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| 11. Homeless with Support |  |
| Operational Guidelines |  |



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# When do these operational guidelines apply?

These operational guidelines should be followed by designated service providers and social housing organisations when making decisions related to the Victorian Housing Register (the register).

These operational guidelines should be followed by designated service providers when making a decision to submit an application on behalf of applicants under the Homeless with Support category.

These operational guidelines form part of a set of guidelines that together sit under the [*Eligibility Policy Framework*](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-policy-framework) https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-policy-framework.

# Purpose statement

The Homeless with Support category is for individuals or households who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or experiencing family violence who:

* have no alternative housing options and
* who are either:
  + - receiving support through a government-funded support program, or
    - exiting care or custody under health, child protection or justice arrangements.

Applications for Homeless with Support are submitted by a designated service provider on behalf of an individual or household.

There are six reasons under which a person is considered eligible for the Homeless with Support category:

* Homeless – for people who are experiencing homelessness (including unstable accommodation, couch surfing and transitional housing) or who are exiting care or custody under health, child protection or justice arrangements and are receiving case managed support.
* Young people leaving care – for people aged between 15 and 9 months to 21 years, who are exiting care and are at risk of homelessness, that are receiving case managed support.
* Family reunification:
  + - for households who need stable and affordable housing before a dependent child is reunited to the care of a parent, or
    - a dependent child is not living with a parent because they do not have suitable housing.
* Family violence – for people who are experiencing family violence and are receiving case managed support.
* Housing First – for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and receiving case managed support by a Housing First organisation.
* Mental health with support – for people who need ongoing (12 months or more) intensive treatment, care and support to maintain housing due to the impact of sustained mental health challenges (including the impacts of trauma they experience).

The Homeless with Support operational guidelines outline the criteria an applicant must meet to be eligible for the Homeless with Support category and the pathways through which an application can be made.

The criteria identifies individuals and households who are homeless or experiencing family violence and need support (other than financial) to obtain and establish appropriate, long term housing.

The operational guidelines seek to ensure that people approved under the Homeless with Support category have their support and accommodation needs actively addressed by a designated service provider. Designated service providers work with the applicant over a sustained period of time (including to establish a tenancy) to maximise their levels of social and economic independence. This will assist them to sustain the tenancy.

Under these arrangements, designated service providers assume a key role in the assessment of individuals and households. These designated service providers invest time in understanding the causal factors of an applicant’s current or past homelessness and can identify how to best provide individual support to achieve long term housing outcomes.

As well as assisting to identify these households as a priority, the intent of these guidelines is to aid support organisations to:

* identify and meet the needs of people who have other factors in their lives that have contributed to them becoming homeless
  + establish a platform for communication and coordination between designated service providers and social housing organisations from the outset of the tenancy.

These guidelines aim to ensure designated service providers and social housing organisations provide a fair and consistent application of policy to all applicants.

# Human rights considerations

In deciding what action to take, staff must give proper consideration to the relevant human rights in accordance with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* s38(1) (the Charter). This consideration should include the potential impact the proposed action they are undertaking through these operational guidelines may have on the person’s (and their household’s) rights under the Charter*.*

For more information see [*Making Client Focused Decisions* operational guidelines](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-client-focused-decisions)https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-client-focused-decisions.

# Eligibility for Homeless with Support

Individuals and households eligible for the Homeless with Support category are people who:

* meet the eligibility criteria including the Priority Access income and asset eligibility criteria
* meet the eligibility criteria for one of the reasons of Homeless with Support
* have no alternative housing options
* are receiving case managed support through a designated service provider.

## Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for social housing, in general primary applicants should live in Victoria and:

* be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia
* meet the income and asset eligibility limits for their household
* have an independent income
* not own a property in which they could live.

Up-to-date documentation to confirm the above criteria must be provided. Income and asset documentation should be less than 28 days old.

For further information see the [*Eligibility Criteria operational guidelines*](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0)https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0.

### Income eligibility

The income eligibility limit for the Homeless with Support category is the Priority Access income limit, which is set out in the [Social housing eligibility](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility) http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility.

To determine total household income, the assessable incomes of the household are added together to determine whether the household meets the Priority Access income limit. If the total household income is less than or equal to the maximum income limit for Priority Access, the household is considered eligible.

