OUR PLACE:

OUTCOMES & LEARNINGS

Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

Our Place: Outcomes & Learnings

A review of the ACT's Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) conducted by Swinburne University in 2003 initially recommended the development of a Foyer service and the ACT response to the National Partnership on Affordable Housing confirmed the usefulness and importance of such a service (DHCS, 2011). As further explanation of the Foyer model below will confirm, this particular model fits well with the contemporary discourse around social security and mutual obligation (Arthurson & Jacobs, 2009). Although the ACT is a relatively wealthy jurisdiction, a lack of affordable housing has meant that homelessness is an ongoing and serious issue, particularly affecting young people. In 2013-14, 26.7% of the people receiving assistance in the ACT from a specialist homelessness service were aged 15-24 (AIHW 2014). Currently, 37.5% of people aged 15-24 entering a specialist homeless service in the ACT are a student, mostly enrolled in high school (AIHW 2014). In a recent study by Swinburne University of homeless youth around Australia, which some Our Place residents participated in, it was found that 63% of young homeless people had spent at least some of their childhood or youth in out-of-home care, and more than half had been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition (Flatau et. al., 2015).

Our Place has provided a Foyer-like youth housing service to young people in the ACT since 2011. The service has operated as a partnership between Anglicare and Barnardos. Our Place provides accommodation to young people who would otherwise experience homelessness with the requirement that they participate in education or training at least 25 hours per week. As well as accommodation, young people have opportunities to develop their living skills and independence with the support and guidance of trained workers.

While progress is monitored by workers throughout the period a young person resides at Our Place, post-exit outcomes have not previously been measured. This evaluation has attempted to make contact with previous residents to gain a picture of how their lives have progressed since leaving the service. The process has also encountered some of the difficulties common to post-exit evaluations of supported accommodation services and has made some recommendations for improving the evaluation process into the future.

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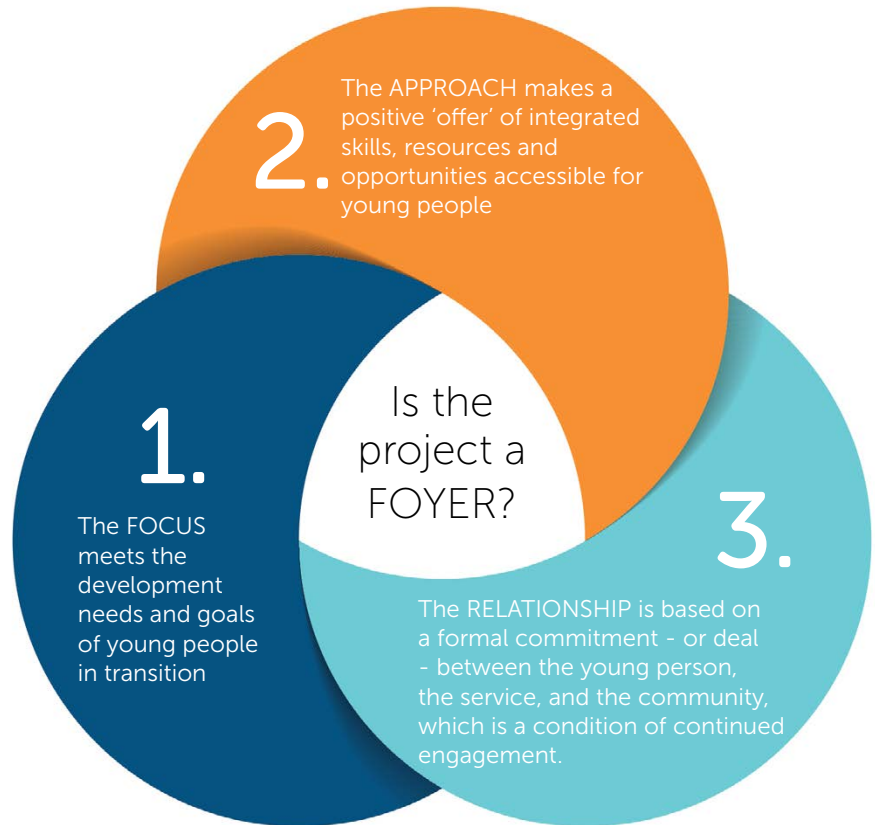
The Foyer model and Our Place

The Foyer model is a transitional housing model for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and links housing with education and employment opportunities. Although Our Place is not an accredited Foyer program, it has been designed around Foyer principles from its earliest beginnings. Some differences were built in to adapt to Canberra's unique context as well as to fit with available infrastructure (DHCS, 2010).

