

EFFECTIVE ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS

RECONNECTING ROUGH SLEEPERS



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM OF THIS GUIDE

This is a guide to reconnecting rough sleepers, drawing from the learning and practices in reconnecting people undertaken within the London No Second Night Out Pilot. It is intended to support local authorities (LAs) and their partners to develop this part of the service offer for people new to the streets with connections in another area as part of the No Second Night Out standard.

‘No second night out’ is a pledge that we make to people new to the streets and is part of a commitment to ending rough sleeping. At Homeless Link we believe that to tackle rough sleeping once and for all, society needs to focus its energy on meeting four simple pledges:

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.

This guidance focuses predominantly on the first pledge, that no one new to the streets should spend a second night out; reconnection as a response may also meet other pledges.

In its strategy, ***Vision for ending rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide***, the Government has called on every local authority to adopt the No Second Night Out standard¹. Every community is different, so how each one achieves this will be different, however in the strategy the Government notes that this requires communities having the right services in place, so that:

- ♦ New rough sleepers can be identified and helped off the streets immediately;
- ♦ The public can alert services if they see anyone sleeping rough so they get help;
- ♦ Rough sleepers can go to a place of safety, where their needs can be assessed and they can get help;
- ♦ Rough sleepers are able to get emergency accommodation and other services they need; and
- ♦ Rough sleepers from outside the area can be reconnected with their community, where they can be near family and friends, and can get housing and support.

Practical tools (including a search function to help you find services in all areas of England) can also be found at: www.reconnect.homeless.org.uk

¹ It is important to recognise that the Government strategy is distinct from the London No Second Night Out Pilot; whilst the pilot shares the same principles, it is important to recognise that it is not wholly replicable and areas will need to develop locally appropriate responses.

2. DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES OF RECONNECTION

2.1 DEFINITION

Reconnection is the process by which people sleeping rough who have a connection to another area where they can access accommodation and/or social, family and support networks, are supported to return to this area in a planned way.

Many people who are rough sleeping in central London and other cities around the country do not originate in these areas and have recently moved from another area of that city, an area of England or another country. Reconnection interventions should take place for rough sleepers, particularly new arrivals, who have a link with an area where they have accommodation, employment, support networks (friends or family) or another connection. In this context reconnection of single homeless people is likely to be an intervention outside of statutory homelessness legislation and should not be confused with referrals made under the legislation for those in priority need.

It will not be appropriate to reconnect every rough sleeper or single homeless person with out-of-area connections. An individual not having a local connection with the area where they present should not be an obstacle to being assessed and offered advice and assistance which may include support with a referral to services in their local area. In particular, where a local housing authority has accepted a duty to secure accommodation for a rough sleeper or single homeless person under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, reconnections policies should not be applied (although local connections provisions under the homelessness legislation may be relevant).

As part of a range of measures to tackle rough sleeping, reconnection plays an important role in reducing rough sleeping and it helps to:

- prevent people rough sleeping at an early stage becoming entrenched with all associated health and other problems
- enable people to move away from the street through accessing accommodation and support in a known area
- ensure agencies provide a coordinated multi-agency approach to support
- make sure that there are enough resources for to meet local need.

2.2 PRINCIPLES OF RECONNECTION

It is important that services who undertake reconnection follow the following principles in developing a strategy and in practice.

- Identifying new rough sleepers and reconnecting rapidly before people become entrenched in a street lifestyle is a vital part of a successful reconnection.
- Reconnection must not be used in isolation and should never just be a ticket home. Used in isolation, reconnection may not be sufficient to prevent that person being homeless, and it is important to take steps to look at what other support needs an individual has that has led to them being homeless in the first place.
- Reconnection involves both challenging individuals about the unacceptability of remaining on the streets in an area where they do not have support in place, *and* challenging services in the area they are connected to take responsibility for supporting them.
- Reconnection can include a limitless range of interventions. People can be reconnected to family, friends, the private rented sector, supported accommodation projects, LA temporary accommodation, tied work with accommodation, therapeutic communities, detox or rehab programmes and more. Reconnection can be to international or national destinations.
- Reconnection involves building an offer for each individual that is credible and realistic, based on assessment and includes the support required to ensure that the individual will not sleep

rough in your area or elsewhere. In some cases people will refuse the offer and multi-agency work needs to take place to ensure it is reiterated. It may need to be revised at a later point if circumstances change.

- If an individual cannot return due to a real threat in the area they have left, that is evidenced through contact with the police or other agencies in the area this has taken place, then the area where the individual is presenting should provide support and accommodation.

3. THE RECONNECTION PROCESS

There are a number of elements that are required to make the process of reconnection successful. Where they do not relate directly to reconnection, but involve developing the wider response, please refer to the guidance provides links to the Guidance on Adopting the No Second Night Out Approach: <http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action/NSNO>.

3.1 IDENTIFYING NEW ROUGH SLEEPERS

Identifying new rough sleepers and reconnecting rapidly before people become entrenched in a street lifestyle is a vital part of a successful reconnection. Guidance on developing local protocols to involve local partners and engaging with public in order to find people quickly can be found at within Adopting the No Second Night Out Approach.

