

Aged & Disability Service Access Policy

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Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Aged & Disability

1. INTRODUCTION

The Aged & Disability Service Access Policy has been developed to provide a consistent approach for access to services from the Aged and Disability Department.

2. BACKGROUND

Wyndham City currently provides support services to people who are frail aged, people with a disability and carers from the Aged & Disability Department. The support activities include Home Support Services, Delivered Meals, Property Maintenance, Planned Activity Groups, Lunch with the Bunch, and Transport support. The services and supports are delivered with strong focus on wellness, reablement and restorative care.

Wyndham City has entered into a funding and service agreement with the Commonwealth as a service provider of the Home Support Programme, for people 65 years and over (or 50 years and over for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people) . Wyndham City has also entered into a service agreement with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services as a service provider for people with a disability under 65 years (or under 50 years for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people).

The objective of the Commonwealth Home Support Program is to provide entry-level support services to frail, older people to assist them to live independently at home and in the community. The services provided to people with a disability are also entry-level support services. Entry-level support is defined by the Commonwealth Home Support Programme Manual 2015 as referring to home support services provided at a low intensity on a short-term or ongoing basis, or higher intensity services delivered on a short-term or episodic basis.

Funding and service agreements include program objectives, outcomes, key features and service delivery principles. These serve to provide context for the management of service delivery. Wyndham City has service management frameworks that address the funding guidelines and integration into organisational policies, systems and processes.

Wyndham City has developed this Aged and Disability Service Access policy to ensure adherence to the funding and service agreements, and to ensure the services provided are planned within the resources available, responsive to community need, and equitably available.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a fair, consistent and transparent approach when determining access to services provided by the Wyndham City Aged and Disability Department. The services are targeted to people who have the greatest need and/or

capacity to benefit from them. This policy introduces further criteria for consideration to enable people within the target group to access timely basic support and maintenance services, whilst managing finite resources effectively and equitably.

The demand for Aged and Disability service supports will increase with population growth and the increasing numbers of older people requiring support to remain in their homes. Aged and Disability Services are currently close to capacity of funded service hours. The approach to service allocations to date has been to ration services, with service capping levels implemented as a rule of thumb.

Funding availability and security is a significant factor in determining service capacity and service parameters. The other key factor is the workforce availability and capabilities.

The current workforce is static. The workforce includes approximately 120 staff, predominantly employed on a part-time basis. The Direct Care staff are employed with minimum qualifications of Certificate III in Aged Care / Home and Community Care. The minimum qualifications and breadth of service expectations in the community require a transparent guide to realistically identify service capacity within the workforce. Health and safety is vital for staff and for those who access services. The introduction of this policy will support the protection of the health and safety of the workforce with guidelines to identify risks and introduce controls for identified risks to staff and clients.

Some individuals have support needs that that require specialist training to reduce or eliminate health and safety risks to themselves and/or staff. This policy supports the transparent identification of service exclusions. The exclusions will include specific health care tasks and service boundaries regarding individual behaviours that require specialist skills and strategies.

There is a specific concern in the capacity to provide appropriate service responses to younger people with disabilities. There are small numbers of staff within the current workforce who are willing and able to provide disability specific services. The provision of disability services for younger people is small compared to the larger volume of services provided to people over 65 years. The Aged and Disability Department management systems and workforce skill-sets have therefore been designed to be more suited to the provision of entry-level aged care. There are other disability service providers who have more expertise and capacity to provide the appropriate service responses for individuals under 65 years of age. Disability service providers have the appropriate management systems, targeted recruitment, workforce development and supervisory support that is specific to disability service delivery. The Aged and Disability Department is developing relationships with other disability providers to develop effective referral pathways or sub-contracting arrangements for individuals requiring specialist training. It would be costly to develop a specialist service for eligible residents when there are other community based agencies.

Wyndham City has a role in planning and advocacy for the community. The Aged and Disability Department are actively working toward the establishment of new and expansion of existing Community Service Organisations that support older people and people with disabilities. This will increase service capacity for the community and increase service options for individuals.

A considered and robust approach to manage service demand and service levels for the growing population of individuals requiring support with activities of daily living is required. This is the purpose of the new Aged and Disability Service Access policy, with supporting operational guidelines.