The Foyer model has itself evolved over time; originally these services "aimed to provide high-quality, hostel-type accommodation with on-site services to assist young people with low support needs with access to education, training and support services" (Quilgars et al, 2008). In response to community needs, Foyers increasingly provide services to young people with higher support needs. For example, the Oxford Foyer in Western Australia set a broad target for service mix of one-third low needs, one-third medium needs, and one-third high needs, although actual proportions fluctuated considerably (Berger, 2013).

The 5 principles that Foyers are traditionally based around are:

2. Housing - a place... to find one's feet in the town, to think out one's plan of action and to find a job. A refuge which becomes a springboard.

3. Services - training and support together with advice (on employment, administrative paperwork and social security entitlements) in the framework of a mutual contract

1. Local management: managed by a Steering Group made up of local members of the public, elected representatives, business people and professionals who share the desire to enable young people to take their place in society.

4. Social mix and group living: not social 'ghettos', but a broad based microcosm, with peer group support and the opportunity of drawing on a wide range of experiences and training... differences are valued and a culture of respect for the individual promoted in the context of group solidarity.

5. Economic requirements: Nothing is free, but everything is affordable. The service providing organisations are genuine business undertakings offering services direct to the young people (who are the clients, not objects of assistance) and to members of the general public living in the local community or town. About 80% of revenue comes from clients and 15% government subsidy in one form or another.

▶ *(Randolph & Wood 2005)*

Currently, the UK-based Foyer Federation accredits projects as 'Foyer' using criteria based around three fundamental tests:

The APPROACH makes a positive 'offer' of integrated skills, resources and opportunities accessible for young people

2.

Is the project a FOYER?

1.

The FOCUS meets the development needs and goals of young people in transition

3.

The RELATIONSHIP is based on a formal commitment - or deal - between the young person, the service, and the community, which is a condition of continued engagement.

▶ *(Foyer Federation 2015)*

Early intervention supports for young people at risk of homelessness are crucial.

In particular, the agreement between the young person and the agency that the young person will remain engaged in the Foyer program, including education or training, for the duration of residence in the Foyer is central. This aspect has mixed views among service users; in particular, in some cases, residents with higher needs can find the obligation to engage in education too much to manage and the 'Foyer Deal' can become "punitive" (e.g. in Berger, 2013; Anderson & Quilgars, 1995). Meanwhile, others who are more independent find the requirement to engage in group activities onerous on top of their work and study commitments (e.g. in Grace et. al., 2011). This perhaps also shows the risk that young people who are in need of accommodation but otherwise are not well suited to a Foyer may enter and have a less beneficial experience.

This highlights the importance of having a variety of supports available in every community to young people in housing crisis. Early intervention supports for young people at risk of homelessness are crucial. Emergency accommodation for those with higher needs who are not able to engage in education or employment at that point must also be available. Finally, mainstream supports including social housing and supports to re-enter and sustain tenancy in the private rental market are necessary for those who do not need Foyer-style wraparound services.

Evaluations of the Foyer model confirm that it is seen as a positive and helpful form of transitional accommodation. However, as identified in FaHCSIA's literature review on successful practice in youth homelessness surveys, "...monitoring of outcomes, while often better than monitoring procedures in other hostels and supported accommodation, remains

limited. Nonetheless, some successes have been reported, including [moving on] to independent living/tenancy sustainment for some residents (especially women) within the social housing sector, and increases in residents' participation in employment, education and training." (FaHCSIA, 2012).

The model has demonstrated a reasonable level of success in supporting young people to re-engage or continue with their education, addressing the risk of 'homelessness/joblessness' cycle which they would otherwise have great difficulty in escaping. Foyers have also received criticism (Allen, 2001) although the significant majority of work evaluating the model and similar programs shows that, when implemented as intended, Foyer and Foyer-like model programs have positive results for suitable participants.

Although Our Place is not accredited as a Foyer, it is based around these same principles of linking accommodation with education to break the cycle of homelessness, poor education, and unemployment. Many UK Foyers are purpose-built, including facilities such as training facilities, spaces for business or social enterprise, and security/staff facilities. They are also often co-located with educational institutions, particularly vocational education and training institutions. Since there was no capital funding available to construct a purpose-built Foyer building, adjustments to the model were required to fit within infrastructure available through Housing ACT (DHCS 2010).

Additionally, although 'pure' Foyer programs would have characteristics such as on-site training facilities, Our Place has taken advantage of the large number of existing training and educational providers in the ACT, including Anglicare's alternative education program (YEP) and assisted young people to engage in education at these existing providers. Its central location facilitates this, while a purpose built facility may not have been able to be located so centrally.

