YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING FRAMEWORK

ABSTRACT:
An integrated approach to innovation and policy initiatives.

Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Inc.

Youth Housing and Homelessness Framework: an integrated approach to innovation and policy initiatives

Introduction

This policy document "Youth Housing and Homelessness. framework: an integrated approach to innovation and policy initiatives" outlines in detail the engagement process that applies to all the stakeholders of the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition (QYHC). This process recognises that different engagement strategies need to be developed for the diverse range of stakeholders. These strategies require a clear approach, with consistent communication through a range of media channels, and transparency and accountability in terms of the ownership of the material being released.

The Youth Housing and Homelessness Framework is underpinned by an evidence base methodology that identifies the issues in relation to youth homelessness/housing in Queensland. This methodology is shown in Figure1 below and commences with an analyses of the data from a range of sources to determine scale and scope of the issue. This data is compared to other State and Territory data sets and explored as a phenomena in national and local research. Concurrent to the data and research analysis is the gathering of data from youth homelessness/housing services and the experiences of young people and their families – this is important as this process may identify data and research gaps.

The evidence collected in relation to youth homelessness in Queensland can then be explored to determine whether there is a policy gap or barrier. This can then generate systemic advocacy with its focus on policy and policy advocacy which is defined as "intentional activities initiated by the public to affect the policy making process"[1].

The Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 is a 10-year framework that the Queensland government has implemented to drive key reforms and targeted investment across the housing continuum. The Youth Housing and Homelessness Framework will contribute to the Strategy and particularly the Partnering for Impact to reduce homelessness in Queensland (Partnering for Impact).

[1] Gen & Wright. (2013). Policy advocacy organizations: A framework linking theory and practice
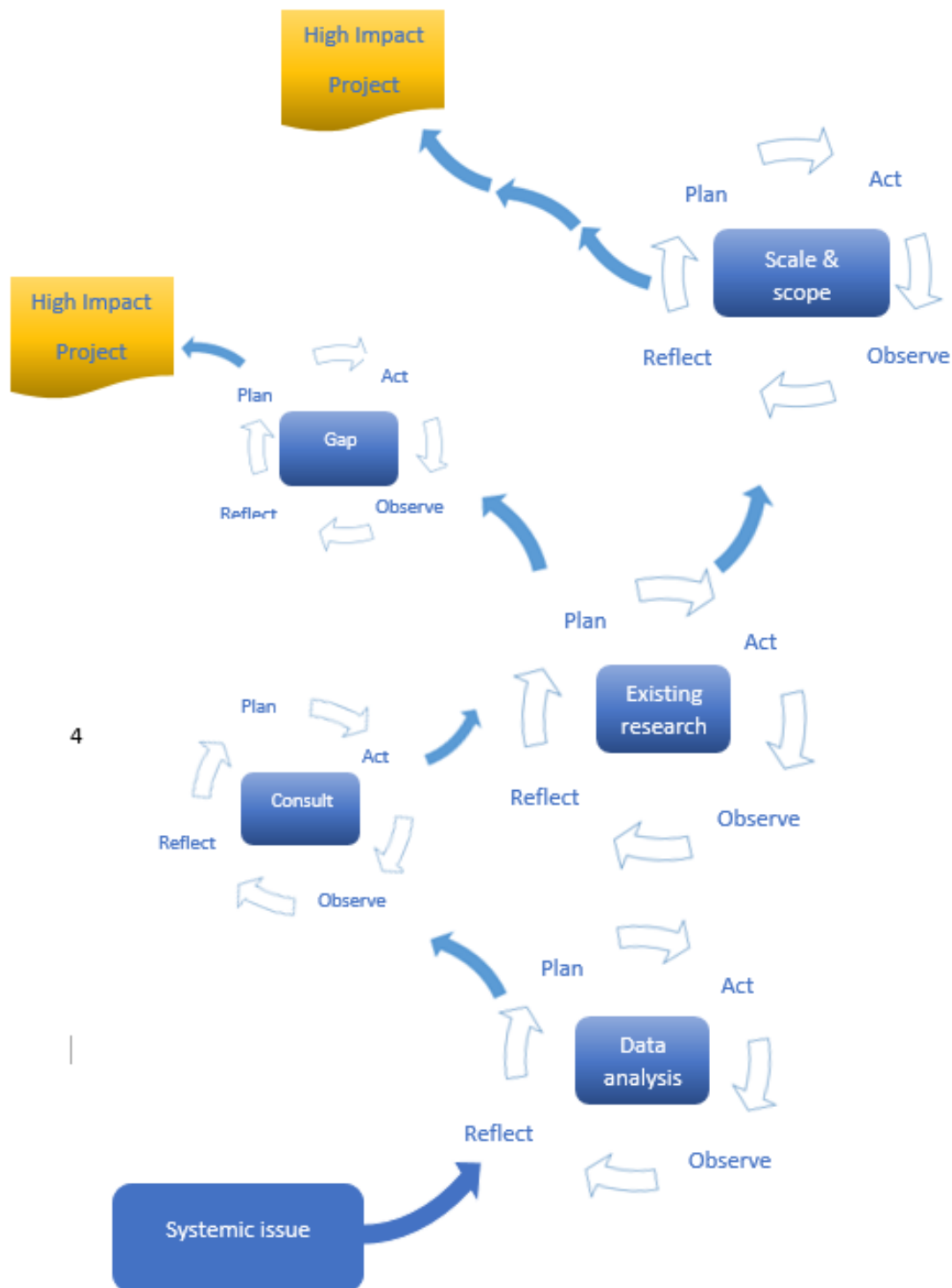
Figure 1: YHH methodology adapted from Eileen Piggot-Irvine1 and Deborah Zornes (2016), Developing a Framework for Research Evaluation in Complex Contexts Such as Action Research

