

# Reconnection Best Practice Guidelines

March 2022

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# Introduction

Routes Home is a service supporting non UK Nationals who are rough sleeping in London.

We know that rough sleeping is harmful and dangerous and that if we are to end rough sleeping in London we must provide bespoke support to non UK nationals who have unclear immigration status or no recourse to public funds

In particular, we believe that all individuals deserve rapid access to assessment and immigration advice so they can understand their rights and entitlements, and make positive decisions about their future. As part of our comprehensive assessment process, indicators of forced labour/ trafficking are also explored, and referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) offered to individuals in these cases.

Our role is to work with individuals to understand their needs, motivations and hopes for the future and work with them to identify a sustainable route away from the street whether this be in the UK or elsewhere.

## Maximising Options

We know that a 'route home' can mean different things for different people and as a result the Routes Home can support with the following different service elements:

1. Immigration advice and casework for individuals who need to resolve their immigration situation. This includes exploring all options for accommodation in the UK including under eligibility The Care Act and support to access work.
2. Supported reconnections for individuals who wish to return to their home outside of the UK. This means we support people to access specialist supported accommodation that meets their needs and that they do not return to homelessness elsewhere in the world.
3. Employment support for individuals for whom employment is a route out of homelessness.

This guide focuses specifically on supporting individuals to end their homelessness by reconnecting to outside the UK.

## What is a reconnection?

A reconnection is a piece of work to support an individual to return safely to their home outside the UK. A reconnection should always involve the following elements

1. Immigration advice so the individual understands their rights and entitlement and can make an informed decision about if they want to reconnect. This includes understanding the implications of leaving the UK on their current status.
2. A safe travel plan and sustainable accommodation in the area where they are travelling to so they do not risk returning to rough sleeping.

3. Support to link in with welfare, health and wellbeing support in the area to which they are returning so they can continue with their recovery.

Any reconnection should be risk assessed and take into account the effects of Covid-19.

### **What is a supported reconnection?**

A supported reconnection is where a staff member supports an individual by travelling with them to the country of reconnection and making sure they are safely linked in with local services on arrival. This is essential for clients who have higher support needs.

Please note: this guide relates only to the reconnection of an individual within the EEA. Routes Home are in the process of developing guidance for reconnecting individuals to outside of the EEA and can be contacted for more information about this.

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## Contact and Assessment

### Making Contact

This Good Practice Guide recognises that contact with EEA nationals may take place in a range of locations, including in a street outreach setting or in day centres.

To support EEA nationals to move away from rough sleeping, contact needs to be built upon a relationship of trust. Workers should start by introducing their role and the purpose of their team and organisation. It is important to clearly explain your Data Protection Policy, issue a privacy notice and explain the circumstances where information will be shared. Information about your organisation should be provided in writing in the client's language.

It is helpful at initial contact to explain that your role is to help people understand their rights and entitlements here and in their country of origin. It is important that people understand you will assess all their options and support them to find the safest most sustainable route off the street. You should always begin by assessing entitlements in the UK and supporting the individual to access immigration advice so they can make an informed decision about their future.

Every interaction can shape a perception of your service, so it is important to provide well-balanced support and alleviate fears by being clear on your organisation's data sharing protocols and working practices.

### Assessment

A decision to make a change, whether that is rebuilding your life in the UK or returning to your country of origin,

requires work to explore and build motivation and to understand barriers.

This needs to be supported by a good quality assessment and independent immigration advice. Depending on the complexity of the case this may need to take place over time.

Where it is possible to find a safe place to stay (e.g. an assessment or emergency bed space) this should be used in order to conduct a thorough and effective assessment and giving the client space and stability away from the street to understand their situation and make informed choices.

