A Guide to Making Links: Homelessness Section

A coordinated project between AOD, Homelessness and Mental Health Community Support Services in Melbourne's North and West

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Introduction

This document is intended to be a resource for workers in the AOD, mental health and homelessness sectors in Melbourne's north and west. It has been designed to help with:

- Cross sector referrals
- Providing accurate information to assist you when you're helping your clients to make decisions about services.

In all systems the need for responses exceeds supply, and service system capacity is under pressure. The format of this document identifies 'areas of difficulty' in our respective sectors and outlines 'tips and tricks' for practitioners when trying to overcome them. We have tried to be honest about wait times, durations of support and parameters for assistance, to help workers manage consumer expectations and needs.

Unless otherwise specifically stated all programs are:



Background

The Making Links Project is a partnership between the AOD, mental health and homelessness sectors in Melbourne's north and west. The project aims to improve coordination and linkages across these sectors for the benefit of shared clients.

In December 2015 the first Making Links forum was held, bringing sectors together to create a shared understanding of how clients access services, how each service system operates and provide an opportunity to explore how service coordination could be improved.

To assist with this an orientation kit was developed and has since been updated.

As part of this project we surveyed practitioners in each sector, conducted consultation forums and have set out to design responses in line with priorities raised. Access to clear information about how each sector operates was identified as an area of specific need. This Orientation Kit is a response to that request.

If you are aware of any inaccuracies in the document, or of any information that requires updating, please contact:

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How you can use this document

This manual is broken up by service system within each sector.

Each system is divided into four parts: Eligibility, Access, Service Pathway, Service Types.



Within each section, we have addressed a couple of subcategories based on cross-sector consultations that have been carried out.

Things that can be difficult:

These are aspects of the service that have been identified as challenging when trying to ensure that client needs are responded to appropriately.

Tips and tricks:

These are actions you or your client can take to help streamline the process and ensure that their needs are met as best as possible.

Section 1: North and West Melbourne Homelessness Service System



Homelessness Access Point catchments:

Note: See 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 for homelessness access point contact details.



2.1 Homelessness Services

ELIGIBILITY

How do you know this service system is right for your client?

Someone over 16 years old who is homeless, or at risk of homelessness who is looking for some support to find housing and address any issues that might hinder housing stability.¹

Please also note:

- 1. A range of specialist family violence services and Aboriginal services are funded within the homelessness sector. See 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 for information about access to these services.
- 2. By law homelessness services cannot support people under 16 years of age, unless they are accompanying an adult who is seeking homelessness assistance.

Things that can be difficult:

There are many more people seeking homelessness assistance than the system has the capacity to assist.

Melbourne is experiencing a housing crisis so there is very limited affordable housing available.

Tips and tricks:

Provide clients with realistic information about the housing crisis and limited range of options. You can get very good information about housing options from the Office of Housing website: housing.vic.gov.au

ACCESS

How do you get your client in to this service system?

- Referral to most homelessness resources occurs through a Homelessness Access Point
- Visit a Homelessness Access Point service for an initial assessment of need (see 2.1.1 for access point contact details and for information about family violence specific services).

Or, if you can't find the local access point, ring 1800 825 955, 24 hours a day. During the day the caller will be given the contact details for the Homeless Access Point closest to you. After 5pm, St Kilda Crisis Centre answers the 1800 number and provides a statewide after hour response.

- For a full list of homelessness and family violence access points around the state, see: <u>http://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-help</u>
- See 2.2.1 for a list of specialist homelessness services which can be contacted directly, without going through an access point.

ACCESS

Things that can be difficult:

- Each access point works differently. Some offer a drop-in service where people wait to be seen by an intake worker on a first-come, first-served basis. Others require you to make an appointment in order to be assessed.
- Clients may not be seen on the day they present to the access point and may need to re-present the following day.
- An appointment at an access point does not guarantee access to emergency accommodation.

