

Single Homeless Service Project

Sub Regional Reconnection Policy (with Procedures)

Emergency Accommodation Protocol

June 2013

The status and scope of this document

- 1.1 This document sets out the sub regional reconnections policy. It sets out the essential definitions and says to whom the policy applies, and within what context it applies. It explains the relationship between the reconnections policy and other national and local policies and initiatives and it explains why this is the right approach.
- 1.2 This policy outlines our broad approach, but it does not explain in detail how the reconnection process will work. That is the subject of the reconnection procedure which can be found as [Appendix Two](#).
- 1.3 This document will be formally reviewed periodically, and no less often than annually.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 In the context of this policy, 'sleeping rough' means sleeping out of doors or sleeping in unsuitable or insecure accommodation because the individual has no accommodation they can occupy in any local authority area in the [sub-region](#).
- 2.2 In the context of this policy, 'reconnection' means the process by which a person who is sleeping rough in the sub-region, and who has no 'local connection' to the sub-region, is helped to secure suitable accommodation either in a local authority area where there is a local connection or else in some other location where they will not need to sleep rough.
- 2.3 The concept of a local connection is derived from [section 199 of the Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996](#). (However, this policy does **not** concern individuals to whom any of the sub regional Council's may owe a housing duty under the Act. This policy applies to people the Council's have no duty toward, or would be unlikely to have a duty toward were they to make a homelessness application under the Act).
- 2.4 Section 199 defines local connection in broad terms. [Section 4 of Annex 18](#) the Homelessness Guide for Local Authorities goes on to further define local connection, as agreed between local authorities. This reconnections policy bases its definition of local connection on that section 4. That definition is set out in [Appendix One](#).
- 2.5 This policy has been developed in line with the government strategy document [Vision for ending rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide](#), and the guidance document [Effective Action to End Homelessness](#). It is intended to support and complement the plan to introduce a 'sub regional single homelessness service' for single homeless people who do have a local connection to the Cambridge sub-region.
- 2.6 The Cambridge sub-regional cluster of local authorities comprises of the following:

Cambridge City Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Huntingdonshire District Council

- 2.7 Access to the range of housing services across the sub-region will be available to single homeless people with a local connection to any district in the sub-region. Under the sub regional single homelessness service approach, this may result in an offer of accommodation to end homelessness and rough sleeping. **People assisted in this way are not the subject of this policy.**
- 2.8 Access to housing services, and to assistance equal to that provided under the sub-regional single homelessness service, may also be provided to people who are not connected to the sub-region but who are at risk of harm should they have to return to their area of connection or should they have to leave the sub-region. (See [Appendix 1 \(4\)](#)). An exception may also be made for people who are unable to qualify as being locally connected to anywhere.
- 2.9 Each case of the kind referred to in 2.8 will be considered on its merits. It is anticipated that the numbers of individuals achieving a local connection by this route will be small. More information about these kinds of cases can be found at [Appendix Two: Procedure](#).
- 2.10 In the light of the forgoing, it can be seen that this policy concerns those individuals who are not locally connected to the sub-region, and for whom either:
- (a) a case is **not** to be made under paragraph 2.8; or
 - (b) a case **is** to be made under paragraph 2.8.
- 2.11 In the case of a person to whom 2.10 (a) applies, a reconnection should be made within the target time discussed at 4.3 (below)
- 2.12 In the case of a person to whom 2.10 (b) applies, an exception request form should be submitted to the Council at the earliest opportunity, and certainly within five days of the agency having started to work with the client.

3. The purpose of the reconnection policy

- 3.1 All of the partner authorities in the sub-region are committed to providing the best possible service to homeless people, including single homeless people not in priority need. One element of this commitment is a pledge to deal effectively with, and ultimately to end, rough sleeping. This approach is summed up in the four principles of 'No Second Night Out':
- 1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out;
 - 2. No one should make his or her home on the streets;
 - 3. No one should return to the streets once they have been helped off of them; and
 - 4. Ultimately, no one should arrive on the streets.
- 3.2 The Council's commitment extends to those people without a local connection to the sub-region. However, the sub-region does not have the capability to provide a proper level of service to everyone, from

- whatever location, who presents as a rough sleeper. Neither would an offer of services to all-comers be desirable: The No Second Night Out approach recognises that the best option for most rough sleepers is reconnection to a place where they can gain accommodation and benefit from pre-existing social, family, statutory or voluntary networks. It also recognizes that it is in the interests of new rough sleepers that this reconnection is made before a person begins to develop habits associated with a street-based lifestyle.
- 3.3 There is also some evidence that the ready and open availability of good street homeless services may itself attract to a district people who will use such services.
 - 3.4 This policy is therefore intended to achieve a reasonable balance between providing for locally-connected rough sleepers, now more-broadly defined than before, while ensuring that the non-locally connected are quickly assessed and quickly returned to their local district. Services to people without a local connection (or not included as locally-connected under paragraph 2.8) will therefore be limited to what is necessary to achieve this end.
 - 3.5 Single homeless people who have a local connection, but do not have a priority need may access services through the Single Homeless Service project to prevent rough sleeping. Emergency accommodation will be provided for a short period of time, as deemed necessary, until alternative accommodation can be sourced. All authorities in the sub region are signed up to the protocol outlined at Appendix 3: [Emergency Accommodation protocol](#)

