Transitional Housing Management (THM) Procedure

**Operations Victoria**

Document Owner

**4**

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# Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the process for managing the Transitional Housing Management (THM) portfolio and maintain compliance with the Department of Health and Human Services (DFFH) Service Standards.

This procedure should be read with reference to the Transitional Housing Management (THM) Policy.

# Scope

The procedure covers all Transitional Housing Management properties managed on behalf of DHHF by Housing Choices Australia in Victoria.

# Responsibilities

The State Manager Victoria is responsible for the maintenance and implementation of this procedure.

The Housing and Property Teams are responsible to ensure compliance with this procedure.

Where there is non-conformance or breach of this procedure the State Manager Victoria is to be advised. Corrective action is to be taken as part of the continuous improvement process.

# Procedure

**What success looks like**

[what does it look like when it is done well]

## Step 1 – Eligibility

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| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| The transitional housing management service is for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have a disability/mental health illness. "Homeless" may include applicants who are:   * staying in crisis, refuge or emergency accommodation, * staying with friends and family temporarily, * escaping family violence, * leaving institutions, or other situations where current housing is inappropriate or unsafe.   Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and homeless, or at risk of recurring homelessness and engaged with outreach support.   * Clients must remain engaged with support for the duration of their THM tenancy * Clients must meet eligibility as per DHHF Priority Access housing requirements * Support agencies who nominate tenants must ensure clients have an ERPIN number with DHHF | **Housing** **Officer** | [THM Nomination Form](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Nomination%20Form.pdf) |
| When a vacancy occurs the nominated support agency is requested to complete and return the completed *THM Nomination Form* to Housing Choices within 14 days. |  |  |

## Step 2 – DHHS lease types

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| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| **1. THM - DHHS Owned**  The property is owned by DHHF Housing Choices manage the property under the THM management agreement  DFFH owned properties can only be shared when listed as class 1B by unrelated tenants when smoke detectors are installed in each bedroom and the bedroom doors have individual locks and there is an exit pathway. Shared tenancies are no longer optional due to the introduction of the NDIS whereby a resident can have many different service providers |  |  |
| **2. THM - DHHS Head Leased**  The property is owned by a private landlord, leased to DFFH and sublet to Housing Choices who then in turn sublets the property to the tenant.  Head leased properties CANNOT be shared by unrelated tenants.  Property lease type information is listed in One Housing in the *Property* view screen under *holding type*. |  |  |

## Step 3 – Getting the property ready to let

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| **Vacated Maintenance**  Unlike other properties within the Housing Choices portfolio, the majority of vacated maintenance works are undertaken by DHHS.  When a tenant has vacated, the Housing Officer must provide keys to the Property Team Leader to complete a vacate inspection within 3 days of the vacancy to determine maintenance works to be undertaken.  A key safe is to be placed at the property in an easily accessible location for contractors and the number to access the key safe is to be included on the works request. | **Housing Officer**  **Property Co-ordinator**  **Property Team Leader** | [THM Furniture and Maintenance Allowance](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Furniture%20and%20Maintenance%20Allowance.pdf) |
| **Housing Choices Responsibility**  Housing Choices are responsible for arranging a vacate clean prior to any other works being completed. This is requested via a work order request.  Locks are only changed if the keys were not returned or if there is a security concern regarding the previous tenant.  All locks to be keyed alike.  Housing Choices are responsible for general maintenance works e.g. minor painting, gardening, cleaning, rubbish removal, lock replacement and repairs, small adjustment works, testing of smoke alarms, pest control, minor housekeeping works - refer to the attached document *THM Furniture & Maintenance Allowance - section 4.6.3 minor responsive maintenance.* |  |  |
| **DFFH Responsibility - Housing Call Centre**  If further works are required, the Property Team Leader is to submit a work order request to the DHHF Housing Call Centre (HCC).  DHHF are responsible to complete a mandatory gas and electrical safety check with every vacancy.  The Property Team Leader will raise separate work orders that are required for the maintenance work to be undertaken by HCC.  If requesting an upgrade of a DFFH owned property, walls need to be washed, carpet steamed cleaned and a general clean completed throughout **before** raising a work request. Once submitted with HCC, a Field Services Officer (FSO) will attend the property for assessment. |  |  |
| **Garden Maintenance**  If the property has a garden and the prospective tenant is unable to manage gardening responsibilities themselves, Housing Choices are to arrange monthly gardening services. This can be requested via the Property Coordinator. |  |  |

