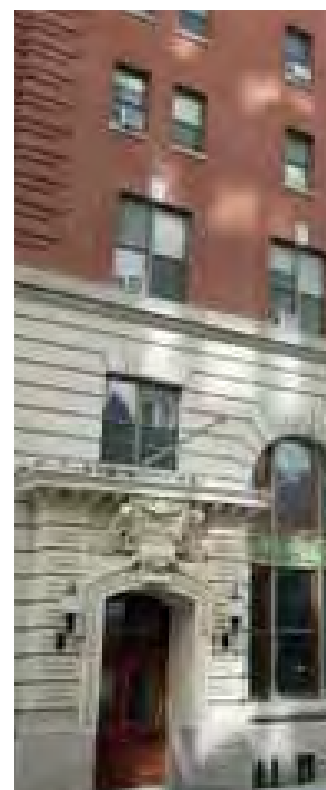*the* **homeless hub**
REPORT SERIES
REPORT **#10**

LIVE, LEARN, GROW:

Supporting Transitions to Adulthood for Homeless Youth

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FOYER IN CANADA

Stephen Gaetz & Fiona Scott

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I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE.

My kids live in transitional housing. It's called my home. My wife and I provide them with shelter, food and a modicum of income. We encourage them to stay in school (they have) and to have a job (they do). We provide them with adult support and mentoring, and they get a good dose of life skills. They are encouraged to take chances, but also are forgiven for mistakes because they will learn from them. Eventually, they are expected to move out and live independently. Because they are still in school, and given the current housing market, would not be able to support themselves to live independently, they remain at home though they do want to move out. In my view, they can stay as long as they need to, but they will eventually leave.

So this raises an important question. If this is OK for my kids (and I don't think this approach to parenting is highly unique), why is it not for young people who become homeless, children in care or those who have had run-ins with the law? For homeless youth who cannot return home (because it is not safe, or there is no home to return to), what kinds of housing supports will help them move forward in their lives? What if we imagined a kind of accommodation and support that is modelled more closely on our expectations of the longer-term needs of adolescents and emerging adults?

Stephen Gaetz

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1 Introduction

IN CANADA, there is a growing interest in developing more effective responses to youth homelessness. This is expressed by the desire to shift our efforts from providing homeless youth with bare bone emergency services to a broader and more strategic emphasis on prevention, and models of accommodation that lead to a life of independence and fulfilment. In striving for these outcomes, communities across the country are looking to build on "what works" and adapt effective models to local contexts. Finding suitable models of housing and accommodation supported by effective policy and funding frameworks is central to these efforts.

And there is no time like the present for making a shift. While acknowledging the very necessary role of emergency services designed to help young people deal with the crisis of broken family relationships, eviction and homelessness, there is now a general openness to doing things differently. At a strategic level, many communities are now adopting "ten year plans" to end homelessness. Many national organizations – including Raising the Roof, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association and Eva's National Initiatives – are arguing that communities should adopt strategic plans to *end youth homelessness.*

As part of any solution to youth homelessness, we need to think about effective models of accommodation and supports. In this report, the Foyer model is explored, with an eye towards its applicability in the Canadian context. The Foyer is a particularly appealing example of social innovation in the area of transitional housing, and offers an integrated living model where young people are housed for a longer period of time than is typically the case, offered living skills, and are either enrolled in education or training, or are employed. It is a transitional housing model for youth that has gained great popularity in the UK, Australia and elsewhere, and can offer inspiration for how we might address the housing needs of homeless youth, and in particular younger teens, and those leaving care (child protection) or juvenile detention.

It may seem a bit odd to talk about the Foyer in relation to a need for social innovation – after all, across Canada, there are numerous examples of transitional housing programs that

target homeless youth, and many of these offer excellent support. At the same time, the notion of transitional housing has become quite controversial in many quarters, and is seen to be somewhat out-dated – in large part because of the growing popularity and demonstrated success of Housing First approaches.

Certainly many current models of transitional housing for youth are quite limited (often the limitations are the result of funding and policy frameworks) in that they confine the length of stay to one year, the range of available supports is limited, and appropriate aftercare is lacking. Such limitations make no sense when we consider that for most adolescents, the transition to adulthood can take many years, and involve moving out and back home several times.

However, the argument will be made here that innovative models such as the Foyer offer a vision of how we might develop effective transitional or interim housing designed to better meet the needs of young people who are transitioning to adulthood. And this is an important point – the goal is not just *independence*, but to support young people to become successful *adults* by helping them obtain an adequate education, skills for living and for healthy relationships, and by encouraging engagement in meaningful and fulfilling activities. And as is the case with any young person, these things take time.

Properly configured, and with adequate funding and a policy framework that embeds such housing in a broader system of care, transitional housing models, such as the Foyer, can be implemented as an appropriate and effective response to the needs of homeless youth, and in particular, those who are under the age of 18. Contemporary thinking about the role of transitional housing continues to evolve, and models such as the Foyer should be part of a range of housing options available for young people.

This report reflects on the possibilities of adapting, and in fact improving on, the Foyer model for the Canadian context. The report has three main sections. First, there is an overview of the challenges homeless youth face in securing and maintaining housing, to be followed by an analysis of the role that transitional housing can play in supporting young people as they move forward with their lives. In the second section, the Foyer model is introduced. The underlying philosophy of the Foyer is explored, key components are explained, and the research on program effectiveness is examined. The final section of the report is designed to support communities in the practical adaptation

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of the Foyer model. A framework that identifies the indispensable features of the Foyer model is presented which clearly lays out how this model can be adapted and implemented in the Canadian context. The proposed framework does not simply replicate what has been developed elsewhere, but rather seeks to incorporate recent developments in housing responses for young people who have experienced homelessness and embed it in the Canadian context.

Methodology

The purpose of this report is to provide clear information on the Foyer as a transitional housing model for youth, and assess its potential for adaptation in Canada. The methodology for the report involved an extensive review of the relevant English language literature on:

- Models of accommodation and supports (including transitional housing) for youth in Canada;
- Descriptive accounts of the Foyer, as a transitional housing model.
- Evaluation literature on the Foyer

The literature review drew on peer reviewed academic publications, 'grey literature' such as commissioned reports and program evaluations, and web-based program descriptions, in order to understand the debates, prevailing theories and hypothesis regarding transitional housing, assess the evidence-base for the Foyer, and make a determination of key elements that could be applied (and modified) in the Canadian context.

For the purposes of this discussion, we define homeless youth as including young people between the ages of 12 and 25, which, following from the Canadian Definition of Homelessness, "describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. [Homelessness] is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing." (CHRN, 2012)

2 Young people, Homelessness and the Challenges of Securing Accommodation

DO WE REALLY NEED SPECIALIZED SERVICES for young people who become homeless? One of the key arguments in support of the Foyer is the necessity of recognizing the needs of adolescents and young adults as unique and worthy of attention. The causes of youth homelessness are different from the causes of adult homelessness, and as such the solutions should be distinct, as well. So in thinking about appropriate models of accommodation and support for young people, we really need to understand the challenges associated with the transition to adulthood and how these impact on the experience of homelessness.

While the pathways to homelessness are varied and unique, one thing that unites all young people in this situation is their attempt to secure housing at a very young age, with minimal or no family support, limited resources and very little experience with independent living. These challenges become more complicated the younger one is, and if one faces discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, or because of racism, problems become compounded.   The barriers homeless youth face in moving towards independent living are shaped by several key factors:

Structural barriers that limit access to housing: supply, income, education and discrimination

Perhaps the key factor that makes solving homelessness a challenge – regardless of a person's age - is the lack of affordable housing in Canada. This is a well-documented problem that is traceable to Canada's lack of an affordable housing strategy and the dramatic decrease in direct investment in this area since the 1990s (Hulchanski et al., 2004; 2009; Shapcott, 2008; Pomeroy, 2007; Gaetz, 2010). A recent study by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) shows that there has not been an expansion in the supply of new rental housing over the past decade, and that the average cost of rent has increased by over 20% since 2000 (FCM, 2012). Social housing is not expanding either, and the wait lists in major cities continue to grow. In Toronto, a record 85,578 families were on the wait list in 2012 (Toronto Community Housing Corporation, 2012). This means less affordable housing and higher rents for a large percentage of Canadians who have seen their incomes drop over the past two decades (Statistics Canada, 2006).

These problems become even more acute the younger you are. For instance, one's youth can lead to discrimination. Millar has argued that, particularly in a tight housing market, "many private landlords (believe) that street-involved youth are a risky investment, assuming that young tenants will fail to pay rent, damage property, and leave without notice" (Millar, 2009:18).

Obtaining safe, affordable and appropriate housing becomes a particular challenge for youth who become homeless and who are also beset by poverty and inexperience. When they *do* manage to get housing, it is often at the margins of the rental housing market. That is, young people can become

victims of unscrupulous landlords who rent rooms that may be unclean, poorly maintained and unsafe. They may also be victimized by landlords who prey on their youth, inexperience, marginalization and lack of parents or guardians to advocate or protect them (Gaetz, 2002).

One thing that compounds problems for marginalized youth is the fact that few have the necessary income to *pay* for housing. Even if a young person is in a community where there is some rental housing available, youth generally do not have access to full-time, well paying jobs. Typically, the only type of employment available to youth these days is low paying, part-time and dead end work. This explains why so many housed youth continue to live at home well beyond their teen years, often punctuated by periods of independent living followed by moves back to the parental home (Côté & Bynner, 2008). In the most recent census (2011), Statistics Canada reported that 42.3% of young adults (aged 20 to 29) "lived in the parental home, either because they never left it or because they returned home after living elsewhere" (Statistics Canada, 2012a:2). If this emerging pattern of extended adolescence, shaped by structural changes to the economy, is affecting young people who have parental support and a home to go to, one can only imagine the challenges it presents to homeless youth. When thinking about appropriate models of accommodation and supports for young people (including transitional housing), this is an important point to consider.

Underlying this economic vulnerability is the fact that homeless youth generally have poor education qualifications. It is well established that the drop-out rates for homeless youth are much higher – over 65% (Gaetz et al., 2010) – than the rate for young people who are housed - 8.5% in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2012b). Evidence from Canada and elsewhere demonstrates again and again that early school leavers face a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace (Sum et al., 2009; Statistics Canada, 2010; 2012b; 2012c). Historic trends show the unemployment rate for dropouts to be more than double that of young people with a minimum high school education (Statistics Canada, 2012c). Not only do they face a much tougher time getting and keeping jobs, they tend to be permanently relegated to low-paying service sector jobs with little opportunity of moving out of this job ghetto. Lack of affordable housing, combined with low earning potential, means few homeless youth are in a position to afford housing, without some kind of assistance.

The Fraserburg Herald. Thursday 9 February 2012 12:26
www.fraserburghherald.co.uk/news/stevenson-centre-to-tackle-unemployed-1-2107140

The lack of institutional support for young people leaving care

One of the major causes of youth homelessness is the unsuccessful transition of young people from institutional care to independent living. The link between the failures of child protection legislation, policy and services and youth homelessness is well established. Research consistently tells us that a high percentage of young people who become homeless have had *some* involvement with child protection services, including foster care, group home placements or youth custodial centres (Dworsky, 2010; Karabanow, 2004; Nichols, 2008; Raising the Roof, 2009; Serge et al., 2002). For instance, in three separate studies conducted over a ten-year period, Gaetz and O'Grady found the percentage of homeless youth in Toronto who reported having lived in foster care and/or group homes to be between 41-43% (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Gaetz, 2002; Gaetz, O'Grady & Buccieri, 2010). The underlying problem is that many young people who leave care fail to make a smooth transition to adulthood and independent living because of underdeveloped life skills, inadequate education, and lack of supports and resources (including income) that we know most young people rely on when moving into adulthood. Some voluntarily leave care because of bad experiences in the system. Other youth 'age out'[1] of the foster care system and are left to fend for themselves, never having been prepared for independent living at such a young age. Difficult transitions from care often result in negative outcomes such as homelessness, unemployment, lack of educational engagement and achievement, involvement in corrections, lack of skills and potentially, a life of poverty.

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1. Child Protection legislation is a provincial responsibility, and there are significant jurisdictional differences meaning that the actual age at which the State remains responsible for young people in care varies from province to province. In Ontario, for instance, young people 'age out' at 18, but can also voluntarily withdraw from care at the age of 16.

Young people who experience **mental health problems**, and are discharged from mental health inpatient care without adequate housing are also at increased risk of homelessness. We do know that the onset of some mental health issues, such as schizophrenia, typically begin when people are young, and often as teens. The problems are often worse for homeless youth, as mental health issues can be both a cause and a consequence of youth homelessness. One study in Toronto found that approximately 40% of youth who are homeless reported having mental health issues, with that number increasing to 70% amongst those who were homeless four years or more. Of those, over half cannot access the mental health services they need (Yonge Street Mission, 2009). It is also the case that young people who have had more significant involvement in a range of systems often experience fragmentation and discontinuation of mental health care as they transition between systems (Munson et al, 2011). Furthermore, poor systems planning sometimes results in the discharge of young people from health care facilities directly into homelessness, because they have no home to go to. Once on the streets, accessing appropriate care and support can be that much more difficult due to young people's lack of family support, financial support and the knowledge required to navigate systems. As a result, the mental health of homeless you can deteriorate.

