

# Policy for Housing Connect front door services

## Purpose

This policy provides the principles for operating Housing Connect front door services in Tasmania to help people find and keep a safe, affordable, appropriate home and live a full life.

## Policy context

The Tasmanian Housing Strategy ([www.tasmanianhousingstrategy.tas.gov.au](http://www.tasmanianhousingstrategy.tas.gov.au)) prioritises safe, secure and affordable housing for all Tasmanians. The Strategy and its action plans will provide a framework to develop a housing system in Tasmania that is affordable and responsive to the needs of the Tasmanian community.

Housing Connect is a key component of the housing system in Tasmania, supporting people to access appropriate housing solutions, including:

- crisis accommodation and support including shelters and transitional housing
- social housing including supported accommodation, public and community housing and specialist accommodation for people in exceptional circumstances
- affordable housing including private rentals and home ownership.

Housing Connect front door services are the principal referral point for Tasmanians aged 16 and over who need housing support or assistance. Housing Connect front door services connect people to the support they need to find and keep a home. Housing Connect provides services tailored to the circumstances of each person and works with people to strengthen their connections to family, friends, community and services to promote their wellbeing and opportunities. The front door works with people to determine the most suitable service response and provides support according to their life stage and circumstances.

Housing Connect recognises that people and service systems are embedded in and shaped by place. Place is critical for developing and sustaining community connection, drawing on family, friends and communities to enhance system responses. Place is also necessary in approaches that facilitate sustainable positive outcomes for people experiencing housing stress and crisis.

Housing Connect services are provided statewide with offices in the North, North-West and South, as well as providing access to services through mobile outreach. Housing Connect information and assistance will also be available through the new Housing Connect website portal.

# Advantaged Thinking

Housing Connect is guided by Advantaged Thinking ([www.efyfoyers.org.au/background/theoretical-framework](http://www.efyfoyers.org.au/background/theoretical-framework)) practice. An Advantaged Thinking practice combines individual and structural approaches to change and works with people to develop and invest in their talents and aspirations. Practicing Advantaged Thinking goes beyond only focussing on people's immediate needs and identifies and reinforces the factors that enable people to thrive.

Advantaged Thinking recognises people's capabilities, talents and potential and creates opportunities to realise them. Using Advantaged Thinking helps people improve their circumstance while attending to structural barriers that may be limiting opportunities. Instead of starting with deficits and problems, Housing Connect builds people's skills, and invests in sourcing the opportunities, networks, and resources for people to use their talents effectively.

## Housing Connect principles

Housing Connect is based on the following principles:

- the safety and wellbeing of the person is always the primary consideration
- people must be supported to play a key role in shaping the services and practices that affect them, and to make and enact choices
- people need to be connected to community, drawing on family, friends and communities to enhance system responses to support sustainable positive outcomes
- capability and relationships are built by connecting people with the resources, networks and opportunities to find and keep a home
- collaboration and integration are central, as is mobilising resources across service systems, sectors and community
- practice must be tailored to people's needs and capabilities by shaping service responses to people's life stage while also addressing their specific circumstances, matching intensity of support and housing to capabilities and needs
- timely action to create the conditions and relationships must be prioritised so that people can thrive (prevention), addressing housing-related issues early (early intervention) and addressing housing related problems as they arise so people can thrive (secondary intervention)
- practice should be driven by evidence, and service delivery and practice should be shaped and based on shared expertise, data, evidence, and experiential learning.

## Risk factors

The root causes of homelessness in Australia are income poverty and disadvantage. A range of structural, community, familial and individual-level issues also affect homelessness in Australia.

Other known causes of homelessness include lack of access to affordable housing, relationship breakdown and family violence, low income and unemployment, mental illness, disability, and drug and alcohol use.

Transitions from institutions to public life, such as exiting prison, mental health services or other institutional care are also risk factors for homelessness.

