Practice Guide

Matching Applicants to Transitional Housing
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Background

Under one social housing system, eligible applicants are assisted on the basis of their assessed housing needs and match to property vacancies.

When an application is received by the department, the Housing Service Centre:

- assesses the applicant’s eligibility for housing assistance under the Social Housing Eligibility Criteria.
- assesses the applicant’s housing needs through the client intake and assessment process
- matches housing assistance to the applicant’s needs.

Transitional housing is community-managed social housing for applicants identified as being in very high and high need for housing assistance who are likely to stabilise their circumstances before moving to longer-term housing.

Registered providers funded under the following programs offer transitional housing to eligible applicants:

- Community Rent Scheme (using privately head-leased and department-owned properties).
- Community-managed Housing - Studio Units (properties with shared facilities or those that the provider has identified as transitional housing).
- Same House Different Landlord (the household remains in the property and the landlord changes from community housing to public housing).

Under the [Allocations Policy for funded social housing providers](#) (January 2014), the applicant referral process is used to fill vacancies in transitional housing. Applicants suitable for referral to transitional housing are identified using a flag in the department's housing register management system (SAP). This flag identifies the applicant as suitable for referral when a transitional housing provider notifies a vacancy to the Housing Service Centre.

Purpose

This Practice Guide assists community housing providers and Housing Service Centres to determine whether an applicant may be suitable for transitional housing during the client intake and assessment process and when making nominations (using [SPPR01 – Allocations procedures for funded social housing providers](#)).

The [Matching Tool](#) provides a quick reference for providers and Housing Service Centres to use when assessing applicants' suitability for referral to transitional housing.

What is matching?

Matching is the process where an eligible applicant’s circumstances and level of need indicate specific forms of social housing assistance that are suitable for them, including services such as bond loans. The Housing Service Centre undertakes matching at the time of application and when allocating social housing assistance. Providers undertake matching when considering referral lists and when making nominations for specific vacancies.
Housing Service Centres and providers must first consider the number of bedrooms, modifications and design features of the property (e.g. accessibility by wheelchairs) when matching applicants to property vacancies. A good match is where the applicant's needs are met by the property, the program of assistance and relevant support services in the location.

**When does matching take place?**

Housing Service Centres match applicants to housing assistance during the client intake and assessment process. Relevant information gathered after the interview has taken place should be used for matching. For example, support agencies may supply the department with additional information about the circumstances of applicants with complex needs.

Providers match applicants to the relevant housing program and notified property vacancy when reviewing a referral report. Providers also match applicants to the program of assistance and to the property vacancy when making a nomination.

Providers and Housing Service Centres should seek applicants' consent to obtain additional information from relevant support agencies, such as Queensland Health, to assist with the matching process. Housing Service Centres must use the approved form for [Authority to request or disclose personal information to external parties](#).

**What does Transitional Housing offer?**

Transitional housing is a form of community-managed housing. Transitional housing providers offer social housing assistance to people in the very high and high needs segments of the housing register, with the aim of transitioning them into a longer-term housing situation in the private or social housing sectors.

Transitional housing providers assist tenants to stabilise their circumstances before establishing longer-term housing in the private or social housing sectors.

A key part of transitional housing is tenancy planning and review, which involves:

- identifying a tenant’s issues with sustaining a tenancy
- assisting tenants to stabilise their situation
- providing information and assistance to build tenancy management skills
- working with a tenant to resolve tenancy-related issues, such as paying rent on time
- linking the tenant with any support services that may be required
- working towards appropriate exit options, and
- whenever possible, resolving barriers to accessing the private market. Note: where a tenant’s barriers cannot be resolved, they may exit transitional housing to long-term social housing after demonstrating the ability to manage a social housing tenancy.
**Principle of client choice for transitional housing**

Applicants suitable for transitional housing can choose to list for transitional housing. Providers and Housing Service Centres must ask eligible, very high or high needs applicants, who are matched to transitional housing, if they wish to be considered for transitional housing. Housing Service Centres must only apply the ‘suitable for transitional housing’ flag to an application when the applicant matches transitional housing and has agreed to be considered for transitional housing vacancies.

The provider and Housing Service Centre must describe transitional housing to the applicant, noting that:

- transitional housing is a form of community-managed social housing and providers operate under the community housing rent policy (tenants pay 25% of household income in rent plus any Commonwealth Rent Assistance received)
- transitional housing is not long-term housing; but transitional housing tenants maintain an application on the housing register and can be considered for long-term social housing
- applicants housed in transitional housing will have their applications deferred for an initial period of three months to ensure that they are not offered long-term social housing before they are ready to move (this does not apply to Same House Different Landlord tenants)
- transitional housing providers assist tenants with tenancy planning and review, to develop skills in sustaining a tenancy and moving towards independent housing.