Policy advocacy is vital for enhancing a democratic environment and civic participation, being able to engage in community education on key social justice issues and gaining community support for addressing homelessness, influencing decision makers and seeking law reform.

Evidence based practice

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is a process where there is a combination of well-researched interventions based within a social welfare practice and ethical framework, driven by a person centred approach that is trauma informed and with a culture understanding to guide and inform service delivery.

Young people

It is important to establish a common definition and understanding of what we mean when we state 'young people'. The Queensland Youth Housing Coalition defines young people as being between the ages of 12 to 25 years. This is a nationally agreed understanding being used by agencies including the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

This does not imply that the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition is of the opinion that the accommodation, housing and support responses will be the same for all young people in this age cohort.

Consideration should be given to age, support needs and skill levels when developing responses to young people's accommodation and housing needs.

Adolescent development

Program and program guidelines must have built into them flexibility that acknowledges the nature of adolescent development and does not request outcomes that neither young people nor services can attain. Adolescent development is generally seen to be in three stages but will differ from young person to young person and needs to consider cultural dimensions.

Early adolescence: 12 to 14 years
Middle adolescence: 15 to 17 years
Late adolescence: 18 – 21 years

The dimensions of adolescent development cover a range of dimensions as Figure 1 demonstrates. QYHC adopts a Lifecourse Perspective that focuses on positive life trajectories.

Figure 2: Dimensions of adolescent developmentFigure 2: Dimensions
https://www.mindmatters.edu.au/docs/default-source/learning-module-documents/j4383_mm_module-2-1-2-modulesummary-v7.pdf|

Homelessness

QYHC adopt the ABS statistical definition of homelessness.

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:
- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The definition has been constructed from a conceptual framework centred on the following elements:

- Adequacy of the dwelling;
- Security of tenure in the dwelling; and
- Control of, and access to space for social relations.

