

From: s22
To: s22
Subject: FW: Income Management Housing Referral Discussion Paper [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Wednesday, 23 October 2013 1:51:25 PM
Attachments: [Housing Referrals Discussion Paper \(for distribution\).DOCX](#)
[Attachment B - DHS Basic process map.PDF](#)
[Attachment C - DHS Full description map.PDF](#)

From: STRAPP, Eliza
Sent: Monday, 5 March 2012 5:14 PM
To: STRAPP, Eliza
Subject: FW: Income Management Housing Referral Discussion Paper [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Eliza Strapp

A/g Section Manager

Place-Based Implementation

Welfare Payments Reform Branch

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

s47F

From: STRAPP, Eliza
Sent: Friday, 3 February 2012 4:40 PM
To: Rebecca Pinkstone (s47F); Joe Parsons
(s47F)
Cc: HEFREN-WEBB, Elizabeth; CANTWELL, Kai; WEBSDANE, Mike; TUNG, Michael; MOYNIHAN, Clare; Sherree Thorne (s47F); Tanya Lindsey (s47F); 'Penny Hood' (s47F)
(s47F)
Subject: Income Management Housing Referral Discussion Paper [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Rebecca and Joe,

As promised, attached is a discussion paper we have put together on potential housing referral models. The idea of this paper is not for us to be prescriptive in any way but to help assist your internal development of your housing referral policy model.

You may be further along with this, but I'm hoping it may help a little – especially with your internal discussions with housing staff. Also included is a high level flow-chart, as well as some more detailed process maps from DHS.

Happy to discuss further with you.

Kind regards,
Eliza

Eliza Strapp

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Purpose

This paper outlines possible pathways and protocols for clients to be referred to income management by State Housing Authorities (SHAs) and how the Commonwealth Department of Human Services (Cwlth DHS) will action the referral with the SHAs. This paper focuses on how referrals will work in practice.

Background

As part of the Australian Government's *Building Australia's Future Workforce* (BAFW) package announced in the 2011-12 Budget, \$117.5 million has been provided over five years to introduce place-based income management to five locations across Australia. From 1 July 2012, place-based income management will operate in:

- Bankstown in New South Wales;
- Logan and Rockhampton in Queensland;
- Playford in South Australia, and;
- Greater Shepparton in Victoria.

These sites were chosen based on a number of factors, including unemployment levels, youth unemployment, skills gaps, the numbers of people receiving welfare payments and the length of time people have been on income support payments.

Three measures of income management will be introduced into the five sites. The measures are:

- The Child Protection Measure – for people referred for income management by state child protection authorities, this will be done in cases where it will benefit the child, family or young person by reducing the likelihood of behaviours that contribute to risk and neglect;
- The Vulnerable Welfare Payment Recipient Measure - for individuals assessed by a Cwlth DHS Social Worker as being vulnerable to financial crisis.
- Voluntary Income Management (VIM) - for people who volunteer for income management. A benefit of VIM is that a person who remains on VIM for 26 weeks continuously will be eligible for a \$250 incentive payment. This payment will be 100 per cent income managed.

Under Voluntary Income Management (VIM) and the Vulnerable Welfare Payment Recipient Measure (the Vulnerable measure), 50 per cent of income support payments are income managed to be used for spending on essential items, including rent, food and clothing. Under the Child Protection Measure up to 70 per cent of income support payments are income managed.

As part of the Vulnerable measure, the Australian Government also proposes setting up formal arrangements for SHAs to refer public housing tenants/clients at risk of eviction due to rental arrears. As with the Child Protection Measure, the intention is also to set up arrangements to enable SHAs to refer clients to Voluntary Income Management, should the client choose.

Issues

Place-based income management referrals from the SHA Tenancy Managers could be made to both the Vulnerable and Voluntary measures.

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Under VIM the decision to participate lies solely with the client. Clients are able to have a discussion about VIM with a Cwlth DHS Customer Service Advisor (CSA).

The decision to place a client on income management under the Vulnerable measure will be made by a Cwlth DHS Social Worker. After a decision about income management has been made, Cwlth DHS will advise the SHA Tenancy Managers, where applicable.

1. Client Consent for Information Exchange

SHAs and Cwlth DHS have expressed concern about how the client information exchange and income management take-up process will work. A number of the SHAs have identified that they would most likely not be able to exchange any information about the tenant to Cwlth DHS without that person's consent.

