

Living Skills Toolkit Pilot Project

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the Living Skills Toolkit Pilot Project. The Youth Coalition has received funding from Social Housing and Homelessness Services, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services to implement this Project in the 2010/11 financial year. The Youth Coalition will roll out the Project in partnership with the Institute of Child Protection Studies.

This document provides:

1. Project Aim;
2. Project Objectives;
3. Project Plan (including timeline);
4. Project Outcomes;
5. Project Rationale; and,
6. Attachment A: Provides the recommendations from the *Living Skills and Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Scheme Consultation Project Paper, Youth Coalition of the ACT, July 2009*:

Project Aim

The Living Skills Toolkit Pilot Project is a five tiered action research based project aimed at developing a sustainable method of embedding living skills development for young people in the youth housing and homelessness, and broader youth services sector in the ACT.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the Project are to:

- Undertake a Literature Review of existing models and delivery of Living Skills;
- Facilitate an in depth consultation and engagement process involving young people, workers and experts in relation to best practice for Living Skills models and delivery;
- To address recommendations of the *Living Skills and Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Scheme Consultation Project Paper, Youth Coalition of the ACT, July 2009*;
- Support the development of a toolkit for the delivery of Living Skills;
- Facilitate and support the pilot implementation of the toolkit; and,
- Undertake a full process and impact evaluation of the *Project*.

Project Plan

The Project will engage ACT service providers that work directly with young people aged 12 – 25, who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness to develop and implement a sector wide living skills training framework. This will be achieved through:

- Employing and supporting a Project Worker to undertake the Literature Review, including relevant local research and reports, and lead the development of the toolkit, including training for staff delivering the toolkit;
- Establishing and overarching Reference Group consisting of a young person, a YHHF representative, Youth Coalition representative, Government representative, academic representative and the individual who undertakes the Literature Review to design and facilitate the consultation process through the YHHF;
- Identifying appropriate pilot sites and providing appropriate support and resources to facilitate implementation;
- Designing and delivering evaluative framework and constructing final reports and recommendations.

Below is the timetable for the Project.

Project Part	Activity	Timeline
Phase 1	Recruitment of Project Worker,	Oct 2010
	Finalisation of Project Plan and Partnerships	Oct 2010
	Establishment of Reference Group	Oct 2010
	Literature and Model Review Report	Nov 2010
	Initial service engagement and consultation (including sign on to project)	Nov 2010
	Development of Evaluation Framework	Oct-Nov 2010
Phase 2	Toolkit development	Nov 2010-Mar 2011
	Ongoing service engagement and consultation	Nov 2010-Mar 2011
	Ongoing process evaluation	Nov 2010-Mar 2011
Phase 3	Pilot roll out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff training • delivery to young people • evaluation 	Mar-May 2011
	Final Project and Evaluation Report	June 2011

Project Outcomes

The outcomes of the Project will be:

- A comprehensive report analysing existing models and delivery of Living Skills training to young people in the youth housing and homelessness and broader youth sector in the ACT and other jurisdictions;
- Engagement of youth housing and homelessness, and other youth services in the development of the package and a commitment to delivery;
- A toolkit for the delivery of Living Skills training to young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, trialled in the youth housing and homelessness, and other youth services sector in the ACT;
- A process and impact evaluation of the Project and toolkit; and,
- Recommendations on future implementation and sustainability of the toolkit.

Project Rationale

'Living skills are personal skills considered necessary for an individual to function on a day-to-day basis.'

In 2008/9 the Youth Coalition undertook the *Living Skills and Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Scheme Consultation Project* engaging Justin Barker to undertake research into the living skills training needs of young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This project involved consultation with workers in the then Youth SAAP services sector as well as young people accessing services.

Dr Barker found that, 'the breadth of the conceptualisations of 'living skills' includes a wide range of practices that vary from merely providing a cookbook or cleaning products to intensive one-on-one training or support. The diverse range of conceptions of 'living skills' exist in part due to the range of people included under the banner of 'homeless youth'. However, whilst it is important to include a wide range of practices that are relevant to a diverse spectrum of young people experiencing homelessness, the lack of conceptual clarity can have a negative impact in practice.'

The ACT Youth Homelessness and Housing Sector has identified that living skills is an ongoing challenge faced by both young people and the sector and has been raised on numerous occasions in various forums. Challenges include:

- Lack of clarity;
- Lack of resources;
- Lack of understanding;
- Lack of training; and,
- Lack of continuity.

Young people experiencing or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness in the ACT are a significant cohort with varying needs and skill levels. Due to the highly transient nature of youth housing and homelessness issues, the Youth Coalition believes that it is vital to have a comprehensive and transferable "toolkit" to equip workers in supporting young people to obtain the requisite Living Skills, imperative to their successful transitions into adulthood and independence.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the Project will focus on two areas:

Impact

The impact evaluation will assess the changes in the well-being of young people that can be attributed to the Project. It will help those involved in the project to establish whether or not there is a link between the Project delivered and the impact it had on the young people involved.

- Did it provoke change?
- Did it encourage thought?
- Were the outcomes met?

Process evaluation

This will measure how the process of running the Project went.

ATTACHMENT: Recommendations from the Living Skills and Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Scheme Consultation Project Paper, Youth Coalition of the ACT, July 2009

With regard to the identified needs of young people transitioning into independent living, the Youth Coalition makes the following recommendations on the effective delivery of Living Skills Training:

Recommendation 1

That Living Skills Training is underpinned by best practice principles and includes:

- Consideration and application of strategies that recognise and account for the different living conditions and personal histories of individual young people;
- Consideration of varied learning styles including hands on and one-on-one training;
- Consideration of varied learning settings, including centre based and outreach opportunities for learning;
- Recognition of the context of what is realistic and what is available to young people; and,
- Recognition of the vulnerability faced by individual young people in admitting they need assistance in capacity building.

Recommendation 2

That Living Skills Training is developed in the context of:

- Addressing the structural, external, environmental and tangible demands that may impact on the provision of the Training;
- Addressing the structural, external, environmental and tangible demands that may impact on individual young people participating in Training;
- The unique hierarchy of the tangible and intangible needs of young people experiencing homelessness; and,
- The interdependency between the need for structural supports such as housing and income, and the role of living skills in attaining those structural supports.

Recommendation 3

That a set of standardised language and definitions are developed to describe Living Skills and Living Skills Training, which recognise context and focus on the conscious provision of Living Skills Training as opposed to regular service provision.

Recommendation 4

That professional and workforce development recognises the role of youth support workers in providing Living Skills Training and includes:

- The level of intensity of support provision required;

- The skills required to integrate living skills into the fabric of their interactions with young people;
- The particular context of the conditions of the lives of young people experiencing homelessness; and,
- The value and importance of rapport building in the context of young people accessing services and training.

Recommendation 5

Living Skills Training accountability systems are developed and implemented which:

- Provide tools and templates; and,
- Facilitate identifying and recording the training progress and achievements for both young people and workers.

Recommendation 6

That Living Skills Training is developed to be flexible and reflect the specific needs of the participating individual young people. Training should include specific strategies to engage target groups of young people experiencing homelessness, for example, young parents, young women and specific age groups.

Recommendation 7

That Living Skills Training is offered to young people experiencing homelessness in a comprehensive, systemic way, which aims to promote connectivity through family, group houses or other social settings and is differentiated from regular service provision by explicitly aiming to develop the capacity of young people to live independently.

Recommendation 8

That services working with young people experiencing homelessness are provided with the requisite skills, funding and staff to develop, implement and facilitate hands on delivery and support in Living Skills Training and assessment.

Recommendation 9

That Living Skills training is embedded in a support structure that allows individual; young people to ask for help and delivered:

- In conjunction with the broader provision of support assisting the transition into independent living;
- In a sensitive and appropriate manner;
- Continually and flexibly;
- By prioritising, with consideration to urgency, the impact the skill will have on the young persons capacity to live independently; and
- Recognising, acknowledged, encouraged and celebrated any participation by individual young people in any living skills training participated in.