

SAFE AS HOUSES

BRIEF EVALUATION SNAPSHOT – March 2019



SAFE as HOUSES

Preventing Homelessness for Women & Children

OVERVIEW OF SASH

Safe as Houses (SASH) is a pilot program that commenced in early 2017 and supports women who are experiencing family and domestic violence and at risk of homelessness. The Safe as Houses program is a collaboration between Tenancy WA, Women’s Law Service of WA and Street Law Centre WA, with Tenancy WA acting as the lead agency. The program aims to provide case management and legal assistance to support clients’ to address their complex legal, financial and social issues and therefore their capacity to obtain or maintain stable accommodation. To date, 133 clients have been supported by SASH.

“SASH provides a wrap around service where each aspect of my situation was managed centrally but helped by Street Law or Tenancy WA. Therefore, it was more effective & coordinated management rather than just being limited to one aspect of your situation. Also saves having to explain your situation multiple times to multiple different agencies- which is exhausting, disheartening & traumatic- especially if no one does anything to help”

- SASH Client

CLIENT PROFILE

Clients complete a ‘legal health checklist’ when they commence with Safe as Houses, and this data highlights that clients are often highly vulnerable and experiencing multiple legal, financial, social and health challenges related to family and domestic violence.

SASH Client Demographics

Average Age: 40 (age range 15-67)

1 in 4 Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander (33)

Nearly 1 in 5 from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background (21.8 %)

The majority of SASH clients had children (60%), with the number of dependent children amongst these client ranging from 1-7.

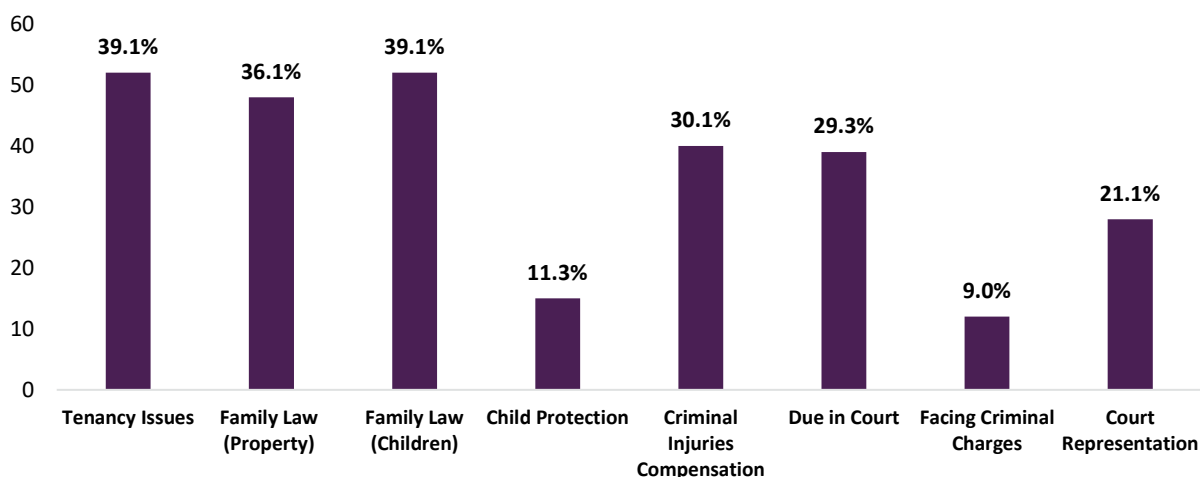
RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Overall 83% of SASH clients were assessed as being at risk of homelessness at the time of first contact with the program, and a further 11% of clients were experiencing primary homelessness and rough sleeping when first supported by SASH. At the time of first contact with SASH, 23% of clients had recently been evicted from a tenancy.

