

Housing Policy and Procedures

Policy

Secure shelter is essential for all people for their dignity, wellbeing, and ability to participate in the broader community. Where feasible, BASP will prioritise those people seeking asylum for whom alternative housing is not available and where resources permit. It will support them to become self-sufficient where possible and transition to other housing in the community.

Procedures

A BASP Coordinator will assess each request for accommodation, gleaning all relevant information from a referring agency where relevant, and having a face-to-face meeting with the person in need.

The assessment will consider the person's/family's:

- current financial situation,
- alternative housing options,
- visa situation
- health issues
- ability to work/work rights.
- likely timeframe for housing and for most, the associated costs of daily living

The coordinator will then match the needs and urgency of those making the request with the type of housing available.

Options:

1. BASP houses.

BASP has varying arrangements with the houses it manages, depending on their source. Some are donated by e.g., religious communities for which there are no costs, low costs or costs of utilities only.

Some houses are leased through agents where BASP pays the rent and utilities and negotiates with the residents if and when they contribute to these expenses.

An agreement outlining these arrangements is provided to the resident and amended as circumstances change.

Residents are required to maintain the house and outdoor areas.

In shared house situations, matching with other residents already in the house is a consideration in offering accommodation places.

Where possible, BASP works with residents to secure income through work or benefits, to become independent and then be able to seek accommodation in their own right. This may involve taking over the lease of the house or applying for alternative rental.

Where the agreement involves a contribution to rent and / utilities, the BASP admin. officer records and follows up on payments.

2. External Rental Support.

BASP may agree to assist with rent and / utilities in houses which are in the tenant's names but where the tenant's ability to pay has been compromised. Assistance is usually for designated period while seeking other solutions such as assisting with training for employment, seeking other forms of housing or income support.

3. Community hosts.

A BASP co-ordinator meets with members of the community who offer accommodation in their home, such as a room or bungalow to people seeking asylum. BASP will assess their suitability (see Host Matching- risk factors), clarify the terms of the offer, including the timeframe, who will bear what costs, expectations, and restrictions on use of the dwelling, and any other issues. A satisfactory Working with Children's Check is required.

BASP will then identify potential asylum seeker candidate(s) who are considered suitable (see Host Matching- risk factors) and may match the offer. We will then arrange a meeting between the and house owner or representative and any other people who may be appropriate, e.g., the case worker from the relevant service provider agency. The meeting will normally occur where the accommodation will be offered. The meeting will introduce the parties, inspect the accommodation, confirm the conditions and expectations regarding use, including who will be doing what, and communication arrangements. Following this meeting, there is a cooling off period for both parties to consider whether to proceed.

If it is decided to proceed, BASP will work with both parties to assist with setting up and providing material and financial aid for basics if needed, specifics of this arrangement.

The main issues to consider include:

- The need to identify the main point of contact for the family and for person offering the accommodation. This will normally be the case worker or BASP.
- If BASP is the main point of contact, BASPs representative will be available for discussion and resolution of issues.
- BASP will assist with alternative arrangements if the accommodation arrangement falls through and will work to achieve an acceptable outcome with all parties.

- Other issues, mentioned above, include length of commitment, the extent of contribution to costs, expectations by the housing owner of the individual or family e.g., for upkeep of premises, involvement with housing owner, acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour.
- Understanding the balance between providing support to asylum seekers and sensitivity to the need for their independence and freedom of choice.

4. Alternative Options

If BASP has no suitable options, it will suggest alternatives, if such exist and / pay for very short-term housing in a hostel or motel for the person seeking asylum.

The housing arrangements are recorded in:

Teams/General Management/Housing/ Rental Properties –All BASP Housing

Teams/ General Management/Housing/Utilities -details for houses.

Teams/ General Management/Housing/BASP rentals-utilities 20-21

Teams/ General Management/Housing/BASP Monthly rentals

Teams/General Management/Contacts/Family Database

Relevant Forms are in found in:

Teams/ General Management/ Forms/Asylum Seeker Info Form

Teams/ General Management/ Forms/ Housing Offers Form

Teams/ General Management/ Forms/ Deed of lease template

Teams/ General Management/ Forms/Housing Agreement suggested format.

Teams/ General Management/ Forms/Host Matching Risk Factors

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BASP Coordinator LS