

Access to Services Policy

1.0 Purpose

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) Homelessness Support Service (HSS) is committed to maximising access to its services for women seeking homelessness assistance.

2.0 Scope

For the purpose of this policy, all HSS staff will implement strategies to maximise access to homelessness services for those seeking assistance.

2.1 Definitions

No Wrong Door approach means that when a person or family presents or contacts a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) provider they will, at a minimum, be provided with information, advice, and referral (if required) to an accommodation or housing provider, a support provider or both. They will also receive an initial assessment (including risk assessment) from the SHS at which they first present.

Common Assessment Approach will result in people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness receiving an initial assessment at their first point of contact with an SHS. This initial assessment will be undertaken as part of the normal interview process that usually occurs when a person or family presents to an SHS provider.

SHS Initial Assessment is supported by assessment forms that ensure a streamlined and consistent approach to client assessment.

3.0 Policy statement

The HSS is committed to a No Wrong Door approach, maximising access to its services for everyone within the agreed SHS target group and to ensuring equity of access across eligible service users. The HSS will work within its available resources, while endeavouring to optimise access for people to its services and activities.

The HSS will:

- Identify and address barriers to access for people in the target group
- Actively support and develop streamlined access approaches across the region and NSW
- Use service planning to maximise accessibility for people in the target group ensuring that all services, activities, facilities and premises are designed to maximise physical and cultural accessibility for service users
- Use proactive information strategies for potential service user groups to increase knowledge of and understanding about the organisation and the services offered
- Regularly review how accessible services are and use this information to improve access wherever possible

3.1 Identifying barriers to access

The HSS provides services to women across the South West Sydney district.

In order to identify barriers to access, the HSS will:

- Compare the profile of clients with local population data and past service records on an annual basis to identify any groups who are under-represented
- Review relevant literature and practice experience
- Consult with clients and/or their advocates, other agencies and staff
- Seek advice from relevant community groups or members

Policy Name:	Access to Services Policy		
Version:	V1		
Approved by:	CEO	Issue Date:	August 2022
		Review Date:	August 2025

The Manager will be responsible for coordinating this process and reviewing the research outcomes as part of the annual planning process.

3.2 Ensuring physical and cultural access

The HSS will ensure the following:

- Its premises are located close to public transport, where possible
- Its staff are trained in SHS assessment practices to ensure effective and consistent client access
- Its premises and facilities are physically accessible to people with limited mobility, where possible
- Its opening hours provide access to the full range of service users
- Services are provided in as flexible a manner as possible to meet the needs of individuals
- The cultural and language needs of people within the target group are identified and accommodated
- Interpreters or bilingual staff are available for any person needing assistance

3.3 Promotion of service

The Manager will be responsible for developing and reviewing a service promotion and information strategy.

The HSS will produce information about its services and activities in a range of formats suitable for the full range of people who may need to access them.

General information about the organisation and its services and activities will be made available via the website.

3.4 Monitoring access strategies

The Manager will be responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of physical and cultural access strategies as part of annual service evaluation and planning.

4.0 Related Policies and other documents

HSS Service Referral Form

Policy Name:	Access to Services Policy		
Version:	V1		
Approved by:	CEO	Issue Date:	August 2022
		Review Date:	August 2025