



youth transitions

in housing - auckland foyer initiative

MacroAuckland Research - Evidence of Need

The MacroAuckland research demonstrates the severe housing shortages that Auckland is experiencing. The majority of rental properties are not affordable for low-income families and individuals.

The lack of affordable housing has a double impact on youth who are transitioning into the rental market from care, the justice system, positions of family stress or as young parents. These young people generally have low incomes (usually benefit-based), and are in a position of high social needs that diminish their capacity to access traditional youth housing solutions, such as flat-sharing or student accommodation.

It is extremely difficult for young people aged 16-18 to attain private rental agreements, particularly as individuals, without references or credit ratings. Young people exiting care, the justice system or family stress often encounter problems such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems and unemployment, all of which are exacerbated by housing stress; and in turn become barriers to accessing sustainable housing.

Although social housing is provided by central and local government, there is a constant and disproportionately high undersupply in Auckland despite many of those on Housing New Zealand's waiting list classified as having 'severe' or 'significant' housing needs.

Action on Issues

A "Foyer" is an integrated learning and accommodation centre providing safe and secure housing, support and training for young people aged 16-25 to meet the challenge of rising youth unemployment and homelessness. The Foyer also provides a safe place for young people leaving care or youth offending institutions, young parents and other young people at risk and in settings that go well beyond the traditional supported housing model. Experts reconnect young people with personal development opportunities, and back into education, training and employment.

In exchange for services tailored to their needs, young people entering a Foyer are expected to actively engage in their own development and make a positive contribution to their local community. The nature of this exchange depends very much on the individual, where they have come from, the barriers they are facing and their aspirations for the future.

It often means picking up the threads of education, developing skills for independence and encouraging greater resilience to overcome housing, education and employment barriers. It can also mean rebuilding family relationships, overcoming mental health issues or developing stronger self-confidence and self-belief.

The objective of the Foyer is to turn young people's experiences of disadvantage into solutions that support

their transition to adult independence and provide the skills, resources and opportunities to take control of their lives and realise their potential as active and engaged young citizens.

In placing young people at the heart of a flexible 'deal', which in the case of Foyers is expressed through a formal contract, it affords them the tools they need to take responsibility for their future and helps them to secure lasting personal and social change.

The objective is a direct, seamless transition into a Foyer – which is a place to "step up to". It is fundamental for the young person to link back into the community, and also learn to live with other young people, enabling an eventual transition to a flatting situation.

Young people are also provided with the opportunity to show that they can sustain a tenancy and pay rent, which means they can also get a landlord's reference.

A business model, quality assurance/accreditation system and international best practice evaluation supports the concept and is already successfully in place in various countries around the world (e.g. the Foyer Association in the UK).

There are long term sustainable benefits for youth, and benefits to the Government and community by the removal of the young person from long term crisis services.

Collaboration

The Foyer model is based on collaborative delivery. The success of the project relies on the joined-up delivery of support services, which would include:

- Counselling and mentoring support
- Health referrals
- Personal development workshops
- Support and referrals to education providers
- Employment skills support and work experience
- Parenting skills

Community Housing providers will be key collaborative partners, as will government agencies who can assist with the provision of key support services.

Funding

The first stage of the project will require \$60,000 to carry out a feasibility study into refining the Foyer model for New Zealand circumstances and linking in with potential partners. This funding would include the salary for a project co-ordinator, resources for youth focus groups, travel to visit and study Australian Foyers and relationship building with the business sector and Government.

A further \$100,000 of funding would enable the project co-ordinator to develop the project over a further two years, with the focus on developing a specific project, establishing a steering group, costing consents, securing capital funding, resources and business partners, and establishing the Foyer building.

Sustainability

Beyond the feasibility and construction of the Foyer, this model of housing provision is extremely sustainable. Affordable rental income provides funding for building maintenance and running costs, as well as resources for a key support worker. Many of the international Foyer projects operate a community enterprise from the building, e.g. a youth café, which provides an income stream to support service delivery.

The model of collaboration leverages significant resourcing from government agencies, ensuring that wrap-around support services can be provided at little cost. Furthermore, the project will act as a pilot to demonstrate a workable solution to affordable housing problems that government could roll out sustainably.

For more information about this project, please contact Mark Bentley or Kat Stanier on 09 277 8833 or visit the MacroAuckland website www.macroauckland.org.nz