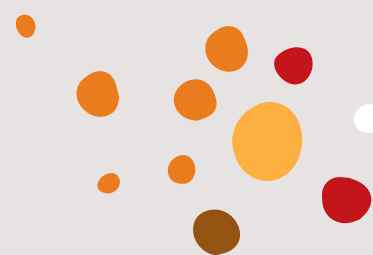

Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places Implementation Guidelines

April 2024



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Glossary

Aboriginal peoples: includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005.

Protocol: this refers to the *Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places*, June 2022.

Workers: includes staff, contractors, volunteers, security officers and police officers. Where necessary, a specific role/worker may be referred to directly i.e. *police officer*.

1. Overview

People experiencing homelessness have the **same rights** as any member of the public to be in public places, participate in public activities or events, carry with them and manage their belongings, and request or decline support or assistance.

The NSW Government introduced the *Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places* (the Protocol) in 1999 to assist and guide government, non-government organisations, and private businesses to interact and engage with people experiencing homelessness, so they are treated with respect and dignity, and do not face discrimination. The Protocol also encourages government and non-government organisations to provide a response or deliver support to people experiencing homelessness if they need or request it.

The Protocol is an important part of the NSW Government's response to homelessness. It has been endorsed by the following NSW Government departments and agencies¹, many of which operate in public places or provide services to people experiencing homelessness:

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment
- NSW Police Force
- NSW Health
- Transport for NSW
- Aboriginal Affairs NSW
- Fire and Rescue NSW
- Multicultural NSW
- NSW Department of Customer Service
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade

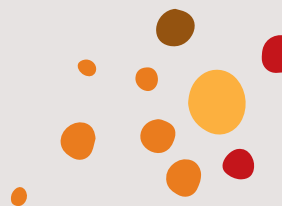
The Protocol can also be used by non-signatory organisations, including but not limited to local government, public health networks, private businesses, and community members. The NSW Government encourages agencies, organisations, and businesses to embed the Protocol principles into their policies and procedures.

The Protocol, including information on underlying principles and considerations for engagement, is attached at **Appendix A**.

The *Implementation Guidelines* (the Guidelines) are a tool to assist workers to use the Protocol effectively. Information in the Guidelines is subject to change from time to time. It is important for workers to use the links provided for the most up to date information.

The Guidelines' Appendices (to be used to support the use of the Guidelines) assist workers to develop empathy and understanding of circumstances that can impact people experiencing homelessness. They provide best practice for supporting people with diverse needs, and links to statewide resources. Workers may need to refer to multiple appendices when offering support due to the intersectionality of a person's needs.

¹ When a government agency or department name or construct changes, it is assumed participation will continue under the new arrangements. The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) will follow up with signatories during all reviews.



2. Legal status of the Protocol

The Protocol does not override existing laws or regulations, or the enforcement of those laws or regulations. Additionally, the Protocol does not prevent government or non-government organisations from taking appropriate action where health or safety is at risk.

However, the Protocol encourages consideration of people's circumstances when enforcing laws and regulations and the use of discretion as appropriate. This discretion should take into account the complex circumstances and specific needs of the person experiencing homelessness.

3. Responsibility of signatories

All departments, agencies, organisations and businesses are encouraged to incorporate the Protocol into their business policies, practices, training, and resources. It is acknowledged that policy and operational issues affecting the implementation of the Protocol will vary across each entity and location.

Signatories to the Protocol should ensure the Protocol and the Guidelines are available and accessible to all relevant workers. Where applicable, it is also recommended that information about the Protocol and its principles are included in induction training for new workers, and in development training for existing workers. This includes induction training and development training for volunteers, contractors, and security personnel.

Signatories should clearly identify the department, agency, organisation, or business they represent at the start of their interaction with a person experiencing homelessness. Signatories should be familiar with their entity's feedback and complaints processes and be equipped to respond to any complaints related to their use of the Protocol. For a list of key agency and departmental contacts see **Appendix S**.

4. Where the Protocol applies

The Protocol applies to public places such as parks and outdoor spaces which are ordinarily accessible to the public. This may also include cars parked in public places such as on-street parking.

It does not apply to private property or property which is not accessible to the general public. However, workers are encouraged to use the principles of the Protocol within any setting.

Land and business owners are recommended to manage their property in compassionate ways that consider the Protocol principles, especially where their property borders public spaces (e.g. doorways and hallways).



5. Implementation of the Protocol

5.1 What does homelessness look like?

There is no single definition of homelessness. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness for the purposes of the *Census of Population and Housing* as the lack of one or more elements that represent 'home'ⁱ.

The ABS statistical definition states "when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered as experiencing homelessness if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations"ⁱⁱ.

People experiencing homelessness are commonly classified under the three categories:

- **Primary homelessness** - People without conventional accommodation which may include sleeping rough (i.e. on the street, in a park) or in improvised dwellings (e.g. a tent, a car)ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Secondary homelessness** - People who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (e.g. crisis accommodation, youth refuges, 'couch surfing')^{iv}

- **Tertiary homelessness** - People staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (e.g. boarding houses, caravan parks, or severe overcrowding situations)^v

People may also experience feelings of homelessness due to a disconnection from family, country or community^{vi}, which can impact their wellbeing.

While the Protocol is intended to support people experiencing primary homelessness (i.e. residing in public places), people living in temporary accommodation, boarding houses, refuges, and unsafe or overcrowded premises may not be permitted, or may choose not to remain on site during the day, and therefore, may be spending their time in public places.

People experiencing homelessness, as with all people, present in a range of different ways. A worker may not be able to identify a person experiencing homelessness from their appearance or behaviour, as each person has their own unique circumstances and presentation. A worker should always be respectful and use discretion when responding or engaging with anyone in a public place.



5.2 Preparing for an appropriate response

Be aware of and understand the Protocol

Each department, organisation, and business has a different role, responsibility and geographical area in which it operates; and will come into contact with people experiencing homelessness who have different needs and circumstances. Therefore, it is important for workers to understand how the Protocol's principles fit into their agency, department, organisation or business's own policies and procedures.

Agencies, departments, organisations and businesses are encouraged to train their workers on a range of topics including use of the Protocol, cultural competency, trauma-informed and person-centred care, and identification of distress or need, through courses such as Mental Health First Aid, Active Bystander training, and other relevant topics. Such training may improve a worker's capacity and skills to respond appropriately to the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

Recognise bias and judgements

There are common misconceptions and stigmas attributed to homelessness. It is important to leave personal biases and judgments aside when interacting with someone experiencing homelessness. Demonstrating respect and understanding throughout all interactions can help to build trust and improve outcomes for the person experiencing homelessness.

It is important that a worker is aware of the potential for unconscious bias. This refers to the attitudes or stereotypes people hold deep in their unconscious mind. These biases may not match how the worker feels or acts when conscious thought is given to a person or subject. Acknowledging unconscious biases and challenging assumptions can help workers connect with people without prejudice and without escalating a situation.

Demonstrate empathy

A worker should demonstrate empathy in response to a person experiencing homelessness. Empathy involves the ability to emotionally understand what another person is experiencing or feeling. An empathetic response requires kindness, a nonjudgmental attitude, flexibility, cultural competency, recognition of a person's strengths and a willingness to understand the person and their needs.



5.3. Models of care for an appropriate response

People experiencing homelessness, as with all people, have unique and diverse backgrounds, experiences, circumstances, strengths and needs. Workers should use trauma-informed and culturally safe practices, be person-centred and grounded in harm reduction principles during all engagements. Workers should also ask the person if they would like a support person, including a cultural support person, to be present.

Trauma-informed practice

Trauma is defined by the impact that an experience has on the individual rather than by the event itself. Between 91 and 100 per cent of people experiencing homelessness have experienced at least one major trauma in their lives.^{vii} Trauma can impact individuals in many ways including socially, psychologically, economically, and physically^{viii}.

Trauma can occur from a range of circumstances including but not limited to the loss of a loved one, experiencing or witnessing violence, war or persecution, sexual abuse, family breakdown, negative experience with government systems, losing a property, and unemployment. Trauma can also be intergenerational, where trauma flows through generations.

A person's trauma may impact their willingness to access support services. Any interaction which is not trauma-informed may worsen a person's trauma and/or exacerbate symptoms.

When a worker engages a person, it is important to consider they may be experiencing the impacts of trauma. The worker should ensure their actions or behaviour do not re-traumatise the person. The worker should also understand and interpret the person's responses or behaviour through a trauma lens. Respect, empathy and consideration should be provided to people experiencing homelessness to help reduce the impact of the trauma and support healing. Key principles to remember when providing trauma-informed care include:

- Ensuring the person is safe and feels safe (and reducing any perceived threats)
- Maintaining trust
- Providing choice
- Collaborating where power and decision making are shared
- Empowering the individual by recognising and building on their strengths

- Being responsive to a person's culture, gender, history and identity
- The response is seamless, effective and efficient, responding to a person's needs

For further information on trauma informed practice, workers can refer to the NSW Health *Integrated Trauma-Informed Care Framework: My story, my health, my future* (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/patients/trauma/Pages/itic-framework.aspx>).

Person-Centred

A person-centred approach is where the person is placed at the centre of the interaction or service. The focus is on the person, what they can do, and what they identify they need, rather than their condition or disability.

Assistance should focus on achieving the person's aspirations and be tailored to their needs and unique circumstances. The person's choices may be different to what a worker may expect or recommend for them, but responses should enable the person's self-determination, and focus support and engagement on the person's will and preferences.

The Council to Homeless Persons' Person-Centred Practice Guide can help workers deliver holistic, strengths-based and trauma-informed person-centred care (<https://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CHP-Person-Centered-Practice-Guide-Accessible-1.pdf>).

Harm reduction principles

Harm reduction or harm minimisation aims to lessen the negative social and/or physical consequences associated with various human behaviours and choices. It focuses on the person's rights while helping people remain safe. It requires non-judgemental interactions with a person who may be engaging in behaviours that place them and/or others at risk.

Note: If you think a person is in immediate danger, phone 000 immediately. For other safety risks, the worker should contact the appropriate service which may include the Child Protection Helpline (132 111).



5.4 Delivering an appropriate response

A worker may approach a person experiencing homelessness under the circumstances described in the Protocol (**Appendix A**). All approaches should be positive, empathetic and respect the person and their circumstances. Language has a profound impact on people therefore it is important that the worker use inclusive and contemporary language that empowers people and minimises stigma.

The person experiencing homelessness may feel threatened by a worker's approach. To reduce this perception, workers must identify who is most appropriate to engage the person and have a clear purpose for the engagement. The worker must understand the limitations of their own capacity and skill set and when it may be appropriate to engage other support services to assist.

The worker must also follow the work, health and safety policies of their agency, department, organisation or business to ensure the worker and others remains safe. All workers should also follow COVID-19 protocols and other relevant NSW Health advice (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au>). If there is no risk, concern, breach or unlawful behaviour, it is important the worker respects the person's choice to engage or not to engage.

If the circumstances are appropriate for engagement, workers should introduce themselves, identify the agency or service they are from and the reasons they wish to engage. It is important to use positive body language, appropriate eye contact (which may include no eye contact for some cultural backgrounds), and ask the person if they prefer the worker to communicate on the same physical level as them. This may require the worker to sit or crouch down to get to the correct level if the person requests it.

It is also important for the worker to identify the person's preferred language (including Auslan) or provide communication resources including the use of an interpreter at the earliest opportunity, if requested or as required. Additionally, when working with Aboriginal peoples be aware that there may be cultural differences in communication, such as use of Aboriginal English and non-verbal communication.

Homelessness NSW's *Assertive Outreach Good Practice Guidelines* (<http://homelessnessnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Assertive-Outreach-Practice-Guidelines.pdf>) is a resource that may assist workers to effectively engage people experiencing homelessness within the community.

If a person experiencing homelessness is in need of medical treatment or concerned about their safety, workers should respond in the same way as they would for any member of the public requiring such assistance (i.e. contact emergency services). When contacting emergency services (000) in some areas, a worker can request a *PACER* response for mental health related concerns which activates a police and mental health clinician to provide person-centred trauma informed care, reducing Emergency Department (ED) presentations, and increasing out of hospital referral capabilities.

Those implementing the Protocol are not required to coordinate or provide direct services to people experiencing homelessness if it is not in their remit to do so. However, wherever possible, if a person consents to assistance, workers should provide:

- appropriate support or services directly
- advice, information, or assistance to connect to available, appropriate and, where possible, local supports or services; or
- a relevant contact point that the person can call or go to for further advice or help, if they choose to in the future.



5.5 Consent

Consent from the person experiencing homelessness must be obtained either verbally or in writing before providing further support, such as referrals to services or delivering assistance.

Exceptions may occur when there are reasonable grounds to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the life or health of the person or another person, or as required by law.

Generally, verbal consent is adequate where the information to be collected, used or disclosed is not sensitive in nature. Written consent should generally be obtained where the personal information collected, used or disclosed is more sensitive and intrusive. Where the person has issues with literacy, severe mental health conditions and/or cognitive disabilities, verbal consent is acceptable. The worker should note that the person provided verbal consent and why written consent was not able to be provided.

Furthermore, in the case of verbal consent, be aware of '*gratuitous concurrence*', where an individual may agree, only to placate the questioner/worker rather than expressing free and informed consent.

A person can withdraw consent at any time. Withdrawing or refusing consent should not result in discrimination nor future disadvantage.

If support or assistance is requested, the worker is required to take reasonable steps to ensure the person understands what providing consent means. The worker must inform the person as to what options are available, if any information will be shared, why information will be shared and with whom it will be shared.

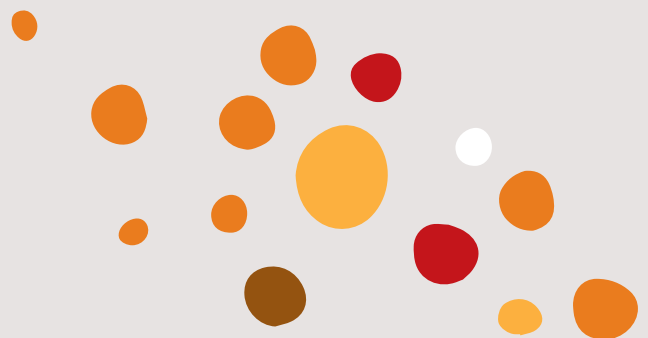
Information about consent should be provided in an appropriate format that can be understood by the person seeking assistance. This may require the use of an interpreter in a person's preferred language (which may include Auslan, Deaf and/or Deafblind interpreters) as required. The NSW Language Services Guidelines are available at <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/resources/> to provide information on how to engage interpreters and translators.

When seeking consent, a worker should:

- be confident that the person has capacity to give or withhold free and informed consent to the question asked;
- consider whether verbal or written consent is appropriate considering the person's unique circumstances.
- be clear, concise and specific
- use simple language that is direct and literal (avoid idioms, acronyms and jargon)
- include accurate, relevant and important information only (no judgements or opinions) about the purpose for collection, to whom the information will be given, and how it will be used;
- eliminate any ambiguous, biased or judgmental wording
- ensure enough relevant information is gathered to make a referral to an appropriate service.

A person's personal information must be used for the purpose for which consent was given and must not be used for a different purpose to that which was agreed². Consent must be re-sought if the information is to be used for a different purpose. If consent must be re-sought, this may require re-engaging an interpreter.

This is not legal advice. It is the responsibility of the worker to adhere to all legal and agency/organisation obligations. All agencies/organisations must have clearly expressed, freely available and up-to-date privacy policies and policies on the management of information.



2 As outlined under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

5.6 Response for children and young people

Children and young people experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable to a range of adverse experiences. All responses to children and young people experiencing homelessness should prioritise their safety, health and wellbeing, while considering their ability to understand information and make decisions.

Reporting suspected risk of significant harm

Child protection responsibilities and mechanisms in NSW are outlined in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (the Care Act). In addition to the Care Act, workers should be guided by their agency/organisation's child protection and wellbeing policies and procedures when working with children and young people experiencing homelessness. Agencies and organisations may have their own resources to assist workers in relation to child protection and wellbeing concerns.

Specific legal requirements apply to mandatory reporters. Requirements depend on the child or young person's age, whether they are known to be a 'child in care'³ and whether they are at risk of significant harm.

As of June 2023:

- If it is suspected that a child or young person (aged 0 - 15 years) may be at **risk of significant harm**, the mandatory reporter must make a report to the Child Protection Helpline on **132 111**.
- It is not mandatory to make a report if it is an unborn child, or a young person aged 16 to 17. However, your organisation's policies and procedures may make reporting for these groups mandatory. Reporting may also help pregnant women, families and young people access services they need.
- A report to the Helpline can be made if the young person aged 16 or 17 years and experiencing homelessness consents to the call.
- If you know or believe the child is in the care of the Minister, regardless of age, you must make a report to the Helpline on **132 111**.

Information on mandatory reporting can be found at: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/mandatory-reporters>.

As an alternative to reporting to the Child Protection Helpline, reports about child protection or wellbeing concerns can be made by NSW Police Force, Department of Education staff, or by NSW Health workers to their agency's Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU).

A report made to the Police, Education or Health's CWU fulfills a reporter's mandatory responsibility and involves the CWU assisting the child or young person in additional ways. See: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/article/How-can-a-Child-Wellbeing-Unit-help>.

Members of the public and workers who are not mandatory reporters but have concerns about a child or young person experiencing homelessness may also contact the Child Protection Helpline as outlined above.

Information Sharing

When working with children or young people who are experiencing homelessness it may be useful and appropriate to seek additional information from, or provide information to, other services. Where possible and safe, information should be shared with consent of the child or young person. However, where consent is not an option or as been declined, information may be shared in line with Chapter 16A of the Care Act: <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/act-1998-157>

Supporting the Child or Young Person

It is important to stay with an unaccompanied child under the age of 16 until the appropriate support service arrives. A worker is encouraged to stay with a young person aged 16-17 who consents to assistance until the support service arrives. Alternatively, if the young person is aged 16-17 and has the capacity and means to travel independently, a worker may help them to engage the support themselves.

Section 29A of the Care Act recognises that making a report does not necessarily exhaust a mandatory reporter's duty of care to a child, young person or their family. This means that a mandatory reporter's duty of care is not over when they make a report to the Child Protection Helpline. A mandatory reporter should consider how they can continue to respond to the needs of the child, young person and their family.

For more information on supporting children and young people, see **Appendix B**.

3 'Child in care' refers to a child under the Parental Responsibility of the Minister or Care Responsibility of the Secretary (including shared care where PR for residency rests with the Minister).

6. Business Response

People experiencing homelessness may occasionally be found sleeping, sitting, or standing in front of local shops and businesses. For some owners or employees, this may result in frustration, misunderstanding, or fear. Owners or employees may feel unsafe due to a perceived risk of theft or potential violence. Some customers may feel discomfort and not approach businesses where people experiencing homelessness are present, resulting in a loss of revenue for the business. Owners or employees may also have limited experience responding to these situations.

Business owners or workers are encouraged to follow the Protocol principles to engage with respect and empathy and avoid re-traumatising the person. People experiencing homelessness may be struggling with a range of issues and difficult circumstances and may not have other places to go. It is important that workers fully understand the rights of all people involved.

Business owners and workers are encouraged to engage the person as a first response if safe to do so, when no unlawful act has been committed. However, if someone's safety is at risk, the worker, business owner or employee should contact NSW Police or 000 to assist.

NSW Police may move people on in line with Part 14 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. Grounds for the NSW Police to move people on include obstructing another person or traffic, harassment or intimidation, causing or likely to cause fear and unlawful procurement and supplying of a prohibited drug.



7. Using the appendices and associated resources

The NSW Government in collaboration with stakeholders, developed additional resources to support implementation of the Protocol.

The Guidelines' **Appendices** have been designed to assist workers develop empathy and understanding of circumstances that can impact people experiencing homelessness. They provide best practice for supporting people with diverse needs, and links to statewide resources.

Often people may be experiencing one or more of the circumstances outlined in the Appendices. People may have a unique set of needs and require access to a combination of support services. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

These Guidelines acknowledge that most workers using the Protocol may not have the necessary qualifications to provide support to the person directly. It is recommended that workers refer the person to specialised support as appropriate if and when the person provides consent. It is assumed that workers are familiar with the services and resources available in their local area and are able to connect the person experiencing homelessness as appropriate.

The local specialist homelessness service (SHS) has expert knowledge and offer a range of supports to assist people experiencing homelessness. The SHS may also be able to collaborate or support agencies, non-government organisations, businesses, and community members to provide a response to a person experiencing homelessness as needed.