If the primary reason for the application is family violence the Register of Interest income limit can be applied, if necessary, to provide appropriate assistance.

Generally, a family violence applicant should meet the income eligibility limits to be eligible for the register. However, where a person and their household are experiencing family violence and need access to ongoing housing in order to be safe, they are also eligible to be on the register.

Applications submitted on behalf of persons in prison through the Transitional Housing Management – Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative may be assessed without income documentation. Income eligibility is reassessed when an individual is released from prison. At that point applicants must meet the income eligibility criteria.

### Asset eligibility

The asset eligibility limit for the Homeless with Support category is the Priority Access asset limit­, which is set out in the [*Social housing eligibility*](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility) http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility.

To determine the total household assets, the assessable assets of the household are added together to determine whether the household meets the Priority Access asset limit. If the dollar value of the total household assets is less than or equal to the maximum asset limit, the household is considered eligible.

If the primary reason for the application is family violence the Register of Interest asset limit can be applied, if necessary, to provide appropriate assistance.

Generally, a family violence applicant should meet the asset eligibility limits to be eligible for the register. However, where a person and their household are experiencing family violence and need access to ongoing housing in order to be safe, they are also eligible to be on the register.

Note: where the family violence applicant owns or has interest in residential real estate and cannot make ‘effective use’ of the property, that is, they are unable to reside in the property or realise their equity, the property is exempt from the asset eligibility assessment. See the [*Eligibility Criteria operational guidelines*](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0) https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0for more information.

Where a household member requires full or major modifications to the property, the ­disability modification asset limit is applied.

A policy consideration can be applied to exempt households from the Priority Access asset limit who are in receipt of formal support as specified under the Significant Personal Support priority reason of the Supported Housing category. These applicants can instead be assessed against the Register of Interest asset limit.

For this to occur, the agency submitting the application on the household’s behalf needs to confirm that the household is at a significant disadvantage in the private rental market, their cash and readily realisable assets cannot, or will not, materially improve their prospects of securing private rental housing, and social housing is the only viable long-term housing option for them.

# Homeless with Support priority reasons

There are six priority reasons under which a person may be considered eligible for the Homeless with Support category. In addition to the eligibility criteria referred to in the [*Eligibility Criteria operational guidelines*](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0) https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0, applicants must be eligible under one of these reasons.

## Homeless

If the primary reason for the application is homelessness or exiting care or custody under health, child protection or justice arrangements, Homeless with Support applications should be submitted under the Homeless priority reason. This includes people who are experiencing their first episode of homelessness.

People applying under this priority reason include individuals or households who are:

* Living in crisis accommodation.
* Residing in transitional housing, crisis managed, or crisis arranged housing (including short term leases or similar arrangements, and accommodation that is unsuitable because transitional or crisis accommodation was unavailable when they needed it).
* Living temporarily with family and friends because they have not been able to access or maintain accommodation of their own.
  + Without conventional accommodation such as sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars for temporary shelter.
  + Living in housing that is unsuitable for a dependent child to be returned to the care of their parents.

Individuals who are receiving support who have no alternative housing options can also be considered under this priority reason when:

* Exiting short term care/treatment services including hospitals, disability residential services, mental health secure extended care or community care units.
* Receiving care through a children, youth and families funded leaving care program.
  + Leaving a secure facility under the youth justice pathways or corrections housing pathways initiative.

The application can be submitted once the Initial Assessment and Planning worker or support worker commences working with the applicant to prepare them for independent living.

Note: applications are no longer required to be submitted up to six months prior to an applicant’s anticipated release or exit date. Applications may be submitted at any stage of the applicant’s sentence or placement to assist with transition planning.

### Evidence for Homeless priority reason

To submit an application under this priority reason the designated service provider must confirm that the applicant is homeless or at risk of homelessness and receiving case managed support.

## Young people leaving care

Where young people, aged between 15 and 9 months to 21 are leaving care and are at risk of entering homelessness at the end of care, Homeless with Support applications should be submitted under the Young people leaving care priority reason.

This includes people leaving residential care (including lead renter), kinship care, foster care, or in some cases leaving another care or living arrangement.

