

## SECTION FOUR

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PRACTICE

# CREATING SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES

FOR TENANTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

**A TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT  
COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS  
STRENGTHEN PRACTICE IN NSW & QLD**



## A Toolkit to Support Community Housing Providers Strengthen Practice in NSW and QLD

### SECTIONS AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES

**SECTION ONE:** Describing a sustainable tenancies approach, a policy template and a series of pathways to guide staff

**SECTION TWO:** Working with hoarding

**SECTION THREE:** Information on trauma informed care

**SECTION FOUR:** Tools and resources to support practice



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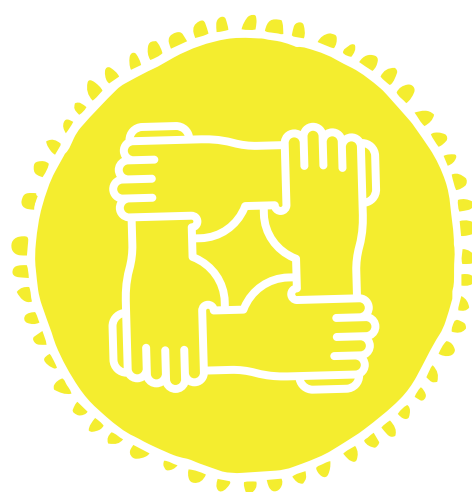
# Introduction

**This section includes an easy read tenancy guide that highlights key tenant rights and responsibilities and outlines the key responsibilities of a CHP to its tenants can be used in a variety of ways to strengthen understanding of the tenancy agreement.**

## A CHP MIGHT CONSIDER:

- Using the easy read tenancy guide at the first tenancy review meeting held post sign up with identified tenants as a way of assessing understanding and identifying any other actions that might be required to assist development of a sustainable tenancy
- Offering the easy read tenancy guide to support service partners who might use the guide to assist their clients to understand their tenancy responsibilities.

This section also includes information on a range of brokerage programs available across NSW and QLD and guidance and practice tools to strengthen safe home visiting practice. The guidance provided on safe home visiting is designed to build on a CHPs policy and procedures already in place to build safe work practice for home visiting and tenant engagement.



# Common brokerage programs in NSW

## Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Brokerage Funding (NSW)

The intention of financial brokerage is to be flexible and tailored to meet client needs and to assist clients to address financial problems or barriers. Brokerage funding has been a key tool for many Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Program funded services, providing additional flexibility to respond to SHS client needs. Evaluations has shown that brokerage funding has been a critical success factor for SHS projects, and in particular, provided additional flexibility to access services in regional areas.and behaviours of concern.

Whilst the current SHS brokerage funding is not intended to pay for rent arrears for social housing tenancies (because effective repayment plans should be established with social housing providers), social housing tenants may be eligible for brokerage funding for expenses incurred on behalf of the client/family to address issues which impact on their capacity to access and/or sustain housing and therefore prevent homelessness.

### This could include:

- Establishing or moving a tenancy.
- Management of housing related debts, such as one off assistance with utility debts (gas/electricity/ telephone, maintenance and repairs for damage caused by domestic and family violence if the perpetrator has left the family home. It does not relate to rental arrears for social housing, as this can be addressed through a repayment plan).
- Employment and education related costs.
- Capacity building and living skills costs to enable a client to increase their self-esteem, life skills and independence.
- Legal expenses to assist clients with issues that are outside of their control.
- Medical and dental expenses.
- Childcare expenses for gaps not covered by the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit, Special Child Care Benefit or other financial support.

- Other costs for children as part of a whole of family approach to the case management plan.
- Culturally specific expenses for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander clients.
- Specialist case management services from non SHS non-government organisations.
- If clients/tenants are approved for SHS brokerage funds, they may be required to repay the brokerage to the SHS service through a repayment plan.<sup>1</sup>

## Tenancy Assistance (NSW)

FACS will only provide Tenancy Assistance once in a 12 month period. This assistance is for clients in a private rental property who are in rent and/or water arrears. The maximum amount of assistance cannot exceed the equivalent of 4 weeks rent. Tenancy Assistance is not provided as a loan, and is therefore not required to be repaid.

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1. NSW Family and Community Services, November 2014, Specialist Homelessness Services Practice Guidelines. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.