Key resources available across NSW that can provide referrals or assistance include:

- **AskIzzy:** a website directory that connects people in need with nearby services at <https://askizzy.org.au/>
- **Link2Home:** a statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service available to anyone at risk of or experiencing homelessness, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year (1800 152 152)

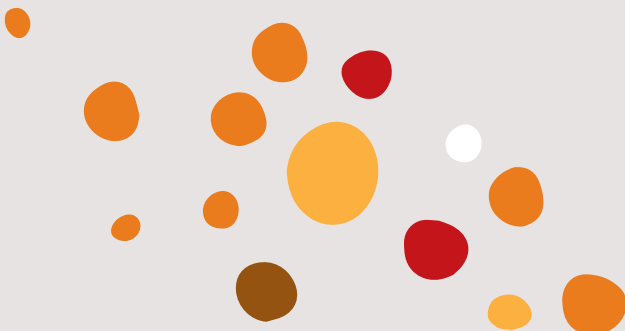
Easy Read and Plain English versions of the Protocol have also been developed to assist people experiencing homelessness to understand their rights. They can be found at <http://dcjnsw.info/engagewell>.

8. Relevant Legislation

Legislation sets important standards and controls which govern the actions of people and groups in public places. It informs some of the actions each department, agency, organisation or business may take when addressing different situations. It is helpful for workers to be aware of applicable legislation and to understand its impacts, requirements and protections. Some of the NSW legislation that may be relevant to the implementation of the Protocol include:

- **Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998** – Aims to ensure personal information is properly collected, stored, used or released by NSW public sector agencies.
- **Anti-Discrimination Act 1977** – Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, race and marital status in the areas of employment, accommodation, goods and services and education.
- **Mental Health Act 2007** – Facilitates the care and treatment of people who are ‘mentally ill’ or ‘mentally disordered’.
- **Disability Inclusion Act 2014** – Acknowledges that people with disability have the same rights as any other member of the community, requires government and communities to facilitate the exercise of those rights and promotes the independence and social inclusion of people with disability.
- **Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998** – Aims to ensure that children and young people receive such care and protection as is necessary for their welfare and well-being.
- **Multicultural NSW Act 2000** – Promotes the importance of equitable and respectful service delivery to the diverse community of NSW and that people of linguistic, religious or ancestral backgrounds can become engaged members of the NSW community.
- **Companion Animals Act 1998** – Promotes the effective and responsible care and management of companion animals and entitles a person with disability to be accompanied by an assistance animal in buildings or places used by or open to the public.
- **Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021** – Aims to ensure that public places can continue to be used, shared and enjoyed by the community as a whole by empowering various authorities to move and otherwise deal with property and animals left unattended in public areas. Use of the Protocol is critical when considering appropriate action (if any) against a person experiencing homelessness and that person’s unattended property.
- **Local Government Act 1993** – Allows local councils to make orders and directions to persons and vehicles in a public place.
- **Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002** – Enables police officers to exercise certain powers, including the powers of arrest, search and seizure, and ensures that those powers are used appropriately, and the rights of individuals are protected.

The above summary is general in nature and is no substitute for the specific provisions of the relevant legislation.



9. Feedback on the implementation of the Protocol

Government departments, agencies, organisations and businesses are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Protocol within their entity. Any feedback or complaints regarding a specific entity's implementation of the Protocol should be directed to the department, agency, organisation or business directly, in the first instance.

General feedback can be provided to the Homelessness Strategy team within the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) at Homelessness.Strategy@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

DCJ will continue to work to improve implementation and use of the Protocol.

Information regarding each signatory's feedback processes can be found in **Appendix S**.



10. More information

The NSW Government recognises the need to ensure that the Protocol is current and meets the needs of all stakeholders including workers and people experiencing homelessness.

The Protocol will be formally reviewed every four years from the date of publication. The review will be managed by DCJ in collaboration with signatories and relevant stakeholders including people with lived experience of homelessness. The implementation guidelines may be updated as required.

Any feedback on the implementation of the Protocol given to DCJ will be reviewed. This feedback and relevant learning points from case studies, entity reports and examples of best practice will be incorporated into the review and future updates of the Protocol and its associated resources ensuring the continued evolution of the Protocol to deliver optimal outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and for workers who are interacting with people experiencing homelessness.

For further information visit the DCJ website or contact the Homelessness Strategy Team:

Homelessness.Strategy@dcj.nsw.gov.au or via
Manager, Homelessness Strategy
Department of Communities and Justice
Locked Bag 5000
Parramatta NSW 2124



- i Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [4922.0-Information Paper-A Statistical Definition of Homelessness, 2012](#), ABS website, 2012.
- ii Ibid.
- iii Ibid.
- iv Ibid.
- v Ibid.
- vi P Memmott and S Long, [Categories of Indigenous 'homeless' people and good practice responses to their needs](#), AHURI Final Report No. 49, Australian Housing and Urban Research Instituted Limited, 2003.
- vii R Cash, M O'Donnell, T Varker, R Armstrong, L Di Censo, P Zanatta, A Murnane, L Brophy and A Phelps (2014). [The Trauma and Homelessness Service Framework](#), The Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, Sacred Heart Mission, Mind Australia, Inner South Community Health and VincentCare Victoria, 2014.
- viii Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, [Stress and Trauma](#), AIHW website, 2024.

Appendix A – Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places



The Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (the Protocol) assists and guides government, non-government organisations, and private businesses to interact and engage with people experiencing homelessness, so they are treated respectfully, with dignity, and do not face discrimination.

The Protocol also encourages government and non-government organisations to provide a response or deliver support to people experiencing homelessness if they need or request it.

The Protocol does not override existing laws or regulations, or the enforcement of those laws or regulations. The Protocol does not prevent government or non-government organisations from taking appropriate action where health or safety is at risk.

A person experiencing homelessness should only be approached if:

- The person requests assistance
- The person appears to be distressed or in need of assistance
- The person's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety and security of people around them
- The person's behaviour is likely to result, or has resulted in, damage to property, or negatively impacts the conservation of nature or objects, places or features of cultural value, including Aboriginal cultural heritage
- The person is sheltering in areas that may place their or others' health or safety at risk (for example during extreme weather conditions, natural disasters, or by sheltering in unsafe buildings)
- The person is a child or young person (with or without an adult) who appears to be under 18 years and at risk of harm; or under 16 years experiencing homelessness
- The person is a child or young person up to the age of 18 experiencing homelessness who is known to be a child in care (i.e. a child or young person under the Parental Responsibility of the Minister or Care Responsibility of the Secretary including shared care where Parental Responsibility for residency rests with the Minister)
- A staff/worker is seeking to engage with the person for the purpose of sharing information.

Where an approach is made under the circumstances outlined above:

- All approaches should be positive, empathetic, and respect the person and their circumstances. Interactions should be trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate behaviour and language should be used.
- The person experiencing homelessness may feel threatened on approach. To reduce this perceived risk, staff/workers must identify who is most appropriate to engage. Things to consider include:
 - the person's culture, religion, gender and age
 - the number of staff/workers that approach the person.
- If there is no risk, concern, breach or unlawful behaviour, respect a person's choice not to engage.
- All staff and contract workers should understand their own organisation's policies and procedures, as well as the Protocol, to ensure all interactions are appropriate.

If a person consents to assistance, staff/workers should provide:

- Appropriate support or services directly
- Advice, information, or assistance to connect to available, appropriate and, where possible, local supports or services; or
- A relevant contact point that the person can call or go to for further advice or help if they choose to in the future.

Additional support or assistance may be required during extreme weather conditions and natural disasters.

Appendix B – Supporting children and young people



Because of the violence I experienced at home, it was safer for me to be away from my family and sometimes that meant I had to sleep in the park... it was scary but not as scary as my home life. What makes it harder is people looking at me like I'm nothing, like I'm a thief or something, just because I'm not at school and have nowhere else safe to go. I didn't choose to be homeless-I just chose not to be hurt by my family anymore.

Female, 16

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

On any given night in NSW, approximately 7,680 young people aged 12 to 24 years are experiencing homelessnessⁱ. They may be homeless alongside their family, or carers, or without an adult present.

The main causes of homelessness for children and young people are family breakdown, poverty, severe overcrowding, domestic and family violenceⁱⁱ or other safety issues in the home. In these cases, a child or young person may be making the safest choice out of a number of unsafe options or may believe this to be the case.

Aboriginal children and young people make up 33 per cent of the total number of unaccompanied children and young people presenting at specialist homelessness services in NSWⁱⁱⁱ. Aboriginal children and young people are overrepresented in at risk groups including young people leaving out of home care. It is important that Aboriginal children and young people are offered supports in a culturally safe way. For information on supporting Aboriginal people see **Appendix C**.

Young people leaving care may experience additional trauma, disadvantage and increased risk of experiencing homelessness. Research has shown that, on average, 17 per cent of care leavers in NSW access specialist homelessness services (SHS) in the year after they leave care and more than half will access homelessness services at some point in their lives^{iv}.

Children and young people with no safe place to stay are extremely vulnerable. They are at higher risk of sexual exploitation, sexual and other forms of assault, and poor physical and mental health outcomes including exacerbation of pre-existing health conditions. They may also be dealing with feelings of fear, shame and/or anger.

Impact of trauma on children and young people

Trauma-informed practice is crucial when working with any person experiencing homelessness, including children and young people. Most children and young people experiencing homelessness will have experienced trauma. This may be due to the events which led to their homelessness and/or events which have occurred during their homelessness. Family members or carers often find symptoms of trauma difficult to manage, and therefore may contribute to homelessness experienced by children and young people.

Children and young people who have experienced traumatic events are more likely to withdraw from conversations and may need time to build rapport or feel comfortable communicating their circumstances or seeking support^v. Their experiences may lead them to distrust adults and be wary of any help that an adult/worker is offering. This may be part of their learned survival skill set.

Other impacts of homelessness on children and young people

Some children and young people may not have, or safe access to, identity documents and a stable mailing address which can impact access to services and supports.

Homelessness is associated with decreased engagement in school and when coupled with frequent school moves, is associated with poor academic achievement^{vi}. Children and young people may be in public places during school hours due to a disassociation with schooling. Children and young people who experience homelessness are also more likely to leave school as well as be placed in juvenile detention.

Children and young people experiencing homelessness may behave in ways that increase risk (often termed risk-taking behaviours). Although these behaviours may increase risk for the child or young person, they are often adaptive coping mechanisms in response to trauma. This includes the use of alcohol and other drugs.

Preschool and school-aged children experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience mental health concerns, with evidence suggesting they are also more likely to have physical disability, emotional or behavioural problems^{vii}. One in ten young people experiencing homelessness report experiencing suicidal ideation in the past three months^{viii}. Additionally, food insecurity is frequently reported by young people experiencing homelessness, leading to increased risk of poor health outcomes^{ix}. For information on supporting people with complex health conditions see **Appendix K**.

Most young people experiencing homelessness, turn to couch surfing or sleeping on floors, temporarily staying with friends, relatives, family and sometimes complete strangers, until they need to move on^x.

Workers responses to children and young people experiencing homelessness

Children and young people often have distinctly different pathways into, and experiences of, homelessness compared to adults. Specific youth-focused, person-centred and trauma-informed responses and approaches are required to address their homelessness effectively and in any long-lasting, meaningful way.

It is important for workers to approach children and young people with empathy, care, compassion and respect. Age-appropriate communication and strategies must be used to connect with children and young people effectively, understanding that children and young people affected by complex trauma may be developmentally behind their peers.

Workers must be aware of all child protection responsibilities including mandatory reporting requirements.

Reporting child wellbeing or protection concerns

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* provides for the care and protection of, and the provision of services to, children and young people.

Under the Act, mandatory reporters are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. Specific legal and policy requirements apply to mandatory reporters, including workers responding to children and young people who may be experiencing homelessness. Requirements depend on the child or young person's age, whether they are known to be a 'child in care'⁴ and whether they are at risk of significant harm. Requirements are subject to change, and workers are encouraged to use the links listed below for the most up to date information.

4 'Child in care' refers to a child under the Parental Responsibility (PR) of the Minister or Care Responsibility of the Secretary (including shared care where PR for residency rests with the Minister).

As of June 2023:

- If you believe a child or young person (aged 0 - 15 years) may be at risk of significant harm, you must make a report to the Child Protection Helpline on **132 111**.
- It is not mandatory under the *Care and Protection Act* to make a report if it is an unborn child, or a young person aged 16 to 17. However, your organisation's policies and procedures may make reporting for these groups mandatory. Reporting may also help pregnant women, families and young people access services they need.
- A report to the Helpline can be made if the young person aged 16 or 17 years and experiencing homelessness consents to the call.
- If you know or believe the child is in the care of the Minister, regardless of their age, you must make a report to the Helpline on **132 111**.
- Mandatory reporters should use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) to help decide whether a child is suspected to be at Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) and a report to the Child Protection Helpline should be made.

Information on mandatory reporting can be found at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/mandatory-reporters>

In addition, many departments, organisations, and businesses have policy directives that specify the reporting obligations within particular employment contexts. All workers should be familiar with their reporting requirements.

Child Wellbeing Units

As an alternative to reporting to the Child Protection Helpline, reports about child protection or wellbeing concerns can be made by NSW Police, NSW Department of Education staff, or by NSW Health workers to their agency's Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU). A report made to the Police, Education or NSW Health's Child Wellbeing Unit fulfills a reporter's mandatory responsibility and involves the CWU planning additional ways the child or young person may be assisted. See: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/article/How-can-a-Child-Wellbeing-Unit-help>

Information Sharing under the *Care and Protection Act*

The *Care and Protection Act* includes information exchange provisions to allow for the flow of information between organisations to facilitate collaborative service provision to vulnerable children and their families. Further information about what information can be shared can be found at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/interagency-guidelines/information-sharing-for-service-coordination>.

People who are not mandatory reporters

Members of the public or workers who are not mandatory reporters but have concerns about a child who is experiencing homelessness may also contact the Child Protection Helpline as outlined above on **132 111**.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Workers often view children and young people experiencing homelessness to be at imminent risk, however, the child or young person may view it as the safest choice out of a range of unsafe options. It is important to find out more about the child or young person's circumstances without triggering traumatic memories. This may be done by asking the child or young person basic questions about their day or what they are most concerned about.
- Workers may encounter children or young people who are accompanying a parent experiencing homelessness. This is often a result of domestic and family violence (DFV). It is important to work with both the parent and child or young person, to avoid further trauma, disempowerment, or negative impacts on the family. For more information on supporting people experiencing DFV see **Appendix L**.
- Children and young people experiencing homelessness are likely to have experienced trauma. A trauma-informed approach is critical throughout all engagements.
- Children and young people affected by trauma can find it hard to regulate their emotions. A young person's experiences or fear can result in behaviours and emotions which may be difficult for workers to respond to, including sadness, irritability, aggression, withdrawal, anxiety, substance use, and/or feeling overwhelmed^{xi}. When their fight or flight mode is triggered, workers may need to use de-escalation strategies to try and assist the child or young person to return to a calm state.

- Workers should be aware that children and young people's responses to workers may be affected by past experiences with government agencies and organisations, or the experiences of their parents or other family members.
- Workers should consider the number of workers and the most appropriate worker to approach the child/young person to reduce any perceived threat and increase the sense of safety including cultural safety for the young person.
- Mental Health First Aid Australia has *Guidelines for Adults on How to Communicate with Adolescents about Mental Health Problems and Other Sensitive Topics* that can assist engagement with children and young people: <https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Centres/Narre-warren/MHFA-Guides.pdf>

Additional information and support to assist workers in addressing children or young people at risk of significant harm can be found at: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/reporting-child-at-risk/harm-and-neglect/chapters/if-a-child-tells-you>

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
 - Consider your body language and proximity to the child or young person, being sure not to stand over or initiate touch. Allow enough space and consider standing or sitting side by side with a child or young person rather than directly across from them.
 - Do not touch the child or young person's belongings or enter the space they are using as a shelter as this may be considered their safe space.
 - Speak in a normal tone and do not use patronising language. Keep your language simple, clear and direct. Remind the child or young person that their safety is priority.
 - Use language which recognises that children and young people might be feeling extremely vulnerable and frightened, and that you are doing your best to support them.
- Try to involve the child or young person in decision-making processes and allow them to participate where possible.
 - Encourage children and young people to share their current situation and needs.
 - Be attentive and listen to the child or young person, empowering them to tell their story, and validate the feelings they share with you.
 - Be aware of any barriers that may affect communication (e.g. language difficulties, misunderstanding, jargon and/or slang), and make appropriate adjustments (e.g. engage an interpreter, ask the young person to explain in more detail, etc).
 - Where required by policy or law, contact the Child Protection Helpline (132 111). Where consent of the young person is required (homelessness/neglect-shelter), seek their consent first.
 - Tell the child or young person if you are legally required to make a report to the Child Protection Helpline. Ask them if they have any questions or concerns about the process. Remind them that their safety is your priority.
 - Provide practical assistance where possible to increase a child or young person's safety (e.g. battery charger for their phone, phone credit, Opal card, etc).
 - Support the young person to engage with appropriate services as needed or requested.
 - Stay with an unaccompanied child under the age of 16, until the appropriate support service arrives (i.e. Department of Communities and Justice or Specialist Youth Homelessness Service).
 - You are encouraged to stay with a young person aged 16-17 who consents to assistance until the support service arrives. Alternatively, if the young person is aged 16-17 and has the capacity and means to travel independently, a worker may help them to obtain support themselves.



RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Headspace	Provide early intervention mental health, physical health (including sexual health) alcohol and other drug services, and work and study support to young people aged 12-25 years old. Support is offered through Headspace centres, online and phone counselling services, and in schools.	Website: https://headspace.org.au/
Kids Helpline	Free (including from a mobile), confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 with qualified counsellors.	Phone: 1800 551 800 Website: https://kidshelpline.com.au/
Reach Out	An online, anonymous and confidential, range of support options including one-to-one peer support and moderated online communities, tips, stories and resources.	Website: https://au.reachout.com/
Rent Choice Youth	Helps young people aged 16 to 24 years to cover a proportion of their rent for up to three years. Case work support is also provided to help young people achieve their career goals.	Phone: 1800 422 322 (Housing Contact Centre) Website: https://facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/factsheets/rent-choice-youth

- i Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#), ABS website, 2023.
- ii S Roche and J Barker, [Youth homelessness and its relationship with family conflict: Models for policy and practice](#), Australian Catholic University, 2017.
- iii Yfoundations, [Yfoundations submission: National Housing and Homelessness Plan Issues Paper](#), Yfoundations, 2023.
- iv Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), [Pathways to Homelessness](#), DCJ, 2021.
- v raisingchildren.net.au, [Traumatic events: supporting children and teenagers](#), raisingchildren.net.au website, 2022.
- vi Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Australia's Children](#), AIHW website, 2022.
- vii Ibid.
- viii Headspace, [Clinical Toolkit - At Risk Group: Homeless Young People](#), National youth Mental Health Foundation, Headspace, 2020.
- ix Ibid.
- x Ibid.
- xi Ibid.

Appendix C – Supporting Aboriginal peoples



'Aboriginal peoples' in this document refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as defined by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005.

Tracy was at home with her family when there was a knock on the door. A stranger came in and took Tracy's little sister away. She didn't do anything wrong, Tracy never knew where they took her sister or when she would come back. Tracy was fearful she may be next. Years later, sitting on a bench in the park, a stranger approaches Tracy and her heart starts to race and she starts to put up walls to protect herself.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Aboriginal peoples are the traditional custodians of Australian land and waters. Aboriginal peoples are recognised as having the longest continuous cultures in the world and their people and cultures remain strong and resilient.

However, Aboriginal peoples have and continue to experience discrimination. Historically, this has included government policies, which resulted in the removal of Aboriginal children, dispossession of land, controlled lives and generational disadvantage. The removal of Aboriginal children, known as the Stolen Generation, broke important cultural, spiritual and familial ties and has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoplesⁱ.

Some Aboriginal peoples may also experience barriers to obtain and maintain appropriate accommodation, education, employment and health servicesⁱⁱ. All of this has resulted in Aboriginal peoples being 15 times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Indigenous Australiansⁱⁱⁱ and 32 per cent of the total clients seeking specialist homelessness services in NSW in 2022/23^{iv}. Aboriginal peoples are also overrepresented in out of home care and the justice system, and experience higher rates of chronic and complex health conditions. These factors make homelessness more likely and more complex for Aboriginal peoples.

Some Aboriginal peoples may experience disconnection from Country, culture, and family and kinship networks. Aboriginal peoples have a strong connection to Country which is integral to social and cultural identity, so disconnection or forced disassociation can lead to a loss of identity, sense of agency and social and cultural capital^v in addition to trauma. Aboriginal peoples may choose not to accept housing that is away from their mob or Country. A worker must be empathetic and understand this important connection and how it may impact all engagements.

Due to governmental, societal and familial impacts, including intergenerational trauma and disadvantage, Aboriginal peoples may also experience domestic and family violence (DFV) at greater rates than the non-Indigenous population.^{vi} For information on supporting people who experienced DFV, see **Appendix L**.