LEGAL ISSUES

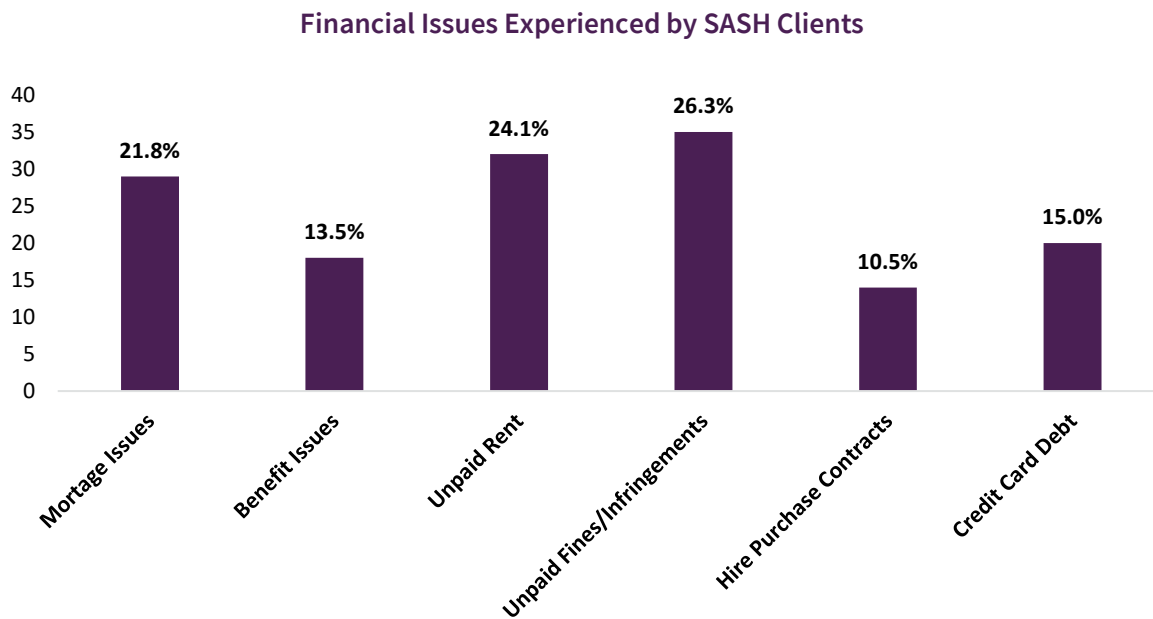
Multiple, complex and intersecting legal issues are the norm for SASH clients (see graph below). Clients have often had previous negative experiences with other legal services and/or the in the court system and find prioritizing and managing their legal issues particularly challenging.

Legal Issues Experienced by SASH Clients



FINANCIAL ISSUES

Serious financial issues are common amongst clients (see graph below), affecting over 83% of clients. SASH works to address clients' legal and financial issues in conjunction with wrap-around non-legal support.



OBSERVATIONS FROM EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

“SASH offers a real benefit to our organisation, as we are able to refer clients at risk of eviction and facing a particular risk of domestic or family violence, where we know they will receive support with issues we do not have the capacity to address”

“Safe as Houses supported one of our clients to extend an eviction notice and supported them in finding alternative accommodation”

“The SASH program provides valuable support to women to assist them in navigating the legal matters associated with leaving a domestic violence relationship.”

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Ashley, a single mother in her mid-thirties, had experienced a sustained period of family and domestic violence and was living in poorly maintained accommodation with no formal tenancy agreement. When she first came into contact with SASH Ashley had recently had her child removed by the Department of Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS) due to concerns about her mental health and substance use and had been hospitalised due to her deteriorating mental health. Ashley was also had considerable debt as a direct result of the domestic violence and financial abuse. These complexities meant that Ashley was exhausted, anxious, frustrated and concerned for herself and her child's future and safety.

How SASH has assisted

Sash provided assistance with more appropriate rental accommodation and submitting the correct information in order to claim the correct rate of rent assistance, taking special consideration of her ongoing security. During this time SASH assisted Ashley with immediate material needs including emergency food relief and transport assistance and provided support at DCPFS safety planning meetings and support letters to agencies. SASH also provided assistance with Ashley's application for the public housing and priority housing waitlists, and negotiated a rental agreement at a reduced rate that Ashley can afford. Ashley was referred for financial counselling and assisted with a collation of debt history. SASH has supported Ashley to seek treatment for her mental health issues and access drug rehabilitation services and has had a key role in increasing her understanding of her legal situation and legal terminology.