Tips and tricks:

- The address on the client's health care card does not determine where the client can get a service - it is their choice.
- It is generally better to present at the access point and the earlier in the day the better. You can attend with your client.
- If the situation is urgent, go to the local access point. If it is not immediately urgent, you can ring the local access point and ask if it is better to book an appointment or drop in. If presenting is difficult, you can request a telephone assessment, (note, though: there may be a delay of several days as the services have to prioritise those people who are waiting at the service).
- Young people (up to 25 years) can visit Frontyard Melbourne Youth Support Service (MYSS) at 19 King Street, Melbourne, for homelessness assistance and a broad range of other services (See 2.1.1).
- Only ring the 1800 number if you cannot find your local access point. If your client is ringing on a mobile phone we can only ensure a free call if they have Telstra, Vodafone or Optus accounts. Clients can ask for a call back to reduce the cost of the call.

SERVICE PATHWAY

What will happen/What is the journey you and your client can expect?

- 1. An initial assessment and planning (IAP) worker will assess and prioritise people for access to homelessness resources according to their level of housing need, support need and vulnerability.
- 2. The IA&P worker will provide information on housing options and assist an individual or household to do some short term planning.
- 3. Access points have some capacity to refer to crisis accommodation services and have limited funds to assist people to pay for temporary accommodation in private accommodation such as local hotels and rooming houses.
- 4. The access point keeps a list of all the individuals/households who need homelessness assistance and will match them to vacancies that arise.
- 5. As accommodation or support becomes available, clients are best-matched and referred to each vacancy.
- 6. If the access point has capacity, they will keep in touch with people on the prioritisation list (this telephone catch up is referred to as Interim Response 1).

SERVICE PATHWAY

Things that can be difficult:

There are so many people waiting for assistance that the time available for planning may be limited.

Tips and tricks:

- 1. Information you can provide:
- Some access points will accept an initial assessment/background information emailed in from a support worker to assist in planning and assessment. You can ring the access point to find out whether they are prepared to forward you an IAP assessment form to complete with your client.
- Forward a hospital discharge summary or a family violence safety plan to the access point if you client has one.
- If you have the capacity to continue to support a client, encourage them to let the access point service know. The IA&P worker will want to know whether you have capacity to support your client if they get access to transitional housing, or whether the client also needs access to a support worker.
- You or your client should provide updates to the access point service if their situation or contact details change.
- 2. Accessing resources from other areas: If your client wants to be on the prioritisation list for resources in a different area and has had an initial assessment at another access point, you can ask that the first access point email the Initial Assessment and Plan (IAP) document to the second access point so that your client doesn't have to present there for an appointment. Once the IAP has been transferred the client will be included on the new prioritisation list. Any further client updates should be sent to the new access point.
- 3. Limited resources: Advise clients that homelessness services have very limited resources and that even those assessed as being the highest priority still have to wait for resources to become available (sometimes for months).
- 4. **Concerns about sharing information**: Information is only transferred with consent and people can identify any services that they don't want their information transferred to. The access point will make contact with the client before sending client information to a service with a vacancy. The Access Point services rarely have capacity to provide updates to allied services about the outcomes of an IAP interview but the client can ask for a copy of their IAP assessment.

SERVICE TYPES

What are some of the options that might be available for your client?

1. Short term assistance (Brief Task Based Response): this is a form of very short term support to either help divert clients away from the homelessness service system where appropriate or contain acute rises until more appropriate resources become available. Support is provided through 1-6 contacts and is focused on assisting the client with a specific task.

Things that can be difficult:

Brief Task Based Response (BTBR) was developed because there are so many people waiting for homelessness assistance.

It can be difficult for clients to understand why this response is so limited, rather than being holistic.

It is a 'stop gap' response for clients who are waiting for more holistic case management support. BTBR capacity is different in each catchment.

Tips and tricks:

Encourage clients to identify if there are some particular things that they would like assistance with in the short term.

2. Crisis supported accommodation: short term supported accommodation (average of six weeks) for people in immediate crisis who require intensive support. Examples include youth refuges, women's refuges and services such as Ozanam House and Flagstaff.

