



Housing First
for People
Sleeping
Rough
**PRACTICE
GUIDE FOR
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT**

*Prepared by the Regional Local Government
Homelessness and Social Housing Charter Group
August 2021*



my dream



Research developed by City of Greater Dandenong
and designed by City of Monash

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The Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter Group first came together to face the challenge of homelessness across the eastern and south eastern region.

Message from the Charter Group Councils

When the Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter Group (Charter Group) first came together in late 2019 to face the challenge of homelessness across the eastern and south eastern region, it was clear that we were all grappling with the best way to respond.

There was compelling evidence that finding the solution to this complex issue would require combining experience and expertise across the 13 Councils. In 2020, the Charter Group developed a Charter with shared regional commitments and has mobilised and made an impact in its short time together. For information on the Charter Group, please visit the Charter www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/Tackling-homelessness

One of the arms of the Charter Group has been to develop evidence-based research and tools for the local government to sector to use. The City of Greater Dandenong was instrumental in resourcing the research and development of this guide and the City of Monash in designing this guide.

The Charter Group hopes that the Housing First for People Sleeping Rough Practice Guide for Local Government will support Councils to develop and improve their response to rough sleepers in their municipality.



Bayside City Council
Mayor
Cr Laurence Evans
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Cardinia Shire Council
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Knox City Council
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Cr Lisa Cooper



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Yarra Ranges Council
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City of Whitehorse
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Background

1.1 Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter

In November 2019, CEOs and executive staff representing 13 eastern and south-eastern Councils came together in a forum focused on homelessness and social housing hosted by Monash Council. The forum was informed by research that the City of Monash commissioned through the Council to Homeless Persons: Making a difference – effective local government responses to homelessness¹.

Since then, a Charter detailing a unified, local government response to homelessness and advocacy for reform to increase the supply of social housing across Victoria was developed. As at August 2020, the Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter (Charter) has been endorsed by 13 councils.

The Charter Group is supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria [MAV] and the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance [EAHA]. Representatives from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Homes Victoria have regularly attended Charter Group meetings.

The Charter articulates the purpose of the 13 participating Councils, to address the urgent need for increased social housing and a more effective, integrated and supported homelessness service system. www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/Tackling-homelessness

Human rights and ‘Housing First’ represent one of the four principles of the Charter. Through this principle the Charter group:

1. Recognises that housing is a human right for every person
2. Recognises the ability of local government to influence an increase in social housing in our region
3. Commits to working with the homelessness sector to deliver a housing first response to homelessness.

The Charter Councils seek systemic change to increase the supply of permanent, safe, appropriate and timely housing for our most vulnerable community members, and to embed Housing First as a key foundational principle.

The Housing First for people Sleeping Rough piece is one of three regional commitments identified by the Charter Group:

Working in partnership with federal and state government, public and private sector partners to coordinate our approach and deliver meaningful outcomes to increase the provision of social housing and respond to homelessness in south and east Melbourne.

This ‘Housing First for People Sleeping Rough Practice Guide’ seeks to identify the role of Councils in supporting and enabling a Housing First approach to people experiencing homelessness in the local community.

WHY SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATE IN THE RESPONSE TO PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH.

A report commissioned by the City of Monash in 2019 and authored by the Council for Homeless Persons ‘Making a difference effective local government responses to homelessness’ identified the interface points for local government with people that experience homelessness. This includes local laws officers, parks staff or contractors who are more likely to interact with people sleeping rough using public land and facilities.

Often out of concern for the person or for perceived safety reasons, businesses and community members are also likely to contact their local Council’s customer service to report people experiencing homelessness. The 2019 Council to Homeless Persons report supports the process taken by a number of Councils including the design of internal work flow processes, the designation of a staff member to coordinate an appropriate response and partnerships with local specialist housing services to strengthen local responses to people sleeping rough.²

1.2 Housing First Literature Review

The first step of this practice guide was to develop a literature review to build an understanding of the Housing First model, current responses to people sleeping rough and the application of Housing First principles to inform local government responses to rough sleeping. Drawing on current research and government policy, this review also provided an overview of the application of Functional Zero, Youth Foyers and the impact of COVID 19 in responding to homelessness.³

The literature review found that Housing First is a strategic response based on principles of consumer choice, harm minimisation, human rights and collaboration. It is an approach that relies on the availability of exit points through adequate housing supply and coordination of support services.

A systems intervention approach grounded in Housing First principles can play an essential role for organisations to build a more effective response to rough sleeping. The role of local government, as both facilitator and responder, could enable an improved response to rough sleeping in a municipality if supported consistently across the organisation and developed in partnership with specialist housing services. Opportunities for local government to facilitate collective impact process to build effective local responses were also evident.

The ‘Literature Review: Local Government Charter Group Housing First for People Sleeping Rough Project’ can be found on the Charter group website.

www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/Tackling-homelessness

1.3 Benchmarking

A benchmarking exercise was conducted to map current practice across the 13 Charter member councils. **Councils were asked:**

- ◆ If they had any informal or formal protocols in place to guide the response to people sleeping rough.
- ◆ What internal capacity building is conducted to build an organisational understanding of homelessness and rough sleeping?
- ◆ What networks and partnerships they facilitated or participated in.
- ◆ What would be useful to have in a Housing First guide?

This process identified a number of best practice examples which have been used throughout this guide. There is also some rich experience across Councils within the urban areas of Melbourne that has also been drawn on to inform this guide. Examples of this work are available to access via the weblinks or contacts provided in this guide.

1.4 Sector Feedback

Feedback from specialist housing services was also sought to identify what worked well and what was perhaps more challenging when working with local government. **Key messages that came from these conversations include:**

- ◆ *We want to have regular conversations with Councils about building the best response – a clearly identified person or team to liaise with makes all the difference.*
- ◆ *Councils can be great advocates to increase housing supply.*
- ◆ *There is a strong need to build community understanding of homelessness.*
- ◆ *The relationship with the local laws team is really important when coordinating a response.*
- ◆ *Some Councils do not have a great understanding of the limitations of the services we have to offer.*
- ◆ *Give us the heads up when a squat is being closed so we can prepare to act.*
- ◆ *Please give us time to engage with clients before you move them on.*

“Recognises that housing is a human right for every person and the ability of local government to influence an increase in social housing in our region.”



1.5 How to use this guide

The purpose of this guide is to assist Councils to gain an understanding of the Housing First model and provide some useful examples as to how Councils can support and enable a Housing First approach in each of their municipalities. Every Council will have a different approach that is unique to the needs of residents of the municipality. This practice guide is intended to encourage a whole-of-Council approach that is based on principles of human rights, including the right of everyone to have a safe and affordable home, while taking responsibility for the protection of public places and spaces. The practice guide will also provide an opportunity for Councils to reflect on their current practice to identify strengths that can be shared across the sector and the areas that would benefit from further work. This practice guide can be continually improved as local government responses to people sleeping rough are explored, evaluated, documented and shared.

“Housing First’ can be utilised and understood in three different ways: as a foundational philosophy embedded within a systems approach; as a specific program provided by an agency or government body; as a team designed to meet the needs of specific target populations.”

2

What is Housing First?

Housing First is a strategic response to homelessness that prioritises permanent and stable housing for people experiencing homelessness.⁴

In March 2020, Homelessness Australia endorsed The Housing First Principles for Australia to promote the implementation of Housing First Australia-wide. **The Principles are outlined as follows:**

- ◆ People have a right to a home
- ◆ Flexible support is provided as long as it is needed
- ◆ Housing and support are separated
- ◆ Choice and self-determination
- ◆ Active engagement without coercion
- ◆ Recovery-oriented practice
- ◆ Social and community inclusion
- ◆ Harm-reduction approach.

