

Oxfordshire Local Housing Authorities Procedure: Summary

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

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 local housing authority in England. This is in force from the **1st October 2018**. This document is a summary of the procedure for referring service users to one of the **five housing authorities in Oxfordshire**. Please consult the full procedure for more information.

1. Who is this procedure for?

Public authorities specified within the legislation and any other organisation wishing to make referrals to one of the Oxfordshire housing authorities.

2. Purpose of the change

This new duty stems from a recognition that the housing authority is often not the first service to become aware of a housing, homelessness or housing-related support issue. It emphasises the need for the public sector and local services to identify risks and intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and housing crises.

3. When to make a referral

Referrals should be made when the public authority or organisation consider someone may be 'homeless' or 'threatened with becoming homeless'. For the legal definitions of these terms please consult the full procedure. For emergencies, please use existing emergency arrangements.

4. How to make a referral



The ALERT online portal is the mechanism to make referrals under this procedure. It can be accessed [here](#) (live.housingjigsaw.co.uk/alert/duty-to-refer). 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 [here](#). For technical issues and queries, please contact the ALERT support team on 01962851747 or email support@npsservice.org.uk.

There are a number of mandatory and non-mandatory questions when submitting a referral. **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).

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.

5. After a referral

An officer will attempt to make contact as quickly as possible, using the preferred method, **within 10 working days**. Officers are likely to make multiple attempts at contact but this depends on local circumstances.

The officer will change the status of the referral to 'accepted' on ALERT and add additional text stating whether they were able to make contact. Referrers will be able to see this on their ALERT dashboard.

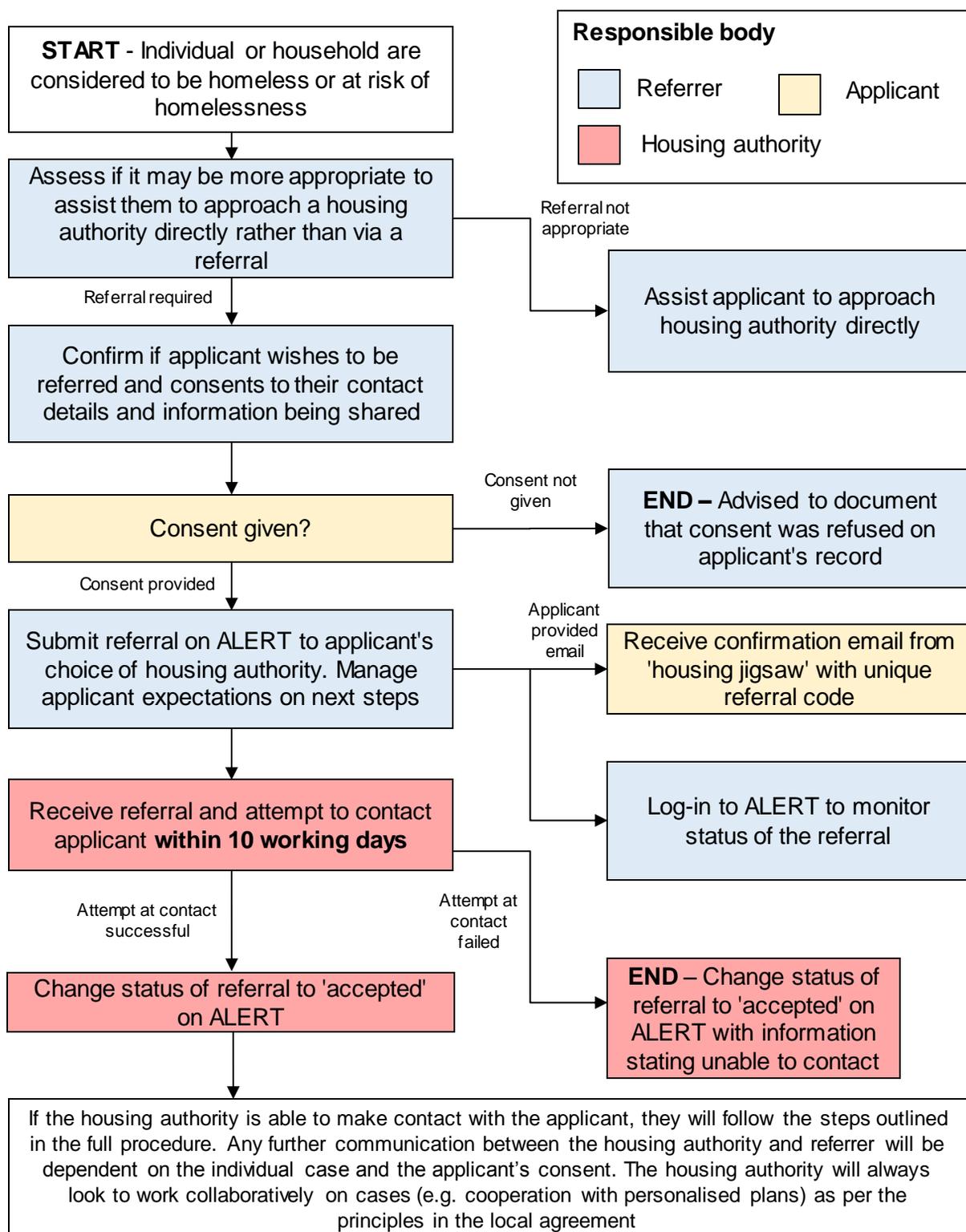
This is as far as the ALERT portal will monitor the process. If the housing authority was able to make contact with the applicant, they will follow the steps outlined in the full procedure. Any further communication between the housing authority and referrer will be dependent on the individual case and the applicant's consent. **The housing authority will always look to work collaboratively on cases as per the principles in the local agreement outlined in the full procedure.**

6. Important to remember

- Report safeguarding concerns in the usual way
- This procedure is to be used in conjunction with existing joint working arrangements
- Consent for a referral is a legal requirement
- Whilst it is the individual's choice on where to be referred, organisations are advised to make applicants aware of local connection
- Rather than referring, it may be more appropriate to assist certain individuals to approach directly

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Visual process flow



If a referring organisation believes a housing authority is not adhering to this procedure (or wishes to provide feedback), they should contact one of the single points of contact in the full procedure. If implemented effectively, this procedure will help realise the true potential of the duty to refer 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.