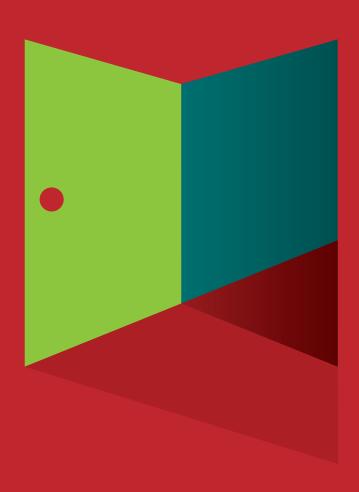# Opening Doors

Better access for homeless people to social housing and support services in Victoria

Service coordination guide

Opening Doors

Better access for homeless people to social housing and support services in Victoria

Service coordination guide

July 2008

Contents

Introduction

What is Opening Doors?

When the Housing and Community Building Division within the Department of Human Services consulted with clients about the homelessness services we provide, they told us that accessing services can be complicated and time consuming. Funded agencies agreed that the service system could be difficult for clients–and even workers–to navigate.

In response to these concerns, the Housing and Community Building Division developed an area-based service coordination framework called Opening Doors–a practice and systems approach to provide timely and effective access to homelessness and social housing services to people seeking assistance. The framework was developed over 2005–06 in consultation and partnership with the community sector and piloted and reviewed in 2006–07. We incorporated what we learned from this testing phase into the final Opening Doors framework.

Opening Doors is for use by Housing and Community Building Division-funded homelessness assistance services[1] and social housing services. When the framework is fully implemented in these services, allied services such as health, mental health and drug and alcohol services can be invited to link with local homelessness and social housing networks.

Local area service networks (LASNs)

Local area service networks are formed from the Housing and Community Building Division-funded homelessness assistance services in a local catchment area. Led by Department of Human Services regions, the local area service networks are responsible for implementing Opening Doors in each local catchment area. This development stage is expected to take an average of nine months from the first network meeting in July 2008 to the local model being ready to implement around March 2009 (see Attachment 1: Timelines: Opening Doors and Creating Connections development and initial change management).

The role of each local area service network is to:

• develop, implement and maintain Opening Doors in their particular geographic catchments

• build on consistency and quality of service delivery practice amongst member agencies

• coordinate referrals with allied services and services in other areas

• undertake data monitoring and client satisfaction review for the purposes of identifying gaps and trends in service provision

• make evidence-based recommendations to the Housing and Community Building Division about responses to service gaps (change in agency catchments/targets/allocation of funds/utilisation of funding).

About the *Service coordination guide*

This guide will assist local area service networks to develop, implement and maintain their local service delivery model. It divides the development work into seven stages, and provides:

• information about membership, roles and responsibilities of the local area service networks

• a detailed outline of the tasks for each LASN

• tools and resources to assist each LASN with these tasks.

Other information about Opening Doors can be found in the Opening Doors *Framework* (overview and policy context) and the Opening Doors *Practice guide* (detailed outline of worker practice).

LASN membership

LASN membership has two stages:

1. establishment of the LASN by the core members and advisory members

2. allied service membership.

Chair

Department of Human Services regional office

Core members (voting)

• all homelessness agencies in the catchment funded under SAAP, THM and HEF

• Housing and Community Building Division funded providers of long-term community housing

• multi-area and statewide agencies that work in the catchment

• SHASP provider

Advisory members (voting or non-voting as decided by LASN)

• regional homelessness network coordinator

• regional children's resource coordinator

• housing services manager or HATT team manager

• representative of the Integrated Approach to Family Violence partnership

• representative of Creating Connection partnership.

Once the core members have coordinated their services, the LASN can be extended to allied services (see the Practice guide Stage 5).

Allied membership (voting or non-voting, as decided by LASN)

• homeless outreach psychiatric services

• jobs placement employment and training

• drug and alcohol services

• Royal District Nursing Service

• Community Connections program

• primary care partnership

- representative of ChildFIRST partnership
- any other services that have high numbers of homeless clients.

If allied services exist in the catchment with a particularly high level of overlapping service provision, the LASN might decide to invite their full participation at the beginning.

Core member agencies might also represent one or other of the other partnerships (Creating Connections, Integrated Approach to Family Violence partnership, primary care partnership), because they are also members. If so, the terms on which they are representing these partnerships should be negotiated to allow reporting back and delegation of authority.

Roles, responsibilities and authority

Local area service networks

Local area service networks operate within the context of each member agency's own governance processes and contractual arrangements with the Department of Human Services.

Clarification about which matters can be decided by the local network, which by the member agencies individually and which will be recommendations from the local network to member agencies and to the Department of Human Services, are among the first items of business for each new local area service network.

Department of Human Services regions

- lead and coordinate the local area service network
- liaise with LASN member agencies on matters relating to their participation in Opening Doors.

Department of Human Services, Housing and Community Building Division

The implementation of Opening Doors at the local level is led by the Department of Human Services regions, supported by the Housing and Community Building Division (H&CB). Housing and Community Building provides general oversight to statewide implementation issues, particularly with regard to the relationship between statewide/multi-area services and local networks. Housing and Community Building also coordinates the development of the electronic resource register and establishment of the statewide free-call number.

Contacts in Housing and Community Building for the implementation stage

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Member agencies

Initially, member agencies are asked to agree to participate in their relevant LASNs, then make a subsequent agreement to abide by the decisions taken by the LASN (once they are made). The first commitment is in writing to the regional Department of Human Services, and the second by signing the MOU at the end of the development stage.

The Department of Human Services Funding and Service Agreement requires that agencies receiving homelessness program funding participate. Any agency that does not participate is in breach of their Department of Human Services Service Agreement.

Each agency should nominate a consistent representative and a proxy representative with clear lines of authority to make decisions at the LASN.

Agency representatives should attend LASN meetings:

- generally monthly during the first nine months of development with additional subcommittee work for most members

- generally monthly during the early stages of implementation of the local model

- less often (as determined by the LASN) after the local model is better established.

Member agencies should make workers available to participate in a practitioners' working group and training about Opening Doors, data collection, strength-based initial assessment work and other relevant training as necessary; and to adapt service delivery practice to accord with agreements made at the local area service network.

Opening Doors regional project officers

Opening Doors regional project officers will be employed for a 12 month period in each region to support the LASNs and the Department of Human Services to implement Opening Doors.

- assist with the provision of information and communication amongst LASN members

- coordinate LASN meetings and perform follow-up talks from meetings

- employ the service coordination guide to support the LASN to develop the local area model

- liaise with the Opening Doors Implementation Reference Group

- assist with organising consumer input

- strengthen the communication channel between the LASN, DHS and other key stakeholders.

Homelessness networkers

- assist regions to engage stakeholders from homelessness service system to participate in the LASN

- support constituents through change by assisting the region to problem solve and negotiate

- provide a broad sector view of progress of interrelated projects in each region (Creating Connections, Integrated Approach to Family Violence, Accreditation and Workforce Strategy)

- communicate between project groups in each region (Creating Connections, Opening Doors, Integrated Approach to Family Violence and so on in regions where they exist)

- strengthen existing communication links with the Department of Human Services through regular meetings with the region and the Housing Sector Development Branch

- share best practice examples and examples of useful processes from other groups (MOUs, codes of conduct, communication strategies and so on).

Regional children's resource coordinator

- participate in LASN meetings in an advisory capacity

- work with the entry point services to provide as child-friendly a space as possible and make any necessary alterations to the layout of the entry point

- provide a secondary consultation response about the needs of accompanying children.

Opening Doors and other Housing and Community Building Division initiatives

The Housing and Community Building Division is working with peak bodies and community-managed organisations towards a stronger, more integrated community-managed sector through a range of initiatives in addition to Opening Doors:

- accreditation of homelessness assistance services
- Integrated Approach to Family Violence
- Creating Connections Youth Homelessness Action Plan Stage 2 (YHAP 2)
- workforce strategy
- Housing Provider Framework (HPF)
- registration and regulation of housing providers.

This *Service coordination guide* includes key links to interrelated projects, and indicates where other projects and steering groups should be involved or consulted.

Existing agreements and protocols

This guide has prompts throughout for identification of existing agreements. If these are up to date, aligned with Opening Doors and complete, existing agreements can easily be made part of the new agreement. However, all areas will have some outstanding issues which they can use a LASN to resolve. For example, a rural town may have only one homelessness service, which is already well linked with allied services, but referring to homelessness agencies in other parts of Victoria is difficult; they may not have equitable access to the regional HEF resources; or are unsure how to tap into statewide specialist services.