A full statement of the principles can be found at Housing First Australia | Homelessness Australia.

Housing First is also described as a rights-based intervention rooted in the philosophy that all people deserve housing, and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery. The approach affirms that stable housing is a primary need, and that issues, such as addictions or mental health, can be better addressed once this need is fulfilled.

3

Collaboration

Collaboration and building partnerships with specialist housing services is an essential component of the Housing First approach and there are a number of models operating across local government in Victoria. Cooperative relationships with the housing sector can improve Councils’ understanding of local issues and strengthen advocacy efforts. Access to real time data, local service responses and challenges provide clarity and direction for the appropriate Council response and allocation of resources.

3.1 Local Housing Partnerships

Local housing networks can be facilitated by individual Councils specifically tailored to their local government area and support the implementation of Council housing strategies.

3.1.1 Mornington Peninsula Shire

The Mornington Peninsula Shire established the Triple A Housing Committee to link the Council, community, other levels of government and relevant housing and welfare agencies. The committee also supports the implementation of the Shire’s Triple A Housing Plan 2020 - 2030. The group is supported in this work by the Peninsula Housing Network which is a forum for front line workers from all agencies to network and coordinate their actions for effective local responses which includes a bi-monthly meeting plus a fortnightly meeting of select members. A Housing Community Reference Group to give Council a direct community perspective including lived experience in relation to housing and homelessness on the Mornington Peninsula is also newly operational. More information can be found here: www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Community-Services/Health-Wellbeing/Housing



3.1.2 Cardinia Shire

Cardinia Shire facilitates the Social and Affordable Housing Partnership (SAH Partnership), which is an advisory steering group informing the delivery of actions outlined in the Cardinia Social and Affordable Housing Strategy, Housing Rights are Human Rights: Social and Affordable Housing Strategy 2018-2025. Decisions will be referred to Council as per statutory requirements.



The objectives of the SAH partnership are to:

- ◆ Strategically guide the implementation of the Strategy and closely monitor progress to identify gaps and relevant actions that may emerge or arise over time
- ◆ Identify and support the development of social and affordable housing opportunities across the municipality
- ◆ Develop and strengthen partnerships across the social and affordable housing sector and investigate opportunities for collaboration to address key strategic areas of the Strategy
- ◆ Share insight and professional advice regarding the planning and implementation of actions within the Strategy
- ◆ Collectively Advocate to State and Federal Government to deliver social and affordable housing in the Shire
- ◆ Contribute, as required, to ensure 'housing data' is current
- ◆ Share progress and learnings of the SAH Partnership back to teams and organisations
- ◆ Serve as ambassadors within the community to actively promote the Strategy.

More information can be found here:

🌐 www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/housing



3.2 The Collective Impact Approach - Functional Zero

The Collective Impact approach is a form of collaboration where organisations and individuals from different sectors all work together on a common agenda to solve complex social problems. Finding solutions to end homelessness is a complex challenge for governments and communities. A collective impact approach can explore different perspectives to local issues and identify potential solutions.

The following collective impact projects to address homelessness use the terms Functional Zero and By Name lists but what do these terms mean?

Functional Zero – often referred to simply as 'zero' – is an approach being adopted in a range of communities internationally as a means for ending homelessness, often focussed on street homelessness. It was developed by Community Solutions (US). Functional Zero is reached when the number of people who are homeless in a city at any point in time is no greater than the average housing placement rate for that same period (usually a month). In other words, a community reaches Functional Zero when 'the average capacity of your housing system is greater than the existing need and you can prove that with data' (Community Solutions 2016b).

By-Name List (BNL) is a tool that is used to manage Functional Zero - a database capturing key person-specific housing and support information and used as the basis for prioritising assistance.

3.2.1 Adelaide Zero Project

The Adelaide Zero Project is a Collective Impact initiative seeking to end street homelessness in the Adelaide inner city. Initiated and co-ordinated by the Don Dunstan Foundation, the Adelaide Zero Project has united a coalition of over 40 homelessness, housing, health, government, university, corporate and community partners, with the goal of achieving Functional Zero homelessness for people sleeping rough in Adelaide's inner city.

In March 2021, The Adelaide Zero Project released an impact report which concluded that the project has achieved a number of goals that have contributed to the success of the project so far. These included the establishment of accountability structures for project partners, creating a collectively owned and shared By-Name List and launching a publicly available Dashboard to track progress. The report can be found here: 🌐 www.dunstan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AdelaideZeroProject-Impact-Report-March-2021.pdf

3.2.2 Port Phillip Zero

In 2017, Port Phillip Zero was initiated as a collective impact program, where the By-Name List is being used (with client consent) to support the most vulnerable to find safe housing⁶. Port Phillip Zero is a collaborative, community-wide approach that brings health and homelessness organisations, state government, police, housing providers, lived experience experts, businesses, philanthropy and residents together to identify opportunities and take collective action to create new housing and reduce rough sleeping.

The Port Phillip Service Coordination Framework outlines the approach that guides the development of this program:

PRINCIPLES

- ◆ Lived experience experts involved at all levels of planning and decision making (nothing about us without us)
- ◆ Collaboration increases capacity through sharing of knowledge and information.

ASSUMPTIONS

- ◆ Shared effort achieves more than services working individually; together we are greater than the sum of our parts
- ◆ Adopting social inclusion measures, rather than exclusion, yields better outcomes.

SCOPE

- ◆ Persons who are sleeping rough
- ◆ Persons affected by sudden rooming house closure.

GOALS

- ◆ End rough sleeping homelessness in City of Port Phillip
- ◆ Work together to provide better support and improved housing outcomes for individuals
- ◆ Workforce support & development through shared effort.

Coordinated actions of Port Phillip Zero include:

- ◆ Outreach to individuals who are sleeping rough
- ◆ Targeted response to rough sleeping ‘hotspots’ in our municipality, bringing people together to create a shared response to amenity issues

- ◆ Supporting individuals who are sleeping rough through service coordination meetings, bringing people from a range of agencies together to ensure the best possible response and support for individuals who are sleeping rough
- ◆ Creation and maintenance of the By-Name List, our tool for accurate and reliable data that allows us to know by name who is sleeping rough in our municipality, so we can provide the best possible support and housing to them.

The Port Phillip Zero project is being implemented in four key stages:

- STAGE 1: Action Planning
- STAGE 2: Achieving a Quality By-Name List
- STAGE 3: Reduce to Zero
- STAGE 4: Sustaining Zero

Port Phillip Zero achieved a major milestone with the creation of a By-name List in July 2019. Just over 12 months later it also achieved Quality By-Name List’ status, accredited by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness and Community Solutions (USA), and is only the third community outside North America to achieve this milestone.

The Port Phillip Zero project is funded by Council and by Launch Housing via the generous support of a number of philanthropists including the Jack Brockoff foundation, and by the in-kind support and enthusiastic participation of all the partner agencies who see the merit in the approach.

For more information on Port Phillip Zero please contact: Senior Project Worker

✉ **Tanya Cale at housing@portphillip.vic.gov.au**

3.2.3 Frankston Zero

The Frankston Zero initiative was introduced in July 2021 as a collective impact functional zero response to rough sleeping homelessness in the municipality, with the backbone support of Council, Launch Housing and under the guidance of the Frankston City Strategic Housing and Homelessness Alliance (Strategic Alliance), which was established in 2019 and is represented by all key Housing and homelessness agencies in the municipality.