An initial assessment should include:

- Basic demographics, ensuring name and date of birth are correctly recorded and any alternative names used are known.
- Any form of ID held.
- Immigration situation and if further advice is needed
- Detailed employment history (in the UK and elsewhere) and whether the person has made contributions (including if they have or can obtain evidence of this). Where and when they have been entitled to any benefits.
- Entitlement to welfare benefits.
- The length of time they have been in the UK and other countries they have lived in. This is best recorded as a 'housing history' and should include dates, full addresses and the local authority/district areas these fall within. It is important to include any periods of no fixed abode in this too, as they may still

- be counted towards any application under the EU Settlement Scheme.
- What skills and training someone has and what they have been doing while in the UK.
- An understanding of their motivations for coming to the UK and their hopes for the future.
- Support needs (such as medical conditions, mental health and substance use issues) and if relevant what support has been useful in coping with these.
- Important relationships and connections – and whether support is required to rebuild these.
- Indicators of forced labour/trafficking, and if appropriate, referrals made to the National Referral Mechanism.
- Use motivational interviewing skills during assessment: ask open questions, use active listening skills and recognise positive skills and abilities – such as focusing on positive help seeking behaviour or good memories.
- Use the assessment process to uncover the positive connections or memories – family, friends, familiar places, support that has been helpful in the past as well as support services that are available now.
- Ensure the assessment is accessible to non-English speakers by using interpreters and employing or developing a network of volunteers who are native speakers of EEA languages. Bear in mind that Russian is still widely spoken as a second language and some languages, such as Polish and Czech, are sufficiently similar to make it possible for speakers of one language to be understood in the other. However, please make sure you always discuss with your client in what language they would like to communicate.

High quality assessment will enable you to formulate a tailored plan with a person to resolve their homelessness, including the enquiries that need to be made about accommodation and support options available here and in their home country.

Assessment should aim to help to build a picture of peoples' rights and entitlements here and in their home country. If it emerges that an individual wishes to return home and/or will not be entitled to support in the UK, then further questions related to this option should include:

- The barriers to returning to their home country. This may include outstanding loans/ debts, issues with family members, peer pressure from others, misinformation about availability of services and support in home country, legal issues.
- Supportive people and organisations in their home country that they have had contact with in the past.

*Good practice tips*

## Making enquiries and checking information

Any assessment requires further enquiries and checking of information. When speaking to third parties always ensure you do this in a GDPR compliant way.

*Consider if there are any signs of modern slavery or human trafficking*

Human trafficking is the fastest growing international crime and there are clear links between trafficking, modern slavery and homelessness.

Homeless Link has produced helpful guidance for frontline services that offers practical suggestions on how to raise awareness, respond to risks and support the people you work with.

### *Eligibility for support within the UK*

Unless the client is adamant they do not want to remain in the UK, you should always explore options in the UK as well as abroad. This is especially important in light of Brexit as decisions to leave now could impact on rights to return to the UK in the future.

EEA citizens who were resident in UK before the 31 December 2020 need to apply for status under the EU settlement scheme to retain their rights to live and work in the UK. The deadline for applications was the 30 June 2021. People who have missed the 30 June 2021 deadline, are still able to make a late application to the EU Settlement Scheme.

All EEA citizens who have applied for status under the EU Settlement Scheme before 1 July 2021, but have not received a decision yet, will have their existing rights protected until they receive a decision. Individuals in this situation need to ensure they remain in close contact with their immigration adviser and respond promptly to any request from the Home Office for further information. Not doing so may result in their application being closed.

Applicants to the scheme may be granted either:

- Pre-settled Status. This status does not give any right to benefits or housing in itself, but those who have rights under the The Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2016 (see below) will keep them.

- Settled status which gives the right to claim benefits and help with housing, without needing to establish past activity. This will make benefit claims much easier for EEA and Swiss citizens who have no history of paid work in the UK.

Individuals who have rights to welfare benefits under the I(EEA) Regs:

- A worker under Reg 6(1)(b).
- A self-employed person under Reg 6(1)(c).
- Someone who has stopped working or being self-employed temporarily due to illness, as provided for in Reg 6(2)(a). 'Temporary' means that the illness is not expected to be permanent. People who stop work because they become permanently incapable of work are also covered if they have lived in the UK for at least 2 years when it happens.
- Someone who has stopped working and become involuntarily unemployed, is looking for work and has a genuine prospect of finding work as provided for in Reg 6(2)(b) and (c). The longer the unemployment lasts, the more difficult it is to demonstrate a prospect of finding work.

