

Wellington Homeless Women's Trust

Accommodation and Support Service

Highlights from July 2014 – June 2015

Read these highlights alongside the model (diagram) attached.



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

- Staff feel their work and the accommodation operations are well supported by the board. Due to an increase in hands-on operations a new Casual Manager has been employed to cover for busy periods and leave (sick and annual).
- We continue to have referrals and are seen as an essential service from our supporting/referral agencies and have received enquiries from others. The number of referral agencies has increased from 9 to 15.
- The Service had 18 accepted referrals accepted during this period. The average occupancy rate was 83% for 12 months July 2014 to June 2015.
- The Trust's tenants continue to fit the description of 'invisible homeless' – many women have experienced mental health needs, violence, alcohol and drug abuse who may otherwise be couch surfing, coming out of prison or living in cars.
- The Trust has accessed funding for another 2 years of operation; until June 2017.

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

- All tenants have a Support Plan developed for their individual goals on arrival by the staff who act as their advocates. The women continue to indicate they value the individualised support provided by staff.

"All staff have been wonderful. I feel happy I have a place to stay while I sort out my life." – tenant

- Between 01 July 2014 and 30 June 2015, ten tenants were supported from homelessness into permanent accommodation by the Trust.
- Overall, the referral process continues to work well. There have been two instances where tenants required more support than was originally assessed and more than the Trust's service could provide, and the Trust referred them on to other services e.g. mental health care.
- Staff continue to work with tenants to connect them to relevant social agencies. In some cases tenants have had on-going support from referring agencies while in the Trust's accommodation. This worked well.
- After leaving the service, women are supported by staff follow-up to help them settle into their community as needed. This includes food parcels and on-going advocacy.

'This is a great service and I am really happy to be here. It is wonderful to know that there is someone to help you or go with you to appointments and other places; especially when you feel so lost.' – tenant

- The Trust has added two new Activity Classes:
 - *'Identify support for those with specific needs (eg mental health)'. This was added due to the demand for this service.*
 - *'The Trust actively participates with and advocates for the homeless sector in Wellington'. This was added to match our increasing presence in the community.*

What difference have we made so far? (Outcomes)

- The benefits of having a robust 'set up' phase for the Trust are evident in its success to date. *'The Wellington Homeless Women's Trust has actively engaged with the sector in the design of its service, its evaluation and sharing of its learnings. The initial preparation and consideration of an evaluation process at the early stages of planning processes are now showing results' – key stakeholder*
- For the 12 months ending June 30 2015, the 18 women accessed the services offered at the accommodation; advocacy, introduction to housing providers, relevant services, support plans and assisted into community living.
- Of these 18 women, The Trust has supported 10 into permanent accommodation. The others have chosen different journeys including being referred to other services.
- The Board and staff have been fully involved in the development of the Te Mahana Strategy by the Wellington City Council which aims to end homelessness in Wellington by 2020.
- The Service is now recognised as being part of the continuum of support in Wellington homeless sector for women with moderate needs experiencing homelessness in Wellington City. There is a demand for the Trust to increase the number of rooms it has available but to date the Trust does not have funding available for expansion.
- Tenants that have come to us from Arohata Prison have found the Trust's service offers a useful/valuable period of transition assisting them to re-join the community.
- Tenants who move into permanent accommodation don't feel so isolated and alone with the staff starting to support them in the community.
- We have added a new Outcome Class – *'Women develop supportive social connections'*. While at the service, our staff encourage tenants to form friendships which endure after they leave the accommodation. It is very early days for The Trust to understand the difference that has been made for tenants.

Was it what we expected?

- The Trust continues to source housing for the tenants within the expected timeframe of 3 months and we continue to have a positive working relationship with Housing NZ and City Council.
- The referral process is working as expected. We are unable to accommodate all women referred to us due to occupancy, the complexity of their situation and their level of support required.
- The Trust has not used volunteers to the extent originally foreseen. Given the complexities that homeless women bring, we have concluded that volunteers may not be the appropriate group to work directly with the women. However, for activities such as fundraising, or raising awareness of homelessness, volunteers may be a useful resource. All the Trust Board Members are volunteers.
- Follow-up support after the tenants leave the accommodation has become an increasingly important component in our service model.
- The average age of our tenants was 40.3 over this period; this was a little higher than expected, and brings with it slightly different support needs.

Next steps for the Board: Actions and issues to consider

- The things we changed in the service last year was to increase the hours for our Casual Staff/Relief Staff to support the House Manager at peak times and to provide increased support to the women when they leave the service – especially over the first 2 weeks of living in their own accommodation. This service is pivotal to the Trust given that its outcomes are centred on increased community well-being.
- Participation in the Street Outreach Programme is considered a priority. This programme is an example of sector collaboration which provides street-based support to men and women who rough sleep and/or beg for money in central Wellington.