3. OBJECTIVES

The Service Access Policy, with supporting guidelines, has been developed to effectively manage equitable services into the future. The objectives of this policy are to have:

- services targeted toward those who will most benefit from them within finite resources;
- increased service capacity for the largest number of individuals who will benefit from the services;
- transparent policy guiding service access decisions;
- management of service expectations;
- an equitable and consistent approach to service access;
- management of risk regarding staff and client health and safety, and financial management of the services;
- a management system for those awaiting access to service;
- consistent decision making by Wyndham City staff;
- consistent responses from all levels of Wyndham City staff or Councillors upon complaint or appeal by someone requesting services, or disputing a decision to change services or service levels;
- the establishment of alternate providers and specialists in the Wyndham municipality through a strategic partnerships approach with community service organisations.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Department is committed to applying a fair, consistent and transparent approach for every person seeking access to services provided by the Department. Our commitment to maintain consistency will be achieved by ensuring access to services will be determined with consideration to:

- Individual eligibility
- Priority of access and level of need
- Available resources, and
- Staff and consumer safety.

4.1 Individual eligibility

The Aged and Disability Department will comply with the Commonwealth Home Support Programme Manual 2015 definition of eligibility as:

Frail, older person who:

- Is aged 65 years and over (or 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples); and
- Has difficulty in performing activities of daily living without help due to functional limitations (for example communications, social interaction, mobility or self-care); and
- Lives in the community.

The Aged and Disability Department will comply with eligibility criteria within the funding and services agreement with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services for services for people under 65 years of age.

Information regarding Eligibility:

- Trained staff screen for eligibility and conduct assessments to prioritise the level of need. It is the Assessment staff who develop negotiated individual support plans that identify goals, service activities and service levels
- Eligible people are then prioritised for service provision
- Eligibility for services is not based solely on age, but on the level of difficulty a person experiences in carrying out tasks of daily living. The support needs must be able to be met with entry-level support services
- Activities of daily living include personal care, dressing, preparing meals, house cleaning and maintenance, and using public transport
- Eligibility does not confer entitlement to service provision
- Services may not be able to be provided due to other people being assessed as a higher priority or resources not being available
- With consent, residents who are assessed as ineligible or low priority can be referred to an alternative service provider if available
- Assessment Officers will advise residents of the process to request a review of the eligibility decision where a person is deemed ineligible or low priority

- Eligibility can change as individual circumstances change. Eligibility for services can be reviewed at any time.

4.2 Priority of access and level of need

The Aged and Disability Department staff determine individual priority to access services based upon a range of considerations, described below. The priority categories are low, medium and high.

- Services are prioritised to people who have the greatest need and/or capacity to benefit from them.
- Services are only provided to people in the target group subject to assessment for eligibility and level of priority.
- Services are provided where they would not be otherwise available through self-provision, carer and family support or another government program.
- Priority is assessed in the context of the person's usual living environment and available supports, in comparison to other eligible people.
- Decisions are based on the assessment of each individual's situation and consideration of factors such as:
 - The level of service to be provided given that the Home Support Program funds entry-level supports
 - The vulnerability of the individual to further deterioration
 - The effect of service delivery on the unpaid carer
 - The likely effect of the service provided in assisting individuals to attain their goals
 - The effect on other existing and prospective consumers of providing services for the individual
 - Safety for consumers and staff
- Factors such as the person's relative needs and the capacity of service providers to respond with existing resources may mean that the services cannot be provided even if the person is eligible.
- Assessment Officers emphasis responsive service provision on the support plans for an agree time period and with agreed review points. This can lead to discussion of exit strategies and short term service use as part of the wellness and restorative approach to service provision.

4.3 Available resources

The approach to manage finite resources is to allocate resources in a way that provides the most benefit to the greatest number of people when demand for services exceeds supply. Maximum service levels have been introduced for a number of the service types in order to ration available resources. The maximum service levels will be reviewed periodically.

Waiting lists have been introduced for services, and will be actively managed by the Assessment team in order to reprioritise individual access to services as necessary.

The other supporting rationale to implement maximum service levels is the principle that clients who require higher intensity of ongoing care and support may be eligible for a Home Care Package. A Home Care Package may also be required when ongoing case management is required. The Commonwealth Home Support Program Manual 2015 states “that the defining feature of the entry tier (Home Support Program) is that services delivered to a client are, in total, generally lower than the cost or volume provided in a Home Care Package per annum”.

Current maximum service levels as at March 2016.

