



United Way
Kingston, Frontenac
Lennox and Addington

YOUTH OUT LOUD

Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness
in KFL&A



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Acknowledgements

This plan, with strategies and implementation steps, has been developed as part of the initiative to end youth homelessness in Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington.

Kingston area was selected to be one of the first two communities (the other being Kamloops B.C.) to participate in a national pilot project, with the objective to develop a plan on mobilizing local capacity to end youth homelessness in mid-sized communities.

Special thanks to the Mobilizing Local Capacity group: Eva's Initiatives, the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, and the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, who are partners in this new program to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness in communities across Canada.

The facilitator of the project in Kingston is the United Way KFLA. United Way worked with a steering committee and a youth planning committee to lead and facilitate this plan

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SECTION 1

Summary

Youth Out Loud: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness in Kingston and Area

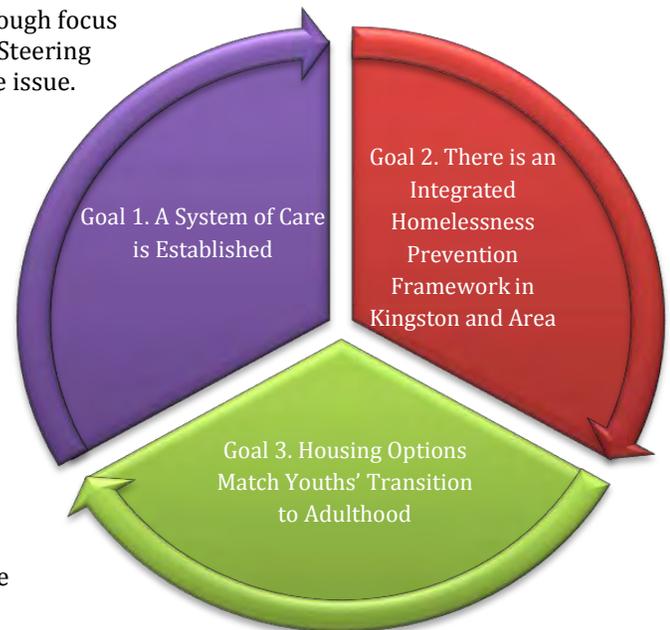
As part of a pilot project, the United Way KFLA has been working closely with community organizations and youth in Kingston and area to address the issue of youth homelessness. The Plan serves to support action and steps to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area. It is a local response to a national issue. The framework focuses on strengthening the assets, protective, and resiliency factors all young people need to lead a healthy life and transition to adulthood.

The plan was developed with input from youth in the area – through focus groups, a forum and input from a Youth Planning Committee. A Steering Committee provided guidance as the United Way researched the issue.

A point in time count was done in 2013 and again in 2014. Data showed us that one third of people in shelters are youth between the ages of 15 and 24. Data also showed that there were equal numbers of females to males (compared to other communities where one third of youth who are homeless are female).

The causes of homelessness were explored, strategies developed and shared at a community forum in May 2014. The United Way then worked with the Steering Committee to develop an implementation plan.

Importantly, this Plan is the first step, not the last step, in establishing a clear path forward to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area. It will continue to evolve and to become more concrete over time.



Goal 1: A System of Care is Established

Establishing a system of care means that services within Kingston and area are coordinated and integrated. A system of care demands an integrated systems response whereby programs, services and service delivery systems are organized at every level – from policy, to intake, to service provision, to client flow – based on the needs of the young person.

Strategy 1.1. Establish a Coordinated Access and Assessment System

- When a youth or family "touches" the system, be it through mental health, addictions, child welfare, corrections, or housing services, they are immediately assessed, their needs are identified, and client-centered plans are put in place through a common assessment tool.
- As youth move through the sector, different agencies work collaboratively to help meet intersecting needs and prevent them from becoming homeless and/or move them out of homelessness as quickly as possible.
- It is a system-wide response designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable first (triaging).

Strategy 1.2. Establish Collective Principles and Values

- What youth require to lead healthy, productive, and meaningful lives is considered in the establishment of collective principles and values that guide systems of care work.
- All stakeholders incorporate systems of care principles and values into daily operations.
- Common principles guide actions and lend focus to systems of care work. Common values help to ensure that youth are receiving the same messages across the system.

Strategy 1.3. Create a System to Collect and Share Localized Research

- A system for ongoing learning is established.
- The system allows for real-time reporting on the total number of homeless youth in Kingston and area, the length and causes of their homelessness, their demographic characteristics and needs, and the services they receive.

Goal 2. There is an Integrated Homelessness Prevention Framework in Kingston and Area

An integrated prevention framework includes activities that remove or reduce risk factors as well as promote protective factors to ensure wellbeing.

Strategy 2.1. Establish Mechanisms for Family Counselling and Mediation

- Family counselling and mediation is offered as soon as youth are flagged as being at risk of homelessness or as soon as youth leave home.
- The goal is not only to support youth, but to also support family members to develop a strong understanding of their family relationships, how to manage and negotiate in challenging situations, and how to develop supportive, meaningful, and sustainable relationships within the family.
- This strategy may include counselling families on how to support youth experiencing mental health and addictions issues.

Strategy 2.2. Support Youth Engagement in School and Community

- Youth at risk of disconnecting from their education are re-engaged with their education and offered greater educational support.
- Youth have "voice and choice" over their education, including autonomy over course work as well as options for classes/the opportunity to participate in educational programs that match their skills and interests.
- An awareness strategy is developed to address factors about the kinds of problems faced by youth that lead to both disengagement in school, and youth homelessness. Examples of these include: dealing with family conflict; financial stress and worry; peer and romantic relationships; navigating social services; mental health and addictions; dealing with landlords; and housing options.
- 211 is promoted as the access point for all youth – in school and community, including street involved youth – and core messages are communicated about where to get information and access to services through system of care organizations (mental health, addictions, housing, educational organizations, etc.).
- Information about youth homelessness is incorporated into school assemblies and teacher/staff training.

Strategy 2.3. Promote Universal Mental Health Prevention and Promotion Programs

- Well-being is promoted by helping all youth cope with the stressful experiences of adolescence.
- Youth will be given the knowledge and skills that allow them to live their lives more fully, and to feel vital and strong without getting "stuck" along the way.
- This includes efforts to reduce stress, distress, sadness and worry, combined with efforts to open up dialogue and raise awareness about youth experiences.

Strategy 2.4. Enhance Youth Employment and Career-Readiness Programs

- Youth have the opportunity to make money, explore different interests, identify life learning goals, and harness strengths within themselves.
- This includes support for building resumes and developing interview skills, as well as with networking, connecting to employers, and identifying further education or training requirements.
- Employers are also prepared to support youth in maintaining their jobs and receive training about how to connect with youth, communicate with youth, and encourage them to carry out their responsibilities.

Strategy 2.5. Ensure Youth are Not Discharged into Homelessness

- Correctional Services and Children and Youth Services (i.e. foster care, group homes), as well as Health Services (hospitals, mental health and addictions facilities) collaborate with case managers to ensure discharge planning includes permanent housing with longer term supports.
- Permanent, affordable housing is available to youth.

Goal 3. Housing Options Match Youths' Transition to Adulthood

The housing options available to youth permit them to transition from one housing program to another according to their individual preference and developmental stages.

Strategy 3.1. Enhance the Role of Emergency Housing Services

- Emergency shelters in Kingston and area are used as a central access point/outreach service.
- Once youth receive basic supports, they are directed to the appropriate services within the community that will support them to be quickly re-housed.
- Family counselling is explored, so that early intervention can occur.

Strategy 3.2. Increase the Amount of Transitional Housing Available

- Youth have increased access to transitional housing units.
- Lengths of stay is flexible based on an individual's unique situation and their ability to locate and prepare for permanent housing.

Strategy 3.3. Make Housing First a Housing Option for Youth

- Permanent housing is made available to youth.
- The developmental needs of youth are considered in the design and implementation of Housing First in Kingston and area (the values, principles, and key elements of Housing First are adopted and adapted for youth).
- There is fidelity to the model by all members of the system of care.

Strategy 3.4. Ensure Access to Affordable Housing Units

- There are more affordable housing units available in Kingston and area and youth have access to these units.
- Youth disconnected from educational institutions that provide housing support still have access to affordable housing.
- A mechanism is in place to support youth, who may not have access to parental co-signers, to access affordable housing.

Strategy 3.5. Ensure Continuous Case Management and Follow-Up Support

- Case management is immediately available so that youth receive the support they need to access housing quickly, as well as building consistent and meaningful relationships with their support team.
- Case management is flexible across the different forms of housing, so that youth have the opportunity to shift from one form of housing to the next without compromising their support.
- Youth who are living in permanent and affordable housing or who have reunited with their family do not lose all form of case management as soon as they become housed or return home.
- Ongoing needs of youth are identified and the services they receive are adjusted as needed.

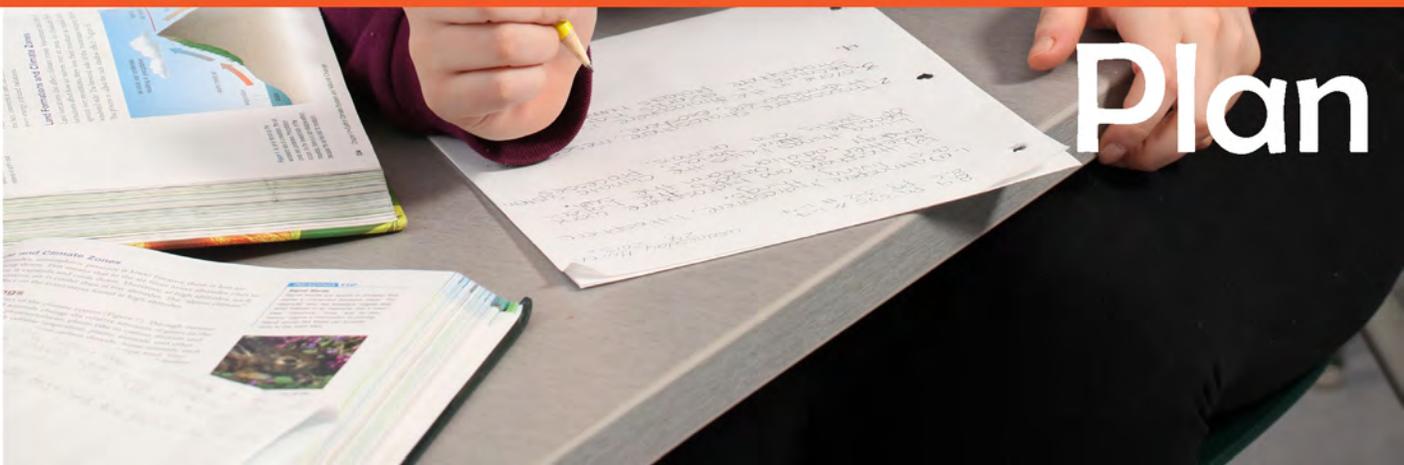
Moving Forward

This Plan takes Kingston and area one step further toward ending youth homelessness. As a result of this phase of the Plan, United Way KFLA and partners will have advanced three key outcomes that will support the obtainment of this goal.

- Firstly, Kingston and area's expertise and knowledge about youth homelessness has been strengthened through effective research and knowledge exchange practices.
- Secondly, collective priorities among youth, social service, government, and non- governmental stakeholders to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area have been established.
- Thirdly, there is strengthened momentum to implement strategies to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area.



SECTION 2



Plan

ACTION PLAN.....3

PROJECT BACKGROUND3

DEFINITION OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS 3

THE RESEARCH PROCESS 4

Steering Committee 4

Youth Focus Groups 5

Point-in-Time Count 5

Youth Community Forum..... 5

KEY FINDINGS 6

Youth Focus Groups and Youth Community Forum 6

Family Conflict..... 6

Mental Health 6

Addictions 6

Education 6

Employment and Training 6

Point-in-Time Count 7

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN10

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN 10

PURPOSE OF A YOUTH FOCUSED PLAN 10

THE PLAN FRAMEWORK..... 12

Positive Youth Development..... 12

OUTLINE 12

Goal 13

Definition..... 13

The Need 13

Action Strategies 13

The Case for Action 13

Promising Local Practices 13

Implementation 13

THE PLAN TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN KINGSTON AND AREA14

GOAL 1: A SYSTEM OF CARE IS ESTABLISHED..... 14

The Definition..... 14

The Need 14

ACTION STRATEGY 1.1. ESTABLISH A COORDINATED ACCESS AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM 15

The Case for Action 15

Promising Local Practices 15

ACTION STRATEGY 1.2. ESTABLISH COLLECTIVE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES 16

The Case for Action 16

Promising Local Practices 17

ACTION STRATEGY 1.3. CREATE A SYSTEM TO COLLECT AND SHARE LOCALIZED RESEARCH 18

Case for Action 18

Promising Local Practices 18

GOAL 2. THERE IS AN INTEGRATED HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FRAMEWORK IN KINGSTON AND AREA	19
The Definition.....	19
The Need	19
ACTION STRATEGY 2.1. ESTABLISH MECHANISMS FOR FAMILY COUNSELLING AND MEDIATION	20
The Case for Action	20
Promising Local Practices	21
ACTION STRATEGY 2.2. SUPPORT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY	21
The Case for Action	21
Promising Local Practices	22
ACTION STRATEGY 2.3. PROMOTE UNIVERSAL MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTION AND PROMOTION PROGRAMS	23
The Case for Action	23
Promising Local Practices	24
The Case for Action	24
Promising Local Practices	25
ACTION STRATEGY 2.5. ENSURE YOUTH ARE NOT DISCHARGED INTO HOMELESSNESS	26
The Case for Action	26
Promising Local Practices	27
GOAL 3. HOUSING OPTIONS MATCH YOUTHS' TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD	28
The Definition.....	28
The Need	28
ACTION STRATEGY 3.1. ENHANCE THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY HOUSING SERVICES	29
The Case for Action	29
Promising Local Practices	29
ACTION STRATEGY 3.2. INCREASE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AVAILABLE	29
The Case for Action	29
Promising Local Practices	30
ACTION STRATEGY 3.3. MAKE HOUSING FIRST A HOUSING OPTION FOR YOUTH	31
The Case for Action	31
Promising Local Practices	32
ACTION STRATEGY 3.4. ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS	32
The Case for Action	32
Promising Local Practices	33
ACTION STRATEGY 3.5. ENSURE CONTINUOUS CASE MANAGEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT	33
The Case for Action	33
Promising Local Practices	34
MOVING FORWARD	34

Youth Out Loud: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness in Kingston and Area

Action Plan

Project Background

The Youth Out Loud: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness in Kingston and Area (Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness) project is part of a national program being led by Eva's Initiatives, the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, and the Catherine Donnelly Foundation. The national program is called Mobilizing Local Capacity to End Youth Homelessness in Canada (MLC program) and the purpose of the program is to significantly change the course of youth homelessness locally and across the country. Over a five-year period, the project will draw on the resources of this unique partnership to:

- ❖ Build community awareness about youth homelessness;
- ❖ Support and assist communities to develop and implement plans that will prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness;
- ❖ Facilitate linkages and foster effective networks and collective action to combat youth homelessness; and
- ❖ Promote systemic change to Canadian public policies impacting on youth homelessness.

