

# Co-design of a Youth-led Housing Hub: Developing a Unique and Scalable Housing Model for Youth Living on Their Own in Durham

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	Page 1
1. Executive Summary .....	Page 2
2. Introduction .....	Page 8
3. Research Methods and Insights .....	Page 12
3.1 Online Survey of Trusted Youth in Durham Region .....	Page 14
3.2 Service Provider Interviews .....	Page 14
3.3 Co-Design and Consensus Building Sessions .....	Page 18
3.4 Steering Committee Return on Investment .....	Page 22
3.5 Youth Engagement in Research .....	Page 24
4. Implications for Policy and Practice .....	Page 29
5. COVID 19 Considerations .....	Page 35
6. Conclusion .....	Page 36
7. Appendices .....	Page 37
8. References .....	Page 45

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# 1. Executive Summary

Concerned community service providers in Durham Region identified a need for individualized and specialized supports for a specific group of youth particularly vulnerable to homelessness. This group is comprised of 16 and 17-year olds who live on their own, independent of their families and collect social assistance. They are known as “Trusted Youth” (TY) because their Ontario Works (OW) assistance must be paid via an adult or community agency acting as a “trustee” on their behalf. That adult or agency is responsible for dispensing the youth’s OW funds as appropriate. TY represent a unique and particularly vulnerable population. They live alone without the opportunity to approach independence in a typically gradual and supported manner. As well, they lack the suitable role models and guidance that would generally be provided in an intact family setting.

A formal research study began in January of 2018 and undertook the following goals:

1. Generate new knowledge about how the social service system can best meet the needs of this unique population of youth;
2. Identify best practices for the engagement of youth in participatory action research;
3. Create an evidence-based and co-designed alternative housing hub model that can be used as a best practice model for supporting precariously housed youth; and
4. Deliver policy and practice recommendations for supporting youth living on their own.

## Study Methodology

Between November 2018 and April 2019 all TY in the service system were requested by their OW caseworker or their youth outreach/trustee to complete an anonymous online survey. Out of 105 TY in Durham Region at that time, 43 youth completed the online survey (41%). Youth were sent a link to the survey and completed it anonymously and on their own time. The survey asked 33 questions (Appendix A) related to demographics and also included a Likert scale on the unique experiences of being a TY. Survey responses were statistically analyzed by survey software.

30  
SERVICES PROVIDERS  
WERE INTERVIEWED  
22 AGENCIES

105  
TRUSTED YOUTH IN  
DURHAM REGION

41%  
OF TRUSTED YOUTH  
COMPLETED AN  
ANONYMOUS SURVEY

In January 2019, 30 service providers from 22 different agencies were asked the same 10 questions developed by the research steering committee in a semi-structured interview format (Appendix B). Of the 30 service providers interviewed, 22 were in front line service positions and 8 were in management. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed and subsequently uploaded into Nvivo 12 software where they were coded for themes. Insights and themes generated by the data analysis subcommittee were validated by the larger research steering committee which included youth members and service providers who interact with these youth and/or youth who are precariously housed.

A further key element of this participatory action research study was to engage youth in the development and design of a unique housing hub model. We intended on actively listening to the voices of youth and between September and December 2019 three co-design sessions were held in the community which included the research steering committee, youth services providers and TY. A fourth consensus building session was held

virtually in May 2020. The purpose of these sessions was to use insights gleaned from the survey of the TY and the service provider interviews to co-design a youth housing hub model for youth in the Durham Region. During the sessions youth shared their experiences of being youth living on their own and expressed their needs. These sessions led to the co-design of a youth housing hub model for precariously housed youth in the Durham Region (Appendix D and E).

At the end of the project, steering committee members were asked to share their reflections on the considerable investment of time and energy given to this project and to capture value generated for themselves or their agencies. Themes were manually coded and compared.

Throughout this 2-year project TY were asked to keep a journal of their experiences and thoughts about participating on the steering committee. During an informal interview with a student research assistant, they shared their experiences of being a part of the project.

“...it seems obvious when you think about it that you should include those people [service users] in trying to design the services to make sure that it’s something actually useful and valuable for them, but it isn’t the way that it often actually works.”

“To have those youth actually involved in the process and to be able to give their feedback in what they’re wanting was really great for me and my organization, and especially for the youth that I serve.”

## Key Findings



The anonymous online survey pointed to high levels of food insecurity, with over half of the TY stating that they had to skip meals to make ends meet.



TY told us that they are struggling with high levels of both physical and mental health concerns, and that these concerns are largely untreated and unresolved.



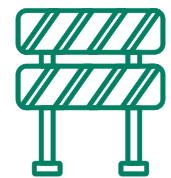
Within one year multiple moves were the norm with some youth moving as many as 4 or 5 times.



The majority of TY are attending school (86%) while living on their own and most feel on track to graduate.



Youth told us they feel supported by their dedicated Ontario Works caseworker. This dedicated OW caseworker for TY was a service change made to the system just prior to the start of this project.



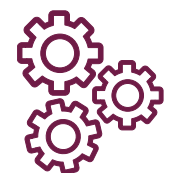
Waitlists for mental health support, agency time constraints, lack of funding or resources and service delivery models that do not match the developmental stages or real-life circumstances of youth were cited as barriers to effectively supporting youth.



Housing challenges in the form of lack of access to safe, affordable housing, navigating the complex process of finding housing and discrimination by landlords were all cited as often insurmountable challenges for TY.



Steering committee members indicated that the co-production experience increased their willingness to approach service planning through a co-production lens by being open to new ideas and unexpected solutions. They committed to allowing service users to challenge the assumptions that may exist with service providers.



TY realized many benefits from their involvement in participatory action research including the development of new skills, improved knowledge of the service system and an increased sense of personal competency and possibilities for the future.

## Implications for Policy and Practice

### 1 Bundle services for youth by creating school hubs

Eighty-six percent of TY surveyed were attending school and felt some kind of support and connection there. Co-locating other services with schools as hubs, such as mental health counselling, primary health care, life skills coaching and vocational and employment supports, as well as access to food would create a sense of wraparound support for TY.

### Create drop-in style supports 2

A high number of TY reported struggling with unresolved mental health and physical health problems. Given their developmental stage, youth need supports that are flexible and available when needed, without any complex referral and wait list process. The research supports a drop-in style approach would work best for youth where they can access support at the moment when it is needed.

### 3 Intervene with landlords on behalf of youth

Youth need an adult to intervene on their behalf to guide interactions with landlords, intervene in disputes, and to alleviate landlord concerns about renting to youth. Among the recommendations is to institute a tenant insurance program so landlords feel protected and/or a funding incentive to landlords who rent to youth.

### A consistent adult to help navigate the service system 4

Both youth and youth service providers told us that the youth service system is complex and difficult to navigate. A recommendation is to have one consistent adult to assist with this navigation, such as a dedicated OW caseworker or trustee. Durham Region Ontario Works has actioned this change just prior to onset of this project and has dedicated specific case workers to TY and revised the application process for youth. These changes have contributed to more consistent engagement with youth clients, their trustees and community service providers, and to increasing the number of TY graduating high school and exiting Ontario Works to enroll in post-secondary institutions.

### 5 Flexibility around communication options

Some service providers indicated that their agency policies prevented them from communicating with youth in non-traditional ways such as texting, What's App, or Facebook. Because TY often feel lonely and disconnected, finding a way to communicate with them in a way that is comfortable and easy for them is of utmost importance. Service providers need the flexibility to communicate with youth in the same way that youth communicate with each other.

## Access to free transportation 6

Although many service providers indicated that access to free bus passes was part of the support their agency or institution could provide, findings indicated that in practice access to free transportation continues to be a significant barrier for youth to attend appointments or even school. It is recommended that transportation should continue to be a standard part of the assistance provided to TY, and alternative ways to provide that support, such as purchased Presto cards, would better ensure their transportation needs are being met.

## 7 Affordable, safe, transitional housing options

Lack of safe and affordable housing options was for TY an ongoing stress and led, for some youth, to multiple moves and periods of homelessness. To prevent the onset of chronic homelessness, and better prepare trustee youth for independence, a transitional supportive housing hub model is recommended, such as the one co-designed with youth during this project where youth have their own apartment but the ability to access guidance, support, and schooling within the hub, see Appendix D and E for a full description. As a shorter-term solution while a housing hub is developed, a housing allowance supplement for TY is recommended. A rent supplement would increase the possibility that youth could find housing that felt safe and secure and would reduce the instability of multiple moves.

## Process for changing schools without parental consent 8

Youth indicated that one of the most difficult issues they had to manage when they moved out on their own was changing schools if they found housing in a new school district. TY are independent from their parents, and as such need more flexibility and an accessible, consistent process to access the public school system. The research has shown that schools are a vital point of connection for TY.

