

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Liz Richardson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 03 September 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2898
TITLE:	Housing Services Reconnection Policy	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1: Housing Services Reconnection Policy 2016		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The policy aims to help rough sleepers off the streets quickly. It sets out how we reconnect rough sleepers without a local connection by helping them to return home with an offer of accommodation and support. Rough sleepers with a connection to Bath and North East Somerset are helped to find housing and support within our district.
- 1.2 We are proposing amendments to the policy to update it and make it even more effective.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- 2.1 Approve the adoption of the Housing Services Reconnection Policy, attached in Appendix 1.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 Rough sleeping is damaging to mental and physical health and the longer someone sleeps rough the greater the demand on public services. Reconnecting rough sleepers is a cost effective policy with an average cost of £43 per reconnection since 2014.
- 3.2 We do not envisage significant changes to the individual costs of reconnection and all costs are managed through existing approved revenue budgets.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This policy is part of a national strategy called No Second Night Out. (Communities and Local Government Vision to end rough sleeping: NSNO Nationwide (2011).

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The current policy was adopted in 2011. It is an effective policy and during the last five years 48 people have been reconnected to areas with which they have a local connection and can access housing and support rather than rough sleeping in Bath and North East Somerset.
- 5.2 The proposed amendments to the policy will update it to better align with best practice and to provide revised guidance about how a local connection is established.
- 5.3 The aims of the current policy include sharing in cross-authority work to tackle and prevent homelessness and having locally agreed robust referral methods. These aims will remain in the revised policy together with a new aim to **reduce** rough sleeping in the district through a locally agreed, client centred assertive resettlement process.
- 5.4 The prescribed list of circumstances which establish a local connection: residency; employment; family; special reasons, have not changed however a new section has been introduced to provide improved guidance on how a local connection is established. The new section clarifies what constitutes 'residency' to stop any incentive to sleep rough for 6 months in Bath and North East Somerset to form a local connection and access local services.
- 5.5 We would like to encourage a more rapid response to reconnections and offers of accommodation and support elsewhere. This would shorten length of stay in Bath and North East Somerset and reduce demand for the Julian House Night Shelter. The revised policy will reduce the assessment process and right to access local services from 28 days to 21 days.
- 5.6 Some aspects of the policy are out of date and have been revised. For example, the Reconnection Forum, which considered complex cases, has been replaced by a Task and Targeting Group which reviews reconnection decisions and appeals.

5.7 There have been some cases where a person has refused to participate with the reconnection process and a new section has been introduced to cover this situation. The new section explains that services will be withdrawn under certain circumstances following a case referral to Task and Targeting Group and outreach work.

5.8 In periods of severe weather the usual practice is that regardless of local connection a homeless person is able to spend the night in emergency shelter provided by Julian House at the Manvers Street Nightshelter in Bath. A new section has been inserted within the policy to cover this and make it part of the policy.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The rationale of amending the existing policy is to reduce rough sleeping in the district and limit access to local resources for rough sleepers with a local connection elsewhere.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Given the nature of the policy only limited and informal consultation has been undertaken. It includes consultation with Julian House and DHI Reach with whom we work in partnership to provide services to rough sleepers, and inclusion of the item in a briefing to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to ensure that the revisions are reasonable.

8.2 The Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer have been given opportunity to review and input into this report.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	None
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