



REPORT

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# Starting a future that means something to you

Outcomes from a longitudinal study of Education First Youth Foyers

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The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a non-government, community-based organisation concerned with social justice. Based in Melbourne, but with programs and services throughout Australia, the Brotherhood is working for a better deal for disadvantaged people. It undertakes research, service development and delivery, and advocacy, with the objective of addressing unmet needs and translating learning into new policies, models and practices for implementation by government and others. For more information visit <[www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au)>.

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## SUMMARY

*In Australia, the standard service offer to young people experiencing homelessness provides an immediate response to housing crisis, but struggles to deliver a pathway to sustainable independent living (AIHW 2018; Homelessness Taskforce 2008; Horn 2018 unpub.). Youth foyers address this gap by providing an integrated approach to tackling youth homelessness, combining affordable accommodation with education, training and employment opportunities and other support services.*

*Education First Youth (EFY) Foyers expand upon the original Youth Foyer concept by prioritising education as key to a sustainable livelihood. As such, EFY Foyers are better understood as a form of supported student accommodation rather than a crisis housing response. The EFY Foyer evaluation finds that the model substantively improves participants' education, employment, housing, and health and wellbeing outcomes, and these improvements are largely sustained a year after exit.*

Developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and Hanover Welfare Services (now Launch Housing), with funding from the Victorian Government, EFY Foyers prioritise education through their partnership with and location on sites of tertiary education institutions, the co-delivered Certificate I in Developing Independence, and the reciprocal 'Deal' agreement between participants and staff. As part of the Deal, young people agree to participate in education and five other EFY Foyer service offers. In return, foyer staff agree to provide participants with accommodation, opportunities and inclusion in a learning community for up to two years.

The EFY Foyer model is founded on a capabilities approach. This provides conceptual leverage in articulating the multi-dimensionality of homelessness and developing appropriate solutions. The capabilities approach measures human development not by the level of material resources accumulated, but by people's substantive freedoms, or real opportunities, to pursue lives of value to them (Sen 1999; 2002). The primary focus is therefore on what people have real opportunity to achieve with the resources available to them, rather than the resources themselves or the paths chosen. EFY Foyers seek to expand young people's capabilities in two ways: by creating mainstream opportunities aligned with their goals and by developing the resources and skills needed to make the most of them.

An Advantaged Thinking practice approach operationalises the relationships necessary to enable core components of a capabilities approach: agency and substantive freedom.

It does so by orienting practitioners to working with and promoting young people in a way that recognises and invests in their aspirations and talents.

While interest in youth foyers from government and advocates has grown in Australia, rigorous research on their effectiveness has lagged (Steen & MacKenzie 2016). The EFY Foyer evaluation was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the model and its impact. This five-year longitudinal study of the three Victorian EFY Foyers conducted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Launch Housing is the first to follow a population of foyer participants from entry through exit and beyond.

This report describes the outcomes of 162 EFY Foyer participants who exited between September 2013 and July 2017, making them eligible for a twelve-month post-exit survey. They represent 98% of participants who exited after a three-month trial period. Outcomes were estimated using mixed effects regression models to adjust for survey attrition over time. This produces a conservative estimate of EFY Foyer impact.

### **At entry, EFY Foyer participants are committed to pursuing education, but have struggled with homelessness**

The EFY Foyer model targets young people aged 16 to 24 experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are committed to pursuing education and training, but hindered by a range

of personal, social and economic factors. They are more likely to be enrolled in education or training than the broader cohort of young people seeking Specialist Homelessness Services, but otherwise report similar experiences associated with homelessness. About 74% had experiences in state custody or supported care, including 33% from out-of-home care. A third did not feel safe in their homes and over half had lived in three or more places in the year prior to foyer. About 70% reported moderate or serious symptoms of mental distress.

### **EFY Foyers have a sustained impact on participant outcomes**

The EFY Foyer evaluation finds that the model substantively improves participants' education, employment, housing, and health and wellbeing outcomes, and these improvements are largely sustained a year after exit. This is the first foyer evaluation to present rigorous evidence of sustained impacts after exit.

#### **Education: strong gains in qualifications and continued participation in education and training after exit**

EFY Foyer enabled participants to pursue the education qualifications necessary to sustainable employment. The percentage who had completed at least Year 12 or a Certificate III increased from 42% at entry to 67% at exit and to 75% a year after exit. By exit, about 30% of participants had completed an education qualification higher than at entry, and a year later about 46% had done so.

Of those who had not completed a higher education qualification, 70% were still enrolled a year after exit. In total, about 70% of participants had either achieved a higher qualification or were still enrolled a year after exit.

These figures do not include qualifications attained below Year 12 or a Certificate III, such as the Certificate I in Developing Independence, completed by 76% of participants. Guided by the goal-setting and planning in Developing Independence, EFY Foyer participants were able to pursue courses aligned with their aspirations, including short courses to improve their employability and courses opening new pathways.

#### **Employment: improved confidence in career management capability and transferable employability skills, with some gains in employment**

EFY Foyer staff created opportunities for participants to find internships, work experience, mentors and jobs aligned with their goals and plans. Participants left foyers more confident in their capability to manage their careers and in their transferable employability skills in self-management and planning.

In the year after exit, about 85% of participants worked or studied. The percentage of participants employed, including in part-time or casual work, increased from 19% at entry to 31% at exit and 36% a year later.

#### **Housing and living skills: improved independence and better conditions in a tough housing market**

EFY Foyer developed participants' living skills and supported them in accessing decent housing by sourcing references and connections to real estate agencies, financial support for bond and rent, and family mediation services. As a result, participants gained and maintained substantially improved housing circumstances after exit in spite of a tough housing market.

Participants showed large improvements in their housing independence at exit that further improved a year after exit. The percentage living in their own place (renting or owning) increased from 7% at entry to 43% at exit, and to 51% a year later. Meanwhile, the percentage sleeping rough or living in crisis accommodation, treatment centres or detention declined from 32% at entry to 3% at exit, and to 2% a year later.

Housing stability and conditions also improved. About 60% of participants reported that they lived in one or two places in the year after exit, compared to 44% in the year before foyer entry. Almost all participants reported living in housing that met community standards and where they felt safe. Though crowding improved at exit (82% uncrowded), more participants reported crowding a year later (72% uncrowded).

EFY Foyer participants' confidence in their housing and financial capabilities increased markedly by foyer exit. However, a year later, confidence in financial capabilities had declined to entry levels. Participants were a bit more than 'somewhat confident' in their capability to pay rent and bills on time, plan and stick to a budget, save money, and navigate potential problems and support services. Confidence in capability to manage housing also decreased

a year after exit, but remained better than at entry. On average, participants were a bit more than 'somewhat confident' in their capability to find and apply for good, safe accommodation; sign a lease; access people or services for help; and have enough money to afford accommodation.

Participants may have learned to budget under the conditions of foyer's subsidised rent, then found they had less money to spare and fewer options in Melbourne's high-cost housing market. In response to alumni feedback, EFY Foyers now employ a Transitions Coordinator to aid participants in budgeting and planning for their transition out of foyer from six months before planned exit up to a year after exit.

### **Health and wellbeing: improved physical and mental health for some participants**

EFY Foyers provide a safe and nurturing space to live, workshops on health topics, and opportunities to take up activities promoting wellbeing, such as sport, cooking, arts and other hobbies. They also offer referrals to counselling and health services.

Self-reported physical health improved only slightly on average. Participants aged 21 and older were especially likely to report improved physical health, having entered with much worse health than younger participants, then reaching parity by exit.

Mental health improvement depended on time spent at foyer, with participants staying between a year and two years most likely to improve. Differences by length of stay persisted a year after exit.

### **Social connection and civic participation: some difficulty sustaining connections after exit**

Young people's sense of social support improved while at foyer, but dropped slightly after exit. Many interviewees spoke about how the foyer community felt like a family, but distance could make it difficult to maintain foyer friendships and sense of community. Currently, alumni can interact on social media and visit foyers when they wish, but this is largely ad hoc and informal. An EFY Foyer working group is developing a formal approach to keeping alumni connected.

Participants' civic participation, as measured by how often they used community facilities, remained modest and unchanged while at foyer and declined after exit. Civic participation was the last service offer developed and was given little attention until recently. While some participants took full advantage of opportunities to engage with local communities, others were focused on completing their education or finding work.

### **Prevent youth homelessness by investing in capabilities**

The Education First Youth Foyer evaluation provides strong evidence that early, integrated investment in young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness supports sustained improved outcomes. Policy-makers must recognise that these young people are navigating a key phase of their life without the immense and varied support traditionally provided by families. To prevent chronic homelessness and social exclusion, government must step in to provide the stability, integrated support and mainstream opportunities that enable these young people to reach their potential.

# 1 A NEW APPROACH TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Ten years after *The road home* called for greater investment in prevention, early intervention and integrated approaches to address homelessness, the service landscape is still dominated by short-term, crisis responses (Homelessness Taskforce 2008; Horn 2018 unpub.; MacKenzie 2018; Youth Development Australia 2019). With some innovative investments, but little systemic reform, homelessness services still receive a steady flow of about 42,000 young people presenting alone each year nationally, including 15,000 in Victoria.

Funded primarily through Specialist Homelessness Services under the National Affordable Housing Agreement, youth homelessness services continue to advance a 'stepping stone' model intended to transition young people from short-term crisis assistance to medium-term transitional housing and independent living. However, with a primary focus on managing housing crisis, the approach fails to acknowledge the multiple dimensions of homelessness, including the physical, emotional, social and ontological (Mallett et al. 2010; Somerville 2013). As a result, too often young people cycle through support periods that offer only temporary respite from chronic structural problems.

A narrow focus on housing crisis particularly disadvantages the young people who must navigate a key development phase—their transition to adulthood—without the immense and varied resources and opportunities typically provided by families (Department of Social Services 2010; Efron et al. 1996; Homelessness Taskforce 2008; Horn & Jordan 2007). To disrupt cycles of homelessness, young people require models integrating stable housing with opportunities to build the skills and capabilities needed to pursue sustainable livelihoods (Department of Human Services, Department of Planning and Community Development & Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2008; Gronda & Foster 2009; Victorian Government 2011).

## From managing crisis to building capabilities

A capabilities approach provides conceptual leverage in articulating the complexity and multi-dimensionality of homelessness and developing appropriate solutions. Such an approach measures human development not by the level of material resources accumulated, but by people's substantive freedoms, or real opportunities, to pursue lives of value to them (Sen 1999; 2002). The primary focus is therefore on what people have real opportunity to achieve with the resources available to them, rather than the resources themselves or the paths chosen.

From a capabilities perspective, homelessness, like poverty, is a form of capability deprivation, or lack of freedom,

fundamentally constraining what people are able to do and be (Batterham 2018; Evangelista 2010; Mcnaughton Nicholls 2010; Nussbaum 2011). Nussbaum (2011) proposes ten central capabilities enabling people to live a minimally decent life to which all are entitled: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; connection with other species; play; and control over one's environment. Research shows how the experience of homelessness and crisis services can undermine every one of these and force choices between them (Mcnaughton Nicholls 2010).

A Housing First approach has been advanced as a means of enabling agency and developing capability (Evangelista 2010; Verdouw & Habibis 2018). Under this approach, people experiencing homelessness are provided with permanent housing integrated into private, mainstream structures with tailored support services and minimal conditions, such as regular meetings with a caseworker or acceptance of treatment services. Support services are separate from housing so that they survive housing loss or change. While the approach has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing chronic homelessness among older people, evidence suggests it is less appropriate for preparing young people to live independently (Verdouw & Habibis 2018).

Youth foyers offer an integrated approach to tackling youth homelessness, combining transitional affordable accommodation with education, training and employment opportunities to expand young people's capabilities. Originating in France and further developed in the United Kingdom, youth foyers support the transition to adulthood by providing foundational elements of home through stability and opportunities to build skills, wellbeing and social capital aligned with young people's aspirations. Foyer staff and young people commit to an agreement wherein foyers source opportunities and resources aligned with participant goals in exchange for young people's active participation in the foyer program. This recognises and enables young people's agency rather than their dependency. Drawing from the UK experience, fourteen youth foyers and five foyer-like services had been established in Australia by 2018, with at least four more foyers under development (Horn 2018 unpub.).

## The Education First Youth Foyer model

Developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Hanover Welfare Services (now Launch Housing), with funding from the Victorian Government, the Education First Youth (EFY) Foyer model expands on the youth foyer approach by prioritising mainstream education and training as a pathway

to a sustainable livelihood. These foyers target young people aged 16 to 24 years who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness and are committed to pursuing education and training. As such, EFY Foyers are better understood as a form of supported student accommodation rather than a crisis housing response.

Education plays a powerful role in determining life chances: Australians who leave school early are three times as likely to face deep social exclusion (Brotherhood of St Laurence & Melbourne Institute 2018). Furthermore, early investment in education is crucial. Young people who do not achieve Year 12 qualifications or equivalent by age 25 are highly unlikely to do so later in life (Lamb & Huo 2017). Yet only about a third of young people seeking Specialist Homelessness Services are enrolled in education, a rate that changes little by the end of their support period (AIHW 2018).

The Education First Youth Foyer model prioritises education through primary partnerships with the tertiary education institutions where foyers are located and the reciprocal 'Deal' agreement between participants and staff. As part of the Deal, young people agree to participate in education and five other EFY Foyer service offers. In return, Foyer staff agree to provide participants with accommodation, opportunities and inclusion in a learning community for up to two years.

Three purpose-built, 40-unit EFY Foyers have been established on technical and further education (TAFE) campuses in Victoria: Holmesglen (2013), in the eastern Melbourne suburb of Glen Waverley; Kangan (2014), in the northern suburb of Broadmeadows; and Goulburn Ovens (2016), in the regional city of Shepparton. EFY Foyer entrants enrol in the Certificate I in Developing Independence, co-delivered with the partnering TAFE, to map their aspirations, develop goal-setting and planning skills and identify the resources and networks needed to pursue goals. Enrolment at the TAFE provides immediate access to TAFE resources and expertise, as well as identification as a student.

All aspects of the EFY Foyer model are informed by an Advantaged Thinking practice approach. Advantaged Thinking promotes a shift from deficit-based welfare models focused on managing young people's crises towards practices recognising their agency and potential and investing in their capabilities. An Advantaged Thinking practice approach operationalises the relationships necessary to enable core components of a capabilities approach: agency and substantive freedom. It does so by orienting practitioners to working with and promoting young people in a way that recognises and invests in their aspirations and talents. EFY Foyers implement the

Advantaged Thinking practice approach through personalised coaching coupled with active efforts to reshape young people's opportunities through multi-sector partnerships with mainstream education, employment, housing and community health providers.

EFY Foyers structure young people's development and opportunities through six service offers identified in research and practice as foundational to a sustainable livelihood: education, employment, housing and living skills, health and wellbeing, social connections and civic participation. Through each of these interconnected offers, EFY Foyer invests in structural and individual-level interventions to develop participant capabilities. This includes supported access to training, activities, networks, and resources tailored to participant aspirations across the offers. As 'Education First' implies, the EFY Foyer model prioritises education as a critical pathway to broader opportunities, but recognises the complementary role of the other offers in transitions to independent yet connected lives.

#### Box 1.1

### Defining elements of the EFY Foyer model

- Partnership with and location on sites of tertiary education institutions
- Reciprocal 'Deal' agreement between EFY Foyer participants and staff
- Advantaged Thinking practice approach
- 'Education First', where education is prioritised as one of six service offers for a whole-of-life approach to transitions to independent yet connected lives
- Opportunities for participants to develop their capabilities through mainstream cross-sectoral partnerships
- Certificate I in Developing Independence, co-delivered with the partnering tertiary education institution as the foundation for the foyer stay
- Post-foyer transition coaching and support for up to a year

## 2 A RIGOROUS, MULTI-FACETED EVALUATION

While Australian governments have shown growing interest in the development of youth foyers, research on their effectiveness has lagged. Steen and Mackenzie (2016) noted a lack of rigorous research into foyer benefits and called for investment in performance data and cost-effectiveness studies. A 2015 youth foyer evidence review similarly recommended increasing the rigour of foyer research through post-exit follow-up, comparative data and evidence linking program mechanisms with outcomes (Levin et al. 2015).

From its inception, the five-year longitudinal EFY Foyer evaluation was designed to address gaps in foyer research and provide a comprehensive understanding of the model and its impact. It is the first study to follow a population of foyer participants longitudinally from entry through exit and up to a year post-exit.

Conducted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Launch Housing, the evaluation consists of three complementary studies:

- an implementation study investigating model fidelity and fit-for-purpose
- an outcomes study measuring the model's impact on participant outcomes, including a comparison study with young people in other foyers, foyer-like services and transitional housing management services
- a financial study measuring the cost-effectiveness of the EFY Foyer model and a cost-benefit analysis relative to other services, commissioned from an independent consultant at KPMG.

