

SASH Partnership Board

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Reconnection Policy

Draft version



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2011 the government published its report on tackling homelessness with a focus on ending rough sleeping, 'Vision to ending rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide'. This vision called on all local authorities to adopt a No Second Night Out ('NSNO') approach and to meet the five NSNO principles including to reconnect people who have come from another area or country and find themselves rough sleeping back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. This is to enable them to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends.
- 1.2 This Herefordshire and Worcestershire Reconnection Policy ('Reconnection Policy') sets out the strategic response to reconnection and is designed to support the local authorities across the two counties (as members of the Services Addressing Single Homelessness (SASH) Partnership) and their partners to develop reconnection protocols to enable rough sleepers to return to an area where they have supportive networks and/or where they have a proven link to as it is usually better for people to live where they have family, friends and other support networks.
- 1.3 Reconnection is the process by which people sleeping rough who have a connection to another area are supported to return to this area in a planned way so that they can access appropriate accommodation and/or social, family and support networks according to their needs. It is also an important option for those who are unable to access the labour market or support services in the UK. For the purposes of this Reconnection Policy this area will be referred to as their "Home Area" and will be taken to mean area or country.
- 1.4 The extent of rough sleeping across Herefordshire and Worcestershire has risen in recent years. Wherever someone is rough sleeping there is a very real risk that this can lead to someone falling into a longer term pattern of "entrenched" rough sleeping.
- 1.5 Reconnection plays an important role in reducing rough sleeping and helps to: prevent people rough sleeping at an early stage becoming entrenched; enable people to move away from the street through accessing accommodation and support in a known area; ensure agencies provide a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to support; and make sure that there are enough resources to meet local need.
- 1.6 It sits in the context of a sub-regional approach to ending rough sleeping. One of the key principles of the Worcestershire and Herefordshire No Second Night Out Sub-regional policy ('NSNO Policy') is to facilitate reconnection. This Reconnection Policy has a particular emphasis on rough sleepers with the fundamental principle being to prevent those newly identified as rough sleeping from spending a second night out on the streets and becoming entrenched in a street based lifestyle. It is intended to form part of the service offer for people newly identified to the streets as part of the NSNO policy.
- 1.7 This Reconnection Policy sets out the way in which individuals will be supported to reconnect to their Home Area, reconnect back to Home Areas within Worcestershire and Herefordshire, and work with agencies outside the two counties to assist

reconnection back to Herefordshire and Worcestershire where appropriate. Full engagement will be required to assist individuals to be reconnected within a structured approach.

- 1.8 The Reconnection Policy has also been developed to improve access to Housing Related Support services for those with a local connection to Worcestershire, and Herefordshire Supporting People funded services in the case of those with a local connection to Herefordshire, and to support those without a local connection to return in a planned way to an area where they have either accommodation, support networks or some other connection. The parties to this Reconnection Policy recognise that this is not always a straightforward issue; Worcestershire and Herefordshire has a wide range of commissioned housing related support services to reflect the needs of its population but it attracts people from other areas who gravitate here (particularly into Worcester City) to access those services and this creates a resource implication.
- 1.9 It should also be noted that St Paul's Hostel has developed a reconnection Policy of its own, applicable to all of its services and based on the same principles as this Policy. In practice this means that rather than allowing unrestricted access to its services for people with no local connection to Worcestershire it will work with the local authorities and other providers to reconnect them with their home area unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. St Paul's Hostel will accommodate any client with a connection to a Worcestershire district but, except in cases where it is not appropriate to do so, will ultimately seek to reconnect them to the district to which they have a local connection
- 1.10 Definitions relevant to this Reconnection Policy in section 12.
- 1.11 The signatories to this Reconnection Policy are provided in section 13.

2 Legal and Strategic Framework

- 2.1 This Reconnection Policy is intended to support and be consistent with the following strategies, policies, guidance and duties:
 - Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017
 - Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013
 - Worcestershire and Herefordshire No Second Night Out Sub-regional policy
 - St Paul's Reconnection Policy
 - West Midlands NSNO Protocol
 - Homeless Link guidance on [Reconnecting Rough Sleepers](#)

- The homelessness legislation – that is the [Housing Act 1996](#), the [Homelessness Act 2002](#) and [the Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation \(\(England\) Order 2002\)](#). There is also a [Code of Guidance](#) which sets out how a local authority should interpret the legislation.

