

# What is Thriving Families?

The Thriving Families Project aims to create sustainable change for families experiencing homelessness so that they can create stable homes and nurturing family environments where all family members can flourish.



## Background

YFS initiated the Thriving Families Project in 2019 to trial a new way of working with families experiencing homelessness.

The YFS Board approved the use of reserve funds for two years to develop a small, multi-disciplinary team bringing together a housing specialist and family coaches.

YFS worked in partnership with Logan Together, the Community Services Industry Alliance, the Yunus Centre at Griffith University and Pathways to Resilience to design the service model.

The Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy funded an earlier ongoing trial of family coaching (Sure Steps) which greatly informed this project. The department was a valuable partner in supporting housing solutions for participants.



## Project evaluation

The evaluation aims to identify project outcomes and key learnings about service design and delivery.

The evaluation covers the 18 month period from 1 July 2019 to 31 December 2020 and was informed by participant, staff and stakeholder interviews, case notes and program data.

## Participating families

**35** families have engaged with the program, including:

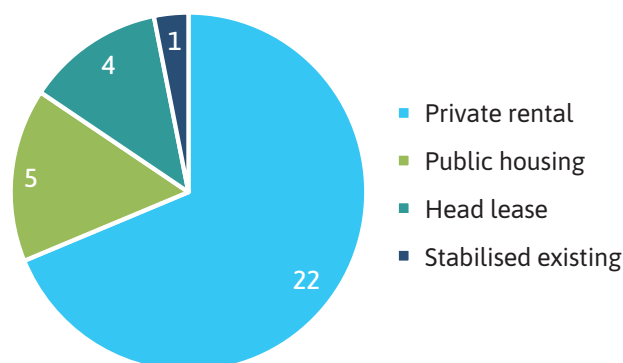
- 24 young parent families (under 26)
- 27 single parent families
- 7 First Nations families
- 2 culturally and linguistically diverse families
- 24 homeless families
- 11 families at risk of homelessness

## Key Findings

Evaluation findings demonstrate significant positive change in the lives of participating families. Key impacts were:

- **sustained stable housing:** 32 participating families stabilised their housing, most entering tenancies in private rental
- **increased personal confidence and capability:** all participants reported improvements in self-esteem, coping ability and practical skills
- **improved understanding of child development:** including greater parent confidence, closer relationships and enhanced child health and wellbeing
- **stronger social connections:** many parents increased their network of informal supports.

## Housing solutions



## Cost effectiveness

Evidence indicates that the integrated service is cost effective compared with separate provision of housing and family support; and the outcomes achieved are likely to generate long-term savings to government through:

- reduction in repetition of homelessness
- diversion of participants to private rental rather than public housing
- preventing child safety involvement or escalation
- improving employment and education prospects for both parents and children.

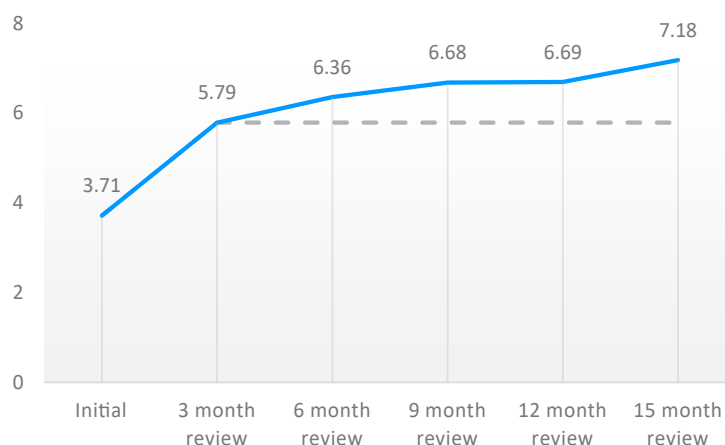
## The added value of long term support

Stable housing provides a foundation from which families can thrive if they are resourced appropriately. Repeated point in time assessments show the longer a family has been involved in Thriving Families, the closer they get to thriving.<sup>1</sup>

*“I dream about the future, not am I going to make it through the day”.*

<sup>1</sup> On a 10-point scale from ‘in crisis’ to ‘thriving’.

### Incremental improvements in thriving



## Strengths

The evaluation found that two key strengths contributed to project success:

- **Integration of specialist housing and family support** – to effectively meet families’ initial housing needs, and establish the platform for ongoing support work to address underlying and emerging issues
- **A family resourcing approach** – based on building relationships and skills as a foundation for change, equipping families with core coping skills to overcome adversity and pursue goals, with parents setting the direction and pace of the work.



### Emily’s experience:

A year ago, Emily and her daughter Bella Rose were living in a friend’s spare bedroom when Emily found out she was pregnant. Facing homelessness, she connected with YFS’ Thriving Families team.

The team helped Emily rent a townhouse. Six months later, Emily used her flawless rental history to upgrade to a four-bedroom house with room for baby Elijah. To secure the larger home, Emily drew from what she learned from the Thriving Families team.

Emily is now taking steps to study nursing or social work with backing from her Family Coach.

## Lessons for service integration

The evaluation identified critical ingredients for successful service integration including:

- strong leadership and management
- shared team purpose, culture and processes
- fluid rather than fixed roles and responsibilities
- transparency of information
- seamless communication with families.