Leaving corrections facilities or – for younger teens – **juvenile detention** centres can also present challenges for young people seeking employment and housing. We know from extensive research that young people who are homeless are, on average, more criminally involved than housed youth

(Baron & Hartnagel, 1997, 1998; Baron et al., 2001; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997; McCarthy & Hagan, 1995; Tanner & Wortley, 2002). Many become involved with the criminal justice system, either as juvenile offenders or as adults, and because of the inadequacy of discharge planning and reintegration policies and practices (for both those who are convicted and those awaiting trial on remand), many ex-prisoners are discharged directly into homelessness (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2006, 2009; Novac et al., 2006 2007; Kellen et al., 2010). Without proper and adequate transitional support (including housing), there is a risk that the youth will reoffend and / or experience enduring homelessness (DeLisi, 2000; Gowan, 2002; Kushel et al., 2005; Metraux & Culhane, 2004; Vitelli, 1993).

Young people leaving institutional care – whether child protection or corrections – are in need of transitional supports if we wish to increase their life chances and reduce the risk of homelessness. Youth exiting these systems often exhibit high needs in other areas, including addictions, mental health and education, for instance. Finally, there is a considerable overlap between youth from these different systems.

Challenges associated with the transition to adulthood

The defining feature of young people who are homeless is in fact their youthful age. Age matters for many reasons, not least of which is their continued development as adolescents. And there are big differences between a young person who is 16 and homeless, and one who is 24. These differences can be further complicated by other factors such as gender, sexual orientation and ethno-racial background. That is, the experience of discrimination (sexism, racism, homophobia) can limit people's educational and economic opportunities, undermine their engagement with mainstream institutions such as school, and may also actually contribute to youth homelessness. We know, for instance, that the experience of homophobia at home, in schools or the community, can make it intolerable or impossible for young people to remain at home (Cochran, 2002; Gattis, 2009; Abramovich, 2012).

Theories of adolescent development often describe the transition from childhood to adulthood, even in relatively stable environments, as one that can be challenging and potentially problematic (Tanner, 2009; Christie & Viner, 2005; Steinberg, 2007). Whether referring to physical, cognitive or social maturation (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Choudhury et al.,

2006; Dorn & Biro, 2011), the developmental tasks associated with "becoming" an adult are many, and are distributed across a range of social, psychological and biological domains. As part of this process, young people assume greater responsibilities in the areas of education, income, accommodation, social relations, health and mobility. Adolescence can also be thought of as a series of "firsts", often associated with adulthood: a first kiss, first relationship, first sexual experience, first job, getting a drivers licence, making doctors appointments, experimentation with substances, etc. There is no set process for these explorations, and different young people will encounter these firsts in different ways, sequences and according to specific cultural and contextual conditions. All of these developments are overlaid with cultural and legal proscriptions that allow certain kinds of autonomous decision making and actions to occur, and according to what timelines. Typically these changes, which incrementally prepare youth for independent living, are supported by adult supervision and support both within and outside the home. Accompanying this is a commitment to education as a central institutional support.

Trident Foyer, Birmingham UK (32 places). C/o Wendy Malycha, St. John's Youth Services, Adelaide, Australia.Powerpoint: ANGLICARE WA YOUTH HOMELESSNESS FORUM PRESENTATION   Foyers – International learning and relevance to Australia.

While there is considerable evidence that most teens actually move through adolescence without significant emotional, social or behavioural challenges (Arnett, 1999; Lesko, 2012; Steinberg, 2007), can we confidently say this about homeless youth? Unfortunately, young people who become homeless are typically shut out of the normal process of adolescent development that so many of us hold as essential for a healthy transition to adulthood. Many lack trusting relationships and

experiences with adults; between 60-70% come from homes where they were victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Karabanow, 2004; Tyler & Bersani, 2008; Whitbeck & Simons, 1993; Van den Bree et al., 2009). Youth who become homeless leave home without the necessary skills and experience, without financial support and importantly, without their home of origin to fall back on if things go wrong. It is also true that homelessness often simultaneously forecloses the opportunity to participate in the institutions that frame what many would deem to be a successful transition to adulthood, including education, getting part time jobs while living at home, and recreational activities.

Unfortunately, our approach to the provision of emergency services, accommodations and supports, often does not help the situation. Homelessness often thrusts young people into adult roles at an accelerated rate, and the expectation is that they seek housing, pursue employment or training (education is usually off the table), and learn quickly to make good decisions. While scientific evidence consistently points to the fact that neurological changes during adolescence impact cognitive development in the areas of advanced reasoning, abstract thinking and effective decision-making (Levbel & Beaulieu, 2011; Bava & Tapert, 2010; Albert & Steinberg, 2011; Steinberg, 2007; 2011), the approach to youth homelessness that is often adopted rushes youth to independence where they may lack maturity, experience and the ability to make good decisions. Emergency services are by design intended to offer short-term support, and even transitional housing models limit length of stay, with the expectation that young people move quickly (usually within a year) to independent living. This is a popular approach, despite the fact that these youth live inherently unstable lives and may suffer from trauma.

Whether a young person who experiences homelessness is really able to make that quick transition to living independently is open to debate. One of the key factors that distinguishes youth homelessness from adult homelessness is that most young people leave home with no prior experience of obtaining and running a household. Few will know what it means to sign a lease, deal with a landlord, pay rent and make the right purchases to maintain their home. Allowing friends to move in, having parties that may get out of control, and an inability to properly maintain their apartment may lead to tensions with landlords. A 2002 study reported that 41% of the street youth interviewed had been evicted at least once (Gaetz, 2002).

So, age does matter . . .

. . . and the younger one is, the more adolescent challenges complicate one's transition to adulthood. We know that many young people become homeless during their mid-teens or even earlier. In a recent study in Toronto (Gaetz et al., 2010), over 60% of young people in the sample (250 youth) had left home before they were 18. The mean age when males left home was 16.9, and for females it was 16.5 (Gaetz et al., 2010). This means that almost half of the street youth sample left home before they were 16, which it should be noted is often the lower limit age range for accessing services designed for street youth.

The consequences of leaving home at such a young age are many, and have a direct impact on an individual's ability to obtain and maintain housing. The first thing to note is that our laws and institutions are organized in such a way that an individual's rights and privileges are clearly determined by their age. For instance, in some provinces, young people under the age of 18 may have greater difficulty accessing benefits (such as social assistance) if they cannot establish their independence from their parents. Some provinces have also established a lower minimum wage for those under the age of 18[2].

Finally, there is compelling evidence of the longer-term consequences that result from leaving home at a younger age, including higher rates of criminal victimization and trauma and longer periods of homelessness (Public Interest, 2009; Gaetz et al., 2010).

In sum, for young people who become homeless, the challenge of moving from childhood to adulthood is not only truncated, but qualitatively different than is the case for most teenagers. A clear distinction needs to be made between youth homelessness and adult homelessness. This suggests that we need to also consider different solutions to youth homelessness.

And in thinking of housing options for youth, we must necessarily consider their youthful age, lack of experience, poverty and discrimination, and for some, experiences with child protection services or involvement with the law. Young people who become homeless, then, require programming, resources, supports and perhaps most significantly, a service model that allows them the time to grow and learn – and make mistakes – that are typically deemed necessary for housed adolescents who are making the transition to adulthood. Obtaining safe and affordable housing when you are young is not easy in the best of circumstances. It is particularly difficult for young people who are homeless.

Nicole and Karl, former homeless, at Lion Garden, accomodation for homeless youth.
Photo: Joe Armao (Australia): www.theage.com.au/victoria/investment-means-young-homeless-get-hope-20110803-1ibm2.html

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2. It is worth pointing out that there are significant differences between provinces in terms of age of majority, and eligibility (and access) to youth and adult programming.

3 Is there a role for Transitional Housing?

THE UNIQUENESS OF INDIVIDUAL ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS suggests we need to carefully consider the kinds of accommodation and support that are appropriate for this population. The range of accommodation options for young people in Canada who are without the support of parents or guardians typically includes emergency shelters, transitional housing, group homes, supported housing and independent living, depending on the community in question. Many other models are hybrids of the above options.

While the pathways to homelessness are varied and unique, one thing that unites all young people in this The challenge for service providers and policy makers is in considering exactly what kind of housing and supports are effective, and appropriate given the diverse circumstances and needs of young people. Do younger teens need different solutions than older teens? Do those who are multiply marginalized by sexism, racism and homophobia need targeted solutions? In other words, what works and for whom? Given the dynamic relationship between adolescence and homelessness, it is worth considering whether there continues to be a role for transitional or interim housing and / or supports.

What is transitional housing?

Transitional housing is a general term that refers to a supportive living environment that is meant to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support (for addictions and mental health, for instance), life skills, and in some cases education and training. "It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network" (Novac et al., 2004a:2). As an approach, this form of housing was developed with specific sub-populations in mind, one of these being homeless youth.

Historically, transitional housing programs were situated within dedicated, building-specific environments, where there was more common space and less private space than might be the case in permanent housing environments (Sprague, 1991; Novac et al., 2004a; 2004b; 2009; Giffords et al., 2007). However, as the concept of transitional housing has evolved,

> **"(Y)OUTH ARE GOOD CANDIDATES FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING GIVEN THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE.** It is argued that youth need the transitional phase in which to learn skills they have perhaps not learned in a family setting. In addition, some of the limits of transitional housing can be overcome through program design, with a convertible/sliding lease, and ensuring there is a full range of affordable housing options available."
>
> (Eberle et al., 2007, 38)

new approaches that incorporate de-centred and in some cases scattered-site housing are now being adopted, with transitional supports considered portable.

Does transitional housing work? In their research on transitional housing in Canada (for people of different ages, not just youth), Novac et al., (2004) state there is evidence for the efficacy of the approach, and that: "[v]irtually every evaluative study of transitional housing has demonstrated some degree of post-program improvement in housing status and a significant reduction in the number of residents who return to a state of homelessness on exiting the program" (Novac et al., 2004b:3). Though most transitional housing programs provide some level of assistance in locating and obtaining housing, Novac et al., also point out that success is increased if the programs are able to provide subsidized housing or rent subsidies for those who move on to live independently.

While there have been some broader Canadian studies on the role of transitional housing as part of a range of housing options for *youth* (Eberle et al. 2007; Millar, 2009; 2010), there has been a limited amount of research (specifically evaluations or effectiveness studies) conducted on specific transitional housing programs. Some exceptions include evaluations of Eva's Phoenix, a Toronto-based program, (Zyzis et al., 2003), and Peel Youth Village (Bridgeman, 2009; Transitions for Youth, 2007). However, there is very little published research on the

long-term effectiveness of such programs for youth in Canada, or of their success in helping young people transition to stable housing afterward (Eberle et al., 2007; Novac et al., 2009). The research that *does* exist suggests positive outcomes, including: "stable residency once permanent housing is achieved, greater reliance on employment rather than income assistance, and/or increased income from employment or welfare programs" (Eberle et al., 2007:38).

Does Transitional Housing make sense for homeless youth?

Transitional housing has for a long time been seen as part of the housing continuum[3] for people who have experienced homelessness. However, in recent years, it has been subject to a lot of criticism. Eberle et al., identify two key reasons:

> "1) Transitional programs reward those who do well by requiring them to move on; and
>
> 2) They can only be effective if affordable independent housing is available to move to afterwards". (Eberle et al., 2007:37).

A further limitation of traditional models of transitional housing for homeless youth is that the maximum length of stay is often quite short (often one year, but there are some examples in Canada where young people can stay eighteen months or more) given the needs of the developing adolescent, and aftercare is not always provided (i.e. the necessary post-residency supports to ensure that young people, once housed, do not fall back into homelessness).

The evolution of other responses to homelessness has also raised new questions. Housing First, in particular, presents a challenge because its underlying philosophy suggests that people do not need transitional supports to 'get ready' for independent living; if you provide people with permanent housing and necessary supports (based on need) they generally do well. In addition, the eligibility criteria for Housing First programs is often less strenuous than transitional housing programs, and there are no goal-based case management requirements (though there may be case management). Research on, and evaluations of Housing First show very high levels of housing retention, upwards of 90% (Tsemberis et al., 2004; Pearson et al., 2009; Waegemakers-Schiff et al., 2012), though it should be pointed out that the overwhelming

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3. In more traditional models of accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, people would progress from emergency shelters, to transitional housing, to permanent housing. This notion that people need to progress to independent living has been central to the critique of transitional housing by Housing First advocates.

majority of these studies do not explore the impact of the intervention on sub-populations, including youth. Interim results from the Mental Health Commission of Canada's At Home / Chez Soi project (the largest Housing First research project ever conducted) demonstrate that 73% of those with a Housing First intervention were able to retain their housing (Goering et al., 2012).

