

# Policy for crisis accommodation

## Purpose

This policy provides the principles for operating crisis accommodation. The program provides people with short-term accommodation and support to access safe and secure long-term housing.

## Policy context

Crisis accommodation is a type of specialist homelessness service for people in immediate housing need.

The crisis accommodation program provides safe and affordable accommodation with the goal of helping people transition into secure and sustainable housing. In Tasmania, crisis accommodation is provided for specific cohorts:

- unaccompanied young people
- men (with or without children), and
- women (with or without children).

Some people, such as women and children escaping family violence and children exiting institutional care settings, including youth detention and Out of Home Care, face significantly elevated risks of homelessness children. These people will be prioritised for placement into crisis accommodation wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Crisis accommodation services include both shelter and transitional settings to provide a range of person-centred responses for people who are in housing need for up to two years. Shelter accommodation is often provided for up to three-months and transitional accommodation is provided for up to two-years. Support is provided in the accommodation or by outreach, to help residents to find and keep a stable, long-term home.

The principles underlying the provision of crisis accommodation services are:

- the safety and wellbeing of the person is the primary consideration
- alternative options for safe, appropriate accommodation should be fully investigated before providing crisis accommodation
- if accommodated, the person will be helped to improve their wellbeing and capabilities to find and keep a safe and stable place to live.

## Presentation and intake

Housing Connect is the entry point for Tasmanians aged 16 years and over facing homelessness or who are in housing need. Housing Connect assesses each person's housing and support needs, and suitability, before making a referral to crisis accommodation.

People in need can also contact crisis accommodation services directly. If a crisis accommodation service cannot assist, it will refer the person to Housing Connect.

Unaccompanied children and young people under the age of 16 may be eligible for crisis accommodation. In most instances the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) will work with crisis accommodation providers to enable placement. Where an unaccompanied child or young person presents to a crisis accommodation service, the provider must contact the ARL as soon as is practicable.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for crisis accommodation, a person must be facing homelessness or in housing need, as evidenced by one or more of the following:

- exiting from an institutional facility into homelessness such as custodial arrangements, foster care and child safety residential placements, hospitals, prisons, youth detention, and mental health facilities
- experiencing primary homelessness such as living without conventional accommodation eg sleeping rough
- experiencing secondary homelessness such as frequently moving from one temporary shelter to another eg brokered accommodation or couch surfing
- experiencing tertiary homelessness such as where accommodation falls below minimum community standards eg boarding house or caravan park
- experiencing insecure tenure such as where the person has no tenure, or their tenure is short and not extendable
- living in a home that is unsafe eg women and children escaping family violence.

## Suitability and placement

People accessing crisis accommodation have the right to safety, respect, and dignity. All residents of crisis accommodation are expected to conduct themselves in a way that does not limit their own or other's safety, respect and dignity, or their participation towards achieving agreed goals.

Crisis accommodation providers are responsible for reviewing referrals, determining suitability, and managing placements in their services.

When determining suitability, consideration will be given to:

- the person's safety and that of other residents and staff
- their capacity and willingness to engage with support

- their ability to live safely and cooperatively in a shared or communal environment
- any health or mobility needs that may affect accommodation options.

Where safety concerns arise, crisis accommodation providers will use a trauma-informed approach to manage and minimise risk, enabling children to access or remain in the program wherever possible.

Examples of risk factors requiring further consideration include:

- recent involvement in serious offending or justice processes where safety planning is required
- unmanaged or emerging mental health conditions
- substance use that significantly affects wellbeing or safety.

These factors do not automatically exclude placement into crisis accommodation. Instead, they inform collaborative risk assessment and planning to ensure appropriate supports are in place to promote a successful and safe placement.

If a person is not suitable for placement into crisis accommodation, Housing Connect will support the person to find other accommodation and support options. This may include brokered accommodation, Safe Space services, accommodation for mental health recovery, accommodation for exiting prisoners, or connecting people with health care.

Unaccompanied children under the age of 16 years may also be referred to crisis accommodation if more appropriate accommodation is unavailable eg Youth at Risk Centres.

## **Allocations**

Crisis accommodation services allocate available accommodation from their own waiting list including referrals that they receive from Housing Connect and other services

If accommodation is available, the service provider will prioritise a placement by the urgency of need. Women and children escaping family violence and unaccompanied children exiting institutional care settings be prioritised for placement into crisis accommodation wherever it is suitable and safe to do so.

While those considered most urgent should be offered crisis accommodation first, it is also important that crisis accommodation services consider the appropriate mix of people to ensure a safe and supportive environment for everyone accessing crisis accommodation.

Senior staff in crisis accommodation services have discretion to prioritise the suitability of allocations when considering the current resident profile.