Frankston Zero represents the local interpretation of the ‘functional zero model’ for ending homelessness, following the successful introduction of this model in the City of Melbourne, and City of Port Phillip, which are both showing promising results.

The goal of Frankston Zero is to introduce a coordinated homelessness response, where information and resources are shared across the sector, to minimise the time spent ‘experiencing homelessness’ for individual rough sleepers, and to achieve an overall rough sleeping reduction in the municipality. The model abides by the principle that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-reoccurring.

Launched in July 2021, Frankston Zero has introduced a new ‘layer’, or way of working across the whole local service system aimed to improve both 1) individual outcomes, and 2) overall rough sleeping response capacity in the municipality, through coordinated cross sectional collaboration.



Through Frankston Zero those experiencing the most exposed and precarious form of homelessness – rough sleepers – are prioritised via a local By-Name-List (BNL) for priority support. The BNL is managed by seven local specialist services, through weekly sector wide case meetings where an inter-agency case plan is developed and wrap around supports identified for priority rough sleepers on the BNL, to assist them to transition into safe, affordable and secure long-term housing.

A Frankton Zero By-Name-List (BNL) is maintained and updated through regular assertive outreach and service coordination activities, with additional rough sleeper information inflows from other sectors about emerging rough sleeper ‘hot spots’.

Frankston Zero, represented by over 20 local organisations and services, is supported by a program Terms of Reference, Operational Toolkit, and Communication Plan.

For more information on Frankston Zero please contact: Community Planning Project Manager:

✉ Venita.makinnon@frankston.vic.gov.au

3.2.4 Advance to Zero

The Advance to Zero Campaign is a national initiative of the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) that supports local collaborative efforts to end rough sleeping homelessness – one community at a time. AAEH provides training and resources to support the development of local projects aimed at responding to rough sleeping. Further information is available here: [Advance to Zero - AAEH](#)

“
The model abides by the principle that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-reoccurring.”

4

Understanding the Service System and Referral Pathways

Working through appropriate referral pathways for people sleeping rough is part of the complex work of specialist housing services. Other agencies and services such as community support agencies including material aide, neighbourhood houses and municipal services such as Libraries are often in a position where information on support services is requested. Various tools have been developed to assist this process for both residents and services that are relevant to the local government area.

4.1 Service Mapping Tool

Mornington Peninsula Shire has developed a service mapping template that can be used in conjunction with other municipal service information directories. It is called the Integrated assertive outreach planning tool for the Mornington Peninsula and is updated on an annual basis. The tool was developed in consultation with the Mornington Peninsula Housing Network for use by a number of agencies in the delivery of assertive outreach programs. The tool identifies services that are specifically relevant for people sleeping rough in the context of the wider service system. Services that are relevant for complex health related issues are also identified. See attachment 1 - Integrated assertive outreach planning tool for the Mornington Peninsula.

A guide has also been developed for residents, the Food and Other Help Guide is available in community settings and can be found here: www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/new-website-documents/about-us/strategies-amp-plans/docs/socialplanning_foodservices_booklet_2020_edition09_v02_web.pdf

For further information on the guide and template you can contact Roz Franklin at

✉ rosalyn.franklin@mornpen.vic.gov.au

4.2 Ask Izzy – an online service guide

Ask Izzy was developed by Infoxchange in partnership with Google, realestate.com.au and News Corp Australia. It was co-designed with people who have a lived experience of homelessness and leaders in the community sector. Strong collaboration between the community, corporate, government and academic sectors has been key to the success of Ask Izzy. You can access Ask Izzy here askizzy.org.au

5

Building an Understanding of Homelessness

Community understanding of homelessness can often impact the way a community and organisation responds, particularly to people sleeping rough. The Housing First approach encourages organisations to build their understanding of what can lead to homelessness and the experience of people who are homelessness. This can inform a person centred approach and provide an opportunity to improve the design and delivery of services that support people experiencing homelessness.

5.1 City of Melbourne Walk in their Shoes Program

A 'walk in their shoes' program is run by Melbourne East Police Station to provide police with knowledge about people experiencing homelessness in Melbourne's CBD and available assistance options. This is a collaborative program with Justice Connect and the Council to Homeless Persons and includes workshops and presentations by the Council to Homeless People, City of Melbourne's Mobile Support Team and current or former persons who have lived experiences of homelessness.

5.2 Casey Homelessness Principle Training

The City of Casey developed The Homelessness Principle, which aims to outline a way for staff and community members to effectively respond to people who are homeless. The training sets out to support the outcomes of Principle 5 – Improved understanding of the causes and effects of homelessness of will ensure the community, local businesses and Council staff approach homeless people with care, dignity, safety and respect. The training includes an overview of what homelessness looks like in the City of Casey and the steps Council is taking to address local challenges.

Training on The Homelessness Principle is delivered to teams across the organisation as required. The training is tailored to meet the needs of each team and is an opportunity for that team to reflect on how services can be improved to better meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the municipality.

For further information you can contact: Hayfa Kaassamani, Access and Inclusion Officer, City of Casey

 hkaassamani@casey.vic.gov.au

5.3 Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education Support Program

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) is the peak body for ending homelessness in Victoria.

The Peer Education Support Program (PESP) is CHP's consumer participation program.

PESP Team Members are volunteers with a lived experience of not having a home and accessing the Specialist Homelessness Service System. They use this expertise to improve homelessness policy, build capacity of the service system and advocate for improved responses to homelessness.

PESP team members also play a key role in promoting the benefits and transformative power of consumer participation in service system and policy development.

Other PESP activities include:

- ◆ Consumer participation training and advice
- ◆ Group and individual presentations
- ◆ Peer facilitation of focus groups, interviews or surveys
- ◆ Peer support
- ◆ Media activities
- ◆ Consultation with all levels of government
- ◆ Consultation with the specialist homelessness support services (SHSS) and related sectors
- ◆ Participation in working/steering groups and committees.

A specific training program for Council staff 'Understanding Homelessness', has been developed with PESP team members to build a better understanding of homelessness.

The training aims to:

- ◆ Equip staff to better respond to constituents who are currently without a home or in housing crisis
- ◆ Provide insight into the lived experience of not having a home and accessing services
- ◆ Achieve learning and development goals
- ◆ Increase social inclusion, and ensure that council policies take into consideration issues of homelessness.

This training can be delivered in a virtual capacity. Council to Homeless Persons can tailor training to meet the needs of individual Councils.

Further training opportunities are available here:  chp.org.au/services/shs-learning-program

Further information can be found here: Consumer Participation (PESP) - Council to Homeless Persons  chp.org.au or contact Cassandra Corrone, Peer Education Support Program Coordinator, Council to Homeless Persons

 Cassandra@chp.org.au

 03 8415 6210 / 0407 993 540



“Community understanding of homelessness can often impact on the way a community and organisation responds.”

6

Clarifying an Organisational Response - Protocol Examples

A protocol is a useful tool that defines roles and procedures for situations that require a whole-of-organisation response. These are a few examples of protocols that respond to rough sleeping developed across local government in Victoria. Where some are available on Council websites the links have been provided. Where these protocols were developed for internal use only, contact details have been provided for further information.

6.1 Victoria Police and City of Melbourne (CoM)

Operating protocols were established and co-signed by the City of Melbourne (CoM) and Victoria Police to effectively manage the amenity of public spaces affected by the behaviour and use by rough sleepers. The operating protocols provide that the best way to manage rough sleeping within the CoM is to refer people sleeping rough and homeless persons to support services to start them on the pathway out of homelessness.