In December 2012, Kingston and area was selected to be one of two communities (the second being Kamloops B.C.) to participate in the national program. United Way KFLA is leading and facilitating the program locally in close collaboration with a diverse Steering Committee. The program focuses on youth between the ages of 15-24 years.

A significant amount of work has been completed to date that tells the story of youth homelessness in Kingston and area. Beginning in January of 2013, United Way KFLA led a research project, the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project, which placed youth voices at the forefront of all discussion. As a result of this research project, information about *what* youth homelessness looks like in Kingston and area, *who* it touches and *why*, has been collected. Solutions to address youth homelessness have also been proposed. This Plan translates some of these ideas into action and helps to create a plan for moving forward.

Definition of Youth Homelessness

The Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness project is being guided by the following definition of youth homelessness:

"Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing."

Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized in a typology that includes:

- ❖ **Unsheltered**, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
- ❖ **Temporarily Sheltered**, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;
- ❖ **Provisionally Accommodated**, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally;
- ❖ **At Risk of Homelessness**, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

The Research Process

The Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project was designed to better understand the experiences of homeless youth in Kingston and area, as well as what youth believe is needed to end youth homelessness all together. The research process included four key elements: the development of a Steering Committee and three methods of data collection. Each element is described in more detail below.

Steering Committee

United Way KFLA recruited a Steering Committee made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups. These groups include:

- ❖ Children and Youth Services Planning Committee;
- ❖ Municipal Government;
- ❖ School Boards;
- ❖ Police, Justice and Diversion programs;
- ❖ Housing and Emergency Services;
- ❖ Labour:
- ❖ Employment Services;
- ❖ Mental Health;
- ❖ Family & Children Services;
- ❖ Social service agencies;
- ❖ Youth.

The Steering Committee is coordinated and supported through United Way KFLA. The Committee meets monthly and membership continues to evolve. The Steering Committee has guided the project from its inception and helped to ensure the project has widespread support in the community. Importantly, this Committee has also provided input into recommendations and strategies to include in the Plan. An outside facilitator (Taylor Newberry Consulting) was contracted to compile the findings and discussions in a draft report. They were invited to a meeting to lead a discussion about what is most needed in Kingston and area to end youth homelessness, followed by additional sessions to provide input into these strategies. The first iteration of the report was shared with community organizations, individuals and stakeholders at a forum in May 2014 to gather further input. Work continued through the fall of 2014 to develop implementation plans for the identified strategies. The Steering Committee will continue to stay in place, to oversee and guide the implementation of this plan.

Youth Focus Groups

In the fall of 2013, nine focus groups were conducted with a total of 79 homeless youth and those at risk of becoming homeless. These youth were recruited from community agencies and programs working with at-risk and homeless youth in Kingston and area. The focus groups were held at these agencies and programs so that the setting was comfortable and familiar to youth. The focus groups were conducted by representatives of the Steering Committee. The agencies and programs involved in the focus groups were:

- ❖ Kingston Youth Shelter;
- ❖ Home Base Housing - In From the Cold Emergency Shelter;
- ❖ Kingston Community Health Centres - Youth Space;
- ❖ Home Base Housing - Youth Services (Rise@one4nine);
- ❖ Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox & Addington;
- ❖ Youth Diversion-SNAP program
- ❖ Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board-Ace Program; Progress Program
- ❖ Limestone District School Board-Progress Street Smart, Second Chance Programs

The focus groups served three key purposes:

- ❖ To learn about the pathway to youth homelessness in Kingston and area.
- ❖ To identify the key challenges that youth experiencing homelessness in Kingston and area face, and what would help to alleviate those challenges.
- ❖ To identify possible strategies to prevent youth homelessness in Kingston and area.

Point-in-Time Count

United Way KFLA carried out a Point-in-Time count on March 6th-7th, 2013 and March 5th-6th, 2014. Shelter and transitional housing providers were asked to provide a count of homeless youth for the evening of March 6th through the morning of March 7th, 2013 and for the evening of March 5th through the morning of March 6th, 2014. At these same times, United Way KFLA and Committee members consulted with local high schools, their adolescent care workers, and alternative education teachers to get their perception of how many youth attending school were homeless or precariously housed. The shelter numbers are used for an actual count of youth in shelters and high school numbers provide an estimate of high school students who may be precariously housed.

Youth Community Forum¹

A Youth Planning Committee was formed, including youth with lived experience of homelessness, to plan and organize a Youth Community Forum. The event, entitled: "Youth Out Loud!" was held on November 14, 2013. One hundred high school students who were selected by the school boards attended the event. The attendees were diverse, including a mix of male and female students, youth at-risk, student leaders, and youth not considered at-risk of homelessness. There were three key purposes of the event:

- ❖ To hear the stories of youth experiencing homelessness in Kingston and area.
- ❖ To promote the strength and resiliency of homeless youth.
- ❖ To learn about what youth think is needed to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area.

A variety of approaches were used to support youth engagement, including icebreakers, games, and small group discussions. The break-out sessions were designed and facilitated by students of St. Lawrence College Social Work program.

¹ A second community forum is currently being planned and will be used to refine and further the Plan.

Key Findings

Data collected through the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project was organized and analyzed by United Way KFLA. A summary of the findings is presented below. These findings are also referenced throughout the Plan.

Youth Focus Groups and Youth Community Forum

Five key themes emerged from discussions with youth. These themes are: family conflict; mental health; addictions; education; and employment and training. These themes arose out of discussion about the pathway to homelessness and the challenges that youth experiencing homelessness face. Each theme is outlined in more detail below. Youth voice has been captured verbatim to the greatest extent possible.

Family Conflict

Family conflict was identified as the leading cause of youth homelessness in Kingston and area, with 52% of youth focus group participants naming family conflict as the reason they don't have a place to live. Many youth (40%) also identified as being "alone" and stated that they have no family support. Youth shed light on practices that families can implement in order to prevent youth from becoming homeless. Youth also outlined supports that would help families keep youth housed and off the streets. Some of these practices and supports are listed in the Plan v.1, (May 2014).

Mental Health

Thirty-six percent of youth focus group participants identified experiencing mental illness. Five of the 9 focus groups also highlighted that mental illness is a leading factor contributing to homelessness in Kingston and area. Youth shed insight about what is needed to alleviate the stresses associated with mental illness and outlined specific ways this could be achieved. Their suggestions about what needs to be done and how are listed in the Plan v.1 (May 2014).

Addictions

Twenty-seven percent of youth focus group participants identified as having an addiction. Seven of the 9 focus groups also explained that addiction is a leading factor contributing to homelessness in Kingston and area. Similar to the conversation surrounding mental health, youth provided insights about how to address some of the issues associated with addictions. These insights fell into three categories: supports for youth; supports for family and community.

Education

Forty-one percent of youth focus group participants indicated that they were still in high school and 29% indicated that they had "some high school education" but were not currently attending. Youth emphasized that greater support is needed to keep youth in school because an education is required to get a job, which in turn helps youth stay housed.

Employment and Training

Forty percent of youth focus group participants indicated that the reason they do not have a place to live is because they can't afford a place to rent. Youth further emphasized that support with accessing employment would be a valuable solution to this challenge. Youth outlined some supports they thought would be most useful and these are listed in the Plan (May 2014)

Point-in-Time Count

The results of the count in March of 2013 showed that 20 youth were staying in shelters with an additional 25 youth residing in transitional housing. Sixty-four youth attending high school were also estimated as being precariously housed. There were roughly an equal number of female and male youth experiencing homelessness (the findings from the 2013 Point-in-Time count are outlined in Tables 1-3 below).

Table 1. Youth Shelter Count on the Evening of March 6th to the Morning of March 7th, 2013

<u>Youth Count March 6th 2013</u>					
	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>		
Homeless Shelter	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24	
Kingston Youth Shelter	0	0	5	2	
HBH - In From The cold	0	1	0	6	
Kingston Interval House	1	0		0	
HBH - Lily's Place	1	3	0	0	
Ryandale Shelter	0	0	0	0	
Salvation Army Harbour Lights				1	
Dawn House Women's Shelter	0	0	0	0	
Totals	2	4	5	9	20
Total Females	6				
Total Males	14				

Table 2. Youth Transitional Housing Count on the Evening of March 6th to the Morning of March 7th, 2013

<u>Youth Count March 6th 2013</u>					
	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>		
Transitional Housing	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24	
Elizabeth Fry Society	4	5	0	0	
KIH - Robin's Hope Transitional Housing	1	2	0	0	
HBH - Rise@one4nine	5	0	3	0	
HBH - Journey House	0	0	1	3	
Ryandale - Transition House	0	0	0	1	
Totals	10	7	4	4	25
Total Females	17				
Total Males	8				

Table 3. Perception of Number of Precariously Housed Youth on the Evening of March 6th to the Morning of March 7th, 2013

Limestone District School Board	Female		Male		Total
	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24	
Precariously Housed Youth	29	9	21	5	64
Total Females	38				
Total Males		26			

The second count, conducted in March of 2014, identified a smaller number of youth. However, the numbers are still higher than they should be. On March 5th, 2014 there were 20 youth staying in shelters, with an additional 16 youth residing in transitional housing. Forty-one youth attending high school were also estimated as being precariously housed. In March of 2014, overall there were slightly more female youth than male youth experiencing homelessness (the findings from the Point-in-Time count are outlined in Tables 4-6 below).

Table 4. Youth Shelter Count on the Evening of March 5th to the Morning of March 6th, 2014

<u>Youth Count March 5th 2014</u>					
	Female		Male		
Homeless Shelter	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24	
Kingston Youth Shelter	1	1	5	3	
HBH - In From The cold	0	0	0	1	
Kingston Interval House	1	2	0	0	
HBH - Lily's Place	3	2	0	0	
Ryandale Shelter	0	0	0	0	
Salvation Army Harbour Lights	0	0	0	0	
Dawn House Women's Shelter	1	0	0	0	
Totals	6	5	5	4	20
Total Females	11				
Total Males		9			

Table 5. Youth Transitional Housing Count on the Evening of March 5th to the Morning of March 6th, 2014

Youth Count March 5th 2014					
	Female		Male		
Transitional Housing	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24	
Elizabeth Fry Society	0	1	0	0	
KIH - Robin's Hope Transitional Housing	0	2	0	0	
HBH - Rise@one4nine	3	0	4	0	
HBH - Journey House	1	1	1	2	
Ryandale - Transition House	0	0	0	1	
Totals	4	4	5	3	16
Total Females					
	8				
Total Males					
	8				

Table 6. Perception of Number of Precariously Housed Youth on the Evening of March 5th to the Morning of March 6th, 2013

Limestone District School Board	Female		Male		Total
	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24	
Precariously Housed Youth	18	5	14	4	41
Total Females	23				
Total Males	18				

Introduction to the Plan

The key findings and themes identified in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project, outlined above, have been used to guide the development of the Plan. Local findings are woven throughout the Plan in order to demonstrate how all recommended strategies to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area are grounded in youth voice and experience.

Purpose of the Plan

The Plan serves to support the development of a shared vision to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area. The plan brings clarity and understanding to the complex social issues that underpin youth homelessness, and illustrates the strategies and contributions that are needed in Kingston and area to address these issues. There are three points to keep in mind when reviewing the Plan. Firstly, this Plan is the first step, not the last step, in establishing a clear agenda to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area. There is more work to be done and this Plan will continue to evolve and become more concrete over-time. To that end, the Plan is also not intended to be a static document. As our collective experience and knowledge of youth homelessness evolves, so too must our definitions and approach to the issue. Ongoing changes to the Plan will demonstrate the developmental nature of community-based work and systems change. Lastly, the Plan is not intended to prescribe a "one size fits all" approach to end youth homelessness. Local action must reflect the specific priorities, assets, and context of Kingston and area. However, the Plan is intended to represent a foundation upon which the youth homeless movement can align local and national priorities in order to emphasize the essentials to end youth homeless in Canada. The Plan can also serve as a catalyst for collaboration across "peer" communities participating in the MLC program.

