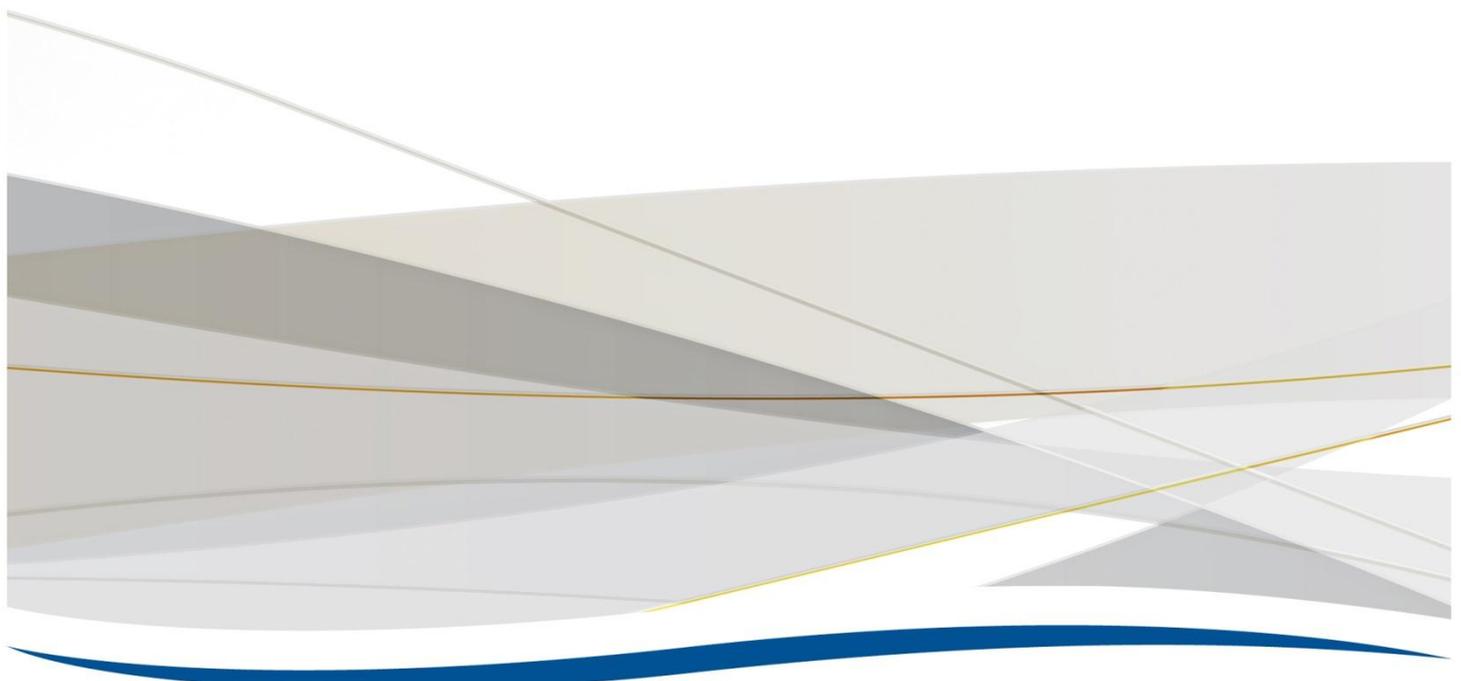




Targeted Youth Support Services (TYSS) Mid-Term Review – Summary Report

2012



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Steering Committee

Deputy Secretary - Children and Youth Services, Director - Strategy, Program Development and Evaluation, Deputy Secretary - Disability, Housing, and Community Services, Director - Disability and Community Services

Working Group

Children and Youth Services - Director of Operations, Planning and Program Development Team, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Team, Community Partnership Teams (South, North, North West); and,

The Youth Network of Tasmania

Reference Group / Consultation Stakeholders

Mission Australia, Bapcare, Anglicare, Department of Education, Tasmanian Courts, Department of Police and Emergency Management, Specialist Homelessness Services, Mental Health Services, Gateway and IFSS DHSS - Children and Youth Services (Child Protection and Youth Justice), Alcohol and Drug Services

Project Manager

Principal Analyst: Planning and Program Development Kate Wilson

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I. Executive Summary

“without the program, life would be a lot more difficult, it is great to have someone to talk to, debrief with and to have support from”

(interview with young person. 2012)

There is a strong evidence base that the provision of support to vulnerable young people who are disengaged from the community can result in significant benefits both to the young person and broader society.

