

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All the young people who have shared their stories in PICYS Most Significant Change research and reflective practice

Special acknowledgements in this second edition to:

- Adrian, 20 yo
- Harmony, 18 yo
- Jax, 17 yo
- Lara, 25 yo
- Liam, 18 yo
- Miles, 22 yo
- Liam, 26 yo
- Paige, 20 yo
- Morpheus, 21 yo
- Smash, 22 yo

(their chosen pseudo names)

PICYS awesome Youth Workers

PICYS Stakeholders Group – Ali de La Rie, Vanessa Harvey, Donna Harrison, Jennifer Griffiths and Salli Higham.

PICYS Board for their continued commitment to giving young people voice, and to ensuring PICYS is focused on listening and responding.

"I sincerely thank all the people mentioned above for their commitment to ensuring we focus on what really matters and makes the most significant changes for each young person to achieve more for themselves."

Andrew Hall JP
Executive Officer



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.

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.

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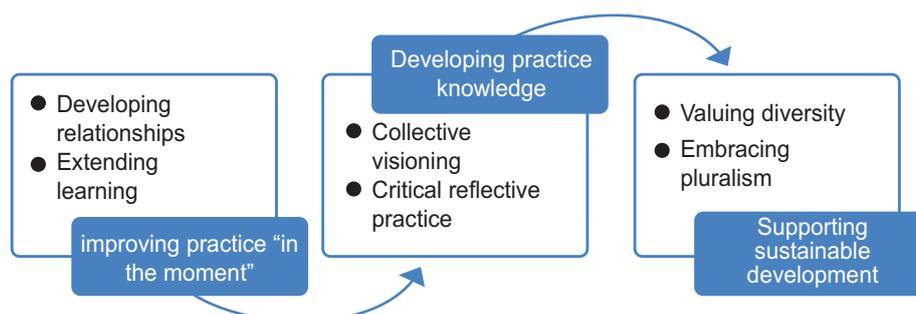
Transformative Evaluation

- 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

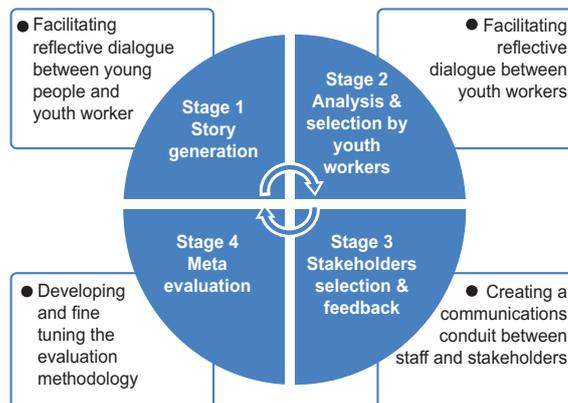
Evaluation

- **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



ADRIAN - 20 YEARS OLD

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

Engaging with PICYS has made a significant change in my life because of the workers involved.

I started at PICYS in 2018 when I decided I wanted to live independently away from home. While studying at school, my Household Network youth worker had helped me secure a place but I didn't end up going due to family circumstances. However, I felt very welcomed in the drop-in centre so I decided to start going to drop-in on a regular basis.

While I was homeless PICYS was a safe place to go on the days I needed somewhere to eat, shower, and wash my clothes. I could always go there on drop-in and get the support I needed. If I needed help with anything there was always someone there volunteering to help. Overall I felt welcomed and safe.

In late 2019 I engaged in the PILLAR Program and got my PILLAR youth worker. She took me to doctors appointments weekly until I got my diagnosis of POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) in May 2020 which made a huge difference in my life. Having a diagnosis would mean I could start treatment. I didn't have the guts to go to the doctors by myself and push for answers. But my PILLAR youth worker supported me in finding answers until I got them. She also took me to hospital appointments and helped pay for my first lot of meds which helped as I was financially unstable and homeless at that time. Rachel helped me through a lot of hard emotional feelings with my mental health and ongoing issues in my life and gave me advice I needed. Rachel still supports me to this day when my current worker is on leave.

In Mid 2020 I was reallocated a new PILLAR youth worker and they helped me through the worst the past year from supporting me at court fighting for my rights to being there when I needed a listener. I came out to the youth worker as trans in late 2020 and they helped me get the right support I needed and helped me with linking into RPH Sexual Clinic and onto my hormones. The youth worker (they) has also taken me to doctors and hospital appointments and supported me in pushing for more answers on my ongoing chronic illnesses. The youth worker currently takes myself and my assistance dog Bruno to his training so he can support me ongoing. And helps with organising FoodHampers on the weekly basis.

PICYS just makes me feel safe and like I've got help when I need it. This is important to me because I don't have other supports like that in my life. They are literally all I've got.

YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION

Adrian is a young trans man, 20, who presented at PICYS at risk of homelessness and living in an unhealthy, abusive family environment. Adrian began seeking the support he required through attending PICYS drop-in regularly and asking staff for assistance as needed. Adrian later became homeless after gaining the strength and self-determination to leave the abusive family home he was in. He sought support from PICYS and began getting case management support from the PILLAR program and clinical support from YouthLink. Adrian has always had very good help seeking skills and will raise concerns and seek support, regularly adding to the goals and tasks he needs support with from his case manager.

