## Online Homelessness Services Portal - connecting people experiencing homelessness with services and support

### What is the Online Homelessness Services Portal?

The Online Homelessness Services Portal (the Portal) is an online platform that acts as the ‘front door’ to accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness.

It aims to connect people seeking accommodation with available beds and valuable services more efficiently as well as increase visibility and utilisation of existing capacity within the homelessness response system.

The Portal will be developed and designed in consultation with a broad range of users and stakeholders.

Development is being undertaken by a consortium led by the successful tender recipient Infoxchange (a not-for-profit social enterprise which provides technology services); in partnership with community services provider Anglicare, the Innovation Unit, a not for profit social enterprise, and Perth-based digital design agency Anthologie.

Funded by the State Government, through the Department of Communities, and in partnership with the community services and corporate sector, this strategic initiative supports the All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030. It is a core piece of infrastructure supporting sector-wide adoption of a No Wrong Door approach to service delivery.

### Why do we need an online platform?

The Portal is an online platform that provides accessible information for people experiencing homelessness – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - about accommodation availability and support services. The Portal will maintain real time data on available beds and supports across a wide range of service providers, making it quicker and easier to support people.

With a user-friendly system of interconnected service providers, the Portal will:

* increase choice and control for users;
* provide transparent and up-to-date information; and
* improve referrals.

The Portal will be an online environment that is designed to foster trust among the user and service provider and facilitate relationship building between them.

The Portal will also aim to prevent ongoing trauma caused when people seeking support have to retell and relive their story multiple times as they engage homelessness service providers for assistance.

A Common Assessment Tool, being developed in parallel, will be used in the Portal design.

The platform will also deliver efficiencies for accommodation providers, including:

* + integration with the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) to reduce long administration processes;
  + simplified and electronic bed count updates; and
  + reduced time on the phone responding to vacancy queries.

### Who will use the Portal?

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness are the intended target audience and user of the Portal. They will be encouraged to use it to identify and connect with accommodation options that suit their circumstances, managing and sharing information important to them for this purpose.

Accommodation Services that provide crisis, transitional/supported and family and domestic violence accommodation (government funded and independent) will also use the Portal to:

* update bed count data and accommodation availability;
* receive accommodation enquiries and referrals;
* make any necessary referrals to other service providers; and
* generate reports and data to fulfill contractual obligations.

Referral agencies - including community sector organisations, prisons, hospitals, police, outreach and other supporting agencies - will use the Portal to identify appropriate accommodation options and support access for those experiencing homelessness.

### Will it always be called the Online Homelessness Services Portal?

No. A new name will be identified during the online portal design process.

### I want to give feedback on the project, who do I contact?

For feedback and enquiries about the project or if you would like further information about how to get involved in the Portal development can e-mail the Office of Homelessness at the Department of Communities at homelessness@communities.wa.gov.au.

## Facts for service providers

### Who will manage the Portal?

The Department of Communities will work in partnership with the community services sector and people with lived experience to develop a ‘No Wrong Door’ homelessness response system, a key principle under the Strategy.

Communities has contracted Infoxchange to develop the technical Portal system and manage the technical operations.

### Is it replacing SHIP or will it integrate with SHIP?

The Portal does not replace SHIP but does replace the existing bed count update required by Communities. The Portal will integrate with SHIP with the aim of reducing the administrative burden of contractually required reporting.

### Will services have control over what content they will display?

The functionality will be worked through in the design process, in partnership with the sector. Services will be responsible for providing content on their service.

### Are we contractually obligated to use it?

The Portal replaces the bed count update that is currently required.

In addition to increasing visibility and utilisation of existing capacity within the homelessness response system, the Portal will provide other benefits to service providers including,

* live bed count data and accommodation availability;
* streamlined referral pathways; and
* integrated reporting and data generation to support contractual obligations.

### I submitted an Expression of Interest for the sector design workshops. Why wasn’t I selected to participate?

The focus groups need to have representation across a diverse range of services and user types to support the design work effectively. All Expressions of Interest are assessed by a panel made up of members of the Project Consortium and the Department of Communities to achieve an appropriate level of diversity and representation. There may be limited places to create balanced perspectives for the workshops.

### I work in a regional area, how can I be part of the design workshops?

The sector design workshops will be facilitated online so participation is not limited by location.

### I support someone who has lived experience of homelessness and they would like to be involved. How do they get in touch?

Complete the Expression of Interest form attached and email it to the Office of Homelessness, at Department of Communities [homelessness@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:homelessness@communities.wa.gov.au)

or complete the online form [here.](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=tY-XZczTy0i8Bl_9uFzfktOI7NlOKupFlvU7au_twKhUN1UxNUhaU0M2SFNQT1lJOVU0WUJBRTAyVi4u)

## Facts for people looking for accommodation

### What will the Online Homelessness Services Portal do?

The Online Homelessness Services Portal (the Portal) will be a free online service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It will display available accommodation options and connect you to service providers across WA. It will help you to make direct contact to enquire about vacancies and available support services.

The Portal will also give you somewhere to store and manage important documents and information. You can choose who to share those documents with.

### What if I don’t have a phone or access to a computer?

You can access the Portal online at public libraries or other facilities with public access to computers

You can also still request access to accommodation through existing pathways; Engagement Hubs, calling Entry Point Perth or contacting accommodation services directly.

### When can I use it?

The Portal is planned to be available in 2023.

### How can I be involved?

We will have different opportunities in the Perth metropolitan area for people with lived experience to contribute. Let us know if you are interested by completing the Expression of Interest [here](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=tY-XZczTy0i8Bl_9uFzfktOI7NlOKupFlvU7au_twKhUN1UxNUhaU0M2SFNQT1lJOVU0WUJBRTAyVi4u) or online [Expression of Interest Form - Lived Experience (office.com)](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=tY-XZczTy0i8Bl_9uFzfktOI7NlOKupFlvU7au_twKhUN1UxNUhaU0M2SFNQT1lJOVU0WUJBRTAyVi4u)

### More information or questions

If you would like further information about how to get involved or any general inquires and updates on the Portal, please contact The Office of Homelessness, at Department of Communities [homelessness@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:homelessness@communities.wa.gov.au) or go online to [Online Homelessness Services Portal (www.wa.gov.au)](https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/online-homelessness-services-portal)