



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 25 awesome Young people who participated in PICYS Most Significant Change process.

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PICYS Stakeholders Group – Ali de La Rie, Vanessa Harvey, and Salli Higham

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PICYS Board for their commitment to the project and ongoing implementation

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We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay respect to them and their cultures, and the Elders past, present and emerging.

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**“I’M GOING TO GO FAR PLACES, I’M GOING TO STUDY NOW, I’VE GOT STABLE ACCOMMODATION, SO I WON’T HAVE TO KEEP MOVING ALL THE TIME. I NOW HAVE MORE LIFE SKILLS AND I HAVE PEOPLE I CAN TALK TO AND TRUST.”**

**CHYNA, 19 YEARS OLD**

# FORWARDS

I congratulate the PICYS team and the young people who generously shared their experiences for this project.

It is vital that the views and experiences of children and young people are heard and responded to in a practical way so programs and services can best support their wellbeing.

The first hand accounts from young people within this booklet show the power of ensuring young people feel respected, heard and valued in interactions with service delivery organisations. This takes both time to build trusting relationships and a degree of flexibility in providing ongoing support that focuses on the immediate and long-term needs of the young person.

This booklet is a valuable resource that should inform service delivery funding and development approaches.

I encourage anyone working with vulnerable children and young people to read these first hand accounts of how effective support can change a young person's life trajectory.

**COLIN PETTIT**  
COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In collaboration with six young people, PICYS have produced an inspirational collection of most significant change narratives. This collection demonstrates vital aspects of the approach taken by the PICYS staff in their work with young people. It highlights the importance of the youth worker approach that takes a practical and holistic view of the young person's current circumstances and needs. It also clearly demonstrates the importance of relationship building within their work. In answering the question "How I have changed as a result of being involved with PICYS", Renee's simple statement "sense of security" really captures this. Every young person needs to feel secure to be able to thrive. The fact that PICYS can provide this to young people who might not have had any other secure base is something to be proud of. Congratulations to PICYS. To the young people who contributed, you are an inspiration.

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ASHLEIGH LIN**  
PROGRAM HEAD OF MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUTH,  
TELETHON KIDS INSTITUTE

The Six young people who share their stories have experienced a number of difficulties including abuse, social isolation, a range of mental health difficulties, and problems with alcohol and drug use. These personal stories provide insight into the reality of the lives of many young people in Western Australia.

The young people became part of the Perth Inner City Youth Service, staff provided them with acceptance, and they were

able to explore who they want to be. They were provided with a home and stability. The stories demonstrate how young people can make many positive changes if they are provided with the right support.

As one young person observes, "If it wasn't for the help I got at PICYS I would be homeless or dead".

PICYS have provided a positive environment to so many young people in Western Australia and I congratulate them for their exceptional commitment to young people over many years.

**WARWICK SMITH**  
DIRECTOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH, NORTH METROPOLITAN HEALTH  
SERVICE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

As these wonderful stories demonstrate we all need trust, safety and understanding in life. Sometimes it is too hard to meet someone half way, at least at first. Sometimes we need to be met right where we are.

Growing and developing our sense of well-being and overcoming adversity takes work, but just as importantly it takes kindness towards yourself and others. PICYS, thank you for giving these awesome young people the care and support they deserve.

Most importantly, thank you to all the young people who shared their personal story about getting through life's challenges. You are awesome.

**HON SENATOR LOUISE PRATT**  
SHADOW ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR MANUFACTURING

PICYS 'Most Significant Change' project has been an inspirational and informative read. Reading the stories of Sam, Ash, Maizie, Renee, Ruby and Chyna provided me with valuable insight on the wide range of issues vulnerable young people face. Reading the contributions from the Youth Workers from the Household Network and PILLAR youth mental health service just further demonstrates how incredible and important these programs are. The stories highlight the holistic approach which the Youth Workers view the young person's circumstances and needs. In reading the responses to the question "How I have changed as a result of being involved with PICYS", I was particularly moved by Sam's story. Sam's story is an important example of the level of trust required to manage the many risks and challenges Sam faced. The stories in the 'Most Significant Change' report demonstrate PICYS are highly capable and professional and staff deserve to be congratulated for their service.

**HON SENATOR DEAN SMITH**  
LIBERAL SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
CHIEF GOVERNMENT WHIP IN THE SENATE

There is no doubt that the Youth Sector Transformative Evaluation – Most Significant Change research project provides an incredibly valuable insight into the nature and breadth of the work that PICYS undertakes not least because young people’s voices and experiences are central to the project.

Each of the six personal accounts in this booklet highlight the importance of fostering connection, acceptance, stability and trust between youth workers and young people no matter how complex the challenges facing the young people are.

As Ruby so aptly put it “You guys are like its ok your going through this we are here to help, that’s a big thing. No other service would take me.”

The evaluation methodology itself recognises the dynamic nature of each young person’s journey and significantly, it provides a clear process for ensuring the voices of young people are captured, valued and acted upon.

The project is yet another example of the exceptional services provided by PICYS and their unwavering commitment to the young people they work with.

**HON ALISON XAMON MLC**  
**MEMBER FOR THE NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION, LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,**  
**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

The transformative evaluation process has provided a great insight in to the work that PICYS is doing to support young people by building high trust youth work relationships and practice. Evaluation in this field is always difficult, as statistics don’t often give the complete picture or a real feel of what change has taken place in these young people’s lives. Powerful stories like these add tangible richness and colour to the supportive change that has occurred due to the skilled youth workers and engagement of PICYS. These stories are important to encourage and inspire others to engage with services that drive positive change and to ensure that resources are provided to programs that deliver real results.

