Housing First Homelessness Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions
All locations

1. About the Housing First Homelessness Initiative
   In December 2019, alongside the release of All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030, the Western Australian State Government announced $34.5 million in new funding over five years for the Housing First Homelessness Initiative (HFHI).

   The HFHI addresses homelessness and rough sleeping by using a housing first approach, where people are placed in housing as a first priority and then provided wrap-around support.

   The initiative will be delivered at new locations in regional and metropolitan Western Australia, including Bunbury, Geraldton and Rockingham/Mandurah.

   It will use private rental subsidies to quickly house individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness with wrap-around supports.

2. How will the HFHI operate?
   The Department of Communities (Communities) has broken down the HFHI into four elements:
   • Housing First System Coordinator
   • Housing First Support Workers – Metropolitan and Regional
   • Finding Home Program (the private rental subsidy component)
   • Evaluation.

   The Housing First System Coordinator will provide backbone support for the HFHI in all locations where it will be rolled out. This consists of co-ordinating support services (including after-hours support) and managing the By Name List.

   Additional Housing First Support Workers in Perth, Bunbury and Geraldton will be responsible for assertive outreach and engaging with rough sleepers on the streets, as well as providing case management to people once they have been housed.

   A community housing provider or equivalent will be engaged to manage the Finding Home Program and ensure that appropriate rental properties are sourced and managed, landlords are engaged and supportive of the initiative, and that properties are taken care of.

   An independent Evaluation of the HFHI will be undertaken to assess how it is performing against desired outcomes and capture opportunities for learning and improvement.

3. How will service providers for the HFHI be selected?
   Communities has obtained an exemption from the minimum requirements of Open and Effective Competition under the State Supply Commission and will not be carrying out an open tender process for the HFHI.

   Services will be procured through a mix of direct negotiation (Housing First System Coordinator and Evaluation) and expressions of interest (Housing First Support Workers – Metropolitan and Regional and the Finding Home Program).
4. **When will the HFHI start?**

Funding for the HFHI is available from 1 July 2020. The first stage of the roll-out of the HFHI has commenced with negotiations underway with Ruah Community Services (Ruah) to provide the Housing First System Coordinator service. The contract for the Housing First System Coordinator is expected to be awarded by 1 July 2020, with contracts for the Housing First Support Workers – Metropolitan and Regional and the Finding Home Program expected to be awarded by 1 October 2020 following an expression of interest process.

A contract for the independent evaluation of the HFHI will be in place by the end of the year.

5. **What has happened over the past six months since the funding announcement?**

The procurement for Housing First was originally proposed through a tender process, which would typically take up to 12–18 months before the funding could flow.

Recognising the need to move more quickly, especially in the context of COVID-19, steps have been taken to fast-track the procurement process.

Communities has worked to establish the necessary requirements to ensure we can get services online quickly and maintain integrity throughout the project.

This has involved:

- appointing a probity adviser to oversee the procurement of services under the HFHI;
- engaging the Department of Finance to conduct the procurement process; and
- ensuring all relevant stakeholders within Communities have the opportunity to provide input into the proposed design and delivery of the HFHI.

6. **Why has Ruah been approached for the Housing First System Coordinator role?**

Ruah has significant expertise performing this kind of work through their role as backbone for the 50 Lives 50 Homes and 20 Lives 20 Homes programs. Given the need to ensure that rough sleepers are housed as quickly as possible, the most effective way for Communities to procure this service is through direct negotiation with Ruah.

7. **How many people will be housed through the HFHI?**

The HFHI includes funding for 170 private rental subsidies each year (130 in Perth [including Mandurah/Rockingham] and 20 each in the Bunbury and Geraldton regions) and it is expected that at a minimum, 170 individuals or families will be housed and supported each year.

Similar to the 50 Lives 50 Homes program, which housed more than 147 rough sleepers in Perth over three years, additional people can be housed without the use of private rental subsidies or when existing participants exit the program.

8. **The HFHI is not enough. How will other people experiencing homelessness be supported?**

Homelessness is a complex issue that requires a coordinated response from across government and the community. The HFHI builds on existing successful programs, such as the Street to Home program and the 50 Lives 50 Homes program, that support people sleeping rough to transition into permanent accommodation.

The HFHI provides support to vulnerable people through wrap-around case management that aims to improve their health and well-being.

Additional case managers through this program will allow for more people to be supported into appropriate services that will help them with any issues they need support with.
This program is a part of a suite of homelessness initiatives that have been announced by the State Government, including two Common Ground facilities.

9. How does the private rental subsidy component work?
Individuals and families who may be sleeping rough will be able to access long-term accommodation through the use of private rental subsidies under the HFHI.

Individuals and families who are being supported through the initiative will contribute to weekly rent through a percentage of their income, with the State Government ‘topping up’ the remaining amount through a subsidy.

Importantly, the rental subsidy is not tapered and is there to support individuals and families for up to five years.

10. Will the HFHI only use private rental properties to house people?
No. Participants will also be placed in other forms of housing including public and community housing depending on their needs and the availability of these properties.

11. Is it possible to get services on the ground any faster?
Designing and procuring a new project of this scale takes time and Communities is committed to following proper process and ensuring that we are funding community services in an open and transparent way that is consistent with the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy.

Communities understands the need to ensure that additional accommodation and support for rough sleepers is available as quickly as possible and is working with the sector to accelerate the roll out of the HFHI, however it is unlikely that timeframes for implementation can be reduced any further.

12. How can I offer my private rental for use as part of the HFHI?
Success of the HFHI will depend on private landlords opting to provide their vacant dwellings for the program. Landlords who participate in the HFHI will have the rental income for their property guaranteed and property and tenancy management costs covered.

If you have a rental property that you think may be suitable and you are interested in participating in the HFHI, please contact homelessness.strategy@communities.wa.gov.au.

Communities is particularly interested in hearing from landlords who have one or two bedroom properties available in Perth, Bunbury, Geraldton and Mandurah/Rockingham.

To find out more about the 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness and the HFHI please visit our website or email the Homelessness Team at the Department of Communities.

Web: www.communities.wa.gov.au/HFHI
Email: homelessness.strategy@communities.wa.gov.au