

Jewish House Crisis Accommodation Program

Preliminary results

Prepared for: Jewish House

September 2017



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1 Introduction

1.1 This report

This report presents an independent analysis of outcomes for Jewish House temporary accommodation and HomeBase clients based on client data collected by Jewish House (Chapter 2).

It is not possible to compare outcomes for Jewish House clients with those of other services and models, as data or benchmarks from a suitable comparison group are unavailable. Therefore, the outcomes presented are indicative of the outcomes Jewish House's supported temporary accommodation and HomeBase models can achieve.

The report also presents the stories of four Jewish House clients that have achieved successful outcomes from the support they receive from Jewish House (Chapter 3). Prior to Jewish House, these clients were in crisis and in need of holistic support to address both their housing and psycho-social support needs. Their stories highlight the tailored support that Jewish House provides, and highlights the positive impact that the Jewish House supported model can have.

1.2 About Jewish House

Jewish House was established in 1984 to provide counselling for teenagers and others who were affected by drug and alcohol abuse. Since then Jewish House has evolved to provide a much broader range of crisis services including a 24/7 help line, crisis accommodation, psychology, psychiatry, social work, financial counselling as well as community education, prevention and positive living programmes.

Jewish House takes a holistic and community based approach to addressing the immediate distress, causes and outcomes of homelessness, to then break the cycle and seek a permanent stable housing situation. Their purpose is to assist people in their time of crisis with immediate intervention, accommodation and various counselling and referral services. Beyond the immediate crisis they support clients with innovative programs to prevent further crises and to facilitate their transition and integration into the community.

In the last five years Jewish House has helped more than 20,000 clients, including almost 1,000 in need of a place to eat and sleep. The latter includes clients seeking refuge from violent relationships, homelessness, and other circumstances that place them in a situation where they don't have stable accommodation. Jewish House currently has 12 beds and can temporarily house up to 240 people a year in safe and supported environment that can address underlying causes of crisis.

Through Project 2,500, Jewish House delivered on the ambitious goal to help 2,500 homeless, or potentially homeless, people over three years from 2013 to 2016 in Sydney's Inner City and Eastern Suburbs. This includes:

- Community bridging - A supportive service that monitors a person's situation and provides them with the necessary support to help prevent them from becoming

homeless.

- Crisis accommodation - Offers relief to those in immediate crisis and provides them an avenue to find a more stable home environment.
- Rapid Re-housing - Helps clients access and sustain permanent housing as quickly as possible. Services include rental subsidies and transitional housing.
- HomeBase- A community-based homelessness prevention program to help families and individuals overcome immediate problems that could result in the loss of housing.

1.3 Homelessness Services in NSW

In NSW, it is estimated that more than 28,000 people are homeless in NSW, with this number increasing by 27 per cent from 2006 to 2011 which was much higher than the national average of 17 per cent.¹ Young people (38%), females (58%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (8%) are over represented amongst those that are homeless.

1.3.1 Specialist Homelessness Services

In 2015-16, almost 70,000 people in NSW received support from a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) at a cost to the NSW Government of \$264 million.^{2,3} Almost 35 per cent of those receiving support were accompanied by children.⁴

The main reasons given by people seeking help from SHSs are:

- Housing crises
- Domestic and family violence
- Financial difficulties
- Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions
- Relationship/family breakdown
- Previous accommodation ended
- Housing affordability stress

In addition to the above factors, mental health and substance abuse, long term unemployment and people leaving health care services, child protection and correctional facilities are also significant causes of homelessness.⁵

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of population and housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2049.0, 2011.

2 NSW Government. (2016). *Foundations for change – Homelessness in NSW, Discussion paper*. Retrieved from: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0007/380545/3879_HNSW_Homelessness-DiscPaper_WEB_R-2.pdf

3 NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). (2016). *Annual Report 2015-16 vol.1*. Retrieved from https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0010/387334/FACS_Annual_Report_2015-16_Volume_1_Performance_and_activities_report.pdf

4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Specialist homelessness services collection, 2015-16

5 Australian Government. (2008). *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. Retrieved from: <http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/4895838/data/the-road-home---a-national-approach-to-reducing-homelessness-data.pdf>

1.3.2 Temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation supplements SHSs in providing short-term accommodation for people while more permanent arrangements are made. The length of accommodation is limited to 28 days in a 12-month period with usual allocation time limited to three night periods at a time.

There are 350 temporary accommodation providers in NSW. Most arrange temporary accommodation in low cost motels or caravan parks, although 13 supported temporary accommodation models are funded in NSW. These supported models are characterised by longer than average stays as clients receive in-house wrap around support⁶ In 2015-16, 21,561 households used temporary accommodation in NSW.⁷

Access to temporary accommodation is arranged through making an application at the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) District Housing Office, or via Link2Home, the statewide homelessness information and referral service provided by FACS. Applicants are required to demonstrate that they are searching for alternative forms of accommodation once placed in Temporary Accommodation in order to get an extension of temporary accommodation.

In 2016-17 an estimated 37,500 requests for accommodation were made to Link2Home, of which 29,000 were provided temporary accommodation at a cost of just over \$21 million.⁸ However, a survey of SHSs and frontline workers across NSW identified that 70 per cent believe that there are not enough temporary accommodation providers in their District. Most services highlighted that they are attempting to meet the unmet demand using a combination of brokerage, SHS funds, other accommodation or refuges, and crisis housing.⁹

In 2015-2016, an estimated 25.4 requests per day (or 9,271 over the year) for short-term or emergency accommodation were not met. An estimated 13.7 of these per day (or 5,000 over the year) were because the agency people presented to had no accommodation available.¹⁰ This confirms the views of SHSs and frontline workers and highlights the urgent need for more temporary and crisis accommodation beds in NSW.

Currently there is no publically available data reporting on systemic longer term outcomes for clients exiting temporary accommodation. In the immediate term, the vast majority of temporary accommodation clients move into households without children (83%). Fourteen per cent move into private rental and eight per cent move into social housing. However, 27 per cent of clients return for further temporary accommodation.¹¹

The challenge of the current reliance on motels and caravan parks for addressing the support needs of vulnerable clients was acknowledged by FACS in the recent industry sounding paper for supported temporary accommodation.¹² Access to in house psychosocial counselling and support services and assistance to find accommodation are the main features that differentiate Jewish House from the 'standard' model of temporary accommodation.

6 Homelessness NSW & Domestic Violence NSW. (2017). *Supportive Temporary Accommodation*; NSW

7 FACS, *op. cit.*

8 NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). (2017). *The role of Temporary Accommodation*. Presentation, Sydney

9 Homelessness NSW & Domestic Violence NSW, *op. cit.*

10 AIHW, *op. cit.*

11 FACS, *op. cit.*

12 ARTD Consultants. (2017). *Supported Temporary Accommodation: Industry Sounding – Background paper*.

1.4 The Jewish House HomeBase Program

HomeBase is based on the New York City model of post crisis homelessness intervention that aims to continue supporting clients after leaving crisis accommodation so that they can establish independent living with appropriate ongoing psychosocial and medical support.

The Jewish House HomeBase Program is a community-based homelessness prevention program to help families and individuals overcome immediate problems that could result in the loss of housing. Specifically the aims are to:

- Reduce the number of people entering homelessness
- Reduce the number of nights spent in crisis accommodation for people who become homeless whilst in the programme
- Improve the accuracy of forecasting risk of homelessness with the use of a validated risk rating questionnaire

Target population for the HomeBase programme are any adults aged over 18 years, with or without family, experiencing a risk of homelessness and consenting to participation in the programme. The most likely referrals for service will come from clients who are exiting other services at Jewish House, or who are referred by other agencies and Housing NSW. Suitable clients must already have a homelessness crisis and not require urgent primary or hospital care for a mental health or substance use issue. Upon intake assessment, clients are rapidly triaged and enter a trauma-informed intensive case management model based on the principals of emergency hospital care. Once a client's needs are assessed, an interdisciplinary case management team develops immediate, intermediate and distal intervention strategies to address the underlying causes of the homelessness crisis.

This model strongly aligns with the service expectations for supported temporary accommodation outlined by FACS.¹³

A randomised controlled trial of the New York City HomeBase model identified that over a 27 month period HomeBase participants on average:

- Spent 25.3 fewer nights spent in shelter
- Were 6.5 per cent less likely to spend at least one night in a shelter
- Were 12.2 per cent more likely to be employed¹⁴

Comparable research has not been conducted in Australia but the results from the New York City trial indicate the potential of the HomeBase model to have significant benefits for people vulnerable to homelessness.

¹³ FACS. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Rolston, H., Geyer, J., & Locke, G. (2013). *Evaluation of the HomeBase Community Prevention Program, Final Report: Prepared for the NYC Department of Homeless Services.*

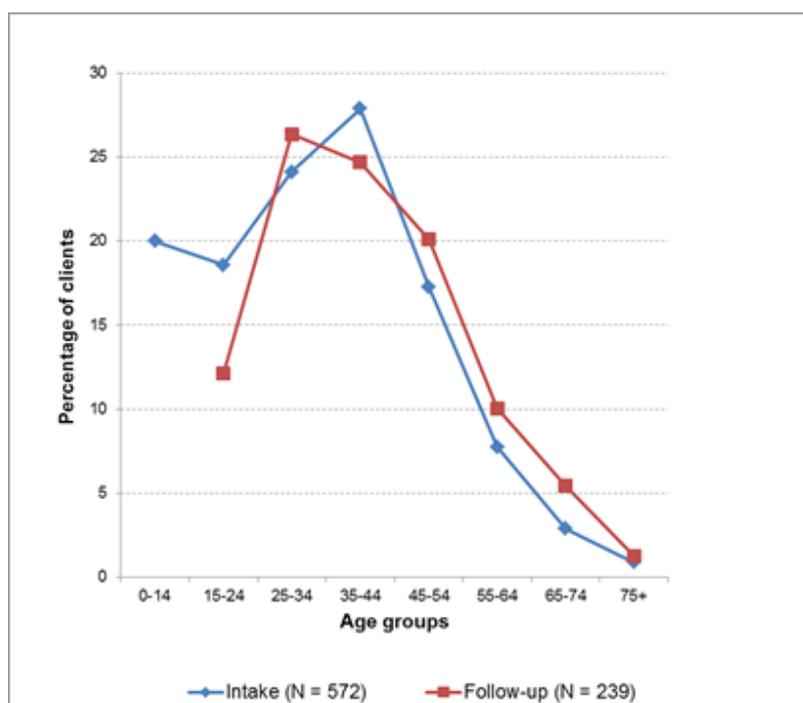
2 Preliminary results of the Jewish House HomeBase Program

2.1 Demographics

Jewish House helped 572 clients with supported temporary accommodation between January 2015 and December 2016. Of these, 364 were female (64%) and 206 were male (36%).

Clients ranged in age from 0 to 84 years (average age of 30 years) (Figure 1) and almost all (99%) were homeless when they started receiving temporary accommodation support from Jewish House.

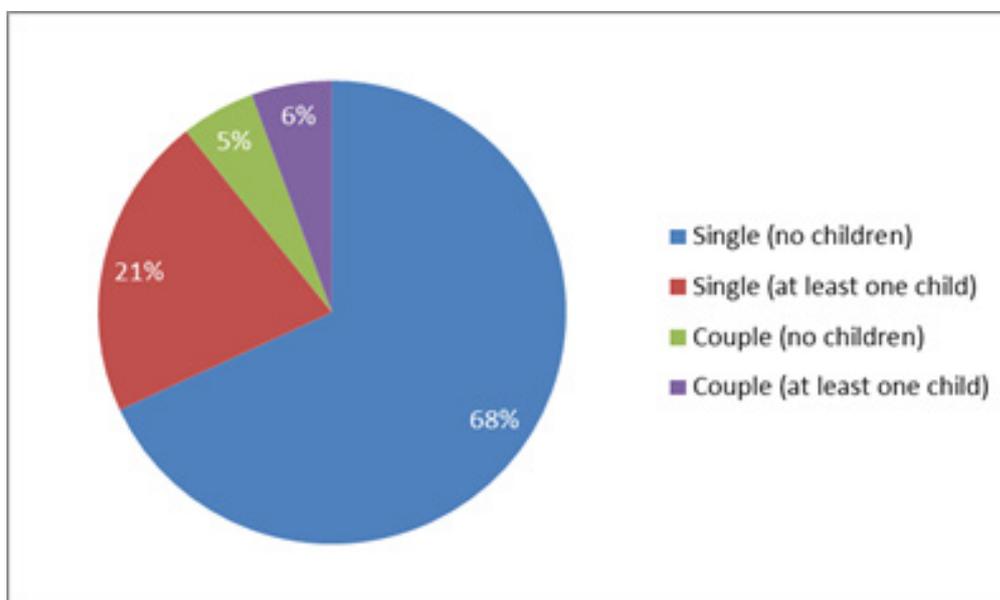
Figure 1: Age of Jewish House supported temporary accommodation clients



Just over two-thirds of the supported temporary accommodation clients aged 15 years or above were single without children and a further five percent were couples without children (Figure 2). However, one quarter of supported temporary accommodation clients aged 15 years or older were accompanied by children, 80 per cent of whom were single.

