

Accessibility checklist for SHS crisis accommodations

Important to note:

This tool, which has been developed through consultation with sector experts, aims to assist specialist homelessness services (SHS) practitioners to identify crisis accommodations for clients with disability.

It is vital for services to be accessible and welcoming to people with various disability, such as physical, psychosocial, intellectual, sensory, neurological, chronic health conditions, and diseases. Some individuals may have multiple disabilities, and the likelihood of disability increases with age. Disabilities can be permanent, fluctuating, or temporary, and not all are visible or disclosed by clients.

Each person with disability has unique needs and preferences, making it essential to discuss and understand their specific requirements. Determining the accessibility of crisis accommodations for an individual involves dialogue with the SHS being considered for referral. Creating a culture of inclusivity and safety sometimes requires making necessary adaptations and modifications, and always involves being aware of the person's comfort and safety within your service.

The checklist provides accessibility information for the Vacancy Management System (VMS) searches to inform conversations between referrers and services. Many individuals with disability won't require the features listed in this checklist and can access a broader range of locations.

Safe adaptations, simple modifications and creative solutions are encouraged to make properties more accessible. This checklist is not exhaustive and does not encompass all accessibility features available in SHS properties. It is not intended to mirror building legislation for accessibility. It helps to refine searches in VMS and is a conversation starter.

Any modifications to provider owned properties should comply with relevant council requirements and NSW planning legislation and providers should seek independent legal advice, as required. Please liaise with your respective community housing provider regarding any modifications to government owned dwellings. The Department of Communities and Justice cannot provide advice to providers about compliance with any code, regulation or Act described in this checklist. This Checklist is not intended to constitute legal advice.

Usability of the checklist will be periodically reviewed. Suggestions for improvements are encouraged and can be emailed to shsprogram@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

For additional information, please refer to the following resources:

- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- [Disability Inclusion Act 2014](#)
- [Disability \(Access to Premises - Buildings\) Standards 2010](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission Guideline on the Application of the Premises Standards](#)
- [Livable Housing Design Guidelines](#)

Using the Checklist

In the pilot phase, this checklist will be used to identify the accessibility features in **SHS crisis accommodation** properties only. Each SHS crisis accommodation facility should have a service record in CIMS and a corresponding VMS record where vacancy information and accessibility information from the checklist can be recorded for each property.

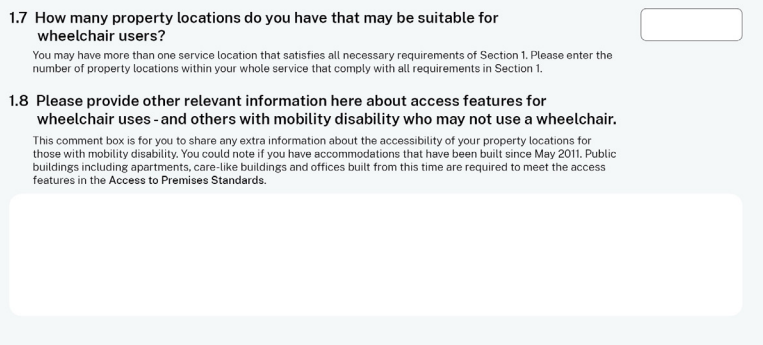
In Section 1, all elements from 1.1 to 1.6 must be marked 'yes' for an individual property in entirety to be deemed accessible. This means accessibility features like appropriate entrances and bedrooms must exist within one property; they cannot be split across multiple properties. If you have more than one crisis accommodation property that satisfies all necessary requirements of Section 1, there is space to indicate this.

For Sections 2–7, mark 'yes' for individual elements if there at least one property that satisfies that element. Comment boxes are available for providing additional information at each section if needed.

Insights gained from using the checklist for SHS crisis accommodation properties will inform its potential application in SHS transitional properties and other service outlets.

Instructions for completing this checklist

- 1 Save the checklist in your organisation's file system
- 2 Audit your crisis accommodation property/ies to determine the presence of the accessibility features outlined in this checklist
- 3 Mark 'yes' or 'no'
- 4 Take photos of relevant areas to improve insight of those seeking to refer a client
- 5 Store photos with the completed checklist
- 6 Include additional relevant information in the comment box for each section



1.7 How many property locations do you have that may be suitable for wheelchair users?

You may have more than one service location that satisfies all necessary requirements of Section 1. Please enter the number of property locations within your whole service that comply with all requirements in Section 1.

1.8 Please provide other relevant information here about access features for wheelchair users - and others with mobility disability who may not use a wheelchair.

This comment box is for you to share any extra information about the accessibility of your property locations for those with mobility disability. You could note if you have accommodations that have been built since May 2011. Public buildings including apartments, care-like buildings and offices built from this time are required to meet the access features in the Access to Premises Standards.

