

Immediate Housing Response Guidelines, Specifications and Requirements

March 2024

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1. Introduction

The Immediate Housing Response (IHR) is a Queensland Government initiative under the Homelessness Program targeted to any Queenslanders experiencing, or at imminent risk of homelessness.

When all alternatives to keep or secure a home are exhausted, including existing temporary supported accommodation options and other safe accommodation options, the IHR can provide immediate access to short-term temporary accommodation, with support services.

The support provided by Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) as part of the IHR includes support to sustain the temporary accommodation, alongside pro-active assistance to transition to longer-term housing options.

While operating as one initiative, the IHR has two separate funding streams:

- Commenced in 2022–23, the **IHR for Families** seeks to assist single parents/guardians with at least one dependent, parent/guardian couples with at least one dependent, expectant mothers or other families in constellations such as parents with adult children or sibling families.
- Commenced in the latter part of 2023–24, the **IHR for Individuals and Couples** assists singles and couples without children or dependents.

Through the IHR the Government, under the Homelessness Program provides funding to SHS to deliver the IHR via two components:

- **Emergency brokerage** enables SHS to purchase essential tenancy commencement and/or sustainment items to assist singles, couples and families to access or keep a home and the purchase of short-term temporary accommodation (for example, hotel or motel accommodation).
- **Support worker funding** enables SHS to employ professional workers to deliver case management support to singles, couples and families in short-term temporary accommodation to assist them sustain their temporary accommodation and deliver pro-active assistance to transition to safe and stable housing.

These guidelines provide the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works' (department) staff and funded service providers with information regarding the aims and purpose of the IHR and its operational requirements and expectations with guidance on the use of additional funding made available under the Homelessness Program.

2. About the IHR

The IHR is an interim initiative under the Homelessness Program and contributes to the achievement of Homelessness Program objectives.

The IHR is time-limited and intended to increase the capacity of SHS to respond to Queenslanders experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness, while increases in suitable housing supply continue to be pursued.

As such, IHR funding is distributed only to SHS funded by the department.

The IHR can provide immediate short-term temporary accommodation (for example, in hotels and motels) for people experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness in Queensland, with proactive support services to facilitate transition to safe and secure housing through home ownership, the private rental market or the social housing system.

The package is to assist Queenslanders who are living in unsafe situations, such as sleeping rough in cars, tents and temporary dwellings.

The IHR recognises there are a broad range of other accommodation and housing options available through the statewide network of Housing Service Centres (HSCs), Registered Community Housing Providers (RCHPs) and the broader SHS system. There are also other accommodation and housing options available through specific government and non-government programs, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and through the private rental and home-ownership markets.

Explicitly, the IHR is only available for Queenslanders for whom every other accommodation and housing option has been exhausted. It is not intended to assist households to relocate to Queensland.

The IHR is comprised of two funding streams.

- Emergency brokerage is provided to SHS so they can:
 - deliver an immediate, short-term temporary accommodation response to people who are experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness and who have no other alternative accommodation or housing option
 - assist people who are placed into this temporary accommodation to stabilise their situation and transition to longer-term housing.
- Funding is also provided to deliver additional support worker capacity. This funding is intended to:
 - give SHS capacity to deliver and coordinate appropriate case management services to people in short-term temporary accommodation, to assist them sustain their temporary accommodation and pro-active assistance to transition to safe and secure housing
 - assist in the distribution of the brokerage, including securing short-term temporary accommodation for households, administering IHR funding and complying with IHR accountability and reporting requirements.

3. Related guidelines

All SHS must operate in accordance with the Homelessness Programs Guidelines, Specifications and Requirements [Homelessness Program Guidelines \(The Homelessness Programs Guidelines\)](#).

The IHR Guidelines, Specifications and Requirements are in addition to these guidelines.

