



The Safe Connections Toolkit



The Safe Connections project, part of the No First Night Out service, was set up to help rough sleepers reconnect to their area of local connection in order to access support and accommodation, and ultimately, to leave the street lifestyle.

Funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) the project worked in a tri-borough area of London, covering Tower Hamlets, Hackney and the City of London, and ran from February 2016 to March 2017. All clients had been repeatedly contacted by outreach services rough sleeping in the tri-borough area but did not have a connection to the area and faced significant barriers to exiting rough sleeping.

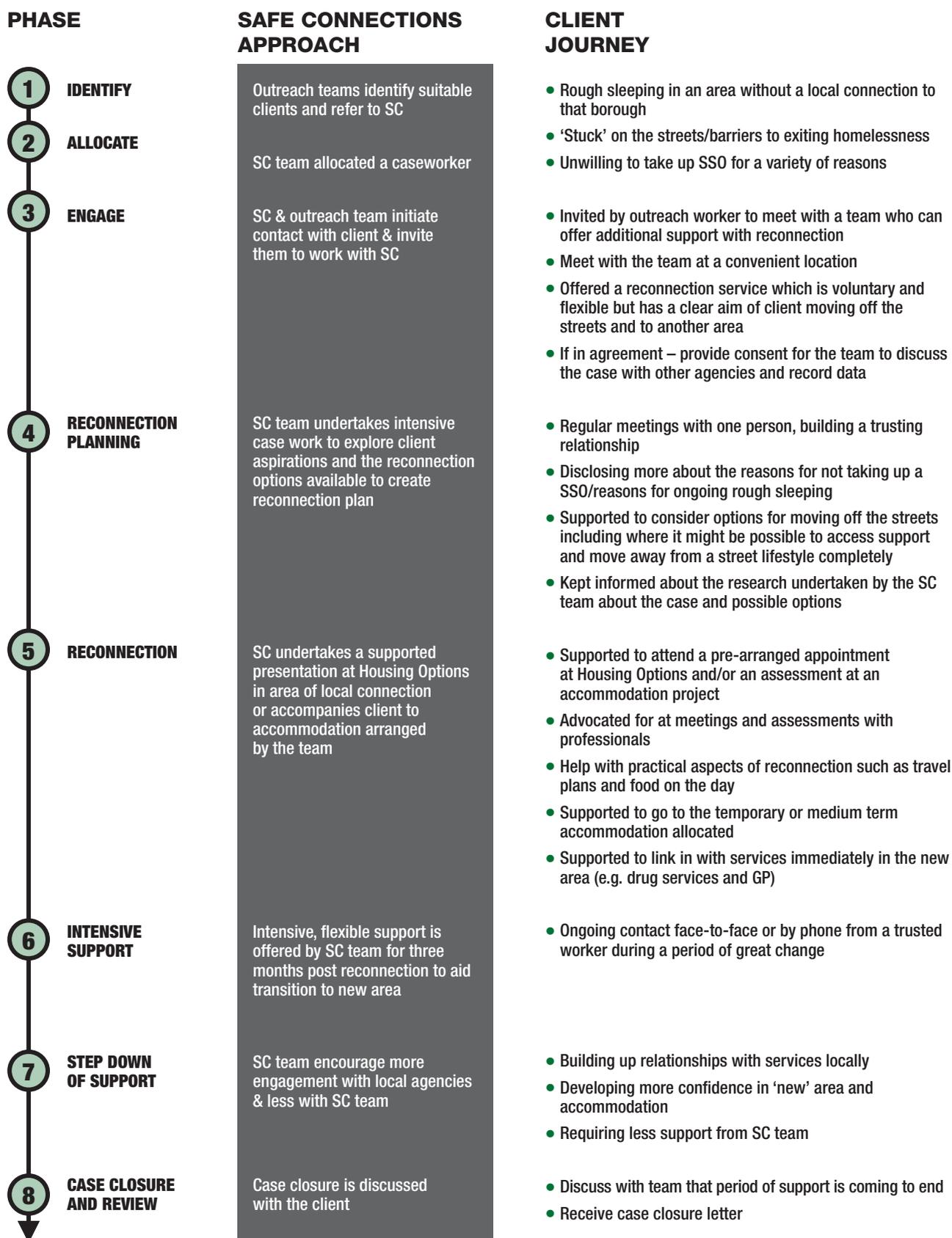
The Safe Connections model recognises that the likelihood of a return to rough sleeping for clients reconnected to their home boroughs is high. Therefore, rather than simply being a reconnection service, Safe Connections also supported clients for up to three months in their home areas after reconnection to maximise each client's chances of sustaining their reconnection and reduce the chances of their returning to rough sleeping. This model of reconnection – ensuring first and foremost that the reconnection is safe and providing intensive support – led to some remarkable outcomes for clients who had failed to stabilise and leave the streets previously. It was also recognised by clients and external agencies alike that Safe Connections' focus on safer, supported reconnections engendered trust and partnership working beyond the scope of previous projects.

