

Negotiating Pathways Forms

1. Application for Housing Assistance

The Application for Housing Assistance form is designed to allow people to apply for all kinds of social housing. It is based on a 'no wrong door principle'. Theoretically the form should streamline the process of accessing housing as the form should allow all of the applicants' needs to be considered and addressed – it's a detailed assessment of the individual.

When an applicant has had their application processed, and they are assessed as eligible for social housing, they will go onto the NSW Housing Register. Applicants that have a critical need for housing will be assessed as 'priority'.

Before you start

It is important before you assist a client to apply for social housing to determine whether they are eligible for housing.

You can find out the eligibility requirements for social housing on the Housing Pathways Website - <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/applying>.

For more in depth information about eligibility you can look at the policy behind the process – that is available here - <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/eligibility-social-housing-policy>

It is not necessarily intuitive whether a person is eligible or not so it is good to check.

Even if they are not eligible for housing assistance, they may be eligible for private rental assistance.

The Form

Applicants can complete the form online, as a hardcopy or can be assessed over the phone.

The online form is accessible at https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/assistance?SQ_VARIATION_549474=0

The paper form is accessible here as a PDF - https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/329223/DH3001-Application-for-Housing-Assistance-221018.pdf

The number to apply over the phone is: 1800 422 322.

What will applicants need?

As a bare basic, applicants will need to have the following:

- Their Centrelink Number, Medicare Card or Drivers Licence
- 1 form of identification for each household member over 16 years old
- Documents supporting their need for housing assistance

They will require various other documents depending on their circumstances. Collecting the required evidence can be labour intensive. It may take weeks to get the necessary information to lodge a complete application.

Clients should refer to the Evidence requirements information sheet DH3001A when completing the application form. You can access this form here:

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=329224>

All evidence must be current – within the past 3 months.

Applicants do not need to use originals. They can use photocopies or print outs.

In some instances there are prescribed forms to use, such as a medical assessment form. It is important to use the prescribed document.

If applicants apply online they can save their application and have 30 days to update or adjust their application. They are able to upload documents.

For each of the criteria it is best if the applicant can provide as much evidence from the list as possible, but quality over quantity is key.

If the client is receiving Centrelink payments they can sign a separate form – the Income Confirmation Scheme Consent Authority, which allows Pathways to check income directly with Centrelink.

Proof of income must be current, i.e. not less than 2 weeks old.

Overseas pensions must be disclosed as part of income.

Where to go for help

The Housing Pathways Website provides information about the application process, including how to fill out the Application for Housing Assistance form and you can call the call centre for advice on 1800 422 322 during standard business hours.

The criteria in the application relates directly to the Housing Pathway policies. You can access the policies here:

Setting applicant expectations

Applicants often do not know much about the limited housing options, the high demand for housing and the limited stock in specific areas. They may wish to be considered for properties with certain attributes, e.g. a yard.

It is important to explain to applicants that they can be waiting up to 10+ years for housing in high demand areas such as the Eastern Suburbs. Housing Pathways produces regular reports showing wait times for certain geographical zones.

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/expected-waiting-times>

You can find the 'allocation zones' here - <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/choose-where>

People cannot choose the suburb that they want – only the allocation zone.

Similarly, applicants often want to be considered for properties that will suit their future needs. Housing Pathways will only assess an applicant based on their physical requirements at the time of applying. Applicants who have degenerative conditions will need to either request modifications in the future or request to transfer.

The other aspects to consider is that there are specific (and often not intuitive) criteria around number of rooms to occupants, when a person can demonstrate a locational need for a particular zone etc. For example, it is considered reasonable for a child to share a room with their parents until the age of 3, and if someone can access similar services in a different location, that will not be sufficient to demonstrate a need to be in a particular zone.

The services and resources that they use in the area must be unique and not be able to be provided elsewhere. Frequency of use is also relevant – an applicant who uses a hospital once a month would not meet the criteria to be located in the zone where that hospital was located.

In our experience, applicants often want:

- yards
- flat access
- no stairs
- no high rise
- multiple rooms
- not to be housed in particular areas
- not to be housed with particular types of people
- to have particular requirements re housing e/g.no carpet

The Social Housing and Eligibility and Allocations Supplement goes into detail about how Housing Pathways allocates people to properties and matches properties to their needs.

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/social-housing-eligibility-allocations-policy-supplement#irtshn>

Topics 10 and 11 are relevant for information about how they determine location and type of premises.

Priority Housing

Clients may be considered as needing housing urgently.

This is often the case if they have unstable housing, they are at risk, or their current accommodation does not fulfil basic housing needs. They must also be able to demonstrate that they cannot resolve their housing needs in the private housing market.

For information about the eligibility and evidence requirements you can go here-

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/social-housing-eligibility-allocations-policy-supplement/chapters/housing-evidence>.

Being assessed as priority means that an applicant is essentially 'bumped up the list', however wait times can still be very long.

Final hints and tips

- set expectations and try to get the applicant to consider broad geographic zones and a range of premises;
- Take the time to fill out the form well. Use the best evidence you can as it is worth the investment (and the applicant will be less inclined to reject offers that come up);

- Where possible see if they can demonstrate priority as this will cut down on the wait times substantially
- Housing Pathways does not provide information about wait times for priority
- Applicants should consider being open to as many providers as possible – you can limit the providers, but this limits the options
- Expert evidence that sets out very specifically what the applicant needs is key