

Western Australian Council on Homelessness

MINUTES OF MEETING Friday 9 September 2011

Large Executive Conference Room, Level 2
Department for Child Protection
189 Royal Street, East Perth
Meeting commenced at 9:00am

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting:

Present

Hon Kay Hallahan AO	Independent Chair
Mr Richard Aspinall	FaHCSIA
Mr Greg Cash	Department of Housing
W/Professor Paul Flatau	University of Western Australia
Mr Steve Glew	Department for Child Protection
Mr James Hunter	Drug and Alcohol Office
Mr Ross Kyrwood	YMCA
Ms Judi Morris	Mental Health Commission
Mr Steve Robbins	Department of Corrective Services
Ms Leanne Strommen(proxy)	Centrecare
Ms Julie Waylen	Department for Child Protection

In attendance

Ms Sandra Flanagan	Department for Child Protection
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Apologies

Ms Kathleen Gregory	Foundation Housing
Mr Tony Pietropiccolo	Centrecare
Ms Nanette Williams	Pilbara Community Legal Service

2. Minutes of meeting held 12 August 2011

The minutes of the WA Council on Homelessness meeting held on 12 August 2011 were confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

The Chair welcomed Mr Robert McMahon, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, to the meeting via teleconference to discuss the review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

Ms Waylen provided an overview of the NPAH initiatives in WA:

A Place to Call Home provides wrap around support to homeless people on the Department for Housing waitlist for an initial 12 month period. Tenants are provided with intensive support to sustain their tenancy and achieve long term sustainable housing. The original target was for 33 properties, this has been exceeded and there are now 34 supported tenancies in operation.

The Foyer model is currently being built and will be managed through a partnership between Anglicare WA, Central Institute of Technology and Foundation Housing to provide a 98 apartment style complex for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is co-located with the Central Institute of Technology to enable connection with employment, education and training.

Street to Home is a comprehensive response for rough sleepers providing intensive support into long term stable housing. This initiative involves a collaborative agreement between 8 NGO's (specialist homelessness services) and includes a mobile clinical outreach component with a part-time psychiatrist.

Public and Private Tenancy Support involves a range of strategies to support people in public and private tenancies as part of the early intervention and prevention strategy, helping them to maintain their tenancies and preventing them becoming homeless. This initiative involves collaboration with real estate companies and the Department of Housing to provide support to people in private and public housing. The Public Housing tenancy support is an extension of other programs operating through the Department of Housing and providing long term strategies to keep people in housing.

Safe at Home provides support for women and children who wish to stay in their own home after domestic violence. This initiative involves collaboration between the domestic violence services and the police. An MOU has been established providing domestic violence services access to the critical incidence reports from the police, which assists with the safety assessment and determining if it is appropriate for the women to stay safe in their homes.

Additional Programs

- Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme (*HUGS*) provides grants to people in utilities hardship to ensure they maintain connection to their utilities and avoid eviction.
- Support for Children in Domestic Violence Accommodation Services.
- Support for Children who are Homeless.
- Support for young women leaving Child Protection services.
- Mental health and drug and alcohol initiatives.
- Remote outreach workers for rough sleepers in remote locations – Broome and Kalgoorlie.
- Homeless Accommodation Support Workers, working to ensure people exiting crisis services are not exited back into homelessness.

Discussion ensued regarding utilising the consultation questions which have been agreed to by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. The questions were used as discussion prompts only and participants were able to discuss other issues as necessary.

1. ***What NPAH programs/initiatives/policies do you think are making a positive difference to reduce homelessness? [for each]:***
 - a. ***What evidence is there to show this positive impact? (e.g. stats/evaluations)***
 - b. ***Do you have any views on whether it could be improved/scaled up/replicated elsewhere?***

The Safe at Home and the Street to Home programs were both trialled previously through the SAAP Innovation and Investment Fund (I&IF). This provided the opportunity to evaluate and modify as required before starting under the NPA. As a result these programs under the NPA, have been extremely successful.

The learnings and modifications undertaken as a result of the I&IF trial enabled the concerns with the Street to Home Program to be addressed. The result is a strong integrated service framework with shared measurement (data collection) and shared management. This shared data system is fundamental as there are a number of agencies involved in the program. Key players in the program include outreach workers – mental health and drug and alcohol; clinical workers; housing support workers, Department for Housing workers; and community housing and crisis accommodation workers. Without the shared data collection system this program would fail, given the large number of services involved. The individual agencies have worked together to establish a successful system of integrated management.

Private Rental Tenancy Program is another example of a program having a positive impact. Fundamental to this program is the collaboration and relationships between the service, landlords and real estate agents. These important relationships have been well established over time. Landlords are more willing to take on tenants they would have otherwise rejected as the tenant is supported to sustain their tenancy.

All of the initiatives mentioned under question 1 have made a significant difference for their target clients.

2. ***Of the examples of [programs/initiatives/policies] you have given, which do you think has made the most difference and for whom?***
 - a. ***What makes you choose that one?***
 - b. ***What evidence is there for this view?***

The provision of *Brokerage funding* has been very successful as it provides agencies with the ability to provide individualised support to assist that person out of homelessness.

Street to Home: Mr Flatau advised that he had undertaken the evaluation for the *Street to Home* program in WA. This involved active engagement with agencies and gained qualitative data through consultations and utilised a proforma for data collection. Additionally, a number of reports have been prepared over time forming the basis of evaluation of this program.

