

## City Executive Board response to Scrutiny Committee recommendation made on 6 November 2018

### Workplace Equalities

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Recommendation 1 - That the Council does not differentiate between Catholics and Christians in its workforce equalities data	Yes	The technical aspects of changing the categories available for applicants to select from will be explored with the platform provider and the data reported going forwards relating to religious belief will be amended accordingly.
Recommendation 2 - That the Council explores opportunities to improve its engagement with the BAME population within Oxford, through existing means such as recruitment fairs, for example.	Yes	This will be taken forward as part of the action plan for 2018.
Recommendation 3 - That the Council ensures it has robust processes in place to gather feedback from employees who are leaving the organisation, and whether their treatment in relation to any protected characteristics was a factor in their decision to leave. Consideration should also be given to facilitating a 'safe space' where current employees can feedback about sensitive employment matters, such as barriers experienced by under-represented groups.	Yes	A revised exit interview process, based on a face to face discussion with a member of the HR team, will be implemented in the New Year. Feedback on the data trends from the new exit interview process will form part of the update to Scrutiny next year. Current policies and procedures provide a confidential pathway for staff to raise such concerns, either through trade union representatives or to HR directly, in a supported and safe environment. In addition a Staff Reference Group will be established shortly where such feedback and perceived or actual barriers can be discussed.

## No Local Connection Review Group

Recommendation	Accept	CEB Comment
<b>Part 1: Redefining the Local Connection</b>		
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> That the Council extends the exemption criteria within the Local Connection Policy to provide a more comprehensive narrative and make clear that discretion may be used to offer a local connection to a person in circumstances where:</p>	<p>Yes to a more comprehensive narrative and more clarity on how discretion is currently used to apply exemptions to NLC rules.</p>	<p>I agree that changes should be made to provide much more clarity and transparency about how officers use the discretion granted to them to apply exemptions to NLC rules. Exemptions are an important tool in the box for this authority to provide support and assistance where it is needed. Discretion is important as individuals affected by homelessness do not always fall into neat boxes and officers need to be allowed to use their professional opinion and their commonsense in order for the best result to be obtained. However, examples of how this discretion is applied and case studies of exemptions should be publically available in order to increase transparency around the process and assist those advocating on behalf of individuals trying to access the pathway.</p>
<p>a) They are known by the Council to have slept rough or 'sofa surfed' in Oxford for a continuous period in excess of 6 months, with no clear prospect of reconnection to another local authority area.</p>	<p>Yes, in part.</p>	<p>If someone has slept rough on the streets of Oxford and has been known to OXSPOT throughout this period then they should be considered as having a local connection for the purposes of the Adult Homeless Pathway. We should always have due regard to with the Code of Guidance HA 1996 and apply the principles to each case on their own merit.</p>
<p>b) Their long term physical or mental health condition (including substance misuse) poses a significantly elevated risk to that person's health and safety, beyond that experienced by other rough sleepers.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Priority access to suitable services should always be afforded to those who are especially vulnerable because of health issues. The Oxfordshire Mental Health Pathway does not require a local connection (other than being registered with a local GP) and may be the most suitable option. Options for reconnection to a home district should be explored first while clients are assessed and given a safe place to stay such as sit-up. This is an area where the importance of officer judgement on when to apply an exemption is especially relevant.</p>
<p>c) They are known by the Council to be</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>This is already done through an exemption. This is an example of</p>

