



**ACT**

Government

Community Services



# Modernising Tenancy Services

Targeted, Differentiated and Outcomes-Focused  
Service Delivery Model of Operation

Housing ACT



## Foreword

The delivery of human services, and by extension public housing tenancy management services, have evolved significantly over the last decade as governments and organisations here and overseas seek enhanced ways to achieve better outcomes for clients while managing more complex client bases with reduced resources as a result of fiscal pressures.

The rationale for moving in this direction for Housing ACT's public housing tenancy management service arm is clear: A 'one-size-fits-all' approach to service delivery is not adaptive enough to respond to the enormous variety of people who live in public housing or changes to client circumstances that occur throughout the life of a tenancy. Traditional tenancy management services miss the mark for some tenants, delivering either too much or too little services, and may focus on outputs rather than outcomes.

Housing ACT's *Modernising Tenancy Services* model has been developed to ensure we capitalise on the strengths and capacities of tenants and provides differentiated services targeted to support greater achievement of positive life outcomes by tenants.

The service model employs a three-tiered approach that will govern the level of contact and support required by different tenants. To reflect this, three service streams have been developed: one to focus on the early days of a tenancy to ensure that tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are linked in to the appropriate supports; a second service stream to oversee predominately self-managed tenants to promote increased independence and social and economic participation; and a third, intensive support service stream that will provide higher levels of support to tenants with more complex needs.

This tiered approach will better direct the time, resources and services provided by Housing ACT's Housing Managers, increase support to complex tenants, and support greater achievement towards social and economic outcomes for tenants.

The *Modernising Tenancy Services* model incorporates many of the guiding principles in the recently released ACT Government *Human Services Blueprint* (2014), of providing 'the right support, at the right time, for the right duration as well as the Community Services Directorate's continued commitment to supporting people and communities to 'Participate: to be engaged, to learn, to work and to have a voice'.

Futhermore the service model sets the strategic practices to guide Housing Managers in the delivery of effective tenancy management services and positive outcomes for tenants in ACT public housing. I thank the *Modernising Tenancy Services* Governance Committee and Housing and Community Services team and staff who have provided valuable input into the development of this service model.



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# **Section 1**

## Introduction and Context

## Introduction

This paper is the culmination of a project undertaken over a period of approximately ten months within Housing and Community Services (HACS). The paper brings together the contributions of staff from across HACS, who engaged in a form of participative research to develop a model, organisational team structure and processes for the delivery of tenancy management services that align with contemporary human services thinking.

This paper is designed to serve multiple purposes, and is purposefully structured as a series of self-contained and discrete sections that can be read either in relation to, or in isolation of each other without losing any value or meaning.

The paper consists of:

	The background and context which articulates some of the current drivers, policy imperatives and tenant stories and community feedback that have been influential in determining the current approach to tenancy services;
	A service delivery model that describes the differentiated service response pathways for tenant and households throughout their journey in ACT public housing;
	A practice framework that provides a 'conceptual map' and supporting narrative of HACS approach to direct practice with public housing tenants and their households;
	A Support for Practice framework that sets out HACS' commitment to supporting housing staff in a structured way; and
	An outline of further work that has been identified through the <i>Modernising Tenancy Services</i> Project.

Taken together this paper can serve both as the tangible authorising environment for a targeted, differentiated and outcomes-based approach to tenancy management, as well as a staff resource guide for direct practice.

## Methodology

This project has been developed using an action research approach, also known as participatory research, with Housing ACT (a division of HACS) staff over a ten month period from November 2013 to August 2014. An action research approach is iterative and action based, with the service model progressively refined via systematic cycles of planning the change in service; observing plans in action; reflecting and revising; and replanning and acting again to improve and refine. This approach allowed us the opportunity to identify and implement change slowly and incrementally, observe and refine the changes as we progressed towards full implementation of the service model.

Action research is highly reflective and is reliant on user (staff and key stakeholders in the case of Housing ACT tenancy management) participation and feedback in all stages of development, implementation and refinement. Participatory activities to inform the development of the *Modernising Tenancy Services* model included: online internal feedback tool (Survey Monkey), staff focus groups, all staff meetings and presentations, executive management governance committee oversight and consultation with relevant sections of Housing ACT (HACT).

The majority of the service delivery model was developed by three working groups of staff from Tenancy Operations and Gateway Services, facilitated by Senior Managers from across HACS. Some of the key features identified by staff that are reflected in the final model, include a differentiated service approach, early intervention through the Intake and Stabilisation stream and the introduction of a team to manage tenancies with complex needs.

## Context

### ACT public housing

Public housing in the ACT has also undergone a series of transformations in recent times in response to a changing tenant profile, fiscal environment, and the introduction of a 'One Human Services' policy context. These changes have increasingly represented a shift towards a tenancy management service more clearly embedded in the 'One Human Services' policy context. This human services response supports tailoring service delivery to the capabilities and strengths of tenants and identifying opportunities for meaningful whole of life outcomes while ensuring a viable future role for public housing.

### Housing ACT tenants

From the 1950s through to the 1980s, most public housing in the ACT was constructed by the Commonwealth Government to accommodate large numbers of public servants. Public housing during this period accommodated single/couple professionals and families. Today, due to finite levels of housing stock, public housing is provided to those most in need. This shift in focus has changed the tenant profile of public housing in the ACT.

Current ACT public housing tenants are generally on very low incomes with complex needs. In 2013–14<sup>1</sup>, of the 865 new HACT tenancies created (excludes transfers and exchanges), 98 per cent were priority and high needs housing application allocations. Additionally, the majority of new allocations had an income support payment (e.g. Centrelink) as their sole or main source of income.

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<sup>1</sup> *Overview of Tenant Profile and Capacity to Pay* (draft) (2013). Business Development Housing ACT, ACT Government

Of the 10,740 ACT public housing tenancies in 2013–14, 65 per cent of the main tenant was female, 47 per cent were single person households (55 per cent of which were female), 35.5 per cent of households had at least one person with a disability, 18 per cent had a main tenant aged 65 or over, and the average age of the main tenant was 48 years. In the same period, 94 per cent of all ACT public housing tenancies received a rental rebate (if eligible, HACT tenants on a rebate pay no more than 25 per cent of their gross household income towards rent), indicating the low financial capacity of the majority of ACT public housing tenants.

In 2011–2012<sup>2</sup>, HACT collected 99.7 per cent of all rent charged, slightly above the national average of 99.3 per cent. As at June 2013, only 11.2 per cent of accounts were in rental arrears (1,408 tenancies), indicating 88 per cent were either current or in credit with their rental payments.

## **Housing ACT as a social landlord**

Partly as a consequence of the changing profile of public housing tenants, public housing tenancy management has gradually but steadily shifted more and more into the domain of being a Social Landlord. A Social Landlord is described as having obligations that go beyond tenancy management and contribute to social welfare by, for example, setting rents at affordable levels, promoting tenant wellbeing and participation, neighbourhood upkeep and community vitality<sup>3</sup>.

Within the ACT, this is witnessed, alongside the staff commitment to sustaining tenancies, by the growth of a number of programmatic responses to support particular cohorts of tenants. Examples include the Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative/Housing Accommodation and Recovery Initiative (HASI/HARI) program, a tri-partite partnership with ACT Health and the non-government sector to support tenants with high and complex mental health needs and the Housing Young People Program, working closely with the Community Services Directorate's Office for Child Youth and Family Support to assist young people under 25 years exiting statutory services.

## **Tenancy Management Service Response**

In the context of a changing tenant base and movement to a human services delivery environment, it is increasingly evident that the current HACT tenancy management model is not adequate in providing person-centred support. With its ad-hoc programmatic response approach, it does not enable staff to be responsive to the strengths and capacities of tenants. It also does not allow staff to harness as part of work practices, the opportunities for wider social and economic outcomes that housing can enable for tenants.

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2 *Debt Management Review Paper* (2013). Policy and Participation, Housing ACT, ACT Government

3 Assessing management costs and tenant outcome in social housing: developing a framework. (2014) AHURI position paper. Pawson, H. et al

## Human services approach to tenancy management

The ACT Government's *Human Services Blueprint* (Blueprint) provides the template for how all human services in the Territory are to be delivered in the coming years. Central to the Blueprint is the notion that services are better matched to people's actual needs by providing '*the right support, at the right time, for the right duration*'. Furthermore, and of relevance to tenancy management of HACT public housing, is that services are delivered in a way that build people's skills and capacity. These services should be targeted at delivering social, community and service system outcomes and should be flexible and differentiated to be able to adapt to changing client circumstances.

This human services approach recognises that housing is an essential human need that has benefits that extend beyond the provision of shelter. Housing assistance can play a critical role from which individuals and households, especially those experiencing complexities, can overcome homelessness, access supports such as health services, participate in education, the workforce and the community and achieve other social and economic outcomes.

The *Modernising Tenancy Services* model shifts HACT tenancy management into a human services framework, one that recognises the variety of people who live in public housing and their differing capacities and support needs. This framework also serves to reframe the role of tenancy services to recognise that housing, and by extension tenancy management, should not be considered the sole outcome, but rather the starting point from which other social and economic outcomes can be pursued. This shift is articulated in a new tenancy management service delivery model that is targeted, differentiated and outcomes focused:

- targeted to tenant capacities and strengths;
- responsive to changing tenant circumstances;
- focused on early intervention responses;
- focused on social, community, and service system outcomes; and
- delivers tenancy management as part of a broader range of human services provided across the ACT Government and the Community Services Directorate (CSD).

Housing ACT has recognised that the profile of public housing tenants is changing and that currently Housing staff are now becoming responsible for:

- determining and responding to housing related support needs;
- differentiating other support needs and engaging a plan of action; and
- engaging the tenant.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

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Housing staff are also navigating and negotiating a complex health and welfare system where:

- staff are undertaking case coordination and case management; and
- responding with a short-term targeted and episodic response, where external services cannot be engaged.

*Modernising Tenancy Services* is a new direction in which HACT will move to a targeted, differentiated and outcomes-based service delivery framework for tenancy management. It will need to be responsive, client-centred and flexible as tenant circumstances change. It will also need to work more effectively and collaboratively with other service support agencies in providing a holistic approach to working with vulnerable and high priority customer needs.

Housing ACT's tenancy management role is to assess strength and work with tenants to build capacity to address underlying issues and offer a continuum of support and resources to assist people to manage their tenancy in a targeted way. The type of resources and intensity of assistance made available to tenants are determined by their individual circumstances.

Tenants with greater capacity and less complex circumstances will receive information from HACT on the resources and assistance available and can choose to access and direct their own assistance. Tenants with more complex circumstances and less capacity to manage and resolve issues with their tenancy will receive a more structured and intensive range of assistance from HACT. This will be delivered by working with the expertise and assistance of the community sector and other government agencies, providing longer term intervention where appropriate.

This targeted, differentiated and outcomes based service response will seek to improve the stability and wellbeing of tenancies and develop tenant strengths that can contribute to long-term social and economic outcomes. Rethinking the way HACT tenancy management services are delivered will ensure it provides a modern service, responsive to the changing needs of tenants and their families.

## Mobilising Capacities and Achieving Outcomes

Increasingly, public housing accommodates people with histories of homelessness and/or complex needs. Tenants from these groups are often unemployed, socially isolated have few personal capacities and resources and often require assistance to achieve good outcomes. Focusing on outcomes recognises the value of stable tenancies for tenants to participate in community life and employment, as well the organisational benefits of assisting to improve rent revenue and reducing costs arising from damage and eviction legal action.

Outcomes for tenant can be considered in terms of:

- *Transitional outcomes (through the housing continuum)*
  - from homelessness to stable social housing
  - from social housing to other forms of tenure (e.g. into private rental or home ownership, from social housing into aged care) where appropriate.
- *Individual outcomes*
  - education, employment, and training (e.g. school attendance, build financial literacy, employment programs); and
  - improved health and wellbeing (e.g. breaking debt cycle, address drug and alcohol misuse, improve financial literacy).
- *Human service system outcomes*
  - reduce impact across service systems (by maintaining out of other systems, e.g. aged care, child welfare, justice systems).
- *Community outcomes*
  - reduce impact on community (e.g. ease incidences of anti-social behaviour, squalor and hoarding).

A stable tenancy is the secure base on which tenants can begin to build for future outcomes, indicators of a stabilised tenancy are:

- rent is up-to-date;
- no neighbourhood conflicts;
- maintaining property;
- meeting legal obligations of tenancy;
- engaging with supports (where relevant);
- tenant security and safety; and
- tenant satisfaction with quality, affordability, appropriateness.

A stable tenancy is vital in terms of positive housing, social and economic outcomes for tenant households and the wider community in that it<sup>4</sup>:

- prevents homelessness;
- consolidates outcomes achieved by homelessness and other support providers;
- provides a base for social participation, employment, education and training and contributes to health and wellbeing; and
- improves housing experience for the community, tenancies and the housing provider.

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4 Newton, T. and Samoiloff, J. (2005) *Sustaining Tenancies*. Housing and Community Building Division, Department of Human Services, Victoria.

Stable tenancies also have a number of organisational benefits including:

- improves rent revenue;
- reduces costs through minimising vacancies, evictions and damage;
- reduces resource costs, as 'turnover' of tenancies contributes to increased staff workloads; and
- reduces broader accommodation costs relative to housing people in the higher cost homelessness system and/or in the higher cost health or correctional systems.

Tenant households unable to have stable tenancies are more likely to have:

- reduced ability to secure long-term paid employment and therefore have greater reliance on public benefits;
- poorer financial awareness and therefore a greater likelihood of making poor financial decisions;
- poverty and disadvantage can be passed from one generation to the next as learnt behaviour;
- disruption to a child's schooling and so lower educational attainment;
- poorer health; and
- reduced whole of life outcome chances.

At the broad level public housing tenancy management authorities can assist to stabilise tenancies by:

- developing linkages and coordinated service strategies with other human service organisations that provide support to public housing tenants;
- minimising the number of evictions through early identification of tenancies at risk of failing;
- focusing service responses to contribute to the overall wellbeing of individuals, families and communities; and
- offering differentiated service responses to different client needs.

## **Factors contributing to tenancy de-stabilisation and poor outcomes**

There are many risk factors that can contribute to the de-stabilisation of a tenancy and consequently place a tenancy at risk and limit the opportunity for good outcomes. In most cases, these risk factors are balanced by a range of tenant resiliencies, capacities or protective factors. However, it is often when the individual's capacities and resilience are threatened by external factors or life events that the risk factors upset the equilibrium. For some people the balance between risk and capacity/resilience is tenuous and the slightest change can threaten their stability.

The figure below identifies many of the risk or vulnerability factors that, when coupled with one or more of the precipitating events can lead to tenancy instability, subsequent failure and compromised outcomes, unless there are appropriately targeted supports at the right time and duration.

## Indicators of tenancy stabilisation and outcomes<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Jones, A., McAuliffe, D., Reddel, T., Marston, G. and Thompson, A (2003) *Sustaining Tenancies in Public Housing: Understanding and Supporting Tenancies-At-Risk*. The University of Queensland, Queensland

## Client and Tenant Feedback

There have been a number of community engagement activities undertaken in recent times by the ACT Government and Australia-wide to gauge community and client feedback about the delivery of human services. These consultation activities have been drawn upon to inform the new HACT tenancy management service delivery model. Feedback has been captured via national and territory social housing surveys; the ACT Government's 'Time to Talk' website; staff and stakeholder consultation; CSD forums such as the Joint Champions Group; and other general public engagement.