**HON COLIN HOLT MLC AND SPOKESPERSON FOR HOUSING**  
**PARLIAMENTARY NATIONAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIAN (WA)**

These incredible stories of change and triumph are a celebration of the strength and wisdom of young people and the determination of the PICYS team. The healing power of belonging, and relationships built on respect, trust and learning are core to these stories and serve as an important guide to future service delivery developments in this important sector.

Having been involved as a researcher on the “Opening Closets” research and training project conducted by PICYS some 15 years ago it is positive to see PICYS still active and progressive in responding to the needs and interests of young LGBTQI+ people. It is a real achievement that now almost 50%

of young people connecting with PICYS identify as LGBTQI+ and that there have been many positive developments since the initial focus on sector training.

Congratulations to PICYS and young people! Your continual engagement in research, evaluation and reflective practice strengthens relationships, deepens learning and most importantly enables young people to be ‘in charge’ of the change they want to see and the futures they are creating.

**EMMA WHITE**  
**PRINCIPAL - NOUS GROUP**

Thank you to the young people who attended PICYS for sharing their stories of how youth work has changed their lives. This provided valuable insight into the things that young people identify as having made a big difference to them. This process is a reminder that the outcomes that young people value most are not always the ones that program funders have nominated or have measured.

**DR TRUDI COOPER - ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**  
**YOUTH WORK, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES, EDITH COWAN**  
**UNIVERSITY**

Congratulations to the entire team at Perth Inner City Youth Services for all the great work that they have done for young people in Perth over the past 40 years. I would also like to acknowledge the countless young people who have chosen to walk through the front door of PICYS in search of advice, support and a helping hand. The trusting relationships that are built between young people and the youth workers at PICYS is, and always will be, the fundamental success factor that enables PICYS to create positive changes in people’s lives.

Trust cannot be underestimated though. We know it is the most powerful thing that can create lasting and positive change, but it’s often the most difficult to demonstrate to funders and others interested in what youth work can do for young people’s lives.

This report demonstrates how PICYS continues to be at the forefront of innovation, keeping it one of WA’s most meaningful and impactful youth services. I was delighted that PICYS chose to take part in the Transformative Evaluation in Youth Work process and in true PICYS style the Executive Officer, Andrew, and the entire team of youth workers took the process on board and have dutifully imbedded it into their work practice. This report demonstrates the power of giving youth workers and young people the pen, so that the stories of trust, change and life can be told. I look forward to hearing many more stories of change from PICYS in the years to come.

**ROSS WORTHAM – CEO**  
**YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF WA**

# INTRODUCTION

PICYS was one of five youth services to participate in a Youth Sector Transformative Evaluation – Most Significant Change research project led by Edith Cowan University and the Youth Affairs Council of WA with funding from Lotterywest. The project operated from August 2017 and the final report was launched at the 2019 Youth Affairs Council of WA Annual General Meeting.

This publication firstly outlines the Transformative Evaluation methodology and process undertaken as articulated by the Edith Cowan University team, using six PowerPoint slides.

We then share six completed examples of generated stories from the original 25 stories young people shared with PICYS Youth Workers. These six stories were selected by the PICYS Youth Workers involved as they demonstrated powerfully the most significant change and young person's achievements when working with a skilful experienced Youth Worker.

All the young people provided their consent to participate and to allow PICYS to share their stories.

All the names have been changed to respect people's privacy, their stories are unedited. Many young people enjoyed selecting their own alias name.

Each of the six young people were engaged in an Individualised Support Plan with an allocated Youth Worker from either the Household Network service or PILLAR youth mental health service at PICYS.

Many of the young people also accessed PICYS' Basecamp open drop in times and other social events during the year (Christmas lunch, IDaHOBIT day, activities in Youth week, Homelessness week, Mental health week, as well as NAIDOC week and SORRY Day).

Below is an age breakdown of the young people at the point in time they provided their comments.

Age	18	19	21	22
No.	1	2	2	1

Of these six selected stories, there were 4 cisgender females and 2 transgender females research participants, all of whom identify as part of the LGBTI community.

PICYS wish to acknowledge each young person for their courage to share some of their story and talk about their journey whilst engaged with PICYS.

Each young person was asked the same open ended question ***"Since being involved with PICYS what's been the most significant change for you?"***

In the 2018 PICYS Annual report we shared our first full Transformative Evaluation research story – the Most Significant Change story of Chyna which was widely acknowledged as a powerful insight into the life experiences of Chyna and the benefits Chyna gained through having a "high trust" relationship with a professional and skilled Youth Worker.

**PICYS Most Significant Change (2019)** outlines the full Transformative Evaluation process applied to six young people's stories, the stories of **Sam, Ash, Maizie, Renee, Ruby and Chyna**. It is definitely worth the read.

The PICYS team found the experience, of generating stories from young people and reflecting on their practice with youth work peers as well as external stakeholders, a rich and informative process of understanding the value and impact of "high trust" youthwork relationships and practices.

All of these stories were gathered as part of a Transformative Evaluation research, using the Most Significant Change methodology. A second publication, ***PICYS Young People's Stories (2019)***, provides each of the 25 original responses from young people demonstrating the value and impact of "high trust" youth work relationships and practice.

The people at PICYS feel privileged to walk alongside these amazing young people and share in their achievements. Thank you.

**ANDREW HALL**  
PICYS EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## NOTE:

Perth Inner City Youth Service operates within the National Child Safe Organisations Principles and the Western Australian Association of Youth Workers Code of Practice and is an accredited National Mental Health Service provider and an accredited Western Australian Specialist Homelessness Service provider.