Aboriginal peoples may also remain in difficult circumstances or not seek assistance out of fear of further harm, such as children being removed or adults being incarcerated. A worker should respect that Aboriginal peoples may choose not to engage with mainstream services and may have a distrust of government and other support services^{vii}, including religious organisations. This is often due to the historical and personal impacts of discrimination and systemic disadvantage.

It is also important to be aware that unconscious bias, though not aligned to how a worker or person may feel or act when consciously thinking about someone, can impact interactions and outcomes during engagement. All workers should complete Cultural Capability training and understand how to create and maintain cultural respect and safety when interacting with Aboriginal peoples. This will contribute to improving interactions and overall outcomes for Aboriginal peoples experiencing homelessness and may affect social and systemic change.

NSW Government is working with Aboriginal peoples, their communities, organisations and businesses to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Closing the Gap aims to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by Aboriginal peoples so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians. It acknowledges that to close the gap, Aboriginal peoples must determine, drive and own their desired outcomes, alongside government and non-government organisations. This can assist in building trust and social capital. Agency is also central to self-determination which means providing Aboriginal peoples with 'choice' and control.

Understanding Culture to Improve Interactions

Some terms and cultural practices a worker should be aware of include^{viii}:

- Aboriginal peoples are diverse with approximately 500 different Aboriginal nations in Australia each with their own languages, dialects and territories and are made up of different tribal groups.
- The term 'Mob' refers to extended family or wider community group, from a particular place or Country.
- 'Elders' are often leaders who support and influence the community. Elders are the holders of community stories and ways of living, ensuring alignment with spiritual, physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Aboriginal peoples have a strong and personal connection to Country, although this has been disrupted for many people. Aboriginal peoples, in particular people who have been released from custody, may express a desire to be outside, rather than housed, due to their connection to Country.
- Many Aboriginal peoples acknowledge Elders and leaders as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle', even if the person is not blood-related or kin. This is a sign of respect in Aboriginal culture. Under some circumstances it may be appropriate for a non-Aboriginal person to address an elder Aboriginal person as Aunty or Uncle. This may include when the person has been introduced using the term Aunty or Uncle and/or when the person is personally known to themix but it is important to ask the person how they prefer to be addressed.

- Family and community connectedness (sometimes referred to as kinship) is paramount in supporting Aboriginal identity formation, understanding spiritual and cultural belonging, and establishing strong links with community.
- Aboriginal men and women have distinct but equally important roles, customs and practices which are referred to as '*men's and women's business*'. Respecting men's or women's business may require the worker to avoid certain conversation topics, and other practices unless consent is provided^x. The worker should ask if unsure.
- Sorry business' is a sacred, sensitive and significant time for Aboriginal peoples which occurs after the death of a family member, if a family/community member is ill or imprisoned, or to mourn the loss of cultural connection to family and land.

Engagement Strategy

Creating a culturally safe space for engagements:

- Understand the cultural and historical background of the area in which the interaction occurs.
- Use the traditional name for places, when known, to acknowledge and celebrate the Aboriginal connection to those places.
- Collaborate with local Aboriginal Elders, community leaders, and Aboriginal services to understand best practice and approaches for the specific community being engaged.
- Always lead with empathy and patience. Aboriginal peoples often perceive time differently, with more value placed on relationships, connection and spatial connection to Country.
- Care should be taken to set clear and realistic expectations about why the engagement is taking place and what the outcomes might be.
- Eye contact should not be expected or forced, and a lack of eye contact should not be assumed to be a sign of disrespect or disengagement.
- Aboriginal peoples may use Aboriginal English which contains words from traditional languages as well as English words that have alternative uses or meanings^{xi}.
- Aboriginal peoples' use of non-verbal communication and "gratuitous concurrence" may lead to harmful misunderstandings especially in interactions with government workers including police^{xii}.
- Children play a vital role in the link between the past, present and future. Workers should provide support for children to be safe and supported both physically and culturally.

- Act ethically and demonstrate cultural respect. All workers should undergo appropriate cultural training on an ongoing basis.
- Where possible work with an Aboriginal partner or organisation to provide cultural information, support and assistance.
- Specify the purpose of your engagement and provide reassurance of confidentiality to build trust. Be clear about the circumstances in which information may need to be shared with others and any limits on confidentiality.
- Ask the person where they are from, share stories and find other common ground. Narrative can be important to understand the context of a person's circumstances.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Maintain appropriate physical distance from the person throughout.
- Ask the person if they are comfortable engaging with you where they are or consider if there is a yarning space (i.e comfortable and not clinical) to continue the interaction.
- You cannot make an assumption that a person is Aboriginal from their looks. If the person discloses to you that they identify as Aboriginal, provide the person with the choice to engage an Aboriginal worker and/or an Aboriginal service and connect them where possible. However, this should not impact the provision of an immediate response if required.
- Use a trauma-informed and person-centred approach throughout the interaction, acknowledging that each person has their own unique wants and needs.
- Be mindful of the person's body language and other non-verbal behaviours as this can be more informative than the conversation.
- Give the person time and space to process information and assess their options. Silence during the conversation may allow the conversation to breathe.
- Seek continual consent, remembering that this can be withdrawn by the person at any time.
- Provide the person with referral/support options for further assistance if they need or request it. This includes discussing culturally appropriate mainstream or Aboriginal specific services and connecting the person where possible. If the person identifies as Stolen Generations, offer assistance to connect the person to Stolen Generation support services as appropriate.



RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
13YARN	A 24/7 national crisis support telephone service that provides confidential, culturally safe and appropriate assistance for Aboriginal peoples to speak about their needs or concerns.	Phone: 13 92 76 Email: enquiries@13yarn.org.au Website: https://www.13yarn.org.au
AbSec (NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Organisation)	AbSec is the peak organisation working to empower Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities impacted by the child protection system. Absec also supports a quality Aboriginal Community Controlled child and family sector to deliver needed supports in Aboriginal communities.	Phone: (02) 9559-5299 Email: admin@absec.org.au Website: https://absec.org.au
Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS)	Provides legal assistance for issues related to criminal law, children's care and protection law, and family law. ALS also has a tenancy advocacy service that provides advocacy, outreach, and tenancy legal education for Aboriginal peoples experiencing housing stress.	Phone: (02) 9213 4100 Website: https://www.alsnswact.org.au
Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Centre	Lists the locations of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across NSW where Aboriginal people can obtain culturally safe healthcare	Website: https://www.ahmrc.org.au/about/members
Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation	Delivers healing programs, provide direct practical support, advocate for policy change, truth telling, raises awareness of the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and links Survivors and families to support services.	Phone: (02) 8004 6162 Email: admin@cootagirls.org.au Website: https://cootagirls.org.au
Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia	An Aboriginal community controlled national peak for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide prevention. Provides a list of resources if a person is in need of help.	Phone: 02 5134 2100 Email: info@gayaadhuwi.org.au Website: https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/if-you-need-help
The Healing Foundation	Provides up to date information and resources on organisations and agencies that can support the healing journey for members of the Stolen Generation and their families.	Phone: (02) 6272 7500 Website: https://healingfoundation.org.au

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation	Helps to restore and reconstruct the identity, dignity and integrity of Aboriginal men who were forcibly removed from their families and placed in the Kinchela Boys Home, and to address the intergenerational trauma that adversely impacts on the lives of the men's families and descendants.	<p>Phone: (02) 9051 1690</p> <p>Email: office@kinchelaboyshome.org.au</p> <p>Website: https://kinchelaboyshome.org.au</p>
Link Up (NSW)	Supports Aboriginal people who have been directly affected by past government policies on their healing journeys. Link Up can assist with reunification, family link, redress, and community building targeted family earlier intervention.	<p>Phone: 1800 624 332</p> <p>Email: Linkup@nsw.link-up.org.au</p> <p>Website: https://www.linkupnsw.org.au</p>
National accreditation authority for translators and interpreters (NAATI)	NAATI can connect people to certified interpreters and translators practicing over 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages across Australia.	<p>Phone: 1300 557 470</p> <p>Email: info@naati.com.au</p> <p>Website: https://naati.com.au</p>
NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)	NSWALC is committed to ensuring a better future for Aboriginal people by working for the return of culturally significant land, pursuing cultural, social and economic independence for its people and politically proactive on issues that affect Aboriginal people.	<p>Phone: (02) 9689 4444</p> <p>Website: https://alc.org.au</p>
Service Our Way (SOW)	SOW provides culturally appropriate service coordination, support and capacity building for Aboriginal peoples and families at risk. It links people to existing, non-government and government programs and services, as well as specialist, informal and community support.	<p>Phone: 1800 952 717</p> <p>Email: sowenquiries@aho.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Website: https://www.aho.nsw.gov.au/programs/services-our-way</p>
Stolen Generations Council NSW/ ACT	Provide advocacy and support to survivors and descendants of the Stolen Generations who are at risk or are experiencing intergenerational trauma.	<p>Email: reception@glalc.org.au</p>
WellMob	Online social, emotional and cultural wellbeing resources for Aboriginal peoples.	<p>Website: https://wellmob.org.au</p>

- i Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), *The Stolen Generations*, AIATSIS website, 2023.
- ii P Memmott and S Long, *Categories of Indigenous 'homeless' people and good practice responses to their needs*, AHURI Final Report No. 49, Australian Housing and Urban Research Instituted Limited, 2003.
- iii University of South Australia, *Aboriginal homelessness requires a different cultural approach*, University of South Australia website, 2022.
- iv Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022-23 - State and territory summary data and fact sheets*, AIHW website, 2023.
- v S Pearce, *Indigenous Women and Entrepreneurship in NSW*, University of Technology Sydney, 2016.
- vi AIHW, *Family, domestic and sexual violence - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, AIHW website, 2023.
- vii Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *How organisations can build trust when collecting and handling the personal information of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, Office of the Victorian Commissioner website, 2020.
- viii NSW Health, *Communicating Positively: A Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology*, NSW Health, 2019.
- ix Ibid.
- x NSW Public Service Commission (PSC), *Everyone's Business*, PSC website, accessed 16 February 2023.
- xi The Conversation, *10 ways Aboriginal Australians made English their own*, The Conversation website, 2020.
- xii Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *Commission Submission - On common difficulties facing Aboriginal witnesses*, AHRC website, 2007.

Appendix D – Supporting people who are culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse



“Ahmet arrived in Australia a few years ago but is still finding it hard to speak English. He received some assistance to settle when he first arrived but when his landlord sold the property he was staying in and none of his friends had space for him, he didn’t know where to turn and ended up sleeping on the street. When Ahmet comes into contact with services, they do not speak his language so he is not able to communicate what he needs. Ahmet feels stuck and very alone.”

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person’s gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Australia is a multicultural country. This diversity drives creativity and innovation and enriches society as a whole. However, people from culturally, linguistically, and/or religiously diverse backgrounds are at an increased risk of homelessness. This can be due to discrimination, speaking a preferred language other than English, limited provision of interpreters and/or translated documents, a lack of culturally appropriate and accessible support services and stigma related to conditions, circumstances, or asking for assistance.

A person’s risk of homelessness may also be increased due to dependence on family or community, insufficient access to community connections or their willingness to engage support services. A person may experience barriers to obtaining employment or income as well, all of which may impact access to accommodation options or a person’s ability to address their basic needs.

Each culture may have their own cultural norms which prescribe how a person may dress, act, and engage with other people. This may impact a person’s willingness to share information or engage with a worker for assistance.

A person may have a complex relationship with their own culture due to their experience or current circumstance. A worker’s ability to understand this will help build trust and improve communication throughout an interaction.

Effective communication is critical to any interaction but may be difficult when a person speaks a language that is different to the worker. In 2021, eight per cent of people experiencing homelessness in Australia did not speak English well or at all. Workers should identify a person’s preferred language and engage an interpreter as required. Multicultural NSW’s [NSW Language Services Guidelines](#) can assist workers to engage interpreters and translators. Workers should be familiar with their agency/organisation’s procedures to procure and/or access translation services.

People from culturally, linguistically and/or religiously diverse backgrounds who are experiencing domestic and family violence may be at increased risk of homelessness. For information on supporting people who experienced domestic and family violence, refer to **Appendix L**.

People from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds who are on temporary visas experience additional barriers and disadvantage. For more information on supporting people on temporary visas refer to **Appendix E**.

It is important that the worker considers the person's cultural safety before, during, and after any approach or interaction. Workers should remain non-judgemental throughout all interactions and respect a person's appearance, behaviour or practices.

A worker is encouraged to participate in cultural competency training and demonstrate understanding through their approach and interactions. Muslim Women Australia provides an engagement guide for faith and culturally appropriate support. The guide can be found at <https://mwa.org.au/submissions-and-reports/saving-face-faith-sector-guide>

Any information, resources, or support provided must be culturally appropriate and considerate. Workers should ask and, where possible, assist people to engage a culturally appropriate support worker if preferred, to improve the experience and outcomes for people who are culturally, linguistically or religiously diverse.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:ⁱⁱⁱ

- The worker should consider a person's culture, history, faith or spirituality, and current circumstances, as well as the impact that these may have on any interaction.
- A person's cultural norms or beliefs may also impact their willingness to access support services.
- Understand cultural gender roles and their impact when engaging. Workers should consider the number and gender of workers that approach a person to ensure cultural safety and respectful interactions.
- Workers should access language services, as required, that are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to assist with any interaction. Note while NAATI Certified Practitioners are preferred, in some cases, only NAATI Recognised Practising Practitioners may be available especially for newly emerging languages where higher certification testing may not be available. The [NSW Language Services Guidelines](#) can assist workers to engage language services when supporting a person who speaks a language other than English.

- It is important that workers do not rely exclusively on a person's family members or friends to facilitate communication. This is to avoid any misinterpretation, bias, vicarious trauma and potential abuse.
- In some small cultural groups and communities, accessing interpreters or bilingual workers can void their anonymity and restrict engagement.
- Where possible, the worker should know where to access materials that are translated into languages that a person can understand. Some people may be illiterate in their preferred language in which other forms of communication (e.g. visual, audio, audio-visual) may assist.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Ask the person their preferred language and engage an interpreter as needed, including when obtaining consent for referrals.
- Confirm that the person has no familiarity with the bilingual worker or interpreter engaged to support the interaction.
- Be aware of non-verbal behaviours that may be interpreted negatively by various cultures (i.e. eye contact, distance between you and the person, or hand gestures that have different meanings).
- Use plain language and keep statements clear and simple, avoiding the use of jargon or acronyms.
- If needed, use visual aids or write information down to assist with understanding.
- Direct the person to an appropriate service that can provide assistance if needed or requested.



RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
AMES Australia	Supports culturally and linguistically diverse communities by providing end-to-end settlement services including English language and vocational training and employment and accommodation services.	Phone: 13 AMES (13 2637) Website: https://www.ames.net.au
Settlement Services International (SSI)	Provides a range of programs to support refugees, asylum seekers and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Programs include disability support, education, medical care and employment.	Phone: 02 8799 6700 Email: info@ssi.org.au Website: https://ssi.org.au
Transcultural Mental Health Centre	Works with health practitioners and communities to support positive mental health for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.	Phone: 1800 648 911 Website: https://www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/transcultural-mental-health-centre



- i University of Western Australia (UWA), *Homelessness in culturally and linguistically diverse populations in Western Australia*, report to the Western Australia Government Department of Communities, UWA, 2019.
- ii Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Estimating Homelessness: Census*, ABS website, 2023.
- iii NSW Government Small Business Commissioner, *Advice for councils: Engaging with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) businesses and communities*, Small Business Commissioner website, 2022.

Appendix E – Supporting temporary visa holders and other non-residents



🔊 Raha recently moved to Australia to live with her Australian partner. She doesn't have a working visa, but has done a few days of 'cash in hand' work. Her partner takes the money she earns to pay for rent. A few months after Raha arrives in Australia her partner becomes violent and she flees the house. Raha has no money, doesn't know anyone else in Australia, doesn't know where to get help and is frightened that if she does ask for help she will be in trouble for working without a visa. 🔊

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

In 2021, it was estimated that 20 per cent of people sleeping rough in the inner city did not have permanent residencyⁱ in Australia. People on temporary visas and other non-residents often do not seek assistance from services due to not knowing the services available, dependence on family or friends, or fear of being removed from the country. The prevalence of people on temporary visas or other non-residents experiencing homelessness is therefore thought to be under-reported.

People on temporary visas or other non-residents may be part of a culturally, linguistically, and/or religiously diverse community. For more information on supporting people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities refer to **Appendix D**.

People on temporary visas and other non-residents encounter unique challenges such as ineligibility for basic health, housing and income support servicesⁱⁱ, which may increase their risk of homelessness.

Many of these challenges involve policies that fall under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Government, such as migration policies, visa status, work rights, and eligibility for income support. This may directly impact the support the NSW Government can provide including provision of temporary accommodation. People on temporary visas may be eligible, on a case-by-case basis, for some NSW Government support when fleeing domestic and family violence, impacted by a natural disaster, or under relevant refugee status.

People on temporary visas may be eligible for crisis support from specialist homelessness services (SHS) in NSW, however there are little to no long-term housing options available within SHS or social housing. The lack of options may result in the person/ family remaining in crisis, unstable and/or unsafe accommodation for extended periods.

People on temporary visas and other non-residents often have limited employment opportunities which in turn affects their ability to maintain stable accommodation. People on temporary visas or other non-residents with young dependents may experience additional barriers to employment due to the lack of affordable and accessible childcare.

These additional life stresses can impact a person's relationships, as well as their physical, mental and/or emotional health. For more information on supporting people in mental distress see **Appendix J**.

People on temporary visas or other non-resident face additional challenges in instances where domestic and family violence (DFV) is present. This may include barriers to accessing help, such as reduced awareness of services, language barriers, lack of social support or connection. For more information on supporting people who experience DFV see **Appendix L**.

Workers will not be able to identify a person's visa or residency status by their appearance or behaviour. Disclosing residency status can be traumatic and uncomfortable for many people, particularly if there is no stability or clarity on their visa status. A culturally safe interaction may enable the worker to learn more about the individual's needs.

Workers should be supportive, non-judgemental, reassuring and help the person to feel empowered throughout all interactions.

Asylum seekers

An asylum seeker is a person looking for protection because they fear persecution, or they have experienced violence or human rights violations. A refugee is a person who asked for protection and was given refugee status from the government and therefore may be eligible for some health and social services. Not every asylum seeker becomes a refugee, but every refugee starts out as an asylum seekerⁱⁱⁱ.

People seeking asylum may wait up to 10 years for a visa outcome without work rights or a source of income^{iv}. This may result in dependence on others and/or living in overcrowded accommodation, or rough sleeping.

Asylum seekers often experience significant hardship. When they enter Australia, they may lack the financial resources to obtain and sustain housing and are therefore at risk of experiencing homelessness. This risk can be exacerbated by racism and discrimination within the housing market, inability to work, unfamiliarity with the local community, and lack of access to safety nets available to others.

Asylum seekers are often exposed to highly traumatic events in their home country and during their migration which often results in higher incidences of poor mental and/or emotional health. A person's mental and emotional health may impact their capacity and/or create additional challenges for engagement^v. For more information on supporting people with complex health conditions see **Appendix K**.

New Zealand citizens

Australians and New Zealanders share a strong connection given the close political relationship between the two nations and the ease in which citizens can live and work across both countries.

However, in 2021, it was estimated that New Zealand citizens made up approximately 50 per cent of non-permanent residents who were sleeping rough in Inner Sydney^{vi}. Depending on the person's visa category, New Zealand citizens may be eligible for Commonwealth assistance in the form of Medicare, family assistance payments, rent assistance and certain pensions, as well as some state housing products. However not all New Zealand citizens are entitled to the same benefits resulting in some New Zealand citizens experiencing extended periods of homelessness and disadvantage due to their visa status.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- The worker should consider a person's culture, history, faith or spirituality, and current circumstances, as well as the impact that these may have on any interaction. Be aware that the way temporary visa holders and other non-residents were treated in their home country and when they arrived in Australia may affect their attitude and trust levels^{vii}.
- Temporary visa holders and other non-residents may have experienced trauma from discrimination, war and/or persecution in their home country, or other forms of trauma. Workers need to be trained in and apply a trauma-informed approach when engaging.
- Ensure the worker demonstrates cultural respect. All workers should undergo appropriate cultural diversity training.
- A temporary visa holder or other non-resident may experience increased fear when approached by a worker due to their visa status, risk of deportation, or lack of knowledge of the system or services available.
- A person's cultural norms or beliefs may also influence their willingness to access support services.