In the ACT, consultation with the community and service users during the design of the Blueprint identified five key aspects for human services sought by users:

- to be simple to understand, easy to access and navigate;
- puts people and families at the centre of decision making;
- is flexible, offers choice and control for service users;
- strengths-based, holistic and focused on achieving positive outcomes and services; and
- viable and sustainable, leveraging resources across the system to respond to current, emerging and future demand.

When asked about these key aspects, the majority of people ranked human services with a focus on being "person-centred" as most preferred (41.1 per cent). This was followed by, offers choice/tailored (22.5 per cent); sustainable (14.7 per cent); flexible (7.8 per cent); outcomes-focused (7.8 per cent); and local networks (5.8 per cent).

Consultation with ACT public housing tenants, as part of the ACT Government Client Satisfaction Survey for Public Housing (2013) report, identified that:

- tenants want more flexibility around the way Client Service Visits (CSV) are arranged, types and times visits are offered, who has to be present during inspections, etc.
- tenants who felt they were doing the right thing (i.e. paying their rent on time, maintaining their property etc) indicated they were not being acknowledged for their efforts and would like to gain some rewards, such as receiving a quick turnaround on repair requests and being transferred to be nearer family or away from neighbourhoods with anti-social behaviour.
- tenants consider the role of HACT in "addressing support needs" to be focused on modifications to the home rather than day-to-day living supports. An opportunity exists in this area for HACT to raise awareness of the breadth of available service supports, that can be offered to tenants in addition to general tenancy management and modification supports.
- tenants would like a consistent service across all staff members and consistent advice about issues and/or general enquires. "There is a difference in the level of service provided across different staff members that I engage with."

- “(regular) turnover of staff does not allow for a relationship to be built up with Housing Managers. It also does not allow Housing Manager’s sufficient time to get to know me and to develop an understanding of my individual circumstances and needs.”
- “(would like) a bit more empathy and understanding of our situation, rather than just seeing us as a number.”
- “communication with tenants is often too bureaucratic and not easily understood. Policies are often seen as black/white or right/wrong when interpreted by HACT staff – need for more flexibility.”
- there is a consistent theme of tenants having difficulty contacting their Housing Manager via the telephone, or when messages are left there is no return call by Housing Managers.

Consultation with service users and tenants, as part of the National Social Housing Survey State and Territory (2010) identified information about accessing support, specifically in relation to supports accessed by clients via their public housing provider:

- in instances where clients sought public housing support and services it was mostly for tenancy management services, residential care and supported accommodation services and advice and referral services;
- when thinking about a time they accessed social housing provider services, there was a fairly even split for it not/meeting user expectations, with higher satisfaction in the way service users were treated by providers, however lower satisfaction with provider knowledge and consistent application of policies and procedures; and
- the survey also identified that the handling of queries received the most negative comment overall with almost one third of service users expressed dissatisfaction towards the time it had taken to get though on the telephone and how efficiently the query was dealt with. Many felt that they had to be proactive and persistent to resolve their issues when accessing social housing provider supports.

The new HACT tenancy management service delivery model seeks to respond to feedback by supporting tenants in appropriate ways. From providing more targeted early intervention and prevention services, to an intensive service offer where required. The model will see services delivered in a coordinated and cohesive way that facilitates the capacity and skills of tenants to work towards achieving whole of life outcomes.

## Available Literature

Whilst there is an abundance of research and literature on homelessness, causes and experiences of homelessness and pathways out of homelessness, the research on best practice within public housing is rather more limited. The research activity into public housing tenancies that does exist focuses primarily on problematic, at-risk or high support tenancies and does not adequately explore the continuum of housing

support throughout a tenant's journey in the public housing system. Notwithstanding these limitations, the following research provides some interesting insights into how other jurisdictions in Australia and the United Kingdom have thought about tenancy management and support within the sphere of public housing.

A 2005<sup>6</sup> study in Glasgow, United Kingdom found that a quarter of lets to homeless and waiting list applicants break down within a year. The study found that the main risk factors which increased the risk of tenancy failure were:

- being allocated a home in an unwanted area;
- dissatisfaction with the condition of the property;
- inability to secure adequate furniture and equipment;
- suffering antisocial behaviour and harassment;
- debt problems; and
- lack of support.

This research study led to a number of strategic changes within the Glasgow area, and some of these are reflected in the *Modernising Tenancy Services* tenancy management service model, including:

- introduction of 'settling-in' visits early in the life of a new tenancy;
- designated neighbourhood relations teams (similar to the existing HACT Improved Support Stronger Communities (ISSC) team who work on anti-social behaviour issues);
- assessment of need at the sign-up stage (similar to the *Modernising Tenancy Services* assessment of capacity using Outcomes Star™ in the early stages of tenancy);
- monitoring of rent accounts of new tenants and use of early non-payment as a trigger for assessing need for tenancy support and advice (similar to *Modernising Tenancy Services* early intervention focus); and
- designated tenancy support staff or new tenancy advisors (similar to the *Modernising Tenancy Services* Intensive Support stream).

Similar evidence from Victoria, Australia<sup>7</sup> identified that without support and assistance, tenants are likely to face eviction within eighteen months of entering long-term housing. Following this tenants are more likely to return to other more costly accommodation options, such as the homelessness service system, correctional facilities or hospitals.

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6 *Tenancy Sustainment Strategy and Action Plan* (2007). The Glasgow Housing Association Limited, United Kingdom.

7 Newton, T. and Samoiloff, J. (2005). *Sustaining Tenancies*. Housing and Community Building Division, Department of Human Services, Victoria.

An interesting initiative introduced in Victoria included:

- *introduction of more intensive client home visits*  
The Victorian Client Home Visit Scheme has been implemented as a means of delivering improved client service, support and tenancy management through an increased focus on visiting clients in their homes. As part of this scheme, Housing Support Officers (similar to HACT Housing Managers) visit all new tenancies within the first six weeks of a tenancy to ensure those who might be at risk of tenancy failure are given support at the earliest opportunity. In addition, staff visit all other tenants once every two years, providing housing staff and tenants with the chance to: establish a better working relationship; give tenants a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities; and foster a more proactive approach to solving problems by local Housing Offices.

Further, 2006 research in Victoria, *Support for High-Risk Tenancies*<sup>8</sup>, found that:

- as the targeting of public housing to those most in need has increased, the effectiveness of routine landlord services was questioned. Victorian Housing Managers were spending more time with a small group of high-risk tenancies;
- problems with a new tenancy tend to emerge early. Of the 145 tenancies examined as part of the research, 50 per cent (72) had problems occurring within the first three years of the life of a new tenancy;
- high needs people who have supports in place at the start of the tenancy, with a commitment to ongoing support, have far fewer ongoing issues; and
- the research identified that the key principles to guide work with high risk tenancies are early intervention, prevention and intervention.

Research by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services<sup>9</sup> identified that *"preventative strategies to reduce the rates of eviction should focus on interventions during the early stages of housing tenancy as ... this period is a vital one in regard to ongoing sustainability."*

Whilst there is a need for further research into 'what works' in public housing tenancy management, the initial indications clearly identify that there is a need for services that are targeted in both duration and intensity to the needs of different tenant groups. In particular, the early phases of a new tenancy are seen as highly vulnerable. It is important to provide targeted supports to tenants that have additional support needs, either in an ongoing manner or for set periods of time until the risk of failure for the tenancy has passed.

8 *Support for High-Risk Tenancies Strategic Project* (2006). Department of Human Services, Victoria Government

9 Healy, B., Ryan, M., Renouf, N., Wright, L., Shaw, E., Gough, I., Boutlis, N., and Sago, R., (2003). *What factors impact on people's capacity to maintain long-term tenancies? Did the SAAP experience help them?* Department of Family and Community Services, Australian Government.

## Client Journeys – Alice and Terry

Whilst a review of the literature can provide some information about best practice service models, it is an understanding of tenant (client) lived experiences that can illuminate how best to maximise the opportunities that exist within existing systems, process and procedures. Client service journeys are a simple diagrammatical tool that can be used to chart a person's journey through a service system in order to use that chart to identify areas of opportunity and change. Being qualitative, client stories are not representative of the overall system, only illustrative of some people's experiences of the overall system. The following stories highlight some of the imperatives to move towards a human services service delivery model of tenancy management.

### **Journey 1 – Alice**

The first story is about a young 19 year old female tenant, whom we have called Alice, and who within a period of just 5 months has gone from homeless, to housed and then receiving a recommendation for eviction (an Unconditional Termination and Possession order and is facing the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for eviction). Alice is pregnant and Care and Protection Services (CAP) are involved in the case.

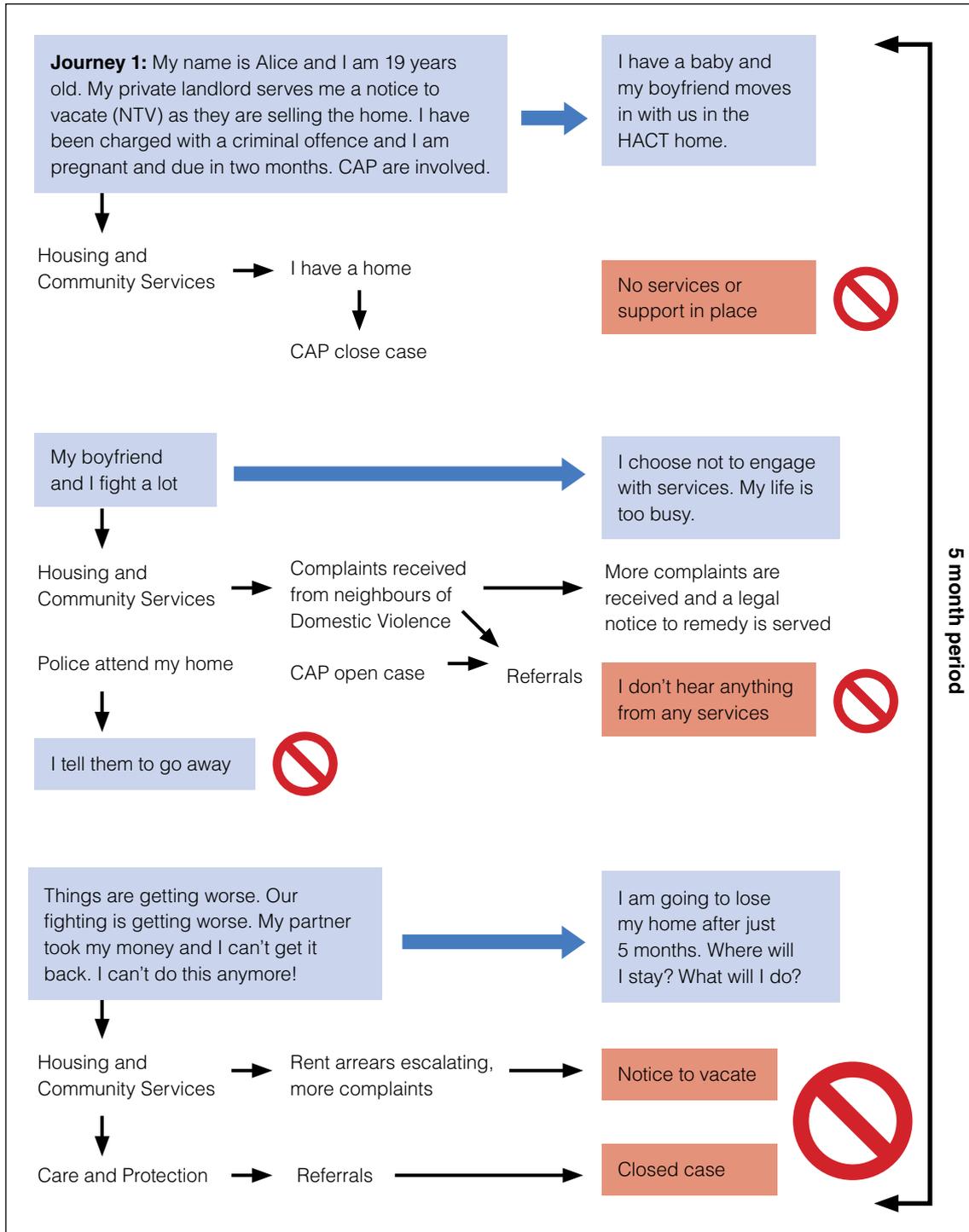
This story clearly illustrates the missed opportunities to provide targeted support to Alice in the early stages of her tenancy and ensure those supports were adequate and remained in place. There are a number of indicators in this client journey that suggest that had there been closer monitoring of her tenancy, it may have been possible to engage her in earlier supports more proactively.

### **Journey 2 – Terry**

The second story is about Terry, a 48 year old single man with an intellectual disability who lives alone. The story identifies that he is not only socially isolated but does not have the daily living skills to manage his tenancy, look after his property or even look after himself. In a period of nine months, despite some attempts and providing support his circumstances deteriorated significantly and he is placing his tenancy at risk.

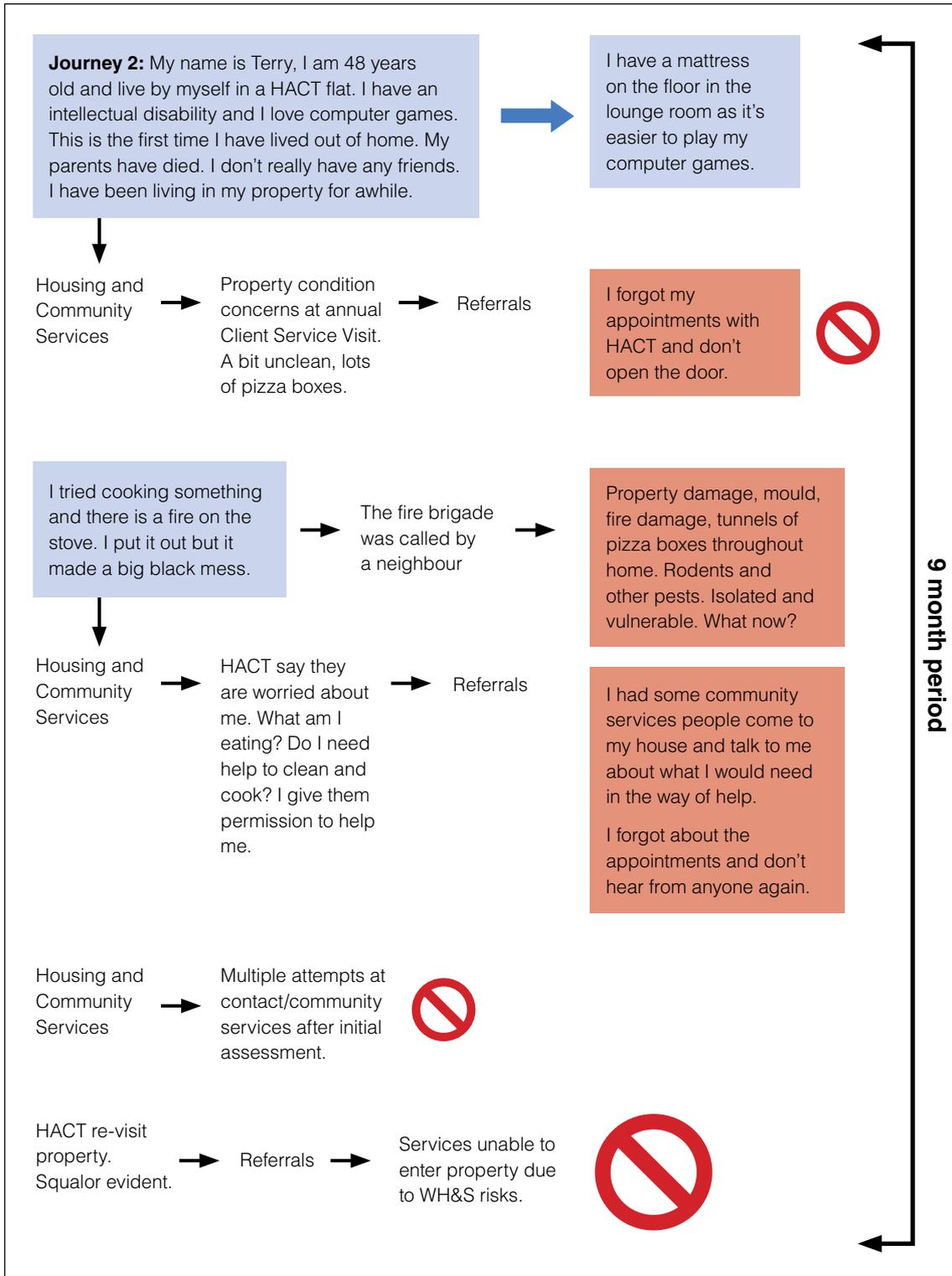
This journey highlights that for some people like Terry there will be a need to provide sustained support over a long period of time in a planned and proactive way to protect the tenant, tenancy and the property.

