

Wellington Homeless Women's Trust

Accommodation and Support Service

Highlights from the first nine months (Oct 2013 – June 2014)

Read these highlights alongside the model (diagram) attached.



Did we have the people, money and resources that we expected and needed? (Inputs)

- The house is fully staffed by an experienced team with the right knowledge and skills.
- Staff continue to report that overall operations are well supported by the board and management.
- Staff continue to report that sufficient funding is available to allocate to key activities.
- The house continues to meet the needs – it is warm and secure.
- We have increased our engagement from 9 to 11 supporting/referral agencies and have received enquiries from several other referral agencies.
- The Service has had 22 referrals and 19 enquiries: Overall, 17 were accepted. Approximately 4 of the 5 rooms are occupied at any one time. This suggests there is demand for the service.
- Tenants continue to fit the description of 'invisible homeless' – that is, women with moderate needs who may otherwise be in a Boarding House, backpackers, or couch surfing. Tenants have tended to come from situations in which they have experienced violence, and many experience moderate mental health needs.
- We have broadened our partnerships with other social service agencies.

What have we done / achieved so far? (Activities/Outputs)

- We continue to provide tenants with Support Plans, with more tenants currently on an individual plan. Tenant feedback remains positive, particularly in relation to the support and guidance provided by staff. Tenants report that the plans are a useful resource to understand their situation, and how their goals will help them to re-engage with the community. As a service, it is possible to establish how far tenants have progressed through their goals, providing them with good insight.

"Felt really supported and welcomed. Very safe. I feel that I was well looked after. Rooms were clean and inviting. Food on Fridays, and the necessities provided by the house makes life easy. Having not to worry about power bills is just great and helps us focus on our goals." Former tenant

- 11 women have been supported from homelessness into permanent accommodation. We have 4 current tenants. Two tenants were required to find alternative accommodation due to breaching the code of conduct.
- In general, the referral process is going well. Overall feedback from agencies indicate that the referral process is appropriate for the targeted client group.

"For us personally if there is a room available at WHWT we can actually get a woman in that day. Communication and liaising is wonderful." Referral agency

- The on-going positive, working relationships built between staff, referral and housing agencies is a real strength of the Service. Tenants are being connected with the right social services to continue working towards their goals even after leaving the house.
- Former tenants are supported by short-term follow-up as they settle into their new accommodation/environment. This is achieved through phone or face-to-face contact.

What difference have we made so far? (Outcomes)

- Most tenants who have left the service have reported positive changes. Former tenants indicate that the accommodation and support has contributed to their level of resilience and ability to re-engage in the community. For instance, a previous tenant outlined:
“Staying here has given me the opportunity to just be! To stand back and breathe. To look at myself and begin to work out what I want in life. I have had the opportunity to start healing to stand up, to start to like myself, to start to make plans for my future. I have begun to try and forgive myself. Being here has saved me”
- The approach adopted by WHWT is viewed to be effective, and the WHWT is viewed as a preferred choice for single homeless women by referral agencies.

Was it what we expected?

- It has been assumed that volunteers were needed. However, given the complexities that homeless women bring, volunteers may not be the appropriate group to work directly with the women.
- The three month period appears to be adequate to support women into housing. Typically, the council and Housing NZ can find housing for the women. However, it is evident that women with high/complex needs may require more than 3 months to find suitable accommodation.
- Tenant housing continues to be sorted within a timely manner. Due to our positive relationship with Housing NZ and the Wellington City Council, tenants are given priority for housing.
- Follow-up tenant support remains an important component in our approach.
- Service is clearer on the type of women who can access the service. Criteria is used to make an assessment for each potential tenant.

Next steps: Actions and issues to consider

- The management team will re-visit a few partner agencies to discuss the referral process and the level of moderate needs that can be accommodated. In addition, expand on the number of referral agencies (where applicable).
- Staff will continue to work with other agencies who may come across women with moderate needs experiencing homelessness to develop a more in-depth understanding of key issues.
- The Board and Management to continue to identify funding opportunities to ensure the sustainability of the service. A service planning day may include:
 - Fundraising activities
 - Approaching for identifying and securing donor agencies
 - Approaching for and identifying and securing other partnerships
- The Board to continue to revisit and confirm the type of women that the Service is accommodating (i.e. the extent to which the Service may cater for higher and complex needs, or maintain current moderate-need focus).
- An exit plan to be developed and completed by tenants. This will help to maintain long-term goals and engagement/commitment towards positive behavioural change(s).