# TRANSFORMATIVE EVALUATION

Edith Cowan University  
School of Arts and Humanities



## Transformative Evaluation

- **Background:**
  - Developed in England through research into youth work organisations
- **Aim:**
  - to design a participatory methodology – demonstrating impact through the generation of evidence.
- **Purpose:**
  - Redistribute the power inherent in the evaluation process
  - re-engage practitioners in participating in evaluation of practice.
- **Outcomes:**
  - engages the whole organisation in evaluating impact
  - promotes interaction and communication between stakeholders that enables learning.

Edith Cowan University  
School of Arts and Humanities



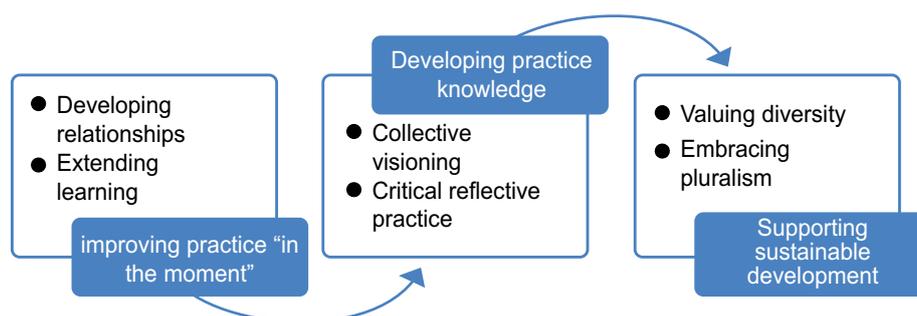
## Transformative Evaluation

- More than just another approach to evaluation
- Establishes **dialogue** between youth workers (evaluators) and community members ( young people and stakeholders)
- Make evaluation more **holistic**
- **Improves practice** in the moment - collaboration between all stakeholders.
- Promotes **organisational learning** and sustainable practice.

Edith Cowan University  
School of Arts and Humanities



## Transforming Evaluation



Cooper, 2017

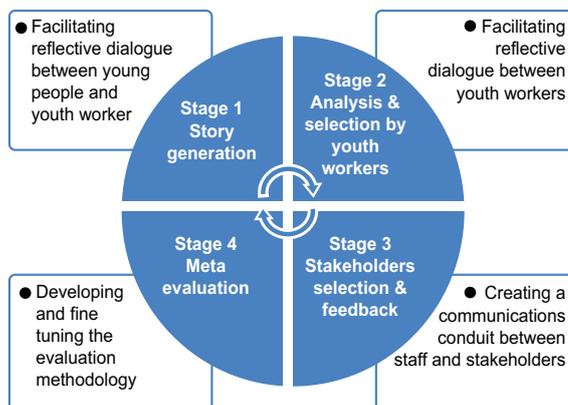
## Evaluation

- **Evaluation – three purposes**
  - Accountability
  - Generate new knowledge
  - Service delivery improvement
- **Standard evaluation privileges “hard data”**
- **Consequences:**
  - youth work becomes a “numbers game”
  - Only values what can be easily measured numerically
  - Youth work moves away from critically reflective practice

## Transformative Evaluation Process

- Based on the **Most Significant Change** technique.
- An **ongoing process** not a one off activity.
- Encourage **greater reflective practice** from youth workers – regardless of skill level.
- **Generating MSC stories** from a number of participants (young people)
- **Process** has four stages

## Transformative Evaluation Process



Cooper, 2017



# SAM - 21 YEARS OLD

## SINCE BEING INVOLVED WITH PICYS WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR YOU?

Since working with the youth worker I have conquered a meth addiction. I was a daily meth user for seven months and was working as a sex worker. Together, the youth worker and I worked on some goal plans and utilised many different techniques to help me cope with meth cravings and the trauma of sex work. Since November last year, I have on the most part stayed clean. I am now studying at Tafe. If it wasn't for the help I got at PICYS I would be homeless or dead. PICYS also helped me with accommodation in the past. Thank you PICYS.

## YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION:

Sam was referred to PICYS by Headspace as Sam needed psychosocial support and felt they would be a good fit. From this point PICYS and Headspace collaborated and coordinated the work that each one does with Sam. Headspace took on a medical role looking at medication, hospital, and clinical support whereas I focused on the other areas of Sam's life that they identified needed attention.

Sam and I have been working together for two years. During this time Sam started to engage in sex work for the first time. During our sessions we would explore risk and safety and put in harm reduction strategies around sex work as Sam wanted to continue in this industry. Whilst working Sam tried methamphetamine for the first time, initially staff worked with Sam on abstinence as Sam reported that use was just out of curiosity. However, after Sam had used over a few occasions Sam became ambivalent and staff used motivational interviewing to explore any shifts in use and also spoke about harm reduction techniques. Sam continued to use and started to inject, staff went through safe injecting practices with Sam. We attended different services for their alcohol and other drug (AOD) use. Sam engaged with different detox, residential, and community counselling services for their AOD issues. We would also work on their AOD issues during session (motivational interviewing, severity scales, goal setting, and implementing different drug and alcohol models).

Sam continued to use drugs, engage in sex work, and other high risk behaviours. This was straining the relationship with their mother, where Sam was residing at the time. Sam's mother could no longer have them in the home and Sam needed to look for alternative accommodation. Staff put referrals into medium to long term accommodation. Sam was accepted into a supported long term service. Staff liaised with the housing staff to support Sam's tenancy (attending the service to help with following the rules, worked on routines, helped clean, budgeting, and take to appointments). Staff put in a referral to long term housing with Ruah 50 Lives 50

Homes where Sam was placed on the list, staff are working on putting Sam on priority housing.