**Alice's Journey**



# Modernising Tenancy Services

## Terry's Journey



## Debt Resourcing

Although only affecting around 10 per cent of tenants at any time, managing rental arrears and sundry debt is one of the most time intensive and persistent aspects of tenancy management. The *Modernising Tenancy Services* tenancy management service delivery model will provide an overarching service approach within which to locate Housing ACT's Debt Resourcing Policy. The Debt Resourcing Policy represents a new orientation in how HACT approaches debt management with tenants.

Embedding the Debt Resourcing Policy within a human services framework means that rather than relying solely on an adversarial, legal response, HACT and its community partners recognise debt as a health and wellbeing issue that is best addressed through a holistic, supportive resourcing approach.

By reframing debt, the Debt Resourcing Policy positions debt as an issue requiring a person-centred, and at times sophisticated, response that is flexible and tailored as well as manageable and comprehensible for the tenant. This response encourages the tenant's participation and ownership of solutions. It does so by operating from the assumption that people experiencing debt have strengths and capacities which can be harnessed to address both the issues underpinning debt and the debt itself.

Housing ACT's role is to assess capacity to manage debt and offer a continuum of support and resources to assist people to manage and resolve their debt in a targeted way. The type of resources and intensity of assistance made available to tenants are determined by their individual circumstances. Those with greater capacity and less complex circumstances receive information from HACT on the resources and assistance available and can choose to access and direct their own assistance.

Tenants with more complex circumstances and less capacity to manage and resolve their debts receive a more structured and intensive range of assistance from HACT. This is delivered by working with the expertise and assistance of the community sector and other government agencies, providing longer term intervention where appropriate. This differentiated service response aims to improve the financial literacy and wellbeing, developing strengths that can contribute to long-term social and economic outcomes.

*Modernising Tenancy Services* provides the person-centred, strengths based model in tenancy operations, which can embed the Debt Resourcing Policy and tools into HACT housing manager practices. It will ensure that the Blueprint, the ACT Government's overarching one human services framework, is reflected in the debt management and housing services provided to HACT's tenants.





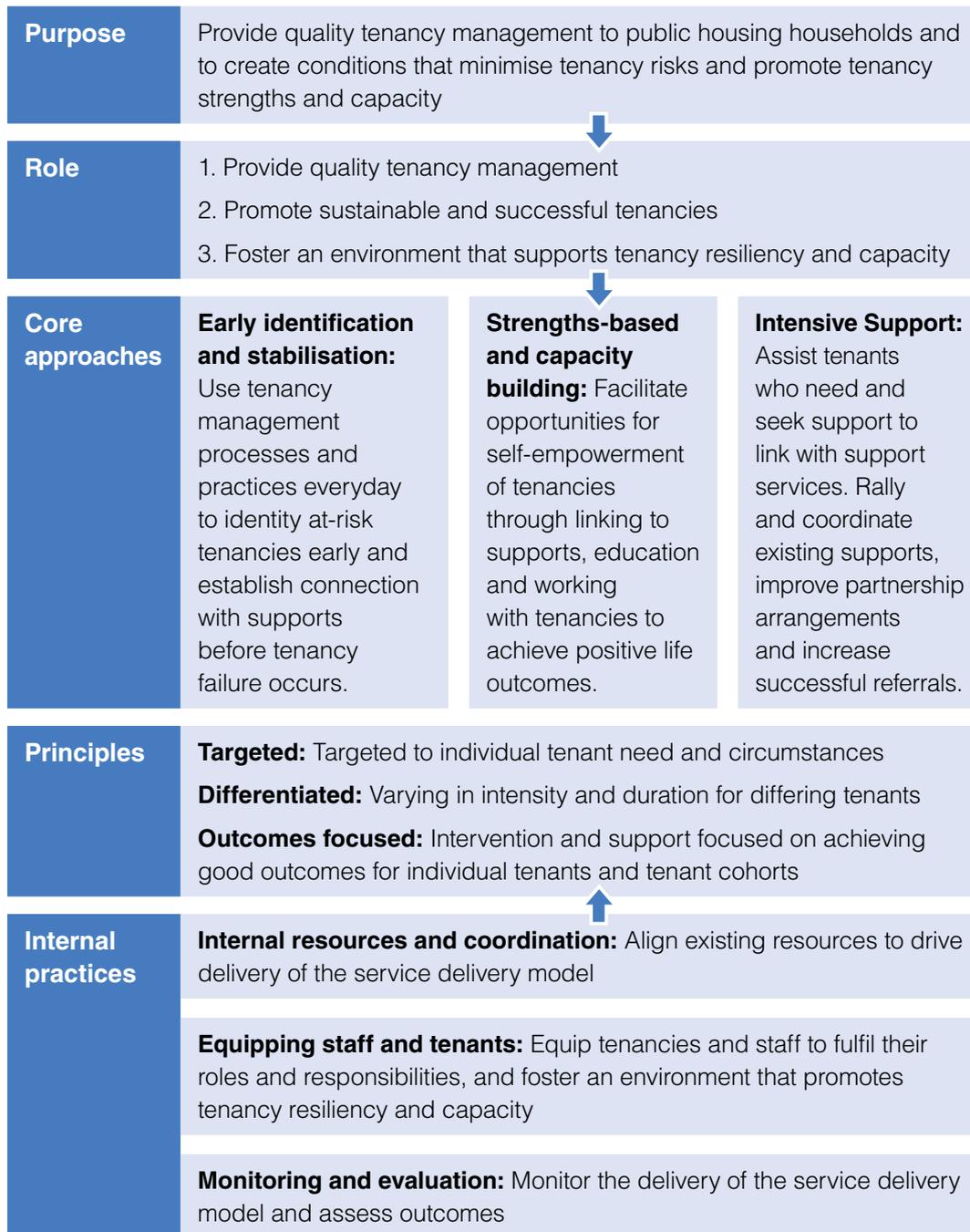
## **Section 2** Service Delivery Model

### Service Delivery Model: A Targeted, Differentiated and Outcomes-Focused Approach

The distinct demographic trend of HACT tenants, combined with a human services model, suggests that the existing approach to tenancy management is no longer the most appropriate or efficient model to generate positive social and economic outcomes for tenants. A differentiated service response, that addresses both the specific support needs of a tenancy and the intensity of those needs, will provide a more holistic service that recognises the links between housing and whole of life outcomes.

A differentiated service model provides service responses more targeted to the needs of a household. It is a way of ensuring that resources are both adequate and appropriate to the needs of each individual household. A differentiated service response should therefore ensure that the right service is provided, at the right time, for the right duration.

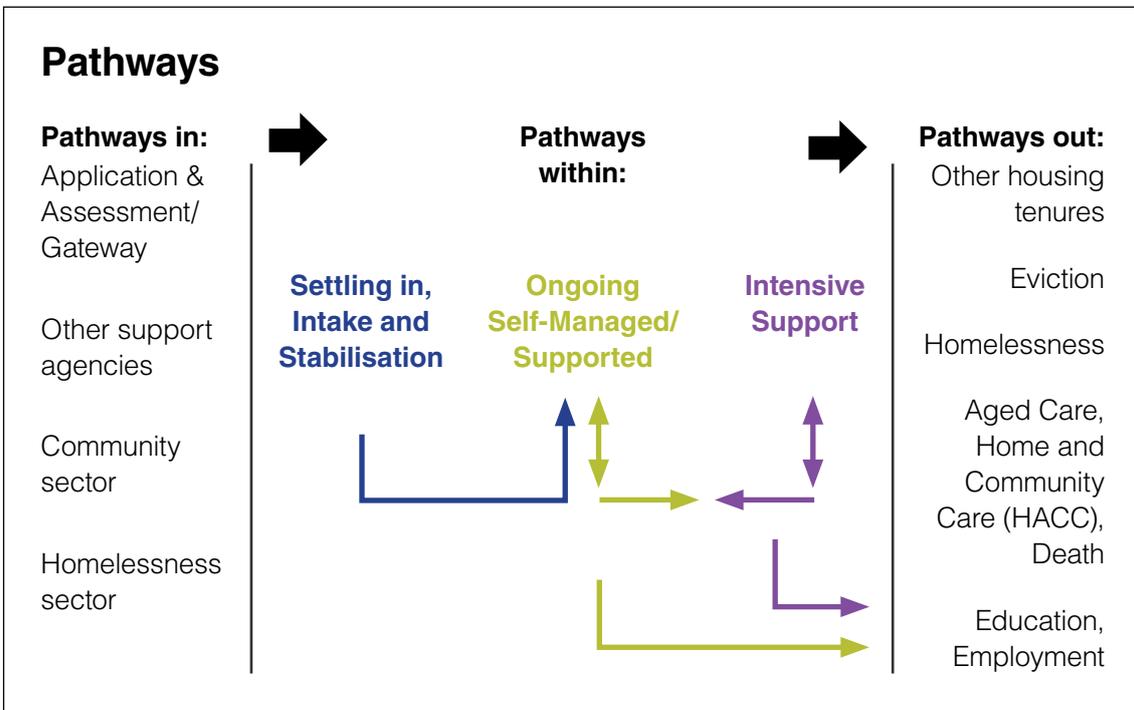
### Service model overview



## Structure of Tenancy Management

A targeted, differentiated and outcomes based approach to tenancy management services requires a restructure and realignment of the organisational structure to match the core elements of the service delivery model. The restructure has realigned a number of service delivery components of the Housing Initiatives area within HACT and integrated these into the Tenancy Operations area to create a more coherent service pathway for tenants.

Shifting from a geographical area based structure of tenancy management, the service delivery model has established three service streams to ensure there is a robust and targeted service response for tenants at different phases of a tenancy. The three service streams provide a pathway approach, and are: Intake and Stabilisation; Self-Managed and Supported; and Intensive Support.



## Intake and Stabilisation Service Stream

Research shows that many new tenants struggle and are at risk of having issues with such things as maintaining regular rental payment, managing their property or building relationships with neighbours in the early phases of moving into a tenancy. For instance, evidence from Victoria states that:

*“without assistance, they (tenants) are likely within eighteen months of entering long-term housing to be facing eviction and a return to other more costly accommodation options.”* (Newman, T and J Samoiloff 2005).

Recognising that for many tenants the early months are critical in establishing stability for tenancies, the aim of the intake and stabilisation phase is to assist all new tenants, proportional to their needs. This includes support to settle into a new tenancy, to ensure relevant services are in place, that rental payment patterns are established and the tenancy is on a stable footing.

Early engagement with tenants at the beginning of their tenancy supports the idea of prevention and early intervention. As a philosophy, prevention is about providing generic services that can prevent problems from arising. If problems do begin to emerge, intervention is undertaken to provide supports early and quickly to ameliorate the impact and prevent an escalation and onset of chronic or entrenched problems.

### **Roles and responsibilities of Intake and Stabilisation:**

- close liaison with Gateway Services Assessment and Allocations staff;
- management of all new tenancies for up to a maximum of 12 months (excludes Mutual Exchanges, and some Management Initiated Transfers);
- complete a voluntary initial assessment and develop a Tenancy Action Plan based on 'Outcomes Star'<sup>TM</sup> (pages 31–33);
- identify appropriate support and intervention for the tenancy;
- coordinate and/or chair case conferencing/professionals meetings if required; and
- develop plan for tenant transition to Self-Managed and Supported tenancy service stream.

Staff within the Intake and Stabilisation service stream will carry smaller portfolios to enable them to work more intensively with tenants in the early months, ensuring the tenancy is stabilised prior to transition into one of the two supported tenancy regions. Staff will work assertively with tenants to ensure that there is a good holistic assessment of the tenancy capacities and support needs, and that relevant and appropriate supports are identified and engaged to support the tenancy. This will mean that for some tenancies, the Housing Manger will be required to undertake a case management or a case coordination role, until an appropriate case manager/coordinator is identified.

The staff within the Intake and Stabilisation service stream will have the capacity to organise and facilitate case conferences/professionals meetings where there are multiple agencies involved.

With intensive support provided by the Intake and Stabilisation service stream, it is expected that the majority of tenancies will be ready to transition to a Self-Managed and Supported service stream region within a maximum period of 12 months, with many transitioned around the six month point.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

More important than arbitrary timeframes are the ‘readiness’ indicators of tenancies when considered for transition to a Self-Managed and Supported service stream region, which include:

- tenant is paying rent, regularly and in full, or on a repayment agreement and complying;
- no outstanding complaints;
- tenant is maintaining property to Housing ACT’s required standard;
- meeting legal requirements of tenancy;
- no legal action commenced, recommended or indicated; and
- engaging with supports (where relevant).