### Evidence for young people leaving care priority reason

To submit an application under the young people leaving care priority reason the designated service provider must confirm that the applicant at risk of homelessness, is leaving one of the above-mentioned care types and is receiving case managed support.

## Family Reunification

The Family Reunification priority reason is for families:

* who need stable and affordable housing before a dependent child is returned to the care of a parent, or
* where the current housing situation is one reason (among others) a dependent child is not living with a parent and the family requires safe, secure and stable housing when reunification occurs.

**Evidence for the Family Reunification priority reason**

A designated service provider (including Child Protection, Community Service Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations) may submit applications.

The designated service provider must confirm:

* + the return of dependent children to a parent:
* is prevented by the current housing circumstances, and
* alternative housing is not an option.
  + the household is receiving case managed support through a designated service provider to establish and maintain long term housing, and
  + secure and stable housing will support the return of dependent children to the care of a parent (including from out of home care arrangements) on a permanent basis. The designated service provider can confirm this by sighting one of the following:
* a case plan or support letter from Child Protection or another designated service provider (including Community Service Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations), or
* a Children’s Court Family Reunification order or other Children’s Court order that includes the relevant conditions or plans required for family reunification when suitable housing is secured.

## Family Violence

If the primary reason for the application is family violence, Homeless with Support applications should be submitted under the Family Violence priority reason. This includes people who are experiencing homelessness (or at risk of homelessness) due to family violence or are residing in housing where the violence has occurred.

People applying under this priority reason include individuals or households who are subject to family violence and are:

* Residing in housing where the violence has occurred.
* Living in crisis accommodation.
* Residing in transitional housing, crisis managed, or crisis arranged housing (including short term leases or similar arrangements, and accommodation that is unsuitable because transitional or crisis accommodation was unavailable when they needed it).
* Living temporarily with family or friends because they have not been able to access or maintain accommodation of their own.
  + Without conventional accommodation such as sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars for temporary shelter.

### Evidence for Family Violence priority reason

To submit an application under this priority reason the designated service provider must confirm that the applicant is homeless or at risk of homelessness and receiving case managed support.

In addition, the designated service provider should sight one of the following:

* an L17 referral from police
* an Intervention Order or an Interim Intervention Order (State), or an application for one of these
  + an integrated assessment such as the Common Risk Assessment Framework that identifies family violence
* a Family Court Restraining Order (Federal)
* a letter from a solicitor stating that criminal proceedings have started against the alleged respondent of violence
* a letter from a medical practitioner.

When documents are submitted to a department office, staff should handle these according to the “*Records management: Client family violence and personal safety information*” practice note.

If the applicant is unable to start legal proceedings or is not in receipt of support or assistance, where the applicant describes their housing need is a consequence of family violence, the priority reason will be accepted on that basis. An approach responsive to individual circumstances should be taken in recognition of the multiple and complex needs of family violence applicants.

If the applicant cannot live in a particular area, the areas that are unsafe must be clearly identified in the application, by the applicant, or through a formal safety risk assessment.

### Exit Pathways from Refuge and Crisis Accommodation for Victim Survivors of Family Violence initiative

The initiative provides participants with subsidised medium term private rental housing (either in a head-leased property or a private lease with an owner in the participant’s name), establishing a platform for them to sustain private rental beyond an initial period of support. Participants in the initiative are:

* victim survivors of family violence
* residing in refuge or crisis accommodation at the time they are referred into the initiative, and
* assessed as likely to be able to sustain a private rental option.

An application for this category can be lodged by a designated service provider on behalf of a household participating in the initiative who is at risk of homelessness because:

* they do not have the financial capacity to continue to meet the costs of their head-leased or subsidised private rental housing, or
* they cannot remain in their head-leased or subsidised private rental property at the end of their tenancy agreement and an alternative affordable private rental option is not available, or
* their private rental housing is no longer safe because the actions of a person using violence has escalated the victim survivor’s level of family violence risk at the property, and
* social housing is the only other viable option for them.

To lodge an application under this priority reason, the designated service provider (who delivered the program) must confirm:

* the participant is residing in head-leased or subsidised private rental housing
* the reason the participant cannot remain in their rental housing, and
* that social housing is their only viable long-term housing option.