This Toolkit brings together the key elements of the model together with good practice tips so that practitioners doing reconnection work can use and adapt them in their own work. It comprises:

- Tool 1 – An outline of the Model of Delivery summarising the eight key phases
- Tool 2 – Good Practice Checklist for each phase
- Tool 3 – Sample Referral Form used to make referrals into the project
- Tool 4 – Case Closure and Review checklist

The Toolkit sits alongside the *Safe Connections End of Project Report (May 2017)* which describes how the project was implemented and includes more detailed learnings.

Tool 1 – Model of Delivery



Model developed by Phil Hennessy, 2016

Tool 2 – Good Practice Checklist

Phase 1 – Identify

A client is identified as suitable for referral to the project.

See Tool 3 Sample Referral Form

Good practice learning

- ✓ To prevent unsuitable referrals, a thorough initial assessment of suitability should be undertaken by the referrer (outreach team worker). This should include: checking eligibility for public funds, information about what ID the client has, details of the client's benefits claims, support needs, outline of housing history, and whether or not they have a local connection to the area they were contacted in while rough sleeping.
- ✓ A steady, ongoing flow of referrals into the project rather than bulk referrals works best. This helps the team to manage the caseload and ensure capacity for intensive support work with new clients.
- ✓ The client needs to be contactable and able to be located by the team, so it is important to work quickly to refer people with recent street contacts whose whereabouts are known.

Phase 2 – Allocate

The client is allocated to a caseworker.

Good practice learning

- ✓ Referrals should be allocated to a lead caseworker, and this information communicated to the outreach team and recorded on CHAIN (in a London context), so that other agencies are aware of the lead worker.
- ✓ Although each client should have a lead caseworker, all members of the team should discuss cases and have a good overview of the whole caseload. This is important for teams with only a few caseworkers to ensure cover as necessary.

Phase 3 – Engage

This stage involves working to build a good relationship of trust with the client. This may include:

- securing consent to record information and liaise with other agencies on the client's behalf;
- explaining the service and reconnection process to the client;
- confirming information passed on by the referring outreach team, including housing history.

Good practice learning

- ✓ The Safe Connections approach should be explained to the client as a new and distinct service – a voluntary, personalised process. This is particularly important for a client who has been resistant to previous offers of support and not engaged effectively with outreach teams.

- ✓ Caseworkers should focus on the 'safe' aspect of the service when introducing it to the client: that the process is a partnership between the caseworker team and the client to get them to a safe area where they can start their journey towards settled accommodation.
- ✓ A Single Service Offer (SSO) can be used as the basis for initial conversations about reconnection, but the team should be open-minded to the idea that there may be other, more suitable avenues for the client and the team to explore.
- ✓ Building relationships with some clients is a slow, gradual process so teams should not set a time limit on engagement.

Phase 4 – Reconnection planning

This stage involves working with a client to establish a reconnection plan to achieve safe, supported connection to an area that would offer suitable accommodation and exit from the street lifestyle.

Good practice learning

- ✓ The caseworker should make early initial contact with a destination local authority, highlighting the fact that the client is rough sleeping, before presenting at the local authority Housing Options department and making a Part VII application. It is important to check whether the client is already known to the local authority, and to alert them that the team is working with the client and intends to make a Part VII application with a housing solution as the intended outcome.
- ✓ All paperwork and evidence should be compiled before the reconnection to ease the process of a presentation at the housing department. This includes ID, benefits documentation, medical information, evidence of local connection and other supporting documents.
- ✓ Reconnection and a potential move to a home area can be traumatic for clients; caseworkers need adequate time for coaching and preparing the client, including informing them of the possible outcomes of a presentation, whether positive or negative.
- ✓ Where a client is unwilling or unable to take up their Part VII offer of a reconnection to a home area, caseworkers should be flexible and listen to the client's concerns and assess other options.
- ✓ Once the reconnection plan is fully in place, it is recommended that the client is provided with an emergency accommodation option for a period of a few nights so that they can stabilise and be fully prepared for reconnection. In addition, work to address urgent medical and substance misuse related issues should be offered to help ensure successful reconnection – for example arranging methadone or other substitution scripts to be available in the area of rough sleeping until the reconnection date and then in the destination area.

