

# Hope Street Wellbeing and Safety Plans

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*Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control. The guiding principle of recovery is to restore control to the survivor.<sup>1</sup>*

Hope Street Youth and Family Services provide 24 hour supported crisis accommodation as a part of a suite of youth specialist programs for young people and young families experiencing homelessness. The accommodation provides each young person with a private room. Each young person is informed about the range of specialist services available. The residential support teams offer respectful, professional, and non-discriminatory assistance designed to respond to young people and their children's immediate and emerging needs.

A significant number of our client group have experienced trauma, in their distant or recent past, and may currently be experiencing the effects of this. Hope Street implements a range of industry recognised approaches to practice within the 24-hours service model, program procedures and daily activities. These practices and activities are a part of our specialist response in supporting young people who have experienced trauma. This article will focus on one aspect of Hope Street's youth refuge intake procedure — the Hope Street Wellbeing and Safety Plan.

In trauma-informed care, every aspect of service delivery needs to be mindful of the difficult histories of young people. The following key themes are outlined by Hopper et al. as the basis for trauma-informed service delivery.<sup>2</sup>

- trauma awareness
- emphasis on safety
- opportunities to build control
- strengths based approach.

*'Trauma informed practice is a strengths based framework grounded in an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.'<sup>3</sup>*

The emphasis on safety is extremely significant for trauma survivors and covers not only physical safety, but, as the McKillop Sanctuary Model<sup>4</sup> outlines, four types of safety: physical; psychological; social and moral safety.

For trauma survivors, boundaries have usually been violated, and systems or positions of power abused. It is extremely important therefore that





- stand up for one's beliefs
- accept and act upon constructive feedback
- build boundaries while respecting those of others
- articulate one's values.

As these plans are developed within the residential team, clients also experience a safe relationship when discussing these issues. This builds trust, initially with that worker. This trust may transfer to other workers on the team and then across the organisation. Part of one person's safety plan may be reaching out for support from trusted friends and family. When that is explored and placed into a Wellbeing and Safety Plan it demonstrates to a young person that the team members support individual networks and believe that clients have the capacity to give and receive support and that they are worthy of receiving this support.

The Hope Street Wellbeing and Safety Plans are not merely a communication tool or a risk management strategy. The Wellbeing and Safety Plans, when utilised with trauma-informed practice principles in mind, become an important therapeutic tool in assisting clients in trauma recovery.

\* Christine Fagan been a leader with Hope Street for four years. Christine manages the Youth Residential Program, the Youth Foyer-like program in City of Whittlesea, Enhanced Youth Refuge Program including the After-Hours Response Service and Case Management Programs. Christine has a career history of working with youth, survivors of family violence, Acquired Brain Injury, community work and educational settings.

#### Endnotes

1. Herman J 1992, *Trauma and Recovery*, Basic Books, New York, p. 59
2. Hopper E K, Bassuk E L, Olivier J 2010, Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-informed care in homelessness service settings, *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 80–100, quoted in O'Donnell M, Varker T, Cash R, Armstrong R, Di Censo L, Zanatta P, Murnane A, Brophy L and Phelps A 2014, *The Trauma and Homelessness Initiative, Report* prepared by the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health in collaboration with Sacred Heart Mission, Mind Australia, Inner South Community Health and VincentCare Victoria. P. 27
3. Ibid.
4. Bloom Dr S, *The Sanctuary Model* accessed at <http://sanctuaryweb.com/TheSanctuaryModel/>

clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries are established and that privacy, confidentiality and mutual respect are always modeled and promoted. These items are covered in our Rights and Responsibilities documents and act as a springboard for discussions with clients about values based behaviour.

During the intake process, a team member encourages all clients to ask questions about their rights and responsibilities, to discuss the consent requirements, and to clarify what confidentiality means in a shared practice environment.

In addition, the Wellbeing and Safety Plan gives clients an opportunity to sit down with an individual team member in order to outline their own wellbeing and safety needs. This is an opportunity for young people to share their issues regarding physical safety. They may disclose self-harm, family violence, use of medication or injuries. The young person and the worker decide on options to lessen or eliminate potential triggers and

develop strategies to assist in managing strong feelings or seeking of help. These strength based measures assist young people to build skills in emotional self-regulation and to develop control within themselves and their lives.

The word 'Wellbeing' in our Wellbeing and Safety Plan is designed to encourage team members and clients to look at more than just physical safety. Wellbeing covers those domains, described in the Sanctuary Model, as psychological, moral and social safety.

These include a broad range of psycho-social skills and abilities, which clients may encounter in the shared living spaces at Hope Street Youth and Family Services.

Emphasis is placed on developing social skills by learning to:

- value self-knowledge
- look after oneself physically and emotionally
- manage strong feelings
- accept differences