



The Opportunity Project:

Telling a New
Story
About Youth
Homelessness
in Ottawa

A Way Home Ottawa
*Initial Findings &
Recommendations*

“We cannot wait 10 years to end youth homelessness. We need to end it now for my friends for whom, in ten years, it will be too late.” –Edgar

Acknowledgements

This framework is made possible by the perspectives, insights, and hard work of a wide variety of people and organizations dedicated to ending youth homelessness in our community.

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Executive Summary

Everyday, there are hundreds of youth in Ottawa without a safe place to stay. They may be leaving home due to violent situations, struggling with mental health challenges, or simply be unable to find housing. In a community as wealthy as Ottawa, we can change this. A Way Home Ottawa is doing just that.

A Way Home Ottawa is a local coalition, convened by the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, shaped and led by youth with lived experience of homelessness, in partnership with agencies supporting youth who are homeless or at risk. After receiving 75 applicants, 7 young people were hired to form the Youth Liaison Team. Once this happened, the momentum of A Way Home Ottawa really took off.

Guided by the expertise of Dr. Jackie Kennelly and Justin Langille of Carleton University's Sociology and Anthropology Department, A Way Home Ottawa embarked on a robust qualitative research process about youth homelessness in our community. We outlined 18 different areas of expertise to engage. This resulted in running interviews and focus groups with over 70 youth with lived experience of homelessness and 50 staff members, working with youth dealing with homelessness.

Their voices and ideas are the core of how we want to move forward to prevent and end youth homelessness in Ottawa. Based on the housing first principles for youth, we developed 5 major recommendations for Ottawa:

1. **Drastically increase options for housing that is affordable - by increasing opportunities to access private market rental units for young people through housing subsidies, by increasing the availability of affordable units dedicated to youth, and by increasing income through income support programs.**
2. **Effective implementation of housing as a human right for homeless and at-risk youth, that prioritizes financial stability, and in turn housing stability, through consistent, understanding, and flexible responses from municipal and provincial programs.**
3. **Homeless and at-risk youth need a variety of resources focused on supporting their development into adulthood, including connection and access to opportunities for education, employment, and life-skills development.**
4. **Youth require a streamlined service referral process between agencies to ensure every youth retains consistent support as needed and requested by them. Youth also require increased access to supports outside of the downtown core, with a particular emphasis on school-based assessment and early intervention in order to meet youth where they are at.**
5. **Youth who are homeless and at risk of homelessness require support in gaining access to social and recreational community engagement that can enable their long-term mental and physical well being.**

At the core of these recommendations, are the repeated calls we heard for housing options for homeless youth, greater coordination of the various systems of support, so that young people are best served, and the creation of real opportunities for homeless youth to be engaged in our community. Prevention and long-term supports for homeless youth, rather than a system built on emergency response alone, underpin these calls for action.

This report is ultimately a framework of values, which will guide A Way Home Ottawa as we continue to work towards ending youth homelessness in Ottawa. These values are rooted in the words and experiences of young people who are living without homes now. As a result, we can be confident that the solutions stemming from this work truly address the challenges of homeless youth. They have spoken. We have listened.

Introduction

Corinne Sauvé, AWHO Co-Chair

The issues that this report deals with are colossal, demanding, over and above the recommendations contained within these pages. They require an evolution in the way we think about youth homelessness and social responsibility. Youth homelessness is a problem that affects not only the young people in question but also society as a whole. Young individuals who currently have no fixed address could potentially become your children's teachers, your city's workers and your society's leaders. The most sincere, touching and farsighted objective that was mentioned by members of A Way Home Ottawa's organizing committee was to ensure that each young person is accompanied by an adult who cares about them and who will remain by their side as they make the transition into adulthood. I invite you to read the following report from the perspective of a neighbour, mentor or parent.

You will notice that the solutions A Way Home Ottawa proposes are systems-level changes, as it is this type of change that the issue of homelessness requires. It is not a question of giving out second-hand clothing, non-perishable food items, and a handful of money – though we don't want to dissuade well-meaning citizens who offer this type of invaluable help to homeless youth. The most significant contribution, however, would be to remove the barriers that prevent street youth from leading the type of life that they aspire to. We must reform certain systems that contribute, due to their shortcomings, to the ongoing problem of youth homelessness. We can all use our own voice to speak up and work within our spheres of influence in order to continue to make progress in this direction.

“

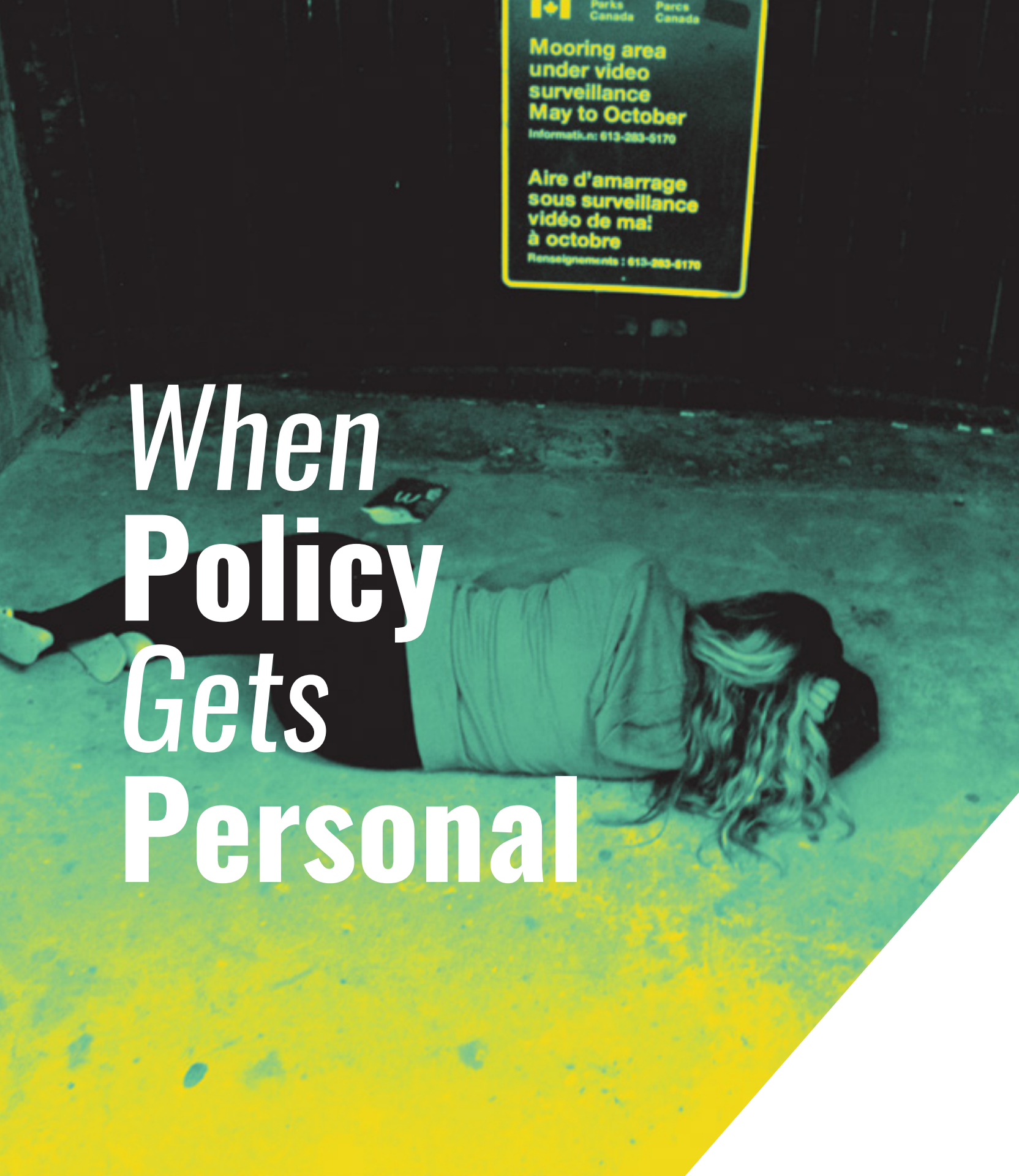
*I wasn't born this way, you see
I was dealt cards beyond my control
People have jobs because of me
At shelters, food banks, for parole
In care, detox and therapy
I contribute to make their lives whole*

*I am necessary
But not to the best of my abilities*

*I dream of the day
When I can I can act on my dreams*

*We are all opportunities untapped
We are all potential waiting to unfold
We are not a burden
We are not a cause
We are the future*

”



When Policy Gets Personal

We Want to Tell You Two Stories.