In response to the criticisms of transitional housing, the broader concept of 'interim' housing is gaining popularity, and is used to refer to traditional transitional housing models, but also other forms of temporary accommodation occupied by people who are waiting for more appropriate and permanent housing options.

Does Housing First make more sense?

Given all of this, it is worth asking whether there is a role for transitional housing as part of the solution to youth homelessness. Why not place homeless youth in a Housing First program? Do we really need the transitional housing option at all? Though a number of cities are using Housing First to provide accommodations for young people under 25 (Toronto, Halifax and Calgary, to name a few), there is actually very little research on how well this works for young people, and how the needs of youth might differ from those of adults.

One innovative program offered by the Boys and Girls Club of Calgary, is the Infinity Project, a Housing First program that employs a scattered site model, where young people are assisted in obtaining housing in the private market. The Infinity Project adopts key elements of transitional housing supports for young people, and grafts those on to a Housing First approach (CHRN, forthcoming 2013). Through intensive case management, youth are provided with a range of supports, including life skills and financial training. Early results show that 96% of homeless youth who have exited the program have maintained permanent housing, and that 63% of those over 18 and 87% of those under 18 have stable income either through employment, alternative funding, or education and/ or employability programs (CHRN, forthcoming 2013). This is clearly an innovative program that can be adapted to other contexts, and with more longitudinal evaluation data, the sustainability of the model can be assessed.

In spite of these promising results, there are some concerns about whether the Housing First model can really work for all youth. Since the implementation of Housing First may be problematic in tight housing markets with low vacancy rates (Gaetz, 2011), the question becomes how to overcome the

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additional discrimination that young people (particularly those under 18) face in obtaining accommodation? A new study on Housing First in London, Ontario complicates the picture further. Forchuk and her team argue that while many young people thrive in a Housing First context, many of those with mental health and addictions issues (or a combination of both) find that the choice and independence offered by the model was difficult to handle, and could be experienced as a 'set up to fail' (Forchuk et al., forthcoming 2013). That is, some young people felt that independent living was isolating and may become an enabling environment for drug use, and therefore they would prefer to address other developmental / health issues first. They conclude that a 'one size fits all' approach to accommodations and supports for young people is limiting and ignores the incredible variability in needs and circumstances of young people who are homeless.

> "The social, cultural, financial and existential (i.e., the perceived meaning of one's existence and place in the world, as well as how this meaning may influence the decisions one makes) situations of the study's participants are very different." (Forchuk et al., forthcoming 2013)

Finally, Forchuk has argued that since client choice is an underlying principle of Housing First, it has to be considered as part of a spectrum of other options for accommodation. That is, 'Housing First' should also mean 'Preference First' (Forchuk, 2012).

When thinking about Housing First in the context of adolescents – particularly those under the age of 18 - an additional question to be asked is whether this approach can provide a much longer-term, sustainable impact in the lives of young people. Again, if we adopt an adolescent development approach, we need to consider the developmental needs of young people. For instance, does a program response that places priority on achieving independence as soon as possible have the unintended consequences of making educational attainment secondary to the necessary priority of earning a living? If so, we

need to consider the longer lasting impact of moving young people in this direction at an early age. Not only do we know that low levels of educational attainment leads to poor labour market outcomes (discussed above) there is also extensive research that correlates dropping out with longer lasting effects on criminal involvement, health and use of government benefits and social services, for instance. In an extensive review of the literature, Lochner (2010) identifies a range of non-labour market outcomes that result from inadequate education. Personal and social outcomes are identified in terms of higher levels of criminal behavior, worse outcomes in terms of health and mortality, and democratic participation. Riddell (2005) also highlights the fact that lower educational attainment is correlated with a greater lifelong reliance on welfare and other social programs.

So, when considering models of accommodation, it is worth asking whether the rush to independence comes at the expense of longer-term outcomes in relation to labour market participation, health and well-being. That is, is the main program goal independence, or a successful transition to adulthood?

## A Range of Housing Options for Homeless Youth

Should it really be that controversial to say that we need different accommodation and support options for young people who are homeless? We know that when young people go to university, for instance, some prefer to stay at home (with supports) or cannot afford to move away; some want to stay in a dorm, which is basically a congregate living environment. This may be a preferred option because although youth have

a greater degree of independence, they are not isolated, but rather are surrounded by other young people, as well as adults. Finally, there are those who desire, and are able to maintain an independent living situation (possibly with roommates). In other words, when we consider the accommodation needs of adolescents and youth (even those from more privileged backgrounds) we usually consider a range of options, based on need, desire and maturity.

An effective response to youth homelessness should give young people choices and options based on their age, maturity, experience and need. Transitional housing should be considered part of a range of housing options for youth, but should be configured to more directly address the needs of the developing adolescent and young adult. Because the experience of adolescence is inherently transitional, this form of housing may be most appropriate for many young people who require the longer-term supports we generally consider necessary in helping them transition to adulthood, while building life skills that enhance their capacity to become economically self-sufficient and socially integrated community members.

The diagram below establishes a range of options for accommodation and supports for young people who are – or are at risk of becoming – homeless. This model is not conceived as a continuum – for instance, it is not necessary for young people to pass through the various stages on the road to adulthood and independence. Rather it is designed in recognition that different young people will need different solutions, and that needs may shift and change over time.

Diagram 1 **Housing Options for Homeless Youth**
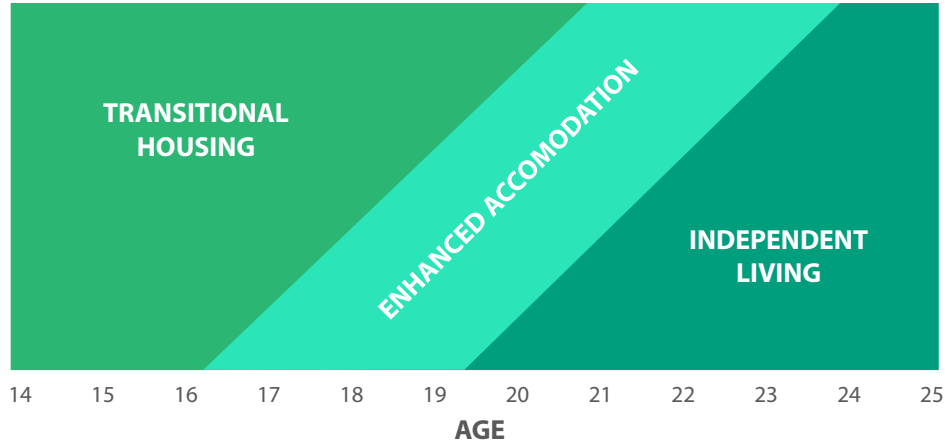
There are a range of transitional housing models characterized by differences in size, scale, program and length of residency. Fixed site, congregate living environments with intensive supports may be important for some youth (and in particular, younger teens), who will benefit from the companionship, and a higher level of day-to-day support. This is where the Foyer best fits in.

Though the diagram proposes this option for younger teens, it is recognized that there are clear jurisdictional challenges in thinking about housing options for legal minors (and there are considerable variations in terms of age of majority and child protection responsibilities across provinces). However, as transitions from child protection continue to be fraught with challenges in communities across Canada, it is worth considering how to create alternative models of housing and support as well as effective and supported pathways for young people in care, or leaving care. Likewise, facilitating pathways from juvenile detention to transitional housing and supports - as opposed to being discharged into homelessness - need to be considered.

A second option – enhanced accommodation - builds on the key adaptations of transitional housing and Housing First models in recent years, which has been to move towards a less institutionalized environment by offering smaller settings and in some cases uses dispersed housing in the community or a scattered site approach[4]. This means that young people experience greater independence by living alone or in small groups, and still have access to supports that are portable. The key advantage here is that young people are supported in their transition from homelessness in a way that reduces stigma and offers more opportunities to integrate into the community, provides greater control over tenure, and is an alternative to an institutional living environment (Novac et al., 2009; Nesselbuch, 1998). At the same time, residents are not yet fully responsible for their leases, or required to earn sufficient income to live in these more independent settings. In the case of young people leaving care (group homes) or juvenile detention, in

Ladder Hoddle St. Mentoring
Photo courtesy of Inner North Community Foundation www.innernorthfoundation.org.au/node/156

particular, and who may react negatively to a more institutional environment, this may be a more suitable option. In both Australia and the United Kingdom, there have been successful adaptations of the Foyer model to include dispersed housing with portable supports (Quilgars, 2001; Quilgars, et al., 2011; Smith, 2004).

The third option is independent living, where young people move into housing of their own. This is the Housing First option. The successful Infinity Project in Calgary confirms that some young people will require intensive case management (which may be longer lasting, depending on need), while others will need minimal supports (which may be in the community and not part of their housing) and eventually progress to fully independent living. This is the end goal of any transitional housing model, and as the diagram suggests, the age at which young people can live independently is variable. That is, depending on their age, needs and level of independence, young people leaving homelessness (or institutional care) may need different housing options.

The three categories do not represent a continuum (meaning that a youth must pass through one stage before they are 'ready' for the next), as young people should be offered the kind of supports that best suit their needs. Likewise, the

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4. Scattered site housing involves renting units in independent private rental markets or social housing. There is seen to be a benefit to having smaller housing units (apartments or houses) seamlessly integrated into neighbourhoods and communities, rather than larger institutional housing projects. From a financial perspective, there is a benefit to having the capital costs of housing absorbed by the private sector. From the perspective of the individual, there is some evidence that residents prefer this kind of housing because it is less stigmatizing, and does not ghettoize people deemed to have significant social, income or health problems (Barnes, 2012).

three categories should not be considered entirely independent and discrete, and it is worth pointing out that some transitional housing models (including some Foyers) are able to bridge all these options. As the diagram suggests, the age at which young people can live independently is variable. That is, depending on their age, needs and level of independence, young people leaving homelessness (or institutional care) may need different housing options. Eberle et al. have argued that "the limits of transitional housing can be overcome through program design, with a convertible/sliding lease, and ensuring there is a full range of affordable housing options available" (Eberle et al., 2007:38). Using dispersed housing and a convertible lease model allows for the lease, through time, to be transferred from the agency

The Stonham Bude Foyer in Summerleaze Crescent (Cornwall, UK) offers local young people accommodation and practical help.
www.budepeople.co.uk/groups/generaldiscussion/new-Stonham-Bude-Foyer-offers-help-young-people/story-10017734-detail/story.html

to the individual. This approach creates a pathway from higher levels of supports to independent living. Young individuals with little independent living experience may prefer a housing option where they are not responsible for the lease, but in time, as they obtain greater independence, the lease is transferred to their name. In this context, and depending on their need, some level of supports may continue. The advantage of this transitional housing approach, which has been implemented in Canadian settings (Eberle et al., 2007; Millar, 2009), is that there is no set length of stay, and young people are able to assert more control and independence as they age. In Australia, the Youth Head Lease Transfer Scheme (now part of the "Same House, Different Landlord" scheme) has been in place for several decades (Leebeck, 2009). This convertible lease program has evolved over time, and evaluations have shown its effectiveness in supporting the transition to independent living of formerly homeless youth (Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning, 1994). Another innovation of the transitional housing approach in Australia is

the ability of young people who are moving into independent living to take their furniture with them.

So, while transitional models of housing and support such as the Foyer should definitely be part of the range of housing options for homeless youth, there are some recommended modifications that should be considered when adapting the model. For instance, rather than limit the length of residency (most transitional housing models for youth in Canada limit stays to one year, and in some cases 18 months), the Foyer should be more flexible and ideally not be time limited. Length of stay should be based on the age at which a young person enters a program, their needs, assets, level of independence. Finally, successful Foyers should be tightly integrated into other supports, as part of a 'system of care'. As we will see, a modified and enhanced version of the Foyer may offer Canadian communities a way of rethinking transitional housing and supports for homeless and at-risk youth.

4 Making the Case for the Foyer

THE FOYER IS A WELL-ESTABLISHED MODEL OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING for youth that has been growing in popularity around the world over the past two decades, and can most certainly can be adapted to the Canadian context. The real possibilities for community adaptation emerge when one considers how the model may be modified based on advancements in our thinking about housing and support developed in Canada and elsewhere, including Housing First, dispersed housing models with mobile supports, and the notion of convertible leases, as discussed in the previous section.