What we expect the Foyer model to achieve

Although there are few measurable outcomes which are comparable across all Foyers, owing to different measures used between services, the requirements of the model mean that most Foyers measure engagement in education/training and employment. A landmark study of Foyers in 2006 found that UK Foyers show positive outcomes in assisting young people to engage in employment or training during their stay (Lovatt & Whitehead, 2006). Other examples of positive outcomes include that, "...by the time young people have moved on from Foyer some 75% are in some form of employment and or training as compared with 50% on arrival." (Clay & Coffey, 2003) It is important to note that this paper partially attributes the increase in engagement with training to the co-location of training rooms on Foyer campus – a characteristic in which the Our Place model diverges from the Foyer model.

Other reports have indicated similar positive results for Foyer residents in terms of education and employment. A major study on Foyers in the UK found that 25% of residents gained their first qualification while at a Foyer and 72% in employment or training on exit. Meanwhile in other aspects of their lives, young people engaged in Foyer services also experience positive outcomes. For example, speaking to their increased ability to seek help

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when needed, 62% of Foyer residents are more confident in dealing with other agencies on exit (Horn, 2013). Foyers provide young people with the stability and support to learn skills and deal with other issues.

Our Place was developed to address key goals of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (DHCS, 2010). These goals included a reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness in the ACT, the number of people exiting housing into homelessness, the number of people experiencing repeated episodes of homelessness, and the number of young people who had experienced homelessness and were not engaged in education or training after a period of support. The outcomes of the Foyer model, and similar models linking training and housing for vulnerable young people, are well aligned to these goals.

The nature of our evaluation

While Our Place regularly reports on residents as per ACT and Federal Government requirements, it was recognised that this process gives little information as to any long-term effects of participation in the Our Place program. By nature this is difficult to discern; young people who become engaged in a program like Our Place often have extremely complicated lives and attributing particular long-term successes or difficulties to a single period of support may not be possible. However, it was important for the program to build a picture of what young people's post-Our Place experiences may have been like.

Methodology

Young people who had left our place 12-18 months prior to the commencement of the evaluation were invited to participate in a phone, online or in-person survey. To recognise the value of the young people's time, a gift voucher was offered as an incentive.

In the first instance, contact was made by an Our Place worker who knew the young people. If the young person consented to participate, their number was passed on to Anglicare's research officer, who was not associated with the program and did not know the young people involved. This was an attempt to provide the young person with the anonymity they may have preferred in order to make honest comments about their experiences. However, it was not possible to conduct any interviews in this way owing to numbers being disconnected or young people declining to participate when contacted by the research officer. As a result, further interviews and invitations to fill in the survey were undertaken by the worker who was known to the young people when they first made contact. In total, 12 young people responded to the survey via phone interview or online.

The survey (found at Attachment A) was designed to cover key areas of the young person's life, including education, employment, housing, living skills, and relationships. These areas were based on some of the points of the Outcomes Star (used as a case management tool at Our Place) to gain a broad idea of ex-residents' wellbeing while keeping the survey relatively non-intrusive and respectful. Questions around education included: whether they were currently engaged in education or training, or if they had finished a course since they left Our Place. Employment

Our Place was developed to address key goals of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

questions included their occupation and the type of work (full-time, part-time, casual). Young people were also asked whether they had a goal in mind for their education and occupation. Housing questions included who they were living with and the type of tenure they held, and living skills questions identified the key outcomes residents at Our Place were assisted to develop. Questions around relationships included their level of contact with friends, family and supportive others.

As with almost any study of the long-term outcomes of a youth housing project (FaHCSIA, 2012), there are limitations to the validity of the data. The small sample size limits the variety of experiences captured, and prevents any extrapolation of themes to other ex-residents. Those who responded may not be representative of all residents; for example, those who had a poor experience may not have wished to speak to the worker or anyone associated with the program, and those who had more difficulties maintaining stability in their lives may have been more difficult to contact at all.

Despite these limitations, the experiences of the group of young people who did respond were captured and provide evidence that the young people who accessed Our Place's services have gone on to rebuild relationships, pursue education, and maintain relatively stable housing and employment.

Young people were asked whether they had a goal in mind for their education and occupation.

Results

Out of 12 responses collected via the method detailed above, the following results were found. Results are categorised into themes of Education, Employment, Housing, Living Skills, Relationships and Feedback on Our Place. Additionally, where relevant, these findings are compared with the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) data routinely collected by Our Place.

Education

Six respondents were studying at the time they completed the survey, including two undertaking an apprenticeship/traineeship.

