

An Evaluation of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's

Homelessness Services:

ALERT, CHOPS, The Cottage, Prague House

22,000 people are experiencing homelessness daily in Victoria

Health issues among people who are homeless cluster with other social determinants of health, including trauma, poverty, unemployment and social disconnection; this challenges traditional clinical boundaries and health system responses.



Evaluation Components

- Review of hospital record data (2015)
- Analysis of changes in hospital use (ED presentations, unplanned and planned admissions; length of stay)
- Interviews with clients, staff and, internal & external stakeholders
- Focus group with homelessness service staff and managers
- Economic analyses



Homelessness Services

ALERT

ED and community based care coordination

CHOPS

Psychiatric outreach for those experiencing homelessness

The Cottage

Short-term residential recuperative and nursing care

Prague House

Long-term residential accommodation

"Ethically I think as part of St Vincent's Health Australia's overall mission it's about allowing really vulnerable, complex homeless people - giving them the health care that they deserve like anybody else ... health care is not medicine alone; holistic health care being absolutely vital, particularly for this group of people."

- Service staff interviewee

Who used SVHM Homelessness Services in 2015?

359 experiencing or at risk of homelessness used one (or more) of the four services



74% male
26% female

50 average age

6% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

21% had primary diagnosis of Schizophrenia



Key Findings

"I was like... a revolving door through the ED department, but whatever the circumstances since November 2015, I've never been back inside the doors of the ED department, sort of to me says something."

- Client

Impact of SVHM Homelessness Services on Healthcare Utilisation

Overall, in the six months after contact with service(s):

28% decrease in the number of clients who accessed the ED

13% decrease in total number of ED presentations

34% reduction in number of unplanned inpatient admissions

30% reduction in total length of stay of unplanned inpatient admissions



Homelessness Service Delivery in 2015

ALERT

139 clients, 2,021 contacts

CHOPS

81 clients, 3,851 contacts

The Cottage

139 clients, 167 episodes of care

Prague House

41 residents

"I need them in my life, I really do. They're literally the anchor. They keep me rock steady in a rough sea. You know what I mean, eh? They really are instrumental in just about everything I do."

- Client



Cost Benefits Associated with Changes in Health Service Utilisation

Evaluation findings add to the growing evidence that targeted interventions for people who are homeless can reduce their use of more acute hospital services.

For the 339 people who had contact with one of the four services, there was an average cost decrease of \$4,203 per person in the six months following service access. This equates to a total of \$1.425 million*.

These reductions in service use free up valuable resources to be used elsewhere.

* Average costs for ED attendance/admission and inpatient days provided by SVHM for individuals identified as homeless from 2015-16. Average costs for outpatient attendance sourced from Independent Hospital Pricing Authority 2016 for Victoria.

Summary

Overall, individuals accessing the four services have multiple complex health conditions, with mental health issues and co-morbidities with alcohol/substance misuse highly prevalent.

ALERT, CHOPS, The Cottage and Prague House have been a central tenet in SVHM's homelessness response and have led significant innovations tackling the revolving door between homelessness and health, and improving the quality of life of those who access their service(s).

This summary was produced from the findings reported in:

Wood, L., Vallesi, S., Martin, K., Lester, L., Zaretsky, K., Flatau, P., Gazey, A (2017). *St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Homelessness Programs Evaluation Report*. Centre for Social Impact, University of Western Australia.