## Intake and Stabilisation Service offer

<b>Tenancy Management</b>	<p>Team to provide education and support to tenant from commencement date</p> <p>Team to provide early intervention under current policy and processes</p> <p>Team to undertake tenancy management and administration as per current policy and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebates</li> <li>• Debt Management</li> <li>• CSV within first 3 weeks, Visit 8 weeks and CSV 90 Day</li> <li>• Complaint Management</li> <li>• Property Condition issues</li> </ul>
<b>Support Tool Assessment (Voluntary)</b>	<p>Team to conduct support tool assessment with tenant at 8 weeks visit and then at 3 and 6 months intervals as per Outcomes Star™ – Organisation Guide</p>
<b>Supports</b>	<p>Team to engage and work with current support services from the commencement of the tenancy</p> <p>Team to establish and work with supports identified from support tool assessment</p>
<b>Advice/consultation</b>	<p>At a 6 month or up to 12 month period team to provide a comprehensive transition of tenancy to Self-Managed and Supported stream (and in some instances, the Intensive Support stream)</p>
<b>Duration</b>	<p>Tenancy to remain in team for a minimum of 6 months up to 12 months</p> <p>Tenancy to be transitioned to Self-Managed and Supported Stream when identified as Category 1 or Category 2 (Refer to Transition Pathways, pages 35–36)</p> <p>On an individual case basis tenancy may be transitioned to Intensive Support team if tenancy is identified at Category 3 or Category 4 (Refer to Transition Pathways, pages 35–36)</p>

## Transfers and new tenancies

Although the Intake and Stabilisation service stream will work closely with new tenancies for a benchmark period of six months (maximum 12 months), there are a number of new tenancy types that will not need to go through this service stream:

- new tenancies that arise as a result of a mutual exchange will continue to be managed by the tenancy region responsible prior to exchange. The reason for this is that mutual exchanges are always tenant initiated and will not require the level of early stabilisation support needed for a new tenancy from sign-up.
- any property transfers where the tenancy is managed by the Intensive Supports service stream prior to the transfer. The reason for this is that although there is a change of property, the tenancy will benefit from the continuity of the support of the Intensive Supports stream, until ready for transition into the Self-Managed and Supported tenancy regions.
- some (not all) tenancies that are transferred as a result of an Out of Turn transfer (OOT) may need to go directly to the Intensive Support service stream. This would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and identified as part of the formal brief seeking an OOT. If the reason for an OOT is significant enough to require an immediate transfer ahead of everyone else, then it is likely that the level of intervention and support needed will be of a level that requires the management of Intensive Support staff.

## Self-Managed and Supported Service Stream

The main purpose of the Self-Managed and Supported service stream (comprised of two regions; North and South) is to provide a tenancy management service that is responsive to the lower level needs of tenancies that are reasonably stable or self-managing.

Consistent with the Blueprint, the service offer within this service stream is primarily that of an 'Access Model'. Tenants will be provided information and self-managing options as needed, coupled with an early intervention response to enable a timely resolution of issues to prevent an escalation into the Intensive Support service stream.

The benefit of the Self-Managed and Supported service stream within a targeted, differentiated and outcomes-based service model is that whilst all tenancies will receive a basic level of tenancy support, those that require intensive support or intervention can be transitioned to the Intensive Support service stream until stabilised. Furthermore, and equally importantly, those tenancies that have demonstrated their capacity to maintain their tenancy without intervention or support for a period of at least five years will be allowed to remain self-managing and encouraged to be more self-reliant.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

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The principles underpinning this service stream are to:

- recognise and promote the capacity of tenants, including capacity to self-manage;
- recognise and support tenant aspirations and goals, and;
- educate and empower tenants to build resilience, capacity and self reliance.

The key aims of this service stream are to:

- ensure that tenants have a smooth service journey throughout their tenancy;
- provide routine and low level assistance to maintain a stable tenancy, as needed;
- assist tenants, as required, to build and maintain resiliency and capacity;
- maintain established trust/relationships;
- maintain productive and collaborative relationships with other supports where these are involved with an individual tenant;
- provide services to facilitate and support a range of exits for tenants (into aged care, private rental or ownership, eviction etc); and
- respond to changing tenant circumstances (health, employment, financial, family).

## **Roles and responsibilities of Self-Managed and Supported service stream:**

The roles and responsibilities of the service stream are: to support tenants, proportional to their needs, throughout the life of a tenancy by:

- assisting them to stabilise their tenancy;
- build resiliency and capacity;
- maintain engagement with their supports;
- engage with new supports as required; and
- ensure they understand their tenancy obligations and housing processes.

Self-Managed and Supported service stream service offer	
<b>Tenancy Management</b>	<p>Service stream to continue to provide education and support to the tenancy following transition from Intake and Stabilisation or Intensive Support stream</p> <p>Throughout the tenancy this service stream is to provide early intervention if tenancy issues commence</p> <p>Service stream to undertake tenancy management and administration as per current policy and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebates</li> <li>• Debt Management</li> <li>• CSV Annual and Self-Service</li> <li>• Complaint Management</li> <li>• Property Condition issues</li> </ul>
<b>Support Tool Assessment</b>	Team to review support tool assessment at transition and gain an understanding of tenant's capacity to manage tenancy
<b>Supports</b>	<p>Team to continue to work with supports identified from support tool assessment and action plan</p> <p>Team to establish supports if none in place or tenant has disengaged or if tenancy is at risk</p>
<b>Advice/consultation</b>	Should there be a need for the tenancy to be transitioned to Intensive Support, the existing team is to provide a comprehensive handover of tenancy
<b>Duration</b>	Tenancy to be managed by team until such time as identified tenancy behaviours reach a threshold requiring transition to Intensive Support (Refer to Transition Pathways, pages 35–36)

### Self-managed options

Whilst it is true that HACT owns the physical asset and has an obligation to check and monitor the integrity of the asset, through the annual Client Service Visit (CSV), this should be balanced by an understanding of the level of risk to the asset by the tenant, and not based on universal risk averse policies that do not differentiate different tenant capacities.

CSV's are enabled under the provisions of the *Residential Tenancies Act (1997)* (RTA) and are part of the tenancy agreement. As a landlord, HACT is able to undertake a property inspection twice in each 12 month period, as well as within the first and last month of a tenancy. Although these CSV's are primarily a property inspection, (under the RTA) HACT has to date utilised these visits as a way of checking on the welfare of the tenant and the household.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

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The service delivery model is based on a differentiation of services for tenants. This aligns with the ethos of the Blueprint which advocates the matching of services that are responsive to client need. The Blueprint principles that underpin the service delivery model are that services are person-centred, community focused, strengths-based, outcomes focused, simple, collaborative, sustainable and of high quality. These principles help to ensure that services are better matched to people's actual needs providing the right support, at the right time and for the right duration. Equally important to this is the focus of building peoples and families' skills and capacity to achieve and sustain positive outcomes. This way of thinking presents a challenge to HACT that has had a traditional service model within Tenancy Operations that is, in part, focused on looking after the physical asset as well as looking after the people living within the asset.

The new differentiated service delivery model for HACT Tenancy Operations is designed to assess the capacity of tenants and match a service response appropriate to the tenant's capacity. In order to fully incorporate the model, there has to be an acknowledgment that increased tenant capacity is directly correlated to an increased ability to maintain property, tenancy and self, and therefore a decreased and decreasing risk to the asset.

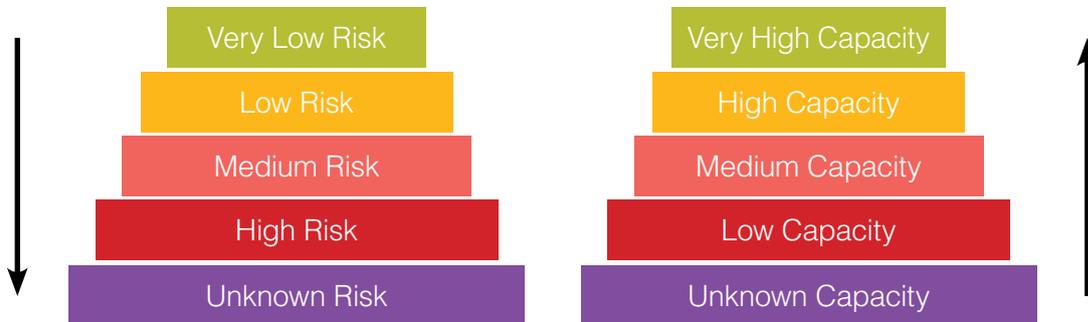
The risk matrix below highlights that for a small group of tenants that have been assessed as having very high capacity, the associated risk is very low. Similarly, the tenants assessed as having high capacity would be a low risk. Both the low risk and the very low risk are considered an acceptable risk level to CSD when it is balanced against:

- the policy objective of promoting self reliance consistent with the Blueprint; and
- CSD's philosophy of housing as a platform for social and economic participation outcomes.

A targeting of services in this way actually means that whilst some tenants will see increased intervention and supports others must, by necessity, be offered alternatives to the traditional face to face home visit (Client Service Visit; CSV), which currently occurs once in each financial year.

As of July 2014, of the 10,695 tenancies managed by HACT, approximately 30 per cent (3,101) would be considered as being *low* to *very low risk*. Just over half of this number (1,815) would be in the very low risk category of which around 1,220 could be considered as a negligible risk with enduring tenancies of 15 years or longer.

### Risk matrix (Risk and Capacity)



### Intensive Support Service Stream

The service delivery model provides the opportunity for a small number of tenancies to be managed more assertively and intensively to ensure good outcomes and tenancy stability. Through a reduced portfolio, Housing Managers in the Intensive Support service stream will be able to provide a greater level of time and effort in supporting tenants, engaging support services and addressing concerns that may be placing the tenancy at risk.

The main aims of the Intensive Support service stream are to work collaboratively with tenants and their supports to ensure good outcomes and stabilised tenancies. The service stream will assist tenants to identify existing capacities, and draw on existing natural and service resources and supports.

The Intensive Support service stream will work assertively with the tenants to seek active engagement and establish a connection/relationship with the tenant and support agencies. This will assist in ensuring tenants understand their obligation and any possible consequences. The service stream will provide an ongoing assessment of tenant capacity, needs and goals.

### Roles and responsibilities of the Intensive Support service stream:

- establish and maintain engagement with tenants;
- support tenants to develop skills and capacity to better self-manage such as increase tenant capacities to have financial capacity to pay rent, manage household and maintain the property;
- move tenancies towards greater levels of stabilisation;
- develop, with the tenant, a tailored and flexible tenancy action plan;
- work with tenants to address areas identified in their tenancy action plan;
- coordinate and engage the right support services for individual tenants; and
- work intensively with tenants to achieved desired outcomes/goals for both the tenant and HACT.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

Intensive Support service stream service offer	
<b>Tenancy Management</b>	<p>Team to work with a small number of tenancies more assertively and intensively to ensure good outcomes and tenancy stability</p> <p>Team to undertake tenancy management and administration as per current policy and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebates</li> <li>• Debt Management</li> <li>• CSV Annual and/or ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) Orders</li> <li>• Complaint Management</li> <li>• Property Condition issues</li> </ul>
<b>Support Tool Assessment</b>	Team to conduct support tool assessment at point of transition and complete reviews as per agreed Action Plan plus annual reviews
<b>Supports</b>	<p>Team to provide support in the form of case management, case coordination and attend case conferences</p> <p>Team to review current supports identified from support tool assessment and complete action plan</p> <p>Team to continue to work with supports identified from support tool assessment and action plan</p> <p>Team to establish supports if none in place and work to action plan</p>
<b>Advice/consultation</b>	<p>Client Support Coordinator (CSC)/ISSC work with Intake and Stabilisation, and Self-Managed and Supported staff</p> <p>CSC/ISSC to also work with Intensive Support staff housing managers on case management, case coordination and attend case conferences</p>
<b>Duration</b>	Tenancy to be managed by Intensive Support staff until identified tenancy issues are returned to Category 1 or Category 2, and are maintained at the level for a 3/6 month period before they are transitioned to Self-Managed and Supported (Refer to Transition Pathways, pages 35–36)

The Intensive Support service stream in tenancy is designed to offer a service to the other service streams in a number of ways, including:

- overall service stream tenancy management of around 500 tenancies that require additional time, intervention or intensive support; and
- providing support, advice and assistance to Housing Managers in relation to matters that require the intervention of either the Improved Support Stronger Communities (ISSC) worker or Client Support Coordinator (CSC) worker.

## Improved Support Stronger Communities and Client Support Coordinator

The role and function of the ISSC or CSC staff has not changed under the *Modernising Tenancy Services* delivery model. However the co-location of the ISSC and CSC staff with the Intensive Support service stream under the leadership of a single manager will:

- provide the opportunity to strengthen the service offers available to all service streams;
- provide ISSC/CSC opportunity for peer support and development; and
- provision of consistent advice and support across Tenancy Operations.

The ISSC and CSC staff will be required to assist and support staff across all of the tenancy service stream. Staff will need to provide a range of service offers consistent with and differentiated by a combination of the complexity of the tenancy, the capability of the Housing Manager and the transitions pathways outlined as part of the service delivery model.

The service offers can be characterised as:

- what can I do to assist you? i.e. general advice, consultation
- what can I do with you? i.e. joint visit, co-work, join to attend a meeting, make referral to etc
- what can I do for you? i.e. case conference, manage the issue for a period of time, such as squalor and hoarding cases. The ISSC worker or the CSC worker will undertake the tasks in entirety. For example, discussion with impacted community or management of anti-social behaviour issues for a time-limited period.

## Assessment Support tool (Outcomes Star™)

Helping people change behaviour is an important role for Housing Managers, which is applicable for staff in the Intake and Stabilisation and Intensive Support service streams.

Change interventions are especially useful in addressing such things as lifestyle issues, long-term property management and addictions. The idea of 'tenant non-engagement' and motivation often focus on tenant failure or tenant deficits. In providing support services it is vital to understand a tenants readiness to make change, appreciate barriers to change and assist tenants to anticipate the lapse and relapse cycles inherent in behavioural change. Doing this can improve tenant satisfaction with progress towards change, as well as assist housing staff to manage frustrations and morale when working with tenants who 'cycle' through the change process.

Behavioural change is rarely a discrete, single event. People cannot change overnight and change has to be seen as a journey, sometimes referred to as 'The stages of change'.

Generally speaking, all people engaged in change journey will move through a number of clearly definable stages, these are:

1. **Pre-contemplation stage:** this is when the person is unaware that a change is needed, or unwilling to accept that change is required.
2. **Contemplation stage:** during this phase the person will accept that change is required, but does not take any action towards the change.
3. **Preparation stage:** during this phase the person prepares to make changes, perhaps taking small steps towards the change.
4. **Action stage:** during this phase, the person is committed to the change and is taking committed action towards permanent change.
5. **Maintenance stage:** this is when the change is made, but steps are needed to maintain the change.
6. **Relapse stage:** this is a normal part of the change cycle and will see the person revert to previous behaviours. Over a period of time the relapse cycle is shorter and less frequent until the change becomes a permanent feature of the person's life.

Outcomes Star™ is an assessment and outcome focused operational tool which is based on the theory of stages of change that is:

- easy to use;
- fully collaborative; and
- evidence based.

The Outcomes Star™ is a suite of tools for identifying and measuring outcomes to support client change. Each version provides an assessment, support planning, review and outcomes tool in one. These are used to measure changes in attitudes, motivation and behaviour towards an end goal. They are also casework tools, empowering people to make changes and aiding the consistency and effectiveness of key-work.

## The Homelessness Star

The Outcomes Star™ model has developed a range of 'stars' for many different contexts. Stars can also be developed and modified for specific contexts. HACT is utilising the Homelessness Star, which although has some limitations being UK based, is sufficient for our needs whilst we test it in our context.

The Homelessness Star consists of three tools that can be used collaboratively with a tenant at different stages of the tenant journey. The assessment tool provides a platform for the tenant and Housing Manager to plot where the tenant is on their self-reliance journey and what is expected of the tenant at each point. The Homelessness Star also provides structured tools for promoting engagement and encouraging cooperation in identifying mutually agreed goals.

The suite of tools consists of the:

1. Star Chart;
2. Star Notes; and
3. Action Plan.

### **The Star Chart**

The Star Chart provides a visual depiction of the tenant's capacity across ten life domains in the form a Star. As the assessment with the tenant is completed over time, and the star chart can be completed as an 'overlay', visually representing the changes made over time.

