

Summary

Life Without Barriers (LWB) supports the right for people to live where, how, and with whom they want in their shared household. This means promoting choice and control when addressing issues of resident occupancy within LWB's Supported Independent Living (SIL) services. LWB is also committed to partnering with the people we support and other providers to ensure the delivery of financially responsible supports that are efficient and directed towards benefiting the people we support. To do this LWB is guided by the following principles:

Collaboration: LWB supports a collaborative decision-making process with current residents, their families and decision-makers, and prospective applicants. Decision-making is based on quality information, documented preferences, informed choice and decisions that are reasonable and justifiable. As appropriate, Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) housing providers, the "landlords," LWB SIL staff and other professionals may also be consulted.

Compatibility: LWB ensures the emotional, social, physical, and environmental preferences and the needs of the current residents are considered when identifying the preferred applicant.

Equity: All applications are considered in a fair, equitable and transparent manner.

Safety: Of primary concern is the safety and well-being of existing and potential residents, along with that of LWB staff. Support requirements and urgency of need are key elements considered.

Sustainability: To reduce any financial impact on household running costs and to ensure the delivery of sustainable supports within available funding, LWB seeks a timely and respectful resolution to any residential vacancy.

Who should read this document?

This policy guideline applies to all residents of LWB SIL services, prospective clients, their families and supports, and LWB employees involved in the management and/or delivery of SIL supports.

What is our aim?

To provide high-quality accommodation services by supporting the rights of individuals regarding their housing and supporting people to live as independently as possible, while ensuring financial responsibility and optimising service outcomes. This includes incorporating existing residents' views, preferences and needs when addressing a vacancy in a home.

Scope

This policy applies to vacancies in all LWB SIL houses, including SDA properties.

This policy outlines how LWB will partner with clients to seek creative solutions and best practice to address vacancies within a SIL service.

Vacancy Management Procedure

- Vacancies may arise in many ways, both planned and unexpected. However, when a vacancy in a home occurs, it opens the opportunity to think collaboratively about different options available. This could include:
 - Advertising for a new co-resident,
 - Considering a new model of support, including the number of people living in a home, or
 - Exploring other residential options for existing residents.
- LWB will discuss the options available, and the approach required for each. This includes ensuring everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities and documenting existing residents' preferences for any new resident for use when identifying a preferred applicant.
- To enable timely support to the existing residents and staff, vacancies must be declared internally within 48 hours of Client Services staff becoming aware of an actual or planned vacancy.
- All vacancies will be advertised on Housing Hub, Go Nest and the LWB website and will remain open for at least 10 working days.
 - Extra advertising on social media platforms is by negotiation between the Regional Operational Manager (ROM), LWB's Marketing and Communications team and the existing residents of the home.
 - Circumstances may occur where an advertisement is not appropriate e.g., on compassionate grounds. When approved, vacancies will not be advertised until suitable to do so.
- All NDIS participants can apply for an LWB SIL vacancy.
 - LWB will consider applications from individuals with funding through Supported Independent Living (NDIS Plan), the Disability Support for Older Australians program, Voluntary Out of Home Care, Out of Home Care, Mental Health, and other funding models.
 - If the SIL vacancy is in an SDA property, the person's NDIS plan ideally includes SDA funding. Where the applicant does not have SDA funding, LWB will work with them to request SDA funding from the NDIA (as suitable) and/or seek exemption from the relevant housing provider.
 - Note: Short Term Accommodation (STA), Community Participation and other support items within an individual's NDIA plan are not suitable alternatives for SIL funding.