Stages, tasks and timing

Stage 1: Establishing an effective local area service network	
Knowledge of Opening Doors	May to July 2008
Preparation by member agencies	June to July 2008
Establishing effective decision making	July 2008
Processes for keeping all stakeholders informed	July to August 2008
Working groups	July 2008 to March 2009
Issues log	July 2008 to March 2009
LASN workplan	July 2008 to March 2009
Begin the MOU	August 2008
Stage 2: Analysis of resources and demand audit	
Understanding the catchment resources	August 2008
Input by LASN members	July to August 2008
Implications for development of the local model	July to August 2008
Identify existing agreements	August 2008
Update LASN workplan	September 2008
Stage 3: Developing the local model	
Identify current local service coordination	September 2008
Determine local entry points	September 2008 to March 2009
Determine interim response practice	September 2008 to March 2009
Links between specialist services (youth, family violence and Indigenous) and generic services	September 2008 to March 2009
Use of resource register	September 2008 to March 2009
Acceptance of first eligible referral	September 2008 to March 2009
Prioritisation of homelessness resources	September 2008 to March 2009
Coordination of prioritisation list	September 2008 to March 2009
Statewide and multi-area services	September 2008 to March 2009
Cross-LASN and cross-regional coordination	September 2008 to March 2009
Client consultation	January to March 2009
Update the MOU	March to April 2009
Prepare a manual/protocols	March to April 2009
Establish a monitoring and reporting framework	March to April 2009

Stage 4: Implementation	
Preparation	March to June 2009
Going live	March to June 2009
Stage 5: Extending to allied services	
Deciding which allied services	July 2009
Deciding when and how to invite allied services	July 2009
Building relationships with other networks in the catchment	August to December 2009
Stage 6: Finalising the MOU	
Update MOU	August 2009
Sign MOU	September to October 2009
Stage 7: Changing the LASN role from building to maintenance	
Ongoing role of the LASN	July 2009
Problem solving and planning	July 2009 onward
Data sharing and review	July 2009 onward
Client consultation	July 2009 onward

Stage 1: Establishing an effective local area service network

Objectives

• all LASN members knowledgeable about the Opening Doors approach

• LASN to act as an effective decision-making body

• strengthened trust and understanding between all LASN members.

Detail

In almost every case, agencies beyond the core SAAP, THM, Housing and Community Building Division and SHASP membership should be brought into the process after the model for operation of the homelessness services as a system has been developed.

See Stage 5: Extending to allied services.

Task	Prompt	Responsibility	Timing
Knowledge of Opening Doors	The Opening Doors *Framework*, Service *coordination guide* and *Practice guide* all need to be read and understood by members and all agency workers. Attend presentations and training, ask questions and discuss with colleagues. Keep asking questions of the Department of Human Services if the concepts do not make sense. Go back to the documents at regular intervals–they can be easily forgotten once you are in the midst of local problem solving.	All LASN members	May to July 2008
Preparation by member agencies	Confirmation of a consistent representative with decision-making authority to participate in the LASN meetings. Each agency should consider the barriers for their particular service and how this might be dealt with in the LASN process. Any issues that might be a barrier to effective cooperation should be dealt with as soon as possible. Each agency might consider preparing a relationship map to help understand clearly where relationships are strong and where they need work.	All LASN members	June to July 2008

Task	Prompt	Responsibility	Timing
Establishing effective decision making	See Attachment 2: Sample meeting rules. Confirm understanding of respective roles of chair, members, Department of Human Services (region and head office), homelessness networker and children's resource worker. Confirm scope of decision making–what can be decided and what can be recommended to member agencies and the Department of Human Services by the LASN? Establish meeting rules at the second meeting: • set a quorum that is realistic–not too high to be unachievable or too low to be representative • determine meeting frequency (monthly or fortnightly) • determine voting process–one vote per member agency is recommended as the basis–and which advisory and allied members can vote • determine how to place items on the agenda–by when, by who • determine the decision-making relationship between LASN and any working groups–the recommended basis is that working groups be advisory and convened to provide information, advice and guidance to the LASN. An agreed mechanism for dispute resolution is required. Disagreement is to be expected, and is a good indication that all points of view are being heard. See Attachment 3: Consultative process for making complex decisions.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2008
Processes for keeping all stakeholders informed	Determine responsibility for taking and circulating minutes and for keeping a minute book that is available at each meeting. All key decisions must be recorded and circulated to all members.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July to August 2008

Task	Prompt	Responsibility	Timing
Processes for keeping all stakeholders informed (cont.)	Determine communication processes between agency representatives and the rest of the workers in their agency. Determine process for communication about this work with key stakeholders such as allied services.		
Working groups	Assign specific tasks to one or more working groups to allow detailed discussion and preparation of options for the LASN to decide a course of action. Working groups from the pilot areas included: practitioner working group, prioritisation working group, data working group, client feedback working group, interim response working group. Assign each working group a clear purpose, timeline, understanding of the extent of its decision-making powers and relationship to the LASN.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2008 to March 2009
Issues log	Keep a list of issues raised at LASN meetings to bring to all meetings and updated as necessary. It helps to keep all the factors on the agenda, even when individual items cannot be dealt with immediately. Consider how issues can also be added to this log by working groups and how they will be resolved.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2008 to March 2009
LASN workplan	Begin the workplan as early as possible, adding tasks as issues arise. Keep a copy with the minute book, as well as communicating the workplan to all members and key stakeholders. See Attachment 4: Developing a LASN workplan (responsibility matrix).	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2008 to March 2009
Begin the MOU	Begin the development of an MOU by inserting these agreements about meeting processes. See Attachment 5: Basic MOU to be filled in by LASN.	Regional contact with all LASN members	August 2008

Stage 2: Analysis of resources and demand audit

Objectives

• that all LASN members understand what resources are available in their catchment

• that all LASN members can use this information as a basis for building the local model.

Detail

The particular Department of Human Services region will have prepared a report about existing homelessness and affordable housing in the catchment that covers:

• crisis housing and support

• transitional housing and support

• HEF and purchased emergency accommodation (motels, rooming houses, caravans, board)

• outreach support

• housing information and referral (worker time).

It will also include a preliminary identification of gaps and systemic exclusions drawn from SAAP and THM data and census information.

This is a preliminary step to prepare the LASNs to take decisions about placement of resources and referral pathways.

Tasks	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Understanding the catchment resources	Region to present data on resources and demand.	Regional contact	August 2008
Input by LASN members	Fill in other data that your agency holds that the region has not been able to use in this summary. See Attachment 6: Template for collecting agency information.	All LASN members	July to August 2008
Implications for development of the local model	Does this data suggest where the entry points could be? See Attachment 7: Characteristics Opening Doors homelessness of entry points. What interim response capacity already exists? See Practice guide section on 'Interim response'. What does the data tell you about current client pathways?	All LASN members	July to August 2008

Tasks	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Implications for development of the local model (cont.)	Are any services working in a coordinated arrangement to deliver services to clients? Are there clear gaps or overlaps to be addressed by the LASN? Remember that the Opening Doors process cannot respond to all gaps. What are the current interactions with statewide and multi-area services? See Attachment 8: Multi-area and statewide service participation in Opening Doors. What (if any) are the current after-hours responses?		
Identify existing agreements	What agreements are in place in the LASN catchment about referral pathways, prioritisation and resource allocation?[2]	All LASN members	August 2008
Update LASN workplan	Update to include any issues that have arisen from this audit and feedback from members. See Attachment 4: Developing a LASN workplan.	All LASN members	August 2008

Stage 3: Developing the local model

Objective

• Successful adaptation of Opening Doors to local conditions.

Detail

Each part of the model development depends on the others, and it probably won't feel satisfactory until you have made all the decisions. However, this order of building your local model is recommended as a logical starting point.

