

Stockport Local Housing Authority Guidance on the Duty to Refer

1 Introduction

1.1 What is the Homelessness Reduction Act?

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) came into law in England in April 2018. It places further duties on Local Authorities to assess, prevent and relieve homelessness. The HRA seeks to strengthen early intervention and effective joint working between Housing Authorities and all relevant parties.

1.2 What is the Duty to Refer?

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act specified public authorities have a statutory duty to notify a Housing Authority of any individuals they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness (i.e. it is likely they will become homeless within 56 days). This is called the Duty to Refer and comes into effect on 1st October 2018.

'The Duty to Refer provides an impetus to develop effective referral arrangements and accommodation pathways that involve all relevant agencies to provide appropriate jointly planned help and support to prevent homelessness.' – Code of Guidance

The Duty to Refer only applies to public authorities in England and individuals can only be referred to housing authorities in England. Stockport Homes is the Housing Authority for Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.

1.3 The Public Authorities subject to the Duty to Refer are:

- Prisons
- Youth offender institutions
- Secure training centres
- Secure colleges
- Youth offending teams
- Probation services (including community rehabilitation companies)
- Jobcentre Plus
- Social service authorities
- Emergency departments
- Urgent treatment centres
- Hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care
- The Secretary of State for Defence is also subject to the Duty to Refer in relation to members of the regular forces.

Additionally, the following have signed up to a Voluntary Duty to Refer:

- Local Housing Providers
- Greater Manchester Police

2 Referral Procedure

2.1 Before making a referral

Before making a referral the public authority must:

- Have consent to the referral from the individual;
- Allow the individual to identify the Housing Authority in England which they would like the notification to be made to; and
- Have consent from the individual that their contact details can be supplied so the Housing Authority can contact them regarding the referral.

2.2 When to make a referral

Referral to a Housing Authority should be made when it is likely that:

- The applicant is going to be homeless tonight
- The applicant is going to be homeless tomorrow
- The applicant will be homeless into the next 56 days

If none of the above apply but there are concerns about the individual's housing situation and risk of homelessness please contact the Housing Options Team at Stockport Homes in the usual way, as listed below in Contacts.

2.2 Advice on identifying a Housing Authority

Any applicant can be referred to any Housing Authority, however the support they are able to offer beyond advice and guidance may be limited if the applicant does not have a local connection to that authority area. When making inquiries to determine whether an applicant is eligible for assistance the Housing Authority also make inquiries to establish an applicant's local connection.

A person has a local connection with the district of a Housing Authority if they have a connection with it because:

- They are, or were in the past, normally resident there, and that residence was of their own choice;
- They are employed there;
- They have family associations living there; or,
- Any special circumstances.

Public bodies may wish to advise clients of this when supporting their referral to a particular Housing Authority. At any stage, an applicant can request that they are referred to a different housing authority.

2.3 Information required upon referral

The information required on the referral form is minimal:

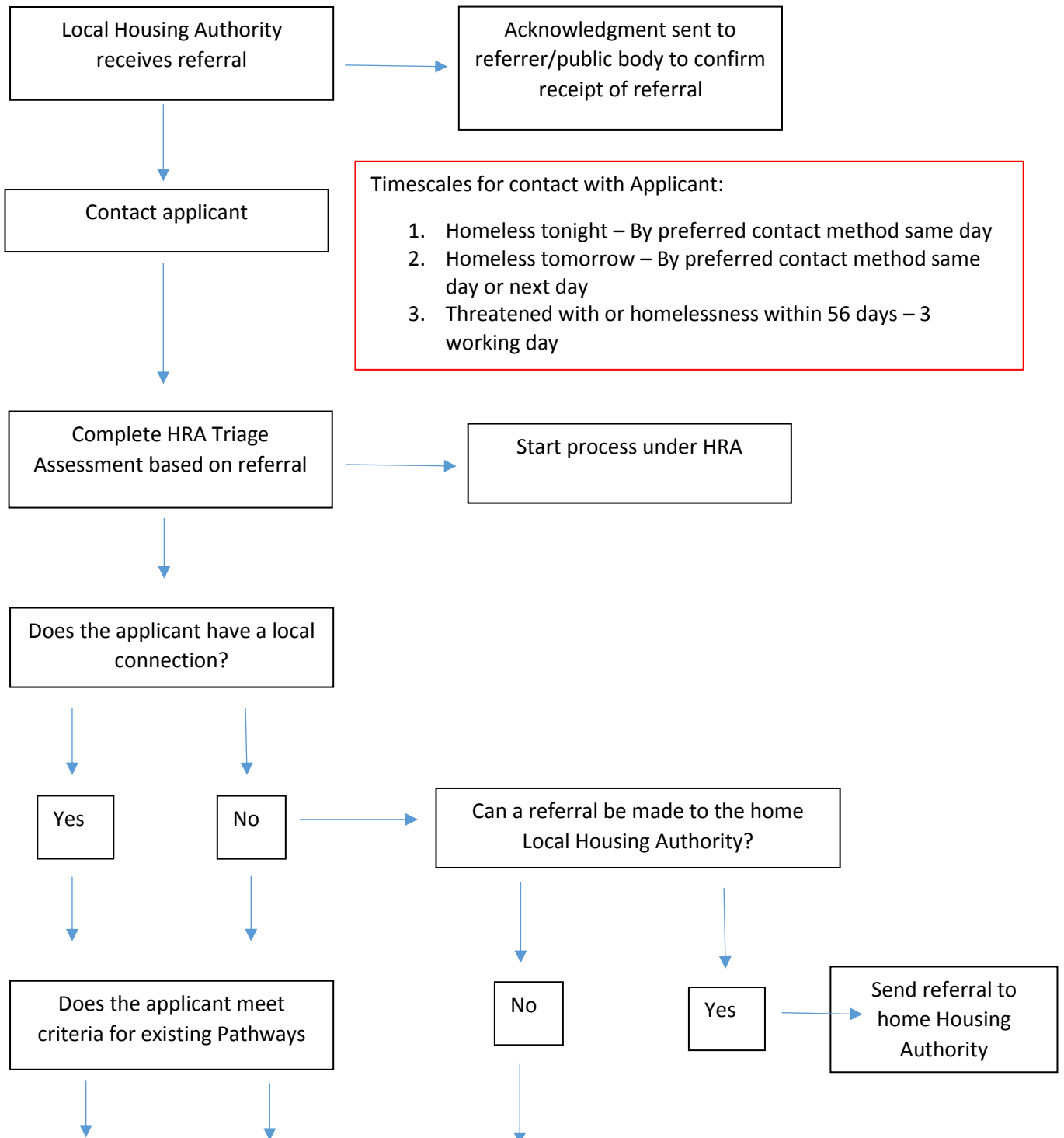
- Applicant's name
- Applicant's contact details