The Chelsea Foyer, New York City, NY

5. www.foyer.net

So what exactly is a Foyer? The term Foyer was coined in France where a network of *"Foyers pour jeunes travailleurs"* (hostels for young workers) was created to support a large number of young people who, in search of work, moved to towns and cities following World War II. In the early 1990s, the British government introduced the Foyer model in response to high youth unemployment, and the model's success led to replication throughout the country. The growth and development of the Foyer model in the UK has been supported by the Foyer Federation[5], which has developed resources including guides for those developing foyers, staff support, a quality assurance scheme and accreditation program. Today, Foyers have been adapted and implemented in Europe, Australia and the US to include not only housing and links to employment, but also access to education, training, life skills development and ongoing case management support.

The three key principles of a Foyer are:

- A focus on helping disadvantaged young people, who are homeless or in housing need, achieve the transition from dependence to independence;
- A holistic approach to meeting a young person's needs by offering integrated access to, at a minimum, affordable accommodation, training, guidance, personal development and job search facilities;
- A formal agreement between the Foyer and young person as to how the Foyer's facilities and local community resources will be used in making the transition to independence, and the 'commitment' is a condition of continued residence in the Foyer (The Foyer Federation, UK).

Foyers are based on these three key criteria, with specific services tailored to each community's needs. The Foyer, as a model of transitional housing for youth, begins with an understanding of adolescent development and the needs of young people. Recognizing that for most people the move from adolescence to adulthood occurs over a number of years and involves ups and downs, progress and setbacks, most Foyers allow longer-term residency. In the UK, young people stay for up to two years, and many programs offer aftercare supports to ensure successful transitions to independent living. Young people are given a range of supports (tailored to individual needs) and life skills training. There is typically on site, around the clock support services.

Other common elements of Foyers are:

- **Case Management Focu**s – Young people living in Foyers are provided with individualized support.
- **Action Plans** – The best Foyers adopt a client-driven model of planning and goal setting. Young people work with their case manager to develop a plan and identify goals, as well as the activities, resources and supports that will help them achieve those goals.
- **Life-Skills Development** – Foyers provide workshops and programs to improve the self-care and life skills (including communication skills, budgeting, health and fitness etc.) of participants.
- **Opportunities for education and training** – A key feature of the Foyer is the active and ongoing support to help young people continue their education (a focus typically lacking from services for homeless youth in Canada), which increases employability and life chances in the long run. Young people who have finished, or are not interested in school, are encouraged to take advantage of training opportunities.
- **Program Fee** – By paying a monthly program fee, participants are encouraged to practice paying rent and saving money. The fee is based on employment income, and is often 'returned' to the young person when they leave, giving them start-up funds.
- **Longer Term Residency** – While most transitional housing programs for youth in Canada allow one year residency, Foyers allow for extended stays in order to help youth develop the necessary skills and capacity for independent living.

"WE ARE IN A SITUATION WHERE there are going to be people who are going to need support between being in the family home or being in care or whatever it is and living independently on their own. We have got that whole sector that can deliver a lot of that but it's called a youth homelessness sector, and there is something about redefining the purpose of that and seeing it as part of positive pathways rather than fall-back provision"

(National key player, as reported in Quilgars, Fitzpatrick & Pleace, 2011:42).

The development of the Foyer in countries such as the UK, the United States and Australia, suggest that it is an adaptable model. The type of housing accommodation provided can include dedicated housing (fixed site) models, where a facility with a set number of rooms and common space (for programs) is used to provide programs and support. The Foyer can also exist using smaller facilities or a scattered site housing model (blending the Foyer with a Housing First or lease conversion model), and as such allow for extended lengths of stay for young people.

In thinking about housing for young people leaving care, it is important to stress that a Foyer is not simply a 'group home' by another name. Rather, at its best it is an innovative response to youth homelessness and unemployment that offers a different kind of transitional housing and seeks to develop talents in young people, rather than focus on their deficits. It is not just a model of supported housing; rather it is a way of working with young people that supports them in becoming responsible and contributing adults.

Foyers Around the World

How do they work, and are they effective?

The Foyer model is not well established in Canada. There is at least one example of the Foyer in Montreal, with plans underway to pilot new Foyers in Calgary and Edmonton. *Le Foyer de jeunes travailleurs et travailleuses de Montréal* provides low-cost housing and community-based supports for young people between the ages of 17 and 24 who are at risk of homelessness. The Foyer opened its doors in 1990, and even though it has undergone significant organizational changes since, continues to support around 50 young people a year. This Foyer seems to follow the model of Foyers developed in Europe, and while there was an extensive report produced in 2005 (Dumais & Laplante), it is difficult to demonstrate program effectiveness without any evaluation or outcomes data.

Below is a review of how the Foyer has been adapted in the English-speaking world, specifically the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. It is worth noting that the countries that have the most comprehensive and integrated responses to youth homelessness (the UK and Australia) also have the most expansive system of Foyers.

How do we know the Foyer model is effective, and will make sense in the Canadian context? In this review, we provide descriptions and case studies. In addition, we address the effectiveness of such interventions. One of the strengths of the Foyer model is that it has been extensively evaluated in Australia, the United States and the UK, and the reports that we draw on provide valuable insight into the outcomes, strengths and challenges of the model. Below is a summary of they key findings.

Focus E15 Foyer London (UK).
www.east-thames.co.uk/focus-e15

The British Foyer Experience

The Foyer model was first implemented in Britain in 1992 in response to a number of social issues that were affecting youth: rising housing costs, rising unemployment and a lack of skills among youth leaving education (Lovatt & Whitehead, 2006). Since that time, over 130 Foyers have been introduced in urban and rural communities throughout Britain and have served approximately 10,000 youth per year (Quilgars et al., 2008).

In Britain, Foyers serve youth aged 16-25 and have a maximum stay of two years. British Foyers can be very different from each other in terms of size, location and services. They range in size from 5-210 beds, though most have between 20-50 beds. While there are some rural Foyers, most have been developed in towns and cities. Some Foyers are purpose-built, while others involve repurposing existing housing programs (many run through YMCAs). The latter programs were already providing housing

"I CAME TO ABERDEEN FOYER BECAUSE THINGS WERE REALLY TERRIBLE AT HOME.
My mum's new boyfriend hates me and it was causing all sorts of problems. At first I was really excited about moving in, the flat was lovely and it felt good to get away from the hassle. However it's really lonely living on your own. My support worker was great, and I know they wanted to help me but it's hard to think about your future when you are still so angry about the past. I invited everyone I could think of to come to keep me company and soon got into trouble, making a lot of noise and some of my visitors upset other tenants. After lots of warnings it was made clear to me that things would have to change and I have just started the Prince's Trust Team course. It's great and I feel so much better. For the first time in ages I feel like I am taking control of my own life and I have a clear path ahead of me to a much better future."

Alison
(Aberdeen Foyer Annual Review, 2006)

and a variety of other services and were given funding and resources to develop the education, employment and support aspects of a Foyer. The range of services varies between Foyers, based mainly on locations, with rural areas having less access to resources.

It is important to note that in the UK Foyers are incorporated into a coordinated 'system of care', meaning that a Foyer is but part of the accommodation pathway for a young person. That is, when young people leave the Foyer - the average length of residency is 13 months (Smith et al., 2006) - there is consideration and support regarding where they move. In the UK, this is referred to as the development of Move-On options for young people[6], and includes help finding housing, making agreements with landlords and supported accommodation providers, and arranging floating or 'portable' supports. As Foyers are often operated by local housing associations (social housing providers), young people are also supported when moving to adult housing facilities.

Foyer Federation: At the same time that Foyers were introduced, the Foyer Federation was created as an umbrella organization to link operational and developing Foyers. Its role is:

- To influence government policy with respect to the needs of disadvantaged youth;
- To promote Foyers and their work to stakeholders;
- To support good practice and innovation;
- To secure funding for Foyer work;
- To offer information and training to member Foyers, as well as advice and support throughout the development process, and;
- To ensure the quality of Foyer work (through an accreditation system).

The Foyer Federation has also introduced innovative programs such as Open Talent – a program that supports young people through creative and engaging opportunities that foster their talents and interests (running music workshops and teaching Thai boxing classes, for instance). The Foyer Federation hopes to show "how an investment in talent, rather than a negative approach focused on what a young person can't do, can enable a young person to realise their potential and achieve their goals"[7].

CASE STUDY

ABERDEEN FOYER SCOTLAND

Established in 1995, the Aberdeen Foyer in Scotland is an excellent example of a Foyer. Working across seven different sites, the Aberdeen Foyer provides supported tenancies for up to 80 formerly homeless and at risk young people (aged 16 – 25) at any given time. There are several features of this model that are worth considering. First, they engage in prevention work in the community, working in partnership with other mainstream services to provide young people and their families with extra support in order to minimize future crises that may lead to homelessness. Second, the Aberdeen Foyer provides a whole range of services and supports to engage young people with the goal of affecting real change in their lives. This includes arts-based programming, and a range of life-skills programming aimed at supporting personal, social and employable skills, and encouraging healthier lifestyles. The programs are either run directly by the Foyer, or in some cases through partnerships with other organizations.

In addition to supporting involvement in education, the Aberdeen Foyer offers a broad range of social enterprises that young people can participate in, including a Foyer Restaurant and Gallery, Foyer Graphics, Roadwise Driver Training, Foyer Works (property maintenance) and Foyer Catering Co. To find out more, download their Annual Reports (Aberdeen Foyer, 2006; 2010) or go to the Aberdeen Foyer Website. www.aberdeenfoyer.com

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6. http://www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/moveon/
7. "Open Talent" Foyer Federation website: http://www.foyer.net/level3.asp?level3id=227

Lifetracks[8] is another innovative initiative by the Foyer Federation that incorporates on-the-ground and online services, including workshops, helplines and an interactive website with information on job searching, education and volunteering.

Aftercare at Foyers in the UK also differs between Foyers. Some research has pointed to the fact that 'move on' supports may last a year or more in some cases, but in others, the Foyers may provide little or no aftercare at all (Lovatt & Whitehead, 2006).

Evaluations of British Foyers

There have been a number of independent reports on Foyers in Britain, which provide information to support the theory that Foyers address the multiple needs of youth (Anderson & Quilgars, 1995; Quilgars, 2001; Maginn et al., 2000; Allen, 2001; Smith, 2004). The reports also identify challenges in implementing the Foyers. In an evaluation of the pilot phase of several Foyers, Quilgars and Anderson (1995) reviewed data on 519 young people who participated during the first 18 months, and reported that more than 130 full-time and 20 part-time jobs were found. Sixty-four percent of youth had left the Foyer (and support services) by the end of the pilot for a variety of reasons. Very few, however, left due to their failure to comply with conditions regarding service use. Quilgars and Anderson concluded that the Foyers "assisted less skilled young people to compete for existing employment and housing opportunities" (Quilgars & Anderson, 1995:1).

Another early study that compared Foyers with other housing schemes found mixed results, but nevertheless argued that Foyers did increase client self-reliance both in terms of employment and in obtaining housing (Maginn et al., 2000).

Smith et al., (2006) conducted a study of 126 former residents of Foyers (who had left at least two years earlier) in order to assess program effectiveness, and its impact on housing, educational and employment outcomes, as well as personal relationships, self-esteem and confidence. These young people, who were residents of a range of Foyers, were interviewed three times during the course of two years. The researchers found that 57% of ex-residents were living in social housing, 9% with parents, 11% with friends or other relatives, 11% in private rental accommodation and 13% in Foyer/hostel or other supported accommodation. The majority of those in private accommodation had moved at least once because of problems

"WE DON'T WANT TO JUST SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO COPE WITH WHAT THEY HAVEN'T GOT, BY FOCUSING ON WHAT THEY ARE NOT AND CAN'T DO. We want to promote young people's goals and enable them to develop the skills, resources and opportunities they need to achieve them. We want to inspire an investment in potential so that all young people can make a positive contribution to society."

(The Foyer Federation website, 2011)

with their landlord and/or non-renewal of their lease. Those living in Foyer/hostel accommodation had returned after their original arrangements broke down. In terms of employment, 61% of ex-residents were employed full- or part-time after leaving, but it should be noted that incomes were generally very low.

The importance of relationship-building and supports was also highlighted in this study. Sixty-six percent of young people reported developing a key friendship while they were at the Foyer (52% found a 'best friend') and the majority of ex-residents reflected very positively on the influence of their key worker.

While most of the evaluations cited point to the positive characteristics of the Foyer model, some have highlighted key challenges:

a) **Fidelity to the philosophy and principles of the Foyer model.** Allen (2001) found that in some Foyers, staff were not adhering to the overall values or policies of the program, for example were not meeting regularly with residents. The study demonstrates the importance of having the right staff, training and support, as well as a system that is responsive to the needs of residents. A lack of fidelity to the values, goals and objectives of the Foyer model can lead to negative outcomes. The report also noted issues with the intake process, whereby the need to fill resident quotas and pay the bills sometimes superseded the actual criteria for acceptance into the Foyer.