Service Type	Maximum Service Level
Domestic Assistance	1.5 hour per fortnight
Personal Care	3 episodes per week (with maximum of 45 mins hour per episode)
Planned Activity Groups	1 session per week, with 2 available if high levels of carer stress are evident
Respite	3 hours per fortnight if not accessing PAG
Shopping	2 hours per fortnight if not accessing delivered meals
Transport Support	2 trips per week

4.4 Staff and consumer safety

There are existing individuals receiving services that present a health and safety risk to staff. These residents are beyond the capacity of the current service provided by Council and the staff team due to:

- The potential of violence to the staff member either by the client or a person associated with the client
- The risk of the staff member developing a health problem as a result of attending to the client, as a result of such factors as smoking in the home, electrical, structural or other faults inherent in the building, the risk of infection as a result of vermin, needle stick injury, etc.
- Tasks deemed beyond the capacity expected of the service due to the level of worker training and the level of organisational support and systems.

Service Exclusion Guidelines will be developed and reviewed. The guidelines will be developed at the completion of a risk management process to identify the high risk activities and environments for staff that do not have viable controls that reduce or eliminate the risk to staff and/or clients. The high risk activities and environments will be detailed in the Service Exclusion Guidelines.

5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Service Access Pathway

Assessment is the gateway to Aged and Disability services. It establishes a person's eligibility to receive services, and it identifies the needs and capabilities, individual goals, and expectations of the person and their carer. It also sets up the person's best pathway through the service system.

Initial screening is undertaken by trained Assessment staff to determine whether the person is in the eligible target group, and identifies the person's need and priority for the services. If other needs are identified then, with consent, a referral is made to other service providers that can meet their needs.

In addition, the Assessment services provide a broader and more comprehensive check called a Living at Home Assessment. A Living at Home Assessment takes place in the client's home, when possible. It helps people to explore ways to live independently and remain active members of their community.

People can refer themselves to an assessment service, via the My Aged Care portal, or via referral by their general practitioner, health service or community organisation.

Assessment staff undertake reviews of support plans with clients at negotiated intervals and when there is a change in individual circumstances. This supports timely and effective service responses for an individual, and supports the ongoing management of the overall service system.

5.2 Operational Guidelines

The Assessment team have the day to day responsibility for implementation of the Service Access Policy and the development and review of the operational guidelines and procedures that support the policy. The policy and operational guidelines will be applied by all staff working the Aged and Disability Department.

The specific guidelines that relate to the Aged and Disability Service Access Policy are:

- Service Access Procedure
- Eligibility Guidelines
- Target Client Group Guidelines
- Service Request and Referrals Guidelines
- Request for Service and Referrals Template
- Service Exclusion Guidelines
- Service Allocation Guidelines
- Waitlist Procedure
- Ending Service Delivery Procedure

5.3 Introduction of Service Access Policy

- The Service Access Policy and operational guidelines will be implemented upon endorsement of the policy for all new and current clients.
- Guidelines will be implemented from first contact for new clients and upon review for current clients.
- At the time of policy endorsement, the maximum duration between individual reviews is 2 years.
- Client support plans will be reviewed in line with the policy and guidelines. Trained Assessment Officers will conduct the reviews with the individual and their support networks if appropriate.
- Services and service levels may be altered as an outcome of a review.
- With their consent, some individuals will be referred to a more appropriate service provider if available.

5.4 Communication of service access decisions

- Eligibility criteria are used to screen for eligibility when a person first makes contact with the service. The same criteria are also used to assess ongoing eligibility to receive services.
- Eligibility means that a person meets the eligibility criteria and is eligible to be assessed and prioritised for service provision.
- Eligibility does not translate to having an entitlement to services.
- Ineligible individuals are given detailed explanation of why they are ineligible.
- Individuals with service requests that meet the criteria of Service Exclusion guidelines will be given an explanation of why requested services will not be provided.
- People who are ineligible for a Wyndham City Aged and Disability service or meet the Service Exclusion Guidelines will be assisted to gain access to a more appropriate service.
- The individual is informed of the service access outcome during the Living at Home Assessment and during individual reviews.
- During the Living at Home Assessment and reviews the Assessment staff will provide information about
 - Making complaints
 - Advocacy processes
 - Rights and responsibilities

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Victorian Home and Community Care Program Manual 2013

Commonwealth Home Support Programme Manual 2015

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Service Access Procedure

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Service Exclusion Guidelines

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Eligibility Guidelines

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Target Client Group Guidelines

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Service Request and Referrals Guidelines

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Request for Service and Referrals Template

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Service Allocation Guidelines

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Waitlist Procedure

Wyndham City Aged and Disability Ending Service Delivery Procedure