The first is a story about how Canadian leaders dramatically changed how we address housing needs in our communities. In the early 1990s, the federal government stopped funding the creation of new affordable housing units.

(Hulchanski, 2009)

Two decades later, the results of this policy experiment are in: with an average of 235,000 Canadians requiring emergency shelter each year, it is clear that not building affordable housing is no longer an option (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013). Despite a limited re-engagement with the housing sector by governments in the early 2000's, communities have simply not been able to keep up with the need created during the time that new affordable housing was not funded.

The second story we want to tell you is about a 16 year old named Tyler, whose home life is violent. Eventually, he leaves home because of this, and ends up at a downtown Ottawa shelter, far from his friends and other supports.

This is the place where our two stories collide.

With no income aside from the meager Ontario Works amount of \$681/month - of which \$376 is intended for shelter (Income Security Advocacy Centre, 2015). Tyler applies for subsidized housing in Ottawa.

And he waits. Tyler waits for an affordable housing unit, after having signed up for the Social Housing Registry wait list, and is told that it may take between 3 - 5 years before he will see a unit that is financially feasible. This is a lifetime to a 16 year old. Knowing that housing is a distant hope, Tyler gets involved in street life. He puts himself in vulnerable positions in order to get money. He is taken advantage of. He starts to lose hope.

An Overview of Youth Homelessness.

Tyler's story is not based on any one person. And yet, it is strikingly familiar to the 6000 young people, between the ages of 16 and 24 in Canada, left with nowhere to go but an emergency shelter every night. (Gaetz, et al., 2013)

Youth homelessness includes both those youth staying in an emergency shelter, and the many others who find non-institutional alternatives, such as staying with friends or acquaintances.

A national definition of youth homelessness has recently been developed that encompasses this spectrum of experience, stating that youth homelessness is "the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence" (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2016).

The pathways into youth homelessness are often intersecting and complex.

- Violence accounts for 60-70% of the reasons that young people between the ages of 16-24 leave or are forced to leave home (Gaetz, et al., 2013)
- Youth who have been involved in the child welfare system account for almost 40% of those youth who experience homelessness.
- Youth who are First Nations, Inuit, or Metis also account for 40% of youth who are homeless.
- A third area of vulnerability for youth are those identifying as LGBTQ - accounting for almost 30% of youth who are homeless. (Gaetz, et al., 2013)
- A fourth group that has increased their use of homelessness services are newcomer youth. As this is a relatively new trend, there is not yet data available indicating how common this may be. However, service providers have indicated that it is a growing challenge.
- Often, a young person may experience more than one of these, and be at even greater risk of homelessness.



Youth Homelessness in Ottawa.

While these are national numbers, we see similar trends in Ottawa. Although we do not currently know precise local numbers for risk factors such as identifying as LGBTQ or Aboriginal, we do know that a total of 903 youth stayed in emergency shelters in Ottawa at some point in 2015.

Of this number, we know that 387 youth stayed within a designated youth shelter, meaning over 500 others were in the adult shelter system in Ottawa (Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016). Service-providers observe that we do not have accurate data for the true number of youth who are homeless in Ottawa, as many more end up in alternative situations, such as sleeping outside, or staying with acquaintances.

These large numbers can be directly linked first and foremost to a lack of affordable housing and investment in safe housing options for young people (Gaetz, 2013). While many other factors affect why youth become homeless, at the base of many of

these issues is the lack of opportunities to keep young people safely off the streets before street life becomes overwhelming and exploitative. Research shows that young people can become entrenched in street life within two months, if there is not early intervention (Worthington & MacLaurin, B. J., 2009). Chronically homeless youth become chronically homeless adults (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008). The best way to stop adult homelessness is to stop youth homelessness.

However, the needs of youth do vary from those of adults who are homeless, and youth homelessness requires a different response for a number of reasons. As Gaetz indicates, one of the major reasons for a youth-specific response is that when a youth is forced to leave home, this departure often means a break from their primary support network - their family (Gaetz, 2014a).

Further, youth are still becoming adults. They are in the middle of developing the skills that adults typically already have to successfully engage in their environment. Youth have often not yet acquired the life skills needed for living alone. Things like knowing one's rights when it comes to rental agreements, how to set up home internet service, taking care of a home, budgeting, cooking healthy meals - these skills are often taught by families as youth begin to live independently. If youth are separated from

this support, they often have few resources to draw from to help them develop these key skills. Experiencing homelessness in the middle of this key period of development can create a significant gap for youth as they become adults. They may well miss out on a period of learning from examples of healthy independence, without role models or resources (Gaetz, 2014a).

Given this, ending homelessness for youth means more than finding housing. It means supporting young people's transitions into adulthood. This includes everything from housing and life skills development to supporting meaningful youth engagement with the wider community.

We can all play a part in this.

Research shows that young people can become entrenched in street life within two months, if there is not early intervention.

(Worthington & MacLaurin, B. J., 2009)



We're Telling a New Story.

Building Momentum Towards Ending Youth Homelessness

Across Canada right now, momentum is building towards creating new strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness in a lasting way.

Federal action is being taken as we move towards the creation of a National Housing Strategy. Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy has highlighted youth who are homeless and at risk of homelessness as a key sub-population requiring unique solutions and supports.

Locally, the City of Ottawa has also highlighted youth as a unique subpopulation requiring a different response in their ten year plan to end homelessness in Ottawa. United Way Ottawa has prioritized decreasing youth homelessness, investing in programs and initiatives that help get homeless youth off the streets.

These policy directions and renewed commitments by our leaders to better address young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness are the backdrop for the creation of A Way Home Canada - a national initiative aimed at supporting

the prevention and ending of youth homelessness in Canada, through the development of local community plans.

A Way Home Canada is firmly rooted in recent research demonstrating that housing first - a housing intervention that provides housing and supports for a person who is homeless, regardless of their employment, substance use, or other barriers - is an effective and evidence-based approach to ending homelessness (Goering, Veldhuizen, Watson, Adair, Kopp, Latimer, Nelson, MacNaughton, Streiner & Aubry 2014).

Stephen Gaetz has developed a unique housing first approach for youth that takes elements of the housing first model for adults and adapts it to the needs of young people.

A key element of housing first for youth is the need to shift away from our current crisis-oriented, emergency response to homelessness.

For almost thirty years, Canadian housing policy has increasingly been aimed at emergency responses rather than preventative or long-term housing stability measures. This type of response has turned homelessness into a chronic crisis in Canada. We are perpetually responding with emergency measures, such as shelters and crisis support.

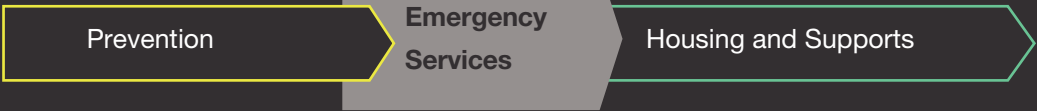
Yet, the reality of homelessness is not a sudden, or unexpected, event. It is a predictable and logical progression of events, in a landscape with no affordable housing and minimal income support. Leading youth homelessness scholar Stephen Gaetz compares the response to homelessness to that of other emergency disasters, such as the wildfires of Kelowna, B.C. and Slave Lake, Alberta, resulting in massive displacement of people.

"But, imagine for a second that the individuals and families in Kelowna or Slave Lake were still living in hockey arenas or motels all these years later.