The SHAs are investigating whether the client's consent is required before information can be shared with Cwlth DHS for referrals from housing authorities. Pending formal advice from each SHA, it is likely that referrals from Tenancy Managers will only be able to be made to Cwlth DHS if the client has given their consent for information to be exchanged.

Exchange of information by DHS works either by express or implied authority.

Implied authority in the case of exchange between the SHA and DHS – DHS have implied authority to exchange information when a referral from the SHA has been received under the Vulnerable measure, the customer is placed onto Income Management and is advised that information exchange with the SHA may occur.

Implied consent is only applicable once the customer is placed on income management. Information exchanged at this point will be in relation to the income management of the person, as the provisions for exchange are in the income management legislation. Consequently, this it does not mean that any information in regards to the customer can be exchanged.

Express authority requires the customer to give their oral or written permission to exchange information with a specific individual or organisation. DHS must work under the express authority model until there is a Vulnerable measure referral and switch on – as outlined above. Express authority is the process currently in place to exchange information under the Rent Deduction Scheme.

In regards to a customer on Voluntary income management, this works on the express authority model, meaning the client's oral or written consent is required to exchange any information.

The remainder of this paper assumes the client has given consent to the SHA Tenancy Manager to share personal information with Cwlth DHS, particular to income management.

2. Criteria for Referral

The criteria for referrals by Tenancy Managers are being developed on a state-by-state basis by the SHAs. The main consideration in choosing these criteria is to decide who will best benefit from income management.

Potential criteria could include:

- number of notices to evict issued;
- amount of weeks in arrears;

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- history of evictions or rental arrears (particularly for potential tenants reapplying for public housing);
- Need to reside within the LGA;
- Cancellation of Centrepay/Rent Reduction arrangements; and/or
- Multiple referrals for VIM unactioned or short term only.

Are there any other potential criteria that the SHAs could see as being useful here? At what point does it become evident that a client could benefit from income management?

Should there be criteria for people who are reapplying for public housing who have a history of eviction or who have previously left the system in rental arrears?

Developing these criteria will help address issues around the use of income management as a 'next step' after methods such as Centrepay and the Rent Reduction Scheme have been tried and have not succeeded.

The Commonwealth and the States will workshop criteria to identify potential clients to be referred in the housing referral pathway to ensure the criteria used to identify potential clients not be too restrictive or too loosely defined.

3. Extent of Information Sharing

Information will necessarily need to be shared between the SHAs and Cwlth DHS in order for the client to be effectively income managed.

Potential information to be exchanged *from* SHAs to Cwlth DHS may include:

- name of tenant;
- Tenant Management System number;
- address;
- Proof of Identity documentation;
- regular rental commitment;
- rental arrears and debt totals;
- if notices to vacate have been issued and their dates;
- number of tenants within the household;
- contact person at SHA for further information;
- history of homelessness (if known);
- known connections with other community agencies; and
- previous attempts made to resolve issue i.e. case management etc.

This information should be designed to help the Cwlth DHS Social Worker make an informed decision about the client's situation and priority needs.

Potential information to be exchanged *from* DHS to SHAs may include:

- confirmation that a tenant is a customer;
- customer resides in LGA;
- whether income management has been applied);
- income management allocations going to rent;
- change of address details/left residence; and
- the date of the client's exit from income management, if available.

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What sort of information would the SHAs need from Cwlth DHS and how would it be used? Is there any other information that would be beneficial to either party to have access to?

Once these decisions are made, Cwlth DHS will be able to incorporate them into the Unified Government Gateway (the UGG) task cards, if the UGG is chosen as the preferred method of information transfer.

4. Method of Information Exchange

The Commonwealth proposes the Unified Government Gateway (UGG), an IT system maintained by DHS, be used for information exchange. The UGG is secure, easy to access, easy to use and is automated.

However, while the UGG provides a secure and easy way to exchange basic information electronically, there may be other options for sharing more detailed information between SHAs and DHS, in an effort to find the best possible solution for the tenant/customer.

For example, is there potential for phone contact between a Tenancy Manager and a Cwlth DHS Social Worker or Cwlth DHS Service Advisor if necessary? Could case conferences be held between the Centrelink Social Worker and the Tenancy Manager/SHAs? This is strongly supported by Cwlth DHS Social Workers.

