

Practice Guide

Tenancy Planning and Review in Transitional Housing

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Transitional Housing

Role

The role of transitional housing within one social housing system is to provide timely housing assistance that is responsive to households with very high or high housing needs. Transitional housing complements and supports the effective delivery of crisis and longer-term housing assistance by helping to connect and improve the pathways between the homelessness and social housing systems.

Purpose

The purpose of transitional housing is to assist eligible households to stabilise their circumstances and build their capacity to progress to longer-term living arrangements, in the private or social housing sectors. Transitional housing does this by providing intensively managed and closely monitored housing assistance based on assessed need.

The [Tenancy Planning and Review Process Tool](#) provides a quick reference for providers to use in conjunction with this Practice Guide during the tenancy planning and review process.

Key Service Delivery components

To deliver on this role and purpose, the key service delivery components for transitional housing, include:

- identifying and matching clients from the housing register using the client intake and assessment and applicant referral processes
- responding to tenant needs in a flexible way through supportive tenancy management and the effective use of a range of privately head leased property and portfolio stock
- maintaining and building on existing local level partnerships between housing providers and other agencies to ensure tenants are appropriately supported, and
- successfully exiting tenants out of transitional housing into longer-term housing options.

Transitional housing clients

Transitional housing is suitable for the following applicants:

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 the appropriate supports in place.

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 practices should be referred to transitional housing.

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 (CRS) 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.

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

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 or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing
- Indigenous council community housing
- Long-term community housing
- Affordable housing.

Tenants of longer-term social housing transferring into transitional housing may be moved back into long-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.

Supportive tenancy management

Supportive tenancy management in social housing

The Supportive Tenancy Management - Policy Statement (endorsed 22 February 2007) outlines the department's commitment to supportive and consistent tenancy management practices. A supportive tenancy management approach requires the tenancy manager to consider the individual circumstances of a tenant and to implement tenancy management practices accordingly. This policy applies to all social housing programs, including community-managed, transitional housing.

Supportive tenancy management in transitional housing

Aim

Supportive tenancy management is a proactive approach to tenancy management which engages tenants to maximise successful tenancy outcomes and to build the capacity of tenants to obtain and sustain long-term housing.

Objectives

The objectives of supportive tenancy management in transitional housing are to:

1. prevent tenancy-related problems from arising and/or address problems early before they escalate (e.g. neighbourhood disputes, rent arrears and other problems leading to tenancy failure)

2. increase the capacity of tenants to meet tenant responsibilities and to independently manage and sustain a tenancy
3. identify exit pathways from transitional housing to long-term housing that are appropriate for tenants on an individual basis, and
4. identify strategies for exits to be achieved in a planned and sustainable manner.

Principles

There are a number of principles that underpin the provision of supportive tenancy management in transitional housing. The key principles are:

1. Maximise successful tenancy outcomes – assistance will be provided to the tenant and their household to sustain their tenancy by linking the tenant to assistance appropriate to their circumstances.
2. Early identification, engagement and referral – to maximise successful tenancy outcomes, there is a need for early identification of existing risk factors, continuing difficulties experienced by households and ongoing requirements for support, followed by a timely and appropriate course of action.
3. Consistent yet flexible tenancy management practices – tenancy management policies and procedures are consistently yet flexibly applied to be responsive to the individual needs of tenants.
4. Positive engagement with tenants – a focus on fostering positive relationships with tenants. Support provided takes into consideration a tenant's whole situation and seeks to build their capacity to sustain their tenancy by building on their strengths.
5. Collaborative approach to support and referral – working with government and non-government housing and support providers to assist tenants appropriately, to make appropriate referrals and establish coordinated solutions.
6. Maximise tenant choice and responsibility for the tenancy – tenants are encouraged to make informed decisions and take responsibility for the management of their tenancy.

Key Elements

Key elements of a supportive tenancy management approach in transitional housing are considered below.

1. Engage with tenants in the delivery of assistance
 - establish a good working relationship with the tenant through regular contact¹
 - monitor individual tenant circumstances and identify early any changes in tenant needs
 - implement tenancy management practices that are tailored to the individual to help them establish and sustain a tenancy.
2. Assist tenants to identify and work towards appropriate long-term housing
 - identify the tenant's barriers to long-term housing using the housing needs assessment information from the Referral Report as a foundation
 - identify opportunities and strategies to address those needs, possibly making referral to support services if required so that the tenant builds the capacity to acquire long-term housing
 - match the tenant to the most appropriate exit option – private housing or long-term social housing
 - monitor and review the tenant's progress in working towards an appropriate exit outcome.