Overall, 20 per cent of temporary accommodation clients were children and a further seven per cent were adolescents.

Figure 2: Jewish House supported temporary accommodation clients accompanied by children



The majority of people receiving supported temporary accommodation at Jewish House were born in Australia (73%). Around 12 percent identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

2.2 The support needs of clients at intake

Clients seeking temporary accommodation at Jewish House have a range of issues requiring wrap around case management to address:

- Almost two-thirds have been victims of violence including 66 per cent of women suffering domestic violence (Figure 3)
- Almost two-thirds reported at least mild anxiety and depression, with almost 35 per cent at severe or extremely severe levels (Figure 4)
- 36 per cent are suffering at least moderate levels of stress (Figure 4)
- 40 per cent use illicit substances and 36 per cent abuse alcohol
- Nearly all (95%) are unemployed and receiving some form of government benefit (81%)

Figure 3: Jewish House temporary accommodation clients reporting being victims of crime

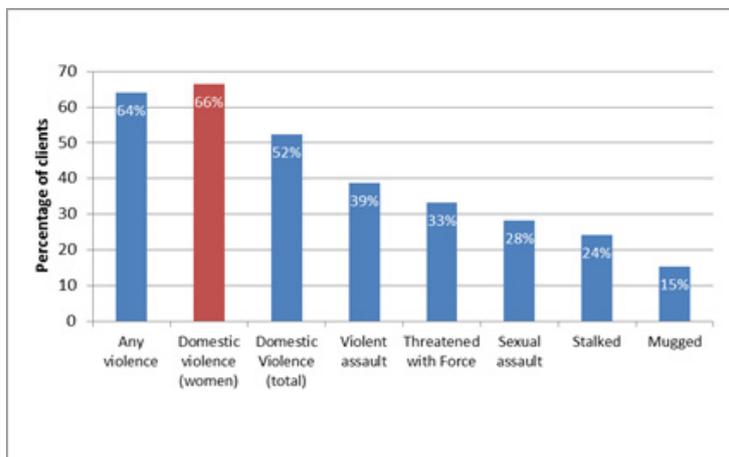
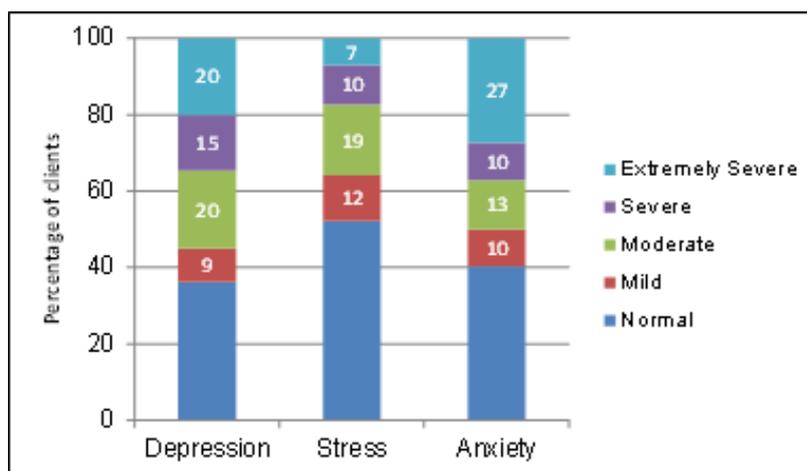


Figure 4: The severity of temporary accommodation client depression, stress and anxiety at intake



2.3 Stable accommodation at the end of supported temporary accommodation

The median period of supported temporary accommodation received at Jewish House was 13 days (average of 14.5 days).

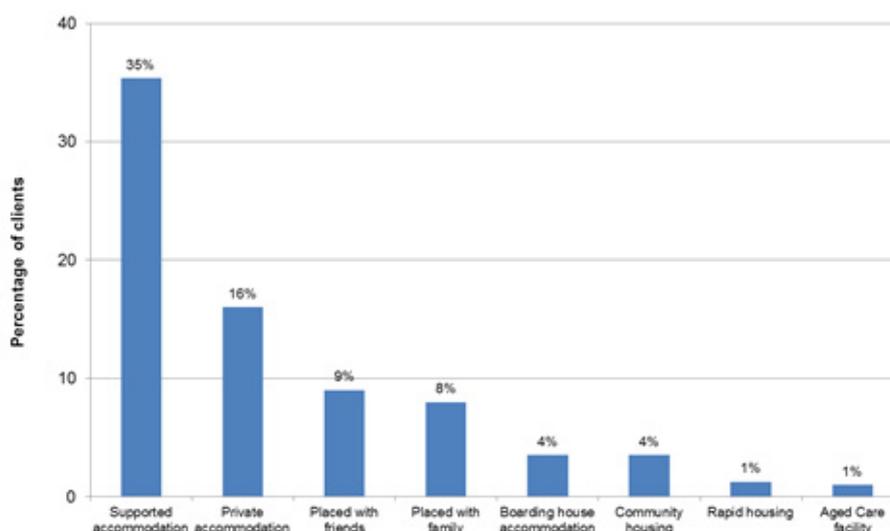
Importantly, Jewish House has a high rate of success placing clients from supported temporary accommodation into stable accommodation. Just over three-quarters (77%) of temporary accommodation clients were successfully placed in stable accommodation at the end of their stay at Jewish House (Figure 5). This far exceeds the 37 per cent success rate for homeless clients across specialist homelessness services in NSW in 2015-2016.^{15, 16}

¹⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2015-2016* < www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2015-16/>

¹⁶ It is not possible to distinguish between crisis accommodation and temporary accommodation clients in the Specialist Homelessness Services

Just over half of all Jewish House temporary accommodation clients were placed in supported accommodation (35%) or private accommodation (16%).

Figure 5: Placements of temporary accommodation clients into stable accommodation



2.4 Success of the HomeBase Program

Of the 572 people provided supported temporary accommodation between January 2016 and March 2017, **339 received ongoing supports as part of the HomeBase Program**. For clients who participated in HomeBase in 2016 (n=261), three month follow up data is available for 80 clients (31%) and six month follow up data is available for 62 clients (24%).¹⁷ These clients are broadly representative of all HomeBase clients at intake.¹⁸

The HomeBase Program has contributed to stable housing outcomes for clients

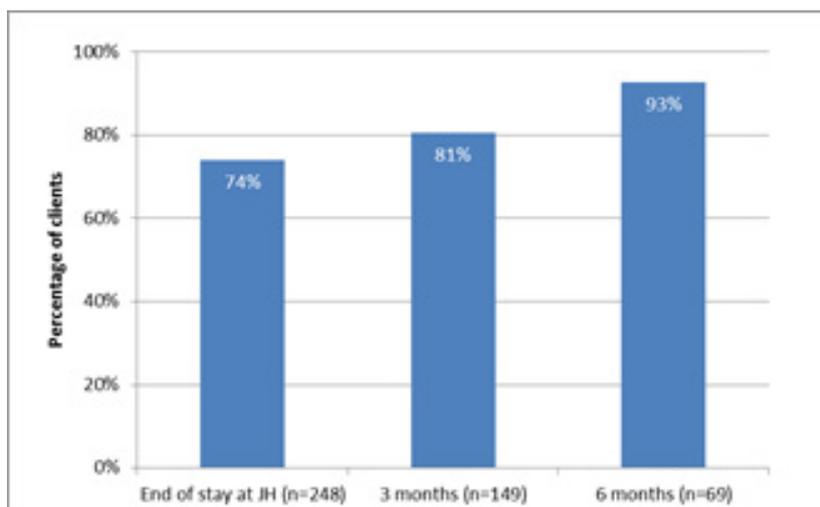
After three months of extended support, the HomeBase program has helped create an increase of seven per cent of stable housing (81%). This increased to 93 per cent after six months highlighting the benefits of ongoing support (Figure 6). After three months 38 per cent of those in stable accommodation were renting an apartment or house, and 23 per cent were in a shelter or refuge. After six months the number of HomeBase clients in private rental increased to 50 per cent and the number in a shelter or refuge fell to nine per cent.

Collection. However, even for crisis accommodation clients Jewish House had a 74 per cent success rate for successful placement in stable accommodation between January 2015 and December 2016.

¹⁷ Housing outcomes are available at 3 months for 149 clients and at 6 months for 69 clients.

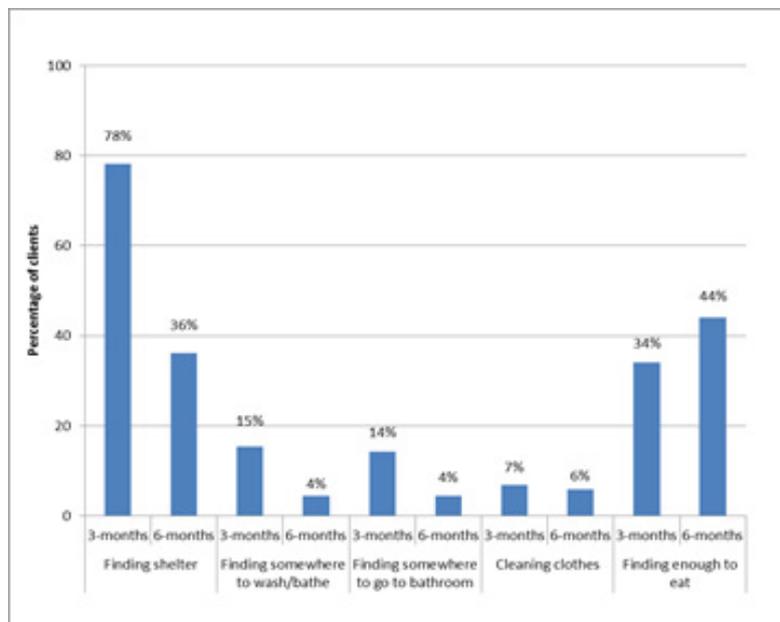
¹⁸ Using a Pearson Chi-squared test of equivalence, HomeBase clients that were followed at 3 and/or 6 months up are statistically identical at intake to HomeBase clients not able to be followed up on age, gender, stress, anxiety and depression (c2(1), p>0.05). However, the clients followed up had significantly lower rates of illicit substance and alcohol use at intake compared to those not able to be followed up (c2(1), p<0.05). HomeBase clients at or above 15 years of age are also statistically identical to other Jewish House temporary accommodation clients on age and gender (c2(1), p>0.05). No children under 15 years of age participated in HomeBase.