Phase 5 – Reconnection

This stage covers the actual relocation and reconnection.

Good practice learning

- ✓ A risk assessment should be carried out before the move to determine any new risks associated with moving e.g. flight risk.
- ✓ The caseworker attending a local authority Housing Options department or new accommodation (e.g. hostel or rehabilitation facility) alongside the client is vital to achieving a successful reconnection.
- ✓ The presentation at Housing Options may take a whole day so the worker should be available to focus efforts on that single case for the whole time.
- ✓ A 'presentation pack' of information and documents, should be sent to the Housing Options Officer or Manager by email a day in advance of the presentation and handed over in hard copy on the day. Examples of documents which should be included in the pack: a birth certificate or other ID, proof of benefits entitlement, medical information, proof of address history, evidence of priority need, and covering letter signed by the caseworker stating that the client is making a Part VII application and summarising key information such as the basis for their local connection.
- ✓ Travel plans are best made fairly close to, or even on the day of travel, because of the ever-changing situation with a client's case.
- ✓ Caseworkers should provide detailed information about what a client should expect on the day of reconnection and the plans for the day, including what will be expected of the client.
- ✓ Access to a reconnection budget to pay for travel, food and other expenses is important.
- ✓ If a client has to return to the area of rough sleeping while they wait for a Part VII decision, it is important that they have confidence in the reconnection process and that the reconnection happens as quickly as possible. Placement in temporary accommodation in the client's home area without support is usually too risky for those with high support needs. In some cases, it is safer to accommodate a client where they have access to support from their caseworker while they are waiting for settled accommodation in their home area.
- ✓ On the day of reconnection the client should be provided with all the information they need to settle in until they start getting linked in to local support.
- ✓ Once the reconnection is in place, the confidence level of the client should be assessed to minimise the risk of immediate abandonment. Any concerns should be addressed and dealt with wherever possible.

Phase 6 – Intensive support

A key feature of the Safe Connections model is the period of intensive support following the reconnection which is crucial to achieving a safe and sustainable reconnection for a client with support needs and barriers to sustaining accommodation.

- ensuring access to healthcare and drug and alcohol services, including scripting services for some clients;
- helping clients transition to new support services such as floating support;
- motivating clients placed in emergency accommodation in their home area to seek long-term accommodation;
- providing emotional support and coaching during a period of great change;
- providing move-in kits, including some food and household items, to help the client to settle into their new environment;
- checking on the clients' financial situation and referring them to local food banks or paying their travel costs to get to appointments for a short period, if necessary.

Good practice learning

- ✓ Post-reconnection support should be a feature of intensively supported reconnection services for a person who has barriers to exiting rough sleeping in London. This phase can be the most time-consuming stage in the process, lasting anywhere between 72 hours and three months. Without sufficient support at this stage, there is a risk that a client will return to the area where they were rough sleeping, or become homeless in their new area.
- ✓ A key feature of intensive post-reconnection support is encouraging increasing engagement with other agencies.

Phase 7 – Step down of support

Once the client has begun to stabilise in their new area and understood the local support network and how and when to interact with services, support should be scaled back and handed over to local support agencies.

Good practice learning

- ✓ The timing of this stage is important to ensure that the client moves on from homelessness services in their area, including the Safe Connections team, and builds up the support networks they need in their area of reconnection.
- ✓ Three to four weeks after reconnection seems to be a usual timeframe for starting to scale back support.
- ✓ It is imperative that the client is encouraged to seek help in the local area and to attend their floating support, health and drug/alcohol treatment sessions. This can be emphasised in a written agreement with their Safe Connections caseworker.

Phase 8 – Case closure and review

Cases should be closed after a period of time after reconnection if the client is still in their accommodation and engaging with services. This includes if the client is:

- receiving sufficient support in the local area;
- in temporary accommodation and, if so, has received a positive decision from the local authority on their homelessness application.