3. Develop partnerships with support services for linkages and referrals
 - build and strengthen referral relationships with local support services, possibly underpinned by service agreements or memorandum of understandings to outline the respective roles and responsibilities
 - identify referral opportunities through the tenancy planning and review process and act as the connecting link between the tenant and the support service/s required
 - maintain a collaborative approach to service delivery through ongoing communication with service providers to monitor and review tenant circumstances.
4. Ongoing communication with the local Housing Service Centre to assist with application and housing register management
 - support the tenant to maintain an active application for social housing assistance with the department
 - provide advice to the department, as required, on the status of the tenant's application and tenant's need for long-term social housing or private housing assistance
 - communicate with the department in a timely manner to ensure the efficient and accurate management of tenant's application on the housing register.

Tenancy planning and review process

Aim

The aim of the tenancy planning and review process is to ensure tenants' needs continue to be appropriately met by supporting the movement of tenants through and out of transitional housing based on assessed need.

Objectives

The objectives of the tenancy planning and review process are to:

- ensure the prospective tenant has a clear understanding of the type of housing assistance on offer
- establish the transitional housing tenancy
- review the tenant's barriers to accessing and sustaining long-term housing
- work with the tenant to identify an appropriate exit outcome and pathway
- build the tenant's capacity to access and sustain a long-term tenancy
- monitor and review progress made in working towards appropriate exit outcome
- support the tenant to make a smooth transition to the identified long-term housing option.

Key stages

There are four key stages to the tenancy planning and review process:

1. Before a tenancy starts (offer stage)
2. Start of a tenancy (first month)
3. During a tenancy
4. Ending a tenancy

Following is a consideration of the tenancy planning and review activities that need to occur at these four key stages. For an overview of the tenancy planning and review process, refer to the [Tenancy Planning and Review Process Tool](#).

Note: This guide should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures relevant to the delivery of transitional housing.

Before a tenancy starts (offer stage)

Objective

Ensure the prospective tenant has a clear understanding of the type of housing assistance on offer.

Background

The tenancy planning and review process commences when the provider is about to make an offer to an applicant. The process commences at this point because the information communicated to the applicant lays the foundation for the tenancy planning and review process.

It is critical that the prospective tenant has a clear understanding of the type of housing assistance being offered. Information on what providers must do when making offers and when an applicant accepts or rejects an offer, refer to the Allocations Policy Transitional Housing and procedures.

Key tools/resources that support the tenancy planning and review process are outlined below.

Tenant Guide to Transitional Housing

The [Tenant Guide to Transitional Housing](#) explains to prospective tenants what to expect during the course of their transitional housing tenancy, including through the tenancy planning and review process. The provider should discuss this with the prospective tenants and answer any questions they have about a transitional housing tenancy.

General Tenancy Agreement

Once an applicant has accepted an offer of transitional housing, the provider and tenant enter into a General Tenancy Agreement (the lease).

Part 3 of the agreement allows the inclusion of 'special terms'. Special terms cannot be enforced if they are inconsistent with the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008*. However, it is appropriate to use the special terms to make the tenant aware that they are being provided with assistance under the *Housing Act 2003*.

The department recommends that the provider include the following 'special terms' in the Tenancy Agreement:

Special Terms in the Tenancy Agreement:

1. The parties agree that the tenant occupies the premises under the [NAME OF PROGRAM] Housing Program. The [NAME OF PROGRAM] is a transitional housing program administered

by the state of Queensland, through the Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services), and the parties acknowledge that this transitional housing program is an affordable housing scheme (the 'scheme') as defined in the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (the 'Act').

2. The tenant acknowledges that, pursuant to section 290 of the Act, if the tenant ceases to be eligible, under the scheme, to receive assistance or to occupy the premises, then the lessor may give a notice to leave the premises to the tenant.
3. The tenant acknowledges having received a copy of the 'Tenant Guide to Transitional Housing' published by the Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services) before entering into this agreement.

