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| **Intervening in Homelessness Early - A community pilot of the At-risk of Homelessness Screening Tool** |
| **Setting/problem**Homelessness costs Victoria more than $194 Million annually. Further, it has social and economic impacts to individuals and families and Australia as a whole (Whitte, 2017). There is no current tool of relevance in the Australian context to identify those at risk of homelessness so that early identification and intervention can be addressed before problems escalate. In 2014, Access Health and Community developed a tool to identify clients who were at risk of becoming homeless. The At-risk of homelessness screening tool (the tool) provides a numerical score out of 13, rating an individual’s risk of homelessness as Low, Medium or High. The tool also collects housing and demographic information necessary to be able to commence working with a client at risk of homelessness.Following a 300% increase referrals to homelessness service agencies in 18 months and a growing interest from partners, a community pilot of the tool was designed.**Intervention**The tool and referral pathways were piloted by more than 100 staff from ten community health and social service agencies in the east of Melbourne.Following training, co-facilitated by a health promotion practitioner and a peer educator with lived experience of homelessness, participants were provided access to a website containing the tool, referral information and factsheets. The pilot occurred over a three month period in late 2018.A mixed methods evaluation design was developed comprising * Literature review
* Quantitative analysis of aggregated referral data generated from the tool.
* In-depth interviews with staff involved in the pilot and clients referred.
* A stakeholder focus group reflecting on possible amendments and revisions to the tool and referral pathways.

**Outcomes**At the time of submission, the evaluation is within its implementation phase (ending Nov 2018). The presentation will discuss evaluation outcomes which will be available early in 2019.**Implications**Homelessness costs society in more than economic burdens. While a tool to measure risk doesn’t completely prevent the problem, it allows for an early intervention into a person’s journey in homelessness reducing the ongoing social and economic burden on the individual and society.**Preferred presentation format:** OralWitte, E. 2017 ‘The case for investing in last resort housing’, MSSI Issues Paper No. 10, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, The University of Melbourne. |