



Yfoundations
Annual Survey: Board Report
2020



Introduction

Each year, Yfoundations surveys our membership and other stakeholders. This annual survey aims to monitor and improve our support and advocacy for young people at risk of or experiencing, homelessness, and the sector that supports them.

Yfoundations' CEO distributed the 2020 Annual Survey via Yfoundations' monthly eNewsletter on the 24th July. We received 38 responses by the time the survey closed on Monday 31st August. This brief summarises the findings from these responses and outlines some steps we plan to take to improve our membership offerings and guide our organisational priorities in the future.

The first half of this brief provides an overview of how Yfoundations has carried out its core duties of consulting with, advocating for and supporting those working in the youth homelessness sector. The second section outlines some of the key issues identified by those working in the sector, and to inform Yfoundations projects and activities.

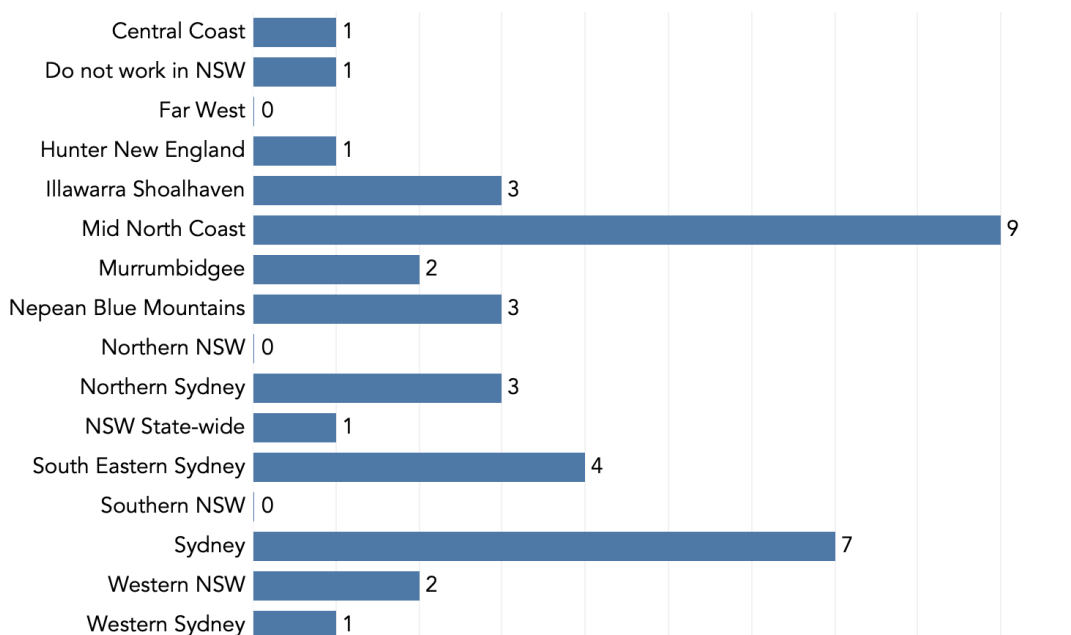
Profile of respondents

Of the 38 survey respondents, 28 (74%) reported that they or the organisation they work for are Yfoundations members. Another five respondents reported that they or their organisation weren't members, and five were unsure.

The majority (90%) reported that they work in the youth homelessness sector. Only one respondent worked for a government agency, and three respondents identified themselves as 'other partners or stakeholders.'

Respondents were asked which of the 15 Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) districts they live and work in. The largest response came from the Mid-North Coast district, followed by the Sydney district and then South Eastern Sydney. There were no respondents from Far West NSW, Northern NSW, or Southern NSW (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Annual survey total responses to the question, "Which district do you primarily live and work?"