- Workers should consider the number and gender of workers who approach the person to ensure cultural safety and respectful interactions.
- Temporary visa holders and other non-residents may face complex intersecting legal issues relating to domestic violence, immigration, family and child protection law, and require legal advice and representation. Workers should refer the person to appropriate legal services.
- Workers should access language services, as required, that are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to assist with any interaction. Note while NAATI Certified Practitioners are preferred, in some cases, only NAATI Recognised Practising Practitioners may be available especially for newly emerging languages where higher certification testing may not be available. The [NSW Government Language Services Guidelines](#) can assist workers to engage language services when supporting a person who does not speak English.
- Where possible, the worker should know where to access materials in languages that a person can understand if required. Some people may be illiterate in their preferred language, in which other forms of communication (e.g., visual, audio, audio-visual) may assist.
- Any person needing urgent medical treatment will not be turned away from a NSW public hospital, however NSW public hospitals are generally not funded to treat Medicare-ineligible patients from countries not covered by reciprocal agreements^{viii}.
 - NSW Health has a specific policy *Medicare Ineligible Asylum Seekers-Provision of Specified Public Health Services (PD 2020/039)* that provides for a fee waiver for necessary health care for persons living in the community and seeking asylum.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Ask the person their preferred language and engage an interpreter as needed, including when obtaining consent for referrals.
- Listen to what the person requires and be aware that this may differ to what you think they may need.
- Build trust and confidence by ensuring culturally appropriate interactions.
- Be aware of non-verbal behaviours that may be interpreted negatively by various cultures (i.e. eye contact, distance between the person and the worker, hand gestures that have different meanings).
- Use plain language and keep statements clear and simple, avoiding the use of jargon or acronyms.
- Do not provide legal advice unless you are qualified to do so, instead refer to LawAccess NSW or other appropriate legal service as needed.
- Assist the person to connect to appropriate supports if they request it.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

RESOURCES

OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
AMES Australia	Supports culturally and linguistically diverse communities by providing end-to-end settlement services including English language, vocational training, employment and accommodation services.	Phone: 13 AMES (13 2637) Website: https://www.ames.net.au
Australian Red Cross	Offers a range of programs that provide help and support to refugees, people seeking asylum, people in immigration detention and other people who are vulnerable as a result of migration.	Website: https://www.redcross.org.au/migration
House of Welcome	Provides transitional housing, case management and wraparound support in Sydney in addition to statewide advocacy.	Phone: (02) 9727 9290 Website: https://www.houseofwelcome.org.au
International Student Hotline	Phone service provided for international students who are having problems with study, safety, work or accommodation.	Phone: 1300 363 079 Website: https://www.studiesinaustralia.com/studying-in-australia/why-study-in-australia/support-services#2
LawAccess NSW	Provides assistance and advice on legal matters including visa applications, immigration status and family sponsorships.	Phone: 1300 888 529 Website: https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au
Multicultural Youth Affairs Network NSW (MYAN)	Providing support and expertise to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds so that they can build the skills, knowledge and networks they need to be active citizens in NSW.	Website: https://myannsw.org.au
Services Australia	Supports new arrivals and non-residents with one-off crisis payments, special benefits for people in severe financial need, free interpreting services and multicultural services.	Phone: 1800 555 660 Website: https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/refugee-servicing-network
SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Asylum Seekers Centre	Provides practical and personal support for people seeking asylum in NSW. Services include accommodation, financial relief, health care, employment assistance, education, food, material aid and recreational activities.	Phone: (02) 9078 1900 Email: intake@asylumseekerscentre.org.au Website: https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au
Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees	MH-CLSR is a unique program that aims to provide trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, culturally safe and responsive psychosocial supports to refugees and asylum seekers who are experiencing psychological distress, mental ill health and impaired functioning.	Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/adults/Pages/mental-health-community-living-supports-for-refugees.aspx

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
NSW Refugee Health Service	Provides information on policy, resources and a range of clinical services and medical assessments for recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers.	Phone: (02) 9794 0770 Email: SWSLHD-RefugeeHealth@health.nsw.gov.au Website: https://www.swslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/refugee/#
NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)	Provides counselling, psychiatric assessments and education groups for refugees and asylum seekers.	Phone: (02) 9646 6700 Email: stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au Website: https://www.startts.org.au
Refugee Council of Australia	Directory to find services for refugees and people seeking asylum for financial, employment, housing and legal advice.	Phone: (02) 9211 9333 Website: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/services
Settlement Services International (SSI)	Provides a range of programs to support refugees, asylum seekers and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Programs include disability support, education, medical care and employment.	Phone: (02) 8799 6700 Email: info@ssi.org.au Website: https://www.ssi.org.au
Jesuit Refugee Service Australia	Accompanies, serves, and advocates for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Provides emergency assistance, support services and casework. Provides community and women's spaces in Sydney.	Phone: (02) 9098 9336 Email: intake@jrs.org.au Website: https://aus.jrs.net/en/jesuit-refugee-service

SUPPORT FOR NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS

Name	Service	Contact Details
High Commission Services for New Zealanders	Consular services are available to New Zealand citizen outside New Zealand. The embassies can provide advice with the aim of helping a person help themselves.	Phone: (02) 6270 4211 Email: nzhccba@bigpond.net.au Website: https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/our-services

- i Homelessness NSW, [The experience of people without Australian permanent residency accessing emergency accommodation in inner city Sydney](#), Homelessness NSW, 2021.
- ii Homelessness NSW, [Attachment G - Provide support for people without permanent residency in NSW experiencing homelessness](#), Homelessness NSW, n.d.
- iii Australian Red Cross, [Refugee and asylum seeker facts](#), Australian Red Cross website, n.d.
- iv Asylum Seeker Centre, [Who we help: seeking asylum in Australia](#), Asylum Seeker Centre website, 2023.
- v Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), [Understanding the mental health and help-seeking behaviours of refugees](#), AIFS website, 2022.
- vi Homelessness NSW, [The experience of people without Australian permanent residency accessing emergency accommodation in inner city Sydney](#).
- vii NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS) and NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), [Working with refugees a guide for social workers](#), RHS and STARTTS, 2004.
- viii NSW Health, [All overseas visitors should have health cover](#), NSW Health website, 2019.

Appendix F – Supporting people with disability



“My partner and brother rely on me to find our little family a safe home. I feel guilty that my physical accessibility needs complicate the already complex process of finding an affordable rental or vying for almost non-existent social housing. As if my disability is somehow within my control, as if the systemic lack of accessible housing is my fault for being too different, too difficult, too disabled.”

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

There are multiple models used to understand disability. The medical model focuses on a person's impairments and limitations in which an impairment can be physical, intellectual, sensory or psychosocialⁱ. Yet the social model explains disability as the result of interactions between people living with impairments and the barriers in the physical, communication and social environments and attitudesⁱⁱ. Workers' actions can help to overcome the constraints imposed on people living with impairments.

In the 2021 Census, about five per cent of people experiencing homelessness in Australia had profound or severe disabilityⁱⁱⁱ. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in 2021-22 approximately 2.6 per cent of specialist homelessness services clients in NSW reported a disability and approximately 37 per cent a mental health condition^{iv}. However, it is assumed that the number of people living with disability experiencing homelessness is under-reported.

The pathways into homelessness for people with disability are diverse and can be influenced by their location, disability type and level of disability^v. Additionally, discrimination and a lack of access to reasonable adjustments can be major contributors to poor education and work outcomes, increasing a person's risk of homelessness.

People with disability may experience physical, psychological, communication and/or social barriers which impact their experience. People with disability may have difficulty accessing public infrastructure and navigating social services, and/or lack financial resources to control or modify their living spaces^{vi}.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides funding to eligible people with disability to enable greater independence, skills, connection, and an improved quality of life. People who are experiencing homelessness (or at risk of homelessness) face a unique set of barriers to accessing the NDIS and may find it difficult navigating the process while in this situation^{vii}.

In very limited instances, the NDIS may be able to assist with accommodation. However, not all people with a disability may be a participant in the NDIS. This may be because the person did not meet the NDIS eligibility criteria, has not applied for the NDIS, or has a pending application^{viii}. A person with disability can access specialist homelessness services (SHS) but not all services may be able to support the person.

Some people experiencing homelessness may not have a formal diagnosis of their disability resulting in the lack of specialist support^{ix}. This may impact a person's wellbeing and/or interactions.

Most disabilities are not visible, so workers may not be aware that a person has a disability unless the person discloses it. People are not required to disclose the fact that they have disability, and many people choose not to, unless they feel safe to do so. It is important for the worker to focus on the person's needs in a non-judgemental and non-stigmatising way.

Each person with disability has unique needs and experiences. A person with disability's choices and preferences must be considered and respected in all interactions where it is safe to do so. Workers are encouraged to participate in disability awareness and capacity building training to better understand the needs of and how to best support a person with disability.

It is important to ensure premises, activities, responses and engagements are accessible, empowering, non-judgemental and respectful for people with disability. Workers should try to make reasonable adjustments on a case by case basis such as providing accessible formats for documents (e.g. Easy Read), providing interpreters including Auslan-English, Deaf and/or Deafblind (as required), and augmentative and alternative communication tools (as required). Workers should provide adequate time when engaging people with disability.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- People with disability require a person-centred response as each presentation of disability is different.
- People with disability may use equipment to assist with their mobility, communication, and/or understanding.
- Workers should be aware of and be prepared to use augmentative and/or alternative communication methods, such as engaging an Auslan-English, Deaf and/or Deafblind interpreter, electronic communication devices, pictorial systems and Easy Read as needed.
- A person who is deaf may not be fluent in Auslan as they may use a different overseas sign language or did not learn that form of communication.
- An Auslan-English Interpreter is someone who translates in both directions between English and Auslan, facilitating communication between two parties. A Deaf Interpreter is someone who works in tandem with an Auslan-English Interpreter and possesses additional specialist language skills to facilitate communication when the person is not fluent in Auslan.
- People with disability may have supports already in place including NDIS service providers, a carer, trustee or guardian. If an interaction with the person proceeds (such as providing referral or services), the worker should ask the person and/or their trustee or guardian, where applicable, for consent to inform or engage with relevant supports.
- Presume that a person has capacity to make decisions about themselves. Do not make assumptions about decision making capacity based on a person's disability (including cognitive disability).
- In some cases, where a NSW Trustee and Guardian may be appointed, the worker should continue to seek the person's opinion on actions and information that will be shared with the trustee or guardian.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Gain the person's attention by a verbal introduction and/or using visual cues.
- Do not touch any assistance equipment or animals unless given permission.
- Be respectful and empowering when you communicate with the person. Consider and address any perceived power imbalances. This includes asking the person if they would like you to communicate with them at their same physical level and may involve you needing to sit or crouch down if they request you to do so.
- Work with the person and their supports, where available, to understand any individual barriers.
- Speak or communicate in plain English and avoid jargon and acronyms. Keep your sentences short and have one main point per sentence.
- Be polite and do not try to rush the conversation.
- Re-word rather than repeat what you say if the person seems to have difficulty understanding you. Try asking 'yes or no' questions if the person seems to have difficulty communicating with you.
- Be aware that some people may have restricted capacity to understand visual cues. It is important to communicate all actions you are doing throughout the engagement, or to express emotions you want to share with the person.
- Consider the person's sensory needs to enhance communication, such as:
 - showing and telling that may improve understanding
 - allowing the person to walk and talk (if appropriate) to regulate themselves, rather than standing still and interviewing

- considering the impact of the environment, and under/over-stimulation, on engagement
 - allowing the person to show their personal space requirements
 - monitoring body language and its impact on the person
 - mirroring their expression to help build rapport when verbal skills are limited.
- When using an interpreter to communicate with someone who is deaf, you do not have to speak loudly. Pause after each phrase (not word) to allow the interpreter time to translate what was said. Be sure to speak directly to the person who is Deaf not the interpreter, using words such as “you” and maintaining eye contact where culturally appropriate.
 - Only make reference to the person’s disability if it is necessary or relevant.
 - Do not make assumptions about the person’s needs. The person has the right to accept or decline any offer of support or assistance. Give the person the opportunity to explain the best way to provide the requested support.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING SERVICES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Auslan Services	Provides face to face interpreting, remote interpreting and notetaking for deaf Australians.	Phone: 1300 287 526 Email: admin@auslanservicesbookings.com Website: https://auslanservices.com
Deaf Connect	Provides face to face interpreting, remote interpreting and notetaking for deaf Australians. Deaf Connect also provide information services to connect the Deaf community to services and supports.	Website: https://deafconnect.org.au
Sweeney Interpreting Services	Provide interpreting services to people who are deaf including Auslan-English, Deaf and Deafblind interpreting.	Phone: 0427 755 753 Email: bookings@sweeneyinterpreting.com.au Website: https://sweeneyinterpreting.com.au

RESOURCES

OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Acquired Brain Injury Services	Provides support to people with an acquired brain injury including individual support, support coordination, recreational programs and supported accommodation.	Phone: 02 9334 2247 Website: https://abis.org.au
Australian Centre for Disability Law	Provides specialist legal assistance for people with disability and their associates.	Phone: 1800 800 708 Email: adviceline@disabilitylaw.org.au Website: https://disabilitylaw.org.au
Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT)	Provides support to people on the autism spectrum including referrals to services, therapy, education and employment.	Phone: 1800 277 328 Website: https://www.autismspectrum.org.au
Council for Intellectual Disability	A disability rights organisation led by people with intellectual disability that provides information, workshops and develops resources.	Phone: 1800 424 065 Email: info@cid.org.au Website: https://cid.org.au
Disability Advocacy NSW	Provides free individual advocacy support services to people with disability.	Phone: 1300 365 085 Email: support@da.org.au Website: https://www.da.org.au/how-we-help
Disability Gateway	The Disability Gateway assists all people with disability, their families and carers to locate and access services across Australia.	Phone: 1800 643 787 National Relay: 1800 555 677 Website: https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au
Intellectual Disability Rights Service	A free disability advocacy service and community legal centre for people with intellectual or other cognitive impairment to promote and protect their rights.	Phone: 02 9265 6300 Website: https://idrs.org.au
First Peoples Disability Network Australia	Supports the rights of Australia's First Nations People with disability, their families, and communities. This service can also assist to find support for individual advocacy.	Phone: 02 9267 4195 Website: https://fpdn.org.au/disability-advocates
Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW	Promotes and protects the rights of people from a non-English speaking background with disability and their family and carers in NSW.	Phone: 1800 629 072 Website: https://mdaa.org.au/individual-advocacy
National Disability Insurance Scheme	Provides support packages for people with disability and links people to services for therapeutic support, personal activities, equipment, community connection, and other support to maintain independence where possible.	Phone: 1800 800 110 (NSW hotline) Email: enquiries@ndis.gov.au Website: https://ndis.gov.au

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
National Relay Service (NRS)	Allows people who cannot hear or do not use their voice to communicate with a hearing person over the phone.	Voice relay: 1800 555 727 Teletypewriter (TTY): 133 677 SMS relay: 0423 677 767
NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal – Guardianship Division (NCAT)	The Guardianship Division determines applications about adults who are incapable of making their own decisions and who may require a legally appointed substitute decision maker.	Phone: 1300 006 228 Website: ncat.nsw.gov.au/how-ncat-works/ncat-divisions-and-appeal-panel/guardianship-division.html
NSW Trustee & Guardian	Protects, promotes and supports the rights, dignity, choices and wishes of the people of NSW through financial management, guardianship, power of attorney and other services.	Phone: 1300 109 290 Website: https://www.tag.nsw.gov.au
People with Disability Australia	Provides information, referrals, advocacy and support to people with disability.	Phone: 1800 843 929 Website: https://pwd.org.au/get-help
Vision Australia	Provide services and support to people who are blind or living with low vision.	Phone: 1300 847 466 Email: info@visionaustralia.org Website: https://visionaustralia.org

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- i Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-2022](#), AIHW website, 2022.
 - ii People with Disability Australia (PWD), [Social model of disability](#), PWD website, 2023.
 - iii Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#), ABS website, 2023.
 - iv AIHW, [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-2022](#).
 - v Ibid.
 - vi Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDC NSW), [Submission to the Productivity Commission National Housing and Homelessness Agreement](#), PDC NSW, 2022.
 - vii ICLA, [NDIS Access: Supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness](#), ICLA website, 2022.
 - viii AIHW, [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-2022](#).
 - ix PWD, [NSW Government Foundations for change – Homelessness in NSW Discussion Paper September 2016](#), PWD, 2016.

Appendix G – Supporting women



Ana was married for 23 years before her marriage broke down and then she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She never thought she would be homeless.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Women make up 44 per cent of Australia's homeless population, an increase of 10.1 per cent since 2016ⁱ. In 2021/2022 almost 60 per cent of people supported by specialist homelessness services were women, with domestic and family violence (DFV) being one of the leading causes for women to become homelessⁱⁱ. DFV can have immediate, re-occurring and long-term impacts for a woman and her dependents (if applicable). For more information on supporting women who have experienced DFV see **Appendix L**.

Other independent or intersecting factors that increase a woman's risk of experiencing homelessness include the gender pay gap, low retirement incomes, discrimination, spousal bereavement, caring responsibilities, limited savings and relationship breakdown.

Older women are at an increased risk of experiencing homelessness, due to many of the aforementioned risks. They may also be at risk of experiencing homelessness as a result of elder abuse, particularly financial abuse from family members. Older women can also face specific barriers to accessing services. For more information on supporting older people see **Appendix I**.

Women experiencing homelessness tend to remain out of sight, away from areas where other people experiencing homelessness may congregate. For example, they are more likely to sleep in their car or couchsurf. This is often due to fear of violence, rape or other abuseⁱⁱⁱ. Women experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of violence and sexual abuse and are often forced into harmful situations and/or relationships out of necessity^{iv}.

On average, women have longer lifespans. Women also have specific and sometimes complex health needs that change over time and require specialised responses. Some of these unique experiences may include pregnancy, menstruation, and menopause, all of which may have physical, emotional, mental, and financial impacts. Women experiencing homelessness may not have access or be aware of available health and support services which can exacerbate their condition/s.

Mental health is another pressing concern for women. One in six women in Australia experience depression and one in three women experience anxiety during their lifetime^v. Women also experience post-traumatic stress disorder and eating disorders at higher rates than men^{vi}. Women's mental health issues are compounded by unique circumstances including postnatal depression, DFV, gender-based discrimination^{vii}, removal of children from their care, and intergenerational trauma. These circumstances make it difficult for some women to obtain housing, employment, and other vital economic resources to support themselves and their dependents^{viii}. For more information on supporting people in mental distress see **Appendix J**.

Workers must provide an empathetic and non-judgmental response to best support and improve the outcomes for women experiencing homelessness. Workers should be educated on strategies related to trauma-informed care and strength-based practice. Specialised supports are available to help women address their specific needs and/or provide safe accommodation.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Women experiencing homelessness may have experienced trauma and therefore require a trauma-informed, strength-based response. This focuses on building a sense of physical, emotional and cultural safety for the person.
- Consider who would be best suited to approach the person on a case by case basis, including the number of workers that may approach and the gender of the worker. It is also important for the worker to take into consideration the woman's culture, religion, and age to ensure an appropriate response.
- Recognise how socio-cultural factors such as gender inequality, power, colonisation and disenfranchisement give rise to victimisation and are barriers to women seeking support.
- Women on temporary visas or other non-residents may feel threatened to engage out of fear their visa status will be revoked. For more information on supporting temporary visa holders or other non-residents see **Appendix E**.
- Pregnant women experiencing homelessness may be reluctant to interact with a worker or access services out of fear that their baby may be removed from their care. Babies born to women experiencing homelessness are at higher risk of birth complications, and longer-term medical complications^{ix}. Information and services should focus on supporting the woman to understand services available to her and ways that she can support the health and development of the growing baby.
- Children accompanying women experiencing homelessness require a specialised response. For information on supporting children and young people see **Appendix B**.