Good practice learning

- ✓ After reconnection, cases should be closed when the client is accommodated and receiving sufficient support in their local area.
- ✓ The client should be informed of case closure by letter, which should include full information about their support services in the local area and what to do in the event of any problems or a crisis.
- ✓ Where there is little or no progress for a sustained period, cases should be closed to avoid excessive caseloads. Re-referral should be an option if people get in touch with services and request the Safe Connections service and are willing to engage.

Tool 3 – Sample Referral Form

SAFE CONNECTIONS REFERRAL

(UK reconnection)

Please email referral, client assessment form and any supporting documentation to: xx@xx

Client Name

CHAIN Number

Referrer's Name and Outreach Team

Criteria for Safe Connection

He/she will qualify for referral to the Safe Connection service if they meet all three of the criteria below, i.e. has:

1. A local connection outside of LB of Hackney, LB of Tower Hamlets and the City of London but within the UK.
2. 'A history of rough sleeping or is a current rough sleeper'. Defined as:
 - a. Living on the street: those who have had a high number of contacts over 3 weeks or more which suggest they are living on the streets
 - b. Intermittent rough sleepers: people who were seen rough sleeping at some point before the period began, and contacted in the period but not regularly enough to be 'living on the streets'
 - c. A rough sleeper who has 2 or more bedded down contacts on CHAIN
3. Multiple needs.

If they meet the criteria then please answer the question below:

Why have you referred your client to the Safe Connection service?

Single Service Offer (SSO)

What is their current SSO? Is this updated on CHAIN?	
--	--

Are they engaging with this? If not why?	
--	--

SITE

Street/area, they are usually seen? Including time	
--	--

Name of day centre or any other support services that they attend	
---	--

Please complete the necessary information, this will support the Safe Connections workers to facilitate the reconnection.

IDENTITY

Are they a UK National?	
Do they have ID?	
Does client have recourse to public funds? (ILR, Refugee, Perm Right to Reside, EU National with Worker Status)	

MULTIPLE SUPPORT NEEDS

Please provide any contact details of support agencies they have engaged in the borough they have a local connection with:

(Please attach any supporting documents from their GP, CMHT, Hospital, Treatment agency, etc. if available.)

ESTABLISHING LOCAL CONNECTION OUTSIDE OF TRI BOROUGH AREA

Where have they lived for at least 6 out of the past 12 months, or 3 out of the last 5 years?	
If employed, where?	
Where does their family live? (mother, father brother, sister)	
Are there other special circumstances which connect the person to the area?	

PLEASE NOTE: FLOW TO BE UPDATED ON CHAIN BEFORE SENDING THIS REFFERAL TO SAFE CONNECTIONS.

DATE

SIGN

Tool 4 – Case Closure and Review Checklist

Phase 8 – Closure/Review and Learning

(Client still in accommodation and engaged after 3 months)

Pre Closure

Step 1 – Is client at 3 months post reconnection point?

YES – Go to Step 2

NO – Continue support ensuring local agencies are taking over, restart at Step 1 when done.

Step 2 – Is client supported enough in local community to be considered for case closure?

- Has sufficient support from local agencies?
- Is risk of return to rough sleeping/originating borough low?

YES – Go to Step 3

NO – Continue referrals to support agencies and clear obstacles to gaining local support, restart at Step 1 when done.

Step 3 – Is client in Temporary Accommodation (LA)?

YES – Go to Step 4

NO – Go to Step 6

Step 4 – Has client received a positive decision from the Local Authority/HPU on their homelessness application?

YES – Go to Step 6

NO – Go to Step 5

Step 5 – Discuss with team and handover support for possible negative decision to local agencies (i.e. floating support/local outreach). On completion go to Step 6.

Step 6 – Case ready for closure, review and learning – go to next section – *Closure*.

Closure

Step 7 – Has client been informed of closure of case?

YES – go to step 8.

NO – Contact client and write a letter confirming who their support will be in local area and what to do in event of any issues and crises – once complete go to Step 8.

Step 8 – Contact all agencies (including originating outreach referrers) to advise of the case closure – Go to step 9.

Step 9 – Close client case in all database systems, for example:

- CHAIN – TLE – Encounters – Case work – Caseload closed
- Move any Outlook folders or Shared Drive folders to Closed Client area

Once complete go to next section – *Review*.

Review

Step 10 – SC Team to review full case and look at any highs/lows and learning points and capture – Go to next section – *Learning Points*.

Learning Points

Step 11 – Enter learning points into centralised log ready for review at next team meeting.