

ONELINK QUARTERLY REPORT

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021

What is OneLink?

OneLink is the central intake and assessment service for human services in the ACT. The service conducts holistic and conversational assessments of all requests for assistance (accommodation and support services). It then prioritises people according to their needs and makes referrals based on a triaging process. OneLink maintains active holding to ensure engagement with service users continues where an immediate referral is not available. Ongoing support needs are continually reviewed in partnership with service users.

How does it work?

People can access OneLink through 1800 176 468, in person at Nature Conservation House (NCH), at Outreach locations or via the OneLink Website (www.OneLink.org.au/services) through webchat.

When a person calls or visits OneLink, an Assessment and Support Coordinator assesses and prioritises the service user's needs, provides information about options and, where appropriate, follows up with service users to connect them to support.

At the end of the month OneLink reports on the number of people still waiting to be connected to any service, both accommodation and non-accommodation supports. Some people waiting at the end of the month may have had some service needs met while still waiting for connection for others.

Note: not all people waiting for accommodation are sleeping rough; the majority may be staying with relatives or friends or in other temporary accommodation (e.g. caravan parks or low-cost hotels).

The key functions of OneLink include but are not limited to:

- assessment, triage, and referral
- monitoring wait list and active holding to maintain engagement with service users
- provision of brokerage for motel/hotel accommodation and other financial support i.e. transportation to an accommodation option
- provision of outreach and weekend service to increase accessibility
- provision of specialist engagement to support those service users who are not referral ready and requiring additional support before being connected with services
- working closely with service users and services to explore collaborative housing and support solutions to help service users achieve outcomes
- implementing initiatives to respond to COVID-19 i.e. Client Support Fund and Accommodation Brokerage program
- data collection, analysis, and reporting; and
- cross sector collaboration, supporting the Specialist Homelessness Service sector in advocacy and sector development.

Collaboration and participation from all Specialist Homelessness Services, Child, Youth, and Family services, and other sectors including mental health, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD), justice, and education is critical to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the central intake model in the ACT.

What supports does OneLink connect people with?

Accommodation

- Short term emergency accommodation
- Transitional accommodation

Support services

- Housing support
 - Assertive outreach
 - Access to independent housing
 - Support to sustain tenancy
- Child, youth and family support
 - Youth support
 - Family and child support
- Other support
 - Aged care support
 - Counselling services
 - Disability support services
 - Domestic and family violence support services
 - Refugee and migration support
 - Financial counselling
 - Legal services
 - Mental health services
 - Health/medical services
 - Drug/alcohol support
 - Domestic assistance

What does this latest report show?

This latest report reflects the impact of the ACT lockdown, and subsequent increased demand on the services of OneLink, and other services in the housing and homelessness sector. Data provided in this quarterly report starts to highlight the increased presentation of service users, as well as the collaboration and responsiveness across the sector. The full extent of this demand will be apparent in the Oct – Dec report which will further identify the increased demand and impact for both services and service users.

From the commencement of the ACT lockdown on 13 August 2021 until the end of this reporting period (30 September 2021), OneLink received 4,101 incoming telephone and online enquiries. This is a significant increase from normal operations.

OneLink has experienced significant increase in demand due to its role in providing coordination of COVID-19 related accommodation support. At the request of the ACT Government, OneLink acted as the central coordination point for brokered hotel accommodation to support Canberrans who have experienced household breakdown due to the health directives regarding public movement (“Lockdown”). In addition to this, OneLink has also served as a broker of self-isolation/quarantine accommodation needs.

- OneLink supported a higher number of service users per month (501) in this quarter compared to the previous quarter (498). This is a slight increase from the previous quarter and shows that OneLink is still experiencing a high demand of service users contacting for support and accommodation.
- The same number of new service users: on average 103 new service users per month. This is the same as the previous quarter 103 during April – June 2021. New service users represented around 21% of all service users each month.
- Higher number of occasions of one-off assistance: on average 572 occasions of one-off assistance per month in this quarter compared with 396 in the previous quarter and 259 in the corresponding quarter in 2020. This reflects the increase in demand on the OneLink service as a result of the COVID19 lockdown in the ACT from the 13 August 2021.
- Service users waited for shorter times for support services: 24.1 days in this quarter compared with 26.6 days in previous quarter and waited longer periods for accommodation (21.1 days in this quarter compared with 16.2 days in previous quarter).

