



*Yfoundations has identified five foundations as integral to the process of ending youth homelessness. These foundations should be accessible to every young person. Furthermore, all services that work with young people experiencing homelessness should be considering these foundations within the work that they do.*

## **Home and Place**

Shelter | Safety | Comfort | Security | Belonging| Control |Identity

*It is vital that all young people have access to a safe, non-judgemental Home and Place.*

*A comfortable place that they identify with and feel a strong connection to. A Home and Place should be an environment that promotes growth and fosters positive development.*

Without access to a suitable 'Home and Place', a young person cannot end their experience of homelessness. Homelessness, is not defined strictly by an absolute lack of shelter (although this is the most obvious manifestation of it) but rather by the intersection of a range of social exclusionary factors that exacerbate poverty, limit opportunities and create barriers to full participation within a society<sup>1</sup>. Young people have told us (Yfoundations) that to them, a home is much more than just shelter, it is the belief that 'I belong and this is my place'. The 'Home and Place' foundation therefore encompasses safety, shelter, comfort, security, control and belonging. A stable 'Home and Place' is a necessary foundation on which young people can build other life domains, such as schooling and education, social networks, personal relationships and spiritual or religious meaning.

The need for young people to feel safe in their home and place is fundamental. Article 27 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup> recognises that every child has the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes adequate housing. However, we are aware that young people experiencing homelessness typically move from house to house, place to place, any number of times prior to contacting the Yconnect Hotline or accessing a Specialist Homelessness Service<sup>3</sup>. Once homeless, a young person may continue to 'bounce' between various forms of temporary

<sup>1</sup> Mallett, S. (2004). Understanding home: A critical review of the literature. *Sociological Review*, 52, 62-89.

<sup>2</sup> Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help

families who cannot afford to provide this. International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. Ratified by Australia in 1990.

<sup>3</sup> This information is obtained through communication with member SHS services and via Yconnect hotline.

accommodation (this may include rough sleeping, couch surfing at a mate's place, sleeping in a car, or crisis shelter or other homeless service). Although temporary accommodation is not the ideal housing situation for any extended period of time, a homeless young person may need to stay in a refuge or similar place for a short while. For some young people their stay may be longer<sup>4</sup>. Consideration must therefore be given to the aesthetics and appropriateness of the environment. For example, is this environment suitable for a young person? Is it youth-friendly and welcoming? Would a young person feel comfortable in this space? Can the environment be enhanced to provide greater comfort?

It is important that sufficient efforts are provided to transitioning a young person into stable housing and ensuring as little time as possible is spent within temporary accommodation. In addition to permanent and appropriate housing, it is vital a young person is supported to connect with other local services that will assist them to reach independence, while building their confidence and self-worth. Enhancing positive connections with employment services, education or training systems, psychosocial and personal development programs (i.e. mentoring) will assist a young person to end their experience of homelessness. When appropriate and in the best interests of the young person, it may be beneficial to assist in reconnecting the young person to their family<sup>5</sup>.

A transient lifestyle, although it may sound exciting, can cause great stress and anxiety to a young person. Living in a constant state of uncertainty is particularly disruptive to learning and development pathways and often results in young people becoming disengaged from education or professional networks altogether<sup>6</sup>. Studies reveal that for many young people, home and place is associated with control. This may involve having control over access to their home, over what takes place within it and a sense of stability of residence, ownership and privacy<sup>7</sup>. Home is "A place of your own, that no one can take away from you"<sup>8</sup>.

Growing up in a deprived environment<sup>9</sup> greatly increases risk factors for young people including poor health and wellbeing, drug and alcohol abuse and violent behaviours, disrupted or terminated education pathways and the development and maintenance of unhealthy or destructive relationships. These risk factors significantly increase the prevalence of mental health disorders in young people<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> This is information that has been provided to Yfoundations by our member services.

<sup>5</sup> There is a large body of research pertaining to the importance of parental attachment for a young persons development for further reading see Laible, D. J. (2004), Pathways to self-esteem in late adolescence: the role of parent and peer attachment, empathy, and social behaviours, *Journal of Adolescence* 27 (6), 703- 716 ; Attachment Theory, Bowlby, J. ( 1980 ). Attachment and loss: Sadness and depression. London : Hogarth Press .)

<sup>6</sup> Eldridge D, Mckenzie P, Clay N, Dethlefs W, (2008), Australia's Homeless Youth, A report into the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness, Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria.

<sup>7</sup> Kidd, S.A., & Evans, J.D, (2011), Home Is Where You Draw Strength and Rest: The Meanings of Home for Houseless Young People *Youth & Society*, 43: 752-773, first published on June 24, 2010

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* p 760

<sup>9</sup> This includes not only material deprivation but also a household devoid of love, support and/or guidance.

<sup>10</sup> Patel V, Flisher AJ, Hetrick S, McGorry P. (2007). Mental health of young people: a global public-health Challenge, *Lancet*; 369: 1302-13

A young person who has the safety and stability of a *Home and Place* is more likely to stay motivated and engaged in education and training or professional networks and therefore more likely to accomplish their personal and career related goals. Involvement in school or training or being part of a work team provides a young person with another positive connection to a *Home and Place* within their community.

The concept of *Home and Place* is unique to every individual. Research suggests that for many young people experiencing homelessness, the security, safety and comfort associated with the traditional construct of 'home' is seldom experienced<sup>11</sup>. Many youth are thrown out of or run away from abusive and dysfunctional family environments characterised by poor mental and physical health, substance use, victimisation and criminality<sup>12</sup>. Therefore young people experiencing homelessness may identify very differently with the concept of *Home and Place* to other young people who have been raised within a loving, stable household. The unique background and lived experiences of each person will also differ, and will contribute to their identification with the home and place concept.

People find comfort and support within various environments with no single environment being suitable for every young person. The *Home and Place* foundation therefore acknowledges this diversity within young people. For example, a young person of Aboriginal descent will identify differently with the concept of *Home and Place*, than a newly arrived young person to Australia. A key element for newly arrived young people in establishing a sense of home and place may be the security of obtaining Australian citizenship, and acceptance of any cultural difference by the broader community. A physical house may not represent a home, however a young person's *Home and Place* may instead be represented by a particular place within Australia or belonging to a specific cultural group, defined by characteristics like language and religion or spirituality.

Young people belong to a number of different networks. Young people grow up in families, in neighborhoods, and often with connections to community-based organisations, service agencies, businesses and employers. All of these connections sit within the *Home and Place* foundation. Belonging to a family, social and community group enables young people to form new relationships and nurture existing ones. From this sense of belonging, a young person builds their sense of self, their perceptions of society and their own identity. Looking at identity and belonging is therefore crucial to understanding youth homelessness. These concepts provide a powerful insight into the relationship between young people's sense of self, their perceptions of society, their immediate social environment and the day-to-day ways that they manage the experience of homelessness.

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<sup>11</sup> Kidd, S.A., & Evans, J.D., (2011), Home Is Where You Draw Strength and Rest: The Meanings of Home for Homeless Young People *Youth & Society*, 43: 752-773, first published on June 24, 2010

<sup>12</sup> Ensign, J. (1998). Health issues of homeless youth. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 7, 159-174; Kidd, S. A. (2006). Factors precipitating suicidality among homeless youth: A quantitative follow-up. *Youth & Society*, 37, 393-422.

Young people require a safe, healthy, non- judgemental, conflict free *Home and Place* where they can freely express their opinions and emotions. A *Home and Place* that provides a young person with the support, guidance and care, necessary in building a strong internal foundation, positive sense of self and connections to the community.