



## ALLOCATIONS POLICY

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### 1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes the approach of South Port Community Housing Group Inc. (SPCHG) to:

- eligibility for its long-term rental housing programs;
- the prioritisation and allocation of vacant properties in its long-term rental housing portfolio; and
- successful and sustainable tenancies and communities through the matching applicants to properties

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all long-term rental properties owned or managed by SPCHG.

### 3. PRINCIPLES

#### 3.1. ELIGIBILITY FOR HOUSING

SPCHG establishes eligibility criteria for long-term housing to fulfil its social mission and to ensure that its housing is made available to people who have experienced, or are at risk of, homelessness.

Accordingly, SPCHG will:

- only allocate long-term housing to eligible applicants;
- communicate clearly to applicants and the community as to who is eligible for long-term housing with SPCHG; and
- comply with its contractual, legal and regulatory obligations relating to eligibility for long-term housing.

#### 3.2. APPROACH TO ALLOCATION

SPCHG will allocate long-term housing to eligible applicants and in a manner which:

- is fair, transparent and equitable;
- relieves households from housing stress;
- is in accordance with its contractual, legal and regulatory obligations; and
- supports the financial viability of SPCHG's long term housing programs.

SPCHG is committed to promoting a successful and sustainable tenancy when matching applicants to its properties. This means that SPCHG will allocate housing in a way that:

- gives appropriate priority to households in need of housing assistance;
- considers the health, safety and support needs of applicants;
- matches individual housing needs with available properties; and
- supports sustainable and harmonious communities.



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### 4. POLICY

#### 4.1. ELIGIBILITY OF HOUSING.

SPCHG participates in the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). The VHR is a common register for all applicants seeking public and community housing in Victoria.

Homes Victoria has established common eligibility criteria for the VHR that are set out in the [Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines](#). The VHR's eligibility criteria apply to all long-term housing owned, managed or controlled by SPCHG in Victoria.

All applicants with a current VHR application are taken by SPCHG to meet the VHR eligibility criteria.

Applicants without a current VHR application can provide evidence to SPCHG that establishes they meet the VHR eligibility criteria. SPCHG will then assist such applicants to make a VHR application either through referral to a suitable service or by assisting the applicant to lodge a VHR application.

##### 4.1.1. *Additional requirements for eligibility for long-term housing*

In addition to meeting the VHR eligibility criteria, to be eligible for long-term housing with SPCHG, an applicant must:

- Be experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness
- Be on government benefits
- Have a connection to the local area

#### 4.2. APPROACH TO ALLOCATION

##### 4.2.1. *Allocations Target - Victorian Housing Register*

Under the VHR's allocations framework, SPCHG is required to meet an annual Priority Allocations Target. This requires SPCHG to allocate 75% of vacancies in Targeted Social Housing to Priority Access applicants in each financial year. As not all of SPCHG's properties are Targeted Social Housing, this Target is adjusted so that SPCHG can make allocations across its portfolio in order to meet the Target.

SPCHG will implement procedures to monitor its performance against the Priority Allocations Target regularly to ensure that SPCHG complies with its obligations.

##### 4.2.2. *Sourcing applicants*

People can apply for housing at SPCHG if they are on the VHR and:

- Self Refer
  - Self Referrals are individuals who make contact directly with SPCHG, either by calling or presenting at the SPCHG office
- Agency referral
  - SPCHG staff will contact agencies when there is a housing vacancy. This is referred to as an Agency referrals.

There are different procedures for self-referral and agency referral.

Given the amount of self-referrals present at SPCHG, this is the main method in which housing is allocated. However staff will use their discretion as to whether to allocate housing through self-referral or agency referral, based on the unit available and the individuals on the reference list.



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### 4.2.3. *New Tenancy Allocation*

New tenancies at SPCHG are allocated housing within the bed-sit program. To access one-bedroom apartments at SPCHG, please refer to the transfer policy.

### 4.3. **PROMOTING SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES**

SPCHG is committed to treating all applicants fairly and will not unlawfully discriminate against any potential applicant or applicant.

SPCHG will assess all applicants before making an offer of housing to determine suitability for a particular vacancy (and eligibility if the applicant does not currently have a VHR application). If SPCHG declines to offer an applicant housing, it will inform the applicant accordingly.