Right to reside is also available for:

- EU citizens who are Jobseekers, but this status does NOT permit claims for Universal Credit.
- Students and self-employed people, but this only applies to those with private health insurance, so generally does not help our clients.

Any EEA citizen who arrived in the UK for the first time after 31 December 2020 is subject to domestic UK immigration rules.



Access to good quality, regulated immigration advice is essential to enable people to understand their rights and entitlements under the EU Settlement Scheme. Information on how clients can access support from regulated immigration advisers or solicitors can be found in the Brexit section of this guide.

If you consider that a person is vulnerable and has eligible needs under the Care Act 2014 then a care act assessment can be requested. EEA nationals who are rough sleeping, may not be considered to have a place of 'ordinary residence', but the legislation makes clear that a local authority has a duty to meet the eligible needs of an adult physically present in its area who has no settled residence. In these cases seek legal advice. In cases where clients have needs that do not satisfy the eligibility criteria for the Care Act the Local Authority may have discretionary power under section 19(1) of the Care Act. More information can be found here [Section 19 of the Care Act](#)

#### *Eligibility for support in the country of origin*

It is important that following and during ongoing assessment that you carry out detailed checks to ascertain what rights to entitlement and support EEA migrants have in their home countries.

In common with the UK, EEA countries usually operate using local connection rules. It is therefore important to check a person's connection to a particular district or region and the services available there. EEA migrants may have a perception that there are no services in their home area to support them, but this may have changed in the years since they left their home country, so it is important that your enquiries help to inform them of this.

#### *Working with UK consulates for EEA countries*

A good place to start will be to contact the relevant consulate. Consulates may be useful for:

- Providing Emergency Travel Documents.
- Requesting police checks.
- Contacting somebody's family here and in the home country.
- Helping you to understand the national systems for housing or welfare and directing you to local councils, social services or support organisations.
- Support with translating official documents.

However remember you do not need to rely on the consulate for support. It can be quicker and more effective to go straight to support agencies, local councils or districts in the home country and ask them for support.

#### *Contacting local councils or services*

What is available in each country, and indeed area, across the EEA will vary significantly, so supporting an EEA migrant to understand what their local rights and entitlements needs to take place on a case-by-case basis. It is possible to contact and refer to a range of services including: temporary accommodation, social services, and drug or alcohol treatment.

Don't treat countries as homogeneous as there will be localised eligibility and roles. Look for resources in the specific area or district that someone last resided in; the local council may be able to check and confirm someone's last residence and what help can be offered. Many organisations have websites containing details of their services, therefore, a good place to contact is via an internet search.

When contacting local councils or services in EEA countries it is important to:

- Explain clearly who you are and the purpose of your organisation, without making assumptions that this will be known about already.
- Be prepared to explain the person's lack of entitlement in London and the UK, why they are not able to access services in the UK and what you have done to check for this.
- Be mindful of the tone of your approach and be clear about the intention to provide support to help a vulnerable person to move off of the street. The concept of 'reconnection' may sound offensive for services in EEA countries if it is seen as the removal of people in a discriminatory way.
- Take steps to understand the social care entitlement rules in each country and area and the amount of contribution an individual has made through work. In some countries, i.e. Slovakia this information is held centrally, in other countries, such as Poland, contributions are recorded at a local level. Most countries provide a national insurance or tax number to enable these checks to be made. Consulates can usually help to ascertain these entitlements too.
- Describe an individual's personal resources and vulnerabilities, as well as any risks and set out what you need to support a move away from rough sleeping and what you are able to offer to help facilitate this.
- Bear in mind that making a referral using this route may require communicating with staff in the national language, although it is also very possible that you can find people who speak English.

## Working with families

Like many people who are homeless, EEA nationals rough sleeping in London, often have unresolved family issues that may have contributed to their current circumstances. People can experience feelings of shame about not having played an expected role or having to admit to their circumstances (homelessness, support needs etc.) to family. It may also be the case that they have completely lost contact with family members, including children.