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8. lifetracks.com

b) Size matters! An extensive literature review of non-mainstream housing designs contended that large scale Foyers are quite expensive to maintain: "The form of super-foyer developed in the past has therefore become a white elephant, to a certain extent, due to the excessive level of management and maintenance required, on top of different and more demanding needs of the client group" (Park & Lang, 2012:38).

Several communities have responded to this challenge by adapting the Foyer using a dispersed housing model, meaning that young people live in shared houses rather than hostels, but still receive the same integrated approach to services and supports. At least two evaluations of dispersed foyers have been conducted in the UK (Quilgars, 2001; Smith, 2004). In her evaluation of the Short-Life Plus Project (set up in South London in 1997), Quilgars identified that the project did remain true to the Foyer focus on housing, training and employment resources. However, the evaluation concluded that while the model was cost effective in terms of capital and maintenance costs, there was an identified need for specialist project workers with enhanced training to deliver support for young people through this dispersed model.

The New York Foyer Experience

Our research identified at least three Foyers currently operating in the United States, with a new one targeting LGBTQ youth set to open in Philadelphia. The Chelsea Foyer in New York is the best known example. Operated by Common Ground, the Foyer model was introduced in New York in 2004 to help address the growing problem of homelessness after foster care. The philosophy of the Chelsea Foyer assumes that young people between the ages of 18 and 21 are not developmentally nor financially ready to be self-sufficient, and that those with no family supports have vastly diminished chances of becoming successfully independent at a young age (Common Ground Community and Good Shepherd Services, 2009). The Chelsea Foyer's program development and practice model is supported by three core principles that assert the Foyer's commitment to providing:

- A supported transition in which young people can practice independent living;
- A developmentally-appropriate environment to build a sense of competence;
- A community of peers and caring adults with emphasis on peer mentoring.

Chelsea foyer common ground
www.housingpolicy.org/gallery/entries/The_Christopher.html

The Chelsea Foyer in New York is a partnership between Common Ground (a housing provider for low income and formerly homeless adults) and Good Shepherd Services (a leading foster care and youth development provider). It is different from most Foyer buildings in the UK in that it is a 40 unit independent residence that is part of the larger Common Ground's 207 unit permanent supportive housing complex for low-income and formerly homeless adults. As of 2009, the Chelsea Foyer had served 165 young people between the ages of 18 and 25. As in the UK, the maximum stay is two years.

The development of the Foyer in New York was influenced by three key factors: the U.K. model, Good Shepherd Services' strengths-based youth development philosophy, and an emerging national theory of practice for transitioning youth to adulthood (Common Ground Community and Good Shepherd Services, 2009). Residents of the Foyer are expected to at least have a part time job even if they are in school, and to engage in a variety of events and workshops. The Foyer offers daily activities and/or workshops related to housing (including money management, establishing good credit, running a household, communicating effectively with landlords), work (including monthly career clubs where youth have opportunities to network with employers), and general health and wellbeing (including fitness programs, a men's forum, a women's forum, and cooking classes). For youth who are not working, employment workshops are mandatory.

Foyer residents contribute a program fee, determined by income, in lieu of rent, which is deposited into a savings account and returned to them when they successfully complete the program.

Chelsea foyer common ground
www.housingpolicy.org/gallery/entries/The_Christopher.html

The Chelsea Foyer has a higher concentration of residents with high needs (mental health, addictions) than is typically the case in the UK. Staff have found that it is possible to have peer mentoring even within a high-needs community. Although the Chelsea Foyer has no dedicated aftercare service, participants are encouraged to keep in touch with program staff, and are invited to attend and participate in regular alumni events. The Chelsea Foyer does however have the Good Sheppard Volunteer program in which a college student commits to volunteering for a one-year term and maintains contact with youth once they have been discharged. The student maintains contact via social media outlets like Facebook, which has proven more effective than relying on contact with participants via telephone, due to constantly changing numbers.

Evaluation of the Chelsea Foyer

There has been no independent evaluation of the Chelsea Foyer, however a comprehensive report of its first five years contains helpful information on housing and employment outcomes of residents at discharge and up to one year later (Common Ground Community and Good Sheppard Services, 2009). In terms of housing status the report concluded that of the 120 people who had graduated from the program, 2% had stable housing when they entered the program, compared to 77% who were discharged into stable housing. One year after they left the Foyer, 84% of respondents were in stable housing. In terms of employment status, data at the time of exit from the program was available for 52 people. Of those, 75% were employed. One year after leaving the Foyer, 91% of respondents reported that they were employed, 56% were

in school and 28% had obtained a degree or certificate since leaving the program. The report indicates that many graduates have broken a multi-generational cycle of dependence on public assistance.

The report also identified factors that contribute to the challenges of implementing a Foyer:

a) **The Need for Aftercare -** The Foyer has limited capacity to work with youth once they leave the Foyer. As a result, it is difficult to obtain follow up information on some of the former residents. Because of the initial lack of follow up, the response rates for information were initially low.

New initiatives, including partnership with a local college that provides a student placement, have improved their ability to maintain contact with residents. The student administers surveys to former residents three months and one year after discharge. Alumni are also invited to regular events and activities at the Foyer.

b) **Continuity of Funding -** Seeking and obtaining funding requires a significant amount of time and effort by Foyer staff. The original aim was to be fully publicly funded, however this has not been possible and it has been necessary to also rely on

Ladder Hoddle Street is an integrated support program for homeless youth, much like Step Ahead. Young people are provided with up to two years of housing, links to employment, education and training and mentoring services. One of the key features of Ladder is that young people who have left the program are provided with aftercare for up to six months to support in their transition to independence.

In the **Step Ahead Foyer** program, operated by Melbourne City Mission and Melbourne Affordable Housing, young people aged 16-24 are housed in fully furnished, self-contained units for up to three years. As with other Foyers, they receive ongoing intensive motivational casework and a structured program of learning (education and training).

There are two accommodation options: first, there is the eight-unit Lion Garden property, designed for younger clients with higher needs. There is also a dispersed housing option for an additional twelve to fourteen young people who are older and/or have lower needs.

For more information, download the Step Ahead's program evaluation (Grace et al., 2011) or go to the Foyer Plus website: www.melbournecitymission.org.au/What-We-Do/Our-Programs-Services/Homelessness-Services/Homelessness-Homeless-Support/Foyer-Plus

CASE STUDY

FOYER PLUS AUSTRALIA

In Melbourne, Australia, they have implemented the "Foyer Plus" model. This project is highly innovation, and includes several separate facilities and programs. For instance, the length of stay is dependent upon the program, with some programs having a two year maximum, and others three years or longer. Operated by Melbourne City mission, they manage several models of "Foyer Plus" across metropolitan Melbourne.

- The Precinct model – located in North Fitzroy
- The High Density model - Lion Garden located in the CBD and Ladder Hoddle Street located in Collingwood.
- Neighbourhood model – dispersed transitional properties located in Inner South and North

private funding.

The Australian Foyer Experience

Just like in Britain and New York, Australia witnessed an increase in the number of homeless and unemployed youth throughout the 1990s, many of whom lacked essential life skills. Since that time, the response to youth homelessness has evolved quite dramatically, with a combination of State support and investment, innovative community-based programming, and a focus on research. The role of housing and supports has always been central to Australian efforts to address youth homelessness, as evidenced through the history of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. In addition, the National Homeless Strategy in 2000 called for a collaborative effort to reduce homelessness using community resources, and stressed the importance of supporting youths' transition into independent living, a sentiment echoed in the more recent planning document, The Road Home (2007). As part of this evolution, many communities in Australia have adopted – and adapted – the Foyer model. Supporting communities in these endeavours is The Foyer Foundation of Australia, established in 2008 to:

- Promote Foyers across Australia;
- Support the development of Foyers through facilitation of collaborative partnerships, and the provision of advice;
- License operators, provide training, and ensure ongoing quality assurance;
- Give voice to alienated young people.

Australia's first Foyer, the Miller Live 'N' Learn Campus, was implemented in 2003. The Foyer has capacity for 28 young people in self-contained units, each with its own kitchen, bathroom, and Internet connection. The building also has a computer room, resource and reference library, study room and common room. The Foyer is open to youth aged 16 to 25 for a maximum stay of two years.

Additional Foyers have been developed in communities throughout Australia since that time, including the Oasis Youth Support Network, Sydney; the Foyer Plus, Melbourne; the Garden Court Foyer, and the Myuna Way Foyer in Wollongong, NSW and the large scale Oxford Foyer (95 beds) in Western Australia. What is interesting about some of these examples (see case studies) are the flexible models of accommodation being used, including dispersed dwellings. This evolution of the Foyer model suggests promising practices that can be adapted to the Canadian context.

Evaluation of Australian Foyers

In spite of the fact that the Foyer model took root in Australia long after it was established in the UK, there is actually a significant emerging body of evaluation research that attests to the effectiveness of this model, and to the innovation that accompanied adaptation efforts.

An evaluation was done of the Live 'N' Learn Campus at Miller in New South Wales, by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (Randolph & Wood, 2005). This Foyer houses and supports young people aged 16 to 25, but is unique in that it focuses on the needs of rural youth. While there is recognition that many of the underlying features of youth homelessness are the same

Step Ahead, Melbourne Citymission
www.melbournecitymission.org.au/What-We-Do/Our-Programs-Services/Homelessness-Services/Homelessness-Homeless-Support/Foyer-Plus

whether you are from a city or the country, this focus on rural youth acknowledges the additional challenges faced by this group in terms of employment, accessing services and transportation. The evaluation of the Live 'N' Learn Foyer revealed that: "the program has helped to stop a number of young people from dropping out of education and becoming homeless. Further, initial outcomes during the first year of operation show positive results with residents sustaining their involvement with education, completing their courses and engaging in employment" (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2006:3).

In assessing the necessary ingredients that enable the Foyer to
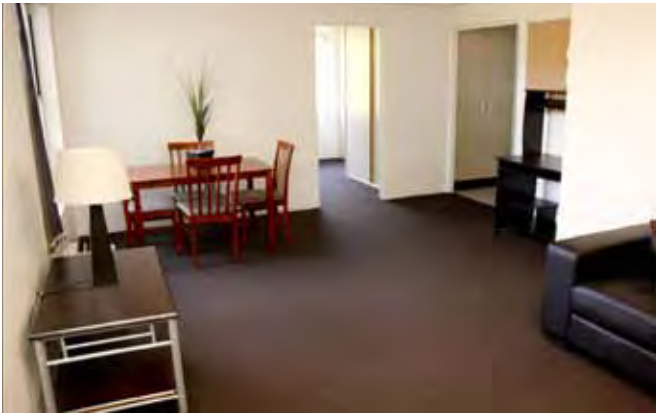
GARDEN COURT FOYER
AUSTRALIA

The Garden Court Foyer in Wollongong (New South Wales) It represents an enhancement on the more conventional fixed site Foyer models in place in most communities (National Youth Commission, 2008). The main Foyer site has seven individual bachelor apartments for youth. Each unit has its own bathroom, kitchenette and living/bedroom area. Communal space includes a lounge, dining room, common kitchen, outdoor courtyard, as well as a training room and computer room.

What makes this Foyer unique is that it combines a central or main location with 'dispersed' units – properties away from the main facility that young people can live in. Youth in dispersed units still have access to the supports and facilities of the main site, as well as supports provided on an outreach basis. This is an interesting model because it demonstrates how the Foyer may be adapted to incorporate elements of 'scattered site' housing, Housing First and potentially convertible leases.

work, AHURI suggested the following are key:

- Addressing which young people the concept is best suited to, for example it would not work for young people with drug and alcohol problems. That is not to say the concept could not be adapted to accommodate such a group at a later stage.
- Finding the right location that is close to a transport hub.
- Ensuring the right people are in place as support workers. They need to be well trained and well qualified.

(Beer et al, 2005, 46)

Southern Youth and Family Services (Australia) www.syfs.org.au

The Garden Court Foyer (see case study) is an innovative model that involves a main facility combined with dispersed units. An evaluation of the Garden Court showed strong results in terms of improved living situations (once people left the Foyer), skills levels, safety and participation in education, training and/or employment (Illawarra Forum, 2008).

Several evaluations of the Step Ahead program operated by Melbourne City Mission, and which is part of the Foyer Plus model in Melbourne, have been done. An outcomes evaluation "yielded tangible, positive results with 98% of young people who participated in the program, successfully achieving sustainable independence within 18 months" Cameron, 2009:4). Another study by the Department of Human Services identified what it referred to as 'Best Practice' elements, including long-term intensive case management, a stable 'home' for the program and residents; individual action plans leading to achievements across several life domains, the sustained focus on education, employment and training; and a flexible, long-term resourcing to enable a holistic approach (DHS, 2010). One of the key features of the Step Ahead program is that it is embedded in a 'system of care', highlighting the importance of system integration in responding to youth homelessness (DHS, 2010; Bond, 2010).

