

MyHome in Canberra - evaluation proposal

Our approach to evaluation is guided by a suggestion included in the Cohort Study commissioned by the Community Services Directorate in 2018:

The community-based Reference Group which assisted the study team suggested trialling models, showcasing those that are successful, and taking a whole-of-government perspective on costs and services.

We have also surveyed the available studies of the benefits and costs of recent programs, in particular the NSW Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative, which have provided combinations of housing and support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through persistent mental illness.

Subject to advice from others more expert in this field, we envisage that the best way to evaluate the MyHome project would be through:

- a) an initial, baseline survey of prospective residents, focused on their physical and mental health and personal circumstances, which would be kept separate from their applying for residence but administered as soon as possible after acceptance of applications;
- b) ensuring that MyHome's tenancy committee and the service provider contracted to support MyHome residents keep records as a basis for analysing the duration of residencies and residents' notified use of ACT Government and community services;
- c) if possible, tracking individual residents in data kept by ACT Government agencies and ACT Police, especially records of their mental-health hospital admissions, their calls on emergency services and any figuring in the justice system; and
- d) follow-up surveys of residents after one year, two years and five years of living at MyHome, covering their physical and mental health, social contact with family and friends, and participation in community activities including engagement in work, education and training.

As noted above, we assume an evaluation would be best conducted by a team independent from the MyHome Board, its tenancy committee and the service provider. This would require us to obtain additional funding specifically for the evaluation, and shortly after the ACT Government decides to go ahead with the MyHome project to contract an evaluation team, seek approval for the evaluation approach in terms of ethical standards, and establish a method of seeking consent from prospective residents for use of information about them in the evaluation.

Ideally, the evaluation would include a control group who would have characteristics similar to those of prospective residents and would be surveyed and tracked similarly through the period of the evaluation. However, the practicality and affordability of this remain to be assessed.

In relation to (c) above, we note that the Cohort Study team referred in August 2018 to data linkage in the ACT as an opportunity, rather than as a fact or a plan.