## Step 4 – Seeking a new prospective tenant

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| When notified of a pending vacancy within the THM portfolio, a THM nomination form is to be sent to the nominated support agency to commence their process for selecting a new tenant. | **Housing Officer** | [THM Acknowledgement of Program Conditions](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Acknowledgement%20of%20Program%20Conditions.docx)  [THM Nomination Form](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Nomination%20Form.pdf)  [Understanding the THM Program fact sheet](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Understanding%20the%20THM%20Program%20Fact%20Sheet.docx) |
| **Nomination forms**  The support agency is to complete and return the form to Housing Choices within 14 days.  Once the nomination is received, the Housing Officer is to ensure the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and all details as requested on the form have been provided. |  |  |
| **Viewing and offering the property**  The Housing Officer arranges a viewing of the property with the applicant and their support worker to further assess suitability and the applicant can choose whether to accept ordecline the offer of housing.  The Housing Officer explains the conditions of the Transitional Housing program and provides a copy of the *Understanding the THM Program fact sheet*. If the applicant understands the conditions of the tenancy and wishes to proceed, they are requested to sign a *THM Acknowledgement Letter* with the support worker witnessing the signature. A copy of this letter is to be kept on the tenants file and a tenant copy will be provided at their scheduled sign up appointment. |  |  |

## Step 5 – Furniture and Utilities

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| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| **Furniture**  As part of the transitional housing management service, Housing Choices provide essential household items such as refrigerator, washing machine, couch, coffee table, dining table and chairs and bedroom furniture with a maximum queen size bed.  Furniture required for the property will need to be ordered and delivered to the property prior to moving in. Following the property viewing and acceptance by the applicant, the Housing Officer submits a work request to replace any household items from the previous tenancy that are no longer able to be used or new items which are required. | **Housing Officer**  **Property Co-ordinator** | [THM Furniture and Maintenance Allowance](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Furniture%20and%20Maintenance%20Allowance.pdf) |
| **Utilities**  Tenants are responsible for connection of all utility connections including water, electricity and gas.  Housing Officers are required to notify the water authority of new water usage connection at commencement of any new tenancy. |  |  |

## Step 6 – Rent

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rent is calculated as per the *Rent Setting Policy*. Market rent is determined annually by DFFH  It is not mandatory that the tenant pays two weeks rent in advance at time of sign up. In these cases, a repayment agreement on top of the usual fortnightly rent amount is to be agreed upon.  **No Bond is required and THM tenants are not eligible to receive Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).**  Rent payment options will be provided to the tenant as per their rental agreement, it is preferable rent is paid by Centrepay which can be set up by Housing Choices where written consent is provided. | **Housing Officer** | [Arrears Repayment Agreement](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Arrears%20Repayment%20Agreement%20Template.doc)  [Centrelink Multiple Consent Agreement - THM](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/Archive/Centrelink%20Multiple%20Consent%20Agreement%20THM.docx)  [Centrepay Deduction Authority THM 555 012 635K](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Centrepay%20Deduction%20Authority%20THM%20555%20012%20635K.doc)  [Rent Calculator - Victoria](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Rent%20Calculator%20-%20Victoria.xlsx) |