### **The Star Notes**

The Star Notes provide a space for the housing staff member and the tenant to record any relevant information about each life domain, for example noting supporting evidence for a rating, or documenting areas of disagreement.

### **The Action Plan**

The Action Plan is structured to identify goals and SMART actions (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Based) to achieve those goals. The Action Plan is a tool that is completed in collaboration with the tenant and can be used to identify areas for priority and determining responsibilities for tasks.

Further information about Outcomes Star™ and extensive resources are available at <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/>

## **Transitions and escalations**

Central to the service delivery model is the need for a clearly articulated transitions pathway that identifies the movement of tenancies with differing service needs and capacities. Whilst the majority of tenancies will remain within the Self-Managed and Supported service stream, a small number will move between the different service streams.

It is important to think about transitions at a number of different points of the tenants' journey:

1. transition of a new tenancy from Gateway Services into the Intake and Stabilisation service stream;
2. transition from Intake and Stabilisation to Self-Managed and Supported service stream or Intensive Support service stream;
3. escalation (but not transition) requiring a service offer from the Intensive Support service stream;

4. transition from Self-Managed and Supported service stream to Intensive Support service stream; and
5. transition from Intensive Support service stream back to Self-Managed and Supported service stream.

## **Transition of a new tenancy into the Intake and Stabilisation service stream**

The process for this transition is fairly clear and commences at sign-up with a lot of the preparatory work being undertaken through the assessment and allocation stages.

## **Transition from Intake and Stabilisation to Self-Managed and Supported service stream**

All tenancies from the Intake and Stabilisation service stream will transition directly to the Self-Managed and Supported service stream. This is based on the following assumptions:

- as part of the assessment and application approval process applicants are assessed be able to 'sustain a tenancy' (refer Gateway Services guidelines);
- where they are unable to sustain a tenancy unaided, supports would have been identified and in place at the point of sign-up; and
- the intake and stabilisation phase of the tenancy would have been effective in ensuring that all aspects of the tenancy are running smoothly.

A tenancy is to remain with Intake and Stabilisation for an indicative timeframe of six months – 10 months, with around 10 per cent of the tenancies taking longer than this timeframe (maximum period of 12 months) and some being transitioned sooner than six months. The important consideration for transition is not the timeframe, but that the tenancy is identified as stabilised.

## **Escalation (but no transition) requiring service offer advice from the Intensive Support service stream**

There will be occasions in the life cycle of tenancies that additional support is required. This may be intermittent and sporadic due to changing tenant circumstances such as ill health, changing family composition and neighbourhood dispute. In some cases, more enduring support will be required to address challenges such as hoarding, squalor, mental illness or property damage.

In this instance the tenancy would remain with the existing Housing Manager, whilst the Intensive Support service stream will be able to provide a tiered service offer to any area of tenancy as follows:

- single consultation – i.e. advice and guidance;
- short-term support to tenancy – i.e. Joint visit or visits, coordinating and chairing a case conference or professionals meeting; and
- longer term intensive support (up to 3 Months on specific tasks) – i.e. managing anti-social behaviour.

### **Transition from Self-Managed and Supported service stream to Intensive Support service stream**

Where support of an intensive nature or intervention is required longer term, for example frequent court ordered property inspections, health and safety concerns for vulnerable tenants, child protection concerns etc, the full management of the tenancy is to be transitioned to the Intensive Support service stream.

### **Transition from Intensive Support service stream to Self-Managed and Supported service stream – and review periods**

While some tenancies may remain in the Intensive Support service stream for an extended period of time, it is important that every tenancy is assessed on an annual basis to determine the requirement for ongoing intensive support. The assessment is to be based on examination of the following:

- original presenting tenancy stabilisation issues and the degree to which these have been addressed;
- current capacity, motivation and engagement; and
- level, type and nature of the support arrangements.

### **Transition Pathways**

Although there is often a desire to seek absolute indicators of which tenancy or tenant should be transitioned from the Intake and Stabilisation service stream to Self-Managed and Supported service streams and to the Intensive Support service stream, in reality this is not always possible. A more workable approach is to provide support and/or guidance to assist with decisions regarding whether tenant's have capacity and willingness to engage with support and assistance and if the tenancy is stabilised.

The table below (adapted from the ISSC Manual 2012) provides staff with a general guide for the critical points in the pathway approach to transitioning tenancies. The approach proposes a pathway of transition from Housing Manager, through to the Team Leader (TL)/ Regional Manager and ISSC/CSC support. This approach aims to support transition of the tenancy into the relevant stream and, in instances of tenancy transition out of Intensive support, a return pathway to Self-Managed and Supported. The approach identifies that regardless of the behaviours or issues the tenancy presents, the critical issues are the tenant's capacity level and willingness to engage along with the response to managing the tenancy. This approach means that it is the degree to which the tenant is engaging with support and assistance (HACT and/or support agencies) that influences the decision to transition, and not necessarily an enumeration of problematic behaviours or issues.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

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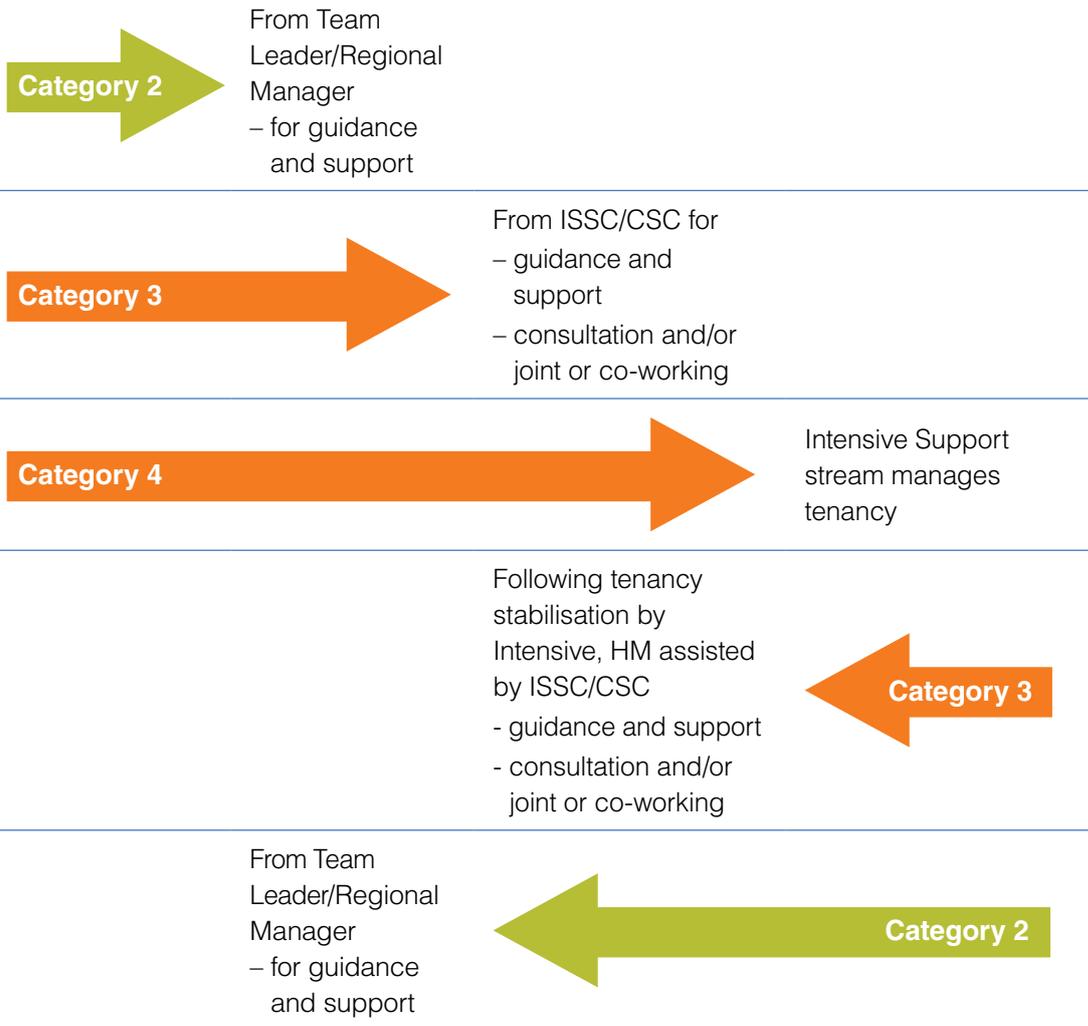
The general pathways through to transition are (refer to diagram below):

- **Category one** (low level) response will be evoked when the regional Housing Manager works to support the tenant around issues (perhaps in response to a complaint etc).
- **Category two** (moderate level) response is where the regional Housing Manger has attempted to work with the tenant around issues but requires support through assistance with TL and/or Regional Manager (RM).
- **Category three** (moderate/high level) response is required where the regional Housing Manger has sought assistance from TL and/or RM and CSC/ISSC support and assistance is required with the tenant around escalating complex issues.
- **Category four** (high level) response will come into effect if the complex issues continue, escalates or intensifies, requiring ongoing sustained intervention and transition to Intensive support stream.

Transition Pathways by Category			
<b>Housing Manager:</b> – manages tenancy	<b>Housing Manager requires:</b> – guidance or support	<b>Housing Manager requires:</b> – consultation or joint assistance in management of complex issues	<b>Housing Manager requires:</b> – to complete transition for ongoing intensive management and sustained support

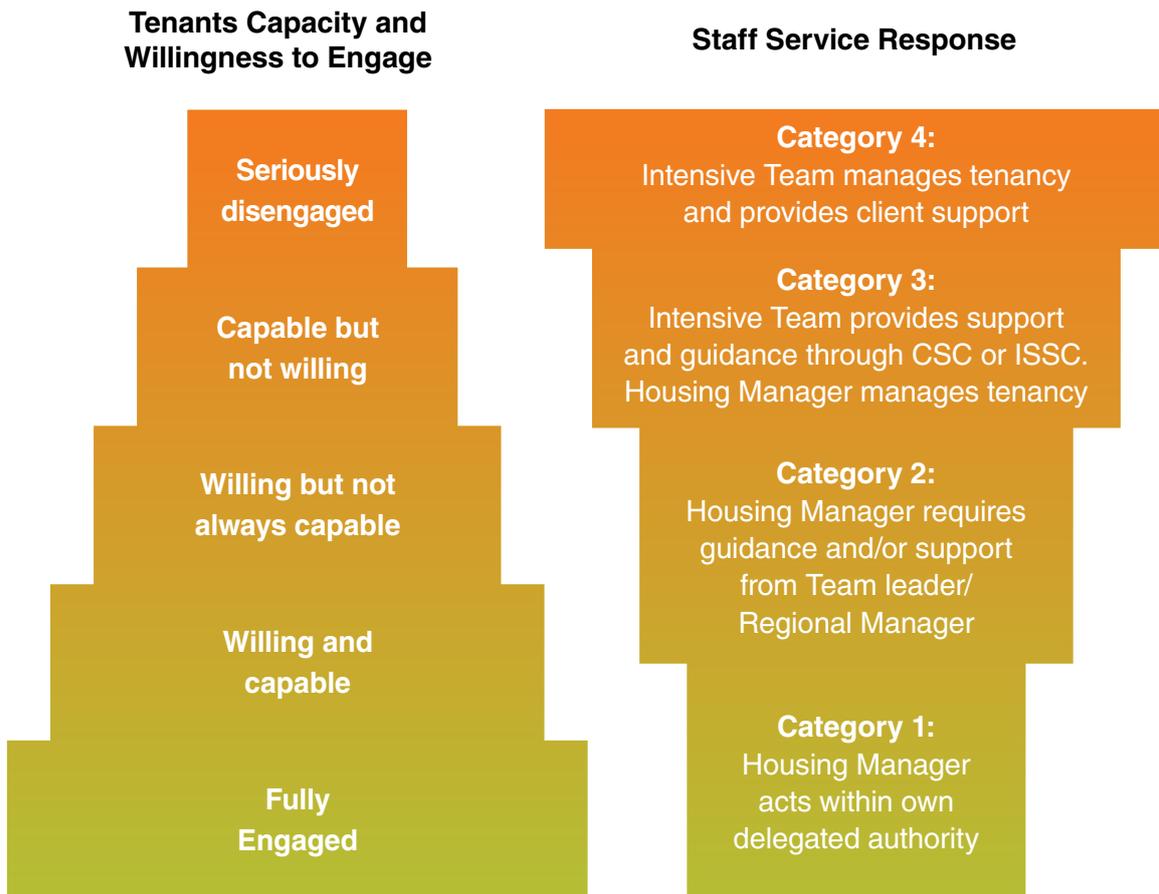
**Category 1**

Housing Manager acts within own delegated authority



# Modernising Tenancy Services

An alternate diagram of the transition pathway approach is provided below, illustrating the critical points in transitioning tenancies by the capacity and engagement level of the tenant against staff response levels which has been adapted from the ISSC Manual 2012.



## Rationale and Determination Guidelines for Transition Pathways

To assist staff to distinguish between the different category levels, a matrix and rationale has been provided below as a guide for the three streams to assess the tenant capacity and engagement, level of intervention and resource requirements involved, support and assistance a staff member will require and the escalation transition points to managing a tenant with presenting issues. The matrix (and rationale document) have been aligned with Outcomes Star™ and should be used in conjunction with the Star Assessment and Star Action Plan completed with the tenant.

