

MODULE FIVE

Collaboration

A TOOL KIT FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING ORGANISATIONS

Collaboration to support veterans to access community housing

Community housing organisations (CHOs) have extensive skills and expertise in establishing and strengthening collaborative working relationships with support services relevant to their tenant groups to enable those tenants to be supported effectively. Working effectively to support veteran applicants and tenants will be strengthened by CHOs establishing such networks with a range of veteran support organisation.

This module discusses what a potential throughcare model could look like to support vulnerable veterans as they transition from the ADF to civilian life to support them as they establish themselves.

It explores the development of a working relationship with ADF transition staff to support early intervention and prevention of homelessness through the development of referral pathways to CHOs. ADF transition staff include a range of teams and personnel

defence.gov.au/members-families/Transition

Photo: Royal Australian Air Force personnel from No. 4 Squadron survey the airstrip Honiara International Airport, Solomon Islands, on 28 November 2021. Photographer: CPL Brandon Grey

Exploring the development of a throughcare model

CHOs, the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) establishing a relationship will create and maintain referral pathways between the services, which is particularly important to respond to the needs of vulnerable veterans. This will therefore require a rapport to be developed by individual CHOs with the ADF, the DVA and ESOs.

It is noted that there are a large number of different roles in the ADF and there are many transitioning and former service personnel who do not have heightened vulnerabilities and/or experience institutionalisation in a manner that is problematic in relation to transitioning to civilian life. However, for those former ADF personnel who experience homelessness, they are most likely to be the most vulnerable and/or institutionalised and may not have had a rental history (particularly if they lived on the ADF base). For those who may have developed learned dependency whilst in the ADF who require more intensive supports, including to be able to obtain and sustain suitable housing, a throughcare approach may be appropriate.

Institutionalisation is the process by which beliefs, norms, social roles, values, or certain modes of behaviour are embedded in an organisation, a social system, or a society as a whole. These concepts are said to be institutionalised when they are sanctioned and internalised within a group or a society. Through institutionalisation, rules and procedures are developed or transformed in order to influence human interactions, coordinate behaviour, create normative action, and regulate social roles¹.

When a person is institutionalised within a particular institution, it often becomes difficult for them to live outside the institutional context.

Through institutionalisation, people get used to definite norms, they behave in a patterned and expected way, and their actions become predictable and regular. This institutionalised behaviour results from being a member of what Erving Goffman called a Total Institution, for example, a prison, mental asylum, an orphanage, the military and so on. A person in a prison is so used to living there being locked up for a long time, that it can be difficult for them to live outside. This can also be the same experience for personnel transitioning from the ADF. They can be institutionalised².

Throughcare is the process of a smooth transition for a person exiting an institution to the community – in this instance, ADF personnel exiting the ADF to civilian life. Throughcare is about individualised care, recognising that good throughcare provision is developed on the assumption that each person has particular, individual needs that are different from those of others. Personnel exiting the ADF are all different. They are from a range of ages, male or female, they may have medical conditions or specific health issues and they all have different family and cultural backgrounds.

Throughcare provision therefore needs to be tailored to the needs of individual ADF personnel. Services involved in throughcare must be aimed at the individual and suited to their individual needs, not a standard 'one size fits all' approach.

Throughcare includes access to additional support for issues that may include mental health, general health, housing, managing personal finance, family problems, learning new skills or utilising current skills in new areas and gaining employment. Successful throughcare will involve a combination of service providers and interventions.

For throughcare services to be successful, it is essential that each agency and institution has a clear division of tasks and is working with a shared goal in mind.

Four areas have been identified as the key elements of a successful throughcare service:

Health: Transitioning ADF personnel may have medical and/or health issues, including mental health.

Family/social supports: Transitioning ADF personnel may have limited family and/or social supports or may be experiencing difficulties in these relationships. Support is vital for the effective transitioning into civilian life.