Special focus: Is the Model Working?

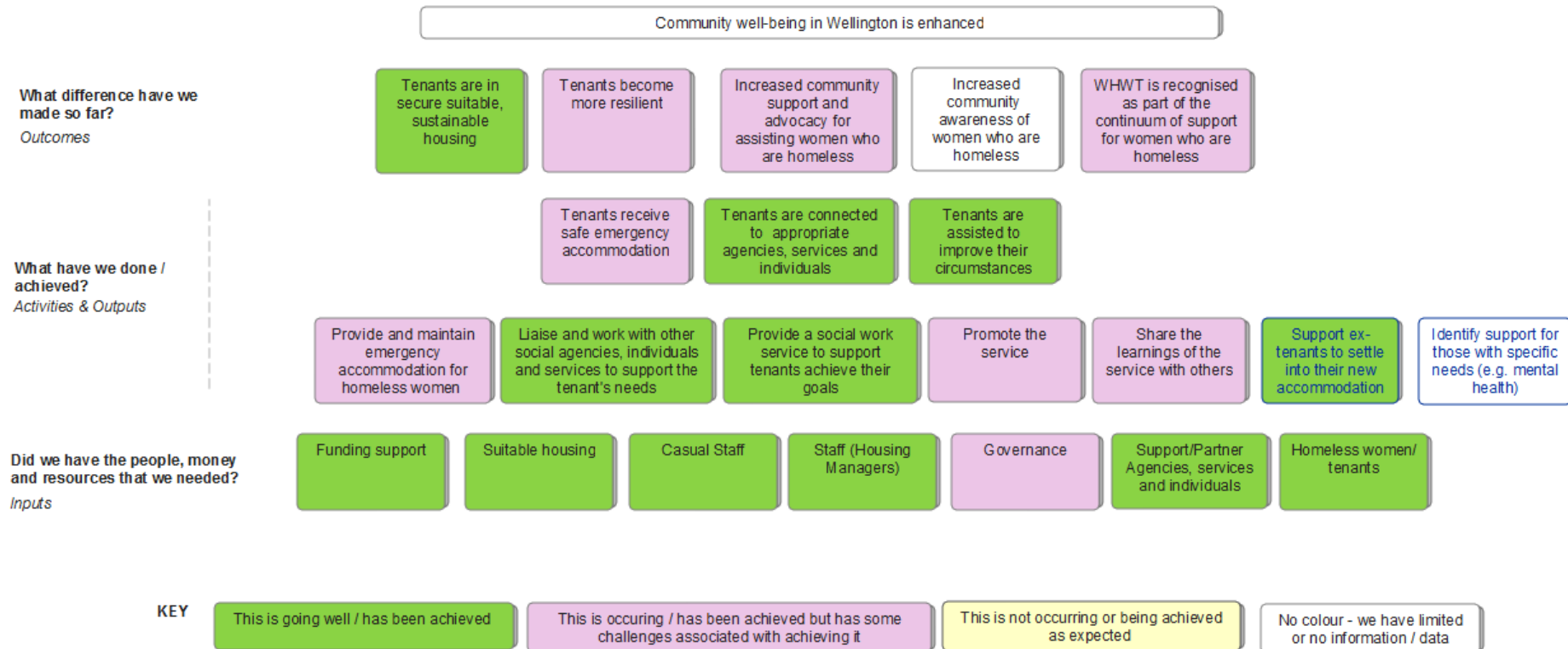
The Board and relevant partners were keen to understand whether service is meeting a clear need (aligned with evaluation questions). Findings from administrative data and interviews has been positive.

- Overall, tenant feedback indicates that when they leave, they feel supported by the WHWT.
“I have met more women from all walks of life. The fact that when I needed somewhere that this place was here for me was a relief. I am very grateful for the support I got. I have been able to put distance between myself and the situation that led me to that place, which has been good”. Former Tenant
- More than half the women have been supported into permanent housing, the model needs to be reviewed further to maintain or increase this number. Additional support/intervention may be necessary for some clients who find it difficult to make positive changes or who leave the service early.
- After care and the follow-up on tenants who leave the service is a critical component to the success of the WHWT approach.

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Notes

1. Homeless women refers to women on their own whom need emergency accommodation.
2. 'Service' refers to both the provision of emergency accommodation, as well as the support activities that the Trust's staff provide tenants, such as referrals/connections with other relevant agencies/services/individuals etc.