Transition Pathways Matrix \*see rationale below

Pathway Category Level	Tenant Capacity (and Impact) – links to Outcomes Star™	Tenant Engagement	Legal Action	Intervention	Internal Consultation/ Transition	Teams
<b>Category 1</b> Housing Manager manages Tenancy	Low impact, medium/high capacity of tenant to manage tenancy and issues	Tenant is fully engaged with Housing Manager (HM) and services or may not require support	Nil or first level legal action. Notice to remedy (NTR) may be issued	Nil or low intervention above that of normal processes required	Nil transition or guidance from Team Leader (TL) and Regional Manager (RM) required	Intake and Stabilisation, Self-Managed and Supported
<b>Category 2</b> Housing Manager requires guidance or support	Low impact, medium capacity of tenant to manage tenancy and issues	Tenant is engaged with services but tenancy issue is not stabilising and/or is escalating	NTR may be issued and non-compliance by tenant	Moderate intervention required	Nil transition but HM seeks guidance from TL and RM	
<b>Category 3</b> Housing Manager requires consultation, joint working assistance or management of complex issues	Moderate impact, medium/low capacity of tenant to manage tenancy and any presenting issues	Tenant is not engaging with HM or services and requires CSC/ISSC advice	NTR issued and not remedied by tenant. Consideration for Notice to vacate (NTV) or referral to ACAT for Orders	Moderate to high intervention required	Nil transition but TL and/or RM request ISSC/ CSC consultation	Intensive Support stream provides support, guidance or management
<b>Category 4</b> Intensive Support stream manages Tenancy	High impact, low capacity of tenant to manage tenancy and presenting issues	Tenant is not engaging with HM, requires management of tenancy by CSC/ISSC	NTR/NTV has been issued with non-compliance by tenant. Matter may be referred to ACAT for Orders	High intervention required	Transition into Intensive Support stream	



SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL



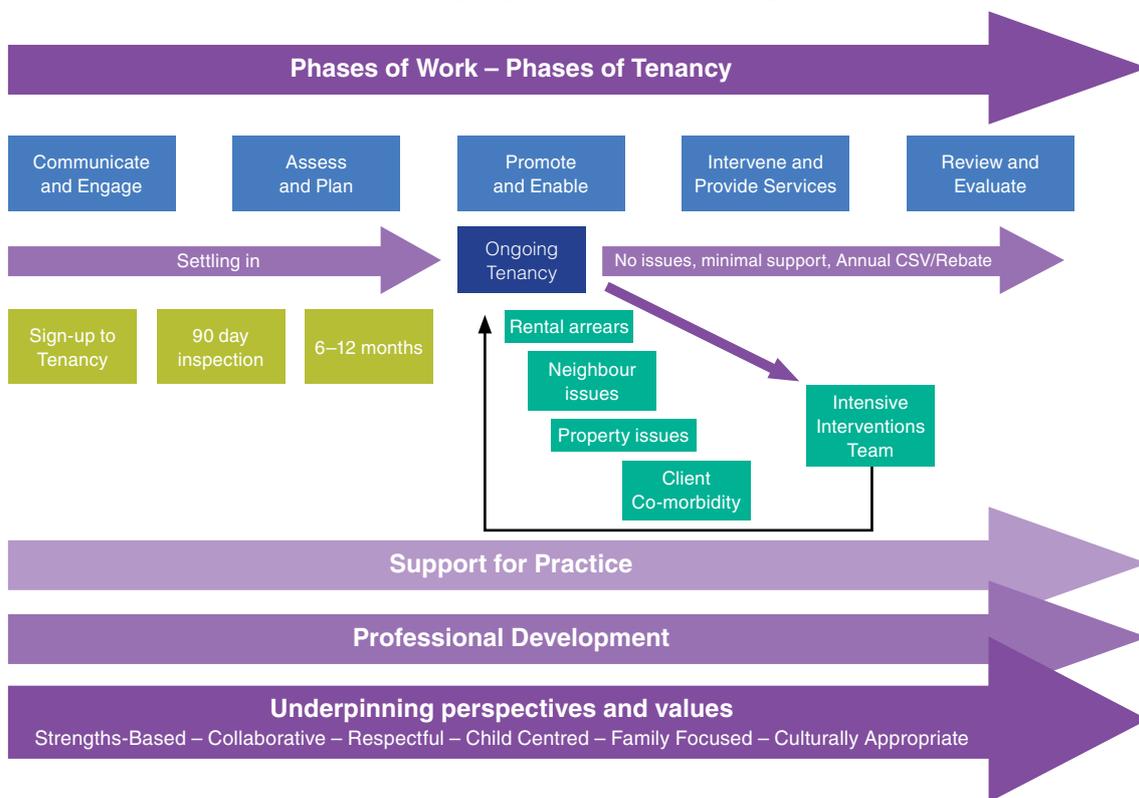


## **Section 3** Practice Framework

## A Practice Framework for Tenancy Operations, Housing ACT

A practice framework is often defined as a ‘conceptual map’ that brings together an agency’s approach for providing direction on organisational practice with its client group. A practice framework for tenancy management of HACT public housing is best conceptualised as a continuum of service practice; from entry and ‘settling in’ into a public housing tenancy, to ongoing tenancy support, tenancy intervention and eventual exit from a public housing tenancy. The figure below illustrates the Tenancy Operations Practice Framework.

### Practice framework for Tenancy Operations, Housing ACT



The idea of a service continuum also allows intervention and support to be focused around movement both at the micro as well as the macro level. An example at the macro level would be breaking the cycles of generational disadvantage by conceptualising public housing as a platform for social and economic participation. At a micro level, staff are able to assist individual tenants to chart their own individual journey to a client negotiated future state. This could be as basic as assisting the tenant to move from irregular rental payment patterns to maintaining regular rental payments, or at a more enhanced level, assisting a tenant requiring high levels of initial support to stabilise a tenancy and achieve capacity to self-manage their tenancy.

At a basic level, the Practice Framework for Tenancy Operations has three key elements:

- the values and principles that underpin an approach to working with tenants;
- the core staff knowledge and skills required; and
- specific work approaches and techniques considered fundamental to achieving desired outcomes.

## Values and Principles

The values and principles that underpin the Practice Framework for Tenancy Operations are aligned to the Blueprint, which was developed using a collaborative, community engagement, design process.

### Principles of tenancy management service approach in a human services framework

Blueprint Principles		Tenancy Management Principles
<b>Person-centred</b>	People and communities are at the centre of decision making, and services are delivered holistically.	Services are strengths-based and recognise all people have capacity, skills, and resources.  We value the relationship with our tenants, and value that they want to have a relationship with us and the agency.
<b>Community-focused</b>	Service design responds to the context in which it is delivered by understanding the needs and expectations of people and communities.	We work as part of a human services system to support positive community outcomes, including supporting opportunities for community participation and reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour on the community.
<b>Strengths-based</b>	Relationships and service responses empower individual and familial resilience, self-determination and independence.	Service builds upon and mobilises people's capacity, with information and supports.
<b>Outcomes-focused</b>	Service design, funding, accountability and performance measurement focus on individual, community, and system outcomes.	Social housing is not an end in itself, rather a platform for economic and social participation.  Outcomes are designed in partnership with tenants to achieve clear and understandable outcomes.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

Blueprint Principles		Tenancy Management Principles
<b>Simple</b>	Information and access to services is easy to understand, navigate, and access.	In partnership with tenants, we define outcomes that are clear, understandable, and achievable  We aim to say 'yes' and work flexibly with tenants to achieve this.
<b>Collaborative</b>	People and communities, community services and government agencies are aligned and united in their efforts to build collective impact.	We work with partners to achieve individual, system and community outcomes.
<b>Sustainable</b>	The current needs of people and communities are balanced with considerations for future needs.	Service provision that is better aligned to tenant circumstance achieves longterm sustainability for the organisation and for tenants.
<b>High quality</b>	People and communities are supported by evidence-informed, innovative, continuously improving responses that appropriately meet their needs and enable them to achieve their desired outcomes.	We provide the right support, in the right amount, at the right time (promoting early intervention and service user participation, reducing episodes of crisis). We provide services through a variety of approaches including online delivery and encourage self-service, wherever possible.

*Adapted from the ACT Government's Human Services Blueprint*

These values and principles provide the overarching considerations in developing the Practice Framework for Tenancy Operations, to guide HACT public housing staff in their daily work with tenants.

The service approach and core principles of the Blueprint will guide and inform the development of a human services aligned tenancy management framework. Building on the work of the Blueprint, in determining the values that underpin a human services aligned tenancy management framework, the following five values were identified as vital to its success:

- strengths-based;
- collaborative;
- respectful;
- child centred and family focused; and
- culturally appropriate.

### **Strengths-based**

When tenants see that their strengths and capacities are recognised, respected and affirmed, they are more likely to rely on them as a foundation for taking the risks of change. Assessments that focus on underlying capacity and levels of need, as opposed to symptoms, problems and client disadvantage provide the best guide to effective intervention and are more likely to produce safety, stability and permanency.

### **Collaborative**

Tenants and their families are more likely to enter into a helping relationship when staff have developed a trusting relationship with them. The quality of this relationship is essential to engaging with a tenant in a process of change. Tenants who have a key role in co-designing the planning process are more likely to remain engaged with supports over time.

### **Respectful**

Work practices that value and consider others, are respectful, courteous, fair and value individual differences are core aspects of building a positive work-force culture. Relationships are marked by showing respect to the person, no matter what their history. It is important to recognise that everyone comes from a different place, and they all bring vast amounts of experience, and possible trauma and wisdom with them. The celebration of difference builds respect and activities that involve mutual participation, collaboration and contribution, work effectively when they occur in respectful way.

### **Child centred and family focused**

The principles of child centred practice are well established in child welfare literature and can be summarised as 'any decision or action that will impact on a child must give consideration to the best interests of the child'. In the context of Tenancy Operations, family focused practice recognises the important role that families have in the protection, welfare and best interests of children. In addition, a home has fundamental importance in providing a place of stability for children.

### **Culturally appropriate**

The ACT is a culturally diverse community and culturally appropriate practice demands that due regard is given to a person's cultural, religious and linguistic background. This means being aware of your own cultural background and associated values and norms and also understanding, regarding and respecting the diversity of others.

## Knowledge and Skills

When considering knowledge and skills it is useful to identify the specialist knowledge as well as the essential skills required to deliver the Practice Framework for Tenancy Operations at the beginner, advanced and expert practitioner level. Knowledge can be acquired through a range of learning mediums including reading and attending courses, whilst skills can only be developed through practice, reflection and experience. It is also useful to understand that knowledge and skills are interlinked and not mutually exclusive. For example, in the area of tenancy management, communication skills are a pre-requisite for assessment knowledge.

The *Modernising Tenancy Services* model will require staff to develop new and additional knowledge, skills, and practices to effectively meet the needs of an increasingly diverse housing population. Core knowledge and skills of practice for HACT tenancy management staff include the ability to:

- communicate and engage;
- assess and plan;
- promote and enable;
- intervene and provide services; and
- review and evaluate.

### **Communicate and engage**

Effective communication is one of the key requirements of any person working within a human services environment. The ability to communicate in written form and verbally with vulnerable people, people in distress and people with challenging or different communication styles is often the first step in developing effective working relationships.

Before any assessment, planning or intervention can commence it is essential to elicit some degree of engagement. Often however, the onus of engaging is placed on the tenant and comments like 'they won't engage' are common place. Whilst it is true that some tenants will be harder to engage with than others, of importance is the understanding of why some people will not engage. Some reasons are:

- poor or no relationships with the housing practitioner;
- they can see no purpose or benefit;
- fear of failure;
- emotional distress; and
- previous encounters and experience.

Effective communication and engagement requires a housing practitioner to be aware of:

- **The skilled use of self:**

The use of self includes being able to engage with, and form effective and trusting relationships with tenants, professionals and others. It also means being comfortable working with strong emotions, including our own.

- **The underpinning knowledge and techniques which inform how to best communicate and engage:**

A practitioner needs to ensure they use words or concepts an individual or household can understand and recognise the importance of body language and tone of voice. Practitioners are encouraged to assist tenants to communicate their situation in their own words, and acknowledge the possible emotional stress and power imbalance of the tenant and practitioner relationship.

- **Use of methods and techniques appropriate to the person and the practitioners role and task:**

Find out what tenants or other professionals are thinking and feeling. Provide the kind of information others need. Interpret and assess complex situations accurately. Advocate, negotiate, mediate and intervene sensitively, authoritatively and appropriately.

In the course of a housing practitioners role they may be faced with a range of different problems some of which are relatively straight forward and simple, requiring practical solutions. Other problems can be more complex such as, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and family/household relationship violence. These complex issues will require more multilayered methods and techniques to bring about a change.

### **Assess and plan**

Undertaking an assessment with an individual tenant or household is the first stage in delivering an appropriate and effective service. The primary tool for assessment within Tenancy Operations will be Outcomes Star™. Some individuals or households may have complex needs and require additional information for the assessment process to be completed and interventions identified.

Other agencies, such as Child Protection Services, Mental Health etc, may be involved with the tenant; a multi-agency approach should be promoted wherever indicated and is in the tenant's best interest.

# Modernising Tenancy Services

The assessment will highlight several components:

- current context, current concerns, current pressures;
- what is the desired outcome;
- individual tenant and/or household identifying their needs and strengths;
- what other service/s are involved with household, and why;
- what other information sources can be identified to contribute to the intervention action plan; and
- what are the priority actions to be undertaken, and why.



To inform the assessment, additional record keeping maybe required, presenting a holistic picture of the individual tenant or household. Records should be written in a simple clear language, be strengths-based in tone and should include examples of the individual tenant’s or household’s skills and capabilities or a description of observed circumstances that explains the current situation or behaviour. Records should avoid judgemental statements or statements that are capable of being misinterpreted or having a double meaning.

## Promote and enable

Individual tenant and household engagement has its basis in good effective practices, aimed at considering the ‘best interest of all stakeholders’. Good practice, engagement and transparent communication are the foundation from which change can occur.

Without effective knowledge skills, practitioners will be less able to:

- find out what tenants or other professionals are thinking and feeling;
- provide the kind of information others need;
- interpret and assess complex situations accurately to develop an intervention strategy; and
- negotiate, mediate and intervene sensitively, authoritatively and appropriately.

### **Intervene and provide services**

Housing practitioners will need to know what a tenant, or other professionals think, feel or believe. This is needed for assessment and planning good interventions and outcomes; as part of collaborative practice with all stakeholders. Housing practitioners may also need to consult with groups or communities to inform wider service planning. Identifying the relationship between 'events' enables us to utilise four important practice techniques when working with tenants, these techniques are:

- to describe and explain what the issue or event is (an assessment);
- to explain why and how it came about (an analysis);
- to predict outcomes (a hypothesis); and
- to control and bring about change (an action/intervention plan).

These practice techniques require the ability to assess and to intervene in ways that address complexity and to be able to communicate findings with a range of different stakeholders, including individual tenants, households, communities, and other professionals and organisations.

### **Review and evaluation**

A key element of effective practice is the cycle of review assessment and development of action/intervention plans. A housing practitioner needs to be able to measure the progress of any action/intervention to ensure the delivery of the service is meeting its proposed objectives. To meet this common goal, services need to be delivered through practice which is proven to be effective, noting that:

- a review and evaluation considers accountability for determining and achieving outcomes;
- review and evaluating outcomes also provides an evidence base for professional decision making; and
- review and evaluation also considers effective practice and partnership workings.

Outcomes Star™ will provide a consistent format for measuring progress throughout the period of intake and stabilisation, providing a visual illustration of change, or the lack of it, and highlight further work required. It will also provide the information required to identify a tenant ready for transition between different service streams.

## Approaches and techniques

Approaches and techniques are recognised ways of working that allow a housing practitioner to assist tenants in different ways at different times. Examples of an approach would be a 'Case Conference' with relevant support agencies to agree a support plan for a tenant. Another approach or technique could be using motivational interviewing to facilitate and engage the core motivation within the tenant to change behaviour. Motivational interviewing is both outcomes-based and person-centred allowing the tenant to self-identify goals for change.

### Strengths-based practice

Strengths-based practice does not minimise the current situation but rather seeks to put it in context. It is an approach that positions the individual tenant or household as multi-dimensional in their strengths, rather than from a deficit perspective of only focused on needs which may impair or reduce motivation to change. Strengths-based practice requires a different way of looking at individual tenants and households. It considers all their capacities, possibilities, values and aspirations, all of which can be utilised to assist the work with the individual tenant or household in that it:

- recognises individuals and families have skills, strengths and resources;
- requires the practitioner to actively listen to the clients story;
- identifies strategies based on strengths; and
- builds rapport and validated individuals and families intention to have better outcomes for themselves.

In using a strengths-based approach, a practitioner should try to:

- actively listen to the individual tenant or household's story and then reconfirm what you think you have heard to ensure clear and effective communication and determine how you may work with them to formulate a case or action plan;
- ask the individual tenant or household what they think their strengths are;
- use positive language to empower;
- address what they think are their personal constraints;
- identify significant people who can support them;
- help them develop a realistic stepped plan and achievable goals;
- set regular meetings to monitor change; as positive reinforcement; and
- acknowledge successes when they occur.