Routes Home has worked with people to support reunification of people with their families, both here and in a home country. This sometimes involves working in partnership with Consular Services or local police to trace family members. For some people, knowing that family members are waiting for them when they return home can be a strong motivating factor to seek treatment or support. It is however important to acknowledge it can take time to deal with painful feelings.

Tips for supporting contact with family members:

- Always speak to your client first to make sure they are comfortable with you contacting their family members and there are no risks you should be aware of.
- When speaking to families explain the support that you and other organisations can provide. This will mean that families do not feel alone in supporting a family member who may have support needs.
- Have a clear dialogue with the person you're supporting about how much information to share with families. For example, some individuals are reluctant for their families to know that they have been rough sleeping.
- Where there are family issues, it may be necessary to revisit the



discussion once you have a relationship if it is refused at first. Where people are initially reluctant to seek family support, make sure that you explore with them the underlying reasons for this; it may be their own anxieties about how they will be perceived by their families rather than the families being unsupportive which prevents them from making contact.

- It helps to support clients to make the initial contact; encourage clients to speak to family members themselves by phone to start rebuilding the relationship. Consider arranging for family to visit and meet somebody here, rather than only thinking about meeting family on return.
- Remember that seeking family support won't be appropriate in all cases, i.e. where there have been incidents of violence.

## Overcoming barriers to returns to a home country

It can be very difficult for EEA nationals who become homeless to consider a return. People will have had a range of motivating factors for leaving their home country and coming to the UK and may have complex needs which affect their ability or willingness to engage with services to discuss a return. Although each person's journey needs to be assessed individually, here are some tips on overcoming some of the common barriers that we see in supporting EEA nationals to consider a return:

*Feelings of shame about their circumstances if people perceive they have failed to live up to the goals and expectations they set themselves when they arrived in the UK.*

People may feel anxious about returning without money and status. EEA migrants who have developed health problems or other support needs may feel anxiety about becoming a burden on their family. This needs sensitive handling, taking time to acknowledge feelings of disappointment, alongside weighing this up with the likelihood of future harm if they should remain on the streets. When contacting family, ensure you have discussed how much your client feels comfortable disclosing; for example, they may not want their family to know they have been rough sleeping.

*People may feel that there is little to return to back home, if they move to the UK due to being unemployed and/or homeless and estranged from their family in their home country.*

In this situation, your role is to support people to understand their rights in the local area to support and entitlements in order to be able to make an informed choice. This could involve contacting the local council, making links with services and possibly helping people to reconnect with family. Explore if a person would consider a move back to their country of origin, but not their specific local area.

*People may believe that there are no services for homeless people in their home area or may have been misinformed by others about availability of services.*

They may not know about or have previously been unable to access support or treatment (for example for alcohol or drug misuse). Services may have changed or developed in the time since they have been away, so it is important to give them up-to-date information and enable them to make contact with services by phone if possible to discuss treatment options as well as give examples of successful case studies where people in their situation have

succeeded. Work has been undertaken to develop links with services across a range of EEA countries.

Routes Home for example has a partnership with MONAR in Poland who provide accommodation, detox and rehabilitation treatment services.

*People may be avoiding criminal justice sanctions in their home country if their motivation for leaving was unspent sentences or unpaid fines.*

Work with consulates and/or local criminal justice agencies and solicitors to support EEA nationals to gain a thorough understanding of the consequences of any return, for example likely length of any sentence. This will enable them to make an informed decision about return and to weigh this up with the harmful consequences of remaining on the streets. Consider whether a local solicitor could be put in place prior to reconnection, especially if the person is at risk of being arrested at the border.

*People may have completely lost connection with their home country, including family members.*

In these cases, use the assessment process to understand a person's full narrative, including any positive memories they have of their home country. Engage volunteers, workers or peers who originate from that country to describe the current circumstances in that country, highlighting any positives. Support people to make contact with family members if possible and in some cases, consider organising for people to visit London for a meeting.