What's involved

1. In making an offer of transitional housing - the provider should give and discuss with the applicant the Tenant Guide to Transitional Housing. The provider may want to refer to relevant tenant fact sheets available on the department's website to provide further information.
2. In offering a tenancy - the provider needs to meet their obligations as a registered provider under the Housing Act 2003 and as lessor under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008. This includes making the applicant aware of any specific property features (e.g. if property is furnished or has shared facilities).
3. When the applicant agrees with the terms and conditions explained, the provider and applicant must sign a General Tenancy Agreement (the lease). It is recommended that the provider include the above mentioned 'special terms'.
4. After the offer is made - the outcome of the offer is reported to the department through the Housing Register Advice Form – Community Housing (see [SPPR01 – Allocations procedures for long term, affordable and transitional housing providers](#) for further information).
5. When the offer advice has been provided to the department, the Housing Service Centre will update the housing register to show that the applicant is in transitional housing and their application for social housing assistance is automatically deferred for three months (unless there is a reason for the provider to request via the [Housing Register Advice Form – Community Housing](#) for this to be overridden).

Start of a Tenancy

Objective

Establish the tenancy, review barriers to accessing and sustaining long-term housing and commence working with the tenant to identify an appropriate exit outcome and pathway.

Background

Within the first month of the tenancy, the provider should contact the tenant to develop a [Tenancy Plan](#) to track the key activities and milestones during the Tenancy Planning and Review process.

Tenancy Plan

A [Tenancy Plan](#) is a reviewable, working document that is developed collaboratively by the tenant and housing provider and captures information about the tenant's housing, support needs and options. It defines the tenant's long-term housing goal, and the strategy or pathway for the tenant to achieve this exit outcome.

What's involved

In developing a [Tenancy Plan](#) with the tenant, the provider should:

1. Assess the tenant's situation and barriers to long-term housing

The provider should use the applicant information on the Referral Report as a starting point to assess the tenant's situation and identify barriers the tenant is facing in accessing long-term housing. This information should be discussed with the tenant during the process of developing their [Tenancy Plan](#).

2. Identify what would be the most appropriate exit option

The most appropriate exit option depends on what barriers to long-term housing the tenant is facing.

It is intended that the majority of applicants referred to transitional housing, after a period of suitable support and skills building, will aim to exit social housing and move into private rental or even home ownership. However, if the barriers identified are likely to be long-term, private housing may not be a suitable option.

When the [Tenancy Plan](#) is reviewed, the selected exit option may be revised, depending on whether the tenant's circumstances have changed.

3. Identify strategies for working towards the identified exit option

Strategies should seek to address the barriers the tenant is facing in accessing long-term housing. Rather than focusing on the gaps, strategies should aim to build on the tenant's capacity to obtain and sustain long-term housing by building on their personal assets (e.g. skills, abilities, support networks). This mostly involves action by the tenant or referral to a support service. Strategies may involve a number of activities that collectively contribute to overcoming a housing barrier.

4. Make referrals to support services

If the tenant is not already accessing appropriate support services, the provider should seek to identify any supports that would be of benefit to the tenant. This could include their own network of friends or relatives, cultural and support groups as well as government and non-government service providers. The emphasis on linkages recognises that finding sustainable housing solutions can require the development and implementation of a tailored suite of integrated and well coordinated supports.

Where possible, the provider should be making referrals or assist linkages through their own relationships with local support services.

Housing providers should have ongoing communication with the support providers to assist in determining whether a tenant is in a position to find and sustain a long-term housing option.

5. Assist the tenant to establish and stabilise their tenancy by providing information and assistance to build tenancy management skills, if required

The provider should offer any assistance required for the tenant to establish their transitional housing tenancy. Based on their tenancy history, the provider should seek to identify whether the tenant needs assistance to build tenancy management skills and identify appropriate strategies for building these skills. This might include providing information and advice about managing a tenancy or referring to other services (e.g. RentConnect).

During a Tenancy

Objective

Build the tenant's capacity to access and sustain a long-term tenancy and monitor and review progress made in working towards the appropriate exit outcome.

Background

Periodically during a tenancy, the provider and tenant should review the [Tenancy Plan](#). Reviews should take place every three or six months, depending on the tenant's circumstances and needs. The purpose of this is to check whether there have been any changes in the tenant's circumstances and to discuss their progress in implementing the strategies or activities for progressing to a long-term housing option.

The provider should engage in proactive, tenancy management practices that sustain and support the tenancy and which continue to build the tenant's tenancy management skills, as required.

Community Rent Scheme Tenant Report

The CRS Tenant Report is a key tool that supports the tenancy planning and review process. It is produced by the department and emailed monthly to all CRS providers. It contains information on each tenant's application status (e.g. cancelled, closed or approved) and housing register segment allocation (e.g. very high need or lower need).