Purpose of a Youth Focused Plan

Alongside this project, the City of Kingston has developed a 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan. The City and United Way KFLA have worked together to ensure the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project will inform the youth homelessness component of the 10 Year Plan. The 10 Year Plan has been valuable in helping Kingston and area refocus its efforts from managing homelessness to ending homelessness. As part of this refocus, the 10 Year Plan acknowledges that youth are a particularly vulnerable population in Kingston and area and there is a need to prevent youth from becoming homeless so that they do not "become tomorrow's chronically homeless adults". The 10 Year Plan also recognizes the unique developmental needs of youth and states that "youth are best served by youth-specific services, not by being treated as adults". Ineffective and misdirected services lead to increased costs on the system and wasted taxpayer dollars.

As outlined in the Municipal 10 Year Plan, approximately 1 in 3 persons experiencing homelessness in Canada are unaccompanied youth, defined as those between the ages of 16 and 24 who are without adult supervision. Twenty-seven percent of the city's total shelter users are in this group². This finding is concerning given that youth are among the most vulnerable of groups who experience homelessness. Their level of development and life experience renders them particularly vulnerable to entrenchment into street life³. Youth are physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and socially still developing. This means they are entering homelessness at a time when they are still forming their identity and trying to understand who they are and what they value⁴. Consequently, homeless youth are particularly vulnerable to criminal victimization and sexual exploitation⁵.

² 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan.

³ Worthington, C. A., & MacLaurin, B. J. (2009). Level of street involvement and health and health services use of Calgary street youth. *Can J Public Health, 100* (5), 384-88.

⁴ Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American psychologist, 55*(1), 170.

⁵Worthington, C. A., & MacLaurin, B. J. (2009). Level of street involvement and health and health services use of Calgary street youth. *Can*

Youth also often enter homelessness with fewer life skills, such as employment, cooking, or money management skills⁶. The lack of skills in these areas means it is more difficult for youth to transition from homelessness to being housed without considerable support. Researchers have found that without effective intervention within the first two weeks of street involvement, youth will likely become entrenched within two months⁷. Entrenched street youth face more serious risks, are more heavily involved in illegal activities, and are more difficult to engage and to serve⁸. There is a need for innovative programs and projects that target young people who are within this two-week critical intervention period.

Youth is also characterized by different experiences than adults. Adolescence is a period when youth are drawn to exploration and experimentation⁹. It is therefore imperative that young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to experiment and explore without life-altering consequences. There are key building blocks of healthy development, known as Developmental Assets, which outline what environments need to offer youth so that they positively transition to adulthood. For example, environments need to offer:

- ❖ Meaningful participation;
- ❖ Opportunities for engagement;
- ❖ Constructive use of time;
- ❖ Healthy and caring relationships;
- ❖ Supportive mentors and role models;
- ❖ Positive peer influences;
- ❖ High expectations;
- ❖ Safety; and
- ❖ Accessibility (universal, physically and financially accessible, and available at the times needed)¹⁰.

When young people experience the assets outlined above, they are less likely to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviours and are more likely to thrive. For example, research shows that youth with the least assets are most likely to engage in problem alcohol use, violence, and drug use^{11,12}; issues that have been found to put youth at risk of homelessness¹³. On the other hand, when youth have higher levels of assets, they are more likely to do well in school and be civically engaged^{14,15}; factors that are correlated with housing stability¹⁶. These findings underscore the need for a Plan that reflects developmental assets and an understanding of what is required to support the positive development of youth. The findings also demonstrate that the needs and characteristics of youth, as well as the assets youth require, pose unique challenges to housing. Just as adults do, homeless youth need safe, accessible, consistent, and appropriate physical shelter. However, the provision of housing alone will

J Public Health,100(5), 384-88.

⁶ *The state of homelessness in Canada 2013*. Homeless Hub, 2013.

⁷ Worthington, C. A., & MacLaurin, B. J. (2009). Level of street involvement and health and health services use of Calgary street youth. *Can J Public Health*,100(5), 384-88.

⁸ Kidd, S. A. (2003). Street youth: Coping and interventions. *Child and adolescent social work journal*, 20(4), 235-261.

⁹ Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 170.

¹⁰ Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied developmental science*, 4(1), 27-46.

¹¹ Leffert, N., Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Sharma, A. R., Drake, D. R., & Blyth, D. A. (1998). Developmental assets: Measurement and prediction of risk behaviors among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science*, 2(4), 209-230

¹² Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual. Rev. Public Health*, 26, 399-419.

¹³ Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual. Rev. Public Health*, 26, 399-419.

¹⁴ Leffert, N., Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Sharma, A. R., Drake, D. R., & Blyth, D. A. (1998). Developmental assets: Measurement and prediction of risk behaviors among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science*, 2(4), 209-230.

¹⁵ Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual. Rev. Public Health*, 26, 399-419.

¹⁶ Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual. Review. Public Health*, 26, 399-419.

not solve the problem. Housing must be coupled with extensive supports that enhance developmental assets and prepare youth for adulthood. It is also important to consider how variations in age influence housing. In the MLC and Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness projects, anyone between the ages of 15-24 is considered a "youth". There are great differences between 15 and 24 year olds in terms of life experience, desires, interests, and needs. For example, a 15-17 year old may require more supervision and structure than an 18-24 year old. For these reasons, in comparison to adult strategies that may call for fewer options, it is important to incorporate diverse housing options in any housing strategy supporting youth.

Lastly, the average Canadian pays a significant financial price when a youth is homeless. One study found that each youth experiencing homelessness is reflected in an annual taxpayer burden of \$13,900¹⁷ and an annual social burden of \$37,450¹⁸. Once these youth reach the age of 25, it is estimated that they will impose a future lifetime taxpayer burden of \$148,790 and a future lifetime social burden of \$461,020. Altogether, the lifetime cost of each homeless youth is over \$1 million. Creating a plan that focuses on strategies designed to ensure youth are stably and sustainably housed is one way of preventing future chronic homelessness and ending homelessness in Canada altogether.

The Plan Framework

Positive Youth Development

As outlined above, it is important that the Plan reflects developmental assets and an understanding of what is required to support the positive development of youth. The Plan is therefore situated within a Positive Youth Development Framework¹⁹. In contrast to traditional approaches, which often focus on the deficits of youth experiencing homelessness, this framework focuses on strengthening the assets, protective, and resiliency factors all young people need to lead a healthy life and transition to adulthood. Applying this framework requires consideration of the life course of youth and an understanding of theories of human development. All action strategies recommended in this Plan are designed to align with the age and developmental needs of the youth populations being served. All activities will take into account young peoples' increasing knowledge base and skill set, and challenge young people to broaden their experiences and aspirations. A Positive Youth Development Framework also requires an understanding of what environments need to offer youth to support healthy development. Environments that support healthy development are those that immerse youth in supportive settings and engage them in a variety of healthy relationships, among other things. A Positive Youth Development approach to ending youth homelessness is supported by current advocates, researchers, and policy makers in the field of youth homelessness.²⁰ The Plan assumes that all engaged stakeholders in Kingston and area, from families to schools to communities, are working from this same perspective.

Outline

The Plan is written so as to carry the reader from issue to action. The goal is to outline what is needed in Kingston and area to end youth homelessness, why it is needed, and how Kingston and area can get there. Each heading that is used in the Plan is outlined and described below.

¹⁷ The \$13,900 includes homeless shelters, hospital bills, legal fees, cost of Children's Aid workers, incarceration, etc.

¹⁸ \$37,450 represents all other indirect costs, such as lost taxes, lower productivity, lost wages, marginal excess tax burden, lower economic growth, etc.

¹⁹ http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthopportunities/steppingstones/youth_policy_about.aspx

²⁰ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

Goal

Each goal represents a change that is expected to occur as a result of the Plan. The goals are high level and represent areas where improvement is needed. All goals were identified by qualitatively analyzing data collected by United Way KFLA. This includes data from the following sources: nine focus groups, one point-in-time count, and a youth community forum.

Definition

The purpose of this heading is to describe the goal in clear terms. All definitions were drawn from MLC's "Essentials to End Youth Homelessness" document and revised based on literature and local research findings.

The Need

The purpose of this heading is to demonstrate why it is necessary to meet each goal and to explain each goal in more depth.

Action Strategies

The Action Strategies outline what is needed in Kingston and area to meet each goal. There may be strategies not included in the Plan that are relevant to the particular goal. The strategies are intended to reflect locally identified needs and priorities.

The Case for Action

The Case for Action ties the individual strategies within each goal area to local data and literature. The purpose is to elaborate on what is needed, and illustrate why the strategy is nationally and locally important. When possible, examples of how to implement the strategy are provided.

Promising Local Practices

Promising local practices include relevant programs, organizations, and initiatives that are already in place in Kingston and area. The purpose of this section is to highlight what is already happening and what can be built upon to put each action strategy into practice.

Implementation Section

Implementation refers to the steps that are necessary to put the Action Strategies into practice. The steps, outlined at the end of this document (Section 3), were drawn from the feedback provided at a community forum. This forum was held in May of 2014 and brought together community leaders including stakeholders working within the youth-serving sector. At this forum the community collectively identified priorities for moving forward with the Plan. Following the forum, conversations with key stakeholders and the Steering Committee helped to refine the priorities.

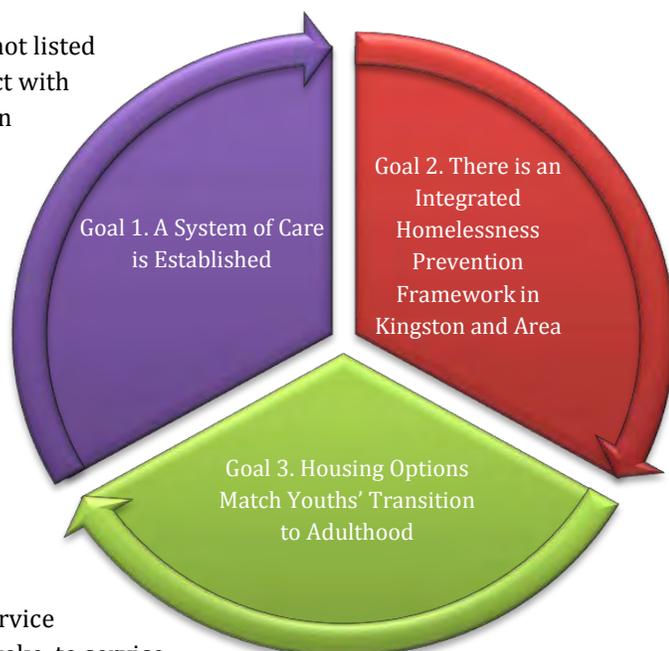
The Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Kingston and Area

All goals and actions strategies are of equal importance and are not listed according to priority. Just as the environments that youth interact with intersect to influence youth experience, so too do the strategies in this Plan. This Plan assumes that all goals will be worked toward simultaneously, as success in one area will depend on success in another.

Goal 1: A System of Care is Established

The Definition

Establishing a system of care means that services within Kingston and area are coordinated and integrated. Different agencies and programs have clear roles and mandates, and work together as providers for the same clients. As opposed to a fragmented collection of services, a system of care demands an integrated systems response whereby programs, services and service delivery systems are organized at every level – from policy, to intake, to service provision, to client flow – based on the needs of the young person²¹.



Goal 1. A System of Care is Established

- **Action Strategy 1.1.** Establish a Coordinated Access and Assessment System
- **Action Strategy 1.2.** Establish Collective Principles and Values
- **Action Strategy 1.3.** Create a System to Collect and Share Localized Research

The Need

The community-based services of the homelessness sector in Kingston and area cannot alone solve youth homelessness. Mainstream services such as health care, addictions and mental health, child welfare, education, and corrections must become

embedded within the youth homelessness sector's coordinated system of care. This is because youth are part of many environments, such as family, school, peer, and community environments, and these environments intersect and influence one another. When there is a breakdown in one environment there is likely a break down in another. An attempt to change one environment can also have side effects on another. This means that increased attention to inter-sectoral partnerships and collaborative service provision is required to ensure holistic and consistent support is provided to youth. A system of care is also important to ensure that the community of helping professionals in Kingston and area take the burden of service coordination 'off the backs' of families and youth. The goal is to better support youth through team work in services and in community planning²². A system of care will also benefit individual agencies and organizations. Collaboration creates a sense of community, whereby service providers are not 'alone' in the support process. There is community ownership for supporting youth, addressing their needs, and promoting their strengths. Agencies can also draw on their unified voice, creating strength and leverage when advocating to governing bodies and policy makers about unmet needs. Furthermore, a system of care reduces duplication of services and allows for greater efficiency. By working together the dynamic needs of youth are met as they flow seamlessly through the system.

²¹ Mobilizing Local Communities to End Youth Homelessness in Canada. *Essentials to End Youth Homelessness*.

²² Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

Action Strategy 1.1. Establish a Coordinated Access and Assessment System

The Case for Action

With a coordinated access and assessment system, when a youth or family "touches" the system, be it through mental health, addictions, child welfare, corrections, or housing services, they are immediately assessed, their needs are identified, and client-centered plans are put in place through a common assessment tool²³. As opposed to there being one door into the system, there are multiple doors, each prepared to support youth as they move through the sector. Different agencies work collaboratively to help meet intersecting needs and prevent them from becoming homeless and/or move them out of homelessness as quickly as possible²⁴. It is a system-wide response designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable first (triaging) and it creates a more efficient homeless serving system by:

- ❖ Helping people move through the system faster (by reducing the amount of time people spend moving from program to program before finding the right match);
- ❖ Reducing re-entries into homelessness (by appropriately responding to people most in need first, and matching all people to supports and services that meet their needs)²⁵.

A coordinated access system has been identified as being particularly important in Kingston and area due to the complexity of the issues that homeless youth experience. When youth were asked what the main causes of homelessness are for young people living in Kingston and area, they indicated that a variety of issues intersect and threaten housing stability. These issues primarily include drugs and addictions, mental health, a lack of affordable housing, and family conflict²⁶. This means that youth experiencing homelessness can "touch" the system at a variety of points. It also means that while a youth may first touch the system in one particular area, they may require support from another area. The strength of this action strategy is that it leads a youth to be served by the system, not by just one agency. In other words, it provides wrap-around support. Another strength is that it prevents youth and families from needing to retell their story every time they access services. Youth in Kingston and area identified this as being critical to their willingness to accept support, as they are "tired of telling their story over and over again" as they move through the system.

