Together Home program evaluation Early Findings and progress update

November 2022

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Evaluation context

Early Findings Report based on data up to December 2021

- This presentation shares the early findings from the Together Home evaluation

- The early findings are based on stakeholder consultations which represent one of three data sources that will inform the overall THP evaluation and program data

- The Interim report, due at the end of the year, will extend this analysis to include analysis of administrative data routinely collected by DCJ, place based case studies of program implementation and delivery in selected locations, and additional stakeholder consultations

- Early findings presented here should therefore be understood as preliminary

| Stakeholder consultations | Provider surveys | Administrative data analysis | Place based case studies | Additional stakeholder consultations | Interim Evaluation report |
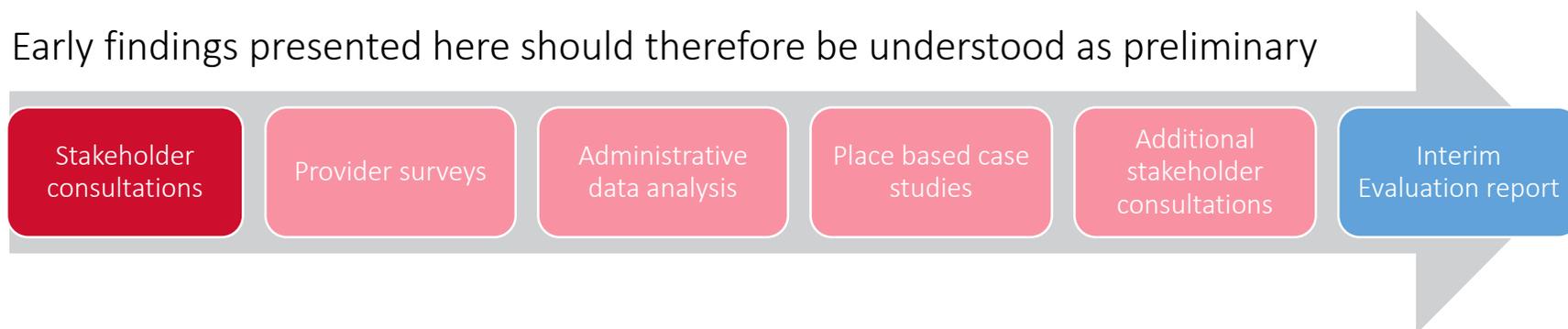
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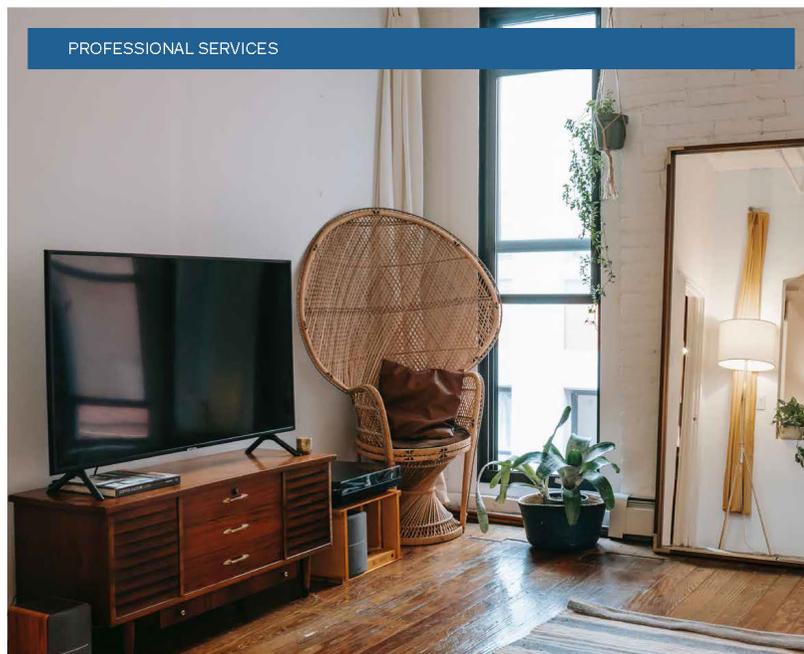
Together Home Program Evaluation
Early findings from the key stakeholder consultations and program data analysis up to December 2021

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Research questions explored in the implementation evaluation

- To what extent was the THP implemented and delivered as intended?

- What contextual factors influenced the implementation of the THP?