### Case conferencing

When a tenant has complex needs and there are a number of agencies involved, it is considered to be in the best interests of the tenant to hold a case conference to facilitate better tenant outcomes and support tenancy sustainment. A case conferencing model involves:

- identifying and engaging the individual tenant or household's own natural support systems;
- engaging a range of other professionals to support the individual tenant or household in a timely and appropriately way; and
- focussing on what different approaches may be most effective.

### **Solution-focused practice**

Strongly linked with the strengths-based perspective, in solution-focused practice the housing practitioner focuses less on the problems and more on solutions. The housing practitioner draws on the strengths and resources of the tenant when undertaking an assessment and encourages tenant participation to find their own solutions to concerns. This in turn supports the tenant's engagement in the process.

### **Task-centred practice**

Task-centred practice focuses exclusively on the tenant's issues. It is a methodology which can be readily understood by a tenant as it focuses on the problems and tasks needed to resolve them. This approach does not address directly any psychological problems; however resolving problems raises self-esteem and self-confidence and can have a lasting effect on problem management.

Task-centred practice is more effective with tenants who have basic stability and are able to self manage, but their ability to manage has been interrupted by a crisis. Task-centred practice is less successful with people who have a history of trauma, loss or disruption and would normally need high levels of support to motivate them.

Techniques for task-centred practice:

- task-centred practice involves the tenant from the outset in understanding and controlling the process;
- involves a logical approach by the housing practitioner and the individual tenant or household;
- problems are identified and ranked in priority;
- tasks are split into those the practitioner, individual tenant or household will complete;
- task planning happens on a regular basis until the problem is solved;
- can demonstrate its effectiveness;
- the practitioner continues to motivate by emphasising how completing the task will lead to problem resolution; and
- where necessary use role play to assist the client deal with a situation they maybe avoiding.

With task-centred approaches, period review dates are important. This is to consider if the original objectives are being met or if there were unresolved matters and what other possible sources of help maybe available.

## **Crisis intervention practice**

Although unlikely to be utilised much with in a tenancy context, Crisis Intervention Practice is an active, direct intervention in the life of the individual tenant or household, a kind of first-aid. The focus is on what is happening currently and the influence of the person's life history on what is happening now.

A crisis intervention response needs to be essentially quick. The practitioner will have to assess whether they are the best person to deliver an intervention, or involve other professionals and resources. Any intervention may be seen initially as making the situation worse. This is mainly due to the strength of feeling present in a crisis, when all the skills and coping mechanisms of the individual tenant or household have broken down.

By the very nature of the crisis, the relationship between the practitioner and individual tenant or household becomes intense; they may see each other daily. Tenants may be more willing and open to change during crisis.

Techniques for crisis intervention:

- allow the individual tenant or household to speak and use active listening, and use key words empathetically to reflect back and reduce their possible defensiveness;
- be aware in crisis people may not remember what they said;
- give information in a format that the individual tenant or household can use, if not now later;
- identify and enlist supports from other professionals or family members; manage the situation and people as appropriate;
- help the individual tenant or household to list options that might help them; and
- review with the tenant or household what happened at the end of the intervention.

## **Accountable autonomy**

Sometimes referred to as Disciplined Autonomy, this concept and practice is appropriate to HACT as a human services agency. Just as a good continuous quality improvement system includes both measures of quality control and less prescribed directions for practice, the Practice Framework provides guidelines for practice whilst allowing staff to be responsive, flexible and innovative in seeking responses and solutions to tenants issues.

*'They [frontline staff] must be supported to act responsively and autonomously, exercising their judgement to deliver, without fear of blame for unforeseen and novel events that are outside their capacity to control.'* (Harrison, 2010, p.19).

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This balance between discipline and autonomy is critical for human service delivery but can be difficult to achieve. The Practice Framework is supported by a professional development framework, a supervision framework and ongoing training. This provides the guidance and support to allow trained and experienced housing practitioners to deliver quality flexible and personalised responses (the 'autonomy'), while quality assurance measures and business systems provide the necessary assurance and accountability measures (the accountability or 'discipline').

## Professional Staff Development

To assist staff to develop new and additional knowledge, skills and approaches to practice, HACT is developing a professional development framework for staff that will deliver the basic knowledge requirements. A Certificate IV in Social Housing (CERT IV) and a Diploma in Social Housing provided in-house will deliver skills training and incentives that encourage sound work practice.





## **Section 4** Support for Practice Framework

## A Support for Practice Framework for Housing ACT

### Development of the framework

In recent years HACT has seen an increase in the complexity of support required by tenants to sustain their tenancy. Staff are doing more than just providing a property and tenancy management services.

Staff support marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants to achieve positive outcomes. This is done through working collaboratively with the tenant, their family and support agencies. This person-centered approach allows tenants to build skills and resilience in order to make real and sustained positive change.

This work is often complex, demanding and at times stressful in nature. Aligned to the Blueprint as a human services framework, implementation of the Support for Practice Framework recognises the complex and changing nature of the work undertaken by HACT staff.

Providing Support for Practice through the implementation of regular staff supervision allows staff the opportunity to reflect and explore the nature of the work they do and the importance of their role in supporting positive outcomes.

The Support for Practice Framework (the Framework) provides an overview of support for practice through supervision, the integral parts, process and the key principles. It also includes a summary of staff feedback about expectations of supervision, the attributes they seek in supervisors and the staff developed charter which includes values, roles and responsibilities. Housing ACT is committed to assisting staff practice development through the provision of regular Support for Practice supervision.

The four elements of learning and development, support, mediation and accountability for staff have been identified as key to achieving a cohesive framework to support good practice. The interrelationship of these elements as shown by the graphic on page 60 is outlined in detail in Section Four of the Framework: Functions of Supervision.

The Framework provides a mechanism for staff to explore the requirements of their role and the manner in which they work. The four key focuses of the Framework assist staff to explore their contribution to the wider CSD goals of enabling Canberrans to participate in a connected community.

The Framework is part of the overall support for organisational practice which has the goal of continuous improvement for high quality service and outcomes. The Framework acknowledges the variety of mechanisms that are put in place as part of quality service delivery. These include:

- staff/team/group meetings;
- case presentations; and
- consultations with senior colleagues.

The Framework for HACT has drawn heavily on the framework developed for the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS). It has borrowed from the OCYFS framework in the use of key concepts, language and processes. It has however been designed to suit the needs of HACT with a language that fits the organisation and the wider Directorate and seeks to imbed the principles and intent of the Blueprint.

In developing the Framework, HACT has sought to engage the housing staff in the process. A small reference group of staff was consulted on the early drafts of the Framework. A series of familiarisation supervision workshops were held for staff. These provided an invaluable feedback mechanism in the development of the Framework as well as the development of a charter of practice support (refer to Support for Practice Charter below). The staff of HACT are committed to high quality service for tenants. Throughout the workshops, the key themes that emerged were of open, honest and trustworthy service delivery that seeks to do the best for the individual tenant, households and the community. Staff were also seeking to have a practice support process that was similar to these key themes.

## Supervision Charter

As part of the process of developing the Framework staff were asked to help develop a charter of Support for Practice which would have a clear value statement and outline the roles and responsibilities of each party. This was undertaken during the workshops and gave staff an opportunity to reflect upon what they wanted in supervision. The Charter would be a document that would provide clear expectations for each of the parties in the Support for Practice process. The following is a reflection of this work.

## Support for Practice Charter

### Value Statement

Housing ACT values all employees and is committed to providing quality Support for Practice through staff supervision.

The Support for Practice process is to be a holistic approach which will enable staff to achieve positive outcomes which are mutually beneficial to tenants, the organisation and staff.

Support for Practice through supervision will contribute to a positive work culture which promotes respect, trust, knowledge, clear direction and one that is pro-active. Supervision will be conducted in a private and professional environment according to the principles of the Directorate's Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework (RED Framework) and the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) code of conduct. HACT believes that everyone has the right to grow and develop as individuals and as part of the greater Community Service Directorate and community. Everyone has the right to be able to express their views in a respectful manner as part of the process. Resources have been committed to ensure that staff are provided with appropriate supervision.

Supervision is about demonstrating understanding, empathy, respect and equality by both supervisors and supervisees. Both parties have a joint responsibility to make this a fruitful relationship.

### Rights and Responsibilities

Staff have a right to regular supervision. It is the responsibility of all involved to be professional, focused and prepared.

It is a mutually beneficial process and staff and supervisors take responsibility to resolve issues in a positive and constructive manner. All parties involved need to respect individual limitations and have realistic expectations of staff to perform to the best of their capacity. Supervision is to provide support for quality performance. It is important that there is understanding of each party's rights and responsibilities.

Supervision is a confidential process and, where information has to be shared, each party is aware of the circumstances. It is done with honesty and transparency. Each party shall be provided with relevant training and development.

It is important that there is follow through with goals by both parties. Part of supervision is to recognise and acknowledge 'mistakes' and to learn from these in order to improve practice.

## What is Supervision?

In a human services delivery environment supervision is seen as central to good practice. Yet there is often little discussion on what is supervision, what constitutes it, what it is not, how to ensure quality and why supervision is important. It is presumed that staff and supervisors know why supervision is important and what it is. It is often built into government contracts and expected as part of service contracts.

A supervision framework is intended to emphasise that supervision is about transforming the organisation to a learning culture where the experience and expertise of its staff is cultivated and supported to provide high quality service. The emphasis is on ensuring regular, scheduled and planned supervision.

Supervision is:

*“a process in which one worker is given responsibility to work with another worker(s) in order to meet the certain organisational, professional and personal objectives which together promote the best outcomes for service users” (Morrison).*

Supervision within this context is an important organisational responsibility. It is part of organisational activities and an expectation that individual staff will be supervised. Importantly it is undertaken to meet certain objectives which promote the best outcomes for the tenant. It is also a hierarchy of responsibility which involves a staff member being assigned this responsibility for others and supervisors who are also supervised by others in a chain of responsibility.

Supervision because of this is imbued with responsibility for performance and outcomes. For many organisations this is where organisational responsibility ends. It focuses only on accountability of performance and through outcome measures appraises staff. The human services environment however acknowledges that the activities undertaken with clients are complex, emotionally difficult and services are dependent upon the individual skills of staff to engage, support, reflect and affect change within the tenant or client.

For individual front line staff to do this, the organisation needs to clearly articulate the requisite skills, knowledge and values that will allow each individual staff member to fulfill their duties. There is considerable technical skills and knowledge required to undertake particular duties and these are the responsibility of the organisation to provide through training, mentoring and supervision.

Employment Assistance Programs (EAP) in organisations exist to assist individual staff members manage challenges and difficulties that affect their ability to undertake their work. EAP's are not an alternative to supervision but are available in circumstances in which staff either experience a traumatic work situation (or a series of incidents that are not resolved) or suffer personal difficulties that affect their ability to work and function effectively. Also, supervision is not an alternative to introduction and orientation into the organisation and roles of the worker. This needs to be undertaken as part of the organisation's ongoing responsibility to ensure that new staff have the knowledge and skills to undertake the work required.

## Functions of Supervision

Supervision has four distinct but interrelated functions, each of which cannot be effectively performed without the others. Each is important in its own right but perhaps more importantly the inter-relationship affects how each function is discussed in a supervision session between a supervisor and supervisee.



### Accountability

This function focuses on the supervisor ensuring that the work the supervisee is accountable for is performed effectively and to a satisfactory standard. Discussion during supervision should include:

- the statutory requirements, policies, procedures and delegations relating to their work and how these are integrated into practice/performance;
- a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the supervisee, including the boundaries and limits of their role and authority;
- reflection and feedback on the overall quality of the supervisee's performance and work output/outcomes;
- the development and monitoring of action plans/targets and objectives and the completion of appropriate management reports;

- the basis of decisions and professional judgements, ensuring that they are clear and properly recorded;
- monitoring of the supervisee's workload; and
- the functions of other colleagues and agencies and ensuring the worker relates appropriately to them.

At times when organisations are under enormous stress the only part of supervision undertaken is the focus on accountability. While this may appear to be sufficient, it is the quality of the work with tenants that is important and often gets neglected during these times.

### Learning and development

This function encourages and assists staff to reflect on their own performance, identify their own learning and development needs and develop plans and/or identify opportunities to address those needs.

The learning and development function will be achieved through:

- appraisal of the worker's professional competence;
- an appreciation and assessment of the worker's theoretical base, skills, knowledge and individual contribution to the agency;
- regular and constructive receipt and provision of feedback on performance;
- assessing development needs and identifying learning opportunities;
- the worker's capacity to set goals and self-monitor progress of these;
- access to professional consultation in areas outside the supervisor's knowledge/experience;
- the worker's ability to reflect on his/her work and interaction with users, colleagues and agencies;
- application of learning to the workplace; and
- provision of 'clinical' consultation through reflective practice discussions.

This function is linked strongly with the professional development process. It feeds into this process.

### Support

Supportive supervision should build the supervisee's confidence, celebrate achievements, build on strengths, promote appropriate independence and acknowledge the difficulty of the work.

The aims of the support function are to:

- create a safe climate for the worker to look at his/her work practice and its impact on him/her as a person and provide and receive feedback;
- debrief the worker and give the worker permission to talk about feelings, anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, helplessness etc;
- validate the supervisee as professional in their work and as a person;
- clarify the limits of confidentiality in supervision;
- help the worker to explore emotional blocks to the work undertaken;
- explore issues about discrimination in a safe setting;
- support workers who are subject to any form of abuse from service users or colleagues, whether this be physical, psychological or discriminatory;
- support and assist the worker with work related health issues such as stress in the workplace;
- monitor the work related health such as effects of stress in the workplace and overall functioning of the worker;
- help the worker reflect on difficulties in colleague relationships, to assist the worker in resolving conflict; and
- clarify when the worker is advised to seek external counselling.

As the work with tenants or service users becomes more challenging the role of support in supervision will become more important within HACT. It is important that supervision is a safe space for supervisee's and that they can freely discuss and reflect upon their work with complex tenants.

It is important that the function of support supervision does not become a counselling session or a process for under performance management. Supervisors have to be supportive of staff and for supervision to be a positive experience.

## **Mediation (Service coordination)**

The aim of this function is to ensure that the relationship between the supervisee, their team, the organisation and other agencies with whom they work is effective. Much of the work undertaken involves other agencies and workers. Service coordination and collaboration is essential for effective practice. For many staff this is often the most frustrating aspect of the work. This is where supervision is essential to ensure where the blockages are for effective service and how to work through the issues so that the tenant needs are best served.

This will be achieved through:

- negotiating and clarifying the team's roles and responsibilities;
- allocating resources in the most efficient way;
- initiating, clarifying or contributing to policy formation;
- briefing senior managers about staff needs, resource deficits and implications;
- consulting and briefing staff on changes/developments that affect their area of work;
- advocating between worker or team and other parts of the agency or outside agencies;
- representing or accompanying staff in work with other agencies;
- involving staff in decision making;
- dealing sensitively but clearly with complaints about staff;
- assisting and coaching staff, where appropriate through complaints procedures; and
- articulating the organisation's vision and strategic direction.

Aspects of this function focus on advocacy and the importance of being person-centred with work practices.