The young people undertaking traineeships were pursuing Business and Disability Services careers. Two others were completing their Year 12 Certificates, and another was studying Youth Work.

■ Young people studying, 12-18 months post leaving Our Place (N=12)

6 Studying   **6** Not Studying

Three young people identified a goal that they had in mind for their future education or employment. One listed completing Year 12 as a goal; another wishes to undertake further studies at an art school, and a third stated a goal of becoming a community youth worker.

> *"Community youth work because they have been there for me and help me a lot with a lot of stuff that I need so I would like to work as a community worker, so then I can give help young people that needs help like me when I need help when I was young." [sic]*

There was a mixture of study formats represented: on campus (n=3), online (n=1), on-the-job (n=1), mixed format (n=1). 4 students studied on a full-time and 2 on a part-time basis.

Most young people in the sample (n=8) reported that, if they had not completed a course they were doing while at Our Place, they had completed it since. Three had completed a different course since they left Our Place. One person specified that they had completed their Responsible Service of Alcohol and Responsible Conduct of Gambling qualifications.

The SHIP data indicates that out of all young people who have completed a support period at Our Place since it opened, 63% were recorded as being a student or trainee at the time they left. It is positive to see that, out of those who were contacted later, half are either still engaged or re-engaged in education, and most had completed courses in the time since they left.
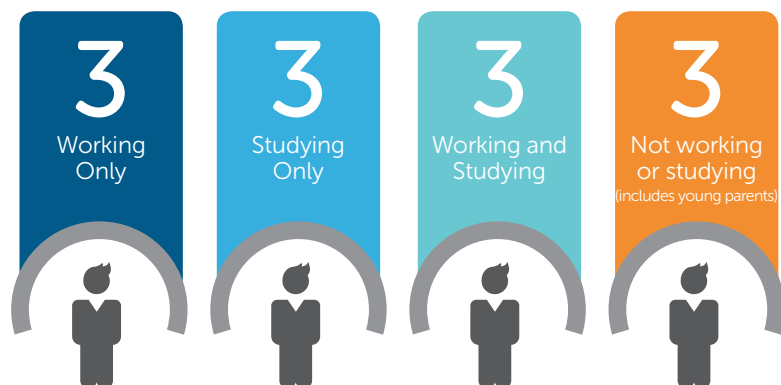
Employment

Half (n=6) of the respondents were working at the time of the survey; out of these people, half were employed on a full-time basis and half on a casual basis. Three reported working in hospitality and one reported working in a school for children with disabilities; no other occupations were reported. One of the young people employed casually indicated that they were also looking for full-time work.

Nearly half (n=5) of the respondents reported that their main source of income was from working. An equal number indicated that their major income source was a Centrelink payment, and one other person indicated that their income was a combination of working and Centrelink support. Three of those whose income was from Centrelink were full-time students. Two (including one of the students) were living as single parents.

It is positive to see that, out of those who were contacted later, half are either still engaged or re-engaged in education...

■ Current activities of young people post leaving Our Place (N=12)

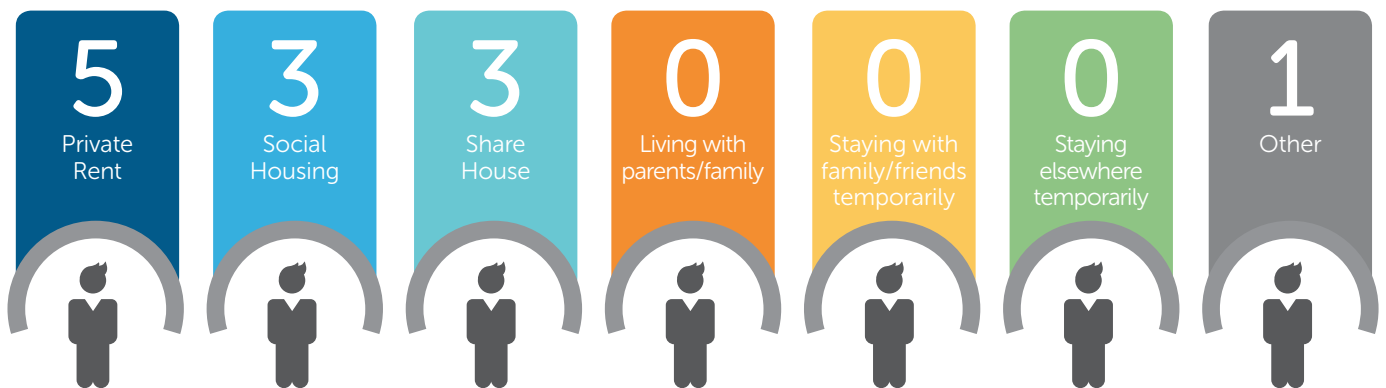| 3 Working Only | 3 Studying Only | 3 Working and Studying | 3 Not working or studying (includes young parents) |