#### 4.3.1. *Matching households to the right home*

SPCHG will, as best we can, match applicants to properties so that an allocation:

- is the right size for the applicant's household;
- is in an area consistent with the applicant's needs;
- assists the applicant to access employment or any support services that they need;
- makes the best use of housing stock owned or managed by SPCHG;
- encourages a sustainable tenancy; and
- meets any particular expressed needs of the applicant so far as they are known, such as modifications for people with a physical disability or mobility impairment, availability of car parking or room for carers.

SPCHG aims to make sure that properties with specific features that are in high demand and short supply are only allocated to those applicants who need them, including:

- properties that are suitable for older people
- properties that have been built or modified to meet the needs of people with a disability;
- properties on the ground floor,
- properties with level access; or
- properties with a yard/garden.

SPCHG will ask applicants to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate any particular requirements, if this is not contained in a VHR application.

#### 4.3.2. *Supporting sustainable and harmonious communities*

SPCHG may, to the extent necessary, adopt different strategies in allocation in response to:

- a high concentration of public and community housing stock in a particular area;
- a high concentration of tenants with multiple health, social or economic issues in a particular area or building;
- existing tenancy management issues (or a potential for them to develop);
- existing neighborhood tensions or disputes which may be exacerbated if allocations are not sensitively handled; and
- a mismatch of supply and demand making the property hard to let.

## 5. **SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO SUPPORT ALLOCATIONS**

- Victorian Housing Register (VHR)
  - The VHR is the common housing waiting list which is operated by DHHS.



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- SPCHG Self Referral Contact List
  - An internal list of names, emails and phone numbers of individuals who have contacted SPCHG to obtain housing
- SPCHG Reference List
  - An internal reference list of individuals seeking housing who have undergone the intake interview process. This list is used to track individuals post interview, to ensure that when housing becomes available, applicants are able to be moved in as quickly as possible.
- Intake Assessment Form
  - An assessment form conducted with all applicants of housing at SPCHG during the intake interview
- Support Service Matrix
  - A matrix determining the level of support required for a tenancy

### 6. MAKING AN OFFER

Applicants offered housing under the VHR are provided two reasonable offers. SPCHG will make an offer of an available unit within our portfolio based on the information the applicant has provided at the time in order to best meet their needs.

If an applicant rejects a reasonable offer of housing, it will be recorded on the VHR as a refused offer.

### 7. SIGN UP

Upon acceptance of an offer of housing, SPCHG will arrange for a 'sign-up' appointment.

At the sign-up appointment, SPCHG requires applicants to:

- Read, understand and sign documents relating to the rental agreement,
- Make payment of rent in advance.

SPCHG will provide each new renter:

- A signed copy of the rental agreement
- Two signed copies of the condition report
- Keys to access and secure the property
- A SPCHG 'sign up kit' containing information on the renter's rights and responsibilities ; information on how the weekly rent payment has been calculated and how to pay rent; and SPCHG contact details, including contact details for urgent repairs.



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### 8. DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

Applicant	means a person who has applied for housing via the VHR or, where permitted by this policy, directly to [CHO]
DFFH	means the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Connection to Local Area	Means the applicants have a connection to the local area through family, community, health services, has lived/s in the area or otherwise significant reason to want to live in the local areas.  It also refers to the applicants selection of Inner Metro South Broadband area in the VHR as a desired place to live.
Homes Victoria	Homes Victoria is a Victorian Government agency established under an amendment to the Housing Act 1983 to deliver the Big Housing Build and transition the role of the former Director of Housing to Chief Executive Officer, of Homes Victoria. The agency assumes the role and responsibility as the principal funding body for social housing in Victoria.
Priority Access	Applicants on the VHR who have been assessed as having a priority housing need. The Priority Access Categories are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Management Housing</li> <li>• Priority Transfers</li> <li>• Homeless with Support</li> <li>• Supported Housing</li> <li>• Temporary Absence</li> <li>• Special Housing Needs</li> <li>• Special Housing Needs (Aged 55 years and over)</li> </ul>
Public housing	Housing owned and managed by Homes Victoria
Targeted Social Housing	The properties that are considered Targeted Social Housing under agreements between SPCHG and the Director of Housing.
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the statewide common application for people seeking public housing and community housing