*Some European countries impose fines and prison sentences for people who do not meet child maintenance payments.*

These sanctions can be a significant barrier for return. It is increasingly possible to access legal advice within EEA countries to enable people to negotiate a payment plan or to file for bankruptcy. The avoidance of sanctions may well be a practical barrier but could also be a psychological barrier; motivational interviewing skills and asking questions to encourage an individual to consider the best and worst-case scenarios can be helpful. In practice experience has shown that on arrival people may only face a relatively short prison sentence and these matters can be resolved, in ways that are less problematic than assumed. Consider whether a local solicitor could be put in place prior to reconnection, especially if the person is at risk of being arrested at the border

*There may be barriers to return that are outside of someone's control, such as delays in acquiring identification, waiting lists for services and issues establishing a local connection.*

It is important to stay focused and ensure a level of confidence and proactive challenge when supporting people to access their rights and entitlements.

## Preparing for an EEA reconnection

Preparing and supporting EEA nationals to move away from homelessness through a return to their home country can mean the opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity. The complexity of a person's situation and the level of their support needs will influence whether someone requires an assisted reconnection or a supported reconnection.

- An assisted reconnection will usually involve support to make contact with services and/or family

and travel arrangements and documentation. Usually, however, an EEA national without significant additional support needs can travel unaided once these arrangements have been put in place.

- A supported reconnection involves more intensive support with a member of staff travelling with the client to ensure that the reconnection is safe and sustainable. Supported reconnection is likely to be more appropriate where someone has significant additional support needs. In London, EEA nationals with complex support needs who are rough sleeping, can be referred to Routes Home for this support.

Every EEA national's needs will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, we have included some helpful hints and tips for preparing and supporting people to return depending on their level of needs.

#### *People close to the labour market:*

- For people with relatively low support needs, there may be local information available to support an individual to close their affairs in the UK and transfer back to their country of origin. For example, the Polish government has lots of helpful information on their website that includes transferring finances, benefits and finding housing.
- For people who are close to the labour market and/or eligible for assistance, Jobseekers allowance and some other entitlements can be transferred to a country on securing a move. Information can be found [here](#).
- There may be advice for people about finding work in their home country through local job centres and employment exchanges.

Support on ensuring that people enter into safe employments can be found via the trafficking page.

#### *People who require identification documents:*

- Identification documents are essential for claiming entitlement or travelling. UK consulates of EEA countries can supply a range of relevant documents, including passports and travel documents, birth certificates and proof of citizenship. Further details, including contact details are contained in the Consulate information pages.
- Emergency Travel Documents allow a single entry into a country and are usually quicker and simpler to obtain than passports. However, it is important to check whether a passport is necessary for a person to make a claim for support in a home country. Emergency Travel Documents may only be valid for a few days or weeks.
- Check with the issuing consulate if there is an expectation to repay the cost of the permit, as some countries seek this once the client has returned home.
- Consulates will often require clients to attend appointments in person to apply for and collect documents. Waiting times for appointments vary, so be mindful of this before booking travel.
- Individual consulates may be willing to offer flexibility about timescales and fees if you explain your intention in supporting a vulnerable person to return and can demonstrate that you have exhausted any entitlements for support in the UK.

#### *Providing support to people with mental health support needs:*

When reconnecting people with mental health support needs ensure that they have the capacity to make informed decisions and that there are appropriate services available in their local area.

If staff have concerns about an individual's capacity to make informed decisions please refer the person to appropriate mental health professionals for advice and support around this.

Where there are long-standing mental health issues it can be helpful to coordinate a case conference in order to work together with mental health professionals and adult social care. If the plan is for a return to country of origin, liaise with local health and social services and ensure there is appropriate transfer of discharge summaries, medication records and assessments.

#### *Providing support to people with substance misuse issues:*

Consider if it is necessary to support clients with substance misuse support needs to stabilise their use before a journey. This decision should be based on good quality assessment, including levels of use and any previous experiences of dangerous withdrawal symptoms or overdose. Involve health and substance use professionals in making this assessment, if appropriate.

It may be possible to access detox services for clients in the UK. This can help people to stabilise and mentally prepare for the journey and makes it easier to maintain contact with clients and to make journey arrangements.

When referring clients to detox services in their home country it is important to ensure people are clear about what this entails and what their options are after completing treatment programmes,

discuss their potential anxieties and plan how they intend to manage or reduce their drug or alcohol intake in the intervening period.