## 9 Change the mindset from youth housing to transition to independence

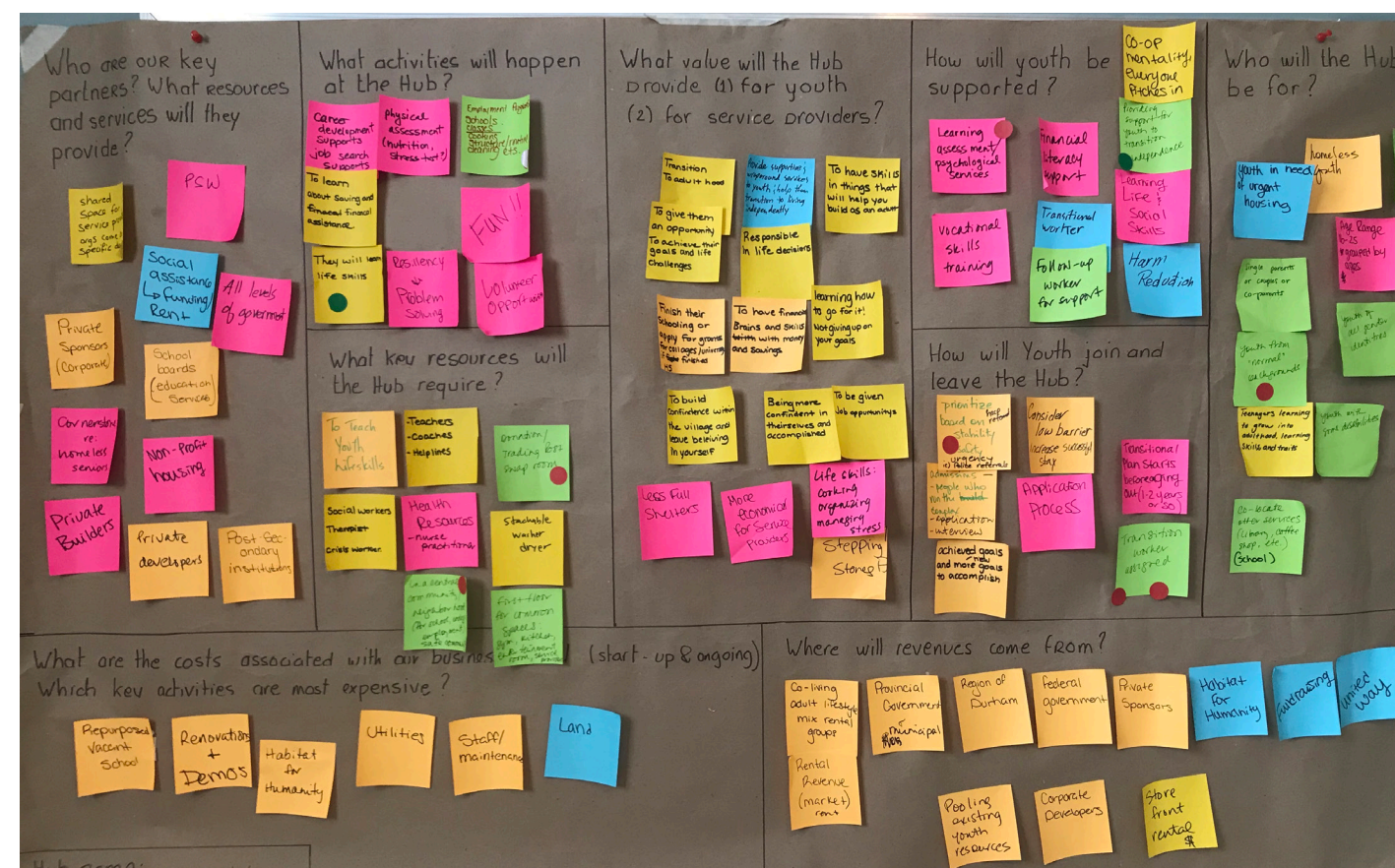
This project culminated in an understanding that securing housing for youth is a completely different focus than supporting youth to transition successfully to independence. There is a tension in the service system between what can be provided quickly for youth and what youth are saying they want/need. Youth repeatedly identified their own life skills deficits and their need for guidance as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. Any service with a focus on youth homelessness needs to have this transition embedded at its core.

## Include youth in the development of youth services 10

Involving youth in a co-production approach, rather than a consultative approach, in the design of youth services ensures that services being developed meet the true needs of youth. Youth benefit in a myriad of ways when fully involved in service design. Specifically, engagement early in the research process and throughout builds the youths' confidence and opens their eyes to possibilities for themselves they hadn't previously considered.

## Conclusion

This 2-year participatory action research project explored the experiences of TY in the Durham Region service system from both their perspectives and the perspectives of service providers. Using a co-production approach, TY were involved every step of the way on equal footing with service providers and researchers and were encouraged to ask the questions and interpret the answers. In the final phase of the project, TY and service providers spent four sessions working together to co-design a supportive housing hub model for youth. This model was fully explored in terms of its projected costs, risks and benefits in a comprehensive feasibility report. It is hoped that the insights and recommendations developed as a result of the research will help inform service design and service delivery in Durham Region, in the province of Ontario and across Canada on behalf of the youth living on their own, and that this project will be the catalyst to brighter futures for TY.



## 2. Introduction

According to a national three-year research project entitled Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road to Solutions, for youth to achieve independent living they require supportive housing that is youth focused and provides stability, access to services and supports, as well as access to education and training (Raising the Roof, 2009). We have learned that “the longer youth remain homeless, the worse their health and life chances become” (Raising the Roof, 2009).

In fact, in Canada, 62% of homeless youth have dropped out of school, 71% are or have been involved with the criminal justice system, and 73% are not employed (Raising the Roof, 2009). Concerned community service providers in Durham Region identified a need for individualized and specialized supports for a specific group of youth vulnerable to homelessness. This group is comprised of 16 and 17-year olds who live on their own, independent of their families and collect social assistance. They are known as “trusteed youth” (TY) because their Ontario Works (OW) assistance must be paid via an adult or community agency acting as a “trustee” on their behalf. That adult or agency is responsible for dispensing the youth’s OW funds as appropriate. These youth represent a unique and particularly vulnerable population. They live alone without the opportunity to approach independence in a typically gradual and supported manner. As well, they lack the suitable role models and guidance that would generally be provided in an intact family setting.

In a preliminary phase, community agencies involved in the work of supporting these youth and TY participated in two focus groups. They actively listened to what the system looked like from the youth’s perspective, and identified what’s working and what’s not, as well as what would make a difference in the youth’s lives. TY were engaged

in open conversations where they shared their “lived experience” and revealed that the most enduring experience of being a TY was loneliness, hopelessness and social isolation. The TY lacked a supportive family and community to help guide them toward independence. In these focus groups, the TY in Durham Region suggested solutions to the challenges they face. They explained that housing insecurity was at the forefront of their challenges on a daily basis in order to create a stable life for themselves. Their vision for the future was focused on a supported “housing hub” where youth could live in a community of other youth who care about each other. They saw this hub having on-site counselling, on-site schooling, a community garden, separate bedrooms and a common living space. More importantly, they saw it as a kind of the creation of a family, managed by the youth who live there, because “kids listen to kids”.

The formal research study began in January of 2018 with the support of funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through the Community and College Social Innovation Fund. Approval for the project was granted in October 2018 by the Durham College Research Ethics Board (REB), application number 168-1819.

**53%**  
OF TY FEEL  
SUPPORTED AT SCHOOL

**OVER HALF**  
OF TY HAVE SKIPPED MEALS  
BECAUSE THEY  
CAN'T AFFORD FOOD

**41%**  
OF TY DO NOT FEEL  
SENSE OF BELONGING

This two-year study was undertaken with the following goals:

1. Generate new knowledge about how the social service system can best meet the needs of this unique population of youth;
2. Identify best practices for the engagement of youth in participatory action research;
3. Create an evidence-based and co-designed alternative housing hub model that can be used as a best practice model for supporting precariously housed youth; and
4. Deliver policy and practice recommendations for supporting youth living on their own.

This project aims to be an early stage intervention, or primary prevention for reducing the incidence of chronic homelessness that could begin in adolescence, and to create this intervention through a co-production approach. The project draws on the principles of participatory action research, by involving youth on equal footing with researchers and community partners to gather data, review data and use this evidence to co-design a supportive housing hub model for precariously housed youth in the Durham

Region. Youth participation in program and service development is key to youth feeling a sense of equal power and to making changes in communities (Christens & Dolan, 2011). The first of its kind with this population of vulnerable youth, this project seeks to be a catalyst to overturn the traditional roles of service providers and service users and introduce an innovative service model to Durham Region.

