

# f• Guide five

## SUPPORTING RESETTLEMENT AND STABILISATION

*'Supporting resettlement and stabilisation'* examines how workers assist people experiencing homelessness to move into stable housing and how people can be assisted to sustain their tenancies. It includes a range of financial and practical supports that move from core activities that the worker 'does' for a client, to sharing skills and knowledge, and working alongside the client to facilitate community engagement.

### **Links to community**

Sustaining a tenancy can be helped by the tenant having links to the local community. This includes both social and recreational opportunities and links to specialist services (such as doctors, mental health support). This reduces the chance of social isolation and encourages access to supports and services which form an ongoing safety net. Resettlement can be particularly challenging for people with a history of long-term rough sleeping without access to ongoing supports. It can also be challenging for children, who may have had to move to a new area, and new schools. Some key barriers people face in engaging with their local communities include financial barriers, a lack of information about what is available in their area and a lack of confidence. Workers can facilitate engagement through:

- Providing consumers with a physical orientation by showing them where services are in their community (see toolkit attached)
- Finding out what activities the consumer enjoys and researching various cost-effective opportunities for participation in the community
- Linking people to cultural groups and communities
- Provide active referrals and follow up with services

- Assisting consumers to connect with local schools and child care
- Providing assistance with transport to help people access local supports and services
- Using public transport with the consumer to support access to community programs
- Attending initial meetings and events with the consumer as a social support.

## Building consumer skills

### *Money management*

Links to services that provide financial literacy and budgeting skills can assist people who are in insecure tenancies to sustain their housing. Services can also assist consumers to stabilise their finances through providing financial assistance for rental arrears, material aid, utility bills and transportation costs. Workers can assist consumers with money management skills through:

- Providing assistance with developing a budget
- Identification of existing debts (Centrelink, bond debts, utility debts, car loans, pay day loans)
- Assistance with setting up repayment agreements
- Setting up Centrepay deductions
- Referral to financial counseling or financial literacy programs
- Showing consumers how to pay bills.

### *Skills for daily living*

Skills for daily living such as shopping, cooking, cleaning and maintaining social networks are essential for maintaining a tenancy and independence. Where problems with life skills have been identified, workers should assist consumers to develop skills. This may include:

- Teaching consumers about shopping within budget
- Taking them to the supermarket
- Showing them how to use a washing machine
- Helping them learn how to keep their home clean
- Providing them with links to services that can teach cooking skills, and basic nutrition, or on-line tutorials.

The development of these skills should be based on modelling for the consumer, and allowing them to test their new skills in a supported environment. Workers can also look to other support agencies, drop in centres and neighbourhood houses where people can further develop their skills. In the event that a person has particular needs which mean they require ongoing assistance with daily living skills, a referral to a specialist service is recommended. Examples that may be relevant include Home and Community Care and disability services.



### ***Employment, education and training***

Employment can provide an effective buffer to both entering homelessness, and to repeat homelessness. However, housing instability is also shown to impede a person's ability to both find and maintain employment. In addition, periods of housing instability and homelessness can directly impact on a child or young person's ability to remain engaged in education. Workers can play an important role in linking people to education, employment and training opportunities. To facilitate access to education, services can:

- Identify local school and educational providers, provide information about enrolment processes, and where necessary support parents to enrol children
- Provide financial assistance including school and course fees, uniforms, school and course resources (including stationary, text books)
- Provide initial assistance with transport.

To facilitate access to employment, services can provide:

- Information and referral to employment services and courses
- Information and referral to voluntary work
- Advice on resumes or referral to a relevant service
- Material incentives – such as work wear or uniforms

- Initial assistance with transport
- Sourcing of back to work incentives
- Advice on reporting casual work to Centrelink.