Is there potential for local staff from Cwlth DHS and state housing to work closely together with these referrals, in order to get the best outcome for the customer/tenant? Can we trial some innovative arrangements, such as case conferencing or joint interviewing with tenants? Should we (national/head offices) allow conversations around these arrangements to be had at the local level, which each site working out their own relationship? This is also strongly supported by DHS Social Workers to encourage client centred approaches and good outcomes

Priority Goods

A list of priority goods is included in the income management legislation. This list includes food, clothing, basic personal hygiene items, basic household items, household utilities, rates and land tax, health good and services, child care and development, education and training and housing. Housing priority goods include rent, home loan repayments, repairs and maintenance. Thus, as rent is classified as a priority good, Customer Service Advisors and Social Workers will take any issues around non-payment seriously when assessing a client's overall priority needs.

Under Section 123YA of the legislation Cwlth DHS Customer Service Advisors and Social Workers are given the power to allocate income managed funds to priority goods even if the client does not agree to do so, noting that this occurs infrequently. Accordingly, if a client continuously fails to meet rental payments and is at risk of eviction their Customer Service Advisor or Social Worker has the option to have their rent automatically paid out of their income managed funds. Therefore, CSAs will place rent as a high priority for customers who have been referred by SHAs, particularly as the SHA has indicated that that person has had difficulty paying their rent.

How will rental arrears be managed? Are they considered a priority need?

Possible Income Management Referral Pathways

Potential client pathways following a SHA referral to DHS are summarised at **Attachment A**. Centrelink's draft referral maps can be found at Attachment B and C.

The SHAs Tenancy Manager has the choice of referring a client for one of two income management measures. The way in which the client is then dealt with by DHS will depend on which measure they are referred under.

Voluntary Income Management (VIM)

If the Tenancy Manager believes VIM could assist their client in paying their rent or rental arrears then they can discuss the possibility of going on VIM with the client.

In cases where the client is interested and gives their consent for information to be exchanged, the Tenancy Manager will start a referral process to DHS via the UGG. It is then up to the client to attend DHS to discuss VIM in further detail with a Customer Service Advisor. The client will then decide if they would like to participate in VIM. Provided consent has been given by the client, the Tenancy Manager can be informed via the UGG when the client starts or exits VIM or when they have withdrawn their consent for information to be exchanged. The information exchanged via the UGG for a VIM referral may require less information to be exchanged than if the referral was for the VWPR measure, and would depend on client consent.

Should the client not attend DHS or choose not to go on VIM then Cwlth DHS will not pass any information back to the SHA. In the VIM scenario the client is not required to see a Cwlth DHS Social Worker, unless they are identified as requiring the service.

In considering a referral to VIM, as opposed to the Vulnerable measure, it is recommended that the Tenancy Manager consider the capacity of the tenant to volunteer for income management, including any past history of volunteering for the Rent Deduction Scheme. For example, if a tenant has repeatedly cancelled their rent deduction payments via Centrelink, a referral to VIM may produce the same issues. While a voluntary referral is preferred, there may be circumstances where it is inappropriate.

Vulnerable Welfare Payment Recipient Measure (Vulnerable measure)

If the SHA Tenancy Manager assesses a Vulnerable assessment is best suited to their client then, via the UGG, they can refer the client to Cwlth DHS. Cwlth DHS will arrange for the client to see a Cwlth DHS Social Worker.

The Social Worker will attempt to contact the client to assess their situation and discuss their options (this may be by phone).

The Social Worker can refer a tenant to the Vulnerable measure of income management, after an assessment of the person's circumstances. The Social Worker may also assess that compulsory income management will not benefit the tenant and may use alternative interventions with the person, such as referral to voluntary income management, Centrepay, weekly payments, nominee arrangements or other support services that the Social Worker deems appropriate to the client's needs. Other interventions or referrals can also be used in conjunction with income management.

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If the Social Worker and the client decide that VIM is the best option for the client then they will commence on the VIM program and the SHA will be informed via the UGG. Provided the client has given their consent the same information exchange process which is applied in the VIM pathway (outlined above) would apply here.

If the Social Worker determines that the client is eligible under the Vulnerable measure, the client will be placed on that measure and the SHA will be informed via the UGG.

If the Social Worker finds that income management is not the best option for that client, they will discuss and potentially put in place a range of other measures to help address that client's core needs, if appropriate. The SHA will be informed of the decision via the UGG.

