

Appendix D

Reconnections policy

Version 1

Dated: October 2013

Related documents: Homelessness Strategy

Section 1: Purpose

- 1.1 This document sets out the reconnections policy of the local authorities comprising the Cambridge sub-region. It sets out the essential definitions; it says to whom the policy applies, and within what context it applies. It explains the relationship between this reconnections policy and other national and local policies and initiatives and it explains why we think this policy is the correct approach for the Cambridge sub-region.
- 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 policy does **not** concern individuals to whom a council may owe a housing duty under the [Housing Act 1996](#).
- 1.4 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 sub regional single homelessness service which will be introduced in the Cambridge sub-region in autumn 2013.
- 1.5 Each of the partner authorities in the sub-region is committed to providing the best possible service to homeless people, one element of which 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.
- 1.6 This commitment extends to those people without a local connection to the sub-region. However, the sub-region does not have the capability to find accommodation for 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 for them to be accommodated somewhere where there are pre-existing social, family, statutory or voluntary networks. It also recognizes that it is in the interests of new rough sleepers that a reconnection to such a place should be made before a person develops habits associated with a street-based lifestyle.
- 1.7 This policy is therefore intended to achieve a reasonable balance between providing for locally-connected rough sleepers, while ensuring that the non-locally connected are quickly assessed and quickly returned to their local district. Services to people without a local connection will be limited, and will

vary from authority to authority in the sub-region. However, each authority will at a minimum provide:

basic advice and assistance;
payment for travel back to the originating local area (where the authority considers this to be appropriate);
Information about any projects in the area to which the person is connected which may be able to help them avoid rough sleeping in the future; and
referral to the No Second Night Out Officer at the originating area.

Section 2: Terms used in this document

- 1.1 **‘Sleeping rough’**. In the context of this policy, ‘sleeping rough’ means sleeping out of doors or sleeping in unsuitable accommodation (e.g. warehouses; sheds) due to the individual having no accommodation they can occupy in any local authority area in the Cambridge sub-region.
- 1.2 **‘Local connection’**. The concept of a local connection is derived from [section 199 of the Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996](#). 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. This reconnections policy bases its definition of local connection on that section 4. That definition is set out in [Appendix One](#).
- 1.3 **‘Reconnection’**. 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 any of the authorities comprising the sub-region, is assisted to return to the local authority area to which they do have a connection, or to some other area, where they will not need to sleep rough.
- 1.4 **‘Cambridge sub-region’**. 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
Forest Heath District Council
St. Edmundsbury District Council
Peterborough City Council
Fenland District Council

Section 3: Local Connection and access to housing advice and services

- 1.1 Under this policy, a single person not in priority need has a local connection to **all** authorities listed at 2.4 if they have a connection to **any** authority listed at 2.4.

- 1.2 A single homeless person not in priority need with a connection to any one of the authorities listed in 2.4 will be given the same access to advice and services regardless of which of the authorities listed in 2.4 they present to.
- 1.3 A single homeless person not in priority need and not connected to the sub-region may be treated as if they do have a local connection to the sub-region if it can be shown that they are at risk of harm should they have to return to their area of local connection. (See [Appendix 1 \(4\)](#)).
- 1.4 A single homeless person not in priority need and not connected to the sub-region may be treated as having a local connection to the sub-region if they have no local connection to anywhere or if they are too ill to travel to their area of local connection.
- 1.5 It is for a local authority to decide whether a person qualifies under paragraphs 3.3 or 3.4. An agency working with a person the agency considers may qualify under paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 must make a formal request for a decision to the relevant local authority. The relevant local authority is the authority for the area where the person resides at the time.
- 1.6 An application made by an agency under 3.3 or 3.4 must be made on an 'exception request form', and example of which is attached to this document. The form should be submitted to the relevant council at the earliest opportunity, and certainly within five days of the agency having started to work with the client.
- 1.7 Each application of the kind referred to in 3.3 and 3.4 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](#).
- 1.8 Single homeless people not in priority need with a local connection may be eligible for the Single Homeless Service. If eligible, it may be necessary for the authority to secure short-term accommodation until permanent accommodation is available. All authorities in the sub region have agreed to provide such short term accommodation, as outlined at [Appendix 3: Emergency Accommodation Protocol](#).

Section 4: Reconnection

- 1.1 A key principle of this policy is that it is not acceptable for people to sleep rough anywhere in the sub-region.
- 1.2 All newly-presenting rough sleepers will be quickly assessed and, if not in priority need, will have their local connection status determined according to Section 3 of this policy.
- 1.3 A person determined under Section 3 as not locally connected to the sub-region should be reconnected (see 2.3).
- 1.4 Such a person's access to local housing services will be limited to what is required to achieve the reconnection, and time-limited to how long it will reasonably take to make the assessment and make suitable arrangements with any 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.

