

FINAL DRAFT

**Innovative Accommodation Support  
for Western Australians with a  
Disability**

**A Discussion Paper:**

by Monique Williamson

ACROD WA

on behalf of the Accommodation Think Tank

June 2006

## INDEX

FOREWORD	3
INTRODUCTION	4
UNDERSTANDING ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT	5
What is Accommodation Support	5
Components of Accommodation Support	6
TOWARD INNOVATIVE APPROACHES	11
A Framework for Innovation	11
Quality in Supported Accommodation	12
Factors are Likely to Lead to Quality Accommodation Support	19
ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION	23
Opportunities	23
Challenges	24
Questions Requiring Further Research and Debate	26
CONCLUSION	27
REFERENCES	28

## FOREWORD

This discussion paper aims to stimulate further debate, with the intention of promoting innovation in accommodation support services for people with disabilities. It includes:

- a framework for conceptualising accommodation support;
- an outline of what constitutes quality in accommodation support;
- the factors likely to contribute to quality; and
- a summary of opportunities and challenges in creating innovative solutions.

It is one of a number of initiatives of the Accommodation Think Tank. The Accommodation Think Tank was established following the Accommodation Blueprint Report (Disability Service Commission, 2003). The Blueprint Report was commissioned by the Western Australian Government to develop a planned approach (blueprint) for the provision of accommodation support services for people with disabilities over the five-year period 2003-2008.

Under the heading “Supporting Innovation”, the Steering Committee recommended the establishment of:

An independent body to coordinate an innovation think tank consisting of families, individuals, funded agencies and Commission staff, to promote the development of new ideas in innovation and community support. (Recommendation 54, p. xvi).

ACROD, the National Industry Association for Disability Services, prepared a submission expressing its interest in the initiative and proposing an approach. Following negotiations, DSC allocated ACROD funding to implement Recommendation 54. ACROD’s approach proposed establishing a Coordinating Committee, specific think tanks as required and a reference group. The former Minister for Disability Services appointed the Chair of the Coordinating Committee for the Think Tank, Professor Daniela Stehlik, who then invited the other committee representatives at the end of 2004.

This discussion paper provides a brief literature review of the most recent research and debates regarding supported accommodation services for people with disabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades within disability services, both in Australia and internationally, we have seen large-scale reform based on deinstitutionalisation. This has reshaped accommodation support for people with disabilities. Many people have moved from large-scale congregate models of care into smaller settings, often based on typical housing within suburban or regional communities. The past decade has seen further developments, with the emergence of more individualised accommodation arrangements for people with disabilities, as they and their allies advocate for further choice, quality and flexibility in the provision of accommodation.

Despite the momentum of reforms and the expectations surrounding newer models, there is little agreement amongst stakeholders on what should constitute future accommodation support. International research and practice overwhelmingly refutes large congregate models of accommodation, on the basis of their negative impact on people with disabilities (Simmons & Watson, 1999; Mansell, 2005). Research findings indicate people with disabilities are more likely to experience positive outcomes such as improved quality of life, in smaller community based accommodation settings compared to more traditional (larger) models (Simmons & Watson, 1999; Emerson & Hatton, 1994). Nevertheless, providing smaller settings does not necessarily guarantee better outcomes. For instance, Emerson and Hatton's (1994) review of British research, that included over 3,000 people in residential services, found that despite smaller setting providing better outcomes overall, some of the poorer quality small residential settings provide outcomes similar to some of the better quality small institutions. This inconsistency of outcomes, across accommodation models, has broadened the research focus to attempting to understand the variables that result in positive outcomes (Emerson & Hatton, 2005; Felce, 2000; Simmons & Watson, 1999).

The policy framework, in which further reform is considered, remains complex and is driven by ongoing tensions between the costs of various models and the rights of individuals with disability to have flexibility, choice and a realistic lifestyle. The increasing demand for accommodation services within the constraints of existing funding allocation, is at risk of leading to a greater focus on cost. The costs of accommodation support needs to be considered in the context of effectiveness and some commentators suggest that more costly arrangements should be considered where they result in higher quality outcomes (Stancliffe & Lakin, 2005, p.3).

It is vital that future innovations are based on sound evidence, where available and/or a willingness to critically analyse suggested developments. This discussion paper aims to inform and promote further debate and in doing so, contribute to innovative solutions that can provide quality supported accommodation for people with disabilities in Western Australia.

## UNDERSTANDING ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

### What is Accommodation Support

Accommodation support is provided to people who, due to the impact of a disability, require assistance with some aspect of daily living. Without such assistance these people would be extremely vulnerable. The type of support a person may require includes personal care, development of skills and support with aspects of daily living. The extent of support required by people with disabilities is highly variable. For example, it can range from minimal support, such as someone to drop in on a weekly basis, to extensive support 24 hours a day.

In 2003/04 users of Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) funded accommodation support services in Western Australia totalled 3,136 of which, 518 lived in institutions/residential/hostels, 1,092 in group homes and 1,576 in other accommodation types (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005).

The type and degree of support required depends on the needs of each individual. It is important to note that in the Australian context most people with disabilities have their support provided by families and/or informal networks. In 2003, 87 per cent of people with disabilities who required assistance, received assistance informally through family and friends (Disability Services Commission, 2005). It is when these natural support networks no longer have the capacity to meet a person's needs, that accommodation support is required. It is also important to note that natural supports and networks remain an important component of quality accommodation support (Felce, 2000; Rogers, 1998).

Accommodation support services tend to have a broad purview since 'home' is the central place from which our broader lifestyles are built. For instance the accommodation support provided may include personal care, day-to-day support with all aspects of maintaining a home and some or all responsibility in areas of a person's lifestyle like learning, recreation, personal interests, finances and maintaining relationships. This broad scope of responsibility provides challenges for accommodation service providers. This is further complicated by the fact that the methods used to assess the support needs and allocate funding to individuals do not necessarily reflect the real scope of services that may be required.