Young people at risk of homelessness

The Queensland Youth Housing Coalition notes that the concept of risk must be placed within a continuum of support framework otherwise 'at risk' can be a very broad concept. QYHC would argue that risk factors must relate to the risk of becoming homelessness.

Young people 'at risk 'of homelessness may be young people who:
- Have been harmed or continue to be at risk of harm from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect;
- Have no significant caring adult figure who can exercise care and responsibility;
- Are engaged in risk taking behaviours and have families who are unable and/or unwilling to protect them from the harm this exposes them to;
- Experience family conflict and breakdown;
- Have no or limited support networks;
- Are unable to value and respect themselves;
- Experience emotional instability and/or mental health issues; and
- Experience education and employment issues

Intersection:

The protective needs of young people may be further exacerbated as a result of particular
 disadvantage due to cultural and social impacts, these include:

- Young people with intellectual disability or learning difficulty;
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people;
- Young people from diverse cultural backgrounds;
- Young people with psychiatric illness;
- Gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgender young people;
- Young people with substance abuse issues;
- Young people who are pregnant and parenting.
- Young people exiting child protection services, from either ageing out of care at 18 years of age or
   young people disengaging from child safety; and
- Young people exiting Juvenile Justice Services, particularly young people on dual child protection and
- Juvenile justice orders

Place-based approach

Across our economically, socially and geographically diverse State, there has been an increasing focus on
place-based responses to creating local solutions that are not limited by government silos and which
recognise the areas unique assets[1].

Many of these initiatives are valuable as they implement the vital collaborative approaches that work
towards reducing homelessness. However, place based approaches need to also consider whether there
are structural arrangements including policy levers that sustain disadvantage and social exclusion. There
is a need to explore whether a local issue is in fact an issue focused on personal factors that are more
widespread and/or whether the causal basis is in poor policy planning or settings such as structural
factors.

Continuum of support

The current service system response to young people experiencing homelessness consists of a range of services from crisis, early intervention, sustaining tenancies and support to mainstream service responses, with an attempt to intervene as early as possible when young people are first identified as being at risk of homelessness. Post crisis responses that assist young people to be housed and live interdependently in the community are also a part of the continuum of responses.

The diagram below provides a visual of the continuum of support[1]
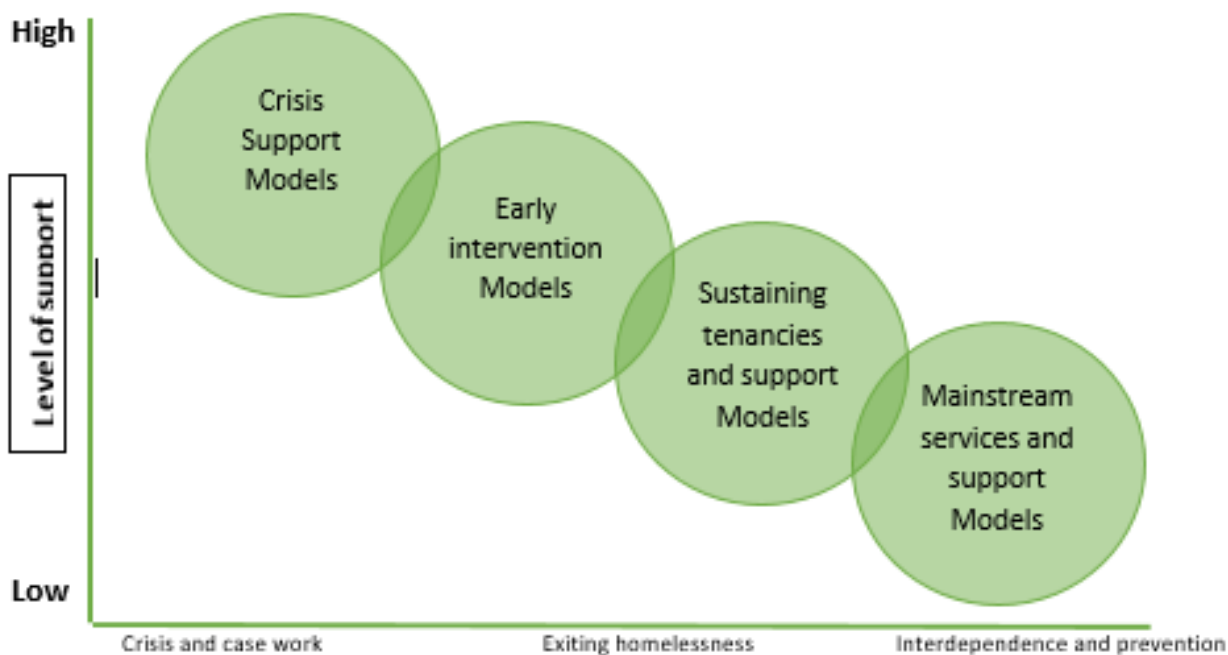
[1] Bentley, G., & Pugalis, L. (2014). Shifting paradigms: People-centred models, active regional development, space-blind policies and place-based approaches. Local Economy, 29(4–5), 283–294. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094214541355
[1] Acknowledgment to the Micah Projects. (2006). Ending Family Homelessness – A Possible Dream, Brisbane. |