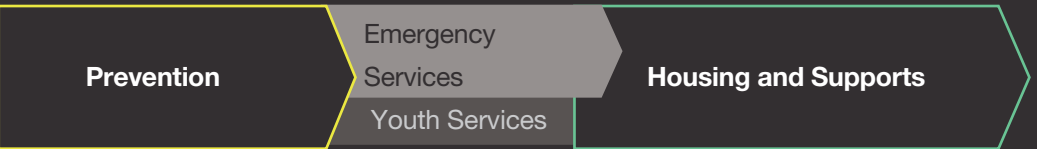
That would seem shocking and absurd and most of us would see this as the complete failure of our emergency response— that we really, really let these people down."
(Gaetz, 2014b)

It means that the resources we invest in the system go from the current response to the future response featured on the next page.

Current Response



Future Response



Healthy Transitions	
Supports to families and parents	Family reunification
Multi-system collaboration	Targeted responses for specific populations
Improved access to health services	Expansion of the housing continuum
Learning, training, and employment	Harm reduction model approach
Education and awareness	Rapid rehousing of youth
Outreach Supports	

(Province of Alberta, 2015).

Housing First for Youth and the Creation of A Way Home Ottawa.

Housing First has become a guiding approach in responding to adult homelessness in Canada. However, the work of A Way Home has largely involved an emerging housing first framework for youth (Gaetz, 2014a). A Way Home Ottawa (AWHO) is the coalition developing this response for youth in Ottawa.

We are now joining 13 other communities across the country working to end youth homelessness through the development and implementation of community-wide, coordinated plans to end youth homelessness. The momentum is building.

AWHO was created in July, 2015, when several youth-serving agencies, convened by the Alliance to End Homelessness, began to receive United Way Ottawa support to develop a coordinated, community strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness. In addition to prioritizing housing as an intervention for youth homelessness, AWHO also emphasizes increased prevention and long-term supports for youth, while moving away from the emergency intervention model of the shelter system that currently exists.

As part of their “Poverty to Possibility” Priority Investment area - with a specific goal to decrease youth homelessness in Ottawa - United Way Ottawa is granting two years of funding for these initial stages of AWHO. By October of 2015, the Alliance to End Homelessness, acting as the backbone agency for the coalition, hired a Project Manager (PM) for the initiative. The early Working Group of agencies expanded and became a Steering Committee, forming a coalition dedicated to working together to end youth homelessness in a coordinated way.

Housing First Youth Principles

1. Immediate access to housing with no preconditions.

Housing First involves providing young people with assistance in finding and obtaining safe, secure and permanent housing that meets their needs as quickly as possible. Key to the Housing First philosophy is that individuals and families are not required to first demonstrate that they are 'ready' for housing. At the same time, housing is not conditional on sobriety or abstinence. Program participation is also voluntary. This approach runs in contrast to what has been the orthodoxy of 'treatment first' approaches whereby people experiencing homelessness are placed in emergency services and must address certain personal issues (addictions, mental health) prior to being deemed 'ready' for housing (having received access to health care or treatment). Immediate access to appropriate housing and supports is particularly crucial for young people and every effort should be made to divert them from long stays in emergency shelters.

2. Youth choice and self-determination.

Housing First is a rights-based, client-centred approach that emphasizes client choice in terms of housing and supports.

- **Housing** — Young people are able to exercise some choice regarding the location and type of housing they receive (e.g. neighbourhood, congregate setting, scattered site, etc.). Choice may be constrained by local availability and affordability. This may mean that some young people want independent scattered site housing, but others may feel that congregate transitional housing models better suit their needs.

- **Supports** — Young people have choices in terms of what services they receive and when to start using services.

- **Access to opportunities for education and training** — For a long-term and sustainable impact on the lives of young people, they should be encouraged and supported to (re) engage in education and, where appropriate, employment training.

- **Harm Reduction** — One of the consequences of such experiences is higher levels of substance use and addiction. For young people with addictions challenges, a recovery orientation also means access to a harm reduction environment. Harm reduction aims to reduce the risks and harmful effects associated with substance use and addictive behaviours for the individual, the community and society as a whole, without requiring abstinence. However, as part of the spectrum of choices that underlies both Housing First and harm reduction, people may desire and choose 'abstinence only' housing. A core philosophy of virtually all approaches to Housing First is that there should be no requirement of sobriety or abstinence.

3. Positive youth development orientation.

The focus of Housing First for youth is not merely a successful transition to independent living, but rather, is on supporting a healthy transition to adulthood. Accommodation and supports must first be designed and implemented in recognition of the developmental needs and challenges of youth and second, foster and enable a transition to adulthood and wellness based on a positive strengths-based approach.

4. Individualized and client-driven supports.

A client-driven approach recognizes that all young people are unique individuals and so are their needs. Once housed, some people will need few, if any, supports while other people will need supports for the rest of their lives. Supports may address housing stability, health and mental health needs and life skills. It is important to remember that a central philosophy of Housing First is that people have access to the supports they need, if they choose. Access to housing is not conditional upon accepting a particular kind of service. At the same time, a youth-focused approach to Housing First must be:

- **Flexible in terms of time frames.** Providing supports for one, two or even three years is unlikely to be adequate for young people, especially those under 18 and/or those who have experienced trauma or who have more complicated developmental, mental health and disability challenges.

- **Adaptable based on the evolving needs of a young person.** Individualized plans of care will need to take account of developmental changes, capabilities and capacities, maturity and level of independence.

5. Social and community integration.

Part of the Housing First strategy is to help people integrate into their community and this requires socially supportive engagement and the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities.

If people are housed and become or remain socially isolated, the stability of their housing may be compromised. Key features of social and community integration include:

- **Housing models that do not stigmatize or isolate clients.** The kinds of housing a young person needs may evolve over time. Those who work with homeless youth regularly remark that for young people – particularly younger teens – loneliness and isolation are constant concerns that can have an impact on reintegration.

- **Opportunities for social and cultural engagement in order to develop positive social relationships and enhance social inclusion.**

- **Support for family reconnection, driven by the needs and desires of the young person.** Though many young people leave home because of family conflict, family and community supports will continue to be important to most youth, even those who become homeless (Winland, 2013).

- **Opportunities for engagement in meaningful activities through employment, vocational and recreational activities**

(Source: Retrieved from A Safe and Decent Place to Live: Towards a Housing First Framework for Youth, pp. 10-13, Gaetz, 2014a)

Youth Voices Leading the Change.

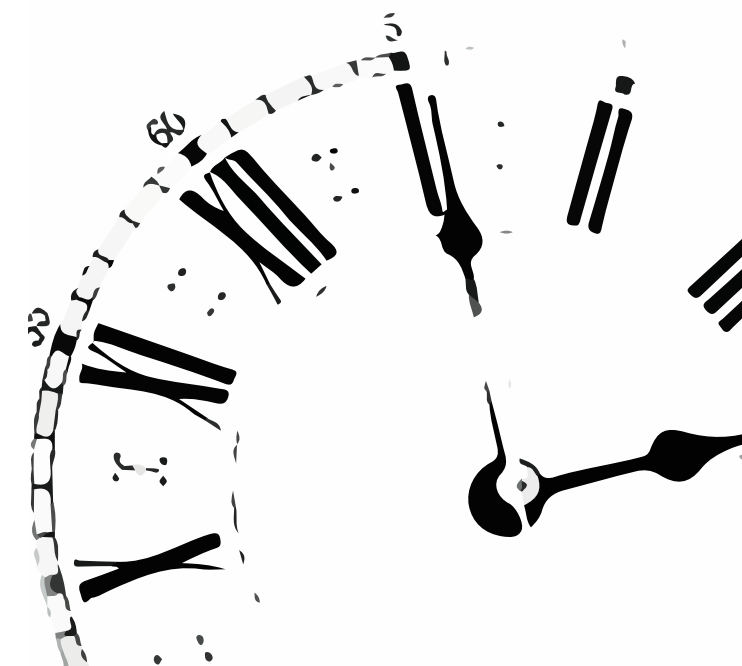
The members of A Way Home Ottawa have recognized that an essential element to the creation of a successful local plan to end youth homelessness is meaningful youth engagement.

Youth have played a central role in our process, both through leadership opportunities and widespread consultation. Youth input and partnership in leading this plan has in many ways driven the energy and momentum of AWHO.