Things that can be difficult:

Clients do not get a chance to see the accommodation before they are referred. Beds in crisis supported accommodation services are very limited.

Services can't hold beds in crisis services.

Residents must engage in case management support.

Tips and tricks:

The access point workers can provide some information about the service and it is a good idea to have a telephone conversation with someone from the service before going there to get a sense of the service.

3. Housing Establishment Funds (HEF): financial assistance to support people to either access or maintain private rental, and also provide short term (usually overnight) accommodation for people in crisis who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

SERVICE TYPES

Things that can be difficult:

HEF may not cover the entire cost so clients may be required to make a contribution.

Sometimes there is no HEF available. Services will try to access other sources of funding to assist.

Some services have limits on how much HEF they can provide to an individual in each year.

The standard of hotels and rooming houses that homelessness services can 'purchase' are often not safe or adequate. Services are limited in the number of nights accommodation they can purchase.

Tips and tricks:

Access point services often enter into copayment arrangements with families so that they have capacity to purchase more accommodation (on a per night basis).

- 4. Private rental brokerage (PRB) / Private Rental Access Program (PRAP): funds to assist households to establish or re-establish in the private rental market. Funds are generally available through the access point and family violence entry point services. You can call VincentCare, SASHS and Launch Housing to ask to speak directly with a PRAP worker.
- 5. Family Violence Flexible Funding: flexible support packages are available to women who are planning to leave a family violence situation and who are supported by a case worker, or whose case plan involves managing having left a family violence situation.

Packages of up to \$10,000 are available for: removals, re-establishment, counselling, and assistance to enter study or the workforce, safety alterations to a house. Contact Women's Health West (West), Kildonan Uniting Care (Hume/Moreland) or Anglicare Victoria (North East) for more information.

6. Transitional support: case management support to assist people to find appropriate housing and address any issues that have contributed to their experience of homelessness. Services are generally provided on an outreach basis for an average of three months.

Things that can be difficult:

Limited capacity: workers are generally supporting 12 individuals or 7 families at any one time.

SERVICE TYPES

7. Transitional housing: Medium-term accommodation (4-18 months) in which residents enter into an occupancy agreement subject to the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA).

Things that can be difficult:

Fewer than 1 in 50 of those seeking transitional housing will be able to access it. Anyone who is accommodated in transitional housing must have a support worker assisting them to explore their long term housing options. There is a lack of 1 and 2 bedroom properties so single people are less likely to access transitional housing.

Tips and tricks:

If you have capacity, you can support a client in transitional housing. If you do not have capacity to provide ongoing support, advise the access point service that your client is seeking support from a homelessness service.

The Transitional Housing Management (THM) service can provide you with a copy of the *Housing and Support Partnership Agreement* that outlines the roles and responsibilities of tenants, support workers and housing workers.

8. Long term housing options: Social housing (public and community housing) is managed by both the Department of Health and Human Services and community housing providers).

Tips and tricks:

- The Victorian Housing Register (VHR) provides one list for anyone waiting for access to public or community housing. As a support provider you can assist clients to apply for long term social housing through the VHR
- Clients need to apply for public housing through 'My Gov: https://my.gov.au/mygov/content/html/about.html
- Agencies can assist clients to submit applications for public and community housing if they have registered with DHHS to receive an EPRIN number through the DHHS ebusiness website: <u>https://hns.dhs.vic.gov.au/</u>
- For information about the Victorian Housing Register online application for organisations, see:

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/funded-agency-channel/about-service-agreements/programrequirements,-__guidelines-and-policies2/victorian-housing-register/victorian-housing-register-onlineapplication-for- organisations

 For updates on the development of the register and information about how to apply to social housing, see: <u>http://www.housing.vic.gov.au</u>