### RentStart Products (NSW)

**Rentstart Bond Loan** is an interest free loan to assist eligible clients pay a rental bond for a tenancy. Usually, FACS will provide a Rentstart Bond Loan for up to 75% of the bond. In exceptional cases, it will provide a loan for up to 100% of the bond. Rentstart Bond Loans are not available for community housing tenancies.

**Advance Rent** is provided to the client as a grant and is not repaid to FACS. However, it is not available unless the client is also receiving a Rentstart Bond Loan.

**Rentstart Move** – Tenants who are leaving public housing voluntarily or at the end of their fixed term lease because they have been assessed as ineligible for a further lease are not entitled to Rentstart assistance such as Rentstart Bond Loan, Advance Rent or Temporary Accommodation. FACS recognise that these tenants may face difficulties in meeting the costs of relocating. In this case the tenant may apply for Rentstart Move.

If a client is eligible for Rentstart move, FACS will provide a Rentstart Bond Loan for up to 75% of a rental bond. FACS will provide this loan under the same Terms and Conditions as it provides Rentstart Bond Loans to other eligible clients.<sup>2</sup>

### Tenancy Guarantees (NSW)

Tenancy Guarantees are available in all FACS offices. A social housing provider may offer a Tenancy Guarantee of up to \$1500 to assist a client with a limited or poor tenancy history to establish a private rental tenancy. The Tenancy Guarantee can supplement the rental bond if the tenant incurs rental arrears and/or damages the property over and above the value of the rental bond.<sup>3</sup>

2. <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/additional-information/policies/rentstart-assistance-policy> viewed 12/07/17  
<http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/additional-information/policies/private-rental-assistance-policy#BF> viewed 12/07/17.  
<http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/additional-information/policies/private-rental-assistance-policy#BF>

3. <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/additional-information/policies/private-rental-assistance-policy#BF> viewed 12/07/17.

### FACS Brokerage Funds (NSW)

FACS provides up to \$2000 in Brokerage Funding for each Youth Subsidy and Start Safely client who secure a private rental tenancy, regardless of whether they receive a subsidy or not. Brokerage is to be used to assist the client in establishing and maintaining their tenancy and/or to cover relevant work/study related costs.

A Brokerage Expenditure Plan is completed to example whether alternate funding options are available e.g. a Leave care plan, Supported Independent Living package, Transition to Independent Living Allowance, No Interest Loans etc.<sup>4</sup>

### No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)

The NILS provides individuals and families on low incomes with access to safe, fair and affordable credit. Loans are between \$300 and \$1,200 for essential goods and services such as fridges, washing machines and medical procedures. Repayments are set up at an affordable amount over 12 to 18 months.

To be eligible for NILS the person must have a Health Care Card or earn less than \$45,000 a year (after tax). Loans cannot be used for cash, bond, rent arrears, debt consolidation, holidays or bills.

NILS works through a process called 'circular community credit'. This means when a borrower makes a repayment to NILS, the funds are then available to someone else in the community.

NILS is offered by 178 local community organisations in over 600 locations across Australia. It is likely there will be a local NILS provider in or near your location.<sup>5</sup> The following link will assist you to locate the nearest NILS in your area: <http://nils.com.au/find>

4. <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/additional-information/policies/private-rental-assistance-policy#BF> viewed 12/07/17.

5. <http://nils.com.au/#what> viewed 12/07/17.

## Common brokerage programs in Queensland

The following is a list of government and non-government organisations providing material aid and / or brokerage assistance for people experiencing financial difficulties.

### Government Organisations

The following products are available for individuals and families requiring assistance with Bond and rent. These products are available by application through the QLD governments Housing Service Centres.

#### Bond Loan

A Bond Loan is an interest free loan to help pay the rental bond or deposit when moving into private rental accommodation.<sup>6</sup> The Bond Loan is income tested and application approval is dependent on eligibility criteria.