Shortly after hiring the Project Manager, youth engagement was highlighted by the Steering Committee as the top priority. A young person, with lived experience, and who had previously worked with some of the agencies, was immediately hired by the Project Manager, and together they went to numerous youth agencies to speak with groups of youth with lived experience. This was an opportunity both to inform the youth about AWHO, and ask how youth could be engaged in the process most effectively.

The response by youth with lived experience across the city was that a team model was key. Youth needed to be hired in a way that recognized some of the challenges to engagement they may face (e.g., transportation support, outside of 9-5 hours). In addition, youth wanted to be engaged as members of the Steering Committee, not as a sub-group. We heard them and the Youth Liaison Team was born.

After doing this extensive outreach to youth with lived experience, AWHO received 75 applications from youth. Of this impressive group, seven were hired. These youth have been incredible listeners and advocates for their peers. Their voices have created urgency for our work in a way that little else could. There is no doubt that the reason that our recommendations are steeped in the words and stories of youth with lived experience of homelessness in Ottawa is this group.



60-70%

Violence accounts for 60-70% of the reasons that young people between the ages of 16-24 leave or are forced to leave home (Gaetz, et al., 2013)

40%

Youth who have been involved in the child welfare system account for almost 40% of those youth who experience homelessness.

The best way to stop adult homelessness is to stop youth homelessness.”



A Framework and Moving Forward.

The first year of our work has been focused largely on listening. We have listened to the voices of youth, first and foremost, who have past or present lived experience of homelessness.

They are the experts of their own experience and have provided immense advice and ideas about what works and what can be improved about the support systems for homeless youth. Our second priority has been to listen to the perspectives of staff members from agencies working with youth who are homeless. The result is that we have created a document firmly rooted in the words, perspectives, and ideas of those most closely impacted by youth homelessness.

The value of A Way Home Ottawa being able to hold sector-wide consultations with these community members is that we can see the common threads of what is working and what is not. We hear the success stories, and recognize how they can be connected with other success stories to make a larger impact. We hear of collective challenges, which, with strategic planning, we could respond to more effectively. The work of widespread consultation this past year is paving the way for us to move forward with developing concrete solutions in the coming year.

Below is a chart highlighting some of the key components of our work this past year and moving forward. This document serves as a framework, strongly grounded in the voices and solutions of our community.



Consultation Process

Methodology

While the youth services sector in Ottawa is smaller than the adult sector, it still operates across multiple areas of expertise. Much of the work that A Way Home Ottawa is intent on doing is to find better ways to coordinate across these silos and work more effectively together, while still drawing on the unique skills and experience of subject matter experts. As we began to outline our consultation process, we identified 18 different sectors within the youth sector, featured below.

Aboriginal Agencies	Families and Children	Rural Services
Adult Shelters	Housing Providers	School Boards
Community Coalitions	Justice Sector	Sex Workers
Community Health & Resource Centres	LGBTQ Services	Substance Use
Developmental Services	Mental Health Services	Youth Shelters
Employment Supports	Newcomers	
	Recreation Services	

In partnership with Carleton University’s Sociology and Anthropology Department, under the supervision of Dr. Jackie Kennelly, and with the assistance of graduate student Justin Langille, we developed a process in which we consulted with individuals from each of the categories above. We aimed to conduct one youth focus group and one staff focus group per category, as well as holding in-depth interviews with staff members in these organizations.

Much of what we have learned this past year is that this work is based very much upon the development of strong relationships. We recognize that we are engaging with individuals from vulnerable populations. There is often a hiddenness to their experience, due to the multiple areas of vulnerability they may face. Many have different pieces of identity, which intersect, and can increase their vulnerability. It takes time to develop trust with people who are vulnerable.

Year 1 Framework Development	Year 2 Detailed Plan Development	Year 3 & Beyond Implementation
Establish coalition of youth-serving organizations	Expand coalition members outside sector	Move forward with Plan’s strategies (as driven by working groups)
Youth engagement & leadership	Build community awareness and engagement	Continue community engagement
Build relationships and community connections	Develop strategies and activities for priorities through key working groups	Report on progress
Broad consultation	Establish shared indicators	Learn and improve
Develop shared understanding of vision & priorities	Develop detailed plan	
Identify needs and opportunities		

It is within this context that AWHO sees ways we need to move forward. While we have heard from a wide variety of experiences, including youth who experience significant vulnerability, we have not had an opportunity to hear from several crucial perspectives. We will continue to do the work of engaging youth who are homeless and First Nations, Inuit and Metis in Ottawa.

As well, we want to seek out further opportunities to hear from youth who are homeless and identify as LGBTQ +. Finally, and particularly in light of the work done to support newcomers and refugees in our community, we realize we need to hear further from newcomer youth who have dealt with homelessness.

As we have learned about the value of relationships in the consultation process,

Dr. Kennelly and Justin Langille trained the Youth Liaison Team members to interview their peers. The content from these interviews often yielded some of the most rich insights in this process. Finally, we sent out surveys for both staff and youth within the youth homelessness sector, examining system successes and areas for improvement.

Overall, these consultations resulted in our speaking with over 70 youth with lived experience through focus groups, world cafes, and peer interviews. We completed over 30 interviews and focus groups, which led to hearing from over 50 staff members who work with youth dealing with homelessness in Ottawa. Now, these voices are informing how we can respond most effectively to youth homelessness in our community, through a housing first approach.

Our consultations revolved around 4 major questions for participants:

Who are youth who are homeless? (e.g., age, race, gender, other identifying factors)

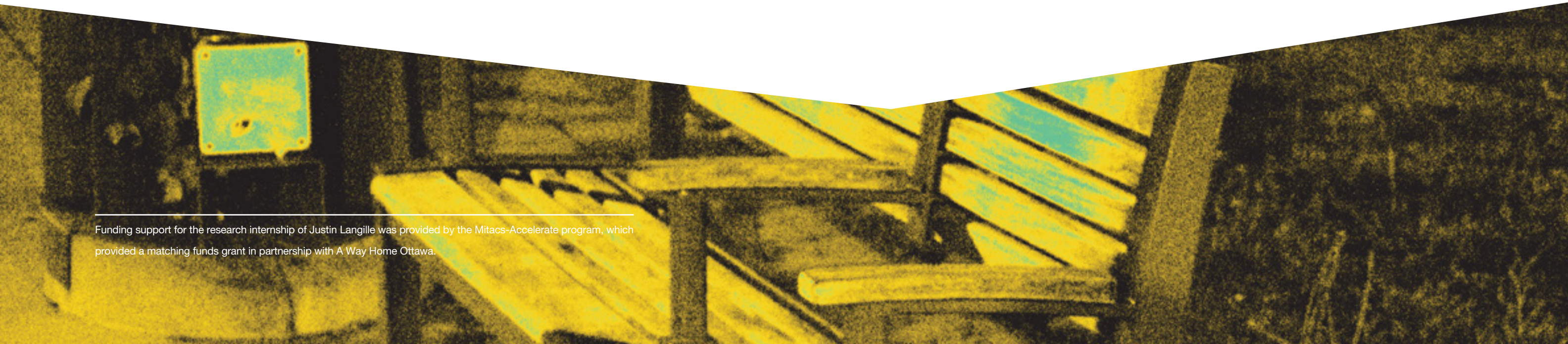
What is not working well with the current system?

What is working about the current system response in Ottawa?

What can we do to prevent and end youth homelessness in Ottawa?

The majority of these consultations were in focus group format, with discussions later professionally transcribed and then analyzed by a small research team that were part of the Steering Committee of AWHO. As the information was sifted through, a number of recurring themes began to emerge.

This report focuses on these themes. Given both AWHO’s mandate for a housing first approach for youth, and the work already done on this nationally, we decided that using the five principles of housing first for youth, as developed by Stephen Gaetz, was a helpful way to organize what we heard through the consultations and recommendations of AWHO.



Funding support for the research internship of Justin Langille was provided by the Mitacs-Accelerate program, which provided a matching funds grant in partnership with A Way Home Ottawa.

“The pathways into youth homelessness are often intersecting and complex.”

LGBTQ

A third area of vulnerability for youth are those identifying as LGBTQ - accounting for almost 30% of youth who are homeless.

