



Oxfordshire Local Housing Authorities Procedure

Homelessness Reduction Act: Referring service users that may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a local housing authority



October 2018 – Version 1.0

Audience	Local Housing Authorities; 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; members of the regular forces; other public authorities or partner organisations that wish to make referrals to Oxfordshire local housing authorities
Overview	The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Homelessness (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018 have introduced a duty on specified public authorities to refer service users that may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a local housing authority. This document sets out the procedure for referring service users to one of the five housing authorities in Oxfordshire. The procedure is for the public authorities specified within the legislation and other organisations wishing to make referrals on a voluntary basis. The procedure and the documents associated with it will be reviewed in the light of experience and further improvements made where necessary.
Action required	For practitioners and stakeholders to be aware of their responsibilities under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Homelessness (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018. In particular, the process and mechanism for making referrals to a local housing authority within Oxfordshire.
Further information and single points of contact	<p>Oxford City Council Joe Marrs, Housing Assessment Officer jmarrs@oxford.gov.uk</p> <p>South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils Paul Derow, Housing Needs Officer paul.derow@southandvale.gov.uk</p> <p>Cherwell District Council Alison Adkins, Housing Team Leader alison.adkins@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p> <p>West Oxfordshire District Council Caroline Clissold, Prevention & Relief Technical Lead caroline.clissold@publicagroup.gov.uk</p>
Additional copies and access	<p>This document is available to view and/ or download from the external website of each local housing authority within Oxfordshire:</p> <p>Oxford City Council South Oxfordshire District Council Vale of White Horse District Council Cherwell District Council West Oxfordshire Council</p> <p>It may also be accessible from a referring organisation's internal intranet or</p>

	through contacting their homelessness champion (if they have one). If a referrer would like a large print version, a translation of, or any other information about this document, please use the contact details above.
Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 ● Homelessness (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018 ● Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities (20 June 2018) ● H-CLIC and personal data: guidance for local authorities (16 May 2018) ● Data linking to Evaluate Homeless Programmes and to monitor the implementation and impact of the 2017 Act: Privacy Impact Assessment (June 2018) ● Understanding the impact of Homelessness Programmes and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: Privacy Notice (March 2018)

This document:

This document is the result of the joint efforts of organisations within the Oxfordshire Trailblazer Champions' Network. It stems from a task and finish group of the Oxfordshire local housing authorities which was established to oversee the operational implementation of the 'duty to refer' within Oxfordshire. Its overall purpose was to develop a consistent approach to the new duty in Oxfordshire and support the trailblazer initiative in preparing public authorities and local housing authorities. The following pages have been developed with referring organisations and describe an approach which, if implemented effectively, will ensure consistently good services are provided to those who need them. The procedure and the documents associated with it will be reviewed in the light of experience and further improvements made where necessary.

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Definitions of language used

Throughout this procedure:

- **“HRA”** means the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- **“the regulations”** means the Homelessness (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018
- **“the housing authority”** means the local housing authority **within Oxfordshire** (Oxford City, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse)
- **“the Code”** means the [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities \(2018\)](#)
- **“duty to refer”** means the s.213b ‘Duty of public authority to refer cases in England to local housing authority’
- **“commitment to cooperate”** signals the intention from referrers to go beyond the one-way referral required by the legislation and establish arrangements for joint working on cases
- **“the applicant”** means the individual or household that is being referred to the housing authority
- **“the referrer”** means the public authority or organisation that is making the referral
- **“homeless”** refers to the definitions outlined under section 175. Under section 175, a person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation.
- **“threatened with homelessness”** refers to the definitions outlined under section 175(4) where a person is ‘threatened with homelessness’ if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days. Under section 175(5), a person is also threatened with homelessness if a valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 has been issued in respect of the only accommodation available for their occupation, and the notice will expire within 56 days.

1.0 Legislative Context & Responsibilities

1.1 s.213b Duty to refer on public authorities

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Homelessness (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018 have introduced a legal duty on specified public authorities to refer service users that may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a housing authority in England. Most of the provisions from the HRA came into force on the 3rd April 2018 but this new duty on public authorities is in force from the **1st October 2018**.