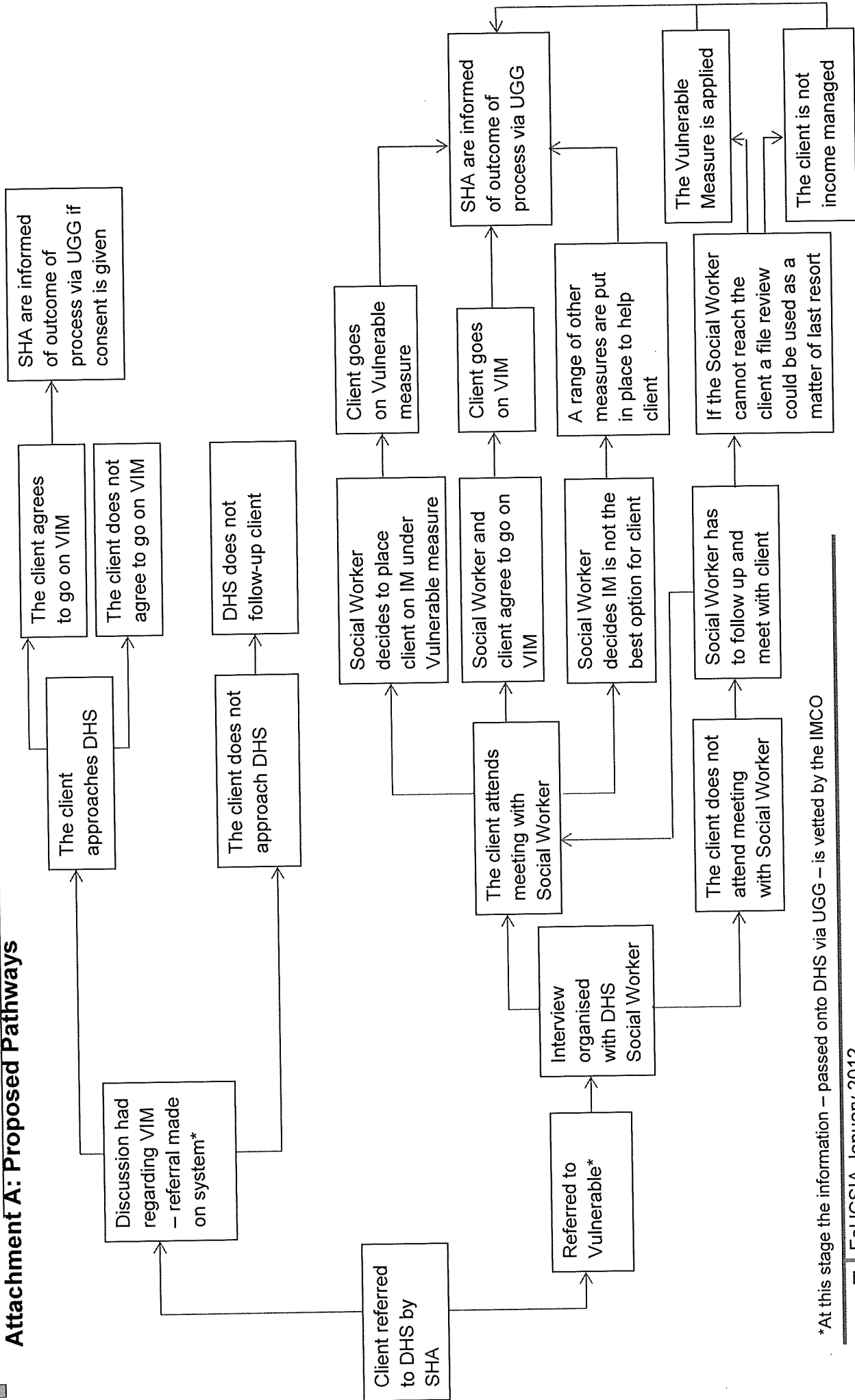
If the client is not able to be contacted by the Social Worker, the Social Worker is required to follow up the matter and attempt to contact the client. Any assistance that can be provided by the SHA at this point would be welcome, for example, joint interviewing or accompanying the customer to the appointment. If contact with the client cannot be made after considerable effort, the Social Worker can undertake a file review. A decision to apply the Vulnerable measure would only be made if there was sufficient evidence to support such a decision. Evidence provided by the SHA in relation to the tenant/client and their tenancy history (arrears, risk of eviction) would be taken into account within the file review. This would preferable also include case conferences between the social worker and the tenancy manager.