## Components of Accommodation Support

Contemporary accommodation support arrangements are based on theoretical developments that challenge the traditional way this type of support is conceptualised (Kinsella, 1993; O'Brien, 1993).

Accommodation support has conventionally been considered all encompassing. The service provider had responsibility for the housing (or building), the support (or care provided to the person) and the management (or the administration) of the program.

In Western Australia, up to the 1990's (and onwards in many cases), if a person required accommodation support it is likely they would be allocated a place (or bed) in a service, either a large facility, hostel or small group home. The service provider would be responsible for the building, the support provided and the service management. There is a trend in more recent literature and practice to deconstruct these components, particularly the housing and support components. This has stimulated innovation in accommodation support models, by providing those responsible for designing services with opportunities to address each component separately (see literature on 'supported living' (Kinsella, 1993; Simons, 1997). This approach takes the focus away from accommodation support models and develops approaches around individuals.

These theoretical shifts have been reflected in the practice and design of accommodation support. Therefore contemporary service provision may involve individuals purchasing, renting or receiving government assistance to gain tenancy for the housing component, while the support (or care) component can be purchased separately and delivered through a range of models.

Taylor (1991) notes the simplicity of this new way of thinking:

The concept is deceptively simple – find a home, whether a house, apartment or other dwelling, and build in the staff supports necessary for the person to live successfully in the community. Inherent in the concept is flexibility. Some people may need only part-time supports or merely someone to drop by to make sure they are okay. Others with severe disabilities and challenging needs may require full-time staff support. There isn't anything in the concept that precludes small groups of people living together...this however should be because they choose to live together and are compatible. (p.108)

Although the interface between housing, support and service management are complex and interconnected it may be helpful to consider them separately. Within each of these components are further aspects worthy of consideration.

## Support

The support component of ‘accommodation support’ refers to the assistance provided to people, particularly with aspects of daily living. The support component is at the heart of accommodation services and may be provided through a range of mechanisms including:

- paid support workers;
- in kind arrangements (where support is provided in return for other benefits such as discount in rent);
- peer support by a co resident; or
- using other forms of support such as assistive technologies.

The establishment of the support component of ‘accommodation support’ for a person with a disability requires consideration of:

- the requirements and circumstances of each individual;
- the interaction of proposed supports with natural supports such as family and friends; and
- any regulatory requirements associated with the funding of support (where funding is provided).

Accommodation support services are increasingly focussing their responsibility to the support component and releasing the responsibility for housing, which may then be managed through another party such as a local housing authority or a persons’ family. This arrangement may reduce the regulatory, administration and maintenance requirements associated with managing housing. It is also purported to provide more flexibility to people with disabilities, since the service provider does not have a stake in the housing or tenancy arrangement (see Allard, 1996; Kinsella, 1993).

Where accommodation support is based on paid (funded) support the nature of support provided relies heavily on government policy and priority. Individualised funding, whereby a person secures funding to purchase support, may provide fertile ground for developing innovative models of accommodation support. Individualised funding arrangements when effectively implemented provide people with disabilities with increased control and flexibility. Head and Conroy (2005) found that individualised funding may improve community inclusion and quality of life.

The quality of accommodation support has a strong correlation with the effectiveness of the support arrangements provided and particularly with the competence and attitude of the person providing support (whether paid or an informal arrangement) (Mansell, 2005). One of the main challenges faced by those responsible for accommodation support arrangements is their ability to attract and retain the right person(s) to

# FINAL DRAFT

provide accommodation support given the requirements and nature of the work.



## Housing

The housing component of ‘accommodation support’ refers to the ‘bricks and mortar’ or building in which a person lives. People with disabilities who requires supported accommodation may use one of several methods to acquire appropriate housing including:

- public housing schemes;
- private rental;
- home ownership; or
- home owned/leased by disability service provider.

Due to the financial disadvantage that many people with disabilities face, opportunities to find affordable housing is especially difficult. With the current housing market thriving there is even greater pressure on an individual’s ability to acquire affordable housing stock. It is important to note that a person with a disability, that requires accommodation support, is likely to be disadvantaged in the housing market by limited financial means. Furthermore, challenges are faced by a people with disabilities to meet the costs of maintenance and upkeep of a home readily available. The development of existing housing can be complicated by regulatory requirements such as local planning guidelines.

The housing acquired, in an ‘accommodation support’ context, should be sensitive to individual needs, preferences and circumstances including broader lifestyle considerations such as the locality of community resources, other supports and social networks. Housing stock that is universally designed and accessible to a person with a physical disability is not easily acquired. Nevertheless, housing that incorporates universal design and/or assistive technology has the potential to reduce the need for other more expensive forms of support such as paid staff.

Disability service providers are increasingly relinquishing responsibility for the provision of housing and establishing alternative mechanisms to manage this aspect of support. At least one Western Australian non-government accommodation service provider has a Memorandum of Understanding with a local housing association such that the housing association has responsibility for the acquisition and maintenance of housing, while the accommodation service provider is responsible for support. Other arrangements may include a family acquiring and maintaining housing or a person using the private rental market whereby the owner maintains the property.

## **Administration and Management**

The final component in accommodation support is the administration and management issues. The funding and regulatory requirements, such as managing employment, workers compensation and taxation, are likely to be a cumbersome aspect of service provision. The management and administration issues may be resolved through several arrangements including outsourcing to an organisation specifically designed to manage this aspect of accommodation support. Many person or family governed models of support may reduce the regulatory pressures by outsourcing the administrative components of accommodation support. For instance a family may select, orientate and supervise workers for accommodation arrangements. However, they may outsource administration including salaries, taxation and workers compensation to a company or organisation specifically designed to manage this aspect of employment. In accommodation arrangements that are based on more private provisions, for example host families or in kind support, it can be difficult to determine the applicability of regulatory requirements and conditions.