3 Purpose of the Reconnection Policy

3.1 The purpose of this Reconnection Policy is to:

- a) Set out the Herefordshire and Worcestershire strategic response to reconnection;
- b) Provide a framework for the local authorities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to prepare local reconnection protocols to actively reconnect individuals without a local connection to the area in which they're rough sleeping, particular new rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, to return in a planned way to their Home Area;
- c) Make clear to all partners and service users who should be reconnected and how;
- d) Ensure that access to all housing related support services in Worcestershire are prioritised for those who are assessed as needing the service and who have a local connection in Worcestershire;
- e) Ensure that access to Supporting People funded services in Herefordshire are prioritised for those who are assessed as needing the services and who have a local connection to Herefordshire; and
- f) Agree common criteria and procedures to be applied when reconnecting rough sleepers within the Worcestershire and Herefordshire area.

3.2 This Reconnection Policy addresses a number of key issues including:

- a) What defines where someone's Home Area is;
- b) A common response to people who cannot or do not want to return to their Home Area; and
- c) Agreeing how provision is made for people who have no apparent links to any community and no Home Area to which they can be reconnected.

4 Outcomes of the Reconnection Policy

4.1 This Reconnection Policy is intended to:

- a) Enable the development of local reconnection protocols (and potentially cross-authority or reciprocal arrangements and support in order to maximise resources);
- b) Rapidly reconnect rough sleepers to their accommodation, supportive networks or some other connection in their Home Area;

- c) Prevent people at an early stage becoming entrenched in a street based lifestyle;
- d) Ensure that rough sleepers referred to other areas have accommodation (with support and access to services if appropriate) available when they arrive to prevent the person from rough sleeping in their Home Area;
- e) Reduce the number of people sleeping rough in Herefordshire and Worcestershire;
- f) Ensure that locally funded supported accommodation is prioritised for those with a local connection to the area on the basis of need ensuring that those who are most vulnerable are prioritised; and
- g) Ensure that Herefordshire and Worcestershire's services support rough sleepers for whom reconnection is either unavailable or inappropriate.

5 Principles of the Reconnection Policy

5.1 The key principles of the Reconnection Policy are as follows:

- a) Reconnection will be considered for rough sleepers who have an identified local connection to another area of Herefordshire and Worcestershire other than the area they are currently rough sleeping, for rough sleepers who have an identified local connection outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire or have identified support networks outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire where they can access accommodation or services;
- b) It is recognised that it is not appropriate to apply the Reconnection Policy to every person. Some people may be so unwilling to return that they will continue to sleep rough as an alternative. This, and other reasons for which it may be inappropriate, is discussed further in section 7. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire local authorities are committed to ending rough sleeping and therefore would not leave people on the streets if they cannot or will not return to their Home Area. Each case should be assessed taking into account individual circumstances in line with this Reconnection Policy;
- c) Reconnection is a planned and robust process;
- d) Reconnection doesn't override any legal requirements or obligations which are placed on any partner involved in the implementation of this Reconnection Policy, in particular the homelessness duties placed on local authorities. It is up to each partner to make sure that they fulfil any legal requirements which are incumbent upon them; and
- e) The SASH Partnership and local homelessness forums/strategy steering groups will promote this Reconnection Policy.

6 Scope of the Reconnection Policy

- 6.1 Reconnection is for rough sleepers in Herefordshire or Worcestershire, who have a connection to another area where they can access accommodation and/or support services and/or some other connection, are enabled to return to this Home Area in a planned way.
- 6.2 This Reconnection Policy sets out reconnection interventions for rough sleepers, particularly new rough sleepers and in this context 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.
- 6.3 An individual not having a local connection with the area where they present should not be an obstacle to being assessed. Where an individual is homeless but not in priority need they have a right to advice and assistance which may include support with a referral to services in their Home Area.
- 6.4 There will be people for whom reconnection is inappropriate and would not enable them to move off the streets and people who are unwilling to return. This is detailed further in section 7.
- 6.5 The responsibility of proof for demonstrating where local connection lies sits firmly with the Referring Authority, not the Receiving Authority. It is the responsibility of the Referring Authority to carry out all relevant checks and investigations in a thorough manner prior to any referral being made.