- 1.5 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.**
- 1.6 Any person returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region within 28 days of an arranged reconnection will not undergo a formal reassessment and may not be permitted access to services (subject to the same exception as in paragraph 4.4). However, contact will be maintained by an identified lead professional where ever possible.
- 1.7 Anyone returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region more than 28 days after an arranged reconnection will be reassessed from first principles.

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.

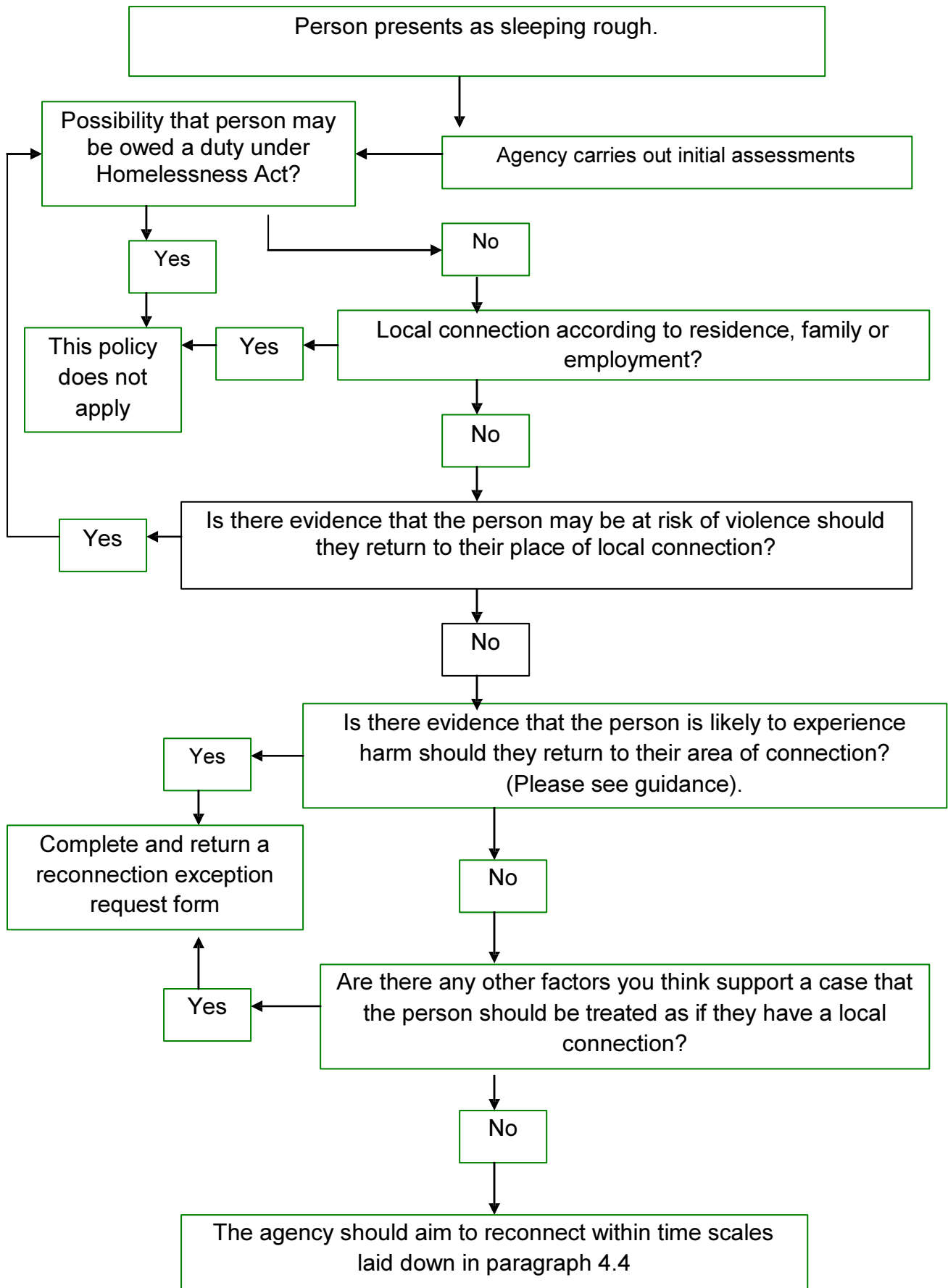
4. Risk of harm and other considerations

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. For Cambridge City this 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 and are vulnerable as a consequence. 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.

Specimen Form

Reconnection Exception Request

Date		Worker name:	
Client Name:		Date of Birth	

Please say on what grounds this exception request is being made:

Housing history (past five years)

Accommodation	Location	Date in	Date out with reason

Family connections and residency outside the sub region.

