

# Together Home program Questions and Answers

Updated November 2023

## Overview of the Together Home Program

### What is the Together Home Program?

The Together Home Program commenced in June 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a \$189 million investment by the NSW Government over 4 years (2020 to 2024) to support over 1,000 people experiencing street sleeping or with a history of street sleeping with access to housing and wraparound support over two years. Housing and wrap around supports are provided separately in-line with Housing First principles.

### What happens after 2024?

Future program funding will be informed by the program evaluation and as part of a broader suite of Housing First initiatives within the new NSW Homelessness Strategy. It is anticipated the new NSW Homelessness Strategy will start from July 2024.

## Program Funding

### How is the Program funded?

The Program has been funded across three tranches to provide housing and wraparound support over two years. The program model includes:

- Over 1000 leasing and wraparound support packages
- 107 high needs packages and one-off funding grants (OOFG) delivered through Homelessness NSW
- An Aboriginal-led model in the Central Coast with 35 leasing and support packages
- New supply to build or acquire around 280 new social housing dwellings, with co-contributions from participating community housing providers
- An independent implementation, economic, and outcomes evaluation

### **All Together Home Packages have already been allocated. Will more funding become available?**

All Together Home packages have been allocated. Tranche 1 and 2 client extension funding for leasing and support has already been allocated to providers to assist a proportion of clients that will benefit from additional time in the program and ease their transition into long term housing. Allocations based on mainstreaming reporting by CHPs and support providers.

Tranche 3 client extension funding was announced as part of NSW 2023-24 Budget in September. Providers will be advised of their funding allocation by December 2023 and payments planned for early in 2024.

## **Program Delivery**

### **How is the Program being delivered?**

Together Home is being delivered across NSW by 18 Community Housing Providers, with the support component being provided by Specialist Homelessness Services or other support providers.

## **Who does the Program support?**

### **Who is eligible for Together Home?**

People who are currently street sleeping or have a history of street sleeping are eligible for this program.

### **How long are clients supported for?**

Clients are assisted for two years, commencing from acceptance into the Program. Some clients may leave earlier or are extended for additional time in the program, depending on their needs. CHPs work with client on exit planning and are committed to housing clients in long-term housing at program exit.

### **What is the program doing to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people street sleeping?**

Together Home prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with around 30% of clients identifying as Aboriginal. An Aboriginal-led model also commenced delivery in 2021 on the Central Coast, providing 35 leasing and support packages, funded through the NSW Homelessness Strategy (2018 - 2023).

### **What counts as a client exit from Together Home?**

If clients are active in the program, receiving THP assistance, CHPs should not record clients as having exited the program. A client is recorded as having exited the program only when all assistance (i.e. leasing, support, high needs and one-off funding grants assistance) is no longer provided.

## **Housing assistance**

### **What housing assistance is provided by the Program?**

Funding for leasing is available for two years, however the funding rules are flexible given that some people may require assistance for a shorter or longer period.

CHPs are funded to lease dwellings on the private market for eligible and accepted program clients. Informed by client assessments and needs, sometimes it is appropriate to house clients directly into social housing properties (either CHP or public housing dwellings). The program objective is to transition clients into long-term, stable accommodation.

### **What happens if a client is in breach of a tenancy?**

CHPs apply best endeavours to support clients to sustain their tenancies. Where a client is at risk of eviction by a landlord/real estate agent, the CHP and support provider will engage with the client to provide the support needed to sustain the tenancy and liaise with all relevant stakeholders. If the client is evicted, the CHP undertakes to facilitate access to alternative accommodation, where possible.

## **Flexible funding rules**

### **Can unspent funds be reallocated to other clients?**

Flexible funding rules allow unspent program and extension funds (all allocated by tranche) to be spent across tranches. This means that funds (but not clients) can be moved between tranches as required to support client needs.

However, if the client is still receiving THP assistance, CHPs should not record the client as having exited the program.

### **Can support funds be used for head leasing and vice versa?**

Unspent Tranches 1, 2 and 3 funds remaining after a client exits the program can be spent interchangeably on tenancy or supports costs to assist other Together Home clients.

Unspent funds after a client exit the program can be used for:

- Extending a leasehold for an existing client
- Extending or increasing level of support for an existing client, or
- If there are sufficient unspent remaining funds, an additional THP package can be created for a new client for two years. However, CHPs must take reasonable steps to ensure that obligations for existing clients are satisfied before creating a new package.

Extension funding received by CHPs to extend tenancy and supports to clients (based on CHP mainstream data reporting) may also be spent flexibly across tranches.

### **Can support funds be used for tenancy costs such as rent arrears or tenant damage?**

CHP funding includes a Rough Sleeper Loading of \$6.6k per package in recognition of the complex needs of the client group, which may be used to cover tenancy costs such as arrears and property damage. CHPs can pool per package funds and use flexibly as required.

As with any tenancy, tenant damage costs can be negotiated and recovered from tenants. Property owners are responsible for general property maintenance.

Additionally, up to 5% of the total specialist case management support funding can be used for Property and Tenancy Management, after client support needs are fulfilled.

## High Needs Funding Packages

### Is there additional funding support for clients with complex needs?

High Needs packages (HNPs) are an important design component of the Together Home program, which provide additional funding for intensive support for people (aged 18 and over) with complex needs. Homelessness NSW manages the funding and delivers High Needs Packages.

These tailored packages aim to promote personal recovery and social inclusion involving a spectrum of help such as access to work and education, learning new skills, participating in activities, and accessing other supports such as psychological therapies, relapse prevention and supports to maintain a tenancy.

Whilst the initial 107 High Needs Packages have been allocated; funding is available for one-off funding grants (OOFGs) to provide additional assistance to existing Together Home clients. Applications for one-off funding grants are made in the same way as for High Needs packages, via the Together Home Providers.

### What is the role of the High Needs Panel?

The role of the High Needs panel is to assess and approve requests for HNPs and OOFGs. The panel outlines the total amount approved for each type of service per client request. If variations to these approved items of expenditure are required, CHPs must submit a Review Request to the Panel.

### What is the protocol when there are unspent HNP or OOFG funds?

High Needs funds **may not be spent on leasing costs**, including arrears or tenancy damage and other.

There are two likely scenarios may lead to having unspent HNP or OOFG funds:

1. **The approved funding amount is higher than the amount spent on an approved item, leaving behind an unspent balance.** In these cases, CHPs are required to submit a Review request to the High Needs Panel for Panel approval for the CHP to re-allocate the unspent funds towards other support needs the client may have.
2. **The client exits the program leaving behind unspent funds.** If a client has approved and unspent HNP funds, CHPs should undertake their best endeavours to keep the client in the program to allow the client to receive the full benefit of approved HNP funding. For example, a provider may set aside the funds for up to three months for a client who has disengaged if there is some expectation that the client may re-engage with the Program. However, if the client exits the Program, they may leave behind unspent, approved high needs funds. In this case the CHP must advise the DCJ Together Home Program team (via [Togetherhome@dcj.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Togetherhome@dcj.nsw.gov.au)) of any

remaining unspent funding. It is most likely that DCJ will require that unspent funds be returned to Homelessness NSW to enable them to increase the pool of OOFG funds for the benefit of other clients. However, the CHP may arrange a time with the team to discuss a strongly motivated, alternative, client-centric option for the use of that funding.

## **Who can I contact to find out more the Together Home Program?**

For further information please email the Together Home mailbox at:

[TogetherHome@dcj.nsw.gov.au](mailto:TogetherHome@dcj.nsw.gov.au)