4. Program outcomes

When people are experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness and are unable to secure other safe accommodation or housing, IHR funds can be utilised to immediately address their homelessness by providing them with assistance to access or keep a home. Support for these households can then transition to other SHS delivering tenancy sustainment services.

If all other options have been exhausted, immediate access to cost-effective, short-term temporary accommodation that meets clients' needs (for example, in hotels and motels) can be secured for a household.

Organisations are responsible for determining whether the organisation has sufficient IHR funding available, including case management capacity to adequately support and transition a household from short-term temporary accommodation.

Once people are placed in temporary accommodation, funded SHS assist households to transition, as soon as possible to alternative safe and secure accommodation or housing. This recognises that short-term temporary accommodation is not an appropriate long-term solution for any household, particularly those with children.

5. Underpinning approaches to service delivery

In addition to the approaches described in the Homelessness Program Guidelines the delivery of SHS funded under the IHR will be underpinned by the following approaches, which are detailed in the guidance below:

- all other options first, including reasonable travel costs
- no exits to homelessness where possible
- accommodation with support
- service engagement and coordination
- client contributions.

5.1 All other options first

IHR funds must not be used to assist clients who can access any other reasonable accommodation or housing options.

People experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness, must be assisted through the existing housing and homelessness system where possible. People who can access safe accommodation and housing through any of the following must not be provided with an IHR response:

- existing SHS services funded by either the department or the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (the women's domestic and family violence (DFV) SHS including DFV shelters)
- the full range of housing responses, products and services delivered through HSCs (and associated RCHPs)
- the private rental and home-ownership markets
- residential services, including boarding houses and rentals for seniors
- other Government-funded housing (for example, through the NDIS and in aged care homes)
- through community (for example, with friends and family).

Where it is possible for an organisation to assist a client with reasonable travel costs to access alternative, safe and sustainable accommodation and housing options, including interstate and overseas, organisations should pursue these as alternatives to the IHR.

5.2 No exits to homelessness

The Homelessness Program Guidelines state that services are required to 'where possible, not exit any client into homelessness' and to 'provide support that is proactive, persistent, reliable, practical and comprehensive'.

Services funded under the IHR will pursue every strategy possible to ensure people do not exit IHR short-term temporary accommodation into homelessness. Strategies include:

- engaging with local HSCs to access the department's products and services to alternatively accommodate clients
- transitioning clients to other SHS services offered by the same organisation, including accommodating clients in properties within the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP)
- engaging with other SHS offered by another organisation to identify options for transitioning the client to an alternative SHS, including CAP
- engaging with other government services (for example, drug and alcohol, mental health or disability services) to identify alternative accommodation solutions in alternative sectors, including through referral to care coordination where available
- supporting people to engage with community to access other accommodation and housing (for example, with friends and family).

5.3 Accommodation with support

When using brokerage to secure short-term temporary accommodation, SHS will consider:

- household make up, including family size, gender identity and ages to ensure the room/unit can accommodate
- the make up of households accommodated in the same motel/hotel
- disability or medical needs, including any related to sleeping/bed arrangements
- that a higher degree of case management contact is necessary for single young people, particularly those aged 16 and 17 years
- ensuite in room
- kitchenette facilities.

Under the IHR, any short-term temporary accommodation provided must be in the context of case management services delivered through the IHR support worker component.

As per the Homelessness Program Guidelines, case management is a mandatory service approach for all services as it puts identifying and responding to the client's expressed needs at the centre of all aspects of service delivery. The main elements of case management, relevant to the IHR are:

- entry assessment, with a focus on a comprehensive process to determine households' existing housing options, establish the need for assistance under the IHR and assess other needs
- planning
- direct service
- coordination (including referral)
- exit planning
- follow-up.

Where households are provided with a short-term temporary accommodation response, SHS must work with households to facilitate their short-term stability in the accommodation and their transition into safe and secure housing. The service must seek to provide a flexible and tailored response, in accordance with the purpose of funding and work proactively and collaboratively with local HSCs to support pathway planning including assistance to access longer-term housing options.