High Impact Projects (HIP)

In a place-based approach, organisations reflect on the evidence of need in their local community, current service system provision and the type of services required to bridge the gap. If there is a new model of service required or a policy gap/ barrier identified, that would provide the justification to conduct a High Impact Project in their region.

Decision making requirements to determine a high impact project:

- Does the data demonstrate a youth homelessness or housing need?
- Is there any supporting research?
- Does the community articulate as a need?
- Is there a policy gap and barrier? If no
- Is there a gap in service delivery? Does this require a new model of service?

If the process meets these five requirements then a high impact project can be considered and impact goal/s identified. Lead organisations can either be a local service or QYHC, depending on staffing and resourcing capabilities, and involvement in the project will be drawn from interested stakeholders.

The Queensland Youth Housing Coalition has been funded by the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) to work collaboratively to respond to issues identified by youth homelessness services and to assist in the delivery of the Queensland Housing Strategy. QYHC will discuss and negotiate high impact projects with DHPW as part of the strategic alliance and Queensland Compact Process.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is through a range of process that pivot around processes in relation to data, research, HIP and events. uBegin is the collaborative digital platform which QYHC utilises to engage with a broad range of organisations and individuals in its network. The platform facilitates collaboration on HIP which supports QYHC in organising multiple partners to work together on joint initiatives.

The digital nature of the tool promotes involvement of rural and regional stakeholders in the network. uBegin is an online ecosystem specifically designed to cultivate meaningful opportunities and communication for both place-based and systemic strategies to succeed. The high impact issues and projects highlighted in the opportunity mapping, are driven by local level intelligence that includes the voices of young people, research, data and evidence. It is aligned to, and complements, the Department of Housing and Public Works Queensland Homelessness Compact.

With the focus of QYHC on youth housing and homelessness services, uBegin also maps our contribution to the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), an international and multi-stakeholder effort to focus policy, innovation and resource allocation to move beyond some of our most significant challenges.

uBegin value adds to the engagement process as it focussed on, and nurtures, local champions at this stage and is aligned to the ABS statistical area 4 or SA4 as they are more commonly referred to (Outback Queensland, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Darling Downs – Maranoa, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Moreton, Ipswich, Brisbane, Logan and Gold Coast). The focus of the champion is to promote engagement in the collaborative process and ensure that knowledge is shared.

Having local champions fosters leadership in the youth homelessness sector, and the creation of connections across the State. The champions are key individuals from around the State who are already active in their networks, know what is going on in their region, and can link organisations and key people to QYHC.   There are 6 monthly network champion Zoom meetings to connect and keep people in the loop around what is happening in terms of projects around the State.