<https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/renting/bond-loan-eligibility>

#### Rental Grants

A Rental Grant is a once only grant of 2 weeks rent to help you pay for the cost of moving into private rental accommodation. A Rental Grant is for people in a housing crisis.<sup>7</sup>

#### RentConnect

The RentConnect service helps Queenslanders to find and apply for a place to rent.<sup>8</sup>

#### This service may help people who:

- are having trouble finding a suitable home for themselves and/or their family
- have no identification documents or rental history
- are trying to prove they will be a good renter/tenant

#### Crisis Payments

6. <https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/renting/bond-loan>

7. <https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/renting/rental-grants>

8. <https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/renting/rentconnect>

The Department of Human Services provides a one-off crisis payment to assist families or individuals experiencing severe financial hardship or are experiencing an extreme life change such as leaving a domestic violent relationship and / or exiting an institution.

The crisis payment is provided through Centrelink and requires an application process. For further eligibility and application details refer to the link below:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/crisis-payment>

### Non-Government Organisations

The following information is a snapshot of non-government organisations providing material aid, brokerage and No Interest Loans Schemes (NILS) assistance in Queensland.

Refer to the following link to access the My Community Directory website

<https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/>

#### Shelter Housing Action Cairns (SHAC): My Money Program

In January 2014 SHAC received two years of funding for the My Money Program (MMP) from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation. This program employs up to three Financial Support Workers to provide financial literacy training and direct assistance to clients presenting for housing.

Families presenting to SHAC for crisis housing are invited to participate in the program. Families who participate in the program are offered a financial support worker (My Money Worker) in addition to a family support worker and provided a non-judgmental, supportive and empowering service to develop an individually tailored financial support plan.

Outreach assistance and transport are critical elements to the support provided

<http://www.shac.org.au/what-s-new/18-my-money-program>

### Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Brokerage

The Department of Housing and Public Works provides brokerage funds as a component of grant funding for some organisations under the Homelessness Program Domain.

Brokerage funds are provided to organisations supporting people who are experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, with the aim of assisting people to move into independent accommodation or assisting them to maintain their existing accommodation.<sup>9</sup>

The provision of brokerage funds for specialist homelessness services is based on the premise that the targeted use of funds can assist people to access or maintain independent accommodation by addressing the issues that put them at risk of homelessness or prevent them from accessing accommodation. In some cases the purchase of food, white goods or the payment of rent, rental bonds, or electricity may be sufficient to meet a client's immediate needs. In other cases the purchase of specialist support may assist clients to increase their capacity to address issues that put them at risk of homelessness. Brokerage is provided for the following purposes:

- assist clients to access or maintain independent accommodation
- assist clients to address any problems or issues that prevent them accessing or
- maintaining accommodation
- provide responses that are flexible and tailored to client needs

**Contact 1800 474 753 for referral assistance to an SHS provider.**

<https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/emergency-temporary-accommodation/homeless-persons-information-qld>

### Anglican Welfare Ministries – Goodna

Anglican Welfare Ministries offers emergency relief, a food pantry and acts as an information and referral service.

[https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Ipswich/Welfare\\_Assistance\\_\\_\\_Services/General\\_Welfare\\_\\_\\_Support\\_Services/100297/Anglican\\_Welfare\\_Ministries\\_-\\_Goodna](https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Ipswich/Welfare_Assistance___Services/General_Welfare___Support_Services/100297/Anglican_Welfare_Ministries_-_Goodna)

### Beacon Community Care

Ipswich Baptist Community Care Service provides emergency assistance (in the form of food parcels) and holds courses on budgeting and other assistance.

[https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Ipswich/Welfare\\_Assistance\\_\\_\\_Services/General\\_Welfare\\_\\_\\_Support\\_Services/100900/Beacon\\_Community\\_Care\\_](https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Ipswich/Welfare_Assistance___Services/General_Welfare___Support_Services/100900/Beacon_Community_Care_)

### Uniting Care Community North

Uniting Care Community provide General Welfare and Support Services within Regional Queensland.

[https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Ipswich/Welfare\\_Assistance\\_\\_\\_Services/General\\_Welfare\\_\\_\\_Support\\_Services/111375/UnitingCare\\_Community\\_-\\_North\\_Ipswich](https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Ipswich/Welfare_Assistance___Services/General_Welfare___Support_Services/111375/UnitingCare_Community_-_North_Ipswich)

9. Guidelines for the use of Brokerage Funds (2011). Department of Housing and Public Works. <http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/brokerage-guidelines-for-shs.pdf>



### **The Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army provides a range of emergency relief assistance, including family services, food assistance and financial support.