More recently, in 2011, a university-based research team evaluated the Step Ahead program (Grace et al., 2011). This research highlighted the diversity and uniqueness of the population that entered this Foyer model, and this had an impact on outcomes. Young people who had high levels of participation in programming, including education and training, and who had better records of health and well-being, tended to benefit the most from the Foyer. Young people who were 'newcomers' (born outside of the country) generally did well in the Foyer, as it also operated as a settlement service. Young people who were considered highly vulnerable to homelessness were those who had the most difficult and challenging backgrounds, and who also may have had mental health and addictions issues. Their participation in programming was less consistent, they were seen to receive less long-term benefits from the Foyer, and their outcomes (in terms of securing stable housing, employment or education) were less certain.

5 A Framework for Adapting the Foyer

THE FOYER, as an example of transitional housing for youth, has been applied in a broad range of contexts, and much has been learned through adaptation and evaluation. What makes the model effective is its focus on programming that is situated in an understanding of the needs of the developing adolescent, so that housing and income, education and training, and providing appropriate supports are all platforms to help young people transition to adulthood and independent living in a safe and planned way. Recognizing the degree to which policy contexts in the UK, Australia and the US differ, it is argued that the Foyer is most certainly a model that can be adapted to the Canadian context, as well. As an example of youth focused transitional housing, the Foyer can be adapted and modified to take advantage of what we have learned about systems of care approaches to dealing with homelessness, as well as innovations such as Housing First and employment training.

In thinking about the possibilities for Foyers in Canada, there exists an opportunity for real innovation by bridging what we know about a highly effective and tested model with the best of what we have learned about responding to youth homelessness in Canada. Several key values should underpin how the Canadian Foyer is conceptualized, funded, supported and implemented.

Based on what we know about youth homelessness, transitional housing and the Foyer as it has been implemented in other contexts, we are proposing a framework for developing and implementing the Foyer model in Canada. The key elements of the framework are: a) the Philosophy of the program, b) Organization and structure, c) the Program, d) Models of Accommodation, and e) Staffing. These features draw on our knowledge of youth homelessness in Canada, a careful assessment of the strengths and challenges of the Foyer model in other contexts, and what we have come to understand as key elements of program effectiveness acquired through a review of program models and evaluations.

5.1 THE PHILOSOPHY

All effective programming for homeless youth must be built upon a clear philosophy and guiding principles. What is to be avoided is the creation of a rule-bound, institutional environment that provides short-term support in the rush to have young people become independent and self-sufficient. Adaptation of the Foyer to the Canadian context should be done with consideration of the following:

Fidelity to the Model

The effectiveness of replicating any initiative depends on program fidelity, or the degree to which the program is delivered as intended. This does not mean strict and unwavering adherence to each program detail, as successful adaptation inevitably requires an assessment of the applicability of program elements to the local context. Rather, it means understanding and incorporating the philosophy and key program principles of the Foyer, in order to ensure that adaptation reflects the essential program philosophy. These principles, outlined below, are an adaptation of those from the Foyer Federation (United Kingdom) and the Chelsea Foyer in New York. The suggested principles of the Canadian Foyer include:

- A focus on helping disadvantaged young people who are homeless or in housing need - including young people leaving care - to achieve the transition to adulthood and from dependence to independence;
- A developmentally-appropriate environment to build competence and a feeling of achievement;
- A holistic approach to meeting the young person's needs based on an understanding of adolescent development;
- A formal plan and agreement between the Foyer and young person as to how the Foyer's facilities and local community resources will be used in making the transition to adulthood;
- A supported transition that is not time limited, in which young people can practice independent living;
- An investment in education, training, life skills and meaningful engagement in order to improve long-term life chances;
- The provision of a community of peers and caring adults with emphasis on peer mentoring;
- The provision of necessary and appropriate aftercare to ensure successful transitions to adulthood and independent living.

Supporting Adolescent Development

There is a wide body of research that shows successful physical, psychological, emotional and social transitions from childhood to adulthood require strong adult support (including mentoring), opportunities to experiment and explore (and to make mistakes), learning to nurture healthy adult relationships (including sexual relationships), the gradual learning of skills and competencies relating to living independently and obtaining a job, etc. Unfortunately, when young people become homeless or are in crisis, many of these assumptions about adolescent development are abandoned in the rush to make

Aberdeen Foyer music
www.aberdeenfoyer.com/music.html

them self-sufficient. We need to ensure that support for healthy adolescent development is at the centre of any support system for those leaving care.

Transitional housing models that limit stays to one year, are highly institutional and rule-bound in their approach, and which do not offer aftercare, are not likely to be effective, as they are not at all designed around the needs of the developing adolescent. So, to effectively implement the Foyer model in Canada, there must be a policy framework and funding in place that allows for transitional housing and supports that last longer than one year.

The Primacy of Education

We need to put education at the centre of our response to youth homelessness, and this is one of the key strengths of the Foyer model. Across Canada, it is well understood that education should be a central priority for youth, and as a society we do what we can to help young people stay engaged with school as

long as possible. Without adequate educational qualifications, employment opportunities for youth can be limited. If they do find jobs, a lack of education will likely lead to low-paying, part time, dead-end jobs (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Gaetz, 2002). In order to lift youth out of poverty, they must be given the opportunities, tools and resources to access education that they often lack as a result of their experience with poverty.

Educating Canada's youth is crucial, and for homeless youth, enhancing educational opportunities can produce longer term, sustainable outcomes and reduce the risk of a return to homelessness. Unfortunately, few programs for homeless youth place educational support as a central focus of their work, in spite of what we know about the social and economic outcomes of early school leaving.

Facilitating Youth Engagement

The Foyer should support and nurture youth engagement with other people (youth and adults), their community, and importantly, with meaningful and fulfilling activities, and opportunities to engage other young people and adults in meaningful and supportive relationships based on caring and respect. Young people should have a say in program design, be engaged as part of quality assurance, and most importantly, play a major role in determining their own pathways out of homelessness. A client-centered approach to case management should be part of the Foyer's operations. While all of this may seem obvious or go without saying, it is worth remembering that many services for young people fail when there is an overemphasis on control, curfews and restrictions. While all young people (as well as adults) need limits, setting a young person up to fail will not help them move forward with their lives.

5.2 THE PROGRAM

A lot has been learned through the development of Foyers around the world. The review of research and evaluation literature on Foyers in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom reveals the need for comprehensive programming and support.   Ideally, programming and support is best provided through a combination of in-house resources, and services provided through partnership. The best solutions to homelessness involve integrated service models (systems of care) that facilitate engagement and connections with sector-based and mainstream service providers. So, in considering program options, one needs to think carefully about who is providing the service.

In establishing a new Foyer, here are some key program components to consider:

Intake Process

A carefully considered intake process is required to determine the eligibility of youth applying to the program.   Several factors should be taken into account including the youth's social, psychological, medical and criminal histories, in order to determine their suitability for a program such as a Foyer. While the youth should demonstrate a commitment to engaging in work, education and/or training, it is recognized that many homeless (and at risk) youth may be suffering from trauma or be sufficiently disengaged from education to require additional support to help them achieve these outcomes. In order to

support homelessness prevention, a Foyer's intake process should also facilitate referrals from child protection services and corrections (juvenile detention) to ensure that young people fleeing care have access.

The decision to accept the young person into the Foyer would then be made by a staff committee based on the service's eligibility criteria, the availability of other forms of accommodation and support, and their current capacity to effectively support that young person's unique needs.

Southern Youth and Family Services (Australia)   www.syfs.org.au

Longer Term Residency

Many transitional housing providers limit the stay to one year, and this is often determined by funding frameworks. This limitation in terms of length of stay is particularly challenging for young people in the throes of adolescent development.

Residents of the first Foyer in Australia indicate that the program's main attraction is the secure accommodation it provides and the opportunity for independent living. Stable housing has enabled them to concentrate on their education and training needs and to focus on achieving their goals (Randolph & Wood, 2005).

The research from the UK and the United States suggests that many young people do end up leaving before two years (Smith et al., 2006). However, because the developmental needs of young people vary (for instance, the needs of a 16 year old may be significantly different than those of a 20 year old), it is argued here that young people should be offered the opportunity of staying in a Foyer for even longer than two years, based on their needs, readiness for independent living, and their financial stability. Young people still enrolled in school may not have the financial security to live independently, for instance.

There is also evidence that when the period of residency is limited to two years, it can shift the focus of support from education to employment training, as there is increasing pressure for young people to become financially independent as soon as possible[9]. This kind of mission drift, even within the Foyer model, can be detrimental to the long-term well-being and financial independence of young residents.

The opportunity for young people to stay in the Foyer as long as they need to, with no set limits on length of stay should be a distinguishing feature of the Canadian Foyer model. In fact, it is argued here that key aspects of the Foyer model could be integrated into a Housing First approach.

9. As discussed on the Chelsea Foyer website: http://www.goodshepherds.org/programs/out-of-home/foyer.html

Client-Centered Case Management

Young people who experience homelessness have typically faced many challenges, and may have had experiences that failed to instil in them trust in authority figures. Youth will all have different strengths and challenges, and any approach to case management must be flexible and responsive to a young person's needs and abilities. In an evaluation of the British Foyers, the authors noted "many required quite intensive support; and a flexible, client-centered approach was essential" (Quilgars & Anderson, 1995). A Positive Youth Development framework should also be adopted; that is, one that relies on an assets-based approach, rather than one that merely focuses on risk and deficits.

By offering on-going case management when in the Foyer and potentially as part of program aftercare, young people will have regular access to a support person that can help them deal with whatever challenges they may be facing. A client-centred approach, in which young people have a major say in identifying their challenges and determining their needs, should necessarily be adopted.

Action Plans for Personal Development

Foyers utilize a client-driven model of planning and goal setting. Action plans, developed with support from a case manager, outline an individual's goals, as well as the activities, resources and supports that will help them achieve those goals. Such plans should be "youth-driven and flexible, accommodating incremental progress and age-appropriate change in plans" (Common Ground Community and Good Sheppard Services, 2009:19). The focus of the plan is on the individual's goals regarding education and training, career, housing, health and wellbeing, and other personal goals defined by the individual. When a young person enters the Foyer, they usually develop a plan for the first 30 days, and this gets reviewed and renewed regularly through discussion with the case manager. Action plans can be supported by data management and evaluation systems such as the Outcomes Star (Mackieth et al., 2008).

Life Skills

Connected to the action plan is a focus on life skills. All Foyers offer life skills development, in some cases provided in-house and in other cases by external providers. The Live N Learn Foyer (Australia) provides a good example. They offer a range of activities and workshops on budgeting, life skills, fire safety, health, nutrition, cooking, repairs and maintenance, skin and hygiene, environmental awareness, community contacts and First Aid. They also have three ongoing programs:

BBC Connect and Create program
www.foyer.net/level3.asp?level3id=188

- *Live 'n' Learn as an Individual* – covering self-esteem and positive affirmation, healthy living and emotional wellbeing, family and relationships and includes a women's group.
- *Live 'n' Learn in the Community* – a recreational program including game nights, judo, movie nights and Sunday lunch.
- *Live 'n' Learn at Work* - an optional course aimed at younger residents (under 19). This course runs for seven weeks and covers activities such as resume writing, mock interviews, literacy, numeracy and IT skills, career guidance, and study support. Young people also have compulsory individual meetings and monthly campus meetings. Training opportunities also provide links between young people and potential employers (such as hospitals, councils, etc.).

Nurturing Environment That Supports Positive Relationships

The social and physical environment of the Foyer is crucial to facilitating youth engagement. Youth need to feel that they are welcome, comfortable and belong. Young people should be given the opportunity to develop and nurture meaningful relationships not only with staff (adults) but also with other young people, in a supportive environment. A case management approach that includes developing anger management and conflict resolution skills, plus the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and work through the challenges that such relationships bring, will foster the development of resilience and increase the likelihood that young people will develop positive relationships as an adult.

The nature of the relationship between staff and residents must be nurturing and support the development of positive relationships. Foyer staff need to engage and relate to the youth; they need to be committed and responsible adults who believe in the integrated and holistic approach and who

"WHEN I WAS IN JAIL SOMEONE FROM ABERDEEN FOYER CAME IN TO TALK TO US ABOUT SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION.

I thought it was the best option, I knew that if I just came out and went back to my old way of life it wouldn't be long before I was back on drugs and back in prison. There's a lot to do at the Foyer, you just have to get up and get going. I am doing things I could only have dreamt of before, climbing hills, playing football once a week and going to the gym. I have been doing a new course called Outside In. It's the first time I have managed to achieve anything academic and I will soon have my first qualification. Sometimes there is still a temptation to use drugs, I just think about how proud my family are of me now (they wouldn't talk to me before) and the feeling soon goes away. I am really glad I moved into Aberdeen Foyer and I am really looking forward to what I can achieve in the next year."