- Did the intake and referral processes operate as envisioned in the program guidelines?

- To what extent did the program design and implementation facilitate the delivery of culturally appropriate and sensitive housing and support?

- What were the challenges and opportunities for CHPs in implementing the THP?

- What were the broader impacts of the THP on the social housing system and housing markets?

Consultations

What?	When?	Who?	Participants
Group interview	22 July 2021	DCJ – Housing and Homelessness, Strategy & Design	5
Group interview	9 September 2021	High Needs Assessment Panel	4
Interview	16 September 2021	NSW Health	1
Group interview	12 October 2021	Homelessness NSW	3
Group interview	12 October 2021	Housing Operations Meeting (HOM)	-
Focus group	18 October 2021	DCJ Districts (4), CHPs (2), SHS (1)	7
Focus group	19 October 2021	CHPs (6)	7
Focus group	20 October 2021	CHPs (6)	8
Focus group	21 October 2021	DCJ Districts (2), CHPs (9), SHS (2)	13
Group interview	10 November 2021	Commissioning and Planning Forum (CaPF)	-
Interview	1 July 2022	DCJ – Community Housing	1

Early findings

The THP is a positive response and fills a gap in the provision of homelessness services in NSW

- THP has benefitted from a collaborative, cross-departmental approach to design and implementation, and the contribution of peak bodies, including Homelessness NSW

- Successfully housed 728 of the NSW's most vulnerable homeless persons (at Dec 2021)

- THP is flexible enough to meet the needs of clients with high and complex needs

- Funding for High Needs Packages has facilitated positive client outcomes

- Stakeholders and CHPs have a high level of commitment to the THP

- Governance is generally working well

- THP is a positive response to chronic homelessness that has been needed for some time

- Has reduced rough sleeping and achieved positive outcomes for some clients

Early findings

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Design of THP is based on sound principles

- THP provides access to housing integrated with wrap-around support services that are person-centred and trauma-informed

- Program guidelines build on evidence-based program design referring to Housing First principles

- Implementation of the housing component of the THP worked well in areas where sufficient private rentals were available, but there were challenges in areas with tight rental markets (in some instances < 1% rental vacancies)

- While there are variations in how support services are contracted and implemented, they generally work well

Early findings

Program logic and Housing First principles

- Continue to develop and refine the program logic and program guidelines to reflect the evolution of the THP as it adapts to contextual factors and to clearly identify alignment with and divergence from the Housing First model

- Closely monitor whether divergence from Housing First principles impacts program effectiveness and longer term client outcomes as compared to other Australian and international studies

Early findings

Program logic and Housing First principles contd.

- Flexible support for as long as needed is a key principle of Housing First

- At present the THP will be relying on exit plans and appropriate referral into the service system for the provision of ongoing wrap around support to THP clients once they exit the program, unless they have an NDIS package

- While steps have already been taken to make THP funding more flexible across tranches to provide longer support for clients who need it, it is desirable that DCJ identify how ongoing wrap around support at the required level of intensity and flexibility will be provided once clients exit the THP. Addressing this issue will require cross-departmental collaboration as the provision of appropriate long term supports for the THP cohort is, in many instances, a shared role and responsibility, as for example in the case of health and mental health.

Early findings

Intake, referrals and rapid rehousing

- Program data demonstrates strong housing outcomes
  - 97% or T1 clients and most 77% of T2 clients were housed at the end of December 2021
  - 80% of both T1 and T2 clients remained housed after 6-18 months

- Time pressures during the implementation of T1 affected implementation
  - intake and referral processes outlined in the program guidelines were not always followed
  - CHPs sometimes struggled to house clients in a timely manner due to a shortage of suitable available housing
  - sometimes clients were housed before supports were put in place

- These issues were partially addressed during T2 and T3, by which time CHPs had support providers in place, referral criteria were broadened and referral processes fine-tuned

Early findings

Head leasing

- Contextual factors impacting the effectiveness of the head leasing model
  - low vacancy rates (<1%) in rental markets in some areas
  - competition for head leased properties between different DCJ programs and from low income private renters
  - private rental housing is sometimes not the most appropriate type of housing for the client group
- Need a range housing options to meet clients' housing needs
- The capital component included with T3 is a positive step towards providing better access to affordable stable housing for the THP cohort, relieving pressures on local rental markets and easing competition between DCJ programs that rely on private rental housing. The evaluation and DCJ should monitor closely whether the number and types of dwellings being created through the capital component are sufficient to meet the housing needs of the program.

