

# PathForward

One Supported Pathway to Confidence, Stability, and Independent Private Rental Living

PathForward is a medium-term, supported housing pathway for women with dependent children who have experienced domestic and family violence and are unable to resolve their housing needs in the short term.

Sustainable exits from homelessness require time, stability, and coordinated support that allows women and children to rebuild confidence, capability, and choice.

This program provides up to five years of stable housing, with the length of stay determined by the tenant's capacity, progress, and readiness to transition to market or long-term housing.

## What Makes PathForward Different?

- Longer-term stability: Housing support beyond crisis and short-term models, giving families time to heal and plan.
- Housing-led, trauma-informed: Safety first, with support paced to each woman's recovery journey.
- Clear pathway to independence: Rent is increased annually to empower tenants to move towards taking on private rental tenancies independently.
- Shared responsibility model: Clear roles for support partners and WHC, reducing duplication and role confusion.
- Guided by survivor feedback and sector input: Grounded in evidence-based recovery phases.

## Who is the Program is for?

Women with dependent children who:

- Are experiencing or at risk of homelessness due to domestic or family violence.
- Are unable to resolve housing needs in the short to medium term.
- Have the capacity, with support, to transition into private rental within three years.
- Are willing to engage in a personalised case plan and capacity-building activities.

## The role of Support Partners

Support partners are critical to the success of this program. Your role focuses on therapeutic, psychosocial, and safety-led support, while WHC manages tenancy and housing pathways.

Support partners will:

- Support eligible clients to apply for PathForward
- Provide supporting information and professional insight as part of the application process.
- Support women through onboarding and tenancy establishment.
- Deliver specialist DFV case management, risk assessment, and safety planning.
- Collaborate with WHC through information sharing and planned touchpoints.
- Participate in planned handover as tenants move toward independence.
- Commit to maintaining consistent support to the tenant for a minimum period of 18 months, extending up to three years.

Importantly, this is not an indefinite support model. The program anticipates that intensive external support may reduce over time, with a structured transition to lighter-touch or alternative supports.

## How Applications are Assessed

PathForward operates through an application-based intake process.

- Applications are prepared and submitted in partnership with the client, supported by their case worker.
- Support partners continue to hold nomination rights; however, all nominations are assessed for eligibility by Women's Housing Company (WHC).
- All applications are reviewed through an internal assessment process.
- Places are assessed based on best fit, considering safety, readiness, program capacity, and alignment with pathway goals.
- We value the role of partners in supporting thoughtful, informed applications and in preparing clients for this process.

## How It Works

PathForward is delivered through a staged, capacity-based pathway over 3–5 years, recognising that women and children recover, heal, and build independence at different paces.

The program is structured around clearly defined phases, each with specific goals, milestones, and planned rent adjustments. Progression through the pathway is guided by regular reviews, with extensions beyond Year 3 offered where additional time is needed to achieve safe and sustainable housing independence.

### Year One - Safety & Stabilisation

Focus on establishing safety, routine, and emotional regulation.

### Year 2 – Processing & Growth

Focus on acting on goals and building capacity for independence.

### Year 3 – Reintegration & Independence

Focus on rebuilding autonomy, identity, and community connection.

### Year 4 – Extension of Program (where required)

Focus on strengthening pathways to full-time employment and sustaining market rent.

### Year 5 - Promoting Independence

Focus on final transition to long-term housing independence.

## What has changed

Following an external review of the program, a series of amendments have been implemented. The program has continued to evolve, with updates designed to enhance outcomes for women and children and to ensure the model remains equitable, sustainable, and aligned with its intended purpose. While the core objectives and collaborative approach remain unchanged, the following updates should be noted:

### **Program Name: Transitional Housing Plus → PathForward**

The new name reflects the program's focus on progression, independence, and long-term housing outcomes, rather than housing as an end point. While the name has changed, the program continues to be grounded in trauma-informed practice, stability, and strong partnerships with the sector.

### **Nominations Rights**

Partners still hold nomination rights into the program.

- Support partners are notified of upcoming vacancies and invited to submit applications.
- Applications are completed collaboratively with the client, supported by their case worker.
- While partners continue to hold nomination rights, all nominations are assessed against eligibility criteria determined by Women's Housing Company (WHC).
- Applications are reviewed by an internal assessment panel.
- Places are offered based on best fit, considering safety, readiness, program capacity, and alignment with the pathway.

This approach strengthens consistency, transparency, and equitable access across the program.

### **A Shift to a 3–5-year, Choice-based Pathway**

The program now operates as a flexible 3–5-year pathway, allowing women to exit earlier where they are ready to do so, while retaining the option of longer support where this best meets their needs.

- Year 3 remains a key review and transition point
- Transitioning earlier is supported where women have the capacity and readiness to sustain housing independence
- Extensions into Years 4–5 remain available after assessment and are purposeful, focused on employment readiness, income stability, and sustaining market rent

This shift reflects a stronger emphasis on choice, autonomy, and best-fit care, recognising that recovery and independence do not follow a single timeline.

### **Clearer Roles and Planned Support Transitions**

The program now includes more clearly defined roles and handover points:

- External support partners provide intensive therapeutic and safety-led support in the earlier stages
- A planned handover to WHC occurs around Month 36, with WHC taking a stronger coordination role as tenants move toward independence
- This supports sustainability for partners while maintaining continuity of care for tenants

### **A Clarified Rent Model Aligned with Program progression**

PathForward incorporates a household-based rent model to ensure affordability while supporting long-term financial capacity:

- Rent is determined based on household size, with different starting points depending on the type of property.
- Rent increases each year over an initial period, gradually building toward market rent.
- After this period, rent stabilises and remains consistent for a further set of years. This approach supports women to maintain and sustain paying market rent over time.
- The model is designed to build financial readiness for future housing pathways, including private rental or other long-term options.

This structure strengthens transparency, supports transition planning, and aligns rental contributions with the program's pathway-to-independence focus.

## What Partners can Expect from WHC

- Clear application processes and timeframes
- Transparent eligibility criteria and assessment outcomes
- Active tenancy management and regular tenant touchpoints
- A dedicated Program Coordinator, with a specific role in supporting pathways to work, study, or volunteering
- Planned communication around rent changes and transitions
- Support with housing pathways and exit planning
- Regular rent increases to support transition and outcomes