Other Considerations:

- If the Social Worker deems the 'other' option as the most appropriate, provision could be made for the Social Worker and the Tenancy Manager to discuss why this is the case and to share information about what, if any, programs the client is involved in to help with their rent situation. This exchange would be specifically about information regarding rent and not the client's broader personal situation. This could be shared via the UGG or in a telephone conversation, whichever is deemed most appropriate, and could not happen without the client's consent.

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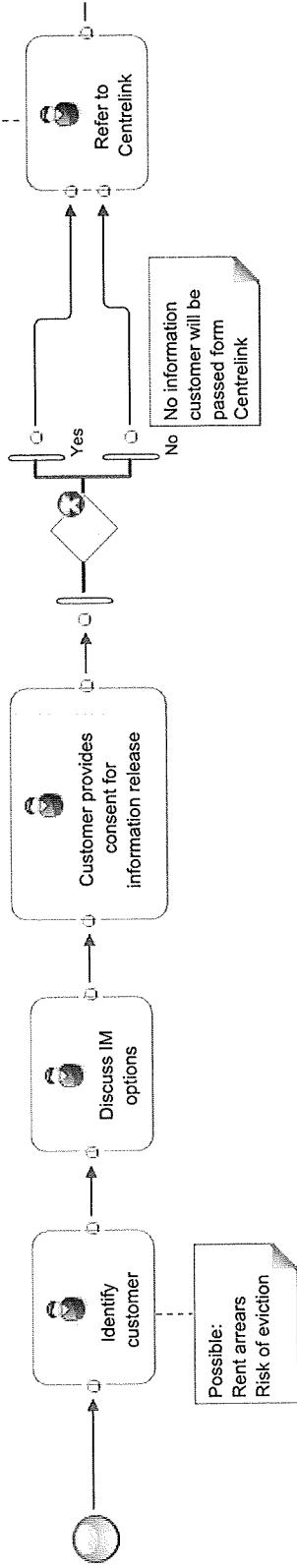
Attachment A: Proposed Pathways



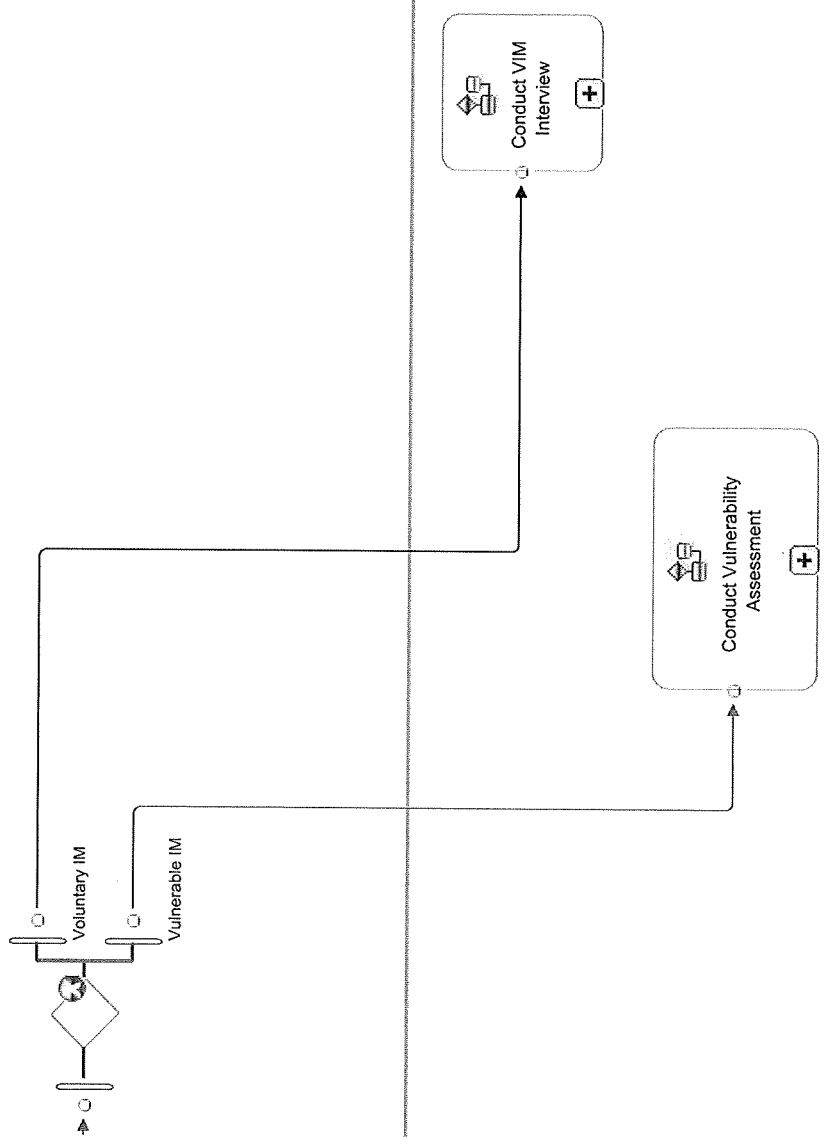
*At this stage the information - passed onto DHS via UGG - is vetted by the IMCO