Key themes of the operating protocols are:

- ◆ Stronger connection and partnerships with service providers
- ◆ Earlier intervention by the CoM with support from Victoria Police
- ◆ More assertive actions by the CoM and as required by Victoria Police
- ◆ Lower tolerance of street clutter and amenity impacts
- ◆ A high level of consistency in the application of local law.

The approach by the City of Melbourne is to clarify the local laws relating to rough sleeping by articulating provisions around camping in structures in public places, portable advertising and causing obstruction.

The protocol can be found here: Homelessness Operating Protocol / Policy Operating Statement www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/residents/local-laws-permits/pages/local-laws.aspx

6.2 City of Port Phillip – ASSIST

The City of Port Phillip has developed a protocol to respond to people who are sleeping rough with the support of people who have experienced homelessness as well as housing and social support agencies based in Port Phillip. **The protocol uses seven principles to guide actions taken by Council when responding to people sleeping rough when:**

- ◆ They request assistance
- ◆ They appear distressed or in need of assistance
- ◆ They are sheltering in circumstances that threaten the health and safety of themselves and/or others (e.g. in derelict buildings)
- ◆ Their behaviour is likely to result in damage to property or to the environment
- ◆ Their safety is threatened by others
- ◆ They appear to be under the age of 18.

Principle 1 - Responding to a person experiencing homelessness and their belongings

Principle 2 - Ensuring access to information about support and services

Principle 3 - Ensuring consistent, integrated and informed responses

Principle 4 - Commitment to ongoing evaluating and researching

Principle 5 - Commitment to working in partnership

Principle 6 - Enhancing understanding of homelessness and capacity to respond

Principle 7 - Commitment to equity and fairness for all

The processes for providing assistance are clearly articulated in the protocol which includes a list of the relevant support agencies.

The protocol can be found here:

 www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/zpkjsjkj/city-of-port-phillip-protocol-ssisting-people-sleeping-rough.docx

6.3 City of Monash Homelessness Protocol

For the last four years, Monash Council has employed a senior Council officer whose role is dedicated to providing assertive social outreach to residents experiencing homelessness in Monash.

“Raising awareness of Council’s obligations and procedures.”

Under the frameworks of social justice, human rights and community development, Council’s assertive social outreach officer works intensively with individuals and families to build the trust of residents experiencing homelessness, and to work towards achieving identified goals.

Council’s assertive social outreach officer works across Council to build the capacity of relevant staff to apply the City of Monash Homelessness Protocol.

The protocol developed by the City of Monash provides a guide for Council staff to respond to homelessness. **The protocol aims to help Council staff respond effectively to common issues emerging from homelessness by:**

- ◆ Identifying Council staff who you can refer matters to
- ◆ Raising awareness of Council’s obligations and procedures
- ◆ Identifying external agencies for Council staff to contact, to seek support for people who may be sleeping rough.

The protocol provides a risk assessment matrix for use by local laws officers that covers assessment of the sleeping environment and location, behaviour and health and wellbeing of the person sleeping rough.

For more information on this protocol, you can contact Bill Kendall, Senior Project Officer

 Bill.Kendall@monash.vic.gov.au
 03 9518 3907 / 0412 787 850

6.4 Yarra Ranges

The Yarra Ranges Protocol has been developed using principles that are based on human rights:

1. People who are homeless and/or sleeping rough have the same entitlement as any member of the public to be in public places, and participate in public activities and events
2. People who are homeless and/or sleeping rough have the same access to right of reply and appeals/complaint mechanisms as any member of the public
3. People who are homeless and/or sleeping rough have diverse backgrounds and needs that should be considered in any response with sensitivity and respect.

The protocol defines homelessness and outlines when it is appropriate for Council officers to respond, that is, when:

- ◆ They request assistance
- ◆ They appear distressed or in need of assistance
- ◆ Their circumstances or behaviour threatens their own safety or the safety of others
- ◆ Their behaviour is likely to result in damage to property or to the environment
- ◆ Their safety is threatened by others
- ◆ They appear to be under the age of 16.

The protocol also identifies appropriate responses for specific situations including dealing with personal belongings, referral to support services and the importance of debriefing for staff.

For further information you can contact Chris Riley, Coordinator Health Promotion
✉ c.riseley@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

6.5 Bayside

Bayside's Homelessness Referral Guidelines aim to provide a consistent approach to recording, investigating, and making referrals regarding homelessness to ensure that the safety and welfare for all is maintained and the exposure to risks is minimised.

These actions are guided by five key principles and summarised with respect to the following scenarios:

1. Person/s contacting Council by telephone or in person requesting assistance on behalf of someone else or who are in need of assistance themselves
2. A staff member becoming aware of a person dwelling in a public place (e.g. park, street, community facility, pavilion or car)
3. Council receiving community concerns advising of a person dwelling in a public place.

Bayside Council's guidelines have been developed using principles that are based on human rights and a person-centred approach for integrated, inclusive and compassionate service delivery to the Bayside community. Council's role is to:

- ◆ Ensure that people requiring assistance are referred to the appropriate service providers or agencies as soon as possible
- ◆ Provide information to the community about where they can access health, financial, legal or housing assistance
- ◆ Provide information to assist with the understanding of homelessness by the broader community
- ◆ Monitor the extent of homelessness in the Bayside municipality
- ◆ Remove hazardous items (sharps, waste, open alcohol)
- ◆ Increase staff understanding about the causes of homelessness and local support services
- ◆ Monitor compliance with local laws.

Council's role is not to:

- ◆ Move people on because they are homeless or not in line with guidelines set out in enforcing the Local Law
- ◆ Provide direct housing, health, financial or legal advice
- ◆ Share or publish personal information regarding people experiencing homelessness beyond for the purposes of assisting with referral to appropriate services
- ◆ Arbitrarily interfere with or disrespect a person or their belongings, make negative judgements, or act in a discriminatory manner.

For further information you can contact Libby Gott, Coordinator Policy and Development Community Services ✉ lgott@bayside.vic.gov.au

6.6 Knox City Council

Knox City Council has developed a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Policy and Procedure to provide direction for decision making and management processes in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping in the Knox municipality. The Policy articulates Council's aspirations to increase awareness and community education on the cause of homelessness and where possible, partner with key stakeholders to prevent homelessness and monitor accessibility to key housing providers, and other support services, where homelessness is an issue.

The supporting procedure provides a coordinated approach to supporting rough sleepers in Knox, including guidance to all Knox Council staff who become aware of a person who is experiencing homelessness, or is at risk of homelessness. **Awareness may arise via:**

- ◆ The person themselves requesting assistance
- ◆ The course of a Council Officer's work; or
- ◆ A notification or request for assistance from a concerned resident, trader or community organisation.

The procedure identifies specific strategies where a person who is homeless or at risk of homelessness is also:

- ◆ A person is aged 55 years and over; or
- ◆ A child/young person, or accompanied by a child/young person; or
- ◆ Affected by family violence
- ◆ Impacted by mental health or an intellectual disability.

A Homelessness Recording Tool has also been developed for when a person who is homeless approaches Council. The tool encourages staff to observe and refer to Knox City Council staff member(s) from the Specialised Access Team (SAT) for referral to an appropriate specialist services. The procedure also acknowledges that the person may not request assistance.