This policy change stems from a recognition that the local housing authority is often not the first service to become aware of a housing, homelessness or housing-related support issue. This is part of the wider prevention focus of the HRA that encourages local collaboration and multi-agency approaches. It emphasises the need for the public sector and local services to identify risks and intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and housing crises. The Oxfordshire Trailblazer Champions' Network has developed the strategic direction for how this new duty should work in Oxfordshire. Annex 4 outlines the principles and commitments that form the strategic 'local agreement' between housing authorities and partners

1.2 Who is this procedure for?

The following public authorities are specified within the regulations and subject to the legal duty:

- 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
- Regular forces (Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army and the Royal Air Force)

Other public authorities may be added or removed in the future. In line with the spirit of the HRA, other public authorities and organisations that are not currently subject to the legal duty are still encouraged to make voluntary referrals. This procedure is therefore for **any organisation wishing to refer someone to one of the Oxfordshire housing authorities** because they consider them homeless or threatened with homelessness.

1.3 What the regulations say

The minimum legal requirements in the regulations state:

- ∓ Public authorities set out in the schedule will have a duty to refer people in England they consider may be homeless or threatened with becoming homeless within 56 days to housing authorities
- ∓ Public authorities are required to ask the customer, and need consent (written or orally) for the referral and the sharing of their contact details
- ∓ The individual should identify which LHA they want to be referred to (in England)
- ∓ A referral should include, at a minimum, the individual's contact details, consent, and agreed reason for the referral (i.e. homeless or threatened with homelessness)
- ∓ The referral itself does not constitute an application for assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (see section 3.1 of this procedure)
- ∓ Housing authorities have a duty to provide or secure the provision of advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, free of charge. This must be available to everyone

1.4 What the code says

The statutory code of guidance is intended to help housing authorities and public authorities implement the law in practice. It offers the following on the duty to refer:

- The duty should be incorporated into wider joint working arrangements and the local homelessness strategy
- Local procedures should focus on identifying people at risk as early as possible
- Housing authorities are responsible for setting up local procedures for managing referrals. They should be tailored to each public authority (who have ultimate responsibility for discharging their duty)
- Housing authorities should set up a single point of contact for submitting referrals
- Housing authorities should include information on how they will respond to referrals
- Referring authorities should be mindful that for certain individuals, it may be more appropriate to assist them to approach a housing authority directly, rather than refer
- Local areas should consider issues of multiple and repeat referrals and agree protocols with service partners to mitigate these
- Authorities are encouraged to establish arrangements with partners that go beyond referral procedures, aiming to maximize the impact of shared efforts on positive outcomes for service users who may have multiple needs. This can advance the objectives of partner agencies and deliver efficiencies for the public purse

This procedure has consulted on and incorporated this guidance.

2.0 Making referrals

2.1 When to make a referral

Training and guidance materials have been produced to support this procedure. If referrers are unsure or need help, they should consult their homelessness champion (if their organisation has one) and the materials in the first instance.

2.1.1 *Emergencies*

An emergency case is when an individual or family require immediate assistance e.g. they are 'roofless' and have nowhere safe to stay due to a fire, flood or fleeing domestic abuse. In these instances, please use the existing emergency arrangements for the relevant housing authority, as set out in Annex 3.

2.1.2 *'Homeless' or 'threatened with homelessness'*

Referrals should be made when the public authority or organisation consider someone may be 'homeless' or 'threatened with becoming homeless'.

The legal definitions of these terms are as follows:

- **“Homeless”** A person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation.
- **“Threatened with homelessness”** A person is 'threatened with homelessness' if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days. Under section 175(5), a person is also threatened with homelessness if a valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 has been issued in respect of the only accommodation available for their occupation, and the notice will expire within 56 days.

The intention behind the legislation is not that other professionals become 'housing experts' and the training and guidance to support this procedure includes more information about identifying when someone may be homeless or at risk.

The legal definition is 56 days for someone to be 'threatened with homelessness' but **this procedure encourages identifying people at risk as early as possible.**

If referrers are in doubt on whether to make a referral, they should consult their homelessness champion (if their organisation has one) and the accompanying training and guidance in the first instance. If still in doubt, they should submit the referral and the housing authority can respond appropriately.