- All applications for a vacancy must be assessed fairly and equitably. Evidence of the basis for any decisions regarding successful and unsuccessful candidates must be recorded and stored.
- A shortlist of applicants for consideration should be developed from the applicant pool. Shortlisting will be based on:
 - Compatibility of the applicants with the existing residents, taking into consideration documented preferences, support requirements, behaviours, and other needs.
 - The capacity of the model to meet the stated preferences, the reasonable and necessary supports and requirements of the applicant.
 - LWB’s ability to create the right level of supports in the home with the available funding for the new person and the existing people or there are clear paths to support individuals to acquire the appropriate funding.
 - Where suitable and practical, property viewings are organised for shortlisted applicants to allow them to assess the physical/environmental suitability of the property.
- The Disability Support Leader (DSL)/House Supervisor will facilitate house meetings to consider the shortlisted applications and identify the preferred applicant(s).
The house meeting must consist of at least three people and include existing resident/s and/or their representative/s and the DSL/House Supervisor. Others to be considered are:
 - Engagement / Intake team member
 - SIL staff
 - Regional Operations Manager
 - Others from the persons’ support network like their Support Coordinator or other professionals
 - SDA or other housing provider
- The house meeting will review the shortlisted applications and will consider:
 - The views, preferences and needs of both the current resident/s and the applicant.
 - Any risks to the health and safety of current residents and staff, including whether identified risks can be lessened.
 - Whether the house and environment are suitable to meet the support needs of the applicant.
 - Whether the applicants’ support requirements, health management and personal goals can be met by their existing SIL funding, or other approved funding, when sharing supports with existing residents.
 - The knowledge, skills, and profile of the existing support staff, and whether additional staff training will be necessary to provide the required level of support to the applicant.
 - Whether the person’s contact with family and natural supports can be maintained.
 - Whether the option will provide the person with opportunities to gain new skills and independence.
 - Any other factors that are specific to the environment and individuals involved.

- It is the responsibility of the Disability Support Leader/House Supervisor to ensure they manage:
 - privacy and confidentiality of applicants and existing residents; and
 - any potential conflict of interest.
- Where practical, existing residents and shortlisted applicants should be given an opportunity to meet as part of the applicant assessment process. This might include BBQs, morning teas or another social event at the house. This will allow current residents to make an informed decision about with whom they would prefer to live.
- LWB’s preferred outcome is a unanimous decision. Where a preferred applicant is not unanimously identified by the house meeting representatives, the majority view of the existing resident/s and/or their representative/s will be considered by LWB, and as required, “the landlord” as the preferred applicant. LWB will work with the existing resident/s and/or their representative/s and landlords to ensure all safety considerations/concerns are addressed before endorsing the majority view.
- Where a consensus cannot be reached, LWB will communicate the rationale behind the decision to make an offer of residency to the existing residents.
- An offer of residency will be made to the preferred applicant. This applicant will have five (5) business days to advise whether they accept or decline the offer.
- If the preferred applicant declines the offer of residency, a further house meeting may be called and previous applicants reconsidered. The vacancy may be offered to an alternative suitable applicant, or they may choose to readvertise the vacancy.
- If the preferred applicant accepts the offer of residency, any unsuccessful applicants will be notified accordingly. Information will be provided on how to raise any questions or concerns regarding the decision through LWB’s feedback and complaints channels.
- Following confirmation that the residency will proceed, Client Services staff must ensure that the successful applicant has:
 - SIL funding (or other permanent funding) and a Service Booking (or equivalent)
 - An LWB Service Agreement
 - An LWB Client Profile
 - An LWB Shared and Supported Living - Individual Support Plan

All documentation **MUST** be completed before the new resident moves in.

NOTE: The Housing Provider is responsible for ensuring an Accommodation / Tenancy Agreement is in place. Where LWB is the Housing Provider, this is the responsibility of the National Disability Housing Unit (NDHU). This must be completed before the person moves in.

- If there are no applications for the vacancy during the minimum advertising period (i.e., 10 working days) or none of the applicants are deemed suitable, the advertisement will be extended.

- Should a suitable applicant not be found, Client Services will partner with existing residents to explore alternate solutions such as alternative accommodation, new models of support and different funding streams.

Related Policy, Legislation and References

- United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability, 2006
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act (2013)
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators.
- NDIS Supported Independent Living Guide