## Step 7 – Sign Up

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| Where possible, arrange for the sign up to be conducted at the property with the support worker present. No sign ups are to be scheduled for a Friday due to supports not being available over the weekend.  The tenant is to be signed up on a THM Residential Rental Agreement (fixed term):   * DFFH Owned properties - 2-year fixed fixed term lease period. * DFFH Head Leased properties - the fixed term lease agreement period must not exceed the end date of the head lease agreement between DFFH and the private landlord. With each head leased THM vacancy, the head lease expiry date must be checked with Lease Management Team (LMT). The usual 2 year fixed term period may be offered provided the end date is at least 3 months prior to the end date of the head lease agreement, otherwise the fixed lease term should be adjusted accordingly.   The tenant is to be provided with a sign-up pack of information which outlines their rights and responsibilities during their tenancy and conditions of the THM program. This includes remaining engaged with supports and actively participating in their exit planning including ensuring their locational area preferences for housing are reasonable and realistic.  Housing Choices require written consent for DFFH to notify us when the tenant receives an offer of housing and the consent form should be submitted to DFFH with their housing application. | **Housing Officer** | [DHHS Consent Form Public Housing Application](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/DHHS%20Consent%20Form%20Public%20Housing%20Application.docx)  [New Tenancy Sign Up Checklist](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/New%20Tenancy%20Checklist%20THM.doc)  [THM Introduction letter](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Introduction%20letter.docx)  [THM Lease - fixed term](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/Archive/THM%20Lease%20-%20fixed%20term.doc) |

## Step 8 – Housing Establishment Grant

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| At the commencement of tenancy, the tenant is entitled to a Housing Establishment Grant of up to $350.00 to purchase essential items for their home such as bedding, towels, cutlery etc. This grant cannot be used to purchase non-essential items such as a television or computer. The grant must be utilised within 4 weeks of their tenancy start date.  Following the sign up, the Support worker will support to $the client to purchase their items up to the value of $350 Once the support agency has submitted the receipts of purchase the Housing Officer is to review the items purchased are in accordance with the guidelines and arrange for an EFT reimbursement for the amount spent up to a maximum of $350 to be paid directly into the agencies nominated bank account.  Alternatively, the tenant may request Housing Choices to purchase the items directly via our preferred retail suppliers.  The resident is entitled to take these household items upon vacating if they choose. Otherwise the furniture provided by Housing Choices is required to remain at the property for the next tenancy. | **Housing Officer** | [Payment Requisition Form](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Payment%20Requisition%20Form.docx) |

## Step 9 – Six week visit and Exit Plan

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| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| A six-week settling in home visit is to be arranged with the tenant and their support worker to ensure their tenancy is going well. The *Settling in Home Visit Form* is to be used as a guide.  The Housing Officer is to follow up that an Exit Plan has been completed and a DFFH housing application has been submitted. Copies of all documentation are to be recorded on the tenancy file. | **Housing Officer** | [Settling in Home Visit Form](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Settling%20In%20Home%20Visit%20Form.doc)  [THM Housing Exit Plan](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/THM%20Housing%20Exit%20Plan%20template.doc) |

## Step 10 – Exit Plan review - six monthly

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| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| Six monthly review meetings are to be held with the tenant, support worker and Housing Officer to ensure support needs are being met and that the housing exit plan is updated. An additional review meeting is to be held 90 days prior to the end of the fixed term lease to discuss lease renewal eligibility. | **Housing Officer** |  |

## Step 11 – Tenancy Management

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| It is imperative to work in partnership with the tenant and their supports. Some residents may benefit from an advocacy service and where appropriate a referral can be made.  Should issues arise during the tenancy, it is important to notify the tenant and the support worker as they arise and to work together on actions required from all parties on how these issues can be resolved.  Inspections of THM properties are undertaken six-monthly with the support worker present. These should be undertaken at the same time as the six-monthly exit plan review visits.  During the course of the tenancy there may be a need to arrange case conferencing with the support agency and other relevant services to discuss strategies on how to sustain the tenancy. | **Housing Officer** | [Property Inspection Report - Vic](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Property%20Inspection%20Report%20-%20Vic.doc) |