Promising Local Practices

Established Relationships and Partnerships

Key organizations supporting youth, and youth experiencing homelessness in particular, are well known in Kingston and area. For example, Schools Boards and the Police already have established partnerships in the community. By placing an intentional focus on facilitating access and wrap-around support, these partnerships can be strengthened to increase coordination within the system. More detail about the partnerships and referral pathways that are already in place is provided below.

- ❖ Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) and the Limestone District School Board (LDSB)
 - When a youth discloses to a counsellor at school that they are precariously housed, they are referred to the following organizations: Pathways for Children and Youth, KAIROS, or the Youth Outreach Worker from Kingston Interval House.
 - If the youth presents as absolutely homeless, they are referred to Kingston Interval House (female-only), Youth Services at Home Base Housing (male and female), and the Kingston Youth Shelter (male and female).

²³ Raising the Roof. (2009) Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions.

²⁴ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

²⁵ Gaetz, S. (2012) The Real Cost of Homelessness: Can We Save Money by Doing the Right Thing?

²⁶ Youth Out Load: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project.

- If the youth presents psychiatric crisis, the Urgent Care Protocol from Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Hotel Dieu Hospital, is followed.
 - These referrals to community partners are done on a school-by-school basis, there is no protocol in place at this point.
- ❖ Police
- Within the schools there is a protocol for a safety threat assessment where police are involved.
 - Officers are equipped to refer the youth they meet on the street to community resources.
 - Relationships with Pathways for Children and Youth, KAIROS, and the Youth Outreach Worker from Kingston Interval House are particularly strong.

City of Kingston's Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS)

In alignment with the City of Kingston's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan, it has been established that any providers that the City funds will be required to use what is called the Homeless Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS). HIFIS data will be accessible to the system of care, which requires an information sharing agreement among system of care representatives. Agencies will be able to learn and grow alongside one another, ultimately strengthening service coordination and integration. How this System aligns with youth providers needs to be explored. For example, it is important that HIFIS includes information about youth serving providers, is aligned with youth development, and is designed to collect data about youth demographics and needs.

SPDAT

The SPDAT (Service Priority Decision Assistance Tool) is an evidence-informed approach to assessing an individual's or family's acuity. The tool prioritizes who to serve next and why, while concurrently identifying the areas in the person/family's life where support is most likely necessary in order to avoid housing instability²⁷. SPDAT is presently being used by many housing providers within Kingston and area. Youth service providers have recommended that SPDAT be revised for youth to reflect youth needs and acuity. A focus group has been recruited to review changes to the SPDAT for youth. They will likely complete some beta testing of a youth SPDAT in the fall to ensure any adaptations maintain the reliability and validity of the tool.

Action Strategy 1.2. Establish Collective Principles and Values

The Case for Action

Large-scale social change requires a shift in focus from isolated interventions of individual organizations to an approach based on working together for collective impact. In Kingston and area, there is already a shared commitment to end youth homelessness across system of care organizations. Many organizations are working hard to support youth on their journey to adulthood and to alleviate or remove the barriers along the way. There is a need to build on this commitment by supporting organizations to abandon their individual agendas in favour of a collective approach to ending youth homelessness. This is because no single organization, however innovative or powerful, can accomplish this goal alone. Instead, improvements must be guided by a shared vision for change. It is therefore important for all stakeholders to incorporate systems of care principles and values into daily operations and to be committed to such principles and values. Common principles help guide actions and lend focus to systems of care work. Common values help to ensure that youth are receiving the same messages across the system. When establishing collective principles and values, it is important to consider youth development and what youth require to lead healthy, productive, and meaningful lives.

²⁷ <http://www.orgcode.com/product/spdat/>

Promising Local Practices

Housing First is a transformational housing model used in a number of Canadian and American communities and is at the heart of many systems of care across the country^{28 29 30 31}. It is a values based model that is guided by clear principles. Much could be gained by having Housing First values and principles guide the system of care in Kingston and area.

City of Kingston's Adoption of Housing First

Housing First as a model has been adopted by the City of Kingston's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan. Housing First puts the priority on a rapid and direct move from homelessness to housing, instead of requiring people to graduate through a series of steps before getting into permanent housing³². The model is based on the belief that housing is a basic right. There are four core principles to Housing First that lay the foundation for the City of Kingston's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan and set the tone and direction for moving forward. These principles include:

- ❖ Youth have choice over their housing;
- ❖ Youth require immediate access to permanent housing with the support necessary to sustain it;
- ❖ Housing is not conditional on sobriety or program participation;
- ❖ Housing promotes social inclusion, self-sufficiency, and improved quality of life and health.

When a system of care is based on the principles above then all players in the system are approaching support from the youth's perspective. Youth define their own needs and goals and the system works together to meet these needs. This is a shift from other continuum of care models that place the focus on deficits³³. These latter models hold the perception that if a youth requires treatment and is "resistant" or "not willing" to be helped, then that youth is not ready for housing. The Housing First model challenges this assumption by recognizing that loss of control over one's life resulting from housing instability, psychiatric hospitalizations, and intermittent substance abuse treatment leaves some youth mistrustful of the mental health system and unwilling to comply with demands set by providers. Accordingly, "compliance" with treatment is not a requirement for housing in the Housing First model. Adopting Housing First principles does not mean the omission of placing expectations on youth. Rather, it highlights the necessity to establish mechanisms for incorporating assets into programs and supports in a way that is congruent with Housing First values and principles.

Along with the adoption of the principles outlined above, the City has established a Vision Statement for Housing First- "*A community committed to providing an effective and coordinated system of housing and supports that is best for each household and quickly ends or prevents their homelessness permanently.*" While Housing First is at the forefront of the City of Kingston's 10 Year Plan, it has not yet been determined how Housing First will play out when applied to youth.

²⁸ Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Youth Homelessness (2011).

²⁹ City of Kingston's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan (2013).

³⁰ Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2012)

³¹ Place to Call Home, Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness (2010)

³² Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration. (2007) What Housing First Means for People: Results of Streets to Homes 2007 Post-Occupancy Research.

³³ Parkinson, S., Nelson, G., & Horgan, S. (1999). From housing to homes: A review of the literature on housing approaches for psychiatric consumer/survivors. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health (Revue canadienne de santé mentale communautaire)*, 18(1), 145-164.

Housing First For Youth Framework³⁴

A Housing First for Youth Framework report has recently been launched in Canada and is being reviewed by many youth serving organizations in Kingston and area. This report is designed to clarify what Housing First is and what is necessary to adapt the model for work with young people who are homeless. The report has spurred conversation among youth homelessness stakeholders in Kingston and area and will be a valuable tool for understanding what values and principles of Housing First are most relevant to youth and how they can be applied.

Action Strategy 1.3. Create a System to Collect and Share Localized Research

Case for Action

Since the time the community embarked on the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness project, much has been learned about youth homelessness in Kingston and area. For example, point in time counts have been valuable at providing an estimate on the number of homeless young people in Kingston and area. The youth focus groups and community forum have also been valuable for helping us to understand why youth become homeless. Despite these gains, there are still gaps in knowledge and a need to create a system for ongoing learning. One way to do this is through real-time reporting on the total number of homeless youth in Kingston and area, the length and causes of their homelessness, and their demographic characteristics and needs. This type of reporting allows the system to learn and strengthen their services on an ongoing basis. It also allows Kingston and area to better understand youths' longitudinal homelessness experiences by tracking the services they receive throughout the duration of their homelessness episode(s).

One way to collect and share localized research is through evaluation. The Plan is new in many ways. It is new to the community in terms of the focus on youth, the types of programs that will be offered, and the way in which the system will work together. This process will need to be monitored carefully in order to stay on track, learn, and grow.

Promising Local Practices

City of Kingston's Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS)

In addition to supporting coordinated access and service integration, HIFIS will also support knowledge mobilization more broadly. The City will host the data collected through HIFIS and prepare regular aggregate reports for the provider community. As noted above, how this System aligns with youth providers needs to be explored. For example, it is important that the System includes information about youth serving providers, is aligned with youth development, and is designed to collect data about youth demographics and needs, including place of origin and migration patterns

Youth Community Forum

In the development of this Plan, a Youth Community Forum was held called Youth Out Loud Kingston!. This forum was planned and facilitated by youth for youth and was successful at engaging a wide range of youth. The forum could become an annual practice and serve as an effective tool for sharing important lessons with youth in Kingston and area.

³⁴ <http://www.homelesshub.ca/housingfirstyouth>

The Students Commission's Youth Friendly Checklist³⁵

As part of Kingston's Youth Strategy, which was designed with the end goal of creating a youth friendly city, a Youth Friendly Checklist was developed to assess progress toward creating youth friendly spaces, programs, or organizations. This resource was created by CAST, a working group of youth and adults who took the lead on developing the Kingston Youth Strategy. A similar type of resource could be developed to align with the Plan to end Youth Homelessness in Kingston and area.

Goal 2. There is an Integrated Homelessness Prevention Framework in Kingston and Area

The Definition

Prevention means stopping youth from becoming homeless in the first place. An integrated prevention framework includes activities that remove or reduce risk factors as well as promote protective factors to ensure wellbeing³⁶.

The Need

Prevention is important because homeless youth are a particularly vulnerable population, subject to challenges that pose not only great risk to their health and wellbeing³⁷, but place a cost on society as a whole³⁸. Of the 79 youth who participated in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project focus groups, 36% indicated having a mental illness, 27% indicated having an addiction, 26% indicated having a medical condition pertaining to their physical health, and 11% indicated having a physical disability. Participants were not able to select multiple responses, however research strongly suggests that homeless youth typically experience more than one health challenge at the same time and the longer a youth is homeless, the greater the likelihood of this occurring³⁹. Health conditions as described above are costly to manage. One study found that the lifetime cost of each homeless youth in Canada is over \$1 million⁴⁰. By stopping homelessness before it occurs, we are better able to support our young people in their transition to adulthood and lessen the demand on our social service, primary health, and mental health care system. The ultimate reason for prevention, however, is that it is the only way to truly end youth homelessness.

Prevention requires an understanding of people within their social worlds and the use of this understanding to improve their wellbeing. This is because prevention assumes the perspective that the problems people confront do not arise from personal failures, but from the failures of community systems to adequately support its citizens. With relation to youth homelessness, prevention theorists and practitioners believe that for prevention to be successful it should occur at three levels. The first level is primary prevention, which focuses on working

- **Action Strategy 2.1.** Establish Mechanisms for Family Counselling and Mediation
- **Action Strategy 2.2.** Support Youth Engagement in School (including Alternative Education) and Community
- **Action Strategy 2.3.** Promote Universal Mental Health Prevention and Promotion Programs
- **Action Strategy 2.4.** Enhance Youth Employment and Career-Readiness Programs
- **Action Strategy 2.5.** Ensure Youth are Not Discharged into Homelessness

Goal 2. There is an Integrated Homelessness Prevention Framework in Kingston and Area

³⁵ <http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/>

³⁶ Mobilizing Local Communities to End Youth Homelessness in Canada. *Essentials to End Youth Homelessness*.

³⁷ Hulchanski, D., Campsie, P., Chau, S. B., Hwang, S., & Paradis, E. (Eds.), (2009) The Street Health Report, 2007: The Health of Toronto's Homeless Population, in Finding Home: Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada.

³⁸ Belfield, C. R., Levin, H. M., & Rosen, R. (2012) The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth. The Kellogg Foundation.

³⁹ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2013) Conference on Family and Youth Homelessness.

⁴⁰ Belfield, C. R., Levin, H. M., & Rosen, R. (2012) The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth. The Kellogg Foundation.

upstream to address factors that increase the risk of youth homelessness, and which can support enhancing protective factors that increase resilience. There is also a need for systems prevention, which means stopping the flow of young people from mental health care, child protection, and corrections into homelessness. Thirdly, there is a need for early intervention strategies designed to support young people and their families when they are imminently at risk of becoming homeless⁴¹. When communities are working at each level simultaneously, young people are adequately supported by the system and youth are prevented from entering homelessness.

Action Strategy 2.1. Establish Mechanisms for Family Counselling and Mediation

The Case for Action

Youth in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project named family conflict as being the number one reason they leave or are “forced out” of their home and find themselves without a stable place to live. Many youth (40%) also identified as being “alone” and stated that they have no family support. These findings are consistent with youth homelessness and youth development literature. The family plays a key role in a youth's life. Strong family support is essential for young people as they mature and become adults. Caring relationships and consistent emotional bonds between families and adolescents are significant protective factors⁴². When emotional bonds are broken, youth are vulnerable and may become at risk of homelessness⁴³. These findings demonstrate that while adolescence is marked in part by the need for greater autonomy than in earlier years, most young people still rely on their families. Family counseling is therefore a core component of the Plan in order to support strong and stable family bonds.

Furthermore, in Kingston and area, the majority of youth who are homeless are “temporarily sheltered”, which typically means they are staying in overnight shelters, shelters for people impacted by family violence, or couch surfing. This trend indicates that family counselling and mediation as soon as youth leave home may be the precise service they need to secure their housing stability. The literature also states that early family intervention can break the cycle of homelessness if implemented at this key stage⁴⁴. This can be achieved by providing dedicated funding to a set of Family Support Workers who work through a lead agency. These workers act as a point of contact (meaning they can be accessed no matter where a youth “touches” the system), and support youth to remain at home. The goal is not only to support the youth, but to also support family members to develop a strong understanding of their family relationships, how to manage and negotiate in challenging situations, and how to develop supportive, meaningful, and sustainable relationships within the family. This may include counselling families on how to support youth experiencing mental health and addictions issues.