Please Note: This procedure and process does not replace or affect any safeguarding concerns and referrals. Please report safeguarding concerns in the usual way.

2.1.3 *Existing joint working arrangements*

This procedure is to be used in conjunction with any existing joint working arrangements between housing authorities and partners (see Annex 2 for a summary). The new duty (and this procedure) represent additional opportunities for housing authorities to be made aware of individuals that are homeless or at risk; and intervene earlier with partners to prevent homelessness and housing crises.

2.1.4 *Referrals to other housing authorities in England & local connection*

The regulations state the individual should identify which housing authority they would like to be referred to (in England). The scope of this procedure is those wishing to be referred to a housing authority in Oxfordshire. If they wish to be referred to another housing authority, referrers will need to follow the relevant local procedure.

After a referral (see section 3), if a housing authority determines an applicant is owed the 'relief duty' (when they are eligible for assistance and homeless), it may also make inquiries to establish an applicant's local connection. They may then, at their discretion, refer the applicant to another housing authority where they have a local connection. Local connection is not considered if the applicant is threatened with homelessness.

In summary, a person will typically have a connection if:

- They are, or were in the past, normally resident there, and that residence was of their own choice (6 months in an area during the previous 12 months, or for 3 years during the previous 5-year period)
- They are employed and work there
- They have family associations living there (for a period of at least 5 years)
- They have any special circumstances e.g. the need to be near specialist medical or support services which are available only in a particular district

Whilst it is the individual's choice, referring organisations are advised to make applicants aware of this when they are making their choice.

2.2 How to make a referral

2.2.1 ALERT Portal

The ALERT online portal is the mechanism to make referrals under this procedure. It can be accessed [here](https://live.housingjigsaw.co.uk/alert/duty-to-refer) (URL: live.housingjigsaw.co.uk/alert/duty-to-refer) or via the relevant housing authority webpage. ALERT is a free online tool that is designed to specifically meet the new duty to refer as well as voluntary referrals. It is accessible to anyone with internet access via an internet browser.

For guidance on how to submit referrals and use the ALERT portal, please refer to the guidance accessible [here](#) or via the relevant housing authority's webpage. For technical issues and queries, please contact the ALERT support team on 01962851747 or email support@npsservice.org.uk.

On the first use of ALERT, referrers will need to register themselves and set up log-in credentials. They will then be able to sign in and make referrals, as well as view their dashboard. **It is advised that teams set up a single account and use the same credentials (e.g team mailbox) rather than doing it as individuals.** This will avoid issues if people are not in work or have left the organisation. It will also make the dashboard functionally more relevant as referrers will be able to monitor the referrals they have made as a team.

Please Note: For certain individuals, it may be more appropriate to **assist them** to approach a housing authority directly, rather than relying on a referral e.g. if there are reasons that make it unlikely they will respond to the housing authority's attempts at contact. In these cases, referrers are advised to record this on their record for the applicant to evidence they have fulfilled their duty.

Please Note: ALERT is available to all housing authorities and partner agencies in England. Referrers may be able to use it to refer applicants to housing authorities outside of Oxfordshire. They will need to refer to the relevant local procedures to confirm this.

2.2.2 Information & Security

There are four steps on the ALERT portal to refer an applicant:

- Referring agency details (entered only at initial registration)
- Applicant basic information
- Applicant support information
- Declaration and submission

There are a number of mandatory and non-mandatory questions when submitting a referral. Whilst it may be difficult to provide all the information requested, referrers are **encouraged to complete as much information as possible**. It is particularly important to capture the applicant's preferred method of contact (or who should be contacted on their behalf). This will maximise the chance of the housing authority being able to make contact and also help build an initial understanding of their circumstances and needs.

The ALERT portal is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation and customer consent is recorded against the referral form in the 'declaration and submission' section. Referrers may wish to keep evidence of given/ refused consent for their own records. Any notification emails received from ALERT will always require users to log-in to the secure portal to view or action.