Tasks	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Identify current local service coordination	All LASN members need a detailed understanding of what is already in operation and what can be built on.	All LASN members	September 2008
Determine local entry points	See Attachment 7: Characteristics of Opening Doors homelessness entry points. Consider the options that best meet client needs. Based on this list of characteristics, determine which current entry points experience the highest demand and where there is worker capacity. Note that workers from other agencies can outpost to the entry points to add worker capacity.	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009
Determine interim response practice	Presentation by the Department of Human Services about pilot models, options and parameters of interim response. What SAAP and THM resources are available? Can these be made available for an interim response? In particular, are any worker resources freed up in non-entry point agencies by changes to access arrangements? Consider by target group–for example, who will cover youth, family violence, families, and so on? What other services may be able to assist, for example, health workers, PDRSS, PSP, JPET? How will you manage demand and referral for interim response? Include interim response clients when developing your prioritisation agreements for HEF, case management and housing.	All LASN members and Department of Human Services	September 2008 to March 2009

Tasks	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Links between specialist services (youth, family violence and Indigenous) and generic services	Integrated Approach to Family Violence alliances and Creating Connections partnerships already exist in your catchment, and are also represented on your LASN. They have already identified some entry points and pathways within their service system, so the LASN should now negotiate how to strengthen links with the rest of the homelessness and affordable housing system. For example: • How does HEF flow? • How does a youth or family violence client get access to the full range of services if they first contact a generic entry point? • Can entry point workers speak to a specialist service worker quickly? • Do specialist service workers need to come to entry points to supplement an initial assessment if required? • If so, how is this arranged?	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009
Use of resource register	Presentation by the Department of Human Services on development, function and use of the resource register. Agree on the criteria for each agency to provide adequate descriptions of their resources: • HEF and other brokerage • crisis housing • transitional housing • long-term housing • support • interim response • private accommodation. Decide which services are responsible for updating information and when this is to be done (the aim is for updates as close as possible to when resources become available, and then are taken off when filled).	All LASN members and Department of Human Services	September 2008 to March 2009

Tasks	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Acceptance of first eligible referral	Are all member agencies clear about the requirement to accept the first referral for an advertised resource? How will the entry point receive feedback when there are problems with the referral?	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009
Prioritisation of homelessness resources	See Attachment 9: Guide for prioritisation Based on the prioritisation grid, make agreements/policies for each resource: • HEF • crisis housing • transitional housing • interim response • any other. Determine how all member agencies, allied agencies and clients will be made aware of these criteria.	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009
Coordination of prioritisation list	Using CMS, the LASN should maintain a list of people waiting for all the resources (housing, support, HEF, interim response and any other) and they will be referred/ matched when resources become available.	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009
Statewide and multi-area services	See Attachment 8: Multi-area and statewide service participation in Opening Doors. Agencies that provide services across more than one LASN catchment should consider how they can best be involved in more than one LASN. Initial assessments from specialist statewide services that support clients released from prison or hospital should be accepted by all entry points and prioritised for resource matching according to the agreed process in each LASN. If a LASN is providing an after-hours contact that is not within their own membership, the LASN should negotiate with the after-hours provider (for example, MYSS, St Kilda Crisis Centre, other).	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009

Tasks	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Cross-LASN and cross-regional coordination	How will your LASN handle referrals to and from other areas? Because this question is also under consideration in all the new LASNs, consider how you can coordinate this work.	All LASN members	September 2008 to March 2009
Client consultation	Once the local model is nearly developed, test it with a focus group of local clients. Amend the model according to this feedback.	All LASN members	January to March 2009
Update the MOU	Insert these agreements about the local model into the MOU. See Stage 1: Establishing an effective local area service network.	Regional contact with all LASN members	March to April 2009
Prepare a manual and/or protocols	Develop practice guidelines based on decisions. Test the model with the practitioner working group.	Regional contact with all LASN members	March to April 2009
Establish a monitoring and reporting framework	Prepare any data collection systems necessary to assist in monitoring the impact of the new model. These should be based on the Victorian Homelessness Data Collection–discuss with Department of Human Services regional contact.	Regional contact with all LASN members	March to April 2009

Stage 4: Implementation

Objectives

• Continuity of service delivery during introduction of the local model

• All relevant local services aware of the new model

• Workers supported during the change.

Detail

Task	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Preparation	Once the local model is developed, or substantial parts are agreed, a 'go live' date should be set to allow all member agencies time to prepare their teams for the changed arrangements. *Support for workers* Entry point workers are likely to experience at least an initial increase in demand, and may find it distressing that there are insufficient resources to meet this demand. Plan for supervision and rostering to address this where possible. Do service delivery workers require further training to prepare for implementation? Establish an ongoing practitioners' working group when the local model is about to be implemented. These are meetings of workers that focus on the practice changes, challenges and problem solving at the direct service delivery level. *Publicising the new model* Develop a communication plan to advise clients and allied services about your local model. How will the LASN publicise the access arrangements–for example, posters, information cards, information sessions?	Regional contact with all LASN members	March to June 2009
Going live	A formal launch of the new model is a good way to mark the transition for members and allied services. Seriously consider a celebration of your achievement! Expect that this might be a difficult time for service workers who are coping with changes to their established practice, and consider how team leaders might support their workers.	Regional contact with all LASN members	March to June 2009

Stage 5: Extending to allied services

Objective

• To widen service coordination to allied services in the catchment.

Detail

Breakdown of task	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Deciding which services	Which allied services have the most homeless clients?	Regional contact and all LASN members	July 2009
Deciding when and how to invite allied services and networks	Undertake preliminary discussions with services and networks which may be interested about their preference for how to join the LASN.	Regional contact and possibly LASN members	July 2009
Building relationships with other networks in the catchment	Present the model and seek input into the impact on the allied services and how they can add to the model. For instance, are there other resources they can place on the resource register? Can they assist with interim response? How do they best access the homelessness and affordable housing services under these new arrangements? Consider what tools are employed by allied services, for example the Department of Human Services Service Coordination Tool Templates. Participate as required in other networks, for example, PCP, ChildFIRST, mental health. It may be efficient to provide representatives with delegated authority and responsibility to feed back to the LASN. Amend manual/protocols based on these discussions.	Regional contact and all LASN members	August to December 2009

Stage 6: Finalising the MOU

Objective

• To formally record the local model in a format that all members can access.

Detail

Breakdown of task	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Update MOU	Include the agreements from Stages 1, 3 and 5 in the MOU. The local model agreements, which have been written up as a manual/set of protocols, should be attached to the MOU.	Regional contact with all LASN members	August 2009
Sign MOU	The MOU should now be ready to be signed by a representative of each board of LASN member agencies and the regional director. Copies of the MOU should be included in the tool kit and be readily available to workers in all member agencies.	Regional contact with all LASN members	September to October 2009

Stage 7: Changing the LASN role from developing to maintaining and improving the local model

Objectives

• To keep the local model operating well and able to respond to changing circumstances.

• For LASN to make the transition successfully from development to maintenance and improvement role.

Detail

Breakdown of task	Prompts	Responsibility	Timing
Ongoing role of the LASN	Planning session to make transition, including identification of ongoing tasks: monitoring, planning, responding to issues arising, problem solving, advocacy, lobbying, communication and consultation. Allocate responsibility for ongoing tasks within the LASN–that is, minute taking, working groups, collation of data. Check on the effectiveness of the practitioners working group and make any necessary alterations to improve its function.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2009
Problem solving and planning	Agree on the mechanism for LASN to act as an ongoing problem solving and planning forum for homelessness and affordable housing services in the local catchment. Establish a process for regular review and planning.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2009 onward
Data sharing and review	Agree on the data to be reported to the LASN, how frequently and for what purpose.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2009 onward
Client consultation	Build in regular client consultation on the operation of the local model–suggest 12 monthly.	Regional contact with all LASN members	July 2009 onward

Tools and resources

These tools have been developed by pilot areas and the Housing and Community Building Division project team.

Seven of the tools are resources that provide detailed advice to LASNs about aspects of Opening Doors (numbers 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). The other five are templates for local area service networks to adapt in their work (numbers 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). They are provided in the order they are likely to be used as a LASN goes through the seven stages in this guide.