Figure 6: HomeBase clients successfully in stable accommodation



The importance and success of the ongoing support provided as part of HomeBase is confirmed by the reduction in challenges finding shelter, a place to wash or bathe, a place to go to the bathroom, a place to wash or clean clothes and finding enough to eat from three to six months (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Challenges reported by HomeBase clients at 3 and 6 months



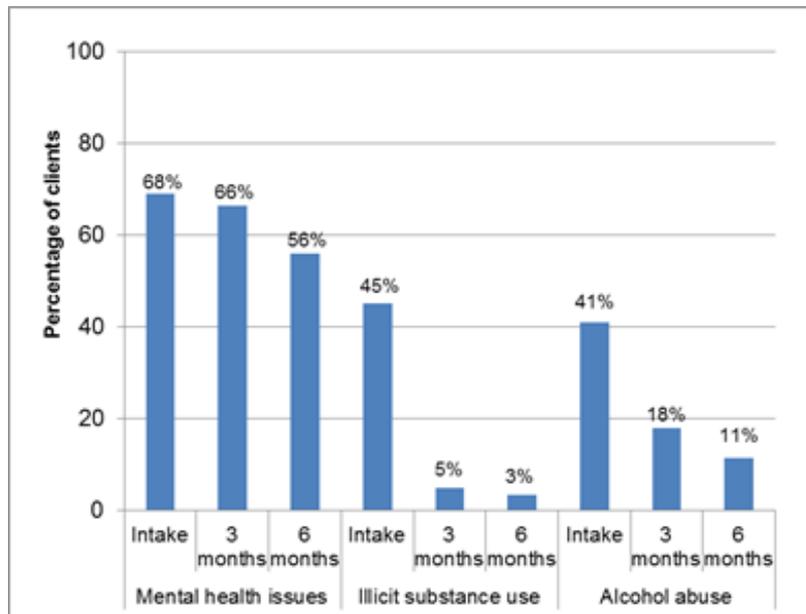
People leaving HomeBase have improved mental health and lower use of illicit substances and alcohol

In addition to improved housing outcomes, HomeBase has contributed to improved mental health and reduced illicit substances and alcohol abuse (Figure 8). People leaving supported temporary accommodation at Jewish House and spending six months in HomeBase have a:

- 12 per cent reduction in self-reported mental health issues
- 42 per cent reduction in alcohol abuse
- 30 per cent reduction in alcohol abuse

This reduction in substance is important given the high levels of comorbidity between illicit substance use, alcohol use, and mental health issues at intake.¹⁹

Figure 8: The effects of HomeBase on mental health and substance and alcohol abuse



Importantly, HomeBase clients received treatment for their mental health condition. Of those followed up at three months who had a mental health condition at intake:

- 50 per cent received treatment from a doctor or mental health professional
- 38 per cent were prescribed medications to control their emotional or mental health problems
- 37 per cent took prescribed medications to control their emotional or mental health problems.

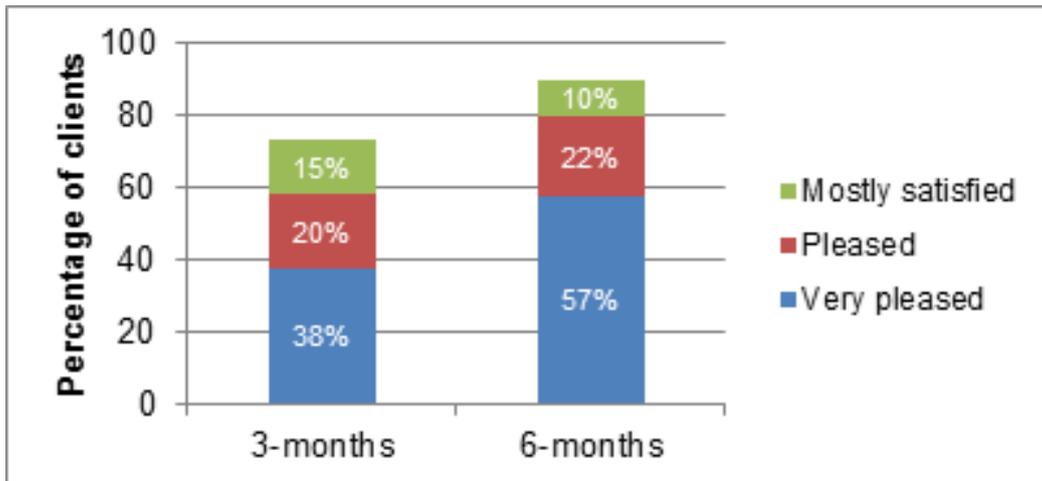
People leaving HomeBase have improved safety

After six months in HomeBase clients reported a dramatic improvement in their safety. There was a 19 per cent increase in the percentage that was very pleased with their personal safety and a 16 per cent increase in those that were mostly satisfied (Figure 9).

¹⁹ Depression is lower amongst those that did not report abusing alcohol compared to those that did ($M = 6.62$ c.f. $M = 8.77$, $t(249) = -3.09$, $p < .01$, two-tailed, $d = .39$).

Anxiety is lower amongst those that did not report abusing alcohol compared to those that did ($M = 5.48$ c.f. $M = 6.77$, $t(251) = -2.08$, $p < .05$, two-tailed, $d = .24$).

Figure 9: The effect of HomeBase on personal safety

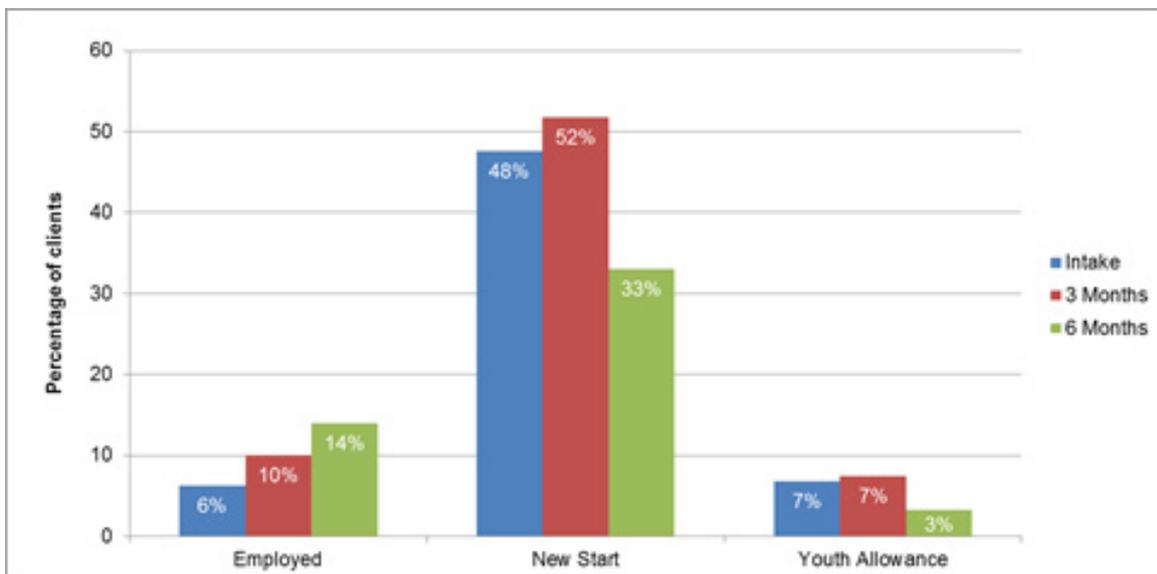


HomeBase clients also reported 16 per cent reduction in legal issues from three to six months (29% down to 13%), and a 12 per cent reduction in contact with the police over the same period (17% down to 5%).

People leaving HomeBase have increased employment and reduced reliance on welfare benefits

After three months in HomeBase, there was a four per cent increase in employment (6% to 10%). Employment increased to 14% after six months. Concurrent with this increase in employment there was a 15 per cent reduction in the number of clients receiving a Newstart allowance. There was an initial increase after three months which could indicate an increase in the number of clients looking for employment.

Figure 10: Employment and welfare outcomes for HomeBase clients



HomeBase could save the Commonwealth and State Governments \$8.6 million per year in avoided service costs

It is estimated that the potential annual cost offset from preventing homelessness is approximately \$33,000 per annum or \$794,900 over the average lifetime of someone who is homeless.^{20, 21}

Given that the followed up HomeBase clients are broadly representative of all HomeBase clients at intake, it can be assumed that 93 per cent of all HomeBase clients secure stable accommodation within 12 months.²²

Based on this the 2016 HomeBase Program had the potential to offset up to \$8.6 million in Commonwealth and State Governments services in 2017. For the 2016 cohort alone, this could amount to lifetime offsets of up to \$207.2 million.

Table 1: Potential cost offsets to government services as a result of HomeBase

HomeBase clients ^a	Stable accommodation rate ^b	Ave. cost offset per client p.a. ^c	Total annual offset	Ave. post-support life span ^d	Average life time cost offset per client ^d	Total lifetime offset
261	93%	\$33,000	\$8.6m	43 years	\$794,000	\$207.2m

^a Based on 2016 intake

^b Assumes the rate of stable accommodation is unchanged from 6 to 12 months.

^c Average offset per client is based on the cost differential between the average cost of services that are provided to people who are at risk of homelessness and the general population. The equation used to calculate each categories cost differential is:

$(\text{Average annual use by clients}) \times (\text{unit cost of service}) - (\text{population average annual use}) \times (\text{unit cost of service})$

The figure is based on Zaretsky, Z., Flatau, P., Clear, A., Conroy, E., Burns, L., & Spicer, B. (2013). The cost of homelessness and the net benefit of homelessness programs: a national study. Prepared for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), adjusted to 2017 offsets at an inflation rate of 3% per annum.

^d Average life outcomes are the present value cost differential for each category based on Zaretsky et al. The assumption in this analysis is that clients will have an average lifespan of 43 years from 2017 and service cost inflation will be 3% per year.

20 Zaretsky, Z., Flatau, P., Clear, A., Conroy, E., Burns, L., & Spicer, B. (2013). *The cost of homelessness and the net benefit of homelessness programs: a national study*. Prepared for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

21 Note: Cost offsets used in this study are adjusted for 4-years of inflation at 3% p.a. from the 2013 figures calculated in the AHURI study. The average lifetime of someone who is homeless post-receiving support is 43 years.

22 Note: The AHURI study is based on a 12 month follow up survey. For this study we have assumed that housing outcomes for HomeBase clients remain stable from 6 to 12 months.

2.5 Conclusions

The preliminary analysis shows that Jewish House is playing a significant role in breaking the cycle of homelessness in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs. Between January 2015 and December 2016, Jewish House helped almost 600 clients with supported accommodation, including almost 150 children and adolescents.

Clients arrived at Jewish House in crisis, with high rates of being victims of domestic and other violence, anxiety and depression, alcohol and drug abuse and unemployment. Unlike other models of temporary accommodation, Jewish House provides clients with an average of two weeks supported accommodation. Importantly, at the end of this period just over three-quarters find stable accommodation which is a striking 40 per cent above the average achieved across all specialist homelessness services in NSW.

Jewish House is the only provider of the HomeBase Program in NSW. This evidence-based and rigorously evaluated model has produced positive results for people at risk of homelessness in New York City. The data clearly demonstrates that the Jewish House HomeBase model is also achieving positive outcomes for people at risk of homelessness in NSW. Since January 2016, more than 300 Jewish House clients have received ongoing support as part of HomeBase. The success of the program is most evident by the 93 per cent stable accommodation rate of clients after 6 months of support. That is an increase of 16 per cent at the end of Jewish House's standard program of supported temporary accommodation.

In addition to improved housing outcomes, HomeBase has contributed to improved mental health, reduced illicit substances and alcohol abuse, improved personal safety and increased employment. Indeed HomeBase clients are 8 per cent more likely to be employed after six months which is on track to either match or exceed the results of HomeBase in New York City.

While a price cannot be placed on helping someone in crisis turn their lives around, the results of HomeBase have the potential to offset annually almost \$33,000 per client in Commonwealth and State Government service costs. This could save up to \$794,000 per client over their lifetime. Based on the number of clients Jewish House have helped with HomeBase to date, this could amount to \$8.3m per annum and \$207m over the lifetimes of these clients. These figures could be even higher assuming that the high rate of stable accommodation achieved by Jewish House's non-HomeBase clients is at least somewhat sustained.

However, the data only tells part of the story and does not truly highlight the severity of crisis some homeless people are in and the full impact Jewish House has on people's lives. To better highlight the outstanding work of Jewish House²³, a series of four case studies were undertaken with clients selected by Jewish House. Their stories describe extreme levels of distress and crisis, and the exceptional and tailored support they were provided by Jewish House. Most importantly their stories articulate how the respect, compassion, warmth and informality of Jewish House has helped them turn their lives around and overcome the crises that were forcing them into homelessness. These powerful stories are presented in the following chapter.