The three components of accommodation support described in this section each provide an opportunity to develop innovative accommodation arrangements. The separation of housing and support allow services to be designed in unique ways that respond to the circumstances and opportunities available at an individual and local level. Although, the development of innovative accommodation arrangements relies heavily on the availability of affordable housing in a variety of areas, the availability of appropriate supports including access to funding, competent support people and/or affordable assistive technology, where appropriate.

## TOWARD INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

### A Framework for Innovation

Innovation is not advocated for its own sake nor is it always positive, as it may result in unwelcome outcomes for already vulnerable individuals. It is acknowledged that there may be many aspects of the accommodation support service system that are currently working well, and do not require changing. The challenge, therefore, is to balance the opportunity for improvement, against the risks of untested change. Innovation in the context of accommodation support needs to be sustainable, viable and lead to outcomes that are relevant and meaningful to people with disabilities.

It is worth noting that many of the group residential options for people with disabilities in Western Australia, from the opening of Pyrrton in 1966, through to the progressive establishment of hostels over the 1960s and 70s, and the establishment of community-based group homes throughout the 70s and 80s, were considered innovative in their time. Over time these models have undergone further reform and the energy and innovation that surrounded them has lost its momentum. These models respectively, generally improved outcomes compared to previous models, however over time their overall inability to provide a satisfactory quality of life, in many instances, was acknowledged.

Simmons and Watson (1999) suggest:

The history of (intellectual) disability services is a history of good intentions that have gone wrong (or at least not worked out as intended). At the same time most people with (intellectual) disabilities are vulnerable in some way, and indeed some are very vulnerable. Therefore when things go wrong, they can go disastrously wrong. By their very nature, residential or housing and support services have an important role in helping people to stay safe. (p.57)

It is imperative that attempts to improve accommodation support models do not create situations that increase the vulnerability of people with disabilities. Currently, there is a tendency to describe a range of human services, including accommodation support, with terminology such as 'best practice', 'leading edge' and 'centres of excellence'. Nevertheless, the use of such terms are often unsubstantiated and compounded by the fact that the literature lacks a consistent view of what constitutes quality in supported accommodation. The deinstitutionalisation discourse that continues to influence accommodation support reform tends to be based on an ideology that refutes institutionalisation, but lacks a consistent set of descriptors or principles to underpin alternatives to institutions (Stancliffe & Lakin, 2005).

It is evident that any model of accommodation will provide a wide variance of outcomes for the individuals involved. This variance in outcomes may be explained by the tendency to duplicate models of

accommodation without considering their particular relevance to the needs of individual or local circumstances. The literature supports further evaluation of different models of accommodation to understand the components of the model that result in positive outcomes for people with disabilities. In their report on variation in the cost and social outcomes of the provision of accommodation support across different models of community accommodation Myles, Ager, Kerr, Myers and Walker (2000) found:

Broader evaluation perspectives, embracing a fuller range of costs and benefits, will be required to unpack exactly what it is about different models of community care provision that lead to positive outcomes... A more sound evidence base is required before effective strategies can be designed to ensure that key policy outcomes are realised and social integration truly achieved. (p.406)

Accordingly, it is important that future developments in accommodation supports are based on sound evidence, where available. Policy decisions that direct developments should be critically reviewed to ensure unintended and long term consequences have been considered. These strategies provide at least some safeguards to ensure innovation leads to quality outcomes for already vulnerable people. Any future innovation must be supported by a framework that provides a consistent understanding of what constitutes quality in relation to the provision of accommodation support.

### **Quality in Supported Accommodation**

Traditionally, judgment of the 'quality' of accommodation support for people with disabilities has been based on exploring the outcomes and life experiences of each individual. For instance, Stancliffe, Emerson and Lakin (2004) suggest that much of the research relating to outcomes achieved in various models of accommodation support has assessed adaptive and challenging behaviour, quality of life, participation in community-based activities, social participation, and skills development. In recent years there has been increasing discussion about what constitutes quality in accommodation support for people with a disability (Emerson & Hatton, 2005; Simmons & Watson, 1999; Stancliffe & Lakin, 2005).

Schalock (1995, p.16) suggests that the outcomes of disability services can be considered in terms of three measures:

- Effectiveness – the extent to which the program meets its goals and objectives
- Impact- whether the program makes a difference compared to either no program or an alternative program
- Benefit-costs-whether the programs benefits outweigh the programs costs

In considering these outcomes there are two important considerations. Firstly the outcomes should reflect the needs and preferences of each individual. Secondly outcomes need to be considered within the scope of responsibility of the accommodation service.

As stated previously any future innovation requires an understanding of what constitutes quality in supported accommodation as this provides at least some safeguard to ensure innovation does not compromise service quality. The question remains ‘how do we know when we have achieved quality ‘accommodation support’?

Quality accommodation supports are likely to include the following outcomes:

- Relevant responses to an individual needs and preferences that result in improved quality of life
- Control afforded to individuals
- ‘Homeliness’
- Builds on and supports informal networks
- Interconnected with local neighbourhood
- Promotes development
- Provides safety

### **Relevant Responses to an Individual’s Preferences and Needs:**

The extent to which the supports and/or housing meet the needs and preferences of an individual is the central issue in regard to the effectiveness of accommodation support. It is therefore evident that services designed around individuals are likely to be more effective than services designed around a particular ‘model’ or building. The support provided to a person should be relevant to their particular needs, such that they are sensitive to their life experience, culture and history. These person-centred approaches are based on an acknowledgment that a person with disability (and their family, advocates and allies) are in the best position to define and determine how their own needs are met.

In terms of responding to a person’s needs, Schalock and Felce (2004, p.264) identify eight core domains that are increasingly being used to evaluate disability service quality.