⁴¹ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

⁴² National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2013) Conference on Family and Youth Homelessness.

⁴³ Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (2012). *A Plan, Not a Dream*.

⁴⁴ Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (2012). *A Plan, Not a Dream*.

Promising Local Practices

Existing Places Offering Family Counselling and Mediation

There are a variety of places in Kingston and area that are currently offering some form of family counselling and mediation. A list of these places and what they offer is outlined below.

- ❖ Pathways for Children and Youth has counsellors available in high schools to work with families and youth; they also offer the Wraparound Program and have a Walk-In Family Counseling service available on Tuesday evenings.
- ❖ Social agencies refer youth to the Youth Counsellors at K3C Community Counseling Centres when they learn that a youth is considering leaving home; they also offer the Mediating Ends Negative Disagreements (MEND) program as well as the Strengthening Families program, which is a provincial pilot program.
- ❖ Family and Children's Services, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington (FACS FL&A) bring in outside counsellors for family counseling.
- ❖ Kingston Youth Shelter offers the Renunite Program, in connection with Operation Come Home, for youth looking to reconcile with out of town family members. The Shelter also provides informal family counselling to the youth and families it supports.
- ❖ Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC) offers support for youth from military families, including family counselling and mediation programs.
- ❖ St. Lawrence Youth Association (SLYA) has community workers who provide individual and family counseling, available to youth who are involved in the justice system.

While there are a variety of places already offering family counselling and mediation, there is a need to coordinate the support being offered. Youth and families also need help navigating the options available to them.

Action Strategy 2.2. Support Youth Engagement in School and Community

The Case for Action

The fact that most people in modern society go through a formal education has led the school to play an important role in the community. Increasingly, schools are playing the role of educator, health and wellness promoter, and socializer. Given these increased responsibilities, it is concerning that 41% of youth in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project indicated they were still in high school and 29% indicated that they had "some high school education" but were not currently attending. Research indicates that when young people are engaged at school they experience higher levels of happiness and confidence⁴⁵, sense of mastery⁴⁶, more positive social relationships⁴⁷, and decreased feelings of loneliness⁴⁸. Developmental asset and positive youth development literature further indicates that these outcomes are fundamental in the transition to adulthood⁴⁹. These findings demonstrate that in efforts to prevent youth homelessness there is a need to provide youth in Kingston and area with greater educational support, and there is a particular need to re-engage youth who are at risk of disconnecting from their education. As indicated by the youth in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project, in order to engage youth at school there is a further need to ensure youth

⁴⁵ Goodenow, C. (1993). Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: Relationships to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 13, 21–43.

⁴⁶ Demaray, M.K., Malecki, C.R., Davidson, L.M., Hodgson, K.K., & Rebus, P.J. (2005). The relationship between social support and student adjustment: A longitudinal analysis. *Psychology in the School*, 42, 691-706.

⁴⁷ Fraser, B. J., & Fisher, D. L. (1982). Predicting student outcomes from their perceptions of classroom psychosocial environment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19, 498-518.

⁴⁸ Chong, H., Huan, V., See Yeo, L., & Ang, R. (2006). Asian adolescents' perceptions of parent, peer, and school support and psychological adjustment: the mediating role of dispositional optimism. *Current Psychology*, 25(3), 212-228.

⁴⁹ Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied developmental science*, 4(1), 27-46.

have "voice and choice" over their education. This includes autonomy over course work as well as options for classes/the opportunity to participate in educational programs that match their skills and interests.

Through the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project youth emphasized that there is a general lack of awareness among young people about what the risk factors for homelessness are and what homelessness really means. Many youth also indicated not knowing where to go to get support when issues arise. This is problematic given that from the moment a youth becomes homeless, there is typically a two week window before they become entrenched in street-life⁵⁰. While system coordination allows youth to access holistic and wrap-around support regardless of where they first "touch" the system, there is still a need to ensure youth know about the services that exist so that they can access support prior to crisis. Examples of problems faced by youth that often lead to both disengagement in school and homelessness, if not connected with the help they need, include:

- ❖ Dealing with family conflict;
- ❖ Financial stress and worry;
- ❖ Peer and romantic relationships;
- ❖ Navigating social services;
- ❖ Mental health and addictions;
- ❖ Dealing with landlords;
- ❖ Housing options.

The development of an awareness strategy to address this would include promoting 211 as the access point for all youth – in school and community, including street involved youth – and communicating core messages about where to get information and access to services through system of care organizations (mental health, addictions, housing, educational organizations, etc.).

Additionally, youth identified other strategies such as introducing the topic of youth homelessness and discussing supports at school assemblies, ensuring all teachers have information about homelessness and community supports, and having school counsellors meet with every student once a year to avoid the potential stigma of reaching out. Some youth also indicated that they don't identify as being homeless because they technically have a home; however, for various reasons they don't believe they can return there. Raising awareness about homelessness may encourage youth to reach out or access services.

Promising Local Practices

Alternative Educational Programs

Currently, there are alternatives within Kingston and area available to at-risk youth to ensure they remain connected with the school system. These alternatives include:

- ❖ Pathways to Education;
- ❖ Alternative Education Plans;
- ❖ The Supervised Alternative Education program.

The programs above are typically offered to youth who are "at-risk" of becoming disconnected from school. There is a need to ensure that youth who have become disconnected for either a short or long period of time are provided the support they need to re-engage, and remain sustainably engaged, with school.

⁵⁰ Worthington, C. A., & MacLaurin, B. J. (2009). Level of street involvement and health and health services use of Calgary street youth. *Can J Public Health, 100* (5), 384-88.

Board Wide Strategies and Plans

Kingston and area's school boards have recently created, or been involved in the creation of, strategies to enhance youth engagement at school and promote positive health and wellness among students. Such strategies include the recently created Mental Health Strategy and the Y2K Kinston Youth Strategy and Community Plan. Strategies and plans may still need to coordinate with Ontario Works to optimally facilitate "at-risk" youth's continued engagement and connection to school.

Youth Community Forum

As highlighted above, a Youth Community Forum was held as part of the development of this Plan. This forum was called Youth Out Loud Kingston! and was planned and facilitated by youth for youth. This forum successfully engaged a wide range of youth and raised awareness about youth homelessness in Kingston and area. This forum could become a vital component of a school and community awareness strategy

Action Strategy 2.3. Promote Universal Mental Health Prevention and Promotion Programs

The Case for Action

Adolescence is the period of development when mental health issues often first arise⁵¹. Unfortunately, research suggests that youth may not reach out for help when needed because they lack understanding about mental illness and where they can turn for help, and also because they fear being stigmatized⁵². The voices of youth experiencing homelessness in Kingston and area echo the literature. The youth indicated poor mental health as a factor leading to their housing instability. They also indicated that the stigma surrounding mental health issues made it challenging to seek support when issues first began to surface. There is therefore a clear need for targeted mental health programming that is preventative in nature, promotes mental health, gets youth talking about mental health, and that targets all youth, not just youth at risk. There is also a need for programs that engage youth as active leaders in all programming efforts. As indicated by youth in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project, this allows youth to better connect with the content and provides meaningful opportunities for youth to engage with their community.

It is very important to note that this action strategy is not associated with the treatment of serious and severe psychiatric difficulties. The prevalence of such difficulties requires different forms of support through case management and more intensive services (discussed in Goal 3). The goal of the strategy is to promote well-being by helping all youth cope with the stressful experiences of adolescence. Youth will be given the knowledge and skills that allow them to live their lives more fully and to feel vital and strong without getting "stuck" along the way. Youth in Kingston and area, as well as the literature, indicates that such efforts to reduce stress, distress sadness and worry, combined with efforts to open up dialogue and raise awareness about youth experiences, are key ingredients to wellness promotion and resiliency, even among individuals who may be at risk for more serious illness⁵³.

⁵¹ Mental Health Commission (2009). *Toward Recovery and Well-Being: A Framework for a Mental Health Strategy in Canada*.

⁵² Government of Canada (2006) *The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada*.

⁵³ Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. *Flex Your Head! A Mental Health Promotion and Promotion Program for Youth*.

Promising Local Practices

Youth-Led Mental Health Awareness and Anti-Stigma Initiatives

There are three notable initiatives running in Kingston and area that are preventative in nature, working to promote positive youth mental health, and that are challenging negative stigma. These initiatives include:

- ❖ The New Mentality Program, Pathways for Children and Youth⁵⁴
 - The New Mentality is a network of youth-led groups that foster meaningful partnerships between mental health agencies and youth. Led by youth facilitators and working alongside adult allies (agency staff providing in-kind support to the group), groups develop unique projects focused on eliminating stigma and promoting mental health awareness, reaching audiences throughout the province and beyond.
- ❖ Student-Led Peer Mental Health Groups in Schools
 - LDSB and ALCDB offer mental health groups that are student-led. The students act as ambassadors within their high schools to challenge stigma surrounding mental health.
- ❖ Open Minds, Healthy Minds⁵⁵
 - Open Minds, Healthy Minds has four clear goals: (a) Improve mental health and well-being for all Ontarians; (b) Create healthy, resilient, inclusive communities; (c) Identify mental health and addictions problems early and intervene; (d) Provide timely, high quality, integrated, person-directed health and other human services.
 - The initiative is starting with a focus on children and youth and will meet the above goals by: providing children, youth and families with fast access to high quality services; identifying and intervening in child and youth mental health and addictions issues early; closing critical service gaps for vulnerable children and youth, children and youth at key transition points, and those in remote communities.

While there are a variety of other mental health services in Kingston and area, including counselling and psychiatric services, there is a need for universal programs that are grounded in theory and practice. Universal programs are open to all youth, regardless of whether or not they experience a mental health issue or illness. A universal mental health program would share information about mental health, including what it means and how it affects people, provide tools for maintaining positive mental health, get youth talking about health, and challenge stigma. Importantly, these goals would be met through engaging and interactive activities.

.Action Strategy 2.4. Enhance Youth Employment and Career-Readiness Programs

The Case for Action

When youth are employed they have money to pay their rent and stay housed. Employment is therefore a key factor contributing to the eradication of poverty, which will in turn end youth homelessness. However, employment for young people is not just about ensuring that young people have money. It is also about ensuring they have the opportunity to focus, explore different interests, identify life learning goals, and harness strengths within themselves. These are the factors that support healthy development and ultimately support youth to further their career and maintain their wellbeing⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ http://www.myrgan.com/Inc/Projects/Entries/2011/4/9_The_New_Mentality.html

⁵⁵ http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/mental_health2011/mentalhealth.aspx

⁵⁶ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

Youth employment is good for cities, provinces, and the country as well. Employment supports young people to get into the workforce early and to engage with small businesses that are good for the economy⁵⁷. Employment also provides youth with the opportunity to develop valuable skills that prepare them for a meaningful career, ultimately reducing their reliance on government funded financial support. With this being said, Ontario is one of the toughest places in Canada for young people looking for work, with youth unemployment rates trending higher than the national average. A new report that analyzes Statistics Canada employment data has found that five years after the global economic crisis, Ontario is now the worst province outside of Atlantic Canada for youth unemployment. The 2013 unemployment rate for Ontario youth between the ages of 15 and 24 ranged between 16 and 17.1%, higher than the average Canadian range of 13.5 to 14.5%⁵⁸. These findings demonstrate the need for intentional programs that support youth employment and career readiness.

Youth in Kingston and area highlighted the need to support youth in creating a plan to achieve career and personal goals. This not only includes support for building resumes and developing interview skills, but also with networking, connecting to employers, and identifying further education or training requirements. Youth also mentioned that it is important that employers are prepared to support youth in maintaining their jobs. While standards of employment must be met and policies must be upheld, employers need training about how to connect with youth, communicate with youth, and motivate them to carry out their responsibilities. Supporting employers may require programs to create partnerships with businesses in the community.

Promising Local Practices

Existing Employment Programs Being Offered in Kingston and Area

There are a variety of programs being offered in Kingston and area that have a particular focus on supporting youth who face barriers to employment to find and keep a job. A list of some of the key programs being offered and who is offering them is provided below.

- ❖ Summer Jobs Service (ReStart formerly CERC, KEYS Job Centre, ACFOMI Employment Services, Career Edge, and St. Lawrence College Employment Service)⁵⁹
 - Free job-search and self-marketing support program available through Employment Ontario Summer Jobs Services agencies.
 - The program helps students find summer jobs and provides a \$2-per-hour-per-student hiring incentive for eligible Ontario employers to create summer employment opportunities for students. This program is available to students aged 15 to 30 who are planning to return to school in the fall.
- ❖ Youth Summer Jobs (KEYS Job Centre)⁶⁰
 - Participants can work 20-35 hours per week for 6 weeks and receive minimum wage, paid through a fund offered by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, as well as funds from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Around 200 youth are provided with placements and supported to maintain their employment annually.

⁵⁷ Winefield, A. H., & Tiggemann, M. (1990). Employment status and psychological well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75(4), 455.

⁵⁸ The Young and the Jobless. Youth Unemployment in Ontario. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

⁵⁹ <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/jobseekers/sjs.html>

⁶⁰ http://www.keys.ca/job_seekers/students.html

- ❖ Youth Employment Fund (ReStart formerly CERC, KEYS Job Centre, ACFOMI Employment Services, St. Lawrence College Employment Service, and Career Edge, Napanee)⁶¹
 - Part of the Ontario government's new Youth Jobs Strategy, which is helping young people across the province get work experience, start a business or build job skills.
 - Youth between 15 and 29 years of age who are unemployed, not attending school full-time and a resident of Ontario may apply.
 - Services include employment counselling and support for finding and securing employment.
 - In addition to employment centres, some agencies provide job search engines built into their website for use by youth and adults. The fund provides incentives to employers to help cover the cost of wages and training for new hires and help youth cover costs like transportation or tools required for the job.
 - Special attention is paid to help youth facing barriers to work, including: youth on social assistance; aboriginal youth; youth with a disability; youth with a poor history of educational attainment or employability; and youth in communities with high youth unemployment.
 - If a youth can demonstrate they are intentionally working toward employment goals, they also have access to a 1 week training program.