3.2 ASSESSING NEEDS QUICKLY AND SAFELY

New rough sleepers need to have their needs assessed and options identified quickly and safely to prevent them from remaining rough sleeping. All local authorities need to have a means to do this as soon as possible after a rough sleeper has been referred. As we can expect referrals to be made when people are seen sleeping out, this means any service responding to this must be available late at night, in early mornings, or throughout the night. The extent to which this is currently available will differ, but local authorities should consider where may be appropriate to deliver this service. This could include using the office base of an existing outreach service, a day centre, drop-in or advice service, a night shelter or direct access accommodation.

The place for assessment should be easy to access (a phone call rather than a more traditional referral/application process) and not involve prior risk assessment, as this will be part of the assessment process. There should be as few barriers as possible for access (including allowing access to people who are dependent on substances, have dogs or have no recourse to public funds).

Wherever the assessments will take place, the following are essential criteria:

- Staffing experience and levels to undertake quick and thorough assessments
- Enough private space for assessments
- Relevant insurance etc to deliver a service
- Accessibility at times when rough sleepers are likely to be referred
- Access to phone (including the ability to make international calls) and computer to ensure correct numbers and addresses and the ability to verify the information given
- Language should not be a barrier; use of telephone translation and/or 'Google translate' is a must.

Local authorities will also need to develop a process for transporting clients to the assessment.

In London, the pilot project established a fit-for-purpose assessment hub to fulfil this role. More information is contained within Adopting the No Second Night Out Approach.

3.3 TRANSLATION

Language should never become a barrier to assessment or reconnection. It is possible to set up an account with telephone translation companies, use staff within your organisation and in many cases Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com>) can be used where people are able to read and write.

Learning from the London Pilot

The No Second Night out hub in London set up a partnership with the London Reconnection Team, who speak most European languages and could be contacted by phone and provided a regular surgery. They specialise in central and Eastern European clients who are regularly found rough sleeping in London.

3.4 THE FACE TO FACE ASSESSMENT

In some cases assessments will require much more than a one-off process; in complex cases there should be space for the assessment process to be ongoing as the picture given in the first hour may change (IE as you get a clearer picture of support needs or housing history).

Most importantly in terms of reconnection, assessment must include the following:

- Correct identity and demographics (ensuring name and DOB are precise)
- Immigration status and whether the client has entitlement to public funds, including how long they have been in the UK
- Support needs (such as mental and physical health and substance use)
- Full housing history over 5 years (ideally this must include accurate dates, full addresses and the local authority areas these fall within)
- Data to inform planning of prevention activities, such as what they consider to be their last settled home, other places they have stayed and the reason people have lost their accommodation.
- Risk assessment and mitigating factors, as this will be required to refer people on to other services
- Ideally you will get signed consent to speak to other agencies to support the reconnection - although if there are obvious concerns, an organisational decision should be made to make enquiries without this in place. Through our Critical Mass project, Homeless Link has produced an Ethics Toolkit to support organisation to develop consent and confidentiality procedures: <http://homeless.org.uk/toolkits-and-handbooks/critical-mass/ethics-main>

A sample assessment form is available at Annex One.

3.5 VERIFICATION OF ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

In order to reconnect rapidly, it is crucial to verify the information that you have received from the client in order to:

- ensure the details are correct (e.g. dates being accurate),
- get formal confirmation in writing (e.g. medical information from their GP),
- ascertain if there are any support needs/risk not disclosed by the client.

This should be done as soon as soon as possible. In order to avoid delay, faxed and emailed requests can be sent at any time, including nights and weekends to be followed up during office hours.

A sample Information Request letter is attached as Annex Two.

3.6 TABLE OF INFORMATION NEEDED FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES

Contact	When needed	What information required
GP Surgery	If client has any medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates of registration Details of medical conditions/medication Confirmation in writing of why homelessness would have an adverse effect on their conditions
Hospital	If client has had admissions or is being seen by a consultant for either physical or psychiatric conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates of admission/ engagement Details of medical conditions/medication Confirmation in writing of why homelessness would have an adverse effect on their conditions
Supported accommodation provider	When a client states they have stayed in an accommodation project in the last 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates of stays and whether their bed is still open Reasons for leaving and whether they can return Risk factors/support needs/other agency contacts
LA Housing Department/ Housing Association /private landlord	When a client states they hold or have held a tenancy in the last 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates of tenancies and whether it is still open Reasons for it ending and whether they can be offered another tenancy Risk factors/support needs/other agency contacts
LA Housing Options	When the client has approached the LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of approach and the outcome, such as whether a s.184 decision was made and the advice/assistance provided Confirmation of housing history/ local connection What support can be provided and what is the protocol for approaching them (appointment if possible)
Support or advice agencies	Where the client has engaged for support around drug and alcohol, mental health, sexual health, immigration etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates of registration/ engagement Details of the support need and risk Confirmation in writing of why homelessness would have an adverse effect on dealing with this issue
UKBA Local Immigration Team and/or immigration support agency	For all non-EU clients where there is no proof of leave to remain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of status/nationality The Local Immigration Team responsible, whether reporting arrangements are in place and whether these need to be reinitiated Likelihood of the client getting status or support
Local outreach team	When a client states they have slept rough or appears to have slept rough in another area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether they are known in the local area and confirmation of local connection Housing history and any accommodation open to them Engagement with any other services, support needs and risk
Embassy	Non-UK citizens who have not sought asylum. Useful when person wants a return/ needs documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What support can be provided, including tickets home Confirmation of circumstances at home (better in some than others) How to get travel documents
Supportive Friends or family members	With client permission and when client struggles to remember details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of housing history If they have previously accommodated why they can no longer do so (in writing if possible) What support they are able to provide

3.6 PROCURING SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There are key types of information that can support a rapid reconnection and provide a significant barrier to accommodation or travel if not procured.

