

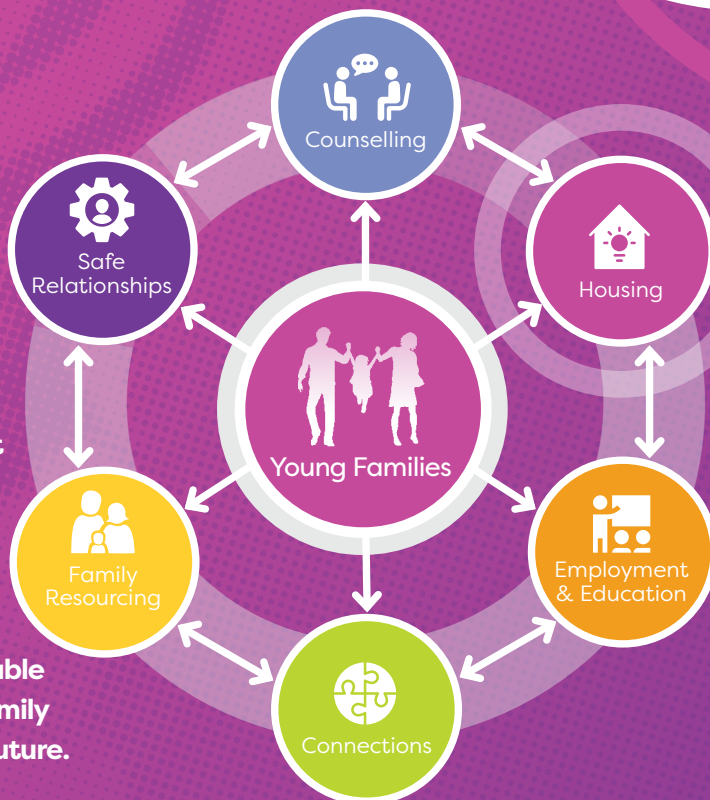


Thriving Young Families

Housing

Through our partnership with Hand Heart Pocket we are investigating what works for at-risk young parents and their children to thrive, and evaluating the effectiveness of integrated service delivery.

Our transformative approach to backing vulnerable young families wraps support around a young family tailored to their needs, goals and hopes for the future.



Issue: Risk of homelessness



Young people aged 12 to 24 experience high rates of homelessness. They account for 25% of the homeless population in Australia, higher than any other age group in the country.¹ Young parents are particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness, due in part to the increased stressors and challenges they face when transitioning to parenthood.



Early experiences of homelessness increase the likelihood of persistent homelessness throughout life. Homelessness is very damaging for children. It can have a significant impact on children's physical and socio-emotional health and wellbeing and their cognitive development and is associated with increased likelihood of child safety involvement.²



A lack of affordable housing, social and financial support and access to education and employment can all act as barriers, preventing young parents from moving out of homelessness.



Within Thriving Young Families:

58% of young parents presented with a housing issue when they first engaged.

¹Kuskoff, E., & Mallett, S. (2016). Young, Homeless, and Raising a Child: A Review of Existing Approaches to Addressing the Needs of Young Australian Parents Experiencing Homelessness.

²Dockery, A. et al. (2013). Housing and children's development and wellbeing: evidence from Australian data. AHURI.



Response: Stable and sustainable housing

Our Step by Step Thriving Young Families initiative aims to get families housed and build their capacity to sustain tenancies for the long term.

A stable home provides a foundation for families to thrive. Access to appropriate and affordable accommodation plays a critical role in supporting families. However, it is insufficient on its own and needs to be coupled with intentional support to improve the likelihood that people stay housed in the long term.³

The Housing Specialist works alongside Family Resource Practitioners to promote sustainable housing outcomes for young families.



Thriving Families Demonstration Project (2019-21)

YFS initiated the Thriving Families Project in 2019 to trial a new approach to working with families experiencing homelessness. The initiative brought together a Housing Specialist and Family Coaches to provide an integrated, long-term, flexible, and aspirational service that aimed to create stable homes and nurturing family environments where all family members could flourish.

This integrated approach was found effective, offering significant value-add over traditional short-term housing work. The team rapidly stabilised housing and built parents' skills to help prevent or manage any future crises, reducing the likelihood of repeat cycles of homelessness.⁴

Through this project we deepened our understanding of what works for homeless families to thrive and what is required for successful service integration. These learnings informed our response to homelessness and housing issues with young families.



Family Resource Practitioner

Equip young families with skills to sustain housing long-term

Team Work



Housing Specialist

Support to rapidly stabilise housing



Young Parents

³Common Ground, & MICAH Projects Families Caught in the Homelessness and Child Protection Cycle: A supportive Housing Model for Keeping Families Together.

⁴McDonald, K. & Testro, P. (2021). Thriving Families Project Evaluation Report: From Crisis to Thriving. Logan: Australia. YFS Ltd.