Attachment 1: Timelines: Opening Doors and Creating Connections development and initial change management

	Preparation		Service mapping		Development of LASN — Development of regional models for Youth Homelessness Services		Maintenance
	Regional commitment	Identify catchment	Resource and demand audit	Preliminary analysis of change	Confirm LASN membership / Options appraisal	Commencement of LASN / Decision making	Develop local LASN model / Change management strategy
Feb 2008	Opening Doors / Creating Connections	Opening Doors					
March 2008		Opening Doors	Creating Connections	Opening Doors			
April 2008			Opening Doors / Creating Connections	Opening Doors			
May 2008				Opening Doors / Creating Connections	Opening Doors		
June 2008					Opening Doors / Creating Connections		
July 2008					Opening Doors / Creating Connections	Opening Doors	
Aug 2008						Creating Connections	Opening Doors
Sept 2008						Creating Connections	Opening Doors
Oct 2008							Opening Doors / Creating Connections
Nov 2008							Opening Doors
Dec 2008							Opening Doors
Jan 2009							Opening Doors
Feb 2009							Opening Doors
March 2009							GO LIVE

Opening Doors ▮   Creating Connections ▮

Attachment 2: Sample meeting rules[3]

Who we are and what we do / Our values / Our priority / Our practices

The values and priority of the local area service network (LASN) are reflected in how members interact with each other to achieve the outcomes determined by the LASN membership. This is demonstrated by the following agreed practices:

Contributing to the principles and objectives

Fighting clean–dealing directly with people involved in an issue and not discussing the issue with others, with the exception of consulting with colleagues to canvas strategies for conflict resolution. Advising those concerned that the matter will be referred to the next meeting if it remains unresolved.

Acceptance versus agreement–differentiating between agreement and acceptance. It is possible to accept, implement and uphold a decision, while not agreeing with it.

Valuing differences–appreciating different behavioural styles that individuals have and realising the strengths that each style brings.

Being responsible and accountable–Positively addressing any issues by offering ideas and being a part of the solution when problems arise.

Fostering Leadership

Review–evaluating the effectiveness of the LASN by:

- reviewing the LASN, its meeting procedures and its effectiveness
- seeking feedback from LASN members
- analysing the data and information generated from the pilot.

Our procedures

Meetings

Purpose

Structure

The agenda should be structured in the following way:

- confirmation of previous meeting's summary
- open forum–to acknowledge achievements, share information or raise issues of common interest and specific to individual agencies
- standing items
- general business–items for information or discussion

Frequency

Attendance

If a member of the LASN is unable to attend, a nominee should attend in their absence. This recognises the commitment to provide consistency in attendance by an agency.

Guest speakers

A guest speaker may be invited to address an issue of relevance to the LASN as required.

Communication

Meeting summary

Following the LASN meeting, a summary of the meeting's key outcomes and actions will be available. All agencies will be advised by email of the availability and location of the meeting summary.

The undersigned agree with the contents contained within the LASN meeting rules charter:

Signature of CEOs of member agencies

Attachment 3: Consultative process for making complex decisions[4]

This seven-stage procedure is useful for making complex or contentious decisions.

Stage 1: Analyse the situation, difficulty or opportunity

A situation, difficulty or opportunity may be far more complex after examination and analysis than first thought. This will only be clarified through early analysis.

Stage 2: Define and agree on the situation, difficulty or opportunity

After a thorough analysis, a definition should be written down and agreed to by the group involved in making the decision. Everyone can then start the decision-making process with an agreed definition.

It is futile for a group of people to try to decide something that is not clear to any of them, or which each is interpreting differently.

Stage 3: Examine alternatives for action

If the situation, difficulty or opportunity is complex, consider several alternative actions. At this stage, it is unnecessary for suggested alternative actions to be practical or even feasible. This is the brain-storming stage, where all kinds of ideas can be floated and teased out without being constrained by practical details.

Stage 4: Explore implications of each alternative

With several alternative actions identified, each is now taken separately and considered seriously. Implications for each alternative are examined against a set of criteria, which could include:

• How will the action affect people involved?

• How much money, time and energy would be needed?

• Are the necessary skills and knowledge available?

• Is the action financially viable, and will it contribute to our preferred future and strategic direction?

• Does the action fit with our organisation's existing commitments and obligations?

• Has any other organisation had experience with this action–and should we talk with them first?

A sheet of paper or a whiteboard divided into two sections to list the positives and negatives of each alternative can help when examining facts. Note that the focus is on facts at this stage.

Stage 5: Select the alternative to be acted on

Selecting one alternative as the preferred action is necessary now, and should be relatively easy after examining the implications of each alternative in Stage 4.

Stage 6: Implement the selected action

Implementation of the selected action is planned in detail by asking these questions:

• Exactly what is to be done?

• What is the purpose and benefit of this action?

• How is it to be done?

• Who is to be involved and where?

• What is the time - schedule for the total action, starting from this day right through to completion of the action?

• How will we know that each stage of the action is completed?

Implementation of the selected action or decision is now ready to proceed. The planning is about to become reality.

Stage 7: Review and evaluate the process and the decision

Ask: How will we know when the total action is completed and that the desired outcome has been achieved?

Reviewing (asking 'Did we do it?') and evaluating (asking 'How well did we do it?') are vital components in the decision-making process. In this review and evaluation stage, it is necessary to:

• revise all the notes taken during the previous six stages

• observe and ask questions of people involved

• compare the real benefits and outcomes of the chosen action with the anticipated and unanticipated benefits and outcomes.

Remember to review and evaluate the process and procedure of making the decision, as well as the decision itself.

Attachment 4: Developing a LASN workplan (responsibility matrix)[5]

A responsibility matrix is a common project management tool which can document the responsibilities of key individuals and groups within one–or across all–participating organisations.

The major benefit of the responsibility matrix is that it helps avoid communication breakdowns between all parties, and avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

Process

1. list major activities or tasks on the vertical axis

2. list key persons or groups on the horizontal axis

3. code the responsibility matrix thus:

E = responsibility to execute, which means the person or group with an 'E' against their name for a particular activity or task is responsible to get the work done.

C = must be consulted, which means the person or group with a 'C' against their name for a particular activity or task must be consulted about this activity. 'Consulted' means that their opinion counts, but doesn't rule.

I = must be informed, which means the person or group with an 'I' against their name for a particular activity or task must know what decisions are being made.

A = approval authority (usually an individual), which means the person with an 'A' against their name for a particular activity or task has approval authority (sign-off).

When the responsibility matrix, together with the code, is accepted, all changes must be approved by those who approved the original version. The advantage to this formal change management process is the presence of a written document for reference, clarification or direction. There can be as many columns and rows as needed, and the best format is a spreadsheet.

Key persons and groups ➡ Major tasks ⬇				

Attachment 5: Basic MOU to be filled in by LASN

.... Local area service network

Memorandum of understanding between:

....

and

....

and

....

and

....

and

....

and

....

and

....

for implementing and maintaining Opening Doors.

Introduction

Glossary and Abbreviations

HEF	Housing Establishment Fund
LASN	local area service network
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
THM	Transitional Housing Management
VHDC	Victorian Homelessness Data Collection

Insert others as required

Background

Suggested text: A coordinated and timely response at the entry point to the homelessness service system depends on significant coordination among all homelessness services. The creation and maintenance of coordinated local area service networks is essential to the effective operation of Opening Doors.

Purpose

Suggested text: This MOU enables the implementation and maintenance of Opening Doors in the .... area.

Scope

Suggested text: This MOU outlines roles, responsibilities and agreements covering:

• the governance processes of the .... local area service network

• protocols to optimise homelessness access and response.

Aims

Suggested text: Provide a mechanism to achieve a collaborative approach to homelessness service delivery in the .... area:

Privacy and confidentiality

What is confidential, if anything?

Description of partner agencies

Suggested text:

While the partner agencies outlined in this protocol all provide homelessness and/or social housing services, types of services provided and delivery mechanisms differ. Services provided by each agency are outlined below.

Name of service	Contact details	Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities

Suggested text: Describe respective roles of chair, members, Department of Human Services (region and head office), homelessness networker and children's resource worker – see Roles, responsibilities and authority section of this guide.

Agreement

Governance and representation

Suggested text: The local area service network operates within the context of each member agency's own governance processes and contractual arrangements with Department of Human Services.

See Stage 1: Establishing an effective local area service network.

Monitoring and review

How and when? Benchmarks, processes and data.

Dispute resolution

Suggested text: As a first step, dispute resolution is the responsibility of the relevant agency team leaders in conjunction with their representatives on the LASN.

As the second step, dispute resolution is the responsibility of the relevant CEOs.

As the third step, the dispute to be referred to the Department of Human Services region.

Each party agrees to raise any issue quickly and the other to respond quickly.

The outcome of mediation is final and binding.

During the term of any dispute, the parties will continue to meet their obligations under this MOU.

Details of local model

Insert agreements from Stage 3 and subsequently from Stage 5.