7 People for whom reconnection is inappropriate or unwilling to return

- 7.1 The Reconnection Policy distinguishes between those who genuinely cannot and those who will not return to their Home Area.
- 7.2 It may not be considered reasonable to reconnect a rough sleeper if:
 - a) It is not safe for them to return to anywhere in their Home Area, because of a risk of violence or intimidation;
 - b) Where the person is considered too vulnerable to return to their identified Home Area. Such decisions will be made in consultation with lead professionals involved in the client's case;
 - c) Where there is an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) or similar in place preventing them from returning to their Home Area;
 - d) The person has been in the area for long enough to have built up strong connections with services but does not have a local connection. In these circumstances, districts can use their discretion to assist individuals and will consider each case on an individual case by case basis;

e) The person does not have a functional link to any area and no identifiable Home Area; and

f) There is no accommodation which can be provided in the Home Area.

7.3 It will be important to identify and agree outcomes for rough sleepers who refuse either to engage with the reconnection process or refuse to accept a referral. Where a rough sleeper has refused all offers of support to reconnect to their Home Area and has continued to rough sleep in the area after arrangements were made for them to return, the local authority will review whether it is appropriate to reconnect them with their Home Area or may chose to use local resources to accommodate the person.

7.4 There may be rough sleepers who repeatedly move from one area to another, not remaining anywhere long enough to sufficiently engage with services to access the support they need. Those with no functional links to any area and no identifiable Home Area and these individuals may be amongst the most vulnerable and present with complex multiple needs. It is recognised that this client group fall outside of the remit of reconnection. It is important to note here that the Herefordshire and Worcestershire local authorities are committed to ending rough sleeping and therefore would not leave people on the streets. Each case should be assessed taking into account individual circumstances and in line with the NSNO policy.

7.5 It is not the intention of this Reconnection Policy to restrict people's legitimate wish to move from one area to another. However, people who choose, without good reason, not to return to their Home Area presents a challenge. There may be local services with legitimate qualifying criteria that include an element of local connection. In such instances it will have to be determined at a local level what service to offer such individuals.

8 Implementation of the Reconnection Policy

8.1 The intention is for a Herefordshire and a Worcestershire reconnection protocol to be developed. The Worcestershire reconnection protocol will clearly detail the individual districts approach to reconnection in accordance with this Reconnection Policy and the NSNO Standard which may become a policy in the future..

8.2 The reconnection protocols should clearly outline the actions to be taken to establish if reconnection is appropriate and how it should be achieved. The protocol should:

- Detail the role of the Referring Authority and Receiving Authority
- Carry out an assessment of the individual's housing and support needs and verification of assessment information in order to reconnect rapidly
- Identify if it is appropriate for the rough sleeper to be reconnected to their Home Area
- Obtain consent from the rough sleeper
- Notify the Receiving Authority/accommodation provider/support service to ensure that the accommodation and/or support services are available for the client in the Receiving Authority
- Facilitate work with support networks if applicable

- Agree arrangements to facilitate the reconnection
- Arrange and fund travel and any associated costs, as required
- Ensure reconnection is successful

8.3 The reconnection offer should be a clear, individual message that should be credible and realistic based on the assessment and inclusive of the support required to ensure that the individual will not sleep rough elsewhere. There are a number of types of reconnection and a tiered approach depending on the situation is considered to be the most appropriate. An example table of reconnection offers, based on a tiered approach, is provided in Appendix 1.

9 Partners

9.1 The following partners have been involved in the development of this Reconnection Policy:

- Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
- BDHT
- Festival Housing Group
- Herefordshire Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- St. Paul's hostel
- Worcester City Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Wyre Forest Community Housing
- Wyre Forest District Council
- Worcester Community Housing
- West Mercia Probation
- West Mercia Police
- Worcestershire County Council, Directorate of Adult Services and Health (DASH)

- 9.2 The partners have adopted this Reconnection Policy, agreed to work in a co-ordinated way and to take a consistent approach to ensure that its principles are actively applied. A statement of commitment and signatories to this Reconnection Policy are provided in section 13.
- 9.3 It is expected that agencies contracted to deliver services and accommodation provision to rough sleepers will be clear and consistent in that reconnection will be discussed assertively with all people within the scope of this Reconnection Policy and that support will be given to facilitate reconnection.
- 9.4 Other partner agencies are encouraged to work in the spirit of this Reconnection Policy, not sustain and actively discourage rough sleeping and a street based lifestyle in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The following partners have formally endorsed and support this Reconnection Policy and actively apply the principles in their work with rough sleepers: St Paul's, Cab/WHABAC, YMCA.