4. Key principles of the policy.

- 4.1 It is not acceptable for people to sleep rough anywhere within the sub-region.
- 4.2 All new rough sleepers will be quickly assessed.
- 4.3 New rough sleepers without a connection to the sub regional group, and unlikely to meet the criteria for consideration as an exception under paragraph 2.8, will have access to local housing services limited to the time it will take to make the assessment and arrange a suitable reconnection with the receiving authority or agency. At the date of this policy, when more effective reconnection processes are still being developed locally and nationally, it is not possible to set a target from first encounter to reconnection that is shorter than the present one of five days. However, the intention is to steadily reduce the target to 48 hours.
- 4.4 Please note that the targets referred to in 4.3 (above) apply where there is not an intention to make an exception request.
- 4.5 Individuals refusing a suitable arranged reconnection may be denied further access to housing and related support services in Cambridge or its sub-region. **NB. This will not apply to arrangements made under severe weather provision.**
- 4.6 Any person returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region within 28 days of an arranged reconnection will not be reassessed and will not be permitted access to services (subject to the same exception as in paragraph 4.4).

- 4.7 Anyone returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region more than 28 days after an arranged reconnection will be reassessed from first principals.

Appendix One: Who is locally connected (or may be treated as if they are locally connected)?

Under this policy, a local connection to the sub-region is gained in the following ways:

1. Residence

A person is normally resident within any of the districts in the sub-region.

'Normal residence' is defined as having been resident for six of the past 12 months, or three of the past 5 years. Residence need not have been continuous.

NB. A period spent rough sleeping will not qualify as 'residence' for the purpose of establishing a local connection.

2. Employment

A person has stable employment (i.e. not of a short-term or a casual nature) within the sub-region.

3. Family associations

A person has a parent, an adult child or an adult sibling who has been resident in the district for at least 5 years. A qualifying sibling or child must have been an adult for that 5 year period.

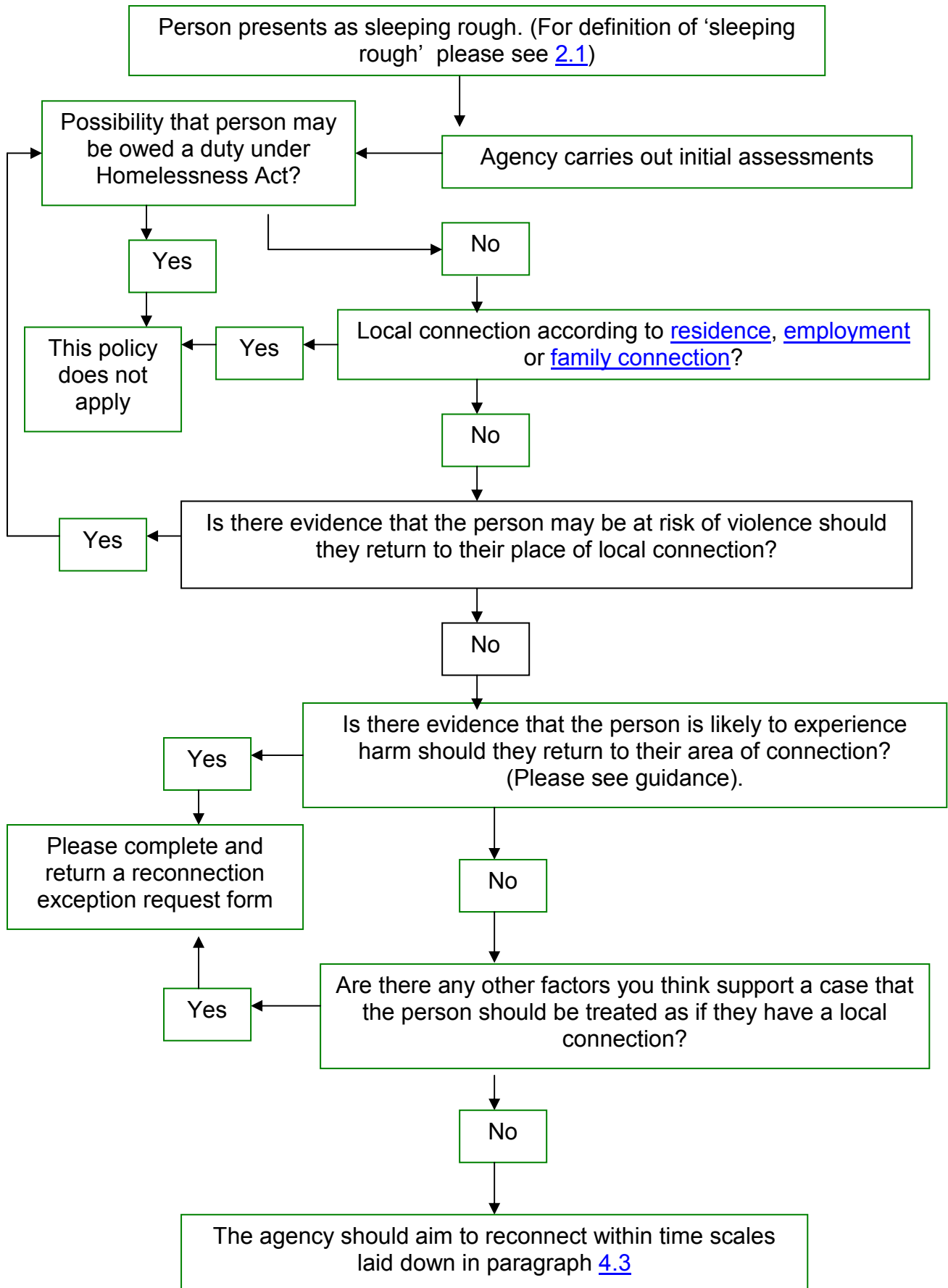
4. Risk of harm and other considerations