- ❖ Summer Company (Kingston Economic Development Corporation, KEDCO)
 - Funded by the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment,
 - Program helps students launch their own summer businesses.

Affordable Bus Pass Research

The City of Kingston has introduced an Affordable Bus Program in Kingston and area. A similar program has been introduced in other municipalities (e.g. Guelph) and evaluations have demonstrated that the program has increased access for low income earners to employment⁶². The City of Kingston has two current transit programs with municipal fee assistance. The Affordable Transit Pass offers a 35% discount, valid for a full year, after approval by the Community and Family Services Department. Youth monthly cost is \$34.75. The Transit Employment Program provides recently hired Kingston residents (part-time or full-time) with a free two month Kingston Transit pass for those who need assistance getting to and from work.

Starting September 2014 as an enhanced pilot program, the City of Kingston offers all Grade 9, 10, and 11 students in Kingston and Amherstview free transportation through Kingston Transit. The pass will be valid from September 1 through August 31, 2015. As this Kingston Transit bus pass is a photo I.D. card, the student must be present at registration in order to have his or her picture taken for the card. There is a nominal \$3 fee.

Action Strategy 2.5. Ensure Youth are Not Discharged into Homelessness

The Case for Action

Many young people have been in care for years and some report being in a series of foster homes before becoming homeless. In many jurisdictions, gaps in the child welfare system mean that young people (16 and older) may have great difficulty in accessing services and supports⁶³. "System failures in child welfare, including the fact that young people can 'opt out' but not back in, and that young people can age out of care, means that for many young people the transition from child welfare support is not to self-sufficiency, but to homelessness. And

⁶¹ <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario/youthfund/>

⁶² Taylor, A. & Gray, A. (2013). *An Evaluation of the Affordable Bus Pass Program*. Taylor Newberry Consulting.

⁶³ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

for many of these young people, there is no 'home to return to.'"⁶⁴ Gaps in the system pose unique challenges to youth living in rural areas as there is often no emergency shelter available in their immediate community. Therefore when a youth is discharged into homelessness their options are to couch surf or leave their community to access emergency housing. When a youth is required to leave their community, any ties they have with school, friends, and family is often severed. This disconnection makes regaining stability challenging.

To ensure that discharging from Correctional Services and Children and Youth Services (i.e. foster care, group homes), as well as Health Services (hospitals, mental health and addictions facilities), does not result in homelessness for youth, there is a need for these systems to collaborate with case managers to ensure discharge planning includes permanent housing with longer term supports. It is therefore also important to ensure that permanent and affordable housing is available. The cost of housing in Canada is a major cause of poverty. Poverty is the leading cause of homelessness. Therefore safe, secure, and affordable housing is not only an essential pathway out of homelessness, it is also a key component of preventing homelessness in the first place."⁶⁵

In his 2008 speech at the Partners Solving Youth Homelessness conference, Miloon Kothari, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, stated: "It is the human right of every man, woman, youth and child to gain and sustain a secure, safe home in which they can live with peace and dignity". Permanent affordable housing is clearly an important component of a Canada-wide strategy to solve youth homelessness and of this local Plan. However, it is only one element of the solution. Homeless youth also need a wide range of supports for the array of complex problems that they face.

Promising Local Practices

Existing Initiatives Supporting Transition into the Community from Jails, Hospitals, and Child Welfare

There are some initiatives taking place in Kingston and area that are supporting youth to successfully transition into the community. There is a need to coordinate these initiatives, assess their alignment with youth development, and ensure there is an intentional overall approach to reintegration efforts.

- ❖ The City of Kingston's Plans to Prevent Discharge into homelessness from Jails, Hospitals, and Child Welfare
 - A zero discharge into homelessness working group emerged from the City of Kingston's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan. The Prevention-Diversion Coordinator will establish a working group to meet regularly to discuss current initiatives and ongoing needs in discharge planning so no youth is discharged without an appropriate shelter/housing plan.
 - In addition to this working group, the City of Kingston's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan has committed to a Prevention and Diversion Coordinator to coordinate efforts around discharge planning.

- ❖ The St. Lawrence Youth Association (SLYA)
 - SLYA has a Reintegration Worker who provides individual and family counseling and assistance for youth with finding employment, accessing Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), locating housing, and navigating a plan for educational success. The only youth who can access the program are those on probation or ordered by the court to participate.

⁶⁴ Winland, D. N., Gaetz, S. A., & Patton, T. (2011). *Family Matters: Homeless Youth and Eva's Initiative's Family Reconnect Program*. Homeless Hub.

⁶⁵ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

- ❖ K3C Community Counseling Centres
 - K3C has a Youth-In-Transition Worker who works directly with youth who are aging out of care.
- ❖ Family and Children's Services, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington (FACS FL&A)
 - There are 4 staff working with youth in transition out of care as well as young mothers.
- ❖ The John Howard Society, Elizabeth Fry Society, and Home Base Housing
 - These organizations are also doing work in this area for the adult sector and their programs can be explored to assess transferability to youth populations.

Goal 3. Housing Options Match Youths' Transition to Adulthood

The Definition

The housing options available to youth permit them to transition from one housing program to another according to their individual preference and developmental stages⁶⁶.

The Need

The introduction of this Plan explained how the needs and characteristics of youth, as well as the assets that youth require, call for diverse housing options. Youth need housing options that will follow them along their journey to adulthood. In this pilot, anyone between the ages of 15-24 is considered a "youth". A 15 year old varies quite substantially in terms of needs, desires, and interests than a 24 year old. There is also great variation within this age-range in terms of life experience and opportunity for skill development. To add a layer of complexity, some youth may experience mental health and addiction issues, while others may not. Just as youth are diverse, so too must be the housing options available to them.

The U.S. National Alliance to End Homelessness indicates that housing can take a number of forms. No matter the model or form of housing selected, youth should have the flexibility to move among housing programs as they gain living skills and economic stability, including the ability to re-enter housing programs and move back along the continuum if their current needs or abilities change. Responding to the needs of homeless youth and engaging them in determining their housing needs will support their transition to adulthood. Providing them with options will also support youth staying housed, as youth will have the opportunity to adjust their form of housing on an ongoing basis so that their immediate and future needs are met.

- **Action Strategy 3.1.** Enhance the Role of Emergency Housing Services
- **Action Strategy 3.2.** Increase the Amount of Transitional Housing Available
- **Action Strategy 3.3.** Make Housing First a Housing Option for Youth
- **Action Strategy 3.4.** Ensure Access to Affordable Housing Units
- **Action Strategy 3.5.** Ensure Continuous Case Management and Follow-Up Support

Goal 3. Housing Options
Match Youths' Transition
to Adulthood

⁶⁶ Mobilizing Local Communities to End Youth Homelessness in Canada. *Essentials to End Youth Homelessness*.

Action Strategy 3.1. Enhance the Role of Emergency Housing Services

The Case for Action

Kingston and area currently has one emergency shelter and a transitional housing unit that play a key role for youth in crisis. Youth may arrive at the doorstep at any hour. This service is important given that family conflict is the leading reason why youth leave home in Kingston and area⁶⁷. Family disagreements typically occur at night or in the wee hours of the morning, leaving youth with few options for places to go. Many youth using emergency shelter services are therefore focused on urgent, practical needs. They need a bed, access to food, hot showers, clothing, and/or emergency support and services. One key issue is that there are no services in the rural counties surrounding Kingston and area. This leaves youth living in rural areas to travel a great distance to access emergency housing services. As we enhance emergency housing services, there is a need to ensure youth in rural areas are provided with access to emergency supports, which includes ensuring they can get to shelters.

Research indicates that once youths' basic needs have been addressed they are more willing to tackle other issues⁶⁸. This makes emergency shelters an ideal referral source. Emergency shelters in Kingston and area therefore need to be used as a key access point/outreach service. Once youth receive basic supports, all in one place, they will be directed to the appropriate services within the community that will support them to be quickly re-housed. The emergency shelter is also one of the places in Kingston and area that is currently offering informal family counselling, as described earlier. Youth accessing these places need to be supported by trained family counselling professionals so that early intervention can occur. Therefore while youth shelters are not the answer to addressing youth homelessness, if used strategically, they are an essential access point where youth in need can begin to get support to become more stable.

Promising Local Practices

Existing Support Being Provided at Youth Shelters

Kingston and area has one youth shelter that is providing emergency housing services to youth. In addition, Home Base Housing provides transitional and supported housing for youth. The Kingston Youth Shelter and Home Base Housing currently offer informal family counselling, education, and employment support. These supports need to be formalized and expanded upon to support early intervention. Furthermore, the City's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan puts housing workers in emergency shelters to help divert people from the emergency system when safe to do so, or once in the system to get them into housing with supports right away. The transferability of this model to the youth shelter system needs to be explored.

Action Strategy 3.2. Increase Transitional Housing Available

The Case for Action

There is discrepancy in the literature about the effectiveness and appropriateness of transitional housing models. A “typical” transitional housing program is seen as an intermediate step between homelessness and “independent” living. A homeless person may transition from living on the streets or in shelters to transitional housing, and from there, move on to a place of his or her own. In almost all cases, supports are provided, such as life skills classes, addictions treatment, and employment support. The vast majority of researchers in the field of housing view transitional housing as limiting to consumer choice and control. There are often rules by which they must abide and transitional housing is almost always time-limited, although the length of time may be anywhere between six months and two years⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Youth Out Loud: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project.

⁶⁸ Raising the Roof. (2009) Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions.

⁶⁹ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness

When assessing the use of transitional housing approaches for youth, it is important to consider how the model matches youth development. Transitional housing models typically offer structure, supervision, support, life skills, and sometimes education and training. Many youth, and in particular younger youth, find this appealing. Youth in Kingston and area, for example, identified the need for structure and support in housing options, with capable support staff who have the skills and experience to support youth in stabilizing their lives. Many of the youth indicated a preference for apartment-style arrangements, but liked having access to supports in-house. Some youth expressed that they liked having goals they were expected to meet. The issues of security, safety, and privacy were identified as critical for success. Also, supports that address education, job skills and employment experience were preferred⁷⁰. The fact that youth find some of the qualities of transitional housing appealing is not surprising. High expectations, structured use of time, opportunities for engagement, healthy and caring relationships, supportive mentors and role models, and safety are valuable assets that environments need to offer youth to support wellbeing and healthy transitions to adulthood⁷¹. Furthermore, not all youth, especially younger youth, have had the opportunity to develop their life skills to the extent that would make them feel comfortable to live more independently⁷². The in-house support provided by transitional housing can often reflect "family" and the rules can reflect parental expectations. While there is room to strengthen the amount of choice, control, participation, and power offered to youth within traditional transitional housing models, the strengths of the model that were voiced by youth are meaningfully considered in the Plan. Accessibility to transitional housing is a key challenge in Kingston and area, especially in rural areas where there is no transitional housing available. There are currently high wait lists and a particular lack of units available for youth in conflict with the law or who experience mental health and addiction issues⁷³. Youth with these complex issues may also require more long-term housing support than what is currently offered by transitional housing models in Kingston and area (primarily 1 year). Furthermore, the tight housing market in Kingston and area makes it difficult for youth to find affordable housing upon completion of transitional housing programs. Lengths of stay need to be flexible based on an individual's unique situation and their ability to locate and prepare for permanent housing. By adjusting the model in this way, one of the key concerns with transitional housing will be alleviated, which is that youth "age-out", "time-out", or "graduate" into homelessness.

Promising Local Practices

Existing Transitional Housing Programs

There are two youth transitional housing organizations in Kingston.

- ❖ Home Base Housing
 - Youth 16-24 years of age are offered rent geared to income (29 units available) and transitional housing (13 units available).
 - Youth receive case management support and can stay in housing for up to one year. From here they work with a case manager to find a suitable permanent housing option.
- ❖ St. Lawrence Youth Association
 - SLYA is in the process of trying to establish transitional housing for youth being released from custody.

Research Network Press

⁷⁰ Youth Out Loud: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project.

⁷¹ Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied developmental science, 4*(1), 27-46.

⁷² Mallett, S., Rosenthal, D., & Keys, D. (2005). Young people, drug use and family conflict: Pathways into homelessness. *Journal of adolescence, 28*(2), 185-199.

⁷³ Youth Out Loud: Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project.

Home Base Housing and the St. Lawrence Youth Association provide a significant amount of support to their youth tenants. Educational and emotional support and life skill development opportunities are integral to their models. Youth have emphasized this support as being essential to their housing success. However, while there is transitional housing available to youth in Kingston and area, there is a need for more beds and units as well as a need to offer lengths of stay that extend beyond one year.

Action Strategy 3.3. Make Housing First a Housing Option for Youth

The Case for Action

Best practice literature indicates that Housing First is the preferred model for people who require intensive supports and are experiencing chronic homelessness. Housing First can exist within different housing forms, from scattered site housing in the private rental marketplace, to units in mixed affordable housing, to congregate models of housing, where there are many units in a single building and the possibility of on-call supports, to permanent supportive housing, where the clinical services and landlord role are performed by the same organization. Services in permanent supportive housing are typically performed on-site⁷⁴. Housing First has gained wide acceptance and has been identified as “best practice” by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

The majority of research about Housing First has focused on adults and there is less literature about the effectiveness of Housing First models with youth populations. However, there are elements of the Housing First model that make it appealing for some populations of youth.