A mixed methods design was used to collect data throughout the 2-year project which included:

1. Anonymous online survey of TY;
2. Semi-structured interviews with 30 youth services providers across the Durham Region;
3. A focus group with service providers involved in the research steering committee;
4. Reflections gleaned from an interview with each youth involved in the project.


Based on the data collected and using a co-production approach, the work continued with youth and community service providers to co-design a supportive youth housing hub model for Durham Region.

“To have those youth actually involved in the process and to be able to give their feedback in what they’re wanting was really great for me and my organization, and especially for the youth that I serve.”

# The Journey of a Trusteed Youth

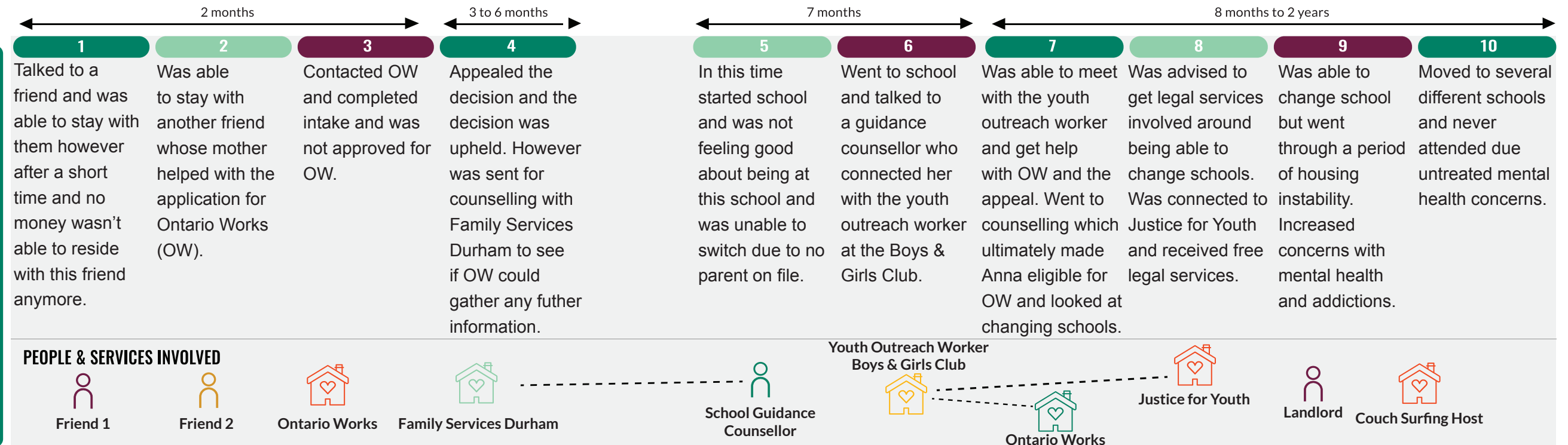

These TY journeys were developed in collaboration with TY on the steering committee and represent the experiences common to the TY journey in the current social services system in Durham Region.

Quotes from youth involved in this project are used throughout this report to help illustrate the experience of the TY. Some quotes are extracted from the housing hub co-design sessions where the youth wrote down their experiences on sticky notes.



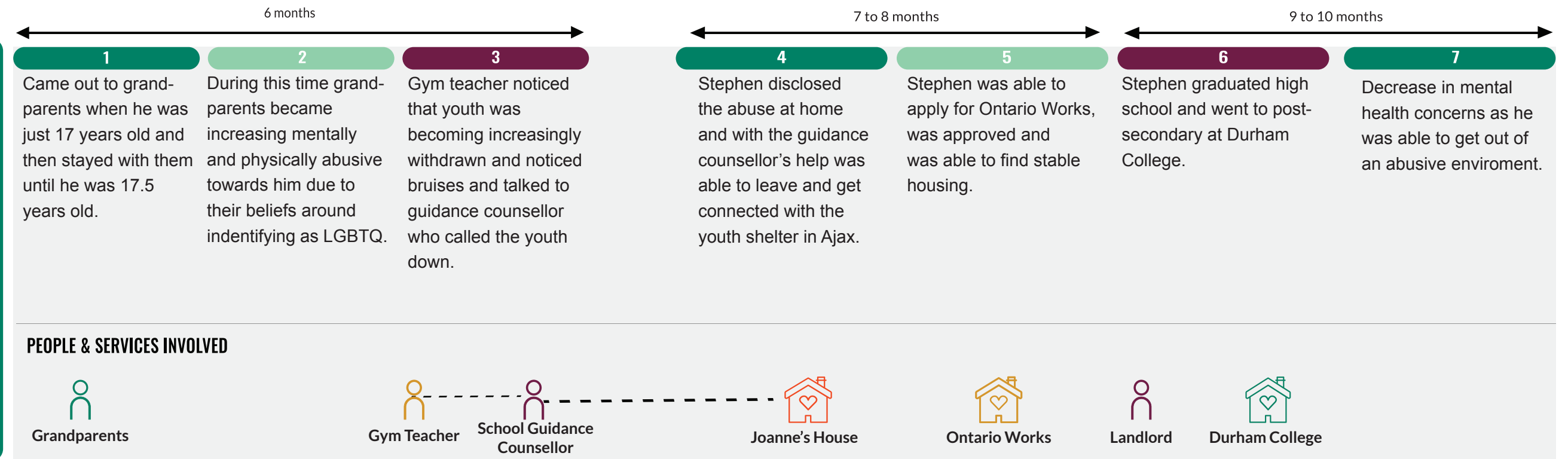
**ANNA**  
 PRONOUN: SHE/HER  
 16 YEARS OLD CAUCASIAN  
 IDENTIFIES FEMALE AND BI-SEXUAL

Anna was kicked out of her family home when she was 16 after a fight with her mom and dad.

**STEPHEN**  
 PRONOUN: HE/HIM  
 17 YEARS OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN  
 IDENTIFIES MALE AND GAY

Lived with grandparents as his parents sent him to Canada from his birth country for a "better" life. Parents still residing in birth country. Left home at 17.5 Y.O. to get out of unsafe environment, due to his sexual identity.



# 3. Research Methods

## 3.1 Online Survey of Trusteed Youth in Durham Region

All TY in the Durham Region were invited to complete a voluntary, anonymous online survey that asked 33 questions (see Appendix A). Surveys were completed independently between November 2018 and April 2019. Youth were recruited to participate in the survey by their TY caseworker at OW and their youth outreach/trustee worker. A \$25 gift card was provided to all TY on the OW caseload as encouragement to complete the survey, however the card was provided whether or not the youth followed through with completion of the survey. Youth were given a link to the survey by their caseworker and /or trustee and they completed the survey at their own convenience. Of the total 105 TY in Durham Region at that time, 43 youth completed the online survey for a 41% response rate. Survey responses were statistically analyzed by survey software.

We were interested in knowing the youths':

- Demographics
- Housing history
- Unique experience of living on their own

### Limitations of the Survey

Due to our recruitment methods and response rate, findings from this survey are not necessarily representative of all TY in the Durham Region. Volunteer bias is a possible limitation of this survey, as it is possible that the youth whose lives are less stable may not have followed through on completion of the survey. Because youth were recruited to the study by their caseworker, it is possible that more youth who have positive relationships with their caseworker completed the study.

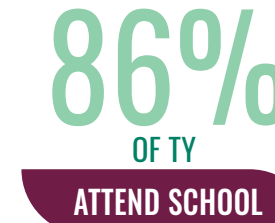
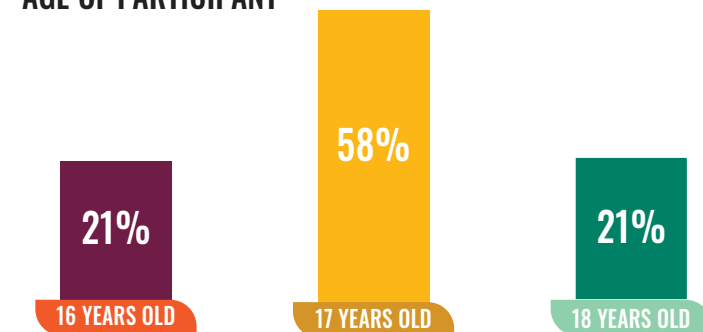
Though the survey questions were designed by the 18-member research steering committee of youth services providers across the Durham Region, the youth members of our research steering committee were not a part of the development of the questions as due to the ethics process they

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



were not yet recruited to the steering committee. Youth members provided feedback that they would have asked different questions to get a more complete understanding of the experience of the trustee youth. It would be beneficial to repeat a similar survey and work with youth to design the questions after a fulsome discussion about what information is hoped to be collected through the survey.