Knox City Council also provides an outreach service with a housing support worker to:

- ◆ Manage a waiting list for five nominated Housing Estate properties
- ◆ Undertake housing assessments
- ◆ Provide advocacy and support for current tenancies
- ◆ Support community connection with housing agencies within Knox

For further information contact Petrina Dodds Buckley, Manager, Community Wellbeing ✉ petrina.doddsbuckley@knox.vic.gov.au



7

Housing Supply - Local Government as Planner and Advocate

Exit strategies that support a Housing First approach is a key success factor to reducing homelessness. There is an over reliance on rooming houses which can often be an inappropriate setting for many homeless people, particularly women and children. The role of local government to advocate for increased supply of social housing is essential in building a holistic response to ending homelessness. Building an understanding of local needs has led to the development of local government housing strategies, which have been adopted by 68 per cent of the 31 metropolitan Councils across Greater Melbourne⁷. Most identify affordable housing needs across a number of themes that include housing diversity, housing needs, population profiling and policy context. About 45 per cent of metropolitan Councils have stand-alone affordable housing strategies that incorporate affordable housing targets, homelessness data, partnership strategies and advocacy positions.

You can view some Local Government Housing Strategies here:

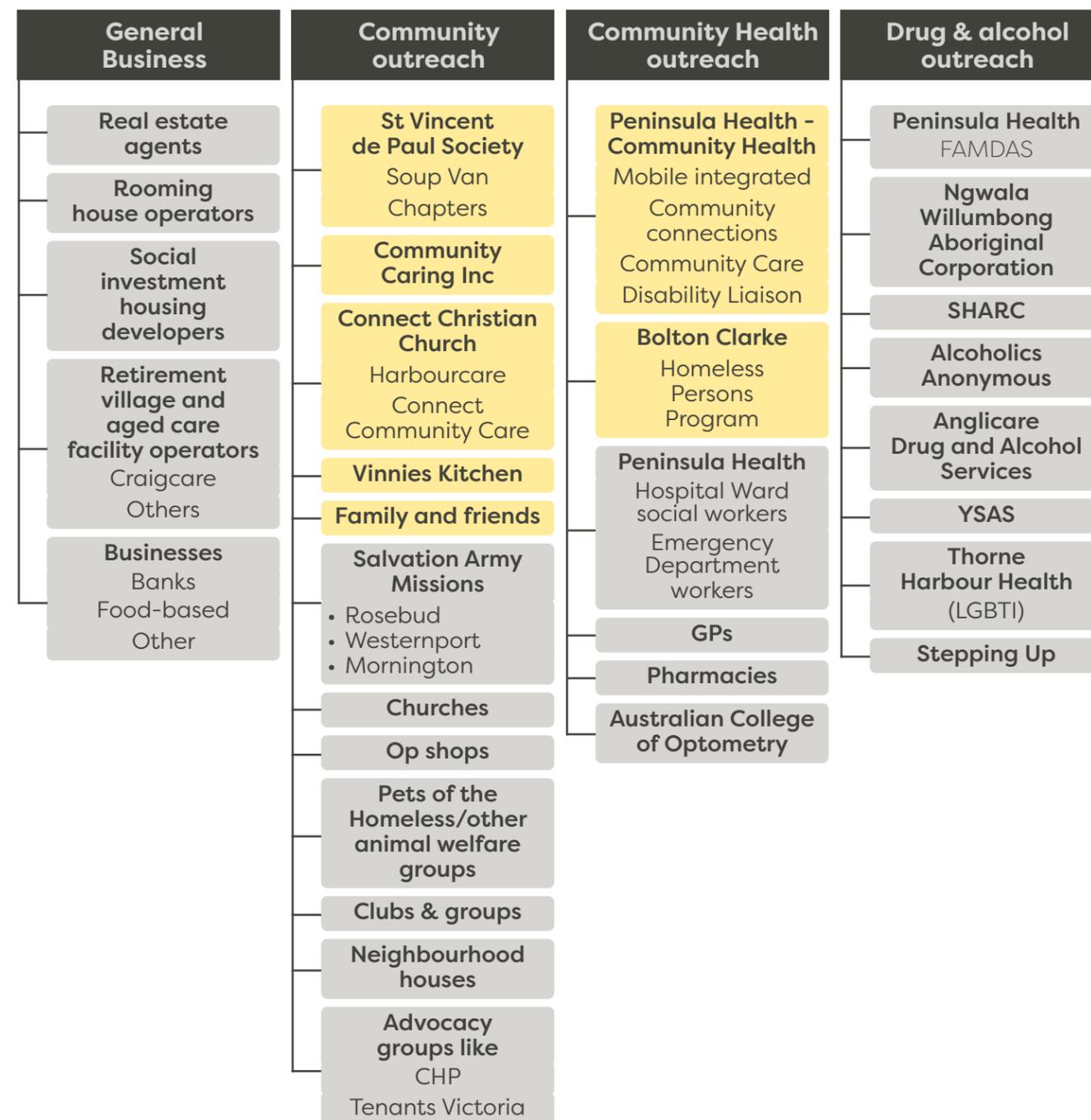
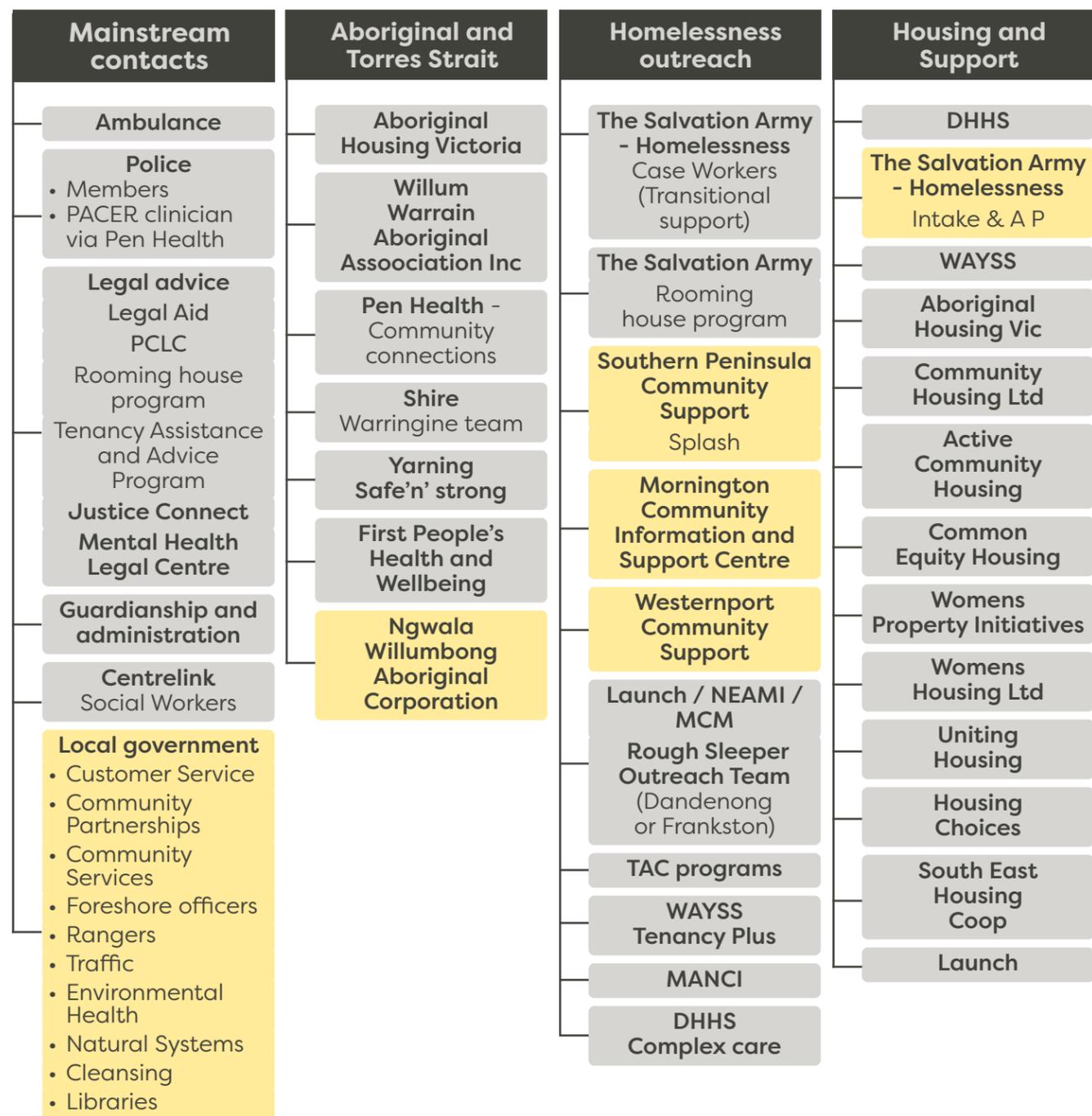
- ◆ **MAROONDAH CITY COUNCIL**
🌐 www.maroondah.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Our-organisation/Policies/Maroondah-Affordable-and-Social-Housing-Policy-2018
- ◆ **CITY OF CASEY**
🌐 www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/affordable-housing-strategy
- ◆ **CARDINIA SHIRE**
🌐 www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/affordable-housing-strategy
- ◆ **MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE**
🌐 www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Community-Services/Health-Wellbeing/Housing#section-14
- ◆ **CITY OF WHITEHORSE**
Affordable Housing Policy 2010
🌐 whitehorse.vic.gov.au
- ◆ **CITY OF PORT PHILLIP**
[affordable_housing_strategy_-_in_our_backyard.pdf](#) 🌐 portphillip.vic.gov.au
- ◆ **CITY OF MELBOURNE**
Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030
🌐 melbourne.vic.gov.au
- ◆ **CITY OF KINGSTON**
🌐 www.kingston.vic.gov.au/Property-and-Development/Strategic-Plans-and-Projects/Homelessness-and-Social-Housing
- ◆ **CITY OF BAYSIDE**
🌐 www.bayside.vic.gov.au/plans-and-strategies
- ◆ **CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG**
🌐 www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/greater-dandenong-housing-strategy
- ◆ **CITY OF KNOX**
🌐 www.knox.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/knox-files/our-services/building-and-planning/knox-affordable-housing-action-plan-2015-20.pdf
- ◆ **YARRA RANGES**
🌐 www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Policies-strategies/Housing-strategy
- ◆ **FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL**
🌐 www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Planning_and_Building/Planning/Strategic_Planning/Strategic_Planning_Projects/Frankston_Housing_Strategy
- ◆ **CITY OF MONASH Social Housing Framework 2020- 2025**
🌐 www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/about-us/council/publications/monash-social-housing-framework-2020-2025.pdf
- ◆ **CITY OF MONASH**
🌐 www.monash.vic.gov.au/Building-Planning/Strategic-Planning/Housing-Strategy
- ◆ **CITY OF MANNINGHAM**
🌐 www.manningham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/affordable%20housing%20policy%20%26%20action%20plan%202010%202020.pdf