When Sam became unwell; Sam, Headspace, Mum, and staff worked together to get a bed into hospital. Staff attending Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) meetings when Sam was in hospital, this allowed the continued care of Sam in hospital and when they come out.

Sam has now been drug free for 6 months. They have returned home, staff are still supporting them to remain drug free and disengaged from the sex industry. Sam is currently studying at TAFE, staff support them with time management, planning for assignments, and assist with assignments when needed.

## THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATES:

The PICYS youth worker was able to use an eclectic coordination of their skills and knowledge with Sam as well as professionally inform others connected in the case management partnerships. e.g. Headspace, DAYS, 50 Lives 50 Homes.

The story highlights the journey of Sam and that there are times of achievement and great things and times when it seems quite the opposite, yet the PICYS youth worker remained strongly connected and understanding. There were times identified with some high risk behaviours around alcohol and other drug use and also participation in the sex industry. The PICYS youth worker was able to educate Sam around risk identification and think of ways to best care for herself and minimise the potential harm. This was all achieved in a non-judgemental way that allowed the trusted relationship to further develop, Sam seeing the genuine interest and care from the PICYS youth worker as well as their skill and competency in working through things together in a non-judgemental way. There was also an overall acceptance of where Sam was at any time along the relationship. This also demonstrates the validation of the young person making their own choices, whilst providing a safe relationship to explore, discuss and consider new information from a trusted person – trusting their knowledge and skills competency and their integrity.

## THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

"All case studies highlighted important aspects of the support provided by PICYS staff but in particular the stakeholder group felt Sam's case study did so significantly more.

Sam's story highlighted the willingness of PICYS staff to allow a young person to have power in their own journey, acceptance and willingness in supporting their choices

whatever they may be and providing the education and tools to ensure their safety along the way. Staff worked with Sam to make the changes they felt were possible for them at this time, enabling them to maintain control of their relationship with the agency. The young person was not made to feel judged on their choices, and the youth worker was able to adjust the service offered to fit with the young person's needs and willingness to accept assistance or change. This meant working with the young person at their stage of change rather than being focussed on the end result the worker might hope for that young person, which validated the young person's good choices rather than focussing on their "failures" and motivated them to continue to consider their own wellbeing, safety and connection to the agency. In this case, Sam was clearly engaging in behaviours that PICYS staff would know were risky and might in another agency be cause for terminating support. Instead, staff went back a step to meet the young person and, without casting judgement, worked to keep the young person as safe as possible until they were ready to move on to the next stage.

PICYS staff worked with the young person to build trust, acknowledging this can take much time and investment. Sam's willingness to stay connected to the agency during the ups and the downs is testimony to the trust that can be developed over time. While in all the cases presented, the pace of the service being fitted to the young person's ability to respond, and the development of trust were fundamental factors underlying change, Sam's behaviours made it likely that they would be excluded from many other potential supports and could therefore easily slip through the cracks. Sam's connection to PICYS support was fragile, being highly dependent on allowing them to feel in control of their choices, validated as a person and secure enough to trust the worker.

Not only were there case management partnerships formed to support Sam best, but any referrals made for Sam were "vouched" for by the agency as they have an established network of trusted partnerships with agencies with the same philosophy. This gave Sam the confidence to accept the referral and attend the appointment knowing they also have the option for the worker to also attend with them if they need it. An example of PICYS commitment to Sam and their journey was the attendance at the health support meetings with them, their Mum and other specialist staff in hospital allowing continued care and support whilst in medical care.

The flexibility, willingness and skills of the organisation to work with young people and their family and/or significant other was highlighted, in this case a parent trusting the organisation to work with their child.

Sam got there herself where she wanted to be, in a good place, with the unwavering support of her worker. "

**"...I HAVE ON THE MOST PART STAYED CLEAN. I AM NOW STUDYING AT TAFE. IF IT WASN'T FOR THE HELP I GOT AT PICYS I WOULD BE HOMELESS OR DEAD. PICYS ALSO HELPED ME WITH ACCOMMODATION IN THE PAST. THANK YOU PICYS"**

**SAM, 21 YEARS OLD**

# ASH - 19 YEARS OLD

## SINCE BEING INVOLVED WITH PICYS WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR YOU?

The most significant change for me is an increase in housing stability and a future plan for where to go next. I have more education and understanding for budgeting and independent living (eg. How rent assistance works). It's been a good base for experimenting and getting to know how to manage my money well to live independently. This has reduced my fear for living on my own without parental support and to be able to 'hold my own' and I've gotten more independence.

I've also had more thinking time to figure out what I want to do with my life and where I want to go - a safe quiet place to be able to think about my prospects. It's been a canvas for what I needed for me to foster some self-improvement and keep my mental health stable.

These are all important things that people need that are good.

## YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION:

Ash has been in PICYS accommodation since 2nd November 2018. She was referred to our services by YShac as she was living in their crisis accommodation (and previously another crisis accommodation service, AYLA) after leaving the family home due to aggressive, abusive behaviours towards her from her dad. She is a trans young person (male to female) who had already initiated her medical and social transition when she came to our service and is benefitting from psychosocial support for the changes she is going through and the affirmative approach we take at PICYS.