### 9. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- SPCHG Internal Transfer Policy
- SPCHG Rent Setting Policy
- SPCHG Rent Management Policy
- SPCHG Complaints Policy
- SPCHG Privacy Policy
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Interim General Lease between SPCHG and Director of Housing

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- Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines

### 10. PROCEDURES FOR SELF-REFERRAL ALLOCATIONS AT SPCHG

The procedure discussed below is for individuals who have made contact directly with SPCHG and are in need of housing. Going through an allocation process does not guarantee housing and is dependent on a variety of factors discussed below.

The steps below provide a step-by-step process on how allocations are conducted for individuals who present to SPCHG. Steps 1 -5 are done every few months to ensure that when housing is available, it can be tenanted quickly.

#### STEP 1. INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS SPCHG BY PHONE OR IN PERSON

Once contact is made, SPCHG staff will establish whether the applicant is enrolled on the VHR. If they are not, SPCHG will provide guidance on how the applicant can get on to the VHR.

SPCHG will discuss with the applicant to ensure they are single, on government benefits and have a connection to the local area. They will explain what kind of housing SPCHG has to offer and make clear that by accepting housing at SPCHG, they will be removed from the VHR.

SPCHG will take down the name, email and phone number of the self-referred applicants and they will be placed on the SPCHG Self Referral Contact List

#### STEP 2. CONTACTING APPLICANTS

When the reference list is low, staff will send out an email / text to people on the email list. It will inquire whether they still need housing, and if they do need housing, to get in contact with staff to organise an intake interview.

#### STEP 3. STAFF ORGANISE INTERVIEWS WITH APPLICANTS AND CHECK THE VHR

Staff will organise a time for the intake interview with applicants who responded to the email / text sent out.

Staff will log-on to the VHR to ensure that applicants are:

- on the VHR as a priority application
- have selected an area within the inner Southern Metropolitan area to live
- are single with no dependents
- are on government benefits

If there is a concern with the results from the search, staff should contact the applicant prior to the interview to clarify the concern. This should not prevent the interview from occurring, if staff believe this can be combatted. However, it is important to discern that the applicant is single and wants to live within the inner Southern Metropolitan area where SPCHG properties are located.



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### STEP 4. CONDUCTING INTAKE INTERVIEWS.

Staff will conduct an intake interview with self-referrals who are still interested in housing

1. Discern whether applicant is suitable for SPCHG housing and whether they would like to be housed with SPCHG. Ensure they meet SPCHG eligibility criteria
  - Single Person
  - Homeless / At Risk of Homeless
  - On Government Benefits
  - Connection to Local Area
    - They must have selected 'Inner Metro South' as a location preference to be eligible for our housing
  - Selected Community Housing on the VHR
2. Important Information to communicate expectations
  - Payment of Rent
  - Violence is not accepted at SPCHG
  - Require two weeks rent in advance
3. If person is suitable for SPCHG housing, go through Intake Form
4. Staff will make clear that an offer of housing at SPCHG, means they will be taken off the VHR
5. Show potential tenant an available unit (if this is possible)
6. Staff will discuss with the applicant the process for obtaining housing and if there are any issues which arose during the interview process that could hinder their ability to gain housing at SPCHG
  - Explain that the renter will go on to a reference list, and SPCHG will contact them when there is a vacancy. It should be explained that they should remain on the VHR and explore housing alternatives as our tenancy turn-over rate is low.

### STEP 5. DETERMINE LEVEL OF SUPPORT REQUIRED

Using the Support Service matrix, determine the level of support required to sustain tenancy. Housing is not contingent on support, however, at SPCHG, we understand the importance of support in sustaining tenancies.

Tenants are given the option to seek support from local services, however, if they do not, staff will work alongside tenants at the beginning of the tenancy to ensure the tenancy is sustainable.



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### STEP 6. UNIT BECOMES AVAILABLE

### STEP 7. STAFF IDENTIFY SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR THE AVAILABLE UNIT

### STEP 8. STAFF WILL COLLATE INFORMATION FROM SPCHG REFERENCE LIST AND MEET ABOUT THE APPLICANTS AND THEIR SUITABILITY.