Identification is required for almost all reconnections into accommodation and can pose a significant barrier when presenting at Housing Options Services or when using Private Rented Schemes. Sometimes people have left these documents with friends or family members and need support to travel to get them.

For non-UK citizens the best place to start is approaching their embassy. A list of embassies and consulates can be found here: <http://www.tlcuk.biz/uk-embassies>

For UK citizens the easiest ID to procure is a Birth Certificate. The information you will need about the client is full name, date of birth, place of birth, mother name (including maiden) and if possible father's name.

- Contact the General Records Office (www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/default.asp) by phone or by using the online ordering service. There is a standard (£9.40) and priority (£23.40) charge and you need a credit card to pay. You can easily set up an organisational account.
- Alternatively contact the Local Register Office in the place of birth. Sometimes this is quicker and cheaper, especially if the client goes there in person. <http://maps.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/MapAction.do?ref=grolight>
- There is a General Records Office for Scotland: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/contacts/opentime/index.html>
- There is a General Records Office for Northern Ireland: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/contacts/contacts-az.htm/general-register-office-for-northern-ireland>

Proof of benefits entitlement is important for entering most types of accommodation. If clients are eligible for support but do not have an active claim then they should be supported to do start a claim as soon as possible. Start the process preferably by contacting Jobcentre Plus by phone (0800 055 6688), informing them that you are of no fixed abode or start a claim online: <https://www.dwpe-services.direct.gov.uk/portal/page/portal/jsaol/lp>. If the client is supported to start the claim it may be possible to get the earliest possible Jobcentre Plus appointment at either the closest office or one closest to the area the client is being reconnected to depending on distance. If the client's claim has only recently stopped it is possible to get a Rapid Reclaim.

Once the claim has been made, contact the Jobcentre Plus regularly to ask for proof of benefits so that this can be used to secure accommodation.

Letters and supporting information (as listed above) are necessary for presenting at Housing Options Teams. The urgency of getting this information should be stressed and the request should be sent through in writing complete with signed consent and followed up by phone.

4. FORMING THE RECONNECTION OFFER AND GIVING A CLEAR MESSAGE

Once the information gathering is in process, it is important to start the process of forming the Reconnection Offer. This is a decision-making process based on the information above and informs the package that will be offered to the client. The client should be involved fully throughout the process and be encouraged to play a role in gathering information and taking responsibility.

4.1 THE SINGLE SERVICE OFFER

Once enough information is available, the individual should be given a single service offer. The single service offer should be a clear, individual message that should be credible and realistic, based on assessment and inclusive of the support required to ensure that the individual will not sleep rough in your area or elsewhere. If it is clear from the information gained that the best solution for the individual is a reconnection, it should include details of travel and should be an offer of accommodation and support elsewhere, not simply a ticket home. Even if an individual has accommodation they can return to (with family, friends or their own tenancy), this should be verified and support may be required to ensure that they do not repeat a move away from this accommodation to the streets. In other cases, following assessment, it may be that an offer of accommodation locally should be made (IE if an individual has a connection to the local area, is fleeing violence and this has been evidenced or they have no connection anywhere).

4.2 REFUSAL OF THE SINGLE SERVICE OFFER

If people refuse the single service offer, it is important to have engagement from all local services to continue to reiterate the message and coordinated work should take place to impose some limits on access to local services for people who refuse in order to remain on the streets (this may include on going assessment of mental health). There should be both recourse for people to challenge their single service offer and an agreed time period for local agencies to review the offer if people become entrenched, have deterioration in health or another significant change in circumstance.

4.3 TYPES OF RECONNECTION OFFERS

There are a number of types of reconnection, that may form the Single Service Offer and those laid out in the following table are generalisations and example interventions rather than an exhaustive list and in some cases people will fall into more than one grouping. Your resources and the level of support needs of the client will determine the extent to which an individual is escorted to accommodation or support.

