Fact sheet for Clients

New policy: Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) Access, Eviction and Withdrawal of Services Policy

December 2024

Summary for clients: Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) Access, Eviction and Withdrawal of Services Policy.

The Policy aims to make the access process for homelessness services clearer

This policy tells SHS providers what to think about when setting up processes for access, eviction, and withdrawal of services. It also explains what information clients should receive from service providers.

Clients, SHS providers, SHS peak organisations, other NSW government departments, people with lived experience of homelessness, and advocacy groups like People with a Disability Australia (PWDA) helped to write the policy.

The next page summarises what clients can expect from service providers under this new policy. A copy of the full policy which outlines all requirements is available here.

Providers are recommended to print, distribute or display the fact sheet so that the information is accessible to clients.

Clients can get help with access, eviction and withdrawal processes

Clients can contact service providers or Homes NSW if they want to know more about the access, withdrawal, and exit processes. If a client has any problems, they can make a complaint in these ways:

- Directly to the service provider. Each SHS must have accessible information about their service and a feedback and complaints system that is safe, confidential, and easy for clients to use.

- By using the Your Feedback widget on the Complaints and Feedback webpage - *https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback.html*

- Contacting the Ombudsman. More information can be found here – *https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/Find-a-publication/publications/fact-sheets/community-and-disability-services/handling-complaints.*

Contact us
For more information please contact Homes NSW, by email: *shsprogram@homes.nsw.gov.au*

Information about accessing services:

Fair and clear process for access

- Services should be welcoming to everybody, including people with disabilities and other support needs.
- Services should respect people's culture and language needs when developing information,
- Services should be culturally safe for Aboriginal people and families.
- People should get clear and easy-to-understand information about the service, who can use it, and what support is available.
- People should be told the service rules, what happens if rules are broken, and how to make a complaint.
- Services must not discriminate against people eligible for the service.
- Sometimes, SHS services might realise a person needs more help than they can give. If this happens, they should look for other services that can help the person. They may also try and work together with other services to safely provide support to a person.

Service eligibility

- A person is eligible for SHS services if:
  - The person is experiencing homelessness or is at risk of homelessness.
  - The person is aged 16 and above, (some services can work with people aged 12 - 15 yrs).
- Services may also have extra criteria if they are a specialist service, for example, just for young people or just for women.
- Eligibility is not based on a person's:
  - Income or assets
  - Visa status
  - Complexity
  - Location
- SHS services are not allowed to ban people permanently.

Being asked to leave a service

- SHS services need to be safe places for everyone (including people using the service and staff).
- People can be asked to leave if they break the rules or stop contact. Some examples are, if people:
  - are violent or aggressive
  - pose risks to other people
  - do not follow service rules or housing agreements
  - have police or legal reasons
  - refuse to meet with their case manager

But first:
  - Services should try to work with people to fix issues before asking them to leave.
  - People should be told the reasons for being asked to leave, if that doesn't cause danger to others.
  - People should be given information on how and when they can come back to the service.
  - If it's safe, people should be helped to access other services.