²³ Note: The representativeness of these four clients to all HomeBase clients cannot be determined. However, these clients were selected to showcase the model of support provided by Jewish House and the potential of the HomeBase program to break the cycle of homelessness.

3 Success stories

This section presents the transcripts of interviews with four Jewish House clients.

3.1 Interview with client 1

I got married to a gentleman which wasn't Michael's father in 2006. He was a bad alcoholic I found out and got very abusive so I had to leave and when I left thinking that I would get some money after being together for four years I didn't. I only got a little bit which didn't go very far. I couldn't work or anything cos I had Michael still as a little boy. So I tried to find rental properties and in rental properties whenever I ran out of money, they wouldn't let me stay so I had to keep moving. Some years we'd move two or three times. Even though we had a contract, it had to be broken. They [the real estate] wanted money and everything. So that was starting from 2009/2010. And I asked Housing can they give us something. They said they had absolutely nothing and because we already did have a house [public housing] before I married ... and I gave it away I'm on a 10-15 year waiting-list. So I tried to cope with trying to get rental ... Michael has cerebral palsy ... So I tried so hard as a single mum. I've been a single mum with Michael since day one. And tried so hard to get a rental property out here. They're not cheap and whenever I got something that was cheap they [the landlord] wanted to move in so it was like every year we had to move. It wasn't once a year. It was two or three times a year.

It was very stressful. Michael got depressed, I got depressed. So with depression came uncertainty and everything else that I could not cope and where do I go from here. I got right down. My family wouldn't help me. They thought I should put Michael, he knows this so I can repeat it, they told me to put Michael in a cupboard, lock the door and throw away the key cos he's setting my life back. So Michael was quite hurt about that, so was I, so I dumped my family as well. They live out west so I've had nothing to do with them for the last five or six years. So with that I still kept trying to find somewhere to live but everything just got more and more expensive ...

I had my stuff in storage for a long time. I've had all this stuff for 20 years you know still in storage all the time till we finally moved here. It was just ridiculous to pay all that and to try and move house and try to make a life and then moving out. It was very difficult. My depression got really bad that I had to go and see someone cos I got to a really bad stage ... About two years I was seeing a psychologist. I started picking up, but then I realised that I had this little boy that I need to look after. By the last time I was fed up. I tried to make myself positive. I knew I was going to drop [get depressed] again. Nobody would give us a home and I remember Michael sitting beside me where it was 2 o'clock in the morning, I'd just put everything in storage. No one would give us somewhere to live and we ... were in Kennard's Storage. It's a locked up area. We were in the car and I said, "Michael this is where we're going to stay", This is all we had. Friends wouldn't give us somewhere because they were sick of looking after us cos we did stay with friends and stuff like that. And Michael was saying, "Mum I can't sleep in the car. I'm scared". I was exhausted cos he's got cerebral palsy. He couldn't help. He was fed up with helping. So I did it [the packing] all myself. That's why I finished at 2 o'clock in the morning and I just fell asleep in the car.

But that day I did ring up emergency housing and I said, "Look", this was a Saturday night, I said, "We have to sleep in our car" and they said, "We're really sorry, We've got nowhere.

Can you just stay somewhere, just for the next two nights and come and see us on Monday". We slept in our car again so then we, thank god Kennard's [Storage] didn't find out. They do have cameras there. Maybe they didn't want to say anything. They understood our condition so they didn't harass us or fine us. So we finally went to Housing on Monday morning and it was probably a week or two weeks they moved us. We went and stayed in a motel in the city. We stayed at a motel in Hornsby. We had to keep moving. Two days here, three days there. Keep moving. I can't cope with this. So I told them [Housing NSW], I said, "Look I can't keep moving. Haven't you got anything to give us you know so we can stay". So they said, after I think about two weeks of running around everywhere, they said, "Look you might have to go a long way. Do you mind going to Bondi?" and I said, "I don't care. Just somewhere to stay".

I needed to get my thoughts together, I was going down, Michael was thrown from pillar to post you know so we went and saw these people [Jewish House] at Bondi. At that time I was a bit airy fairy. I don't remember that day if you can understand. I was so stressed, exhausted. Michael was exhausted and I remember walking in thinking, "What are these people going to do with me?" I was so frightened. So anyway they said, they took us around the corner to this little motel and it was quite vacant. There was another lady living in one of the rooms next door. They said, "You and Michael can have these rooms. The kitchen is available", and they gave us a box of cooked food which we hadn't lived on cooked food for quite a while. We were buying anything at that time. Money was very short. And so they treated Michael with respect. They treated me with respect. They were so kind. They were lovely. They kept bringing us food and filling up the fridge with food. I didn't have to stress over that. I didn't care how far it was. I just needed to get myself together ... So we were there for ... It must have been three months I think ... and apparently you're only allowed to stay there for a short time but I just knew I couldn't move. There was nowhere for me to go. I was too screwed up to put it quite bluntly and I needed to just take care of Michael. So ...

That was not last year but the year before because last year we moved three times, so two years ago. 2015 July till about October, November. And what they [Housing NSW] told us is that they've got nothing for us and we'd have to go and rent somewhere really cheap. So I did the running around again ... Michael stayed at home he didn't have anywhere to go ... I found out that there is properties available ... Housing here were getting rid of, this one [apartment block] was vacant for five years ... It's pretty low. They wanted to sell it for \$11 or \$12 million. We really struggled and they said they had nothing and I bluntly told them, I said, "I know you have properties empty. I've been told about this". They said you tell us where the property is. So the end result was that they [the community housing provider] rang Christina [social worker at Jewish House] and said, "Do you have anybody who's really [desperate]?" We rented a property in Hornsby. We felt quite alone there ...cos we didn't know anybody ... I have a few friends here so Michael and I did come out here a couple of times. I still felt lost. Well we have friends that I like to keep in touch cos they do help us a bit. So I told Christina that and she said, "Just hang in there". So anyway, after a year living at Hornsby, Housing said to us look if we find somewhere out here they'll help us with the rent. They didn't help us out there [in Hornsby]. It was \$440 a week. I only get \$980 a fortnight ... Fortnightly the rent came out, \$880 so I had \$100. I couldn't survive.

I just said, "Look, I can't cope with this you know. I had to go to Vincent de Paul in Hornsby and say, "Look you have to pay my electricity every three months please because otherwise the electricity gets cut off" ... We had a bottom unit. It was freezing cold and very damp. The whole place was getting all mouldy, I was sick. Michael was sick. I must admit we haven't been sick since we moved out of there. And then they [Housing NSW] said, "If you find somewhere out here they'll pay the majority of our rent. So we moved to Dee Why at the end

of November and then mid-January [2017] they said that they might have a property here because Link Housing ... bought this property.

Interviewer: When you were at Jewish House can you tell us what they did for you?

Lots. Spoke to us ... They knew I needed care. They knew I needed someone to talk to. They cleaned up the property. They talked to me about different things. They told me to go and do things like get out, do something cos we locked ourselves away. They were like social workers cos that's what I call her Christina and she just constantly talked to me. She'd say come up and see us you know. We'd go in and we'd talk to them and she'd ask, "How am I going? What am I doing? ... How am I feeling". They were very considerate and we did have a kitchen there but at times I'd go down the road and buy something. Michael likes chicken and chips you know ... I'd go for a walk down there and I'd say, "Michael come out for a walk". He still didn't feel [up to it], ... We were living on Bondi Road. He never went out. ... He locked himself up more so than I did. Yeah, he was depressed and I still was feeling we're not secure cos that's how we've been for years. It's a really bad place to be when you're sitting at the edge 24/7 and I thought I've already been told by Housing that if it is such a problem for me to find somewhere they were going to take my son off me and that would fix the whole problem. They'd put him in a far out place - the country. And I told Christine that and I told Rosana that. I think I was angry sometimes and they were so considerate even though I was going through all this dilemma with my head and everything ... But I just remember them being there for me all the time. Supplying food, they had a place where they cooked beautiful food, ... solid meals. And I think that helped us repair quite a bit, but the talking to us was something.

Yeah, Michael started to come out. It took a while. We were there for three months. They started talking to Michael. I said Michael has to come over too so they can talk to him and help him break out of the stressful state he was. He's a completely different boy today than he was then a couple of years ago. They were very helpful and Michael really liked them, felt comfortable with them and he didn't feel comfortable with anybody else.

They are beautiful people and I've never ever met Jewish people cos they said they're Jewish and they have certain days where they don't work and I've never met them, but they are a group of people that are so caring and so wonderful so it makes you feel calm and safe. They made you feel safe. Not at all judgemental. If they felt that I was doing something wrong I think that they would tell me if I was doing something wrong, but they've always told me I've done the right thing. Trying so hard yes, but sometimes you've just got to put your hand up ... I'm Italian and being Italian my child is first, but I hear about so many people, I mean the girl downstairs she dumped her child in foster care. I can't imagine what it would be like for that child. I could never do that to Michael and they made me feel, yeah, it's okay what you did. You had to do it and we understand.

Interviewer: So at the end of the three months how did you feel? Did you feel revived?

I was revived but still scared cos ... we still didn't have a home. Christina especially, then it was Alice before Christina and Alice got on the computer while we were sitting there and remember that we were in her office and looking up all these places ... We were looking at all these properties cos I couldn't even deal with that. I couldn't even talk to people and I'm going, "What's the use. They're not going to give us anything anyway". Our record was really bad. We owed quite a bit of money to many real estates. That was really depressing ... me cos it was like it's a home, you have to live somewhere ... Yeah, and they [the real estate agents] abused Michael a few times ... I stepped out for coffee and I remember that he just came in the real estate, didn't even tell me he was going there, just opened the door and said

[to Michael], “If you can’t afford this, get out” ... And Michael rung me and he was petrified. So I ran straight home ... and I said, “It’s all right Michael. We’ll try and find somewhere to go”. I mean I understood him but he had no right to come in and abuse Michael.

And I wasn’t perfect after that three months because Jewish House tried so much to talk to Housing about getting us a property that we really needed somewhere ... Alice was helping us, Rosanna and everybody. They were just making us feel it’s okay. We’re going to keep trying. We’ll keep trying. Just hang in there. And ...

Interviewer: So what happened in the end? Did Jewish House help you find accommodation?

They told me to go to this property ... I parked my car somewhere in Hornsby and walked. I think I looked at four properties that day. I think Alice thought I wasn’t going to do it but I did do it. It was a nice day too so I went to all these properties. It was really hard cos I went to all these properties and I told them, “Look, I’m with Jewish House ... I’m going to pay the rent and this and that”, but they looked at you like you were down there. They didn’t even ring Jewish House they didn’t ring anybody. They didn’t ask any questions. I remember going in and I said, “No one’s rung. Nobody’s rung anyone for references. Nobody’s done anything” and I remember sitting there and yeah Rosanna was in this cos she wanted to ask how I went and everything. And Rosanna said, “No one’s rung us. What did they say to you?” I said, “Well I told them the truth. You told me to give them this letter that the rent would be paid. Housing will help and blah, blah, but they still didn’t ring up or anything”. So then that’s when I think Rosanna got on the phone and started ringing up a few of the places and said, “Is there any chance you’ll give these people the place cos I promise you you will get the rent”. They [Jewish House] guaranteed that everything would be all right. They helped me with money too. They gave me bond [money] and I think they paid a couple of weeks in advance. I got a little bit out of my pension and paid that as well cos I didn’t have the full bond money cos that’s four weeks rent. So they helped me with that. That’s why I think they do need funding and things like that because they supported me a lot with money and stuff.

I had to pay full rent there at Hornsby ... Housing paid the bond that’s right and Jewish House paid a couple of weeks in advance, gave me six weeks I think it is. So they paid half and Housing paid the other. I had to pay back Housing ... I had to pay them all back but Jewish House didn’t ask for the money back ...

Interviewer: So have you continued your support, your contact with Jewish House?

Yes, I like to ring them every now and again and say hello. They contact me every now and then. It is just so nice to say hello. I want to get in the car and go and see them. It is far away Bondi, but I like to go and see them ... Yeah, if there’s anything that happens here, if ever I lose this place, they say I never will, but anything can happen with my bad luck, so they’re always there plus they just ring every now and then: “How’s it going? How’s Michael?” They always keep in touch. It’s not that they’re gone and we don’t talk to them any more cos we do. It is it’s very comforting. I don’t have anybody else to sort of talk about my past. I don’t talk to my friends anymore. I think they’re over it, so it’s nice to have Jewish House that understands it all.