Providers and Housing Service Centres should give applicants copies of the [What is Transitional Housing?](#) and [What is Community Housing?](#) information sheets, available on the department’s website at [www.hpw.qld.gov.au](http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au). Only applicants who have given their consent to be considered for transitional housing should be considered for vacancies in any of the transitional housing programs.

**Referring and nominating applicants to transitional housing**

The [Allocations Policy for funded social housing providers](#) (January 2014) establishes referral and allocation processes for filling vacancies in transitional housing. Housing Service Centres manage the application and referral processes. Providers and Housing Service Centres must refer to the allocations policy and procedures for managing referrals and nominations.

**Identifying applicants suitable for referral**

Transitional housing will only be available to applicants in the very high and high needs segments of the housing register who are matched to transitional housing.

The following categories of circumstances provide identifiers for matching applicants in the very high and high needs segments of the housing register to transitional housing:
**Applicants transitioning from crisis and/or supported accommodation**

Applicants in crisis and/or supported accommodation with one or more barriers to accessing or sustaining housing should be matched to transitional housing to establish an appropriate housing pathway.

As a stepping stone from crisis accommodation, hospital or an institution, or another supported living arrangement, transitional housing can prepare the tenant for managing a longer-term housing option in social housing or the private market. This approach is underpinned by the partnerships and coordination between service providers at the local level. Providers with local partnerships or other agreements should consider nominating applicants for specific vacancies.

**Applicants experiencing homelessness**

Transitional housing is an appropriate and timely option for applicants experiencing homelessness, where:

- the applicant is assessed as having some capacity to sustain a social housing tenancy
- the applicant is assessed as having limited capacity to sustain a tenancy but they have a support arrangement in place (for example ‘Street to Home’) that will assist them to establish and sustain a tenancy.

An applicant assessed as not having the capacity to establish a social housing tenancy, or who requires support to establish a tenancy and that support is not in place, should be assisted to access an appropriate service (for example, a specialist homelessness or other support service). The applicant’s housing options should be re-assessed when they have appropriate supports in place.

Applicants in the following groups of current housing circumstances should be considered for referral to transitional housing:

- living on the street (including living in a car or other vehicle) or sleeping in the park, or
- living or squatting in a derelict, makeshift or illegal building.

Applicants who will be homeless for any of the following reasons should also be considered for referral to transitional housing:

- boarding house, hostel or caravan park has closed or is about to close
- household is facing immediate eviction in the private market
- household needs to leave current housing due to a domestic violence situation
- household needs to leave current housing due to a risk of violence from another household member, neighbour or community member
- irreversible family breakdown resulting in the household being asked to live elsewhere
- person convicted of an offence and assessed as homeless or at risk of homelessness on release from a correctional facility
- victim of natural disaster
- victim of a major crime, or
- living in a medical institution/facility or hospital and have no other housing to go to.*
*Providers and Housing Service Centres should seek advice from other stakeholders to assess whether long-term social housing or the Same House Different Landlord program may be more appropriate.

**Applicants with a short duration of need**

Transitional housing is suitable for people with very high or high housing needs who, after assistance of a short duration, are likely to improve their circumstances and re-establish independent housing in the private market.

Applicants with a short duration of need with barriers to the private rental market which are likely to be resolved through tenancy planning and review should be referred to transitional housing.

Applicants with the following barriers to accessing the private market may be suitable for transitional housing:
- no previous rental history or referees
- poor tenancy history either in social housing or in the private market, or
- large household size or with a difficult-to-house family structure.

Applicants who have had three or more tenancies within the past three years for the following reasons are also likely to be suitable for transitional housing:
- rent arrears due to unaffordable rent
- household member has impaired capacity due to a medical condition or disability that contributed to property damage and/or failure to keep the rental property clean and tidy*, or
- household member has impaired capacity due to a medical condition or disability that contributed to objectionable behaviour.*

*Providers and Housing Service Centres should consider whether applicants in these circumstances require formal support services such as funded disability or mental health support to sustain a tenancy and, if these are not available to the applicant, no referral or nomination should be made for transitional housing. Providers and Housing Service Centres must consider the advice of the Adult Guardian or the person’s substitute decision maker where such arrangements are in place.