Basic Referral Issues:

1. Clear guidelines are required about the customer group this measure will be applied to.
2. Expectations need to be managed :not all referrals will be Income managed.
3. Range of options to be considered
4. IMI should be targeted to a specific group



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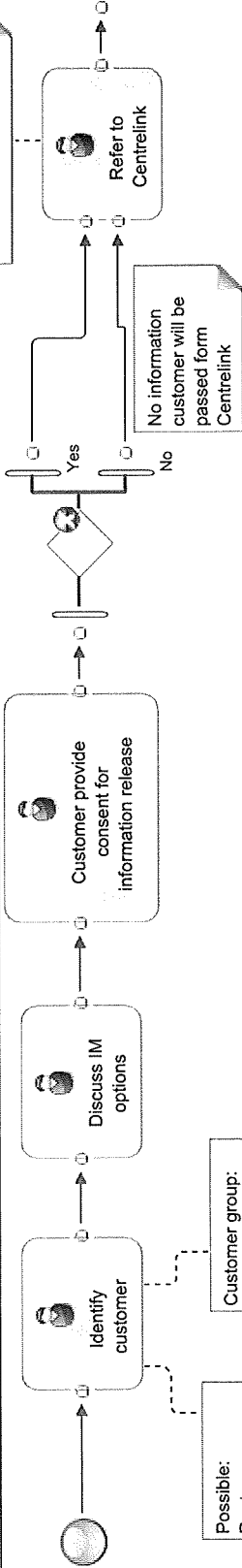


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Clear guidelines will do

1. Clear guidelines are required about the customer group this measure will be applied to.
2. Expectations need to be managed :not all referrals will be Income managed.
3. Range of options to be considered
4. IM should be targeted to a specific group

