

Tenant Wellbeing

Purpose

This policy outlines how Bridge Housing's wellbeing approach is applied to support our tenants to meet their tenancy obligations and respond to their needs. It also explains how Bridge Housing will identify and respond to these needs when tenants and/or their household members require additional support to sustain their tenancy.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, tenants and household members of Bridge Housing. The policy also applies to Bridge Housing's contracted government and non-government (NGO) support partners.

Policy Statement

Bridge Housing is committed to enhancing the wellbeing of our tenants through the provision of safe and affordable housing. Bridge Housing's wellbeing approach underpins our work to sustain tenancies and assist tenants to identify and access support services when these are needed. Our approach seeks to empower tenants to sustain their tenancies, and improve health outcomes, social and community connections, and economic independence.

Bridge Housing acknowledges there are many individual, societal and environmental factors and circumstances that can affect wellbeing. Some situations may be temporary or linked to a specific life event; for example, job loss or relationship breakdown. Other situations may require ongoing support, such as managing a long-term disability or mental health issue, living on a low income or minimising the impact of social isolation and loneliness.

Within this context, Bridge Housing recognises there are numerous protective factors that enhance and lead to positive wellbeing outcomes for tenants over the short, medium and long term. These include, engaging with family, friends and social networks; participating in community and social activities; access to meaningful education and employment opportunities; volunteering; feeling safe in their homes; and being empowered to make positive life changes. We want to ensure our tenants can access services necessary to maintain their tenancy and enhance their wellbeing, whatever their needs.

Policy

Bridge Housing is committed to delivering high-quality services to our applicants and tenants with fairness, respect and sensitivity, as outlined in our [Customer Service Standards](#).

Our wellbeing approach to tenancy management is based on Bridge Housing staff understanding, identifying and responding early to address underlying support issues of our tenants. Each of our customer service teams has a role to play in supporting tenant wellbeing:

- Our Housing Team, in particular our Housing Managers, who are the first point of contact for tenant relationship management and for assisting our tenants to access the support services they need
- Our Housing Support Coordinators are available to provide additional support to tenants and navigate multiple services when required
- Our Asset Management Team ensure that our properties are maintained at standard to maximise a healthy built environment
- Our Housing Pathways Team manage the assessment and allocation of tenancies across a variety of housing products and programs. As part of this process, Housing Pathways staff are also responsible for identifying applicants' support needs and making referrals to appropriate services
- Our Community Engagement Team delivers quality tenant engagement and community development initiatives. These initiatives aim to reduce social isolation, enhance connection to local community services and programs, support neighbourhood harmony and give tenants a say in how we deliver our services

Our wellbeing approach in action

Once an applicant has accepted an offer of housing, Bridge Housing transitions the tenant to a Housing Manager for day-to-day relationship management and support. Bridge Housing's wellbeing approach is enabled by our low tenancy management ratios, which enables our Housing Managers to engage more closely with tenants and their household members.

Identifying tenants who may require extra support

A tenant may be assessed as potentially requiring support at any point in their tenancy or they may approach Bridge Housing seeking assistance to access services. Bridge Housing will use the following service encounters to assess support needs:

- At allocation and sign-up
- During an eight-week new tenancy wellbeing visit
- During tenant surveys
- During wellbeing visits
- When rental arrears are identified
- When reports of noise and nuisance are received
- When reports of domestic violence are received
- When a tenant asks for help to access a survey
- When requested by the tenant through a formal or informal nominated advocate or support person
- At block meetings

Through our wellbeing approach, Housing Managers:

- undertake the property sign-up process and provide all new tenants with Bridge Housing's Starting a Tenancy pack
- conduct a wellbeing visit within eight weeks of each new tenancy
- work with tenants to identify their goals and support needs and assist with referrals to appropriate services
- develop a tailored home visit schedule according to tenant needs
- conduct an annual wellbeing visit including a property inspection to review tenants' needs and ensure they are meeting their tenancy obligations
- conduct all activities and actions in accordance with the NSW Residential Tenancies Act (2010).

Using approaches that are strengths-based and trauma-informed

Bridge Housing staff adopt a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach to the identification and solution of individual tenant support needs at scheduled milestones (including sign-up, eight-week inspection, annual inspection and tailored home visits).

Strength-based approach to support needs means respecting the resilience and individual strengths of each tenant in the process.