4.4 TABLE OF RECONNECTION OFFERS

Situation	Potential Reconnection Offer	Hints and tips
UK national, low support needs, identified local connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral to Private Rented Sector (PRS) Scheme in LA where local connection is held (if available), by contacting the Housing Options service in the first instance. Search for schemes via: http://www.privaterentedsector.org.uk/ If this is not available, it may be possible to refer to a scheme needing no local connection in a nearby area (i.e. there are some London-wide schemes). Be aware that for people under 25, and from January 2012, people under 35, will only be entitled to the Shared Room Rate under the Local Housing Allowance. Support to reconnect with family and friends (if young person, possible referral to mediation service) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an individual is planning to access PRS, they will need ID and proof of benefits. See section on procuring supporting information. Clients should be supported to lead on finding properties/ attending viewings with support to use internet and phone. Unless property is not fit for habitation, the property viewed will equate to be the single Reconnection Offer. Where possible volunteers or staff can support with viewings. Emergency accommodation is required until client moves into accommodation
UK national, medium support needs, possible to identify a connection to a local authority area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An offer will often be on the basis of what is available in the LA area: In some LAs there is a pathway in place to support access to emergency accommodation or specialist services; this may be coordinated by an outreach team or a team within the LA. If reconnecting to an area where no pathway exists, a phone call should be made prior to presentation at the LA Housing Options. Judgement is to be made on whether to advise presentation without advocacy, on the basis of whether an appointment has been made and the extent to which it seems that they will be supported. If medium support needs then a Homelessness Application should still be requested, but if found not to have duty there should be an emphasis on asking what hostel accommodation/PRS with support is available. Also use the Reconnection Portal (www.reconnect.homeless.org.uk) to look at accommodation projects available to people in each local area and make direct referrals. This may be a place where someone has had a previous stay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish partnership working protocols with pathways where you regularly reconnect people to where possible. Whether presenting with a client or send them to present without support, writing a supporting letter setting out the client's issues and connection to the area (set out under the terms of the Housing Act) is useful. The final offer cannot be made until accommodation has been found.
UK national, high support needs, has a local connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even when an individual has high support needs, the reconnection offer rests on the basis of what is available in the LA: In some areas there is a pathway in place or an agreement to refer through the outreach team. The offer may be a place at an accommodation project with support through this pathway. If no pathway, an approach should be made to the LA where the individual has a local connection, preceded by a phone call and with the information-gathering set out above completed to the best of your ability. Escorting and advocating leads to the best results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing a supporting letter setting out the client's issues and connection to the area (set out under the terms of the Housing Act) is useful. The final offer cannot be made until accommodation has been found Please note, it is important to balance information gathering this with making the approach earlier rather than later, as the onus is on the local authority to investigate

<p>UK national, where difficult to establish a local connection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation with friends or family • Hostels that don't require local connection, as close to where connections or support are available as possible • Communities outside the LA commissioning structure, such as Emmaus Communities • PRS, through a scheme not requiring local connection • Finding tied accommodation with employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local connection is about working with the client to agree what area they have connections to so that they are most likely to be successful in moving away from rough sleeping. This could converge with local connection as defined by homelessness legislation (such as residence for 6 out of 12 months, or 3 out of 5 years) or take into account contact with services, employment or connections with supportive friends or family. • Use Homeless UK to search for accommodation: www.homelessuk.org • To find tied accommodation with employment try the following: http://www.workabout.uk.com/home.aspx, www.gumtree.com http://www.jobisjob.co.uk/accommodation-provided/jobs
<p>European Economic Area Nationals (EU + Denmark, Iceland and Lichtenstein) but Romanian and Bulgarian Nationals have certain restrictions</p>	<p>If EEA nationals have recently arrived in the UK and become a rough sleeper then the first offer should always be reconnection back to the home country or a country where they have support and accommodation available. Length of time in the UK and entitlement will influence whether an offer within the UK is made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person has friends and family (in the UK or in another EU country) they should be encouraged to make contact and if they do not have housing or support then the offer must include finding accommodation and referral to support. There are specialist teams who work with EEA nationals, but it is also possible to research and organise an intervention inhouse. Once a plan is in place and travel/support has been booked and organised people will need to be accommodated in short term accommodation. • If the person is in receipt of welfare benefits then the same course of action should be followed as with a UK National depending on need, to ascertain a connection to an area and refer people to a local service. • If someone has high support needs then they will need to pass the test of eligibility for housing support. EEA (excluding Romanians and Bulgarians) nationals may be entitled to support and the variables include whether they have permanent right of residence (residing for 5 years and exercising treaty rights), whether they are a worker (this includes people who are temporarily unable to work, have worked for at least a year and are now registered as a jobseeker). Although the Workers Registration Scheme is no longer in place for A8 nationals, whether people have been registered on it will be important for a local authority when investigating eligibility. • If low support needs and in receipt of benefits then PRS may be the offer. Information about eligibility for Housing Benefit can be found here: http://www.housing-rights.info/02_2_4_HB_eligibility.html#EEA-nationals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wealth of information can be found at: www.routeshome.org.uk • For more information look at Chapter 9 and Annex 12 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance. • More information here: http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/eu_and_ea_nationals/eligibility_for_housing_and_benefits#2 • If a JSA claim has not been made, or if it was very recent, then the length of time that this would be pending means that to ensure the person is not sleeping rough, reconnection may still be the best offer to make. It is important to give people a realistic message about how long a claim takes (6 weeks minimum) and the potential barriers to a successful claim. A guide to EEA entitlement is available at: http://homeless.org.uk/effective-action.