#### *Issues with the criminal justice system in home countries:*

If people have unspent sentences or unpaid fines in their home country, ensure work has taken place with consulates and/or local criminal justice agencies to support EEA nationals to gain a thorough understanding of the consequences of any return, for example likely length of any sentence. Whilst it is unlikely that EEA nationals who have committed offences in their home country will have problems re-entering it is worth making people aware that criminal justice agencies in their home country are likely to want to pursue these matters once they return. It can help to reassure clients if they are offered support to access advice agencies or legal services in their home country whilst still in the UK.

Where clients are subject to an Order as a result of committing a criminal offence in the UK, notify relevant agencies of the client's intention to return to their home country. The process to obtain authorisation for the reconnection is complex and lengthy so support the person to get further legal advice if necessary.

## Arranging and supporting journeys to EEA countries

There are a number of important steps that may need to be considered when arranging and supporting an EEA national to undertake a journey to a home country:

- When booking travel, ensure the mode of transport is appropriate for the individual – i.e. some people might be too vulnerable physically

for a long coach journey. It can be helpful to compare the length and price of journeys via websites such as [rome2rio](#).

- Alongside booking travel ensure that the client has the appropriate travel documents and that the date of travel is appropriate for family or agencies providing support in a home country.
- Ensuring that people are medically fit to travel, if possible ensure they see a doctor before travel. People will need adequate supplies of any medication they require to last until they are able to register with care in the home country. If travelling with large quantities of medication, check that there aren't any restrictions on entering the country of reconnection with these medications and if possible, get a letter signed by a doctor confirming that the medications have been prescribed for the person travelling. Check that if required, medical care is available on arrival and that there are no restrictions on entitlement to this.
- Ensure that drug and alcohol dependency can be managed on a journey, including supplies of substitute medication. For clients on methadone or any other controlled substance, it is important to have a letter of support from a health professional to show to security staff.
- Notify support organisations of the expected date of arrival and check you have fulfilled all referral requirements. Where the return is to family, make sure that the relevant person is contacted and given the details of the plane/coach arrival time and asked to be there to welcome the client.
- To enable people to return with dignity consider providing things like new clothing and footwear, a

suitcase or bag and providing pocket expenses for food and onward travel.

### *Supporting EEA nationals on the journey*

Assessment should inform whether an EEA national is able to travel on their own or will need support on the journey. Organisations should risk assess the journey itself and consider whether it is necessary for two members of staff to support an individual. When considering lone working consider the clients support needs, the complexity of the travel and reconnection arrangements as well as the total length of the journey. Make sure the organization arranging it has robust measures to support and supervise any lone working reconnections.

Think about any risks or issues that may arise during the journey, so you can put in place thorough and comprehensive strategies to respond to these effectively. Common scenarios include: managing clients' anxieties, boredom or worries whilst waiting/travelling; responding to requests from clients with substance misuse support needs to buy and/or consume alcohol during the journey and dealing with unexpected delays or issues leading to changes in the reconnection plan.

Finally, be aware that flight schedules may make it impossible for accompanying to return on the same day as the outward journey. If this is the case, be sure to make arrangements for accommodation before leaving the UK.

### **After-care and follow up**

Effective partnership building and appropriate handover to agencies and authorities in the home country should enable them to hold the care and responsibility once the reconnection has taken place. It is important to ask for



feedback regarding both progress and difficulties in order to support individual EEA nationals and to develop your service.

- Provide people with key contact numbers of agencies and family members and ensure that this is shared with partners, including emergency contacts always in line with GDPR and local policies.
- Where clients are escorted by staff on the journey, staff should travelling with clients to the service they have been referred to. That way they can ensure the reconnection has happened as planned and give local staff a handover. The handover should include key documents including risk assessment, discharge notes or information regarding medical conditions and treatment.
- For people who travel without direct support, you should provide a handover to local services before the reconnection if possible and follow-up within 24 hours to ensure safe arrival by contacting the client, their family or the service they have been referred to. If possible you should also provide the client with details for a contact in the UK to contact if they experience any difficulties during the reconnection.
- Arrange follow up contact with your client directly, with family and services to get a further update on the client's progress. This is also a good opportunity to seek feedback on how effective the service has been in preparing the client for a return.