During this quarter there were more vacancies advertised for support services, which resulted in a shorter wait time. This can be attributed to a response by the sector to increase capacity for those affected by COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions.

Accommodation wait times can be attributed to an increase in service providers requiring thorough COVID screening before accommodating clients. In addition, the increasing demand saw many service providers nearing, or reaching, capacity in the first month of the lockdown period.

- Much higher number of service users placed into accommodation and lower number of service users provided with support in this quarter. 238 service users were placed into accommodation and 204 provided with support services in this quarter compared with 107 and 222 respectively in the previous quarter.

The increase in the number of referrals made for accommodation this quarter is reflective of our higher volume of service users, combined with the sector response and collaborative working relationships throughout the COVID19 lockdown period. In addition, the reopening of Winter Lodge eases pressure on other services as they are able to accommodate a high number of male services users.

- Higher number of service users on the wait list for referral in this quarter. An average of 237 service users were waiting at the end of each month in this quarter compared with 228 in the previous quarter and 272 in the corresponding quarter in 2020.

Continuing with the themes above, this data reflects the higher volume of services users presenting to OneLink in this quarter and is reflective of the number of vulnerable Canberrans reaching out for support during the ACT lockdown.

- Client Support Fund (CSF): OneLink continued supporting individuals and families through the Client Support Fund. As at 30 September 2021, the CSF has supported 16 families or individuals. This includes a combination of families/individuals receiving tenancy assistance and/or case management support. Not all CSF is linked to a property head leased from Housing ACT.

Since the beginning of CSF in May 2020, Onelink has supported 89 clients through this program. This includes 73 individual's/family units from May 2020- June 2021, and a further 16 during this current reporting period.

- Accommodation Brokerage Program: During this quarter, the program spent \$488,857.28, a significant increase from the previous quarter \$13,782 to provide

temporary accommodation at a motel/hotel for 162 individuals and families (an increase from 19 individuals/families in the previous quarter).

- This was in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Canberra and the request of the ACT Government. During this period, OneLink served as the emergency accommodation intake service for all Canberrans impacted by COVID-19 and requiring alternative accommodation during the lockdown period.
- This significant departure from the normal operations of OneLink has led to flow on effects across OneLink and the wider specialist homelessness sector with markedly increased requests for assistance and increased demand for specialist homelessness sector accommodation and support.
- *In-reach and Outreach:* At the beginning of this quarter, OneLink had recommenced outreach services at both Red Cross Roadhouse and the Early Morning Centre one afternoon per week at each location. Unfortunately, the ACT lockdown has impacted on OneLink being able to continue their onsite presence at these locations, and continued outreach will be reviewed in line with easing restrictions. OneLink continued to build on the stakeholder relationships reported in the last quarter, with services continuing to participate in in-reach activities at Nature Conservation House, until the ACT lockdown. These included Salvos Doorways, Catholic Care, YWCA Next Door, Aged Care Housing Assistance, Supportive Tenancy Service, and Conflict Resolution Service. A number of services have been providing in-reach in this reporting period and includes Catholic Care, Supportive Tenancy Service, and Conflict Resolution Service.
- *OneLink and Housing ACT integration:* OneLink welcomes the ongoing collaboration of Housing ACT. During this reporting period, there has been marked increases in work between OneLink and HACT Gateway Services.

This collaboration has seen the two organisations work closely during the ACT lockdown to be able to meet the needs of vulnerable Canberrans' while maintaining social distance requirements.

The ACT lockdown also saw an increase in the presentation of existing Housing ACT tenants to OneLink. This was an opportunity for OneLink and the Tenant Experience team to strengthen their working relationship to ensure tenants are responded to effectively and efficiently when presenting in crisis.

ACT LOCKDOWN ACCOMMODATION RESPONSE – Stories of Success

During the period of ACT Health Restrictions including the lockdown period, OneLink worked closely with accommodation providers in both the commercial and community sector. Several hotel chains and individual providers, the entire specialist homelessness sector and many other ACT Community Organisations partnered to provide supports at the request of and on behalf of the ACT Government.

