

# Housing Connect Reform



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

**The Reform will improve the way the Housing Connect system enables Tasmanians in housing crisis to build their capabilities and opportunities to find and keep a safe and affordable home and live a good life.**

## Project Update

In December 2020 the Housing Connect Reform Steering Committee endorsed the new Housing Connect service system design – Housing Connect 2.0.

The service system design is the milestone output for the design phase (Phase 1) of the Housing Connect Reform project.



The Housing Connect 2.0 service system design provides the framework for how the new service model will be brought to life operationally. It is the high-level architecture that details the design logic, principles and key elements of the new service model.

The design is informed and guided by the core recommendations of the Housing Connect Review (2018-19) and subsequent consultations with providers and peaks involved in the delivery of Housing Connect services in Tasmania. The design is also consistent with and underpinned by a capabilities / Advantaged Thinking Approach.

The Housing Connect 2.0 service system has been designed in collaboration with the existing Housing Connect sector. Feedback, discussion and ideas from services through the Community of Practice sessions and individual consultations have been instrumental in refining the service model design.

Phase 2 of the Reform project commences in 2021 and involves an intense 18-month period of developing, testing and refining the key service model elements and roles and documenting the resulting practice and procedures.

Key outputs of Phase 2 of the Reform project will be the Housing Connect 2.0 Practice Guide and Toolkit.

Implementation of the new service model will commence from 1 July 2022 with the full model (including the Online Housing Portal) commencing from July 2023.

## What are the key changes?

The key changes associated with the new service model are outlined below. The changes (including associated funding allocations) are focused primarily on Front Door and Housing Support Services (Type 1 and 2 services). Crisis accommodation remains a critical element of the new service model. Crisis providers will continue to be heavily involved in the upcoming practice development phase of the project.

Consolidated review recommendations	Proposed Housing Connect service system design changes
<b>Where possible, divert people from the Housing Connect system into familial/community level supports if they have minimal service needs and high capability</b>	Enhanced Front Door offer that connects people to community Enabling self-direction through Housing Connect Online Portal
<b>Maximise the Housing Connect system capacity and resources to support those most in need by reducing the flow of low needs service users from the Front Doors into housing support services</b>	Enabling self-direction through Housing Connect Online Portal Improved triaging at the front door based on comprehensive assessment Targeted brief intervention at the Front door
<b>Match intensity of support offering to the needs and capabilities of service users</b>	Specify and differentiate levels of intensity of support
<b>Differentiate and structure service responses around key cohorts to avoid duplication or thin resourcing to specified cohorts</b>	Design Housing Connect service interventions around life stages/household types
<b>Enhance the effectiveness of the social housing register by minimising routine registrations by non-priority service users at the Front Door or support services</b>	Enhanced Front Door offer that connects people to community Enabling self-direction through Housing Connect Online Portal Practice changes
<b>Provide targeted support to sustain social housing tenancies to prevent these tenants from becoming homeless</b>	Embedded tenancy support across all social housing providers
<b>Implement Housing First approach for high needs populations especially those who are rough sleeping</b>	Embed assertive outreach in the Housing Connect system and connect to housing offers

## What is the Online Housing Portal?

The Online Housing Portal (the Portal) is designed to:

- Increase timely access to Front Door services by enabling online housing applications as well as greater access to timely housing and support information for people with low support needs.
- Increase people's capacity to make informed and active choices and decisions in relation to their housing, homelessness and related needs.
- Empower people to have a more active role in managing their own information.

The Portal does not replace personalized service delivery or the Housing Connect 1800 hotline. It is an additional resource for people to access key Front Door functions that they have the capacity and desire to independently manage. It will increase the flexibility and accessibility of Front Door services for all Tasmanians.

Key features of the Portal include:

- Information and advice
- Eligibility tools
- Changing/updating personal details
- 6-month housing review (social housing applicants)
- Applying for private rental assistance, social housing products and programs.

The Portal will be developed and introduced in stages, with the full portal functionality available by July 2023.

## What is an Enhanced Front Door?

Increasing Front Door access and service system efficiency through introduction of the Online Housing Portal is just one way the Front Door will be enhanced. Other enhancements include:

- Introducing a tailored housing and support response through the comprehensive engagement and assessment process and decision making tool
- Introduction of Front Door Connection Coach roles that provide brief, targeted intervention at the Front Door to divert people from the homelessness system and a greater focus on connection back into Community and related services
- A focus on place based co-location of key, related mainstream service providers within the Front Door
- Place based delivery with expanded access points and some mobile servicing (including in-reach).

Connections Coaches are a new role in the Housing Connect system, replacing the role of Type 1 Front Door Assessment Workers. Connection Coaches hold deep knowledge and expertise of the housing and homelessness system, and associated housing assistance options. In addition to connection to housing and housing assistance, they play a vital role in (re)connecting people experiencing housing crisis and stress to community supports and resources.

## How will Housing Support Services change?

There are two key structural and practice elements and new roles in the Housing Connect 2.0 service system model that will change the way Housing Support Services are offered:

### Four levels of Support Intensity:

- Very light touch (self-direction)
- Light touch (level 1)
- Medium (level 2)
- High intensity support (level 3)

The **Front Door Connection Coaches** will provide the light touch support – a brief early intervention for people faced with some challenges but have medium to high capability.

**Connection Coaches** (who can be co-located at the Front Door) will provide level 2 (medium intensity) support – a short to medium term intervention for those facing some challenges but with low to medium capability.

**Key Development Coaches** will provide level 3 (high intensity support) for those facing high level or multiple challenges with low capability.

The Key Development Coach is a new role in the Housing Connect system, replacing the role of Housing Support Case Workers. They can be embedded within, or work across, Shelters to provide continued coaching and support in the transition from crisis (post crisis period).

For those that do not enter the system via a Shelter but are assessed as requiring a Level 3 intensity response, Key Development Coaches will provide coaching and support via outreach.

Continuity of support is an important element of the Key Development Coach role and case loads will be capped to ensure the correct intensity of support can be provided.

## Tenancy Support

Tenancy support will be embedded with social housing providers and provided to people in social housing as a prevention / early intervention response. This is designed to provide timely support and action to keep people in their homes and prevents people and households from becoming homeless due to avoidable breakdown of a tenancy.

Tenancy support workers will identify people's/household needs for early intervention support at the assessment/allocation stage for social housing. They will also identify tenancies at risk and intervene to sustain the tenancy.

Tenancy support workers will connect people with the appropriate connections to community and other service system resources.

## Next Steps

Information sessions will be held with services in early 2021 to go through the design document in more detail, introduce the workplan for Phase 2 of the project and talk through the opportunities for involvement in this work. The commitment to co-design will continue strongly through the next phase of work.

In the interim, if you have any questions or feedback or if you'd like a copy of the full Housing Connect 2.0 Service System Design please contact Anna Balmforth (Project Manager Housing Connect Reform) on [anna.balmforth@communities.tas.gov.au](mailto:anna.balmforth@communities.tas.gov.au) or (03) 6166 3671.

Thank you again for your amazing commitment and achievements through what has been an unprecedented and challenging year. The Tasmanian community benefits greatly from your dedication and expertise.