Termination of this agreement

Suggested text: Any party may terminate their involvement in this MOU after attempting dispute resolution. Termination is to be in the form of three months' written notice to the chairperson.

Executed as an agreement by the parties on the dates below:

Signed by:

....
(insert Department of Human Services regional director name)

....
(signature)

this .... day of .... year

REPEAT as required for number of signatories

Attachment 6: Template for collecting agency information[6]

This template was developed to assist the resource and demand audit for the LASN.

This information may also be used for listing agency details on the resource register.

Important: Only document agency details and information for resources and linkages within the LASN catchment.

Agency name:
Street address: Melways ref: Postal address:
Telephone number for public: Fax number: Telephone number for workers only:
Hours of operation:
Website / URL:
Agency description
Programs within agency and staff numbers (for example, youth team–1.5 worker)
Target groups for service delivery (eligibility criteria and/or exclusions)
Areas of expertise (for example, achieve outcomes working with refugee communities)
Other funding sources (for example, PDRRS, HACC and so on)
Partnerships and linkages with non-homelessness services (include agency name, address, contact name, web/email address and so on and the nature of the partnership/linkage and resources available)
Other comments

Attachment 7: Characteristics of Opening Doors homelessness entry points

The entry points for each local catchment are likely to have a high volume of clients and need to be geared to respond. The following recommendations should guide local area service networks in making decisions about the location and operation of their entry points. Not all entry point services can meet these characteristics at first, but they are offered as a good practice guide.

Location

Proximity to public transport (easy walking distance) and to free/cheap parking (especially in suburban, regional and rural locations).

When more than one entry point exists in a catchment, they all must be linked and coordinated, although not all must be provided by the one organisation. For example, a rural area may have a larger entry point in the regional centre, with two or three other entry points in the smaller towns.

Access to a worker

Drop-in

Staff should be available from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm to clients who drop in, as well as those who telephone and make an appointment. The entry point should attempt to roster extra workers at times of likely heavy demand.

Appointment

Appointments must not be used when there is an immediate accommodation crisis. Instead, the person should be assisted as soon as possible that same day either in person or by telephone.

Appointments to be available within five working days.

Telephone

Consider how many telephone lines should be in operation to provide a reasonable level of telephone access.

Provide free-call access (this will be implemented with Opening Doors).

Do not use answering machines during opening hours.

Physical access

Must be open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday.

Offer some explanation of how to access an after-hours response, recognising that these can be severely limited and not available at some locations.

The entry points for each catchment should be well publicised to potential clients and allied services (for example, wallet cards, posters).

The entry point building should have:

• disability and pram access

• as comfortable as possible a waiting area

• private interview rooms

• client access to toilets

• client access to baby-changing facilities.

Physical barriers between staff and clients should be unobtrusive and kept to a minimum.

Specialist access

If yours is a generalist entry point, the service should work with local Indigenous agencies about what is culturally appropriate for these client groups, and make any necessary alterations to the layout of the entry point.

The entry point should work with the Creating Connections partnership on youth access and response (through the LASN).

The entry point should work with the Integrated Approach to Family Violence partnership on youth access and response (through the LASN).

If yours is a specialist agency (Indigenous, youth or family violence) acting as a direct entry point, it must link into the other entry points in the catchment to enable access to all local resources in a coordinated manner.

Child access

The entry points need to work with the regional children's resource coordinator to develop as child-friendly a space as possible.

Attachment 8: Multi-area and statewide service participation in Opening Doors[7]

The challenge

Because of a geographic approach to service coordination, agencies that deliver services in more than one network catchment face challenges in participating in service integration. As part of the pilots, a discussion paper was prepared for the pilot networks, outlining some of the issues and possible options. In September 2007 the Housing and Community Building Division and Council to Homeless Persons held a meeting with agencies delivering services across multiple areas, and made a commitment to revise the paper, incorporating agencies' feedback.

This discussion paper is a resource to assist existing and future networks to work with multi-area agencies in their catchment. It is the beginning of a process to explore the challenges and develop solutions.

The discussion paper provides several options to address the following two questions:

• How should a homelessness service provider that currently delivers services in more than one local area service network catchment area participate in Opening Doors?

• How can such multi-area service providers work with local service providers to ensure equitable, timely distribution of homelessness resources?

The intention of Opening Doors is that all housing and support resources are prioritised in a way that does not discriminate on the basis of current location of the client.

All homelessness agencies are expected to work with any person who contacts them for assistance, regardless of their area of origin. Area of origin is not an acceptable basis for exclusion from services.

Definitions

A 'statewide' service provides direct service delivery to clients where they are in each Department of Human Services region.

A multi-area service provides service delivery in more than one LASN catchment area. Accepting clients from more than one area is not an acceptable criterion when assessing whether a service provider is 'multi-area'.

The term 'multi-area' is applicable to both these service types.

'Multi-area' agencies face challenges in participation and resource distribution across multiple catchments. Practical considerations in responding to these challenges vary according to the number of areas covered by the multi-area service provider.

Multi-area services each contribute something unique to the service system, and therefore it is not possible to identify key features that all have in common. However, all multi-area services will share some features, including:

• operating across more than one LASN catchment area

• providing service to a specific target group (specialist)

• acting as a homelessness entry point

• offering an after-hours response.

In addition, multi-area services can play an advocacy and secondary consultation role for particular target groups.

The service coordination process of Opening Doors should ensure that all multi-area services also develop the following features:

• formal protocols with relevant agencies across their catchment area (in particular, the local entry point)

• provision of a specialist service that is not provided by local services

• promotion of their services in all areas of their catchment.

Many multi-area services provide both local and multi-area service delivery. Clear protocols should articulate the roles and responsibilities of both the local and the multi-area responses, and document any associated processes.

This does not represent a significant change for multi-area services. Networking has been integral to the work of a multi-area service, which should continue. Program structure, processes, staff, funding and focus all evolve, and consequently, the networking role is ongoing for all services. Opening Doors encourages a more formal networking environment.

Example

A service provider operating as a local entry point and currently funded for after-hours service provision may respond to after-hours calls from a much wider area because the other areas have no local after-hours response.

Local service providers which put the after-hours number on their answering machine should communicate regularly with the after-hours service to ensure accurate information. They may also provide or coordinate the follow-up response so that the multi-area provider is not overwhelmed by demand.

What should happen

• Equitable, timely and flexible distribution of available resources to people seeking assistance.

• A homeless person receives assistance at any homelessness entry point.

• Clients in every area can access a crisis, early intervention and outreach response as well as specialist Indigenous, family violence and youth response.

Examples

A single person leaving a crisis accommodation service to resettle in their home town should not arrive homeless in that area as if they are a new client.

A woman in rural Victoria deciding to leave her violent partner should have access to a family violence specialist response.

A person arriving at an entry point other than the one in the area on their health care card should still receive HEF according to availability and need.

Generalist initial assessment workers should have access to specialist youth secondary consultation to assist them in matching a young person with an appropriate youth refuge vacancy.

To achieve this

Initial assessment workers in all relevant LASNs must be able to access multi-area resources quickly and reliably (pathways and prioritisation criteria).

Clients of multi-area agencies must have quick and reliable access to support, HEF and housing in the areas to which they refer clients (pathways and prioritisation criteria).

While there are well-established and effective models in operation, there may be gaps in coverage and opportunities for developing enhanced referral protocols.

Options for participation by multi-area agencies in LASNs

Each multi-area service should consider the most suitable participation option for their particular circumstances, and negotiate this with their Department of Human Services regional and/or head office contact.

Issues for consideration:

• What is the size and make-up of the multi-area service's catchment?

• What will be the most time-efficient way of achieving service coordination?

• Is the multi-area service already acting as an entry point, or is it providing resources to which entry points will refer people?

• Is the multi-area service already participating in service coordination initiatives such as Creating Connections, primary care partnerships or Integrated Approach to Family Violence?

Many multi-area services are managed by large agencies with a range of homelessness programs. Consideration could be given to delegating the team leaders or managers of the individual homelessness services within the larger agency to participate in their local LASN as a means of approaching service coordination. It is critical that representatives attending LASN meetings have the authority to make decisions.

Option 1: A multi-area service joins the local network in the area where their head office is located, or where their main service delivery occurs. Access from other areas to their services is negotiated via this local network's arrangements with other areas. Recommended for service providers with a majority of local service provision.

Option 2: A multi-area service joins all the local networks in which they deliver services and directly participates in resource access negotiations. Recommended for service providers working across no more than two or three catchments.