(Gaetz, et al., 2013)

Indigenous

Youth who are First Nations, Inuit, or Metis also account for 40% of youth who are homeless.



A Way Home Ottawa Priority Recommendations

After the extensive consultation outlined above, we have developed a series of priority recommendations that have emerged from the perspectives of youth who have lived experience of homelessness and staff working with youth in the Ottawa community. These recommendations align with the housing first principles for youth, developed by Dr. Stephen Gaetz (featured above). It is important to note that Gaetz's principles were designed with the understanding that housing first is a model that is flexible. It must be adapted to meet the needs of youth first, rather than as a concrete set of rules to be followed to the letter.

HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH PRINCIPLE #1

Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements.

“It’s hard to maintain a job when you don’t have a place to go to. I know I have a job and I can pay my bills but I don’t have a place to go to because no one has given me a chance to show them I’m not some immature kid. It’s hard to maintain anything when you’re homeless because it’s one more giant thing to worry about. Where am I going to sleep tonight? Where am I going to put my stuff? It’s really difficult to maintain.” -Young person describing the necessity of housing first

WHAT WE HEARD

1. There are not enough affordable options for housing for youth in Ottawa.

“Nowadays, you can pay \$900 for a cockroach-infested, hole in the wall, you know? ...that’s more than 90% of a disability cheque and 140% of a welfare cheque.” -Young Person with past experience of homelessness

2. There is little affordable housing stock set aside for youth, and access to the private rental market is difficult without additional income for rent.

The number one challenge that we heard from youth and staff alike, is that there are simply not enough affordable housing options for youth in Ottawa. The waiting list for subsidized housing varies between 3 - 5 years for youth. In addition to the lack of subsidized units, private market

rental access is nearly impossible, given the current amount of social assistance available to youth (i.e. Ontario Works/ OW). For a single person, OW amounts to \$681/ month - \$376 of which is intended for shelter. In contrast, the average Ottawa rent for a bachelor apartment at the end of 2015 was \$801/ month (ISAC, 2015, CMHC, 2015).

This also does not account for the challenge of saving enough income for first and last month’s rent, not to mention the actual cost of living beyond rent. Further, youth under 18 years of age who are experiencing limitations to work are unable to access the Ontario Disability Support Program, which offers recipients larger amounts than OW. Given these realities, homelessness can become inevitable without additional income.

3. Youth require a variety of housing solutions, in differing geographic locations, from supportive and transitional housing to independent living opportunities that align with both the diversity of youth, and the spectrum of housing that youth go through in transitioning to adulthood.

Supportive housing options for youth who are homeless, or have additional needs (such as involvement with the justice or mental health system) are at full capacity,

and transitional housing options are limited in Ottawa. Further, transitional housing is as the name suggests - a non-permanent housing solution - a transition to permanent housing. Young people are required to leave after a certain period of time.

In addition, many youth described the challenge of finding supportive housing in locations of their choice. Often, supportive and transitional housing would be far outside of their neighbourhood and by extension, their community. This was often described as removing young people from their natural supports, and causing even greater instability. This was particularly exacerbated by rural and suburban youth who were often forced downtown to access both emergency shelters and services.

“I heard that once a girl goes homeless, pregnancy rates go up. If she gets pregnant she will get housing faster.” -Young woman describing impression of housing access process

“A lot of people do that. That’s a choice people have to make: get a roommate or get pregnant.” -Second young woman describing impression of housing access process

4. **There are systemic barriers unique to youth accessing housing, including the way that we assess young people’s housing priority status and the way in which age determines what service young people are able to access, with little transition between services.**

Currently, the Social Housing Registry prioritizes housing need based on how many consecutive days a person has been in the shelter. We already understand that this does not correspond with the patterns of youth homelessness. Youth tend to be much more transitory, often using a shelter intermittently, as home life dynamics may change. As well, many youth do not stay in shelters at all. Given the vulnerability of a young person in an adult shelter, many stay with friends or acquaintances when leaving

home, also known as “couch-surfing” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2016). This means that they will receive very low priority for subsidized housing, as they are not registered as homeless, but indeed still are homeless.

Finally, many youth experience age cut-offs as they move through the housing system. Transitional and supportive housing units intended for youth have an age cut-off, and these services are often bottlenecked with young people ready to leave, but unable to afford or find places to live that are appropriate. Further, these cut-offs, which occur literally overnight with the advent of a birthday, do little for setting youth up for success and stability.

OTTAWA RECOMMENDATION

Drastically increase options for housing that is affordable - by increasing opportunities to access affordable market rental housing for young people through housing subsidies, by increasing the availability of affordable units dedicated to youth, and by increasing income through income support programs.

Increase access to private market rental opportunities through the dedication of affordable units to youth, and increase financial resources for housing, including more rent supplement opportunities for youth.

In order to improve the likelihood that youth receive housing, we recommend that the City develop a mandate to reserve a certain number of private market units for youth, amongst the group of landlords with which the City is currently engaged. In addition, we recommend that new investments be made in providing rent supplements and housing allowances for youth, so that youth can choose the housing option that is best for them. Finally, we recommend that the shelter portion of social assistance rates be raised to reflect the average market rent.

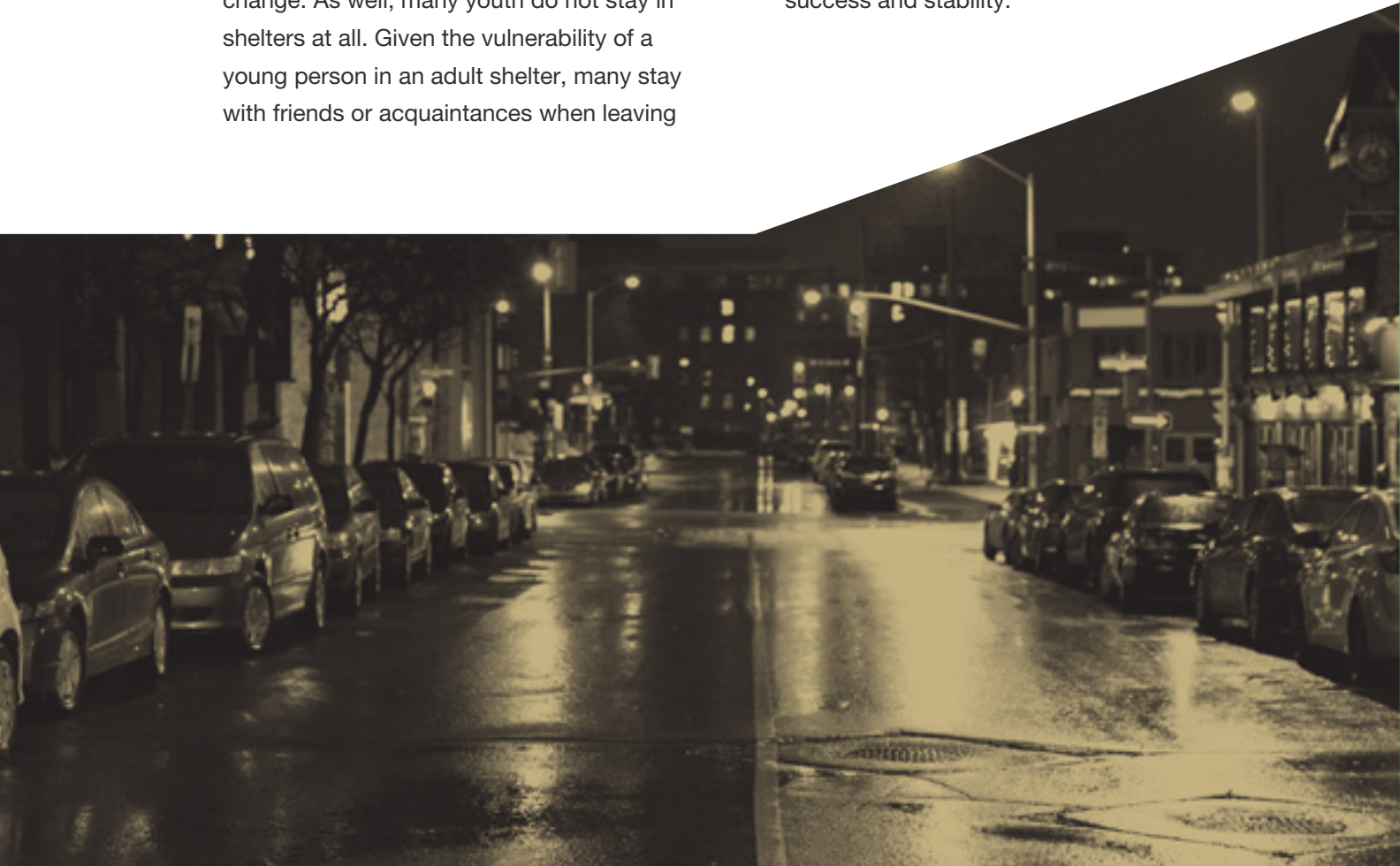
Increase transitional housing and permanent supportive housing options for youth.