### STEP 9. CHOOSE APPLICANT WITH EARLIEST REGISTRATION DATE THAT FITS THE UNIT CRITERIA

### STEP 10. SIGN UP

Staff will meet with chosen applicant to sign forms, show them the specific unit and discuss the requirements of living at South Port

The following forms are required for all new/transferring tenancy sign ups.

- TENANT INFORMATION FORM (BLUE FORM)
  - Make sure all details are completed and up-to-date including Next Of Kin/ Emergency Contact details. If they are reluctant explain it will ONLY be used in cases of emergency.
- FIRE SAFETY
  - Explain alarm and sprinkler system. Refer information sheet on Fire Systems and additional information in the TENANT INFO KIT.
- GIVE THE TENANT THE NEW TENANT INFO KIT.
  - These contain general information for new residents. Explain in detail all parts of the New Tenant Info Kit –
    - Rights and Responsibilities re Tenancy
    - SPCHG Rights and Responsibilities Statement
    - Compliments and Complaints Brochure
    - Privacy and Confidentiality Brochure
    - How Maintenance gets done/ Maintenance after-hours arrangements
    - Fire Safety Sticker
    - Cheap and Free Meal Services In Area
    - General Information, House phone number, Office phone number, Opening hours.
    - After hours contact numbers
    - Renting a Home (Consumer Affairs Booklet)
    - Local medical services area document
    - 24 hr Crisis Support Information phone number
- RENT PAYMENTS
  - There are 2 ways of paying rent, Centrepay and Agent (rent) Book. SPCHG's preference is Centrepay
    - CENTREPAY FORM
      - Centrepay is used to debit a specified amount (rent/rent arrears) directly from a tenant's Centrelink benefit. If the tenant chooses to pay via Centrepay complete the Centrepay form immediately.
      - If the tenant agrees to pay via Centrepay explain that we also require them to complete a PERMISSION TO SHARE INFORMATION form.
    - AGENT (RENT) BOOK
      - Agent (rent) Book deposits rent directly with the ANZ bank. The tenant must go to ANZ each week/fortnight to deposit the rent. ,





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- If using an Agent book the Housing Worker needs to issue a rent book with an AGENT NUMBER that is not currently in use by someone else. Explain rent payment procedures, including how to fill out rent slips each time rent is paid (important they fill out their name in case the bank enters wrong agent number
  - We do not accept cash at the office
- All new tenants are issued a supplies kit. This includes bedding, hygiene products, and assorted useful house items. We also supply new mattress protector when the mattress does not need replacing.
- Staff will make clear that once an offer has been made through the VHR and accepted, that there VHR application will be withdrawn.

### STEP 11. STAFF WILL SHOW APPLICANT UNIT ON OFFER

### STEP 12. FORMAL OFFER OF HOUSING ON THE VHR

A housing worker will use the VHR to formally offer the applicant housing, once they have seen the unit in question. The applicant must accept this offer to be housed with SPCHG.

## **11. PROCEDURES FOR ALLOCATING HOUSING AT SPCHG THROUGH AGENCY REFERRAL**

SPCHG has a range of contacts at local homeless and support services. When required, SPCHG staff will contact a local service to house an individual that meets the criteria.

Below is the process that SPCHG staff will undergo when seeking a referral from a relevant agency.

### STEP 1. UNIT BECOMES AVAILABLE

### STEP 2. STAFF IDENTIFY SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR THE AVAILABLE UNIT

### STEP 3. SPCHG CONTACTS AGENCIES

Manager, Housing Operations (MHO) will contact relevant agency to seek referrals from the service. MHO will outline the specific criteria for the available unit and request a specific number of. Referrals must come with an IAP and the applicant must be on the VHR.

### STEP 4. STAFF REVIEW THE IAP

Staff will collate information from referrals and meet about the applicants and their suitability. SPCHG staff will then contact the potential tenants.