Client history

Please detail work done to reconnect this client

Why has this work failed?

Please provide here any further information

Future Plans

Decision and reasons	
Decision made by:	
Date of decision	

Appendix 3

Single Homeless Service

Emergency Accommodation Protocol

This document sets out the sub regional Emergency Accommodations Protocol. It outlines the essential definitions and to whom the policy applies, and within the context to which 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. The advice and assistance letter at [Appendix 4](#) will be used to outline the advice and assistance given.

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. It is expected that the assessor will try to negotiate an extension of stay with the client's most recent accommodation provider i.e. family or friends. The client's personal safety must be considered if securing an extension of stay. Where this is not possible emergency 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. The provision of accommodation in this respect will be offered under S192 of the Housing Act 1996 Part 7 (as amended by the 2002 Act). See [Appendix 5](#)

The use of emergency placements will be monitored and reported regularly to the sub regional homeless group.

This protocol will be periodically reviewed to ensure that it reflects the needs of the project. The review period is to be set by the sub regional homeless group.

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

- a) Make every reasonable effort to 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.....

Forest Heath District Council..... Name of

Officer.....

Date.....

St Edmundsbury District Council..... Name

of Officer.....

Date.....

Peterborough City Council..... Name of

Officer.....

Date.....

Fenland District Council..... Name

of Officer.....

Date.....

Appendix 4

Advice and Assistance Letter

Name of local authority

Address and branding to be included

Date:

Reference number:

Dear

On *{Insert date}* you approached the Council for assistance with regard to your housing situation.

This letter sets out the advice and assistance we discussed to assist you in resolving your housing need. You may wish to take this letter to other agencies or organisations who are supporting you so that they are aware of the advice you have been given.

1. Your situation

From our basic assessment we believe your situation to be as follows:

2. Homelessness application

Option 1: *The Council has considered a homelessness application from you. The Council has concluded that it is not under a duty to accommodate you under the provisions of homelessness legislation and I would refer you to our letter that was sent to you on [date] in which the Council outlined the reasons for its decision. The letter informs you of your right to request a review of the decision.*

Option 2: Based on our initial assessment, we advised you that an application for assistance under the provisions of homelessness legislation was not the most appropriate way to resolve your housing situation because {insert reason}. You are still entitled to make a formal application for homelessness assistance.

3. Meeting your immediate housing need

Having discussed your current circumstances with you, the table below sets out the actions that need to be taken to resolve your immediate housing issue (including remaining within your current accommodation if appropriate) and other related needs:

Action to be taken	Date of action	By whom	Other Agency actions
<i>IE Referral to Private Rented Scheme (include specific details)</i>	<i>Immediate referral. Follow up on 12/12/12</i>	<i>Housing Options</i>	
<i>Attend appointment with supported accommodation provider.</i>	<i>12/12/12</i>	<i>Insert name of homeless person</i>	

You have given us consent to contact other agencies on your behalf.

You have follow up appointments with:

{Insert details of time, location, agency name, individual name and contact details}

4. Preventing rough sleeping

The actions outlined above will address your housing need both in the short and medium term. The advice and assistance given, if followed, should ensure that your homelessness is prevented or resolved and that you do not therefore have to sleep rough.

Following our discussion today and the actions taken you will be staying in the following location tonight:

5. Longer term housing needs

In order to address your longer term housing needs and to prevent future homelessness we have agreed that the following steps need to be taken:

Action to be taken	Date of action	By whom	Other Agency actions

6. On-going support and an update review of the advice and assistance you have received

Should you wish to discuss your case further with regard to changes in your circumstances or if any of the above is unclear is, your named contact is:
{insert name and appropriate contact details}

The complaints procedure if you are not happy with the advice you have received today is:

{insert details}

A copy of this letter will be kept by the local authority in case you lose this copy or you have cause to come back, so we may consider the steps that have been taken and any further action that is necessary to prevent you being homeless.

Yours sincerely,



Appendix 5

S.192 Duty to persons not in priority need who are not homeless intentionally.

- (1) This section applies where the local housing authority—
 - (a) are satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance, and (b) are not satisfied that he became homeless intentionally, but are not satisfied that he has a priority need.
- (2) The authority shall provide the applicant with (or secure that he is provided with) advice and assistance] in any attempts he may make to secure that accommodation becomes available for his occupation.
- (3) The authority may secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant.]
- (4) The applicant's housing needs shall be assessed before advice and assistance is provided under subsection (2).
- (5) The advice and assistance provided under subsection (2) must include information about the likely availability in the authority's district of types of accommodation appropriate to the applicant's housing needs (including, in particular, the location and sources of such types of accommodation).]