Jack
(Aberdeen Foyer Annual Review, 2006)

understand the reasons behind youths' struggles. Staff need to be positive role models for youth and enable and empower young people to achieve their full potential. Staff / client relations must be nurtured so as not to replicate the rule-bound model of many group homes. Instead, the existence of rules, roles and expectations must be balanced with opportunities for young people to explore, become independent, make mistakes and achieve success. This is a model based on adolescent development rather than institutional care.

Young people should be supported in developing positive relations with other young people, not only within the Foyer but in the communities within which they live. For some young persons the goal may be to support the young person to return home. For other young people this goal may not be desirable or even possible. In either case, the intent is to help young people stay connected with their communities, and assist them in developing and nurturing positive relationships with family members (parents, siblings, relatives, etc.) and learn to manage conflict. All of this is important, as family can potentially be an important resource to be leveraged as young people move into adulthood and become more independent (Winland et al., 2011).

Work, Training and the Importance of Education

As an expectation of residence, youth should be encouraged to be involved in training or employed, and/or be offered support to continue education in a field of their choice. While participation in education should be a top priority, it is recognized that some young people may be disengaged from education, or may not be ready for the changes that are required to move forward. As suggested above, this may represent a challenge in working with some young people, so a flexible system that supports reluctant young people in moving towards this goal is important. This is also consistent with a have a history of homelessness) lose their housing because of their failure to participate in such activities.

From an organizational perspective, this means the Foyer as an institution should be actively engaged with the education system, school boards and schools that meet the needs of clients. And while efforts should be continually made to support the engagement of young people in education. It should be noted that young people participating in education full-time should also be encouraged to work part-time, in order to develop budgeting skills and the ability to balance school and work.

Foyers should also facilitate opportunities for employment training. By providing youth with support in essential work skills, like resume writing and interviewing, as well as links to employers, youth will be better prepared for work. However, we know from research that training alone is not sufficient to help marginalized and homeless youth move forward, because their predicament is not simply a consequence of their lack of skills or motivation. That is, one must situate training within a 'determinants of health' perspective, to ensure that other factors that contribute to social exclusion and poverty are dealt with, and not just the deficits and inadequacies of the individual. Canadian programs such as Choices for Youth (St. John's, NFLD), and BladeRunners (Vancouver) offer great examples of innovative employment training programs.

Mental Health Supports

Mental health issues are common among people experiencing homelessness and unemployment. Mental health challenges can impact a young person's ability to work and live independently; therefore services must be in place to help young people deal with existing mental health issues. Activities that promote positive mental health are also important.

How mental health supports are accessed is an important question. While staff should be knowledgeable about mental health issues, recognize symptoms, and facilitate access to support, it is not necessarily the best approach to rely on 'in house' supports. The Chelsea Foyer (New York) which reported that 21% of participants had a diagnosed mental illness, chose to have no medical or mental health services other than a part time nurse whose salary was supported through funding streams that require this service. This was intentional; they felt that mental health services were widely available in the community, and to deliver mental health services themselves would make the Foyer too much like many of the residents' previous experiences in care. They concluded that "young people with serious mental health challenges are not effectively served by the relatively unstructured Foyer environment" (Common Ground Community and Good Sheppard Services, 2009).

A key challenge of implementing a Foyer then is how to integrate necessary and appropriate mental health supports through a 'systems of care' approach that embeds the Foyer in a network of mainstream and targeted services. Underlying principles of mental health supports should include:

- Ensuring that young people receive the proper assessments for mental health and learning disabilities (there is often a cost for this and should be considered a budget item);
- Providing young people with access to ongoing mental health supports based on need;
- Nurturing mental health through the program's philosophy and service delivery model;
- Training and support for staff.

The Arts – For Living Life

Recent research describes the benefits of the arts for engaging youth, as well as improvements in cognitive function as a result of participating in arts-based learning and initiatives (Gazzaniga, 2008; Posner et al., 2008). The arts are a creative and engaging way of enabling people to express themselves, which is crucial for mental health and cognitive development. Many young people have had traumatic experiences that affect their ability to learn, and to connect with others. The arts provide an opportunity for young people to tell their stories through music, painting,

poetry, photography, dance, etc., and can be a source of stress-relief in an otherwise stressful life. The arts bring people together and provide an opportunity to connect through mutual interest.

There are some interesting examples of how to incorporate arts into programming. The Foyer Federation has resources regarding Open Talent which is programming that supports arts based youth engagement. And in North America, though not part of existing Foyers, two interesting arts-based programs for homeless youth provide excellent models of how to engage young people in the arts:

- Sketch (Toronto)
- Roaddawgz (San Francisco)

Open Talent – Yeovil Foyer, Sommerset UK. SWEET SOUNDS: The Foyer band, brothers Simon and David Gaylard, perform at the launch of the Open Talent campaign at the Foyer in Yeovil.

Photo: Jennie Banks,Western Gazette, North Dorset www.thisissomerset.co.uk/Students-thrilled-look-vibrant-gypsy-culture/story-16522898-detail/story.html

Program Fees: A Model That Does Not Penalize

Having young people work and pay a small fee to be part of the Foyer is seen as necessary to build young people's capacity to live independently. However, in order to be sustainable, the program fee charged to residents needs to be affordable and geared to income. In the UK, young people who work pay higher program fees than those on public assistance. In some cases, the program fee was more than the youth could reasonably afford and some youth were going into debt. This forced some youth to leave their jobs and rely on public assistance. The funding model must be geared towards helping young people become self-sustaining.

At the New York Foyer, residents pay a program fee roughly equivalent to 30% of their income. The money is deposited into an account that residents can use at the end of their stay to contribute to a rent deposit. This is a significant advantage for residents – not only do they get the practice of paying 'rent', but they are in a much better position to secure housing when they leave the Foyer.

Aftercare

Although the Foyer approach addresses many youth needs, once youth leave the Foyer to live independently, they may still require some level of ongoing support. The need for aftercare should be a priority, and built into the model, with full recognition that this can be a challenge. Staff of the New York Foyer report that, after fund-seeking, aftercare is their biggest struggle. They would like to be able to do more with the young people, however that would require an additional staff member, and therefore more funding. In the UK, some youth who left Foyers were not successful in maintaining their move-on accommodation because they were overwhelmed by the bills and responsibility (Smith et al., 2006), indicating a need for ongoing support after discharge.

Plans to engage youth in aftercare should be a part of the discharge planning process. The transient nature of the population means that contact phone numbers often change, and it is important to collect all contact information from youth before they leave. The New York Foyer has employed innovative ways of maintaining contact with youth including via social media sites like Facebook, and also by developing a partnership with a local college that provides an intern to coordinate aftercare contact, in the absence of funding to support an aftercare staff person. The level of contact required depends on the needs of the youth, and should be decided in collaboration with youth and staff as part of the discharge planning process. Youth need to be engaged not only in follow up conversations with staff, but also with events and activities that continue to support them in building relationships and networks. Program staff should be in contact with former participants within a reasonable time frame post discharge in order to maintain a relationship.

One final note about aftercare: young people should be allowed 'second chances'. That is, they should have the opportunity to move back to the Foyer and / or resume supports, even after they have left the program. As Quilgars et al., (2011) have noted, in the UK it is not considered unusual for the average young person to move back and forth between their parents' home and independent living, based on circumstances (including employment, failed relationships etc.), and this is certainly true in Canada as well (Côté & Bynner, 2008). Things do not always work out in the early years of independence, and programs that support the development of pathways to independent living should also give young people the opportunity to move back temporarily.

5.3 ACCOMMODATION – A SAFE AND DECENT PLACE TO LIVE

One of the key considerations in establishing a Foyer is to decide what kind of accommodation will be provided. A fixed site with multiple rooms and a common area? A dispersed housing model with individual apartments, or small clusters of rooms with shared space? There are many options, and these carry different considerations in terms of capital and operating expenses. In addition, the built form of the Foyer also has implications for how services and supports are delivered.

The development of the new Foyer allows providers the unique opportunity to build on what has clearly been demonstrated to be an effective model, and to adapt what has been more broadly learned about the full range of housing options for youth. Research from elsewhere highlights that there is no single type of facility associated with the Foyer, and that they come in all shapes and sizes. Ensuring that young people have the right supports, in combination with appropriate accommodation seems to be the key:

> "A foyer is not just a building, but the building is important. The most successful foyers are in buildings that are landmarks that provide status to the young people living there, and to the area in which they are located. Good design is essential for the building to be attractive, practical, secure, and cost- and environmentally efficient to operate."
> (Gold Coast Youth Service Inc., 2009:20)

Accommodation is about much more than shape and size. The *quality* of accommodation is also really important to consider. Often, there is an attitude on the part of funders and the public that 'beggars can't be choosers', and that young people who are homelessness should be satisfied with the bare minimum of accommodation. This goes against a core belief that underlies the Foyer model, and more progressive approaches to youth development. The Foyer should be more than a bare bones shelter; it should be a safe and a decent place to live.

> "Go smaller, fight for the money, make them nice places to be. Don't make them austere. Don't have a bare mattress. Make it look nice. Invest in living space, good quality furniture, nice flooring, everything that makes it nice. These poor kids are coming from horrible places often, so make it nice for them."
> (Narelle Clay, Chairperson, Homelessness Australia[10]).

What forms of housing are most appropriate?

International research identifies that there is much flexibility in terms of the physical form that Foyers can take. In fact, the Foyer can be adapted to incorporate different forms of housing, including a dedicated youth housing facility on one hand, or dispersed housing (potentially including scattered site approaches) on the other. There are benefits to both models, and in thinking about establishing a Foyer, they should not be considered mutually exclusive. For instance, one can imagine a system where young people move from the dedicated facility to scattered site housing, and are able to retain the supports and services that are part of the Foyer.

Dedicated youth housing facility

Dedicated facilities, also known as 'stand-alone' or congregate living environments (though not to be confused with congregate shelter environments, where many people sleep in the same room) may be seen to be more appropriate for youth who are younger, less independent, have higher needs for support and / or need help with social interaction. Dedicated facilities have the advantage of centralizing staff and program resources, easily accessible program space, and the ability to nurture and support community building. For high needs clients, where security and access to around the clock supports is important, this may be a preferable option.

Youth may have different needs in terms of the types of accommodation that will make them most comfortable. Some youth seek private accommodation in a room by themselves, while others need more interaction in order to feel safe and secure. In the Chelsea Foyer there are two kinds of rooms: 20 singles and 5 quads. The quads have four single rooms and residents share a kitchen and two bathrooms.

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10. Quotation from a conference presentation at the CHRA Congress, St. Johns Newfoundland, May 4, 2012

Reports on the implementation of Foyers in Australia concluded that "good design is essential for the building to be attractive, practical, secure, and cost and environmentally efficient to operate" and that successful Foyer buildings include "well-planned offices for support staff, training rooms and space for tenant partners" (Malycha, n.d.). Innovative Canadian transitional housing projects for youth, such as Eva's Phoenix in Toronto and the Lilly Building run by Choices for Youth in St. John's demonstrate how to combine innovative living accommodations with common spaces, services and training space in renovated settings. Jeff Karabanow, a leading Canadian scholar on youth homelessness, suggests that transitions out of homelessness may be facilitated by having housing facilities at a distance from mainstream youth services as this may make it easier for street involved youth to disconnect from the lifestyle. (Karabanow, 2004; 2008).

Dispersed Housing Units

Dispersed housing has been used in transitional housing models as an alternative to the dedicated youth housing facility, and is seen as more advantageous for young people who are older and / or who are able to live more independently. Dispersed housing is often distinguishable from scattered site models because, though in both cases the units are smaller (housing fewer residents in one place) and located over a wider area, the units are owned by the provider. Scattered site housing typically refers to units rented from the private sector, which can allow greater flexibility and lowers capital investment.

Scattered site approaches have been used for transitional housing in Toronto (through PARC) and as mentioned, Calgary's Infinity Project (Boys and Girls Club of Calgary) uses scattered site housing for its Housing First program. Scattered site housing provides a great deal of flexibility in terms of differentiated accommodation, more so than fixed site models. Single room or multiple room apartments can be used, as well as houses.

While dispersed housing models have become common particularly in the wake of the success of Housing First, there is no reason to believe that this approach cannot also work with Foyers. In fact, the Foyer model has been adapted to include dispersed accommodation in both the UK (Quilgars, 2001; Smith, 2004) and Australia (National Youth Commission, 2008). A key consideration is ensuring that the key supports and program components of the Foyer, such as communal space (below) life skills, educational supports and the nurturing of positive relationships, are implemented and supported in an effective manner.