## Step 12 – End of Tenancy

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| When the tenant receives an offer of housing, Housing Choices do not require the usual 28 days notice of intention to vacate as per the RTA. This is generally because once an offer has been made to the tenant, the turnaround time to view and accept the property is processed is short.  Once the tenant accepts an offer of housing and have signed up for their new tenancy, rent charges for their transitional property should cease but the Housing Officer should agree with the tenant a date to return the keys allowing the tenant time to move their belongings from the property within a reasonable timeframe (between one to two weeks).  The tenant may wish to take the bed with them however if a request is made to take furniture and white goods, an assessment on the length of the tenancy and age of the goods is to be determined and approved by the Team Leader.  Assistance with removal costs can be provided through HEF funding but Housing Choices cannot provide funds for rent in advance if moving into public or community housing  Where the exiting tenant has left possessions at the property, refer to the Dealing with *Abandoned Goods Procedure.* | **Housing Officer**  **Housing Team Leader**  **HIR/HEF Officer** |  |

## Step 13 – Absence from property - reduced rent

| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
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| In special circumstances where a tenant is temporarily absent from their property, rent may be reduced to $15.00 per week for a period of up to six months.  Special circumstances may include:   * Family violence - where a tenant is forced to leave the property due to being a victim of family violence. * Nursing home - temporarily residing in a nursing home and required to pay accommodation costs. * Rehabilitation - psychiatric, physical or drug and alcohol rehabilitation treatment which requires living away from home for a period of time and required to pay accommodation costs. * Respite Care - respire care and required to pay accommodation costs. * Incarceration - serving a prison sentence or is on remand.   Tenants are required to inform HCA of their upcoming absence by completing a Temporary Absence Form. Written confirmation of their circumstances with supporting documentation must be provided.  The Housing Team Leader will assess and determine whether a reduced rent will apply. For nursing home, rehabilitation and respite care facilities, the rent reduction will only apply where the tenant is required to pay accommodation costs for their temporary accommodation. For those who are incarcerated, suitable documentation may include a letter from the prison/remand facility, solicitor, the court, or a social/community worker.  The maximum permissible period for a sole tenant or entire household to be absent from their home for any reason is six months. The six months applies from the date the sole tenant or entire household left the property, regardless of when Housing Choices was informed. Where the period of six months has been exceeded, Housing Choices may ask the tenant to relinquish their tenancy or take steps to end the tenancy and regain possession of the property.  The reduced rent will apply until the tenant returns to the property where rent will revert to the previous amount payable.  For more information, refer to the *DFFH Tenancy Management Manual - Temporary absence policy statement* <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/tenancy-management-manual> | **Housing Officer**  **Housing Team Leader** | [DHHS Temporary Absence Policy Statement](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/DHHS%20Temporary%20Absence%20Policy%20Statement.pdf)  [Temporary Absence Form](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Temporary%20Absence%20Form%20VIC.doc) |

## Step 14 – Vacated Arrears

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| **Instruction** | **Responsibility** | **Resources (programs/templates)** |
| Requests to write off any vacated arrears balance is to be approved by the Housing Team Leader and Housing Services Manager | **Housing Team Leader**  **Housing Services Manager** | Debt Collector / Write off Referral Form |

# References:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| legislation & Standards | Related INternal documents |
| [List legislation, standards and guidelines relating to this process] | * [Rent Setting Policy](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Rent%20Setting%20Policy.docx) * [Allocations and Community Lettings Initiative Policy](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/Archive/Allocations%20and%20Community%20Lettings%20Initiative%20Policy.docx) * [Transitional Housing Management (THM) Policy](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Transitional%20Housing%20Management%20(THM)%20Policy.docx) * [Rent Setting & Rent Reviews Procedure](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Rent%20Setting%20&%20Rent%20Reviews%20Procedure.docx) * [Settling in Visit Procedure](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Settling%20in%20Visit%20Procedure.docx) * [Water Usage Procedure](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/Water%20Usage%20Procedure%20.docx) * [DHHS Homelessness Services Guidelines.](https://housingchoicesaustralia.sharepoint.com/sites/knowledge/KnowledgeCentre/DHHS%20Homelessness%20Services%20Guidelines.pdf) |

## Glossary

[add terms specific to this policy/delete section if not appropriate].