- Some women may experience additional complexities or challenges due to the intersectionality of other characteristics or experiences. Refer to other relevant appendices as needed when interacting.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Maintain appropriate distance and allow the woman to choose how and where she would like to engage to ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Be mindful of verbal and non-verbal cues such as body language and tone. Consider strategies such as bending to be level with the person or using a low, calm tone of voice.
- Encourage the woman to express her needs which may differ from the needs you identify. This may require time and multiple interactions to build trust and rapport.
- Model inclusive, respectful, and fair relationships between service users, staff and management.
- Respectfully communicate using gender neutral and non-patronising language. Empower the woman to make her own choices and offer options and information.
- Be non-judgemental and encourage pregnant women to seek or access medical support.
- Ensure the woman has a safe place to stay that does not exploit her or result in other precarious and/or unsafe situations. Offer opportunities for women to safety plan where risks are identified.
- Be aware of local services and supports and provide referrals to assistance if requested.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
1800 Respect	The 24 hour national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service.	Phone: 1800 732 732 Website: https://www.1800respect.org.au
NSW Domestic Violence Line	The 24 hour NSW domestic and family violence counselling, information and referral service.	Phone: 1800 656 463 Website: https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/domestic--family-and-sexual-violence-support-contacts/nsw-domestic-violence-line.html
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

OTHER SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Full Stop Australia	Confidential, trauma specialist counselling for people of all genders who are impacted by violence and abuse, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members.	Phone: 1800 Full Stop (1800 385 578) Website: https://www.fullstop.org.au
Law Access NSW	A free government telephone service that provides legal information, referrals and in some cases, advice for people who have a legal problem in NSW.	Phone: 1300 888 529 Website: https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/contact-us
Muslim Women Australia	Provides support and advocacy for women including Muslim women.	Phone: (02) 9750 6916 Website: https://mwa.org.au/
NSW Health Sexual Assault Services	A network of state-wide free services for victims of sexual assault, including crisis and ongoing counselling, information and support, medical care and forensic examination, group work and court preparation. There is at least one sexual assault service open 24 hours a day in each Local Health District.	Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/sexualassault/Pages/health-sas-services.aspx
Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP)	Provides direct services to sex workers across the state via peer-based outreach and a range of other direct support services.	Phone: (02) 9184 9466 Email: admin@swop.org.au or swopconnect@swop.org.au Website: https://swop.org.au
Women's Health Centres NSW	An association of statewide women's health centres and specialist women's centres that are non-government, community based, feminist services providing choices for women to determine their individual health needs. A list of centres is available on the website.	Phone: 02 9560 0866 Email: info@whnsw.asn.au Website: https://whnsw.asn.au

- i Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Estimating Homelessness: Census*, ABS website, 2021.
- ii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22*, AIHW website, 2022.
- iii Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *Violence, Harassment and Bullying and Homelessness*, AHRC website, 2012.
- iv Ibid.
- v Beyond Blue, *Women*, Beyond Blue website, 2023.
- vi Ibid.
- vii Women's Mental Health Alliance, *Additional evidence on gender and mental health for the Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system*, Women's Mental Health Alliance, 2020.
- viii Ibid.
- ix F Haylett, S Murrat, J Watson and J Theobald, *The Extent, Nature and Impact of Homelessness on Pregnant Women and Their Babies*, Council to Homeless Persons website, 2022.
- x Porchlight UK, *Working with homeless women*, Porchlight UK website, 2022.

Appendix H – Supporting people who identify as LGBTIQ+



Homelessness is hard enough, workers make it worse when they don't respect me by using my name and pronouns as I have told them. They also make it worse when they see my homelessness as secondary to what they call my gender problem, and say this to my face. Having nowhere to live is the issue. Who I am is not a problem it is my diversity and should be respected.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

The acronym LGBTIQ+ is often used to refer to people with gender, sexuality and/or sex diversities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning, asexual, or other gender or sexual identities). Although people are often grouped together under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella, it is important to understand that each person has unique characteristics, experiences and needs that must be acknowledged and taken into consideration during any interaction.

LGBTIQ+ people have a higher risk of homelessness compared to heterosexual or cisgender people often due to rejection from familyⁱ. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) gay or lesbian people (34 per cent) and people with 'other' sexual orientations (21 per cent) were more likely to report at least one past experience of homelessness compared with heterosexual people (13 per cent)ⁱⁱ. A 2021 study by LaTrobe University found that 23.6 per cent of LGBTIQ+ young people had experienced one or more forms of homelessness in their lifetime and 26 per cent reported that their experience of homelessness was related to being LGBTIQ+ⁱⁱⁱ. These figures are likely to underestimate the true extent of experiences of homelessness for LGBTIQ+ people^{iv}. Many mainstream data collections in Australia do not adequately record diverse genders, sex characteristics, and sexuality^v.

LGBTIQ+ are nearly four times more likely than non-LGBT people to experience violent victimisation, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault and about half are not reported to police^{vi}.

LGBTIQ+ people are also at greater risk of experiencing sexual coercion which is further compounded by experiences of homelessness.

Although many LGBTIQ+ people live healthy and happy lives, research indicates that a disproportionate number experience poorer mental health outcomes and are at higher risk of suicidal behaviours than the general population. This is directly related to experiences of stigma, prejudice, discrimination, and abuse on the basis of having an identity that falls within the LGBTIQ+ diversity^{vii}.

In Australia, there are limited policy and programs that provide LGBTIQ+ specific support to people experiencing homelessness^{viii}. Public and other mainstream services may create challenges and/or lack appropriate options (e.g. gender neutral toilets or accommodation welcoming of transgender and gender diverse people). Not all support options will be recognised as safe, appropriate, accessible or welcoming for LGBTIQ+ people experiencing homelessness. Therefore, it is important that a worker fully explain available support options so the person can make an informed decision.

It is important to provide a respectful and inclusive response when providing support or care. Workers should not assume a person's gender, sex, or sexual orientation by the person's appearance, behaviour or formal documentation. It is for the individual to disclose this information to the worker if they choose to.

Worker Resources

The National LGBTI Health Alliance has developed a guide for inclusive practice to assist workers engage effectively with LGBTIQ+ people who may be experiencing homelessness^{ix}: The *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia* can be found: <https://homelessnessaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/LGBTI-Inclusive-Practice-Guide.pdf>

The Australian Institute of Family Studies developed a guide that outlines why inclusive communication matters and what works to ensure inclusive communication. The Guide supports practitioners to use this evidence in their decision making. A copy of the Guide can be found: <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/inclusive-communication-lgbtq-clients>

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Understand the difference between sex, gender, sexual orientation, and variations of sex characteristics. For example 'cisgender' refers to a person whose sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity^x.
- The Australian Institute of Family Studies' LGBTIQ+ Glossary of Common Terms can be found: <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/lgbtqi-glossary-common-terms>.
- Be aware that disclosure about sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or innate variations of sex characteristics, may be particularly sensitive for people, may put their safety at risk, and possibly have been a part of their experience in becoming homeless.
- Be mindful that respectful language can differ between age groups, as terminology changes. Avoid making age-based assumptions, and reflect the language that the person uses.

- Be aware that the LGBTIQ+ populations are very diverse. Multiple intersectionalities (e.g. sexuality, gender, sex characteristics, physical and cognitive ability, race, ethnicity, religion, class, age) can combine to impact people's lived experience in many different ways, including but not limited to experiences of stigma, discrimination, and oppression^{xi}.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Share your pronoun/s to demonstrate understanding and build rapport with the person.
- Use gender neutral language until the person discloses how they would like to be addressed. Ask the person what name they are most comfortable for you to use including their preferred pronoun/s. Then use their name and pronouns as they described, throughout the engagement.
- If you are unfamiliar with the language the person is using to describe their identities and/ or experiences, then tell them and ask for clarification. Note the terminology and explanation to assist with referrals to services they may request^{xii}.
- Ask questions that are person-centred and focus on the person's needs and safety.
- Allow the person to share their story and listen without judgement or providing advice.
- Don't make assumptions about the type of service that the person may wish to access. Ask the person what their specific needs are, and what they are comfortable engaging with. If they request a referral to a service, refer the person on their self-identified gender and choice.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
The Gender Centre	Provides transgender and gender diverse people assistance with housing, income, health, employment, education and training, counseling, support groups, advocacy and building the strength and resilience of the community.	Phone: 02 9519 7599 or 02 9569 2366 Email: reception@gendercentre.org.au Website: https://gendercentre.org.au/services
Twenty10	Provides emergency and transitional accommodation, case management, information and referrals, counselling and social support programs for LGBTIQ+ young people.	Phone: (02) 8594 9555 Email: info@twenty10.org.au Website: https://twenty10.org.au/

OTHER SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
ACON	Provides a range of services including mental health, drug and alcohol, family and domestic violence, ageing as well as HIV and sexual health education prevention and testing services to LGBTQ communities. ACON also provides counselling, care coordination, peer support to people living with HIV. ACON works to improve the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.	Email: acon@acon.org.au Website: https://acon.org.au/
Intersex Human Rights Australia	Provides mental health and wellbeing services, confidential fee-free, short-term counselling to people with innate variations of sex characteristics and their family members.	Email: info@ihra.org.au Website: https://ihra.org.au/
QLife	Provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.	Phone: 1800 184 527 Website: https://qlife.org.au/
Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline	Available 24/7 for anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been impacted by sexual domestic and/or family violence.	Phone: 1800 497 212 Website: https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/family-violence
Reach Out	An online, anonymous and confidential, range of support options including one-to-one peer support and moderated online communities, to tips, stories and resources.	Website: https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/family-violence

- i AO Hill, A Lyons, J Jones, I McGowan, M Carman, M Parsons, J Power and A Bourne, *Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia*, Latrobe University, 2021.
- ii Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey: Summary Results* [data set], ABS website, 2015.
- iii AO Hill et al., *Writing Themselves in 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia*.
- iv LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, *Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People*, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, 2021.
- v AO Hill et al., *Writing Themselves in 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia*.
- vi A Flores, L Langton, I Meyer and A Romero, 'Victimization rates and traits of sexual and gender minorities in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey 2017', *Science Advances*, 6(40), 2020, doi: 10.1126/sciadv.aba6910.
- vii LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, *Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People*.
- viii AO Hill et al., *Writing Themselves in 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia*.
- ix Andrews and McNair, *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*, The University of Melbourne and National LGBTI Health Alliance, 2020.
- x L Daniele, *Equity before the law bench book – Trans and gender diverse people and people born with diverse sex characteristics*, Judicial Commission of New South Wales, 25 October 2022. [The reference is to a title for part of a publication (a periodical).]
- xi Andrews and McNair, *LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*.
- xii Ibid.

Appendix I – Supporting older people



Connie had a lovely home and had seen her three beautiful children grow into productive adults. But after leaving her cheating husband of 33 years, she lost everything; her money, her super, her home, and her sense of safety. She didn't want to ask her children for help and found herself experiencing homelessness as an older person.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Australians are living longer and healthier lives than previous generationsⁱ. However, there is a growing trend of people experiencing homelessness for the first time later in life (55 and over), particularly older womenⁱⁱ.

The term 'older people' usually refers to people aged 65 and over due to eligibility for many of the Commonwealth's products and services. Yet, older people experiencing homelessness are often identified as aged 55 and over (or aged 50 and over for Aboriginal people). This is due to the negative impacts of homelessness on a person's health and wellbeing.

The 2021 Census identified that in NSW about 19,378 people were experiencing homelessness and aged 55 and over, making up about 15.8 per cent of people experiencing homelessness at the time of the Censusⁱⁱⁱ. This is likely to be an underestimation, as many older people do not identify as being homeless or are not aware of / do not access mainstream housing and homelessness services^{iv}. Older people are less likely to be sleeping on the streets, and more likely to be in rooming houses, caravan parks, cars, staying temporarily with friends and family, and other forms of marginal accommodation with no security of tenure.

Older people are often on a fixed income, leaving them vulnerable during adverse events^v. Some events that may lead to homelessness include but are not limited to family breakdown, rent and/or mortgage repayment increases, limited funds to cover living expenses, unsuitable housing arrangements^{vi}, domestic and family violence (DFV), elder abuse/financial control, health conditions, and lack of a financial safety net.

For more information on the supporting someone who has experienced DFV see **Appendix L**.

Discrimination is also a contributing factor, with financial institutions, employment, and private rental markets perpetuating negative ageist attitudes towards older people. Systemic and policy issues may also impact older people reducing access to information or support including the shift to electronic or digital information and applications. These events and challenges are often coupled with complicated feelings (such as shame) around accessing government support and services, and fear of being institutionalised^{vii}.

An older person's health and connection can also impact the incidence and risk of homelessness including frailty, complex and multiple health conditions, cognitive impairment, and limited family and social-support networks^{viii}. In 2021/2022, 31 per cent of older people experiencing homelessness who engaged with a specialist homelessness service reported having a mental health issue^{ix}. For more information on supporting people with complex health conditions see **Appendix K**.

Older women are one of the fastest growing demographic in the homeless population due to factors such as domestic violence, relationship breakdown and financial difficulty including rent or mortgage interest rate increases and limited superannuation^x. Though an age specific response is required, more information on supporting women can be found in **Appendix G**.

Other groups, such as veterans, Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people exiting custody may also be at a higher risk of homelessness^{xi}. For more information on supporting Aboriginal peoples see **Appendix C**. For more information on supporting culturally and linguistically diverse people see **Appendix D**. For more information on people exiting justice or correctional settings see **Appendix M**.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- The worker should demonstrate respect and empathy that an older person may not identify that they are experiencing homelessness or may feel shame regarding their situation. The person may choose not to disclose their full situation or any challenges they may be facing at home, especially when a family member may be involved. Workers should remain non-judgmental throughout all engagements.
- Some older people may not be used to asking for help or being in a position of needing help. The person may need more time to get comfortable with a worker to fully disclose their situation.
- Older people may have experienced trauma and require a trauma-informed, strength-based response. This means focusing on building a sense of physical, emotional, and cultural safety for the individual.
- Older people may have physical and cognitive conditions that affect their ability to engage effectively (i.e. dementia, hearing or other sensory loss, mobility issues). The worker must be patient and person-centred throughout their interaction.
- Some older people might not understand or have access to technology required to access support (i.e. internet, online forms, etc.).
- Where possible try to engage in a space where there is limited background noise or distractions.

- Services such as MyAgedCare are available to support people aged 65 and over. However, there is lack of and limitations to accessing subsidised residential aged care and/or appropriate aged care options.
- Older people can access specialist homelessness services (SHS), however SHS may not always be accessible or able to provide age specific support.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Respectfully communicate using plain English, no jargon, and short sentences.
- Allow the person to talk without interruption and do not talk over them.
- If the person has lost some sensory function, consider using visual cues, speaking loudly, or using alternative communication devices as needed.
- Be patient, remain calm and go slower if needed when speaking with the person.
- Reflectively listen, confirming your understanding and the person's understanding of each key point before moving to the next.
- Allow the person to ask questions and use face-to-face interaction with eye contact (where culturally appropriate) as it can assist with understanding.
- Do not assume you know what the person needs, ask the person how you can help.
- If help is requested, offer to assist and facilitate the connection or attendance to relevant support services.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

RESOURCES

OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline	Information, practical support and referrals to help intervene and prevent incidences of elder abuse in NSW.	Phone: 1800 628 221 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/statistics/ageing-and-disability-abuse-helpline
Council on the Ageing	Provides information pathways that enables older people to be informed about issues that are important to them and contribute to policies that impact them.	Phone: (02) 9286 3860 or 1800 449 102 Email: info@cotansw.com.au Website: https://www.cotansw.com.au
Dementia Support Australia	A 24 hour helpline that provides advice and recommendations to people who care for someone with dementia whose behaviours are a risk to themselves or others.	Phone: 1800 699 799 Website: https://www.dementia.com.au
Mental Health Line	NSW Health's 24 hour statewide phone service which links people with NSW Health mental health services.	Phone: 1800 011 511 Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/mental-health-line.aspx
My Aged Care	Helps older Australians access in home support options, community care, residential aged care, and referrals to other appropriate services.	Phone: 1800 200 422 Website: https://www.myagedcare.gov.au
Older Persons Advocacy Network	Provides advocacy, support and education to help older people to exercise their rights in aged care.	Phone: 1800 700 600 Website: https://opan.org.au
Older Women's Network	Runs groups offering activities/classes for older women, provide warm referrals and assistance to older women, and advocate on issues impacting older women.	Phone: 02 9519 8044 Email: info@ownnsw.org.au Website: https://ownnsw.org.au
Seniors Rights Service	Provides free and confidential advice, aged care advocacy and support, and legal advice to seniors across New South Wales.	Phone: 1800 424 079 or 02 9281 3600 Email: info@SeniorsRightsService.org.au Website: https://seniorsrightsservice.org.au
NSW Ageing and Disability Commission	Provides resources and training and promote the rights of older people and adults with disability to live free from abuse in their family, home and community.	Website: https://www.ageingdisabilitycommission.nsw.gov.au

- i Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Older people – Overview](#), AIHW website, 2023.
- ii C Thredgold, A Beer, C Zufferey, A Peters and A Spinney, [An effective homelessness services system for older Australians](#), Final Report No. 322, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), 2019.
- iii Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#), ABS website, 2021.
- iv Thredgold et al., [An effective homelessness service system for older Australians](#).
- v Ibid.
- vi Parliament of Australia, [Final report: Inquiry into homelessness in Australia](#), Parliament of Australia, 2021.
- vii Thredgold et al., [An effective homelessness service system for older Australians](#).
- viii Ibid.
- ix AIHW, [Specialist homelessness service annual report 2022-23](#), AIHW website, 2023.
- x Parliament of NSW, [Report No.61 – Homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in NSW](#), Parliament of NSW, 2022.
- xi AIHW, [Older Australians – Housing and living arrangements](#), AIHW website, 2023.

Appendix J – Supporting people in mental distress



“When I was on the street, I would become very fearful and suspicious of everyone, very paranoid – I thought people were trying to hurt me. Everything was brighter, closer, louder – all noise sounded like nails down a blackboard. I trusted no one.”

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

People experiencing homelessness may exhibit symptoms of mental distress. Mental or psychological distress is when someone has deeply unpleasant feelings, symptoms or experiences which may or may not be due to mental illnessⁱ. Mental distress can occur as a reaction to one particular situation/incident, or a combination of factors that places extra-ordinary stress and pressure on a person. People react differently to highly stressful eventsⁱⁱ.

People in crisis can experience strong emotions, including feeling overwhelmed, tearful, agitated, worried, fearful, angry, helpless or hopelessⁱⁱⁱ. People in mental distress may or may not be experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Mental distress may impact a person's capacity to concentrate and/or control these emotions. A person may display a range of behaviours such as crying, yelling, raised voice, confusion, impaired judgement, and/or difficulty with seemingly simple tasks.

Supporting people who are experiencing heightened distress can be challenging. It can feel uncomfortable to be in the presence of strong expressions of emotion, but it is important to realise that this is a common reaction to stressful and unexpected events^{iv}. More than 80% of people experiencing homelessness report having experienced life-altering trauma at some point in their lives^v.

Homelessness can amplify mental distress due to increased anxiety, fear, depression, sleeplessness and/or substance use. People may experience feelings of helplessness or hopelessness which can lead them to overlook opportunities for change or relief^{vi}. If mental distress is severe and ongoing it can develop into mental illness. People who have experienced homelessness have a significantly higher rate of mental health conditions (54 per cent) compared to the general population (19 per cent)^{vii}. For more information on supporting people with complex health conditions, see **Appendix K**.

It is important that a worker can identify and understand someone exhibiting symptoms of mental distress. The worker should demonstrate empathy during all interactions and be sensitive to the person's needs, prioritising the person's emotional and physical safety.

If a worker feels that their safety or the safety of others is at risk at any time, they should contact emergency services (000). The worker may also contact a specialist (such as the Mental Health Line) to assist in addition to emergency services.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Language has a profound impact on people and the use of inclusive and contemporary language empowers people, minimises stigma and changes culture over time.
- A worker should conduct a general assessment of the person's presentation and behaviour, taking note of any practical needs (like water, food or safety) that the worker can address during the interaction. The assessment should be conducted from an appropriate, safe, and respectful distance.
- Mental distress may be mistaken for alcohol or other drug misuse – it is important the worker does not make assumptions and work with the person to address the person's needs.
- A worker must assess their person's safety and the safety of those around them. If there is any imminent risk to self or others the worker should contact emergency services (000) first for a response. After emergency services have been notified a worker can contact the Mental Health Line. All referrals to mental health services go through the Mental Health Line (see below).
- There is a very high prevalence of trauma amongst people who have experienced homelessness. Workers should use a trauma-informed approach. A trauma-informed approach maximises:
 - a person's feelings of choice (such as choice over the gender of the professional providing care support or treatment)
 - collaboration (such as asking at the outset what the person needs to happen through the encounter)
 - trust (such as being clear about what will happen and when)
 - empowerment (such as enabling the person to make active decisions with regards to their care, support or treatment)
 - safety (such as ensuring sufficient privacy).
- Unless the worker conducting the interaction is a qualified professional, the worker should only refer and where possible connect the person to appropriate support.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Give the person your full attention and do not interrupt the person when they are speaking.
- Provide clear information, using short statements if necessary. Avoid technical language or jargon. Provide short and easy choices.
- Use a gentle, reassuring tone, and be mindful not to let the person's anger or anxiety escalate your own emotions.
- It is important to be aware of your own feelings and model being calm, or at least present a calm exterior^{viii}.
- Use open ended questions (for example "what's happened to make you feel this way?"), keep your questions to a minimum, and give the person time to think before they respond.
- Consider stepping back and providing space to provide a non-verbal cue of 'no pressure'.
- Actively listen and paraphrase what the person is saying. You don't have to agree with what they are saying, but by showing you understand how they feel, you are letting them know you respect their feelings. For example, "it sounds like you are feeling ABC and that you want/plan to XYZ. Have I understood correctly?"
- Reassure the person that there are solutions and support. It is important not to try to rationalise or debate the issues, or pressure the person to see a positive side to their situation, or inadvertently shame the person for feeling hopeless^{ix}.
- Avoid providing opinions or advice, or agreeing/disagreeing with what they are saying.
- Help the person consider their most urgent needs, and how and when they could be met.
- It is important to remember that the person may feel overwhelmed and present as disorganised when making decisions. You may need to directly assist them to access support (such as making a phone call for them or taking them to an office/service) as they may not be capable at that moment of carrying out simple tasks.