Ash had suffered significant depression and anxiety when living in the abusive home environment. Since leaving the home environment it has reduced and become manageable. Ash's anxiety about securing stable accommodation was heightened when she came to our service so she was relieved to move into our transitional accommodation and be able to talk through her anxiety and depression symptoms. Having a safe supportive worker to talk this through was impactful as she had come out of an unstable, anxiety-provoking environment in crisis accommodation. Ash was also grateful for the support to secure a Housing Support Worker with Youth Futures as this service will be able to ensure she would secure long-term housing at the end of her tenure at PICYS.

PICYS supported accommodation has given Ash the opportunity to have a safe, secure place to live to achieve her education and interpersonal goals. She is undertaking a Computer Game Design course at TAFE this semester. Ash had been able to foster more positive and supportive relationships with her mother and sister now that she is out of the abusive home environment and able to avoid engaging with her dad. She has also been able to focus on personal goals such as undergoing an Autism assessment process, planning her career goals, starting to exercise more, practicing self-

discipline, and enjoying her friendships and gaming. We have worked closely to develop rapport and trust with Ash, utilising patience and consistency to do so. Through this trustworthy, predictable relationship, we have been able to support Ash to develop her independent living skills and awareness around aspects such as budgeting, meal planning, and conflict resolution and assertive communication when sharing a house with another young person.

## THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATES:

The themes of the importance of building trust and rapport with young people we are supporting are key. Additionally, utilising patience to be able to meet the young person 'where they are at' to ensure we provide the support they need, at the time they need it, has been important for working effectively with Ash.

## THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

This case study was chosen as it highlights the safety young people feel when accessing accommodation with PICYS and the suite of supports available to young people, which can be accessed at their own pace and in their own time.

Following difficult and anxious times in crisis accommodation and with immediate family, Ash found a place where she was able to enjoy safe, peaceful, stable accommodation together with time to think and consider her future.

Not only did she not need to worry about where she would live next but also felt safe to test her base for experimenting and getting to know how to manage things and hold her own.

Her fear reduced and over time she felt comfortable to build a trustworthy relationship with her worker, to share her story, stabilise her mental health and support her through her transgender journey. PICYS offered her a range of supports and facilitated safe connection with trusted specialist services where she worked through things and increased her independent living skills.

Through trusted relationships with the PICYS workers, Ash was supported to access long term housing. Ash was able to foster positive and supportive relationships with her mother and sister safely, outside of the home.

The case study highlighted the flexibility that PICYS is willing to apply, to best accommodate the needs of individual young people and enable them to feel trust, belonging and safety and they are supported at their own pace.

This story also highlighted the importance of being out of a difficult home environment, not just to create safety but to enable more positive family relationships to develop.

# MAIZIE - 18 YEARS OLD

## SINCE BEING INVOLVED WITH PICYS WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR YOU?

### THANK YOU PICYS

I feel I can't find the most significant change because PICYS has helped me with sooo much. Since being with PICYS I have found a therapist I can connect with, a case manager who wants to see me thrive and because of this I have now found my self worth. Without PICYS I don't believe I would've ever made it to the hospital that first time. They've improved almost every aspect of my life just by helping me learn to live it. If it weren't for PICYS and everything they have done for me I don't believe I would have been able to find my smile after I lost it. The things they have done has helped me to understand myself and why I feel they way I do. And if it weren't for that I could never have even started to improve.

### THE YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION:

Maizie was referred to PICYS by the school counsellor at Alta-1 (Merriwa), Maizie had been couch surfing at a friends house and it was no longer option for Maizie to live there (it was only meant to be a short term solution until Maizie found alternative accommodation). Maizie presented with mental health issues, trust issues, problematic family dynamics, difficulties with maintaining long term accommodation and lack of community support. Maizie was initially resistant to support, found it difficult to trust and ask for help. Maizie presented self sufficient, self reliant and fiercely independent. Asking for help was difficult for Maizie, she perceived it as a sign of weakness. Maizie has a history of being let down by those close to her, so when Maizie came to PICYS she did not expect much from her youth worker in fact she anticipated she would not stay engaged with the service for long. The youth worker worked with Maizie in a consistent, reliable and predictable manner and overtime she started to develop trust and feel comfortable and safe to ask for help. The relationship is well established with Maizie and the youth worker and are working on her goals and providing psychosocial support (psycho education on mood management, triggers, the early warning signs, coping skills, distress tolerance techniques, and relapse prevention). Maizie has developed good help seeking skills and reaches out when she is struggling with her mental help. Maizie has been both keen and curious to understand how her early life experiences have impacted her life (how she behaves in her relationships, how she perceives the world), gain perspective and learn new ways of thinking and responding to life challenges. As time has gone on the youth worker has seen Maizie's self-esteem and self-worth significantly improve and has a greater self-awareness and insight. Maizie has now been with the service approximately 12 months and is linked in with a psychologist at Youth Axis.

The relational support provided to Maizie at PICYS allowed her to have corrective emotional experiences and challenge the once held belief she had that adults are not reliable. As

a result Maizie is now able to go on and develop healthy relationships with other adults in the wider community.

### THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATES:

The Youth Worker Group chose this story as it demonstrates the importance of the youth workers approach, working with Maizie in a consistent reliable and predictable way meant that she was able to trust again, challenge her once held fixed belief that adults were not reliable.

It also highlights how the PICYS worker is trauma informed and has insight and understanding how early trauma impacts behaviour, so challenging and testing behaviours are addressed without rejecting the individual. PICYS operates under the principle of "elastic tolerance" (trauma informed practice). There have been times when Maizie has been resistant to support and acted out defiantly and destructively however because these challenging behaviours have been tackled creatively and flexibly the young person has increased their insight into what was driving the behaviour (thoughts/feelings - tip of the iceberg model), and is now learning new ways to respond.

### THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

Maizie's case was chosen as it highlights the skills employed by PICYS staff in developing trust with a young person – an essential component of any engagement. It supports the need for program flexibility and trauma informed practice. Maizie was resistant to support and found it difficult to trust and request help given her background which included mental health issues and difficult family dynamics. Maizie's presentation as self-sufficient, self-reliant and fiercely independent needed to be respected while at the same time presenting her with alternative options and ways to respond that would improve her situation. Even when Maizie exhibited challenging and destructive behaviours the worker responded creatively and flexibly. This is very skilled work given that Maizie had been consistently let down by others and saw asking for help as a sign of weakness.

This case demonstrates the importance of workers engaging with young people in a trauma informed, consistent, reliable and predictable way to gradually develop the trust required for further work. In Maizie's case this included psychosocial support and education which has had an extremely positive impact on Maizie's world view. She has developed a keen interest in how her early experiences have impacted on her life and has greater self-awareness and insight. This is a fundamental and positive shift in a relatively short period of time. As Maizie states, "the things they have done has helped me to understand myself and why I feel the way I do."

# RENEE - 22 YEARS OLD

## SINCE BEING INVOLVED WITH PICYS WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR YOU?

- Weight gain
- Mental stability
- Access to services, in particular health services

How I have changed as a result of being involved with PICYS

- Sense of security
- Sense of direction
- Control over my emotions

The most significant change that has occurred for me is 100% my health. I have gained 20kgs after being diagnosed with Anorexia. I struggled with my weight for many years as a result of an eating disorder, I have also been diagnosed with BPD.

The youth worker was persistent and helpful in my recovery, from using CBT based techniques, to negotiating with insurance companies on my behalf.

PICYS understands the link between mental and physical health and the intimidating aspect of independence. These are the things young people need help with, which cannot be done in a 'typical' psychology setting.

There are many things PICYS have done for/with me.

The most helpful and important parts were tackling the horrors and discomforts with my physical health.

From my head to my toes and everything in between I am healthy.

## YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION:

Renee was referred to PICYS by her case worker at Headspace, presenting issues included difficulties maintaining long term accommodation, mental health issues, cannabis dependency, lack of consistent/reliable social support networks and physical health issues. An assessment of support needs identified gaps and additional support needed, the youth worker subsequently linked Renee to appropriate services. The youth worker supported Renee to maintain engagement with services and provided ongoing agency collaboration and coordination.

Renee with support systematically addressed all presenting issues and presents now healthy both physically and mentally and is living in a private rental with her partner. Renee is engaged in a Youth Reference Group with YouthLink and recently completed a self-reflection journaling activity. Renee has gained significant insight into her mental health issues over the past 12 months and is now in the space to focus on

study and reach her full potential. Renee has been accepted into Curtin University to study "Uni Ready Course" in 2018.

Renee has embarked on this new journey with clear direction and a new set of goals.

## THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATES:

How PICYS is able to respond to young people in a holistic manner hence can support young people in addressing both physical and mental health issues. In a practical sense this may involve transporting a young person to an appointment, preparing questions for the appointment, clarifying what the doctor said in the appointment, following up with post appointment requests i.e. blood tests. Often young people are reluctant to engage with other services (due to their previous experiences, or because they lack confidence) however, as a trusted person in the young person's life they are more willing to engage in support services knowing that the youth worker can support them with the process and their journey.

## THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

The Stakeholders group has chosen Renee's story. The reason the Stakeholders chose this story was because it contained more of a description of the process of what was done by the Youth Worker with the young person, including some specific example actions taken.

The story demonstrates some of the key themes demonstrated across the stories, including:

- Time - PICYS allows time to process and grow, accepting the young person where they are and that they may need support to do seemingly simple things
- Security or safety was important to the young person in being able to achieve the space to contemplate change
- The Youth Worker was valued as being "persistent" and "trustworthy"
- The young person may have a very different perspective to that of the Youth Worker as to what the key issues are or what they would like to work on
- PICYS has an holistic approach that includes all aspects of a person's needs - physical, mental and emotional
- The development of adulthood and independence and the need for support to feel competent to do this

Staff encourage a culture of optimism and hope.

# RUBY - 21 YEARS OLD

## SINCE BEING INVOLVED WITH PICYS WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR YOU?

Everything has changed! Even my whole perspective on life the person I am has changed in a better way, my relationships with friends and family have changed. Mainly because you guys that work at PICYS are like these are human beings not just people that come in. You guys are like its ok your going through this we are here to help, that's a big thing. No other service would take me because they were like "Your not working! Your not studying! Your mentally insane!" But you guys were like that's ok your still a human. You guys have helped so much, encouraged me with schooling, meeting people going through the same things and having somewhere to live that's safe, being given a chance to be helped, help with little things like going to the Doctor, next week I've booked all my own doctors appointments! Because of you guys I've got my own house where I can have cats which is a big thing because I love cats. I haven't had my own space since I was a young teenager, even getting therapy I wouldn't have sorted that, I couldn't have don't it without you. You guys really need more funding because there isn't enough places out there to help us, there's no other service like PICYS. You don't judge, you put in the effort for all young people, people are nice to you when you come in, you communicate with us and we communicate back. You even bring your dogs in for us. You guys have provided me with information about jobs and opportunities to use my experiences to help others like the job at YACWA. I want to use my shitty life to now help others, I don't know where I would have been if it wasn't for you guys. I stopped self-harming, now I'm a responsible-ish adult. I'm slowly getting more adult, like I get hungover for two days after a bottle of wine!

## YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION:

Ruby became involved with our service from an Entrypoint referral. When we met Ruby she was 21, had a physical disability, mental health issues – PTSD, Anxiety, Depression, BPD and Bulimia. Ruby identifies in the LGBTI+ community. Ruby's background includes a long history of family breakdown, Ruby's mother left her with her father and moved interstate when she was a child ending their relationship. Ruby's father re-partnered with a woman who has significant mental health and AOD issues making home life very disruptive which led to her becoming homeless. Ruby was homeless for 2.5 years including periods of sleeping rough. Ruby has experienced neglect, physical and sexual abuse. Ruby's life before PICYS was very challenging emotionally and she was constantly in a state of anxiety about her future. When she presented Ruby had been battling with mental health issues, presenting at ED on and off with suicidal ideation and daily self-harm. Ruby had recently left a domestic violence relationship and had been evicted from a mental health housing service due to risks resulting from

her complex diagnosis. Ruby had all but given up hope on finding suitable accommodation. Ruby was looking at share house options out of desperation as all housing services that she applied for had knocked her back as she did not meet their criteria. When PICYS staff met Ruby she explained how she really wanted opportunity to work on her mental health and would repeatedly say all I want is some support. Ruby was offered a place in Household Network transitional accommodation and remained for a year. Ruby engaged safety planning with PICYS to mitigate risk and PICYS worked hard to build rapport which allow early identification of decline in her mental health. In that time we worked with Ruby on linking her into a suitable doctor that had experience working with people at risk/complex needs. PICYS referred Ruby to a specialist mental health service to commence therapy. PICYS were able to work collaboratively with mental health services to ensure Ruby established a strong support network. Ruby did experience declines in her mental health which sometimes led to hospitalisation, however the Household Network model allowed for housing to remain stable through periods of absence. PICYS identified the cycle Ruby presented with in regard to repeat hospitalisations and worked hard to put a plan in place to prevent this cycle repeating by utilising residential mental health recovery programs. Ruby would reach out to PICYS staff at times of need as there was no family support to keep her on track. Once Ruby's mental health stabilised PICYS was able to work towards her long term goals. This included securing long term housing. PICYS referred Ruby to the 50 lives program which she was accepted. 50 lives gave Ruby even more support, especially with access to their after-hours program. PICYS attended monthly meetings and strongly advocated for Ruby to be put forward for long-term housing as this was something Ruby was now ready for. Ruby also started studying for the first time since leaving school and was future focused. Due to PICYS advocating strongly for Ruby she was finally offered long-term housing. With Ruby having long-term housing for the first time since becoming homeless Ruby was feeling positive about her future. Ruby managed to complete her studies and has now gone on to further studies working towards becoming a nurse. PICYS will continue supporting Ruby through her journey.

## THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATES:

The youth workers chose this story as it demonstrates the positive relationship and experience with PICYS supporting the young person and not the diagnosis. The importance of consistency and ongoing support was highlighted as key to identifying and overcoming barriers they had previously experienced. The youth workers felt this story reflects the young person feeling PICYS believed in them and for this reason was able to move from survival mode to being future focused. Trust is evident and shows Ruby's journey to stability and recovery.

## THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

Ruby's case was chosen because it illustrates several important features of the PICYS service, including collaborative partnerships, case complexity, stability and the importance of the first contact. Ruby had an extremely complex case history that made it difficult for her to meet the criteria of other agencies, but PICYS was able to engage with her and work with her to manage her many mental health and lifestyle difficulties. This illustrates the flexibility that PICYS is willing to apply, to best accommodate the needs of individual young people and enable them to feel trust, belonging and safety. Ruby's experience at PICYS also highlights the depth of engagement PICYS has with other agencies and services, being able to work collaboratively and provide advocacy, in ways that provide a learning experience for the young person about self-advocacy, self-efficacy and trust.

This young person had multiple layers of distress and difficulty creating barriers to progress and the key factors for her in moving out of "survival mode" into a more future-focused mode seemed to be the way that PICYS responded to her as she was, without judgement, and just "being nice to you", so that she felt human again. This gave her the breathing space to decide for herself what she wanted to change in her life rather than feeling she had to change if she wanted assistance, and the safety and support to try and instigate these changes. There was ongoing consistency,

not only in the way staff responded to Ruby, but through provision of supported accommodation that was stable even through hospitalisation absences, creating a sense of safety, trust and continuity that enabled the young person to think. This story also highlighted the importance of being out of a difficult home environment, not just to create safety but to enable more positive family relationships to develop already had good people skills because I know how to talk to people but still more skills than I had before. I think differently about my future now I used to think I would end up a junkie on the streets but now I think I'm going to have a good future

**"YOU GUYS HAVE HELPED SO MUCH, ENCOURAGED ME WITH SCHOOLING, MEETING PEOPLE GOING THROUGH THE SAME THINGS AND HAVING SOMEWHERE TO LIVE THAT'S SAFE..."**

**RUBY, 21 YEARS OLD**

## CHYNA - 19 YEARS OLD

### SINCE BEING INVOLVED WITH PICYS WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR YOU?

Having a place which is permanent. I hadn't been stable even before my mum got arrested, so 18 years of instability at one point we lived in a car. Since Mum got arrested I moved around without her so for 7 years on my own. That was SHIT, very unstable. I was sick of moving, the people I stayed with were good but some weren't accepting of my gayness or my transition. I had never had my own place before PICYS, having my own unit was good because of the freedom and independence. It's good to have people you can talk to at PICYS, I don't use drugs as much as I was, I'm more confident than I was and happier than I was. PICYS has helped me with independence, how to live on my own, I already knew how to but now I have more skills, life skills and more people skills. I already had good people skills because I know how to talk to people but still more skills than I had before. I think differently about my future now I used to think I would end up a junkie on the streets but now I think I'm going to have a good future with a good job and a nice husband. Let that sink in! This is

important to me because I won't have some bum-ass future like I thought I was going to have. I'm going to go far places, I'm going to study now, I've got stable accommodation so I won't have to keep moving all the time. I now have more life skills and I have people I can talk to and trust. This is good because if you haven't got someone to talk you turn to drugs or alcoholism.

### YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION:

Chyna became involved with our service at 18 years old, when a woman who he was couch surfing with called PICYS after looking up support for young people who are Transgender. At the time Chyna was Trans female and taking female hormones and had been doing so for 2 years. Chyna had been homeless for a few years after his brother didn't accept his choice to begin his transition. Chyna was living with his brother after his Mother and a sibling were placed in prison for a long term sentence. Chyna was lacking in self-confidence when he presented to PICYS and did not talk with any other young people. Chyna had difficulties communicating with his housemate and she began self-medicating with

methamphetamine. Chyna would often engage in high risk behaviours in order to get access to methamphetamine. Safety planning is something we have been focused on from our first engagement with Chyna. I referred Chyna to YouthLink and began working with them to have him re-engaged as he once received counselling years before. Chyna had two suicide attempts while living in the PICYS accommodation and was hospitalised in the mental health ward for a number of weeks. During this time PICYS remained in contact with her visiting the hospital and maintaining that connection with the service. Shortly after he was discharged from hospital Youth Link re-commenced therapy with him. PICYS also linked him in with The Drug and Alcohol Youth Service and work began regarding his Methamphetamine and Alcohol use. PICYS adopts a harm minimisation approach which has allowed Chyna to become increasingly open about his drug and alcohol use and reasons behind it. PICYS referred Chyna to the 50 lives 50 homes project and as a result of this he was offered long term accommodation. Chyna has recently stopped transitioning and now identifies as a gay male and changed names to reflect this. Youth Link and DAYS have formed strong connections to Chyna and he is actively engaged with both services. PICYS has now been working with Chyna in all aspects of his wellbeing and co-ordinating case management with all the services involved with Chyna. Sadly Chyna lost a sibling to suicide this year and PICYS has been supporting him through this very difficult experience in collaboration with Youth Link. PICYS continues to case manage Chyna, assists him with relationships, tenancy support, socialisation, mental health, physical health, education, drug and alcohol support and Centrelink. Chyna has made friends with many of the young people at PICYS and is a regular in our weekly drop in sessions.

It should be noted that PICYS supported Chyna with other personal issues however, as Chyna chose not to share these experiences in this forum, PICYS respects Chyna's decision and will not elaborate further on these experiences.

### THE YOUTH WORKERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

The Youth Workers Group selected this story as a most significant change story because it demonstrates PICYS and the youth workers capacity to "hold" a young person during times of distress preventing social isolation. When Chyna first engaged with the service he was disconnected physically and emotionally. He was deemed to be "too hard" by many agencies/services. Chyna's lack of self-confidence meant he struggled with a sense of identity and the way he presented himself altered as a safety strategy given his traumatic background. However, the acceptance shown by the youth worker and PICYS staff meant that Chyna feels safer to express himself. Chyna was at risk of "falling through the gaps" however, PICYS focus on a sense of community and collaboration has also assisted in Chyna feeling a sense of belonging.

### THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP SELECTED THIS STORY BECAUSE IT DEMONSTRATED:

"The Stakeholder group selected Chyna's story. While sharing many characteristics with other young people's stories, this young person was chosen as having experienced the most significant change, coming from a background of extreme trauma to a point where they believed in a hopeful and joyful future for themselves. This young person may have struggled to get accommodation and support in other agencies because several characteristics of their lifestyle would have been likely to either exclude them from access to, or result in their expulsion from other services: existing and ongoing drug use, extremely fluid gender identity and sexuality which might be challenging not only for an accommodation service but also attract the negative attention of other service users/household members, and a number of high risk behaviours, especially those related with generating access to drugs. PICYS was able to respond to the young person as they were and build a trusting and respectful relationship that preserved the young person's dignity and sense of control over their own life.

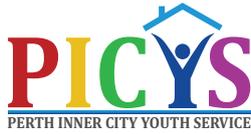
The change was especially significant given the background of trauma and complete lack of family support, especially following the suicide of the only family support available in the state. It was notable that, for a young person with no physical or emotional stability, who had been effectively homeless from childhood and had little expectation of care or safety, they came to feel safe not only with staff but within the wider PICYS community and stated that they had hope for their future that included a vision of love and stability.

In common with other stories, the young person noted the flexibility of PICYS, offering them a suite of options and interactions that they could choose and allowing them to make choices that fitted with how they saw their needs, allowing them to have control over what happens to them. This included being able to interact at a level that was comfortable for them, so that, given time and respect, trust could be built and they came to value the ease of access to someone to talk to. "

**"I HAD NEVER HAD MY OWN PLACE BEFORE PICYS, HAVING MY OWN UNIT WAS GOOD BECAUSE OF THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE."**

**CHYNA, 19 YEARS OLD**





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PICYS is committed to working with young people in a non-judgmental and holistic way that fosters a belief in empowerment, integrity and collaboration, and provides a safe and secure environment.

PICYS pledge to promote and support the positive wellbeing, appreciation, active participation and voice of young people in Perth & beyond.

## Pledge Form

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