The EFY Foyer evaluation followed an adaptive evaluation approach (Hart 2018 unpub.) developed by BSL to derive learnings that support service development and sustainable systems change in innovative, complex initiatives. This approach shares characteristics of other evaluation approaches, including the participatory and inclusive aspects of action research (Wadsworth 1997), the focus on identifying effective program mechanisms of realist evaluation (Pawson 2013), and the motivation of service development and system change advocacy of collaborative and developmental evaluation (Montague 1999; Patton 2010).

Unlike traditional evaluations that monitor adherence to program logics and outcomes frameworks from a distance, the adaptive approach uncovers program value through close research collaboration with services to adapt and test practices in response to challenges on the ground. Researchers interact with services primarily through a Community of Practice, where researchers, service

development officers and practitioners meet to share emerging insights and workshop solutions.

This report does not include results from the comparison group outcomes study. Sample size and differences between the cohorts at entry limited our ability to make fair and rigorous comparisons. Most importantly, EFY Foyer participants were more likely to be enrolled in education or training at entry: 70% were enrolled compared with 51% in other foyers and 25% in transitional housing management services. With fewer than 100 baseline surveys and fewer than 50 follow-up surveys for each comparison sample, we also did not have the numbers to create a statistically sound comparison group through matching. Any comparison between the models must therefore be made with caveats about differences in the cohorts. A discussion of this, as well as unadjusted outcomes data for each group, appears in the EFY Foyer cost-benefit analysis report.

Without the aid of a rigorous comparison group, the evaluation attributes EFY Foyer impact through an analysis of how and under what conditions the model produced positive outcomes. The qualitative implementation study tracked model development and drift from the establishment of the first EFY Foyer at Holmesglen to the full implementation of the third EFY Foyer at Goulburn Ovens. Coupled with ongoing monitoring and outcomes data collection, this provided valuable insight into effective program conditions and mechanisms. A second forthcoming outcomes report uses proxies in monitoring data to investigate the relationship between identified program mechanisms and outcomes. It also explores differences in outcomes by participant background.

### Study population

This report describes the outcomes of 162 EFY Foyer participants who exited between September 2013 and July 2017, allowing for a year of post-exit data. This covers almost all (98%) of EFY Foyer participants who exited beyond a three-month trial period during this time.

All reported outcomes include the 34% of young people who did not meet EFY Foyer expectations and exited 'involuntarily' during the analysis period. Though including this group is critical to assessing model outcomes, this has not consistently been done in existing foyer research (Levin et al. 2015). Exits from foyer are classified as involuntary if they are initiated by staff, usually because a young person presents a threat to staff or peers, stops participating in EFY Foyer service offers for a significant period or seriously or repeatedly breaks tenancy rules. They include both evictions (19%) and managed exits (15%) where participants

work with staff to find other suitable housing. This could and did happen at any point in the two-year foyer stay.

### Triangulating data to link the EFY Foyer model with outcomes

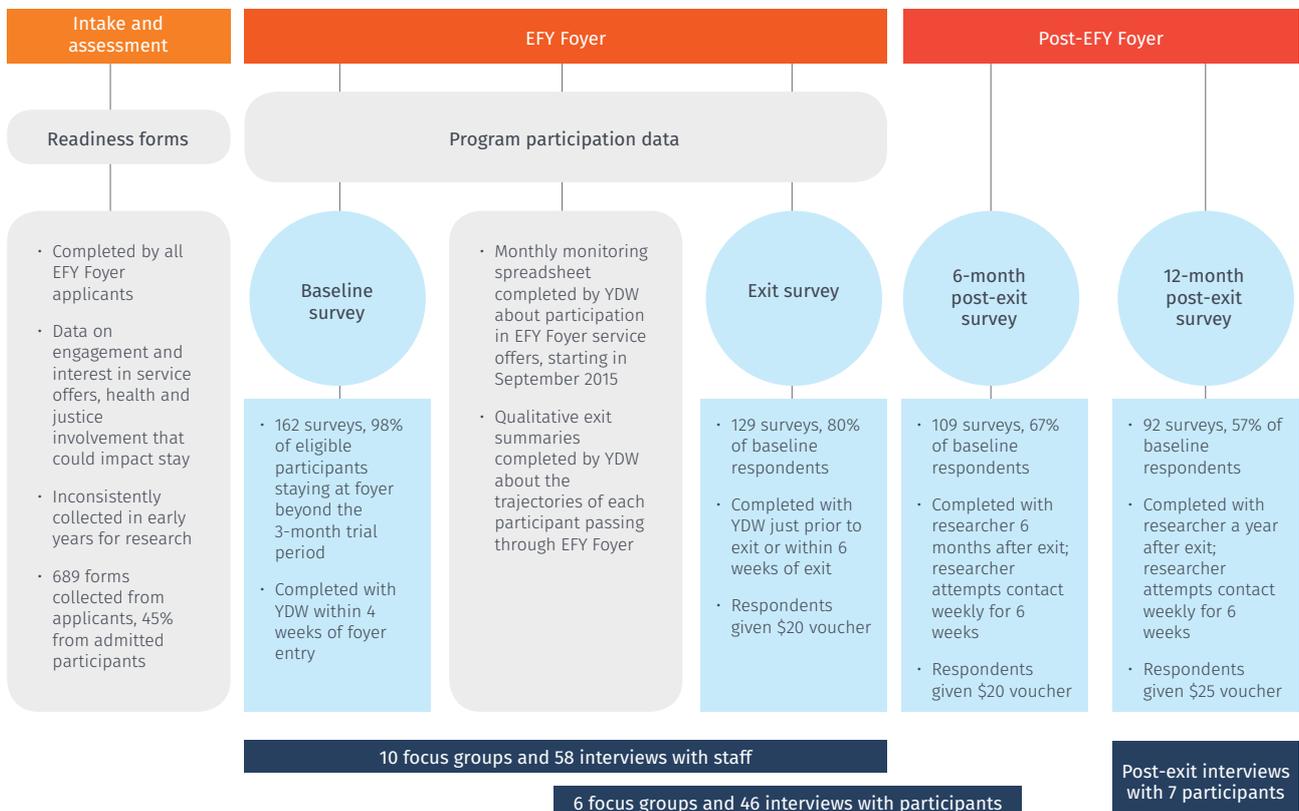
We investigated the link between EFY Foyers and participant outcomes through a mixed methods approach (Adato 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark 2011). First, longitudinal surveys at entry, exit and post-exit provided evidence of changes in participant outcomes over time. Second, interviews with foyer staff and participants over the course of model development revealed the mechanisms and conditions facilitating these outcomes. Third, we triangulated these findings using programmatic and monitoring data on model development, participation in the six service offers, and exit summaries recounting participant trajectories.

### Parallel quantitative and qualitative data collection

The research team collected and analysed surveys, program administrative data and data from focus groups and interviews in a parallel fashion, with some triangulation throughout and intensive triangulation during the final analysis phase. Figure 2.1 depicts the data collection. Survey response rates were high at baseline (98%) and declined at follow-up points, a common trend in longitudinal research. A full account of the ethics and data collection process appears in [Appendix A](#).

Figure 2.1

#### Evaluation data collection



Note: YDW = Youth development worker

## Quantitative outcome measures

The EFY Foyer research team, in consultation with stakeholders, identified a set of quantitative outcomes aligned with service offer goals to evaluate the effectiveness of each offer. Details of each outcome measure are available in [Appendix B](#).

Where possible, we included both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ measures of outcomes. Hard outcomes represent a clearly defined status, such as attainment of an education qualification or employment. Soft outcomes such as confidence, sense of social support, or health are more difficult to define and measure quantitatively. Nevertheless, an outcomes framework for young people supported by the UK government insists that both types of outcomes are necessary for examining how well programs transform young lives, as improved capabilities are often a prerequisite for success in education, work and housing (McNeil, Reeder & Rich 2012).

In this report, hard outcomes are often reported as percentages, while soft outcomes are presented as averages. Almost all soft outcomes are composite measures created by averaging responses to several related survey questions, in order to capture complex concepts.<sup>1</sup> For example, the Kessler-6 index of mental health measures the frequency of a range of distressing feelings to arrive at a measure for overall mental health. All soft outcomes presented are based on Likert survey items on a scale from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more positive outcomes.

## Quantitative modelling to address survey attrition

We use mixed effects regression models to estimate outcomes presented in this report. These models adjust for two features of the EFY Foyer data to reduce potential bias in reported results: the longitudinal structure of the data and survey attrition over time. Without this adjustment, results could be biased by the fact that some participants are more likely to answer follow-up surveys than others. For example, young people less likely to benefit from the model, such as those who exited involuntarily or those who stayed only a short time, were less likely to respond to follow-up surveys.<sup>2</sup> This type of attrition is widespread in evaluation research, but rarely addressed. Adjusting the data for attrition, while not a panacea, provides a conservative estimate of EFY Foyer outcomes.

The models use the available data on all participants to estimate outcomes for the entire group at exit and post-exit, making adjustments based on how participant baseline characteristics impacted survey response rate and outcomes. More details on the modelling strategy, including alternative methods investigated, are available in [Appendix C](#). A table comparing adjusted and unadjusted outcomes is available in [Appendix D](#). Since we analysed a population (whole group) rather than a random sample of a larger population, we do not include confidence intervals around model estimates or refer to the statistical significance of differences.<sup>3</sup>

## Presentation of outcomes

The following chapters review the characteristics of EFY Foyer participants and their Foyer stay, before evaluating the impact of the six EFY Foyer service offers: education, employment, housing and living skills, health and wellbeing, social connections and civic participation. Each chapter first reviews the conceptual framework, goals, services and expectations underpinning an offer. It then presents the quantitative outcomes for the offer, contextualised with research on other foyers where possible. Each offer chapter ends with qualitative evidence, drawn from interviews and focus groups, on the activities influencing outcomes, and with a case study.

## Previous research on youth foyers

Where possible, we present outcomes in the context of research about other foyers. However, these comparisons should be interpreted with caution for four reasons. First, as others have noted, participant outcomes particularly in housing and employment are sensitive to local market conditions, with variation found between localities and over time (Anderson & Quilgars 1995; KPMG 2018; The Foyer Federation 2006). A second related issue is that most existing research comes from the United Kingdom, in a distinct policy environment, especially in terms of the availability of social housing. Third, variations of the youth foyer approach have focused on some outcomes more than others—particularly employment, in the case of many early foyers. Finally, we exclude previous findings when a lack of clarity about the model or differences in research design

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- 1 The exception is the physical health outcome, represented by one survey item, a self-rating of physical health on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent).
  - 2 For example, about 65% of those with involuntary exits responded to exit surveys and 42% responded to twelve-month post-exit surveys, compared with 87% and 64% respectively of those with voluntary exits. In addition, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants, participants born overseas, and participants reporting better mental health at entry were less likely to respond to surveys after exit.
  - 3 Statistical significance assists in making inferences about a population based on a random sample, but is meaningless when applied to data on a population.

prevented informed comparisons (Levin et al. 2015). Where we do include comparisons, we refer to differences in the main text or in footnotes.

### **Case studies**

The research team developed case studies of participant experiences before, during and after foyer to gain an understanding of outcomes and the mechanisms and conditions influencing them. They drew primarily from exit interviews, supplemented by twelve-month post-exit interviews where available. For this report, we selected case studies where the participant linked outcomes with an EFY Foyer service offer, though in all of these, multiple service offers contributed to outcomes. Case studies are in the participant's voice with additional contextual information in the margins. All names presented in the report are pseudonyms.

### 3 WHO ARE EFY FOYER PARTICIPANTS?

The EFY Foyer model targets young people aged 16 to 24 at risk of or experiencing homelessness who are committed to pursuing education and training, but hindered by a range of personal, social and economic factors. Unlike traditional housing support services that respond to immediate needs in crisis, EFY Foyer is an integrated education model aimed at supporting long-term education and career goals and sustainable transitions to independence. Accordingly, EFY Foyer participants must demonstrate a willingness to take part in foyer commitments and opportunities and an ability to live in a community of 40 young people with minimal staffing. They should not have a recent history of violent or aggressive behaviour and should seek support for any mental health or alcohol and drug challenges.

#### Struggles with homelessness prior to foyer

EFY Foyer follows the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) definition of homelessness, which goes beyond the concept of 'rooflessness' to consider the core elements of a home, including a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety and the ability to control one's living space. Specifically, a person is considered homeless when their current living arrangement is in an inadequate dwelling, is insecure in tenure, or provides no control or access to space for social relations (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012).

Table 3.1 shows the housing circumstances of participants immediately prior to their foyer entry.<sup>4</sup> About half of EFY Foyer participants came to foyer from crisis accommodation (28%) or supported housing (20%), and a sizeable number had been living with relatives or friends (30%). Few young people came to foyer directly from their parents' home (11%) or their own place (6%). About 5% came to foyer from a treatment centre or sleeping rough.

Other indicators suggest that EFY Foyer participants had struggled to find safe and secure homes prior to foyer. The majority (57%) had experienced very unstable housing in the previous year, living in three or more places. A considerable proportion of young people came to foyer from places where they did not feel safe (33%) or it was overcrowded (35%). Eighteen per cent moved to foyer from places that did not meet community standards of adequate sleeping, cooking and toilet facilities, electricity and running water.

**Table 3.1 Housing circumstances immediately prior to foyer entry**

Housing characteristic	Details	%
Type of housing prior to foyer entry	In my own place	6
	Crisis accommodation	28
	In my parents' home	11
	With relatives or friends	30
	Transitional housing management (THM)/ supported/foster care	20
	Other (incl. sleeping rough, treatment centre, detention)	5
Quality of last accommodation	Did not have facilities meeting community standards*	18
	Did not feel safe	33
	Was overcrowded	35
Number of living places in last 12 months	1-2	43
	3-5	43
	6 or more	14

\* Defined as having adequate toilet facilities, running water, sleeping space, cooking facilities and electricity.

In addition, about three-quarters of EFY Foyer participants had experiences in state custody or supported care (Table 3.2). This includes crisis accommodation, out-of-home care, transitional or supported housing, or detention. This is consistent with research on pathways into homelessness in Victoria, which indicates that after family breakdown, young people exiting state or supported care without the resources or skills to live independently are especially likely to face housing crisis and homelessness (Victorian Auditor-General 2014).

**Table 3.2 EFY Foyer participants' prior experiences in state or supported care**

Type of state or supported care	%
Emergency, crisis or refuge accommodation	55
Out-of-home care (foster, residential, kinship)	33
Transitional or other supported housing	29
Detention, remand, prison	4
<b>Total ever in state or supported care</b>	<b>74</b>

Note: Many participants had experienced more than one type of custody or care.

<sup>4</sup> These figures are unadjusted.

## Greater enrolment in education at entry and some demographic differences compared with other homelessness services

To support the mutual accountability and reciprocity embodied in 'the Deal', EFY Foyer admits young people based on (1) applicants' willingness to commit to the foyer program and participate in education and (2) a conscious effort to maintain a balanced, supportive foyer culture where young people can positively influence each other and feel they belong. In practice, being enrolled in education or training prior to foyer entry often served as an indicator of interest in pursuing education, though the young person might have struggled with attendance, achievement or fit at school.

Given the EFY Foyer selection process, we would expect participants to differ in key ways from the broader cohort of young people seeking homelessness services, particularly in their enrolment in education or training at entry. Table 3.3 displays selected demographic characteristics of our study sample compared with Victorians aged 15 to 24 who accessed Specialist Homeless Services (SHS) from 2013 to 2017.<sup>5</sup> As expected, EFY Foyer participants are more likely than SHS clients to be enrolled in study at entry (71% enrolled vs 31%), with the largest difference in VET enrolments (44% vs 8%). EFY Foyer also has a higher representation of men (52%) than the SHS population (36%) in an intentional effort to keep a gender balance, and a younger cohort, with 62% less than 20 years old, compared with 46% of SHS clients.

EFY Foyer participants come from diverse backgrounds. About 11% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, a percentage similar to the SHS client group. A considerable group of EFY Foyer participants come from immigrant backgrounds, with about 35% born overseas and 22% speaking mainly languages other than English at home. Data from interviews with participants and staff suggest that many of these young people faced additional barriers to accessing education and housing due to their visa status in Australia.