SHIP data indicates that out of all 70 young people who had completed a support period at Our Place since it opened (as at 21st July 2015), 30% were recorded as being employed at the time they left. The group interviewed had a higher rate of employment with 50% either working or combining work and study. Meanwhile, although 63% of all previous residents were studying when they left Our Place, only 50% were still studying (or had returned to study). This could suggest a positive trajectory from completing education to moving into the workforce; however, it is impossible to generalise for all previous Our Place residents.

Housing

Young people had various housing arrangements: 5 reported renting in the private market, 3 reported renting from Housing or similar, 3 reported living in a share house, and 1 indicated that they lived with their partner but did not specify the nature of tenure (shown as 'Other' category in the graph below).

Housing arrangements of young people, 12-18 months post leaving Our Place (N=12)

5 Private Rent	3 Social Housing	3 Share House	0 Living with parents/family	0 Staying with family/friends temporarily	0 Staying elsewhere temporarily	1 Other

All young people were living independently, and from their responses, none appeared to be in a situation of homelessness.

All young people were living independently, and from their responses, none appeared to be in a situation of homelessness.

There was a wide variety of arrangements with regard to who the young people lived with. In total, 4 reported living with their partner, two lived with their child or children only, and two lived with friends. Others lived with their partner and children, alone, with other family, or with their partner and other friends in a share house.

Length of tenure was similarly variable. Out of the 9 respondents who provided a distinct unit of time in their current residence, the average length of tenure was over 6 months with a range of 1 month to 15 months. Considering that respondents were selected because they had moved out of Our Place 12-18 months prior to completing the survey, this indicates that some had experienced relatively stable accommodation since exiting the service. One young person indicated that they had lived at their current place, with their boyfriend, for 18 months 'on and off', suggesting a less stable arrangement although one lasting for a long period of time.

SHIP data also indicates that 93% of young people who have completed a support period at Our Place moved from the service into a house/townhouse/flat, and 53% moved into a transitional housing arrangement on exit from the program. This shows that most have a positive transition

but provides no information about the stability of their housing over the following months and years; in particular, those who moved to a transitional arrangement could be expected to move again within a short period of time. It is positive to see that the average length of tenure reported by the young people interviewed was several months in length, even considering the likelihood that they spent time in transitional arrangements during the meantime.

Living skills

Seven respondents reported learning, or improving, some of their skills while at Our Place, and 4 reported that they did not. Those who commented referred to increasing their independence and building on their living skills.

In terms of specific skills covered by the Our Place program, between one-third and just over one-half of respondents reported being already competent at each skill. Seven out of twelve respondents reported being 'already competent' at the skill *Shared Living: Respectful Noise Levels*. However, only 4 out of 12 reported being 'already competent' at *Shared Living: Communication, Cooking: Healthy eating, Budgeting* and *Organising your own transport*. Half of the respondents reported improving on each of these skills while at Our Place.

Only one person felt that they 'learned' (as opposed to 'improved') any skill at Our Place, which was the *Cooking: Learning recipes skill*. One respondent reported that they 'did not learn' any of the skills asked about. This person may have understood the response options differently than intended and meant to indicate that they felt already competent in each of the skills listed. However, they may also have felt they needed assistance in all of these areas which they did not receive at Our Place.

The survey also asked what else was learnt at Our Place. Young people responded that they learned more about the supports available to them, and that they and their struggles were important to others.

Nine people responded to the question about the usefulness of skills they learned at Our Place. Apart from one respondent who indicated that they didn't learn any skills, all respondents reported that the skills they learned were 'moderately' (n=3) or very (n=5) useful.

It is positive to see that the average length of tenure reported by the young people interviewed was several months in length...

Relationships

Two thirds of the young people contacted (n=8) indicated that they were in contact with their family. Frequency of contact varied approximately equally between 'about every day', 'every couple of days', 'every week or so' and 'every couple of weeks or so'. In terms of feeling supported by their family, 5 out of the 9 people who responded to the question indicated that they did feel supported by their family, with one young person commenting: "more so than before".

Two thirds of the young people (n=8) also indicated that they were in contact with friends. Half (n=4) contacted their friends every couple of days, 2 contacted their friends just about every day, and 2 did so every week or so. Five out of the 8 respondents indicated that they felt supported by their friends.