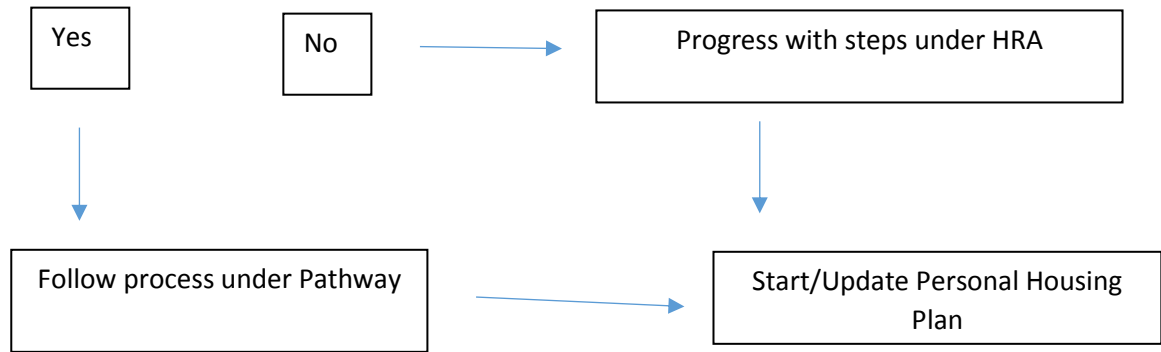
- The agreed reason for the referral (i.e. homeless or threatened with homelessness)
- Applicant’s consent to refer

All Housing Authorities in Greater Manchester are using the same referral form.

Referrals can be sent via email to dutytorefer@stockport.gov.uk or any of the 9 other Greater Manchester Housing Authorities using the same format.

2.4 Upon receipt of referral under the Duty to Refer





3 Further Information

3.1 Making contact with the applicant

We will make all efforts to contact the applicant via the contact details provided upon referral. If indicated that the applicant is sleeping rough in a certain area we will go out to try and find that individual.

3.2 Homelessness Reduction Act Pathway

The next steps under the Homelessness Reduction Act are:

- After subsequent contact, if we believe the individual to be homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days, and the individual indicates they would like assistance, this will trigger an application for assistance.
- The applicant will be offered a 1-1 appointment with a member of the Housing Options team, resulting in a Personal Housing Plan.

[A Personal Housing Plan is unique to each applicant and sets out actions and responsibilities of the Housing Authority and reasonable actions and recommendations for the applicant. This plan is constantly reviewed and will travel with the applicant through their support from the Housing Authority]

- Following further assessment of the applicant's eligibility, level of need and local connection further advice and guidance will be offered. This may include an offer of temporary accommodation.

3.3 Repeat and multiple referrals

Agencies can make repeat and multiple referrals simultaneously to any LHA, however the advice and assistance that the LHA can offer may be dependant on the person having a local connection.

If this is a repeat referral where the previous application has been closed recently by the LHA, the LHA will respond to the referral to evaluate if there has been any change in relevant facts which require further enquires to be made

Contact Details

Duty to Refer:

dutytorefer@stockport.gov.uk

All other Homelessness and Housing Options enquiries:

Cornerstone

2 Edward Street

Stockport

SK1 3NQ

United Kingdom

0161 217 6016

homechoice@stockporthomes.org

Out of Hours

0161 474 2818

Monday – Friday 5.00pm to 8.30am

Friday – Monday 5.00pm to 8.30am