**For further information contact 13 7258 or the website below.**

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/find-help/community-and-family-support/>

### **No Interest Loans Scheme NILS**

An alternative for families and individuals requiring assistance is the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS). NILS provides individuals and families on low incomes with access to safe, fair and affordable credit.

Loans are between \$300 and \$1,200 for essential goods and services such as fridges, washing machines and medical procedures. Repayments are set up at an affordable amount over 12 to 18 months.

NILS also provides a safe and affordable alternative to the high cost finance options such as payday loans or 'rent to buy', products which promise 'fast cash' but often compound a person's financial situation.

**The links below provide information on access to NILS providers in Queensland.**

[http://qld.vinnies.org.au/?\\_ga=2.1851190.687989339.1506900972-1304027807.1506900972](http://qld.vinnies.org.au/?_ga=2.1851190.687989339.1506900972-1304027807.1506900972)

<http://goodshepherdmicrofinance.org.au/services/no-interest-loan-scheme-nils/>

<https://salvos.org.au/need-help/financial-assistance/nils/>



# Home Visits

There can be many benefits to visiting tenants in their homes rather than in the office environment.



Firstly, talking to tenants in their homes can be more comfortable for people and potentially reduce the inherent power differential in the landlord / tenant relationship. Secondly, a home visit can afford a more comfortable and private venue for tenants and housing workers to discuss tenancy issues and support options. Thirdly, a home visit is much easier for tenants who have limited transport or child care options available. Finally, visiting people in their homes allows housing workers to identify potential property and maintenance issues needing attention first hand, and potentially identify any other support needs if applicable and appropriate.

All organisations should have policies and procedures and specific processes related to visiting a tenant's residence that workers need to follow. For example, when preparing for a visit, there will be specific forms that need to be prepared in order to collect relevant information. There may also be information that needs to be provided to the tenant such as rent statements, consent forms or fact sheets.

## Preparing for a visit

The tenant should always be contacted to organise a home visit. If the visit is for a reason other than a routine inspection, telephone contact should be made with the tenant to organise an appropriate date/time for the visit. After the home visit has been organised with appropriate notice, there are still a number of tasks which should be undertaken to prepare for your visit.

Before your visit you should ensure you read available information and tenancy notes, whether in a physical file or in your organisation's tenancy management database, to gather as much information about the tenancy as you can before the visit. This will identify any additional information or forms you may need to take with you, as well as alert you to any warnings recorded or additional occupants identified.

You should also follow your organisation's policies and procedures in relation to personal safety and notification. This might include who you need to notify regarding your planned visit and what information needs to be recorded. **This might include:**

- Planned date and time of the visit
- Name and address of the tenant you are visiting
- Reason for the visit e.g. routine property inspection
- Expected return time, remembering to allow time for unexpected issues and travel time
- Your mobile phone contact number during the visit
- If you will be alone or with a colleague, and if so, name of colleague
- Have the schedule of inspections available in the organisation's shared calendar that can be viewed by relevant staff
- Establish a 'buddy' system whereby the staff member conducting the home visit/inspection sends a text message to their colleague (buddy) upon arrival at the property and upon completion of the home visit/inspection.

**There will also be items you will need to take with you to the visit. This might include:**

- Organisational Photo Identification (ID)
- Mobile phone, as above, with battery charged
- Camera
- Any forms you may need, such as a property inspection form, tenancy rent ledger, arrears repayment agreement, maintenance request form, referral consent forms or fact sheets
- Spare notepaper and pen to record additional items.

If there are any potential safety concerns, it is advisable to complete a home visit risk assessment. The below is a guide that could be adopted for your organisation.

# Quick Risk Assessment Guide for Home Visits

To assist with preparing for home visits and gauge the level of risk associated, complete the following by circling the relevant score for each question and write in the 'point's column'.

Once all questions are answered and scores carried across, add the total points and write in space provided. Compare your score with the identified level of risk to inform your action.