When an applicant has had three or more tenancies within the past three years because a household member was asked to leave by the lessor at the end of each short-term tenancy (shorter than 12 months), further information is required to determine if there are underlying reasons indicating a need for transitional housing. The applicant may benefit from a period in transitional housing to gain skills in managing a tenancy.

Applicants with any of the following locational needs may be a suitable match for transitional housing:
- parole conditions apply for the applicant
- access to a medical facility or medical services (the applicant must only need these services for a short period of time, e.g. undergoing rehabilitation for a two year period), or
- to take up a firm offer of permanent employment (not of casual or temporary nature) or for promotion.
Specific solution referral

Transitional housing may be suitable for applicants requiring a particular type of property that is not readily available in the long-term social housing portfolio, or when a support arrangement is in place to assist them to sustain a tenancy and housing is required before a long-term solution will be available. Providers should consider using the nominations process for applicants receiving support.

Housing Service Centres should consider working with providers to source a Community Rent Scheme property for applicants with specific property requirements, such as a large number of bedrooms or disability modifications, who are unlikely to receive a timely allocation from the housing register to meet a very high housing need.

Applicants who are clients of support agencies may also be referred to transitional housing where the support agency, applicant, provider and department agree on the match to the property and program. For example:

- referral from Child Safety Services where the safety of a child is at risk (i.e. an urgent and justified child protection requirement), or
- referral from Disability Services confirming a support package for the applicant to establish a new household.

Applicants housed under these arrangements may remain in transitional housing until an appropriate long-term housing option becomes available. Exit options will depend on ongoing assessment of their housing needs, including requirements for ongoing support as identified through the tenancy planning and review process. An appropriate exit option may involve:

- remaining in the same property, with the type of assistance (program) changing to long term social housing (for example, becoming a long term tenant with the provider or becoming a public housing tenant with the department).
- moving into another property managed by the provider or another provider to receive long term social housing assistance appropriate to their needs
- being assisted to access another appropriate housing option, for example in the private market or with the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS).

Applicants with a need for long-term social housing may be appropriately matched to transitional housing when a support arrangement is in place and the applicant would benefit from tenancy planning and review, to develop skills in managing a tenancy.

Transfers into transitional housing

Current tenants of longer-term social housing may be suitable for a transfer into transitional housing if their tenancy is at risk of failure due to rent arrears, failure to maintain the property or other tenancy management issues. This includes applicants living in:

- Public Housing (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing)
- Indigenous Council Community Housing
- Long-term Community Housing, or
- Affordable Housing.
Tenants of longer-term social housing transferring into transitional housing may be moved back into longer-term social housing when they have demonstrated that they are able to manage a social housing tenancy. Tenants may also be assisted to exit to the private market where they have demonstrated the capacity and willingness to do this through the tenancy planning and review process.

When a tenancy is at risk of failure, appropriate supports should be put in place with the aim of preventing or breaking the cycle of homelessness. Providers and Housing Service Centres should consider whether accommodation and support provided by specialist homelessness or other services may be more appropriate for the tenant.

**Client and community matching**

Upon receiving a referral report from the Housing Service Centre, the provider must assess the match between the referred applicants and the community in which the vacant property is located. Providers should give as much detail as possible on the Notification of Vacancy Form – Community Housing to assist the Housing Service Centre to generate a referral report and, where appropriate, discuss potential referrals with the Housing Service Centre. Further guidance on matching is available in (using SPPR01 - Allocations procedures for funded social housing providers), including the Allocation Panel Practice Guide.

Where support arrangements are in place, providers should seek the applicant’s approval to share information and discuss the applicant’s needs and situation with relevant agencies to determine whether the housing offered will meet the person’s needs.

Providers should consider:

**Property characteristics**

The Housing Service Centre will refer applicants whose needs match the notified property vacancy in terms of bedroom entitlements, disability access features and other features as recorded on the Notification of Vacancy Form – Community Housing.

The provider should consider any features of the property that may not have been recorded on the Notification of Vacancy Form – Community Housing that make it more suitable for an applicant’s needs. For example, an applicant requiring support may be well matched to a property in close proximity to relevant services.

**Neighbourhood and community**

The provider should consider the neighbourhood and community characteristics in which the applicant will be housed.

**Access to support and health services, education, training and employment**

The provider should consider whether services and employment opportunities are available in the community to meet the applicant's needs, including whether there is accessible transport between the property and services and employment.
Enquiries

For assistance with matching applicants to transitional housing, please contact the relevant Housing Service Centre.

For other enquiries, contact the Procedures and Implementation Team on 3007 4555 or email HHS PIT HelpDesk