Please Note: Consent for a referral to be made is a legal requirement. In no circumstances can a referral be submitted without the applicant's consent. If the applicant is judged to not have the capacity to do so, referrers are reminded that a homeless application can only be made by a person who has the mental capacity to do so. It is currently uncertain whether a deputy can be authorised by the Court of Protection to make a homeless application on behalf of a person who lacks capacity. Referrers are advised in these cases to contact Oxfordshire County Council's adult social care team as they may qualify for services (potentially including accommodation) under the Care Act 2014.

If referrers require more information about data protection and security, they are advised to contact the dedicated data protection officer within their organisation.

2.2.3 *Internet Access*

The ALERT online portal is the mechanism for making referrals and requires internet access. If the referrer does not have access to the internet, they should contact the named contacts on page 1. This will be monitored as part of the review process to see if any further changes or improvements are required.

3.0 Responding to referrals

3.1 Housing authority work following referral

3.1.1 *Response time & contacting the applicant*

The housing advice/ options team at the housing authority will receive a notification email from ALERT with the referral. An officer will then attempt to make contact as quickly as possible, using the preferred method, **within 10 working days**. This could include arranging an appointment to make contact at a later date. Officers are likely to make multiple attempts at contact but this is dependent on local circumstances.

If the officer can contact the individual, they will change the status of the referral to 'accepted' and add additional text to state they were able to make contact with the individual. Referrers will be able to see this on their ALERT dashboard. **This does not mean the housing authority has accepted a homeless application for assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (see below).**

If the officer does not receive a response after attempting to make contact, they will change the status of the referral to 'accepted' and add additional text to state they were unable to make contact. Referrers will be able to see this on their ALERT dashboard. They will then close the case and send information on accessing advice and assistance to the applicant using the contact details provided.

Please Note: Applicants can also receive a confirmation email (from 'housing jigsaw') with the unique referral code if they provided an email address. If not, this should be given to the applicant for their reference. It is the referrer's responsibility to inform the applicant when they can expect to be contacted and what will happen next.

3.1.2 *Determining if a homeless application is required*

If the housing authority has made contact with the applicant, they will confirm if they have reason to believe they may be homeless or threatened with homelessness (i.e. if a homeless application is required). If an application is required, they will make inquiries to see whether they owe the applicant any legal duty under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. This may include a duty to provide suitable interim accommodation. After these inquiries, if the authority decides the applicant is eligible for assistance (based on their immigration status) and homeless or threatened with homelessness, they will owe the applicant the relief duty (homeless) or prevention duty (threatened with homelessness). More information and guidance on the HRA process can be found [here](#).

If the housing authority has made contact with the applicant and does not have reason to believe they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, they will provide the applicant with appropriate advice and information for their circumstances.

3.1.3 *Next Steps (if applicant owed a duty)*

If an applicant is homeless and owed the relief duty, they may be referred to another housing authority if they do not have a local connection with the one that accepted the duty. As outlined in section 2.1, referring organisations are advised to make applicants aware of this when they are making their choice but this will be the responsibility of the housing authority to determine (at their discretion).

All applicants owed the prevention or relief duties will have an assessment of their needs and circumstances. This will supplement the information provided with the initial referral and the assessment will therefore be more effective if this initial information is comprehensive and of good quality.

Housing authorities will work alongside applicants to identify practical and reasonable steps for them, the applicant and partners to take to help them retain or secure suitable accommodation. These steps will be provided to the applicant in writing as their 'personalised housing plan'. Both the applicant, housing authority and partners will then complete the steps in the plan to seek to prevent or relieve the applicant's homelessness. More information and guidance on the HRA process can be found [here](#).

3.2 **Communication between housing authority and referring body**

3.2.1 *Receipt of referral*

Referrers will receive a confirmation email from ALERT that the referral has been sent as well as a unique referral code. The referral will appear with a 'pending' status on the ALERT dashboard. ALERT also retains a copy of the referral form that can be accessed any time.