Option 3: A multi-area service consults with stakeholders (clients, services and Department of Human Services) to develop a generic referral protocol for use by any LASN. Recommended for agencies delivering the same service in many catchments.

Option 4: Multi-area agencies with similar client groups or practice models work together to enable participation in multiple LASNs. Recommended for youth refuges and large crisis accommodation providers in similar geographic areas, Integrated Approach to Family Violence or Creating Connections partners.

Options for equitable, timely distribution of multi-area resources

Multi-area agencies should determine the most appropriate way to ensure equitable and timely distribution of their resources. It may be necessary to take more than one approach for different resources and/or to adapt a model.

The following options are offered as discussion starters:

- A multi-area service advertises their resources (along with relevant eligibility and matching criteria) on a resource register accessible by all agreed LASNs.

- A multi-area telephone or after-hours service has referral protocols with local homelessness agencies in several catchment areas.

- A specialist multi-area service arranges to act as a secondary consultation point and/or a specialist initial assessment provider for entry point services within their catchment.

- A multi-area service establishes formal protocols to enable equitable distribution of their resources through each eligible local entry point.

- A statewide service develops formal protocols with each local network and rotates attendance at each network to maintain a visible presence across the networks.

Attachment 9: Guide for prioritisation

The following guidelines for prioritisation provide a consistent and transparent basis for allocation decisions, and should be the basis of resource allocation agreements within each LASN.[8] All prioritisation systems must be based on the following principles.

Principles of resource allocation and prioritisation

Match the resource to the person whose needs will be best met by that particular resource.

Prioritise appropriate resources for households with the greatest housing and support needs, risks and vulnerabilities.

Ensure capacity to respond to people with high and complex needs and those requiring early intervention.

Regularly review prioritisation policies using unmet demand as a key indicator to ensure there is capacity to match available assistance to need.

Ensure service exclusion practices are not built into prioritisation policies.

Ensure that prioritisation policies are consistently understood and applied by all participating workers.

Make prioritisation policies transparent for clients and for other agencies.

These guidelines for prioritisation describe the interrelated criteria of:

- current accommodation
- other housing options
- stated and/or observed support needs
- professional support available.

These guidelines comprise two tables with the criteria for assessing housing and support needs and a grid that differentiates four priority levels: A, B, C and D (where A is the highest priority and reflects the highest level of client need and risk).

Guidelines cannot capture all the factors that may need to be considered when allocating resources. Each person's circumstances are unique and require an individualised response. Recent first-hand contact with the person should be a key element of the process.

Prioritisation for a specific resource takes into account all members of a household, including accompanying children.

Specialist expertise may be required to accurately assess some groups, for example, youth, Indigenous, or people who experience family violence (see Attachment 1: Guide to specific target group issues in the Opening Doors *Practice guide*).

1. Assessing housing need

The level of assessed housing need (high, medium or low) reflects the client's current housing circumstances, and the range of other housing options (if any) available to them. When prioritising include all household members, adult and child.

Level of housing need	Current accommodation	Other housing options
High	Client experiencing primary homelessness (sleeping rough, on trains, in car, squatting). Client living in a family violence situation at immediate risk of injury to self and/or children (possibly with Child Protection Order to leave violent partner or have children removed).	Client has no other reasonable accommodation options: • client cannot access HEF and/or • accommodation cannot be sourced due to multiple bans from accommodation providers and/or • accommodation cannot be established because the health or wellbeing of the client would be seriously compromised in HEF purchased accommodation, for example: – client has recently suffered physical attack within a rooming house setting, and it could be reasonably assessed that further accommodation in a similar setting would increase the client's experience of trauma – client experiencing severe health problems that could reasonably be expected to be worsened by rooming house accommodation, but does not require hospitalisation – client assessed as particularly vulnerable to exploitation or violence in a rooming house environment– for example, frail aged and families.
Medium	Client in current temporary accommodation assessed as detrimental to client's wellbeing: • temporary HEF–funded accommodation, assessed as unsuitable for client, as a stop–gap measure while awaiting crisis vacancy	Client has no other more appropriate accommodation options available: • client not able to access HEF from any source

Medium (cont.)	or • temporary accommodation with friends or family, with negative impact on client or • client facing imminent discharge from institution (hospital, psychiatric inpatient unit, prison).	or • client can access HEF, but the available HEF-funded accommodation options are likely to be detrimental to client's wellbeing.
Low	• Client in current temporary accommodation, ending soon or • client currently has no accommodation, but is able to access suitable accommodation.	Client has other suitable accommodation options available: • with family or friends and/or • client eligible for HEF, and HEF-funded accommodation is deemed suitable for the short term.

2. Assessing support need, risk and vulnerability

A person's level of need, risk and vulnerability in relation to their support issues (high, medium or low) reflects an assessment of their stated and observed support needs, as well as the level of professional support they currently receive. When prioritising include all household members, adult and child.

Level of support need/risk/ vulnerability	Stated and/or observed support needs	Professional support available

High	• Client has one or more significant support needs currently having a major impact on client's functioning and/or wellbeing
	
	and/or
	
	• client has multiple or complex support needs requiring intensive assistance
	
	and/or
	
	• there is a significant risk of harm to client or others, due to:
	
	  – major physical or mental health issues
	
	  – vulnerability to violence (including domestic violence), exploitation or abuse from others
	
	  – potential for self-harm/suicide risk.
		Client currently has no active support in place:
		
		• previous support links may have broken down
		
		• client may be resisting support
		
		or
		
		• client has some support in place, but the support relationship is tenuous or likely to break down in the near future.

Level of support need/risk/ vulnerability	Stated and/or observed support needs	Professional support available
Medium	Client has one or more significant support needs.	At least one support worker actively providing ongoing support to client. Level of support may be insufficient.
Low	Client has minor support needs.	• Appropriate supports in place or • no supports in place • client has not stated need for support

3. Priority grid

Priority level	Housing need	Support need/risk
A	High	High
B	High	Medium
B	Medium	High
C	Medium	Medium
D	Low	Medium
D	Medium	Low

4. Prioritising among people with a similar level of need/risk

Within each priority level there may be several people with a similar level of need and/or risk, who could be considered for any vacancy that arises. In making decisions regarding prioritisation amongst these people, the following factors may be relevant:

• finer distinctions in relative levels of need and risk, based on consideration of the changing circumstances of each person/household

• an assessment of a person's vulnerability–their individual capacity to cope with risks posed to their wellbeing

• anticipated length of time a person can remain in current accommodation–a person whose accommodation is about to end would tend to be prioritised

• the length of time a person has been waiting for an appropriate resource–all other factors being equal, a person who has been waiting longer would be prioritised over someone who has been waiting a shorter time.

Attachment 10: Unacceptable and discriminatory exclusion practices

The following description of unacceptable and discriminatory exclusion practices is provided for use by local area service networks as an aid in making local agreements and protocols that avoid these practices.

Violent or aggressive behaviour–actual or feared

Clients who behave aggressively towards workers are sometimes banned from an agency or local area. Worker/agency perceptions of client behaviour and intention vary widely–one may be able to cope with the sort of behaviour that another could not tolerate.

A cross-target agency working with a woman leaving a violent partner may refuse to work with the male partner because they assess that his presence in the agency poses a risk to the woman. However, if there is no other homelessness service in that area, the man must travel for assistance or go without.

An agency that provides shared housing may refuse to house a person who poses a risk of violence to other clients. The perception of risk may be very broad, such as all people with a mental health diagnosis or all people with a serious drug or alcohol issue, or may be based on past experience with that person.

Good practice signpost

All homelessness workers, particularly at entry points, should be trained in managing aggressive behaviour, and need to have access to high quality supervision. Give people the benefit of the doubt and base decisions on actual events rather than possible problems.

Intoxication

People who are intoxicated (alcohol or drug) might be evicted or asked to leave housing–especially shared housing, such as refuges and crisis accommodation–and may be banned from coming into some agencies. This is usually because of an assessment of increased risk of violence. Sometimes this arises through a value judgment by workers, for instance, that the person should be trying harder to abstain from using drugs and alcohol. Some people with mental health problems may be caught up in this exclusion if their behaviour is perceived to be due to intoxication.

Good practice signpost

Intoxication is a common situation in the homeless population, especially before people settle into housing. Agencies should have policies that include, rather than exclude, people in this condition as far as possible. If a person is intoxicated to the extent that they cannot manage the interview, they should be followed up when they are sober.