Finance and housing: Whilst transitioning ADF personnel are linked with the DVA to explore and determine payments they are entitled to, the transitioning ADF personnel may have limited financial literacy (due to their finances being 'managed' whilst being in the ADF). There may also be limited understanding of what housing options are available and the costs to set up a property i.e. bond, rent in advance, utility costs etc.

Employment: A sense of purpose and stability is critical for people exiting an institutional environment such as the ADF.

A collaborative approach (with the transitioning ADF personnel's permission) will ensure that such duplication does not occur.

CHOs should be aware of the institutional arrangements and administrative structures. It should be remembered that the ADF have accountability for their ADF personnel and this should be respected by all external agencies working with the transitioning ADF personnel. Such responsibilities can act as a barrier to collaboration and should not be viewed by external agencies such as CHOs as an unwillingness to co-operate. Rather, the parties should negotiate a collaboration that satisfies the requirements of all concerned.

The identification of key contact people in the ADF and external agencies is critical to the smooth running of throughcare services. Experience indicates that in throughcare delivery, the development of personal working relationships is significant.

A CHO could contact Triage and Connect on triageandconnect@dva.gov.au (preferred) or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** to help identify the key contacts in the ADF who a CHO might want to connect with across their region.

Collaborative approach

One of the most powerful instruments in providing successful throughcare services is effective cooperation and networking between the ADF and external organisations that support the transitioning ADF personnel into civilian life.

It appears that there is a need to further develop and improve collaboration and structured networking between the ADF and CHOs in order to support a throughcare approach. It is not typical for CHOs to access ADF bases to be involved in the transitioning process, however, this may be an idea to explore with local ADF bases to determine whether such a presence is considered necessary/appropriate for individual transitioning ADF personnel.

A significant advantage of such a throughcare approach (apart from the obvious advantages to the transitioning ADF personnel) is avoiding duplication of tasks by different services / individuals.

¹ <https://www.sociologygroup.com/institutionalization-definition-meaning/> viewed 01/11/2020

² <https://www.sociologygroup.com/institutionalization-definition-meaning/> viewed 01/11/2020

Establishing a throughcare approach

Establishing and maintaining an effective working relationship is a complex task, involving the sharing of values, effective communication, clarity about specific roles and responsibilities of partners, as well as the appropriate lines of decision making. Communication and information sharing are essential aspects of a trusting and effective working relationship.

Therefore, the following criteria could assist to organise a throughcare approach:

- Appoint an official liaison person for each organisation
- Draft a memorandum of understanding or other less formal arrangement
- Organise information sharing / feedback meetings on a regular basis.

There are many different possible approaches to start the process of cooperation between the ADF and external organisations. One example is to organise a discussion with the ADF on throughcare.

The aims of this dialogue can be to:

- identify areas of common interest for the ADF and external organisations (such as CHOs)
- raise awareness amongst ADF transitioning staff of external organisations (such as CHOs) and the potential benefits of cooperation with them
- develop cooperation skills to allow the ADF to involve external organisations (such as CHOs) in the throughcare process.

During this discussion, all parties involved should be given the opportunity to present themselves, their mission, their core values, their areas of competence, their services and strategies, their resources and their actual or possible contribution to the throughcare process. The ADF could be requested to prepare information about how external organisations (including CHOs) can help with any throughcare activities in the ADF and about what representatives of external agencies (such as CHOs) should know before coming to the ADF base to deliver services or information sharing.

This dialogue could be followed up in different ways. One step might be to compile a Throughcare Directory, in which all relevant external agencies are listed (such as descriptions of services and useful contacts). It is important that any such directory is updated on a regular basis. The directory might be used by ADF transition staff as a source of information when looking for specific services for transitioning ADF personnel as they transition to civilian life.

The dialogue can also be the starting point for a more structured and formalised working relationship between the ADF and external agencies.

Preparing for effective cooperation

The following identifies key aspects of collaboration and shared practice that need to be in place to support an effective throughcare model.

