

THE NSW REGISTRAR OF COMMUNITY HOUSING

NSW Registrar's Compliance Assessment Notes - October 2017

Accessible information for tenants and applicants

The intent of this guidance note is to clarify for registered community housing providers (CHPS) the Registrar's expectations and requirements for additional evidence which will be required from Tier 1 and Tier 2 for the 2017 compliance review for Performance Outcome 1.

Performance outcome 1 requires a CHP to be fair, transparent and responsive in delivering housing assistance to tenants, residents and other clients

The Registrar has received feedback from a range of sources indicating that information from some community housing providers is not easily visible and accessible to applicants, tenants or residents and other relevant parties.

In view of this feedback it is intended that the 2017 compliance assessment will take a closer view of how providers demonstrate that they are fair, transparent and responsive in delivering housing assistance. This will mean that you may be asked for additional evidence demonstrating how you comply with this outcome.

In particular you may be asked to demonstrate how visible and

accessible information is to applicants, tenants and others.

Things to consider

What information is available to applicants, tenants and others regarding:

- How you determine and manage eligibility, the allocation and termination of housing assistance
- How you set and manage rents
- Setting and meeting relevant housing service standards
- How you manage and address complaints and appeals relating to providing housing services

Is the information available to your clients easily accessible and understandable?

- Is the information readily available in a number of formats?
- Are those formats suitable for your client base?
- Does the information provided allow informed decision making by your clients?
- Is the information easy for your clients to access?
- Have your staff received appropriate training to provide information to your clients and assist them to understand how it relates to their circumstances?

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The Registrar will be checking if this information is readily available and accessible to the tenants, residents and other clients.

- Information provided is clear, concise, plain and simple, accurate, understandable, easily accessible and available in a variety of forms of communications, formats and languages appropriate to the needs of relevant parties/users.

For example: Are your organisation's housing service standards readily available in these formats:

- Brochures in multiple languages relating to your client group
- Posters in your office in multiple languages
- Your newsletter
- Your website
- Tenant sign up pack
- Is your information accessible to people with disabilities or whose first language is not English?

The Registrar will seek feedback to assist in developing a good practice guide; however some examples of good practice in this area include the following:

- Any technical terminology, acronyms and abbreviation used are defined, consistently applied and not ambiguous.
- All published information online must be printable.
- Client facing publications such as posters at reception areas should be displayed in line of vision. Tenancy application forms, policies

and procedures are available in display area for easy reference and accessibility.

- When including links in the information content, use header that properly describes where the link will go and the expected content.
- There should be no more than two clicks from the menu option to access information from a website.
- Staff are trained and have a good understanding of the organisation processes relevant to subject of inquiry for effective and timely response.
- Organisation's information on complaints handling and appeals processes should be readily available and accessible. Generally, this process includes information on how complaints and appeals are managed, expected timeframes, and how complainants will be informed of progress and the outcome/judgement. Complaints and appeals are dealt with by an appropriately trained staff. There should be no charge for making a complaint and appeal. Overall, complaints processes promote an avenue of trust to bring forward complaints for effective resolution.
- The information about how to complain or lodge an appeal should identify appropriate alternative external parties the complainant can go to with their complaint. For example, Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) is an independent agency that deals with appeals from people who are unhappy with a decision of a housing provider.