The duration of stay in short-term temporary accommodation must be managed closely, recognising that hotel or motel accommodation is not an ideal accommodation option. The SHS will collaborate with its local HSC and care coordination group (if applicable) to manage the transition from this environment in as timely a manner as possible.

Under no circumstances is a single, couple, or family¹ aged under the age of 16 years to be accommodated in IHR-funded short-term, temporary accommodation. Where such presents to an SHS, the household must be provided with warm referrals and other SHS assistance to young people aged under 16 years in line with the *Supporting Young People Under 16 Years of Age: Guidelines for Good Practice for Specialist Homelessness Services*.

Households experiencing DFV and in need of short-term accommodation should be referred to DVConnect for assistance in the first instance from other suitable funded DFV specialist services. Any SHS accommodating a household experiencing DFV with IHR funding will ensure that specialist DFV services are engaged to ensure safety plans are in place.

Services are required to proactively seek to engage clients in case management and clients are not required to formally agree to case management to receive assistance through SHS

When short-term temporary accommodation is provided under the IHR, it is important that the provider confirms expectations regarding communication with the provider. If the client disengages with direct case management, appropriate repeated effort should be made to re-engage the

¹ This refers to an under 16 parent or guardian with children.

household through a variety of contact methods including, for example, face to face attendance at the accommodation, texts, phone calls, emails and letters.

5.4 Service engagement and coordination

The IHR offers only a limited array of services, targeted specifically at households in immediate crisis. While support worker and case management capacity are funded under the program, the objective of this funded component is to assist people in short-term temporary accommodation and to transition to safe and secure housing as soon as possible.

There is an array of other associated services which households will require and which can be sourced from the service system in many Queensland locations. Organisations are required to source readily available services to deliver a holistic set of services to clients.

Key service delivery partners include:

- the network of local HSCs across Queensland, which can assist households access private market products and social housing
- SHS funded by the department and the DFV SHS funded by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, including DFV shelters and mobile support
- other specialist support services including, for example, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, child and family support and emergency relief services.

Organisations receiving IHR funding are also required to work closely with the Critical Response Team in the locations they will be established under *Homes for Queenslanders* – that is Cairns, Mareeba, Tablelands Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Livingstone, Fraser Coast, Gympie, Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich, Redlands, Toowoomba and Gold Coast and SHS outreach and tenancy sustainment services.

It is required that SHS operating IHR services in the same region/location and across local geographical areas will work in a collaborative way, sharing information appropriately to ensure that placements of people in motel/hotel accommodation consider risks and operates as effectively and efficiently as possible.

5.5 Client Contributions

Collecting a financial contribution has many benefits including preparing people for paying rent in longer-term housing and providing a rental payment history.

Although the short-term temporary accommodation is not formally secured under CAP, IHR-funded organisations are to apply the Community Housing Rent Policy (CHRP)², with specific reference to the Program Specific Requirements – Crisis Accommodation Program to secure an appropriate 'contribution' from clients for the accommodation.

Under the terms of the CHRP, with respect to crisis accommodation, providers may negotiate a service charge³ with clients in temporary accommodation. It is appropriate for clients to pay a service charge where their circumstances support this.

Any service charge should be set with due consideration for the case management process and providers have discretion to set this from a base of \$0 to 25 per cent of gross assessable household income.

Access to accommodation or support services should not be affected by a household's ability to pay a service charge.

The responsibility sits with the service provider to engage with households and to make assessments regarding clients' ability to pay a service charge and to negotiate an agreement with clients about a reasonable amount.

² Available at [Community Housing Rent Policy \(hpw.qld.gov.au\)](https://hpw.qld.gov.au)

³ Any contribution is considered a 'service charge', rather than 'rent', as households assisted under the IHR will not be covered by the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008*.

All efforts to negotiate a suitable contribution, including evidence of capacity to pay, should be recorded by organisations.