**Table 3.3 EFY Foyer participants compared with Specialist Homelessness Services clients in Victoria, 2013 to 2017**

Characteristic	Details	% EFYF N=162	% SHS N=81,452
Age at entry (EFY Foyer average=19 years)	15–17	30	23
	18–19	32	23
	20–24	38	54
	25–26	1	Out of sample
Gender	Transgender	1	Not given
	Male	52	36
	Female	47	64
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		11	11
Born outside Australia		35	Not given*
Main language at home not English		22	Not given*
Educational enrolment at entry	Secondary school	17	16
	University	6	3
	VET	44	8
	Other/not stated	4	4
	None	30	69

Source of SHS data: AIHW 2018

\* Comparable data on immigrant background for this cohort of Victorian young people are not publicly available.

Comparable data on immigrant backgrounds for this cohort of SHS clients is not publicly available. However, about 15% of all SHS clients in Australia in 2017–18 were born overseas, and Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018 data indicates that people aged under 35 are overrepresented in this group (80% of those born overseas compared with 60% overall).

<sup>5</sup> SHS data include all young people presenting at Specialist Homeless Services, whether alone, in a couple, or with a family due to inconsistent reporting on presentation type across demographic and outcomes tables. All valid and non-missing data were extracted from data cubes last updated in February 2019.

## 4 EFY FOYER PARTICIPANTS IN OUR STUDY EXPERIENCED A DEVELOPING MODEL

The EFY Foyer model was expected to evolve through implementation in response to issues ‘on the ground’. As a result, EFY Foyer participants in our study experienced foyers at different stages of development.

A partial base model was designed to begin implementation, with further operationalisation to take place in stages. Since 2010, the EFY Foyer model has developed in three stages: start-up (which included planning and development); establishment (in which foyers built on a partial model); and the full model. Key milestones for each Victorian foyer are summarised in Table 4.1.

The EFY Foyer implementation study (concurrent with this outcomes study) reviews model development and adaptation during this period. Learnings from conception to implementation of the partial base model, are discussed in the report, *Throwing out the rulebook* (Borlagdan & Keys 2015). A second report detailing learnings from the establishment stage is forthcoming.

### Outcomes data primarily collected during EFY Foyer establishment are likely to underestimate model benefits

Collaboration between research and services during the establishment stage supported model development and adaptation to challenges on the ground. It also contributed to our understanding of what makes the EFY Foyer model work. However, the fact that our data collection window fell disproportionately in the establishment stage also means that outcomes presented in this report probably understate the impact of a full model.

Data collection for the outcomes evaluation began in 2013, at the opening of the Holmesglen Foyer, and ended in August 2018 with the twelve-month post-exit surveys of participants exiting prior to August 2017. Most EFY Foyer participants in our outcomes dataset entered during the establishment stage (85%) of EFY Foyer development, and few had exited the newest foyer at Goulburn Ovens.

Table 4.1 Stages of EFY Foyer development

	START-UP Planning & Development	ESTABLISHMENT	FULL MODEL
Period	2010–2013	Holmesglen 2013–2015 Kangan 2014–2015 Goulburn Ovens 2016–2017	Holmesglen and Kangan from January 2016 Goulburn Ovens from October 2017
Key operational activities	Gain community buy-in Establish external partnerships Set up governance structures Construction and building modification	Focus on selecting participants Establish services, policies and practices Staff learn roles Further develop policies and procedures Establish offers with partners Establish practices supporting a positive EFY Foyer culture	Foyers fully operational All offers developed and implemented Review and reflection processes implemented

Table 4.2 summarises the characteristics of foyer stays in our dataset, which reveal the evolving implementation during the establishment stage. For example, almost all the participants who ‘overstayed’ at foyer (longer than 24 months), came from the first foyer cohorts at Holmesglen and Kangan, when staff were developing exit processes and offers.

Model development is also apparent in the pattern of ‘involuntary’ exits (34% overall), which rose in 2015 and 2016 during a period of model drift due to management and cohort changes. Researchers collaborated with service staff to analyse the causes, mechanisms and impact of this drift.<sup>6</sup> Afterwards, staff developed and implemented procedures to protect against these types of disruptions.

Due to the developing model, participants who entered during the establishment stage experienced different foyer environments, policies and opportunities from those entering a fully established model. Based on fluctuations in participation and outcomes over the study period, we believe the averaged outcomes presented in this report are likely to underestimate the benefits of established EFY Foyers as they currently operate.

**Table 4.2 Characteristics of EFY Foyer stays, N=162**

Characteristic	Details	%
EFY Foyer location	Holmesglen, Glen Waverley	48
	Kangan, Broadmeadows	43
	Goulburn Ovens, Shepparton	9
Entered in foyer establishment stage		85
Time in foyer (average = 15 months)	3–6 months	15
	7–12 months	30
	13–24 months	40
	Longer than 24 months	14
Involuntary exit (eviction, managed exit)		34

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, refer to the EFY Foyer implementation report.

## 5 EDUCATION: THE FOUNDATION OF THE EFY FOYER MODEL

Education is foundational to the EFY Foyer model as a route towards economic independence and better life chances (Buick, Mallett & James 2014). The Australian education system often assumes that students receive support from families to maintain engagement in education and plan for the future. Indeed, family support and networks play a crucial role in developing young people’s education and career pathways (Bourdieu 1999). However, not all young people can count on such support.

The EFY Foyer Education Offer supports young people to attain at least Year 12 qualifications or equivalent by developing their capabilities for mainstream education (Table 5.1).

We measure education outcomes in two ways: attainment of a Year 12, Certificate III or higher and confidence in capability to participate in education (see [Appendix B](#)).

### Strong gains in qualifications and continued participation in education and training after exit

EFY Foyer participants showed strong improvement in their educational qualifications. The percentage who had completed Year 12, a Certificate III or higher increased from 42% at entry to 67% at exit and continued to increase to 75% a year after exit (Figure 5.1). Furthermore, by exit about 30% of participants had completed an education qualification higher than at entry<sup>7</sup>, and about 46% had done so by a year after exit. Of those who had not improved their qualifications, 70% were still enrolled a year after exit.

In all, about 70% of participants had improved their education qualifications or were still enrolled a year after exit. Of the 40% who were still enrolled, about half were enrolled in tertiary courses such as diplomas and bachelor’s degrees and about a quarter were in Certificates III or IV courses.

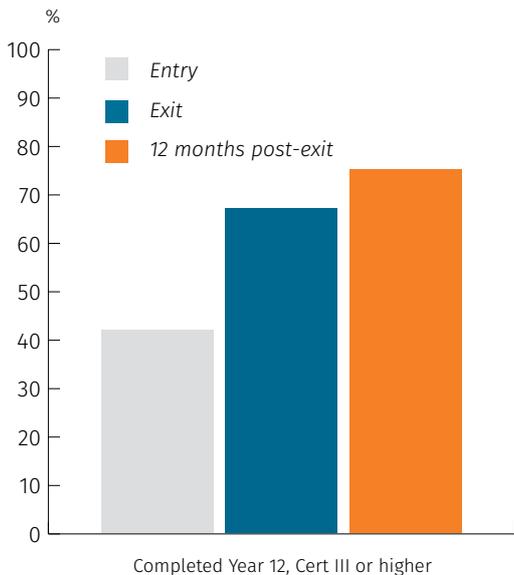
**Table 5.1 The Education Offer**

Goals	Supports	Expectations
<p>Support participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop career goals and plans to achieve them based on their aspirations</li> <li>access education, training and work experience based on their goals</li> <li>develop practical employability skills to achieve and maintain employment</li> <li>build their social networks through Foyer opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>EFY Foyer offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cert I in Developing Independence, co-delivered by youth development workers and a teacher from the co-located TAFE</li> <li>ongoing personal coaching on goals and plans for education and training</li> <li>co-located TAFE resources, including literacy and numeracy support, career guidance, study spaces and library resources</li> <li>brokerage for course fees and materials (via ‘the Deal’)</li> <li>tutoring</li> <li>ICT support</li> </ul>	<p>Each participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain enrolment and 85% attendance in mainstream education throughout stay or until attaining at least Year 12 or Cert III</li> <li>complete Cert I in Developing Independence within first 3 months of stay</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> When the new qualification was at or above Year 12 or equivalent.

Figure 5.1

Percentage completing Year 12, Cert III or higher



Furthermore, enrolment at entry did not have a strong influence on education outcomes at exit. At entry, about 33% of young people who were not enrolled in education or training had completed Year 12 or equivalent, compared to 46% of those who were enrolled. By exit, about 67% of both groups had attained Year 12 or equivalent.

The EFY Foyer rate of qualification gain by exit is double those reported in previous studies of youth foyer outcomes from the United Kingdom<sup>8</sup>, though unclear measures inhibit direct comparison. For instance, Maxted (1999) found that 15%<sup>9</sup> of participants across several foyers gained a qualification during their stay, while both Quilgars (2001)<sup>10</sup> and the Foyer Federation (2006) found that 16% of study participants did so. However, these findings could refer to any qualification gained while at foyer, rather than a higher qualification, as our measure captures. This would further increase the difference between EFY Foyer and previous youth foyer results.

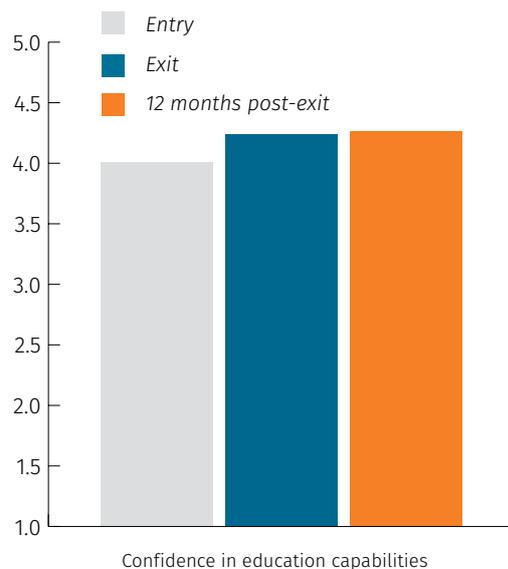
Enhanced confidence in education capabilities

EFY Foyer participants had confidence in their education capabilities at entry, reporting an average score of 4 out of 5. Nonetheless, they still showed a trend towards increasing confidence at exit at 4.24, sustained a year later at 4.26 (Figure 5.2). The change corresponds to a shift from 'agree' towards 'agree a lot' to positive statements about their capability to find information on education/training options, apply to education/training programs and engage in and complete courses of study.

It is possible that the 5-point bipolar scale used here reduces potential change by only giving respondents two options to express a degree of confidence: 'agree' and 'agree a lot'. While most entered with some education capability, as shown in their rates of enrolment, a considerable number of interviewees spoke about how foyer staff connected them to resources, opportunities or pathways they had never considered. Had they been given more options on the scale, they could have expressed a more nuanced growth in confidence.

Figure 5.2

Average confidence in education capabilities



8 Recent youth foyer evaluations from Australia focus on education engagement rather than attainment.  
 9 It is unclear whether this figure includes all participants leaving foyers or those who had 'successfully completed' their foyer 'action plan'.  
 10 Quilgars (2001) noted that this figure might be an underestimate, since data were collected prior to exit for some students undertaking courses.

## Supporting positive education outcomes

Participants spoke about how EFY Foyer supported their education in two ways. First, the foyer provided a safe, stable place where education was valued. They spoke about how the foyer's private and communal living spaces gave them the freedom to work quietly in their apartment or join others for tutoring and homework help. When staff prioritised a young person's willingness to participate in education over crisis and need at intake and fostered a culture that valued education, participants reported that peer influence increased their commitment to their studies. At times, when this culture was not fostered, peer influence either reduced participant commitment to education or caused students to retreat to private spaces or away from the foyer. This echoes findings from an evaluation of Foyer Oxford in Perth on the impact of safe, stable accommodation and the motivating engagement of other foyer residents on education outcomes (KPMG 2018).

Second, participants spoke about the opportunities EFY Foyer provided to clarify and resource their education and career plans. For example, enrolment in the Certificate I in Developing Independence connected them to the partnering TAFE. Students who found this useful spoke about how the course helped them develop their goal-setting and planning skills and get organised. The TAFE partnership also gave them access to course pathway planning through services like Next Step<sup>11</sup>.

Participants also highlighted gaining access to courses aligned with their goals through the 'something for something', a practice aligned with the EFY Foyer Deal. Through the 'something for something' EFY Foyer provides participants with resources supporting their goals (typically course fees and materials), and in exchange the participant organises a service for the foyer community aligned with their skills and interests. Foyer staff also helped participants to access other opportunities supporting their learning, such as art supplies or mentors in their chosen career. Foyer staff could sometimes leverage the TAFE partnership to get students access to courses at reduced cost.

Elaine's case study (following page) demonstrates how a participant's motivation to pursue education was encouraged, with the Advantaged Thinking practice approach and access to opportunities clarifying and supporting her goals. After her time at foyer, Elaine had a clear sense of direction and was on a path to her chosen career.

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<sup>11</sup> Next Step is a career and course planning service offered through Kangan Institute TAFE for young people aged 15 to 24.

## CASE STUDY: ELAINE

### ‘Starting a future that means something to you’

#### Accessing mainstream opportunities enabling education goals

“

I was not able to live with my family due to conflict. I wasn't the right age to live in public housing, so [my worker] said, 'Maybe we could look up somewhere that suits you more to finish your school'. Education was my priority, and I was given that chance, so I was using every single opportunity that I had in [the foyer]. They have a lot of resources—it helps you to find your 'something' because you experience a lot of different activities that you wouldn't even think you'd like, but you end up liking.

The pushback [the workers] give you, it's just inspiring. They just let you step a little bit away from your problem, so you focus more on growth. The way they focus more on you than your problem—I find that inspiring. I think that's the biggest step for me—starting a future that means something to you, like that mindset of having goals. That was a big step because I started uni [while at the foyer].

[EFY Foyer] helped me with my uni fees, because I wasn't allowed to be on HECS. That's one of the best things that EFY Foyer has done for me because they looked at the priority that I have and helped me on that, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to go to uni. Also, homework club—they bring in tutors and people who can help to the foyer. It makes it easier, accessible because they come to you.

I met quite a few important people, like made a real connection with them. I've met a few doctors—because I want to be a doctor—and they can contribute their experience in how to achieve my goal. I've met other great mentors—they're helping me find work experience—and another mentor who I can look up when I'm graduating, looking for work, just having a strong, solid connection with them. They are there to motivate you and just show you what life is about.

[Soon] I'm going to be graduating. I [start] my placement next week [at a hospital]. The interviewer said there are job opportunities once you graduate, so possibly I will be working there. I've applied for a Masters. I just want to settle down once I finish my Masters: work and be involved in my local community and work on myself for a little while. Once I have established myself, then I will think about doing international work.

While at foyer, Elaine completed Year 12 and explored careers in medicine, advocacy and international aid.

Elaine said EFY Foyer helped her identify goals for the future. She started a science degree.

Elaine's visa status made it difficult for her to pay for university. EFY Foyer helped pay for course fees and source tutoring.

EFY Foyer linked Elaine with mentors to develop her career. She was able to travel abroad to shadow doctors working in international aid.

Two years after she exited Foyer, Elaine had applied for a Masters in a medical specialisation and was about to start a work placement.

## 6 EMPLOYMENT: INVESTING IN CAPABILITIES TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

Disconnection from the labour market is associated with other forms of social exclusion, including family conflict and violence, mental health challenges, and drug and alcohol abuse, which also contribute to homelessness among young people (Mallett et al. 2010). Yet general employment services often fail young people by cycling them through education and training courses to maintain compliance. This is at the expense of matching them with opportunities enabling long-term gain by meeting young people’s interests and labour market needs (Flentje, Cull & Guiliani 2010).

The EFY Foyer Employment Offer seeks to expand young people’s capability to maintain adequate housing and achieve economic independence by supporting their entry to the labour market (Cull, Mallett & James 2014). It seeks to develop young people’s career goals, plans, skills and opportunities based on their aspirations (Table 6.1).

We measure employment outcomes in three ways: through employment status (employed or not), career management capabilities and core transferable employability skills (see [Appendix B](#)).

### Continued commitment to career pathways in a competitive youth labour market

A year after exit, about 36% of participants were employed, including part-time and casual work, an increase from 19% at foyer entry (Figure 6.1). This figure had fluctuated from 31% at exit to 39% six months after exit. These results are as good as or better than findings from several evaluations of youth foyers in the United Kingdom, though comparisons should be made with caution due to variations in context and cohort<sup>12</sup>. Anderson and Quilgars (1995), Worley and Smith (2001), and the Foyer Federation (2006) found 24–25% working at exit on average across foyers, while Maxted (1999) found 35%<sup>13</sup>. Both Anderson and Quilgars (1995) and the Foyer Federation (2006) show employment rates at exit varying between foyers in their samples from 9% to 39%.