3.2.2 *Outcome of referral*

As noted above, referrers will be able to see if the housing authority was able to make contact with the individual using the ALERT dashboard. **This is as far as the ALERT portal will monitor the process.**

If the housing authority was able to make contact with the applicant, they will follow the steps outlined in the previous section. Any further communication between the housing authority and referrer will be dependent on the individual case and the applicant's consent. The housing authority will always look to work collaboratively on cases (e.g. cooperation with personalised plans) as per the principles in the local agreement (Annex 4) and any protocols/ joint working arrangements in place.

4.0 Referrals to Oxfordshire housing authorities: Table of responsibilities

	Responsible body	Activity	Milestone
1	Referrer	Identify individual or household that is considered homeless or threatened with homelessness	
2	Referrer/ Applicant	<p>Confirm circumstances and if applicant wishes to be referred</p> <p>Capture information and establish consent. Manage their expectations on next steps</p> <p>Assess if it may be more appropriate to assist them to approach a housing authority directly</p>	If in doubt (after consulting homelessness champion and/or training and guidance), submit a referral
3	Referrer	Submit referral on ALERT (if appropriate)	Once a need is identified, a referral should be submitted as quickly as possible. This is dependent on an applicant's circumstances so, if appropriate, does not need to be made immediately
4	Housing authority	Attempt contact with applicant using preferred method	Within 10 working days
5	Housing authority/ Applicant	If contact made – determine if homeless application required	Dependent on case and housing authority
6	Housing authority/ Applicant	If application required - make inquiries and initial decision on whether a duty is owed	Dependent on case and housing authority
7	Housing authority/ Applicant	If a duty is owed - next steps	Dependent on case and housing authority

5.0 Expectations of partner organisations

5.1 Local agreement

All partners will understand the corporate value in working together to prevent and relieve homelessness in Oxfordshire. Partners are therefore expected to adhere to the principles and commitments outlined in the local agreement, developed by the Oxfordshire Trailblazer Champions' Network (see Annex 4).

5.2 What applicants will be provided with (on referral)

- A consistent evaluation of whether they might be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Made aware of local connection when choosing where they wish to be referred
- The unique code (from ALERT) for their referral
- Contact details for the housing authority they have been referred to
- Next steps (including how long to wait for contact from the housing authority)
- Where to get more information on support available including the benefits of working with the housing authority to help prevent or relieve their homelessness

6.0 Monitoring & Review

6.1 Adherence to this procedure

There is no sanction specified in the HRA for public authorities that do not comply with the legal duty. However, breach of the duty could be subject to Judicial Review and a failure to comply could also be addressed through contractual means where a provider's contract requires a contract holder to comply with all their legal duties.

For the initial six months of the new duty (October 2018 – March 2019), the number and source of referrals submitted via ALERT will be monitored and reported on by the Trailblazer Programme. During this period, regular contact will be made with partners and referring organisations to discuss, test and embed the new ways of working outlined in this procedure. This will also look at the effectiveness and impact of the new duty (for applicants and referrers/ housing authorities) and share good practice.

If implemented effectively, this procedure will help realise the true potential of the duty to refer/ commitment to cooperate for the people of Oxfordshire. It is the responsibility of every organisation to promote, follow and embed the new ways of working within their service.

6.2 Points of escalation & feedback

If a referring organisation believes a housing authority is not adhering to this procedure (or wishes to provide feedback on the process), they should contact the single point of contact provided on page 1 for the relevant authority.