These services have seen the ACT Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) pushed to its limit and vacancies across the sector reduced to near zero while demand has grown exponentially. In this time of challenge, it is important to recognise the impacts of our services and share some of the positive outcomes generated through the work of the ACT SHS Sector.

- Anthony presented to OneLink, during the ACT lockdown, already being supported by service provider Street 2 Home (STH). He is a young 25year old male who has a history of being homeless and sleeping rough. Anthony has a history of substance abuse and was homeless for approximately a year before engaging with OneLink. Whilst in hotel accommodation brokered by OneLink, he was able to further engage with STH, Directions for drug and alcohol support, and be referred to youth support. During this time, Anthony ceased substance use, and identified goals for improving his life. Within approximately one month, OneLink were able to refer Anthony on to one of our specialist homelessness service men's refuges. Anthony was accepted by the refuge and has been happily residing there since.
- Lucy presented to OneLink after fleeing a relationship where she was experiencing domestic violence. Lucy stated that she had been evicted from her supported accommodation for a breach of their rules. As a result of limited other options, she had returned to living with her ex-partner. Lucy contacted OneLink seeking accommodation support during the lockdown period. Lucy used the time in the hotel to save money towards a bond. After approximately one and a half months in hotel accommodation, she had been able to save up enough money for a bond. Lucy has been able to move into a private share house with the funds she had saved.
- Elise was asked to leave her rental property by her landlord, after being identified as a close contact at a COVID exposure site and needing to be tested for the virus. Elise presented to OneLink, and identified that her only other option was to return to her mother's home, where there had recently been family and domestic violence perpetrated against her. Upon assessment, OneLink brokered Elise into hotel accommodation and connected her with youth focussed specialist homelessness services who assisted her to connect to supports around her mental health. This was important as Elise had a pet, which would normally exclude her from emergency accommodation. As Elise felt more secure and stable in hotel accommodation and with supports, she was able to explore options which would open up possible accommodation referral pathways. This included enlisting support to care for her pet. Elise was then referred to a youth refuge and was able to settle in there soon after her initial brokerage began.

- Blake presented to OneLink after sleeping in his car for two months, following a relationship breakdown. Blake was unable to stay with family due to being verbally and physically abused by them. Blake had previously been working as a tradesman, but due to COVID his work ceased and he was receiving limited payments from Centrelink. Following assessment, OneLink brokered Blake in hotel accommodation and after three weeks, he was successfully referred to a specialist homelessness service men's refuge. Blake has since been able to return to his employment, and he recently exited the men's refuge after saving up for a bond, and securing a private rental.

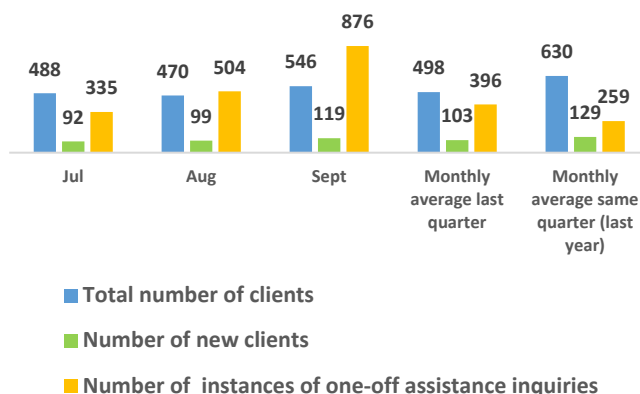
*names have been changed for privacy reasons

ONELINK QUARTERLY REPORT ENDING SEPTEMBER 2021

Number of service users

- OneLink supported an average 501 service users each month during this quarter (Jul, Aug, Sept 2021).
- OneLink supported a total of 310 new service users during the July to September 2021 period, lower than 387 in the same period in 2020.
- OneLink provided an average of 572 one-off assistance each month in this quarter, higher than 259 in the same quarter in 2020.

