

Client-centred Responses to Young People in Crisis

Hope Street Youth and Family Services

Before arriving at Hope Street, Shaun was living with his mother and sisters. However, due to Shaun's ongoing perpetration of violence and physical assaults against his mother, the police applied for an Intervention Order to remove Shaun from the family home. He temporarily moved to his sisters' place, however due to overcrowding and Shaun's behaviour, this placement broke down and Shaun spent the following period squatting in the local area, moving through public spaces with nowhere to go.

Shaun entered Hope Street's First Response Youth Refuge with limited independent living skills. With the intensive daily support of our

residential staff Shaun soon improved his independent living skills. Shaun completed all chores, creating a daily structure for himself. Furthermore, Shaun continuously worked on his behavioural issues and is now able to effectively communicate with workers and recognise the behaviours that have a negative impact on his life.

Housing outcomes for Shaun have been limited as he was diagnosed with an intellectual disability and ADHD, impacting his ability to manage behaviour, understand information appropriate to his age level and live independently. Furthermore, given Shaun's aggressive behaviour was mostly triggered

by his family, reunification was not a workable option. The team at the refuge explored all housing options alongside his care team, determining that the most suitable form of accommodation was Supported Independent Living (SIL)

However, the SIL property that was set aside for Shaun was taking longer than expected to become available. Knowing that Shaun had a long-term housing outcome, and understanding that the refuge was for short-term stays, case managers worked with his care team to find more suitable interim accommodation. Sharehouse accommodation was identified as an interim option.



Image by Evolution participant Beck

Utilising the flexible brokerage, which is key to the First Response Youth Refuge model, case managers worked alongside Shaun to ensure he would have a smooth transition into the share house while waiting for the SIL property. This was done by encouraging Shaun to look at the property prior to moving in, making sure Shaun was equipped with all new bedroom furniture and linen, a companion card, \$200 voucher for food, and payment of one month's rent. Furthermore, First Response Youth Refuge case managers encouraged Shaun to use his wellness and recovery plan which he could access and use at any time when he felt overwhelmed or needed to talk to one of his support workers.

Since moving into the sharehouse, Shaun continues to receive intensive outreach support from the First

Response Youth Refuge case managers. Furthermore, he has been engaged with his NDIS support work daily alongside workers from the SIL property to aid the transition into the accommodation. Shaun's goals are to live in stable long-term accommodation and re-build positive relationships with family and friends, which he is achieving. Shaun is thankful for the support that he has been provided and enjoyed his time at the refuge.

While Shaun was able to access the necessary services required to exit homelessness, his options were extremely limited. Shaun's situation required intensive case management and a flexible approach to achieve a longer term housing outcome. The flexible brokerage provided ensured that Shaun was able to exit into an

interim housing option as a planned stepped approach to entering his longer-term housing. Shaun was an active participant in the case management process including determining how the brokerage funding was utilised, which Shaun commented as empowering.

Shaun's situation highlights the value of future accommodation and support models for young people that include:

- an individualised approach
- greater access to flexible brokerage
- case managers who empower young people to be active participants and decision makers in achieving their support plans including financial decisions
- the benefits of specialist supported crisis accommodation such as the First Response Youth Refuge model, which focuses on:
 - holistic youth-centred wraparound case management support tailored to the young person's situation and needs
 - safety
 - stability
 - intensive behaviour therapy
 - referral to specialist services
 - development of key living skills
 - integrated trauma informed practice
 - assisting young people to develop their abilities and readiness to progress into sustainable housing options.

In support of young people in crisis, future youth housing needs to provide more immediate access to housing and accommodation options. Shaun's situation demonstrates that a variety of long-term safe and affordable housing models are essential for young people and must be responsive to each young person's different housing and support needs.

