnesses and their prevention among clients and carers (see key public health messages)
- Include risk in care records and consider whether changes might be necessary to care plans in the event of a heatwave (eg initiating daily visits by formal or informal care givers for those living alone)
- Ensure all frontline staff are aware of the hot weather plan and public health advice for hot weather. This could be through staff bulletins/newsletters, team meetings, a training session etc

#### Care homes and hospitals:

- Ensure business continuity plans are in place and implement as required; ensure appropriate contact details are provided to LA/NHS emergency planning officers to facilitate transfer of emergency information
- Identify or create cool rooms/areas (able to be maintained below 26°C)
- Install thermometers where vulnerable individuals spend substantial time
- Be familiar with the principles and core elements of the national Heatwave plan, in particular the <u>advice for</u> care home managers and staff

#### **Additional Actions for 2022:**

- More residents of care homes and people receiving personal care than usual may be at risk from heat due to COVID ill-health. Review who may be at high risk.
- People receiving care may need additional support to cope with the hot weather. Review your usual plans for surge capacity in hot weather in light of possible COVID-19 related staff absence and to ensure staff welfare
- Care home managers may wish to remind staff that face masks should be changed when they get damp, staff
  may need to change their masks more often in hot weather
   Fans should only be used in single rooms for residents who do not have COVID-19 and have not been a
  close contact of a confirmed case

## **Level 2: Heatwave forecast – alert and readiness** 60% risk of heatwave in two to three days

#### Professional staff (all settings):

- Check high-risk people have visitor/phone call arrangements in place
- Reconfirm key public health messages to clients
- Check client's room temperature if visiting

#### Care homes and hospitals:

- Check indoor temperatures are recorded regularly during the hottest periods for all areas where patients reside
- Ensure cool areas are below 26°C
- Review and prioritise high-risk people
- Ensure sufficient cold water and ice
- Consider weighing clients regularly to identify dehydration and rescheduling physic to cooler hours
- Communicate alerts to staff and make sure that they are aware of heatwave plans
- Ensure sufficient staffing implement business continuity plans if necessary

#### **Level 3: Heatwave action**Heatwave trigger temperatures reached

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Adapted from the UKHSA Heatwave Plan: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england</a>

- Professional staff (all settings):
- Visit/phone high-risk people
- Reconfirm key public health messages to clients
- Advise carers to contact GP if concerns re health

#### Care homes and hospitals:

- Activate plans to maintain business continuity including a possible surge in demand
- Check indoor temperatures are recorded regularly during the hottest periods for all areas where patients reside
- Ensure staff can help and advise clients including access to cool rooms, close monitoring of vulnerable individuals, reducing internal temperatures through shading, turning off unnecessary lights/equipment, cooling building at night ensuring discharge planning takes home temperatures and support into account

#### Level 4: Major incident – emergency response

Central government will declare a Level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged heatwave affecting sectors other than health and if requiring coordinated multi-agency response.

- Continue actions as per Level 3 unless advised to the contrary during extreme conditions, it is not only highrisk groups that may be at risk. Therefore, further risk appraisals should be made as to how the wider population is likely to be affected
- Receive and utilise community volunteers
- Situation reports might be requested more frequently than once a day

## **Heatwave Action Card**

## Community, voluntary sector and individuals<sup>6</sup>

#### Level 1: Heatwave and summer preparedness

1 June to 15 September

#### Community groups:

- Further develop community emergency plan
- Support the provision of good information about health risks especially with those vulnerable groups and individuals (see key public health messages)

#### Individuals:

- Find good information about health risks and key public health messages to stay healthy during spells of severe heat (see key public health messages)
- Look out for vulnerable neighbours, friends and family
- Familiarise yourself with the UK Health Security Agency's 'Beat the Heat' resources.

#### Additional actions for 20227

- Advise those at risk that they should continue to seek medical help if they are feeling unwell and that plans are in place to deliver services safely despite COVID-19
- Due to the impact of COVID-19 on health and working patterns, more vulnerable individuals may be spending time at home than normal this Summer. Community groups and individuals should check in on vulnerable neighbours, especially those they know spend most of their time at home
- More people than previously may be now be vulnerable to the impact of heat, due to long term impacts of severe COVID-19.
- Due to the spread of COVID-19, it is possible that more people will be sick with acute respiratory infections and fevers during the Summer months. Having a fever during hot weather can reduce the body's ability to cool down. Individuals and community groups should be vigilant about high temperatures and fevers occurring concurrently, and phone 111 if they need medical advice.

#### Level 2: Heatwave is forecast – alert and readiness 60% risk of heatwave in two to three days

#### **Community groups:**

- Keep an eye on people you know to be at risk
- Stay tuned into the weather forecast and keep stocked with food and medications
- Check ambient room temperatures

#### Individuals:

- Stay tuned into the weather forecast
- Check ambient room temperatures especially those rooms where disabled or high risk individuals spend most
  of their time
- Keep an eye on people you know to be at risk ensure they have access to plenty of cool fluids
- Look out for vulnerable neighbours, friends and family

#### Level 3: Heatwave action

Heatwave trigger temperatures reached

#### Community groups:

- Activate community emergency plan
- Check those you know are at risk

#### Individuals:

- Follow key public health messages
- Check those you know are at risk

#### **Level 4: Major incident – emergency response**

Central government will declare a Level 4 alert in the event of severe or prolonged heatwave affecting sectors other than health and if requiring coordinated multi-agency response.

Continue actions as per Level 3 unless advised to the contrary.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Adapted from the UKHSA Heatwave Plan: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Adapted from PHE 'Coping with Heat and COVID-19' <a href="https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/33429529/phe-guide-beat-the-heat-leaflet.pdf">https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/33429529/phe-guide-beat-the-heat-leaflet.pdf</a>

## **SEVERE WEATHER - Key Local Leads Contact List (May 2022)**

Cascade Group	Lead Name	Position or Department	Will Cascade to	Email
Public Health	Sarah Robinson	Public Health Department	<ul> <li>All email addresses on this list for onward cascade</li> <li>Community Health Ambassadors</li> </ul>	Sarah.robinson@southwark.gov.uk publichealth@southwark.gov.uk Ginette.hogan@southwark.gov.uk
Emergency Planning Team	Andy Snazell Barry Hall Robyn Cassidy	Emergency Planning Officer	<ul> <li>Community Wardens</li> <li>on call staff</li> <li>SMT when applicable (level 3)</li> </ul>	barry.hall@southwark.gov.uk emergency.planning@southwark.gov.uk Andy.Snazell@southwark.gov.uk robyn.cassidy@southwark.gov.uk
Rough sleepers – awaiting update	Natty St Louis	Rough Sleeper Street Population Coordinator	Outreach teams	Natty.StLouis@southwark.gov.uk
Children's Services	Aneesa Kaprie Vilma Edwards Wendy Heller Kevin Morris Nikki Tilson Richard Hunter	Children's Social Care L&A Early Help Central Team Assistant Dir, L&A	<ul> <li>Children Social Care Teams</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>Nurseries &amp; early years provisions</li> </ul>	Wendy.Heller@southwark.gov.uk vilma.edwards@southwark.gov.uk Kevin.Morris@southwark.gov.uk Nikki.Tilson@southwark.gov.uk Richard.Hunter@southwark.gov.uk
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