10 Monitoring and evaluation of the Reconnection Policy

- 10.1 Monitoring and evaluation of the Reconnection Policy will be the responsibility of the SASH Partnership Board and will include consideration of:
- a) Patterns of rough sleeping locally;
 - b) The number of rough sleepers for who reconnection is an available options;
 - c) The number of rough sleepers reconnected successfully;
 - d) The number of rough sleepers returning to Herefordshire and Worcestershire after re-connection;
 - e) The number of rough sleepers who refuse to engage with the reconnection process;
 - f) Costs of reconnection.

11 Review of the Reconnection Policy

- 11.1 The Reconnection Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis (from adoption of the Reconnection Policy) by the SASH Partnership Board.

12 Definitions

Connection may exist through a number of different ways and is established by:

- Residency in the area for six out of the last twelve months, or three out of the last five years, where residency has been out of choice; or
- Close family members (i.e. parent, sibling or in some cases adult children) who have themselves lived in the area for five years or more;
- Employment, other than that of a casual nature; or
- For another special reason (e.g. to receive specialist health care or for religious reasons).

Home Area is not necessarily the area or country where a person originates from but where they have most recently has sustained attachments to a local community. This could be an area or country where they have had stable accommodation, employment, where

they have been in receipt of benefits or where they have been engaged with health, probation, Children's Services or Adult Social Care.

Referring Authority is the local authority in the locality where a person presents as homeless.

Receiving Authority is the local authority of a person's Home Area with which they are being reconnected.

Local connection is where someone has a provable "connection" to a local area i.e. in Worcestershire this would be to one of the six district council areas, Bromsgrove, Malvern, Redditch, Worcester, Wychavon or Wyre Forest.

Reconnection is the process by which people sleeping rough in Herefordshire or Worcestershire, who have a connection to another area are supported to return to this area ("Home Area") in a planned way so that they can access appropriate accommodation and/or social, family and support networks according to their needs.

Rough sleeper is a person coming within the definition used in the DCLG document (September 2010) 'Evaluating the Extent of Rough Sleeping, a new approach':

"People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents (inappropriate use of tents), doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bushes")".

For the purposes of this Reconnection Policy, the definition also includes people in emergency accommodation provided by statutory or voluntary agencies who would come within the above definition if it were not for the provision of such temporary accommodation provided to prevent rough sleeping, hostel residents and day centre users.

13 Statement of Commitment and Signatories

All signatories to this document commit to upholding the principles outlined within the Reconnection Policy and to seeking the best possible collective outcomes through reconnection for rough sleepers, where it is appropriate to do so.

All signatories commit to participating in and facilitating multi-agency training and awareness relevant to this Reconnection Policy, in order to increase the understanding of the terms of the Reconnection Policy and the role that different organisations and agencies have in delivering its aims.

Each signatory also commits to ensuring that its officers are aware of and understand the terms of the Reconnection Policy, including its aims, and will ensure that properly timely training is given to new officers.

This Reconnection Policy has been signed up to and agreed by the following local authorities:

<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council</p>	<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Herefordshire Council</p>
<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Malvern Hills District Council</p>	<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Worcester City Council</p>
<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Worcestershire County Council, Directorate of Adult Services and Health (DASH)</p>	<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Wychavon District Council</p>
<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Wyre Forest Council</p>	<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust</p>

Signed by:	Signed by:
Print Name:	Print Name:
Date:	Date:
On Behalf of Festival Housing Group	On Behalf of Wyre Forest Community Housing

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Appendix 1: Example table of reconnection offers