Criminal behaviour such as drug dealing, assault, theft

People might be evicted from shared accommodation if they commit crimes. Others may be excluded if they have a criminal record, especially of sex offences against children.

Good practice signpost

It should not be general practice to ask a person about their criminal record. If there are known risk factors, safety planning should take these into account. Where shared accommodation is not suitable, other options should be sought. Evictions should only occur for breaches of the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

Specific target groups

An agency may add an extra condition to access for a highly sought-after resource. This is often in the belief that it will mean a better outcome from the use of that resource. For example, an agency might only nominate young people who are still at school into their youth-designated THM properties, even though this is the only THM property available. Young people who are out of school may only have access to the lower quality accommodation options of caravan parks or rooming houses.

Good practice signpost

Local area service networks decisions on resource targeting must be based on increasing, rather than constraining access. Resource targeting should be based on evidence and care should be taken not to leave another part of the client group without an option.

Being from outside the area

Proof of a 'link' to the region has sometimes been important when assessing for resource eligibility, in the belief that local resources should be targeted to local people, and/or that people have a greater risk of failing if they are housed in unfamiliar surroundings. However, many homeless people have no connection to any particular area, and others may be looking for a new place to make a fresh start away from old trouble.

Good practice signpost

Provide a service regardless of area of origin and, when possible, check which other agencies may already be working with the client so that work is not duplicated or confused.

Failure to accept support

This is also called 'failure to engage'. A condition of being housed can be that the person agrees to work with a support agency, and that they continue to do so. This is because better outcomes are generally achieved by supported tenants, and sometimes because supported tenants are usually 'better behaved' tenants.

Good practice signpost

Effort needs to be made to understand why someone refuses support, because they may have very good reasons–which can be addressed. Everyone has the right not to have a support worker, even if this seems unwise. Local area service networks and agencies should consider ways of offering housing options to homeless people who do not want the accompanying support.

Unwilling to work on support issues

Similarly to the above comments, a person may be excluded from homelessness assistance accommodation if they do not demonstrate their willingness to address the problems that the assessing agency believes has caused their homelessness. This is sometimes described as not being 'housing ready.'

Good practice signpost

Many homeless people may fall into this category, but they are all eligible for services. Some people may seem more amenable, personally likeable and ready to change, but this cannot be the basis for choosing or refusing.

Support needs assessed as too high

Agencies may refuse to support a person whose needs they assess as so high that they feel unable to work effectively with them. This may also be due to a feeling that the person is more rightly a client of another system–mental health, drug and alcohol, and so on.

Good practice signpost

Homelessness workers may have to initiate co-case management with relevant support providers so that the client can receive a fuller range of the services they require and so that the homelessness worker can concentrate on the housing aspects of the client's needs and risks. Local area service networks can assist by developing protocols with commonly overlapping services.

Attachment 11: List of local area service networks as at May 2008

Note: some changes to these catchments may occur in the course of implementing Opening Doors.

Region and LASN	Local Government Areas in catchment
Barwon South West	
Barwon	Greater Geelong, Colac Otway, Surf Coast, Queenscliffe
South West	Warrnambool, Corangamite, Moyne, Southern Grampians, Glenelg
Eastern Metropolitan	
Eastern Metropolitan	Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse, Manningham, Knox, Yarra Ranges, Booroondara
Gippsland	
West Gippsland	West Gippsland, Latrobe Valley, South Gippsland, Bass Coast and Wellington
East Gippsland	East Gippsland
Grampians	
Central Highlands	Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool, Hepburn, Pyrenees
Central Grampians/ Wimmera	Horsham, Ararat, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarriambiack
Hume	
Wangaratta and district	Wangaratta, Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Moira (Yarrawonga/Cobram), Strathbogie (Violet Town/Euroa)
Wodonga and district	Indigo, Towong
Shepparton and district	Greater Shepparton, Moira (Nathalia/Numurkah/Barmah)
Seymour and district	Seymour, Mitchell, Murrindindi, Strathbogie (Nagambie)
Loddon Mallee	
Loddon	Bendigo, Mount Alexander, Macedon Ranges, Campaspe, Central Goldfields
Mallee	Mildura, Swan Hill, Ganawarra, Buloke
North and West Metropolitan	
Northern Sub Regional	Hume, Whittlesea, Nillumbik, Moreland, Darebin, Banyule, Yarra and Melbourne (Carlton, Parkville, East Melbourne, CBD, Southbank and South Yarra
Western Sub Regional	Melton, Wyndham, Brimbank, Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and Melbourne (Kensington, North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Flemington, Port Melbourne
Southern Metropolitan	
Inner/Middle	Port Phillip, Stonnington, Glen Eira, Bayside, Kingston
Outer/Peninsula	Casey, Cardinia, Frankston, Dandenong, Mornington

Attachment 12: Common terms and language used in Opening Doors

This glossary can assist with language and terminology for the implementation of Opening Doors, but is not a complete list. Nor is it a detailed description and/or the context. Further information can be found in the Opening Doors Framework, other parts of this *Service coordination guide* and the *Practice guide*.

Further definitions can be located in the SAAP Act and the *Victorian Homelessness Data Collection Data Dictionary*.

Accreditation	Formal accreditation is a standards-based recognition system with a clear focus on continuous quality improvement. It involves assessment against a predetermined set of standards and formal acknowledgement of achievement of expected performance against those standards through a recognition process. For further information see Homelessness Assistance Service Standards below.
Active referral	A process of referring clients to a service they need by contacting the relevant agency to confirm eligibility, appropriateness and their capacity to accept or assist the person. It means taking responsibility to ensure that a referral has been accepted before ending the service relationship with the person seeking assistance.
Aim of SAAP	The overall aim of SAAP is to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in order to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Within this aim the goals are to: • resolve crises • re-establish family links where appropriate • re-establish a capacity to live independently of SAAP.
Case management	In the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), this is a collaborative planning approach to the achievement of individual client outcomes. It includes intake assessment, and may also include appropriate referrals, provision of direct assistance and the use of mainstream services for each client, as appropriate. It may involve the development of a personal plan or support agreement developed in consultation with each client following assessment, and includes linking clients with the range of support that they will require after leaving SAAP. Case management operates from the case manager's initial point of contact with the client to exit from a case-managed support period. It may also involve post-exit follow-up of clients.
Crisis supported accommodation	Short-term supported accommodation (average of six weeks) for people in immediate crisis of homelessness or family violence who require intensive support. Example includes youth refuges, family violence refuges and the major night shelters. Refer to the *Office of Housing Homelessness guidelines* for further detail.
Engagement in initial assessment	In the homelessness service system, a primary purpose of initial assessment is to facilitate engagement as a foundation for successful service delivery. 'Engagement' is the activity required offering a professional relationship based on respect and care to people who may have little reason to trust the service system.

Engagement in initial assessment (cont.)	For the client, successful engagement would involve feeling believed, accepted, that their individual circumstances had been understood and that the worker was attempting to help. For the worker, successful engagement would mean feeling they know enough of the client's circumstances and wishes to confidently advise them of their options and to advocate on their behalf.
Entry point/access point/front doors	In the Opening Doors service coordination model, consolidated access points into the homelessness service system undertake initial assessment, prioritisation and resource allocation for all homelessness assistance services in the catchment. The access points provide improved timelines of assistance and pathways through the service system and out of homelessness.
Family	An adult or adults with dependent children and/or a woman who is pregnant, youths and adult siblings, and adults who identify as a family.
Family violence	Family violence is the repeated use of violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour by an individual against family members, or someone with whom they have, or have had, an intimate relationship. Violent behaviour includes physical assaults and an array of power and control tactics used along a continuum in concert with one another, including direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, property damage, social isolation and behaviours which cause a person to live in fear.
Family violence risk assessment	The Victorian Government's Integrated Approach to Family Violence initiative developed a family violence risk assessment framework for family violence services and other services that see women and their children experiencing family violence. Risk assessment involves risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation. Risk identification determines what, where, when, why and how something could happen; risk analysis attempt to understand the nature of a risk, and determine the resultant level of that risk; and risk evaluation compares the level of risk against criteria that determine the significance of the risk.
First contact	In the Opening Doors *Framework*, first contact is an initial screening for risk and service requirements and determines whether the individuals and families seeking assistance are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In a timely manner the worker gathers enough information from the client to determine what assistance is needed and whether the service is the appropriate provider. The worker may provide the client with housing information immediately or organise a time for the client to complete an initial assessment.
Homelessness	According to the definition in the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act*, a person is homeless if they have inadequate access to safe and secure housing. A person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if the only housing to which the person access: • damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health