Interviewer: So if you had to suggest anything in terms of improvements in terms of their program – can you think of anything or is it just, did they just hit the nail on the head so to speak?

Honestly, they’ve got that little property around the corner for people in need to live

somewhere. No, I think they just need help with support and stuff like that, because I think they did everything that they could to help us. I can't fault them. They're the best people in the world and we said that to them.

Interviewer: What did you think would have happened if you hadn't met Jewish House? What would have happened?

I would have killed myself I think. That's how bad I got. Yeah, I had those feelings ... and when I was really low at that time I was afraid, very afraid for Michael cos I just could not cope anymore. If this was what our life was going to be like living out in the gutter there was no way I was going to dump him but that was the only way out.

Interviewer: So they really rescued you?

They did. That's how I felt - rescued. They were the only people who really and truly cared. Housing they just gave you ultimatums you know. Just try and get rid of you ... I've been abused by Housing quite a bit but I'm just so glad I've got this place and that's what Michael and I, we were partying weren't we? We have a forever home don't we?

Interviewer: So I should imagine psychologically, it must be incredible?

It was and Christina and Rosanna were going, "We have a forever home" ... I'll never forget them. Never ever for what they did for us, ever.

Interviewer: So did they help you find this place?

What Christina told me is that how it all came about is that Link Housing ended up buying this place off Housing. They'd been fighting them for a long time. And they asked Christina, well Rosana actually, "Who are the most desperate people you think would really need a home", because they only have 12 units here and there's thousands of people who need a home as you know and so Rosana said ... "They want you go and have a look at it. I said, "I don't care what it looks like. If it has a roof, windows and a door I don't care. I just want somewhere to live". And she said, "Well you go have a look at it". I said, "No. I'll just take it". She said, "No, you have to go apparently and have a look at it". So I came in, walked around with Michael and we said, "Yep. We'll take it" ...

And everybody in the street is really lovely. They walk out of their place. They don't treat us like we're low people. "Hello. How are you? Have a nice day." it's so nice ...

Interviewer: So could you tell me a bit about a day in Jewish House? Maybe you could just give me a bit of a sense of the program?

When we arrived there at Jewish House as I said they gave us all this food and they said put it in the fridge. We put the food away. I think we ate something. It's a bit fuzzy for me because of how I was feeling but if I remember correctly I saw a single bed. I haven't slept in a single bed for a long time but there was two single beds. They said, "You can put it together if you want". I said, "No that's fine". Just to have a bed was wonderful after sleeping in a car ... It was a struggle moving all the time, so just to be settled for a while was great. And I think I watched television, I call it sometimes the idiot box cos I just like sit there and I just watch whatever's on television. It just makes my mind go away. Maybe I was thinking of a good day at the beach or a nice day at a picnic. Just relaxing I guess.

Yeah, I remember asking her, "When do I have to move out?" and they said, "We'll try and see

if we can get you somewhere first". And so I thought, well, I wasn't relaxed but more relaxed than what I had been for a while. So that was nice ... The first few days I think I slept a lot. I think we both did. I was so fatigued you know ...

Interviewer: So eventually, after a period of time, you settled down?

Yeah and them talking to me and stuff and coming over and we'd go over there and see them cos it was just around the corner and things and talking to them or inviting us to social groups and talking to other people

There was a lady there that asked us to come and talk to her and she asked me about how I was feeling and things like that. Some social worker or somebody that was coming in asking how I felt and what I'd been through which was nice. I don't know if I told her as much as I've told you but I remember a few things that I did say.

I think we didn't want to do group sessions. We were still a bit frazzled. I think we were still standoffish. I didn't much see anybody or do anything. I think I just rested in my room. I liked staying in that room ... It was nice to just open the curtains see the sun. I never went to Bondi beach. Even though we were there for that long we never went down to the beach or anything

It was like they [Jewish House] picked us up out of the street and supported us quite a bit with talks, food, making us feel comfortable just everything ... I like to talk to somebody that understood my situation. Even if I was talking gibberish, they were still there listening to me. I must have spoken many times gibberish. Things must have been just coming out of my mouth and I didn't understand what I was talking about. I was fatigued, exhausted, traumatised about it all that I just, I can't believe it. I still can't believe today we've slept in our car. I don't know anybody who can cope with that ... I

Interviewer: So what do you reckon the impact's been having that certainty and stability?

Stability is the most important thing. Now I go out. I buy food, fill up the fridge and I say to Michael, "What do you want to have for dinner? What do you want me to cook?" We have conversations now. We sit at the table now ... But yeah it was really good to know that I can walk in that door and nobody is going to say, "Get out". ... Yeah cos even when we moved in here Michael was still a bit depressed and that, he was still locking himself away. Not it's like he was up early this morning knowing that you were coming this morning so okay, "I'll get up early, have my shower, get ready and then can we go out this afternoon mum?" and I said, "Yes we can".

I would love to [visit Jewish House]. They're wonderful people absolutely. Just recently they had a picnic at Bondi at one of the parks out there so we went out there and had a luncheon and they supplied all the food and it was wonderful and we met other people that went through the same things we sort of went through so it was really nice and kids and that.

Interviewer: So what do you reckon other programs can learn from Jewish House?

A lot. A real lot ... One thing that Jewish House is good at, I don't know if they're qualified social workers but it took me a long while to feel calm that everything is going to be okay. Jewish House, all of them were always very understanding. I mean I still go there and I hug them and everything because they became like family to us. And what it is with other people, I mean even Cerebral Palsy [Association] and all that, they all just do their job ... But Jewish House are very, very good at making you feel like you are family and everything's okay. I mean that was one of the most important things. It probably took them a few days to make me feel

like that because of the abuse we copped [historically], but that's one thing everybody's got to learn. I don't expect to be cuddled and that by everybody, but just the way they spoke to you and everything, understanding the whole situation

I had a big cleaning business and Michael's father was around, I had a business partner Trish and the business was going really good. Because I had Michael and he had all these problems everybody ran away. Everybody was too scared and John [ex partner] ran away and said, "That's not my child. I don't have disabled kids, It must be you". Everybody sort of abused you. It has been years of abuse. And Trish wanted to be in the police force and so she left and the business was just had to close it all. I didn't even sell it. I couldn't sell it, I was so busy with Michael so I just closed it. I said, "Look vacuum cleaners if you want this". I just gave things away and just said, "I can't do it anymore".. It was really sad that when I did that ... I felt like I was going to, I thought I was going to get up and do what I had to do but I failed. I was a failure and it really hit home. But Jewish House told me, "No you're not. You're not a failure. You're just taking care of Michael". But at times I didn't see it. I thought I was doing everything wrong. So everybody out there has to make people feel [good]. Like they don't have to be social workers, just talk to people. Yeah. Treat you with respect. Everybody has just treated us so badly. I just can't get over it. ... Even the police. The stressful times that I've had that I've had to drive a car and drive somewhere or run out somewhere, pick up Michael or to go and see somebody. I got booked every time. I must have been so stressed. I don't even remember driving, I shouldn't have been driving maybe, but I've got a lot of fines. A lot of bills. Jewish House said, "Okay bills, eventually something will come up. Don't worry about it ... Yeah, it was just making you feel okay. I copped so much. I can't believe it that I didn't kill myself. I really can't believe that I haven't achieved it. It was so bad

Interviewer: So I should imagine your resilience now has increased dramatically?

Yes, much healthier, stronger, happier. Just everything. I can cope now.

Interviewer: So do you reckon you'll re-enter the workforce at some point?

If Michael gets something ... So hopefully in the future I might do something but I'm not sure what ... 'd love to do that [help at Jewish House]. I'd love to help for what they've helped other people. I'd love to help somebody out too ... They [Jewish House staff] always talked to us about different things. They always asked us, "What's going on? Have you got a problem with something? ...

Michael would love to help other kids and have friends and stuff. That would be what he would love to do, wouldn't you Michael? ... He loves kids too. He helps out and whenever he sees somebody in a wheelchair he always goes up and says, hello and are you okay and everything.

Interviewer: Would you say the program [Jewish House] has turned your life around?

Very much so. As I said before, if I didn't find Jewish House no one else would have helped me out. I don't know what would have happened to me or Michael. It's scary to think what would have happened to us because we wouldn't be anywhere ...

Interviewer: So final question – how do you see the future?

Hopefully Michael will have a job where he gets up in the morning and goes in positive, meets a lot of people because after all that's happened a lot of people look at us like we're not worthy. Michael doesn't have any friends. Nobody visits him. Nobody ask him out to watch

a movie or anything like that so I'm hoping Michael gets friends, he starts going out. I want Michael to meet a nice girl, get married, have kids like a normal person, I'm hoping. And me, I don't know - get a job, work somewhere where I'm happy and have a life now ... cos it's been 10 years 2007. 2007 when I was getting too abused by Ron ... I think our lives are looking forward now. We have a future now which I could never see it before. I've got a lot to give to Jewish House. A lot, a lot. Wonderful people, absolutely wonderful people ... Jewish House pulled us through they helped us through everything yeah

3.2 Interview with client 2

Interviewer: Maybe we could start if you could just tell me you know how you got to become a client of Jewish House?

I had a rental place for 26 years, home essentially. Two kids, one grown and living independently, the other one living with his mother five days a week, myself two days a week, and me working as a sound engineer, life steady. So I received a notification from my long time real-estate people that they were going to renovate the place and up the rent way out of my affordability range ... So that was going to be difficult, but more or less at the same time I think it was about five or six days before I had to transition out of my place and find another place, my ex-partner who has some mental difficulties, the police came and got my son and removed him from her and now I found myself in the 100% parenting range. Now I work at night. I'm a sound guy. So all of a sudden I was put in a position where I couldn't take work. I still am struggling to do that. So I couldn't accept work because I can't leave him overnight by himself ... It was basically a confluence of everything that came at once and so I found myself without a roof. I stayed at the warehouse that we operate the business out of for a couple of days while I made phone calls.

They [the landlord] gave me 90 days so they were good. They were great. I can't, as far as landlords go, I couldn't ask for better. Very understanding and all the rest of it but yeah, I mean I had to go. So I had time to prepare which I was in the process of doing and had I not had my son come to me at that precise moment. It was just very bad timing. I would have been able to find a place, small studio place and would have been okay. But all of a sudden, no work, no money and had to leave the apartment.

It was an interesting experience. It's humbling really. I often pass by [homeless] people and wonder to myself, "How does that happen?" Now I know, you know. It was also very quick. I didn't really have much time. I wasn't even panicked. I didn't have time to panic ... It was only after I got into Jewish House and now the penny's actually started to drop exactly what happened, but it was all within the space of two crazy weeks. So the reality has sort of settled in now and I've slowly come up with a game plan to get back in the groove so to speak.

My son's 14, but that, he's just a little bit too young to for example where we are in transitional housing, it's great, I'm very appreciative and happy to be there, but there's many restrictions. Because he's not yet 16, I can't leave him even for a brief period of time to go out and do some work. And he's been a soldier. He's very, he's really done a great job but he is very sensitive at the moment. So I'm dropping him to school, picking him up from school because I don't want to complicate his life. So I can't really accept very much [work] during the day at the moment because my window in the day-time is very short. Once he becomes more settled, more confident, I will put him on public transport and that should allow me to pick up a little bit more during the course of the day. But there is not that much day work in my world. It's very much night oriented.

I've got loads of work [potentially]. There's no shortage of job opportunities out there. I can work seven days a week if I want to. I'm just it's actually the most debilitating element of my current situation, is the inability to actually accept work. I do a little bit here and there. Then I check Ralph, my son in with my brother over the weekend so I normally drop him there Friday after school and then I go to work and I work back to back from Friday afternoon till Sunday night. I go and pick him up on Sunday night. so I'm trying to cram essentially four days of work into two days ...

Interviewer: Where are you staying at the moment?