The model is particularly valuable for youth who have struggled in transitional housing or have been in and out of housing treatment facilities (primarily due to mental health and addictions issues). This is because one key benefit of the Housing First model for youth is that it takes into consideration how a history of entering and existing psychiatric/treatment facilities may leave some youth mistrustful of the mental health system. For youth that are unwilling to comply with rules or participate in treatment programs at the outset of a program, the Housing First model does not revoke the support being offered. Rather, the intent is to provide housing stability with the goal of allowing youth the opportunity to accept support at their own pace⁷⁵. Housing stability also provides space for youth to remove themselves from negative influences and pressures. Without the stability of housing, the youth were more likely to be influenced by environmental and psycho-social stresses, such as stress associated with poor weather conditions, noise in cramped housing facilities, lack of safe places to sleep (especially in cities), as well as peer pressure to use drugs and alcohol. Participants also indicated that a lack of permanent housing can worsen mental health issues, or cause one to turn/return to substance use as a way to cope with the stress of the unknown⁷⁶.

There are also challenges associated with Housing First models when they are applied to a youth population. For example, people may assume that youth, like adults, have the experience and household skills for independent living. Many homeless youth have not yet developed these skills, which leads to feelings of insecurity and nervousness about living without structured adult supervision⁷⁷. Adolescence and young adulthood is also a time when peers play an important role. Tight-knit communities are often formed in transitional housing and the study about youth treatment preferences, described above, found that some youth chose not to pursue Housing First out of fear of disconnecting from their peer group and becoming isolated⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration. (2007) What Housing First Means for People: Results of Streets to Homes 2007 Post-Occupancy Research.

⁷⁵ Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration. (2007) What Housing First Means for People: Results of Streets to Homes 2007 Post-Occupancy Research.

⁷⁶ Forchuk, C., Richardson, J., Lavery, K., Bryant, M., Rudnick, A., Csiernik, R., & Kelly, C. (2013). Housing First, Treatment First, or Both Together. *Implications for Policy and Practice*, 95.

⁷⁷ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2006) Promising Strategies to End Family Homelessness.

⁷⁸ Forchuk, C., Richardson, J., Lavery, K., Bryant, M., Rudnick, A., Csiernik, R., & Kelly, C. (2013). Housing First, Treatment First, or Both

Furthermore, while choice and control about personal goals is reduced in transitional housing models, some youth prefer to live with other youth who are going through the same experience as them and to have expectations placed upon them⁷⁹. Youth with mental health and addictions issues may therefore become overwhelmed by the amount of independence that Housing First can provide. These challenges do not mean that Housing First is not a desirable model for youth. Rather, these challenges highlight that certain forms of housing within the Housing First model are more ideal for youth than others and re-emphasizes the important role that case management and programmatic supports play in Housing First models. For example, while scattered site forms of housing are primarily encouraged for adult populations⁸⁰, congregate housing or permanent supportive housing where there are greater opportunities to build a sense of community and receive supports in-house may be ideal for youth transitioning to adulthood. Ultimately, the primary importance is to match youth with the form of housing that is most suitable to their developmental needs and most likely to promote a healthy transition to adulthood.

Promising Local Practices

A Local Focus on Housing First

The City of Kingston included a Youth Funding Stream in the Request for Proposal issued in the Spring of 2014 for the delivery of a Housing Assistance and Emergency Shelter Program (15 beds) and a Rapid Rehousing/Housing First Program which includes intensive case management services targeted to those most in need. The City will need community partnerships to meet the full demand of housing supports for youth.

Existing Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams

There is currently more than one ACT team operating within the Kingston area – such as the ones operating out of Providence Care: Assertive Community Treatment & Community High Intensity Treatment (CHITT). ACT Teams provide recovery-oriented treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery services, while CHITT provides 24/7 service (on-call after hours) to clients making the transition from hospital to community. It would be valuable to seek opportunities to partner with such agencies to take advantage of existing expertise within the community.

Action Strategy 3.4. Ensure Access to Affordable Housing Units

The Case for Action

When 79 youth in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Research Project were asked what led to their homelessness, 40% indicated that they couldn't afford a place to live. Furthermore, for Housing First to be an option for youth in Kingston and area, affordable housing needs to be available to youth. Affordable housing is therefore a core component of the Plan. The goal of any strategy should not be to keep youth in emergency, transitional, or permanent supportive housing for their entire life. The goal should be to keep youth housed and offer the support necessary so that they can transition to adulthood in the community, free of housing supports. Affordable housing is not just beneficial to youth, however. An appropriate supply of affordable housing can help retain young talent and knowledge in the city of Kingston. An adequate supply of affordable housing will also support the city to meet the accommodation needs of minimum wage workers vital to the success of local service businesses, thereby contributing to a critical element of the local economy⁸¹. Despite the personal, municipal, and economical benefits of affordable housing, Kingston and area has a shortage of units available. Kingston and area is home to two major post-secondary educational institutions (Queen's University and St. Lawrence

Together. *Implications for Policy and Practice*, 95.

⁷⁹ Lindsey, E. W., Kurtz, P. D., Jarvis, S., Williams, N. R., & Nackerud, L. (2000). How runaway and homeless youth navigate troubled waters: Personal strengths and resources. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17(2), 115-140.

⁸⁰ Padgett, D. K., Gulcur, L., & Tsemberis, S. (2006). Housing first services for people who are homeless with co-occurring serious mental illness and substance abuse. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 16(1), 74-83.

⁸¹ 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan.

College) as well as to the Royal Military College and the Canadian Forces School of Communications and Electronics. The demands from these educational institutions force young people to compete for housing and landlords often favour students who have parental co-signers on leases. This leaves youth to experience difficulty obtaining housing⁸², especially youth disconnected from the educational system and without family support

Promising Local Practices

Clear Guidelines for Increasing the Amount of Affordable Housing Units Locally

The City's 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan has made clear recommendations and set guidelines to increase the amount of affordable housing units in Kingston. The remaining need is to create a plan to get youth most at risk of homelessness into those units. One way to achieve this goal is through the adoption of a coordinated access system, as described in Goal 1. Another way is through the use of case managers and follow-up mentorship, which is described in more detail in Action Strategy 3.5.

Through Continued Care and Support for Youth (CCSY), youth ages 18-20 can receive financial and other supports from Family & Children Services. The local FACS also helps youth in the CCSY program to find youth friendly landlords.

Action Strategy 3.5. Ensure Continuous Case Management and Follow-Up Support

The Case for Action

Best practices point to the need for a case manager or case management team to help youth make a healthy transition to adulthood, while also affording the youth the rights and responsibilities of tenancy^{83 84 85}. Case management is a key component of transitional and Housing First models. There is a need to extend this support so that it occurs from the point of entry into the system (e.g. upon being identified as at risk of homelessness) through transition to affordable housing and beyond, when the youth has moved to permanent housing. Accordingly, there is a need for case management to be flexible across the different forms of housing so that youth have the opportunity to shift from one form of housing to the next without compromising their support.

It is important for case management to be immediate and consistent as youth move along the housing continuum for a variety of reasons. It is important that case management is *prompt* so that youth receive the support they need to get housed quickly. It is important for case management to remain *consistent* so that youth have meaningful relationships with their support team and someone supporting them to reach their goals. Consistent case management also ensures that a youth's ongoing needs are identified and the services they receive are adjusted as needed.

It is also important to ensure youth who are living in permanent and affordable housing or who have reunited with their family do not lose all form of case management as soon as they become housed⁸⁶. We have a responsibility to follow-up with these youth and to provide them with support while they settle in and adjust to their new living situation. Things don't always work out, and some youth quickly find themselves in challenging situations that can once again threaten their housing. For example, a youth may lose their job, get into another fight with their family or with their landlord, get overwhelmed with responsibilities, or return to substance

⁸² 10 Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan.

⁸³ Frankish, C. J., Hwang, S. W., & Quantz, D. (2005). Homelessness and Health in Canada. *Canadian journal of public health*, 96

⁸⁴ Calgary Homeless Foundation (2011). Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Calgary.

⁸⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness.(2013) Conference on Family and Youth Homelessness

⁸⁶ Gaetz, S. (2014). *Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

abuse. A case manager or trained mentor can assess the extent of the challenges and take action accordingly. It may be as simple as lending an ear, or it may require connecting the youth to services, programs, or employment in the community. It may also require working with the youth's landlord or identifying a more suitable form of housing. Either way, emotional and practical support is necessary to ensure youth stay housed.

Promising Local Practices

Case Management Through Existing Transitional Housing Programs

In Kingston and area, youth can stay in Home Base housing for up to one year. After a year, the youth works with a case manager to find suitable permanent housing. This support could be extended to ensure youth have consistent after-care for another year. There is also a need to explore how best to support youth that have difficulty locating permanent housing.

Moving Forward

The next step in the Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness project is to widely share this Plan with stakeholders both within and outside of Kingston and area. While the priority is to push the agenda locally, we also want to engage other communities in Canada who share the common goal to end youth homelessness. Through collaboration and collective voice, together, we can make movement.

As a result of this the Plan, United Way KFLA and partners have advanced three key outcomes that will support the obtainment of this goal. Firstly, Kingston and area's expertise and knowledge about youth homelessness has been strengthened through effective research and knowledge exchange practices. Secondly, collective priorities among youth, social service, government, and non- governmental stakeholders to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area have been established. Thirdly, there is strengthened momentum to put strategies to end youth homelessness in Kingston and area into action. With held hands and focused minds, we trust we can set this plan in motion and end youth homelessness in Kingston and area.

The implementation steps outlined will be monitored, assessed and evaluated by the Steering Committee. Adjustments and course corrections will be made as appropriate. An update will be provided annually to document key challenges, successes and progress towards the goal of ending youth homelessness in Kingston and area.



SECTION 3

Implementation

Implementation Plan

The steps outlined were drawn from reviewing best practices locally and nationally, combined with feedback provided at community forums and conversations with stakeholders and the Steering Committee.

Community forums were held: a youth forum was held in November 2013 and a community forum in May 2014. The youth forum brought in youth from across the region; the community forum brought together stakeholders working within the youth-serving sector and community members at large. At these forums the community collectively identified priorities for moving forward with the Plan. Following the forum, conversations with key stakeholders and discussions at Steering Committee meetings helped refine the priorities and implementation steps. The implementation steps outlined in this document reflect these discussions.

This section aims to lay out a clear path for moving forward. The reality is that we are better prepared to take action in some areas than others. This variation reflects the strength of the Plan, as it highlights both our existing assets as well as how we plan to intentionally and holistically address gaps in service. In all cases, steps to move forward have been provided, along with expected timelines for implementation. Measures for assessing success have also been outlined. It is important to note that additional steps may be necessary to fully fulfil each Action Strategy. The steps outlined include those that the Steering Committee and wider community have identified as priorities and as being necessary for further refinement of the Plan to occur.

Goal 1: A System of Care is Established

Action Strategy 1.1. - Establish a Coordinated Access and Assessment System

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Review and, where necessary and feasible, develop and adapt common assessment tool for youth. Ensure youth serving organizations and youth are engaged.</p> <p>Review External resources (i.e.) Alberta & National Learning Centre, ORG CODE.</p>	<p>A youth-friendly common assessment tool is created, training is completed, and tool is being used by youth serving providers within the homeless system</p>	<p>July 2015</p>	<p>City of Kingston</p>
<p>Implementation Step B.) Implement a Homelessness Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS) for agencies funded by the City of Kingston to deliver homelessness programs</p>	<p>HIFIS is embedded in system of care for agencies funded by the City. Training is provided prior to implementation.</p> <p>Non-identifying data from HIFIS is available to the community and the steering committee to assist in monitoring and planning services for youth.</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>Service Manager, City of Kingston</p>
<p>Implementation Step C.) Explore the feasibility of the entire system of care using a common system as the primary data collection tool. Currently all City of Kingston funded agencies will be using HIFIS to track data.</p>	<p>Develop and identify ways to collect and track data from non-city funded organizations; (i.e.) HIFIS or compatible tool. Identify funding sources for non-city funded organizations</p>	<p>2015 and ongoing</p>	<p>Steering Committee</p>

<p>Implementation Step D.) Use 211 as a coordinated access and referral point for youth at risk or homeless.</p> <p>Develop protocols and promotional materials for 211. Work with 211 to ensure accuracy of data and information.</p> <p>Develop a youth friendly communication plan designed to promote access through 211.</p>	<p>Protocols and agreements are in place with 211 and all agencies.</p> <p>Promotional materials re: 211 for youth who are homeless developed and distributed</p> <p>Track number of calls, referrals through reports from 211 and service providers</p>	<p>March 2015</p>	<p>United Way with Protocols Sub-committee</p>
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Action Strategy 1.2. - Establish Collective Principles and Values

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Steering Committee will review the Housing First for Youth Framework as well as existing protocols presently guiding housing organizations in Kinston and Area, with an intentional eye toward encouraging the adoption of key values and principles to guide the system of care.</p>	<p>A common set of values and principles are outlined and agreed upon by the Steering Committee.</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>Steering Committee</p>
<p>Implementation Step B.) Steering Committee and Youth Out Loud Committee to create a Vision, Mission Statement and Values to guide the system of care.</p>	<p>Vision statement, mission statement and values are in place.</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>Steering Committee & YOLK</p>
<p>Implementation Step C.) Embed system of care values and principles into common assessment tool for youth</p>	<p>Training program for assessment tools includes a module about the principles and values underlying the youth homelessness strategy.</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>External with Sub-committee</p>