A2 Nationals (Romanian and Bulgarian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an A2 national becomes homeless and is not in work or recently in work, a reconnection offer (as above) is the best realistic option to ensure they are not rough sleeping. This could be to an area where they have family or connections as well as the home country. If in work or have worked legally without interruption for 12 months, then offers can include PRS or support to access supported accommodation depending on connection to an area. 	<p>A2 nationals cannot access benefits whilst looking for work (but they can receive in-work benefits) and are only permitted to work in certain circumstances. A2 nationals seeking work cannot access benefits unless they have been working legally without interruption for 12 months.</p> <p>In addition, most A2 nationals must have obtained an Accession Worker Authorisation Document before they commence employment. A2s, like all EU citizens have the right to establish themselves in other Member States as self-employed. Self-employed A2 nationals do not have to obtain a work permit but must register with the Inland Revenue.</p>
Refugees, failed asylum seekers, irregular migrants, over stayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If people have been turned down for asylum, destitute people can apply for Section 4 support, but they have to meet strict requirements. See: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum/support/apply/section4/ Refugee Action operates an Assisted Voluntary Return Service for asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, people with no legal status and people with discretionary leave to remain. As well as travel and documents, people who have been in the asylum system can receive a grant to help them resettle. Details at: http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/ourwork/assistedvoluntaryreturn.aspx 	<p>Once information such as status has been confirmed with UKBA/ voluntary sector refugee support agencies/ solicitors a judgement on the offer needs to be made based on the likelihood and timescale of getting status. However, it is important to recognise that we are in no way giving expert advice, rather making the decision based on consultation with the above agencies.</p>
Individuals who are under 18 years of age	<p>Liaison with Social Services must take place to arrange accommodation and support, which may include a reconnection or family mediation. This may include accommodating the parent or guardian if the young person or child is sleeping rough with family members. If the local area is organising a designated assessment site, then inhouse protocols for Child Protection should be followed.</p>	

5. APPROACHING A LOCAL AUTHORITY

5.1 THE APPROACH

When approaching a LA, think about the following:

- Know what you are asking for. Although under homelessness legislation anyone can approach a Local Authority (LA) to make a homelessness application and /or for advice and assistance, it is worth weighing up when to approach and for what.
- Balance the need to continue to demand services with allocating time and energy when you have a reasonable chance of someone having a duty to be accommodated. However, remember that the onus is on the LA to investigate someone's situation.
- Call ahead and try to get an emergency appointment or at least a named appointment. Check what involvement they have had with the person. Ideally have a route agreed so that you don't have to go through the initial screening interview (this could take half a day in some cases) If no appointment and just advised to present, get there early – in one local authority you have to be there half an hour before office opens in order to get seen at all that day.
- Know the Code of Guidance inside out - take a copy with you. Find it at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode>. Use Shelter's Website for updates and clear explanations of areas of housing law: <http://england.shelter.org.uk/>
- Take documentation with you, as outlined in the Procuring Supporting Information Section. It is suggested that you prepare by writing a supporting letter covering the Homelessness Criteria and setting out the circumstances in full as a good preparation.
- Escorting clients leads to much better outcomes (The London NSNO pilot found that there were examples of clients getting accommodated when escorted who were turned away previously when presenting on their own)
- Start off taking a listening/passive approach and always use flattery. Challenge and assertiveness is always the later response.

5.2 HOMELESSNESS CRITERIA

The kind of homelessness assistance a person is entitled to depends on their circumstances and how they became homeless. The Housing Act 1996 (amended 2002) states that enquiries must be made by a local authority about all homeless applicants to establish if they have a duty to help, and if so, what kind of help they should give. Every Council must, by law, ensure that enquiries are made into all homeless applications.

1. Is the person Homeless?

The Housing Act 1996 (amended 2002) states that a person is homeless if they have no accommodation available in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. This means that if a person has suitable accommodation anywhere in the world, which is available to them, they are NOT homeless.

A person will also be considered to be homeless if they have accommodation available to them but:

- It is not reasonable to live there with people who would normally live with them as members of their family. This includes partners, children and carers.
- They are not legally entitled to occupy it because they have a court order requiring them to leave, or they are a tenant with no right to remain where they are.
- Their accommodation is not reasonable for them to occupy. For example, it is in poor physical condition, and is beyond reasonable repair.
- They are at risk from violence in the property.

2. Is the person eligible for assistance?

Whether or not a person is eligible for assistance depends on their immigration status, and whether they are 'habitually resident' in the UK. Eligibility is quite a complicated area but generally speaking the rules are as follows:

UK Citizens

A [homeless](#) British citizen who is living in the UK, and has not recently spent time living abroad will be eligible for assistance.

EEA Nationals (EU nationals plus people from Denmark, Iceland and Liechtenstein), other than A2 nationals – see below

All EEA nationals have the right to look for work. However, this does not mean that they will be eligible for assistance. An EU or EEA national you will only be eligible for assistance if they are :

- a worker - ie a person who has actually worked (periods of illness, unemployment and vocational training are still treated as work). Work does not need to be full-time – if they are doing genuine part-time work but you need to top up your income with state benefits they can still be classed as a worker, or
- a worker who has had to stop work because of permanent incapacity and they have lived in the UK for more than 2 years, or
- a worker who has had to stop work because of permanent incapacity for work resulting from an industrial illness or disease that entitled them to a full pension from a UK institution, or
- self-employed, or
- a worker or a self-employed person who has retired after having worked in the UK for at least 12 months and you have lived in the UK for at least 3 years, or
- self-sufficient, or
- a student with comprehensive insurance who is self-sufficient, or
- someone who has been here lawfully, exercising EU rights for 5 years continuously.