Group	Situation	Potential Reconnection Offer
UK National, low to no support needs, identified local connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person has left their Home Area without thinking through the consequences. • There is no vulnerability and on reflection the person realises they have made a mistake leaving their Home Area with insufficient planning/resources and now wish to urgently return there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary provide means of transport to Home Area. • Referral for social housing or to Private Rented Sector scheme in the Home Area. • Support to reconnect with family and friends. • The above will be made available resources permitting
UK National, low to medium support needs, possible to identify a connection to a local authority area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who is observed and confirmed to be new to the streets and is verified as having slept rough. • Someone who is likely to require a needs assessment in order to establish if reconnection is appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSNO emergency accommodation space while undertaking assessment to establish if reconnection is appropriate. • Support to access emergency accommodation in area where connection is. • If reconnecting to an area where no pathway to support access to emergency accommodation exists, phone LA Housing Options prior to presentation. • The above will be made available resources permitting
UK National, medium to high support needs, has local connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough sleeper, new to area and with high levels of vulnerability. • A person who presents with such apparent level of need that an extended period of assessment is deemed necessary. This will be made available for a 28 day period only. This may be for a variety of reasons, including complex needs and high levels of vulnerability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation provision with support. • Support into appropriate services for a 28 day period only.
UK National who wishes to be reconnected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who having been housed in emergency or temporary accommodation, comes to realise there may be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate for return to Home Area. • Support to access accommodation that may

<p>to their home area</p>	<p>greater opportunity to find then stable accommodation in their Home Area or a person who wishes to either re-establish links with or return to their family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone who is accommodated close to where they previously slept rough may decide that it is desirable to move away to leave behind connections to their street based lifestyle. This may particularly be the case for those who have experienced difficulties with substance misuse. 	<p>have been lost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to reconnect with family and friends. Mediation Identify support and services in Home Area.
<p>UK National, where difficult to establish a local connection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No connection to any other area. Long term entrenched rough sleepers. Highly transient, regularly moving from one area to another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reconnection response as such clients may fall outside the sphere of reconnection. However, it may be about working with clients 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 be outside local connection as defined by homelessness legislation but take into account contact with services, employment or connections with supportive family or friends. Accommodation with friends or family Hostel accommodation that doesn't require local connection, as close to where a connection is. Private Rented Sector. Tied accommodation with employment. Any other type of accommodation
<p>European Economic Area (EEA) Nationals</p>	<p>Low to no support needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly arrived in the UK as part of a 'scam'. Been in the UK for only a short 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If EEA nationals have recently arrived in the UK and become a rough sleeper than the first offer should be

<p>(excluding A2 countries as Bulgarians and Romanian Nationals have certain restrictions)</p>	<p>time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently lost work. • No dependency issues. • Support at home. • Should be able to manage their own return if ticket is provided. <p>Medium support needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Been in the UK for a while • Entrenched rough sleeping • Alcohol and substance misuse issues. • Poor health needs. • Little support at home. • Should be able to manage their own return if ticket purchases and accompanied to transport. <p>High support needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Been in the UK for along time • Entrenched rough sleepers • Alcohol/substance misuse issues • Serious health needs • No support at home • Require more assistance to prepare for the journey and to access appropriate support back home 	<p>reconnection back to the home country or a country where they have support and accommodation available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time in UK and entitlement will influence whether an offer within the UK is made. • Low support needs: Ticket only reconnection check and assist with replacement documents as necessary and identify means to purchase. • 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. • If low support needs and in receipt of benefits then PRS may be the offer. • If the person is in receipt of welfare benefits, then the course of action may follow as with a UK National depending on need, to ascertain a connection to an area and refer people to a local service. • Medium support needs: Assisted reconnection – contact supporting services, family, check and assist with replacement documents, identify means of purchase, accompany client to transport. • High support needs: Supported reconnection – contact supporting services/family, check and assist with replacement documents, purchase ticket
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<p>A2 Nationals (Romanian and Bulgarian)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A2 nationals cannot access benefits whilst looking for work (but can receive in-work benefits) and are only permitted to work in certain circumstances. A2 nationals seeing work cannot access benefits unless they have been working legally without interruption for 12 months. • Low to high support needs, as above. 	<p>and accompany client throughout journey.</p> <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 most 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 support needs and connection to an area.
<p>Refugees, failed asylum seekers, irregular migrants, over stayers</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Failed asylum seekers may be able to receive short-term support while they are waiting to return to their country of origin (Section 4, 'hard case', support under the terms of section 4 of the National Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) or if they are seeking to reopen their asylum case or are unable to travel for medical reasons