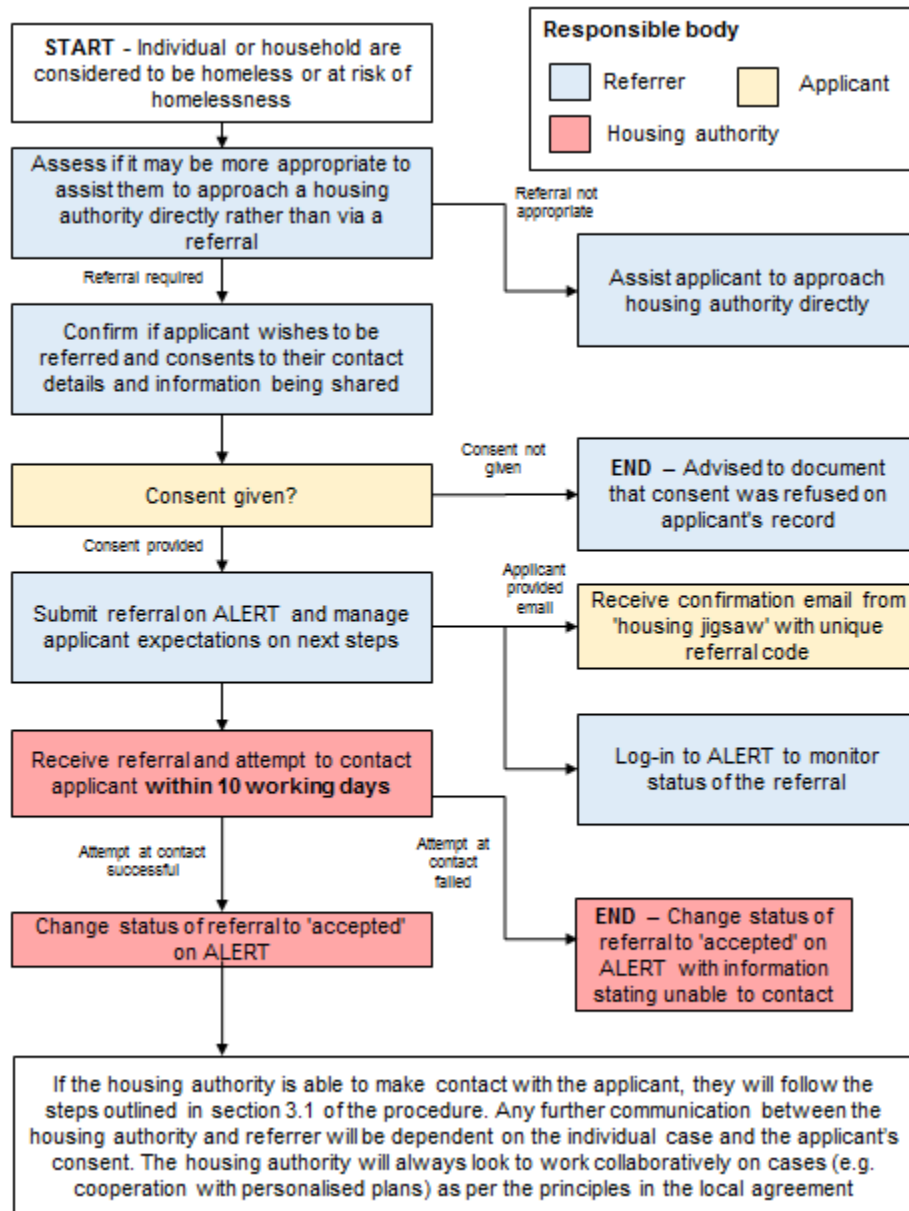
For technical issues and queries regarding the ALERT portal, please contact the ALERT support team on 01962851747 or email support@npsservice.org.uk.

6.3 Multiple and repeat referrals

Referring organisations may have repeat contact and/ or engagement with applicants they have previously referred to a housing authority. As outlined in this procedure, if in doubt referrers should first consult their homelessness champion (if their organisation has one) and guidance. If still in doubt, they should submit another referral. The housing authority will then attempt to make contact to evaluate if there has been any **change in relevant facts** since the last referral/ homeless application was made.

The code advises local areas to agree protocols to mitigate referrals of the same applicant from multiple organisations. When a housing authority receives a 'duplicate' referral i.e. an applicant they've already received a referral for or who has an existing homeless application, they will change the status of the referral on ALERT to 'mark as duplicate'.