### AGE OF PARTICIPANT



### Insights

The anonymous online survey indicated high levels of food insecurity exist, with over half of the TY stating they had to skip meals to make ends meet. The financial support provided to TY through OW is not enough to meet their basic needs. In their 2015 Canadian study Pickett, Michaelson, & Davison found going to bed hungry has a strong correlation with poor physical and emotional health for children. Other studies indicated that in adolescence, lack of sufficient caloric intake can lead to ongoing health problems (Molcho, Gabhainn, Kelly, Friel, & Kelleher, 2007). TY stated that they are struggling with high levels of both physical and mental health issues, and that these concerns are largely untreated and unresolved. Hunger due to a lack of financial resources exacerbates these unresolved health issues.

Another striking factor was that multiple moves, as many as four to five, within a one-year time period proved to be the norm. Despite these challenges, the majority of TY were attending school (86%)

while living on their own. It is clear that a school connection is key to supporting TY, and using schools as supportive hubs is important to help youth feel connected and hopeful about their futures.

### Number of moves since leaving family home



Youth felt supported by their dedicated OW caseworker. This was a change made to the service system supporting TY that occurred just prior to the onset of this project. In the Durham Region there are now two OW caseworkers who support all of the TY. A caring, consistent adult to help guide and navigate the complex service system makes a difference for TY.

\$ not enough to cover rent. (OW)

Focus on money (lack of) makes it hard to focus on other things

Want to belong somewhere



## 3.2 Service Provider Interviews

Experiences related by the service providers in Durham who support and interact with TY was an integral part of this project. Steering committee members worked together to create a list of service providers in the Durham Region who would typically interact with TY. The committee members were conscious of being inclusive of services throughout the geography of the region, hearing from both front line and management level staff and engaging with providers from a wide range of service categories including; housing/shelter, employment, food bank/food security, LGBTQ2S, counselling services, mental health crisis services, abuse services including domestic violence, child welfare, legal services, primary health and education.

TY on the research steering committee were involved in creating this list and were helpful in identifying service providers who may otherwise not have been considered by adult committee members.

Service providers were recruited for an interview through a standard email correspondence from the principal investigator, which included a description of the research project. Participants were advised a research assistant would contact them within a few weeks of the email to coordinate an interview. Invitees were assured that their participation in the interviews was strictly voluntary and for various reasons some participants declined to be interviewed. From the list of 38 service providers contacted for a meeting, 30 service providers (79%) from 22 separate agencies were interviewed. Of the service providers who were interviewed, eight held a position in management and 22 were in front line positions.

Interviews began in January 2019 and ended in June 2019. Both the principal investigator and a research assistant conducted semi-structured interviews, either over the phone or in person. Participants were all asked the same 10 questions (Appendix B) with some variation in each interview to allow for follow up discussions. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by two



research assistants. Transcriptions were uploaded into Nvivo 12 software and coded for themes developed by the data analysis subcommittee of the research steering committee. The initial code book was created by the four-person subcommittee after reading through several transcripts. Transcripts were coded through discussions held by the subcommittee and/or coded individually and then re-coded by one other subcommittee member for reliability. The codebook and themes were created primarily through an inductive reasoning process, moving from specific observations to broad generalizations. The themes were extracted from the data and then refined and validated by others coding the same transcripts. Insights and themes generated by the data analysis subcommittee were validated by the larger research steering committee which included TY members and service providers who interact with TY and/or youth who are precariously housed.

### Agencies who participated in interviews:

- Boys and Girls Club of Durham
- Brock Community Health Centre
- Carea
- Community Development Council Durham
- Canadian Mental Health Association Durham
- Cornerstone
- Durham Alternative Secondary School
- Durham District Catholic School Board
- Durham Children's Aid Society
- Durham District School Board
- Durham Mental Health Services
- Durham Regional Police Services
- Durham Region Welcome Centre and Immigrant Services
- Family Services Durham
- Joanne's House
- John Howard Society
- North House
- Ontario Shores
- PFLAG
- Region of Durham Income and Employment Support
- Region of Durham Social Services
- The Refuge

## Study Limitations

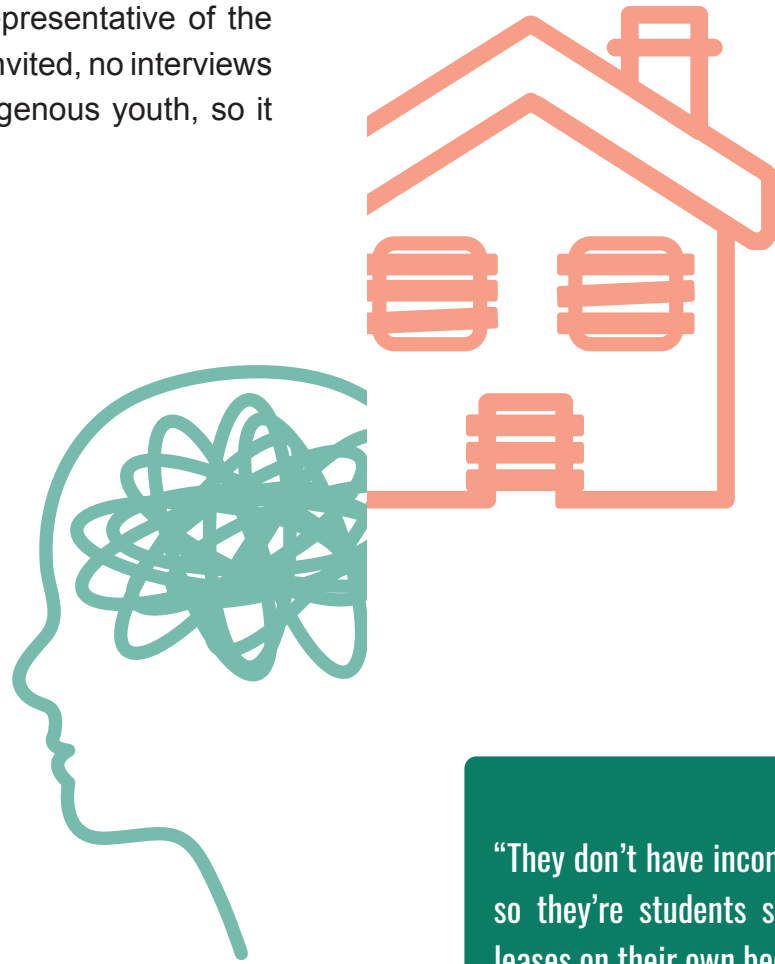
Due to the sampling methodology and the study design, the data may not be representative of the experiences of all service providers working with TY in the Durham Region. Though invited, no interviews were completed with service providers whose primary mandate is to support indigenous youth, so it was not possible to include that perspective into the results of this data collection.

## Insights

### Service Barriers

In the interviews, agency bureaucracy and inflexible service processes and mandates were the most often mentioned barriers to effective service. Both youth and service providers described a high level of untreated mental health issues. However, waitlists, agency time constraints, lack of funding or resources and service delivery models that do not match the developmental stages or real-life circumstances of youth living on their own were cited as impediments to effectively supporting youth.

Some of these processes and mandates created barriers for youth that would be easy and not cost-prohibitive to ameliorate. For example, many service providers told us that being able to text with youth would help with service continuity, as would access to free transportation such as a bus pass or Presto card



### Housing Challenges

Access to safe, affordable housing, and navigating the complex process of finding housing were all cited as major challenges in service provider interviews. Many service providers indicated that issues with landlords create sometimes insurmountable obstacles for youth to find housing. These difficulties put TY at high risk for multiple moves and homelessness.

“I don’t think young people should wait two months to have a psychiatric assessment... and there can be a wait time of 6 months to one year for therapy.”  
— Service provider

“I think it is really hard for a child essentially to manage and connect with a lot of the services available to them. Being the person that’s doing that for them, I find it difficult.”  
— Service provider

“They don’t have income, they’re still in school so they’re students still and they can’t sign leases on their own because they’re under 18.”  
— Service provider

“Housing is huge, almost impossible to find youth housing, especially in an affordable price range.”  
— Service provider

“They’re vulnerable to landlords, and to roommates as they are probably not going to be living on their own...they can be taken advantage of because they are young and inexperienced, and it can be hard living with other people.”  
— Service provider

“We don’t ever think about youth participation and adjusting our expectations to meet their developmental level and change the process, so it matches the population.”  
— Service provider

Further insights related to suggested changes in the service system to better support youth with housing can be found in the policy and practice implication section of this report.

# 3.3 Co-Design and Consensus Building Sessions

A key element of this participatory action research study was to engage youth in the development and design of a unique housing hub model. Actively listening to the voice of youth allows “young people to bring ideas, opinions and knowledge that not only need to be acknowledged and respected but should be brought into... the design and evaluation of local Housing First for Youth programs (Gaetz, 2017). Between September and December 2019, three co-design sessions were held in the community. The purpose of these sessions was to use information and insights gathered from the survey of TY and from the service provider interviews to co-design a youth housing hub model for precariously housed youth in the Durham Region.