There are exceptions to these rules, so it's best to do a bit of research with any complicated cases.

A2 workers

The rules are different for people from Bulgaria and Romania. Unless a person from Bulgaria or Romania is working and registered with the Home Office they will not usually be eligible for assistance.

Other people from abroad

People who are not British citizens or who are not from an EU/ or EEA country are not normally eligible for assistance. However, there are exceptions to this.

A person will probably be eligible if, they:

- have been granted exceptional leave to remain in the UK
- have indefinite leave to enter or remain ('settled status')
- are a refugee who has been granted asylum

Habitual residence

If a person has recently come to the UK or is a British Citizen returning to the UK after a period of time abroad, they will be subject to the Habitual Residence test. As part of this the council will investigate the person's reasons for coming to the UK and their ties to this country. Annex 10 in The Code of Guidance goes into detail about the HRT and is worth looking at if any cases come up involving this.

3. Is the person in priority need?

A local authority will only have a duty to provide immediate temporary accommodation for people

who are homeless, eligible for assistance and who may be in priority need.

A person is considered to be in priority need if they:

- have dependant children living with them or have dependent children who might reasonably be expected to live with them.
- are pregnant.
- are vulnerable as a result of old age (people over 60 may be considered vulnerable), mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason
- are 16 or 17 years of age.
- are homeless as a result of flood, fire or other disaster
- are age 18 - 20 and are a care leaver
- are vulnerable as a result of leaving prison or the armed services or they have spent time in care when they were younger and are now over the age of 21.

The critical test for vulnerability is whether the applicant is less able to fend for him/herself so that he/she will suffer injury or detriment, in circumstances where a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effects.

If a person is not "in priority need" they are entitled to advice and assistance to help them find their own accommodation. There are no rules about what "advice and assistance" means and this can vary depending on the local authority involved.

If a local authority has a reason to believe that a person is homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need they should provide interim accommodation, whilst they investigate the situation.

It is important to note that a local authority only needs to have a "reason to believe" that a person is homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need in order for them to have a duty to provide interim accommodation. This should mean that they do not require a huge amount of proof of medical conditions etc. However in practice this is not always the case.

4. Is the person intentionally homeless?

The local authority will investigate whether a person is "intentionally homeless". In order to make an intentionally homeless decision local authority will need to be satisfied that the person has deliberately done or failed to do something and as a result of this they have lost suitable accommodation that would have been available to them

For example, you could be "intentionally homeless" if you:

- sell or give up your home when there is no need to and you do not find other suitable accommodation before you sell or give up your home.
- do not pay your rent or mortgage repayments when you can afford to.
- ignore housing advice, which would have prevented the loss of your home.
- are evicted because of anti-social behaviour.

If a person is intentionally homeless then they are entitled to advice and assistance from the council. They should also be entitled to accommodation for a reasonable period of time, usually 28 days, while they find accommodation of their own.

5. Does the person have a "Local Connection"?

A person will usually have a local connection if:

- They have lived in the area for at least 6 out of the past 12 months, or 3 out of the last 5 years.
- They are employed in the area
- They have close family living in the area, who have lived there for at least five years
- There are other special circumstances, which connect the person to the area.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF HOMELESSNESS CRITERIA

The implications for individuals of passing the tests set out above are as follows:

- If the local authority investigates the circumstances of an applicant and is satisfied that they fall under **all of the above categories**, in sequential order, then they have a responsibility to **house them for two years**
- If a person is homeless, in priority need and **intentionally homeless** with a local connection, the local authority has a responsibility to **house them for 28 days**
- If a person is homeless and priority need but **without a local connection**, the local authority will **refer the person to their local authority with whom a connection is held**, or accept responsibility if no connection is held with any other authority. In cases where the person is referred back, the second authority is bound by the decision of the first
- If the person is homeless, but **not in priority need**, the local authority will provide **assistance and advice**

APPENDIX ONE: ASSESSMENT FORM

Client information

Last name	
First name	
Other names/ nickname	
Location of rough sleeping	
Ask: If you hadn't been brought to the centre what steps would you have taken to solve your current rough sleeping crisis?	
Email address	
Phone number/s:	
Client address (if any)	

Assessment checklist

Ensure that you complete all sections on the form; areas of the form that are particularly important and are highlighted in red. Cross out sections that are not required.

- ☐ Ask for ID and take a copy – if no ID please ensure this is highlighted on the client action plan
- ☐ Ask for proof of benefits and take a copy – if unavailable, please highlight on client action plan
- ☐ Ensure that the risk assessment is completed (after the assessment)
- ☐ Ensure that the consent form is signed by the client.
- ☐ If client has no mobile offer Voicemail 4 All

Name of staff member completing assessment (full name)	
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Demographics

Date of birth	
Gender	Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/>
Preferred language	
Spoken English ability	
Country of origin	
Nationality	
Immigration status	
NI number	
Recourse to public funds	Yes / No
Does the client have ID (Please take a copy)	

Ethnic origin (if applicant is not willing to provide information, tick 'refused')

White - British	<input type="checkbox"/>	White - Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
White - Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British - Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or Asian British - Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Black British - African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or Black British - Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Black British - Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed - Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed - White & Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed - White & Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refused	<input type="checkbox"/>

Next of kin details (optional)

Last name			
First name			
Address			
Relationship		Telephone no.	