“About 45 % of metropolitan Councils have stand-alone affordable housing strategies that incorporate affordable housing targets, homelessness data, partnership strategies and advocacy positions.”



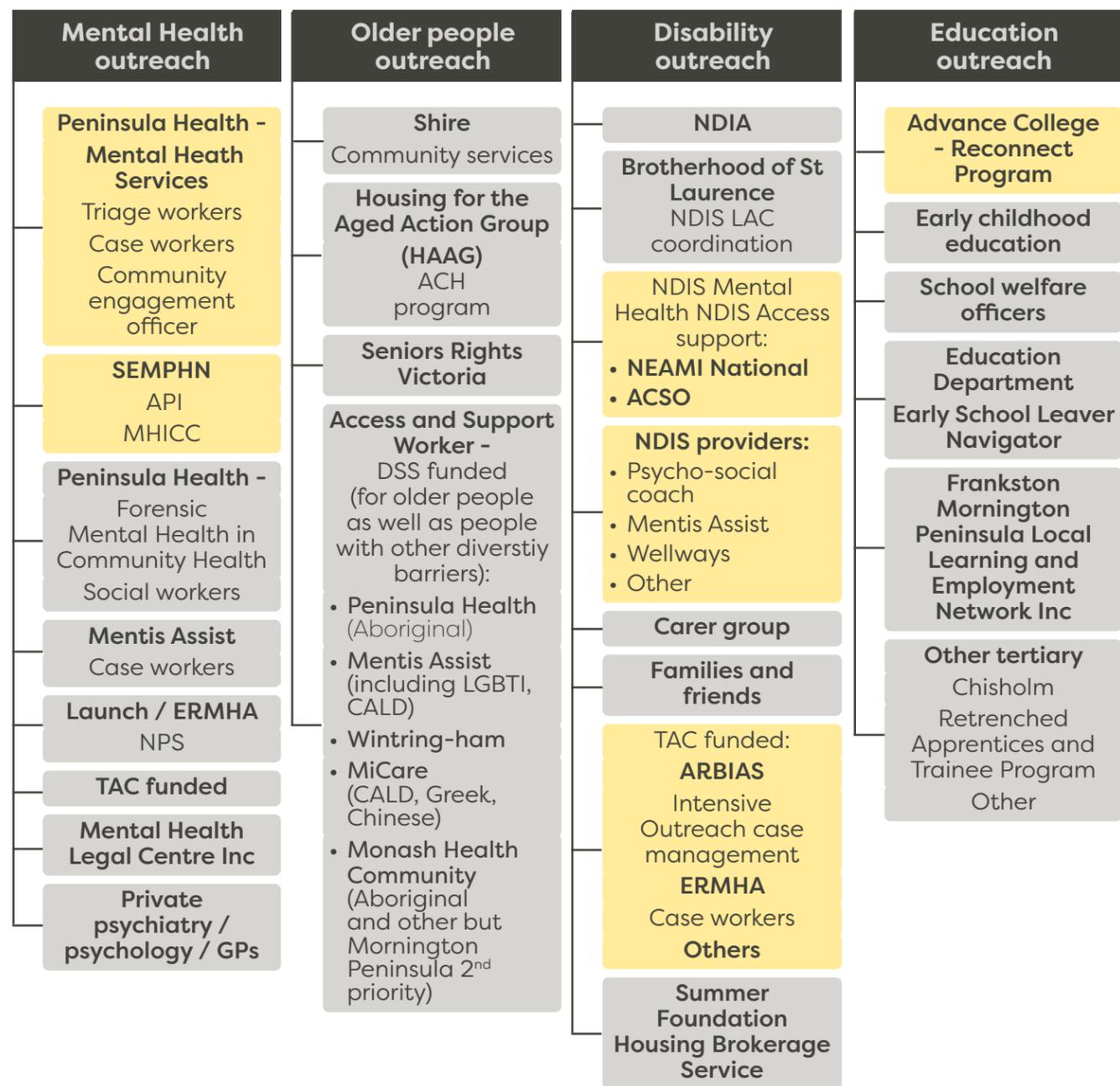
Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1: Integrated assertive outreach planning tool for the Mornington Peninsula.