These domains include:

- emotional wellbeing
- interpersonal relationships
- material wellbeing
- personal development
- physical wellbeing

- self determination
- social inclusion
- rights

It is important to acknowledge that the quality of life of people with disabilities is based on the same components of quality of life of all people (De Waele, Van Loon, Van Hove and Schalock, 2005, p. 230). Accommodation support arrangements are likely to strongly influence personal outcomes related to each of these domains. For example:

- emotional wellbeing – such as contentment, self concept and a sense of safety and security. Accommodation support arrangements can be organised in ways that promote emotional wellbeing. For instance, people with cognitive impairments may prefer a structured environment to gain a sense of personal safety. Similarly, attention to creating the right relationship between support workers and the person requiring support will need attention, if emotional wellbeing is to be achieved.
- interpersonal relationships – such as interactions and relationships. Accommodation support arrangements can be structured in ways that promote social inclusion and interpersonal relationships. The person(s) providing support will have a role in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships particularly by creating a welcoming environment.

The importance and subtleties of the relationship between support staff and people requiring support is described by Marquis and Jackson (2000) who suggest:

Creation of a social world through relationships with others in any life situation has potential to fulfil the basic capacity to develop resilience and meaning in life. Although not a substitute for natural friendships, validating relationships between people living and working in services have potential to provide people with disabilities with a sense of attachment, emotional integration and stability, reinforcement of worth, and the development of confidence in entering other relationships.(p.421)

Similarly, the delicate relationship between paid and informal supports needs to be established.

- material wellbeing – such as financial security and housing. Material poverty can be a significant reality for many people with disabilities (Saunders, 2005). In the context of accommodation support, people with disabilities may need to be supported to ensure their material wellbeing is safeguarded through support with budgeting, acquisition of personal possessions and tenancy of suitable housing.

- personal development – such as personal competence. There are a wide range of developmental opportunities associated with home. Support staff will need to build on these opportunities to ensure people with disabilities are supported to maximise their potential.
- physical wellbeing – such as health status and leisure. People with disabilities should be supported to develop and maintain physical wellbeing. This will include access to adequate medical support and be supported to have a healthy lifestyle such as exercise and diet.
- self determination - such as autonomy and personal control. In the context of accommodation support, support arrangements can be organised in a way that promote a persons autonomy and control. This is a critical issue in the creation of ‘homeliness’ and supports should be provided in ways that create opportunities for choice and control.
- social inclusion – such as community roles and social support  
Accommodation support arrangements can be organised in ways that promote social inclusion. Ericsson (1996) noted that for a person with an intellectual disability, “housing is also the platform from which they establish participation in community life, preparing to make purchases, caring for their health and well-being, taking part in culture and recreation as well as social relations and community involvement” (p.92). Therefore supports can be provided in ways that connect people to their community and support people to develop community roles.
- rights – such as human rights and legal status. Accommodation support arrangements should be organised in ways that protect people’s human and legal rights, such as providing adequate safeguards.

These eight domains provide a framework for considering the outcomes and effectiveness of disability services including supported accommodation services. The effective analysis of these domains needs to be strongly grounded in the actual experience of people within accommodation support.

## **Homeliness**

The creation of ‘home’ is one of the key outcomes of quality accommodation support. There has been increasing debate about provision of a genuine sense of home as an element of quality accommodation support.

The importance of home as a mission (or goal) of supported accommodation is increasingly evident in disability service policy.

Annison (2000) suggests:

Despite the nation-wide move of significant numbers of a person to group homes and the creation of more home-like settings, the question of, “what constitutes a genuine home?” has been largely ignored or inadequately addressed by service providers and policy makers... it is therefore highly important that any consideration of community living arrangements as they affect a person in socially devalued groups, should also examine the nature of home because of the central role of ‘the home’ in contributing to high quality community living. (p.252)

The manner in which accommodation supports are structured will either enhance or hinder the creation of home. Practices that are likely to develop ‘homeliness’ include residents having control over who they live with and how they spend their time, support staff who respect and nurture the concept of home, privacy afforded to residents and finally minimising ‘workplace’ practices.

### **Control Afforded to Individuals;**

The degree of choice and control available to a person with a disability, with regards to their accommodation including the choice of whom they live with, how they spend their time and the degree of control over their home environment is an important outcome of quality accommodation support.

As Kendrick (2002), in considering the issue of ‘homeliness’ suggests:

Perhaps the most important distinguishing factor to note is whether the home is indeed that of the person(s) who reside there. In this sense, did they elect to live there or was the place selected for them or by others? At issue is whether they exercise some normative sense of sovereignty over the home typical of that enjoyed by most citizens. Specifically, there should be no confusion as to whose home it really is. For many clients of services, the home isn’t really theirs, but rather is controlled by others-typically agencies or other corporate bodies. Ownership may be less the issue than personal dominion over one’s place of residence. To be one’s home, such dominion need not be absolute in the sense that it may be shared with others, yet the understanding that it is authentically “your place” should not be in dispute. (p.2)

### **Builds on and Supports Informal Networks**

The extent to which accommodation support complements and enhances informal supports, particularly families, will be a key determinant of quality in accommodation supports. People with disabilities are likely to have a range of established relationships including family, peers and friends when entering accommodation support arrangements. It may require sensitivity and creativity to develop a ‘place’ for families within



accommodation support arrangements (or at least efforts not to displace these existing relationships).

## **Interconnected with Local Neighbourhood**

The degree to which accommodation support complements and connects a person to their local neighbourhood and broader community is a consideration in determining its effectiveness. The design compatibility with the local neighbourhood may be an important factor in promoting acceptance. The outward focus of the housing design, such that it is welcoming and part of local neighbourhood, rather than hidden or cut off, is likely to contribute to connectedness with local neighbours.