Action Strategy 1.3. - Create a System to Collect and Share Localized Research

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) The Steering Committee will identify key data requirements, funding requirements, and the Success Measures outlined in this Plan.</p>	<p>Key data requirements clearly outlined in one document.</p> <p>Include results of annual youth PIT counts (United Way)</p>	<p>February 2015</p>	<p>Steering Committee</p>
<p>Implementation Step B.) Explore the feasibility and cost of the entire system of care, as well as housing providers, using common assessment protocols and tool for youth who are entering the homelessness delivery system.</p>	<p>Common assessment tool is being used by system of care stakeholders, as well as housing providers.</p> <p>All system of care agencies are part of coordinated access system and use common assessment protocols.</p>	<p>Spring 2015</p>	<p>Steering Committee, Service Manager City of Kingston</p>

Implementation Step C.) Hold annual youth community forum to collect and share information. Work with Y2K group to avoid duplication of effort	Documentation of forums being held annually. News coverage of forums. Strong attendance at community forums	Annual	Youth Planning Committee
Implementation Step D.) Consult rural communities to select/coordinate methods to track rural data.	Plans to collect rural data selected and a strategy document is in place.	Ongoing	L&A County; Frontenac County

Goal 2: There is an Integrated Homelessness Prevention Framework in Kingston and Area

Action Strategy 2.1. - Establish Mechanisms for Family Counseling and Mediation

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Seek funding for Family Support worker who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a youth focused, mobile counselor; • operate through a community agency; • have formal linkages to schools to provide prevention programming (training and workshops for both parents and youth); • pilot with high school age youth; • work closely with shelters and prevention diversion workers • potentially supervised through K3C or Youth Diversion <p>Explore possibility of Prevention Diversion workers funded by the City to assume some responsibility for family mediation as part of intervention services</p>	<p>Family Support Worker is established within an agency.</p> <p>A high number or percentages of identified youth are able to return home and remain stably housed.</p>	March 2015	United Way, K3C, Youth Diversion, Service Manager City of Kingston
<p>Implementation Step B.) Provide training to system of care on how to access the Family Support Worker and other youth counselors presently offering family counseling and mediation. A focus will be placed on ensuring shelters are prepared to access the Family Support Worker to ensure youth is housed when possible.</p>	<p>Staff working within system of care organizations report feeling prepared to make referrals to counselors.</p> <p>Ongoing tracking demonstrates that system of care organizations are appropriately referring youth to counseling and mediation support.</p>	March 2015	United Way, K3C, Youth Diversion
<p>Implementation Step C.) Family Support worker will provide family counseling and mediation training to parents.</p>	Families are enrolled in counseling and mediation.	2015 and Ongoing	

Implementation Step D.) Case management and the Family Support Worker will be coordinated through one access point so there are not multiple case managers/workers working with each family.	Lead agency is selected and Case Management and Family Support Worker are embedded within agency.	2015 and Ongoing	Steering Committee
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Action Strategy 2.2. - Support Youth Engagement in School and Community

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Meet with School Board Superintendents to coordinate existing school engagement* in initiatives and embed this into existing strategies.</p> <p>Explore the development of Section 23 schools or similar programs for highest risk youth who cannot attend regular school.</p> <p>*All school initiatives include alternative education programs.</p>	Meeting has taken place and a plan for embedding the Plan into existing strategies is in place.	October 2014 ongoing	School Boards
<p>Implementation Step B.) School Boards utilize the social media campaign to connect with students about school activities, events, programs, and initiatives.</p>	High number of tweets, posts, and updates provided through social media about school related activities, events, programs, and initiatives.	November 2014 and Ongoing	School Boards
<p>Implementation Step C.) Incorporate information about youth homelessness into school assemblies and teacher training.</p>	<p>Students, teachers, guidance counselors and principals have plan and tactics to increase awareness about youth homelessness as an issue.</p> <p>Students, teachers, guidance counselors and principals indicate increased capacity to respond to issues related to youth homelessness.</p>	Ongoing	<p>School Boards</p> <p>Teachers Training, Queen's University</p>
<p>Implementation Step D.) Promote 211 as the access point for all youth – in school and in community, including street involved.</p>	<p>Information about services is available to 211 and updated regularly.</p> <p>Service providers also have information about where to turn. Targeted materials available to promote 211 service.</p>	Ongoing	Steering Committee

Action Strategy 2.3. - Promote Universal Mental Health Prevention and Promotion Programs

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Embed this Plan into the School Boards' Mental Health Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure there is a focus within the strategy on universal programming. 	<p>The Taking Action to End Youth Homelessness Plan is embedded within the School Boards' Mental Health Strategy.</p>	<p>November 2014</p>	<p>School Boards</p>
<p>Implementation Step B.) Steering committee to facilitate meeting and conversations with existing providers to seek youth-friendly service (Schools & Hotel Dieu have a protocol with urgent care consult).</p> <p>Steering Committee to help design a program and UW to explore funding to develop a community intervention program specifically for youth.</p> <p>Explore possibility of drop in clinics for youth with mental health.</p>	<p>Youth oriented services available to youth with mental health crisis in schools, shelters and the community</p> <p>Programs are located where youth, who are homeless and at-risk, are found.</p>	<p>March 2015</p>	<p>Steering Committee</p>

Action Strategy 2.4. - Enhance Youth Employment and Career-Readiness Programs

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Support the creation and implementation of an affordable bus pass program in Kingston and area.</p>	<p>Youth experiencing homelessness report the bus pass program facilitates access to employment.</p> <p>Affordable bus pass program is funded and in place.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	
<p>Implementation Step B.) Support initiatives that mentor and train local employers to invest in youth employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include training for supervising and supporting youth for success. Outreach in Shelter: develop opportunities in shelter for entrepreneurship guidance, support through Launch Lab, employers through KEYS Explore initiatives and programs for street 	<p>Employers report feeling prepared to hire and support youth employees.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Steering Committee With KEYS, ReStart, SLC, ACFOMI, Career Edge, Launch Lab</p>

<p>involved youth to access supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to help youth get drivers' license 			
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Action Strategy 2.5. - Ensure Youth are Not Discharged into Homelessness

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Prevention Diversion Coordinator understands youth discharge patterns from hospitals, child welfare, corrections in KFL&A and works to develop protocols to prevent youth being discharged into homelessness (including shelters) where possible.</p>	<p>Prevention and Diversion Coordinator hired and protocols developed</p>	<p>December 2015</p>	<p>Home Base Housing (funded by City for prevention diversion coordinator)</p>
<p>Implementation Step B.) Explore shelter diversion through "host homes" model within urban and rural areas to address overflow and unique situations for youth. This would include ensuring placements with caring, safe adults are available for 16-18 year olds within their community while coordinated plans to re-house the youth are put in place. Examples of this type of program can be found in Lanark and Sharbot Lake.</p>	<p>Youth living in urban and rural areas access "host homes" support in their community.</p> <p>School records indicate that youth experiencing homelessness in rural areas remain connected to their school.</p>	<p>December 2015</p>	<p>Steering Committee</p>
<p>Implementation Step C.) Utilize a working committee to develop ways to inform community partners and youth of the services available to youth under 16 years of age and eligible youth ages 16-21 at Family and Children's Services of Frontenac. Lennox and Addington (FACSFLA).</p> <p>These services include Renewed Youth Supports (16 and 17), Continued Care and Supports for Youth (18-21), and coordinated discharge planning between 16 and 21 years of age with the Youth in Transition Worker at K3C. The committee recommends continued advocacy with FACSFLA for the provision of services up to 21 years of age</p>	<p>Annual increase in number of youth (who have experienced homelessness) accessing income supports.</p> <p>On-going discussions with FACS regarding the role they can play in prevention and support.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>FACFLA, Housing & Social Services Dept. City of Kingston, Frontenac County, L&A</p>

Work with OW offices in Kingston, Frontenac and L&A to identify opportunities for youth to access income supports.			
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Goal 3: Housing Options Match Youths' Transition to Adulthood

Action Strategy 3.1. - Enhance the Role of Emergency Housing Services

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Ensure shelters are recognized and supported as a key access point and are using youth friendly common assessment protocols, tools and service maps to obtain appropriate housing options.</p> <p>As well, youth will be directed to the wider system of care as necessary.</p>	<p>System of care reports shelters as being a core component of youth homelessness strategy.</p> <p>High percentage of youth (number to be determined) accessing emergency housing are being re-housed.</p>	January 2015	Service Manager City of Kingston, Kingston Youth Shelter
<p>Implementation Step B.) Ongoing consulting with rural service providers to ensure rural specific solutions to emergency housing are established.</p>	More specific rural focused solutions are embedded within the Plan.	Ongoing	Municipalities: Service Manager City of Kingston and L&A county
<p>Implementation Step C.) Steering committee to consult with medical and mental health systems to develop a protocol to identify and support youth with mental health and addictions, including urgent and emergency care situations</p>	Mental Health and Addictions Protocol established	Ongoing	Steering Committee: sub committee

Action Strategy 3.2. - Increase Transitional Housing Available

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) Steering Committee to look at housing needs across continuum and determine methodology to determine number of transitional housing units needed for Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>Baseline number of transitional units is determined for both urban and rural.</p> <p>Include in PIT count annually</p>	September 2014	Steering Committee
<p>Implementation Step B.) Explore "host homes" as an option to provide additional access to transitional housing in both rural and non-rural settings.</p>	<p>Higher numbers of youth able to access interim or temporary housing through host homes.</p> <p>Youth report reduced wait times for transitional housing.</p>	January 2015 and Ongoing	

Implementation Step C.) Using newly developed guidelines for how to determine transitional versus permanent housing needs, youth are referred to the Prevention and Diversion Coordinator	Guidelines are in place and being used to direct youth. High percentage of youth are accessing units.	Ongoing	
Implementation Step D.) Match housing and support intensity to needs of youth, who are in the Prevention/Diversion or Rapid Rehousing/Housing First programs.	Baseline number of units and types of support is adapted on an ongoing basis.	Ongoing	
Implementation Step E.) To increase prevention services for youth in need who are living in transitional or permanent housing to prevent entry into homelessness.	Funding in place Prevention workers dedicated to youth	2015	Municipalities and broader funding community

Action Strategy 3.3. - Make Housing First a Housing Option for Youth

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
Implementation Step A.) Ensure that the Service Manager has representation from programs providing “Rapid Rehousing/Housing First” under the Youth Stream so that youth-specific issues are considered in policy development.	The Service Manager’s operating standards for Rapid Rehousing/Housing First consider the unique needs of youth and reflect the “best practices” for youth housing and supports, wherever feasible in the policy document	April 2015	Service Manager City of Kingston
Implementation Step B.) The demand for Rapid Rehousing/Housing First Program (housing with case management supports) needs to be determined in order to establish realistic program targets and funding models.	Baseline number of Rapid Rehousing/Housing First (units with supports) is developed. Strategies to achieve the target are developed.	January 2016	
Implementation Step C.) The assigned case manager in the Rapid Rehousing/Housing First program supports youth within these units	Youth will have stable housing	Ongoing	Provider agencies
Implementation Step D.) As more is learned about the needs of homeless young people, this understanding is used to match housing to specific levels and needs.	Baseline number is adapted on an ongoing basis. Number of units required based on baseline is developed	Ongoing	

Action Strategy 3.4. - Ensure Access to Affordable Housing Units

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead organization
<p>Implementation Step A.) A Housing Liaison Worker will work with Rapid Rehousing/Housing First case managers to identify housing needs for youth in the Program and work with private and public sector landlords to secure housing units that are affordable.</p> <p>Work with Service Manager City of Kingston related to affordable housing ensuring the unique needs of youth are considered.</p>	<p>An inventory of housing will be developed for youth in the Program.</p> <p>Baseline number of affordable housing units is determined. Number of units required is based on this number and need.</p>	<p>September 2015</p>	<p>Provider agency, funded by Service Manager City of Kingston</p>
<p>Implementation Step B.) As more is learned about the needs of homeless young people, this understanding must be used to match housing to specific levels and needs.</p>	<p>Baseline number of housing units is adapted on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Number of units required based on baseline is developed.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>Implementation Step C.) The Prevention-Diversion Workers and Housing Case Managers-Youth connects youth with these housing in consultation with the Housing Liaison</p> <p>Better understand the barriers to accessing and maintaining income supports for youth under 18 and 18-24 and advocate where possible to ensure lack of income supports, in itself, does not result in or prolong homelessness.</p>	<p>High percentage of youth are accessing units.</p> <p>Barriers to housing are removed</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>Implementation Step D.) A working group to ensure zero discharge into homelessness will work with Family & Children Services and Ontario Works to explore the option that all young people (who have experienced homelessness) can access income supports up to the age of 24.</p>	<p>Annual increase in number of youth who have experienced homelessness accessing income supports.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>Implementation Step E.) Create an inventory of landlords who are informed about Rapid Rehousing/Housing First as it relates specifically to youth and are amenable to adapting renting practices for the youth population.</p>	<p>Inventory created and feedback measured regarding its efficacy.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Provider agency, funded by Service Manager City of Kingston</p>

Implementation Step F.) Y2K to pilot a “Youth Friendly Landlord” checklist, which includes actions a Housing First youth-oriented landlord exhibits.	Checklist created. Distribution to landlords alongside Housing First materials that support landlord knowledge.	Ongoing	Y2K
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Action Strategy 3.5. - Ensure Continuous Case Management and Follow-Up Support

Implementation Steps	Success Measures	Implementation Timeline	Lead Organization
Implementation Step A.) Explore feasibility of case management being tied to the youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing First Committee will discuss case management as it applies to various housing models, so as to ensure flexible model is developed. 	Case Management Strategy is in place. Youth report feeling adequately supported before and after being housed. Case Managers report feeling adequate case loads and satisfaction with strategy.	Beginning January 2015 and Ongoing	
Implementation Step B.) To increase housing case management supports to youth in need who are living in transitional or permanent housing.	Funding for Rapid Rehousing/Housing First housing case managers dedicated to youth as per level of need as identified in periodic PIT counts.		Steering Committee



YOUTH OUT LOUD

2014



United Way
Kingston, Frontenac,
Lennox and Addington

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