Like all young people, EFY Foyer alumni face a youth labour market marked by short-term, insecure work (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond 2015). This contributes to fluctuations in their participation over time, so it is more meaningful to look at young people’s participation over a period, rather than at a single point in time.

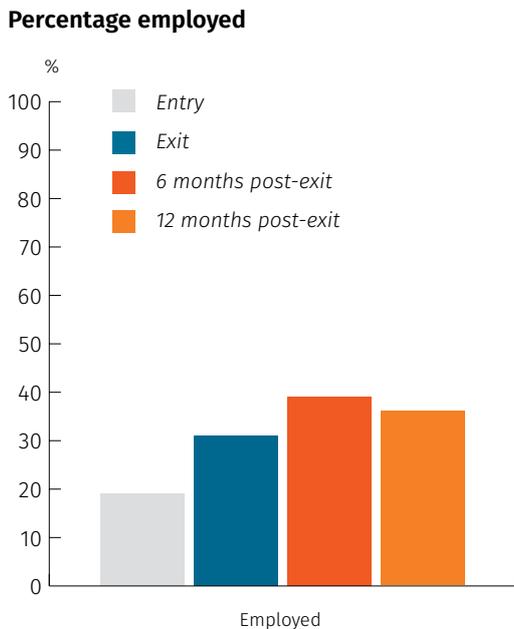
Table 6.1 The Employment Offer

Goals	Supports	Expectations
<p>Support participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop career goals and plans to achieve them based on their aspirations</li> <li>access education, training and work experience based on their goals</li> <li>develop practical employability skills</li> <li>build their networks through EFY Foyer opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>EFY Foyer offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cert I in Developing Independence to develop career goals and plans</li> <li>employment readiness workshops with guest speakers and program tailored to local labour market</li> <li>work experience or placements aligned with participant goals</li> <li>industry nights featuring local employers</li> <li>Advisory Committee to develop external partnerships</li> </ul>	<p>Each participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attend at least 4 employment workshops</li> <li>participate in a minimum of 40 hours of employment preparedness activities each year, including workshops, industry nights, work experience and employment related to career goals</li> <li>complete a Work Readiness and Employment plan</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> For example, some foyers serve participants as old as 35, give preference to those without employment for longer periods and target employment as an outcome.

<sup>13</sup> It is unclear whether this figure includes all participants leaving foyers or only those who had ‘successfully completed’ their ‘action plan’.

Figure 6.1



While some participants were ready to enter the labour market at foyer exit, others were continuing their education. In the year after exit, about 85% participated in education, training or employment for some period. An additional 5% had done some voluntary work.

When young people were not studying or working, most were looking for work and finding it difficult. About 40% of participants were not studying or working at the time of the twelve-month post-exit survey. Of these, 80% were dissatisfied with their current situation and three-quarters had registered with job agencies, though half were dissatisfied with the services they received. This experience was in spite of the fact that most not studying or working held at least Year 12 or Certificate III qualifications (60%) and had clear career aspirations (70%). The most common difficulties these participants reported were the shortage of jobs in the area (40%), the scarcity of work experience (40%) and mental health challenges (40%). All this suggests that more active labour market interventions are needed to enable young people’s transitions into work.

### Improving capability to manage careers and confidence in employability skills

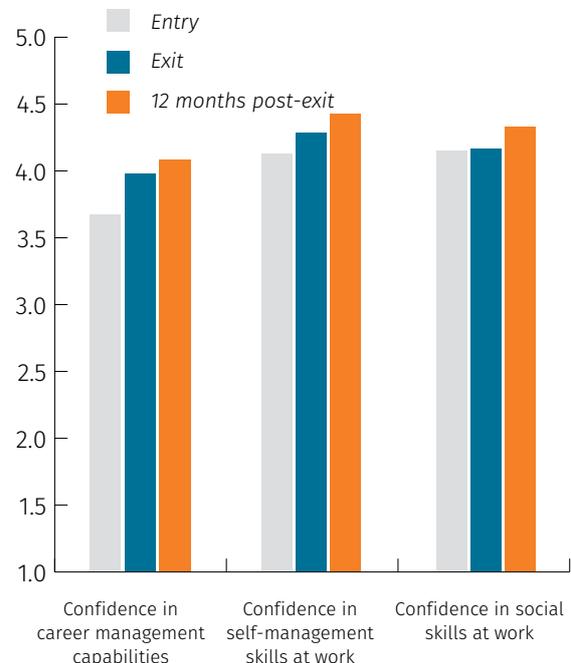
In spite of labour market challenges, EFY Foyer participants reported increasing confidence in their capability to manage their careers and in their transferable employability skills of planning, prioritising, self-management and

interpersonal skills. Participants’ confidence in their capability to manage their career improved substantially while at EFY Foyer (from 3.66 to 3.97) and continued to improve to 4.08 a year after exit (Figure 6.2). This measure captures not only their confidence in forming clear goals and plans, but also their capability to access supports to enact those plans and find a good job.

Figure 6.2 also shows that although EFY Foyer participants entered with confidence in their transferable employability skills, they still showed some improvements by a year after exit. Confidence in self-management skills steadily increased between entry and the post-exit follow-up from 4.11 to 4.43. Average confidence in social skills at work remained constant while at foyer, but increased slightly from 4.14 to 4.32 by a year after exit.

Figure 6.2

### Average confidence in career management and transferable employability skills



## Supporting participant career goals

Participants and staff highlighted three ways that EFY Foyer supported young people's employment goals. First, participants often spoke about how EFY Foyer sourced and resourced education and training opportunities. These could support long-term career goals, through tertiary courses, or short-term goals, through (for example) a Responsible Service of Alcohol course for those looking for casual or part-time work while studying.

Second, the EFY Foyers developed young people's employability skills through regular workshops, coaching and work experience. EFY Foyer offers employability training over six weeks with community speakers discussing workplace issues and processes. Youth development workers and TAFE teachers also support job seekers in writing tailored résumés, sourcing references and other tasks related to applying for jobs.

Third, and of greatest importance to participants and staff, EFY Foyers facilitated direct connections with job agencies and employers. This enabled participants to explore different career options, build their experience and find work aligned with their goals. Foyer staff partnered with services and employers to provide mentors, work tasters, industry nights, work experience, casual jobs and continuing employment. There are many examples of EFY Foyer staff

facilitating opportunities to explore a career with partners that ended in further study or employment. For example, several participants are now pursuing careers in advocacy or youth work after casual work as youth advocates or mentors. Another participant took on freelance graphic design work at a partner agency. Some interviewees said they appreciated the freedom to clarify their career goals and 'find your something' while at foyer.

Gregor (following page) offers an example of EFY Foyers providing participants with an enabling space to explore their goals and find a myriad of connections and resources to reach them.

## CASE STUDY: GREGOR

### 'There's a long list of things I would not have had'

#### Investing in young people's career goals

“

When you're in it by yourself, it gets a bit solitary and things may just seem mentally to deteriorate a bit, dealing with situations and setting goals, all that sort of stuff. What was very good about the foyer, it gave me the time with safety and the security to organise it all in my head. [Before Foyer], it was kind of like being in survival mode, and I didn't really have time to stop and take a breath. [EFY Foyer] really gave me that, as well as having the structure at the same time.

The myriad of information's been great. Speaking with people, having workers there, all open and friendly that you can talk to—that's been very good. Because I'm alright to make a decision. I'm alright at analysing things. Lived experience I'm not as strong. The biggest thing is the third party perspective of all the workers and all their lived experience. So I would ask them 'What do you think about that?' 'Have you done that before?' It was like having a private, talking library.

If it wasn't for the [Foyer] mentor program, I would never have picked up a regular mentor who's a lawyer, and because of that, I managed to get in to do some work experience with the [court]. Having a lawyer as a mentor, I tell you, is all my Christmases. There's a long list of things I would not have had, period, had it not been for the Foyer. I got some good connections with [a clothing store that] bought some stuff off me at one point and we're continuing a relationship. I want to continue my small business and make it much larger.

[An elected official] asked if I'd be their campaign manager, so I'm tossing that up and working part time at an organising level. I pop in [to the foyer] here and there, but I've also been in touch about trying to hire some people. I've offered housing opportunities as well. I always keep my eyes and ears open for the foyer. A friend of mine just started working for a real estate agent in [foyer suburb], so I thought I might get them in touch with each other about housing and jobs.

EFY Foyer provided space for Gregor to focus on his goals and develop his networks after leaving a difficult home environment.

Gregor felt living at the foyer gave him access to the knowledge, experience and resources of Foyer staff and participants.

Gregor explored careers through Foyer connections. He appreciated how staff supported his goal of developing his own business, instead of insisting on formal employment.

While at foyer, Gregor participated in political campaigns. Two years after Foyer, he was working and continuing to develop his business and networks.

## 7 HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS: SUPPORTING PERSONALISED PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

Enabling young people to access and maintain secure, quality accommodation at exit and beyond is a key concern of the EFY Foyer model. The decline in the affordability and availability of adequate housing in Victoria over the last decade has only made their transition to adulthood more difficult (Horn 2014 unpub.; National Housing Supply Council 2012; Raynor, Dosen & Otter 2017). In this context, young people cannot afford most private rentals, especially those near education or employment, and face steep competition and potential discrimination in applying for affordable properties.

Established programs addressing housing insecurity, focus on providing either short-term assistance in a crisis or permanent housing to those with long-term disability or incapacity (Australian National Audit Office 2013). This is consistent with a ‘Housing First’ approach. However, research suggests that simply addressing immediate housing needs

and connecting clients with services is insufficient for developing young people’s independence and social inclusion in the long term (Mission Australia 2014; National Youth Commission 2008; Verdouw & Habibis 2018).

The EFY Foyer Housing and Living Skills Offer aims to build young people’s long-term housing capability. In the short term, participants move into supported, subsidised housing at the foyer to build their independence. There, they develop their skills and knowledge around housing, finance and living independently and with others through workshops and coaching (Table 7.1). In the long term, the other EFY Foyer offers are intended to support future housing security.

We measure housing outcomes in terms of participant housing circumstances and their confidence in their housing and financial capabilities (see [Appendix B](#)).

**Table 7.1 The Housing and Living Skills Offer**

Goals	Supports	Expectations
<p>Support participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop residency and living skills to sustain independent living, particularly in shared tenancies</li> <li>develop financial skills and assets, including financial literacy, access to financial services and/or income support, savings and positive tenancy references</li> <li>access sustainable housing options consistent with their goals</li> </ul>	<p>EFY Foyer offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>subsidised housing for two years to actively develop housing and living skills in a community of 40 young people</li> <li>housing and living skills workshops to promote knowledge of the housing system as well as skills in living independently with others</li> <li>financial literacy workshops, personal coaching and opportunities to develop financial skills, assets and networks</li> <li>transition planning assessing housing goals and options, searching for housing and potential housemates, obtaining a positive tenancy record and references, and/or developing a plan for return to family where appropriate</li> <li>community campaign for affordable housing, including developing relationships with real estate agents, government, education institutions and landlords</li> </ul>	<p>Each participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take part in at least 20 hours of housing and living skills preparation, including at least 4 workshops, financial management training, and personalised housing planning</li> <li>meet the conditions of residency, which include paying rent, complying with their lease and participating in ‘the Deal’ by engaging in education or training and regularly meeting with their youth development worker</li> <li>complete an exit and transition plan</li> <li>prior to exit, develop a budget that addresses foreseeable costs of living independently</li> </ul>

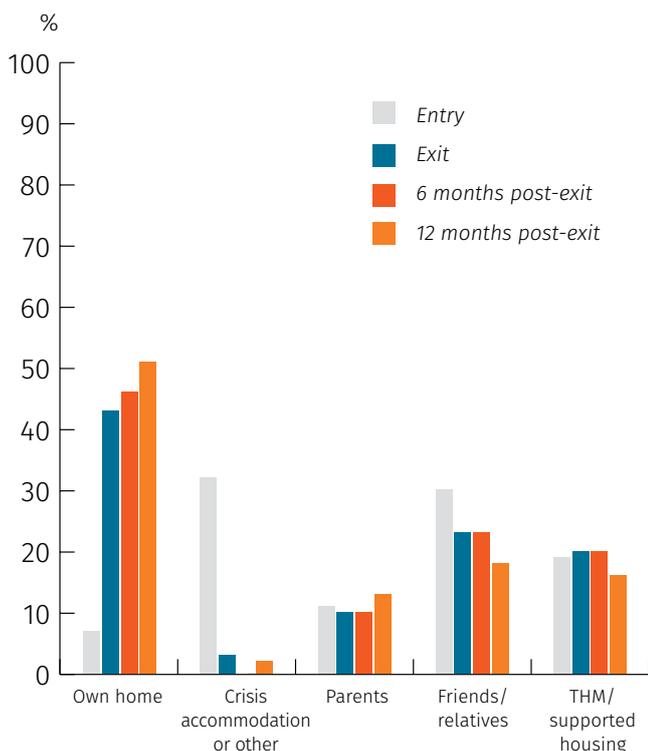
### Continued improvement in housing independence and most circumstances a year after exit

EFY Foyer participants gained markedly improved housing circumstances after foyer in terms of their independence, safety, condition and stability. Figure 71 shows two primary positive shifts in accommodation type demonstrating increased housing independence. First, the percentage of participants living in their own place (renting or owning) increased from 7% at entry to 43% at exit, and further to 51% one year after exit. Almost all were in private accommodation, with a small number in public housing. Second, the percentage of participants living in crisis accommodation, in detention or treatment centres, or sleeping rough fell from 32% at entry to 3% at exit, sustained a year after exit at 2%.

In addition to these major trends, we see a decreasing percentage of participants living with friends or relatives (from 30% at entry to 18% a year post-exit). However, the percentage of participants in supported housing did not

Figure 71

#### Percentage of EFY Foyer participants in each accommodation type



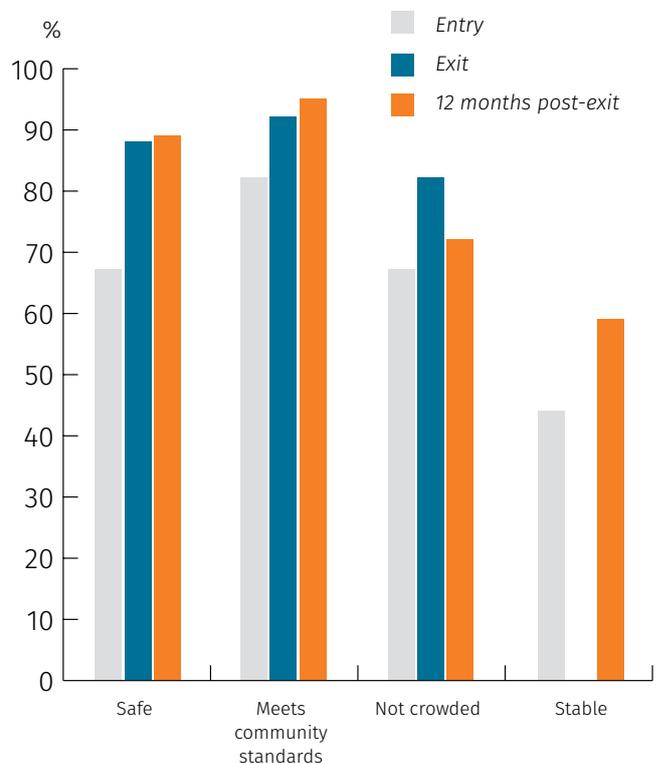
Note: THM = Transitional Housing Management. No respondents were in 'crisis accommodation or other' 6 months post-exit.

change much (from 19% at entry to 16% a year post-exit); nor did the percentage living with parents (from 11% at entry to 13% post-exit). EFY Foyer staff assessed the majority of moves to parents' homes at exit as positive for the participant, linked to improved relationships with family.

Other aspects of participants' living situations also improved after exit (Figure 72). Almost 90% of participants reported feeling safe in their home after foyer, up from 67% at entry. After exit, 95% of participants reported that their home met community housing standards, including adequate sleeping space, running water, electricity, and adequate cooking and toilet facilities (up from 82% at entry). Young people were more likely to exit foyer into uncrowded homes (82%, up from 67% at entry); however, a year later, this had fallen back to 72%. Finally, housing stability improved, with 59% of participants reporting that they lived in only 1 or 2 places in the year after exit, compared with 44% in the year prior to foyer entry.

Figure 72

#### Percentage of EFY Foyer participants with positive housing circumstances



Note: Stability was not recorded at exit because it is measured over a 12-month period, which would have included the foyer stay.

Together, these findings are consistent with past foyer studies from the United Kingdom and Australia, in which living situations at exit indicated greater independence and stability in better quality accommodation, compared with circumstances at entry (Anderson & Quilgars 1995; Common Ground Community & Good Shepherd Services 2009; EJD Consulting & Associates 2013; KPMG 2018; Smith et al. 2007).

