



How to Support the Cambridge Homeless Community

Cambridge residents often interact with the homeless community in the city, both at night and day time. Sometimes it's hard to know how to respond, especially as there's a variety of homelessness organisations and you may not know where to start. Homelessness is complex, and has many causes. We believe that if everyone better understood the bigger picture and was equipped to respond, it would help us to end homelessness in the long term. This document is a starting point to make the public aware of the networks of support that are available to homeless and vulnerable people in the city.

Background

Cambridge is a great city to live and work in. It's got a huge amount to offer, with many amazing local organisations, charities and residents working together to make Cambridge the place it is. However, it is also one of the most unequal cities in the UK - with high house prices and living costs, as well as a huge disparity in those who earn the most and those who earn the least.

As a resident in Cambridge, you're likely to encounter homelessness and begging in the city. Naturally, people instinctively want to help, so we've put this pack together as a short guide for all residents, giving you the basic information on how to respond and where support is available.

Housing and Homelessness

If someone is at risk of, or already experiencing homelessness, they should immediately get in touch with the **City Council**. The Housing Advice Service can be called on **01223 457918** or **0330 053 8109 (out of hours emergencies)**. The City Council then works to triage people who have approached them and will determine what legal duties are owed to them, including housing provision. In Cambridge, we have many different types of accommodation available (including for emergency purposes) - short-term and long-term hostels, and self-contained accommodation - where the vast majority of those experiencing homelessness can be supported. These hostels are run by various organisations in the city that you may have already heard of, such as Jimmy's, Cyrenians or Whitworth House.

If you come across someone sleeping rough in the city, you can alert local support agencies through the **StreetLink App** (<https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>). By downloading the app and registering, you are able to notify agencies of the time and place you see anyone sleeping rough. This enables the city's CGL Street Outreach team to make sure contact is made with that person. We'd encourage **all residents to download the app** on their phone so they can use it if they need it.

If you are unsure where to direct someone who has approached you on the street, there is comprehensive information about the services available, opening times and locations on the **Street Support Cambridgeshire website**: (<https://streetsupport.net/cambridgeshire/>). If you click on '**Find Help**' on the front page, you'll be taken to a variety of options where you can discover exactly what help is available around you at the time.

Street Begging

Begging and homelessness are not necessarily the same thing, and we need to approach both in very specific ways. There are many reasons why people beg on the street and each person has their own story to tell. While it is ultimately your choice whether to give money or not, giving money directly to someone on the streets isn't always the most helpful. This is because it is hard to know someone's full situation and needs. Sometimes, it can enable people to stay on the streets and delay or stop them visiting services where they can get the professional support they need, to get off the streets permanently.

Instead, if you'd like to support individual people financially, you can donate to Cambridge Street Aid (<https://www.cambscf.org.uk/cambridge-street-aid>). This is a grant fund made up of donations, to which people who live or have lived on the streets can apply. There are also various Street Aid contactless donation points across the city where you can tap and make a £3 donation. Every single penny donated to Street Aid goes to those in need.

Additionally, daily hot meals, drinks, hot showers, housing support, training, and welfare assistance are available for people sleeping rough, at **Wintercomfort Cambridge**. Anyone can drop into their centre at Overstream House, Victoria Avenue, CB4 1EG, between **9-1 Mon-Fri and 9-12.30 at weekends**. While food may be an immediate necessity, visiting Wintercomfort allows people to become aware of the broader networks of support in the city.



Homeless at Night

Unfortunately, it is likely that residents will come across people sleeping on the streets at night in Cambridge. The council and local organisations work together to provide support for these people as much as possible. **Caring for Cambridgeshire's Homeless** is a local organisation that goes into town in the evenings and mornings to provide hot drinks, food, toiletries etc to anyone who is sleeping on the streets. There is also a student society which runs a similar scheme called **StreetBite**. Both of these groups will have established connections and trusting relationships which they have built up with people who have been sleeping on the streets long-term.

The city council has a helpline that can be called out of hours for people in desperate need for help and advice on homelessness (0330 053 8109). Again, if you come across someone who is homeless, it is best to report it on the **StreetLink App**, which notifies the Council's Street Outreach Team who work with people on the streets in Cambridge.