Early findings

Contracting and funding model

- The THP model, whereby CHPs are funded to provide housing and subcontract wrap around support, is a disruption to how housing and homelessness support is normally delivered. The evaluation will monitor the impact of this on the quality of services provided, client outcomes and potential system impacts.

Early findings

Monitoring and reporting

- The client voice in monitoring and reporting needed strengthening. In response to this finding, DCJ has finalised the client satisfaction survey and it can now be administered at the 18 month point and when clients exit the THP.

- Understanding of the impact of the program on client vulnerability and wellbeing would be significantly enhanced if VI-SPDAT scores were reported in CIMS at the client level. In this way the initial VI-SPDAT score could function as a baseline against with to measure clients' progress (as was planned when the THP was designed). As noted in the baseline report, at present VI-SPDAT scores are only available as an aggregate score, which has limited utility for an assessment of client outcomes.

Early findings

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Monitoring and reporting

- Monitoring and evaluation could be improved if mechanisms were put into place to better capture which and how much support is provided to clients.

- Establish and include in contracts a minimum expectation for support included as part of a standard package.
    - Develop and implement a reporting tool that captures what low, medium and high supports are in place
    - Report the number and type of successful referrals
    - Report on whether an individual plan has been developed and is being implemented for each client
    - Include cost of support provision in monitoring and evaluation

Early findings

High Needs Packages

- The High Needs Packages are an important component of the THP and assisted in addressing client needs that were not being met anywhere else and should be retained.

Early findings

Regional differences

- There are considerable differences between regional, rural, and metropolitan locations in which the THP operates, in terms of housing markets, availability of support services and client need. These issues affect how the TPH is being implemented and how it operates and will be further investigated in the case studies which will inform the interim and final reports.

Early findings

Changes between tranches

- Since T1 eligibility for the THP has altered to include people with a history of homelessness and/or rough sleeping, and referral pathways have been broadened to enable referrals from SHS and to allow clients to move between CHPs.

- Since T3, providers have been given flexibility to use their leasing subsidies and support funding interchangeably across tranches to enable them to provide longer support to clients who are unable to transition from the program after two years.

- T3 introduced a capital component to the program. The $72.5 million capital component aims to develop up to 250 additional social housing dwellings, which will increase the housing options available to THP clients and within the sector.

- The evaluation will monitor the impact of these changes on the THP program and the broader housing and homelessness system in NSW.

Early findings

Client Referral Assessment Group (CRAG)

- CRAGs appear to be operating as anticipated in the guidelines

- THP could further capitalise on the role of the CRAGs by expanding their functions and operations to enable them to function as on-going case-coordination groups.

- While this is already happening in some CRAGs, consultation participants mentioned that other CRAGs were being discontinued. How well CRAGs are operating and what factors contributed to them being successful will be further analysed in the interim and final evaluation reports.

- It is desirable that DCJ review and refine the operation of local CRAGs to maximise opportunities for local collaboration and coordination.

Early findings

Culturally appropriate services

- Early indications are that level to which the THP implementation prioritised delivery of culturally appropriate and safe housing and support varied between providers. It will be important for DCJ to continue to monitor how the THP provides and accounts for culturally appropriate support, including building capacity of existing CHPs and support providers, and contracting directly with Aboriginal led organisations.

Early findings

System impact

- There is potential to refine THP, including defining how the program sits within the service system in each location. To be effective and sustainable, THP needs long-term funding and a range of housing options (including social housing), which is beginning to be addressed by the capital component as part of T3.

Ongoing research

Place based case studies

- Evolve Housing in Western Sydney (Liverpool/Fairfield, Parramatta, Penrith, Blacktown), provides housing and support

- Home in Place (formerly Compass Housing) in the Hunter partners with the Jeder Institute and Neami National

- Argyle Housing in Murrumbidgee, Far West, Western NSW (incl Wagga Wagga) partners are Marathon Health and Uniting

- Bridge Housing in central Sydney partners with Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army

- Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Services (service provider) in Central Coast, housing provider is Home in Place

Ongoing research

Survey

- Survey of all CHPs

- Survey of all contracted support providers

Ongoing research

Administrative data analysis

- CIMS and CHIMES data
- Client survey

Ongoing research

Additional stakeholder consultations

- CHP operational staff
- Homelessness NSW