However, these studies also consistently note the sensitivity of these outcomes to the availability and affordability of social and private housing, and the need for post-exit support in sourcing and maintaining housing. For example, Anderson & Quilgars (1995) found 43% of participants exiting to their own place on average, but this result was driven by one foyer in a particularly open housing market where 72% exited to their own place, while other foyers ranged between 13% and 25%. KPMG (2018) reported 54% of Foyer Oxford participants exiting to private accommodation in Perth between 2014 and 2017, but also noted that participants were more likely to do so at the end of the period when local rents were lower. Smith (2007) found that UK participants who exited into social housing showed the greatest housing stability: six months after exit, they were twice as likely as others to remain in the same accommodation.

### Improved confidence in housing and financial capabilities challenged after leaving foyer

In addition to immediate housing outcomes, EFY Foyer seeks to develop long-term capabilities to manage housing and finances. Participants initially reported increased confidence in their housing and financial capabilities upon exiting foyer. Average confidence in housing capabilities increased by about half a scale point, from 2.95 at entry to 3.43 at exit (Figure 7.3). This corresponds to a shift from 'somewhat confident' towards 'very confident' in their capability to find and apply for good, safe accommodation, sign a lease, access people or services for help, and have enough money to afford accommodation.

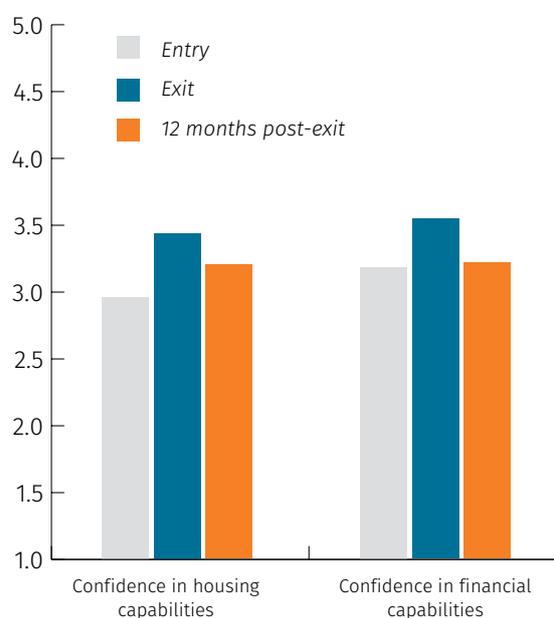
Average confidence in financial capabilities also initially increased, from 3.18 at entry to 3.54 at exit. This corresponds to a shift from 'somewhat confident' towards 'very confident' in the capability to pay rent and bills on time, plan and stick to a budget, save money, and navigate potential problems and support services.

However, Figure 7.3 also shows that both outcomes fell a year after exit. While participants' confidence in housing capabilities remained higher than at entry, their confidence in financial capabilities had fallen to entry levels. Since EFY

Foyer provides subsidised housing, moving into a competitive, high cost housing market likely contributed to this decline. This suggests that even though many participants could sustain independent housing, they continued to experience some housing and financial stress.

Figure 7.3

#### Average confidence in housing and financial capabilities



## Developing living skills and pathways to housing independence

The Housing and Living Skills Offer has evolved over the study period from an initial focus on skill-building to greater attention to transitions out of foyer. From their establishment, EFY Foyers offered workshops, events and personal coaching on finding and maintaining housing, financial literacy and budgeting, and living skills such as cooking and cleaning. In 2015, EFY Foyers added Transitions Coordinators to their staff to support participants in their transition out of foyer, from six months before exit to a year after exit.

Learning opportunities at foyer have included workshops with external partners offering information on housing applications, housing rights and financial literacy. EFY Foyer staff also organised regular cooking workshops and group meal preparation. While many participants found these useful, they expressed a desire for personalised support with budgeting new expenses and housing after foyer. Since 2015, EFY Foyers have required that participants work with the Transitions Coordinator to develop a transition plan and post-foyer budget before their exit.

In addition to developing participant living skills, EFY Foyers established mainstream partnerships to increase housing opportunities. Transitions Coordinators formed relationships

with real estate agencies in a campaign to promote young people's reliability and responsibility, and provided participants with housing references. They brought housing agency representatives to foyer for private consultations with participants and connected young people with support services, such as step-down rent programs, grants for bond and first month's rent, furniture and white goods, family mediation and, for some, supported housing. They encouraged participants to consider house-sharing with friends from foyer or school, rather than with strangers.

While the Housing and Living Skills Offer supports young people's housing transitions, the integrated service offers are designed together to provide a foundation for long-term sustainability. Firouz's story (following page) shows how investment in skill-building and opportunities across the offers developed his capability to achieve independence.

## CASE STUDY: FIROUZ

‘After three years, everything’s going in the right direction’

### Foyer provides opportunities supporting independence

“

My uncles are my only family members living here. We had a lot of family problems and hardships, and I could no longer live with them. Living in the foyer had a big impact on my life because of all the friends, the workers and the guests that would come throughout the week ... the speakers and the personal training sessions that we had, the dinners every fortnight ... I made a lot of friends there, so I didn’t really feel lonely. They kind of filled the place of my family in my life.

[Foyer staff] teach us to be independent, so they don’t spoon feed us. If I was a 2 when I entered foyer, I can definitely say that I’m a 7 now. I still have stuff to work on, but it was a big change. The Certificate I in Developing Independence [is] pretty helpful. It teaches you your strengths and weaknesses and what you need to be working on. It was like a mirror—you could see yourself in it. It drives you to think about yourself, write it down, and read through it.

I moved out of foyer because of a job. [BSL] has a partnership with Beacon, so [my worker found] an internship. [My youth development worker] helped me with the cover letter and my résumé, and I got accepted. It’s a full-time job. Everyone in the foyer knows that I want to be an engineer. I’m working in an engineering company now [in corporate responsibility]. I think that’s going to open doors for me in the future.

My work is in [distant suburb], so I wanted to live somewhere closer. I moved in with my friend. He’s a reliable, good guy, mature, and he’s an engineer. It’s a two-bedroom apartment we share. [The foyer] directed me to Vincent Care, so I could get my bond and my first month payment for the rent. It’s a 12-month lease.

After three years, everything’s going in the right direction. A year from now, my internship will be finished, so I have to look for a new job, or start to study with the money I’ve saved up through this year, or if I have my visa, go study at uni. I’m clearer about what I want to do in the future and I feel more mature than before.

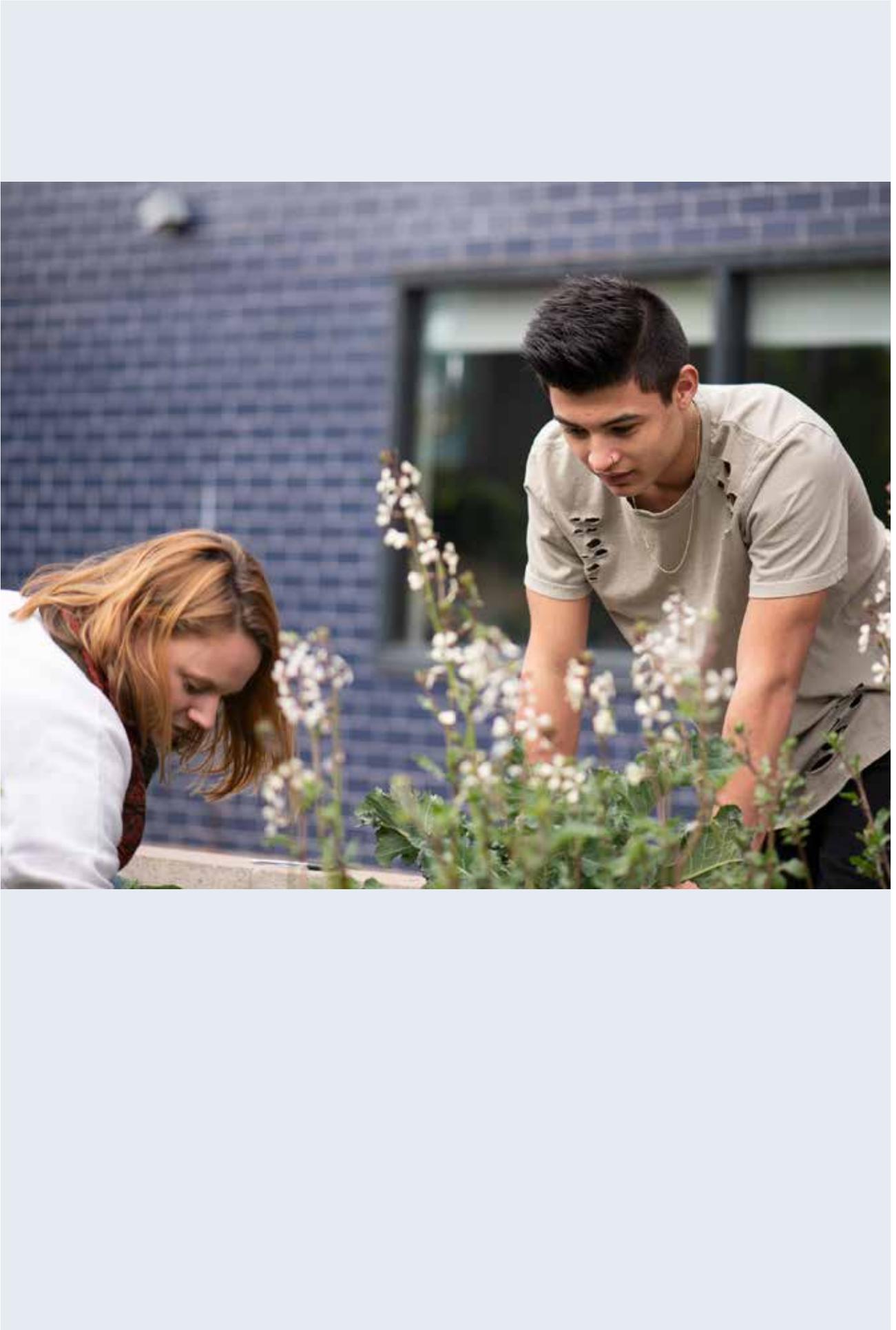
Firouz formed connections with EFY Foyer staff, participants and guests that made him feel like part of a supportive family.

Firouz stayed at the foyer for 9 months and developed his living skills. Developing Independence helped clarify his goals and plans.

Firouz completed Year 12 while at foyer. Foyer staff sourced a paid internship to develop his engineering aspiration.

With wages and service supports, he moved into private rental. He felt he would be able to renew his lease in a year.

EFY Foyer staff helped Firouz map pathways to his goals while he waited for a visa that would enable him to attend university.



## 8 HEALTH AND WELLBEING: DEVELOPING POSITIVE HEALTH PRACTICES AND SPECIALISED SUPPORTS

The EFY Foyer model seeks to build young people’s mental and physical health so that they can thrive in all aspects of life (Rooney, Mallett & Edwards 2014). Health and wellbeing are critical to education and employment pathways (Orygen Youth Health 2014; Wyn 2008). However, young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness are more likely than their peers to experience poor mental and physical health, often related to their precarious housing and life circumstances (Kamieniecki 2001; Mallett et al. 2011; Mallett et al. 2003; Mallett et al. 2010; Rossiter et al. 2003). With most existing services oriented towards crisis and deficits management, these young people also have less access to the resources and opportunities promoting positive health and wellbeing that their family-connected peers rely on to navigate their transition to adulthood (Mallett et al. 2011; Wyn 2009).

The EFY Foyer Health and Wellbeing Offer addresses this gap by promoting positive health among participants. Positive health and wellbeing refers to practices promoting health rather than managing ill health. EFY Foyers provide a safe, nurturing space to live and opportunities to develop interests, connections and practices promoting wellbeing (Table 8.1).

Participants rated their physical health on a five-point scale ranging from poor (1) to excellent (5). We measured mental health with the Kessler-6 Psychological Distress Scale, rescaled to align with our other outcomes, so that higher scores indicate better mental health (see [Appendix B](#)).

**Table 8.1 The Health and Wellbeing Offer**

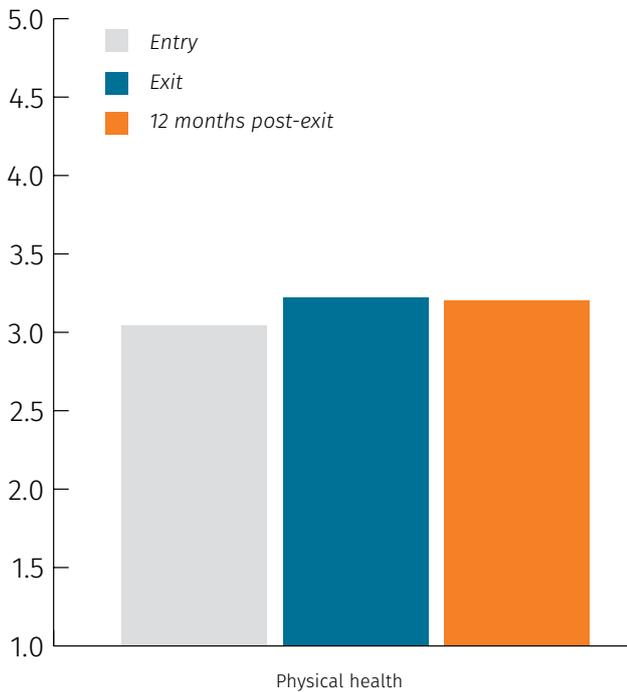
Goals	Supports	Expectations
<p>Support participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote and build positive physical, emotional and psychological health</li> <li>• develop skills and knowledge to build positive health</li> <li>• access and engage in activities promoting positive health, aligned with interests and goals</li> </ul>	<p>EFY Foyer offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a safe and nurturing environment</li> <li>• regular personal coaching based on Advantaged Thinking</li> <li>• physical health and nutrition consultation with external partners</li> <li>• workshops and training on topics promoting wellbeing, including mindfulness, resilience, positive relationships and sexual health</li> <li>• informal cooking and other peer-supported groups</li> <li>• referral and access to specialist physical and psychological health services</li> </ul>	<p>Each participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a physical health and nutrition plan within the first 6 months at foyer</li> <li>• complete positive relationships training within the first 6 months</li> <li>• complete sexual health training within first 12 months</li> <li>• undertake at least 20 hours of health and wellbeing activities per year, including at least four elective workshops</li> </ul>

### Improvement in physical health among older participants

On average, participants' self-reported physical health improved only slightly while at foyer, from 3.04 at entry to 3.22 at exit (Figure 8.1). This corresponds to a rating between 'good' and 'very good'. Improvements in physical health varied by age, with participants aged 21 and older reporting the greatest change (Figure 8.2). Older participants entered with physical health ratings as much as a point lower than younger participants (closer to 'fair'), but by exit had improved substantially to rate themselves similarly to younger participants.

Figure 8.1

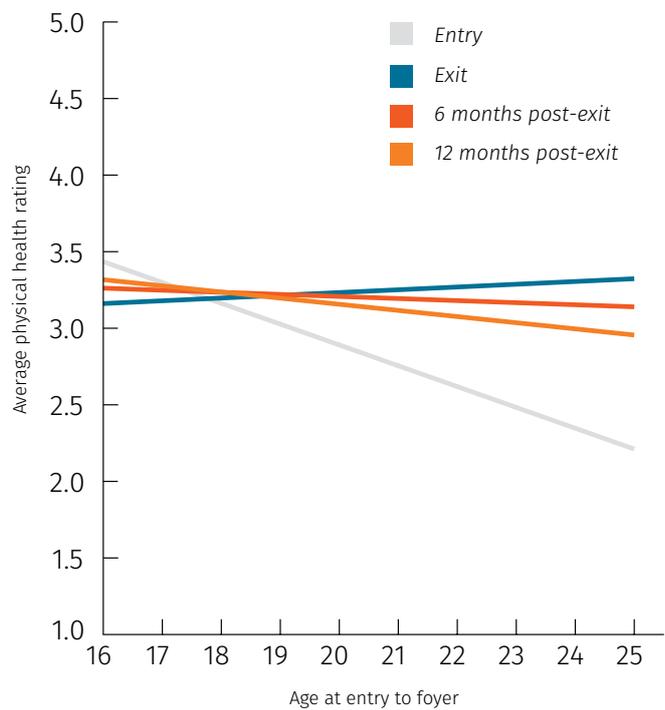
#### Average physical health rating



Evidence from other survey items suggests that older participants were less likely than younger participants to have accessed routine healthcare prior to foyer, but these differences had disappeared by exit. For example, prior to foyer, older participants were less likely to access general practitioner consultations or dental appointments. Instead, they were more likely to be admitted to a hospital. By foyer exit, older and younger participants showed similar patterns of access and use, suggesting that EFY Foyer connections to community health services helped equalise differences. While we do not have quantitative data on healthy eating or physical activity, these practices may also have improved at foyer, given opportunities such as cooking lessons and gym memberships.