Investment must be made in prioritizing affordable housing opportunities for youth. It is clear from the research that there is no

one-size-fits-all form of housing that works best for youth. A variety of options at various points during a young person’s development is key. New money for increasing permanent supportive and transitional housing settings in differing geographic locations is required.

Prioritize youth in housing application process and provide on-going housing supports for young people aging out of youth services to maintain housing.

We recommend that the housing priority status for youth be adapted to reflect the unique nature of youth homelessness in Ottawa. This includes maintaining homelessness priority status on the Social Housing Registry waiting list while in transitional housing – as it is a non-permanent housing solution. Further, we call for increased investment in housing or rental supports for youth leaving supportive or transitional housing due to age restrictions.



HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH PRINCIPLE #2

Youth choice and self-determination. Housing First is a rights-based, client centered approach that emphasizes client choice in terms of housing and supports.

WHAT WE HEARD

1. Lack of flexibility of municipal and provincial services for youth.

“If we discharge a student from the program, we are required to contact their OW worker to let them know. So they’re disqualified from LEAP (Learning, Employment and Parenting)” -Staff Person

2. Current policies are very rigid and unresponsive to the particular challenges youth face in accessing housing and supports.

This comment from a staff person working with young moms was a common refrain in our consultations. Youth frequently cite little or no understanding from Ontario Works staff about the

crises or instability that often accompany young people who have left home. We heard that this lack of understanding often resulted in young people losing benefits and income - seemingly a “one strike, you’re out” policy. The above quote highlights how certain OW programs require the recipient to stay in school or be employed.

Another staff person commented, “These youth get into a situation where their money is withheld and then they can’t pay rent and then thatliving situation is short-lived.” This income is key to paying rent, and losing this benefit because of a crisis means losing housing, which only further pushes a young person into crisis. This does not reflect an understanding that housing is a human right, first and foremost. Regardless of condition, youth need to be able to trust in consistent, stable housing access.

“I’m moving into a new place, I have nothing. I have no furniture. ‘Karen, can you help me? And sometimes it’s yes, and sometimes it’s no. That’s not standardized.” -Staff Member regarding speaking with Ontario Works

3. Ontario Works Support Workers are inconsistent in their provision of supports for different youth.

While we heard about some phenomenal Ontario Works Support Workers who are doing everything they can to support young people, we also heard of many youth

having very negative experiences, with completely different access to resources. Either way, youth and staff alike described an inconsistent response from OW. Without extensive knowledge of the system, many were unable to obtain resources that others could, and this was perceived as entirely dependent on the worker.

Further, youth also discussed their negative personal experiences associated with Ontario Works, “I think... it’s interesting. Ontario Works, social assistance, welfare, whatever you want to call it, it’s one of the most useful resources but it’s also in many ways the most demeaning.” -Young Person. This kind of experience with housing and supports demonstrates a serious lack of rights-based services. Attempting to access what a young person in crisis is entitled to as a human right should not result in humiliation.

“I’ve seen women cry because they hit their 18th birthday and so-and-so could no longer work with them and that literally happens overnight that they’re locked off from something that they’ve seen as supportive for a long time.” -Staff Person

“A lot of people do that. That’s a choice people have to make: get a roommate or get pregnant.” -Second young woman describing impression of housing access process

4. **Age cut-offs for youth transitioning to the adult system are far too abrupt, people don't become "ready" to be an adult overnight, as the system currently dictates.**

Similar to the age cut-offs for supportive and transitional housing, age-cut-offs occur for services as well, and often those services are delivered by a particular staff person who has built a strong relationship over time with a young person.

We consistently heard that there was little transition as these relationships ended and youth transitioned from a youth service to an adult service. For a young person who has been disconnected from their family and

other support networks, these relationships can be foundational. The experience of being a youth does not end overnight, yet the housing and support system treats youth like it does.

Greater system flexibility is required to respond most effectively to youth, but the need to ease transition into the adult service system is evident. In particular, Transitional Aged Youth (TAY), those aged 16-17 years of age are at particular risk of falling through the cracks of the system. At 16, one can no longer access child welfare services. Yet, until a youth turns 18, that young person is unable to receive any of the adult support services as well.

OTTAWA RECOMMENDATION

Effective implementation of housing as a human right for homeless and at-risk youth, that prioritizes financial stability, and in turn housing stability, through consistent, understanding, and flexible responses from municipal and provincial programs.

Government services such as Ontario Works must adopt a human-rights based approach to housing for youth, in order to ensure rental amounts and financial support will not be revoked if youth are not able to attend school or work for valid reasons, so as to maintain their housing in a time of crisis.

We recommend that reducing housing crisis through government services become a priority for supporting youth at risk, and that greater awareness of youth-specific barriers and challenges is developed for staff supporting youth.

A youth lens or framework should be adopted when engaging with young clients, prioritizing consistent, youth responsive support which emphasizes access and choice within available resources

It is important that services for youth are designed to allow for maximum choice in a consistent manner. Youth should not need to hear about other resources through friends

or acquaintances - these options should be provided for youth, so as to empower their choice in what they need to move forward.

Services for youth need to better account for the transition period between youth services and adult services, so that a young person's progress is not compromised as they age.

Similar to the need for housing transition supports as youth age out of a youth-specific support service, resources need to be allocated to provide better transitions for them, including connecting them to adult services, and allowing for flexibility in reducing their use of youth services.

HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH PRINCIPLE #3

Positive youth development orientation: Practice is not simply focused on meeting basic needs, but on supporting a young person's transition to adulthood.

WHAT WE HEARD

1. **There are limited opportunities for education, employment, and life-skills development that meet youth where they are at.**

"School is really scary for me because I want to be a doctor. And so I've got to go to college and go to university...and I can't do that if I don't have the money. I can't have a future if I'm trying to save up all the money that doesn't go to rent, with welfare, but sometimes I inevitably have to spend it and I get \$260 a month, without spending that on rent, and that's not enough.... once you go to postsecondary you can't be on welfare anymore ...and I keep trying to get a job and no one will hire me. So, it's really terrifying because all I want to do is go to post-secondary. I'm scared that I won't get to because my time is running out and there's nothing I can do about it." Young person who is homeless

2. **Youth and staff talked about their difficulties in accessing education and employment given the particular challenges that youth who are homeless face.**

Ottawa is a city with three universities, and two major colleges. Yet, we heard from homeless youth who live here that they did not see how they could access higher education financially. The challenges of obtaining Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) funds were perceived as too great. Without parents or guardians involved in their life, youth described the systemic challenges of not being able to apply for the funds in the first place, as well as the reality that OSAP often underfunds the real costs of living.

For a youth experiencing precarious housing, there is no financial buffer to afford items like textbooks, or computer software required for a post-secondary program. This must be addressed if we are to expect youth who are coming out of homelessness to attend school.

As well, the need for flexible employers and employment settings was clear throughout our consultations with youth. Many barriers, unique to youth who are homeless, made getting employment very difficult.

Limited access to e-mail or a phone to contact an employer were cited as challenges that youth faced in applying for work. Many youth experience a day which revolves around the schedule of addressing basic needs such as food served at specific times during the day at shelters, or meeting with workers. These sorts of things make regular, consistent work schedules difficult to access. As well, indirect costs related to employment such as transportation or work clothing were cited as challenges for youth who are homeless.