Safe at Home: good administrative data has been collected and is available to use for evaluation.

The learning from the I&IF pilots provides a sound evidence base which, as mentioned earlier, was utilised in the development/establishment of the programs under the NPA. New services have not yet had the time to be fully evaluated, and should not be overshadowed by those that have.

3. ***Are there programs which have had limited impact?***
 - a. ***What makes you choose that one?***
 - b. ***What evidence is there for this view?***

The sector has undergone significant reform. A small number of agencies have struggled with the change to operations. This has identified the potential to develop better workforce management strategies and enhance skill levels at the facilitation and integration level.

The following additional constraints, while not program limitations, have had an effect on the success of the programs.

Limited access to affordable housing potentially impacts all initiatives as housing is required for the support to have a long term positive impact.

Continuous improvement is also occurring in respect to the responsibility on mainstream agencies to become more aware of, and involved in, homelessness issues. This is leading to better interdepartmental integration and means of coming together to maximise the effort and value that is already undertaken, and to leveraging additional outcomes for clients.

Interface with employment was discussed. Members expressed concern that people who are homeless are not supported sufficiently in employment opportunities. Additionally there is concern regarding the effectiveness of distributing the available funding to assist these people.

4. *What are some of the lessons that have been learned in recent action to reduce homelessness?*

Important advances have been achieved through the development of the new initiatives and reform of the sector. A significant change has been the move to an integrated system and the development of collaborative mechanisms and partnerships.

This has resulted in a positive impact for clients, particularly over the past 18 months. The integration between non-government services and between non-government and government agencies has been substantial leading to improved outcomes for clients. Integration is not just a buzz word; it is championed from the top and occurring on the ground.

The chair thanked Mr McMahon for participating via teleconference.

4. Guest Speaker – Ms Rosemary Cant, Director, Social Systems and Evaluation

The Chair welcomed Ms Cant to the meeting. Ms Cant provided an overview of the evaluation of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness programs in Western Australia, including the following information:

- The overarching evaluation is results based – How much was done? How well was it done? With what results?
- The evaluation also uses program logic based on a Hierarchy of Intended Outcomes.
- Evaluation is about 1/3rd of the way through.
- Workshops held with staff from all agencies in conjunction with the March NPAH providers' forum.
- Interviews with managers (and other staff) from all agencies 95% complete.
- De-identified data received for January to December 2010.
- Interviews with 310 clients and electronic worker survey about to commence.
- Case studies to be developed in October/November
- Interim Report due December 2011; Final Report December 2012.

Findings to date include:

- Program activities are occurring as expected.
- Clients are being engaged. As well as being homeless most clients have mental health, drug & alcohol, financial, legal or relationship issues.

- Housing or other accommodation is being sourced.
- Clients are being linked to mental health, drug & alcohol, financial, legal & other services.
- Evidence that accommodation is sustained.
- Considerable interagency activity. Relationships are very important.
- Flexible brokerage funds are a key component.

Action: Ms Flanagan to provide details regarding brokerage and employment issues to Ms Cant.

5. Business Arising

5.1 Interdepartmental Integration

Mr Kyrwood advised that the two meetings that have taken place to discuss intergovernmental integration have been useful. At the last meeting the importance of achieving the right balance between an agency's rights and responsibilities regarding the implementation of their program, and maximising limited resources ensuring the best outcome for the client was explored. Good communication is necessary to understand the different requirements and preferred strategies and outcomes. For example, the purpose of the allocation of housing for mental health or drug and alcohol clients may not primarily be linked to homelessness. Improved communication is required to ensure strategies are understood to prevent misunderstandings and miscommunications.

DCP is taking the lead in progressing this initiative.

6. Update from the Department of Housing

Mr Cash provided a brief update regarding NPA allocations. The target was for 610 allocations and 564 applications were received to the end of June 2011. Of those received 425 clients have been housed. This is the expected number as there is a lag between receiving the application and getting the client into accommodation. It is expected that the target will be met this financial year as the referral process is now operating with all relevant services, thus more referrals are being received. Importantly, the clients are people who are already on the public housing waitlist and through collaboration between the housing support worker and the Department of Housing, they are placed on a priority list requiring immediate housing to avoid or alleviate homelessness.

7. Development of Regional Plans to reduce homelessness: update

Deferred to next meeting.

8. Future Agenda Items

- International Alliance to End Homelessness Conference (Ian Carter, attending October Mtg).
- The Hon Troy Buswell MLA, Minister for Housing (attending October meeting).
- Links between specialist homelessness services and health services: it was suggested the Street to Home Program is a good example and Anthony Collier from the Mobile Clinical Outreach Team (MCOT), Adele Stewart and Lynne Evans be invited to discuss at the November meeting.

- The outcome of the Fair Work Australia Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Case to be discussed at a future meeting.
- Social Innovation Grants – Ruah has received a grant involving an employment program. Francis Lynch, CEO, Ruah to be invited to a meeting to provide an overview.

9. Correspondence

9.1 In

Response from Minister McSweeney advising that the requested letters to Minister Buswell (Three Strikes policy) and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs (Visitors Mapping Project) have been prepared and forwarded and Minister Buswell's response attached.

10. General business

Nil

10.1 Questions for Minister Buswell

The Chair advised that questions for Minister Buswell are to be emailed to Ms Flanagan as soon as possible after the meeting.

11. Next Meeting

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 10:35am.

The next meeting will be held on 14 October, 2011 at 9am.