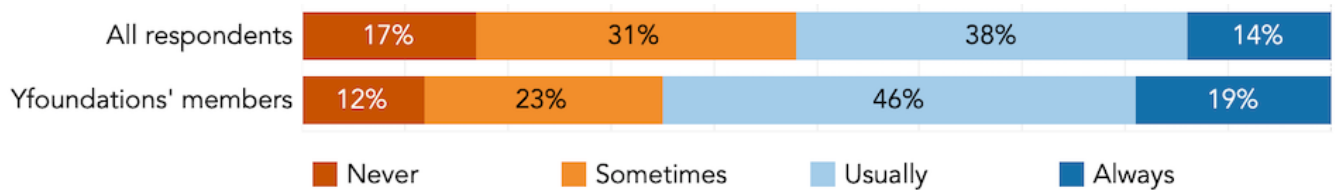
Yfoundations performance

Stakeholder consultation

The annual survey posed several questions designed to determine how effective Yfoundations' sector consultation has been over the past year. While the responses were positive overall, there is still scope for improvement in our outreach and engagement.

As indicated in Chart 2, 52% of all respondents, and 65% of members, stated their views are 'always' or 'usually' sought by Yfoundations. However, 17% of all respondents, and 12% of members who responded, reported that their views have 'never' been sought.

Chart 2: Annual survey total responses to the question, "Overall how often do you think your views have been sought by Yfoundations in the last year?"



As indicated in Chart 3, 61% of all respondents, and 73% of members, reported that they were 'extremely well informed' or 'well informed' by Yfoundations.

However, 14% of all respondents, and 12% of members, reported that they were 'not informed at all'.

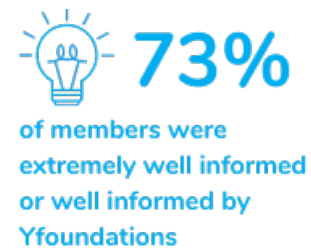
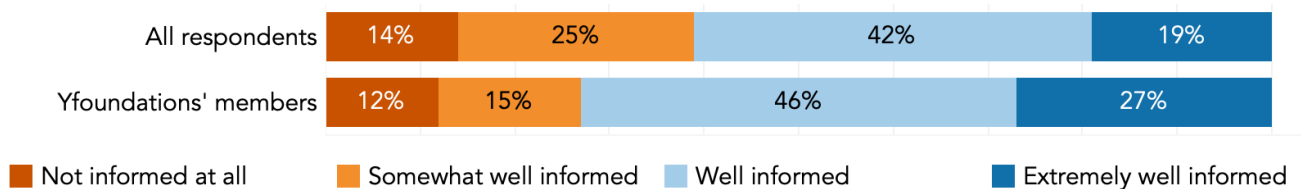


Chart 3: Annual survey total responses to the question, "How well informed by Yfoundations do you feel about developments in the sector and related policies in the last year?"

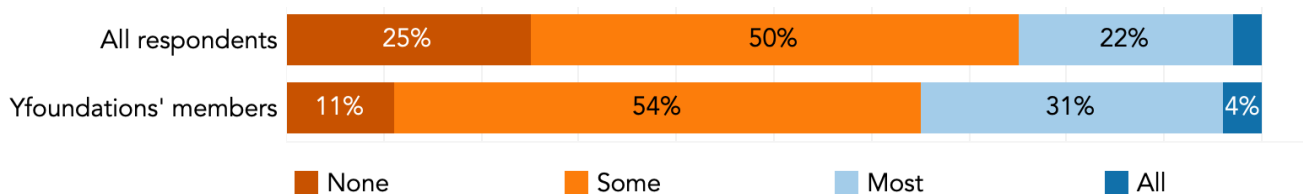



Projects and activities

The annual survey posed several questions to determine how effective Yfoundations has been in supporting the work of the youth homelessness sector. As with the consultation questions, these results were promising, but also reveal significant opportunities for improvement.

As indicated in Chart 4, 25% of all respondents, and 35% of members, reported that Yfoundations supported 'all' or 'most' of their work over the past. However, the most common response – from 50% of all respondents, and 54% of members – was that Yfoundations has supported 'some' of their work in the past year. Concerningly, 25% of all respondents, and 12% of members, reported that our organisation hadn't supported any of their work in the past year.