Institutional history

Armed forces	Y/N	Date last left armed forces: Estimated date last left:	
Care	Y/N	Date last left care: Estimated date last left:	
Prison	Y/N	Date last left prison Estimated date last left:	Please provide name of last prison *

Last accommodation details (tick all that apply)

Country	
Region (LA in UK or region in non-UK)	

Type:			
Private Rented <input type="checkbox"/>	Council Tenancy <input type="checkbox"/>	Supported Housing <input type="checkbox"/>	Foster Care <input type="checkbox"/>
Rehab Unit <input type="checkbox"/>	Hostel <input type="checkbox"/>	Friends/Family <input type="checkbox"/>	
Housing Association Tenancy <input type="checkbox"/>		Name of HA <input type="checkbox"/>	
Rough sleeping <input type="checkbox"/>	B & B <input type="checkbox"/>	Parental Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Hospital Ward <input type="checkbox"/>
NFA <input type="checkbox"/>	Foster Placement <input type="checkbox"/>	Residential Care <input type="checkbox"/>	Prison <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify.....		

Housing history (starting with most recent, last 5 years, or more if possible)

Accommodation type	Dates to and from	Reason for leaving

Client's local connection

Country	Area/LA.....
Reason for local connection:	
Previously/currently resident <input type="checkbox"/>	Family association <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/sibling <input type="checkbox"/>
Rough sleeping/street activity <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/> - please specify:
Contact with HPU/Housing options in last 12 months?	
If yes – where?	

Historical and current housing issues (tick or circle all that apply)

Never had independent accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Needs sheltered accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Had previous tied accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Sale of property <input type="checkbox"/>
History of rent arrears <input type="checkbox"/>	Needs supported accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Relationship breakdown <input type="checkbox"/>	Escaping violence* <input type="checkbox"/>
History of noise nuisance <input type="checkbox"/>	Evicted from previous accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Inability to cope <input type="checkbox"/>	Escaping sexual abuse/harassment <input type="checkbox"/>
Leaving residential care <input type="checkbox"/>	Hospital admission/discharge <input type="checkbox"/>	Mobility difficulties affecting access <input type="checkbox"/>	Anti-social behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>
Care leaver leaving foster care <input type="checkbox"/>	Prison discharge <input type="checkbox"/>	History of rough sleeping and street activity <input type="checkbox"/>	History of abandon tenancies <input type="checkbox"/>
Evicted - noise nuisance <input type="checkbox"/>	Evicted - rent arrears <input type="checkbox"/>	History of living in shared accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Overcrowding <input type="checkbox"/>
Current rent arrears <input type="checkbox"/>	Outstanding repairs issues <input type="checkbox"/>	Need additional security in home <input type="checkbox"/>	

Additional comments section (use this section to highlight any housing issues or any identified patterns in relation to the client's housing difficulties)

Length of time sleeping rough in current period of rough sleeping:				
1-2 Days <input type="checkbox"/>	3-7 days <input type="checkbox"/>	8 – 28 days <input type="checkbox"/>	1 -6 months <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 6 months <input type="checkbox"/>

New rough sleepers - places stayed 3 months prior to first contact

Type of accommodation	Location

If not as above, ask client to specify what was their last longer term or settled base

Type of accommodation	
Reason for leaving	
Location (LA or area)	

Support needs and medical details

GP details (practice address):

Primary support need

History of drug Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	dependency/use	<input type="checkbox"/>	Frail elderly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elderly with mental health needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rough sleeping/street activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentally disordered offender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical/sensory disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young person at risk (Under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young person (Care Leaver)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fleeing domestic violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ex or current offender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asylum seeker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Single homeless with support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lone teenage parent (16-18 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	HIV/AIDS	<input type="checkbox"/>

Secondary support needs

Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	History of drug dependency/use	<input type="checkbox"/>	Frail elderly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elderly with mental health needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rough sleeping/street activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mental disordered offender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical/sensory disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young person at risk (Under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young person (Care Leaver)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fleeing domestic violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ex or current offender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asylum Seeker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Single homeless with support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lone teenage parent (16-18 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	HIV/AIDS	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mental health details

MH diagnosis:				
MH checklist (key characteristics and support – tick all that may apply)				
Suicidal ideation <input type="checkbox"/>	Paranoid/delusional thoughts <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor anger management/impulsive behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>	Suicide attempts <input type="checkbox"/>	
Panic/anxiety attacks <input type="checkbox"/>	Social phobia <input type="checkbox"/>	Paranoia <input type="checkbox"/>	CPA level: standard <input type="checkbox"/>	
CPA level : Enhanced <input type="checkbox"/>	Schizophrenia <input type="checkbox"/>	Depression <input type="checkbox"/>	On depot <input type="checkbox"/>	
Receiving outpatient treatment <input type="checkbox"/>	Personality disorder <input type="checkbox"/>	Supported by Forensic MH Team <input type="checkbox"/>		
Contact details of Care Coordinator or other involved professional:				
Additional Notes				
Level of support needs assessment (mental health): High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> No need <input type="checkbox"/>				