Accommodation support services are likely to have responsibility for how a person spends their time, their civic presence, their relationships and roles. The capacity of accommodation support to effectively provide these aspects of support is an indicator of quality. Similarly, accommodation supports that have a positive social impact on local neighbourhood are more likely to lead to inclusive experiences for people with disabilities. The social impact of accommodation arrangements would include considering the impact of parking cars within the neighbourhood, comings and goings of support staff and noise from the home. Attention to these details may pave the way for involvement with neighbours.

## **Developmental**

Quality accommodation support will provide developmental opportunities for people with disabilities. The nature of 'home' provides broad opportunities for development such as bill paying, home maintenance, entertaining and socialisation.

Cocks (1998), aptly describes the importance of a developmental principle, as the following:

The developmental principle embodies a set of basic beliefs about human beings. These beliefs centre on the fundamental importance to human beings of growth and development. The principle states that growth and development, and the opportunity for the exercise of these, is vital to everyone, including people with disabilities, no matter what the extent of their disability... The person is seen as having a powerful influence on the provision of opportunities. The rate of developmental growth may differ from person to person, but potential for growth and the essential quality and dignity of development are necessary human characteristics. (p.31)

Research analysing the impact of deinstitutionalisation suggests that, similarly to institutions, people with disabilities who live in the community are far from achieving their developmental potential (see Emerson & Hatton 2005 p.37).

## **Safety**

The extent to which accommodation supports provide safety and security for the person with a disability is a critical component of quality. The acknowledgement of the life experience and increased level of vulnerability of a person needs to be balanced with their right to experience risk (dignity of risk). It is appropriate to aim for a balance between the potential opportunities and benefits of risk taking and possible harm.

## **Factors Likely to lead to Quality Accommodation Support**

The literature identifies several factors that have at least some correlation to improved outcomes in accommodation support. However individually (and in combination) none are expected to guarantee quality outcomes. This noted these factors and their interrelation provide opportunities for the design of new (and the improvement of existing) accommodation support services. An initial search of the literature identifies the following factors as impacting on the quality of supported accommodation.

- Support staff
- Person centred approach
- Location
- Structure of supports
- Service Culture
- Safeguards
- Service Management

## **Support Staff**

The way staff provide support to the people they serve has been singled out as a key determinant of outcome in supported accommodation (Mansell, 1998). The relationship between support staff and the people supported is a central factor influencing outcomes in accommodation. This relationship is likely to hinge on creating the 'right' balance, for example, finding a balance between supporting a persons' independence and acknowledging their personal limitations. Furthermore, a balance needs to be created between 'caring for' and 'caring about' a person, for instance 'caring for' is more about providing the practical care that people require and is not the same as 'caring about' a person (Stehlik 1991:85).

The relationships, warmth and interactions between people within the accommodation support arrangement will have an important impact on the achievement of beneficial outcomes and service quality. The compatibility of all tenants including support persons is a critical component for the creation of 'homeliness'.

The role of support staff in accommodation has changed and developed particularly in more individualised arrangements. Support staff are more likely to work in arrangements without direct supervision.

Bradley (1996) in describing the changing role of support staff suggests:

The role of direct care staff in traditional organisations is essentially to be the arms and legs of the agency, carry out orders rather than collaborating to solve problems. Though direct service personnel are often asked to work in highly decentralized and isolated circumstances, they are rarely given the autonomy to shape their work life. In more individualized settings they will

likely be called on to make independent decisions, to work with people with intellectual disabilities and their families to fashion individual and idiosyncratic supports, and to work with generic agencies and natural supports in unique and community specific configurations. (p. XII)

Although support staff are a critical component of successful accommodation support arrangements these relationships are likely to be strongly influenced by other factors such as management practices, service practices, training and the physical environment.

## **Person Centred Approach**

A ‘person centred’ approach to accommodation support, when effectively applied, ensures supports and housing respond to the unique needs of individuals. The accommodation support provided using this approach is likely to be sensitive to the life experience, culture and history of the person. Such, person-centred approaches are based on an acknowledgment that a person with disabilities (and their families, advocates and allies) are considered to be in the best position to define and determine how their own needs are met.

Despite the effectiveness of ‘person centred’ approaches, in practice they have been poorly applied in disability services in some instances (see Mansell & Beadle- Brown, 2004). Inevitably a person centred approach will require some form of planning with individuals, although, this needs to be approached with caution.

O’Brien (1993) suggests:

The service system plans for people in a linear, rational way. Annual objectives and regular periodic reviews are supposed to control the amount, direction and means of assistance a person receives. This assumption is built into the regulation and review of systems. But peoples’ real lives change differently. Needs for more or less support or the discovery of a new area of need or interest doesn’t follow an orderly pattern. (p.9)

## **Location**

The location of housing, for most citizens, is a major consideration in selecting a home. The location reflects our preferences and linkages to the local neighbourhood.

Simmons and Watson (1999) suggest:

People’s community of origin, and their links with family and friends should be a starting point in terms of service design. In this context location becomes critical. Far too many people have to move to where traditional services are located. Supported living represents an attempt to halt the process of their exclusion from many communities. (p.19)

## **Service Culture**

The culture of an organisation refers to the prevailing attitudes and practices, the unwritten rules and the accepted patterns of behaviour (Drennan, 1992). Organisational culture has a direct impact on staff behaviour. The culture of the organisation that provides supported accommodation is likely to impact on outcomes (Emerson & Hatton 2005). For instance, an organisational culture that embraces the philosophy of personalised and individual service, as part of its ethos and practice, is more likely to provide meaningful outcomes to individuals. Although the impact of an organisations culture has not been widely researched in accommodation support services, initial studies suggest further research is warranted.