This information should assist the provider to identify whether or not the tenant is likely to receive an offer of long-term social housing or whether private housing is a more appropriate housing outcome.

What's involved

1. Every three or six months after the tenancy has commenced, the provider and tenant should review the Tenancy Plan together using the [Tenancy Plan Review Template](#).
2. Using the CRS Tenant Report as a reference, the provider should check on the application status of the tenant's social housing application to ensure the tenant continues to have an active application with the department.
3. If the application is cancelled or closed, the provider should follow this up with the tenant and the Housing Service Centre and assist the tenant to reinstate an approved application with the department, if possible. If the tenant is no longer eligible for social housing, the provider should refer to the exit procedure and take action to end the assistance.

4. If an application is deferred because the applicant is housed in transitional housing, when reviewing the [Tenancy Plan](#) the provider and tenant should determine whether the deferral period should be extended or not. This will depend on the tenant's readiness to sustain a long-term tenancy and whether social housing is an appropriate and likely exit option for the tenant. Each period of deferral should be for a maximum of six months and applications should not be deferred for more than 12 months in total.
5. If the decision is made to defer the tenant's social housing application for a period of time, this is communicated back to the department by emailing the Housing [Register Advice Form – Community Housing](#).

If the tenant is in Segment A of the housing register (very high need) the provider will be contacted by the Housing Service Centre to discuss the tenant's situation and suitability for long-term social housing every three months.

Ending a Tenancy

Objective

To support the tenant to make a smooth transition to identified long-term housing option.

Background

When a tenant is assessed as having the capacity to sustain a long-term tenancy, the provider should assist the tenant to identify and transition to the most appropriate long-term housing option – whether social or private housing, depending on their circumstances and as recorded on their [Tenancy Plan](#).

It is intended that the majority of transitional housing tenants, after a period of appropriate support, will have the capacity to exit social housing and move into private rental or possibly home ownership.

When exiting tenants, providers should refer to SPPR02: Procedures for transitional housing providers for managing tenant exits. The procedure includes information on how to assess whether a tenant has an ongoing need for social housing assistance.

An invalid rejection of offer may result in a tenant's application being placed in a lower segment of the housing register or cancelled.

If the tenant ceases to be eligible for transitional housing assistance, the community housing provider may issue the tenant with a Notice to Leave under Section 290 of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008. If this occurs, the provider needs to assist the tenant to find other suitable housing.

What's involved

1. If a tenant requires social housing and meets eligibility requirements, the provider should seek to identify an appropriate property from their portfolio, with other providers or by liaising with the department (refer to SPPR02: Procedures for transitional housing providers for managing tenant exits).

2. If a tenant's exit option is private housing, the provider should encourage the tenant to take the lead in finding appropriate housing.
3. The provider should inform the tenant of the range of private housing assistance available, including through the National Rent Affordability Scheme (NRAS) and refer to the information sheets on the department's website.
4. The provider may refer the tenant to the RentConnect Officer in the local Housing Service Centre who will be able to provide information and advice and assess the tenant's eligibility for other private housing assistance products offered by the department. The provider should consider whether the tenant would benefit from any other services or one-off assistance available in the local community.
5. The provider should notify the department of the tenant's exit and of the resulting property vacancy, as per [SPPR02 – Procedures for transitional housing providers for managing tenant exits](#).

Appeals and review

Tenants have the right to request housing providers to review decisions relating to them under Section 29 of the *Housing Regulation 2003* (the 'Regulation'). Providers are required, where appropriate, to give written reasons to clients for their decisions. Further, Section 23 of the Regulation requires providers to ensure that clients and eligible persons have access to copies of certain policies including policies in relation to dispute resolution and review of decisions.

Tenants should raise any concerns about their provider's decisions with the provider.

Complaints about the provider may be made to the Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services) or directly to the provider.

Tenants may seek advice about tenancy related issues from the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service or the Residential Tenancies Authority.

For more information, see [Tenant Information Sheet – How to Appeal](#).

Enquiries

For assistance with tenancy planning and review in transitional housing, please contact the relevant Housing Service Centre.

For other enquiries, contact the Department of Housing and Public Works.

BNCR – 3007 4377	HS ODCM Brisbane North Coast HSODCMBrisbaneNorthCoast@hpw.qld.gov.au
Central – 4848 7054	HS CDM ODCM Central Region HSCDMODCMCentralRegion@hpw.qld.gov.au
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