If someone has attempted or is at immediate risk of attempting to harm themselves or someone else, call **Triple Zero (000)** immediately.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
13YARN	A 24/7 national crisis support telephone service that provides confidential, culturally safe and appropriate assistance for Aboriginal peoples to speak about their needs or concerns.	Phone: 13 92 76 Email: enquiries@13yarn.org.au Website: https://13yarn.org.au/
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Beyond Blue	A 24/7 confidential hotline of mental health professionals that provide support for people affected by anxiety, depression and suicide. A representative will provide information, advice and direct clients to relevant services to seek further support.	Phone: 1300 22 4636 Website: https://www.beyondblue.org.au/
Lifeline	A 24/7 crisis support telephone service providing crisis support and suicide prevention services.	Phone: 131 114 Sydney metropolitan Phone: (02) 9361 8000 Regional and rural NSW Phone: 1800 422 599
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
Mental Health Line	Free 24/7 statewide phone service linking people with NSW mental health services. It is staffed by trained mental health professionals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer mental health advice • complete a brief assessment • make recommendations for appropriate care, including referral to NSW Health mental health services. 	Phone: 1800 011 511 Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/mental-health-line.aspx
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Alcohol and Other Drugs Information Service (ADIS)	Provides phone counselling, support, referrals and information for people affected by alcohol or other drugs. Counsellors are trained to work with people concerned about their alcohol and drug use, as well as people concerned about their family or friends.	Phone: 1800 250 015 Website: https://svhs.org.au/our-services/list-of-services/alcohol-drug-service/alcohol-drug-information-service

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Kids Helpline	Australia's free (even from a mobile), confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. Qualified counsellors at Kids Helpline are available via WebChat and phone anytime and for any reason.	Phone: 1800 55 1800 Website: https://kidshelpline.com.au
NSW Mental Health Support Website	Includes an extensive list of mental health support contacts that could assist someone in mental distress.	Website: www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/Pages/support-contact-list.aspx
Safe Havens	Provide a calm and non-clinical alternative to hospital emergency departments, for people experiencing distress or suicidal thoughts. Safe Havens operate as a drop in service with no referrals needed.	Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/towardszerosuicides/Pages/safe-haven.aspx
Suicide Prevention Outreach Teams (SPOT) Service	A mobile service and provides support for people in distress or at risk of self harm in their communities or more familiar environments. People in distress can speak to a peer worker with lived experience or to a mental health clinician. SPOTs are accessed by calling the Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 and operate in various locations across NSW.	Phone: Mental Health Line 1800 011 511 Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/towardszerosuicides/Pages/suicide-prevention-outreach-teams.aspx

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- i NSW Mental Health Commission (NSWMHC), [NSW Budget 2020-21 Analysis: Domestic Violence](#), NSWMHC website, n.d.
 - ii Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC), [Supporting someone in distress](#), QMHC website, n.d.
 - iii Ibid.
 - iv Ibid.
 - v Psychiatric Times, ["I Have No One": Understanding Homelessness and Trauma](#), Psychiatric Times website, 2022.
 - vi QMHC [Supporting someone in distress](#).
 - vii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Mental health – Specialist homelessness services](#), AIHW website, 2023.
 - viii QMHC [Supporting someone in distress](#).
 - ix Ibid.

Appendix K – Supporting people with complex health conditions



Phil is in excruciating pain due to a tooth abscess. The last time Phil tried to see a dentist the receptionist asked him to leave before he'd even had a chance to say hello. The infection is making Phil sick and feverish and he can no longer stand. People walking past don't pay attention because they assume Phil's strange behaviour is due to drug use.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

People experiencing chronic homelessness are more likely to have a range of complex health conditions. These may include chronic pain, cognitive impairment, traumatic brain injury, mental illness, substance use disorders and/or chronic health conditions such as diabetes, Hepatitis C and other blood-borne viruses, HIV, dementia, liver or heart disease.

Complex health conditions can arise from risk taking behaviours, ageing or psychiatric disordersⁱ, as well as the result of abuse, trauma or the hardships of life on the streets. Complex health conditions can significantly impact many aspects of a person's life including their capacity, opportunities, motivation, behaviour, and quality of life, especially if the person is unable to access appropriate treatment.

For people experiencing homelessness, meeting basic needs such as food, water and a place to sleep can be the most important day-to-day priority. Health needs are often not addressed until an emergency arisesⁱⁱ. Physical barriers such as a lack of documentation (e.g. Medicare card), not being able to afford public transport or access transport to attend appointments, having no mailing address or phone to receive appointment reminders, and not being able to keep medications secure are some of the difficulties faced by people experiencing homelessnessⁱⁱⁱ.

People experiencing homelessness may also struggle to access crucial medication and nutritious food which leaves them unable to address their health needs and can lead to worsening health conditions^{iv}.

The rate of mental health conditions is substantially higher among people with a history of homelessness (54 per cent) compared to the general population (19 per cent)^v. An Australian survey found that 73 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women experiencing homelessness had one mental health disorder in the past year; while 40 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women experiencing homelessness had at least two mental health conditions^{vi}.

In addition to higher rates of mental health, people experiencing homelessness have high comorbidity rates of various conditions including alcohol and other drug (AOD). More than one third (38%) of people were diagnosed with a chronic physical health condition in addition to their co-occurring AOD and mental health condition^{vii}. People experiencing homelessness may benefit from the support and coordination of various services. However, navigating these services can be challenging^{viii}.

In some cases, people experiencing homelessness may experience significant stigma and discrimination from providers when they do access health care^{ix}. This can impact the person's general health, access to services, and often results in poorer mental and physical health^x. People experiencing homelessness may be fearful and distrust health services due to past experiences including institutional mistreatment and harm and/or intergenerational trauma.

A person's complex health condition/s may not be visible without the person's disclosure. In some situations, a person may not recognise their own complex health condition/s. Workers must therefore be non-judgemental of a person's condition and chosen treatment to address their condition (which may include no treatment). Trauma can be a major contributing factor to a person's health, so it is important the worker provide a trauma-informed and person-centred response throughout.

Substance use disorders

Substance use disorders are a complex health condition. People may use substances such as alcohol or other drugs (AOD) to dull emotional or physical pain, or to escape from problems or difficulties experienced in life including experiences of trauma.

Around 1 in 20 Australians has a substance use disorder^{xi}. It can result in changes and long-term damage to a person's brain and other organs^{xii}. AOD use may result in increased aggression and irritability, changes in attitude, personality or habits, and involvement in criminal activity.

AOD use is complex and workers should practice harm minimisation to support people using AOD to reduce the harm to the person and the wider community. Harm minimisation techniques help to reduce risk behaviours, create safer settings for use, and build resilience^{xiii}. It focuses on the person's rights while helping people remain safe.

There may be limited access to treatment options for people who request assistance. For those who are in active addiction, restricted access to their substance of choice and/or support network may lead to acute, complex withdrawal, irritability, and erratic or risky behaviour.

Engagement strategy

Things to know before engaging:

- It is important to show compassion and respect to people who are experiencing complex health conditions and homelessness. This includes remaining non-judgemental and person-centred to ensure the person's individual needs are met.
- People with chronic health conditions may struggle with communication and movement. They may also experience depression and anxiety or a lack of independence due to their condition. It is important to understand the effects of chronic health conditions before undertaking any engagement^{xiv}.
- Navigating the service system can be complicated for people with complex health conditions due to the extra complexity the condition adds to their homelessness. It can also restrict options for support. Workers should be aware of suitable resources and work with the person to obtain the support they chose.
- If someone is at imminent or immediate risk of attempting to harm themselves or someone else (or yourself), contact emergency services (police or ambulance) on **Triple Zero (000)** for assistance.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Ensure your approach and all interactions are non-judgmental both in verbal and non-verbal communication. Remove any personal bias during engagement.
- Remain calm and do not raise your voice throughout the interaction.
- Maintain your safety and the safety of the person at all times and contact emergency services if required.
- Give the person space and allow them to take a break if needed or requested.
- Avoid using potentially harmful positivity statements (e.g. "You'll get over it").
- When safe to do so, encourage a health response instead of a police response.
- Refer the person to a health service nearby if needed or requested. Where possible, offer to take the person or organise transport to a service for support if the person accepts assistance.
- Call an ambulance if there is a health or safety emergency (000).

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
Mental Health Line	A free 24/7 statewide phone service which links people with NSW Health mental health services. It is staffed by trained mental health professionals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer mental health advice • complete a brief assessment • make recommendations for appropriate care, including referral to NSW Health mental health services. 	Phone: 1800 011 511 Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/mental-health-line.aspx
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
ACON	Provides a range of services including, mental health and drug and alcohol, family and domestic violence, ageing as well as HIV and sexual health education, prevention and testing services to LGBTQ communities. ACON also provides counselling, care coordination, peer support to people living with HIV. ACON works to improve the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.	Phone: visit the website for contact numbers for the relevant location Email: acon@acon.org.au Website: https://acon.org.au
Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)	A 24/7 free and confidential counselling helpline for those in NSW with concerns around alcohol or drug misuse. ADIS is staffed by professional counsellors who provide education, brief intervention counselling and referrals to other appropriate services in NSW.	Phone: 1800 250 015 Website: https://www.svhs.org.au/our-services/list-of-services/alcohol-drug-service/alcohol-drug-information-service
Bobby Goldsmith Foundation	Support for people living with HIV including case management, community support, financial advocacy and counselling, HIV/AOD Integrated support, and health and well being programs.	Phone: 02 9283 8666 Email: bgf@bgf.org.au Website: https://bgf.org.au
Full Stop Australia	Confidential, trauma specialist counselling for people of all genders who are impacted by violence and abuse, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members.	Phone: 1800 Full Stop (1800 385 578) Website: https://www.fullstop.org.au

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Health Direct	A 24/7 free health advice helpline. Can provide information on health professionals in the area.	Phone: 1800 022 222 Website: https://www.healthdirect.gov.au
National Disability Insurance Scheme	Provides support packages for people with disability and links people to services for therapeutic support, personal activities, equipment, community connection, and other support to maintain independence where possible.	Phone: 1800 800 110 (NSW hotline) Email: enquiries@ndis.gov.au Website: https://ndis.gov.au
NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal – Guardianship Division (NCAT)	The Guardianship Division determines applications about adults who are incapable of making their own decisions and who may require a legally appointed substitute decision maker.	Phone: 1300 006 228 Website: https://www.ncat.nsw.gov.au/how-ncat-works/ncat-divisions-and-appeal-panel/guardianship-division.html
NSW Public Guardian and NSW Trustee and Guardian	The Public Guardian is a public official appointed by the NCAT Guardianship Division or Supreme Court of NSW to make healthcare, lifestyle and medical decisions for a person who lacks decision-making ability. The Public Guardian delegates their decision-making authority to a team of guardians at the NSW Trustee and Guardian.	NSW Public Guardian Website: https://www.tag.nsw.gov.au/public-guardian NSW Trustee and Guardian Phone: 1300 109 290 Website: https://www.tag.nsw.gov.au
NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)	The NUAA operate a Needle and Syringe Program to supply people who inject drugs with sterile injecting equipment to prevent the transmission of blood borne viruses, including Hepatitis C. The NUAA also provides blood borne virus testing and treatment referrals.	Phone: 9171 6650 Website: https://nuaa.org.au
Way Ahead	Provides a mental health information line or online directory to connect people to services, provide support information on mental health, wellbeing and community services.	Phone: 1300 794 991 Directory: https://directory.wayahead.org.au Website: https://wayahead.org.au

- i Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Health of people experiencing homelessness](#), AIHW website, 2021.
- ii Ibid.
- iii Ibid.
- iv National Health Care for the Homeless Council (NHCHC), [Homelessness & health: What's the Connection?](#), NHCHC, 2019.
- v AIHW, [Clients with a current mental health issue using specialist homelessness services](#), AIHW website, 2021.
- vi M O'Donnell, T Varker, R Cash, R Armstrong, L Di Censo, P Zanatta, A Murnane, L Brophy and A Phelps, [The Trauma and Homelessness Initiative](#), Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, Sacred Heart Mission, Mind Australia, Inner South Community Health and VincentCare Victoria, 2014.
- vii Comorbidity Guidelines, [Homelessness](#), Comorbidity Guidelines website, n.d.
- viii AIHW, [Health of people experiencing homelessness](#), AIHW website, 2024.
- ix J Reilly, I Ho and A Williamson, 'A systematic review of the effect of stigma on the health of people experiencing homelessness', *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 2022, 30(60), 2128-2141, doi: 10.1111/hsc.13884.
- x Ibid
- xi healthdirect, [Substance abuse](#), healthdirect website, 2023.
- xii Ibid
- xiii AIHW, [Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia](#), AIHW website, 2023.
- xiv Global Health Living Foundation Creaky Joints (GHLF), [How you can support someone with chronic illness](#), GHLF website, 2020.

Appendix L – Supporting people who experienced domestic and family violence



Maxine had to leave home to escape a violent partner, fearing for her life. Maxine is constantly terrified that her partner will find her. She knows it is not safe to fall asleep in an unfamiliar and public place so she starts using amphetamines to stay awake at night. By the time Maxine feels ready to visit a service to ask for help, her drug use has escalated and she's told that she cannot access crisis accommodation until she is not drug affected.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Domestic and family violence (DFV) occurs when one person in an intimate, personal, family, kinship, or informal carer relationship uses violence or abuse to maintain power and control over the other person. DFV can take many forms including coercive control, emotional, psychological, physical, verbal, social, financial, immigration, reproductive and/or sexual abuse. DFV can negatively impact a person's physical and mental wellbeing, employment status, academic performance, financial situation, and relationshipsⁱ.

In NSW, there are approximately 2,500 incidents of domestic violence reported to police every month, however this is thought to represent only 40 per cent of actual incidents due to underreportingⁱⁱ. In 2021/22 approximately 38 per cent of people receiving specialist homelessness services in NSW reported experiencing DFVⁱⁱⁱ.

DFV is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children, further compounding adverse impacts on health and wellbeing. (For more information on supporting women see **Appendix G**).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, or other gender or sexual identity (LGBTIQ+) people are just as likely as people in the general population to experience DFV (one in three people)^{iv}. (For more information on supporting LGBTIQ+ people, see **Appendix H**). Aboriginal women are more likely to experience DFV and suffer more severe forms of violence than non-Aboriginal women^v. (For more information on supporting Aboriginal people, see **Appendix C**).

Leaving a DFV situation can be extremely difficult, highly risky and complex for the victim-survivor. It is important to recognise that people who have experienced DFV have also experienced trauma. Therefore, a worker must understand the effects of trauma and avoid re-traumatising victim-survivors during any interaction.

Workers must be supportive, non-judgemental, reassuring and help the person to feel empowered and safe throughout all interactions, this includes cultural considerations. Workers must also recognise that it is not uncommon for victim-survivors to leave and return to DFV relationships more than once. For example, a lack of safe and affordable housing can prompt women to return to abusive situations to avoid homelessness.

When interacting with a person who may have experienced DFV, the worker in the first instance, must ensure the person's immediate safety is addressed and assist the person in any safety planning required. This may include managing the disclosure of personal information and/or contact details. Risk assessments and safety planning should be completed collaboratively, with the person leading the plan along with a trained professional.

A lack of safe and secure accommodation can impact a person's access to supports, including medical treatment. There are limited DFV support services for the LGBTIQ+ community which may increase risk and create additional challenges for a person to maintain physical and psychological safety.

Worker Resources

DVNSW created the [Good Practice Guidelines](https://www.dvnsw.org.au/categories/good-practice-guidelines) to assist the specialist DFV sector in NSW (<https://www.dvnsw.org.au/categories/good-practice-guidelines>).

Say It Out Loud provides a range of tools for service providers working with people in the LGBTQA+ community who are victim-survivors of domestic and family violence at <https://sayitoutloud.org.au/professionals/?state=NSW>.

A worker can refer any victim-survivors to **1800 Respect** to get the specialised care they may need including referrals for immediate and ongoing support.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Acknowledge that violence is not acceptable in any form and people have the right to feel safe, respected and supported in their relationships.
- Victim-survivors of DFV have experienced trauma and require a trauma-informed, strength-based response. This means focusing on building a sense of physical, emotional, and cultural safety for the individual.
- Recognise children and young people as victims in their own right even when they are accompanying their parent/carer. Consider the support required for the whole family. Information on supporting children and young people can be found at **Appendix B**.
- Older women are one of the fastest growing cohorts of people experiencing homelessness which is often related to experiences of domestic and family violence. Information on supporting older people can be found at **Appendix I**.

- Recognise that some victim-survivors have had difficult and traumatic experiences within the social and justice system which may lead to a distrust of services and agencies. Workers should take care to build trust, rapport and communicate openly and transparently.
- A worker must be aware of how their presence and approach may be interpreted. This may require a worker to adjust their behaviour avoid re-traumatising the person and/or family.
- Consider who would be best suited to approach the person on a case by case basis, including the number of workers that may approach and the gender of the worker. It is also important for the worker to take into consideration the person's culture, religion, and age to ensure an appropriate response. (For more information on supporting a person from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background see **Appendix D**).
- Understand the relevant factors that may be associated with the DFV situation and what risks may be associated to the individual, their family, the community and the worker. This requires a timely and appropriate response and should be done in consultation with trained professionals.
- Individual victim-survivors may have different understandings or interpretations of their experiences of violence or other parts of their story. Workers must allow people the opportunity to share their stories in a way that feels appropriate to them at that time and stage of their journey.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Confirm that the person feels safe to engage with you where you are or find another place where the person feels safe. This may include engaging at another time or through other means.
 - The person's immediate safety must be prioritised and requires a timely response. This may require contacting emergency services if the person is in imminent danger.
- Inform the person of your intentions to engage and reassure the person that any information shared will remain confidential outlining the exceptional circumstances in which information may be shared (i.e. child is at risk of significant harm or a person is in imminent and serious danger).
 - It is important that phone numbers, contact details or information on the person's whereabouts are kept confidential to protect the person's safety.
- Maintain appropriate distance and be conscious of any physical contact with the person to avoid re-traumatising them.

- Do not ask the person to share their story, but if they choose to, listen without judgement or providing advice. Respond with sensitivity and prioritise the safety of victim survivors.
- Be careful not to make assumptions and be aware of any unconscious bias about violence or abuse.
- Be aware of, and provide referrals to, appropriate assistance or supports including local specialist DFV services.
- Provide person centered responses that are respectful, sensitive, culturally appropriate, and safe.
- If a bilingual worker or interpreter is engaged to support the interaction, confirm that the person has no familiarity with them to protect the person's anonymity.
- Recognise and address the barriers that impact a person's support and safety options.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
1800 Respect	The 24 hour national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service.	Phone: 1800 737 732 Website: https://www.1800respect.org.au/
NSW Domestic Violence Line	The 24 hour NSW domestic and family violence counselling, information and referral service for women.	Phone: 1800 656 463 Website: https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/domestic--family-and-sexual-violence-support-contacts/nsw-domestic-violence-line.html
Mensline Australia	The 24 hour free telephone and online counselling service offering support for Australian men.	Phone: 1300 789 978 Website: https://mensline.org.au/
NSW Sexual Violence Helpline	The 24 hour NSW sexual violence counselling, information and referral service.	Phone: 1800 424 017 Website: https://fullstop.org.au/get-help/our-services
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program	WDVCASs provide information, advocacy and referrals to assist women and their children who are or have been experiencing domestic and family violence, with their legal, social and welfare needs including housing, financial assistance, health services, and counselling.	Phone: 1800 WDVCAS or 1800 938 227 Website: https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-partners/womens-domestic-violence-court-advocacy-program
Full Stop Australia	Confidential, trauma specialist counselling for people of all genders who are impacted by violence and abuse, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members.	Phone: 1800 Full Stop (1800 385 578) Website: https://www.fullstop.org.au

RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Child Protection Helpline	Any member of the NSW community who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm should report their concerns to the 24 hour Child Protection Helpline.	Phone: 132 111
Child Wellbeing Unit	The Child Wellbeing Unit can provide advice and support for appropriate local responses when the risk of harm concerns about children and young people do not meet the threshold of suspected risk of significant harm. Child Wellbeing Units are located in NSW Health, the NSW Department of Education and NSW Police.	Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/interagency-guidelines/understanding-roles-and-responsibilities-in-the-sector/chapters/child-wellbeing-units
Immigrant Women Speakout	Provides information, guidance and other direct services to help access the resources culturally diverse women need to live independently, free from violence, exploitation and discrimination.	Phone: (02) 9635 8022 Website: https://www.speakout.org.au/
Muslim Women Association	Domestic violence specialist services and cultural support services for all women and Muslim women in particular.	Phone: 9750 6916 Website: http://www.mwa.org.au/
No to Violence	Works with men who use violence, to change their abusive and violent behaviour.	Phone: 1300 766 491 Website: https://ntv.org.au/
Relationships Australia NSW	Provides domestic violence counselling, men's behavioral change programs, and assistance to navigate through court matters.	Phone: 1300 364 277 Email: enquiries@ransw.org.au Website: https://www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/support/services/
Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline	Available 24/7 for anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been impacted by sexual domestic and/or family violence.	Phone: 1800 497 212 Website: https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/family-violence
Reach Out	A safe place for young people to chat anonymously, get support, and feel better.	Website: https://au.reachout.com/
Victims Services	Helps people who are victims of a violent crime in NSW to access counselling, financial assistance for immediate needs and economic loss, funeral expenses and recognition payment.	Phone: 1800 633 063 Website: https://victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au

i Homelessness NSW, [No child should be left without a home](#), Homelessness NSW website, n.d.

ii NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS), [NSW Budget 2020-21 Analysis: Domestic Violence](#), NCOSS website, n.d.

iii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-22](#), AIHW website, 2022.

iv ACON, [Domestic and Family Violence](#), ACON website, n.d.

