

4.8 Ongoing Evaluation

Preamble

Women's Housing Company (WHC) is a community housing association as part of the social housing system in NSW. WHC provides long term housing for single women and medium term housing through support partnerships.

WHC is committed to offer best practice, professional services with an articulated focus on tenants input and feedback. As part of this commitment WHC is guided by the concept of ongoing evaluation.

The underlying principles and values to this policy are grounded in the concepts of participation and decision making. Staff and applicants / tenants' involvement is not to be an abstract position but a practical reality.

It is understood that to implement ongoing evaluation clearly articulated processes and structures are required.

These processes and structures are part of the general service delivery. There is no artificial separation between service delivery and evaluation, evaluation is treated as integral to service delivery.

POLICY

Women's Housing Company integrates the following processes and initiatives as part of our commitment to **Ongoing Evaluation** as this relates to staff and stakeholder input;

- Daily supervision support
- Weekly staff meetings
- Monthly supervision meetings including complaints analysis
- Six monthly policy workshops
- Housing Appeals Committee recommendations
- Annual surveys with tenants
- Bi-Annual surveys with partnership agencies
- Annual external registration process
- Three yearly external accreditation process
- Annual operational planning meetings

In relation to applicants / tenants WHC recognises that as service users they are in a vulnerable position. That there is an imbalance of power in the relationship between WHC as an organisation and/or as represented through staff, and applicants / tenants.

Concrete actions are required to gain applicant / tenant evaluation and planning input in a non-threatening way.

PROCEDURE

All staff are encouraged and invited to participate in service development and improvement. Staff will be given dedicated opportunity to raise ideas, make suggestions and identify problems with service delivery at WHC. Key commitments involve:

1. Staff will be **supported to make professional assessments and suggestions**.
 - Staff will be given dedicated professional reading time as part of their general duties. Staff will participate in networking with individual organisations as well as key groups of organisations such as Inter-agencies as directed.
 - Staff are encouraged to ascertain informal feedback from other organisations at all times.
 - Staff will identify areas of professional development and training needs, and receive training if the skills and knowledge are agreed to be contributing to best practice and improved service delivery.
2. Women's Housing Company offers **daily supervision support** which allows staff on all levels to clarify, raise questions and make suggestions on policies, practices and positions as they relate to daily tasks as part of the general service delivery. This support and opportunity is informal and unplanned and is initiated by any staff member on an at needs basis. Senior staff are expected to be available at all times when available in the office or when working from home, if so negotiated.
3. On a **weekly** basis WHC staff meet for a **staff meeting** with set agenda items that can be filled with sub-issues as required.

A blank staff meeting agenda is available for input from all staff in the general office area in a special manila folder, the agenda is typed by the administration worker. The set agenda items for instance include Policy matters which allows for any concerns or suggestions to be raised on a weekly basis.

This process is formal and documented through staff meeting minutes.

4. On a monthly basis all staff meet with their line manager for **monthly supervision** meetings.

These meetings are an opportunity for either party to raise issues of concern, seek clarification, receive support and guidance, and make suggestions on issues that have arisen during the previous weeks.

It is at this point that policy and procedure issues are highlighted and affirmed or questioned and improved.

This process is formal and documented through staff supervision standards reports as they relate to the relevant job description.

5. Every **six month** Housing Workers, the Administration Worker and the Senior Housing Manager meet for a half day **policy workshop** to discuss policy and procedure matters.

An action plan for tenancy management service delivery improvements is developed at these meetings, taking into account all feedback received through formal surveys and informal suggestions. The action plan implementation is monitored by the SHM.

Date developed: 31/1/05

Date/s policy was ratified and/or changed by Board: 31/1/05; 28/8/07

Note: Procedures are designed to guide the implementation of a policy and will be updated on a regular basis as part of ongoing best practice service improvement.

The Senior Housing Manager will present a draft agenda based on issues as they have arisen over the previous months.

However, the agenda is open and can be added to during the meeting as issues are identified.

As the workshop is held over a half day, sufficient time is available to discuss policy needs for improvement in detail.

This process is formal and documented through notes and decisions of the workshop.

6. With increasing promotion and referral to the **Housing Appeals Committee** Women's Housing Company has benefited from **recommendations** made by the HAC.