Number of clients, new clients, and one-off assistance (Jul-Sep 2021)

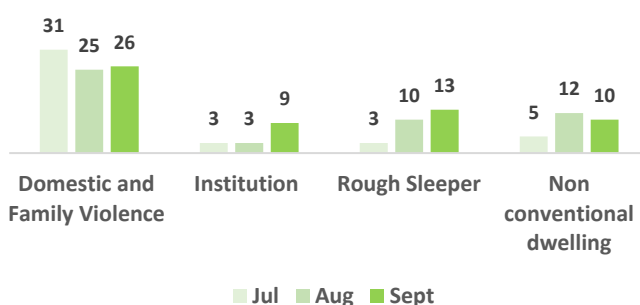


New service users by priority groups

- Of all **new** service-users the largest single priority group was those experiencing DFV (on average 26.5% of new service users).

Note this graph is reflective of the top four priority groups and does not capture all new service users.

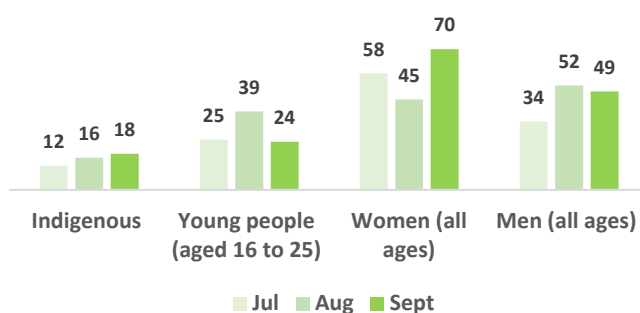
New clients by priority groups (Jul-Sep 2021)



New service users by demography

- There were more new female service users (on average 55.8%) than new male service users (43.5%).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 14.8% of new service users.
- Young people accounted for 28.4% of all new service users.

New clients by demography (Jul-Sep 2021)

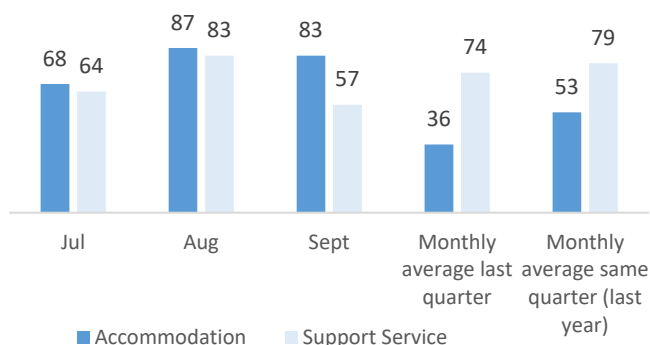


Number of service users placed into accommodation and support services

- A total of 238 service users were placed into accommodation, with an average of 79 service users placed each month.
- A total of 204 service users were placed into support services, with an average of 68 service users placed each month.

This is over double the number placed into accommodation in the last quarter, and highlights the collaboration amongst the sector to secure outcomes for the higher number of services users presenting during the lockdown period.

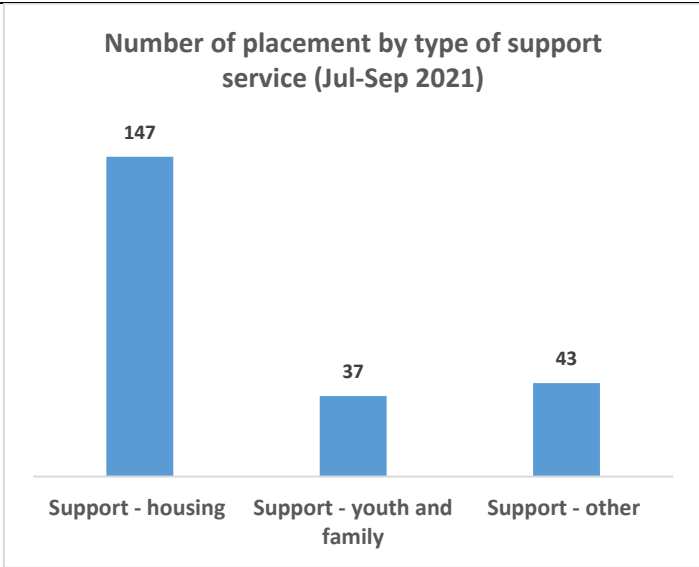
Clients placed into accommodation and support services (Jul-Sep 2021)



Placement by Support Service
 During this quarter, there were a total of 227 placements into support services:

- 64.8% (147) provided by housing support services, which provide tenancy support, assertive outreach, access to independent housing.
- 16.3% (37) provided by youth and family support services.
- 18.9% (43) provided by other support services including legal, mental health, DFV, financial assistance, disability support, counselling services, and drug and alcohol services.