“ Like even the smallest things and gestures made it feel like, wow, people care. Everyone here truly does listen and aren't just like 'we're going to make it what we think because we're older and we're adults.' ”  
— Trusteed youth

In addition to members of the research steering committee, these sessions also included youth service providers and TY. A list of youth services providers was developed by the 18-person research steering committee. All of the service providers who engaged in qualitative interviews were invited to participate in the co-design sessions by email, as well as other housing service providers in Durham Region who were considered to be important stakeholders by the research steering committee. All TY in the system were recruited for the sessions through a consistent script that was delivered verbally or sent through email by a youth outreach worker/trustee, who was also a standing member of the

research steering committee. Participating youth were paid hourly for their time in the sessions and provided a meal. Average attendance at the sessions was between 25 and 30 people, with youth attendance varying from a maximum of 18 at one session to a minimum of 6 at another session.

All three sessions were facilitated by an independent consultant who worked with a co-design sessions sub-committee of the research steering committee to develop the agenda, activities and facilitation tools. Thought and attention was taken to provide varied activities—written, verbal and creative—to help youth express their thoughts and ideas.



## Co-Design 1

**Session #1** focused on building both understanding, and empathy for the journey of a TY. It also included the exploration of promising existing youth housing hub models, both local and international. Some early brainstorming activities helped the group visualize and articulate what kind of housing hub model would best support youth in Durham Region.

## Co-Design 2



**Session #2** focused on assessing the data collected in the youth services provider interviews and validating that information through feedback from youth. A stakeholder map which identified core services with which TY typically engage was reviewed and refined (Appendix C). Further consideration of several housing hub models reviewed in the brainstorming session resulted in two prototypes: 1) a scattered site model and 2) a central building, co-living with seniors' model. The positive and negative elements of each model were explored and participants were invited to vote for their preferences.



## Co-Design 3

**Session #3** focused on detailed refinement of the two prototypes and included discussions of business model development and governance structure. After further development and presentation of the two distinct models, a youth jury was formed. The youth jury developed their own criteria and rated both models. At the end of this session, all participants were invited to anonymously vote on which of the two housing hub models they preferred. The youth jury rated both models equally with no clear preference for one model. After all participants, including service providers voted, there was a slight preference for the central building model. Because of the closeness in voting and the youth jury tie, it was decided a further consensus building session was necessary to reach an agreement on the most suitable model.

## Consensus Building Session

**84%**  
OF YOUTH PREFERRED THE  
APARTMENT STYLE MODEL



**The consensus building session** was held virtually in May 2020 where considerable time was spent reviewing in detail the specific elements of each housing hub model. Questions were answered and participants invited to vote anonymously on both the housing hub elements, and their preference for the best overall housing hub model. This online session hosted a total of 32 participants. As well as members of the research steering committee, the group included 18 youth, some of whom had not been involved in the previous co-design sessions and were seeing the two potential housing hub models for the first time.

At the end of the two-hour session, it was evident there was a clear preference for the central building, co-living with seniors' model. In separate ratings of each of the models, approximately half (48%) of those surveyed stated that they liked or strongly liked the scattered housing model. This compares to a much higher proportion (84%), who reported that they liked or strongly liked the central housing model. Consensus was clear: youth and stakeholders preferred the central housing concept. There was a strong preference by youth for their own, individual apartment versus sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities in a scattered houses model. Youth also indicated that safety and security was a top priority for them.

**While it was important to youth to have the ability to participate in a community with others, including seniors, it was equally important to them to have control over, and choice about when that engagement in community happened.**

An infographic of the preferred, co-designed model and its key elements is attached in Appendix D, as well as the business model canvass which further outlines the co-designed model in Appendix E. Further, the completed feasibility study outlines in detail the elements of the co-designed model and what costs, risks and benefits would be involved in creating such a model for Durham Region.

## Feasibility Study

To assist with the costs, risks and benefits involved in the co-designed housing hub model, a consultant was hired to complete a detailed feasibility study. TY and research steering committee members were keen to understand the practicalities involved in making this unique, youth housing hub a reality in Durham Region. The feasibility study included:

- a scope of similar models currently in operation;
- the benefits and challenges of the central building model versus the scattered site model;
- potential funding options;
- potential partners;
- risks and mitigation strategies; and
- an evaluation plan.

A copy of the feasibility study can be made available by contacting either author of this report by email: [Lorraine.closs@durhamcollege.ca](mailto:Lorraine.closs@durhamcollege.ca), [nora.landry@durham.ca](mailto:nora.landry@durham.ca)

## 3.4 Steering Committee Return on Investment

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During a focus group meeting, research steering committee members were asked to share their reflections on the considerable investment of time and energy given to this project and capture any value that has been generated for themselves or for their agency as a result. The focus group was audio recorded and transcribed. Themes from the transcription were manually coded separately by the principal investigator and another member of the data analysis subcommittee, and subsequently common themes were extracted. The common themes are presented here as well as quotes from standing steering committee members.

Discussion included the following guiding questions:

- How was it to be involved in participatory action research, using a co-production approach?
- Was there value for you and/or your agency in being a part of this project?
- Were there any service planning process or service design process changes made as a result of being part of this project?

### Insights

Co-production is becoming renowned as a valuable method of service delivery planning and as such was a meaningful take away and return on investment for service providers involved in this project. Many were familiar with the concept of co-production but had limited practical experience with the process. Those in front line youth service delivery found it rewarding to hear the TY speak for themselves in this environment and contribute to the outcome. Steering committee members indicated that in their experience youth voices often get lost and this project gave youth a clear voice.

The impact was further reinforced as members indicated the co-production process has already begun in other working groups in which they were involved.

**“That whole co-production concept has cross-fertilized in the community and really empowered [us] not just I think within this group, but within the broader community of people with housing challenges.”**

Many others spoke of their commitment to moving forward with service planning processes that include elements of co-production. They indicated that this experience has increased their willingness to approach service planning through a co-production lens by being open to new ideas and innovative solutions. They identified a new commitment to allowing service users to challenge the assumptions that service providers may have.

**“...it seems obvious when you think about it that you should include those people [service users] in trying to design the services to make sure that it’s something actually useful and valuable for them, but it isn’t the way that it often actually works.”**

Other steering committee members cited a greater emphasis on youth centered program design, and the development of a youth centered housing model as a significant return on their investment. Many noted that housing and homelessness are often listed as a community priority, and that planning around the issue of housing is typically very broad and can overlook the unique needs of youth.

**“What really resonates with me is the constant reminder of how important it is not to make decisions FOR people but to make decisions together WITH people and how the voice of youth in our communities is so important.”**

A solid commitment and understanding of working with co-production can help service providers better address some of the challenges they may face in their organization of designing services by using this approach. For example, dedicated co-production work takes more time, and service providers may need to defend that additional time and expense with decision makers unfamiliar with the process. Taking time to listen and being open to discarding preconceived notions about what a service user may need was considered worth the investment because the final product met a true need.

**“What I’ve learned from co-production through this experience is just that it’s so easy to sit in an “expert chair” and think you have good ideas and good ways to move forward, but ultimately, without including the individuals for whom this service is being designed in that process, it’s a huge miss.”**

# 3.5 Youth Engagement in Research

Youth can be brought to the table but how does meaningful engagement happen? Throughout this 2-year project TY were asked to keep a journal of their experiences and thoughts. During an informal interview with a research assistant, they shared their experiences of being a part of the project. This interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were reviewed by the principal investigator and a member of the data analysis subcommittee separately to manually pull out themes. These themes were then merged, and insights shared here are a combination of youth journal reflections, and steering committee member and principal investigator insights about engaging youth in participatory action research.

## Create a Level Playing Field

At the beginning of this project the youth shared a great deal about their personal lives by simply attending, without ever offering any of the information directly. Through their involvement as TY, they implicitly declared their age, income source and the fact that they no longer lived with their family of origin. This represented a power imbalance, because conversely, the adults at the table shared virtually no personal information by attending. Acknowledging this inherent inequality was crucial. Leveling the playing field required sharing of personal information from the adult committee members, which for some created initial discomfort as it is not a typical aspect of 'business' meetings. Each meeting opened with an exercise designed to encourage all members of the committee to share something of themselves. Beginning every meeting this way served to bring the group together, and create a culture of humour, mutual respect and shared vulnerability.

## Compensation and Acknowledgment for Their Contributions

All adult members of the steering committee represented their respective agency thereby receiving compensation for their contribution as it related to their expertise and experience. To ensure balance, all youth were compensated monetarily for their time, contributions and transportation costs. This compensation was a clear message that the youths' time was equally as valued as the other steering committee members' time.