There is a need for the provision of specialist support services that assertively target young people who have disengaged from statutory and community based support services. The Targeted Youth Support Services (TYSS)¹ provides intensive, therapeutic case management for this target group.

The Funding Agreement specifies that:

‘the purpose of this service is to deliver an intervention service offering intensive case management and therapeutic interventions targeted at vulnerable young people aged 10-18 who are identified by DHHS, education, community or welfare professionals as having significant and / or multiple risk issues and for whom, without intensive support, notification to child protection or entry and / or escalation within the youth justice system is likely.’ (page 35, schedule 2.2.1)

The purpose of TYSS is to support young people in achieving the following outcomes:

1. improved developmental outcomes for young people;
2. improved wellbeing and safety;
3. reduced offending and / or reoffending;
4. reduced individual and family risk factors and / or reduced impact of risk factors coupled with increased protective factors;
5. a lower rate of notifications and / or re-notifications to child protection services for individual young people post intervention;
6. increased levels of connectedness with family, community and schools;
7. stability in accommodation and reduced risk of homelessness and/ or inappropriate accommodation; and
8. improved capacity to maintain tenancy.

¹ **Please note** – it is acknowledged that the Targeted Youth Support Services program is referred to and known by different names across the state. The Northern regions (North and North West of Tasmania) refer to the program as the Supported Youth Program (SYP). However for the purpose of this review report document all regions and providers will be referred to as delivering the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) as per the funding agreement.

This program became fully operational in December of 2010. The program is delivered across the four geographical regions of Tasmania through the community sector. The organisations being funded to provide the TYSS program are Mission Australia (lead agency) in partnership with Bapcare for the South West and South East of the State, and Anglicare Tasmania for the North and North West.

The program is intended to provide support to one hundred and forty young people per annum.

A total of \$1.439 Million is allocated state-wide per annum. Funds are provided by Children and Youth Services and Housing Tasmania (DHHS). The current funding allocation ends at 30 June 2013.

This review was undertaken to provide advice on the effectiveness and value for money of the program. It is intended that the findings of the review will inform the future provision of these services.

The review examines access, effectiveness and client satisfaction.

The findings of this review indicate benefits to many clients engaged with the program in the areas of:

- wellbeing;
- participation in society; and
- enhanced stability of accommodation and broader living arrangements.

Overall Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Summary of qualitative feedback provided in relation to the TYSS program is considered to provide an early indication of the effectiveness of the service in meeting client need. As such it is recommended the program continue with a view to building upon the current evidence base in relation to longer term outcomes.

Qualitative and quantitative data considered throughout this review suggest that clients benefited in a range of areas currently not adequately reflected in the services' current funding agreements. In particular, the review has highlighted the valued contribution that this program is making towards the prevention of youth homelessness.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the funding agreements be amended to reflect and provide a measure for capturing the contribution of this program to the prevention of youth homelessness.

2. Review Process

“TYSS give help no matter what, and they help without expecting things in return”

(interview with young person. 2012)

2.1 Terms of Reference

Major reform for family support services and child protection processes was implemented in September of 2009, with funding provided for a new community based common access service (Gateway) and new Integrated Family Support Services. In 2010, an additional \$4.2million (over three years) was allocated to establish a new Targeted Youth Support Services (TYSS) for adolescents. This is 50% funded by each of the Child and Youth Services and Housing Tasmania.

Current Funding Agreements expire 30 June 2013. This review was undertaken as part of standard program management, to provide advice on the effectiveness and value for money of the model.