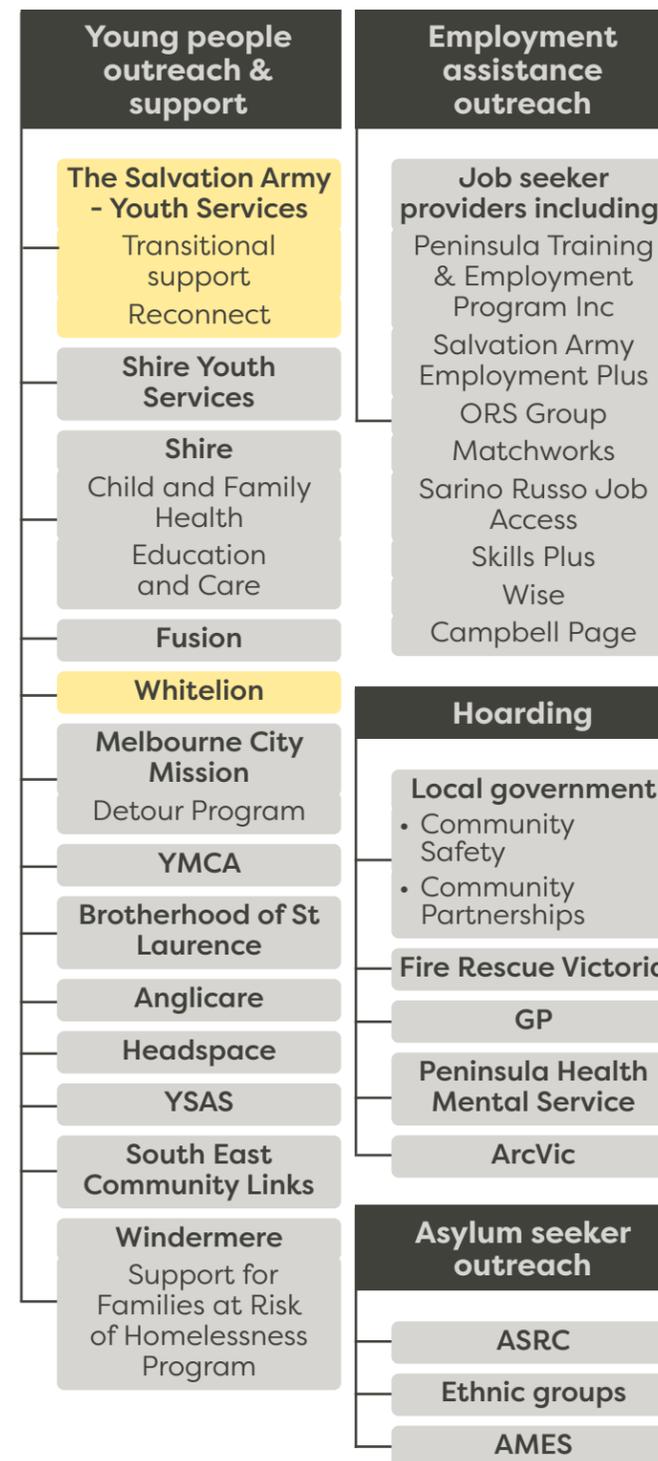


Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1: Integrated assertive outreach planning tool for the Mornington Peninsula. (Cont.)

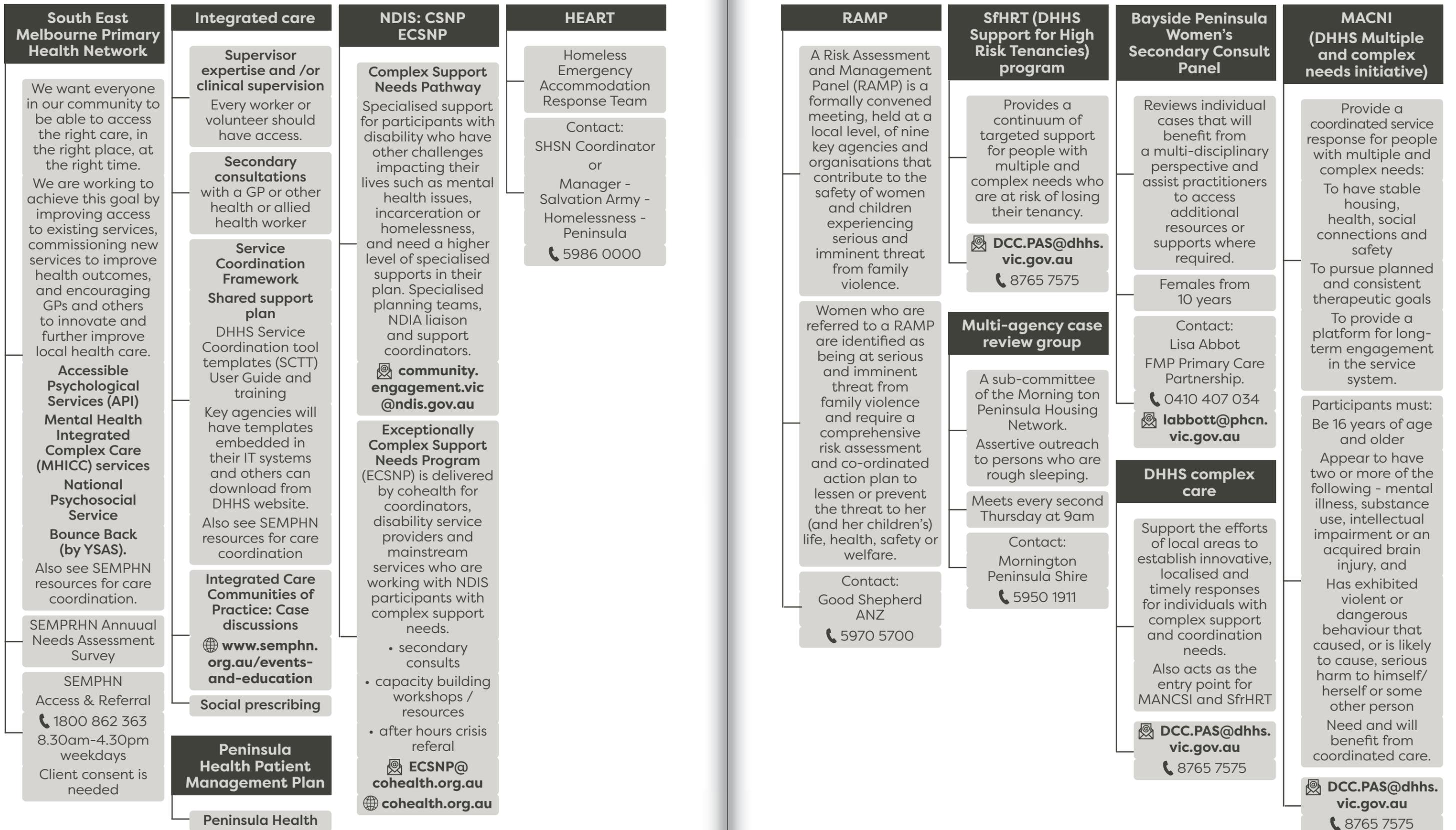


“People sleeping rough are in one of the most precarious situations any human being can face.”



OPTIONS FOR COMPLEX CASES*

* Direct client contact is not necessarily offered



ATTACHMENT 2: Port Phillip Zero Service Coordination

Multi-Agency Client Consent Guidance Notes for Working with People Sleeping Rough

Port Phillip Zero Service Coordination is a group of services working together to get the best support and housing possible for people who are sleeping rough in the City of Port Phillip.