Staff will logon to the VHR to ensure that applicants are:

- on the VHR as a priority application
- have selected an area within the inner Metro South to live
- are single with no dependents
- are on government benefits
- selected Community Housing on the VHR

### STEP 5. CONDUCTING INTAKE INTERVIEWS.

Staff will conduct an intake interview/s with chosen applicant/s from agency

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  - Homeless / At Risk of Homeless
  - On Government Benefits
  - Connection to Local Area
    - They must have selected this on the VHR to be eligible for our housing
2. Important Information to Communicate Expectations
  - a. Payment of Rent
  - b. Violence is not accepted at SPCHG
  - c. Require two weeks rent in advance
3. If person is suitable for SPCHG housing, go through Intake Form
4. Show potential tenant an available unit (if this is possible)
5. Staff will discuss with the applicant and the support worker the process for obtaining housing henceforth and if there are any issues which arose during the interview process that could hinder their ability to gain housing at SPCHG

### STEP 6. DETERMINE LEVEL OF SUPPORT REQUIRED

Using the Support Service matrix, determine the level of support required to sustain tenancy. Housing is not contingent on support, however, at SPCHG, we understand the importance of support in sustaining tenancies.

Tenants are given the option to seek support from local services, however, if they do not, staff will work alongside tenants at the beginning of the tenancy to ensure the tenancy is sustainable.

MHO will discuss with agency whether there is ongoing support provided by agency to support the tenancy.

### STEP 7. CHOOSE APPLICANT WITH EARLIEST REGISTRATION DATE THAT FITS THE UNIT CRITERIA

### STEP 8. SIGN UP

Staff will meet with chosen applicant to sign forms, show them the specific unit and discuss the requirements of living at South Port

The following forms are required for all new/transferring tenancy sign ups.

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  - These contain general information for new residents. Explain in detail all parts of the New Tenant Info Kit –
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  - Staff will make clear that once an offer has been made through the VHR and accepted, that their VHR application will be withdrawn.

### STEP 9. STAFF WILL SHOW APPLICANT UNIT ON OFFER

### STEP 10. FORMAL OFFER OF HOUSING ON VHR

A housing worker will use the VHR to formally offer the applicant housing, once they have seen the unit in question. The applicant must accept this offer to be housed with SPCHG.



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### 12. TENANCY SUPPORT

Staff will support tenants at the beginning of their tenancy to ensure that it is sustained. This is aimed to be a preventative action, rather than reactive, to ensure that tenancy can be good for all involved.

There are 3 levels of engagement for the first 6 months of tenancy

- Low
- Medium
- High

focusing on:

- Rent
- Social Interaction
- Support

Support will involve seeking to understand:

- How are they settling in?
- Are there any issues?
- Do they need support?
- If there are an issues, staff should follow them up
  - i. This is done regardless of where the information comes from (i.e. Rent arrears, neighbor complaints, etc.).
- Any issues from SPCHG perspective.

#### **Step 3.1 - Low**

This means that the staff believe that there will be very little issues with tenancies, based on the assessment of the intake interview. The aim is to prevent situations from escalating, so staff are to take a focused proactive approach

1. Follow up with tenant in first week
2. Follow up with tenant at 1 month mark
3. Follow up with tenant at 3 month mark

#### **Step 3.2 - Medium**

If they are deemed to put their tenancy at risk staff are to take a more active approach. Staff will provide support to tenants where desired and suggest specific supports that may benefit from. If in rent arrears early, staff should make sure that they go and visit the tenant and discuss this with them as soon as rent is not paid. The aim is to prevent future rent arrears.

1. Follow up with tenant in first week
2. Follow up with tenant every 2 weeks for 3 months

#### **Step 3.3 - High**

This high level requires consistent following up, in a non intrusive manner. The aim of consistent following up is to ensure they remain long term in housing. Any violent and aggressive behaviour should be discussed at length.