“...helps with like the income. Even though it's like \$90 a month. It still is that 90 more dollars that like helps with food and things.”  
— Trusteed youth

## Slow the Process Down

Regular business meetings are typically highly structured and involve complicated processes that most adult participants simply accept as 'the way things work'. The youth involved in our research had little or no experience with formal meeting structures. Their inexperience served to create several learning points for the entire steering committee. Why do we run meetings the way we do? With this question in mind, standard meeting processes were reviewed, and their value ascertained for all members of the steering committee which breathed new life into the meetings, and ascribed additional meaning to steps involved. Taking time to hear some of the questions and issues youth raised about the project, created the opportunity to thoughtfully consider and evaluate how choices and decisions were made. It often brought renewed attention to items that may otherwise have been taken for granted or overlooked.

“...we ask questions and like we voice our opinion when we don't understand something.”  
— Trusteed youth

## Share a Meal

An important component of building relationships and trust was the sharing of meals, which promoted collaboration. Food was provided at every meeting and time was set aside to eat together. The value of this cannot be overstated as communal eating relaxed the atmosphere, created opportunity for casual conversations and enhanced group dynamics. The youth appreciated being involved in conversations and having their opinion sought on the selection of food both for the meetings and especially for the co-design sessions. Food choice was an area where youth felt confident they had a better understanding than the adults of what their peers would like, and they took pride in planning meals that would encourage their peers to attend and participate in the sessions.

“... [Chair] always cares about like the food and we made that a very big thing when food is important and stuff and yeah, you can definitely tell that like we are being heard.”  
— Trusteed youth

## Give Youth Specific, Meaningful Roles

The youth were involved in subcommittee work including the co-design session subcommittee, the newsletter production subcommittee and they worked with two Durham College students, Ryan Beaton and Brandon Ramphal, to support the creation of an award winning video about the project. This video can be found here: <https://youtu.be/3df9Qvx00jk?list=PLww1dvjSoO4NE9Z0qYYNYMliaQOjNNwsJ>

TY also developed the “youth journey visuals” used in both the co-design sessions and in this report. TY had the opportunity to contribute their experience, if they felt comfortable, and to share stories of their peers’ experiences, which created authentic youth journeys and provided another opportunity in which to share their voice. These essential roles in the project offered the youth an opportunity to experience success and achievement.

**“ It’s also... something like consistency. It’s like that one thing that I haven’t messed up on...”**  
— Trusteed youth

## Acknowledge the Challenges of Adults and Youth Working Together as Equals

Truly working as equals with youth, seeing them as equal, capable members of the group is not always an easy goal to achieve, no matter how well intentioned the adults. One adult steering committee member recounted something happening at a co-design session where each small table was to have a steering committee member seated at it. There was a table without one, and the adult member expressed concern saying, ‘I would go sit at another table, but then there wouldn’t be a committee member here’. ‘I’m here’, said one of the youth at the table. ‘I’m a steering committee member’. And of course, she was.

## Youth Participation Encourages Other Youth to Participate

The youth involved on the steering committee, and the youth outreach worker who acted as trustee, were the driving forces behind engaging more youth to attend the co-design sessions held in the community. TY on the steering committee were intimately involved in the planning, scheduling, food ordering, and invitation process for these sessions. They reached out to their networks and actively worked to engage peers in this process by explaining what was happening and how becoming involved could benefit not only the youth themselves, but also other youth in the community in years to come.

**“Also like it’s just like I know that it’s (potential youth housing model) not going to like help me specifically, but I know how hard it is, and I know how much it sucks. And like if I can do something to like help other people that way it’s not so like sucky then, yeah, it’s really nice...”**  
— Trusteed youth

## Increased the Youths’ Understanding of the Service System

Youth described gaining insight into aspects of their own involvement with social service agencies as they realized that systems were not always designed to work the way they had experienced them. They realized that speaking out about some of the gaps between service design and service delivery had value, and that as service users, they were in a unique position on the steering committee to point out these gaps. Youth also expressed feelings of validation as they came to learn that some of the issues they face in their personal situations were in fact much more universal than they had realized.

**“ ... you blame not having enough money on you being stupid, on spending it on other things than things that you kind of like actually should be spending on when you are 16-17. So, it kind of gives you just the realization that like, you’re not like a f—k up...it helps you realize that everyone’s struggling with it... you actually don’t get enough money. Like you don’t get enough support. You don’t get enough benefits.”**  
— Trusteed youth

## Get the Right People at the Table

At least one service provider had an established relationship with one of the TY outside of the work of this project, and this pre-existing relationship went a long way toward building trust and engagement with the youth members on the steering committee. Further, as the group was made up of representatives of agencies who work with youth, they understood the challenges and advantages to working productively with the youth they serve. Some held formal leadership roles in their organizations, and some worked directly with youth on the front lines. Active youth engagement meant taking time to acknowledge the concerns of TY as service users, and to gently encourage them to consider stepping outside their own experiences to potentially see the value of engagement with service providers from whom they felt some personal disconnection.

“I think it changed my outlook on the people who are working [at community agencies] as well. Like, oh you’re good guys...now I’m like oh “she’s really nice” ...so I would definitely say in that sense it’s opened my eyes to the community and the resources we have.”  
— Trusteed youth

## Empowered youth see new possibilities

Youth involved on the steering committee developed new skills, experienced meaningful learning and developed a new sense of personal competency.

“I feel like this has really opened up my eyes like being able to do things...inspired me and ...I want to go into like some realm of helping society, the community and people. ...I’m more like, oh, I want to be the guys in the chairs who are the adults, and it’s more accessible and easier than I had thought it might be.”  
— Trusteed youth

# 4. Implications for Policy and Practice

Based on our research with TY and service providers throughout this 2-year project we have highlighted ten potential ways in which service providers and policy makers can improve the support system for youth living on their own in Durham Region.

## 1 Bundle services for youth by creating school hubs

More than 85% of TY we surveyed were attending school and feel some kind of support and connection there. One of the most enduring experiences of being a TY is loneliness and schools are very well situated on which to build this connectedness and increase a sense of belonging for TY. Co-locating other services such as mental health counselling, primary health care, life skills coaching and vocational and employment support as well as access to food, would create wraparound support for TY.

“I wish that [alternative school] could be seen as a choice, rather than a fall back.”  
— Service provider

## Create drop-in style supports 2

TY must manage an array of adult responsibilities and are launched into a service system even service providers say is complex and difficult to access. Additionally, many youth reported struggling with unresolved mental health and physical health problems. Given their developmental stage, youth need supports that are flexible and available when they are needed, without any complex referral and wait list processes. The drop-in style best supports youth where they can appear and access support in the moment.

“...our medical staff found a lot of teens tend not to come for care or follow up appointments which for a lot of medical situations is very important. The follow up rate for teens was dismal so then it became [clear] we need to go there rather than expect them to come to us.”  
— Service provider



### 3 Intervene with landlords on behalf of youth

TY consistently reported that struggles with landlords was one of the biggest barriers to accessing affordable housing. Youth need an adult to intervene on their behalf to support and guide landlords, intervene in disputes, and alleviate landlord concerns about renting to youth. These supports would be a proactive measure and decrease the chances of homelessness and multiple moves experienced by TY. Instituting a tenant insurance program would be beneficial so landlords feel protected and/or a funding incentive to landlords who rent to youth.

**“...youth we see...they don’t have employment. The landlords don’t typically rent to that population.”**

— Service provider

**“Landlords don’t want them. They’re too young, it’s just like a red flag when a landlord sees a 17 [year old] youth.”**

— Service provider

### A consistent adult to help navigate the service system 4

Both youth and youth service providers indicated that the youth service system is complex and difficult to navigate. One consistent adult to assist with this navigation, such as a dedicated OW caseworker or trustee would improve the experience. Durham Region Ontario Works actioned this change just prior to the onset of the project and has dedicated specific case workers to TY as well as implementing a revised application process for youth. These changes have contributed to more consistent engagement with TY, their trustees and community service providers and resulted in additional TY graduating high school and exiting Ontario Works to enrol in post-secondary institutions.

**“The challenges that they’re facing and trying to navigate are so much broader and deeper than their peers.”**

— Service provider

### 5 Flexibility around communication options

Some service providers indicated that their agency policies prevented them from communicating with youth in non-traditional ways such as texting, What’s App, or Facebook. Because TY feel lonely and disconnected, finding a way to communicate with them in a way that is comfortable and easy is of utmost importance. Service providers need the flexibility to communicate with youth in the same way that youth communicate with each other. And those means are typically texting or messaging applications.