Figure 8.2

#### Average physical health rating by age at entry to foyer



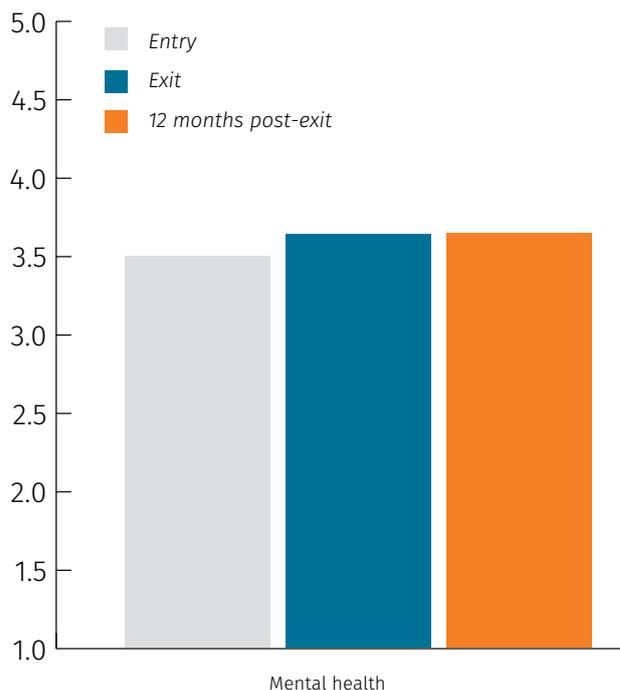
### Mental health improvement varied with length of stay

About 30% of participants entered foyer with ‘serious’ mental distress and an additional 40% entered reporting ‘moderate’ mental distress, according to their ratings on the Kessler-6 Psychological Distress Scale<sup>14</sup> (Kessler et al. 2010; Prochaska et al. 2012).

Overall, about half of EFY Foyer participants reported better mental health at exit than at entry, and improvement varied with length of stay. For the overall group, mental health scores did not change much on average, shifting from 3.50 at entry to 3.64 a year after exit, which corresponds to experiencing negative symptoms less from ‘sometimes’ to ‘a little of the time’ (Figure 8.3). However, participants staying between a year and two years showed improvement of about half a scale point on average (Figure 8.4). This difference by length of stay persisted a year post-exit.

Figure 8.3

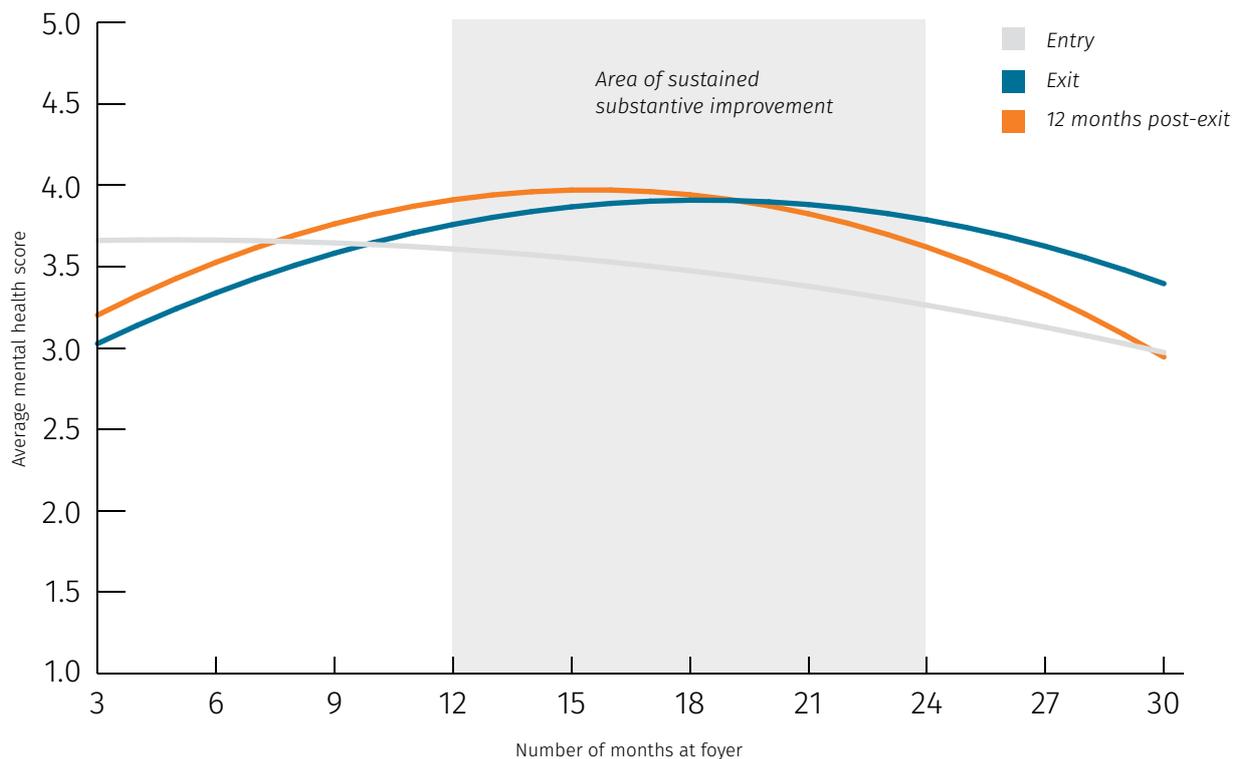
Average mental health score



<sup>14</sup> Since about 20% of participants did not answer questions for this scale, these figures may underestimate the prevalence of poor mental health at entry. The Kessler-6 rating system varies slightly by country. The original Kessler-6 scale ranges from 0 to 24, with each component survey item ranging from 0 to 4. Australian scholars prefer to scale the score from 6 to 30, with each component survey item ranging from 1 to 5. A rating of 13 or more (19 or more Australian) is considered serious. A rating of 5 through 12 (11 through 18 Australian) is considered moderate. We rescaled the rating to align with other scales in the report to ease interpretation. The scale reported here therefore ranges between 1 and 5, with higher scores indicating better mental health.

Figure 8.4

## Average mental health score by length of stay at foyer



Note: Participants are expected to stay at EFY Foyers up to two years. However, during our analysis period, 23 participants (14%) stayed longer, from a week to as long as 10 months longer. Participants were not immediately exited at 24 months if they were in the process of exiting or struggling with the transition.

Some participants leaving within a year found they needed more support than the model could provide or struggled with congregate living. Foyer staff mentioned that participants would require ongoing health and wellbeing support in 40% of exit summaries for young people exiting prior to a year, compared to 20% of summaries for those who stayed at foyer longer.

The small number of young people who stayed longer than the expected two years typically did so because they were not ready to transition. This occurred primarily in the first foyer cohort as staff were developing transition processes. Interestingly, these participants showed an initial improvement in their mental health at exit, only to decline to entry levels a year later.

There is a growing consensus in the foyer literature about the importance of mental health and wellbeing supports. A 2006 survey of UK foyer managers found that available

mental health services were 'patchy and variable' and 73% of managers felt existing foyer services were insufficient to meet their residents' needs (Taylor, Stuttaford & Vostanis 2006, p. 17). One study of former UK foyer residents in this period found that rates of depression, anxiety and stress increased while at foyer then declined to entry levels after exit, but that suicide attempts and self-harm declined while at foyer (Smith et al. 2007). Meanwhile, some residents of a West London foyer mentioned improvements in their wellbeing (30%), self-esteem (28%) and recovery from mental health problems (18%) in qualitative interviews about their experiences at the foyer (Worley & Smith 2001).

In response to increasing awareness about mental health, a targeted health program including life coaching, specialist workshops and training, and 'taster' opportunities in community health was piloted in UK foyers between 2007 and 2010. A majority of foyer managers surveyed felt it

improved their ability to address health issues including nutrition, fitness, self-esteem and stress, and that this flowed on to other outcomes in housing, education, and employment (Foyer Health Programme no date).

Studies of Australian foyers note some improvements in wellbeing, but stress that foyers are not designed for those unwilling or unable to take up mental health supports or whose mental health would be negatively affected by living in relatively independent congregate settings (Grace et al. 2011; KPMG 2018). One study of former residents of the Step Ahead program in Melbourne found that about half had experienced poor mental health while in the program, and half of these had made significant improvements while at the foyer (Grace et al. 2011).

## Investments in positive health and referrals to specialised supports

EFY Foyer participants and staff commented on three areas that supported young people's wellbeing: the positive environment at foyer, foyer activities supporting social connection and hobbies, and referrals to specialised health services.

First, most participants interviewed said the stable, positive foyer environment contributed to improved mental and physical health by allowing them to work on their goals instead of constantly managing crisis. Some spoke about the design of the buildings, and the benefits of having one's own space combined with communal support. Some spoke about the Advantaged Thinking coaching style, which focused on their goals and growth rather than their problems. Others said that the friends they made at foyer had the biggest impact on their wellbeing.

Second, foyer activities helped create a positive and supportive culture. These included regular group cooking and dinners, personal training activities, art therapy, mindfulness sessions with yoga or meditation, outdoor camps, and health and relationship workshops.

Third, foyer staff developed partnerships with health services and supported participants in accessing them. They connected participants with a community health centre if they were not already seeing a general practitioner and ensured they were comfortable and able to attend appointments regularly. Many young people also took advantage of gym memberships offered by foyer partners and reported that gym proximity to the foyer, group gym visits, and plans developed by the foyer personal trainer were motivating.

EFY Foyer staff also connected participants to mental health, alcohol and drug services, trialling different avenues, through regular clinics or personal appointments, through their general practitioner or a partner organisation. Some participants said they continued to meet their counsellors after foyer. Occasionally, the move to foyer revealed a serious underlying mental health, alcohol or drug issue that required treatment in a supported mental health facility or rehabilitation centre.

The case study of Ramis (following page) shows how counselling and family mediation services combined with foyer relationships and opportunities enabled him to get through some tough times, reunite with his family and develop his sense of self and purpose.

## CASE STUDY: RAMIS

### 'It's more empowering'

#### The transformative effect of enabling relationships

“

In Year 12 VCE, I was really concerned about my mental health. I had gotten kicked out [of my home]. Given the massive dysfunction in my life, when I first moved [into foyer], living independently was really hard. I removed myself from VCE studies. But then after that, I completed a tertiary enabling program. You have these fluctuations and things that just happen. My ambition was still there; it was just committing to that ambition that wasn't 100 per cent.

[The foyer staff are] very genuine. They don't treat you as a client. They're not bureaucrats. They don't adopt this sense of stern professionalism. They're open, relaxed, engaging. They give you advice, but they're not pushy. They respect your opinion. They were always there for me. I'm just more comfortable, open, and have a laugh and just do things.

Whenever I was stressed or anxious, I [found] the outdoor area very relaxing because I used to always [garden there]. It began to be really therapeutic. I picked up gardening for [a 'something for something'] for paying off my course semester. I spent months maintaining the garden, which is something that I was really passionate about. It's more empowering. You're not just being handed everything, spoon-fed the whole way. They've helped me grow and develop during my stay.

The relationship with my family was somewhat hostile, but then through having space to ourselves, we just grew through it together. We've reconciled. Now I attend family functions and visit my niece. My mother respects me more now, and she loves me. I'm her only son.

I'm growing up—because I was really submissive. I didn't have the courage to speak up. Here through engaging with these different personalities, I really started to set boundaries. You come to learn off others, how to interact with others, how to adapt in different situations.

I'm now involved in student politics, and that's opened an avenue for me that I've never looked at before. It's given me access to a network. I'm in an internship with [a union] and I'm learning heaps of things from being with the organiser there. I'm in all these training workshops [for] campaigning. I was with [a youth advocacy program] as well. I'm actually now employed by them. So I guess through engaging in things that I'm passionate about, I have learnt a lot.

Family issues disrupted Ramis' education. Foyer staff coached him to find a new path, and he eventually enrolled in university.

Ramis found the Advantaged Thinking approach 'empowering'. A staff member was a close mentor.

An EFY Foyer staff member introduced Ramis to gardening. His family sometimes visited the foyer to garden with him.

EFY Foyer staff supported Ramis in accessing counselling and family mediation.

By foyer exit, staff described Ramis as 'the quiet leader of the foyer'.

Ramis took up many EFY Foyer opportunities in employment and civic participation that developed his leadership skills and interest in public service.

## 9 SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: LINKING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITIES SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR GOALS

Social connections provide a secure base for young people to build their self-esteem, sense of belonging and self-efficacy to pursue their interests (Hwang et al. 2009; Oberle, Schonert-Reichl & Zumbo 2010). Research indicates that young people who are supported by family, friends and community are better able to manage major changes in their lives (Hwang et al. 2009). However, housing instability often has a disruptive effect on social connections (Homelessness Taskforce 2008; Scutella & Johnson 2012).

The EFY Foyer Social Connections Offer aims to build the social and emotional capabilities needed to form the networks vital to successful participation in society (Hanson-Peterson et al. 2015). Table 9.1 outlines the goals, supports and expectations of the offer.

We measure social connections outcomes with a composite social support scale capturing young people's ability to rely on someone in troubled times (see [Appendix B](#)).

### Improved social support at foyer, but some difficulty sustaining it after exit

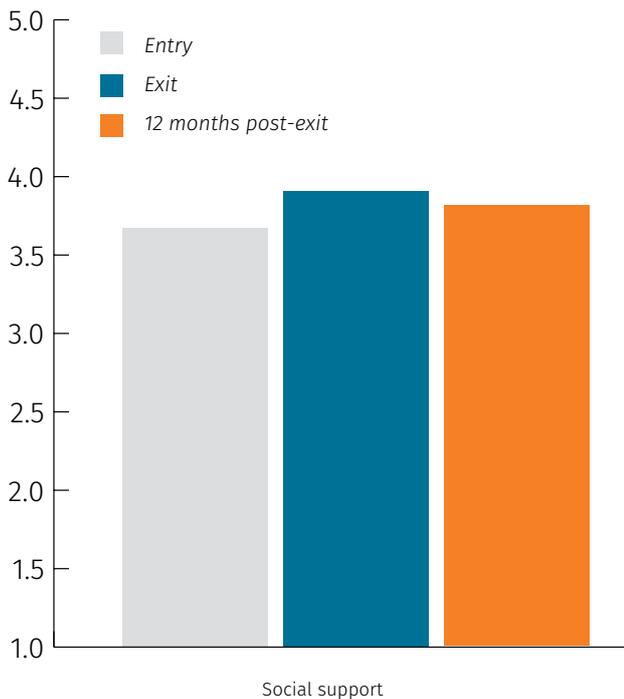
Participants' sense of social support improved while at foyer, but was not as strong a year after exit. Average social support increased from 3.67 at entry to 3.90 at exit, but dropped slightly a year after exit to an average of 3.81 (Figure 9.1). This corresponds to a rating between 'neither agree nor disagree' and 'agree a little' to positive statements about their capability to lean on someone in times of trouble, rely on someone to cheer them up when they feel down, or talk with someone about something troubling them.

Many young people embedded in foyer life said they were sad to leave the strong community they had developed at foyer, especially when they moved to distant locations. Some said that while they were ready for greater independence, they missed the positive environment and the supportive friends and staff. EFY Foyer staff are currently developing a formal approach to keeping alumni connected.

Table 9.1 The Social Connections Offer

Goals	Supports	Expectations
<p>Support participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>access social and emotional knowledge, skills and opportunities to develop thriving social relationships and networks</li> <li>gain sustainable connections with helpful supports and resources</li> </ul>	<p>EFY Foyer offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interaction with EFY Foyer staff and peers, based on an Advantaged Thinking approach</li> <li>workshops on healthy relationships, conflict resolution, effective communication and living in communal settings</li> <li>social activities including men's and women's groups, Foyer leadership groups, 'something for something' proposals</li> <li>monthly 'family and friends' dinners, movie nights or events organised by residents</li> <li>family mediation and counselling</li> <li>community mentors</li> </ul>	<p>Each participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attend at least 4 social connections workshops</li> <li>participate in at least 40 hours of social connections activities, including workshops, ongoing membership in a social activities group at the foyer (about 2 hours per month), and 'something for something' proposals that contribute to communal living at the foyer</li> </ul>

Figure 9.1

**Average sense of social support****Enabling supportive relationships at foyer and beyond**

The Social Connections Offer aims to enable supportive relationships and networks within and beyond the foyer. Its implementation is often integrated with other offers. Many staff spoke about the need to develop the right balance between creating a vibrant foyer community and encouraging connections outside foyer to create sustainable support networks for participants.

