

Medium-term accommodation

Yfoundations factsheet

What is medium-term accommodation?

Medium-term accommodation is a supported housing model, which provides homeless young people trauma-informed support in a home-like environment. Unlike youth refuges, which are a short-term, crisis response, medium-term services typically offer one to two years of support. This model aims to provide homeless young people with the stability they need to reconnect with family, finish their education and avoid negative longer-term outcomes.



[Read our factsheet on foyers](#)



[Read our factsheet on crisis & transitional accommodation](#)

Where medium-term accommodation differs from other youth housing models, such as Foyer or transitional accommodation, is the level of onsite support. Medium-term services have staff onsite 24/7, offering young people practical and emotional assistance. These staff also link residents to other providers (e.g., mental health, education) and run in-house programs to help them develop independent living skills. Unlike models such as Foyer, medium-term services do not require a formal commitment to education and training. This means they are suited to young people who might not be ready for that level of engagement and independence.

What's the situation in NSW?

The Going Home Staying Home reforms resulted in a loss of critical medium-term accommodation. There are now only five medium-term services across NSW, all of which are in metropolitan areas. These services are:

- [Young Independent People In Housing \(YIPIH\) and Outreach Support Service, Link-Inn and Treehouse](#), provided by [Southern Youth and Family Services](#) in the Illawarra
- [Leith House](#), provided by [Taldumande Youth Services](#) in Northern Sydney
- [St. Laurence House](#), provided by [St Laurence House Youth Services](#) in Sydney

In addition to these services, [Lillian Howell Project](#) and [Youth Off the Streets](#) operate [Lillian's](#), which is a medium-term service adapted to meet the needs of younger women.

This number is completely insufficient to meet demand, particularly in regional and country areas where there is not a single medium-term accommodation service. The dire need for more medium-term services was also highlighted by Yfoundations members in our [2021 Annual Survey](#), where respondents identified the lack of medium-term accommodation as the second most urgent issue in the youth homelessness sector – behind only rental affordability.



[Read our position paper on homeless 16 and 17-year-olds](#)

Figure 1: Yfoundations 2021 Member Survey responses
What do you think are the biggest issues affecting the homelessness sector?



Who can medium-term accommodation help?

While medium-term accommodation services in NSW cater to homeless children and young people aged between 13 and 21 years, Yfoundations advocates for new services to be targeted at homeless 16 to 18-year-olds. This age group is too old for [responses targeted at homeless children](#) but generally does not have the living skills required for programs aimed at older homeless youth - such as Foyer or [Rent Choice Youth](#).



[Read our position paper on unaccompanied 12 to 15-year-olds](#)



[Read our factsheet on Rent Choice Youth](#)

Medium-term accommodation provides an important lifeline for this vulnerable cohort. The current gap in the service system means that these homeless teenagers are being forced to refuge-hop, couch surf or even sleep rough.

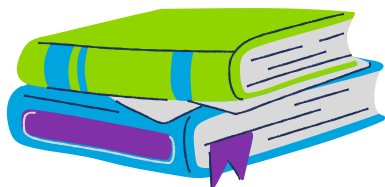


[Read our position paper on young people with complex needs](#)

But medium-term accommodation will not suit all homeless 16 to 18-year-olds. A small number will have the capacity to live independently and can be accommodated through programs like Foyer and transitional accommodation. Other young people, particularly those with significant untreated mental health and/or drug or alcohol issues, will require more intensive, specialised support than what medium-term accommodation can provide.

What does the research say?

Refuge-hopping, couch surfing and rough sleeping are [extremely unsafe](#). These practices can also exacerbate the trauma homeless young people often experience in childhood, leading to [high rates of mental](#) and [physical health issues](#) and [drug use problems](#). Homeless young people are vastly more likely to engage in [risk-taking behaviour](#) than the average population, and to become involved in the [criminal justice system](#).



One of the most important factors protecting homeless young people against these negative outcomes is positive social connections. [Researchers have found](#) that supportive relationships with family, schools, service providers, partners and pro-social peers [reduce psychological distress, drug abuse](#) and risk-taking behaviour among homeless youth.

Medium-term accommodations service providers improve positive social connections directly, by offering trauma-informed care and support. They also allow young people to stay connected to their school community, [while also promoting family reunification](#). Data from the Ruby Reunification Program – which provides medium-term accommodation for 13 to 17-year-olds in South Australia – shows that over 80% of clients returned to their families in 2018-19. And almost 90% of these young clients did not present to an SHS in the four years following their departure from the service.

By keeping young people connected with their school communities during critical development periods, medium-term accommodation will help avoid negative longer-term outcomes and provide significant savings to the government. This was made evident by [Ernst & Young's evaluation](#) of Lighthouse Foundation's medium-term accommodation service in Victoria, which found that each young person that passes through the service will save the state **\$677,836 over 35 years**.

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