The Terms of Reference for this review were to:

1. Assess the extent to which TYSS is delivering the objectives of the original program scope
 - Providing young people assessed as having multiple risk factors with:
 - individualised,
 - intensive,
 - targeted support which is appropriate, timely and preventing escalation into the statutory service systems (Child Protection/ Youth Justice)
 - Reducing the number of young people notified to Child Protection by improving access to and responsiveness of a targeted youth support service
 - Prevention or reduction in youth homelessness.
2. Assess the model of intervention being used to support clients and the relationship that TYSS has with other service systems
 - Examine state wide differences and consistency in the model of delivery.
3. Assess areas identified for improvement.
4. Assess the extent to which TYSS is delivering value for money for government.
5. Provide advice to government on the future directions and any priority areas requiring development.

2.2 Review Methodology

Funding Agreements with the Targeted Youth Support Services run until 30 June 2013. With services operating since 2010, a mid-term review was timely. This review was undertaken by Children and Youth Services in partnership with Disability and Community Services, and in close consultation with the community sector. Client satisfaction, access and effectiveness were examined, this included consideration of the:

- operation of the TYSS program (including integration with Gateway services);
- relationship with child protection services;
- relationship with youth justice services (community and custodial);
- relationship with specialist homelessness services;
- outcomes for young people including the interface with other services e.g. drug and alcohol, mental health, and universal services; and
- service demand including projections of future service capacity and funding.

Information was obtained through consultation with service providers, the youth sector as a whole and the key stakeholders including clients of the service. The following methods of information collection were utilised:

- face to face interviews were conducted with all four service providers for the TYSS program;
- the Youth Network of Tasmania's (YNOT) conducted semi -structured interviews with 12 clients of the TYSS program;
- on-line survey was utilised to provide an easily accessible avenue for community stakeholders to contribute to the review. Overall 88 individuals engaged in the survey state wide;
- telephone and email discussions were utilised to gather information from Gateway service providers across the state; and
- administrative data, as collected by DHHS from TYSS service providers throughout the operation of the program.

3. The TYSS Program Outline

“TYSS has definitely helped kept me out of trouble both at school and with the police”

(interview with young person.2012)

The TYSS program meets a gap in service provision in Tasmania, by supporting young people for whom other services may lack capacity to achieve sufficient engagement. The program for young people is unique in Tasmania’s current service system. Funded by Children and Youth Services (DHHS), in partnership with Housing Tasmania (DHHS), TYSS assists young people on client-identified issues in a manner which can address and support any area of need.

TYSS is not solely funded to address criminogenic needs, nor family safety issues, nor tenancy sustainability. However, TYSS is funded to provide intensive support across all facets of a young person’s life, with the aims of assisting them to limit engagement or escalating contact with statutory service systems. All TYSS providers utilise a framework of practice with strong understandings of the impact of complex trauma and mental health concerns on an individual’s development. Practising with empathy, respect and patience, TYSS workers have engaged and supported individuals with whom few other services have successfully built rapport in the past.

The funding agreement for TYSS does not specify a model of practice or the particular therapeutic interventions to be utilised in supporting vulnerable young people, as these frameworks of practice were left to the service providers to determine. Both Anglicare and Mission Australia provided a proposal for funding which outlined the TYSS program they would deliver.

TYSS utilises intensive and assertive case management in its engagement with young people, undertaking a variety of specific therapeutic interventions suited to the client in order to support their healing from trauma and movement towards independence in the future. TYSS workers utilise a wealth of knowledge, and the skill set of staff to support the needs of young people in a flexible manner. The key consistent approach across the state is the use of trauma-informed practice and interventions informed by a framework for understanding the impact of trauma on an individual.

4. Key Findings and Recommendations

“other young people should come to the TYSS program to help them get a better life”

(interview with young person. 2012)

Early indications from information collected to date suggest that TYSS has been beneficial for clients engaging with the service. It is recommended that funding of the TYSS program continue into the future.

4.1 The TYSS Program Model

The findings of this review have relied on access to preliminary findings from quantitative data. This is due to the relatively small number of clients who have completed the program, together with the limited amount of time elapsed (since completion of service involvement) in which to observe the associated mid- and long-term outcomes.