Trauma informed approaches mean understanding and respecting the impact of different life experiences have on tenant wellbeing, and designing an approach that supports respect, resilience and capacity for the tenant as the active and primary participant in the support process.

Our wellbeing approach is based on client consent – we aim to work with tenants to identify their service needs and assist them to access the services in a timely manner.

Our practical approach to support

Our staff take the following actions and/or provide the following types of support dependent on our tenants' needs:

- Ensuring all tenants understand their rights and responsibilities under their Residential Tenancy Agreement when starting their tenancy and throughout the duration of their tenancy
- Providing information on local support services to support tenants' goals and aspirations
- Making referrals to mainstream and specialist support services to ensure tenants can meet their tenancy obligations and meet their personal goals
- Contributing information to inform case planning and exit planning for tenants
- Proactively monitoring and managing tenants' rent and non-rent arrears, including referral to the [Hand Up](#) arrears management program
- Using a trauma-informed approach to investigate and respond to incidents of domestic violence as per our [Domestic Violence Policy](#)
- Responding to and addressing disputes between neighbours (e.g. noise and nuisance complaints) in accordance with our [Good Neighbour Policy](#)
- Providing a good standard of repairs and maintenance in our properties within required timeframes as per our [Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#), [Hazardous Building Material Policy](#), and [Pest Management Policy](#)
- Managing and/or actioning tenant requests to make alterations or disability modifications in their property in a timely manner as per our [Alterations and Disability Modifications Policy](#)

Accessing more support

Tenants and/or other household members who would like or need greater assistance are referred to our Partnerships and Support Coordination Team.

Housing Support Coordinators will conduct a detailed wellbeing assessment in a safe, non-judgemental and respectful way. This assessment will be done with tenants who request it or who need greater support to sustain their tenancy.

Once an internal referral or request is made, Housing Support Coordinators work together to co-create a wellbeing plan. Co-creation means the plan is developed in partnership with the tenant and support services. Bridge Housing will then ensure that tenancy sustainment goals are monitored and documented at quarterly intervals, in a way that works for the tenant and for Bridge Housing. The wellbeing plan template is used for this process.

Privacy and Confidentiality

If a tenant indicates they have a support provider, Bridge Housing will seek permission to exchange information with that provider and other relevant agencies through a formal consent process with the tenant. Where possible, this will occur prior to the tenancy sign-up stage.

Bridge Housing prioritises the health, wellbeing and safety of our tenants, their household members and other people who may come into contact with their households, including our staff. As part of our wellbeing approach, Bridge Housing may refer tenants to support services, and/or disclose personal information if the tenant has provided written consent to share their information or in circumstances where Bridge Housing is authorised or required to do so by law.

Bridge Housing will ensure that all records are managed in accordance with privacy and confidentiality laws and standards, as outlined in our [Privacy Policy](#).

Improving our wellbeing approach

Bridge Housing is committed to the continuous improvement of our services, including our wellbeing approach. Our Outcomes Framework, *The Difference We Make*, is a comprehensive and an evidence-based approach which we use to drive service improvement and investment decisions across the organisation. The framework includes a set of key outcome areas which are aligned to different aspects of tenant wellbeing.

The Difference We Make builds on our current approach to learning more and improving the wellbeing of our tenants and their household members. To inform the continuous improvement of our wellbeing approach, Bridge Housing uses the following monitoring and evaluation tools:

- Using a mix of monitoring and evaluation methods, such as the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey, and commissioning internal and independent evaluations of our key initiatives
- Regularly reviewing our key strategies and policies to ensure these remain fit-for-purpose
- Collecting tenant data on support requirements and outcomes to ensure tenancies are sustained and personal wellbeing outcomes are achieved
- Where appropriate, engaging with tenants through our regular engagement processes, including: Tenant Advisory Groups; Block meetings; Good Neighbour workshops; the Your Views E-Panel and Time to Talk workshops

Complaints about Bridge Housing's service delivery

If a tenant is not satisfied with a service that Bridge Housing has provided and/or does not agree with a decision we have made, they can ask for a formal review. Further information on this process can be found in Bridge Housing's [Compliments, Complaints and Appeals policy](#). The policy is available from Bridge Housing's office or can be downloaded from our website www.bridgehousing.org.au