QUESTIONS					POINTS
1. Has the tenant, or any individual household member, had any history of violence, including domestic violence?	Within 3 months	Within 1 year	1-5 years or more	No history	
	13	6	1	0	
2. Has the tenant expressed intent to harm others?	Within 3 months	Within 1 year	1-5 years or more	No history	
	6	3	1	0	
3. Does the tenant have any history of self-harm in the past year e.g. cutting, drugs and/or alcohol?	YES		NO		
	1		0		
4. Is there a history of any behaviour in any household member that would warrant the need for 2 staff to attend?	Within 3 months	Within 1 year	1-5 years or more	No history	
	6	3	1	0	
5. Is the tenant known to have visitors who may have any of the above issues?	YES		NO		
	1		0		
6. Does the tenant live in an area or situation that may place the staff member in a dangerous situation? (e.g.- dangerous animals at the property, night visit, potential weapons)	YES		NO		
	1		0		

IDENTIFIED LEVEL OF RISK	Low 0-5	Medium / significant 6-12	High /extreme 13 +
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If points total between 6 and 12, home visiting with two staff may need to be undertaken until further assessments demonstrate otherwise. This decision should be made by the manager/team leader.

If points total above 12, staff attending the premises must be accompanied by a senior worker until the risk is reduced or further assessments are completed and identified risks are reduced.

The total point score on this sheet is to be clearly highlighted.

### Comments /advice on the above

### How will risks be mitigated/reduced

Employee's Name		Signature	
Manager's Name		Signature	
Date			

# WHS, Home Visits and Managing Aggressive Behaviours

While the format and content of policies will vary between CHPs, below are some examples of relevant guidelines relating to WHS for home visits and managing aggressive behaviours.<sup>10</sup>

**The following excerpt is adapted from the Victorian Governments Tenancy Management Manual – Home Visits Guidelines July 2012.**

## **Note the specific information under the headings:**

- Managing your personal response
- Physical responses
- Personal triggers
- Signs of imminent threat
- Common personal reactions

**The Department defines occupational assault as any incident in which employees are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of or in the course of their employment. This may take the form of verbal, physical or psychological abuse.**

In our work, verbal abuse and threats of harm are the most common forms of incident initiated by clients against staff, however they are quite rare. This includes shouting, intimidation, sarcasm and personal insults. Staff may also be subject to sexual and/or racial harassment through offensive suggestions and remarks. It can also be the attempted or actual exercise of any force so as to cause injury to a worker.

These guidelines have been developed to assist all managers and staff in developing safe work practices whilst on home visits and conducting interviews.

All staff are entitled to a safe working environment and no one should have to work in fear of violence, aggressive behaviour or harassment.

## **The Department is committed to ensuring:**

### **MANAGERS/ SUPERVISORS**

- provide and maintain a healthy and safe local working environment
- consult with employees and Health and Safety representatives on workplace health and safety information, issues and opportunity for improvement
- identify local risk through workplace inspections, incident reports, DINMAs, accident investigation and workplace consultation
- develop and implement health and safety improvements in consultation with employees
- provide a business case for recommended improvements to senior managers to secure resources
- integrated health, safety and wellbeing strategies into work practices and procedures
- document health, safety and wellbeing improvement strategies and monitor for effectiveness
- report on progress and workplace health, safety and wellbeing to senior managers and employees.

10. Centre for Training in Social Housing, (May 2017), CHCCCS020 Respond Effectively to Behaviours of Concern Participant Notes

## EMPLOYEES

- participate with management in the development and implementation of health and safety issues
- participate in relevant health, safety and wellbeing training
- take care that activities undertaken or neglected do not cause a risk to health and safety of any person in the workplace
- report all work related disease, near misses or accidents to the Department.

## Preparing for a Home Visit

**Think about your personal safety and make an assessment of the risk. Gather as much information about the tenancy you intend to visit before you come face to face with the client.**

This includes familiarising yourself with the client's background and their tenancy history before conducting any sort of contact, especially if you have just taken over the area or have been on leave. It is a requirement that your Team Manager is aware of your home visit schedule.

### ENSURE THAT YOU:

- have a working mobile phone
- have completed a "Home Visit Schedule" and have given this to your Team Manager.

It is your responsibility to record information about where you are and to make sure it is accurate. It is also your responsibility to contact the office if you are significantly delayed. This information is needed so that concerns do not develop for your safety.

### THE BASIC INFORMATION REQUIRED IS:

- your name
- mobile number
- the client's name and address
- if the visit is routine
- any identified risk factors
- expected time of return.