6. Underpinning definitions

Definition of 'individual'

An 'individual' person is a person who presents to the IHR provider alone and requires to be accommodated alone for the duration of the accommodation.

'Single' status is independent of whether the person presenting is married, in a registered relationship or in a defacto relationship.

For the purposes of this initiative, expectant mothers are considered to be presenting as a family.

Definition of 'couple'

A 'couple' refers to two people seeking to be accommodated together for a portion of, or the duration of their accommodation.

'Couple' status is independent of whether the person presenting is married, in a registered relationship or in a defacto relationship.

A 'couple' cannot be comprised of siblings or a parent/ guardian with a dependent.

Definition of 'family'

A family is defined as a single parent/guardian or couple with at least one dependent, or an expectant mother, or a family unit (for example, parents with adult children or sibling families).

Young families (for example, families where one or both parents/guardians are under 25 years of age) are a key cohort to be assisted under this program.

Definition of 'homelessness'

For the purposes of the IHR only, and not with respect to the broader Homelessness Program, a person is considered to be experiencing homelessness if they are living in:

- improvised dwellings or 'sleeping rough', noting that this includes people sleeping in cars
- unsafe or inadequate accommodation (for example where domestic, family or sexual violence threatens the person's safety).

Definition of 'imminent risk of homelessness'

For the purposes of the IHR only, and not with respect to the broader Homelessness Program, a person is considered to be at risk of homelessness if they will imminently fall within the above definition of homelessness prior to the next business day (including consideration of weekend, public holiday or other service closures).

7. Service delivery framework

The IHR service delivery framework comprises two service categories:

- emergency brokerage
- support worker funding, including a component for on-costs, including administration.

7.1 Emergency brokerage

Emergency brokerage is the primary element of the IHR.

Eligible expenditure

SHS can use this emergency brokerage funding flexibly to secure an immediate short-term temporary accommodation response for people experiencing, or at imminent risk of, homelessness.

As such, a critical category of eligible expenditure is the purchase of short-term temporary accommodation, including but not limited to hotel and motel accommodation and pet boarding.

Emergency brokerage can also be used to pay for damage to short-term temporary accommodation where this cannot be appropriately recouped from the client or is not the responsibility of the client.

SHS can also use this emergency brokerage funding for goods and services that affect or support the transition of households from a temporary accommodation setting to a stable, longer-term housing option. Funds can be used to effect or support this transition, regardless of whether the accommodation was secured using brokerage funds under the IHR or, during usual SHS service delivery.

In addition, the following is a non-exclusive list of eligible emergency brokerage expenditure items, where this secures a short-term temporary accommodation response or sustains existing accommodation:

- purchase of essential services that are not offered by the agency or available from a free service including but not limited to:
 - health and allied health, including medications
 - hygiene
 - mental health and alcohol and other drug services
 - childcare services
 - legal services
 - pet boarding.
- tenancy commencement or sustainment items, such as:
 - pay utility bills
 - moving costs
 - pay bond (if ineligible for a bond loan)
 - pay private rental market rent arrears
 - purchase of material aid such as food and white goods
 - travel costs for households to access alternative, safe and sustainable housing options, including interstate and overseas.

Before funding tenancy commencement or sustainment items through the IHR, it is expected that SHS will assist or refer clients to other SHS delivering tenancy sustainment support.

Limitations

Organisations should not expend emergency brokerage funds on items that can be purchased under other emergency response initiatives, for example, through Community Recovery assistance packages or Emergency Relief.

Emergency brokerage funds cannot be used to purchase temporary structures, including tents and swags or for any improvised dwelling.

In circumstances where an SHS identifies a temporary structure or improvised dwelling is considered part of addressing a client's immediate needs, the **SHS is required to escalate the client's needs to the relevant Regional Director**, Housing and Homelessness Services within the department who will assist with alternative solutions.