<p>fleeing violence from another area within the UK, with no clear prospect of reconnection to another local authority area that is considered safe.</p>		<p>where better information about how exemptions are applied is needed.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> That the Council grants a lifetime local connection to people who were born in Oxford, where no period of absence from the City would invalidate their connection, except in circumstances where they have a more appropriate local connection to another Oxfordshire district.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Oxford Hospitals provide maternity services for a very wide area, we also have a relatively transient population with many people coming to Oxford to study or work for a fixed period before moving on. It would make no sense to grant children born within the city boundaries lifetime rights to housing services provided by the council. This is another key area where officers need the flexibility to apply a common sense approach to the granting of exemptions as no two people will have identical connections to the city, again, published examples of exemptions which have been granted will help future clients to make their case and produce more confidence in the system.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> That the Council grants a local connection to people confirmed as sustaining a contracted voluntary role within the City for a period of 6 months.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>More work will need to be done on this to make sure that any changes will not be open to abuse. The council would need to be confident that despite being unpaid and voluntary the work is not casual, short term, marginal or temporary. I would also want to be sure that any local employer is not exploiting unpaid labour at the expense of providing paid jobs. However I agree with the principle in relation to the adult homeless pathway.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> That the Council extends the close relatives connection criteria to include first cousins, grandparents and grandchildren. Deceased family members in the immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister or children) should also be explicitly referenced in the policy as providing a connection.</p>	<p>Yes, in part.</p>	<p>The nature of the relationship with family members should be the primary determinant of whether they are 'close' or not, not the strength of blood ties. Deceased relatives should not be considered as they no longer form part of a family support network which this policy aims to protect.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> That a person's stay into institutions such as hospital, prison or rehab should not invalidate their local connection. Specifically, time spent in these institutions should not affect a</p>	<p>Yes in part.</p>	<p>This is already the case for the AHP. The provision for special circumstances means that in practice the recommendation is already normally followed under Part 6 and Part 7</p>

<p>person's residency connection time (six out of the last twelve months or three out of the last five years), and entry and exit into these institutions should 'freeze' the accounting period.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b></p> <p>That the Council negotiates terms with neighbouring district councils to grant an Oxford local connection to people with a connection to areas adjoining, or very close to, the city boundary such as Botley and Kennington, where it is requested.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>The council will always support efforts to reconnect rough sleepers to their home district, so that the cost of their support is borne by that authority. When individuals are 'reconnected' it is always to an actual available bed space.</p> <p>20% of the people sleeping rough in Oxford have a proven connection to one of our neighbouring districts and those councils need to step up the level of services they provide in their area to cope.</p> <p>We are continuing to work with two of our neighbouring councils to try and support winter night shelters in their area using some of the RSI funds successfully obtained by Oxford City Council.</p> <p>We have a funding mechanism already in place under the pooled budget arrangement where District beds are provided in the City e.g. O'Hanlon house serves all Districts in the County. (27 for OCC, 11 CDC, 6 VWDC, 6 SODC and 6 WODC) and future plans for Rymers Lane (in partnership with WODC)</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b></p> <p>That where any changes to the Local Connection Policy (set out in recommendations 1-6) are not amenable to the City Executive Board on a permanent basis, a 12 month pilot should be taken up to provide insights into the level of demand, cost and effectiveness of introducing such changes.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>It would not be responsible to pilot major changes without first assessing the potential impact on costs and the impact of such changes on the availability of beds within the adult homeless pathway.</p> <p>Widening eligibility without any corresponding increase in capacity will not lead to any more people being helped off the streets.</p> <p>Monitoring of the RSI beds is part of the programme on an ongoing basis with learning being captured along the way.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b></p> <p>That the Council partners with Crisis and other partners (e.g the City Conversation) to undertake a full assessment of the social and economic impact of any changes to the Local Connection Policy after 1 year of</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>We will not be piloting changes.</p> <p>A full assessment of the recommended or adopted changes would be a major piece of work which would probably need to be commissioned from consultants.</p> <p>However, some of this information can easily be made available to</p>

<p>implementation (or piloting). The outcome of the assessment should be reported to the Scrutiny Committee and the City Executive Board, and should include data and conclusions concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The demand for bed spaces within the pathway</li> <li>b) The proportion of people rough sleeping with a connection to Oxford</li> <li>c) The estimated savings and expenditure for other public services</li> <li>d) Any impact on equalities, with a specific focus on gender and sexuality</li> <li>e) How any changes have impacted on neighbouring district councils</li> </ul>		<p>CEB or the Scrutiny Cttee i.e. the number of occupied/unoccupied spaces with the AHP; the proportion of people sleeping rough with an oxford connection; the sex of rough sleepers and those within the AHP;</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b></p> <p>That the Council makes representations to the other Oxfordshire District Councils to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Increase their funding for bed spaces in O’Hanlon House, particularly for those individuals with complex needs.</li> <li>b) Adopt any changes agreed to Oxford’s Local Connection Policy, and that any agreed changes be updated in the Oxfordshire Adult Homeless Pathway Common Operational Protocol.</li> <li>c) Collectively review the system for allocating bed spaces to remove procedural barriers to ‘lending’ beds between the Oxfordshire District Councils, to adjust for varying demand between the localities.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes, in part.</p>	<p>We will absolutely continue to make representations to our neighbouring district councils and the county council to maintain or increase their funding for homelessness services.</p> <p>See the officer advice on a,b,c.</p>
<p><b>Part 2: Reconnecting People</b></p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b></p>	<p>Yes, in part.</p>	<p>Current capacity in sit-up is limited (even with the RSI funded expansion to 20 places), so it is right that priority is given to those</p>