### **Tenancy advice**

#### ***Promoting rights and responsibilities***

Promoting consumers' rights and responsibilities in tenancies, is a positive step in assisting a person to maintain a tenancy. It allows individuals to not only know what is expected of them, but also to know about the responsibilities of their landlords. Worker practices to assist tenants may include:

- Workers developing their own knowledge of state based housing legislation and tenancy rights
- Running individual or group sessions within an agency to explain rights and responsibilities to potential tenants
- Not assuming consumers know about their rights and responsibilities
- Ensuring consumers have received a copy of their lease agreement and understand their rights and responsibilities (refer to toolkit attached)
- Ensuring consumers have received a copy of information about renting (consistent with state/ territory based tenancy legislation)
- Providing contact numbers for state-based tenancy support services.

### **Repairs & Maintenance**

Poor conditions in a property can impact on health and wellbeing. Often people who have experienced homelessness or a housing crisis are reluctant to report problems with their property for fear of eviction or rent increases. Key aspects of good practice in relation to property conditions include:

- Helping consumers understand who is responsible for what
- Providing tenants with information about repair processes, phone numbers with which to contact the state housing authority, response times to be expected (available from the landlord, real estate agent, the community housing provider or the state housing authority website)
- Supporting tenants to write letters to notify of repairs required
- Gaining permission from tenants to progress complaints if repairs have not been undertaken within expected time-frames.

### **Preventing evictions**

Key areas that may lead to evictions include anti-social behaviour and rental arrears. Workers checking in with consumers regularly in the early stages of a tenancy can help to prevent evictions. Key questions may include:

- Have you had any troubling paying your rent?
- Are you able to keep up with the bills?
- Do you have enough money for daily living needs (food, toiletries etc)?

- Have you found yourself in debt?
- Has anything been broken in the property? Has the relevant person been notified?
- Have you made friends or other connections in the neighbourhood?
- Is there anything else you need in order to settle in?

### **Ongoing supports**

Some consumers may require ongoing support. Ongoing support can range from intensive and long-term; to lower intensity support that assists people to sustain their tenancies.

Key areas in which workers can provide brief and time-limited support to consumers include:

- One off or time limited financial support
- Support to address anti-social behaviour from either the tenant or neighbours
- Responding to landlord disputes (such as rental arrears and repairs and maintenance)
- Advice around the time of a tenancy renegotiation or review.

Case plans developed through the assessment process will help workers to identify intensive and long-term needs and provide active referrals to services that provide:

- Mental health support
- Drug and alcohol counselling
- Disability support
- Home care and support.



## TOOLKIT: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Helping consumers understand their leases can assist them to keep their housing. Workers can play an important role in helping consumers understand both their rights and responsibilities. This tool has been adapted from the National Alliance to End Homelessness' rapid rehousing lease explanation tool.

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/rapid-re-housing-lease-explanation-tool>

How much is my bond?

When is my bond due?

What date does my lease start?

What date does my lease end? Or  
What date will my lease be reviewed?

How often do I pay my rent?

How much is my rent?

What day is my rent due?

How do I pay my rent? (Recommend Centrepay)

Who can I call if I am having trouble paying my rent?

Who else is allowed to live with me?

What do I do if I want someone to move in?

Am I allowed to have pets?

Who is responsible for utilities in my house?

How often are my utility bills due?

Who do I call if I am having problems paying my bills?

Who is responsible for maintaining any outdoor areas?

Who do I call if there is a problem with the  
outdoor areas?

How often is my landlord allowed to visit my house?

How much notice does my landlord have to give me before  
visiting my apartment

Who is responsible for cleaning my property?

What happens if I break something in my house?

Who do I call if I break something in my house?

If something breaks down in my house who do I call?

What do I do if the landlord won't fix something that is broken?

What are the rules in my house about noise?

Who do I call if my neighbours are making too much noise?

What happens if someone makes a complaint about me?

At the end of my lease, how much notice do I have to give if I want to move?

What do I do if I want to move house before my lease is up? (break lease fees, notice)

What will I need to do before I move to get my bond back?

How do I get my bond back after I move?