	SERVICES	PHONE NUMBER	ADDRESS				
Northern and Western Metropolitan Melbourne Homelessness Access Points							
	Haven Home Safe	(03) 9479 0700	52-56 Mary Street, Preston				
	Launch Housing	(03) 9288 9611 / 1800 048 325	68 Oxford Street, Collingwood				
North	VincentCare Victoria, Northern Community Hub	(03) 9304 0100	175 Glenroy Road, Glenroy				
	Unison iap@unison.org.au	(03) 9689 2777	112-122 Victoria Street, Seddon				
West	Unison outpost: Werribee iapwerribee@unison.org,.au	(03) 9216 0300	Level 1, 1-3 Watton St, Werribee				
	Salvation Army Western Metro Homelessness Service sunshine.IAP@salvationarmy.org.au	(03) 9312 5424	6/147 Harvester Road, Sunshine				
	Salvation Army outpost: Melton	(03) 9747 7200	232 High Street, Melton				

2.1.1 Additional Information West Melbourne's Homeless Access Points

Northern & Western Metropolitan Melbourne Family Violence Entry Points

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	Berry Street Family Violence Services	Ph: (03) 9450 4700
	Provides a range of support services to women and their children who have experienced family violence in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne.	Email: <u>dvointake@berrystreet.org.au</u> Website:
North	Berry Street will assist women and their children to remain safely within their community wherever possible and maintain a life free of violence, while also addressing their emotional and practical needs and issues arising from the violence.	www.berrystreet.org.au/family- violence/northern In the North East you can access the Orange Door www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au
	Women's Health West	Ph: (03) 9689 9588
	Women's Health West assists women and children affected by family violence in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne.	Website: <u>whwest.org.au</u>
West	Outreach support workers provide free face-to-face or telephone support by giving you information and assistance that may help you decide for yourself what to do.	
	Link to 'My Safety Plan' booklet:	
	whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Safety_ Plan2.pdf	

STATEWIDE HOMELESSNESS ACCESS POINTS

St Kilda Crisis Centre/Homelessness 24 hour phone line	1800 825 955 Free call from most mobile providers	Transfers calls to the closest access point during the day and provides a crisis response overnight
Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre	Ph: (03) 9322 3555 or	Phone access only
24-hour family violence response line for women and children experiencing family violence. You can contact Safe Steps if a woman is in immediate danger, otherwise it is best to contact Berry Street or Women's Health West for a local response.Safe Steps is the referral point in to the women's refuges.	toll free 1800 015 188 (not free from mobile) Website: <u>www.safesteps.org.au</u>	 24 hours, providing online support and referral to family violence services
Frontyard Melbourne Youth Support Service	Ph: (03) 9614 3688	19 King Street,
Melbourne Youth Support Service (MYSS) is a	Website: <u>http://www.</u>	Melbourne Mon-Fri,
statewide homelessness access point service for young people aged from 16 to 24 years, providing information, short term support and referral for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. MYSS is based at Frontyard Youth Services in the CBD with a range of co-located youth services including health, law and education programs.	melbournecitymission.org. au/services/homelessness- justice/young-people-25- years/	9am-8pm Weekends and Public Holidays 10am-6pm
Women's Housing Ltd	Ph: (03) 9412 6868	Suite 1, Level
Provides housing information, transitional and long term housing for women.	womenshousing.com.au	1, 21 Cremorne Street, Cremorne
IA&P workers in prisons and Youth Justice IA&P Initial assessment and planning (IA&P) workers are funded to support people exiting prison and leaving Youth Justice Centres.		You can access the Youth Justice Homelessness Assistance Service through the
Link to Protocols supporting these arrangements:		VincentCare
http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content2/c7/Final%2 0Prison%20Exit%20Protocol%20June%2010_142421 8150425_1540035913942.pdf		Northern Hub on: Ph: (03) 9304 0100
and		
http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content2/c7/Youth% 20Justice%20access%20to%20HSS%20protocol%202 50814.pdf		