Gillett and Stenfert-Kroese (2003) in their pilot study on the associations between organisational culture and quality outcomes in residential services for people with intellectual disabilities found:

Results suggest that there may well be a meaningful relationship, although the nature of this relationship is far from clear. These findings support the continuation of investigations into organisational culture, with a focus on clinically as well as statistically significant results, as a relatively small but consistent difference may have a significant impact in terms of service user and organisational outcomes. (p.283)

## **Structure of Support**

The structure of support provided in an accommodation service will have a significant impact on the realisation of 'home' for a person who lives within the setting. Generally, it is likely that models of support that rotate around short and medium shifts for workers are less conducive to home than models of support where workers live in for longer periods and provide consistency. The challenge for service designers is to find an arrangement that balances the need for a homely routine with the needs of support staff to have their own lifestyle within the accommodation arrangement. Furthermore, service support structures need to be flexible enough to respond to changes in individual needs.

Kendrick, Bezanson, Petty and Jones (2006) in evaluating and describing high-quality community services suggest:

Another feature of high quality community services is that the systems supporting those services have mechanisms for staying in communication with users to keep abreast of changes in their lives and to respond in flexible and creative ways.

The lives of service users are dynamic, just as are the lives of most people. As service users experience new dreams, goals, and circumstances, they may need a new array of services and supports to meet those needs. (p.5)

## **Safeguards**

The development and maintenance of accommodation supports need to consider and ensure the safety and security of people with disabilities including acknowledging the heightened vulnerability experienced by this group.

O'Brien (1993) comments:

Service providers are responsible to assist people to deal constructively with their vulnerabilities. Sometimes this means sticking with people through very difficult and confusing experiences and sometimes it means working hard to negotiate a safer situation for people. (p.6)

Accommodation support needs to be structured in ways that safeguard people from all forms of abuse and neglect. This will include:

- strategies to attract, train and supervise the 'right' people to provide support;
- understanding and responding to each individual's personal vulnerabilities; and
- understanding local community factors that increase the risk of abuse.

## **Service Management**

Service management will have a direct impact on support staff behaviour. The autonomous nature of contemporary accommodation arrangements may require a different style of management to traditional service settings.

O'Brien (1993) suggests:

Staff must become much more autonomous in managing their schedules and in making decisions about people's well being and the best use of agencies time. In order to sustain effective alliances, all staff have to learn to make judgments consistent with agencies values. Every worker will deal with community members. Some workers find this much expanded role challenging and interesting; others find it a greater responsibility than they want to manage. Managers have to learn to be effective consultants in problem solving and effective mediators in complex relationships. The agency must develop ways to insure that staff don't feel isolated and unsupported, and these must be thoughtfully created so that staff don't feel distrusted or manipulated. (p.11)

## **ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

This discussion paper aims to inform and promote further debate and in doing so, contribute to innovative solutions to providing quality accommodation support for people with disabilities in Western Australia. The extent of future developments in accommodation support remains both inspired and constrained by the opportunities and challenges discussed below.

### **Opportunities**

#### **Evidence Based Practice**

The research from the last few decades has provided a broad range of evidence to direct the development of quality accommodation support. It has also highlighted gaps in evidence that require further consideration. At a policy level decision makers will be required to analyse existing research, consider anecdotal findings as effective accommodation supports emerge and apply this information to future practice.

#### **Increasing Focus on Quality Outcomes**

Increasingly research and practice in accommodation support is being considered against its effectiveness to provide quality outcomes for people with disabilities. While effective measurement of quality outcomes (grounded in the real experience of people with disabilities) are yet to be broadly applied, a commitment to the principle is encouraging.

#### **Flexibility of Individualised Funding**

The individualised funding approach for accommodation support in Western Australia provides extensive opportunity for promoting innovation and individualised arrangements.

#### **Support for Emerging Models**

Substantial support (through the Disability Service Commission, Commonwealth Government and local service providers) has allowed a range of new models of accommodation support to develop in WA such as family networks to develop family governed service models.

#### **Willingness to Develop Individualised Supports**

The nature of individualised supports can require a new style of governance and management.

O'Brien (1993) describes:

(Individualised supports) even more than other innovations, needs slack to develop and can never be uniform and predictable in the way that services based on standardized control of clients can be. This makes

(individualized supports) an attractive but threatening anomaly. (p.2)

Despite the management style required for individualised support several service providers in Western Australia have been willing to develop skills in this area.

## **Challenges**

### **Vulnerabilities Inherent in Individualised Accommodation Models**

The evidence to date, both research and anecdotal, suggest that individualised accommodation support approaches are providing promising outcomes (see Felce, 2000; Kinsella, 1993; O'Brien, 1993). Nevertheless all models of accommodation support have their own challenges in providing quality outcomes. Some of the challenges purported in individualised support include:

- Isolation – this can occur in individualised support arrangements (as with other support models). Those designing and providing support will need to pay particular attention to the maintenance and development of relationships. Support staff can also become isolated and some benefits may be gained from connection to others in similar work roles (see O'Brien, 1993, p.7).
- Realities and limitations of community – Individualised accommodation support may be based on an altruistic view of community, for instance the belief that most people will be welcoming and 'involved', yet the modern reality of community will likely include rejection and disconnection.
- Direct supervision and monitoring –as with many of the small community based models of support “*direct 'eyes' on supervision of front line staff is virtually impossible*” (O'Brien, 1993, p.10).

These challenges also often exist in other accommodation models and can be overcome with careful consideration and creativity in the implementations of supports. In designing and maintaining individualised supports, acknowledgment of and safeguarding against these challenges can increase the likelihood of achieving quality outcomes.

### **Overcoming Social Inequalities**

People with disabilities, when compared to the rest of the population tend to achieve poor outcomes in some areas, across all forms of accommodation supports. The evidence suggests health, employment, financial security and social inclusion are all areas where people with disabilities achieve poor social outcomes (Hatton & Emerson, 1996; Emerson & Hatton 2005). There is a need for further development to address these aspects of imbalance in accommodation services.