We're in temporary accommodation and they give you a small apartment there. I mean it's very nice. However, on the other side so once you're in your door it's almost okay. You can almost fool yourself into feeling like you're in a place. However, it's very security oriented. They've got, you have swipe cards amenity doors it doesn't matter where you need to go. There's curfews which make it difficult for me. For example, 10 o'clock, I was stopped the other night and they said, "No. You can't do it". I had a four-hour call. I knew Ralph would be okay to be in there on the computer for four hours in the room but because he's 14 ... they require me to be with him at all times. Even if I have to run across the road to the convenience store they will let me do that but I have to ask permission to do that ...

Interviewer: So compared to others [in your situation] you've been quite fortunate?

Extremely, right from the word go, literally from the first phone call. It really has been extraordinary. A lot of support, very quick to deal with things. And I have spoken with others and they've not nearly been so lucky. So it was just luck. The timing or I just seemed to hit the sweet spot, I seemed to have hit it. I've now become acquainted with a number of people more or less in the same position who have really had to slog to get what I have managed to sort of fall into support-wise very easily. So I'm under no illusions that this is the way things are. I'm not looking at my situation as being a very realistic one. I can see very clearly that this is generally much more challenging than my experiences so I've been very lucky.

Interviewer: So how did you get on to Jewish House?

We were sleeping in the warehouse in Marrickville. There's a couple of couches there and Wi-Fi and a shower. But it's cold. There was nothing homely. It's a warehouse and it is a working warehouse. You've got people walking through and all the rest of it. So I went to Newtown Neighbourhood Centre on day 3 I think of the warehouse experience and they very quickly, firstly they said, "You don't fit". I'm not on Centrelink or anything like that, so we didn't tick any of the boxes. They very quickly said to me just wait there which we did and they got on the phone and rang around ... and they came very quickly and said, "There's this place Jewish House. It's wonderful. They've got a place there available". The other thing that was difficult ... it turned out it wasn't, but apparently it can be ... I'm a single father; apparently there's many more fits available for women, so the story goes ... And they said, "Jewish House you know. They're very comfortable there with fathers'. So here I came and I stayed in the apartments a block from here for I think about two weeks ... So obviously I hadn't found a place because I didn't have any money. My 28 days came to an end so Jewish House then got behind me once again and brought me in to the main Jewish House area here ... They'd had my name down for various other temporary accommodation places but it gave us an extra few days to look for a place ... So I had more than my 28 days' worth because I guess of the kindness and attitudes shown by Jewish House

Interviewer: So what was the accommodation like [in Jewish House]?

Fantastic, absolutely. Having had no experience prior to this if somebody would have said to me you're going to be in homeless crisis accommodation, the images I conjured would have been entirely different to what they were ... We had a very nicely appointed apartment. It was designated a share apartment, two bedrooms but because of the father and son thing there was no other father and son so we actually had the entire apartment ... Cooking facilities and Oz Harvest dropped food in and you know that was in itself that was fantastic cos otherwise it was costing me .It didn't matter how little I tried to spend I couldn't get away under about \$30 a day to actually feed us, get to and from school and so forth and when Oz Harvest comes in and they've got full fridges here that took that \$30 and allowed me to use that for other things ... So things like having food there I could say okay right. I've got petrol in the van I can, instead of giving Ralph \$10 a day for lunch money, I stopped doing all that and I would make sandwiches. And so I could pretty much run on, I could keep that \$30 a day for the next day.

Interviewer: I should imagine that must have been pretty comforting?

It took the fear out of it. It didn't take the pressure off so much you still felt you had no money and there's a pressure that comes with that ... I've got two work vehicles and one of them now is unregistered and so pretty much everything I earned this weekend will be spent on registration this week, so it's two steps forward and one step back. So I know that once I get that registration paid, if I can have another good weekend next weekend which I'm certain I will, it won't really buy breathing space but a little bit of the fear will lessen ...

Interviewer: So when you were in Jewish House what support did you get?

Yes, in mysterious ways they're very supportive. Negotiating the system. I'd had no experience of the system before so I guess the most important part in terms of support the initial support was what I had to do – here's what you need to do – they laid it all out for me. We need to get you to go and see these people. We need to speak to these people. We need to fill out these forms and so I would come here every morning at 11 o'clock and have a brief meeting with Fiona who would then say, "Okay, here's where we are up to. We need to apply for this and we need you to read this. Sign this". This is what it's all about. You need to go to Housing on this day to get your extra this. Just the general upkeep of all the little boxes that you have to tick. So that was invaluable. If I had to do that on my own it would have been [difficult], because these appointments are never easy. You go to Housing Department. You may sit there for three, four hours waiting for your number to be called and then you may find yourself in the wrong queue, as I did. I've ended up with two separate identification numbers which is still causing people concern now because they made me sign up twice even though I explained to them I was already signed up ... And there would have been a lot more of that had I not had guidance from Jewish House just negotiating the system; what my obligations were because there are obligations you have to make sure that you fit as many boxes as you can. And also at the moment I'm in the process of trying to sign on to Centrelink, not really for the money ... Mostly I need to get this Centrelink number ... so that I don't have to sit down for an hour and go through everything all the time because I don't fit the boxes. The very first question they ask you is, "What's your Centrelink number?" and as soon as you say you don't have one, "It's oh", and then there's an entirely more complex process to have to go through. It seems that if you've got a Centrelink number all the other questions are pretty straightforward and so I'm going to sign on, just declare what I earn and it'll allow me to you know when I deal with Department of Housing and I've applied for I think it's called St George ...

I've just gone and done six years' worth of tax. That was another thing Jewish House

supported me with because I couldn't afford to go and they wanted \$200. I was six years behind and they wanted \$200 per year to do it - \$1200, I just don't have. So Jewish House organised somebody to help me do that and that should be nearing the end of that process now and once I submit that then I can sign up to Centrelink.

Interviewer: So besides helping you to negotiate the bureaucracy and of course Oz Harvest and accommodation, was there any other assistance from Jewish House?

Well basically the fundamentals of getting through. So there was the accommodation. There was Oz Harvest. There was advice on negotiating the system. There's also programs here which I didn't take up because I didn't have any, didn't come out of violence blah, blah but there are programs I know they run here that are support programs that people can gather in groups and do workshops and I'm sure that would be very helpful for those people that ... I didn't actually need any of that myself. But they always let me know that there were programs here if I was starting to feel a little bit you know down, depressed or whatever, that there was support mechanisms here for that. But what they actually really did was go above and beyond what anything I would have expected. I mean to help me get my tax done was just remarkable. I spent two entire days with a chap who just donated his time. He came in and went through thousands of pages of my bank accounts and I had to get bank statements for the last six years. Tracking back through every transaction, where was that, who was that? And I don't think that that's something they do here very often, but I think it's remarkable and it's worth noting that when they were presented with a situation that really wasn't I guess a typical situation they didn't say, "Sorry we don't do that", they said, "Leave me with it for a couple of days", and sure enough, right we've been ringing around and we've found somebody that's going to do this and this. And that's impressive, to say the least. I felt you know that's the kind of support it's real support because it's not support by the numbers - this is what we do and anything outside these guidelines, well we don't do that. It would have been very understandable, very typical, very expected kind of that's the way the world works now, "This is what we do and this is what we don't do". They didn't come across in any way, shape or form with that kind of attitude. It was okay, this is a situation. This is what we need to look at. Okay, how do we [do it]? Leave that with me and at each turn they managed to come up with some kind of solution or some suggestion. You know let's try this ... It would seem that they didn't place limits on their time, I know they have to work within guidelines themselves, but they certainly were prepared to look outside the usual. And I'm guessing and I'm pretty sure I would be accurate in saying I would not expect other places to do this. I think, my sense is that that would be pretty unique to this place. I'm sure there would be other places maybe that might go a little bit further than they had to, but I think it would be unlikely that places would go to the extent that Jewish House went to.

It basically boils down to understanding. They get to know you a little bit. As much as they can in a short period of time and they try and understand what your hurdles are and then they certainly in my case helped me to address the hurdles in a very proactive way. They didn't just say, "Here's what you'd have to do". They jumped on board and said, "Okay. What we need to do is this". And they were actively making phone calls. Actively speaking to people, asking what can we do about this; pushing people along.

I know that in the place I'm in at the moment, it's very difficult to get in there ... It's a busy place for a start, but it is also very central. It's in Surry Hills so it is a place that it is not easy to get in especially not on short notice. And I know that there was some polite but persistent pushing pressure from here to say, "Come on. We need to sort this". And without that I think you know it would have been much easier for V..... House to say, "Look, there nothing available right now. Maybe next week". But they [Jewish House] just politely applied the

appropriate amount of encouragement/ pressure and popped me through the door.

When we went in there for the meeting cos you have to... there was no guarantees, but as I say with Jewish House backing they approved me very quickly. So I went to the meeting. I was told at the end of that meeting, "We can't make any promises but it doesn't look like there'll be a problem". The very next day the call came through, "Okay, when do you want to move in?" It was quite interesting because I didn't want to leave here Because everybody here really actually the other thing I should mention in terms of what it feels like to be here, is they're very personal. My son felt it, I felt it. I know that other people that I met here feel it. You felt not like you were in somebody else's place ... and that was a major thing that we actually felt comfortable ... Even when I came over and lived in the main house here for that week or so I was upstairs here, so you would think because the offices and everything are down here and this was the nerve centre you would think that being in such close proximity to the actual administrative side of things that there would be that kind of feeling but that wasn't the case. And when you're upstairs you felt very much like [at home].. They've got a living room section there. I mean you could watch TV if you choose to. We're not TV people. We're internet people but you have to get out on the stairwell when you're upstairs to get the good stuff [connection], but kids are fine with that. They would sit anywhere as long as they've got connection. But there's a little living area. The fridge is massive. Well stocked with the Oz Harvest, fridge, freezer, oven everything. And so you could get up in the morning, make your breakfast as you would normally do in your own home. Off to school, work whatever and then come back and okay there is the after school, go and do your homework. It was an analogue of home really. I don't know how often it occurs in this arena. My guess is that this [Jewish House] is an exception and as little experience as I have in this I'm just absolutely certain that this is not the typical experience that people would have.

They all deserve enormous credit, the staff here on all levels - the support level and just generally. People say good morning to you when they pass you by. They get to know your name. You get to know them by name and it's very much like we're living in a big house with lots of people ... and you know it is sort of a family feeling. I mean you know that it's not, but you allow yourself to believe that we're all in this together and we're all part of the same team so it was great ...

Apparently they do have kids here often, but we didn't have any other kids here when we were here so I didn't have the opportunity to see how other kids adapted here. But I did see my son and his experience with the place we're at now has been radically different from Jewish House ... He felt comfortable to talk to anybody here [Jewish House], in just a causal way you know, "How was your day?" and I know he felt good when he came home from school ... He would walk back from school because he just goes to school here across the road and he would walk back as he would always do, just throw his school bag down, go and make something to eat all very comfortable. Go and get his lap top, straight on to Wi-Fi like and it was almost like home in a very real sense ... It felt very normal and I think that's a strength of the place is that you don't feel like you're destitute ... At the same time you never forget what your actual position is, but you're able to make out that you're sort of okay with that for the moment because you think, "Look, I'm safe". While I'm safe, I have another day to think about my situation and you do feel hope. You don't feel like this is it ... I didn't think this was ever going to happen to me, it is all over, all too big to get back. It is a long slow haul to get back in there but it's possible.

Interviewer: So when you came in, in the morning what would you do? Would you have an appointment?

Loosely formal you know. Like 11 o'clock we agreed on, but it wasn't like you know exactly at 11 o'clock ... I would get myself ready after getting Ralph to school. I would wander in sometimes a little before 11 have a coffee, sit out the back in the sun. Have a cigarette and coffee, occasionally chat with one or other person who was having a similar experience and then they would sort of say, "Come on through now". So yes, there was appointment times, but it was sort of when they got to you ... Obviously you're involved with other programs and that they'd be more time oriented, but the fact that you're coming in here and touching base every day it does keep things real for you because you don't forget that you're in this process. If you were just left to your own devices over there you would be tempted to well you wouldn't be able to forget I guess what you're circumstances were, but you're constantly reminded just by coming in here. This is real. We've got to do this. This needs to be done. There are obligations, commitments all of that, so that kept you aware. And then once that was done you were off and there was your day for yourself again so you could get out and do what you needed to do. That model in my case worked very well because I did feel independent when I was over there. There is a curfew at 10pm and I discussed that with them you know sometimes I'm going to be a little bit later than that but they said look we understand. It's a security building, you have to code yourself in so no doubt I'm certain there'd be some record of your comings and goings simply by the fact that you're pressing the buttons and there's cameras there. I'm just guessing but I'm sure there is some kind of accountability.