## Housing First

If the applicant has experienced sustained or multiple episodes of homelessness and is being supported by an approved Housing First program (Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI), Melbourne Street to Home programs; and the assertive outreach, modular unit and supportive housing team initiatives through *Victoria’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan* and *Towards Home*), then applications should be submitted under the Housing First priority reason. The J2SI program has been funded to provide intensive case managed support to cohorts of clients since 2018. Cohort groups are recorded in HiiP as a priority type (Cohort 1 to Cohort 5) based on date of program commencement. Refer to Housing First J2SI program commencement and allocation dates table below:

Housing First J2SI program commencement and allocation dates

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cohort | J2SI Program Commencement date | Allocation target timeline |
| Cohort 1 | 1 August 2018 | April 2021 |
| Cohort 2 | 1 August 2019 | April 2022 |
| Cohort 3 | 1 August 2020 | October 2022 |
| Cohort 4 | 1 February 2022 | May 2024 |
| Cohort 5 | 1 October 2022 | May 2025 |

In recognition of the importance of timeliness for Housing First applicants, applications for Housing First may be processed through the fast track registration process.

Prior to an offer of housing, the support organisation listed on the application should be engaged to assist with establishing and maintaining the tenancy.

### Evidence for Housing First priority reason

To submit an application under the Housing First priority reason the designated service provider must confirm that the applicant is homeless or at risk of homelessness, has a history of sustained and multiple periods of homelessness and is receiving case managed support by a Housing First program.

In addition, the designated service provider must attach a summary of the applicant’s case plan to the application.

## Mental Health with Support

If an applicant requires ongoing intensive treatment (12 months or more), care and support to maintain housing due to the impact of sustained mental health challenges, including the impacts of trauma they experience, then a Homeless with Support application should be submitted under the Mental Health with Support priority type.

### Evidence for Mental Health with Support priority reason

An application under the Mental Health with Support priority reason can be submitted by a homelessness service provider or a designated service provider. Designated service providers currently include Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services such as Austin Health, Peninsula Health etc and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

In addition to the Income and Asset and broader requirements for the Homeless with Support category, a designated service provider must authorise the release of information about the application and confirm:

* the applicant is homeless or at risk of homelessness
* that the applicant is receiving, or is eligible to receive, ongoing (12 months or more) mental health and wellbeing support from the designated service provider
* that the applicant is receiving, or eligible to receive, appropriate State or Commonwealth funded psychosocial or daily living supports integrated with their mental health treatment
* that the applicant consents to receiving offers of social housing
* any special accommodation requirements or locational preferences.

# Alternative housing options

Individuals and households applying for the Homeless with Support category are expected to use other available options in an attempt to resolve their urgent housing need, such as attempting to obtain accommodation in the private rental market.

It is understood that a household’s capacity to access alternative housing may be compromised by a range of factors, including:

* The availability and cost of private rental accommodation that matches the individual’s or household’s housing requirements in their preferred area, as well as other suitable areas.
* Personal circumstances or characteristics of the household which are likely, or has been shown, to reduce their access to private rental. Examples may include psychiatric, developmental, physical or intellectual disability or mental illness which makes it difficult for the household to rent in the private market.
* A history of housing breakdowns due to factors such as inability to make rental payments, manage relationships with landlords or other renters, or to manage their housing commitments while other significant issues are affecting them.
* An inability to access private rental housing due to a negative listing on a renter database.
* An inability to access private rental brokerage funds or services.

For some, a combination of these factors may mean that a social housing tenancy may be the only realistic and sustainable housing option. For many, however, there may be a number of alternatives.

It is expected that the designated service provider confirm that the applicant has received assistance to explore alternative housing options, including private rental housing, which cannot be secured.

# Designated service provider

Homeless with Support applications must be submitted on behalf of the individual or household by a designated service provider.

Designated service providers are funded by the Victorian or Commonwealth Government to deliver support programs and specialist services including:

* child protection and family services
* disability services
* youth services and youth justice services
* homelessness services
* family violence services
* joined-up initiatives
* aged care
* alcohol and drug treatment services
  + mental health services.

Homeless with Support applications should be submitted where applicants have been assessed as homeless or at risk of homelessness and are receiving case managed support.