<p>That an individual's refusal to engage with the Council, or to reconnect to another area, should not restrict their access to the sit-up service, except in circumstances where they pose a risk to the safety or progress of other people using the service.</p>		<p>willing to engage with services and so have the prospect of moving on, freeing up their sit-up place as they do so.</p> <p>Longer term and subject to resources, officers are working on proposals which would allow for an expanded sit up service and/or a night shelter service which could take people of the street with only a minimal level of engagement.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> That the Council trials a reconnection log for 12 months to monitor the outcomes and effectiveness of reconnections to other areas. The reconnection log should be presented to the Housing Panel when there is sufficient data to draw conclusions.</p>	Yes	<p>OXSPOT have a dedicated reconnection service. A report of their work could be made available to the Housing Panel.</p> <p>Efforts will be made to attempt this, bearing in mind some of the difficulties in keeping in touch once people have moved out of area, and moved on with their lives.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 12:</b> That the Council commissions a report to be brought forward in 2019 setting out options for establishing a county wide reconnection service having regard to lessons that can be learnt from the London-wide reconnection service.</p>	Yes, in part.	<p>Oxford City Council will continue to work to reconnect rough sleepers in the city to their home district, who are the body with responsibility to support the individual, whenever this is possible. Officers will be asked to look at what improvements can be made to make reconnections more successful. This should include dialogue with neighbouring districts and the county council. This could be the subject of a report to the Housing Panel if required.</p>
<b>Part 3: Allocating Housing</b>		
<p><b>Recommendation 13:</b> That the Council revises the Housing Allocations Scheme to:</p>	No.	<p>CEB will not be revising the Housing Allocation Scheme as a result of this review panel report.</p> <p>Oxford's Allocations scheme is already far less strict than Government guidance which recommends a two year residence criteria but we treat permanent residence of a minimum of 6 months as sufficient for local connection</p> <p>See Officer comments.</p>
<p>a) Accept any person who qualifies for a local connection under any accepted recommendations in this review onto the</p>		

Housing Register.		
b) Ensure that time spent in prison, hospital or rehab does not affect a person's residency connection time (six out of the last twelve months or three out of the last five years), and entry and exit into these institutions should 'freeze' the accounting period.		
c) Accept any person onto the Housing Register who is confirmed as having lived in supported accommodation continuously within Oxford for more than 6 months, including accommodation services that are recognised but not directly funded by the Council.	Yes, in part	Officers should explore reviewing some supported accommodation in the city, to determine whether residence of greater than two years, should be considered 'settled' including Emmaus, some Response accommodation, and some other provision (inc ACT). 6 months would not be considered a significant enough stay.
<b>Part 4: Commissioning and Budget Setting</b>		
<p><b>Recommendation 14:</b></p> <p>That the City Executive Board commissions a report to be brought forward in 2019 setting out options for the Council entering into arrangements with colleges, registered social landlords and private landlords to take over and refurbish sub-standard and empty properties. The Council would then sublet the refurbished properties, at a minimum rent, to</p>	No.	<p>We already have £20million (which received a further £5million of social investment) invested in local properties which we use as temporary and emergency housing. These are let at LHA rates and the scheme is already saving the council money as use of PRS and B&amp;Bs has dropped.</p> <p>Our priority must remain the building of more homes available at social rents, including increasing our council stock.</p> <p>Where properties are sub-standard we will take enforcement action</p>