"So that's another experience with me is I had people constantly at my neck about, 'You're not doing this right, you're not doing that right!!' And I'm like, why are you judging me? You know, I'm just, I'm trying, I've never had my own apartment before, I've got all these mental health issues I'm trying to deal with, I'm trying to get my life straight." - Youth describing living independently for the first time

3. **Youth living on their own for the first time have often not had the chance to learn the life skills needed for independent living.**

Employment is an incredible challenge for youth experiencing homelessness. The address of a shelter often precludes a young person being considered for employment positions, and the disconnection from their family or primary support network also often means a lack of modelling of what it is to look for employment (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013, 250). Any plan to prevent and end youth homelessness means finding supports for young people who are homeless to engage with pathways leading to long-term employment. It is not enough for young people to enter minimum-wage jobs which could resign them to poverty in the long-term. Real opportunities for successful adulthood means supporting youth who are homeless into education and employment-training opportunities (Gaetz, 2014a).

OTTAWA RECOMMENDATION

Homeless and at-risk youth need a variety of resources focused on supporting their development into adulthood, including connection and access to opportunities for education, employment, and life-skills development.

Create more partnerships with local post-secondary schools and high school programs aimed at supporting youth at-risk and who are homeless to pursue further education.

The challenges facing youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness require an alternative approach to education. Expecting a youth in this position to attend a standard school day, when basic survival is a daily quest, is not always possible. Encouragingly, excellent programs in response to this challenge have developed in Ottawa, such as the Ottawa Carleton District School Board’s and Ottawa Catholic School Board’s teachers working at drop-in centres for youth who are homeless. We strongly recommend the expansion of these sorts of programs to the post-secondary level as well. These programs succeed in recognizing that the timelines and schedules of a youth who is homeless will differ, as youth work around getting access to food, shelter for the night, and other necessary supports.

Education should be a main priority for service providers supporting youth who are homeless and coming out of homelessness, and programs must be responsive to their unique needs.

Create more employment-focused programs designed to support youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, which address the specific barriers that these youth often face with employment.

Traditional employment settings may not work for many youth fighting for basic survival. Therefore, we recommend continued expansion of employment programs that provide financial incentives for employers who hire homeless youth, and create environments accommodating their unique challenges. This could mean employment accommodations such as flexible contracts, perhaps with immediate cash payment opportunities, as a bank account is commonly not accessible for many homeless youth. Recent initiatives such as HireUp - an online platform advertising jobs specifically targeted at youth who are homeless by national employers -- are promising.

Provide life-skills development classes and opportunities, aimed at youth living on their own for the first time.

We heard again and again that being forced to leave home as a young person means an interruption in the development of independent living skills. For youth who experience homelessness to become thriving adults, they need the supports to develop these skills. Budgeting, cooking, cleaning, and building healthy relationships are all key pieces of growing up. Setting young people up with housing is not enough for long-term success if we do not follow through with further supports. Ottawa has a variety of these sorts of programs, and youth frequently commented on how these were essential for successfully living on one’s own for the first time. We recommend investment in these programs to expand their impact.



HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH PRINCIPLE #4

Individualized and client driven supports.

WHAT WE HEARD

1. Youth have limited knowledge of available resources and system confusion.

“To me, it was staggering the amount of other youth who didn’t have any family or literally didn’t have a choice to be on the streets and literally, had no clue where to turn.” Young person describing entering the system

Youth repeatedly discussed not knowing where to go if they ended up without a safe place. We heard many times that youth often did not have any idea of what to do, where to go, or who they could speak with if they became homeless or were in crisis. Many commented that the emergency housing system was confusing, citing the differing age cut offs for various services. As well, there were many comments about how “bureaucratic” the process to get support was. By this, participants cited examples of the forms required to receive services, and needing to do new forms with similar processes at different agencies - seemingly sharing the same information again and again.

“....the coordination of services -it would be so good if there was one central location to send people.... We’re left being the detectives, and learning the system.... a parent or a kid who is in crisis and that’s mostly why they throw their hands up....forget it, it doesn’t work.” - School Staff person describing the confusion of accessing support

2. There is a lack of communication between agencies, and youth end up getting bounced around.

Many staff cited the strong networks between individual staff members of agencies. However, these connections did not often transfer at an organization-wide level. Often, as an employee moves to another position, professional connections are severed, and communication between agencies once again becomes difficult. This ultimately puts youth in the position of doing the work to get service.

“It’s crazy that they give us a bunch of professionals and expect that it’s all going to work out and yet when it’s at its worst you can’t ask for help.” Young woman describing the need for support outside of formal service hours

3. Youth experience crisis outside of support service hours, with minimal opportunities for accessing supports.

Youth and staff alike commented on the need to meet youth in their “window” of need. Many times, when in crisis, youth connect with supports, particularly regarding mental health and substance use challenges. However, the wait lists for these supports are long, and by the time a young person can access them, this “window” may

be closed. As one young woman put it, “So, when you wait for like a month to see a guidance counsellor, do you have any idea of how many things have happened in that time?” Immediate access is key to meeting youth where they are at. Programs that provided same-day mental health crisis support, in particular, were mentioned repeatedly as the most helpful. Part of the strength of these, according to school staff, was that youth left with a concrete action plan, and tools to carry this out.

“Because it’s easy, you know you can walk in. For most communities, it’s close. They also walk out with the plan. So you know it’s not going to solve the issues but it’s a plan and you can tell them that. You know you can go and you can be there for half an hour ...they’ll give you some tips and then come up with a plan with you at least for the short term you can walk away with something significant.” - School staff member describing YSB’s walk-in counselling program

Further, location was often mentioned as a significant barrier for youth to access supports. Rural and suburban youth found transit very difficult to get to downtown - where the majority of services are located. Both the centralized hub of services in one major geographic area, and limited transit services, were described as significant barriers for youth accessing support.

OTTAWA RECOMMENDATION

Youth require a streamlined service referral process between agencies to ensure every youth retains consistent support as needed and requested by them. Youth also require increased access to supports outside of the downtown core, with a particular emphasis on school-based assessment and early intervention in order to meet youth where they are at.

Develop a standard, city-wide, inter-agency referral protocol for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We recommend the development of a common access point for youth to connect to services, that is widely known by service providers, City staff, and school officials. As well, we recommend that agencies and school boards work together to develop a standardized protocol for youth who are homeless, so the response becomes increasingly consistent and youth are not referred from one agency to another.

Explore solutions to developing an inter-agency team approach for supporting homeless youth, so that no young person falls through the cracks.

We strongly recommend a protocol be developed to ensure follow through and communication between multiple agencies involved with each youth coming into contact with the system. This would help to clarify the roles of each agency involved in supporting

a youth, and place the young person at the centre of the service. Further, a consistent, shared approach would ensure that a young person receives equal treatment, regardless of which service they connect with. We recommend this de-centralized approach as it also provides space for youth choice in the services that they want.

Increase awareness and training for all school boards regarding youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Provide greater in-reach services at schools for mental-health and substance use support, as well as family mediation and education information.

We recommend greater partnership and use of schools as the “frontlines” for recognizing youth at risk. In addition to increased training about youth homelessness for teachers, we recommend greater in-reach partnerships with community services. Schools serve as an immediate intervention point for youth, where transportation may be a barrier.

As well, schools can serve as a point of connection for family mediation supports. We recommend adopting a whole family approach to ending youth homelessness, where, in cases where it is safe, families are treated as the “original frontline workers” as one parent indicated, and given the tools to support their children.

“We really need to be looking at engaging parents and families for the ones who can possibly, successfully stay at home if there were services provided that were meeting their needs better and working together as a system rather than just kind of treating the youth alone.” - Mental Health Counselor



HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH PRINCIPLE #5

Social and Community Integration. Long-term housing stability for youth depends upon breaking social isolation and providing opportunities for participation in meaningful activities.