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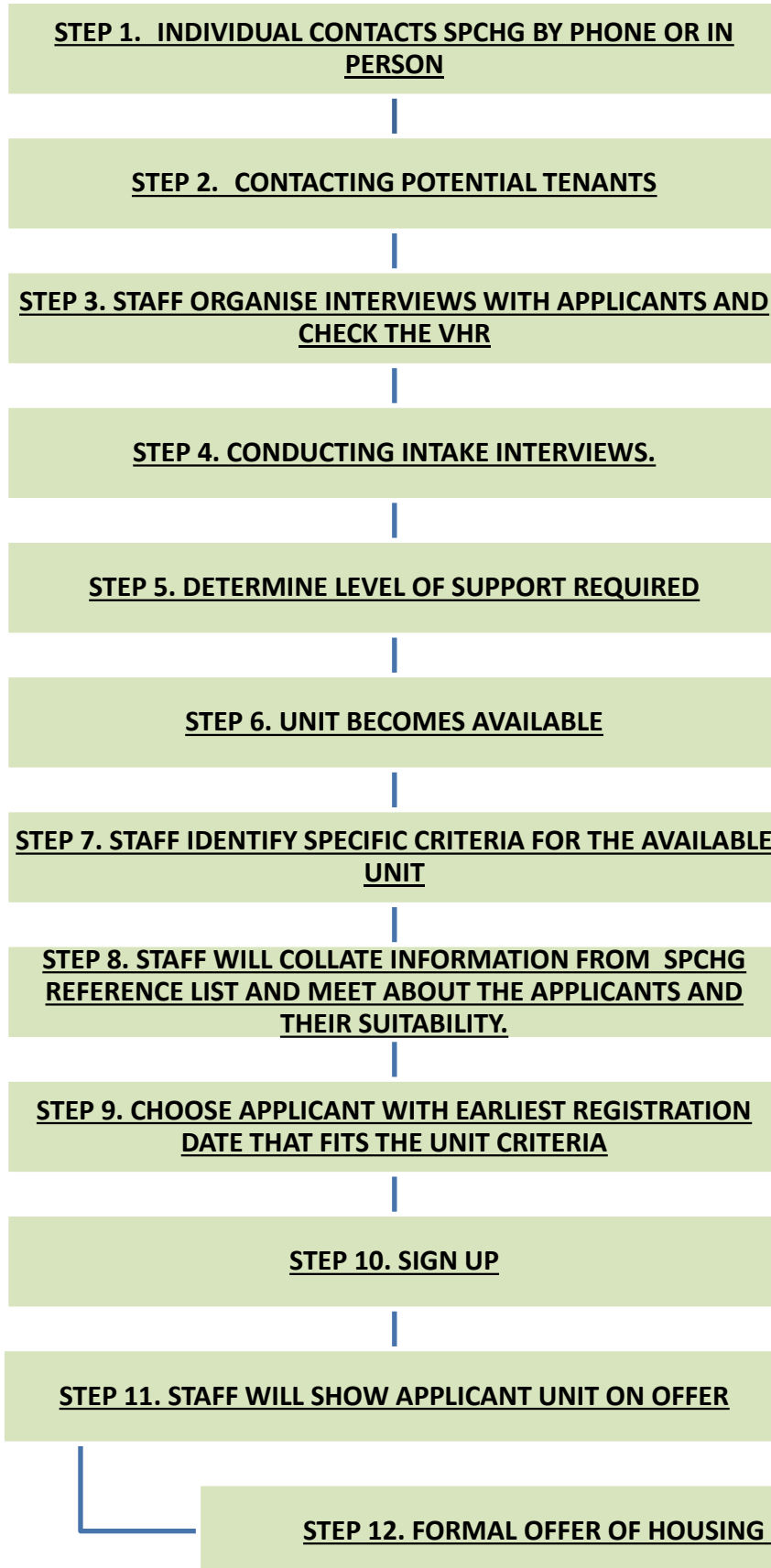
All issues should be discussed in an appropriate manner with tenants, so that they understand. Staff are to use active listening and appropriate techniques for portraying their point.

1. Staff should suggest external case management support.
  - With the consent of the tenants, staff will make an appropriate referral to a relevant, local support service.
  - Given that it cannot be forced, staff should indicate that they will be checking in on the tenant on a regular basis to make sure they are OK, they are settling in and discuss any ongoing issues.
2. Follow up with tenant in first week
3. Follow up with tenant every week for 3 months
4. At the end of the three months staff should assess whether they need more support and decide upon a course of action.



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13. SELF-REFERRAL PROCESS OVERVIEW





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14. AGENCY REFERRAL PROCESS OVERVIEW