Nearly half of the respondents (n=5) were in contact with other supportive people or agencies, and contact with these ranged from every week to occasionally. Most (3 out of 5) felt supported by the people or agencies they were in contact with.

Feedback on Our Place

Young people were asked if there were any ways that Our Place was helpful to them. Responses referred to supportiveness, learning skills and independence, kindness and fun, and providing accommodation.

"felt supported and cared for"

"by always being super fun and nice"

Young people were asked if there were any ways Our Place could have been more helpful to them. Responses included stronger communication, checking up on individual clients, more tutoring, and a particular issue around fairness and tenancy management. Three respondents suggested that there weren't any ways Our Place could have been more helpful.

"Maybe if they checked up a bit more often on individual clients"

"not really, they supported independence, however were there whenever needed"

Respondents were asked whether they felt there were any ways that Our Place let them down. Most respondents indicated that they didn't feel there were any ways Our Place had let them down. One respondent, however, felt that some issues had not been addressed suitably, including roommate issues, and problems with allergies and the cleanliness of an apartment owing to a previous tenant's pet. Of note pets are not allowed for the residents in Our Place.

Most respondents indicated that they didn't feel there were any ways Our Place had let them down.

Analysis

As noted above, the small sample captured means it is not possible to extrapolate further than the group who responded. This limitation is common to many attempts to evaluate the long-term effects of youth housing programs. However it is also clear that many of the young people who responded had positive experiences of stability and support which may have been a crucial turning point for them to re-engage with education and gain vital qualifications they needed to sustain employment.

Education & Employment

Results from the survey indicated that young people had the opportunity to commence and complete courses owing to their time at Our Place. Even if they were not able to complete their course while engaged in the service, several later completed their course or a different one. Two appeared to have clear goals linking study and employment; one studying and working in a disability support traineeship, and another studying youth work with a clearly articulated motivation to become a youth worker. It was particularly encouraging that this young person had found his or her youth workers to be such positive role models that they had chosen to pursue youth work as an education and career goal.

These results are confirmed by the findings of Our Place's SHIP exit summary, which showed that on exit, 68% of clients were enrolled in a formal education or training program.

■ Education enrolled in at the time exited Our Place (N=60)

21 Secondary School	5 University	14 Vocation	1 Other	3 Don't Know	16 Not Applicable

Exit survey results also show that some young people found their stay at Our Place very supportive of their education.

[Our Place has] provided me with stability and support I needed to finish school.

[From my time at Our Place I have gained] the ability to live independently and achieve well at school and uni.

While our survey did not ask about the particular experiences of young parents, three of the respondents indicated that they currently lived with their child/ren, whom they may have had prior to or during their stay at Our Place. Further research is required into how young families such as these perceived Our Place and the supports available to them through the service. Other programs such as the Oxford Foyer project in Western Australia have identified young parents as an important target group and report regularly on their outcomes.

Exit survey results also show that some young people found their stay at Our Place very supportive of their education.

Are young people better off for having spent time at Our Place?

Most of those who responded to our survey appeared to be achieving positive outcomes, including education, employment, stable housing and supportive relationships. Compared to expected outcomes for young people who experience homelessness and do not receive accommodation and education support, these outcomes are more positive (Sloane et. al., 2012).

In particular, most young people reported that the skills they learnt while at Our Place were at least moderately useful (89% of young people who responded to the question) with 56% reporting that the skills they gained were very useful.

Young people also tended to continue with education, with most completing a course in the time since leaving Our Place – either the course they were working on while in the program, or a different one. The assistance young people received to re-engage with education may have

given them the confidence and skills to identify their interests and training needs and work towards increasing their knowledge and vocational skills.

Is Our Place achieving what it is intended to achieve?

Our Place was proposed in response to the significant need for supported housing in the ACT, particularly that which is targeted at young people.

It was tied to goals identified by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, which required states and territories to work towards a reduction in

- the number of people experiencing homelessness,

- the number of people exiting housing into homelessness,

- the number of people experiencing repeated episodes of homelessness, and;

- the number of young people who had experienced homelessness and were not engaged in education or training after a period of support.

Young people who experience one episode of homelessness are at increased risk for future episodes (Flatau et. al., 2013). Therefore, all of the young people included in the sample were at a higher risk for experiencing instability in their housing. While most housing services try to ensure that, where possible, clients do not exit the service back into homelessness, the immediate arrangements made may not be stable in the long term.