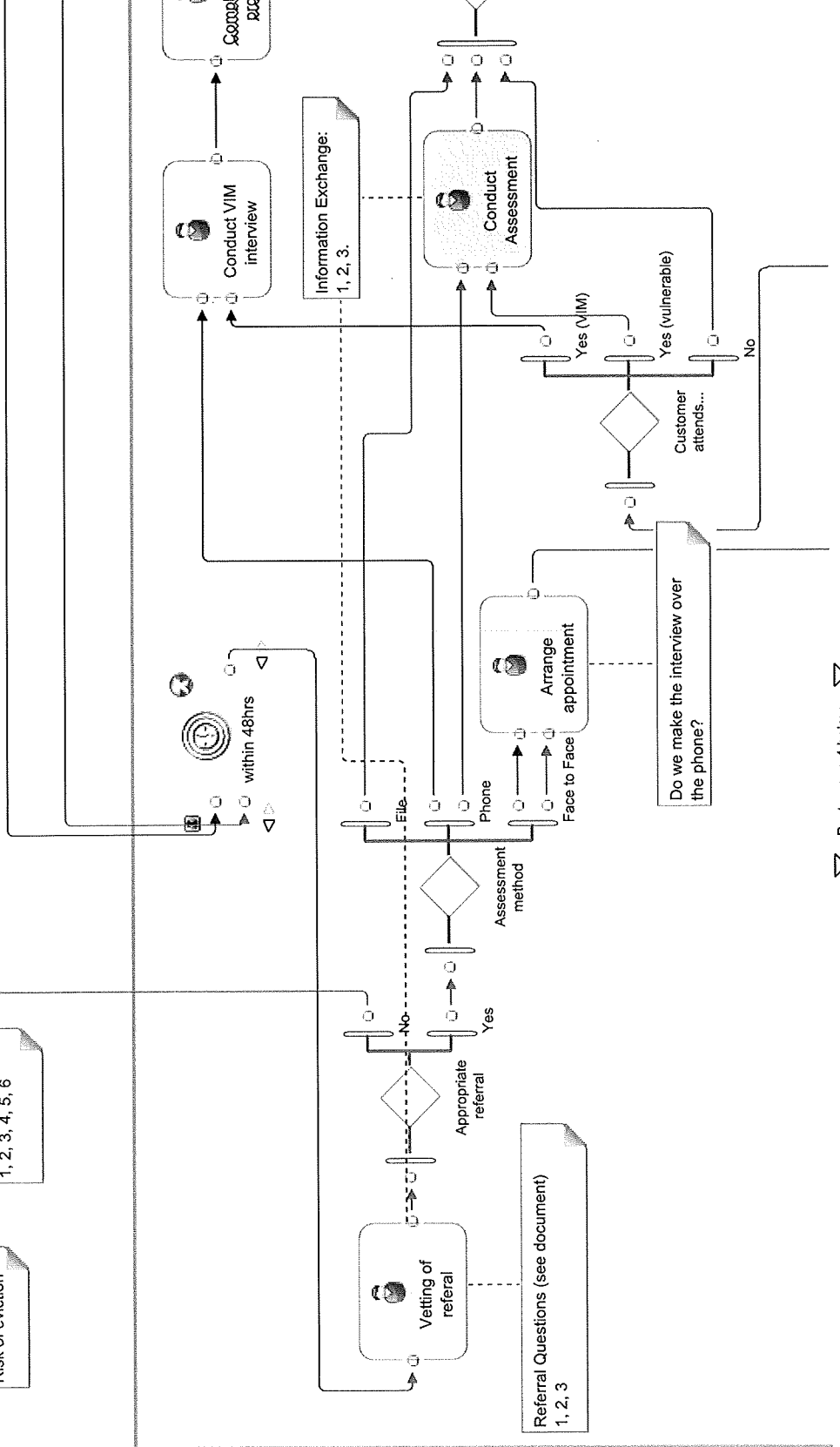


Referral Questions:
4, 5
What information will be included in the referral?

Customer group:
(see document)
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Possible:
Rent arrears
Risk of eviction

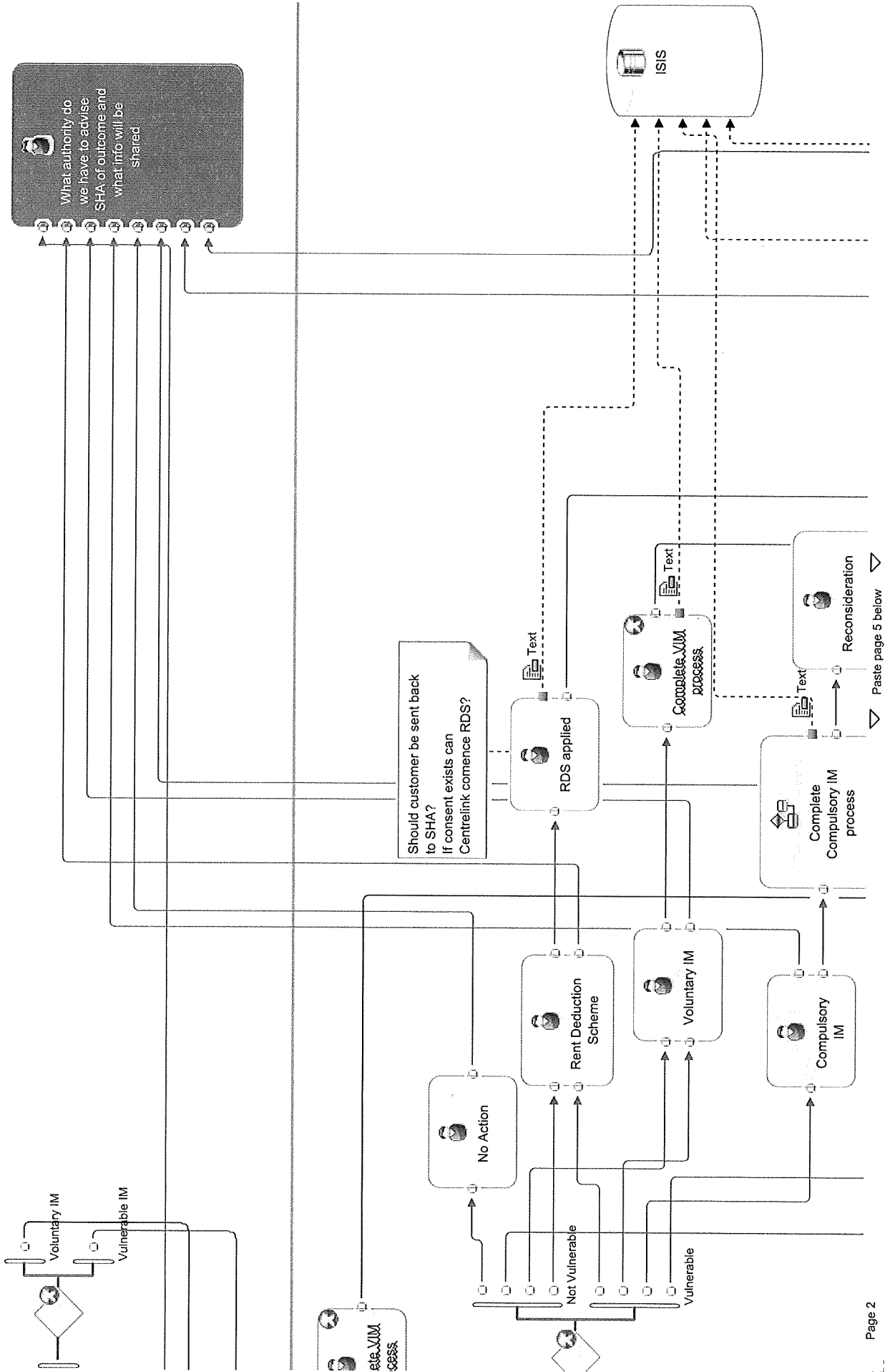
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Referral Questions (see document)
1, 2, 3