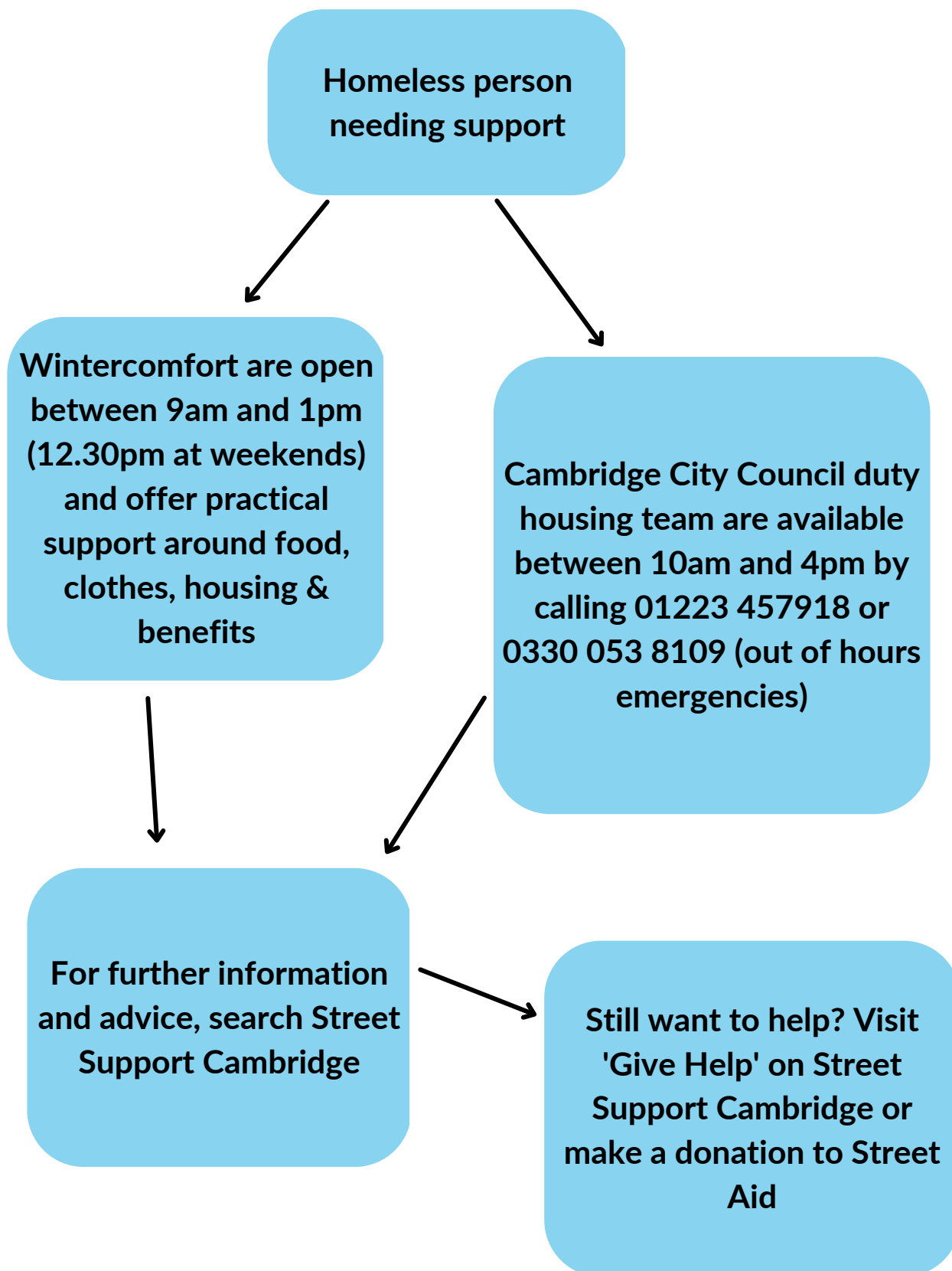
During the winter months, the council has a duty to make sure there is provision for those who are rough sleeping or in unstable accommodation (i.e. sleeping on friends' floors) when the weather gets severe. **The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)** can be turned on for a few days at a time, however the council is moving towards a system whereby throughout the entire winter period there is additional emergency accommodation available. This has been run by **It Takes A City** over the past few years, and, in addition to the staff team at the project, has volunteers on site every day - as well as ITaC's own volunteers. The **Cambridge Churches Homeless Project** also provides significant volunteer resources, to assist with a variety of tasks.

Wider Networks of Support

As has been mentioned above, **Street Support Cambridgeshire** (<https://streetsupport.net/cambridgeshire/>) is a really helpful resource for anyone who's unsure about what support there is locally for those experiencing homelessness. We'd recommend having a look over the website so you can see how it works and for a better idea of all the varied support services in the city. It has some helpful filtering functions too, so if you're looking for something specific you can narrow down your search.



Basic Info



How to Help

The other side of the **Street Support Cambridgeshire** website is focused around how people in the city can offer their time, resources or money to local homelessness organisations. When entering the Street Support page, you can click on **'Give Help'** which will then display lots of options for donating and volunteering. If you're interested in helping out locally, you can find volunteering opportunities that suit you, or places to donate items and money.

It Takes A City has also been working closely with various local groups and organisations to ensure that residents are linked up with local efforts. If you'd like to get more involved, there are links below for various groups and ways to stay in touch!

Quick links

- **It Takes A City** - local organisation coordinating homelessness support and initiatives across the city. You can contact us at info@ittakesacity.org.uk.
- You can find more information on ITAC's website here:
(<https://www.ittakesacity.org.uk/>)
- **Find Help on Street Support Cambridge** (<https://streetsupport.net/find-help/>)
- **Give Help on Street Support Cambridge** (<https://streetsupport.net/give-help/>)
- **Volunteer to help out at our Winter Provision accommodation:**
<https://www.cchp.org.uk/register>
- **City Council** - further information on homelessness
(<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/homeless-people>)
- **StreetLink** - alert local services (<https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>)
- **Street Aid** - donate to support the homeless
(<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/street-aid-help-for-people-on-the-streets>)

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