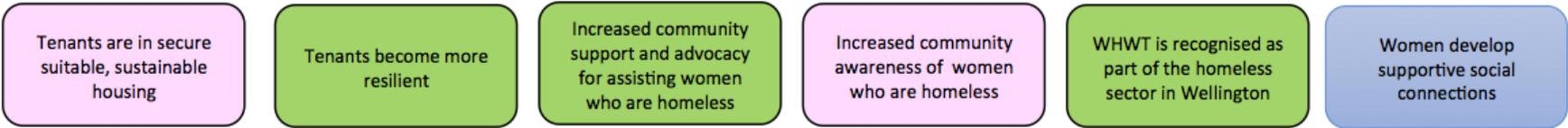
- Re-examine the referral process to ensure that the tenants' and referral agency needs are met as expected.
- The Trust is seen as an 'exemplar' for a service by people in the sector but not by funding agencies.
- Additional casual staff are required to provide additional cover for when staff take leave.
- Enabling the Trust to fund our existing service. This will be done by accessing funding from grants and donations. We are building towards a donor base.
- While our current business is assured for two years, we are unable to expand our services, or increase staffing or expand the accommodation.
- The staff had to turn away some enquiries for accommodation from our referral agencies due to the women being referred either not meeting our criteria (includes complex needs) or we had full occupancy.

Special focus: Supply of permanent housing in Wellington City

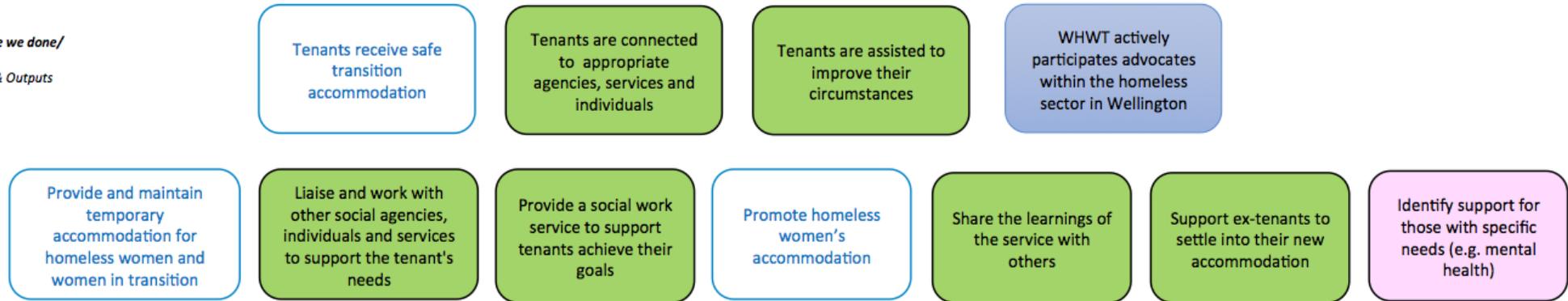
- The Wellington City Council and Housing New Zealand are The Trust's major sources of permanent accommodation for our tenants when they leave the service. Both agencies provide affordable, quality rental housing for people on low incomes.
'It feels awesome to finally have my own house and not have to live on the streets anymore' – tenant
- The accommodation women require is predominantly one-bedroomed units or bedsits/studios.
- Another requirement of safe housing is that women do not feel isolated once they leave the Trust's accommodation. Her permanent housing needs to make her feel that she is part of the community eg we found accommodation up the Hutt valley for a women and she found it too isolating and so she came back to the accommodation for a short time until another flat was available in Wellington city
'It feels empowering to finally have my own house' – tenant
- There is a high demand for affordable, appropriate, quality community housing in Wellington. Our women can be on the waitlist for two months or more.
At one of our meetings this morning I mentioned to the wider team that there continues to be heavy demand and a continuing limited supply of what we have due to tenant's remaining in our properties' – WCC Tenancy Advisor
- The Wellington housing stock supply fluctuates depending on availability. This is due to people not moving on and earthquake damage to previous accommodation.
- 90% of housing requests to the Wellington City Council for all accommodation is for units in Central City, Newtown and Kilbirnie.
- The waitlist for Council accommodation varies between 2-3 weeks to 6-9 months. The longer period creates block to our housing women ready to live independently
- There are further delays between accommodation becoming available and it being occupied due to the refurbishment that takes place before a new tenancy is granted.
- The Trust uses donated goods to make sure all the women have whiteware and basic furniture, linen etc when they move into their accommodation.

Community well-being in Wellington is enhanced

What difference have we made so far?
Outcomes



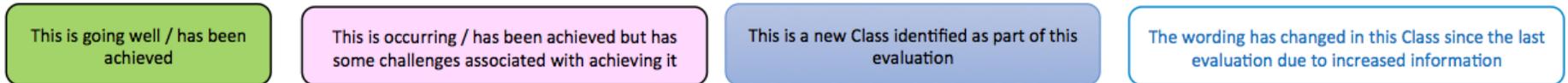
What have we done/achieved?
Activities & Outputs



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



Key



- Notes:
- Homeless women refers to women on their own whom need temporary transition accommodation
 - 'Service' refers to both the provision of temporary transition 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.