Information Exchange:
1, 2, 3.

Do we make the interview over the phone?









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 Customer

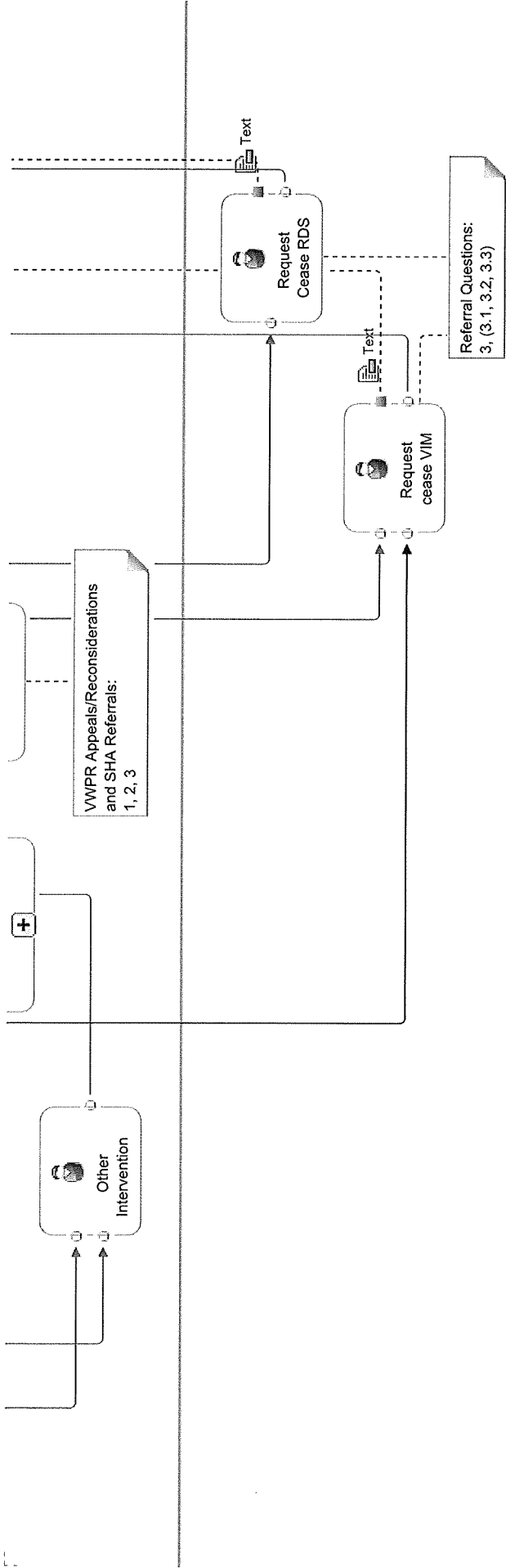
Custom Color Legend

-  Data Exchange Options
-  VIM

May be up to 28 days if customer does not engage

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