There are many clear advantages to the dispersed Foyer model, however. First, because it is not associated with a single facility, it can feel less like a 'program' or an institutional setting for residents. This may be particularly effective to young people leaving homes or juvenile detention facilities. Second, support for sub-populations (young

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women, LGBTQ youth) can be more easily accommodated with a decentralized housing model. Third, the number of youth who can be accommodated is much more elastic, and is not limited by the number of rooms in a dedicated housing facility. Fourth, costs for capital, administration and maintenance may be reduced and shifted to the private sector, making the model more cost effective (though support costs may be higher because of client dispersion).

Finally, and this is perhaps the key benefit, length of tenure becomes much more flexible. With a scattered site model that houses people in private market housing, lease conversion is then possible, making the transition to independent living much more fluid. Long-term tenancy is therefore possible through the Foyer, with the outcome that young people are supported to live independently in permanent housing. People can begin participation in the program as part of a transitional housing arrangement, where they are offered higher levels of supports. At some point they may no longer need such levels of support, but there is no requirement for them to 'move on'. The lease is transferred over to them at that point. This model has been used in the Addiction Recovery Program in Vancouver, in France (where it is referred to as a 'sliding lease') and in Australia, where it is called the Youth Head Lease Transfer Scheme (Eberle et al., 2007).

Blended model: Hub and Spoke

Some interesting innovations have resulted from blending the two models of accommodation. A blended model might include a main or central dedicated facility with multiple residential units, communal space, and administrative space. Residents who are young, inexperienced or have higher needs would be more well suited for this centralized facility. At the same time, this central facility could be augmented with

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a number of dispersed units as well, allowing older youth who are more independent or who are averse to the more institutional context the opportunity to live in smaller units that are integrated into the community. The Garden Foyer in Wollongong, New South Wales (Australia) offers a particularly interesting example of a hub and spoke model.

The importance of Communal Space

Whether the Foyer uses a dedicated housing facility or a scattered site approach, it is considered important for youth to have safe spaces to gather, talk, and engage in activities together. Without communal spaces, youth can often feel isolated. By providing space, youth can gather to exchange information and experiences, get support from peers, and essentially learn effective ways of communicating.

The common areas at the New York Foyer are limited due to the lack of such rooms in the building. Staff have indicated that more common rooms would be beneficial. There is one open common area on the first floor within view of the staff. There is also a multi-purpose room on the first floor, which is used for meetings, workshops and evening hang outs where youth can watch TV and play videos. Additionally, there is a digital library in the basement and each floor has chairs for socializing in the hallways.

5.4 ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Effective program models cannot be delivered unless there are adequate resources, a positive policy and funding environment, appropriate staffing, and a commitment to evaluation. These are all key considerations when establishing a Foyer. Key features of an effective organizational framework include:

Appropriate and Consistent Funding

Ongoing, dedicated funding continues to be the biggest challenge reported by all three countries discussed here. For instance, the Chelsea Foyer (New York) has lacked a flexible, dedicated funding stream or significant public sponsor and has relied on six separate funding streams that have divergent requirements and serve different populations (Common Ground Community and Good Sheppard Services, 2009). This means that significant staff time is spent completing reports for funders, each having their own reporting requirements. The development of a Foyer in Canada must be backed by a clear, secure funding commitment that is flexible in order to enable the delivery of high quality services that support youth. The policy and funding framework should also support the possibility that young people can stay in the Foyer and / or receive supports for periods longer than two years, if they require it.

Embedding the Foyer within a 'system of care'

The Foyer should not be considered simply another program within the homelessness sector. In fact, it should be seen as an alternative to homelessness, which is best achieved by ensuring that the Foyer is properly nestled within a broader 'system of care'.   In many communities, the response to youth homelessness is fragmented and uncoordinated, and loosely connected to mainstream services. The responsibility for youth homelessness thus rests with a small and poorly funded sector.

A systems of care approach works in a different way, in that there is a stronger emphasis on coordination and integration of services, linking the work of the homelessness sector to mainstream providers, and ensuring that young people are tracked and supported as they move through the system, so that they do not 'fall through the cracks'. In order to meet

the complex needs of young people who have experienced homelessness (or significantly, who are leaving care), such a model should involve inter-institutional collaboration between the Foyer provider, other street youth serving agencies, as well as the mainstream services supported by provincial and municipal governments, including schools and school boards, child protection services, the transitional housing provider, mental health services and corrections, for instance. Indeed, Sharp and Robertson conclude that "the prevention of homelessness does not happen in isolation from other issues. An exclusive focus on homeless may not yield the most efficient results; rather a holistic or systemic approach is needed" (2008:8). This focus on Foyers and system integration is best highlighted in examples from Australia, where the 'Step Ahead' program is seen to be more effective and achieve strong results because it is not a stand alone service, but rather its activities are coordinated with other providers, including mainstream services (Cameron, 2009; DHS, 2010; Bond, 2010).

Step Ahead, Melbourne Citymission
www.melbournecitymission.org.au/What-We-Do/
Our-Programs-Services/Homelessness-Services/
Homelessness-Homeless-Support/Foyer-Plus

Consideration of the Mix of Residents

The question of the mix of residents is important to consider, and will have an impact on the model of accommodation you choose. The UK Foyer model suggests that a mixture of low, medium and high needs residents provides a peer community where those with lower needs who are working and/or finishing school serve as leaders and models for those with higher needs. In New York however, funding streams for high-needs youth are more widely available than for those with low-needs, and the majority of their residents are young people who have aged out of foster care and are at risk of homelessness, as well as those who have experienced street homelessness.

In applying the model to the Canadian context, it is proposed that there be a mixture of residents in terms of need and capacity. In order to avoid 'creaming' the least challenging clients, a rigorous intake process should be developed. The

Chelsea Foyer has different intake processes depending on the funding stream. There is a monthly open house for potential residents to attend an overview/orientation. Young people are required to complete a five-page application and provide personal references and a resume. Once the documentation is complete, young people are invited for an interview with a social work supervisor. If they are considered eligible and suitable, they are invited back to meet the director who makes the final decision. Suitability for the program is based on the young person's motivation to return all of the documents and follow through on the interview process. Work history is also taken into consideration. However, caution should be exercised in intake, so that the Foyer does not accept only those young people with the best chances of succeeding.

Foyers for Sub-Populations

Given what we know about the diversity of the homeless youth population, it is worth considering how the needs of sub-populations, such as minority youth, newcomers, LGBTQ youth, young mothers, and even couples, can be accommodated. For instance, can the Foyer be configured to support young mothers? What would this mean in terms of space (bedrooms, common areas), and proximity to other services and supports? Likewise, because we know that some sub-populations experience discrimination and safety concerns both prior to, and once they become homeless, how will these issues be accommodated in a congregate living context? While *all* Foyers, should actively implement and support anti-discrimination practices, it may be that the needs of sub-populations, such as LGBTQ and Aboriginal youth, are best met with targeted Foyers that incorporate more specialized services and supports.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that targeted Foyers cannot easily address the underlying prejudices that lead to marginalization. Nevertheless, in developing culturally sensitive programmes and supports, ensuring the ongoing self-esteem and safety of young people involved is paramount, and so conscious and strategic efforts will need to be made to avoid the further marginalization of these populations.

Staffing

It goes without saying that you need adequate staff to effectively deliver a program. The staffing model should fit the needs of the program, and this will of course differ based on the size of the Foyer program, and whether accommodation is provided through a dedicated facility or scattered site model.

Step by Step Crimea Road building (UK)
www.stepbystep.org.uk/news-info/prel/UKHousingAwards2012.htm

The staffing model we present here is from the Chelsea Foyer in New York:

- Program Director: Responsible for the development, planning, administration and supervision of the Foyer
- Program Coordinator: Supervision of staff and life skills program. Responsible for safety, security and maintenance of Foyer program space
- Social Work/Aftercare Supervisor: Responsible for facilitating and supervising intake and aftercare services
- Case Managers (3): Responsible for counseling, case management, referrals and advocacy services for residents
- Resource Case Manager: Responsible for coordination of mentoring services, as well as housing resource development
- Independent Living Counselors (5): Responsible for preparing residents to live independently
- Administrative Assistant: Responsible for office management, documentation, reporting and data collection/entry
- Nurse – 8 hours a week. Requirement of SILP and RHY funding

Outcomes-based Evaluation Built into Case Management

In order to get the best information on the progress of youth moving through the Foyer, it is important to integrate systems of monitoring into case management so that it is not seen as an additional task. For disadvantaged youth, decreases in the risk factors or increases in the protective factors that contribute to homelessness and unemployment are outcomes in themselves.   An effective model for a client-based system of outcomes evaluation is the "Outcomes Star" (Mackeith et al., 2008), which integrates data collection into the day-to-day work of case managers. The Outcomes Star is a client-based case management and evaluation system incorporating a Stages of Change approach. Originally developed by St. Mungo's in the UK, the Outcomes Star has been adapted by many communities in Canada.   The Outcomes Star provides a means of measuring a number of variables that relate to the risk and protective factors for homelessness including:

- Self-care and living skills
- Social networks and relationships
- Physical health
- Meaningful use of time
- Managing money and personal administration
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Emotional and mental health
- Managing tenancy and accommodation

Resources for the Outcomes Star can be found on the Homeless Hub: Program Evaluation Topics: The Outcomes Star.

6 Conclusion

THERE IS NO DOUBT that many youth making the transition to adulthood and independence struggle with unemployment, education, homelessness, and a lack of social support. This in turn greatly affects their chances in life. Lest we think that these are simply youth problems, it is worth considering that they do not only affect the young people in question – they affect us all; for young people who lack opportunities and hope are in the long run less able to make contributions to their families, communities and society as a whole.

In proposing the Foyer model, we are suggesting that there are innovative models of accommodation and supports that can be successfully adapted in urban and rural communities across Canada. This is a model that best responds to the needs of the developing adolescent. The goal is not simply moving young people to independence (which is simply a reworking of the goal we set for addressing adult homelessness) but rather, it is to help young people successfully transition to an independent adulthood. It is not enough to expect young people to simply pull themselves up by the bootstraps; it is up to society to provide these youth with a better chance.

Many of the youth who experience homelessness have been in the care of child protection services and /or have been involved with the criminal justice system. They have been taken away from their families and put in the hands of a system that is not set up to deal with the effects of their early experiences of abuse and neglect, which include difficulties in the education system, a lack of social supports, and a lack of independent living skills. Child protection services focus on the immediate need of finding any kind of accommodation for youth, and fail to provide young people with the skills, resources and supports necessary to make

… UNTIL WE HAVE YOUTH HOUSING STRATEGIES, as opposed to youth homelessness strategies, we will never actually plan for young people's transition and their housing needs, and we will always be adopting a deficit model around homelessness. … If you have all crisis provision you'll have crisis. If you have all homelessness provision, you'll get homelessness. If, however, you recognise that young people do grow up, do need to move on, do have housing issues, and you start to plan for that, from the various backgrounds that they come from, then you are more likely to deal with that issue…

(National key player from Quilgars, et al., 2011:45)

a healthy transition to adulthood. Those leaving corrections may also come from challenging families, have educational challenges, and be dealing with mental health problems or addictions. Many of these young people will have had little or no experience with independent living prior to incarceration, and be in need of life skills training, and transitional supports.

For young people who are making the transition to adulthood and independence – and especially for those leaving care – the Foyer is an excellent model of transitional housing and support, and one that has been demonstrated to be effective. As a response to youth homelessness, the Foyer has many advantages. It addresses the causes of the 'no home - no job – no home' cycle that many youth who are brought up in poverty, care, or other stressful experiences find themselves in. It provides resources, opportunities and support to youth who have not had the kind of experiences that many other youth have in preparing for independent living, the workforce, or quality relationships. The Foyer approach is based on solid evaluation and research evidence relating to the risk and protective factors of poverty, unemployment and homelessness.

The Foyer has been adapted and implemented with success in several countries. It provides a flexible model that allows for innovation, and can address the needs of both urban and rural youth (Beer et al., 2005). The adaptation of the Foyer to the Canadian context provides a real opportunity for innovation in our response to youth homelessness. By incorporating our own learning about what works in Canada, and addressing many of the challenges of the Foyer identified by our international counterparts, there is a real opportunity to deliver a highly effective initiative that can significantly impact outcomes for youth. The Foyer is currently being piloted in Calgary and Edmonton, with support from the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. These pilots are targeting high needs young people coming from care (child protection) and corrections. Each pilot is using a different model of accommodation. The evaluations will help demonstrate the effectiveness of the Foyer, and will give other Canadian communities the opportunity to learn from and adapt the model to their context.

However, in order to get there, there needs to be openness to doing things differently. There needs to be a policy framework and funding supports that allows for multi-year residency and on-going supports. There needs to be a commitment to addressing youth needs from the perspective of adolescent development. The Foyer has to be more than just another program, it has to be integrated into a broader service model – a system of care. Models of accommodation and support such as the Foyer that are based on the needs of the developing adolescent are not only more likely to be effective, but will also enhance the longer term life chances of youth who are struggling. This is what we would hope for any young person.

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