

4.9.2 Access to support (information, advice & referral)



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.

Women's Housing Company follows a social justice approach in all aspects of service delivery. It is the organisation's explicit aim to support tenants towards achieving successful tenancies.

WHC positively discriminates towards tenants with higher needs by providing a large number of properties to support agencies under formal partnerships.

WHC acknowledges that there is a large number of tenants in need of support services without being housed under identified partnerships. WHC is committed to supporting these tenants through dedicated and respectful services.

POLICY

Women's Housing Company's commitment to tenants' access to support is guaranteed by;

- Networking and actively participating with a broad range of support agencies to promote information and access.
- Subscribing to a range of publications relating to social sector and relevant research project reports, including overseas reports that inform direction for the Australian social housing system.
- Providing training to staff to develop skills when dealing with high and complex needs tenants and how to support these tenants in a dignified and constructive manner; while observing professional conduct and working within the law.
- Maintaining a resource tool for easy reference to WHC staff needing to identify appropriate services to tenants. The resource tool is updated by the CD worker.
- Developing support strategies for specific tenant groups, based on identified need, e.g. elderly tenant strategy.

Women's Housing Company will make support information accessible to tenants through;

- Regular updates in the quarterly Newsletter
- Displays in the office foyer and interview room
- Individual tenant assistance when such need is identified either by a tenant or a WHC staff

WHC provides information, advice and referral in combination with the principles and strategies identified under [4.1 Access & Equity](#), [4.2 Charter of Rights & Responsibilities](#), [4.4 Confidentiality and Privacy](#), [4.4.1 Duty of Care](#), [4.4.2 Mental Health Reports & Orders](#), [4.4.3 Office of Protective Commissioner](#).

PROCEDURE

The Community Development Worker and Senior Housing Manager will actively pursue networking with agencies providing a range of services including;

- Crisis accommodation & other housing services;
- Domestic Violence services
- Alcohol and other Drugs support services
- Emergency Relief agencies
- Migrant Resource Centres & cultural specific services
- Aboriginal services
- Health services
- Tenancy Advice services & Legal services

Housing Team staff will be encouraged to actively participate in networking opportunities such as interagency meetings, forums and working groups. This includes attendance of support agency staff meetings and Annual General Meetings, and WHC presentations to other support agencies about WHC services.

The SHM will actively invite key support agencies to present at WHC meetings to ensure up to date information on service provisions and processes is available.

Working with agencies will ensure that Women's Housing Company is equipped to:

- Receive & make appropriate referrals
- Maintain a profile that will lead to increased opportunities for service users
- Respond to target group needs
- Understand service needs and gaps & identify trends

WHC stocks application forms of other housing associations and brochures of all partner support agencies and a wide range of other support services at the WHC offices, easily accessible to staff and tenants. Administration staff will provide information on other housing associations to enquiries for housing outside the WHC eligibility criteria.

The SHM monitors training of the housing team and will direct professional development into areas which will contribute towards improved tenant access to support services.

The housing team will actively engage in positive relationship building with Real Estate Agencies by promoting positive and professional communication.

Referral to support services is generally provided in the form of provision of information, verbal and written. The Community Development worker publishes information on support services and activities through the quarterly Newsletter.

More active referrals involving some form of advocacy, negotiation and active perusal by the housing team are generally done in consultation with the SHM; usually when a housing worker has identified a need for additional services.

The SHM monitors the frequency and outcomes of such referrals with a view to identify emerging trends and changes to service delivery practices.

Date developed: 2000

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.

4.9.2 Access to support (information, advice and referral)

The most recent trend analysis identified the need for an **older tenant strategy** to guide best practice service delivery to older tenants.

As part of this strategy Women's Housing Company commits to;

- Undertaking Modifications based on Occupational Therapist Reports when requested by tenants;
- Replacing bath with showers where financially feasible;
- Providing access to an electronic Centrelink income verification option to minimise mobility issues;
- Opening up rehousing eligibility to tenants over 65 (45 in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants) who are in leasehold properties, requesting to move to a capital property to minimise relocation mobility stresses and costs due to potential sale of property;
- Opening eligibility to women who are eligible for Social Housing Subsidy Program (women who work) on the general waiting list if they are over 60, to maximise housing option in all Sydney metropolitan areas and to shorten waiting period due to a higher rate of vacancies on the general waiting list;
- Exploring future redevelopment opportunities such as Wellington Road, a special supported partnership project for older Muslim women;
- Obtaining further redevelopment sites specific for older women over 55;
- Obtaining further properties for older women with limited mobility or medical conditions requiring access to city medical facilities, such as Derwent Street;
- Increasing the regularity of block meetings at block of units with ageing tenants, to allow for tenant involvement and participation;
- Providing transport for frail and aged tenants to the Annual General Meeting, on request;
- Developing of community capacity building projects aimed at older and isolated tenants, to allow them to communicate with each, such as the calendar photo project;
- Actively referring tenants to Home and Community Care - HACC services;
- All WHC staff to proactively identify potential need of HACC or other services to SHM. Staff to submit a Notification of a Tenant Concern form e.g. staff notice debilitating issues affecting tenants living situations during an inspections or CD worker or asset management staff are at properties for another reason and notice concerns.
- Active promotion and referral of elderly tenants to the Red Cross Tenant Connect service, which provides a daily phone call to tenants aged 80 years or older (55 years or older for Aboriginal tenants). Tenants aged 75 to 79 years (and Aboriginal tenants aged 50 to 54 years) who are considered to be frail and vulnerable are also considered by the service;
- Sending birthday cards for all tenants over 80 years;
- Training staff in aged related health matters including dementia, mental health
- The development of an information pack for elderly tenants including information on WHC's elderly strategy commitments and resource information and access details for support services including local community transport services, health services, and tips for safety in the home;
- Seeking additional funding for tenant participation and capacity building initiatives.

Date developed: 2000

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.