Emergency brokerage funds will not be directed toward administrative/overhead costs. Some provision for these costs is made through the support worker funding component (refer below).

Sustainable services

Organisations have the responsibility for balancing demand for emergency brokerage and the funding allocated to ensure that the organisation's funding allocation is sustainable, that households receive appropriate and timely case management support and that emergency brokerage is available across the full term of the funding agreement.

If organisations identify existing or new clients that cannot be supported within an organisation's IHR, the organisation must call local networks and other funded services to arrange a suitable client referral. It is also critical that this be communicated immediately to the organisation's Contract and Partnership Officer (CPO) or escalated to the relevant Regional Director to identify options and appropriate responses.

Where all other pathways have been explored, IHR services are required to make a warm referral to the relevant HSC.

Tracking and monitoring

Organisations in receipt of IHR funds are required to complete the IHR Brokerage Reporting template for all expenditure. Due to the different focuses of the components of the initiative, organisations are required to complete the template relevant to the funding stream:

- organisations funded through the IHR for individuals and couples are required to submit data in the Singles and Couples template (**Attachment 1**)
- organisations funded through the IHR for Families are required to submit data in the Families template (**Attachment 2**).

Organisations funded through both components are required to submit both templates, containing only the relevant data in each.

Each organisation is required to submit the completed IHR Brokerage Report template or templates to their Contract and Partnership Officer within ten business days after the end of each month to enable the department to have oversight of expenditure and the responses being delivered in each region.

Each organisation is also required to submit the IHR Financial Acquittal (**Attachment 3**) within five business days of the conclusion of the financial year, demonstrating the expenditure of all or a portion of the brokerage funds provided.

Organisations funded through both components are required to submit separate acquittals for each component.

SHS must continue to capture all client data for clients supported in their reporting to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

7.2 Support worker funding

Support worker funding is provided to enable SHS to increase support worker capacity to support households.

It is also provided, in a limited manner, to enable organisations to administer IHR funding.

Eligible expenditure

SHS should primarily use this funding to employ additional support workers or increase the hours of support workers. It is reasonable for these support workers to be engaged in the following work:

- case management and support of people in short-term temporary accommodation, with a focus on supporting households with short-term stability in the emergency accommodation
- developing and implementing plans for the transition of households from short-term temporary accommodation, or other crisis accommodation into safe, long-term accommodation and the execution of these plans

- engaging with a range of stakeholders, local government and sectoral service providers and other community support, to source additional client support services and transitional services.

Acknowledging the increased administrative workload of the IHR, funding for support workers includes an increased amount for on-costs including administration. This funding assists organisations to:

- source short-term temporary accommodation (for example, booking and purchasing accommodation, establishing bulk purchase arrangements with suppliers where appropriate)
- complete required IHR reporting.

Limitations

Support worker capacity allocated under IHR should not be responsible for the delivery of services funded under other SHS.

Outputs

IHR support worker funding is provided to each organisation to fund multiples of a Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Through each FTE, the SHS must deliver 1260 hours of support and assist a minimum of 42 service users each year.

Support worker funding includes a contribution to vehicle costs, insurance, administration and other costs that are incurred due to the employment of the position.

Reporting

Activity delivered by support workers is reported in accordance with SHS Data and Performance Data in section **6.7. Data, statements and reports you are to submit** within the Homelessness Program Funding Schedule.

8. Payments and contracting

IHR funding is provided to SHS.

The department is responsible for determining the allocation of IHR funding to SHS across Queensland. Determinations regarding allocations of IHR funding are based on experienced demand and more general considerations of demand for homelessness services across Queensland, alongside the capacity of the broader housing and homelessness service system in relevant locations.

The department will make contract with organisations delivering SHS for the provision of IHR funding through the most appropriate method, which the department will determine on a case-by-case basis.

Funding allocation and contractual processes will take into consideration surplus IHR funds from prior years where practicable.

9. Further information and assistance

For further information contact your local Contract and Partnership Officer.