Where a special allocation is made directly to a Youth at Risk Centre by Homes Tasmania, the provider will assume responsibility for assessing suitability and confirming placement.

## **Accommodation services**

Crisis accommodation is designed to provide safe, inclusive and appropriate short-term accommodation for people in housing need.

Accommodation features of crisis accommodation include:

- a private single bedroom with access to an ensuite or shared bathroom
- at least one accessible bedroom and bathroom for residents with mobility needs
- access to kitchen, dining and lounge areas, which may be shared
- Wi-Fi access in all rooms.

## **Placement for the duration of need**

The length of stay for up to two years, is flexible to support the person's progress against their goals and their success in securing a longer-term home. Accommodation will be provided in three-month blocks, which can be renewed over the term of the stay, subject to the person consistently meeting the conditions of their lease or accommodation agreement with the service provider.

## **Meals**

Residents will be supported to access three nutritious meals per day as well as supplementary foods eg morning tea and healthy snacks with consideration of the Australian Dietary Guidelines. This includes consideration of special dietary requirements such as allergies and food intolerances.

## **Laundry service**

Residents will have access to communal laundry facilities, including washing machines and dryers to launder their own clothing. Residents will receive a weekly laundry service to launder bed linen and towels.

## **Affordable**

Residents with an independent income are required to pay an affordable rent or board based on 25 per cent of their income plus any Commonwealth Rent Assistance. A security deposit (bond) of up to two weeks' rent may be required and paid in instalments if needed.

## **Provision of support**

Residents of crisis accommodation have access to coaching and support to help people capitalise on their skills, abilities, and resources with the goal of supporting people to find and keep a stable home.

Support is focused on enabling people to identify and advance their goals and aspirations outlined in their individual action plan.

In communal living settings (such as shelters) on-site support and services will be available and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In dispersed settings, support may be provided as outreach, as needed.

Support provided through the crisis accommodation program will be:

- **Tailored to strengths:** applying a trauma-informed, capabilities-based approach known as Advantaged Thinking, focusing on potential rather than deficits.
- **Coordinated:** working collaboratively with other providers to deliver a connected, integrated response with clear roles, responsibilities and shared outcomes.
- **Community-based:** building strong community connections to promote inclusion and civic participation.
- **Person-centred:** empowering children people to participate in decisions about their lives, with their voices heard and valued.
- **Inclusive:** recognising and valuing the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and children from diverse cultural, linguistic, religious, ability and gender backgrounds.

## Exit planning

Crisis accommodation services will work with each resident to plan a safe and appropriate exit from their service.

This could include:

- exiting into independent living eg social housing or private rental
- exiting into long-term, supported accommodation for those residents who have ongoing support needs.

In some situations, it may be appropriate to exit a person into brokered accommodation. This could include:

- where the person is escaping a family violence, and it is necessary to move them for safety reasons
- where a longer-term property placement is imminent, and the person is ready for independent living
- where the person poses a risk to themselves, the safety of other residents, or workers
- where a person will not enter into an agreement to engage with support to achieve their goals.

Where safe, affordable long-term housing is not available, crisis accommodation may need to be extended, or alternative crisis accommodation secured.

Unplanned exits should be avoided, and no person should exit the service into homelessness. Alternative accommodation should be in place before a person is exited where exclusion of a resident from the service is unavoidable.

## Reporting abuse or neglect

Crisis accommodation providers have a duty of care for their residents and visitors. If a person is in immediate danger, call **000** or the **Police Assistance Line** on **131 444**.

## Safety of children

In Tasmania, mandatory reporting requires any person with reasonable grounds to believe a child is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse, neglect or exposure to family violence to report it.

Reports must be made to the **Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line** on **1800 000 123** or via the online form at [strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au](http://strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au).

## Family violence

Where there are safety, risk and well-being concerns relating to family violence, crisis accommodation providers should call the **Family Violence Response and Referral Line** on **1800 633 937**.

## Elder abuse

If elder abuse is reasonably suspected, crisis accommodation providers should call the **Tasmanian Elder Abuse Hotline** on **1800 441 169**.

## Relevant documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant documents, including:

- Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework - [www.strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au/child-and-youth-wellbeing-framework/](http://www.strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au/child-and-youth-wellbeing-framework/)
- Head lease rent arrangements - [www.homestasmania.com.au/engage/Information-for-Partners/contract-management-framework/head-lease-arrangements](http://www.homestasmania.com.au/engage/Information-for-Partners/contract-management-framework/head-lease-arrangements)
- Advantaged thinking - [www.efyfoyers.org.au/background/theoretical-framework/](http://www.efyfoyers.org.au/background/theoretical-framework/)
- Australian Dietary Guidelines – [www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-dietary-guidelines-1-5](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-dietary-guidelines-1-5))

## Our contact details



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