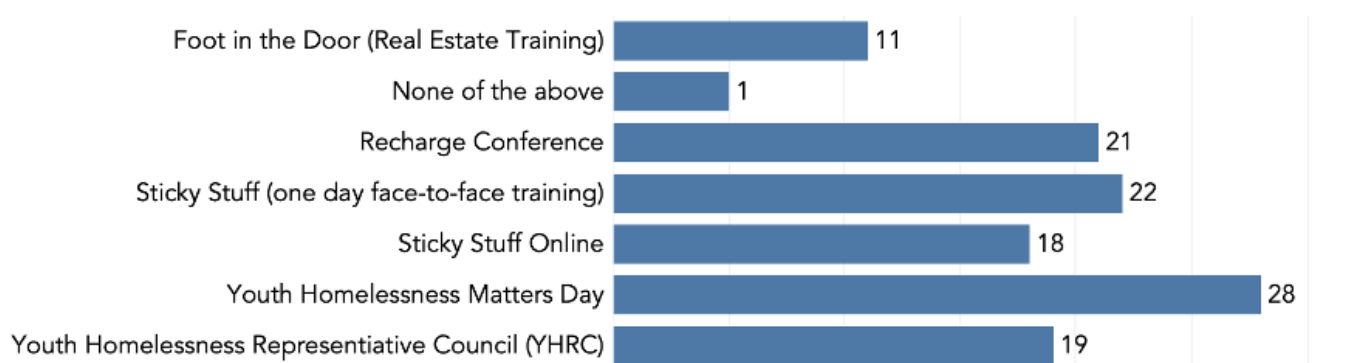
Chart 4: Annual survey total responses to the question, "How much of your work (policies, projects, activities) has been supported by Yfoundations?"



78% 
of respondents
recognised
Youth Homelessness
Matters Day

As indicated in Chart 5, Youth Homelessness Matters Day is the most widely known Yfoundations initiative – recognised by 78% of respondents. This is followed by Sticky Stuff face-to-face training (62%), the ReCharge Conference (58%) and the Youth Homelessness Representative Council (53%).

Chart 5: Annual survey total responses to the question, "Which of the following Yfoundations initiatives are you aware of?"



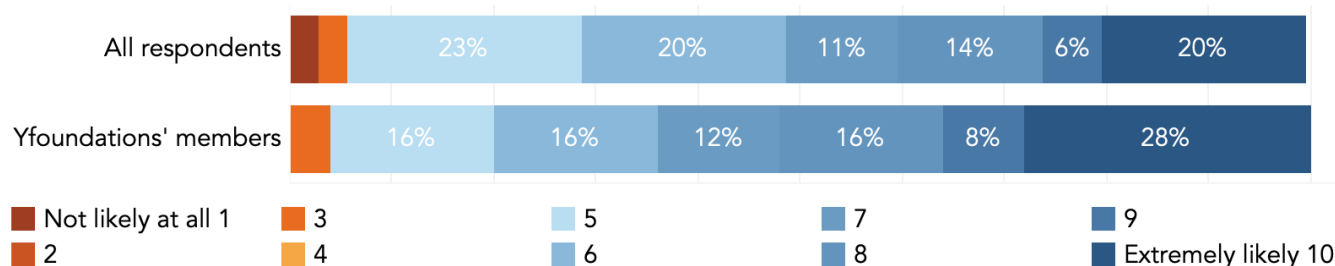
Membership promotion

Survey respondents were asked to rank themselves, on a scale of one to 10, according to how likely they are to recommend Yfoundations membership to a friend or colleague.

The majority of those who are already members (52%) rated themselves eight to 10, suggesting they were highly satisfied with their Yfoundations membership (see Chart 6). Another 44% rated themselves five to seven, suggesting they were somewhat satisfied with their membership. Only one member (4%) rated themselves under five, suggesting they weren't satisfied with their membership.

Those who weren't current Yfoundations members, or didn't know if they or their organisation were members, were less likely to report that they would recommend membership to a friend or colleague. As indicated in Chart 6, only 40% of all respondents rated themselves as eight to 10 on the scale, and 54% rated themselves as five to seven.