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Appendix M – Supporting people exiting justice or correctional settings



Rod has been in and out of custody most of his adult life for charges related to substance use. He also suffers with mental ill health and was released without any medication or scripts, which he needs otherwise he can become paranoid and fearful. He does not have a home or any support in the community. He has tried to go to the Housing office a few times however he feels like he is being judged and spoken down to, and often ends up leaving in frustration.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

In 2018, more than half of the people exiting the Australian justice system expected to be either homeless or did not know where they would be staying when they were releasedⁱ. In NSW, at least 4,000 people released from custody each year do not have a stable place to liveⁱⁱ and in 2021-22, 1,773 specialist homelessness services clients in NSW had come from custodyⁱⁱⁱ.

Adults on remand can be discharged into the community at any time and may have limited opportunities to plan accommodation arrangements prior to release. People can also be refused bail because they are homeless and without an address.

Incarceration itself can have a significant impact on a person's physical and emotional wellbeing. People exiting custody may have experienced trauma in their past or during their incarceration; in NSW, 65 per cent of people in prison had experienced or witnessed a traumatic event^{iv}. Workers should provide a trauma-informed response during all interactions.

People exiting custody may seek freedom in open spaces and stay away from services in response to their distrust of government services and to counteract the captivity and lack of control they previously felt.

Many people exiting custody will have no formal and often few informal supports. Without adequate pre-release planning or transitional support, people exiting custody may lack the essential resources to successfully transition to life after custody^v. A person exiting the justice system may have challenges and considerations that impact their transition into community:

- Additional considerations for housing, such as parole conditions, Apprehended Violence Orders or the NSW Child Protection Register.
- Stigma and discrimination when attempting to access services or gain employment in the community. People exiting the justice system can be excluded due to their criminal record or lack of personal documentation (i.e. identification).
- Homelessness is one of the two main predictors of reincarceration in Australia^{vi}. A suitable housing solution can reduce reoffending^{vii}.
- Many people face a difficult choice between homelessness or returning to unsafe environments, such as a violent relationship.
- People exiting custody are often estranged from family and social networks. Exiting custody and navigating complex social dynamics can be isolating and lonely. For Aboriginal peoples, this sense of isolation is also related to being away from Country.

Between 200 and 300 young people are released from Youth Justice facilities in NSW each month^{viii}. Young people experience many of the same challenges upon release from custody or engagement with the justice system as adults, however, due to their age, opportunities for suitable accommodation may be even more limited. Many vulnerable young people under Youth Justice supervision are involved with other services such as alcohol and other drug treatment services, and child protection^{ix} and/or have mental health concerns. Workers should try to provide an age-appropriate response when engaging young people. Information on supporting children and young people can be found at **Appendix B**.

Workers must be respectful and non-judgemental when engaging a person who has exited a justice or correctional setting. A worker should also try to understand the impacts of incarceration and create an environment where the person is heard and empowered to make their own decisions, with options for appropriate support where requested.

Over-representation in the justice system

People exiting custody often have intersecting and complex needs associated with disadvantage^x. Some cohorts are also overrepresented in custody and require targeted and person-centred support to address their individual needs.

In September 2023, Aboriginal people made up 30.4 per cent of the adult prison population in NSW^{xi} (approximately one in three people in custody). While 54.8 per cent of children in custody in NSW identify as Aboriginal^{xii}. Information on supporting Aboriginal peoples can be found at **Appendix C**.

Women made up 6.6 per cent of the people in custody^{xiii}. Information on supporting women can be found at **Appendix G**. Around 70 to 90 per cent of women in custody have experienced abuse^{xiv}. Information on supporting people who experienced domestic and family violence can be found at **Appendix L**.

People with disability make up almost a third of the people in custody, despite being only 18 per cent of the general population. 95 per cent of Aboriginal peoples charged with criminal offences who appear in court are estimated to have an intellectual disability, a cognitive impairment or a mental illness^{xv}. Information on supporting people with disability can be found in **Appendix F**.

In 2018, 40 per cent of Australian prisoners had been diagnosed at some point with a mental health condition, 29 per cent had a disability or chronic health condition and 33 per cent were previously homeless^{xvi}. The majority of women are in custody due to illicit drug offences (23.7 per cent)^{xvii}. Information on supporting people with complex health conditions can be found at **Appendix K**.

Engagement strategy

Things to know before engaging:

- People who have had contact with the justice system experience complex and intersecting forms of disadvantage throughout their lives, which might mean they need support across a range of domains.
- People can be released from custody without identification, medication, or plain clothes, which can present barriers to accessing services, housing, and employment.
- People exiting custody may face many challenges when attempting to rebuild their lives in the community, which can cause an emotional response of stress, anxiety, anger and hopelessness^{xviii}. People who have been in custody are also adjusting to different social and cultural ways of engaging in community. This shift in environment, combined with the emotional response and stress, can sometimes result in people presenting as agitated, closed-off, and/or defensive, and the person might struggle to communicate clearly and calmly with service providers. For information on supporting people in mental distress see **Appendix J**.
- People who have been in custody often have low levels of formal education, which can lead to poor literacy. People who have been incarcerated for long periods of time can also lose vital skills which are necessary for life outside a correctional setting, and they might require increased patience and support from workers.
- Prisons are located all over NSW, and people can be released from prison in locations they are unfamiliar with, and where they have no supports, or community connections.
- A person may project their frustration with the system or their experiences onto the worker. Workers are encouraged not to interpret the person's behaviour as a personal attack, but provide non-judgmental, positive and empathetic responses.
- A worker may not know if a person has a history with the justice system unless the person chooses to disclose this information.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Allow the person to verbally release feelings of anger or frustration as is safe to do so. Respond calmly and encourage the person to express their needs which may differ from what you think they may be.
- Speak in plain language to facilitate the person's understanding and/or obtain an interpreter where required.
- Support the person to connect to appropriate service providers if requested.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Bail Accommodation and Support Service	An after-hours intake service for NSW Police which provides information that helps young people gain access to bail if they are likely to be held in custody. Young people can be connected with accommodation, transport, case support and other services to help them satisfy the conditions of a bail order.	Phone (for police): 1300 224 555 Email: bail-and-accommodation-support-service@justice.nsw.gov.au Website: https://www.nsw.gov.au/legal-and-justice/youth-justice/bail-and-accommodation-support-service
Community Restorative Centre	Provides specialist through-care, post-release and reintegration programs for people transitioning from prison into the wider community.	Phone: (02) 9288 8700 Email: info@crcnsw.org.au Website: https://crcnsw.org.au
EQUIPS (Explore, Question, Investigate, Practice, Succeed)	Provides a suite of therapeutic and educational programs to reduce the risk of re-offending. It is designed to increase participation opportunities for offenders in both custody and community settings.	Website: https://tap.nsw.gov.au/programs/equips-programs.html



RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
Prisoners Aid NSW	Provides practical help to inmates, ex-inmates and their families including employment opportunities and ongoing education, qualifications and life skills.	<p>Phone: 0412 430 214</p> <p>Email: info@prisonersaidnsw.org</p> <p>Website: https://prisonersaidnsw.org/</p>
Youth on Track	A Youth Justice early intervention program that identifies and responds to the needs of young people aged 10 to 17 years who are at risk of long-term involvement in the criminal justice system.	<p>Email: youthontrack@justice.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Website: https://www.nsw.gov.au/legal-and-justice/youth-justice/programs-and-services/support-services/youth-on-track</p>

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- i C Martin, R Reeve, R McCausland, E Baldry, P Burton, R White and S Thomas, *Exiting prison with complex support needs: the role of housing assistance*, AHURI Final Report No. 361, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, 2021.
 - ii Community Restorative Centre (CRC), *Submission to Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Homelessness*, Parliament of Australia website, 2020.
 - iii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-22*, 2022, AIHW website, 2022.
 - iv Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (NSW), 2015 Network Patient Health Survey Report, Justice Health NSW, 2017 in Inspector of Custodial Services, *Health services in NSW correctional facilities*, Inspector of Custodial Services, 2021.
 - v CRC, *Homelessness in Ex-Prisoner Populations: A CRC Submission for FACS*, CRC, Sydney, 2016.
 - vi E Baldry, D McDonnell, P Maplestone and M Peeters, 'Australian Prisoners' Post-release Housing', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 2003, 15(2), doi: 10.1080/10345329.2003.12036287.
 - vii C Martin et al., *Exiting prison with complex support needs: the role of housing assistance*,.
 - viii NSW Bureau of Crime and Statistics and Research (NSW BOCSAR), *New South Wales custody statistics quarterly update December 2022*, NSW BOCSAR website, 2022.
 - ix AIHW, *Youth Justice*, AIHW website, 2021.
 - x R McCausland and E Baldry, 'Who does Australia Lock Up? The Social Determinants of Justice', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 2023, 12(3), doi: 10.5204/ijcjsd.2504.
 - xi NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), *Custody Statistics*, BOCSAR website, 2023.
 - xii Ibid.
 - xiii Ibid,
 - xiv Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), *Women's imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence*, ANROWS, 2020.
 - xv Disability Royal Commission, *People with disability overrepresented at all stages of the criminal justice system*, Disability Royal Commission website, 2020.
 - xvi AIHW, *The health of Australia's prisoners 2018*, AIHW website, 2019.
 - xvii ANROWS, *Women's imprisonment and domestic, family and sexual violence*.
 - xviii RA Contreas, *A communication guide for ex-offenders*, California State University San Bernardino, 2018.

Appendix N – Supporting people sleeping in vehicles



***Vehicle** refers to a car, van, caravan, recreational vehicle, houseboatⁱ, liveaboard, or other thing used to transport people.*

Jo has been evicted from the property due to an inability to pay rent. Jo was able to store some belongings in a friend’s garage, but everything else is in Jo’s car. Jo has a job but is only getting a couple of shifts each week. It’s enough to pay for about \$20 fuel each week. Jo is sleeping in the car in a different place each night but can’t afford to travel far. On days when Jo works, Jo use the public bathrooms at the local surf club to shower. No one at work knows that Jo is homeless.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person’s gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

People living in vehicles are one of the fastest growing cohorts of hidden homelessnessⁱⁱ, however the full extent of people staying in vehicles is unclear.

People may turn to a vehicle as their main accommodation due to factors like high rental prices, lack of suitable properties, domestic and family violence, and/or a lack of knowledge of or access to support services, family, or friends. Alternatively, people may stay in a vehicle in an attempt to remain with family members, partners or companion animals due to limited affordable accommodation options. While sleeping in a vehicle may appear to be a safer alternative to sleeping exposed on the street, people forced into these situations face a range of issues that continue to put them at riskⁱⁱⁱ.

Vehicles are often not able to remain in one location for extended periods of time. To avoid being fined or towed a person may be forced to regularly move or relocate the vehicle. This instability can impede their capacity to find stable accommodation, increase stress and anxiety, and disconnect them from community and/or social networks.

Vehicles are often cramped spaces that do not provide key amenities or full privacy^{iv}. This can also impact a person’s physical and mental health, exacerbating pre-existing conditions and/or creating new medical concerns. Constant disruptions and fear of people passing by, potential abuse, street lights, or being moved can increase stress and trauma.

Maintaining a working vehicle can be costly^v. People experiencing homelessness may experience additional stresses and challenges around maintaining a license, ongoing vehicle registration and insurance, parking/anchoring fees, and other maintenance expenses which is further exacerbated by having limited or no income. This could also impact the person’s ability to move the vehicle, resulting in additional fines or the potential loss of the vehicle which impacts their present accommodation or sense of security.

Despite these negative circumstances, a person experiencing homelessness may view their vehicle as their temporary place of residence or home, and consider that it provides them more autonomy and privacy than is offered in traditional refuges or other support services^{vi}. It is important to respect the person’s living environment and the circumstances that led them to seek refuge in their vehicle, and provide appropriate assistance to address their presenting needs if they request it.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Workers should identify any potential risks they can see inside or around the vehicle including (but not limited to) if a person is trapped, the vehicle is damaged, or if there are children in the vehicle. If anyone's safety is at risk at any point, the worker should contact the appropriate service which may include contacting NSW Police, 000 or the Child Protection Helpline.
- Workers should be mindful of the time of day/night when approaching a person in a vehicle. Shining a flashlight or knocking on the window at night or when windows are covered, may result in increased fear, anxiety or a sense of intrusion for the person experiencing homelessness. Therefore, workers should identify the most appropriate method for engagement if there is no initial risk identified.
- Under the NSW Local Government Act, people are able to sleep or live in a vehicle on a street, if parking is permitted on that road^{vii}; marine legislation does not permit a person to live permanently on a houseboat in NSW^{viii}.
- There are limitations to the number of days a person can anchor in one place, and a yearly maximum of days at anchor. For more information see:^{ix} <https://www.nsw.gov.au/driving-boating-and-transport/using-waterways-boating-and-transport-information/waterways-and-designated-areas/houseboats>^x.
- Workers should be familiar with the parking, mooring and anchoring restrictions for the location.
- Local councils are often responsible for street parking enforcement, while NSW Maritime are responsible for vehicles on the water. All workers are encouraged to use discretion when engaging people experiencing homelessness.

- A vehicle may be registered under a person's name other than the person using it to sleep in.
- Women are more likely to experience 'hidden' forms of homelessness including sleeping in vehicles. For more information on supporting women, see **Appendix G**.
- Local specialist homelessness services may be able to assist people experiencing homelessness obtain identification and other required items for maintaining their vehicle.
- Workers should respect that some people may choose to live in their vehicle but not consider themselves to be experiencing homelessness.

Strategies for engagement:

- When approaching a vehicle, make your presence known verbally by politely identifying your name and the department, organisation or service you are from.
- Be aware of any physical hazards before moving closer to the vehicle.
- Approach a vehicle during daylight hours when you can see the person is not sleeping. During evening hours, consider leaving a note or information for the person to contact you directly in their own time instead of disturbing them.
- Provide an opportunity for the person to openly discuss their current state and situation of the vehicle without judgement.
- Provide information on the closest free amenities, including toilets, showers, appropriate parking areas, and where the person may be able to obtain other needed supports.



RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Local Government Directory	Local councils across NSW represent the interests of their communities and deliver local services and infrastructure.	Website: https://olg.nsw.gov.au/public/local-government-directory
NSW Maritime	Provides boating licence or vessel registration, information about fishing, and staying safe on the water.	Phone: 13 12 36 Website: https://www.nsw.gov.au/driving-boating-and-transport/boating-and-marine
Service NSW	Provides vehicle registration, licenses, parking information, fines, and other vehicle related information.	Phone: 13 77 88 Website: https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/services/driving-and-transport



- i NSW Government, [Houseboats in NSW](#), NSW Government website, n.d.
- ii C Giamarino, E Blumenberg and M Brozen, 'Who Lives in Vehicles and Why? Understanding Vehicular Homelessness in Los Angeles', Housing Policy Debate, 2022, doi: 10.1080/10511482.2022.2117990.
- iii Ibid.
- iv Ibid.
- v Ibid.
- vi J Guynn, [Hidden homeless crisis': After losing jobs and homes, more people are living in cars and RVs and it's getting worse](#), USA Today website, 15 February 2021.
- vii S Mallet, 'Understanding home: a critical review of the literature', *The Sociological Review*, 2004, 52(1): 62-89, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00442.
- viii NSW Government, [Houseboats in NSW](#).
- ix Ibid.
- x Ibid.

Appendix O – Supporting people with companion animals



☛ Sue has been sleeping in the same park for five years. A couple of years ago a friend passed away and left his dog Jax in Sue's care. Sue has been physically and verbally attacked many times. She feels much safer sleeping next to Jax. Jax never goes a day without food - Sue feeds him before she feeds herself. Some workers have said they might be able to help Sue get a place at a local refuge, but she's heard they don't allow dogs and there is no way she's leaving her best, and only friend Jax. ☛

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Companion animals contribute to good physical and mental health, and quality of life. It is estimated that around one in five Australians experiencing homelessness owns an animalⁱ. For people experiencing homelessness, a companion animal can provide a sense of identity, purpose and responsibility, reduce feelings of loneliness and provide protection from external threatsⁱⁱ. Animals also provide a sense of friendship and act as social facilitators, often inspiring conversation and interaction with other peopleⁱⁱⁱ.

Workers must consider the important bond a person may have with their companion animal. In many cases, people experiencing homelessness may describe their companion animals as family members and the animals' needs are prioritised over their own wellbeing^{iv}.

However, having a companion animal can create additional barriers to sourcing accommodation^v and limit potential support options due to the exclusion of animals on most premises. Without safe and reliable animal care or temporary boarding, people may also have difficulties accessing health services or employment^{vi}. A person's separation from a companion animal can produce feelings of guilt, depression, exacerbate feelings of loneliness and lead to increased substance use^{vii}.

When engaging or offering assistance, a worker should consider support options that address the needs of both the person and their companion animal. There are often local services that can help a person experiencing homelessness care for their animal. Local councils, veterinary care services, community groups, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) may provide support to people in their local area. Workers should be familiar with local services that can provide accommodation and/or support to people experiencing homelessness who have a companion animal.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Companion animals are different to Assistance animals. Assistance animals are legally considered medical aids and are trained to assist the person living with a disability. They are granted full Public Access Rights and must go through annual accreditation. Companion animals are considered pets and do not have set standards or an accreditation process, nor public access rights^{viii}.
- Companion animals are reported to provide a sense of responsibility and a reason to live, reduce substance use, and seek healthcare^{ix}.
- Dogs owned by people experiencing homelessness are as healthy and cared for as those owned by people with housing. Dogs owned by people experiencing homelessness are less likely to have behavioural issues, such as aggression toward strangers and separation anxiety^x. However, workers should still exercise caution when approaching companion animals.
- Companion animals can be a reliable source of emotional support and protection offering unconditional love and acceptance to people experiencing homelessness.^{xi}
- A person experiencing homelessness, and their companion animal, may become stressed when someone approaches them if they have experienced abuse in the past^{xii}. Workers should use trauma-informed principles throughout the interaction.
- A person may choose to continue sleeping rough or reject support offered to avoid separating from their companion animal. Workers must remain non-judgemental and demonstrate understanding of the person's choice.
- Local council rangers or the RSPCA may be able to provide support for health or safety concerns of a companion animal.

Strategies for engagement:

- Be mindful when approaching a person with a companion animal and maintain appropriate distance to reduce risk, identifying if the animal is on a lead or secured.
- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Only touch/pat the animal if the person gives you verbal consent.
- Offer practical support to both the person and the companion animal where possible, and if the person requests it, such as provision of food, bottled water, bowls, towels, blankets etc.
- If the animal requires veterinary assistance, provide information regarding local veterinary care services, community supports, or other relevant animal services.
- If support is requested, be sure referrals and services are appropriate and can accommodate their animal/s.