## **Transitions**

The transition from the family home to accommodation support is a significant life change for both the family and the person with a disability. It is important to consider ways to make this transition successful for all stakeholders. Adequate support for people with disabilities and their families in this period of transition from home to an alternative arrangement is critical. Existing models of both support and funding may not adequately support effective transition.

## **Poverty**

Poverty is experienced by many people with disabilities (see Saunders, 2005). Financial poverty can lead to impoverishment of life experience and other outcomes such as health and housing. It can be challenging for people with disabilities (even though they may be funded for support) to meet the costs of rent and 'day to day' living expenses. This can create challenges for service designers, to provide adequate housing within limited financial resources.

## **Responding to Complex and/or Changing Needs**

As with any dimension of the human experience, the needs and preferences of a person with disabilities are likely to change over time. Factors associated with changing needs include the ageing process which may have an earlier than usual onset in some disabling conditions, the degenerative nature of some disabling conditions and a reduction or withdrawal of service support in other dimensions of the person's life (e.g. loss of day placement or employment). In some cases the person's needs for support may diminish due to successful habilitation (or rehabilitation). More often than not, however, the issues listed above result in the need for higher levels of support to be provided. The capacity of accommodation support to respond to changing needs is likely to improve with:

- universal design of premises (to ensure accessibility for wheelchairs and other mobility aids);
- timely access to additional resources if required (to maintain quality support and assure service continuity); and
- support from funding bodies to allow agencies to be flexible in their approach.

## **Eligibility for Accommodation Support Funding**

In Western Australia funding for accommodation support is based on a person being in critical need before funding is allocated. Many people are in crisis before funding is available and this creates at least two significant challenges. Firstly the capacity of families to consider creative individualised responses may be minimised due to emotional and physical exhaustion. Similarly, the capacity of families to offer informal supports may be limited by extended periods of strain on the family unit. Secondly the current system may provide significant barriers for the establishment

of accommodation support responses for people with disabilities who through friendship, choose to live together, yet would rely on funded accommodation support to achieve this, as the likelihood of both people reaching critical need together is unlikely.

## **Questions Requiring Further Research and Debate**

The history of developments in accommodation support, particularly the failure of promising models to achieve policy expectations, would suggest that it is important that future developments in accommodation supports are based on sound evidence, where available. Policy decisions that direct developments should be critically reviewed to ensure unintended and long term consequences have been considered. These strategies provide at least some safeguards to ensure innovation leads to quality outcomes for already vulnerable people.

This paper attempts to shift the debate in accommodation supports away from the effectiveness of models and toward personalised approaches to a persons preferences and needs in a least restrictive way, which may involve any number of models and approaches. The literature to-date has highlighted that although we have certainly come a long way in having improved the outcomes for people with disabilities through the reform of accommodation support, there are still important issues that require continuing emphasis and debate such as:

- How do we ensure an affordable supply of housing stock in an individuals preferred location?
- How do we attract and retain the right support persons to provide individualised accommodation support?
- How do we overcome the links between poverty and disability to ensure high standard housing and support?
- How can we promote accommodation support models that help to build citizenship and promote contribution to society by people with disabilities?
- How can we further assist family members to establish accommodation support arrangements for their family members when they (the family unit) wish to be self-sufficient and not rely on government funding?
- How can innovation improve the outcomes achieved in shared supported accommodation, if that is the accommodation model chosen?
- How do we understand, define and measure the effectiveness of accommodation support?
- How do we provide responsive and appropriate accommodation support for people with complex needs for instances to persons' with significant medical needs or people who are at risk of entering the justice system?

## CONCLUSION

This paper has included a brief review of current and emerging literature and practice to provide a framework for conceptualising accommodation support. It has analysed accommodation support, particularly the components of housing, support and administration, with the aim of providing opportunities for developing innovative solutions around each of these components. However, it is acknowledged that these components are complex and interconnected. Furthermore, innovation in each of these areas requires supportive policy frameworks and resource availability.

Innovation in accommodation support must be supported by a framework that outlines what constitutes quality in accommodation support. This provides at least some safeguard to ensure innovation does not compromise quality outcomes for already vulnerable people. This paper has provided discussion on what constitutes quality in accommodation support. Similarly, it provides insight into the factors likely to contribute to quality in supported accommodation.

In conclusion, the paper provides an outline of the opportunities and challenges that influence innovative solutions, with a view to stimulating further debate. The aim of the paper is to provide a context for future innovation in meeting individual accommodation support needs of Western Australians with disabilities.

## REFERENCES

- Allard, MA. (1996) Supported Living Policies and Programmes in the US. In J Mansell & K Ericsson (Eds) *Deinstitutionalization and Community Living: Intellectual Disability Services in Britain, Scandinavia and the USA*. London: Chapman and Hall.
- Annisson, J.E. (2000). Toward a clearer understanding of the meaning of 'home'. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 25 (4), 251-262.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2005) Disability and Disability Services. In Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005. *Australia's Welfare 2005*. AIHW cat. no. AUS65. Canberra: AIHW.
- Braddock, D., Emerson, E., Felce, D. & Stancliffe, R J. (2001) Living circumstances of children and adults with mental retardation or developmental disabilities in the United States, Canada, England and Wales, and Australia *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews* 7 (2). 115 – 121.
- Bradley, V. (1996) Foreword. In Mansell, J. and Ericsson, K. (Eds) *Deinstitutionalization and Community Living: Intellectual disability services in Britian, Scandinavia and the USA*. (pp. IX-XVII) London: Chapman and Hall.
- Cocks, E. (1998) *An Introduction to Intellectual Disability in Australia* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) Canberra: Australian Institute on Intellectual Disability
- De Waele, I., Van Loon, J., Van Hove, G. & Shalock, R L. (2005) Quality of Life Versus Quality of Care: Implications for People and Programs. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*. 2. 229-239.
- Disability Service Commission. (2003) *Accommodation Blueprint Report*. [http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au/cproot/798/2/1accomodation\\_blueprint.pdf](http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au/cproot/798/2/1accomodation_blueprint.pdf)
- Disability Services Commission (2005) Annual Report. [http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au/cproot/1664/2/DSC\\_ARReport\\_2004-05.pdf](http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au/cproot/1664/2/DSC_ARReport_2004-05.pdf)
- Drennan, D. (1992) *Transforming Company Culture*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Ericsson, K. (1996). Housing for the person with intellectual handicap. In Mansell, J. & Ericsson, K. (Eds), *Deinstitutionalisation and Community Living: Intellectual disability Services in Britian, Scandinavia and the USA*. (pp.81-96) London: Chapman and Hall.
- Emerson, E & Hatton, C. (2005) Deinstitutionalisation. *Learning Disability Review*. 10 (1). 36-40.
- Felce, D. (2000) *Quality of Life for people with learning disabilities in Supported Housing*. Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities. Applied Research Unit. University of Wales College of Medicine.
- Felce, D. (1996) 'Quality of support for ordinary living. In McConke, R. *Innovations in evaluating services for a person with intellectual disabilities*. Lisieux Hall Publications