Where you are to conduct more than one home visit, it is suggested that an approximate time is given as to when you will be visiting each client.

## Assessment of risk

If either of the following factors are present then consult with your Team Manager before conducting a home visit:

- previous Police involvement with the client relating to violence
- there is a history of violence towards workers.

## High Risk client contact

Where a client is deemed to be high risk because of previous history and experience, you should notify your Team Manager and use one of the following strategies:

- conduct the home visit with another support worker of the client
- conduct the home visit with a second worker or Team Manager
- arrange for a family member or friend of the client to be present
- conduct an office interview instead of a home visit.

## Tips when visiting

### THINGS TO DO WHEN OUT ON SITE:

- Prior to entering the premises:
- Do not park in the driveway
- Do not stand directly in front of the door after ringing the bell, either move to the side or back from the door
- Never enter the property if the tenant is not home or if there are no adults present
- Do not enter until met at the door by the client.

### INTERACTION WITH CLIENT:

- Politely ask who else is home at the time of the visit
- Be professional and courteous at all times
- If for cultural or other reasons the client requests that you remove your shoes before entering the property, discuss if alternative options such as wearing shoe covers is suitable. If the client insists that the removal of the shoes occurs, discuss alternative arrangements such as an office interview
- Avoid confined spaces where possible.

### AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- If you felt unsafe, report the interview/ incident to your Team Manager. Complete a DINMA form
- Above all else, use common sense. If you do not feel comfortable do not enter the property.

The Department of Human Services has developed significant resources over the years regarding Worker Safety when dealing with verbal assault, challenging behaviours and physical assault, for example, Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy.

The information described in the next few pages is to assist staff in taking greater preventative measures and acting responsibly.

If any unforeseen safety concerns develop or a potentially violent situation escalates beyond your control, you must, if able, terminate the interview. Trust your own judgement to decide whether you are in an unsafe situation. If you feel you are in an unsafe situation, you must leave.

## Managing your personal response

Normal responses to threatening situations include fear and anger. The purpose of these responses is to quickly prepare a person to take self-protective action. It is very important that you are aware of how you tend to respond in threatening situations. This is so you can monitor and control your responses and use your skills to manage the situation.

Your reactions are also an important risk indicator that you should not ignore.

They also give clues to a potential attacker about your current state.

## Physical responses

- rapid shallow breathing
- rapid pounding heartbeat
- feeling of tension in stomach, chest, head or entire body
- sweating
- clenching of jaw, teeth or fists
- pacing
- wanting to cry
- trembling
- flushed face

## Personal triggers

Nearly everyone will have had some previous experience of aggression and violence. These experiences can act as triggers in certain circumstances. Awareness of your own personal triggers will help you to attend your choices about ways of dealing with future episodes of aggression and violence.

### THINK ABOUT, OR DISCUSS, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- what do you perceive as aggressive and violent behaviour?
- what types of behaviour affect you most?
- how do you currently deal with different types of aggression? Is your tendency to confront the client? To give way? To stay calm?
- what groups of clients give you the most concern and why? For example, male adolescents, people with mental health problems, etc.
- which situations do you find most difficult and why?
- what might prevent you from asking for support and protection?
- how can you be more aware of your personal reactions and extend your personal safety risk assessment?

## Indicators of imminent violence

Individuals may indicate in different ways that they are about to become violent, although some people become violent without warning.

### BE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING CUES THAT MAY BE EVIDENT:

- abusive language
- person threatens violence
- flushing of the face and neck
- protruding and pulsing blood vessels in the forehead, temples and neck
- rising voice
- grimacing or frowning
- grinding teeth and clenching jaw muscles
- increasing excitability and gesticulation
- rapid, shallow breathing
- trembling of limbs
- increasing coarseness of language
- pounding on table with fist
- standing up in the course of a seated interview
- pacing to and fro

## Common personal reactions

There are a range of common personal reactions to exposure to violence and aggression at work. A person may react as a result of a single incident or as a cumulative response to the impact of work.