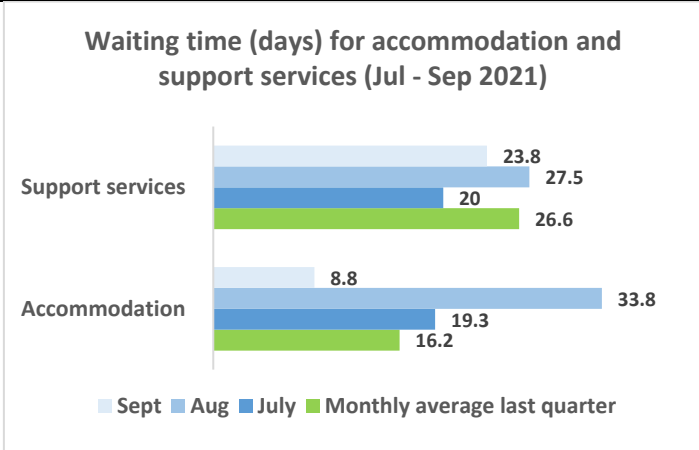
Note: number of service users and number of placements are different; some service users are provided with more than one placement to meet their different needs.



Waiting time for accommodation and support services

During this quarter, service users waited on average 24.1 days for support services (26.6 days in the last quarter), and 21.1 days for placement into accommodation (16.2 days in the last quarter).

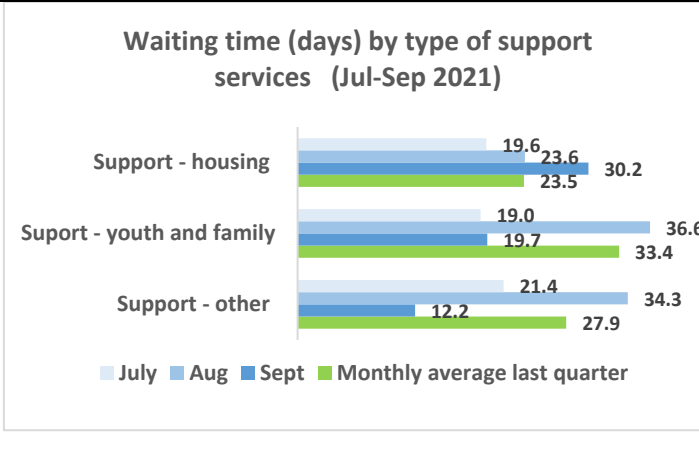
Note that 'waiting for accommodation' does not necessarily equate to rough sleeping. Many people are staying with friends or relatives or in other temporary accommodation.



Waiting time by type of support service

During this quarter, service users waited on average:

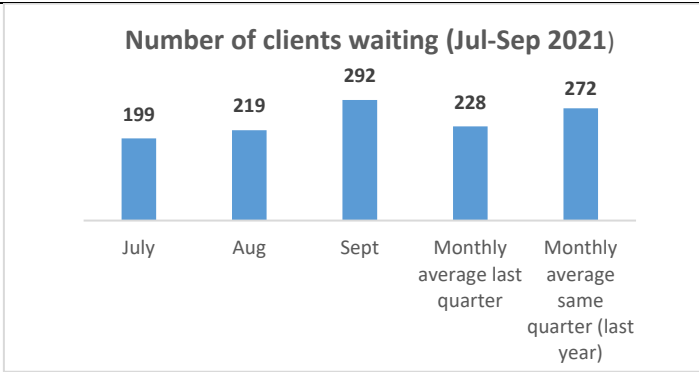
- 23.8 days for placement into housing support (23.5 days in the last quarter).
- 27.8 days for youth and family support (33.4 days in the last quarter).
- 22.0 days for other support (27.9 days in the last quarter).



