

STEP C merger with Together Home - FAQs

What is STEP C and why is it being merged into Together Home?

The Supported Transition and Engagement Program (STEP) is a rapid rehousing response, based on housing first principles.

This approach prioritises getting people into housing as quickly as possible and linking them with wraparound, person-centred support so that the issues that contributed to their homelessness can be addressed. It was implemented in three phases, STEP A, STEP B and STEP C.

STEP C provided housing and wraparound support for people sleeping rough or experiencing secondary homelessness in Mid North Coast and Western NSW.

There were 24 long-term housing and wraparound support packages in STEP C; 12 packages in Mid North Coast and another 12 packages in Western NSW.

The merger was undertaken because DCJ and the providers (Community Housing Ltd, Housing Plus and Neami) found that STEP C and the Together Home Program (THP) targeted the same client group, and they served the same functions, across mostly the same areas and providers.

The main difference between the two programs was the duration of accommodation, with STEP C offering 18-36 months, and THP up to 24 months - this difference is being addressed in the merger

to ensure that obligations to STEP C clients are honoured.

After the merger (31 August 2022) STEP C ceased to exist and STEP C clients and funds have been absorbed into Together Home (TH).

STEP A and STEP B will continue business as usual.

What is the status of the merger?

DCJ district staff and providers of STEP C were consulted and are supportive of the merger.

Client transition plans were prepared by Western NSW and North Coast Districts in collaboration with the relevant CHPs and support providers to ensure a smooth transition for STEP C clients.

Ten former STEP C clients were transitioned into TH with their existing housing and support packages. Those former clients not requiring TH support have been referred to local Specialist Homelessness Services, the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) or the NDIS.

Will this merger affect my organisation?

The merger will only impact on Community Housing Ltd and Housing Plus and Neami National. In the case of these two CHPs, their STEP C packages will simply be converted into an equivalent number of Together Home packages and High Needs Packages.

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Will the incorporation of STEP C into Together Homes bring additional funding and packages to the Together Home Program?

Yes, STEP C funding will support the transition of existing STEP C clients to Together Home and for any new clients in FY 2023 and 2024 (across both locations Mid North Coast and Western NSW).

This will enable the provision of 22 housing and support packages and two High Needs packages in these Districts. Note that the 10 existing clients will take up 10 of these packages, leaving the rest available to new clients.

Some existing STEP C clients already get three years of support. Will STEP C clients identified to transfer over to Together Homes come with their original STEP C funding arrangements or will they lose some of that support through the transition?

No. The original STEP C service offer of up to 36 months will be maintained for existing clients transferring into Together Home. However, it is important to note that the offer is not time already assisted plus three years. DCJ will honour the three year service offer minus time already assisted in the STEP C program. The duration of support already received by the client before the transition will determine the remaining assistance time period required as well as the budget required to support them. New clients (post-merger) will qualify for the two years' service currently under offer from the THP.

If a former STEP C client exits before their package is completely spent, can the remainder of that package be used for a new client?

Yes. The THP includes flexible funding arrangements across tranches, whereby unspent funds from one client or a number of clients can be combined to offer a package to a new client. The same funding arrangements will be applied to the merger into Together Home and unspent funds from a former STEP C client who exits can be reassigned to any other Together Home client.

If a transferring client has high needs, can a High Needs Package be applied for?

Yes, enough STEP C funding has been earmarked to offer two High Needs Packages, one in Mid North Coast and one in Western NSW.

Who is managing the program under these new arrangements?

The Together Home Team continues to manage the Together Home program and is available to answer any further questions via our mailbox at:

TogetherHome@facs.nsw.gov.au