



The Macarthur Youth Mental Health and Housing Project

Final Evaluation Report

The Macarthur Youth Mental Health and Housing Project (MYP) was designed to support young people in South Western Sydney who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and who have mental health issues.

The project provided case management and outreach support to young people, as well as working with youth homelessness and clinical mental health services.

Running from March 2011 to June 2014 the MYP was operated by Neami National and funded by the NSW Department of Families and Communities (FACS).

Evaluating the project

Neami partnered with Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) from UNSW Australia to conduct an evaluation of the project.

The evaluation report describes the outcomes for young people during the project regarding housing, personal wellbeing, and social connectedness. The report also lists lessons learnt from the project that may be applicable to future service delivery for young people.

The report analyses the experience and outcomes for young people participating in MYP and aims to identify whether the Project met its core objectives, which included:

- Supporting young people to stable housing
- Enhancing the personal wellbeing and social connectedness of young people involved in the project

Outcomes and achievements

The MYP provided support to 30 people aged 16-18, 22 were female and 8 male. Participants stayed in the project for 6 months on average (up to 22 months).

“I did a lot of it [make positive changes] on my own but Neami helped me get there quicker and were there for me the whole time” – MYP participant

The young people and the stakeholders of the MYP who participated in the evaluation viewed the project positively. The evaluation found MYP achieved positive outcomes for the young people who engaged with the project, such as:

Finding suitable housing

This ranged from securing short-term crisis housing to supporting one person into private rental housing.

“They helped me find a house and move out of the refuge” – MYP participant

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing

This included being with participants when they were in crisis or providing strategies for anger management.

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Increasing social and community participation

This was achieved through supporting the interests of the young people and doing social activities with them – for example supporting a young person join and compete in hockey.

“Yes, just like with the support with everything, it’s given me that little boost of confidence to get where I am”

– MYP participant

The MYP was also able to achieve positive outcomes to improve the family relationships of some of the young people.

“My relationship with my daughter has improved, and she is not as reliant on me as in the past. I feel my daughter is stronger emotionally and is now off medication, which I am happy about”

– Family member

The MYP worked with the some participants and their families to identify and address issues in the relationship that may have led to the young person leaving the family home.

Limitations of the project

The MYP was constrained with limited resources and this was seen with the number of key support workers limited to one at any one time. Providing flexible and deep outreach support is resource intensive.

One goal of the project was to improve youth homelessness services in the Campbelltown area in responding to the needs of young people experiencing mental illness and homelessness. Due to limited funding and staff resources and with mutual agreement of FACS and Neami, this objective was not pursued as intended.

Lessons for service providers

Service providers felt that the MYP filled a gap in services, supporting young people in areas that existing service providers did not have the ability to support.

“I think it’s just really important that if there’s the capacity to build and extend the service within the area, that would be really good because it’s just that flexibility, it’s just that different –I guess that outreach”

– Service provider

The project provided a learning opportunity for Services in delivering a youth targeted program. One of the lessons included ensuring staff responded flexibly to the changes in the circumstances of the young people.

More Information

For the full evaluation report and more information about Neami visit www.neaminational.org.au/myp

For more information about the project, the evaluation or research at Neami send an email to the research team at research@neaminational.org.au

For more information about the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) visit www.sprc.unsw.edu.au