Although nearly all of those represented in our survey appeared to be housed with relative stability at the time of responding, it is impossible to know whether those who chose not to participate, or those who could not be contacted, were doing as well. Indeed, it could be speculated that young people who were experiencing further periods of homelessness may have been more difficult to contact, making it less likely they would be represented in a follow-up survey such as this. Nevertheless, the experiences of those who did respond included relatively stable housing arrangements.

Participation in education or training is a requirement of the Our Place program and young people who do not participate are asked to leave or required to pay market rent for their unit, which is a considerable increase from their subsidised rate. Workers report that a frequent reason for young people to be asked to leave the program is their decision to discontinue their education or training program. The survey did not ask the circumstances under which young people left Our Place so it is not known whether any respondents fell into this category. However, half of the respondents were engaged in education at the time of the survey, and several indicated having completing a course since leaving Our Place, suggesting an ongoing participation in education and training activities.

Questions for the future

The difficulties of researching community services are well known; not only is it impossible to control the infinite variables affecting a person's

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experiences and behaviour, but it is unethical to withhold a service from a vulnerable person simply for the purposes of research. This difficulty no doubt explains the lack of clear 'scientific' evidence around successful models and practice in youth homelessness services.

There does not appear to be any consistent way of measuring progress across Foyer model programs in the UK, although there are commonalities in measures recorded against the primary objectives of the program, that is: engagement in education, training or employment, and transition to safe and stable housing at completion or exit from the program.

It is recommended that Our Place, without replicating existing data collection obligations, develop a system to evaluate program outcomes which can more clearly show young people's trajectories from entry to the service to exit and post-exit. It is important for this to align closely, not only with requirements of funding bodies, but with the processes of other Foyer model programs; examples of other major programs operating are provided below. It is also recommended that the development of a comprehensive program outcome system includes liaison with major partners in the sector such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Anglicare WA, both of which are likely to have a similar variety of reporting obligations which they have integrated into their evaluation systems.

Examples of Foyer/Foyer-like Project Evaluation processes

Anglicare WA's Oxford Foyer project uses simple RBA measures to track outcomes for young people in their service. The service also uses measures such as the KIPP Character Strengths and VIA Institute Character Assessment to support strength-based practice. Examples of measures used are given on the following page, although measures evolve over time to improve relevance to the service and more closely reflect critical success factors.

Foyer	
TURNING THE CURVE	
How Much Did We Do?	**How Well Did We Do It?**
• # of young people accommodated	• % accommodated against age, gender, parental status, involvement with child protection • % passing probation period • # of mainstream and specialist partners providing onsite support • % who report being treated well by the program • Wait list • Vacancy rate • Cost per young person • Staff/client ration • Staff turnover • Staff satisfaction
Is Anyone Better Off?	

- **% of young people provided with secure, stable accommodation**
- **% of young people who participate in employment, education or training opportunities**
- **% of young people linked with and access specialist and mainstream services to meet individual needs**
- **% of young parents who develop positive and effective parenting skills**
- **% of young people who re-engage with family where appropriate**
- **% of young people who exit into long-term, positive accommodation options**
- **% of young people who exit and maintain their participation in education, employment or training**

How much did we do?
- Number of YP housed
- Number of YP supported
- Number of completed referrals to external service provision

How well did we do it?
- Demographic data esp. Aboriginal/CALD/Care System
- % of YP staying longer than 12 months
- % of YP who pass intake probation
- % of YP who maintain contact with specialist providers
- # of mainstream & specialist providers onsite

FOYER
— OXFORD —

Is anyone better off?
- % of YP who engage with employment, education or training
- % of YP who have a formal qualification at exit
- % of YP able to identify a career plan
- % of YP with improved independent living skills (1-5 regular assessment)
- # of YP who make positive return to family of origin
- % of YP who maintain contact with family
- % of YP who exit into positive long-term accommodation options
- % of YP who exit and maintain accommodation for 12 months

RBA FOR FOYER

AnglicareWA   central INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY   foundation HOUSING Ltd.

▶ (Source: Anglicare WA. 2013)

The Education First Youth Foyer (EFYF) project operated by the Victorian Government in partnership with Brotherhood of St Laurence and Hanover Youth is conducting a thorough evaluation comparing EFYF outcomes to two other youth housing projects. Baseline data about participants is all that is available thus far but indicates a thorough examination of young people's development not only in educational and vocational engagement but in social and community participation as well (BSL et. al., 2014).