**“The ability to text and email the clients...how much easier things would be if we were able to do that.”**

— Service provider

**“...it would mean easy service delivery to this age group which is the way they communicate.”**

— Service provider

### Access to free transportation 6

Although many service providers indicated access to free bus passes was part of the support provided by their agency or institution, in practice access to free transportation continues to be a significant barrier for youth to attend appointments or even school. Youth who live outside core urban centres in Durham Region face additional challenges accessing transportation. Some agencies provided bus passes once the youth was a client, but this process does little to assist youth to attend their initial appointment. TY indicated they face significant food insecurity and high housing costs compared to the benefit amounts they receive, therefore it’s possible that funds issued to support transportation may not consistently be used for that purpose and may at times be used to purchase food or other necessities. Access to free transportation should continue to be a standard part of the assistance provided to TY, and alternative ways to provide that support, such as purchased Presto cards, would better ensure their transportation needs are being met.

“...you get someone living in Pickering, but the meeting is in Oshawa... so I think transportation at that age is significant.”

— Service provider

“...transportation is a huge issue up here.”

— Service provider

## 7 Affordable, safe, transitional housing options

Lack of safe and affordable housing options was for trusted youth an ongoing stress and led, for some youth, to multiple moves and periods of homelessness. To prevent the onset of chronic homelessness, and better prepare TY for independence, this research supports a transitional supportive housing hub model such as the one co-designed with youth during this project where youth have their own apartment but also have the ability to access guidance, support, and schooling within the hub, see Appendix D and E for a full description. As a shorter-term solution while a housing hub is developed, a housing allowance supplement is recommended for TY. During co-design sessions youth expressed a strong preference for having their own, individual apartment versus sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities in rooming house style of living. This rooming house style of living is often the only type of living arrangement that a TY can afford. A rent supplement would increase the possibility that youth could find housing that felt safe and secure and would reduce the instability of multiple moves.

“...when you're forced to go out on your own it would be nice if there was a supportive housing situation like seniors have, where you could get meals or...someone to talk to when you need them.”

— Service provider

One of the most difficult challenges managed by TY when they move out on their own, is the change to a new school if available housing is in a new school district. Youth said they needed written parental consent to change schools. Though school representatives indicated that this policy could be waived for TY, in practice it doesn't appear to be happening and this policy often led them to accessing Justice for Children and Youth out of Toronto. This organization provides free legal service to youth to help them, among other things, change home schools without the requisite parental consent. TY are independent from their parents, and as such need more flexibility and an accessible, consistent process to access the public school system. Schools are a vital point of connection for TY.

“I think school plays a really fundamental role in where kids go for help. The school is the constant...”

— Service provider

## 9 Change the mindset from youth housing to transition to independence

Through the work on this project, it was understood that accessing youth housing is a completely different issue than supporting youth to transition successfully to independence. If the only focus is on ensuring youth have stable housing, then what youth are saying they really need is being missed. There is a tension in the service system between what can be provided quickly for youth and what youth are saying they want/need. Youth repeatedly identified their own life skills deficits and their need for support, and guidance as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. Any service with a focus on youth homelessness needs to have this transitional work embedded at its core. This too will proactively reduce the incidence of chronic homelessness that began in adolescence.

“...circumstances that have led them to be on their own typically mean they've had very limited, to no nurturance and guidance...”

— Service provider

“We don’t have someone teaching kids how to take the bus, pay their bills, clean or cook.”  
— Service provider

## 10 Include youth in the development of youth services

Involving TY in a co-production approach, rather than in just a consultative approach, in the design of youth services ensures that services are developed to meet the true needs of youth. Youth benefit in a myriad of ways when they are fully involved in service design and some of these are outlined in the section on youth engagement in research in this report. Most importantly, engagement in the research process built the youths’ confidence and opened their eyes to possibilities for themselves they hadn’t previously considered.

“Kids listen to kids.”  
— Trusteed youth

People  
Can  
help  
each other

Safe  
Spaces  
"own space"

No Wrong  
Door

## 5. COVID 19 Considerations

At the time of writing this report the world is in the midst of a pandemic. The authors thought it prudent to reflect on some of the ways that this world event has affected this research project. Much of what occurred because of the pandemic as it related to this specific project was difficult, for example it delayed pieces of the work plan as service providers spent a few months engaged in recovery and adjustment to a new way of working. Also, it was a sudden disruption to the usual way of coming together as a steering committee and therefore created some feelings of abrupt disconnection. There were, however, some positive outcomes for precariously housed youth:

- Holding the co-design consensus meeting online levelled the playing field of service providers and TY and created opportunity for more youth involvement because of lack of transportation issues, comfort with virtual conversations, and the safety of choosing to be seen or not seen. This further underscored the concept that youth respond to having choice around their level of engagement and control over their level of vulnerability.
- As a result of the pandemic there was a heightened awareness in the local community around the need for more emergency housing for youth as many of the factors that contributed to the ‘hidden’ element of this issue, for example ‘couch surfing’ with friends or family, were suddenly no longer available. A local youth shelter had reduced capacity due to physical distancing rules and that brought needed attention to the complex housing needs for homeless youth under 18. COVID 19 specific community funding is supporting three new youth housing projects, two aimed directly at TY and the other for youth more specifically. These have resulted in more spaces to house unsheltered youth locally, more youth specific housing outreach and a rent subsidy program for unsheltered youth living on their own.
- The COVID emergency also saw the local community pilot some innovative supportive housing models--some temporary and some more permanent offerings. With the stated goal of promoting life stabilization, and transition planning, these projects include some of the supportive and wrap around elements of the model developed in the co-design process in this research project.
- Other changes have occurred to the education system as a result of COVID 19. For example, in service provider interviews one provider spoke of how beneficial it could be to youth living on their own if alternative school systems were offered as options, rather than a fall back after failure at mainstream school. COVID has altered the public education landscape in Ontario, with many more virtual and “quadmester” options currently being offered and these options may prove successful for many students, but particularly for youth living on their own.

# 6. Conclusion

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This two-year participatory action research project explored the experiences of TY in the Durham Region service system from both their perspectives and the perspectives of service providers. Using a co-production approach, TY were involved every step of the way on equal footing with service providers and researchers to ask the questions and interpret the answers. In the final phase of the project, TY and service providers spent four sessions working together to co-design a supportive housing hub model for youth. This model was fully explored in terms of its risks and benefits in a comprehensive feasibility report.

This project inspired areas for further exploration and these include

- To use a co-production approach to learn how best to integrate a ‘transition to adulthood model’ into existing youth housing systems that includes youth, service providers and local landlords in the solution development;
- To work with local school boards to develop a formal process for changing schools without parental consent for TY youth;
- To explore the opportunities and challenges of seniors co-living with youth in the community;
- To leverage the existing hub model in local high schools to discover best practices to deliver other services on site (mental, physical health, and other supports) using a walk in, no wait list model.

The insights and recommendations developed as a result of this research can help inform service design and service delivery in Durham Region, in Ontario and across Canada on behalf of youth living on their own, and this project has the potential to be the catalyst to brighter futures for TY.

# 7. Appendices

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## Appendix A

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### Online survey of Trusteed Youth

#### Co-design of a Youth-led Housing Hub: Developing a Unique and Scalable Housing Model for Youth Living on Their Own in Durham

You are being invited to participate in an anonymous online survey as part of a research study conducted by Lorraine Closs from the School of Health and Community Services at Durham College and a Steering Committee of community service providers including the Durham District School Board, The Region of Durham Social Services, Durham Mental Health Services, The Boys and Girls Club of Durham, The John Howard Society Durham Region and Joanne’s House, because we want to learn about your experiences of being a youth living on your own.

The survey asks questions about your experiences of being a Trusteed Youth. It will take about 15 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact **Lorraine Closs at 905 721 2000 ext. 3667**

*--Attach the consent for participation in research for reading and a button to confirm understanding and consent to participate.*

The following questions ask for some details about you in order to help us understand who you are so that we can plan services and supports to meet your needs.