- i The Big Issue, [A Housing Tail: Pet Friendly Crisis Accommodation](#), The Big Issue website, 2022.
- ii N Kerman, S Gran-Ruaz and M Lem, 'Pet ownership and homelessness: a scoping review', *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 2019, 28(2): 106-114, doi: 10.1080/10530789.2019.1650325.
- iii L Scanlon, P Hobson-West, K Cobb, A McBride and J Stavisky, 'Homeless People and Their Dogs: Exploring the Nature and Impact of the Human-Companion Animal Bond', *Anthrozoös*, 2021, 34(1): 77-92, doi: [10.1080/08927936.2021.1878683](#).
- iv Ibid.
- v Ibid.
- vi N Kerman, M Lem, M Witte, C Kim, and H Rhoades, 'A Multilevel Intervention Framework for Supporting People Experiencing Homelessness with Pets', *Animals (Basel)*, 2020, 10(10): 1869, doi: 10.3390/ani10101869.
- vii B Henwood, E Dzibur, H Rhoades, P St. Clair, and R Cox, 'Pet ownership in the unsheltered homeless population in Los Angeles', *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 2021, 30(2): 191-194, doi: [10.1080/10530789.2020.1795791](#).
- viii Assistance Dogs Australia, [What is the difference between an Assistance Dog and an Emotional Support Dog?](#), Assistance Dogs Australia website, n.d.
- ix Kerman et al., 'A Multilevel Intervention Framework for Supporting People Experiencing Homelessness with Pets'.
- x Ibid.
- xi Kerman et al., 'Pet ownership and homelessness: a scoping review'.
- xii Ibid.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless
OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Local Councils	Local councils have rangers and other support staff that conduct regular patrols in their local areas to check on people experiencing homelessness and their companion animals.	Website: https://lgnsw.org.au/Public/Public/NSW-Councils/NSW-Council-Links.aspx
Paws and Recover	Offers practical help such as dog walking, respite care, vet transportation and support services for owners and their companion animals during times of crisis. Support is provided by local volunteers where available.	Email: pawsandrecover@gmail.com Website: https://pawsandrecover.com
Pets of the Homeless Sydney	Provides information on pet friendly shelters, housing and support.	Email: petsofthehomelessydney@gmail.com Website: https://petsofthehomelessydney.wordpress.com/pet-friendly-shelters-housing
RSPCA Community Homelessness Program	Assists pet owners who are currently experiencing homelessness by providing temporary foster accommodation, financial assistance for veterinary treatment and provides pet friendly refuges.	Phone: (02) 9782 4408 Email: mail@rspcansw.org.au Website: https://www.rspcansw.org.au/what-we-do/working-in-communities/community-homelessness-program
RSPCA Indigenous Community Companion Animal Health Program (ICCAHP) – Regional NSW	Provides veterinary services for Aboriginal children and families that have companion animals	Phone: (02) 9770 7555 Email: outreach@rspcansw.org.au Website: https://www.rspcansw.org.au/what-we-do/working-in-communities/icahp

Appendix P – Supporting people carrying personal belongings



📌 Jules writes poetry and had more than 30 notebooks of poetry in a suitcase, as well as two blankets. Jules had a health emergency and was taken to hospital by ambulance. Jules tried to ask the ambulance officers to bring the suitcase, but nobody listened. When Jules was finally able to return to try and find the suitcase it was gone. Jules was devastated and has sworn never to go to hospital again. 📌

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

People that experience homelessness have the same right as anyone else to carry and manage their personal belongings in public places. However, people experiencing homelessness may not have a safe place to store personal items and may need to carry them for extended periods or leave them in public places. Personal belongings may include things like food, water, mattresses, blankets, identification, medication and photos. According to the 2022 NSW Street Count, 212 public locations were reported to have unattended belongingsⁱ.

People may leave their belongings in public places where they reside or frequent for a range of reasons including avoiding carrying heavy loads, or to claim a location. When belongings are left in public places, they can often get damaged, stolen or thrown away. The loss or destruction of personal belongings can increase trauma for people experiencing homelessness. A loss of identification can make it harder for people to access essential services. The loss of medication, food, dry bedding or clothes can negatively affect a person's health and wellbeing.

A lack of storage for belongings can negatively impact a person's ability to exit homelessness. Difficulties retaining necessary identification documents needed to apply for housing; limited mobility and challenges such as attending appointments, court or job interviews with luggage in addition to the high cost of replacing lost, removed or stolen items, and the visible stigma associated with homelessness can pose serious challenges to securing a homeⁱⁱ.

During any engagement it is important that the worker maintain an appropriate distance from a person and their belongings. Personal belongings should only be touched if the person asks for assistance or there is a reason to do so under legislation - for example where items pose a risk to public health and safety. NSW Police under the [Law Enforcement \(Powers and Responsibilities\) Act 2002](#) have the right to search and seize belongings if a risk to safety is identified.

The [Public Spaces \(Unattended Property\) Act 2021](#) allows for authorised officers to remove unattended property for specific reasons, including where it:

- obstructs public access,
- poses risk to people or the environment,
- interferes with an amenity, or
- has been in the same place for a certain period of time.

In these cases, attempts should be made to identify the owner, and provide clear and simple information about the need to remove the items. It is important that a worker acknowledges the trauma that may result from removing personal belongings and uses discretion when implementing policies.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Workers should withhold their own judgements when assessing or engaging with a person's personal belongings as they may be of significant value to the person.
- People who have had personal belongings damaged or taken previously may feel threatened or experience trauma when approached.
- Storage facilities can help keep belongings safe and secure while allowing people to focus on everyday activities. Workers should be familiar with local councils, services, or businesses that offer storage and share this information with the person, noting that affordable storage options may not be available in all areas.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Maintain a reasonable distance between yourself and the person's belongings.
- Outline the intention of the engagement and where safe to do so, accept a person's refusal to engage.
- Provide information on available storage facilities nearby.
- Only handle the person's belongings where they give their consent, require assistance, and there are no safety concerns.
- Where possible provide assistance or referrals to services to replace needed items (e.g. identification, sleeping equipment, water, etc) if the person requests it.
- Where possible, avoid focusing on valuable possessions that may have been lost, stolen, or damaged so you do not re-traumatise the person.
- Where appropriate, consider leaving a note with a worker/service's contact details to discuss the person's belongings or the removal of belongings to work through alternative solutions.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

i Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), [NSW Statewide Street Count 2022 Technical Paper](#), DCJ, NSW Government, 2022.

ii Port Philip Community Group, [Storage Lockers for People Experiencing Homelessness Feasibility Study 2019](#), Port Philip Community Group, 2019.

Appendix Q – Supporting people during extreme weather events



📌 Nick was sleeping in his usual place, unaware that the Bureau of Meteorology was sending out warnings that the area was about to be inundated with significant flooding and loss of electricity. All Nick owns is on the footpath with him and he has no wet weather gear or shelter. He doesn't know where to go for help at this hour of the night. 📌

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.

Overview

Extreme weather is any unusual, unseasonal and severe weather that has a devastating impact on people and places. Extreme weather conditions can force people into homelessness and pose a significant risk for people already experiencing homelessness.

New South Wales, including rural and regional areas, has been significantly impacted by severe flooding, bushfires, storms, extreme heat and extreme cold. These events can damage homes and personal belongings, force people into shelters, cause financial hardship, threaten a person's safety and stability and result in weather-related health conditions or even death.

People may not be prepared physically, emotionally, or financially to protect themselves from the impacts of extreme weather. In response to an extreme weather event, people may experience mental distress or shock which may also impact their ability to control their emotions or make decisions. For more information on mental distress see **Appendix J**.

Extreme weather can impact on a person's physical health. For example, some anti-psychotic medications have metabolic effects that can impair the body's ability to regulate temperature and increase the risk of overheating during extreme heat events. Extreme heat also increases the risk of dehydration, particularly for people with uncontrolled diabetes or kidney disease.

Urgent physical needs, such as protection/shelter from the weather and/or clean drinking water must also be addressed during extreme weather.

People experiencing homelessness face additional challenges during extreme weather including:

- exposure to the weather
- limited access to public health warnings and messages
- extended travel between sleeping spots and emergency accommodation
- lack of storage facilities or protective equipment
- damage to personal belongings including clothing, blankets and other items
- disconnection from community.

People may face several barriers to accessing support as there is further strain on the service system during these critical times.

Workers must have a good understanding of emergency response protocols for different weather events. Workers are asked to use discretion and work with a person to address their physical and emotional needs during these circumstances.

Agencies, departments, organisations and business are encouraged to develop a local extreme weather guide with relevant stakeholders, including people with disability¹. The guides should provide details of the available resources and services in the area including:

- safe places to go/stay in various extreme weather conditions
- accessible drinking water
- public toilets
- free bus routes
- free electronic device charging stations
- doctors who bulk bill
- areas of free Wi-Fi coverage
- weather information sources.

NSW emergency management plans are updated regularly. For information on the most up to date plan visit: <http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au>

The NSW State Emergency Services (SES) provide a number of resources to assist during extreme weather. Examples include safety tips during and after a flood and severe storm ([During a Flood Fact Sheet](#), [After a Flood Fact Sheet](#)).

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Extreme weather events can trigger or exacerbate a person's trauma, mental health, or physical health conditions; therefore, workers should provide a trauma-informed response.
- Ensure workers have up to date emergency information to maintain safety and assist others to stay safe.
- Assess safety risks in the surrounding environment and engage appropriate services as required (i.e. SES, police).

- Be familiar with local amenities and services that can assist during extreme weather events.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Remain calm and empathetic, using trauma-informed engagement principles and respect throughout the interaction.
- Address urgent physical needs by handing out water bottles, warm clothes, wet weather gear and other needed items as appropriate. Where possible, this includes providing supplies in advance of known weather events.
- Work with the person to identify what type of help or support is needed and when to provide the support.
- Support people to connect to available services such as evacuation centres, accommodation services and medical care.
- Increase flexibility in the provision of support and assistance to ensure a person's safety and wellbeing is addressed. This may require discretion and seeking out-of-guidelines approvals where necessary.

If the person is showing signs of being unwell, or is injured, then call **Triple Zero (000)** / emergency services.

Best practice example

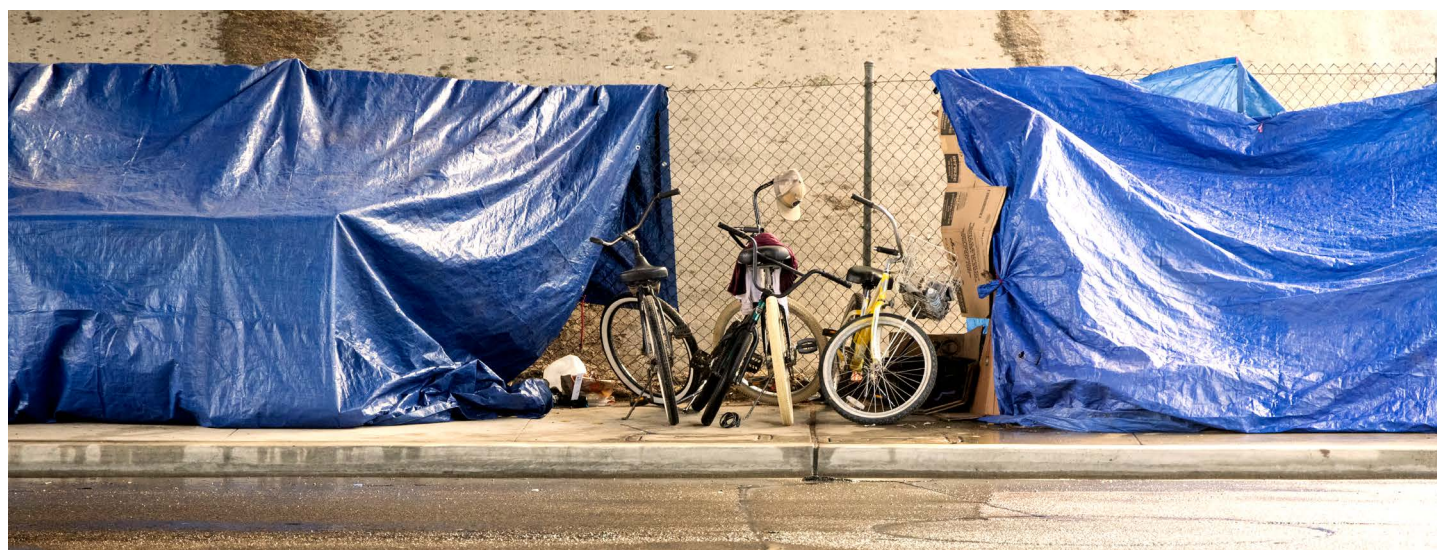
The City of Sydney in collaboration with the Department of Communities and Justice developed the *Inner City Emergency Response Protocol* which provides instructions on how to assist people experiencing homelessness in the local area during extreme weather events. This is activated during severe storms, flooding, extreme heat, cold and other emergencies such as disruptions to power, transport and security. Other local areas may look to develop their own alert system with dedicated strategies specific to local needs.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
Australian Red Cross	Practical help and resources to use before, during and after emergencies.	Phone: 1800 733 276 Email: contactus@redcross.org.au Website: https://redcross.org.au/emergencies
Local Government Directory	Local councils across NSW represent the interests of their communities and deliver local services and infrastructure. This directory provides the contact details to connect to the local council.	Website: https://olg.nsw.gov.au/public/local-government-directory
NSW Health	Provides information and instructions about ways to prevent weather related illnesses.	Website: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/emergency_preparedness/weather/Pages/storms-and-floods.aspx
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service	National Parks and Wildlife Services manage more than 890 national parks and reserves including plant and animal conservation, fire management, sustainable tourism and visitation, research, education, volunteering programs, upgrading infrastructure and more.	Website: https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au
NSW State Emergency Services (SES)	Provides guidance on how to plan, evacuate and recover from extreme weather conditions. SES provide information on extreme weather conditions in each local area and road closures	Phone: 132 500 Website: https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au
OzHarvest	Provides state-wide food rescue and relief for people in need.	Phone: 1800 108 006 Email: info@ozharvest.org Website: https://www.ozharvest.org/contact-us
Service NSW	Government initiatives and resources are available for people impacted by natural disaster.	Phone: 13 77 88 Website: https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/contact-us



- i University Centre for Rural Health (UCRH), [Submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Emergency Planning and Response](#), UCRH, 2020.
- ii State Emergency Services (SES), [What's your plan?](#), State Emergency Services website, 2022.

Appendix R – Supporting people during large public events



James sleeps in the same place every night and often leaves his gear there so he doesn't have to carry it around with him all day. He is familiar with the area, feels safe, and knows where the amenities are. However, he returned to his place of rest one night and it was surrounded by fencing and security guards who wouldn't let him collect his belongings. As the evening moves on, James relocates to another area but he cannot relax or sleep because the sound is too loud from the event and he is in a new and unknown surrounding.

Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support to each person they engage.

Overview

Major public events are an important part of community life, creating culture, employment and providing economic benefits for local communities. However, it is important to recognise these benefits may only be experienced by a limited proportion of the community. Major events can also negatively impact members of a community in particular people experiencing homelessness. These negative impacts may be environmental, economic or social.

The extraordinary disturbances associated with public events (such as increased light, noise and crowds) may be viewed by a person experiencing homelessness as a disruption to the place they call home. People experiencing homelessness are also at greater risk of being displaced during large public events. This occurred in NSW during the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics and 2008 World Youth Day. Displacement can be a traumatic experience and result in a person feeling angry, confused, overwhelmed, or misunderstood.

There may be limited options for people experiencing homelessness who are willing to relocate during a major event. They may face additional risks to their safety and wellbeing due to being in areas or around people they are unfamiliar with and unexpected financial burdens.

It is important for workers and local businesses to respectfully and empathetically engage with a person experiencing homelessness, increasing flexibility and discretion where possible in these circumstances.

A person experiencing homelessness may not be aware that a public event is taking place or the potential risks associated with an event in the area. Public events attract large crowds of people which can place people experiencing homelessness at higher risk of physical harm and/or having their personal belongings damaged or stolen. It is therefore critical that clear and accessible information is provided and events are inclusive. Early preparation can help people experiencing homelessness understand their options and prevent further disadvantage, segregation, isolation and mistrust.

Engagement strategy

Things to consider before engaging:

- Event organisers are encouraged to contact local council and specialist homelessness services in the area to help prepare people who are known to be in public spaces.
- Where possible, respect a person's right to remain in their location rather than relocate them from the area or to temporary/crisis accommodation.
- Consult the event organisers, and/or local councils to identify contingency plans for people experiencing homelessness.
- Use a trauma informed response acknowledging that a person may have travelled to feel safe and may feel disoriented or have experienced trauma as a result.

Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation that you work for.
- Discuss the potential risks for the person during the event and work through potential strategies together to maintain their physical and mental safety and wellbeing.
- If a person chooses to relocate, support them to connect with culturally appropriate and accessible services/supports that take into consideration the person's connection to the local area and community.
- Refer the person to additional services for support as requested.

RESOURCES

CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Ask Izzy	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	Website: https://askizzy.org.au
Link2Home	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	Phone: 1800 152 152 Website: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless

OTHER SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
Local Government Directory	Local councils across NSW represent the interests of their communities and deliver local services and infrastructure.	Website: https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/local-government-directory



Appendix S – Key Contacts for Feedback



The Department of Communities and Justice are exploring strategies to address concerns with the implementation and use of Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (Protocol).

In the interim, departments, agencies, organisations and businesses are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Protocol within their entity. Any feedback or complaints regarding a specific entity's implementation of the Protocol should be directed to the department, agency, organisation or business directly, in the first instance. The table below provides the general feedback and complaints processes for each signatory.

General feedback can be provided to the Homelessness Strategy team within the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) at Homelessness.Strategy@dcj.nsw.gov.au

Name of Department	Contact Details
NSW Fair Trading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: General Complaint • Phone: 13 32 20 • In writing: PO Box 972 Parramatta NSW 2124 • Other complaint forms: Mail forms - General Complaints Form
Aboriginal Affairs NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Office Contacts
Department of Communities and Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Feedback Widget • Email: complaints@fac.s.nsw.gov.au • Phone: 1800 000 164 (Child protection complaints) and 1800 422 322 (Social housing complaints) • In Writing: Client Feedback Unit, Locked Bag 7150, Liverpool BC 1871 (Social Housing complaints) <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Reply Paid 63437, Complaints Unit Locked Bag 4028, Ashfield NSW 2131 (Child protection related complaints)</p> </div> </div>

Name of Department	Contact Details
Department of Customer Service (Service NSW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Online feedback form • Email: info@service.nsw.gov.au • Phone: 13 77 88 • In Writing: Customer Resolution Coordinator GPO Box 7057 Sydney NSW 2001 • Other complaint forms: Complaint for with Anti-Discrimination NSW Complaint about a NSW Government Agency
Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Feedback and Complaints • Email: education@yourfeedback.nsw.gov.au • Phone: 1300 679 332 • In Writing: GPO Box 33 Sydney NSW 2001
NSW Department of Enterprise Investment and Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email: communications@enterprise.nsw.gov.au
Department of Planning and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Feedback Widget • Email: DPIE@yourfeedback.nsw.gov.au • Phone: (02) 9338 6600 • In Writing: Customer Resolution Coordinator GPO Box 7057 Sydney NSW 2001
Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Department of Premier and Cabinet Complaints Form • In writing: GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001
Multicultural NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email: contact@multicultural.nsw.gov.au • Phone: (02) 8255 6767 • In writing: PO Box 618 Parramatta NSW 2124
NSW Fire and Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online form: NSW Fire and Rescue Complaint or Feedback • Phone: Call the NSW RFS on 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737) • In writing: Locked Mail Bag 12 Greenacre NSW 2190

Name of Department	Contact Details								
NSW Health (Health Care Complaints Commission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: Health Care Complaints Form • Email: hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au • Phone: (02) 9219 7444 • In writing: Locked Mail Bag 18 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 								
NSW Police Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online form: Lodge a Complaint • Email: customerassistance@police.nsw.gov.au • Phone: 1800 622 571 • In writing: P.O. Box 3427 Tuggerah NSW 2259 								
Transport NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Form: general feedback • Phone: 131 500 • In Writing: PO Box K659 Haymarket NSW 1240 • Other Complaints Forms/Processes: <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: top; margin-right: 20px;"> <tr><td>metro</td></tr> <tr><td>trains</td></tr> <tr><td>buses</td></tr> <tr><td>ferries</td></tr> </table> <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: top;"> <tr><td>light rail</td></tr> <tr><td>on demand</td></tr> <tr><td>regional trains and coaches</td></tr> <tr><td>point to point</td></tr> </table> 	metro	trains	buses	ferries	light rail	on demand	regional trains and coaches	point to point
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light rail									
on demand									
regional trains and coaches									
point to point									



6 Parramatta Square
10 Darcy Street
Parramatta, NSW 2150

Locked Bag 5000
Parramatta, NSW 2124

E: Homelessness.Strategy@dcj.nsw.gov.au
W: dcj.nsw.info/engagewell