2.1.2 Homelessness Services in Melbourne's North and West that can be accessed directly

Aboriginal services



- Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service: support for Aboriginal women or other women involved with Aboriginal men experiencing family violence, Ph: (03) 9482 5744, www.emhaws.org.au
- Marg Tucker Hostel for Girls: accommodation service for young women; Fairfield, Ph: (03) 9482 1161, margarettucker.org.au
- Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Service: crisis accommodation service for young men;
 Case management service for Indigenous men who use violence, Thornbury, Ph: (03) 9484 5310,
 www.vacsal.org.au/programs/bert-williams-center.aspx
- WT Onus and George Wright Shelter for the Homeless Aboriginal Hostels Ltd: Northcote, Ph: (03) 9489 6701, www.ahl.gov.au (ring first to check that the service is taking referrals)
- Indigenous Tenancies at Risk program: based at Aborigines Advancement League; Thornbury, Ph: (03) 9480 7777

Referral pathways generally from other service systems

- Brosnan Youth Services: service for young people exiting or who have had contact with the Youth Justice System; Brunswick, Ph: (03) 9387 1233, <u>www.jss.org.au/what-we-do/justice-and-crime-prevention</u>
- ACSO McCormack Post Release Service: response for people exiting prison who experience complex mental health issues; Abbotsford, Ph: (03) 9413 7000, <u>www.acso.org.au/what-we-do/community/ forensic-residential-services</u>
- Flat Out: Case management and advocacy through outreach support to women who have left prison; Ph: (03) 9372 6155, www.flatout.org.au
- The Salvation Army Adult Services SANS: provides intensive support to homeless men and women who have, for the most part, been excluded from the mainstream and homeless service system. This program gives priority to people who have histories of long term homelessness and limited, if any, other options for accommodation and support, Ph: (03) 8371 7800, <u>www.salvationarmy.org. au/Find-Us/Victoria/Adult-Services/Programs-and-Services/Outreach-and-Support-Programs</u>
- The Salvation Army Adult Services PLACES: short term support and advocacy for people Living in unsupported and marginalised living options such as squats, sleeping rough, rooming houses and caravan parks in the inner west metropolitan region, Ph: (03) 8371 7800, www.salvationarmy. org.au/Find-Us/Victoria/Adult-Services/Programs-and-Services/Outreach-and-Support-Programs
- Wombat Housing and Support Service Single's Program: support program for people living in rooming houses in the inner west; North Melbourne, Ph: (03) 8327 2222, www.wombat.org.au

Other homelessness services with a unique role

- **Caroline Chisholm Society:** support to pregnant women and parents with children under primary school age, based in Essendon, Ph: (03) 9361 7000, www.caroline.org.au
- McAuley Community Services for Women: support and accommodation for women experiencing family violence and women who are homeless, Ph: 1300 408 751, www.mcauleycsw.org.au
- **Ozanam Community Centre**: drop in centre with a meals program, vincentcare.org.au/what-wedo/programs-and-services/general-support/ozanam-community-centre
- Mathew Talbot Soup Van: provides free food every day, based in Fitzroy, Ph: (03) 9895 5800, www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp/view/90
- St Mary's House of Welcome: drop in centre with a meals program, based Fitzroy, Ph: (03) 9417 6497, www.smhow.org.au
- Wintringham: services for elderly people who are homeless, based in Flemington, Ph: (03) 9034 4824, www.wintringham.org.au
- Family Reconciliation Mediation Program (FRMP): brokerage for young people who have a case plan that includes goals in relation to family reconciliation or mediation, or recovery from family conflict and breakdown, to access therapeutic assistance, family mediation, group work or have some respite. See: www.melbournecitymission.org.au/services/homelessness/young-people-25-years/family-reconciliationmediation-program-(frmp)/frmp-brokerage
- Bethlehem Community: accommodation and support for single women over 35 unaccompanied by children who have experienced homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Ph: (03) 9462 3937 www.sacredheartmission.org/services/longer-term-support-accommodation/womens- accommodation
- Bright Futures Children's Specialist Support Service: provides enhanced case management and/or group work responses to children (0-18) whose families are accessing homelessness and/ or family violence services in Melbourne's north and west. Contact the Bright Futures team on (03) 9359 5493 or on brightfutures@merri.org.au