## Supporting non-EEA nationals with irregular migration status

Irregular migration refers to movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country. The irregularity does not refer to the individuals but to their migratory status at a particular point in time. People may have irregular migration status for a variety of reasons and in many cases people will be able to regularise their status with the help of immigration advisers or solicitors.

When working with people with irregular status, you need to be mindful of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and OISC regulation. Unless you and the organisation you work for are appropriately qualified and regulated to do so, you must not provide any immigration advice or services. You can however provide general information on the immigration and asylum system in the UK, signpost to websites and advice lines where clients can find information about immigration issues and refer people on to immigration advisers or solicitors. Information on finding an immigration adviser can be found on the [UK government website](#).

Homeless Link has produced a [Migrant Destitution Toolkit](#) that provides useful resource for both frontline workers and senior managers who work in services that provide either regular or occasional support to destitute migrants from outside of Europe.



## Planning EEA reconnections during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The spread of COVID-19 across the world has massively altered international travel, with some countries closing their borders. Changing travel advice, local measures, and public health advice mean that a number of factors need to be considered prior to arranging and supporting an EEA national to undertake a journey to a home country.

When exploring options to return to an EEA country with clients, it is important to risk assess all aspects of this with the client prior to confirming travel and reconnection plans.

This risk assessment is in addition to the advice set out in our 'Arranging and supporting EEA reconnections' section, and should reflect the latest travel and social distancing/quarantine guidance for the UK as well as the destination country. Where the travel arrangements involve a stop-over in a third country, the guidance in this country should also be considered as part of the risk assessment.

### *Travel and social distancing/quarantine requirements*

Travel restrictions and social distancing/quarantine requirements are currently in place in many countries to curb and prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Up-to-date foreign travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) can be found [here](#).

The FCDO advice is regularly updated to reflect changing guidelines across different countries. Each country page now includes a "Coronavirus" section, which outline a country's restrictions on international travel as well as information

on the local measures in place to curb the spread of the virus. It is important to note that these guidelines are the UK government's understanding of current rules for people travelling on a full 'British Citizen' passport from the UK, therefore there could be differences for nationals of the country. Check these with the country of reconnection government's website page.

This information needs to be fully integrated into the risk assessment, while taking into account individual circumstances and other relevant support needs.

Practically this would include actions such as:

- Consult individual country travel advice pages for information on local measures and ensuring that the client is informed and able to follow local requirements upon arrival. In some cases this may require complying with quarantine requirements.
- Planning the travel in the UK and abroad in line with the relevant social-distancing and quarantine guidance, ensuring the relevant Personal Protection equipment (PPE) is provided if needed.
- Contacting the airline, Travel Company, or other transport and accommodation providers to receive the latest information on the way they are operating and the requirements that may be in place.
- Understanding the local healthcare system and how someone returning to the country following a period of absence would access this if needed.

### *Individual circumstances and additional support needs*

In completing the risk assessment it is important to consider the travel and country information in light of the individual's personal circumstances and other support needs.

Some individuals may be at higher risk of getting seriously ill when contracting Covid-19, due to underlying health conditions. Guidance on the conditions that make people more vulnerable to Covid-19 complications can be found on the [NHS website](#).

Similarly, while some clients may be returning to their own property or a family

home close to a main airport, others may need to rely on local provision of emergency accommodation and/or travel long distances within the destination country to reach their final destination. The risk associated with these individual circumstances need to be taken into consideration when developing a reconnection plan. Where risks cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level, the reconnection may need to be delayed. In this case the reconnection plan needs to be periodically reassessed as country-specific guidance and/or individual circumstances change.

#### **More information / contact details**

If you require further support around reconnection planning, risk assessments, or advice and signposting for EEA nationals, please contact Routes Home on 07841053396 or [RHS-referrals@mungos.org](mailto:RHS-referrals@mungos.org)

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