Young people involved in the foyer community reflected that the positive environment acted as a foundation for their broader development. It created the conditions of respect, trust and belonging that encouraged them to open up and challenge themselves. Some said that living among a large and diverse group increased their interpersonal skills and reduced their social anxiety. However, with so many opportunities within foyer to form connections, some participants put less effort into forming connections outside foyer and were more likely to face disruption in their social support network upon foyer exit.

Some participants said that certain practices, such as the barring of overnight visitors, or the distance between the foyer and their home communities made it more difficult to maintain external relationships. This contributed to an early exit for some. Following participant advocacy, the policy was changed to allow overnight visitors.

EFY Foyer fostered social connections outside foyer primarily through other service offers. For example, Foyer staff sourced mentors and created networking opportunities to support studies and careers. Some participants made friends through gym memberships, hobbies or volunteering. Most participants who reported making sustained external connections did so while pursuing their education, career and health and wellbeing goals.

Many participants improved their relationships with their families while at foyer, while others felt that getting space away from their families was best for their wellbeing at the time. Most participants who spoke of reconnecting with their families did so through their own personal development, enabled by living independently in the supportive foyer environment, or through individual counselling services. While foyers offered family mediation counselling, staff said few participants took it up. Instead, Foyer staff offered informal opportunities to reconnect with family through mediated communication, joint social activities or invitations to social events and celebrations.

Shaun's case study (following page) shows how EFY Foyer could act as a supportive 'family'. However, moving away from this community could be hard. While Shaun had built connections to sustain him after Foyer, he missed having so many friends and mentors readily available.

## CASE STUDY: SHAUN

### 'It feels like a family'

#### The importance of belonging

“

I moved from the country to the city and then into the foyer, not knowing many people. The first few people to move [to the foyer] with me, the majority of them are close friends now. The culture is very nurturing. It feels like a family, and that is a hard culture to create in a new environment. I always felt safe. I'm the sort of person, having grown up in rough neighbourhoods, having all of that security was comforting. I felt like I had a say and my opinions were respected.

Shaun credited the EFY Foyer staff for creating the homely environment.

I am a big cook, so I was always cooking with people. The reason I liked Sunday dinners is [because] there were not many times for us to get together in such a large group—[up to] twenty of us. [Before foyer] I used to live by myself, and I'd come home from TAFE and eat dinner by myself. It was a lonely existence.

He was an active participant in foyer leadership and social activities.

[I was] very sad and conflicted [when I left Foyer]. Conflicted in the fact that I was so comfortable living there and running amok in that environment full of young people. It is a place of learning and support, but we still pull pranks. It is a very fun place to live. Conflicted in that I need my space now. I want to start living like an adult, [but] I want to be [at the foyer]. I want to come home and ask someone if they want to have dinner with me. Now if [we] want to hang out, either I've got to go all the way [there], or they have to travel an hour to come here.

At exit, Shaun felt he needed more independence but found it hard to leave. After leaving, he still felt like part of the family and sometimes connected with foyer friends.

I already had some pretty decent survival skills, but living in the foyer—for one thing, just being around so many people—that really helped with my anxiety because I tend to isolate myself a lot. Also just the advice and the networking that the [Foyer staff] gave me—that really helped me going forward—all the services that they put me in touch with, and all the opportunities that they gave me to grow professionally and personally.

A year after exiting foyer, Shaun reflected on how EFY Foyer contributed to his ability to manage housing disruptions since leaving foyer.

At the moment, I've got a supportive team and I enjoy what I do. It's more like the work/life balance, so I've just been looking at case manager roles in smaller organisations. I see myself as a case manager, preferably for a non-government organisation.

Shaun had maintained employment and was working towards his career goals.



## 10 CIVIC PARTICIPATION: OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVOCATE AND DEVELOP RECIPROCITY

Civic participation means actively engaging in activities that improve community wellbeing and offer opportunities to reflect on the meaning of citizenship (Innovations in Civic Participation 2010). It can contribute to young people’s development by facilitating belonging, a sense of efficacy and an extended social network, while at the same time supporting active communities (Shaw et al. 2014).

However, service-connected young people have fewer avenues for such participation than their peers (Cull et al. 2015). They may have less time, resources and energy to take part because they need to prioritise agency compliance, family care or day-to-day survival, compounding their social exclusion.

The EFY Foyer Civic Participation Offer seeks to engage young people in community life to foster a sense of positive purpose, connection and understanding of civic and political organising, so they can advocate for themselves and others. Table 10.1 outlines the goals, supports and expectations of the offer.

We measure civic participation with a composite measure of how frequently participants use community facilities, such as community centres, sporting facilities, arts and cultural venues, parks and libraries (see [Appendix B](#)).

**Table 10.1 The Civic Participation Offer**

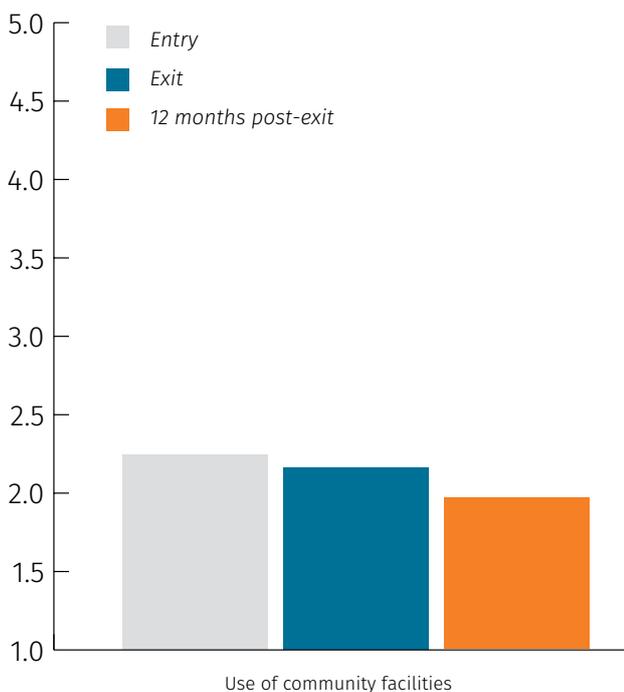
Goals	Supports	Expectations
<p>Support participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand civic and political organising</li> <li>• become active members of a community</li> <li>• develop a positive purpose in their lives</li> <li>• contribute to improving the lives of others in society</li> </ul>	<p>EFY Foyer offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workshops on civil society, political participation and social topics</li> <li>• student leadership groups to participate in EFY Foyer governance</li> <li>• participant proposals for community events and activities</li> <li>• ‘something for something’ proposals to contribute to EFY Foyer community</li> <li>• opportunities at community organisations</li> </ul>	<p>Each participant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• submit a proposal for a charitable or volunteer project</li> <li>• complete at least 20 hours of charitable or community-based work per year</li> <li>• (if part of the Student Leadership Group) work on one leadership group project per year</li> </ul>

## Modest civic participation declined after exit

Civic participation, as measured by the use of community facilities, remained unchanged while at foyer and declined after exit. As shown in Figure 10.1, the frequency of attending these facilities stayed around an average score of 2.2 at foyer, corresponding to a little more than 'a few times a year'. However, by a year after exit, it had decreased by about a quarter of a scale point to 1.97.

Figure 10.1

### Average use of community facilities



The use of community facilities may have declined after foyer because participants prioritised particular commitments instead of exploring a diversity of opportunities. A decline in the diversity of facilities visited as well as the frequency would produce an overall decrease in the measure. Increasing work or education commitments or less opportunities after foyer could contribute to a decrease in frequency and diversity. Interview data suggests that those with an interest in advocacy, politics and the community services sector often turned their volunteering commitments into work opportunities, satisfying their interest in civic participation through employment. Some who volunteered while at foyer found it difficult to continue after moving away, due to distance or less free time.

This measure does not capture the range of ways civic participation could be (and was) developed and expressed, such as through political knowledge and awareness of current events, occasional volunteering or community-oriented initiatives at work or school. Monitoring data shows that most participants who entered after August 2015 engaged in some type of volunteering while at the foyer: about 77% of participants volunteered in the broader community and about 33% prepared and submitted a proposal for a civic project. Some 23% of EFY Foyer participants were recorded as ever taking a leadership role while at foyer.

## Civic participation given lowest priority among service offers

For most of the study period, staff expressed uncertainty about how to best implement the Civic Participation Offer. They consistently rated it as the least developed offer and the lowest priority. Implementation included personalised opportunities tied to interests, group fundraising or charitable activities, events to discuss topics of interest and participant-run projects and leadership groups.

Staff and participants agreed that structured expectations and opportunities could encourage civic participation among those less familiar with it. For some young people, this promoted a shift in perspective, increased empathy or a greater sense of purpose. Others said it felt good to give back to the community occasionally, but did not take up any ongoing commitments. Involvement usually took the form of fundraising activities like walks or barbecues or other awareness-raising activities. Some considered their activities within the foyer community a means of giving back to other young people. Others felt they needed to prioritise education and work goals and did not take up civic opportunities while at foyer.

The case study of Lucy (following page) represents the experience of participants who found that EFY Foyer opportunities changed their perspective.

## CASE STUDY: LUCY

### ‘Now I see it as opportunity’

#### Developing empathy through exposure to new people and opportunities

“

I think having diverse people around here, you learn a lot of things. I've learnt how everyone has to have that respect in how they talk to someone. I've built a great relationship with one of the [migrant] students, who hasn't built great English yet, but I help her through it. I really do enjoy having different cultures [around]. I've learnt a lot of skills [living with] 40 of these different kinds of people.

My personality has flipped. Now, when my old friends talk to me, and I'll go, 'Don't say that. It's wrong to say that', and they go, 'What's wrong with you? Normally you would agree to that', and I'm like, 'I know, but I don't agree with it anymore.' It's changed so many things. Now, I'm getting involved in a lot of community programs. I got involved in Good People Act Now. It's about domestic violence towards women, like how to avoid it and everything. I never thought I would be involved in outreach, and now I'm very involved.

I've always wanted to do the Good Friday Appeal [for the Royal Children's Hospital], but I didn't know where to start. I did it last year, and the foyer helped me—I was organising it, but they said, 'Money-wise, we'll help you out', and gladly [the TAFE] said, 'We'll help you as well. Just organise it, give me your plan, and we'll do whatever you want us to do'. I got everyone to get involved from the foyer, and we'd do sausage sizzles and veggie burgers in TAFE, and we raised about \$430. I was worried about being the leader, but you don't have to be a leader. Everyone is a leader. I gave them an idea, but everyone got involved in it. So I got that opportunity, which was the best thing I've ever done.

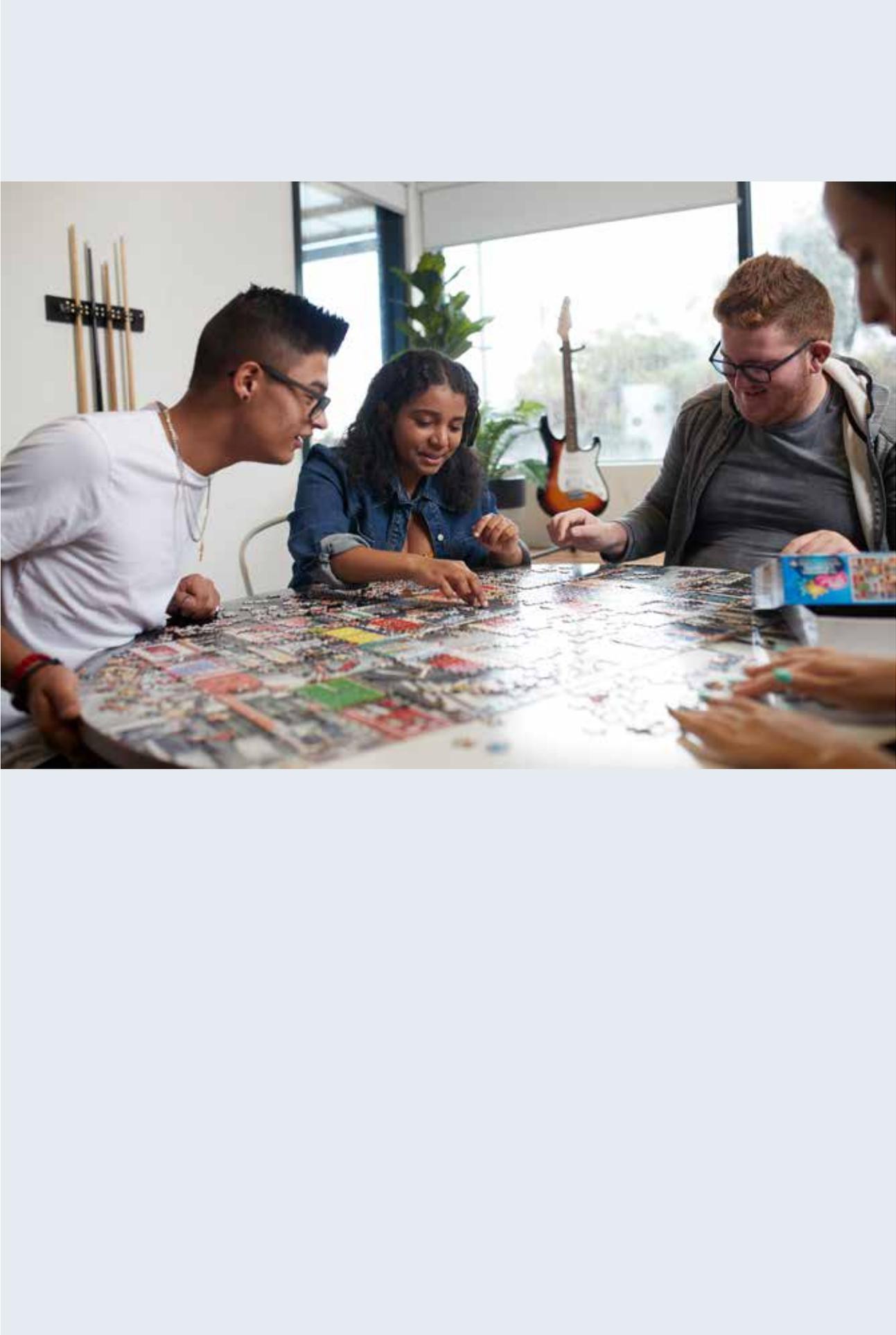
When [I] achieve goals, it makes me happy to think that I can do it, when a few months back I never thought I could. This place has opened up my opportunities. My life has changed a lot, and I like this life a lot more. I'm much calmer than I was. Before, if something bad happened to me, I would be destroyed mentally, but now it doesn't bother me. Now I see it as opportunity. I've learnt something. I've failed in it, but it's ok—I can get up again. Now that I'm living by myself, I've kept it with me—that motivation towards achieving goals and growing from it.

Lucy came to foyer from crisis accommodation and felt it was a welcoming space.

When asked to identify the biggest changes in her life since foyer, Lucy described herself as 'a different person' with greater empathy, strength and an impetus for civic participation.

EFY Foyer supported participant-led civic projects with coaching and funding. These could be individual or group projects.

Lucy thought EFY Foyer opportunities across the six service offers and Advantaged Thinking coaching from staff increased her empathy and resilience.



## 11 PREVENT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS BY EXPANDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAPABILITIES

The longitudinal evaluation of the Education First Youth Foyers is the first to rigorously demonstrate the sustained, positive effects of youth foyers on key outcomes among young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The EFY Foyer model builds on the Youth Foyer approach by prioritising education and training as the foundation for a sustainable livelihood. A year after exit, participants showed remarkable gains in their qualifications and continued capability to pursue further education and training. About 75% held Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, the minimum required to access decent work. Half had improved their qualifications to this level or higher, and of the remainder, 70% were still enrolled. This surpassed all previous foyer studies. Building on this, young people were transitioning into the workforce, with 36% employed a year after exit, compared with 19% at entry.

EFY Foyer also expanded participant capability to access and maintain independent, decent homes. In spite of crippling housing affordability, half of participants were living in their own place a year after exit, almost all in private accommodation, compared with just 7% at entry. The percentage in crisis accommodation, treatment centres, detention, or sleeping rough all but disappeared to 2% a year after exit, compared with 32% at entry. Almost all participants felt safe in their homes and lived in places meeting minimum community standards for housing.

Some young people also reported improved health and wellbeing. Though the majority of EFY Foyer participants struggled with moderate or serious mental health challenges, participants staying at foyer between one and two years reported an improvement at exit that was sustained a year later. In terms of physical health, on average EFY Foyer participants reported 'good' health that did not change much. However, participants aged 21 and older entered with closer to 'fair' health and improved by exit.