Homelessness (cont.)	• threatens the person's safety
	• marginalises the person through failing to provide access to adequate personal amenities or the economic and social supports that a home normally affords
	• places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.
	The homelessness service system recognises the Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992 definitions of homelessness:
	• primary homelessness–people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, parks and so on)
	• secondary homelessness–people moving between various forms of temporary shelter (friends, emergency accommodation, refuges, hostels and rooming/boarding houses)
	• tertiary homelessness–people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure.
Homeless persons' support centres	The Supported Accommodation Assistance programs provide funding for support or day centres for people who are homeless, providing meals, living skills, counselling or personal care. Services often also provide facilities for the linked delivery of support by other services or programs.
Homelessness Assistance Service Standards	The Housing and Community Building Division developed the Homelessness Assistance Service Standards for agencies providing Housing and Community Building Division-funded homelessness services. They are a set of common standards and guiding principles for homelessness assistance services in a range of settings, designed to enhance service responsiveness, consistency and awareness of clients' rights within the homelessness service system. See also Accreditation.
Homelessness Service System Development Projects (HSSDP)	HSSDPs were established through the Victorian Homelessness Strategy in Eastern Metropolitan Region, Hume Region, Inner Metropolitan Melbourne and the Outer South to test new service configurations and infrastructure initiatives, including service coordination, common assessment and referral approaches and homelessness assistance entry points.
Housing Pathways (Joined-up) Initiatives	Through the Victorian Homelessness Strategy, the Housing and Community Building Division established a range of cross-program/government targeted support and housing initiatives assisting with the prevention of homelessness and early intervention for people at risk of homelessness with complex needs.
Initial assessment	In the Opening Doors *Framework*, initial assessment provides an immediate response and an entry point to the homelessness services system or access to information and assistance to obtain services outside the system. It refers to an assessment of client housing and support needs, and the development of a course of action for a client and/or system to address those needs. The process of initial assessment is a 'conversation', in which building trust with the client is essential to providing quality outcomes.

Initial assessment (cont.)	An initial assessment should only collect information about a client's current circumstances and needs. It does not refer to the more detailed, comprehensive assessments which are part of an ongoing, longer-term case management approach. Initial assessment also involves sensitivity to the person's coping ability, which may change according to the situation or the time.
	Initial assessment determines:
	• the most immediate homelessness-related needs and risks
	• options for safe housing for the night
	• basic needs for food, hygiene, transport
	• indications of need for specialist support
	• risks to clients' safety or to the safety of others.
Interim response	The Opening Doors service coordination model formalised the role of interim response as a critical response in the homelessness service system. Historically, other names for this work include 'follow-up', 'holding', 'short-term intervention' and 'case coordination'.
	Interim response has a dual function of:
	• remaining engaged with individual/households who have been assessed and are awaiting housing and/or support and to monitor their situation for any changes
	and/or
	• assisting at-risk clients to prevent homelessness.
	Key elements typically include:
	• the development of a course of action to access services or prevent homelessness as required
	• active referral to appropriate housing, support and material aid services
	• building relationships with community services and supporting clients to establish effective support networks in their community
	• participating in integrated support planning with other agencies and community services
	• secondary consultation regarding housing issues
	• waiting list management and prioritising clients for a service.
Direct services	These include:
	• placement in emergency short-term accommodation and subsequent exit planning, outreach and follow-up
	• monitoring while the client is waiting for other services
	• safety planning
	• access to food, clothing, personal hygiene
	• assistance to secure and/or maintain crisis, transition or private rental accommodation

Direct services (cont.)	• assistance with application for priority access to public housing
	• assistance to prevent homelessness occurring
	• financial assistance for housing related needs
	• assistance with legal issues
	• housing advice and information
	• advocacy/liaison
	• emotional support
	• staying in contact with people while they are waiting for an ongoing resource (housing and/or support), which may include contact over the phone, face-to-face meetings, assistance to complete an application for the segmented waiting list, advice to secure private rental, referrals to allied services.
	There may be variations in duration of engagement, intensity of support and frequency of contact.
	Interim response is linked to Homelessness Assistance Service Standard 2.3 Effective referrals.
Prioritisation	Prioritisation is a tool that manages demand and best matches resources to need. Because of scarcity of resources in the homelessness service sector, prioritisation must remain linked to unmet demand, but can still concentrate on the best matching of resources to need. In the positive sense, effective prioritisation should mean that a person receives a service that is best matched to their individual circumstances. In the negative sense, prioritisation may be used to 'keep back the tide' of a demand that feels overwhelming. Prioritisation also needs to be considered in the context of service exclusion practices as general exclusions can be used to narrow the number of people to whom the service responds.
	Criteria used in competitive allocation of resources (support or accommodation):
	• level of risk–people at greatest risk should be prioritised for a particular resource felt to reduce this risk
	• appropriateness–the person whose needs best match the characteristics of the available resource should be prioritised
	• service exclusion practices must not be built into prioritisation policies
	• prioritisation policies must be transparent for clients and other agencies.
Provider agency/ service	Agencies that deliver Housing and Community Building Division-funded homelessness assistance services of support, crisis housing, transitional housing, supported accommodation (crisis accommodation and refuges) and HEF are referred to in the Opening Doors local area service network as 'provider agencies'.
Referral	See Active referral.

Resource register	In Opening Doors a resource register is a tool for use by the local area service network that allows all local provider agencies to promptly and accurately advertise resource vacancies, including: • financial assistance–HEF or other • crisis supported accommodation • transitional housing • support capacity and expertise • local resources. Each advertisement includes a description of the eligibility criteria matched to the resource. A resource register allows for an efficient and timely allocation of resources where the initial assessment worker can directly match the person with the assistance currently available.
Risk assessment	Risk assessment is a preliminary assessment of key risk factors, such as whether the person is a risk to themselves, dependents, other householders the public, or at risk from others. It is a process where specific client information is gathered and analysed, enabling prediction about the likelihood of future risks to safety occurring. Risk assessment also enhances decision making regarding prioritisation and allocation of resources and expertise in specific cases.
Specialist services	One that provides expertise in working with a particular target group and/or the provision of specialised responses. These services may or may not provide homelessness services. Specialised services within the homelessness service system include: • youth • family violence • Indigenous • children's resource support workers • mental health. Specialised services outside the homelessness service system that are most likely to be drawn on by homelessness services include: • asylum seekers • drug and alcohol • cultural and linguistic diversity • gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender intersex • mental health • ChildFIRST.

Transitional housing	The Housing and Community Building Division funds community transitional housing providers to provide and manage safe medium-term accommodation for individuals and families who are homeless and most in need of support, to assist them to resolve homelessness. Transitional housing is usually linked to transition support provided through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, and equips the client to sustain a long-term tenancy.
Transition support	In the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, transition support is the provision of a range of supports to people who are homeless and in crisis or in transition from crisis, to assist them towards independence. Transition support is medium-term support provided either with transitional housing or on an outreach basis that assist clients to address the range of issues that are impacting on their ability to access and maintain long-term housing. Key elements typically include: • intake • detailed ongoing assessment of housing and support needs • case planning and exit planning • coordination of services • monitoring, review and evaluation • secondary consultation • building relationships with community services and supporting clients to establish effective support networks in their community • participating in integrated support planning with other agencies and community services.
Telephone information and referral	In the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, telephone information and referral is the provision of information, referral and limited counselling for people who are homeless or experiencing family violence, generally through telephone services.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement and contributors to this glossary:

- pilot local area service networks

- Department of Human Services Opening Doors project leaders in the North West Metropolitan Region, Sarah Langmore and Mark Knauer.

Definitions have been adapted from a number of documents including:

- Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children 'Enhancing the safety of women and children in Victoria'

- Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management, supporting an integrated family violence service system

- Homeless Assistance Programs, *Guidelines and Conditions of Funding*, 2006–2009, version 2 September 2007

- Homelessness Assistance Service Activities *Draft Definitions* September 2007

- Inner Metropolitan Homelessness Project working Group *Draft Definitions* April 2005

- *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994*

- *Victorian Homelessness Data Collection Date Dictionary* June 2007.