Chart 6: Annual survey total responses to the question, "How likely is it that you would recommend Yfoundations membership to a friend or colleague?"

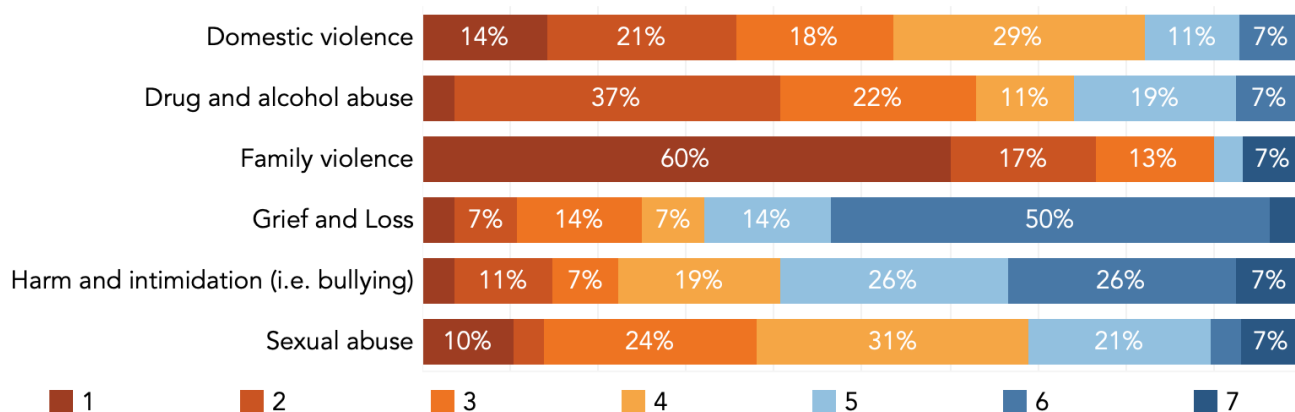


Sector concerns and priorities

Mental health

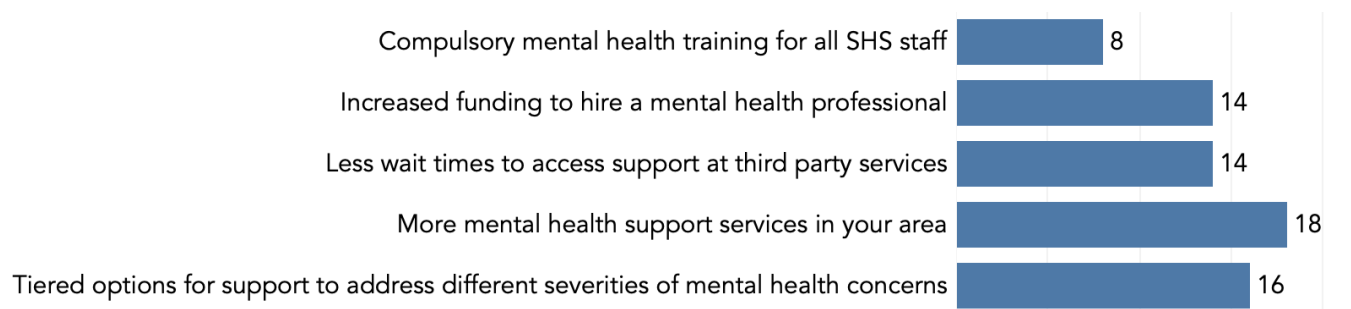
To identify the key concerns of the sector, and inform our work over the next year, Yfoundations asked a series of targeted questions about the issues of youth homelessness in NSW. One question asked respondents to rank the most common youth traumas they encountered in their work. As indicated in Chart 7, the most widely identified issues were 'family violence', followed by 'domestic violence', 'drug and alcohol abuse', and 'sexual abuse'.

Chart 7: Annual survey total responses to the question, "Within your experience, what would you rank the most common trauma experience(s) of young people to be?"



Respondents were also asked what their services needed to better support the mental health of young people in their care. As indicated in Chart 8, the most common response was 'more mental health supports in their area' (58%), followed by 'tiered options for support to address different severities of mental health concerns' (52%), 'less wait times to access support at third party services' (45%), and 'increased funding to hire a mental health professional' (45%).