- Gillett, E. and Stenfert-Kroese, B. (2003) 'Investigating Organizational Culture: A comparison of a 'High'- and a 'Low'- Performing Residential Unit for people with Intellectual Disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*. 16, 279-284.
- Hatton, C and Emerson, E. (1996). *Residential Provision for People with Learning Disabilities: A Research Review*. Hester Adrian Research Centre, University of Manchester.
- Head, M and Conroy, J. (2005) Outcomes of Self Determination in Michigan: Quality and Costs. In Stancliffe, R.J., and Lakin, K.C. (219-240) *Costs and Outcomes of Community Services for People with Intellectual Disabilities*, Baltimore: Brookes.
- Kendrick, M. (2002) Some Significant Ethical Issues In Residential Services. "Housing and Support for People with "Challenging Behaviour": Some Guidance, Edited Presentation by Dr Micheal Kendrick for Disability Services Queensland and The Queensland Department of Housing, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia March 11, 2002.
- Kendrick, M.J., Bezanson, L., Petty, R. & Jones, D.L. (2006) *Hallmarks and Features of High Quality Community-Based Services* ILRU Community Living Partnership
- Kinsella, P. (1993) *Supported Living: A new paradigm*. Manchester: National Development Team.
- Mansell, J. (1998) Commentary on Getting a foot in the door: The strategic significance of supported living. *Tizard Learning Disability Review*. 3 (2) 17-19.
- Mansell, J. and Beadle-Brown, J. (2003) Person-Centred Planning or Person-Centred Action? Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disability Services. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 2004, 17, 1-9
- Mansell, J. (2005) Deinstitutionalisation and community Living: An international Perspective *Learning Disability Review* 10 1
- Marquis, R. & Jackson, R. (2000) Quality of life and Quality of Service Relationships: experiences of people with disabilities. *Disability and Society*. 15. 411-425.
- Myles, S. Ager, A. Kerr, P. Myers, F. & Walker, J. (2000) Moving home: costs associated with different models of accommodation for adults with learning disabilities *Health & Social Care in the Community*. 8 (6) 406.
- O'Brien, J. (1993) *Supported Living: What's the difference?* Responsive Systems Associates, Inc.
- Rogers, K. (1998) Family Empowerment in Accommodation Services *Interaction* 11 (3) 24-27.
- Saunders, P. (2005) *Disability, Poverty and Living Standards: Reviewing Australian Evidence and Policies* Social Policy Research Centre Paper No. 145

- Schalock, R.L. (1995) *Outcomes-Based Evaluation* Plenum Press, New York.
- Schalock, R. & Felce, D. (2004) Quality of Life and Subjective Wellbeing: Conceptual and Measurement Issues. In Emerson, E., Hatton, C., Thompson, T. and Parmenter, T. R. (Ed). *The International Handbook of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*. (261-280). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Simons, K. (1997) *Residential Care or Housing and Support* British Journal of Learning Disabilities Vol.25 1997.
- Simmons, K. & Watson, D. (1999) The View From Arthurs Seat: A Literature Review of Housing and Support Options 'Beyond Scotland' The Scottish Office Central Research Unit
- Stancliffe, R. J., Emerson, E. & Lakin, C. (2004) Residential Supports In E. Emerson, C Hatton, T. Thomas and T. R Parameter (Ed). *The International Handbook of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*. (459-478). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Stancliffe. R. J., & Lakin, C. (2005) *Costs and Outcomes of Community Services for People with Intellectual Disabilities*. Baltimore:Brookes Publishing.
- Stehlik, D. (1991) *Making the Invisible Visible: An analysis of the home and community care program: A socialist-feminist perspective*. Unpublished Master of Social Science Thesis (Human Services) Edith Cowan University
- Taylor, S.J. (1991) Toward individualized community living. In Taylor, S., Bogan, R. & Racino, J.A. (Ed) *Life in the Community*, Baltimore:Brookes Publishing.

# FINAL DRAFT

This discussion paper is the second paper commissioned by the Accommodation Think Tank Coordinating Committee. A paper was produced in 2005 titled 'Innovation in the provision of accommodation support services for Western Australians with a disability: Case studies'. It is available on the Think Tank website ([www.thinktankwa.net.au](http://www.thinktankwa.net.au)).

**Further Information: Monique Williamson**

**ACROD WA Division**

**PO Box 1428**

**OSBORNE PARK WA 6916**

**1/59 Walters Drive**

**OSBORNE PARK WA 6016**

**Tel: (08) 9208 9802**

**Fax: (08) 9242 5044**

**[moniquewa@acrod.org.au](mailto:moniquewa@acrod.org.au)**