

# Housing Connect Reform



**The Housing Connect Reform commenced under Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 (2019-2023).**

**The Reform will improve the way Housing Connect services are delivered to Tasmanians experiencing housing crisis or homelessness to improve their capacity to find and keep a safe and affordable home.**

## Project Update

We continue to work in uncertain times and the levels of resilience and commitment shown by workers across all services has been amazing. During this uncertainty, we are grateful you have still found the time to engage and participate in the Reform process.

The Reform project is moving forward after re-adjusting our approach as a result of COVID-19. We moved away from delivering a series of pilots, and instead have focused on defining the structure of the new service model first.

We've been consulting widely with the sector through multiple channels and will continue to do this to refine the thinking and assumptions that will underpin the new service model.

It's important to reinforce that this is the high-level phase of the reform where we define the structure of the new service model. The detailed operational stage will come next. Implementation of the new service model will not happen until July 2022.

One key consultation channel is the newly established Community of Practice for Housing Connect which had its first meeting on 19 August. This meeting was focused on youth pathways within the new service model. Membership of the group included representatives from all service types (Front Door, Support and Crisis Accommodation providers). The focus of these sessions while we develop the service model will be on key life stages – young people, families (with or without children), single adults, older adults.

Sessions are also being held with key stakeholders from related services (e.g. Service Tasmania, Children and Family Services) to progress opportunities for greater collaboration and integration.

We've had several questions and common themes coming through which are addressed in this Project Update. Please continue to feed these questions through either directly or through your managers as the governance for the project is set up to facilitate these strong communication channels.

### **1. *Everything seems very high level and unresolved – when will we know what the change will be on the ground?***

We're in the high level phase of the Reform process. You're right, there will be more questions than answers in this phase as we work towards a solid structure for the new model. The detailed stage will come next when we focus on the Practice Framework – this will answer those operational questions of exactly how things will work in the new model.

Although the service model will be defined by the end of 2020, when working through the operational detail it's likely the model will need to be continually tweaked.

It can be difficult to sit comfortably with this uncertainty but through regular communication both with your managers and team, and us as the project team, we will keep you informed about progress.

### **2. *What do the project milestones mean?***

The Reform milestones have been introduced to drive the project forward and define the high-level deliverables. They are also reference points for progress of the Project.

Currently, we are in the service model phase, where the thinking is high level and focused on the key components of the system, how it is organised and what the main functions are.

A good way to think about the milestones is:

- Delivery of a New Service Model for Housing Connect – the “skeleton” (delivered by the end of 2020)
- Delivery of a Practice Framework – the “operational meat on the bones” (delivered by the end of 2021)
- Funding reallocation\* – costing each component and determining a process for selection of providers (before March 2022)
- Implementation Phase – “bringing it all to life” (from July 2022)

\*Note: reallocation of the existing Housing Connect funding envelope will be dependent on functions and specialisations in the new service model. This is primarily focused on Front Door and Housing Support Services. While crisis accommodation providers are a key stakeholder in the Housing Connect system and heavily involved in the Reform project, their existing funding allocations will not decrease as a result of the Reform.

### **3. *What is the Reform project looking to change?***

The objective of the Reform project is to improve the way Housing Connect services are delivered to increase the capacity of Tasmanians in housing crisis and homelessness to find or keep a safe and affordable home.

We know that since Housing Connect was established in 2013, the context in which it operates has changed dramatically. This change relates to the growing affordability issues in the housing market, the tightening of the rental market, increased demand for services, and growing complexity of needs.

We know that we need to improve the accessibility of services, we need to better tailor support to meet the needs of clients, and we need to work better together to deliver greater continuity and consistency of services statewide. This is in addition to the strong commitment to deliver ambitious supply targets over the next few years.

Currently, we're working through what the following changes might look like at a system level:

- **Improved access to Housing Connect Front Door services through:**
  - Delivering an online housing assistance portal
  - Enhancing the service offer through place based co-location of services
  - Introducing tailored access points/hubs (e.g. Safe Space and Youth Hubs)
  - Increasing regional access to services (co-location in satellite locations)
  - Increasing mobility of Front Door functions
  
- **Improve intake and assessment practice at the Front Door to deliver:**
  - Improved urgent need responses
  - Comprehensive engagement and assessment to better tailor responses to the needs of clients.
  
- **Tailor support to the specific needs of clients and better manage caseloads, by:**
  - Introducing defined levels/intensities of support (light touch, group 1, group 2 and group 3 support)
  - Introducing a life course approach to frame delivery of support, including key life stages:
    - Young People
    - Single Adults
    - Families (including singles with children, and couples without children)
    - Older Adults
  - Embedding support in specific areas of service delivery (e.g. tenancy support) to ensure people build their capacity to both find and keep a home.
  
- **Better internal and external integration and collaboration**
  - Clarity of functions, roles and responsibilities
  - Maintaining practice flexibility, diversity and regional variance where appropriate
  - Enhancing critical partnerships.

## Communications:

We're committed to providing effective communication for the Reform Project to make sure people are informed and are involved in the process. Some recent changes to our consultation approach include:

- Expansion of attendance at Reform Steering Committee meetings to include operational level managers, Shelter Tasmania and continued statewide representation of independent Crisis Accommodation providers
- Establishment of a Community of Practice for the Housing Connect system
- Targeted 1:1 meetings with service providers
- Continued quarterly communiques for all staff.
- Fortnightly update emails to all managers
- Regular updates at established sector forums (e.g. SHS forums)

## Further Information

As always, if you have any questions, concerns or feedback relating to the Reform Project, please contact:

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