Tell Us About You:

1. How old are you?
  - a) 16
  - b) 17
  - c) 18

2. Where did you last attend school?
- a) Oshawa
  - b) Whitby
  - c) Clarington
  - d) Ajax
  - e) Pickering
  - f) Scugog/Brock/Uxbridge
  - g) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you currently:
- a) Attending school full time
  - b) Attending school part time
  - c) Not attending school

4. What is your gender?
- a) Male
  - b) Female
  - c) Transgender
  - d) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) Prefer not to answer

5. What term do you prefer to use to describe your sexual orientation?
- a) Asexual or non-sexual
  - b) Bisexual
  - c) Gay
  - d) Heterosexual
  - e) Lesbian
  - f) Queer
  - g) Not sure or Questioning
  - h) Two-spirited
  - i) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_
  - j) Prefer not to answer

6. What is your first language?
- a) English
  - b) French
  - c) Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your current status in Canada?
- a) Canadian born
  - b) Permanent resident
  - c) Landed immigrant
  - d) Refugee
  - e) Unknown

8. What population group best describes you?
- a) White
  - b) First Nations, Metis, Inuit
  - c) Asian
  - d) Black
  - e) Middle Eastern
  - f) Latin American
  - g) Multiple or Mixed
  - h) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you have any special needs?
- a) Physical
  - b) Mental Health
  - c) Addiction
  - d) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_

10. What is the last grade you completed?
- a) Grade 8
  - b) Grade 9
  - c) Grade 10
  - d) Grade 11
  - e) Grade 12
  - f) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_

11. Are you currently:
- a) Working full time
  - b) Working part time
  - c) Working occasionally
  - d) Not working

12. Where do you currently live?
- a) In my own place
  - b) With a friend or relative
  - c) In an emergency shelter
  - d) I am unsheltered (public places not intended for shelter)
  - e) Other please describe \_\_\_\_\_

13. How many times have you moved since leaving your family home?
- a) Once
  - b) Two to three
  - c) Four or more

14. Which of the following do you have currently?
  - a) Ontario health card
  - b) Ontario photo ID
  - c) Ontario driver's License
  - d) Passport
  - e) Birth Certificate
  - f) Social Insurance Number
  - g) Bank account

The following questions will give us some idea about your current thoughts, feelings and experiences of being a youth living on your own:

Please rate your answers using the following scale:

- 1) Strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neutral 4) agree and 5) strongly agree 6) Not applicable

15. I feel that my current living situation is safe
16. I feel that my current living situation is stable
17. I feel supported at school
18. I feel on track to graduate from school
19. I feel hopeful about my future
20. I feel supported by my caseworker
21. I feel supported by my trustee
22. I feel supported by another adult who I trust
23. I feel a sense of belonging
24. I feel in the last month there has been someone in my life I could talk to
25. I feel anxious and/or stressed because of my life circumstances
26. I feel that I have some health concerns that I still need help with
27. I feel in the last month that I have had to cut the size of my meals or skip meals because I couldn't afford food
28. Is there anything else you would like to tell us:

## Appendix B

### Service Provider Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your program and how it contributes to the support of Trusteed Youth (16 and/or 17 year olds living on their own)?

(Probe for mission statement, number of clients, catchment area, length of intervention, who they partner with/coordination of other services, if they have trouble reaching particular groups of youth)

2. Can you discuss any challenges involved in the work you are doing with 16 and/or 17 year olds?

(Probe for information about funding, policies, procedures, culture of the service sector)

3. Can you discuss any challenges that you see in your work that youth are experiencing?

4. Where do you think there are gaps in services and supports for teens living on their own? (Particularly 16 and 17 year's olds?)

5. What would you need to more effectively work with 16 and 17 year olds?

6. Can you discuss what is working well with the youth that you are serving?

7. Does your agency partner with any other agencies within and/or outside the Durham Region on behalf of 16 and 17 year olds?

8. Do you have any evaluations or research reports documenting the effects of your program? What have these shown? Can you share these?

*(probe for internal or external evaluations, funding reports, annual reports, program model documentation, high level data, data on youth served)*

9. Would you recommend I talk to anyone else who could provide further insight into interventions and practices on the ground for 16 and 17 year olds?

10. Is there anything you would like to say that was not addressed in today's interview questions?

## Appendix C

### Stakeholder Map



## Appendix D

### Apartment Building Model

The apartment will be one centrally located building in Durham available to youth across the region.



#### Who will live there?

- Mix of youth (aged 16-24) and seniors (youth with greatest needs prioritized for admission)
- Extension up to age 30 based on needs (e.g., young parents)
- Live-in support worker who can help you with issues related to money, school, mental health, etc.

- Youth can receive guidance from and have companionship with seniors
- Receive in-house social service support

#### What is the layout of the building?

- First floor dedicated to services (e.g., nurses on site, mental health services, coffee shop)
- Studio style single units have their own bathroom and kitchen
- Lock for each apartment and fob for building entry

- Access to on-site supports
- Enjoy safety and privacy of your own unit



Floors divided by age: youth (16-24) live on separate floors from seniors

- Develop basic rules for the building with other youth and seniors (e.g., quiet time, checking in visitors for safety reasons, smoking)

- Common area on first floor where youth and seniors can connect
- Common area includes games room, a community kitchen, a common TV room, trading post/swap room and a library

- Enjoy opportunities to connect with other youth and seniors

- On-site parking
- Close to grocery store (15-minute walk or bus-ride)

- Close proximity to amenities

#### What services/programming will be available?

- Employment opportunity in youth-led business on ground floor (e.g. print-shop, coffee shop, bakery, flower shop)
- A school open to youth in the building
- Youth programming throughout duration of stay
- Help with transition to independence (e.g., moving out after age 24, learn life skills like nutrition, stress management, vocational skills)
- Transitioning worker assistant will follow-up with you after you move
- Services can include: help with school, links to medical professionals, gym, career development, vocational training and volunteer opportunities

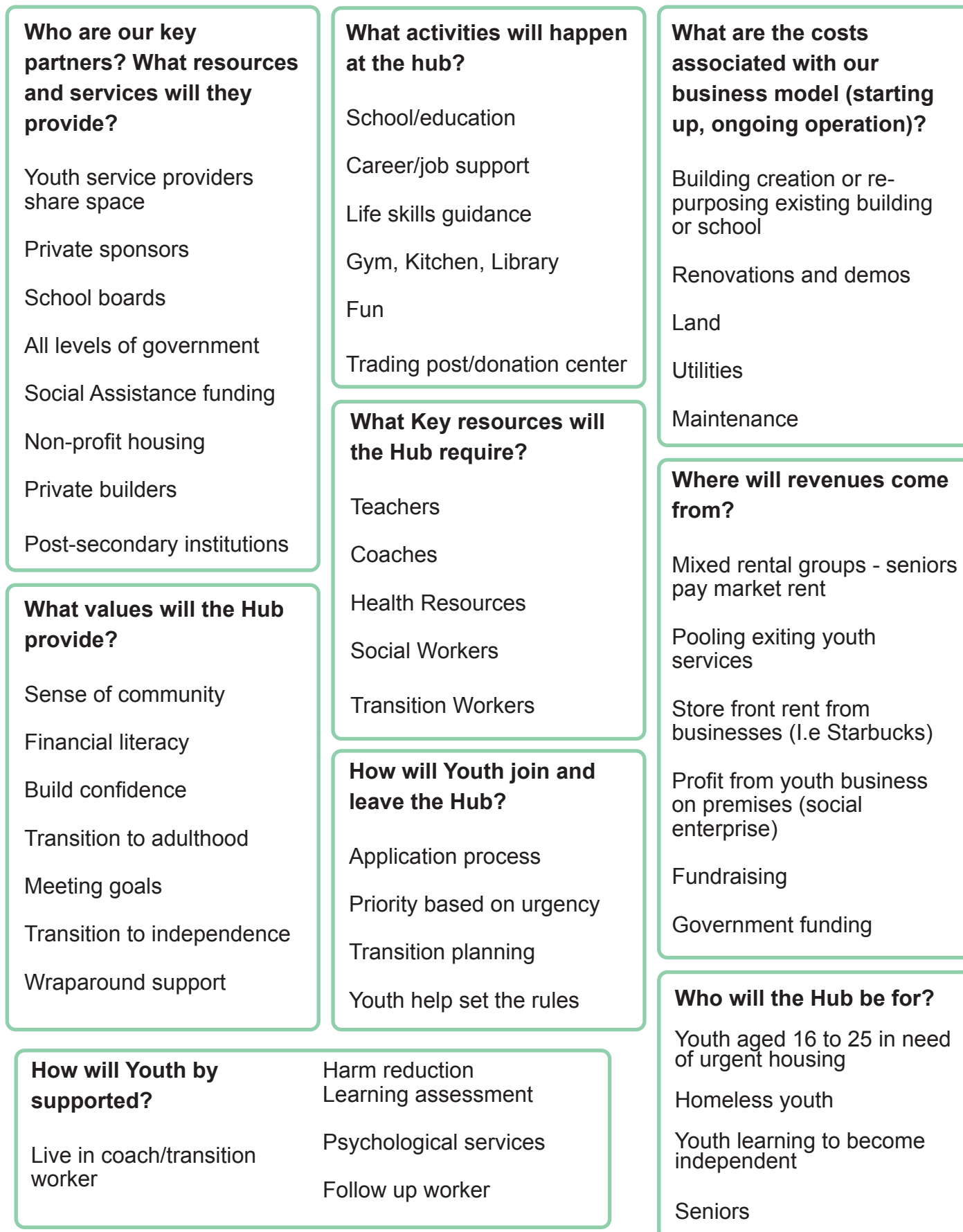
- Take advantage of employment opportunities in youth-led business

- Receive social service support while in the building and through the transition to independence



## Appendix E

### Business Model Canvas Co-Designed Youth Housing Hub Model



## 8. References

### References

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