Current housing crisis

The current housing crisis has had a significant impact on housing options for participating families. For example, a single parent with one child on full Centrelink entitlements including rent assistance has a rental affordability of \$205-\$275 per week (based on 30%-40% of their income). There are currently zero properties available to rent in Woodridge and surrounding suburbs for less than \$275.⁵

Housing availability and affordability

Single parent with one child



Maximum affordability

\$275

Availability



By comparison, in 2019 there were a range of affordable properties available to choose from, making it possible to secure a private rental within a week. In the current environment, it may take six months as competition is fierce once an affordable property becomes available.

Focus on stabilising current housing

In this context of availability and affordability challenges we need greater emphasis on sustaining tenancies and stabilising current living situations. Young parents often need to stay with family and friends for extended periods. This makes family relationships particularly important. The team works with young parents around how to manage conflict in the household and neighbourhood, so that young parents and their children can stay longer in their current situation and are not at imminent risk of homelessness due to relationship breakdown.

Building the capacity of young parents to secure and sustain tenancies

There is also a strong focus on building young people's readiness to secure and sustain tenancies, by:

- increasing their income and affordability, for example, through employment or savings
- building their tenancy skills (such as paying rent on time and maintaining a property) so that when they do secure a tenancy, they are better equipped to sustain it.

Housing outcomes

Despite difficulties in the housing market, participating families improved their housing situation, with 89% in stable housing at the end of service. The majority of these families were able to sustain their tenancies, with 78% of contactable families still in stable, affordable and appropriate housing after 12 months.



89%

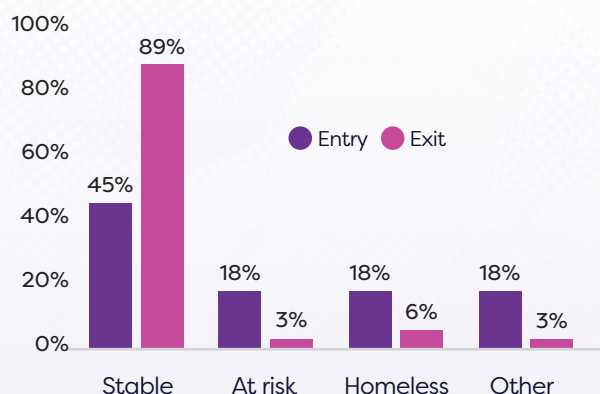
of families exited in stable housing



78%

of contactable families sustained housing for 12 months

Housing status on entry and exit



⁵Based on a search of Realestate.com in September 2022.

What is working well

In this current environment, we have found that a skilled Housing Specialist is more essential than ever. Housing Specialists have deep knowledge of housing options and essential relationships with real estate agents and the Department of Housing, which are critical success factors in helping families secure both private and public housing.

Housing Specialists act quickly in response to crisis and mobilise families to put their best foot forward (for example with impeccable housing applications that are fully completed and have all supporting documentation in order), ensuring they have the best chance of success.

While the Housing Specialist leads the housing response, it is a team effort. Family Resource Practitioners provide ongoing support to young parents and build their capacity for long term outcomes.

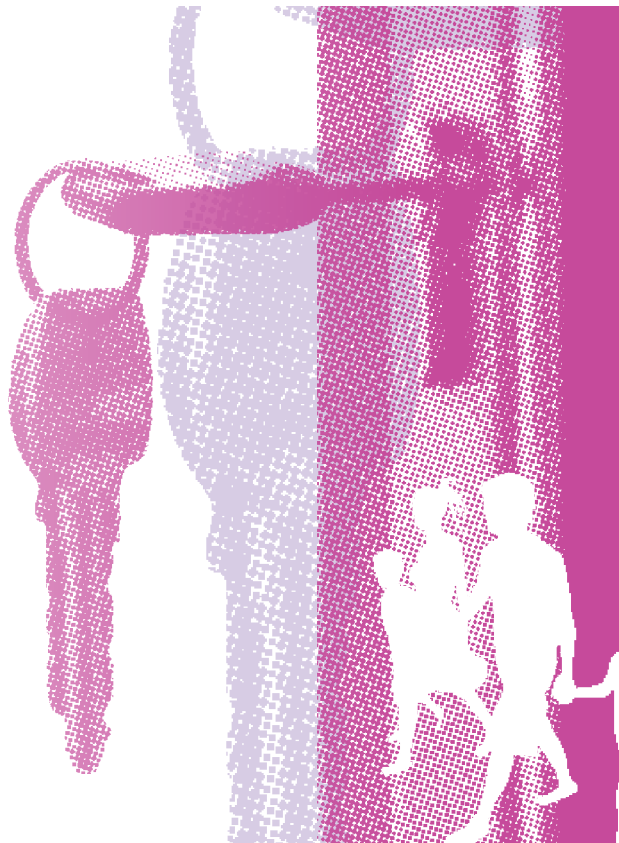
They play a critical role in preventing homelessness by:



monitoring families' housing and financial situation and flagging potential issues early with the Housing Specialist



supporting young parents to deal with the challenges that may accompany extended stays with friends or family



Next steps

Going forward, we will continue to work with partners to:



explore

innovative housing options for young families



advocate

for solutions to the housing crisis



advance

our understanding of collaborative practice and integrated service delivery.



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