WHAT WE HEARD

1. Youth who are homeless and at risk of becoming homeless often feel isolated and lack a sense of belonging.

“You can have a million different professionals...but there’s nobody you can call that can help you dig out of a hole... but that’s just really what I need, a family.” -Young Woman describing needing support beyond formal services

2. Without real social supports, beyond service providers, it is difficult to stay housed, even after a housing intervention.

Youth struggled with developing social connections outside of the service sector. The above quote highlights just how isolated youth may feel after they have had to leave home. Not only are they entering into life without a stable place to live, they often lose their social supports along with becoming homeless. One youth described how being homeless can make one feel disconnected from the broader community,

“The one thing that I’d really like it is to be kind of integrated into society. Not just have as much, or as many professionals to try to deal with that, but....a system... where housing would be available to help us achieve a regular place in society. I keep saying regularbecause I do feel different.”

Once youth become housed, we heard that many described feeling really lonely. The community that they had developed on the street was no longer in place, and often, youth still experienced disconnection from previous social supports.

3. Mentorship and peer support are essential to building stronger social connections for youth.

We heard from many staff that mentorship, both formal and informal, was a key component of youth moving beyond homelessness. Successful aftercare housing programs mentioned during the consultations often involved activities where young people could build strong, consistent relationships with the same worker. These sorts of relationships became the basis of mentorship for youth.

Informal mentorship was also highlighted as key. One young mother talked about how valuable it was to be around healthy families as she learned how to parent well, having come from a home where her role models were not as strong.

“That’s where they have to have exposure, ...and recognize what a healthy family is... I don’t know, personally, from my experience, I met different families... and I see how functional families are supposed to be...I was able to look at family values, the correct way, not from in my own home, but from other’s homes, and it was nice.”

Further, peer support was brought up as a valuable way to reach other youth living through homelessness. The sense that peers understand what one is going through was evident, and that this was found to be really helpful and supportive. As one young person stated,

“There are people there who have gone through the same things as you. None of my friends from the preppy school never had anything bad happen to them, and it was hard to explain... Then you go to the shelter and everybody has got stories, and people that are better off than you or worse off than you and you think “Oh my God, I’m normal”. Peers can provide a powerful opportunity to be understood, in what can often be an incredibly isolating experience for youth.

OTTAWA RECOMMENDATION

Youth who are homeless and at risk of homelessness require support in gaining access to social and recreational community engagement that can enable their long-term mental and physical well being.

Agencies partner with wider social and professional networks, creating more opportunities for youth to develop stronger connections outside of the service sector, with an emphasis on professional mentorship.

This is the place of possibility that we wish to not only recommend, but inspire the Ottawa community to step into with A Way Home Ottawa. Developing ways to engage with youth who are homeless is the work of the Ottawa community and we encourage community members to continue thinking creatively about how each person might best connect with youth who are homeless.

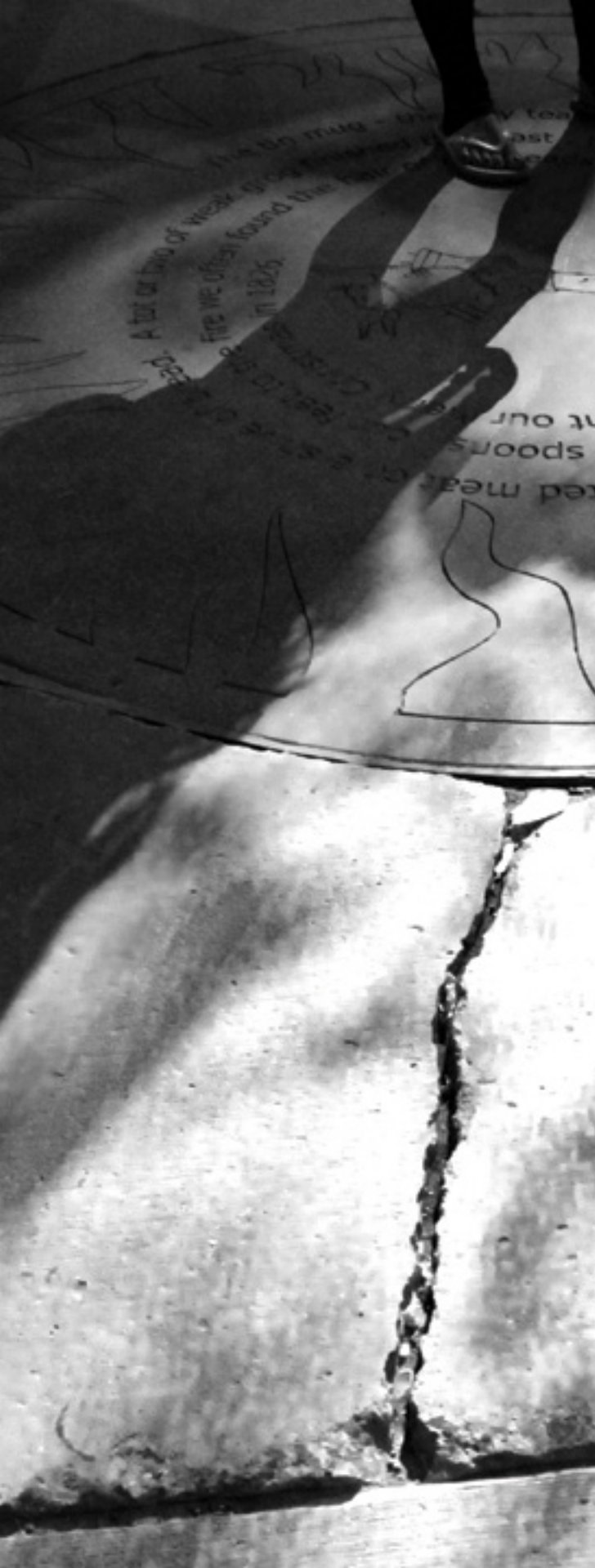
One place to start that has been discussed many times is that of professional mentorship. Youth who have had to leave home have often missed the opportunity to gain the skill development and connection to networks that happens when families simply model how to get started in the working world. There are networks of employers

and mentors already for youth at risk and coming out of homelessness in Ottawa, and we encourage people who are interested in investing in this way to engage with these.

Invest in peer support programming for youth, both as a method of continuing to incorporate youth voices in ending homelessness, and to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement opportunities for youth who have gone through similar circumstances.

Peer Support work can be a valuable opportunity for young people to be engaged in meaningful ways in community. Youth can be a valuable resource for staff, in developing greater engagement with peers. This sort of engagement can often create a strong sense of purpose and meaningful connection to the community that is so important to one’s quality of life.





Conclusion

Edgar Mbaraga, AWHO Co-Chair

In the last couple of months, I have seen what it means to carve out your own successful path. I first saw it in the eyes of Aboriginal girls last November, as they emphatically told me how they thought municipalities had to step up and do more about the issues facing homeless youth. I felt it too in the energy from the youth at Operation Come Home as they shared with us the lack of understanding and confusion around the current homelessness system. I especially recall one particular interview where one youth that had been housed, sighed, and said, “There is not enough long-term housing for homeless youth.”

In that moment I realized that the youth in Ottawa were determined to speak up for all of their peers and change the system.

As I was reading through this report, I turned to my co chair and asked her, “What if this does not work?” She stopped and thought a minute, then answered, “This is not something we should worry about”. She continued to let me know there is no sense in getting all worked up about the bigger picture, one must take it one step at a time. There was no other choice, this has to work, and further more it is working. We have already

managed to bring all the amazing social service providers in this city together. These superheroes now have a platform to speak as one and work together in tandem for the betterment of our community. This has already helped build trust among homeless youth and social service providers.

With this in mind, my fellow youth co-chair was onto something when she said there is no reason to be discouraged or intimidated by this huge task.

We are moving. The momentum is building. We are beginning to find a way home for homeless youth in Ottawa.

“

I was the start

In the beginning

I was the best part

Until I was kicked and bruised

And left in the dark

For police and bylaws

To kick me out of the park

And now in the end

Without a roof and a bed

A roof and a bed

A roof and a bed

Why do you tell me

There’s more priorities than this

I wonder if you see

That sooner than later

The world will be left to me

And then you’ll realise

That...

I was the start

”

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Momentum is building towards new strategies in support of street-involved youth.



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