## ABOUT THE HOUSING-FOCUSED SUPPORT PRACTICE GUIDES

*The guides to providing housing-focused support were developed by the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) to assist workers in the specialist homelessness sector (SHS) gain and maintain housing for consumers. They articulate good worker practice in providing housing-focused support to consumers, and are informed by a literature review, focus groups and consultations with consumers and advanced practitioners. The development of these guides was made possible by a grant from the Mercy Foundation. This guide is the fifth in the series of five.*



## TOOLKIT: LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD ORIENTATION

Workers can help consumers become familiar with their new neighbourhood through actively showing them around, taking public transport with them, and through providing them with contact numbers that they may need both initially and in the future. The following list can be used by workers as a checklist for local orientation and for ongoing use by the consumer.

| <b>EMERGENCY</b> | Name                               | Contact Number | Address |
|------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|---------|
|                  | Ambulance, Fire & Police Emergency |                |         |
|                  | Local police station               |                |         |
|                  | State Emergency Services           |                |         |
|                  | LifeLine                           |                |         |

| <b>HOUSING</b> | Name                                | Contact Number | Address |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------|
|                | Tenancy contact                     |                |         |
|                | After hours tenancy contact         |                |         |
|                | After hours repairs and maintenance |                |         |
|                | Water provider                      |                |         |
|                | Gas provider                        |                |         |
|                | Electricity provider                |                |         |
|                | Pet registration                    |                |         |

| <b>HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b> | Name                     | Contact Number | Address |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------|
|                               | GP                       |                |         |
|                               | After hours locum doctor |                |         |
|                               | Dentist                  |                |         |
|                               | Pharmacy                 |                |         |
|                               | Recreation centre        |                |         |
|                               | Local Hospital           |                |         |
|                               | Crisis Assessment Team   |                |         |
|                               | Poisons information line |                |         |

| <b>OTHER SERVICES</b> | Name                 | Contact Number | Address |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------|
|                       | Supermarket          |                |         |
|                       | Bank                 |                |         |
|                       | Library              |                |         |
|                       | Meals service        |                |         |
|                       | Neighbourhood Centre |                |         |
|                       | School / TAFE        |                |         |
|                       | Employment Service   |                |         |
|                       | Community groups     |                |         |
|                       | Translation service  |                |         |



## CASE STUDY

Stephen moved into supported accommodation following a period of rough sleeping. As with others that have a history of rough sleeping, the transition to housing was difficult. *“Very rarely you’ll find a good case worker who’ll really follow you and reintegrate you properly - the way you want - back into society. And that’s hard when you’re transitioning too”.*

Stephen’s homelessness support service provided three months of intensive support to establish him in his housing and resettle into his community. He was lucky to develop a good rapport with his worker, of whom he says: *“went above and beyond”.*

His worker helped him to identify ways in which he could link into his local community, as well as allowing him the freedom to establish his own supports. *“It’s important to give the person the information about what is out there”.*

To assist him in regaining his independence and to improve his health, Stephen’s worker’s agency provided financial support to join a local gym, and the program provided him with financial support to purchase work-out equipment. *“That sort of stuff I love being a part of, because it helps in my recovery as well”.*

Stephen has also been linked to gardening, art classes, computer access and libraries.

As Stephen had identified a desire to return to study, he was supported to find an appropriate course, and his worker secured resources from within the program to pay his tuition fees. *“She paid for my schooling, and that wasn’t even up to her...”.*

Stephen notes that his worker acted as a safety net, providing support and information if and when he needed it. The engagement with particular supports was however, ultimately, driven by Stephen. *“She gave me a bit of confidence, and enough knowledge to navigate myself, but with her guidance. And that was good for me... I was really nice to have that power back, but if I did make mistakes or have questions she was there”.*

He began to see improvements in his health, and his ability to maintain appointments and his wellbeing overall. He notes that having a safety net around him while he got used to his housing was of significant help. *“It really helped me to transition, to where I am now”.*

Stephen has maintained his tenancy and is continuing his studies to gain another qualification. In relation to ongoing supports, he says he is building his own support networks: *“I’ve sort of sourced my own networks and services I can use”.*



### Questions for workers to consider

1. Why may Stephen’s history of rough sleeping have affected his transition into permanent housing?
2. How did connecting with his local community improve Stephen’s quality of life?
3. How may connecting with community help Stephen to sustain his tenancy?