Designated service providers are expected to have in place appropriate procedures to ensure applications are submitted or endorsed by staff with a level of delegation at their organisation allowing them to commit the organisation to meeting the documented client support requirements at housing allocation stage.

Applications may also be submitted by intake and assessment workers, as part of a holistic response, for example Initial Assessment and Planning workers working within correctional facilities.

An External Party Reference Identification Number (EPRIN) is required to submit applications on behalf of applicants. The EPRIN of the designated service provider is to be entered on the application.

A designated service provider or program that does not have an EPRIN, and that would like to receive information about how their program can submit applications on behalf of applicants, should email the department at [VictorianHousingRegister@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:VictorianHousingRegister@dffh.vic.gov.au).

Applicants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness but not receiving support should contact an intake and assessment worker or a designated service provider. For more information go to the [*Getting help*](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/getting-help) page https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/getting-help.

# Support requirements

When submitting a Homeless with Support application with the recommendation to approve, the designated service provider is:

* confirming the individual or household applying meets the support requirements threshold.
  + committing their organisation to meeting the documented client support requirements, including establishing and maintaining a tenancy in long term housing.

It is expected that designated service providers maintain internal review and quality control processes to ensure that applications are reviewed and submitted appropriately.

## Eligibility threshold for support requirements

In order to target scarce support resources to those individuals and households most in need of support to successfully establish and maintain tenancies, it is important that applicants for the Homeless with Support category meet a minimum level of need or vulnerability that justifies their consideration under this category.

If it is determined a short term or crisis response is sufficient and it is unlikely the individual or household will require support at the establishment phase of a tenancy, an application should **not** be submitted under the Homeless with Support category.

Individuals and households will be eligible for the Homeless with Support category where they require case managed support to obtain, establish and maintain appropriate, secure, long term housing and community connections.

It is the role of intake and assessment workers or equivalent to identify a person’s support requirements and make appropriate referrals. Where an assessment determines that the support threshold is met, the date of the assessment is recorded in the referral to be used as the effective date for the Homeless with Support application, should the ongoing designated service provider submit an application.

It is expected the designated service provider will work with an individual or household for a period of time before deciding to submit an application under the Homeless with Support category. This is to ensure the designated service provider has a clear understanding of the level of support required and can make a thorough assessment of the individual or household’s most suitable long term housing options.

This process also requires the individual or household to consider whether they agree to engage with support for as long as assistance is required. It is expected that designated service providers will discuss the requirements under this category with the individual or household being assisted.

If it is determined an individual or household is not able to maintain a social housing tenancy due to their high needs, an application should not be submitted under the Homeless with Support category. In these circumstances, a more suitable housing option should be considered, such as rehabilitation or other supported housing option.

Housing First is based on the provision of housing quickly; without requirements for housing readiness such as independent living skills or clinical support; but with ongoing support to maintain a tenancy.

In some circumstances an intake and assessment worker may submit an application for Homeless with Support as part of a holistic assessment of needs, where the individual or household has been identified as meeting the support threshold.

For example, Initial Assessment and Planning workers working within correctional facilities as part of the Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative are able to submit applications for individuals and households exiting custody arrangements.

Where an individual is leaving prison, a youth justice program or a care/treatment facility, the relevant worker will make an assessment of their support needs and whether they are likely to exit into homelessness. As part of the release or exit strategy, the support worker should plan to link the individual with the required support. However, in circumstances where a support connection cannot be made, the individual will remain eligible for this category.

For those exiting care or custody arrangements who are not able to access support and have an application submitted on their behalf by a worker within child protection, justice or health care or custody services, these clients will be approved under this category regardless of the support connection in place.

Being in receipt of support services such as mentoring programs, chaplaincy support, home help, and meals on wheels or assistance with shopping are not considered to be sufficient indicators of need under the Homeless with Support category.

## Expectations of designated service providers

Designated service providers lodging Homeless with Support applications will:

* Develop a case plan that aims to assist the individual or household to establish and maintain their own accommodation and ultimately increase their independence to a point where services may no longer be required.
* Submit an application on the individual or household’s behalf and assist to maintain the currency of the application.
  + Support the individual or household to establish a tenancy at the time of social housing allocation (either through direct delivery or active referral, handover and client engagement processes with another provider).

