

This Way Home: Supporting Young People into Accommodation

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The Green Paper *Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness* signifies that the current Labor Government and the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd are genuinely keen to see a change in situation for some of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

The Green Paper attempts to identify some of the issues people who are homeless face, and outlines three options for addressing homelessness. These options go some way to recognising that homelessness is a complex issue that needs to be addressed by all areas of the community. Service to Youth Council Inc (SYC) believes that a central assessment, referral and case management service is a key part of this response.

From our 50 years experience as a service provider to young people who are homeless, SYC proposes two alternative and best

practice models to those proposed in the Green Paper. SYC is currently implementing these models and is achieving effective outcomes with young people in a developmentally appropriate way and providing assistance across the housing continuum. These models are Trace-A-Place and the Cooperative Foundation Court.

Trace-A-Place

Since 1994 SYC Trace-A-Place has been the central assessment, referral and case management service for Adelaide metropolitan Youth SAAP services. Trace-A-Place provides any young person who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with assistance to identify, access and when appropriate maintain housing both within SAAP and in non SAAP housing. Young people must go through Trace-A-Place (or the Crisis Response Unit after hours) to access emergency accommodation and intensively supportive transitional Youth SAAP services. This model is unique to South Australia and provides an integrated service and equity of access to accommodation for young people.

What Trace-A-Place has demonstrated is that a model of centralised case management works effectively for young people who are homeless. Trace-A-Place provides case management to young people from their first contact with SAAP until they are able to move to stable accommodation. Trace-A-Place is the only service that follows these young people and assists them to negotiate the Youth SAAP system and other systems, through referral and advocacy on their behalf. Trace-A-Place knows the young person's history, the places they have been accommodated and most importantly is able to build a relationship with these young people during the length of their period of instability. Trace-A-Place is able to offer ongoing support to young people for as long as they need it. This is vitally important for this group who, due to their developmental stage, will need support which is flexible, responsive and often for an extended period. Due to its position, Trace-A-Place is able to provide a continuum of care to young people, is able to pick up with them each time they require support, without them having to tell their story again.



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In addition this model of service delivery has encouraged collaboration across the youth homelessness sector and with other NGOs and Government service providers.

At Trace-A-Place our statistics show that SAAP and this model of a centralised case management works for young people. In the 2006–2007 financial year Trace-A-Place received request for support from approximately 1900 young people and went on to provide case management to 850 young people. Of this group:

- 82% were supported for 3 months or less
- 10% were supported for up to 6 months
- 8% were supported for 6 months or more

Historical data tells us that 75% of the clients who come to Trace-A-Place will only have one period of support while 15% will have 2 periods of support. Trace-A-Place is effective in responding to young people's accommodation needs as 77% of young people were referred to the accommodation they requested on their first contact.

In interviews conducted with young people they told Trace-A-Place that they preferred having the one service they can go to for assistance.

"There is not so much confusion with one service (like in Melbourne). It's good to have one worker, not lots of workers doing different things" (client, aged 18)

Feedback from young people shows that the centralised case management service helps young people address their barriers as they are able to provide ongoing support. One young person said:

"The Trace A Place worker knows all the options and knows what best for us. We'd be less stable if we self-referred. I'd run away from my problems more" (client, aged 17)

Trace-A-Place is effective in supporting many young people to move through homelessness in a short period. Those who are not able to move on as quickly, often due to the complexity of their situation and the underlying reasons for becoming homeless, are able to access ongoing support as often and for as long as they need. It is the flexibility and centralised case management that Trace-A-Place provides which makes this model effective and essential for the Government to consider.

Cooperative Foundation Court (CFC)

At the other end of the housing spectrum is the Cooperative Foundation Court (CFC). CFC fills a gap in the housing market for young people 17–25 yrs of age, by providing medium to long-term affordable housing (6–12 months). This housing was developed in 1993 in partnership with Adelaide City Council and philanthropic investment. Rather than replicate other services being provided to young people such as SAAP funded services, CFC responds to young people who are reasonably independent but have barriers to accessing other independent accommodation. These barriers include low income, lack of housing references, limited independent living experience, difficulties sharing accommodation, exiting SAAP system and having no other viable accommodation options due to the lack of housing availability and affordability.

CFC is a small group of units located in the CBD in a secure 'gated community' and is based on a community housing model. The intention of this model is to create a community for young people to live within and assist them to develop interpersonal skills necessary for independent living. An SYC volunteer lives on site as the caretaker and the young people are supported by an SYC Social Worker to develop goals and

access independent housing. As a result of their stay young people develop knowledge and skills in maintaining an independent tenancy, are provided with a rental reference from SYC and acquire necessary household items to take into their next tenancy.

It is a requirement that young people who have a tenancy at CFC must be engaged in education, training or employment. If they are not they will be assisted to do so by the SYC Social Worker. SYC is able to provide CFC residents with a holistic response to their accommodation and education by linking them with SYC's JPET, PSP, Job Network and Registered Training division.

CFC has demonstrated that it is effective in supporting young people to transition onto independence through housing and participation in the community in education, training or employment. Since its inception CFC has accommodated 127 young people whom upon referral to SYC were in the state of secondary homelessness. Of those young people who have left CFC, 70% of tenancies have resulted in the young person moving to independent housing. For this client group we believe this is outstanding.

CFC is also a cost effective model. The units and staffing costs are covered by rental payments which are affordable at \$90 a week. As such this model is a very cost effective model of youth housing. SYC has proven that this model is so effective in supporting young people that it proposes to expand the CFC model to other areas of Adelaide.

SYC delivers young people a continuum of housing and support. These programs have demonstrated their effectiveness over time and demonstrate the importance of centralised case management and innovative affordable housing models to respond to young people where ever they are in their homelessness experience. ■