Waiting list

- At the end of September, 292 service users were waiting for accommodation and/or support services.
- This is higher than the average of over the 3-month period.

Note: service users at end of month may be connected to some services but are waiting connection to others.



Key terms explained

Service user	A service user refers to any person who directly receives a service. For example, if a mother and three children require accommodation, and OneLink only has contact with the mother, then the mother will be the only service user for OneLink, with other family members not directly assisted. If referred to a service that then accommodates the family, then that service provides direct service for the mother and the children and that service will count each member of the family as service users.
One-off assistance <i>*people receiving one-off assistance are not counted as service user</i>	Provision of immediate support, including providing information and clarification, where there is no need for continued assistance at the time of the enquiry.
Active holding	OneLink maintains contact with service users while service users are waiting for OneLink to connect them with appropriate accommodation and/or support services. Active holding is to ensure OneLink's assessment of the service user's needs and situation is up to date.
Rough sleeper	A person who is living on the streets, sleeping in parks.
Non-conventional dwelling	A person who is a squatter or who is living in an improvised dwelling (tent, car etc.)
Assistance to access independent housing	Provision of support to service users to obtain an independent tenancy, including private, community and public housing. Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Tenancy Service – housing options • ASSIST (Catholic Care) • Youth Housing Support Service (Catholic Care) • St Vincent de Paul's (SVDP) Family Service and Young Parents Program • Everyman Australia • YWCA Canberra • Karinya • Northside Community Service • Ted Noffs Take Hold
Tenancy support	Provision of support to service users to maintain an existing tenancy (e.g. Supportive Tenancy Service – tenancy support).
Short term or emergency accommodation	Short term accommodation with support to help address any issues leading to homelessness and seek an independent tenancy. Services are targeted to particular population groups or needs, including single men (e.g. Samaritan House, CatholicCare Minosa), young people (Youth Emergency Accommodation Network (YEAN)), women and families (Toora) and women leaving domestic violence (e.g. Beryl, Doris).
Transitional accommodation	Medium-term accommodation with limited support focussed on finding long-term accommodation, for people who have the capacity to maintain a tenancy. Funded transitional accommodation includes SDVP's Family Service, YWCA Canberra's Housing Support Unit, Barnardos Our Place and

	Friendly Landlord programs, Everyman, Northside Community Service and Karinya.
Assertive outreach for rough sleepers	Outreach services to assist people who are sleeping rough or in non-conventional dwellings, to assist in connection to services as needed (e.g. SVDP's Street to Home program).
Financial assistance/material aid	Emergency relief, such as food, clothing or assistance with expenses (e.g. SVDP, Salvation Army and Uniting Care Kippax).
Domestic/family violence support	Support specifically around responding to the experience of DFV e.g. Domestic Violence Crisis Services; note other services (including Beryl, Doris, YWCA Canberra and Toora Women) provide DFV violence support as part of emergency accommodation.
Youth Support	Support for young people, up to 25 years of age e.g. Youth Engagement Teams and YouthCARE Canberra.
Family/child support	Support for families and/or children, including family case management services.
Disability support (including NDIS)	Support for people living with a physical or intellectual disability, including services under NDIS or CASP other than domestic assistance – excludes psychosocial disability.
Domestic assistance/CASP	Support for domestic assistance or through CASP, which provides assistance to people who do not qualify for or have not yet obtained NDIS support (domestic assistance is often provided through CASP).
Aged care support	Support for older people (generally 65 years or older), including through My Aged Care.
Health/ medical services	Medical support e.g. through General Practitioners, Winnunga.
Mental health services	Support for people living with a psychosocial disability, including through NDIS, as well as other specific mental health services.
Counselling services	Professional assistance to promote mental health and wellbeing, enhance self-understanding, and resolve identified concerns (e.g. Relationships Australia).
Drug/alcohol support	Support for people dealing with addiction to alcohol or other drugs (e.g. Directions ACT, Karralika).
Legal issues/court support	Legal advice or assistance through legal processes (e.g. Canberra Community Law, Tenants Union, Street Law, Legal Aid).
Financial counselling	Information, support and advocacy to assist people in financial difficulty (e.g. Care Financial).
Other	Support not covered in other categories, including general support for specific population groups (e.g. MARSS).