Recommendations have been made on numerous occasions including those where WHC's decisions were upheld by the HAC, however, where the HAC indicated that policy could be strengthened and improved. These recommendations have been embraced and implemented at the first opportunity.

7. Every year towards the end of November Women's Housing Company sends out an **annual tenant survey** to ascertain tenant feedback, level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and to allow tenants to raise issues in an anonymous way if so desired. The surveys have a deadline for their return date to allow for an assessment usually towards the end of January the next year.

The survey questions are developed by the Senior Housing Manager in conjunction with the Board of Directors, and with recommendations from the Office of Community Housing. The data analysis is conducted by the Senior Housing Manager and reported to the Board of Directors.

8. Similarly, and around the same time every two years, Women's Housing Company sends out an **bi-annual partnership agency survey** to ascertain agency feedback, level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and to allow agencies to raise issues in regards to WHC's service delivery. The surveys have a deadline for their return date to allow for an assessment to take place usually towards the end of January the next year. The survey questions are developed and data analysis is conducted by the Senior Housing Manager and reported to the Board of Directors. An action plan for partnership service delivery improvements is developed and implemented by the SHM.

9. Women's Housing Company has been part of the first round of **community housing performance based registration system** to take place in NSW. WHC has successfully continued in the second round of registration which is taking place **annually**, in both instances WHC received a straight 'A' grade registration in all nine key areas of service delivery and management. WHC aims to continue to maintain this high achievement.

10. Women's Housing Company has participated in the Office of Community Housing initiated **accreditation process** ever since they were introduced, initially on a voluntary basis. The accreditation process allows an external group of evaluators to scrutinise our policies, processes and practices against national standards and make recommendations where appropriate and necessary. These recommendations are embraced by WHC and implemented at the first available opportunity.

Date developed: 31/1/05

Date/s policy was ratified and/or changed by Board: 31/1/05; 28/8/07

Note: Procedures are designed to guide the implementation of a policy and will be updated on a regular basis as part of ongoing best practice service improvement.

11. All staff are invited to participate in the **annual operational planning meetings** which are tasked to implement the strategic plan as set by the Board of Directors, which in turn is influenced by the input from staff as represented by the CEO.
 - 11.1 A collective assessment of issues and gaps in service delivery, agency philosophy and practice, including assessment of the previous operational plan. This will include:
 - Strengths and achievements;
 - Weaknesses;
 - Opportunities;
 - Outcomes of projects, activities;
 - Progress on continuing projects, activities;
 - Access and length of support to identified service user groups, including indigenous people, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background, etc.
 - Cost efficiency of projects, programs.
 - 11.2 To develop a collective plan detailing:
 - Goals;
 - Key priorities for the coming period;
 - Specific objectives and strategies;
 - Performance measures;
 - Identification of resources; and
 - Responsibilities.
12. WHC is committed to **actively pursue applicant / tenant input** for all evaluation and planning activities.
 - 12.1 Staff are encouraged to ascertain informal feedback from applicants / tenants at all times, for instance this may be through property inspections and block meetings or tenant participation activities.
 - 12.2 At times, WHC may ask a focus group of applicants / tenants to comment on a particular policy or process.
 - 12.3 Applicants / Tenants are actively encouraged and reminded to make use of an anonymous suggestion box in the foyer of WHC office.See **4.9 Tenant Involvement & Participation** for more detail.
13. WHC is committed to making use of and gaining insight from **internal and external data** for evaluation and planning processes. WHC will:
 - 13.1 Collate and interpret service data, including NDCA data.
 - 13.2 Access demographic data e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data.
 - 13.3 Access local and regional planning reports relevant to service delivery from organisation such as Department of Community Services, City Councils, Housing NSW, and a range of both Australian and overseas housing research reports.
14. WHC is committed to **finding the resources** necessary to meet identified needs and implement service delivery improvement strategies.
 - 14.1 WHC may shift resources within budget limits.
 - 14.2 WHC may pursue external funding opportunities, including recurrent and one-off funding opportunities.

Date developed: 31/1/05

Date/s policy was ratified and/or changed by Board: 31/1/05; 28/8/07

Note: Procedures are designed to guide the implementation of a policy and will be updated on a regular basis as part of ongoing best practice service improvement.