GRIEVANCES/CONCERNS

The Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS) is the key advice and information service for consumers seeking or receiving assistance from any Victorian community-managed homelessness assistance or social housing service. The goal of HAS is to achieve mutually beneficial resolutions for consumers and service providers. It achieves this goal by providing consumers and service providers with secondary consultation, appropriate and accurate information, problem-solving, complaints resolution, referral, advice.

- You can contact the HAS Advocate via:
 - o Email: angela@chp.org.au
 - Free call 1800 066 256 or (03) 8415 6213
- If you need an interpreter, please advise the HAS advocate
- Alternatively, you can call VITS (Victorian Interpreting and Translation Service) on (03) 9280 1970.
 Tell them you wish to speak to HAS at the Council to Homeless Persons
- Please advise the HAS Advocate if you require a disability sticker for your car when attending the officer
- For more information, download the HAS information sheet: <u>http://chp.org.au/wp-</u>content/uploads/2012/08/chp HAS.pdf.

2.2 Bolton Clark (RDNS) Homeless Persons' Program

ELIGIBILITY

How do you know this service system is right for your client?

- If your client has physical and mental health needs and requires a health assessment, health education or health information
- If your client is homeless or at risk of homelessness
- This is a free service and is an assertive outreach health response

Things that can be difficult:

Delays in accepting the referral as the allocated nurse is at full capacity to take on a new referral.

ACCESS

How do you get your client in to this service system?

Phone the Bolton Clark (RDNS) on 1300 33 44 55 and ask to be transferred to the Homeless Persons Program. If you are unsure whether your client is eligible, ring RDNS HPP to conduct a secondary consult. Appointment times are variable depending on health need being addressed.

Geographical cover where the outreach nurses are located:

- **NORTH EAST:** Melbourne CBD, City of Yarra, City of Darebin Broadmeadows District, Moreland and Hume, Inner Metro North District, Box Hill District, City of Whitehorse and Maroondah
- WEST: Flemington District, City of Brimbank, City of Wyndham, Keilor/St Albans District, Sunshine District
- RDNS HPP nurses also co-located at: Access Health St Kilda, Flagstaff Crisis, Ozanam Community Centre, McAuley House, SRS North West Metro area, Melbourne Streets to Home and Rough Street Initiative
- **YOUTH** Broadmeadows District, City of Darebin, City of Banyule, Inner MetroNorth.

Tips and tricks:

- You can make the referral on your client's behalf
- If you know the HPP nurse already, you can refer direct to the nurse
- Screen will be done by a Team Coordinator to determine if referral is appropriate
- Once spoken to a Team Coordinator, you may be asked to complete a referral form. If the client is selfreferring, this may not be required, if the referrer knows the nurse directly, a referral form may also not be required.
- Client does not need a GP referral
- Client may request an initial joint assessment visit

SERVICE PATHWAY

What will happen/What is the journey you and your client can expect?

Initial Health Assessment: this is usually done at the first contact either by phone or in person. Assessment includes history of health (physical and mental), housing, AOD history, financial and social history.

Things that can be difficult:

- Health assessment may occur over a period of time not just at first appointment by phone or in person.
- Nurses are mandated to assess the risk for dependent children and make reports if required. Submission of a report does not mean the children will be removed from care.
- Verbal consent may be obtained initially and we reiterate how the information will be used. Disclosure of health information may be withheld as deemed necessary, unless client is at risk to themselves or others.

SERVICE TYPES

What are some of the options that might be available for your client?

- 1. Health assessment, education, information and advice.
- 2. Health care treatment and on-going assistance.
- 3. Advocacy and supported referrals to other services that may help, including legal, optometry, dental, etc.
- 4. Health promotion and illness prevention.

4.9 A Guide to Making Links