## Frequency and Length of Supervision

Housing ACT is introducing Support for Practice through supervision for its entire staff. Staff will need different frequency of supervision depending on their roles within the organisation. Staff that have high and intensive contact with tenants have different supervision needs to staff in policy and other non-tenant contact areas.

The following is a guide only for frequency and length of supervision:

### **Housing officers/Housing practitioners**

Supervision needs to be regular, scheduled and well planned:

- new and less experienced staff will need frequent supervision for the first three months until they have been fully inducted into the new workplace.
- it would be expected that planned supervision for all staff (excluding new staff) would be at least one hour every three weeks.

As with most supervisory relationships it is important that an agreement is reached for frequency that allows for regular and structured supervision. It may be at certain times that individual staff need very frequent supervision (at least weekly) for an agreed and time limited period. The frequency should be determined by need of the worker in agreement with the supervisor. There is however a minimum standard of

supervision for HACT with the expectation that workers receive supervision at least every three weeks. It is important that this be transparent.

## **Team leaders**

As the Framework depends on team leaders providing quality supervision it is important that they are supported through this. Peer support sessions will be available every fortnight and team leaders should be provided with individual supervision on a monthly basis.

## **Managers**

It is important that Managers are provided with quality supervision. Depending on arrangements with senior staff it is expected that they be provided with supervision at least every month.

## **Policy and other staff**

As the Framework is rolled out through the organisation all staff will have supervision on a regular basis. It is expected that this be a minimum of monthly.

## **Scheduled and unscheduled supervision**

As noted earlier supervision can occur in a variety of settings depending on circumstances. Unscheduled supervision sessions are often determined by need of the staff member for either assistance in making decisions and working through complexity of decision making or experiencing distress and needing debriefing. For staff the key expectation is that supervisors are approachable and have an 'open door' policy.

Unscheduled sessions tend to be shorter though depending on need and occur 'on the run'. What is important is that these do not replace the regular scheduled supervision sessions. It would be expected that over time unscheduled supervision should not be a regular event as the staff member becomes less reactive and more proactive. Though there will always be incidents that will need debriefing because they are beyond the experiences of the staff member.

The use of unscheduled supervision needs to be backed up with support system when a supervisor may not be available (at meetings, on visits, etc.). It is important that as part of the supervision planning process workers are provided with other staff who can provide that level of supervision. This may include mentors, experienced peers, other team leaders and managers. The supervisor needs to be informed of any event and form part of the next supervision session.

## **Support For Practice session structure**

While each individual session won't necessarily cover all the functions, over time the supervision sessions should cover them. The four components of supervision need to get equal commitment from both supervisor and supervisee. It is however, a cycle and over the year each component should be fully addressed. It is important that the supervision record focuses on capturing quality improvement.

The focus of supervision will be at times on individual tenant work and decisions around intervention. At these times the decision need to be recorded on the appropriate tenant file.

While supervisory relationships are focused on positive and reflective practice, there can be times when it can be fraught, difficult and conflictual. It will be important that the Supervision Agreement is clear and allows for conflict to be managed in an appropriate manner. Discussions within the supervision sessions need to be had regarding how constructive feedback will be provided by both parties, how disagreements are to be managed and if conflict occurs how it will be managed.

Regular and scheduled supervision is essential, as too is the quality of the supervision provided and the interaction that occurs during sessions. Quality needs to be ensured via supporting supervisors through peer discussion; training on supervision; regular feedback from supervisees and through their own supervision by Managers and Directors.

Supervisors need an opportunity to discuss their own practice as a supervisor in a regular forum which allows for further development. The model of supervision needs to be reflected in all the supervisory relationships so that Team Leaders and Regional Managers also experience quality supervision.

## Trust and Supervision

To be effective, supervision is dependent upon building a trusting relationship that involves mutual respect and recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all parties. Trust has to be earned between supervisor and supervisee and the process of developing a work relationship needs to be part of the education and training of supervisors. Respect was seen as the key principle by staff and that the development of trust revolved around openness, transparency, confidentiality of the sessions and issues were followed up by supervisors.

## Record Keeping and Supervision

Record keeping is important part of the process and is a joint responsibility of all parties. This ensures the accountability of the supervisor and supervisee to the process. As a formal process the advantages are that it provides an ongoing record on training and development needs; issues in service coordination; and personal reflection. It is important that as part of the supervision process a tool for recording outcomes of supervision including agreed actions is used. This should be simple recording proforma to assist the process and is based on principles of keeping it simple and transparent.

## Principles of Supervision

For supervision to be effective there are a number of key principles which need to be embedded in work practices, these are:

- that it be a positive though challenging experience;
- has a strong focus on learning for both supervisee and supervisor ;
- focus is on promoting quality practice;
- is conducted in private to allow for confidential discussion if required;
- be an active process with a planned agenda to cover the issues ;
- not be postponed or cancelled except for emergencies (staff illness, etc.); and
- that performance management of staff be distinguished from supervision and should be undertaken in a separate process

## Skills required for supervision

The skills required for supervision are broad and multifaceted. The skills most commonly recognised for supervision are:

- communication and interpersonal skills;
- adult teaching and learning skills;
- ability to model ethical and professional conduct;
- assessment and appraisal skills;
- reflective skills;
- skills in managing poor performance;
- skills in enhancing practice; and
- ability to give and receive feedback.

For many supervisors they are thrust in the role without any formal training and support. It is assumed that because supervisors tend to have been experienced workers that they have the requisite skill to supervise others. Experience alone does not guarantee that a supervisor has the skills, knowledge and confidence to be effective in their role as a supervisor. HACT is committed to providing the necessary support to supervisors to be able to undertake their role effectively.

## Training, support and supervision

To be effective supervisors, it is important that training be provided. It is also important that supervisors are supported in their role and that it is seen as integral part of quality service delivery. Formal training will be put in place giving supervisors the opportunity to explore different models of supervision; skills in supervisory relationships; conflict negotiation and resolution; learning styles and supervision; and so on.

Support for supervisors should also be provided on an ongoing basis. This includes providing access to an experienced supervisor for consultation and advice; peer support network; supervisors receiving appropriate supervision; and resources for effective supervision.

## A Summary of Staff Feedback about their Expectations of Supervision

The following points are a summary of staff comments provided through consultation. Every effort has been made to reflect these accurately including in some instances maintaining wording verbatim.

### Environment

HACT staff provided very strong feedback that supervisors need to have an 'open door' policy. This was the consistent feedback from all the workshops. This meant being available, though staff recognised that supervisors do at times have high workload demands on them and could not always be available on the spot.

It was also important that there be a private space for a regular one to one supervision session. It was important that an environment be created in which the supervisor was approachable. It was important that supervision be regular and consistent. Well planned sessions will ensure that discussion is consistent with feedback received outside of the supervision sessions and that there are no surprises for staff concerning performance or professional development. Staff also stated that it is important that these sessions not be interrupted.

Staff do want to have a say of how often supervision was to be held. The recognition that supervision had to be flexible was based on adjusting learning styles for the individual staff member. This was related strongly to the values of valuing diversity of staff. Staff wanted supervision to be rigorous, honest and constructive but importantly positive so that they would leave feeling better and more positive.

### Content

The strong recognition that supervision was to ensure the accountability of staff came through however the sessions should not be just about Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) or filling forms correctly but instead be outcome focused. For many staff it was important that supervisors were aware of complex profile tenants within the portfolio. In this the role of staff needs to be clear and understood by the supervisor as well as what staff are doing in their day to day work. Valuing the staff member in the role and recognition of its importance was also an important theme.

For the sessions to be productive staff should be able to explore outcomes and have some level of autonomy depending on experience. Supervision sessions need to provide support for staff and give staff guidance and direction. For many staff knowledge was important though, when explored in depth, for many staff it related to the supervisor and whether they could find out information and share that with staff.

## **Mentoring**

Mentoring was strongly mentioned by HACT staff. This ranged from mentoring complex cases to career and practice mentoring. For relatively new staff they wanted to be led by example. The staff wanted support in their work environment and to be encouraged to build their skills through mentoring and formal training. It was recognised that supervisors do not have to be mentors and that an alternative mechanism can be developed for experienced senior staff to act as mentors.

## **Team**

For staff it was important that supervision be seen in the context of the wider team. Supervision should not be a silo exercise but should assist in developing a better and more effective team. This may mean at times supervision as a team. It was strongly presented that collaborative teamwork was essential as this has many flow on benefits for the work of the team.

Consistency was seen as essential from supervisors. For staff this meant that each staff member was equally supported and supervised depending on need and experience. Supervisors need to follow up needs of the team whether that is training, support, information and so on. In doing so it is hoped that supervision will build a culture of care and concern for the team and staff members.

## **Process**

While the process was seen as involving trust, it was emphasised that this was a formal process which needed defined expectations for each party. In so doing each party would develop a shared understanding. It strongly recognised as HACT moved into this new supervision direction that it was a growth process and that it may take some time to mature. For supervisors and supervisees this is an important transition process and everyone is learning. It is important that HACT recognises this and acknowledges potential anxiety and supports staff through the change.

It was important that the supervision sessions be well planned and preparation by both parties be undertaken. It is recognised that supervision is a structured process but needs to be flexible if there are burning issues that either party needs to explore.

## A Summary of Staff Feedback about Essential Attributes of Effective Supervision

The following provides a summary of feedback items provided by staff during workshop sessions to explore the development of a Support for Practice Framework.

### **Personal attributes**

For staff there was strong agreement that a supervisor need to demonstrate empathy, respect, openness and genuineness. In essence they were seen as 'people-persons' if they are to be effective. It was also important to staff that supervisors be positive about people and the task at hand.

There was some recognition of how important emotional intelligence is for supervisors; skills such as remaining calm in a crisis were an important characteristic. Other personal characteristics mentioned by staff were the ability to inspire and motivate. At all times it is imperative that supervisors be ethical and discrete.

### **Perspective on role**

For staff it is important that the supervisor be professional. They would demonstrate wisdom and they had sound knowledge of the organisation, its policies and legislation. For many staff the ability to model the values of the agency and the processes around supervision was seen as essential. At times it would be important for supervisors to represent their staff on key issues and this was seen as demonstrating supervisors' commitment to staff.

The valuing of the role of each staff member and the ability to acknowledge 'good' work was seen as essential. Staff had the view that supervisors be aware of training available and be interested in each individuals career development.

### **Work skills**

The skills were grouped around communication and interpersonal skills. These focused on be an active and reflective listener as well as open in their communication. It was important for staff that being open in communication meant hearing other opinions and views and being able to communicate why a decision had to be made.

Supervisors were seen as needing to be qualified and demonstrate leadership skills with a good mix of training and experience. Team building skills were seen as necessary as the team is mix of dynamic personalities and experience and need to work effectively together. Problem solving skills were important, with staff wanting supervisors to assist them in working through issues (though at times they might 'vent!'), assisting by taking on intensive issues and working with staff to get the best outcome for the tenant, community and directorate.





## **Section 5**

### **Further Work**

## Further Work

The *Modernising Tenancy Services* model is being implemented using a staged process. As the implementation progresses, there are some items that will be further developed by operational areas of HACT. By utilising the skills and knowledge of our operational staff, HACT is able to ensure business processes, tenant information and support and tools utilised in the model will best reflect the needs of tenants now and in the future.

Items that will be implemented through the staged process include:

- business rules and forms for staff and factsheets for tenants.
- finalisation of the procurement of the Outcomes Star™ assessment tool and associated hardware.
- further training for staff in the use of Outcomes Star™.
  - It is recommended that a train-the-trainer package be purchased for further training of staff.
- investigation of HACT 'self-managed' options for tenants.
- development of revised Key Performance Indicators for tenancy staff that support measurement of the outcomes focused nature of the *Modernising Tenancy Services* model.

## Out of Scope – Further work

During the design phase of the *Modernising Tenancy Services* project, a number of valuable items of work were identified. It is noted that whilst these works could not be progressed within the scope of the *Modernising Tenancy Services* reforms, they nonetheless would provide valuable support to the *Modernising Tenancy Services* model and will be further investigated to evaluate their viability and achievability during and following the *Modernising Tenancy Services* implementation process.

### **Debt resourcing**

A one human services framework allows a debt resourcing policy to focus on positive outcomes for individuals experiencing debt, government services, and the broader community. The Debt Resourcing Policy will underpin Housing ACT's role as a social landlord. This approach supports the mobilisation of skills, expertise, and resources of government and the community sector to improve the financial health and well-being of HACT tenants who are in debt. It focuses on early intervention as the key to achieving better outcomes through debt prevention and/or preventing debt escalation.

## Application and assessment

Whilst in the majority of circumstances, Tenancy Operations (Tenancy) staff do not have a role in the processing of applications and assessment of applicant needs, in some cases, such as transfer applications, Tenancy staff will have valuable insights into possible support needs of applicants. Some enhancements to this process have already been commenced outside of the *Modernising Tenancy Services* project that allow for a streamlined process for Tenancy staff to provide information to Assessing Officers through the HomeNet system itself. This allows for an efficient, transparent and accountable process for internal information sharing.

## Allocations

The allocation process seeks to match existing HACT property stock to approved applicants registered to the Priority, High needs or Standard waiting lists. The allocation is not based on chronology but seeks to best match applicant needs, requirements and location with urgency. This is an area where there may be some opportunities for enhancements involving Tenancy staff. It is acknowledged that Tenancy staff may have knowledge that is of value to the allocations process (for example the suitability of a neighbourhood in meeting stated needs of a particular client.) Work on how best to ensure this information sharing could contribute to better decision making at the time of allocation could be of value.

## Sign-up

The purpose of the Intake and Stabilisation phase is to ensure a smooth transition into tenancy and begin to establish a relationship between HACT and the tenant, setting the ground for a stable tenancy experience.

This process commences at the sign-up stage within Gateway Services and is essential for a smooth handover to Tenancy Housing Managers. There was considerable discussion in consultation activities with staff for the *Modernising Tenancy Services* project about the option of Housing Managers undertaking the sign-up process at the allocated property. Whilst this has some advantages in that it introduces the tenant to the Housing Manager at the outset of the tenancy process and allows the Housing Manager's to talk to the tenant about property condition and maintenance that might require immediate attention, further investigation into possible risks and work levels will need to be undertaken prior to any changes being made to current processes.

It is strongly recommended that no change is made to sign-up process until at least 12 months after *Modernising Tenancy Services* has been fully implemented to allow the Intake and Stabilisation team to be well established and the full impact of the Human Services Gateway be assessed.

## Next steps

There are some additional work items that have potential to add further value to the *Modernising Tenancy Services* model. These work items are not critical to the success of the human services approach imbedded through the *Modernising Tenancy Services* model but would contribute to the ongoing continuous improvement process after a period of full operation of the model. It is noted that the following two items of work will require significant resourcing. Housing and Community Services will consider the availability of appropriate resourcing through Housing and Community Services Branch Work Planning process. The two further work items identified are:

- development of a Quality Assurance Framework for Tenancy Operations; and
- a review of Tenancy Operations staff roles and duty statements to align staffing roles, duties and expectations with the *Modernising Tenancy Services* model.

## Further information

For further information on the role of Social Housing in the ACT please visit the Housing and Community Services Website at <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/hcs>

For detailed information on the Blueprint please refer to the *Human Services Blueprint Technical Specifications* and the *Human Services Blueprint Consultation Report*. Both reports are available at <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/home/publications>













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