## **Housing Connect front door services**

At Housing Connect, people aged 16 and older can access housing information, advice and support. Eligible people can access tailored coaching support and apply for housing or housing assistance, including social housing, supported accommodation, Youth2Independence (Y2I) program, affordable private rentals, and access flexible funds.

There are three ways to access Housing Connect front door services:

1. front door hubs in the North, North-West and South either in person or over the phone
2. a mobile response for people who are unable to access hubs
3. the Housing Connect website portal for people who want to apply for housing, including social housing and affordable private rental housing or find information about housing in Tasmania.

People seeking emergency accommodation outside business hours can contact the Housing Connect After Hours Service on 1800 800 588 or contact a shelter directly.

The Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) is the principal referral point for unaccompanied children under the age of 18 years. The ARL will assess the individual circumstances and needs of each child, including referrals to appropriate accommodation services. The ARL can be contacted on 1800 000 123.

## **Housing Connect website portal**

The dedicated online website portal will make it easier and more convenient for people to find information and apply for housing services online.

The website portal will provide information about housing products and services in Tasmania and where people can get help. People will be able to apply for social housing, including supported accommodation, and a range of private rental products, including private rental assistance.

People will be able to monitor their housing applications, respond to housing reviews and update their applications online.

The Housing Connect front door will receive and respond to enquiries via the website portal for people who need additional help applying for housing.

## **Eligibility**

Housing Connect front door services provide support and assistance for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or in housing need.

Eligibility for housing products is determined through screening and assessment at the front door or through the Housing Connect website portal. People accessing Housing Connect are provided with tailored service responses to best meet their needs and help them achieve their goals. Some of these responses may include housing products such as social housing, private rental initiatives, flexible funds and Y2I programs.

## The deal

A deal is a supportive agreement between a person accessing Housing Connect front door services and their connections coach. A deal is individually planned and negotiated with the person seeking support or assistance and focuses on some or all of the five key life domains, depending on the person's individual circumstances and goals.

A deal highlights that people accessing Housing Connect services are held in high regard and each party has a contribution to make towards achieving the agreed goals outlined in the person's action plan. Housing Connect coaches work with people across a range of connected life domains, all of which are crucial to people's wellbeing and support positive long-term housing outcomes, including:

- housing and living
- employment and income
- health and wellbeing
- education and learning
- social and community connections.

A deal establishes the offer and expectations between Housing Connect and a person seeking assistance and fosters shared ownership of the planning, opportunities and services offered by Housing Connect. A deal may initially outline a person's expectations and accountabilities during their accommodation or support period, focused on their safety and the safety of others, including staff. Once a person's immediate needs for safe and secure accommodation are met, a deal can be expanded to focus on longer-term goals, such as securing housing and progressing goals across relevant key life domains.

## Intensity of support

Housing Connect support offers three levels of intensity. Levels 1 and 2 are provided at the front door by connections coaches, and level 3 is provided by key development coaches through Housing Connect personalised support services.

The level of support intensity required is determined through the intake and assessment process at the Housing Connect front door. People's individual circumstances and their capabilities form the basis for determining the intensity of support a person needs.

### **Level 1 support – front door (approximately 6 to 10 hours)**

Level 1 support connects people seeking housing assistance to information or resources and provides a timely, brief support intervention to establish or sustain housing. Support at this level may include assisting people to access the Housing Connect website portal to apply for housing products such as social housing and private rental assistance. People provided with level 1 support usually have high capabilities.

## **Level 2 support – front door (approximately 4 to 12 weeks)**

Level 2 support offers early intervention to prevent people experiencing housing crisis from progressing to a situation of prolonged homelessness. This short- to medium-term intervention is provided for people who have the capabilities and motivation to progress their housing goals. Connections coaches support people to connect with resources, networks and opportunities identified in their action plan.

## **Level 3 support – personalised support (approximately 9 to 18 months)**

Level 3 support is a targeted and intensive homelessness response. Support at this level is personalised and supports people to build their capabilities to find and keep housing. Responses at level 3 are tailored to the person's age, their stage of life and personal circumstances. Level 3 encompasses support and assistance across the five wellbeing domains for people needing intensive, longer-term coaching and practical support to secure long-term housing and live a good life.