You may react immediately after an incident or sometime later and could experience any of the following:

- fear of client and particularly of confronting clients
- fear of coming to work
- fear of reporting the incident
- crying
- inability to sleep
- feelings of powerlessness
- self-blame and guilt
- anger at work and in personal relationships
- damages to your profession self-image
- headaches
- anxiety or depression





## AAT (Achievement Awareness Training) Course in Managing Aggressive Behaviour and Personal Safety (Threatening Situations)

### Definition of Aggressive, Threatening and Potentially Violent Behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is defined as any behaviour that creates a stressful, intimidating, frightening or offensive situation. This may cover a wide range of unacceptable or hostile behaviours directed towards staff. This behaviour may occur anywhere in or outside working hours and on or off the organisation's premises. It may be face to face, over the phone, text, email or by written correspondence. **Staff do not have to "feel" threatened for the behaviour to be aggressive or unacceptable.**

#### AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR MAY TAKE SUCH FORMS AS:

- Vulgar noises, expressions or gestures
- Threatening or offensive behaviour
- Bullying or harassment
- Verbal abuse of either a personal or general nature by means of innuendo, raised voice or obscenities, including racist and sexist comments
- Threatening self-harm or harm to others
- Physical violence against a person such as hitting, kicking, grabbing, punching or through the use of weapons
- Physical violence against objects such as kicking, defacing or destroying property
- Stalking
- Unwelcome Actions including the exhibiting of offensive material, or
- Block exits or unlawfully detaining

**Angry behaviour** is issue focused.

**Aggressive behaviour** is directed away from the issues, either towards others, the environment or towards themselves.

# AAT (Achievement Awareness Training) Course in Managing Aggressive Behaviour and Personal Safety (Threatening Situations)

## 1, 2, 3 System & Personal Safety

### STEP 1 - Defuse and Redirect Behaviour

Informal (*Soft*) warning with a redirecting question or statement

**C**lear, Calm, Communication

**E**xpand your distance and broaden your vision

### STEP 2 - Controlling Behaviour

Formal (*Firm*) warning with an appropriate consequence

**N**egotiate assertively and take verbal control

**T**ake extra safety steps and be aware of exits

### STEP 3 - Stop the Interaction

Leave, hang up or ask the person to leave

**R**emove yourself and get assistance

**E**vade injury and step away

**D**efend yourself as a last resort to get away

Staying **CENTRED** and in **CONTROL** is one of the most important steps in dealing with aggressive and potentially violent behaviour.  
Competing and "buying into it" with people will only escalate the situation

## **AAT (Achievement Awareness Training) Course in Managing Aggressive Behaviour and Personal Safety (Threatening Situations)**

# **Managing Angry and Aggressive Behaviour**

### **STEP ONE: DEFUSE AND REDIRECT BEHAVIOUR**

Attempt to defuse the situation by using an informal (soft) warning. Finish on the issue you need to discuss with a redirecting question or statement.eg.: **"I can see you are angry, but having a go at me isn't going to help, let's focus in the issue. Tell me more about.....?"**

#### **PROFESSIONAL RESPECT - TREAT PEOPLE AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED.**

- Always introduce yourself in a polite and courteous manner.
- Clearly clarify your job role and get assistance early if needed
- Keep things simple and straightforward. Use simple language.
- Voice tone should be calm, confident and speak a little slower
- Use open neutral body language to show you are paying attention

#### **LISTEN, CALM AND CLARIFY - FIND OUT THE OTHER PERSONS VIEW FIRST. "EMPATHY"**

- Use questioning techniques to find out what is happening, clarify or redirect.
- If appropriate, it may be useful to let angry people ventilate their feelings and issues, as long as they are not aggressive.
- Be patient; allow people time to tell their story. Have attentive body language.
- Follow the conversation by using verbal and non-verbal indicators.
- Clarify the situation by repeating a little bit back to the person of what they have said. Repeat key issues, main themes and acknowledge obvious feelings.
- On the phone be aware of background noise and remember your voice tone is extremely important. Talk to people as you would face to face.
- If appropriate take notes to help clarify issues and understanding

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### ASSESS AND EXPLAIN OPTIONS - CONCENTRATE ON WHAT YOU CAN DO.

- Assess whether you need any help after hearing the person's situation
- Decide if this should be referred to someone more senior.
- Avoid any blaming statements that may escalate behaviour e.g. "You're wrong"
- Use neutral words e.g. "I can see there has been some miscommunication".
- Offer to take a break to help defuse the emotions
- Get a colleague to reinforce the information or get a second opinion.