<p>priority homelessness cases before returning the properties to their owners after a mutually agreed period.</p>		<p>whenever appropriate, we also already have an empty homes officer who has been successful at reducing the number of empty homes in the city in recent years.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 15:</b> That the Council continues to commission at least one female only overnight accommodation provider in the Adult Homeless Pathway and keeps demand for this provision under review. Opportunities should be sought to extend this provision for women with no local connection where possible, if further spaces are needed to meet demand.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>It will be important to learn from the experience of the women only house we are currently piloting to see if this is a service which should continue. If there is demand for it then it should.</p> <p>All provision within the AHP, including that accessible to people without a local connection should take into account the needs of female service users.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 16:</b> That the City Executive Board, as part of its budget setting process, identifies provision for:</p> <p>a) Free room hire and refreshments for a female homelessness forum. The Council should also ensure these women's views are represented within the Council's decision making process on homelessness issues.</p> <p>b) Free sanitary products to be available for women experiencing homelessness 24 hours a day. The location of distribution for these products should be agreed in liaison with women currently experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>A) Yes. B) Yes.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 17:</b> That the Council makes on site provision for domestic pets a material consideration as part of the supported accommodation commissioning process.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>The demand for accommodation with capacity for pets should be kept under review and provided where possible.</p>



<p><b>Recommendation 18:</b> That the Council engages with Crisis and the City Conversation to see what further opportunities exist for piloting innovative Housing First and Critical Time Intervention programmes, given their rates of success and relative cost-benefit ratios.</p>	Yes.	
<p><b>Recommendation 19:</b> That the Council, as part of its budget setting process, gives consideration for contingency funds to be made available for the Council's commissioned outreach Service (OxSPOT) to be more flexible and reactive to changes in homelessness demand throughout the year. For example, extending shifts to meet spikes in the numbers of people sleeping rough.</p>	No.	This does not require contingency funds. The OXSPOT team have already received a boost with three extra FTE for 18/19 and 19/20 and do not report any problems with capacity.
<p><b>Recommendation 20:</b> That the Council writes to Central Government to welcome the new funding made available through MHCLG this year, and lobby for greater assurance about the necessity of long term funding to sustain new support services which will help deliver their Rough Sleeping Strategy.</p>	Yes.	The portfolio holder also welcomes this recommendation!
<p><b>Part 5: Communicating What We're Doing</b></p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 21:</b> That all future Council policy documents referencing homelessness should recognise the net positive contribution that people experiencing homelessness can make (e.g. the</p>	Yes.	Positive stories should be shared whenever and wherever appropriate. Homeless people themselves should never be framed in a negative light.

<p>skills, experience and diversity they bring). Homeless people themselves should not be framed in a negative light and this should be reflected in the Council's communication's plans.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 22:</b> That the Council recognises the value someone's homelessness experience can potentially bring to the employed officer workforce, and that it be given due weight in the recruitment process for staff supporting the homelessness function.</p>	Yes.	
<p><b>Recommendation 23:</b> That the Council revisits its approach to communicating with people experiencing homelessness, local service providers and the public to better convey information about the Local Connection Policy, how it is applied, and what wider support services are available in the City. Any significant changes (e.g a new notice board or public leaflet) should be presented to the Housing Panel for comment prior to implementation.</p>	Yes.	<p>As set out earlier, the council should publish anonymised details of case studies where discretion has been used to grant an exemption to our local connection policies in relation to the AHP. This will increase transparency and confidence in our procedures and assist those working with rough sleepers to make their case for an exemption. Officers are working on a business card for public circulation to publicise the work of OXSPOT. I have also asked officers to commence work on a booklet which could be a resource for rough sleepers, those working with rough sleepers and concerned members of the public which sets out the wide range of support services available in the city.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 24:</b> That the Leader considers appointing a City Executive Board member with exclusive responsibility for Homelessness to provide public clarity on board member roles and raise the profile of the issue, given the increasing funding and support being offered in this area.</p>	No.	<p>This is a matter for the Leader. However, as I am a full-time councillor I don't believe that I lack the time to devote to this issue just because it is not my only area of responsibility.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 25:</b> That the Board Member responsible for Homelessness considers attending the quarterly contract management meetings of the largest supported accommodation</p>	Yes.	<p>I will attend the next meeting that I am available for and will continue to attend if my attendance proves to be useful.</p>

provider(s) commissioned by the Council.		
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