



Cambridge City Council Reconnection Policy and Procedure

April 2016

The status and scope of this document

- 1.1 This document sets out Cambridge City Council’s 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 we think 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 policy supersedes all earlier versions of the Council’s reconnections policy. **The main difference between this and earlier versions is that from 1 April 2016 only people from Huntingdonshire or South Cambridgeshire will be able to access Cambridge services on an equal basis to Cambridge-connected people. (Under the previous version all authorities in the Cambridge sub-region¹ had equal status).**
- 1.4 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.
- 2.2 In the context of this policy, ‘reconnection’ means the process by which a person who is sleeping rough in Cambridge and who does not have a local connection to Huntingdonshire or South Cambridgeshire is helped to secure suitable accommodation in their area of local connection, or in some other location.
- 2.3 This policy does **not** concern individuals to whom the Council may owe a housing duty under the Housing Act 1996.
- 2.4 This policy uses the same definition of local connection as is found in Section 199 of the Housing Act 1996 and further defined by [Section 4 of Annex 18](#) the Homelessness Guide for Local Authorities. That definition is set out in [Appendix One](#).

¹ Cambridge City Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
St Edmundsbury District Council
Forest Heath District Council
Peterborough City Council
Fenland District Council

- 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 single homelessness service.

3. The purpose of the reconnection policy

- 3.1 Cambridge City Council, and its 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 their 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. However, Cambridge 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 also 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 quickly, before a person begins to develop habits associated with a street-based lifestyle.

- 3.3 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 (or people exempted from this process under paragraph 4.2 below) will therefore be limited to what is necessary to achieve this end.

4. Key principles of the policy.

- 4.1 A person sleeping rough with a connection to Huntingdonshire or South Cambridgeshire will be treated as eligible for single homeless services in Cambridge on the same basis as Cambridge-connected people. Similarly, Cambridge people will have equal status with Huntingdonshire or South Cambridgeshire people should they seek services in these districts. However, agencies working with rough sleepers will be expected to attempt to reconnect a person to the 'home' authority as a first priority, unless there is a risk of harm to the individual by doing so.

- 4.2 Access to services may also be gained by people who are not connected to the sub-region but who are at risk of harm (including a risk to their general welfare) should they have to return to their area of local connection. (See Appendix 1 (4)). A further cause for exception may also be made for people who are unable to qualify as being locally connected to anywhere.
- 4.3 Each case of the kind referred to in 4.2 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*.
- 4.4 An exception under 4.2 must be agreed with Cambridge City Council. 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.
- 4.5 Jimmy's will remain open to all-comers.
- 4.6 Cambridge Youth Foyer, as a fully funded project, is open only to Cambridge City-connected people.
- 4.7 New rough sleepers without a connection to Cambridge, Huntingdonshire or South Cambridgeshire, and unlikely to meet the criteria for consideration as an exception under paragraph 4.2 may 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. The target time from first encounter to reconnection is five days unless the individual has been admitted into Jimmy's, in which case a 28 day reconnection target will apply.
- 4.8 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 emergency provision.
- 4.9 Any person returning to rough sleeping in Cambridge or the sub-region within 28 days of an arranged reconnection will not be reassessed and will not be permitted access to services.
- 4.10 Anyone returning to rough sleeping in Cambridge, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire 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 Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire is gained in the following ways:

1. Residence

A person is normally resident within Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire.

‘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 Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire .

3. Family associations

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

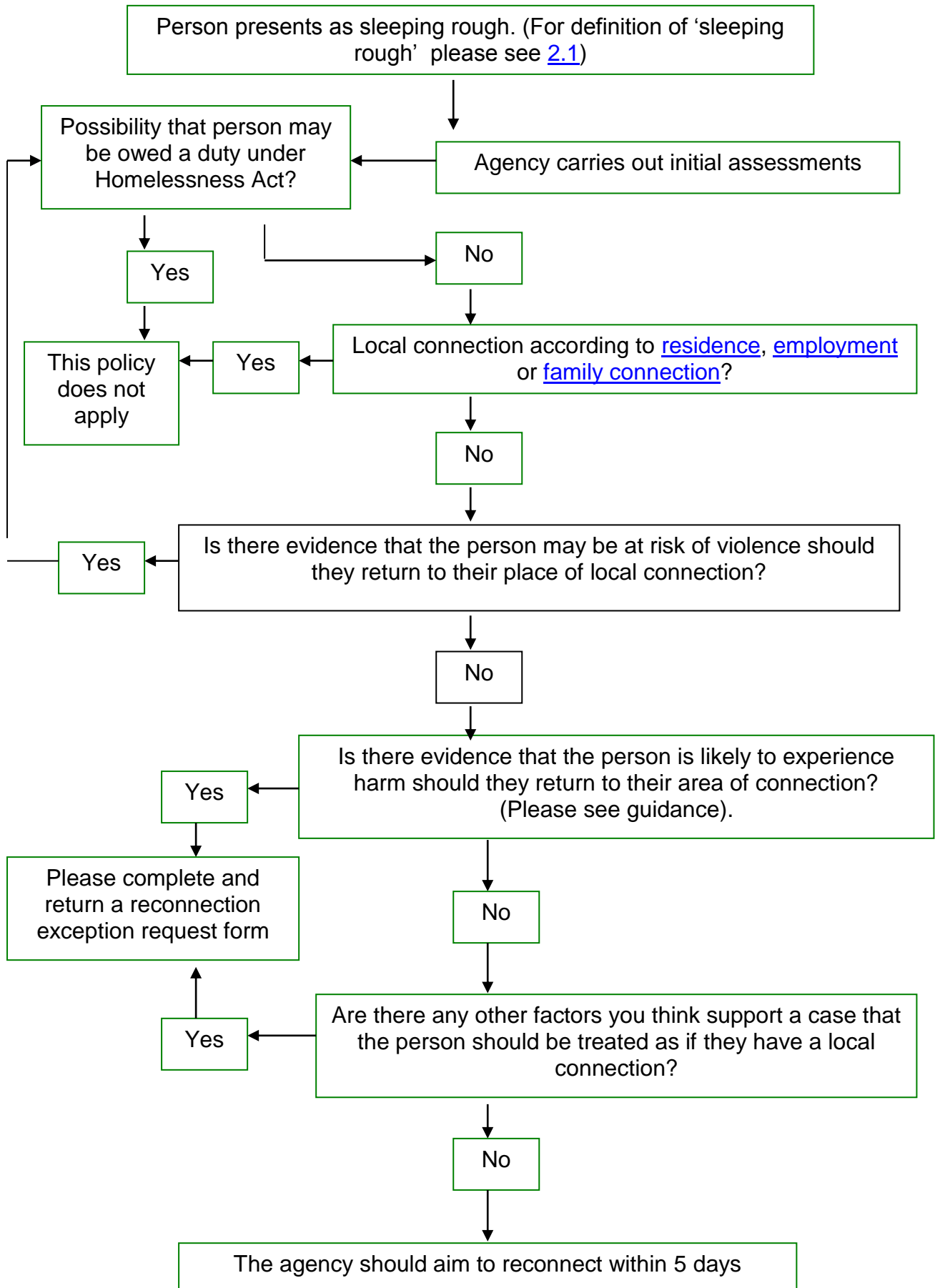
4. Risk of harm and other considerations

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 Cambridge 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, case workers 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.

Family connections and residency outside Cambridge

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	