Typically, the designated service provider will work with the individual or household over a sustained period of time prior to and after housing allocation to provide the required support either through direct service delivery or within a care coordination, care planning or individual planning framework involving:

* assessment of needs
* development of a case plan
* implementation of the plan
  + monitoring/maintenance and review of the plan.

Support should proactively address risk factors relevant to housing stability and wellbeing and include consideration of previous housing history and reasons for housing breakdowns to reduce risk for any future tenancy. For example, if any tenancies ended due to antisocial behaviour or rental arrears, and if relevant, the designated service provider should include in the case plan strategies to support a change of behaviour.

The designated service provider should discuss with the applicant how the housing outcome they desire can be best achieved including assisting with issues surrounding any previous social housing tenancies the applicant may have had, and assisting the individual or household to decide on location preferences that are conducive to timely housing allocation, connection to social and community support, and long-term housing outcomes.

### After the application is approved

It is expected, where possible, the applicant or the designated service provider will inform the department of any changes to the applicant’s circumstances.

Any proposed changes to application details should be made only after discussion between the applicant and designated service provider, to avoid negative impacts on eligibility for the Homeless with Support category or likely waiting times for housing.

For example, a discussion to inform the household’s decision making should occur about the selection of a location preference by the applicant that creates a ‘low opportunity’ for suitable and available housing, when combined with an existing Special Accommodation Requirement.

Applicants and their support workers are also encouraged to contact the local department office to determine the likely impact of any change.

In the event of case closure, the designated service provider is to provide clear advice to the applicant on how their service will assist when an offer of accommodation is made. This may include active referral, handover and client engagement with another support service that will take over the ongoing support of the individual or household, or advice that they will initiate a referral to another designated service provider at allocation stage.

### At allocation stage

The principle underpinning the Homeless with Support Operational Guidelines is that eligible households will have experienced significant difficulty and failure in their housing history and require additional support to maximise the likelihood of long term success with their next tenancy.

It is expected that the applicant’s designated service provider will assist the applicant with their transition into long term housing when an offer of accommodation is made. This may be through the direct provision of support or active referral and case transfer.

If an offer of accommodation is made outside the catchment area of the designated service provider, it is expected the organisation will facilitate the case transfer to an equivalent designated service provider in the new catchment area with appropriate client consent and engagement.

The service assisting the household at allocation should do so in coordination with the social housing organisation. In this way, a platform for communication and coordination between the social housing organisation and support organisation can be established from the outset of the tenancy.

Support to individuals or households at allocation stage should include at a minimum:

* the support worker attending the offer appointment and, if necessary, the sign up interview for a social housing property.
* the support worker confirming for the social housing provider the first point of contact in the event that a tenancy is considered to be at risk.

Where the designated service provider is unable to support the individual or household beyond the sign up interview due to funding agreements, they are expected to transition support to another service.

The level of support after sign up will depend on the needs of the individual or household, but the focus of support should be on practical activities that assist the household to establish their tenancy and community connections. For example, activities like assisting the individual or household with orientation to the local community, ensuring utility services are connected, coordinating any specific furniture requirements, and accessing local transport and essential services.

The support for the individual or household may also focus on establishing access to services like medical facilities and schools and, where required, coordinating specialist services such as financial counselling, to build budgeting and living skills, or drug or alcohol services for addiction issues.

# Applying for Homeless with Support

Applications for Homeless with Support can only be submitted by a designated service provider that is approved by the department to submit Homeless with Support applications, on behalf of an applicant.

Lodging organisations will need an eBusiness account and an EPRIN to do this.

For more information about how to apply to the register, including submitting applications online, refer to the [*Eligibility Criteria operational guidelines*](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0)https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria-0.

# Application effective date

The effective date for the Homeless with Support category is determined by the designated service provider submitting the application. Generally, the effective date is the date the individual or household was assessed through an initial assessment and planning interview or equivalent, as requiring support that meets the Homeless with Support threshold. The application should be submitted within six months of that assessment.

If an individual or household has received a Notice to Vacate to leave a rental property and is assessed as requiring support, the date they actually vacate the property is used as the effective date for the Homeless with Support application, not the date they were assessed as requiring support.