Effective throughcare networking is possible if the following quality criteria are met:

- Common goals are defined and agreed between partners
- A co-ordinating body is agreed by all parties
- Roles, responsibilities and tasks of all parties are clearly defined
- Quality standards are defined
- Transparency, trust and relationship are guiding principles
- Individual case planning is established (e.g. interdisciplinary case conferences)
- There are clear procedures on communication, information sharing and information protection
- There are clear and sustainable funding structures
- All services are individual and locally or regionally oriented
- On-going evaluation is an integral part of the networking process.

Providing information to transitioning ADF personnel

CHOs should establish with the ADF transition staff what information is distributed to transitioning ADF personnel to minimise the risk of double up of information.

Emphasis should be on building and extending existing provision and CHOs should focus on housing related information. However, there may be local information about supports, services, and activities that could be useful i.e. local events and activities that could provide psychosocial support.

Transitioning ADF personnel should be provided with information to help them determine the most appropriate housing options.

General information includes:

- Aims and objectives of organisations and the services they provide
- Material designed to help transitioning ADF personnel identify where they can go to get assistance / further information
- List of services each organisation provides
- How each organisation can assist
- How clients can access information
- List of contacts
- How to make contact with services
- Costs associated with setting up housing (regardless of the housing option chosen by the client).

It is vital that this information is kept up to date and all phone numbers, addresses, web links and contact persons must be current.

Information needs to be:

- easily understood by transitioning ADF personnel with a wide range of abilities
- written in accessible language that meets the needs of all clients
- focused on options open to clients both transitioning from the ADF and after they have entered civilian life.

There are several ways information can be provided:

- Textual leaflets or small booklets
- Easy to read leaflets
- Use existing ADF information sources
- Face to face information
- A combination of approaches.

Information can be delivered by a wide range of people including:

- ADF transition staff
- External staff (such as CHO representatives)
- Peer workers.

The provision of information to transitioning ADF personnel is vital but it is also important that they are not the passive recipients of information. Providing information must be carried out with a participatory approach in mind. Transitioning ADF personnel need to consent to the throughcare process and be made aware beforehand exactly what the process involves.

Information is not only one way. It is important for all staff assisting the transitioning ADF personnel to not only provide information but also listen carefully to their views and accept their requests and ideas. It is important that transitioning ADF personnel make their own choice in relation to housing and other such matters and are aware that the staff are there to support and guide them, as appropriate.

CHECKLIST: PRINCIPLES OF PROVIDING EFFECTIVE INFORMATION FOR TRANSITIONING ADF PERSONNEL

Throughcare Principle	Why would we consider this?	Action Point
Trust has been created between provider and the recipient of information	Trust is a fundamental component of the relationship required for effective collaboration	Who in our CHO represents us in dealings with veteran services?
Information is accessible, up to date and easy to understand	Clear information communicated well minimises the need to keep repeating critical information to the veteran and other services	When did we last review our information resources to ensure they are accessible, up to date and easy to understand? DATE:
The ADF transition staff have identified the key issues relating to housing at the point of the transitioning ADF personnel exiting into civilian life	Seeking clarity from the ADF on key issues is critical to building an effective throughcare model and collaborative approach	Who in our CHO is responsible for seeking clarity on these issues from the ADF?
Feedback is shared between stakeholders routinely	Developing a planned approach to gather and share feedback is a critical aspect of effective collaboration	What dates are scheduled to seek feedback from partners in this project? DATE:
The individual needs of clients, cultural identification and context are taken into account in delivering information	This action will support effective communication and information dissemination	Explore the tools and approaches used in our CHO to communicate effectively across cultures
Information to transitioning ADF personnel is non-discriminatory	It is important that all people engaging with our CHO feel welcomed and valued	Our information resources are reviewed to ensure they are welcoming YES ☐ NO ☐
A variety of methods are used in the delivery of information	A variety of communication tools are developed to meet the range of learning styles applicants would present with.	Our CHO media and communications team use a variety of approaches to communicate with community members: Pamphlets ☐ Videos ☐ Social media ☐ Other ☐