HOMELESS YOUTH DUAL DIAGNOSIS INITIATIVE
REPORT

The Northern Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative (HYDDI) is a Department of Health and Human Services Youth Homelessness initiative implemented through a partnership between Hope Street and NorthWestern Mental Health (NWMH), the mental health arm of Melbourne Health. A HYDDI Practitioner is employed by NWMH’s Substance Use and Mental Illness Treatment Team (SUMITT) and is co-located at Hope Street’s youth refuge in Brunswick West.

The initiative focuses on developing the knowledge, abilities and capacity of youth Specialist Homelessness Services workers in the north of Melbourne to identify and respond with early intervention to the complex needs of young people (aged 16 to 25 years) who are dually experiencing homelessness and difficulties related to mental health or substance use.

Client and sector impact
During 2018-2019, the Northern HYDDI Specialist Practitioner:

- Conducted 185 sessions of direct clinical work with young people;
- Provided co-case management to seven young people;
- Provided long term (i.e. ongoing for more than 12 months) counselling / therapeutic interventions for two young people who have particularly complex needs;
- Saw 33 young people for single session consultations;
- Provided 234 secondary consultations to workers within the sector; and
- Conducted 198 capacity building and educational sessions in the form of structured sessions for teams or programs around an identified topic related to dual diagnosis, or informal educational sessions around a clinical related question.

Services provided
The main role of the Northern HYDDI Specialist Practitioner is to support the youth homeless sector in providing services to young people. This is achieved through:

- Primary consultation offering a confidential specialist mental health and substance use assessment, with the case manager present to promote capacity building;
- Secondary consultation advising case managers on brief interventions and strategies, information on referral for specialist treatment, services coordination and clinical problem solving;
- Individual and group support for case managers on working with clients with a dual diagnosis;
- Short term co-case management of clients with an emerging or current complex needs or dual diagnosis;
- Long term (greater than 12 months) individual counselling and therapeutic work for young people with complex needs who otherwise cannot access treatment and support; and
- Training and development for staff on working with clients who have complex needs.

Partnerships
During 2018-2019, this work was conducted alongside workers from the following agencies and sites:

- Hope Street Youth and Family Services (West Brunswick refuge; Brunswick Town Hall; Thomastown and Melton foyer-like supported transitional housing programs; BOOST outreach; Youth Reconciliation Program);
- Melbourne City Mission (Stopover, Vicky’s Place, WRAP and Iramoo youth refuges; Foyer transitional programs; Springboard);
- Meni Outreach Support Service (Catchment Youth Refuge);
- Salvation Army Trammere St Program;
- Wombat Housing; and
- Bolton Clarke Homeless Persons Program.

Ongoing therapeutic support
During the 2018-2019 year, the Northern HYDDI Specialist Practitioner began offering ongoing therapeutic support to young people engaged with youth homelessness services whose needs have not been met by mainstream therapeutic services. At the end of the 2018-2019 reporting period, two young people have been engaged in this form of support.

PhD research
The Northern HYDDI Specialist Practitioner, supported by both Hope Street Youth and Family Services and SUMITT, continued to undertake a PhD through the University of Melbourne. The research project will run over several years and aims to engage young people who have or are experiencing homelessness in a co-produced project to identify and examine the factors that support young people to exit homelessness and maintain stable accommodation.

Challenge
The most prominent challenge faced by young people who engage with HYDDI is being able to get their needs met when the latent effects of previous traumas impact upon service provider’s ability to respond to their needs. This can affect the young person’s ability to engage with or access specialist health and welfare services, or their ability to sustain housing. HYDDI plays a critical role in both supporting young people to utilise different skills when engaging with services, and supporting specialist services and workers to conceptualise and respond appropriately to the effects of early negative experiences in a way that allows both the young person’s and service’s needs to be met.

Media coverage
The HYDDI program was featured in an article called ‘Responding to Youth Homelessness in Melbourne’s north: Partnerships for dual diagnosis,’ published in the April 2019 edition of Parity Magazine, a national homelessness publication.

Report written by Brendan Pearl, Northern Homeless Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative Specialist Practitioner.