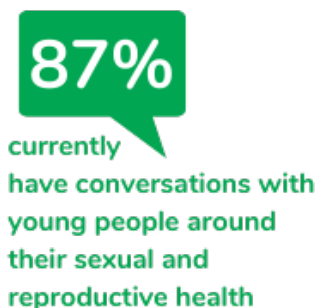
Chart 8: Annual survey total responses to the question, “Research has found that mental health concerns are more common in young people experiencing homelessness. What does your service need to better support the mental health of young people at your service?”



In open-ended comments, survey respondents also identified a ‘lack of after-hours and 24-hour support’, ‘better access to the NDIS and referral pathways’, and ‘more Housing First options for youth housing’ as key services to support young people’s mental health needs.

Sexual health

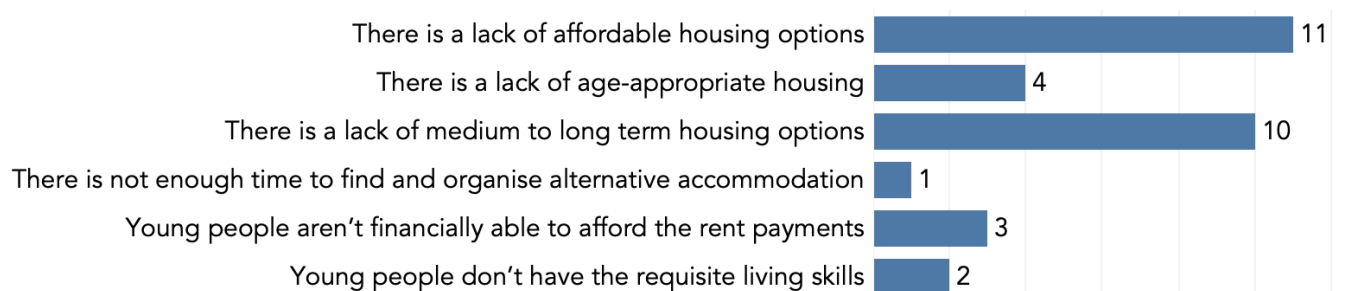
Yfoundations asked respondents to share their insights on broaching the issue of sexual health with young people, to inform the organisation’s sexual health training arm – Sticky Stuff. The majority of respondents (87%) reported that they currently have conversations with young people around their sexual and reproductive health. Most respondents (72.5%) stated that they have sufficient sexual and reproductive health resources available at their services.



Transitioning from crisis accommodation

The annual survey also posed two questions about supporting young people to transition out of crisis accommodation. As indicated in Chart 10, the primary barriers identified by our respondents were the ‘lack of affordable housing’ (36%), followed by the ‘lack of medium-term housing options’ (32%), and the ‘lack of age appropriate housing’ (13%).

Chart 10: Annual survey total responses to the question, “What is the main challenge you are faced with when transitioning a young person out of crisis accommodation?”



