



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HOUSING  
AND HOMELESSNESS SECTOR

## Lived Experience Engagement Service

REPORT 2 • JULY 2021

Between 2020 and 2030 there are changes being made to housing and homelessness services in South Australia. These changes must be driven by the feedback and opinions of people with lived experience.

The **Lived Experience Engagement Service** is an independent state-wide and sector wide service funded by the South Australian Housing Authority. We engage the voices of people who have experience accessing any housing and homelessness system. We embed client voice in the process of service design and specialist homelessness services sector reform. We produce quality evidence to inform decision making on policy and broader sector service reform.

### Information and Housing Support

The Lived Experience Engagement Service engaged with people to discuss the impacts of housing stress, homelessness and systemic issues around accessing housing and homelessness services. A thematic analysis of these discussions identified *“information, misinformation or lack of information”* as one of the central issues within housing and homelessness services. One person described their experience as:

*“There is a huge lack of information in the system that needs to be addressed. I have been tossed around between housing services and only managed to secure a house by luck. No one in the service actually knew what they were doing or where I needed to go.”*

Availability of, access to and relevance of information is highlighted as a key component in effective service delivery that users of these services believe are falling short. The consequence of this means that people with lived experience of housing and homelessness systems are not able to access support effectively, efficiently or in appropriate ways which ultimately affects their quality of life during these periods of need. People emphasised the importance of having *“clear communication within services”* and *“with people accessing services”*. This will be particularly vital during the current transition and mobilisation of service models of the new Alliances.

The Lived Experience Engagement Service sought to ascertain what needs to be considered in embedding lived experience in the development and distribution of information into service design and delivery. Engagement activities were held to elicit from people with lived experience the mechanisms that would improve relevancy and accessibility of information on housing options and homelessness services.

In these activities, people were asked to:

1. Indicate how and where they receive/received information about housing and homelessness services.
2. Discuss where they would prefer/have preferred to access information.
3. Identify information that is beneficial for people to know:
  - a. In the **short-term** when experiencing homelessness and seeking emergency housing.
  - b. In the **medium-term** when people secure short-term accommodation and are looking for more stable accommodation options.
  - c. In the **long-term** when people have stable or affordable housing and want more permanent accommodation options or their own home.

## Recommendations

The information below reflects where people with lived experience of housing stress and homelessness accessed information. It provides their recommendations as to where information should be located in the future to maximise the chances of people accessing the right information when they need it.

### **Where people found out information about housing and homelessness services:**

Word of mouth from:

- other people experiencing homelessness
- social worker
- case manager
- friend
- family member
- mental health worker.

**Suggested touchpoints for better accessibility of information:**



Medical facilities



Education facilities



Correctional facilities



Libraries



Centrelink



Aboriginal Health & Community Services



Caravan Parks



Employment Services Providers



Advertising billboards



Facebook



Shopping centres



Noticeboards



Telephone Support



A mobile app

**Medical facilities:** Hospitals to have a designated housing service provider section. Information to be available at medical clinics and mental health services.

**Education facilities:** Schools to have a designated service navigation role, similar to a guidance counsellor. Information to be available at TAFE centres, Universities, and other education providers.

**Correctional facilities:** Housing service information is not readily available for people in prison or other correctional facilities. Many do not have internet access therefore restricting their ability to search for available accommodation options and services.

**Free telephone service and an App:** A proactive telephone service that provides central, up to date automated service information (phone wait times are too long) and an App for those that have a mobile device. The App also provides information for service providers in other sectors so they are aware of who can offer support and what kind of supports they offer

People also discussed the kinds of information that would find beneficial at different stages of their journey through the housing and homelessness systems.

The following were described:

### **Essential information that people need in the short-term:**

- Medical information including bulk billing doctors and out-patient services,
- Where to access free food (soup kitchens, food banks etc.), showers, laundry facilities, clothing, essential products such as phones, backpacks, blankets and toiletries, mobile phone charging stations, bus tickets and other transport vouchers.
- 24/7 services *“homelessness is not a 9-5 Monday-Friday job that you can leave till Monday”*
- Identified safe spaces when sleeping rough
- Domestic and family violence services
- Boarding houses
- Camping and caravan sites
- People also wanted information on the requirements or criteria for getting into emergency accommodation.

### **Essential information that people need in the medium-term:**

- Information about multiple service providers to eliminate being locked into one service provider
- Access to a life coach, mentors or peer-support workers
- Nutritionist information
- Financial advisor
- Information on affordable appliance services (TV, furniture, laptops etc.)
- Database for affordable private rental properties
- Support services for older and younger people to secure private rental properties
- Information on what is required to get into private rental properties.

### **Essential information that people need in the long-term:**

- Information on eligibility criteria for home ownership
- Support to finance home ownership
- Pathways to owning a home after securing and maintaining a lease for a stipulated time
- Easily understandable rental terms and conditions and accessible transfer forms.

## Please share this report with your networks

Currently misinformation and lack of information means that it is by *chance* that people are able to access services. *“People feel lost in the system, confused, it creates barriers to accessing support, lack of clarity that leads to staying longer in an unwanted situation, it makes everything hard.”* Ultimately this means that the existing information is not accessible to the audience it is designed for and people are not getting the support they need when they need it.

### Acknowledgement

The Lived Experience Engagement Service wishes to express their sincere appreciation for the knowledge, insights and time provided by the Aboriginal Lived Experience Reference Group, Lived Experience Reference Group and engagement activity respondents.

### Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this document are of people who have current lived experienced accessing housing and homelessness services and are not necessarily those of the Lived Experience Engagement Service RentRight SA, a service delivered by SYC with funding from the SA Housing Authority (SAHA). This document is designed to provide information that assists the SAHA and the housing and homelessness sector to understand the needs of those using the services over the development and implementation of the 2020-2030 housing reforms. The information provided in this report can be utilised to better respond, reflect, plan, design and develop how lived experience will be embedded in the reform.