Physical health issues

Physical diagnosis	
Physical health checklist (key characteristics and support – tick all that may apply)	

Sensory impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stroke	<input type="checkbox"/>	Motor-neurone disease	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobility difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue/tiredness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Out-patient hospital treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>
TB	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify			

Additional notes and details of current treatment

Level of support needs assessment (physical health):

High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ No need ☐

Substance dependency issues

Substance misuse checklist (key characteristics and support – tick all that may apply)

Alcohol dependent	<input type="checkbox"/>	IV drug use	<input type="checkbox"/>	On methadone maintenance/ reduction programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug dependent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completed rehab/ detox programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attending counselling/ day programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	Linked to CJIP/CARAT	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Level & pattern of **alcohol** use (state consumption and pattern):

Type of drug used

Heroin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Crack	<input type="checkbox"/>	Methadone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cocaine	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solvents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tranquillisers	<input type="checkbox"/>	CAT/KAT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amphetamines (speed)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Crystal Meth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other prescribed medication	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ketamine	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify:					

Frequency of drug use (tick one option only)

Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐

Additional notes

Level of support needs assessment (alcohol):

High ☐

Medium ☐

Low ☐

No need ☐

Level of support needs assessment (drugs):

High ☐

Medium ☐

Low ☐

No need ☐

Elderly person

Elderly/frail person checklist (key characteristics and support – tick all that may apply)

Mobility
difficulties ☐

Dementia ☐

Alzheimer's ☐

Victim of
physical abuse ☐

Risk of
isolation ☐

Poor hearing ☐

Poor sight ☐

Victim of
emotional abuse ☐

Adult protection
issue ☐

Additional notes

Ex-Offenders

Ex-offenders checklist (key characteristics and support – tick all that may apply. Mandatory if ex-offender)

Type of Licence or Supervision Order							
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Service Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	Automatic Conditional Release Licence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Probation Order/Community Sentence	
Young Offenders Institute Licence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discretionary Conditional Release Licence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Life Licence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extended Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section 42 (2) MHA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anti-Social Behaviour Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule 1 Offender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Known to MAPPA	<input type="checkbox"/>	High Risk/Dangerous Offender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date Licence/Supervision Order Ends:			
Additional notes (include details of offences and/or conditions on licence and contact details of Offender Manager and Prison Officer)							

Employment details (please include current and past employment and training details and volunteering experience)

Employment/training/education details	From	To	Reason for leaving

Welfare benefits and income details (ensure client provides proof)

Income type	Received since	Weekly amount	Proof confirmed	Notes

Is applicant submitting sickness certificates	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If 'yes', since when?	
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Has applicant successfully applied for money from the Social Fund in the last 6 months?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
---	--

Is the applicant likely to qualify for additional benefits/premiums?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--

Welfare benefit support needs (tick all that apply)

History of discontinued benefits <input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of benefit book <input type="checkbox"/>	Not claiming full benefit entitlement <input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty signing up for benefits <input type="checkbox"/>
Not linked to GP for sickness certificates <input type="checkbox"/>	Change of address details needed <input type="checkbox"/>	Currently not receiving any income <input type="checkbox"/>	No NI No <input type="checkbox"/>
Current payment through an appointee <input type="checkbox"/>	Not eligible for public funds <input type="checkbox"/>	Financial support via SSD <input type="checkbox"/>	

Has the applicant got any outstanding loans/debt? (If 'yes' complete below)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--

Type of loan/debt/arrears	Amount outstanding	Weekly payments	Comment/memo

APPENDIX TWO: NSNO INFORMATION REQUEST

{Insert GP Name}

{Insert GP Address}

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: URGENT REQUEST FOR MEDICAL INFORMATION FOR {Insert name and DOB}

My name is and I am an Assessment Worker for No Second Night Out (NSNO). No Second Night Out focuses on helping those who find themselves rough sleeping on the streets of London for the

first time. We ensure there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers, and will provide an offer that means they do not have to sleep out for a second night. We offer people help so that they do not need to return to the streets; for many this will be returning to their home area, reconnecting with family and support networks.

I am currently assisting a client; *{Insert name}* who I understand is a registered patient of yours. As I am in the process of trying to reconnect and accommodate *{Insert name}*, it would be extremely helpful if you could provide any of the following information:

- Details of any current or historical health conditions
- Details of any medication that has been prescribed
- Your opinion as to whether my client would be particularly vulnerable if he were to remain homeless.

It would also be useful if you could confirm the address that *{insert name}* is registered as living at and for how long they have used that address whilst being registered at your surgery. This information is of particular importance as it could help determine a local connection which could contribute to helping them get housed.

If you could provide me with this information as soon as possible I would be extremely grateful as my client is currently homeless. A signed consent form is attached.

You can send the information by fax or email to *{insert contact details}*

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

Assessment Worker
No Second Night Out