- 7 Populate your CIMS service record with your checklist responses
- 8 Your checklist responses will now display in the 'Accessibility' tab in the VMS
- 9 Any checklist items marked with a 'yes' responses trigger an accessibility icon in VMS search results
- 10 Practitioners seeking referrals for clients with accessibility needs use the 'Accessibility' filter in their search and review the 'Accessibility' tab for an overview of available features
- 11 Practitioners will contact you to discuss the referral's suitability, enabling the consideration of nuanced details

Section 1

Yes No

1. We have at least one location that may be suitable for someone who uses a wheelchair.

Only check this box if all items in Section 1.1-1.6 are checked 'yes'. In order to check 'yes' this needs to be complete for at least one property in entirety.

1.1 A wheelchair user can enter the accommodation.

Only check this box if all items in Section 1.1 are checked 'yes'.

1.1.1 The entrance is step free.

Tick 'yes' if the entrance is step free, or you can make it step free by using a portable step ramp. A step ramp should as a minimum be 1000mm wide, with a firm landing top and bottom of at least 1500mm x 1500mm.

1.1.2 The accessible entrance door is at least a clear 850mm wide.

This is the effective clear width for entry when a door is open. It will provide enough space for most manual wheelchairs to pass. While it is best if this is the main entrance, you can tick 'yes' if the accessible door is not the main entrance.

1.2 The hallways from the accessible entrance to the accessible bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and a communal area can be accessed by a wheelchair user.

Tick 'yes' if these hallways are step free, at least 1200mm wide, and can be free of clutter and items that may intrude into the space. You can use a step ramp if needed.

1.3 There is at least one accessible bedroom or an accessible family bedroom.

Only check this box if all items in Section 1.3 are checked 'yes'.

1.3.1 The bedroom provides adequate circulation space for a wheelchair user.

A bedroom that is 3000mm x 3000mm or similar would provide circulation space. Unnecessary intrusions into this space such as chairs may need to be removed. This space is needed for a wheelchair user to get in and out of bed. If a mobile hoist is required to be used, at least 3600mm unobstructed space should be available next to the bed to be able to maneuver the hoist and person easily and safely.

1.3.2 The door handle is easily reached and grasped or turned.

Round door handles are not easy to use for someone with limited dexterity/strength in their hands, arms, or upper body. Door handles should be positioned 900mm–1250mm from the floor.

1.4 There is an accessible toilet and shower.

Only check this box if all items in Section 1.4 are checked 'yes'.

1.4.1 The bathroom door is at least a clear 850mm wide.

This is the effective clear width for entry when a door is open.

1.4.2 The bathroom door handle is easily reached and grasped or turned.

Round door handles are not easy to use for someone with limited dexterity/strength in their hands, arms, or upper body. Door handles should be positioned 900mm–1250mm from the floor.

1.4.3 The bathroom has a circulation space of at least 1600mm x 2000mm.

The circulation space can include a hobless shower area if it can be used as part of this circulation space. The space can include the toilet but should exclude other intrusions such as a bath or vanity. There should be at least 1200mm circulation space in front of the toilet.

1.4.4 The toilet paper can be easily reached.

It should be located no more than 300mm from the front edge of the toilet pan, and 700mm from the floor.

1.4.5 The shower is accessible.

Tick 'yes' if the shower is hobless, is at least 900mm x 900mm, and has at least a 1200mm x 1200mm circulation space in front of the shower.

Section 1 - continued

Yes No

1.4.6 The shower has an adjustable hand-held shower head and hose.

Tick 'yes' if you have a permanent hand-held rose or can install a temporary one.

1.4.7 Grab rails are in place at the side of the toilet and in the shower.

Tick 'yes' if you have permanent grab rails.

1.5 The communal kitchen and at least one living area are accessible to a wheelchair user.

Only check this box if all items in Section 1.5 are checked 'yes'.

1.5.1 The doors to the communal kitchen and communal area are at least a clear 850mm wide.

This is the effective clear width for entry when a door is open.

1.5.2 The door handles to the kitchen and the communal area can be easily reached and grasped or turned.

Round door handles are not easy to use for someone with limited dexterity/strength in their hands, arms, or upper body. Door handles should be positioned 900mm–1250mm from the floor.

1.5.3 There is adequate circulation space in the kitchen and a living area for a wheelchair user.

Tick 'yes' if there is a circulation space of at least 1500mm x 1500mm.

1.6 There is suitable parking for a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

This can be street parking or parking on the property. Only check this box if 1.6.2 is checked 'yes'. Item 1.6.1 will only be necessary for some clients.

1.6.1 Wheelchair users can exit from the side or back of the vehicle.

Wheelchair users should be able to exit a vehicle onto a safe firm flat area or path. If parking is in a garage, a ceiling height of 2000mm may be required for someone to get in and out of a vehicle.

1.6.2 Wheelchair users can get from the vehicle to the accessible entrance to the accommodation.

This path of travel should be step-free, provide a firm surface and be no steeper than a 1:14 gradient. . You can use a portable step ramp if needed. If parked on the street, a kerb ramp or driveway may be used.

