

Abstract title: Children, Policy and Cultural shifts in homelessness services in South Australia

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In 2008, with the aid of increased State and Commonwealth funds, Housing SA led the strategic reform of the homelessness sector in South Australia. Sector reforms were implemented in 2010. Reforms included the establishment of 75 specialist homelessness services across the state.

A fundamental principle of the South Australian Implementation Plan is that children who attend homelessness services will be recognised as clients in their own right. This requires assessment and case management for every child presenting with an adult at a homelessness service or domestic/Aboriginal family violence service in the state. There is a wealth of literature that identifies poor physical and mental health, limited educational engagement and criminality at high rates in this population of children. These children and their families are often described as “point-end” or “complex” are often disengaged from mainstream services including health and education; they fall through the gaps.

This presentation provides an outline of research and educational interventions aimed at addressing the policy changes and sector reforms through an internal cultural practice shift in frontline homelessness services; to overcome structural and systemic barriers and promote opportunities for children in homeless families.