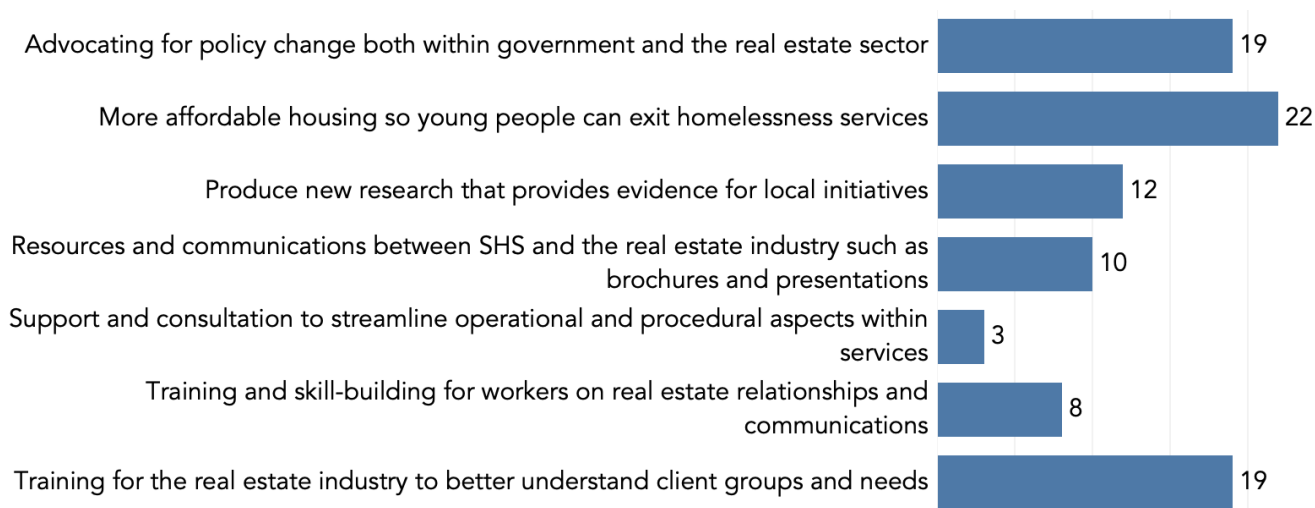
In open-ended comments, respondents also raised concerns about real estate agents discriminating against young people. This is one of the issues that Yfoundations seeks to address through our Foot in the Door program.

79%
 identified increasing affordable housing as the primary priority



To inform this program, the annual survey included a more specific question about how best Yfoundations can support Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) to successfully transition appropriate young people into a private rental. As indicated in Chart 11, respondents again identified increasing affordable housing as the primary priority (79%). This was followed by increasing advocacy efforts to amend both government and real estate policies and practices, and increased training for the real estate industry to better understand the needs of vulnerable young people (68%).

Chart 11: Annual survey total responses to the question, “How can Yfoundations best support the SHS sector in successfully transitioning appropriate young people into private rental properties? Please check all that apply.”

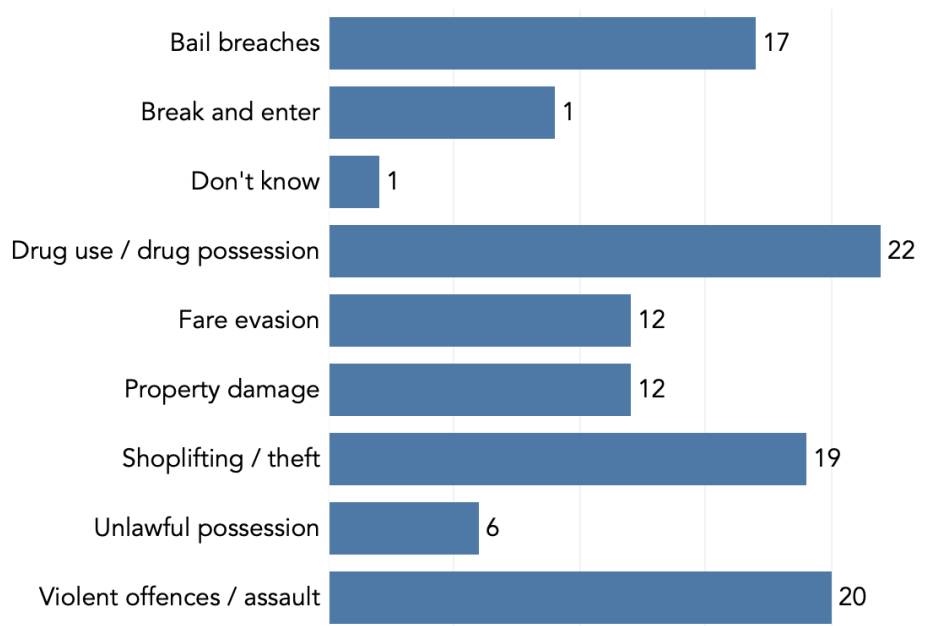


Contact with the criminal justice system

Yfoundations asked respondents to share their insights on the intersection between young people experiencing homelessness and the criminal justice system. This is designed to inform our organisation’s research on supporting homeless young people leaving youth justice.