### Remaining gaps in policy

Despite notable progress in key outcomes, some participant experiences after exit indicate gaps in social policy. Some difficulty in sustaining less crowded housing and confidence in financial capabilities a year after exit suggests that after foyer, participants continued to experience financial stress. This shows a continuing need for housing and social security reforms to support service-connected young people in establishing themselves as they complete their studies and enter the workforce.

The struggle of some EFY Foyer participants in gaining employment despite having clear career goals, holding a minimum of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, and using employment services also suggests a need for youth employment policies that create entry-level opportunities to develop experience and match job-seeker interests with employer demands.

### Social and civic offers require more service development

The lack of meaningful change in social support and civic participation as measured also suggests areas for further practice development at EFY Foyers.

To enhance ongoing social support, Foyer alumni events or other opportunities to enable participants to maintain their foyer connections could reduce the shock of moving away. Alumni could also serve as valuable peer mentors, advisors in EFY Foyer service development, and community advocates, as they currently do informally. More efforts could also be made to support participants in maintaining or building social connections outside foyer.

Finally, while qualitative data suggests that civic participation was not a priority for participants, it is also true that our measure does not capture the range of ways this could be (and was) developed and expressed, such as through political knowledge and awareness of current events, occasional volunteering or community-oriented initiatives at work or school.

### Limitations and further research

Some limitations in our study could underestimate EFY Foyer impact. These point to areas for future research.

First, while a longitudinal design with post-exit follow-up provides rigorous evidence of impact, it is limited by the common problem of survey attrition, in which some participants, typically those who benefit less from an intervention, are less likely to respond to follow-up surveys. We adjusted for this using mixed effects regression models and trialled other missing data methods detailed in [Appendix C](#). While this is subject to assumptions about the patterns of missing data and is therefore not a panacea, it provides a conservative estimate of EFY Foyer impact.

Second, 85% of participants in our data entered EFY Foyer during model establishment and therefore only experienced a partial and developing EFY Foyer model. This is likely to underestimate the benefits of a full model. Future research could build on this dataset using similar measures to

investigate full model impact compared with these establishment outcomes. Ongoing outcomes tracking could offer insight into the impact of practice change and service development.

Finally, the use of five-point bipolar Likert scales for some 'soft' outcomes could also limit measured impact. Such scales may constrain variation on items where respondents are unlikely to express a lack of confidence, but may feel nuanced levels of confidence. We can see the difference when we compare the education capabilities scale with the housing capabilities scale. Young people seeking student accommodation are likely to 'agree a little' that they have the capability to participate in education, but may express levels of confidence between 'a little' and 'a lot' if given the option. In this case, unipolar and more granular scales would be preferable, such as the confidence in housing capabilities scale, which allowed participants to choose between more levels of confidence.

### **A first in foyer research**

In spite of these limitations, our ability to track young people over time and beyond their foyer stay offers the best evidence to date of positive and sustained foyer outcomes. Critically, these outcomes include the 34% of participants who exited because they did not meet foyer expectations. Given factors constraining our ability to capture impact, it is remarkable to see such strong gains in capability, particularly in education and housing. We believe further research addressing the limitations documented above will provide stronger evidence of foyer impact.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Evaluation data collection and ethics

#### Longitudinal surveys

Researchers surveyed participants at four time points: at entry to EFY Foyer, at exit, six months after exit and twelve months after exit. The surveys included questions on demographics and past and current circumstances regarding education, employment, housing, living skills, health, and social and community engagement. The six-month follow-up survey was shorter than the others and excluded some outcome measures.

Participants completed the baseline and exit surveys online with an EFY Foyer youth development worker. If a young person left without completing an exit survey, researchers reminded them to complete it online for up to six weeks. Participants completed the post-exit surveys by themselves online or with a researcher over the phone. Respondents received a \$20 voucher for each exit and six-month post-exit survey completed, and a \$25 voucher for the twelve-month post-exit survey.

Survey response rates were high at baseline and declined over follow-up points. Of the EFY Foyer participants who stayed longer than the three-month trial period and exited prior to August 2017, 98% completed a baseline survey. From this group, 80% completed an exit survey, 67% a six-month follow-up survey, and 57% a twelve-month follow-up survey. The method of analysis was chosen to address any potential bias due to survey attrition (see [Appendix C](#)).

#### Programmatic and monitoring data

In our analysis, we supplement survey data with programmatic and monitoring data to confirm or provide context to findings.

In the foyer application process, participants complete short 'readiness' forms detailing their interest and engagement in each EFY Foyer service offer. They also provide information on current challenges with drugs and alcohol, justice involvement, violence and mental health. Readiness forms were at first collected for research in an ad hoc manner, but were more systematically collected towards the end of the data collection period.

When participants entering foyer consented to take part in the research, researchers gained access to monthly reporting spreadsheets completed by youth development workers on participation in the EFY Foyer offers. Systematic monitoring began mid-way through our data collection period, in 2015.

Finally, youth development workers completed short qualitative exit summaries for each participant, summarising their experiences at foyer and the likely sustainability of their education, employment, housing and general wellbeing post-foyer.

#### Focus groups and interviews

The research team conducted over 100 semi-structured, qualitative interviews with EFY Foyer participants, EFY Foyer youth development workers, EFY Foyer team leaders, TAFE staff and staff from the service delivery and development teams. Forty-six young people participated in an interview at exit and seven completed interviews at least a year after exit. Additionally, the team conducted 10 focus groups with EFY Foyer staff, and 6 focus groups with EFY Foyer participants.

Participant interviews and focus groups were carried out between 2014 and 2017, mostly within 6 and 30 months of the foyer's opening.

Foyer staff interviews and focus groups were carried out between 2013 and 2017. Initial interviews were carried out with Foyer managers, team leaders and youth development workers after each Foyer opened to understand how the model was being implemented. Managers and team leaders were then interviewed annually. Follow-up focus groups were held with Foyer managers and team leaders and separately with staff in 2017.

## Appendix B: Outcome measures by service offer

**Table B.1 EFY Foyer outcome measures used in this study**

Outcome	Measure
<b>Education</b>	
Education attainment <sup>a</sup>	Percentage completing Year 12, a Certificate III or higher
Confidence in education capabilities <sup>b</sup>	Composite measure of participants' level of agreement with four positive statements about their capability to find information on education/training options, apply for education/training programs and engage in and complete courses of study. It ranges from disagree a lot (1) to agree a lot (5).
<b>Employment</b>	
Employment <sup>c</sup>	Percentage employed, part time or full time
Confidence in capability to manage career <sup>d</sup>	Composite measure of participants' level of agreement with six positive statements about their capability to get and maintain a job, find information on employment and career opportunities, access employment services, use information to develop their careers, set goals and make good decisions about their careers. It ranges from disagree a lot (1) to agree a lot (5).
Confidence in transferable employability skills (self-management and problem-solving) <sup>e</sup>	Composite measure of participants' level of agreement with seven positive statements about their ability to arrive at work neat and on time, maintain a positive attitude at work, control emotions in difficult situations, plan and prioritise work tasks, and identify problems and solutions at work. It ranges from disagree a lot (1) to agree a lot (5).
Confidence in transferable employability skills (personal and interpersonal) <sup>e</sup>	Composite measure of participants' level of agreement with six positive statements about their motivation to do well at work and belief in their ability to do well at work, work cooperatively with others, interact with others without conflict or discomfort, and express views confidently. It ranges from disagree a lot (1) to agree a lot (5).
<b>Housing and living skills</b>	
Independent housing <sup>c</sup>	Percentage of participants in various accommodation types before and after foyer. Participants' selections from 16 categories are combined into five broad categories.
Housing circumstances <sup>c</sup>	Three separate indicators for whether participants agree that their accommodation feels safe, is not crowded, and meets community housing standards (adequate toilet facilities, sleeping space, cooking facilities, running water and electricity). The housing standards indicator is an aggregation. If any of the listed features is missing, the housing does not meet community standards.
Housing stability <sup>c</sup>	Number of places the participant has lived/stayed in the past twelve months, asked at entry and a year after exit. 'Stable' indicates no more than two places.
Confidence in housing capabilities <sup>b</sup>	Composite measure of six items capturing participants' level of confidence in their capability to find and apply for good, safe accommodation, sign a lease, access people or services for help, and afford accommodation. It ranges from not confident (1) to extremely confident (5).
Confidence in financial capabilities <sup>b</sup>	Composite measure of ten items capturing participants' level of confidence in their capability to pay rent and bills on time, plan and stick to a budget, save money, and navigate potential problems and support services. It ranges from not confident (1) to extremely confident (5).

Outcome	Measure
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	
Physical health <sup>c</sup>	A single-item self-assessment of overall physical health on a five-point Likert scale ranging from poor (1) to excellent (5).
Mental health <sup>f</sup>	The Kessler-6 mental health scale measuring the frequency of feelings such as a sense of worthlessness, restlessness, nervousness, sadness, hopelessness, and that everything is an effort. It is rescaled to match the other outcomes scales, ranging from all the time (1) to none of the time (5), with higher scores indicating better mental health.
<b>Social connections</b>	
Social support <sup>e</sup>	Composite measure of participants' level of agreement with three positive statements about their ability to rely on or talk to someone in times of trouble. It ranges from disagree a lot (1) to agree a lot (5).
<b>Civic participation</b>	
Use of community facilities <sup>g</sup>	Composite measure of participants' frequency of use of six types of community facilities: sports centres and facilities, libraries, parks, arts and cultural venues, other community centres, and other centres. It ranges from never (1) to every day (5) and represents an average across facilities.

Sources for measures:

- a. NCVET study establishing rough equivalence of Cert III with Year 12 VCE (Karmel & Lim 2011)
- b. Developed in collaboration with service staff, based on capabilities identified in the Certificate I in Developing Independence
- c. Adapted from the survey developed for the Journeys Home study of factors affecting housing instability and homelessness (Scutella & Johnson 2012)
- d. Core career development competencies identified in The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (MCEECDYA 2010)
- e. Common set of transferable skills identified by Blades, Fauth and Gibb (2012) in literature review of employability skills.
- f. The six-item Kessler (K6) Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler et al. 2010; Prochaska et al. 2012)
- g. Literature on social citizenship has proposed the frequency of use of community facilities as a measure of active civic participation (Baum et al. 2000; Yeung, Passmore & Packer 2012).

## Appendix C: Quantitative methods used in this report

Outcomes presented in this report were estimated using mixed effects regression models.<sup>17</sup> These models adjust for two features of the EFY Foyer data to reduce potential bias in reported results: the longitudinal structure of the data and survey attrition over time.

### Accounting for the longitudinal structure of the data

The research design produces repeated measures from the same participants at four unevenly spaced time points. Traditional multiple regression models assume that all measured units are independent—in other words, unrelated to each other in any systematic way. This assumption is usually not valid when we ask people the same questions over time, as a participant's responses over time are likely to be more related to each other than to the responses of another participant. This clustering in the data could bias the model estimates and our conclusions. Mixed effects models directly address clustering by modelling repeated measurements as nested within individual participants.

### Addressing survey attrition over time

EFY Foyer participants dropped out of the research progressively over the four survey points, due to declining to participate or losing contact. Since the participants who drop out are measurably different from those who stay in the research<sup>18</sup>, this could bias the results if left unaddressed.

Mixed effects models use information from all respondents to estimate effects, whether they respond to later waves or not, and these estimates are valid for the entire group if data meet the missing at random (MAR) assumption. MAR means there is no pattern to the missing data once observed variables in the data associated with missingness are taken into account. For example, in the EFY Foyer

evaluation, involuntary exits, shorter stays and better mental health at entry (among other factors) were associated with survey drop-out over time. When we look at data within groups sharing the same combination of these factors, then data should be missing at random.<sup>19</sup>

Our models therefore include all participants who completed a baseline survey and were eligible for a twelve-month follow-up survey, whether they responded to that follow-up or not. Covariates in the models include predictors of missingness, such as length of stay, mode of exit, foyer, stage of foyer development, employment at entry, enrolment at entry and participant demographic characteristics. This information, in combination with an individual's outcome trends in prior surveys, helps meet the MAR assumption.<sup>20</sup>

Multiple imputation is another common method of addressing missing data problems, also under the MAR assumption. Through this method, missing data are predicted and imputed based on models of missing outcomes. These imputation models use non-missing variables included in the analytical model and auxiliary variables that predict both the outcome and missingness. Chained equations is a method of multiple imputation that iteratively models and imputes missing data, using prior imputations to model and impute other variables with missing data. Multiple imputation produces multiple datasets with different imputations based on the imputation models and random draws from an assumed distribution.

Analytical models based on multiply imputed data combine estimates from models of each imputed dataset to incorporate the error inherent in imputed data into the model. We estimated mixed effects regression models of outcomes based on imputed data<sup>21</sup> and found they produced similar results to the direct likelihood approach. We chose to present results using the direct likelihood approach because it requires fewer analytical decisions that could affect results.

<sup>17</sup> Mixed effects models are also known as multilevel models or hierarchical models, and were developed to analyse data with a hierarchical structure. In this case, repeated surveys over time are nested within an individual participant. Binary outcomes, such as employment were modelled using mixed effects logistic regression models, while scale outcomes were modelled using mixed effects linear regression models with an unstructured residual error covariance structure. Survey wave was treated as a categorical measure of time. All models are random-intercept models allowing for variation by participant.

<sup>18</sup> Young people who spent less time at foyer or had a managed exit or an eviction were less likely to respond to surveys after the baseline survey. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants, participants born overseas, and participants reporting better mental health at entry were less likely to respond to surveys after exit.

<sup>19</sup> Another way of thinking about this is that once variables associated with missingness are included in the model, the likelihood of missing is not related to the missing data itself. For example, say we are modelling mental health and participants with lower mental health are less likely to respond to a survey. If previous mental health trends and other observed factors do not predict mental health at the missing survey wave (the missing data mechanism), then the data are missing not at random (MNAR), and there is very little that can be done to address this.

<sup>20</sup> There is no direct test to determine whether data are MAR or MNAR (missing not at random), though one can perform sensitivity analyses.

<sup>21</sup> We used chained equation multiple imputation to produce 50 imputed datasets. Instead of imputing all missing variables of interest at once, we batched variables in similar analyses to produce more precise imputation models and ease computation. Multiple imputation models were tested to ensure results were robust to model-building decisions.

## Appendix D: Comparing adjusted and unadjusted outcomes

In this report, we estimate EFY Foyer outcomes data using mixed effects regression models to address survey attrition. Adjusting outcomes data typically presents a more conservative account of impact, due to differences in attrition rates across groups. We present the adjusted and unadjusted statistics in Table D.1 for reference.

Table D.1 Adjusted EFY Foyer outcomes data compared to unadjusted

Outcome	Adjusted				Unadjusted			
	Entry	Exit	Six months post-exit	Twelve months post-exit	Entry	Exit	Six months post-exit	Twelve months post-exit
<b>Employed</b>	19%	31%	39%	36%	18%	32%	42%	38%
<b>Accommodation type</b>								
Own place	7%	43%	46%	51%	6%	43%	47%	50%
Crisis accommodation /other	32%	3%	0%	2%	33%	3%	0%	2%
Parents	11%	10%	10%	13%	11%	11%	10%	14%
Friends/relatives	30%	23%	23%	18%	30%	24%	24%	17%
THM/supported housing	19%	20%	20%	16%	20%	20%	19%	16%
<b>Housing conditions</b>								
Safe	67%	88%	–	89%	67%	88%	–	89%
Meets community standards	82%	92%	–	95%	82%	92%	–	95%
Not crowded	67%	82%	–	72%	65%	82%	–	73%
Stable	44%	–	–	59%	43%	–	–	60%
<b>Mental health</b>	3.50	3.64	–	3.64	3.49	3.65	–	3.69
<b>Physical health</b>	3.04	3.22	–	3.20	3.03	3.22	–	3.20
<b>Social support</b>	3.67	3.90	–	3.81	3.67	3.89	–	3.87
<b>Civic participation</b>	2.24	2.16	–	1.97	2.22	2.17	–	1.99
<b>Confidence in ...</b>								
Education capabilities	4.00	4.24	–	4.26	3.97	4.25	–	4.26
Career management capabilities	3.66	3.97	–	4.08	3.62	4.01	–	4.09
Social skills at work	4.14	4.16	–	4.32	4.13	4.18	–	4.32
Self-management skills	4.11	4.28	–	4.43	4.09	4.30	–	4.42
Housing capabilities	2.95	3.43	–	3.20	2.96	3.43	–	3.25
Financial capabilities	3.18	3.54	–	3.22	3.17	3.53	–	3.30

Note: Some data items were not collected six months post-exit.

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