A person without a local connection may be treated as if they have a local connection as follows:

- (i) There is evidence that a person is at risk of harm should they return to the place where they have a local connection *and* there is no other district to which they are locally connected except that district where they are at risk
- (ii) There is evidence that a person needs to remain in the sub-region for reasons of their welfare.

A claim under (4) must be made formally to, and confirmed by, a reconnection panel.

Appendix Two (1): Reconnection Procedure Overview



Appendix Two (2): Guidance for making a reconnection exception request

The following is intended to assist agencies when deciding to make an application on behalf of a person that relies on the exception to the local connection rule outlined in paragraph 2.8 of this policy. This guidance is not intended to be comprehensive or definitive. Agencies working with rough sleepers are encouraged to continue to take a broad view of what may be in the best interest of the client and in this way test and further refine this policy. Agency workers are encouraged to discuss any case with the housing advice partnership manager before making an application.

1. A reconnection exception request may be made at any time. It should be made on the prescribed form and emailed to james.mcwilliams@cambridge.gov.uk.
2. A request may be made in order that a client may:
 - be accepted into services;
 - be allowed access to temporary beds; or
 - have a reconnection ban overturned.
3. The reconnection exception request form should be completed with as much information as possible, in particular detailing:
 - why it is necessary for the client to remain in the sub-region;
 - what work has been undertaken to facilitate a reconnection;
 - why this work has not been successful;
 - any drug and alcohol issues including scripting;
 - agencies client is involved with;
 - physical and mental health issues;
 - (if the request is made on the grounds of access to services) why these services cannot be accessed elsewhere;
 - (if the request is made on the grounds that the client needs a period to stabilise) what is planned once this is achieved;
 - current offending behaviour; and
 - longer term planning.
4. The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) makes provision for people who have left accommodation because of the threat of, or the actual experience of, violence. As an alternative to making a reconnection exception request, caseworkers may wish to consider making a homelessness application on behalf of such clients. Case workers considering this are strongly advised first to speak to the Council's housing advice team, as single homeless clients will usually not be in priority need under the Act.
5. Reconnection exception requests citing fleeing from violence should be accompanied by reasonable evidence to support the claim, such as police or former landlord reports.

Service standards

1. A decision will be made on a fully completed exception request within five working days of receipt.
2. The decision will be made by the Council's housing advice partnerships manager and another senior officer assisted, as necessary, by the client's worker or some other person within support services.

Appendix 3

Single Homeless Service

Emergency Accommodation Protocol

This document sets out the sub regional Emergency Accommodations Protocol. It sets out the essential definitions and to whom the policy applies, and within what context it applies. This protocol is designed to ensure that a standardised approach and service is available to all people who qualify for access to the Single Homeless Service across all of the participating authorities in the sub region.

Single people who approach any of the Housing Advice services at any of the local authorities within the sub regional grouping will have their circumstances assessed. Where appropriate, Homeless Prevention activities will try to ensure that they do not lose their accommodation. When it has been established that the applicant will no longer be able to retain their accommodation they will be assessed to determine their suitability for the Single Homeless Service project, in accordance with the agreed procedures.

Once accepted as being suitable for the project there may be a need to secure emergency accommodation until alternative accommodation can be secured through the project. The accommodation secured should, in the first instance, be in the locality area of the authority where the approach has been made. If emergency accommodation cannot be secured in the immediate locality then an approach to another local authority within the sub region for assistance should be made.

Each of the authorities within the sub region has agreed to;

- a) Provide emergency accommodation for all people who qualify for assistance from the Single Homeless Service project.
- b) Assist with the provision of accommodation where the originating locality area is unable to access accommodation in an emergency for qualifying people, on a reciprocal basis. Until alternative accommodation is secured through the project.
- c) Facilitate with the provision of emergency accommodation where a person is in 'fear of violence' in their originating area.
- d) Each local authority will provide the name and contact details of an Officer who will lead on provision of emergency accommodation. This may or may not be the same person who has signed the agreement.

Signed by;

Cambridge City Council.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....

East Cambridgeshire District Council.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....

South Cambridgeshire District Council.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....

Huntingdonshire District Council.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....

St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath District
Councils.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....

Peterborough City Council.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....

Fenland District Council.....
Name of Officer.....
Date.....