Annex 1 - Visual process flow



Annex 2 - Impact on existing referral arrangements within Oxfordshire

This procedure is to be used in conjunction with any existing procedures and protocols. The table below summarises these existing arrangements:

Existing Arrangement	Housing Authorities
<i>Pre-eviction Protocol – Mental Health Supported Accommodation</i>	Countywide
<i>Young Persons’ Pathway – Accommodation Panel Meeting</i>	Countywide
<i>Protocol for 16 and 17 year olds</i>	Countywide
<i>Pre-eviction Protocol - Adult Homeless Pathway</i>	Countywide
<i>Intentionally Homeless Families Referral</i>	Countywide
<i>Pre-eviction Protocol for Registered Providers of Social Housing</i>	Oxford City Council
<i>Pre-eviction Protocol for City Council Residents</i>	Oxford City Council
<i>Tenants at Risk Meeting</i>	Oxford City Council
<i>Pre-eviction protocol for Young Persons Projects in Cherwell</i>	Cherwell District Council
<i>Registered Providers - Joint Working Agreement Appendix B – Pre-eviction Protocol</i>	Cherwell District Council
<i>Accommodation Panel</i>	Cherwell District Council
<i>Registered Providers – Homelessness Prevention Notification</i>	South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils (South & Vale)
<i>Accommodation Panel</i>	West Oxfordshire District Council

Annex 3 - Emergency contact details

Oxfordshire domestic abuse service: 0800 731 0055

Oxford City Council

Office hours: 01865 249811

Out of office hours: 0800 833408

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

Office hours: 01235 422452

Out of office hours: 01235 422422

Cherwell District Council

Office hours: 01295 275751

Out of office hours: 01295 252535

West Oxfordshire District Council

Office hours: 01993 861000

Out of office hours: 01513 432945

Annex 4 - Local agreement

The Oxfordshire Trailblazer Champions' Network developed the strategic direction for the duty to refer and commitment to cooperate in Oxfordshire. This included discussions of how to make the most of this opportunity and how it was going to work. The following principles and commitments were developed and form the strategic 'local agreement' between housing authorities and partners:

Duty to refer

Public authorities (with the legal duty):

- We will aim to expand on the minimum information requirement when making referrals
- We will provide information to those being referred to help inform their decision on which local housing authority they wish to be referred to
- We will refer everyone in need of help, even those not in immediate risk as per the 56-day definition, to maximise the opportunity for earlier intervention
- We will work with local housing authorities to establish a local referral procedure and a data sharing protocol that is clear, consistent, and works for both organisations and service users
- Where appropriate, we will assist people to approach a housing authority directly, rather than a referral

Public authorities and other organisations (not subject to the legal duty):

- Although not legally obliged, we will commit to the requirements of the duty to refer and the principles above

Local housing authorities:

- We will work (or continue to work) with public authorities to establish a local referral procedure and data sharing protocol that is secure, clear, consistent, and works for both organisations and service users
- We will establish a single point of contact for referrals and a standard mechanism across Oxfordshire that is simple and easy to use
- We will communicate consistent information and advice on procedures, protocols and how we respond to referrals
- We will respond promptly to referrals and adhere to timelines outlined in the agreed procedure

Commitment to cooperate

All organisations:

- We will work together to ensure everyone in need of help is identified as early as possible, fully assessed and given appropriate assistance and support
- We will be responsive to the needs of clients, outcomes focussed and client centred
- We will establish collective arrangements that go beyond referral procedures (e.g. attendance at multi-agency meetings for clients with multiple needs)
- We will develop protocols for cases of multiple and repeat referrals so the required intervention and support is put in place

- We will participate in any governance mechanism to support the implementation and ongoing delivery of the commitment to cooperate, including monitoring and reviewing its impact and effectiveness
- We will ensure staff are trained to understand the issues and undertake the processes correctly
- We will embed the commitment to cooperate and its requirements into our strategic and service plans
- We will raise awareness of the commitment to cooperate and its value for everyone in Oxfordshire

Public authorities and other referring organisations:

- When appropriate and accessible, we will actively participate in the casework and support for service users following a referral
- We will collaborate with relevant partners and local housing authorities when completing our casework, ensuring integrated working and better outcomes

Local housing authorities:

- When appropriate, we will commit to notify the referring public authorities of the outcome from the assessment and personalised plan. This will include the integrated working required to carry out the steps in the plan and ensure the applicant receives the required help and support they need
- We will collaborate with relevant partners when completing our casework, ensuring integrated working and better outcomes