## **Focus of support**

Coaches provide coaching and support to help people capitalise on their skills, abilities and resources. Coaches assist people to focus on the goal of finding and keeping an affordable, stable, safe and appropriate home. Support is focused on enabling people to identify and advance their goals and aspirations as outlined in their action plan, including:

- being tailored to the strengths and needs of each person
- attending to the individual goals of each person with consideration of the goals and needs of any accompanying children
- using an Advantaged Thinking approach and reinforcing a person's capacity and agency in making decisions relevant to their goals and aspirations
- encouraging people to engage with key services and opportunities in their local community
- delivering a connected response focused on enhancing people's skills and resources to live outside the service system.

## **Life course approach**

A life course perspective underpins the services, people, pathways and practices in Housing Connect. Housing Connect is structured around four pathways combining life stage with household type: young people, single adults, families (adult couples with or without children and single parents with children) and older adults. This approach supports tailored responses to individuals and households in ways that attends to people's needs and leverages the opportunities, resources and networks required by their stage of life.

## **Flexible support**

Support is flexible and responsive to the needs of each person or household based on individual circumstances and people's capabilities.

People receiving support from Housing Connect can have a change in circumstances that may mean they need a different level of support. Level 1 and 2 support is provided by connections coaches and can easily be altered up or down as needed. Changes in support are reflected in people's action plans. People receiving level 1 or 2 support who experience a significant change in circumstances and need more intensive level 3 support can be referred to a key development coach.

People receiving level 3 support will likely grow in their capabilities as they progress. This is an indication of increased capability and progress towards their goals. When this occurs, the key development coach will alter down the support they provide, until support is no longer needed.

## **Exiting from support**

Coaches work with people to identify their goals and the support they need to achieve secure, safe, affordable, long-term housing and live a good life. People exit the service when they achieve the goals in their action plan or when there is no further support that Housing Connect can offer.

People exiting Housing Connect services will have stable accommodation in place and be connected to supports and resources to help them live a good life.

There may be times when people have unplanned exits from Housing Connect services due to their own or other extenuating circumstances. Housing Connect will endeavour to ensure people do not exit services into homelessness.

## **Reporting abuse or neglect**

In Tasmania, people under the age of 18 who present to homelessness services unaccompanied (without a parent or legal guardian) are formally recognised as children.

The Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) must be contacted on 1800 000 123 whenever an unaccompanied child presents to a homelessness service.

Where there are safety, risk and wellbeing concerns relating to family violence, housing support providers should call the Family Violence Response and Referral Line on 1800 633 937.

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

If the provider believes a member of a household is at immediate risk and police or medical assistance is required, they should call emergency services on 000.

## Relevant documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant policies and procedures, including:

- Tasmanian Housing Strategy ([www.tasmanianhousingstrategy.tas.gov.au](http://www.tasmanianhousingstrategy.tas.gov.au))
- Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework ([www.strongfamiliesafekids.tas.gov.au/child-and-youth-wellbeing-framework](http://www.strongfamiliesafekids.tas.gov.au/child-and-youth-wellbeing-framework))
- Policy for Housing Connect Personalised Support ([www.homestasmania.com.au/personalised-support-policy](http://www.homestasmania.com.au/personalised-support-policy))
- Policy for Housing Connect Flexible Funds ([www.homestasmania.com.au/flexible-funds-policy](http://www.homestasmania.com.au/flexible-funds-policy))
- Housing Connect Practice Framework ([www.homestasmania.com.au/housing-connect-practice-framework](http://www.homestasmania.com.au/housing-connect-practice-framework))
- Policy for Social Housing ([www.homestasmania.com.au/social-housing-policy](http://www.homestasmania.com.au/social-housing-policy))

## Our contact details



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