The services involved are Launch Housing, Star Health, Sacred Heart Mission, HousingFirst, St Kilda Community Housing, Wintringham, Alfred Health, and the City of Port Phillip who meet as a group to share resources which could assist people to be linked with support and housing.

Member agencies of Service Coordination have agreed to implement & operationalise a model of Client Consent which is intended to operate with the highest possible levels of cognizance to obtaining and managing consent from clients about how they want their information to be collected and shared. Consent is at all times obtained for the sole purpose of getting the client the best possible access to support and housing resources through the joint effort of the partner agencies.

Background and rationale

People sleeping rough are in one of the most precarious situations any human being can face. They are in a daily struggle for survival.

Some key facts to keep in mind about homelessness which are especially true of people sleeping rough and illustrate that people in this situation are among the most marginalised and vulnerable members of our society:

1. Homelessness is a significant health inequality (FEANTSA 2016) and should be regarded as an important and modifiable predictor of mortality (Nilsson et al 2018)
2. Homelessness is an independent risk factor for death and is more hazardous than being in 'conventional' deprived socio-economic circumstances (Morrison 2009)
3. Individuals experiencing homelessness have greater morbidity and mortality rates than the general population and experience more co-morbidities than their housed counterparts (National Health Care for the Homeless Council 2018)
4. Homelessness is also independently associated with high mortality (Nilsson et al 2018).

“People sleeping rough are in one of the most precarious situations any human being can face.”

Resistance to engagement

People sleeping rough may feel abandoned by society. Some are angry and initially resistant to attempts to engage and provide them with a service. People whom we know to be LGBTI, Trans or Gender Diverse, Older and/or of ATSI background are also at greater risk when sleeping rough.

We now know that resistance to engagement can also be sign of trauma (Hopper et al. 2010). However, with time, and sometimes multiple attempts, most do accept our help.

Especially when we are able to provide them with the housing and support they ask for.

Given this, our engagement with people sleeping rough must be sensitive and careful.

Engagement is also our responsibility as representatives of the coordinated service system. (Gronda et al. 2011). All partner agencies in Port Phillip Zero Service Coordination model persistent, respectful and creative attempts to engage with people.



Consent for people sleeping rough

Port Phillip Zero Service Coordination has a new Shared Consent process which seeks to obtain informed consent from people sleeping rough to share their information among the project partners for the sole purpose of linking them to support and housing.

It is a legal and moral requirement that we explicitly ask people who seek our services if we can collect their personal information and store it for the purpose of providing them with a service. We also explain what we use that information for and who we share it with. All members of teams that work with people who are sleeping rough must understand these processes and, when appropriate, gain this shared consent with clients. These teams work within Launch Housing, Star Health,

Sacred Heart Mission, HousingFirst, St Kilda Community Housing, Wintringham, Alfred Health, and the City of Port Phillip. Clients may choose to remove one or more of these agencies from their consent, or may agree to add others. In all cases, Port Phillip Zero Service Coordination Shared Consent form will be used and list the agencies which the client agrees may share the information.

However, workers should always operate with the discretion that if collecting this consent is judged likely to be a barrier to engagement, workers can decide when they bring up the matter of consent.



Recording client information in SHIP/SRS for people who have not yet given consent

It is legitimate to collect and record the first and last name of a person, if it is known, for the purpose of trying to provide services.

It is also okay to record gender and approximate age.

If you do not know the name of a person, an alias is an acceptable alternative.

When creating an alias for first and last name, workers must be mindful that it will be used to help identify that person in the future. Aliases must be respectful and thoughtful, and stand the scrutiny of the client themselves (if they saw it might they be offended?)

A respectful example is descriptive and absent of judgment:

- ◆ First Name: Tall
- ◆ Last Name: Long Red Hair
- ◆ Gender: Male
- ◆ Age: Unknown but estimate mid-30s

When a person is identified as sleeping rough but a worker has not been able to engage with them, and needs to record that they have been seen as they will be approached by another team member at some time to come, the worker can input them into SHIP/SRS as an alias using the format agreed by the Port Phillip Zero Working Group.

What to do if someone says no to the collection of all their information.

We can still collect basic information for the purpose of trying to provide a service and share it with our project team of people trying to do so. However, we should not share personal information (such as mental health or health status), except in situations where

we feel that risk of harm to the individual or society is imminent, or if there is a duty of care concern as described below.

We should also try not to inflame a situation by repeating our need for consent if it gets in the way of engagement and service delivery.

Duty of care without consent

If there are duty of care concerns, the worker should first discuss it with their Supervisor, within the care team or with a relevant practitioner within the Service Coordination partnership, and make notes that clearly record what they have observed. These are for the benefit of their colleagues and continuity of service delivery (e.g. 'Don't say this to the person, or approach them in a particular way', etc.)

Notes should identify that the consent has not been received, however a duty of care, or the need to track the engagement (written in general terms), is the reason why the case note is being created.

If there is no consent and the person's behaviour poses a risk to others, this must be recorded clearly. Any violence or any serious change in behaviour (e.g. signs of rapidly deteriorating health) should be seen as a sign of imminent threat to self or others and must be case noted and followed up in conversation as described at the start of this section. This is for the benefit of the person and your colleagues, to whom you also owe a duty of care.

Please note, swearing directed toward a worker during engagement is not necessarily a sign of violent personality or imminent risk to others. In this instance, it should still be shared respectfully with other members of the team and can be case noted. e.g. a person says clearly don't contact me.

If someone is sleeping rough, be alert for the following:

- ◆ Sleeping in unsafe location e.g. flash flooding, construction site, precarious squat)
- ◆ Potential victim of public violence or sexual assault
- ◆ Potential victim of standover

Here are some examples of observed conditions that suggest a duty of care and the need to make case notes and consult with the rest of your team and/or Manager with or without the persons' consent.

Health	Mental Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Jaundice ◆ Swollen feet, hands or abdomen ◆ Large open wounds that do not heal over time ◆ Black, grey or blue hands or feet ◆ Coughing blood ◆ Inability to regulate temperature ◆ Persistent rash ◆ Loss of fine or gross motor skills ◆ Decrease in orientation e.g. time, place, person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Amplification of intent and means in relation to chronic suicidality ◆ Increase in psychosis or mania related symptoms, e.g. disordered behaviour, tangential thinking, delusions, paranoia ◆ Change in communication style e.g. blunted affect, pressured speech, fluency, word salad ◆ Inability to regulate temperature ◆ Decrease in orientation e.g. time, place, person.
Alcohol and Other Drugs	Family Violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Using Fentanyl ◆ Mixing drugs ◆ Drinking bleach or similar ◆ Previous overdose ◆ Using after period of detox ◆ Suffers DTS or seizures without alcohol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has a perpetrator in their life (regardless of relationship status) ◆ Is scared of the perpetrator ◆ Avoids police ◆ Has been strangled before - this is a new high risk indicator ◆ Presence of any of the high risk death indicators (e.g. isolated, jealous behaviour, threats to kill, strangulation, recent separation)

What to do if someone says no to the collection of some information.

If you have broached the subject of consent with a person and they say no to the collection of some information, for example they refuse to do the VI SPDAT, the worker can explain that it makes it harder to match people with the full range of services, but that we will do our best with what the person is willing to share.

What to do when a client says no to sharing information with a particular service.

- ◆ Consult with your Manager
- ◆ Make case by case decisions.

Be mindful of duty of care, but also be aware of the impact on your engagement.

E.g. 'don't share my information with the Salvo's' (Okay. We won't), compared to, 'Don't share my information with mental health services' (We may if there is a duty of care concern).

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