The effective date of applications submitted on behalf of individuals exiting care or custody under health, child protection or justice arrangements (sentenced individuals) is the date the Initial Assessment and Planning worker or support worker commenced working with them in relation to preparing them for independent living. The application should be submitted within six months of that assessment.

## Effective date for Housing First reason

In recognition of the repeated system failures that contribute to the experience of chronic long term homelessness the effective date for people applying under the Housing First reason is the date of their initial episode of homelessness and engagement with support in Victoria. The effective date can therefore be set back to when the client first engaged with services that in effect failed to effectively support a resolution to homelessness.

The earliest date a Housing First application can be set back to is 01 January 2001.

The impact of chronic long term homelessness also means that not all tenancies are immediately successful or can be sustained. If a social housing tenancy breaks down in the first six months, information contained in the original application can be used to approve a new application to the register (Homeless with Support status retained with original effective date) if the applicant is still eligible and the circumstances relating to the breakdown of tenancy have been documented.

A request to extend the above time limit to 12 months may be granted where a support worker confirms that the client has been unable to effectively adapt to their new tenancy arrangements, and the tenancy has or is at imminent risk of breaking down.

Properties head leased as part of the J2SI Social Impact Investment will be designated as ‘transitional housing’ for the purposes of the register and will act as a pathway towards sustained long term housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness.

Those J2SI clients that are housed using head leased properties will be able to maintain their existing priority status on the register and be offered long term social housing properties when they become available.

## **Effective date for the Exit Pathways from Refuge and Crisis Accommodation for Victim Survivors of Family Violence initiative reason**

There are several possible scenarios for the effective dates of eligible Exit Pathways participants:

1. There was an approved Homeless with Support application removed after the household was accommodated under the initiative. When the designated service provider lodges a new application they will request:

* the Homeless with Support application is reinstated with the Family Violence priority reason, and

with the original effective date (of the removed application).

1. There was an approved application on the register before entering the initiative, but not for the Homeless with Support category. When the designated service provider lodges a new application:

* the application is upgraded to the Homeless with Support category with the Family Violence priority reason, and
* the effective date will be the date the household entered refuge or crisis accommodation or were accepted into the Exit Pathways initiative (whichever is earlier), as confirmed by the designated service provider.

1. The participant did not have an approved application on the register before they entered the initiative. When the designated service provider lodges an application:

* a Homeless with Support application is approved with the Family Violence priority reason, and
* the effective date will be the date the household entered refuge or crisis accommodation or were accepted into the Exit Pathways initiative (whichever is earlier), as confirmed by the designated service provider.

## Effective date when upgrading an application to the Homeless with Support category

There are situations where a household is approved to another category of the register, however, later becomes homeless or experiences family violence and receives assistance from a designated service provider or other specialist service. In these situations, the effective date for the Homeless with Support category will be the date the individual or household was assessed as requiring support that meets the Homeless with Support threshold.

## Effective date when downgrading an application from the Homeless with Support category

If it is determined an individual or household is no longer eligible for the Homeless with Support category, but they wish for their application to remain on the register, the effective date will be:

* the original Homeless with Support effective date if they meet the criteria for another priority category; or
  + changed to the date the household first demonstrated eligibility if the application is downgraded to the Register of Interest.

# Application approval

If an application for Homeless with Support is submitted by a designated service provider, the lodging organisation should make a recommendation as to whether the application should be approved.

If an application for Homeless with Support is submitted and approved by a participating registered agency, the department will accept that:

* the application meets the eligibility criteria for one of the Homeless with Support priority reasons
  + applicants have no alternative housing options.

The department will only find the application ineligible if the household does not meet the eligibility criteria for social housing.

If the application is approved, the number of bedrooms and any special accommodation requirements will be assessed according to the [*Clients with Special Accommodation Requirements operational guidelines*](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/clients-special-accommodation-requirements) https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/clients-special-accommodation-requirements.

# Decision Review

Applicants who are not recommended or have been assessed as ineligible for Homeless with Support may request to have the decision reviewed. For more information see the [*Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Processes operational guidelines*](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/complaints-appeals-and-feedback-processes) https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/complaints-appeals-and-feedback-processes.

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