

Press Release: Homeless Kids, the Invisible Victims of Domestic and Family Violence

26 April, 2016 | Caretakers Cottage

Yfoundations, the peak body for youth homelessness in New South Wales has recently published a policy paper "[Slamming the Door](#)" outlining the gaps in the youth homelessness sector's response to domestic and family violence (DFV).

The paper asserts that the existing DFV literature discusses children and young people largely as "witnesses" or "secondary" victims of the violence perpetrated against their Mothers. This understates the involvement of young people in DFV, ignoring that they may be a direct victim of DFV, their role in protecting and supporting the parent who is a victim of abuse, or the vicarious effects of abuse on child or young person's worldviews and mental health.¹

Caretakers Cottage has long been an advocate for the very young and homeless (specifically the homeless "under 16s"), especially in the aftermath of the Going Home Staying Home reform; Caretakers has already implemented the following strategies for meeting the needs of young victims of DFV, and many of our strategies are similarly included in the Yfoundations policy paper recommendations.

- Philosophy: Caretakers Cottage firmly believes that youth homelessness is "not about the bed" but about having a safe and supporting home; youth homelessness is more often an issue of child protection, not accommodation.
- Case-management/support: All clients (& their families, where applicable), receive support from a caseworker. Support is provided to clients of all genders (including transgender youth). A young male who is a DFV victim will receive the same high quality support as a female client;
- Advocacy: Caretakers advocates to child protection agencies on behalf of the client (especially where there have been gaps in service provision, reporting, etc.);
- Data collection on DFV clients are included in both the required SHS data collection (e.g. in reasons for seeking assistance) as well as part of an independent research project run by Caretakers Cottage;
- Caretakers Cottage has positive working relationships with SHS and DFV services in the Eastern Suburbs;
- Specific DFV training has been provided to staff at the Caretakers Cottage Crisis Youth Refuge as part of a comprehensive number of training sessions;
- On-site counselling is offered to clients, this counselling is offered regardless of whether they fit the "mental health" category and specifically for those who are unlikely to attend a session at an outside service (e.g. a local Headspace office);
- Caretakers Cottage has launched "[Colour My Voice](#)" – a pilot art therapy program – helping our clients express their emotions, learn coping strategies and engage with casework;
- Caretakers Cottage understands that returning home is not always an appropriate outcome for homeless kids (especially victims of DFV) and works towards the most appropriate outcome (e.g. medium term accommodation, an OOHHC response, etc.).

*For additional information, please contact Laurie Matthews, CEO of Caretakers Cottage, at:
(02) 9389 0999 or press@caretakers.org.au*

¹ Fielding, Jessica & Chris Stone. *Slamming the Door: Policy and service gaps for Young People Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence*. Yfoundations. 2016.

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