

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Reconnections Policy For Homeless People With No Local Connection

Meeting/Date: O & S Panel (Social Well-Being) - 7 January 2014
Cabinet - 23 January 2014

Executive Portfolio: Customer Services: Cllr B. Chapman

Report by: Head Of Customer Services

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and the Government's 'No Second Night Out' policy aims to address the issue of rough sleeping across the country. The Council is committed to addressing all forms of homelessness within the district including rough sleeping where this occurs.

Huntingdonshire tends not to have a significant issue with rough sleeping but is part of the Cambridge sub region group of authorities some of which have higher numbers of people sleeping rough. The group of authorities (which for this purpose includes Peterborough City) have been awarded funding to address the issues of single homeless people and rough sleeping. Cambridge City, as the area with the most significant rough sleeping issues, is the lead authority in this particular partnership.

One of the issues that Cambridgeshire, and in particular Cambridge City, faces is that a proportion of the individuals that end up rough sleeping do not originate from the area and are attracted to the county from other areas of the country and even other areas of Europe. All of the authorities in the partnership recognise that as part of the role we all play in preventing homelessness reconnecting rough sleepers to the area where they have a local connection is most likely to provide the best outcome for their situation. Most authorities already undertake this type of preventative work through the powers contained with the homelessness legislation and this policy formalises this process across all the partners within this initiative.

This report explains the policy and how the Council will use these powers.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet approve this policy for adoption.

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to explain how the Council will use powers contained within the Housing Act 1996 relating to the prevention of homelessness, to reconnect homeless people with the area where they have a local connection.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report is necessary to approve the policy which explains how the Council may use these powers.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The Council recognises that homeless people at risk of rough sleeping are more likely to have a positive outcome to their situation in an area where they have a local connection, through previously formed support networks with family and friends, or purely through a better knowledge of that area as a result of previously living there.
- 3.2 The reconnection of rough sleepers with the area where they have a local connection is therefore considered the most appropriate option to consider to resolve their situation.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received assurances that vulnerable individuals, for example, those who are victims of domestic violence, will not be reconnected against their interests. Officers will verify individuals' level of risk with the appropriate authority. Having been advised that the policy formalises practices already employed by the Council through its homeless prevention work, Members have endorsed the content of the policy for adoption by the Cabinet.

5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 5.1 The key impact of this policy will be to reduce the instances of rough sleeping in the area, particularly by vulnerable people with no connection, and more than likely no support networks, in the area.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The policy will be implemented as soon as it is approved.

7. LINK TO THE LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

- 7.1 This policy links directly to the theme of improving the quality of life in Huntingdonshire by contributing to a low level of homelessness.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There is no requirement for the Council to consult on the implementation of this policy.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

(Comments from the Head of Legal & Democratic Services)

- 9.1 The Head of Customer Services has delegated authority to exercise the Council's powers and duties to homeless households who satisfy the criteria laid down in the Housing Act 1996. This policy makes use of certain powers available to the Council within the Act.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

(Comments from the Assistant Director, Finance & Resources)

- 10.1 It is anticipated that there will be no additional resource implications associated with the implementation of this policy. Any costs associated with reconnections will be paid for from the Council's Homelessness Prevention budget. This budget already covers these types of costs where they are felt to be appropriate in contributing to the prevention of homelessness.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

(Equalities, environment, ICT, etc)

- 11.1 There are no other implications

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

(Summary leading to the Recommendations)

- 12.1 The policy aims to assist homeless individuals and help provide solutions to address their rough sleeping. Although the Council may have no 'duty' to assist single homeless people directly with housing this policy will help address the needs of some of the most vulnerable people within our communities by reconnecting them with an area, agencies and possibly family and friends who will be best placed to assist them with the issues that led to their homelessness.

- 12.2 It is therefore recommended that Cabinet approve this policy for adoption.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Reconnections Policy For Homeless People With No Local Connection

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide - DCLG July 2011

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Appendix 1

Reconnections Policy For Homeless People With No Local Connection

January 2014

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

2. Definitions

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

Cambridge City Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
West Suffolk District Council
Peterborough City Council
Fenland District Council

3. The purpose of the reconnection policy

- 3.1 All of the partner authorities in the sub-region are committed to providing the best possible service to homeless people, including single homeless people not in priority need. One element of this commitment is a pledge to deal effectively with, and ultimately to end, rough sleeping. This approach is summed up in the four principles of 'No Second Night Out':
1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out;
 2. No one should make his or her home on the streets;
 3. No one should return to the streets once they have been helped off of them; and
 4. Ultimately, no one should arrive on the streets.
- 3.2 The Council's commitment extends to those people without a local connection to the sub-region. However, the sub-region does not have the capability to provide a proper level of service to everyone, from whatever location, who presents as a rough sleeper. Neither would an offer of services to all-comers be desirable: The No Second Night Out approach recognises that the best option for most rough sleepers is reconnection to a place where they can gain accommodation and benefit from pre-existing social, family, statutory or voluntary networks. It also recognises that it is in the interests of new rough sleepers that this reconnection is made before a person begins to develop habits associated with a street-based lifestyle.
- 3.3 There is also some evidence that the ready and open availability of good street homeless services may itself attract to a district people who will use such services.
- 3.4 This policy therefore intends to ensure that non-locally connected are quickly assessed and quickly returned to their local district. Services to people without a local connection will therefore be limited to what is necessary to achieve this end.
- 3.5 Single homeless people who have a local connection, but do not have a priority need may access services through the Single Homeless Service project to prevent rough sleeping. This policy does not apply to those individuals.

4. Key principles of the policy.

- 4.1 It is not acceptable for people to sleep rough anywhere within the sub-region.
- 4.2 All new rough sleepers will be quickly assessed.
- 4.3 New rough sleepers without a connection to the sub regional group will have access to local housing services limited to the time it will take to make the assessment and arrange a suitable reconnection with the receiving authority or agency.
- 4.4 Individuals refusing a suitable arranged reconnection may be denied further access to housing and related support services in the sub-region. **NB. This will not apply to arrangements made under severe weather provision.**
- 4.5 Any person returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region within 28 days of an arranged reconnection will not be reassessed and will not be permitted access to services (subject to the same exception as in paragraph 4.4).
- 4.6 Anyone returning to rough sleeping in the sub-region more than 28 days after an arranged reconnection will be reassessed from first principals.

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

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

1. RESIDENCE

A PERSON IS NORMALLY RESIDENT WITHIN ANY OF THE DISTRICTS IN THE SUB-REGION.

'NORMAL RESIDENCE' IS DEFINED AS HAVING BEEN RESIDENT FOR SIX OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS, OR THREE OF THE PAST 5 YEARS. RESIDENCE NEED NOT HAVE BEEN CONTINUOUS.

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

2. EMPLOYMENT

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

3. Family associations

A PERSON HAS A PARENT, AN ADULT CHILD OR AN ADULT SIBLING WHO HAS BEEN RESIDENT IN THE DISTRICT FOR AT LEAST 5 YEARS. A QUALIFYING SIBLING OR CHILD MUST HAVE BEEN AN ADULT FOR THAT 5 YEAR PERIOD.

4. RISK OF HARM AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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

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

Appendix 2: Reconnection Procedure Overview