Survey respondents were asked to identify the main reason why young people residing in SHS might come into contact with the NSW Police. As indicated in Chart 12, the most common offence identified was drug crimes (71%), followed by assault (65%) and theft (62%). Two respondents further commented that young people also come into contact as a result of Apprehended Violence Orders, and another highlighted that Police might be targeting young people from particular cohorts, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Chart 12: Annual survey total responses to the question, "What are the main reasons young people in SHS come into contact with the Police? Please check all that apply"



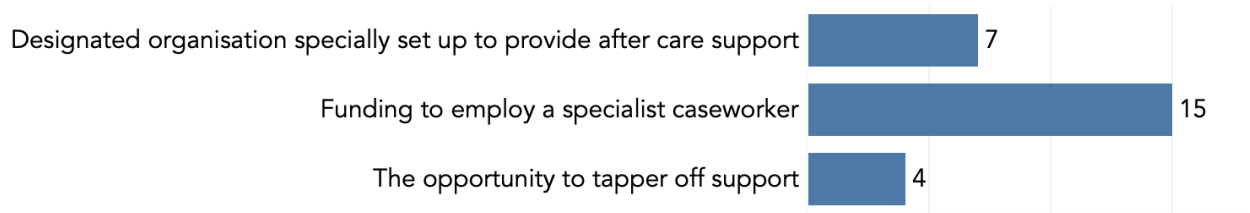
The survey also asked the open-ended question, "What do you believe would decrease young people's contact with the Police?" The most common theme of their responses was the need for more caseworkers and community liaison workers, particularly those who could provide early intervention and prevention programs, intensive family interventions and alcohol and other drug counselling. Others identified the need for health activities and mentoring, which might help "youth understand what processes and consequences are" of becoming involved in crime.

Other respondents focused on improving young peoples' living situations: providing more affordable housing, more employment opportunities, higher incomes, free TAFE and better living standards. While some focused on improving the relationship between youth services and the Police and encouraging the Police to undertake cultural awareness training and youth consultations – preventing young people from being "targeted due to age, appearance or cultural identity".

Aftercare support

The annual survey asked two questions to gauge the level of support provided to young people after they leave crisis accommodation. The vast majority (86%) of respondents indicated they have the capacity to provide aftercare support to young people transitioning from their service. When asked what would help them improve aftercare support and outcomes for young people, 58% specified funding to employ a specialist caseworker, and 27% would like to see an organisation specifically set up to provide aftercare support (see Chart 13).

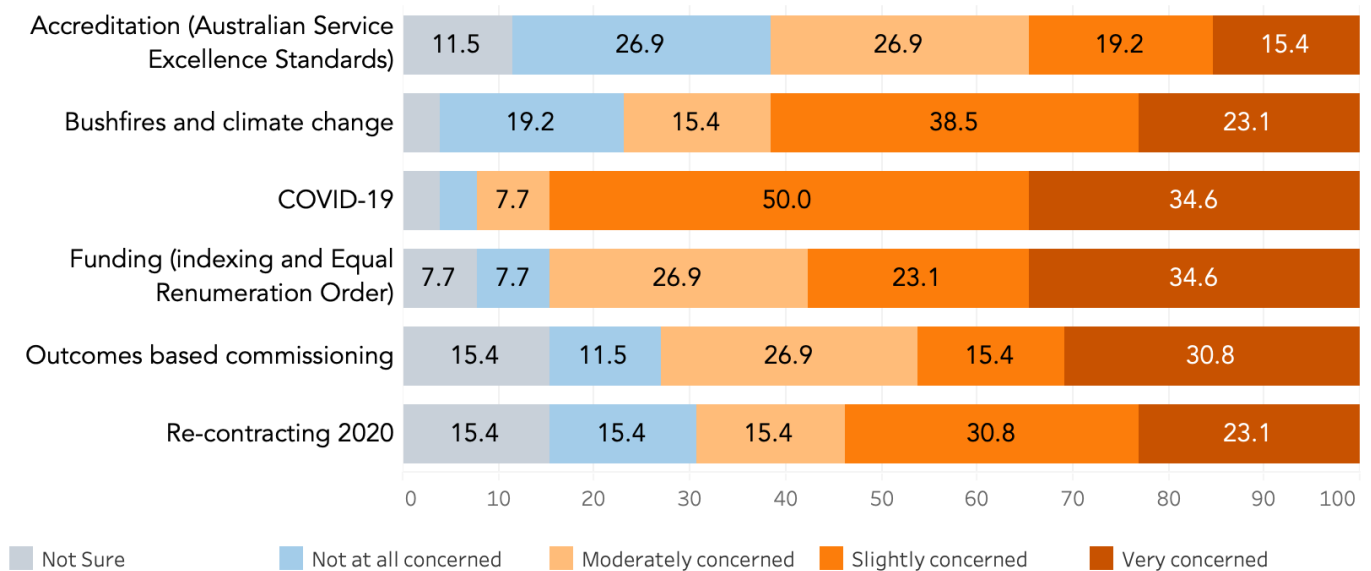
Chart 13: Annual survey total response to the question, "What would be helpful in providing aftercare support and seeing improved outcomes for young people?"



