

Appendix five – Temporary accommodation for people sleeping rough - standard practice vs COVID-19 response

Element	Pre-COVID standard practice	COVID-19 response
Referral pathways	Individuals can contact a telephone service, Link2home, the Department's Housing office or a Community Housing Provider to commence an application for temporary accommodation.	Assertive outreach was rolled out state-wide, with increased patrols where such an approach was previously established. In some areas the Department partnered with NGOs to conduct further outreaches. Individuals could also still use the pre-existing pathways listed at left.
Eligibility criteria	Clients should: be a citizen or Australian resident, 16+ years old (or accompanied by parent or guardian), meet the social housing income eligibility limit, have no more than \$1,000 in case assets, be facing imminent homelessness, be unable to find alternative accommodation and demonstrates situations in which their personal safety or mental health may be at risk (or that of another household member), be facing a short wait for a more permanent housing solution.	Unchanged, but individuals identifying as sleeping rough were allocated more initial temporary accommodation (up to 30 days) than other clients (up to five days).
Application process	As part of the application process for temporary accommodation, individuals are required to provide two formal documents to verify their identity	This requirement was temporarily removed.
Initial accommodation period	Individuals are provided with two nights' accommodation and support, then need to attend the relevant Departmental office for a full housing needs assessment, which may include an extension of temporary accommodation. Individuals are limited to 28 days temporary accommodation per financial year. Temporary accommodation will not be continued where a client has received an offer of alternative appropriate accommodation (which may include social housing, private rental including share accommodation, registered boarding house or crisis accommodation).	The policy was changed to allow for individuals who self-identified as sleeping rough to be provided with 30 days accommodation initially, and assistance to work towards a long-term housing outcome. This period could be extended if the client continued to work with the Department to secure long term housing. Individuals who required temporary accommodation, but were not sleeping rough, were entitled to five nights' accommodation. The limit of 28 days temporary accommodation per financial year was removed until 1 July 2020.

Element	Pre-COVID standard practice	COVID-19 response
Engagement with supports and housing services	Individuals are required to contact a Departmental Housing Office, or relevant Community Housing Provider to commence working towards long-term housing outcomes.	<p>Cross-agency 'pop-up style' service access points were established in seven inner city hotels to assist people in temporary accommodation, and to provide information, support, housing assistance, access to mobile phones, and referral to other supports including health services.</p> <p>The Department contracted a service provider to liaise with every person entering temporary accommodation in Sydney during the pandemic to make an initial assessment of their needs and link them up with appropriate services.</p>
Annual capacity	Approximately 24,000 households and 169,000 nights' accommodation.	Approximately 36,000 households and 169,000 nights' accommodation.

Source: Audit Office analysis 2021.