

## **Accessing Funding for Additional Temporary Accommodation due to COVID-19 pandemic**

*This information is current as at 29th April 2020. If there is anything in this document which concerns you, or you believe to be wrong or out-dated please contact the Homelessness NSW team.*

### **Purpose**

This document provides an interpretation by the Industry Partnership - comprising DV NSW, Homelessness NSW and Yfoundations - of DCJ policy with regards to accessing additional Temporary Accommodation Funding during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is our advice to services, in the absence of DCJ guidelines for services.

### **Funding Background**

The NSW Government has committed an additional \$14.32 million in funding for TA. This funding provides for services to:

- a) Deconcentrate a refuge (large-scale congregate care facilities to manage public health risks). DCJ has given SHS clearance to keep some beds vacant to facilitate physical distancing.

*See Guidelines: Homelessness Accommodation and COVID-19 March 2020 – section 4.1) the option of deconcentrating the service. As per COVID-19 Homelessness Sector Accommodation Plan (Appendix 6).*

- b) Assist clients to self-isolate: where they cannot do so in the refuge, due to the following reasons:
  - a. Client has been tested and is confirmed to have COVID-19
  - b. Client has/had been in contact with people with COVID-19
  - c. Client is showing flu-like symptoms and is undergoing testing for COVID-19

All cases will be based on advice from registered medical practitioners or the NSW Health Department.

or

- c) To accommodate additional people where they cannot currently do so in their service

### **Accessing Alternative Accommodation**

In brief: Where possible, services should liaise directly with accommodation providers ([see this register for possible vacancies](#)), and seek approval for funding with DCJ Contract Managers.

More detail:

### **Financial arrangements and resourcing**

- DCJ Districts Contract Manager will negotiate an upfront funding supplement to providers, linked to their PLA, which is based on an estimate of immediate needs in the first month. DCJ will then provide adjusted monthly funding that reflects level of

funds usage.

- In the first instance, services will need to negotiate with DCJ District Contract Manager estimated monthly COVID 19 supplementary funding needed, to enable a Letter of Variation to be issued and advance payment to be released against their PLA.
- Then, services, as appropriate and relevant:
  - Discusses deconcentration plan with DCJ District; and/or
  - Identified individual clients who may need to self-isolate; and/or
  - Identifies persons who require accommodation which can't be met by the service
- DCJ District contract Managers will advise services further on how clients placed and price negotiated by services will be reconciled against the advance funding, and adjust additional future funding accordingly.
- If case work or staffing requirements increase funding is available. Please discuss with DCJ Contract Management to fund accordingly.

## **Accommodation**

- The Industry Partnership has coordinated a register of accommodation providers who have vacant properties available and have nominated to make them available to services. To access the register please go to:  
<https://www.homelessnessnsw.org.au/resources/access-register>

Please note this is information to link services and accommodation only – the Industry Partnership is not responsible for policy or funding in relation to Additional Temporary Accommodation.

- Once upfront funding supplement has been agreed, services will liaise directly with self-nominated providers and will advise DCJ of bookings.
- Services will continue to provide support to clients in any alternative accommodation settings.
- Services will ensure that the type of accommodation accessed can support the client's needs (e.g. serviced apartments are preferable to hotel rooms for women and children, people with mental health issues, and people who are quarantined).
- Any additional costs once accommodation is in place, such as damage to property, will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Service providers are asked to ensure support provision mitigates risk of damage as much as possible.
- Accommodation should be booked in line with the current policy (as at 22<sup>nd</sup> of April), which states:
  - 5 days for anyone eligible for Temporary Accommodation
  - 14 days for people advised by NSW Health to self-isolate
  - 30 days for rough sleepers

## **Client planning**

- Services will ensure that each client has a current coordinated Health and Support plan which addresses any drug and alcohol use, and an agreed process for checking and responding to the client's welfare while in alternate accommodation settings.
- Services should commence exit planning immediately with each client and work with DCJ to identify longer term housing solutions for when clients exit these temporary

arrangements.

- Wherever possible services should prioritise people into private rental through Rent Choice as an alternative to hotels/serviced apartments.
- The additional \$34 million for rent assistance packages and temporary accommodation announced by the NSW Government includes:
  - 500 x Rent Choice Assist packages (for those in crisis) at \$10.5m over 15 months
  - 370 x Start Safely packages (for DFV cohort) at \$6m over 15 months
  - 142 x Rent Choice Youth packages totalling \$2.45m over 15 months.
- Start Safely and Rent Choice are private rental assistance products available across NSW that include a rental subsidy and links to support services.

### **Questions? Us too.**

We're still seeking information on the following, but in the meantime discuss with your DCJ Contract Manager:

- How will DCJ Contract Managers guide services on acceptable accommodation prices to avoid excessive handling by contract managers, and expedite clients access to accommodation?
- What information are services expected to keep in order to help DCJ reconcile finances?
- How will client confidentiality be maintained in new accommodation sites?
- If SHS are expected to deconcentrate their service, but can only access 5 or 14 days of Additional TA, how are they expected to manage this, and provide stability for clients in the longer term context of the ongoing health pandemic?
- Will travel costs be catered for? How should clients who need to self-isolate travel?

Please let us know of other questions and concerns, and we will continue to work to get clarity for services.

### **Other notes**

- DCJ is finalising a framework for accommodating unaccompanied children aged 12 to 15 years in supported temporary accommodation – to address the unique needs of unaccompanied children in relation to supervision and support and clarify the approach to be implemented if demand for accommodation (due to COVID-19) exceeds the capacity of HYAP and SHS crisis accommodation services.
- DCJ is finalising a redeployment strategy to support additional staffing needs.

### **Contact us**

Should your experience in accessing additional Temporary Accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic be different to our advice, please do get in touch with either [Homelessness NSW](#), [DV NSW](#) or [Yfoundations](#).