Interviewer: So what do you reckon other programs can learn from Jewish House?

I think the true value of this place is the people that work here. It's all about the way they connect. As far as the facility itself goes those things are you know I guess could be easily mimicked. The actual facilities and the system that sort of thing you could say anywhere could learn to do that. It's the intangible stuff here and I don't know how that can be taught or implemented ... Of course all of these things are led from the top you know. If management and the people in the positions of influence in a place have that attitude it will filter down through people and that's what's so obvious here is that it's not just okay, I'm supposed to be treating people with respect, I'm supposed to be friendly. It is my job to be supportive. Now I don't know how you would teach that you know. I don't know that it can be and it really does stem from whatever the top is. I mean I don't know whether the top starts and finishes but I do feel that it's an attitude that is ingrained ... You don't get the feeling here that it's like that because they're obliged to treat people [with respect]. it's not like McDonalds where it's like you know I'm supposed to say, "Do you want more fries with that?" ... They're so natural here. So that's the gold in this place. The mechanisations and the general running of and all of that is wonderful you know and that from an institutional perspective that sort of stuff you can go well you know if you tick these boxes then we can get this place to run just as smoothly, we can mimic this anywhere, we can, but it's the staff. 100% it's everything. This place could be a very humble. It turns out it is a very well-appointed place, but if it was not so well appointed it would still be a good place ...

The accommodation - well in terms of what we had when we initially moved in here which was when we were living at a set of apartments that they've got just over the way there, and so it's sort of like decentralised temporary housing. There is no reception desk when you walk in. There is no other presence in the building. I mean there is in the sense that there is Robert. He looks after anything, maintenance and cleaning and so on and so forth, so there is a presence there but it really isn't a presence. So it's pretty self-contained and it would seem to me that that particular model of getting something like that. It is not very intense in terms of having

staff there and all of that sort of stuff and that you come here as I was doing reporting, so you come in here every day so you are still in contact You are not left to your own devices. If you were doing something not quite right or something like that I mean they do have security there, there's cameras and so on. But I'm pretty sure if you were not doing the right thing it would come to the surface pretty quickly. And so just being somewhat informal sort of place and then just reporting every morning to the place ...

My feeling is that there needs to be more places akin to what Jewish House is doing. That are there for people who aren't quite so needy. Who just need a place to go. Who need a stepping stone, a spring board, need a minute to think, to get something. You're not treated like you have some sort of real challenge, other than a real world challenge. That don't treat you like a loser you know. That accept that you are going to actually move forward and move through ...

Interviewer: In what ways do you think the program at Jewish House could be improved – any ideas, any suggestions?

I really want to help you with that, but other than say look I think they've got it just right ... I'd love to contribute - if they just did this they could be so much better, here's a problem that I could help address, but I can't say anything like that because they have been extraordinary ... So I guess if I was to make a suggestion, it'd be fantastic if the place could get more funding or something like that and get more places. Quite literally expand. Build on this model. Just more availability, more of it, more of what is obviously a very successful and a good sort of system.

Interviewer: What do you think would have happened if Jewish House hadn't been around?

Look I had actually thought that one through and look I have seen some other places and have met now with people who have been through other places. Now there's a chap at St V... House in a similar situation to me only worse cos he's got three kids ... He's been through the more typical experience and he was telling me about other places where they have people there who have drug issues, alcohol issues, mental health issues that you know you can hear through the night there are issues. There are ambulances being called. There are police visiting and he's got these three kids and they're wonderful kids but they are being exposed to all of this. So that would be the more typical experience that people had. As I said, I think I'm I've managed to you know avoid that.

3.3 Interview with client 3

I have to leave the place I was living in ... I lose the house. I used to live in that house 17 years you know and this [having to leave] has given me a lot of problem. I became unbalanced you know and upset because it is so difficult ... I went to Housing because I was already put my name on the list in 2014, yeah. They called back, they say, "Would you like to still live in North Bondi or Bondi because I lived here 20 years. When I came to Australia I start to live here. I don't see me living in another part because I am by myself ... I have just some friends who live here [in the area]. People who give me support for every situation in my life. And they [Housing] said, "Go to Jewish House because they look after the people and that's the area where I come from". One time I talk to Rosana [social worker at Jewish House]. Fortunately she speak Portuguese and it helps me a lot ... When I'm upset I don't speak English because the words not come ... I got personal case worker who looks after me. Nice girl, Fiona. I still talk to Rosana. She translates for my case worker and they [Jewish House] gave me a place for living in Bondi Road ... I lived in Bondi Road [Jewish House accommodation] for I think four weeks. After that they found a place ... Rosana said to me, "I think I have a room for you in North Bondi ... It is nice and private and you can pay \$118 a week" ... I still live there you know ... I live there, nice house, nice lady 85 years she is so ... And you know this Jewish House is helping me a lot. They're helping me for food, for clothing, for dancing (dancing group meets every Wednesday), for whatever.

Interviewer: So when you were staying in Jewish House what type of things would you do? What type of things did you participate in?

I come here every Wednesday for a meeting ... I have a case-worker at Jewish House and she is starting to help me with my problems. I think they can help me have security for housing ... I have them like protection for me you know what I mean. Like if you have some problem ... I come here and they help me.

Interviewer: What do you think is special about Jewish House?

I think the people here are very good staff. They work very well. The people give you attention, give you help. Not only for me. I see other people come here. I see ... the staff, the case-worker help a lot. They help a lot with food, for me, for other people.

And I think the accommodation is very good ... It [the accommodation] was very good you know. No problem, everything very clean, very stable.

It is very comfortable there. You have everything. People for cleaning room; the apartment you live in; they have food two times a week. And every Tuesday, Saturday, a lot of food, too much food. I got fat. Nice food, cakes, chocolate no this is enough for me, but I eat it ... Two months I was there. I say thank you very much. That was nice. They say, "You very nice too. You have to continue your life ... I am depressed too of course after that situation, but my depression I heal it by walking, yoga. I do those things ...

Interviewer: So you feel more balanced now. Do you think Jewish House has helped you regain your health?

Lots ... For me it was big surprise I got a lot of free help.

Interviewer: Do you think they're doing everything right at Jewish House?

I think they do everything right ... Here I come all the time. Any time. I have no problem ... I think Jewish House is more generous for homeless people than other organisations.

Interviewer: What would have happened if you had not come across Jewish House?

If I not found the Jewish House ... I still maybe live in the refuge ... I got so upset. Now I'm well because they found a room for me. Now I do well. I think I start to work, I think I find job ...

Interviewer: So how are you feeling now that you are settled?

I feel so well. I tell you I go for a job after tomorrow. My feeling now is okay, is all right. ... Before I a little bit upset when I come here - start talking, start crying. Now is talking ... I don't know who will be my case worker Rosana or one of the girls but I'm sure they could [continue to] help me a lot ...

Interviewer: So how do you see the future?

In this moment I'm living in new air ... I don't want to be unhappy anymore. I passed that ... My future is so well ... The Jewish House is still helping me.

3.4 Interview with client 4

I was in a family domestic violence went through two of the governments safe houses but they were very small time-frame, I was praying for a miracle as we have two cats as well, so there's myself and my daughter who is nine. And we had our two boys [the cats]. And then praying for a miracle and I arrived at Jewish House after saying I need some good Ju Ju [sic]. ... And we'd come to Bondi and Jewish House and amen good Ju Ju - Jewish House and that has been amazing. So I actually arrived here through the domestic violence line. Had a really good supporter on the phone and she knew that the short-term stuff was not appropriate for Emily and myself anymore and by luck we were drawn here ...

We did go to Housing and they put us in a motel for the night. Our safety was a big thing for Emily and myself and Hosing put us in a women's safe house on the northern beaches for one night and then really west. I would have to call the domestic violence hot line regularly. It wasn't an ideal situations you know. I'm trying to protect my child and in that environment that we were in, these safe houses were just as toxic ... Spoke to a lady on the domestic violence line and she [made a call to Jewish House]. She said, "You know she's a mom. She's doing her best. She needs assistance" ... The next day I got a call at 9 and it has been a blessing. I can't explain it.

The other places were very toxic. They were government run. They weren't clean as such. The people that came in, I understand everyone has a different walk of life and I understand that that's just their coping tools you know. I do understand this. Though I'd already exposed my daughter to so much in our own home life previously that my biggest concern and my biggest wish was for us and for her to feel safe. And just that relaxed that you can breath and not have to look over your shoulder and be antsy because we were very nervous and anything would make us jump. There was just no rest. Always on alert you know, quite tense and as much as I tried to calm myself Emily could feel that ...

Interviewer: So they when you came here, can you tell us like what happened?

So we arrived and they were very attentive which was marvellous. We didn't come with as such belongings, but I did have quite a few bags of bank statements and things that I didn't really want to leave. They did help with the luggage and they were smiling and it was a very warm welcome. Really nice. They didn't rush us ... Once I went through my little bits of paper work and spoke with Rosana the first thing is they made sure we had everything we needed which was basic toiletries because you know it comes down to a hair brush, or brushing your teeth. Even the shower. You know they have a nice shower. We hadn't had a decent shower in two months. We could have a shower but it was different. And that was all just ready for us as such. And then once we hit that bed, I still remember Emily's little face when she lay down and she just looked like that little baby that gets all snuggled in and I saw this big sigh of relief, that's okay. She can relax now. I can relax. We automatically felt safe. Clean, safe, clothed and fed ...

When we first arrived I was quite nervous - antsy, anxious. I was very untrusting and very hungry and I don't just say hungry in the sense of I'm not eating properly. I literally hadn't had a decent meal. I felt dirty, the whole lot. And just it was within the first hour of being here ... had a nice warm food, nutritional food you know and just all that stuff, fantastic. Seeing Emily being accepted and myself accepted and our boys that was big for me. It still is very, very ... I don't know what the word is ... To be honest. It felt like some of the pieces we had lost over time or came undone, it came together, yeah ... In the previous 24 hours before hand you know I had my so called family try to institutionalise myself you know and take my daughter from me ... They had tried everything in their power to make sure I had nothing and made sure of that. That's what I mean when I came here I felt safe and I nearly could have lost everything again 24 hours previously ...

Interviewer: You were in a precarious situation

I was. I wasn't sure where I was going. All I knew was that ... I need to protect Emily and I, I need to live. I needed to breath and I've been able to breath here ... I think being here at Jewish House having that support that they enabled with me was yes I had all these other responsibilities, I'm a mother, I had two little furry pets you know but there was also, I have another daughter who is 17 and sadly she's still with her step-dad's side of the family. With all these other responsibilities what about me, just me as a person. You know, you can be there for everyone else and we do mechanically. But Jewish House I think it was only two days after me arriving, I did one of their groups and [I thought] this girl's got her fire again. This girl's got her willpower back I felt so much better ...

Interviewer: So Jewish House has allowed you to regain your strength?

Correct. I came here on my own ... also as a mother, but literally I like to say on my own because I didn't know where I was going ... I literally had no idea ... t was desperate. I'd gotten on my knees so many times you know. Not to be religious or spiritual, but I was on my knees - "What do I do? I have no idea" ... We were here for two and a half months ... I think the ways that they also approach people when they come into the crisis refuge as well like I said they're very attentive and the food and what not, but it's very important that you have at least a two-day period of rest you know where you really don't need to be thinking and they encourage that. I'm thinking I've got to do this and that but that rest time is really important ... I was so grateful. There were times when I was thinking, "I've really over- stayed. What's my next move? What am I going to do?" It's nice to breath, but now what am I going to do. I know what I want to do, but how do I go out there and do this you know yeah.

Interviewer: So where are you now?

So at the moment I'm in Kingsford. I have been moved into a longer women's refuge for the time being. Casual work, part time work is something that I'm looking for ideally at the moment. It just wasn't there, the money to go into another private rental. But this again comes under trust and Jewish House have been really supportive and encouraging any which way they possibly can. Definitely recommended me to another good place. It's very similar to Jewish House - comfortable, safe.