### NEGOTIATE SOLUTIONS - FOCUS ON ISSUES, NOT PERSONALITIES

- Explain what you can do and all the options available in a confident manner
- Work out a plan for what happens next, and who will do what by when

### STEP TWO: CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR

Take verbal control by using a Formal (firm) warning with an appropriate consequence that you can apply. eg.: **"If you continue to abuse me I will have to ask you to leave, I don't want to do that. Do you want to continue?"**

- Staying calm and looking confident is the key
- Use a calm firm voice tone, sound like you mean what you are saying
- Have a neutral non-aggressive body language, you need to look confident
- Gestures can help to strengthen the message where appropriate
- Use simple clear messages that focus on the outcome you want

**At any stage get help from a colleague or manager if required**

## **AAT (Achievement Awareness Training) Course in Managing Aggressive Behaviour and Personal Safety (Threatening Situations)**

# **1, 2, 3 Managing Behaviour**

### **STEP THREE: STOP THE INTERACTION**

**Leave, Hang up or ask the person to leave.** Use simple directive statements

#### **STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP WHEN ASKING SOMEONE TO LEAVE**

- Get help early if you might need it
- If you feel safe you will act more confidently, move away from the person and if seated, stand up
- Leave clear exits for the person to leave and use open handed gestures to direct
- Keep a confident voice tone and look like you mean what you are saying.
- In the office get a colleague or manager to repeat the same message to the person if they will not respond to you
- Mentioning the Police should be used as the last option. When advising someone about possible Police involvement, think about your wording. e.g. "I don't want to have to call the Police, please leave."

#### **LEAVING A THREATENING AND POTENTIALLY VIOLENT SITUATION**

- Talk about when you would leave with your partner before you deal with people. "When one feels it's time to leave, you both leave". Have a plan.
- Identify the exits before you start moving
- Create a safety zone of a couple of metre if possible before you turn your back. Always turn side on first before turning your back and only if it is safe to do so.
- When you decide to back off do so without delay. Create extra space by stepping away from the person and then tell them you are leaving.
- If you believe someone may be violent, adopt personal safety postures as shown to help control risk as you leave.

## Signs of Violence

**Although there is no 100% guaranteed way to predict when someone is going to become violent, there are some clues that may indicate an increased possibility of it. Some signs to look for are:**

Raised voice; threats; clenched fists; verbal abuse; withdrawal; shaking arms; face expressing rage; spitting; loud breathing; skin flushed; pacing; body pumped; threatening gestures; eye to eye staring; teeth clenched; pacing; invading your personal space - intimidating; banging furniture; rapid speech; rapid breathing; content of speech, "I could punch you out"; adopting a fighting stance; dramatic behavioural change; loss of colour from face; look away from you while being threatening; block exits.

**The key is to focus on the actual behaviour, not what people look like!**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** It is recommended that you listen to your "gut feeling" and remove yourself or get help when you feel unsafe.

## Post Incident Management:

**Although there is no 100% guaranteed way to predict when someone is going to become violent, there are some clues that may indicate an increased possibility of it. Some signs to look for are:**

### INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PROVIDES:

- An opportunity which may identify "flagging" of clients/customers who are potentially violent.
- A record of all events relating to angry/aggressive/violent clients/customers and situations which may affect a staff members ability to function effectively.
- An opportunity for the organisation to take action in response to the continuing unacceptable behaviour of a particular client/customer.
- Documented evidence of the incidents that may be required to assist in legal proceedings.
- Documented evidence of the incidents which may have a cumulative effect on an individual staff member.
- An opportunity for a staff member to debrief following an aggressive incident.

The recording of aggressive incidents should be based on what the organisation regards as unacceptable behaviour of its clients/customers. This may occur in or outside of working hours, and on or off the organisations premises. This would include incidents in person, on the phone, by mail or aggressive behaviour directed at a staff member's family.

# CREATING SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES

FOR TENANTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

**A TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT**  
COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS  
STRENGTHEN PRACTICE IN NSW AND QLD

## SECTION FOUR

TOOLS AND RESOURCES  
TO SUPPORT PRACTICE



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