Qualitative data available suggest that once engaged, many clients are well served by the TYSS model. The data demonstrate that the program is meeting many of the short-term outcomes specified in the funding agreements (more time is required to observe the mid- and long-term outcomes). The data also indicate that there are broader benefits not specified in the funding agreements; specifically in the areas of prevention of youth homelessness; support of adolescents affected by trauma; and engagement of young people disengaged from the child protection system.

Key positive features include:

- effective development and active review of business procedures between Gateway and TYSS resulting in appropriate referral pathways;
- timely targeted assessments;
- intensive assertive outreach and case management;
- support that follows the client regardless of their circumstances;
- rapport building with highly disengaged and vulnerable young people;
- a strong therapeutic framework informing interventions; and
- active advocacy of issues faced by this target group.

The case studies, interviews and survey contributions provide extensive feedback from clients and providers about the value of the service and the skill base of workers.

The operational aspects of the system demonstrate the complexity and richness of the work being undertaken by TYSS staff in engaging and remaining engaged with highly vulnerable young persons (and where appropriate their families). Facing challenges relating to high demand on service provision, and intensive complex cases, TYSS workers have engaged and built rapport with a cohort of disenfranchised young people.

All four services have adopted an evidence- based, reflective practice model. This has resulted in the providers undertaking ongoing review and adjustment of the service model throughout the funding period. This allowance for service model flexibility, however, is not required in the funding agreement key performance indicators (KPIs). The flexibility and lack of detail had the added effect

of limiting the development of a mechanism to collect and report administrative data that might demonstrate progress and achievement relating to the eight defined program outcomes. This has resulted in only preliminary quantitative data being available for this mid-term review. As such, the major findings for this review are based upon the qualitative information obtained from service providers, community members, Gateway staff and service clients.

The TYSS funding agreement specifies three themes by which key performance indicators are measured; these are outlined below with a summary of TYSS performance against each:

4.2 Access to Service

The TYSS program has, over its two years of operation, indicated encouragingly high levels of community engagement/ education. This has been enhanced by an ease of referral process for community members. The high level of demand on the program's limited resources indicates that TYSS has been designed to meet a high level need in Tasmania for young people. There are aspects of the referral processes and access to the service which can be further improved and streamlined.

Future analysis of the inconsistencies in the regions may be useful. However, there is no evidence to demonstrate that these inconsistencies result in differences in client eligibility or community access to the program. Additionally, greater community education and understanding of the client capacity of TYSS and the eligibility criteria could dispel any community confusion regarding referrals which are not allocated or accepted by the program.

Recommendation 3

Further work be undertaken to clarify the eligibility criteria for the TYSS program, and engage referrers in understanding program eligibility and the voluntary nature of Program.

Recommendation 4

Further work be undertaken to examine the gap in service provision for younger children (under 10 years of age) requiring intensive Youth at Risk support services.

Recommendation 5

Examination of the case capacity and client quota to ensure that targets for client throughput are realistic and timely

Recommendation 6

Further examination of the appropriateness of active holding and waiting list processes

Recommendation 7

Reengineering processes between TYSS and Gateways to prevent inappropriate referrals. In doing so review the benefits of using a common Targeted Assessment tool for reducing time taken time taken to complete assessments.

Recommendation 8

Further examine the consistency of a state-wide targeted assessment and the appropriateness of using a CAF targeted assessment in the absence of specific youth oriented areas of risk and need identified.

Recommendation 9

Re-evaluate the intent of KPI used to measure length of time utilised to complete a Targeted Assessment.

Recommendation 16

An information solution to capture robust quantitative data for reporting against outcomes and performance of TYSS should be identified and implemented as part of a broader approach to implementing a solution for capturing relevant data for families, children and young people engaging with other similar community sector services.

4.3 Effectiveness of Service

Only limited data is available regarding the effectiveness of the TYSS program. This is primarily due to the relatively short length of time that the service has been operational, which precludes observation of long-term outcomes. Over time, more data will become available regarding these young people and their engagement with statutory services (such as Youth Justice or Child Protection) or other support services (including housing, mental health, drug and alcohol). Nevertheless, this review has resulted in a number of recommendations on how reporting can be altered to support capture of critical performance and outcome information.