Interviewer: So could you tell me a bit about the program at Jewish House?

So the programs here are as such, I love them, just get that clear, I love them. I literally could thrive off three of these a week. Not only are the programs where you're speaking with the support worker or your case worker, but the encouragement, the movement groups that are here on a Wednesday, I did that for the first week that I was here. It's good to have the encouragement and the mindfulness cos I find it's really important for me personally and the way that they bring these topics and subjects to the group with no judgement, open hearts, a lot of compassion. They hear you out. They're not judging you and you can freely speak and then you realise well done, or I could really use that ... So the groups here I find are very supportive and encouraging. I still go to them. I'm still here on a Wednesday ... It doesn't have to be a group for domestic violence, all walks. Which I think is great because I think under the label Jewish House as such, people assume that it is a Jewish House literally. It's not like that at all. It's just Jewish arms I like to say ... They're all walks of life ... They don't have to come from domestic violence. They could just be an alcoholic or narcotic problem or it could be a fulltime worker and you could still come to the groups. Find some information you know. Something useful to help you ...

Interviewer: Are there individual sessions?

I thank Kayla for that. When I first arrived she was a student, ... but I really felt connected with Kayla and she really helped. So I found and was encouraged with Rosana and other support workers to utilise that. So my one on ones would be to talk to the student counsellor, support worker, social worker, and I love to talk to Rosana as well. So that's my one on ones yeah ... They're informal. Probably get them at the spur of the moment or ask them if they have time but I am having formal one on one ones with the psychologist and again thank you for Jewish House for that.

Interviewer: So what would you do day to day?

I had Emily here and going through this process I needed her to have some sort of core stability you know cos we'd gone from everything we'd known, so stability was a big thing. Once we had rested and I think the goal plan was very clear for everybody to see, enrolling her in school was my next big thing. But before we got her just into school it was wake up and let's go and get a bit of support I need to go to appointments, a doctor appointment or just chase some of the things that we were leaving behind you know cos it's never just completely let it go. Yes, you physically move from all this, but you've still got a few things you need to follow up with. Once she was in school that was really amazing. Jewish House they really helped me there .. Yeah, three big pieces came together, can't see my shoulders drop but it was amazing when she went to the school there. I had Rosanna who came with me [to the school]. It's a bit of a complicated case so it was really nice to have their support. I literally had no financials when I came here. And humbly Jewish House had a little bit of loot there to help with her uniforms to get her into the school.

I think that also they helped with a little bit of acceptance and that so once she went to school I was able to focus on me ... I kind of didn't really have time to really look at me as such you know ,so I really needed to look more at me and focus you know. Get a job and then something will come up with me or something will happen and I'm not ready for this because when you've been so somewhat nervous and scared literally for your life and your child's life, when you are able to breathe again, coming out to the world was really scary for me again. So I was blossoming, but then all of a sudden I'd clam and then okay I need to talk to somebody cos I need to push through this. Tania you can push through this and you know it took several weeks, but with Jewish House support and service I was able to and here I am facing the world, looking for jobs and Emily is happy, really happy. She loves the school. I say, "Do you love school?" "Love school". And she has adapted to all these changes herself really well. It has been quite amazing and as just a parent and observing her going through this cos you've always got this, what I used to call guilt, but it's not actual guilt cos I'm not the one who put us in this. I feel this guilt like this beautiful little human going through all these changes and what not and then seeing her at school, walking in smiling, coming out smiling and then hearing great feedback from her teachers. Yeah, that has been amazing ...

Interviewer: So by the time you left Jewish House I should imagine you felt a different person?

I felt like myself after around about a week here. After the three weeks to a month wow yeah that was me definitely.

Interviewer: So, would you say the program is very successful?

Yes, definitely. I have mentioned that to some other women. I think the programs' very successful.

Interviewer: So what would you say is the essence of why it is so successful?

I think for me personally in my opinion, it's not clinical. It [Jewish House] doesn't come across as clinical okay. It doesn't come across as clinical ... It's coming across vey mind, body, soul ... Even though it is clinical it's not coming out to the people as such so you're getting the advice and support yes clinically but it's not in a very formal fashion and there's a warmth in the group. Just in the room in itself there is an energy you feel and people that are very new and I have seen some come into the group and I want to give you a hug cos I know how you're feeling right now. You just see how they can drop their shoulders somewhat and breathe a little bit and they always say the energy in this room is amazing and they would be people that wouldn't normally speak of this ... I'm all for compassion. Compassion goes a long way. Kindness and compassion you know. It really does. I know they go hand in hand but those two for me personally go along way and Jewish House have the kindness and the compassion and the patience. I'm sure I've tested their patience at times you know. It goes hand in hand.

You have to have the right dynamic and I find that they do work as a team. Yeah, definitely the staff you know. There's not been one that I can say, "No, I don't trust you" or where I don't feel comfortable ... I believe they've definitely got it right with the staff even the students that come here. So when I first arrived Sasha and Gail were really amazing and we knew that they were going to change at some point ... And Rosanna started saying we're getting new ones and I'm saying, no. Then we've got two beautiful ones I find that they also have a nice presence about them as well. Like they are being clinical this is the whole job you know it is a clinical experience but at the same time they're all connected. There's no patronising at all. You don't get looked down on because of the way you've come into Jewish House ... and that's where the compassionate side comes in to the play. You're putting your service out

there to help people from whatever walk of life, whether it be domestic violence, it could just be drugs and alcohol or what not. So I think it's vital that you do have the compassion and are not looked down on.

Interviewer: So do you think there is any way the program could be improved?

I have been thinking about this – is there some way that I feel it could be improved. And I'm going to say, absolutely not. I don't see for myself personally from my experience because I honestly believe from what I came from to here, this is the way it should be for people if they go through those previous experiences that Emily and I went through. I can see how people remain homeless. They come in and then they go back and they're homeless again. You just think this is no better than what I'm leaving previously. Whereas here you know it completely different. No definitely, I can't think of any sort of improvement. I honestly am not just saying that. That's just how I feel about it ...

Interviewer: So what do you think other organisations can learn from Jewish House?

Use their money wisely. Invest in some decent beds. At the beginning we were so anxious and just to feel safe and having a really decent bed and newish pillow, that's an amazing difference. We felt like we hadn't slept for a year ... And I think also the support also from the other organisations ... You've got Oz Harvest. They come and donate some food ... Branching out and reaching and asking for the community's support is a big thing cos there is a stigma behind homelessness. It's a horrible label, but everything needs a label doesn't it. So you know invest in some good beds, branch out and get the community really involved helping these people cos 9 out of 10 of us have got nothing but ourselves you know. We're starting all over again. We are asking for your help you know ... And after seeing different organisations and this one - very family oriented and community networked ...

I do know the symbolism behind the whole comfort zone of having a decent mattress and pillow ... In another place ... we used the jumpers we had as a pillow and this was a refurbished establishment that we were staying in.

Also the accommodation ... When we arrived here in Jewish House, okay, we walk in, it has just been freshly painted – wow you weren't walking into a room that was unwelcoming. It looked hygienic. Not only did it look, but it felt it you know. So we look at the beds was the first thing my daughter and I did. And once we sort of liked the bed and looked around a bit and saw there's a fan. It was winter, but we used it.

There was a heater in the living room, the family room and in the main area of the kitchen, but the rooms didn't get cold as such. I think it came down probably to the insulation in our room . We got quite fortunate we had a little ensuite.

For me personally it was a massive sigh of relief [not having to share] cos I was feeling quite enclosed. I was feeling a bit claustrophobic by all the people always around and just invading my space all the time that we were able to breath. Okay, we could go into our room and have our shower ... Close the door if we need time out. We were able to do that like if we wanted to leave our hairbrush there we could ... Wherever Emily and I are, [we say top ourselves], okay, so this is our home for now. So we try and make it as cosy and comfortable and we would try and be out of this room and go into the family living area upstairs and play board games, card games. I found it really important to keep that side of things going. Not just be in your room and it's just not healthy. For me, I feel it is not healthy just to be hibernating you know ... And over a few days we had other residents that were here and they'd come in and chat with us

and want to play games with us and I'd encourage it, or we'd cook. So when it came to the services of the room as accommodation and just the living area was comfortable you know you could sit in the lounge and ... it was nice you know. You could sit in there and feel – Yeah, I am homeless. I am short-term, but at the same time this is more my thing. I'm not feeling dirty or looking around every five seconds.

Emily didn't want to leave. I look at Jewish House like a second family now. I know I'm probably overstepping maybe by saying this but I actually feel ... I do honestly feel that this is some of my family. Emily really made progress. "Hey, I'm so happy here. Hey, I like this". She's so full of life and she really did blossom when she was here you know ... It definitely helped [the healing process]. It really did. I'm very lucky with her. We got lucky

Now we're in a women's refuge, but we're not able to take the boys [the cats]. Now Jewish House is the only refuge in NSW that accommodates [animals] other family members cos they are family members ... Non-negotiable and thankfully Jewish House is still being quite patient with us with this ... They [the cats] are so happy here ... They've become so resilient and I really have Jewish House to thank for that. I really do and one day I will be able to give back just as much.

Interviewer: So what's the plan now?

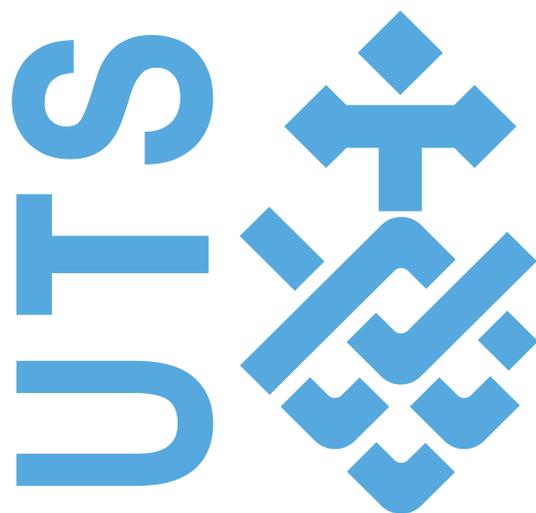
So my plan hasn't changed. From the moment I arrived I've had a clear vision and my plan has always been we are two steps into the three ... So, the first step was stability for Emily for school. Got that and maintaining that ... The second was to get myself right. So I am able to have my self-confidence to put myself back out to society that was step two. Still I'm 96/97% there ... and then it was employment – look this is really big ... So I need employment because there is that judgement, stigmatisation, single mum unemployed plus it is just not affordable ... So I had to work through these issues within myself to be able to get a job ... I've always been positive even through the darkest times. There was something stopping me from interacting as such and now you're not going to be able to stop me ... Someone will take a chance and I'll be able to be hired in a job ... They [Jewish House] helped me put together the resume they have given me a few ideas where to look ... And you know when it comes the time to look for a property [private rental] I know that Jewish House will lend some support there in helping me.

There's no getting rid of me ... Just because I'm not living here any more and thankfully I pretty much am still here cos I come every day to see my boys [the cats]. Their services are still available to me you know... So Rosanna and the support workers and every other member that I have formed a personal relationship here it's not over you know. We're still here to support you ... It's good because they are my only support at the moment ... They're my support. My little family. Another kind of little family. I don't have that support from the other family, friends.

Interviewer: what do you think other programs can learn from Jewish House?

One be clinical, but not clinical. So don't make it so formally clinically cause you really get a lot more people who will open up and be honest or real with you when you are able to somewhat relate or put an experience to it. So I think other programs also be making it light and fun. That is a biggie. When Jewish House put on the family fun day over at Wesley Park that was big for me personally, but it was a need and I was like geez that's clever because we really need to get out and have fun and get into society as such and you know I think other programs could do that ... Make it a bit light, fun welcoming cos really that's what it comes

down to and I realise that through this that even where we are now they are doing these fun experiences with the other mums. You know we all need it. Life is so serious ... You can be serious without it needing to be so uptight about it. Does this make sense? They approach it gently. They do have a gentleness. I think that's the crucial thing. Comes back down to the gentleness, yeah.



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