In addition to measures around demographics, education and employment, the EFYF project asks young people questions including:

- Whether they had a GP
- Average self-rated physical health and impact on daily activities
- Average self-rated mental health and impact on daily activities
- Frequency of volunteering
- Civic participation, including intention to vote at the next election (if appropriate) and frequency of participation in community activities/events
- Frequency of contact with friends & family
- Whether domestic violence has interfered with their education/employment
- Whether they had "someone to lean on in times of trouble"
- Whether they often felt lonely

The Miller 'Live N Learn' Project, now South West Sydney Youth Hub, developed a system of Key Performance Indicators around the themes of Living, Learning, and Earning. These are as follows, and refer to outcomes for young people exiting the program.

Performance Indicator		
1	**Living**	
	1.1	Number of residents entering independent accommodation
	1.2	Number of residents living in safe and stable accommodation (other than in 1.1)
2	**Learning**	
	2.1	Number of residents undertaking and completing a recognised education or training course
	2.2	Number of residents achieving agreed learning objectives that are linked to specific living or earning outcomes
3	**Earning**	
	3.1	Number of residents in paid employment
	3.2	Number of residents achieving an equivalent situation in an unpaid or training position

▶ *(Source: Anglicare WA. 2013)*

This set of indicators is broad but covers the fundamental outcomes required of a program designed to address homelessness and educational disadvantage among young people. It has been used in other evaluations of Foyer/Foyer-like models such as the Yallah project in the Illawarra region of NSW (Powell et. al., 2014).

Recommendations

While the findings of this survey show that some young people recall having a positive and useful experience at Our Place, it is not possible to know whether this is the case for all or even most young people who have exited the service. As a result, we recommend building a more formalised evaluation tool into the Our Place client management system.

In order to increase Our Place's capacity to measure outcomes effectively, it is recommended that a consistent survey is built into the intake process, exit process and, where possible, follow-up at 12-18 months post exit. Using the examples of other, larger projects' evaluation processes, this could take the following form:

Point in journey	Subject	Suggested questions
Entry (prior to entering the program)	Demographic information	• Age group & gender • Aboriginality • NESB • Birthplace • Whether spent time in OOHC • Whether refugee background
	Housing	• Housing status immediately before entering service • Whether slept rough/in crisis accommodation in 12 months prior • Housing issues affecting them • Feeling safe in current (pre-Our Place) housing arrangement
	Employment	• Employment status
	Education	• Educational attainment • Enrolment in study • Any goals?
	Wellbeing/social connectedness	• Whether has a GP • Self-rated physical & mental health, & impact on daily activities • Participation in volunteering & community events • Contact with friends/family • Have someone to lean on in times of trouble? • Often feel lonely?

Point in journey	Subject	Suggested questions
Exit	Housing	• Exiting into safe, stable independent accommodation? • Exiting into other safe & stable accommodation? • Concerns about housing issues
	Employment	• Employment status
	Education	• Educational attainment • Enrolment in study • Any goals?
	Wellbeing/social connectedness	• Whether has a GP • Self-rated physical & mental health, & impact on daily activities • Participation in volunteering & community events • Contact with friends/family • Have someone to lean on in times of trouble? • Often feel lonely?
	Reflection on Our Place	

Point in journey	Subject	Suggested questions
Post-exit (12-18 months follow-up)	Housing	• Living independently in safe, stable accommodation? • Living in safe stable accommodation otherwise? • Concerns about housing issues?
	Employment	• Employment status
	Education	• Educational attainment • Enrolment in study • Any goals?
	Wellbeing/social connectedness	• Whether has a GP • Self-rated physical & mental health, & impact on daily activities • Participation in volunteering & community events • Contact with friends/family • Have someone to lean on in times of trouble? • Often feel lonely?
	Reflection on Our Place	

Since long-term outcomes are an important measure of the value of a service, developing a more formalised system of attempting to follow up ex-residents could improve response rates. For example, informing residents before or when they leave the service that a worker may contact them in 12-18 months, asking if they would be happy to be contacted, and informing them that there will be an incentive attached to their feedback, may increase the likelihood that young people would participate in follow-up surveys. At entry, some services ask for permission to contact young people in future for research purposes. Other studies have recommended that services also request names and contact details of people who will always know how to contact the service user. This will mean that young people can be offered the opportunity to participate even if their contact details have changed (Grace et al, 2011).

In order to ensure outcome measures are comparable with similar services in Australia, it would be valuable to liaise with other major Foyer service providers, such as Brotherhood of St Laurence and Anglicare WA. This would assist in developing a collaborative and consistent approach to add rigour to the evaluation outcomes and to support the continuing improvement of supported housing services for vulnerable youth.

In order to ensure outcome measures are comparable with similar services in Australia, it would be valuable to liaise with other major Foyer service providers, such as Brotherhood of St Laurence and Anglicare WA

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