Factors impacting the delivery of youth homelessness services

One of the final questions in the Yfoundations' annual survey sought to anticipate factors that might affect the delivery of youth homelessness services. Respondents were provided with a list of potential issues and asked to rate themselves on a scale from 'not at all concerned' to 'very concerned'. As indicated in Chart 14, respondents were 'very' or 'moderately' concerned about funding, including indexing and Equal Remuneration Order (61.5%), followed by outcomes-based commissioning (57.7%) and COVID-19 (42.3%).

Chart 14: Percentage responses survey total response to the question, 'What would be helpful in providing aftercare support and seeing improved outcomes for young people?'



2021 Yfoundations priorities

The final, open-ended question in the annual survey prompted respondents to identify the most pressing issues they felt Yfoundations' should focus on in the year 2021. Survey respondents identified a pressing need for increased:

- Crisis accommodation, particularly in regional and remote areas
- Affordable housing, particularly in Sydney
- Supported housing, following the Foyer model, particularly in regional and remote areas
- Medium-to-long term housing for those exiting crisis accommodation
- DCJ funding for SHS providers, including applying the Equal Remuneration Order and extending the length of contracts to five years
- Funding for wraparound support for high needs young people, including casework, family interventions, drug rehabilitation and mental health services
- Income support for young people.

Respondents also called on Yfoundations to support them with navigating the DCJ re-contracting and Australia Service Excellence Standards accreditation process and resolving the policy issues surroundings under 16 year-olds.

Conclusion

The findings of the 2020 Yfoundations Annual Survey provide scope for optimism. The majority of our members report that they have been kept informed and regularly consulted about important policy developments. The majority of our members also felt that Yfoundations supported their work to some degree, and would recommend membership to others. They were also familiar with our programs and initiative, in particular the Youth Homelessness Matters Day, Sticky Stuff training, ReCharge Conference and the Youth Homelessness Representative Council.

However, the Annual Survey also reveals opportunities for significant improvement. The number of people who responded to the Annual survey was relatively low, and a minority of members who did respond reported that they had not been adequately consulted, inform or supported through the year. This suggests Yfoundations need to work on improving the reach of our consultation and information sharing, to ensure that we're supporting those across the youth homelessness sector to understand and engage with research and policy developments, improve their practice and have their voices heard.

A considerable number of respondents to the Annual Survey also reported that they or their organisation weren't Yfoundations members or stated that they were unaware of their membership status. This group were significantly less engaged with our organisation and saw fewer benefits from our work. These results highlight the need to improve our membership offerings and expand our membership base, drawing in relevant bodies and individuals across and beyond the youth homelessness sector.

Yfoundations would like to thank the sector for their feedback and will now use the insights to work more closely with our members to improve our service offering, advocacy and communication to get better outcomes for homeless children and young people across NSW.



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