The early indications are that TYSS has demonstrated some preliminary benefits regarding how the program models are addressing the eight program objectives. This includes an improvement in developmental outcomes for young people, through to increased stability in accommodation.

In an attempt to meet the program objectives, TYSS providers have implemented a strong foundation of therapeutic interventions, group work, and flexibility of service provision, rural outreach and collaboration with other agencies. Still in its infancy, it is anticipated that TYSS will create robust networks with other services for young people, and in time will embed its role as the lead agency for many young people who would otherwise lack a central coordinated response to the barriers they face.

TYSS providers all practice within a trauma-informed framework and evidence base. They hold rapport building and key worker relationships with clients as paramount to positive changes occurring for young people. Working from an understanding that many highly vulnerable young people have struggled with building rapport or trust in a worker in their past, TYSS practices with commitment to young people, allowing their clients to identify the goals they wish to achieve in their futures.

Overall the TYSS program has demonstrated that it can effectively engage vulnerable young people in a client-driven relationship with the aim of working towards overcoming barriers in a young person's life. There are improvements to be made in capturing and measuring the work that TYSS is doing, but this should not detract from the narrative evidence provided which indicates that many young people engaged with the program are positively benefiting from the existence of TYSS.

Recommendation 10

Reporting tools be examined to determine methods for capturing data against the progression of goal achievement for clients

Recommendation 11

Clearly define the program objectives to allow for measures of success to be articulated

Recommendation 12

Re-evaluation of the KPI to measure the impact that the TYSS program has on the reduction of Child Protection engagement.

Recommendation 13

Further evaluate the feasibility on and expectations of TYSS to take on rural and geographically isolated case management, in recognition of the need for support in isolated areas as a priority

Recommendation 14

Undertake a thorough evaluation into 'Therapeutic' interventions and examine a method of evaluating the effectiveness with this population of young people of differing interventions

4.5 Client Satisfaction.

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) was invited to undertake interviews with young people who are clients of TYSS. Twelve young people across the state accepted the invitation to be interviewed. All young people who were interviewed were very positive about the changes that engagement with TYSS has helped them achieve. Numerous young people identified goal setting activities as a rewarding part of the program, and in one instance a young person informed that he had never before in his life been guided to set goals or have something to work towards achieving. Additionally the recreational activities that TYSS can support or engage young people with were mentioned many times, with explanation that these helped young people keep busy and have things to look forward to. Quite a few young people gave examples of both practical and emotional support that was given to them by TYSS in their reengagement in education or training, and one young person mentioned he now felt supported in looking for employment. Some young people also mentioned the care that they now felt having a TYSS worker in their lives. This was brought up in a context of their knowledge that an adult in their lives cared for them and this care and support gave confidence to their actions and provided motivation for achieving goals. Other young people spoke also of the TYSS program supporting them to stay away from legal trouble and behaviours that might bring them to the attention of police.

The TYSS program was identified by quite a few young people as supporting them to rebuild relationships with family members, providing them with pathways to return to the family home. Two young people were supported with their pregnancy; one of these young people was supported

to rebuild her relationship with her mother which has resulted in her returning to her mother's care.

In interviews young people were asked to provide information on what were the best elements of the program. The majority of answers identified the worker client relationship as fundamental to the program's ability to support them. Recreational programs and the use of brokerage funds to support with purchases used to engage young people in school, therapies or for the purchase of setting up accommodation were also identified by young people as effective strategies of support.

Young people were asked to provide constructive suggestions on how the program could be improved to better support them. While the majority of young people stated that they were not able to provide any suggestions, two suggested changes were provided by a few participants. These suggested changes were to increase the hours of availability of TYSS workers so that young people could contact either their own worker or another worker over the weekends; and the second suggestion was the purchase of phone credit for worker engagement.

Recommendation 15

Examine the ability to engage young people in providing feedback of the program throughout their engagement, including reasons for exit (with inclusion of feedback from parents/ carers and other stakeholders; in alignment with the proposed *Consumer, Carer and Community Participation Framework* for Children and Youth Services)