1.7 How many property locations do you have that may be suitable for wheelchair users?

You may have more than one service location that satisfies all necessary requirements of Section 1. Please enter the number of crisis accommodation locations within your whole service that comply with all requirements in Section 1.

1.8 Please provide other relevant information here about access features for wheelchair users - and others with mobility disability who may not use a wheelchair.

This comment box is for you to share any extra information about the accessibility of your property locations for those with mobility disability. You could note if you have accommodations that have been built since May 2011. Public buildings including apartments, care-like buildings and offices built from this time are required to meet the access features in the Access to Premises Standards.

Section 2

Yes No

2. There are communal outdoor areas.

Check this box with 'yes' if you have checked 'yes' to any of the items in Section 2.

2.1 There is an accessible balcony adjoining the dwelling.

Tick 'yes' if you can get to this area without steps, and doors to this area are at least a clear 850mm wide. The balcony should have a secure rail.

2.2 There is a yard or garden that can be accessed without using steps.

If access to the yard or garden is via a ramp, the ramp should be no steeper than a 1:14 gradient; include a rail on at least one side; and be at least a clear 1200mm wide.

2.3 The yard or garden is enclosed with a fence.

2.4 Please provide other relevant information here about your outdoor areas:

This comment box is for you to share any extra information that could help referrers.

Section 3

Yes No

3. We have at least one property with features that may suit someone who has experienced trauma or is neurodivergent.

- People who are neurodivergent experience and interact with the world around them in different ways, including people who have Autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy and Down Syndrome.
- Some clients may have experienced trauma.
- People can experience both hypersensitivity (over-responsiveness) and hyposensitivity (under-responsiveness) to what is going on in their environment.
- Check this box with 'yes' if you have checked 'yes' to any of the items in Section 3.

3.1 There is a quiet room where people can withdraw to reset.

Quiet rooms often include soft lighting, bean bags, neutral colours, comfortable seating, quiet ambience and noise inhibitors, visual simplicity and offer privacy. Appropriate signage on the use of the room can be useful.

3.2 There is a yard or garden area with seating.

Ideally this seating would include armrests.

3.3 There is play equipment in the yard.

Consider ground cover under and around the play equipment that is soft but traversable by someone using a wheelchair.

3.4 Please provide other relevant information here about features that may suit people who have experienced trauma or are neurodivergent:

This comment box is for you to share any extra information that could help referrers.

Section 4

Yes

4. Qualified sign language interpreters are provided when needed.

If clients who use sign language require a qualified interpreter in order to communicate effectively with a Service Provider, and will be disadvantaged by not having a qualified interpreter present to facilitate effective communication with the Service Provider, the Service Provider must make a qualified interpreter available, unless:

- after conducting a reasonable enquiry, an appropriately qualified interpreter is not available; and
- consideration has been given to whether it would be reasonably possible to delay the conversation or activity requiring interpretation to an alternate time, when a qualified interpreter would have been available to attend and assist the client to communicate effectively, and following consideration, it is not reasonably possible to delay the conversation until a qualified translator is available.

4.1 Please provide other relevant information here:

This comment box is for you to share additional information that could help referrers understand how much your service supports people who are culturally Deaf, deaf, hearing impaired or Deaf-blind. Some information you could include:

- do you provide information in Auslan?
- do you actively recruit for or train staff in Auslan?
- do you include the National Relay Service in your contact information and train staff in its use?
- do your staff know how to activate captions (and audio description) on the TV in the communal area?
- do you have hearing loops in your service areas?

Section 5

Yes

5. Assistance animals are welcome.

Assistance animals must be permitted to access public places when under the control of their owners, and to access accommodation with their owners. Assistance animals are not pets and are acknowledged under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW). Service providers can request that a client with an assistance animal provides verification of the animal's training to assist them with independence, and verification that the animal's training meets the standards of an assistance animal (including in regard to hygiene and behaviour standards). Clients may train their own assistance animal, but this training must allow the animal to meet the definition of an assistance animal.

Yes No

5.1 There is an accessible outdoor area or nearby public area suitable for assistance animals to toilet.



5.2 Please provide other relevant information about assistance animals here:

This comment box is for you to share any extra information that could help referrers.

Section 6

Yes

6. We grant access to vetted individuals who are providing necessary support for a person with disability who is staying in our accommodation.

Service Providers can conduct a risk and safety assessment as part of their vetting process. Entry will not be refused to persons providing necessary support to a person with a disability, unless the safety of residents is at risk. Pursuant to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (the Act), it is discriminatory to refuse access to public spaces to a carer or assistant who provides necessary support to a person with disability. It is also unlawful under the Act to discriminate against a person with a disability in regards to their carer or assistant.

6.1 Please provide other relevant information about disability support here:

This comment box is for you to share any extra information that could help referrers.

Section 7

Yes No

7. The service is also a registered NDIS provider.

7.1 Please provide other relevant information about your NDIS service here:

This comment box is for you to share any extra information that could help referrers.

VMS Service record name:

Completed by:

Date last complete: