

Innovative Harm Reduction: Disrupting the Homelessness Merry-Go-Round - Transitional Housing with Integrated Drug and Alcohol Treatment

Authors:

Grace Oh², Bailey Hossen², Hannah Stenhouse¹, Walter Granetto¹

¹St John of God Health Care, Drug and Alcohol Withdrawal Network (DAWN), Perth, Australia, ²St Patrick's Community Support Centre, Fremantle, Australia

Presenter's email: graceoh@adec.com.au

Background

People experiencing homelessness, AOD use, and co-occurring concerns face fragmented systems that drive repeated disengagement and housing instability. The Ready for Change Project responds by embedding AOD care directly within transitional and crisis accommodation.

Model of Care

Co-designed with residents, the project centres lived experience, self-determination, and social and emotional wellbeing. It includes two subprograms: Yarn & Move (a men's group integrating therapeutic conversation, physical activity, and reflective practice) and Holding Space (a women's group focussing connection, relational support, and mindfulness). Delivered through a partnership between St Patrick's Community Support Centre and Drug and Alcohol Withdrawal Network (DAWN), this multidisciplinary, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, harm reduction model features a weekly onsite Pop-Up Hub. The hub provides connection, shared meals, clinical care, harm reduction education, take-home naloxone, behavioural interventions, visiting services, and tailored AOD pathways, including specialist nurse-led, GP-supported home-based withdrawal within a stepped care approach.

Acceptability

Early implementation demonstrates strong engagement through consistent, relationship-based presence in familiar environments, with ongoing adaptation and responsiveness central to the project's success. 'Bringing the mountain to the people' reduces barriers, builds trust, enables earlier intervention, and meets people at varying readiness for change, positioning this as a practical and scalable housing–AOD integration model.

Conclusion

Next steps include evaluating AOD and wellbeing outcomes, and their contribution to housing stability and prevention of recurrent homelessness.

Practice, Policy, First Nations, Communities

Grounded in true co-design and aligned with Housing First and Harm Minimisation, the project advances equity and cultural safety, demonstrating that AOD treatment can and should be accessible in transitional housing settings. Delivering services that fit the client, not the client fitting the service, this scalable model shows how harm reduction can be embedded across housing, health, and First Nations practice to improve outcomes, inform policy, and drive system-level change.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.