Adrian's health issues have been a challenge that he has needed support to cope with and navigate health systems and diagnoses. He has shown great resilience; not giving up easily and speaking up for himself, despite the challenges associated with his chronic health issues, undiagnosed symptoms, social isolation and complex PTSD. Adrian has shown his ability to adapt well to new or difficult situations and how he can think creatively when faced with challenging situations. For example, when homeless he purchased a tent and slept in a friend's back yard (safer option than living on the streets). Adrian can look at what's in front of him and can optimize what he has to work with, for example he was creating art and selling it and sewing and selling dog coats to supplement his income at times.

Adrian has been supported to develop the ability to have great insight, awareness and perspective. He's showed this when facing challenges related to getting jobs with his health issues, and when dealing with conflicts with his partner and housemate friends; he could take a step back in the stress of the moment and see the issue from all perspectives to decide how to move forward.

In the last year Adrian has been able to begin his medical transition by starting hormones and has 'graduated' from YouthLink due to his notable management and coping with his CPTSD and anxiety. Adrian has also researched and implemented multiple strategies to assist him managing his health issues and persists with navigating his life with chronic illness, despite the many challenges and obstacles that are thrown his way.

Adrian has become a highly responsible young person; dealing with legal issues he's faced due to family conflict, managing his complex health, caring for and training his pets, and taking rental inspections seriously. Consequently, after having previously moved every 3-6 months and experiencing primary homelessness, Adrian has successfully retained stable accommodation for the past 12 months and is planning for his future.

YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP REFLECTION

The youth worker group selected this story because it highlights how the PICYS community plays a particularly significant role in this young person's life referring it to their "safety net" providing them with a sense of belongingness and security.

Adrian has effective and instrumental help seeking skills, is able to refuse help when they can perform the task by themselves yet they can obtain help when it is needed. An example of this was when Adrian was homeless and took the matter into his own hands and purchased a tent and set it up in their friend's backyard (Adrian was realistic about wait times for private rentals and DOH properties and knew it was safer living in a friend's backyard than the streets)

A theme throughout this Most Significant Change Story is Adrian's resilience, their ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. The youth worker has supported Adrian to tap into their strengths and support systems (PICYS) to overcome their challenges and work through problems.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

The Stakeholders' Group selected Adrian because his journey reflects some of the many ways in which PICYS assists and supports young people to move safely through major challenges and difficulties in life, which he would otherwise lack the support to undertake, and to draw on and build their own resilience.

Adrian initially attended PICYS drop-in whilst living at home in an unstable and abusive family environment. The trust which developed through this time provided the basis for Adrian to then seek help to gain increased support from PICYS PILLAR when he became homeless. PICYS provided a safe place for Adrian to eat, shower, wash his clothes and receive any other help he needed at the time. This "safety net" allowed Adrian to live with dignity through the crisis of homelessness.

Adrian also experienced a serious and chronic medical condition and it was through the support of PICYS that he was able to attend medical appointments, receive a diagnosis and treatment, and have help to pay for his medications. Many young people could take for granted that supportive parents would help them with navigating diagnoses and treatment of complicated medical problems but for the young people accessing PICYS, this is typically not the case. Adrian stated that he "didn't have the guts to go to the doctors by myself and push for answers" and it was only through the support and "walking alongside" of the PICYS case worker, that Adrian was able to access this very necessary medical help.

The relational approach taken by PICYS also made it possible for Adrian to come out as trans to his case worker, and again, was supported to navigate the complex and stressful process of transitioning.

Adrian showed resourcefulness and resilience and was able to work with the support of PICYS to grow and develop in ways which he is unlikely to have been able to do. Adrian was able to work on his mental health issues throughout this time. He was able to resolve his mental health issues sufficiently to complete work with YouthLink and start to undertake many developmental steps which are appropriate for young adults, such as maintaining stable accommodation, successfully managing rental inspections, care for and train pets, and plan for his future.

Overall, Adrian's story illustrates PICYS' focus on supportive, wholistic and relational work, to meet young people very much where they are at and to be alongside them to cope with hardships and challenges which would otherwise be overwhelming. In Adrian's own words, "PICYS just makes me feel safe and like I've got help when I need it. This is important to me because I don't have other supports like that in my life. They are literally all I've got".

**"...PICYS JUST MAKES ME
FEEL SAFE AND LIKE I'VE
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OTHER SUPPORTS LIKE
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- ADRIAN 20

HARMONY - 18 YEARS OLD

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

Since being with PICYS, many positive and lifesaving changes have occurred for I; this includes things such as have a strong support network which involves my case manager and other youth who also access the service. I also have access to basic things such as a wide array of food, toiletries, and general household items. Overall, the most significant change has to be that PICYS has given me the will to live, they have done this by providing me with a unit of my own when I had nowhere to go, by believing in me when I don't, by providing a never-ending amount of support when I need someone. My level of gratitude for PICYS cannot be described in words, and I thank you for that.

YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION

PICYS began working with Harmony in the PILLAR Program in September 2020 after receiving his referral from Youth Axis. When Harmony was first referred to PICYS he was living with his sister but was unable to stay there any longer due to Harmony's mental health impacting his sister's family. Harmony lost his mum at 11 years of age and his father moved to Bali soon after, leaving him with minimal family and a lack of connection and identity in Perth. Harmony has a diagnosis of depression, anxiety, BPD and complicated grief. Harmony found it difficult to regulate their emotions and were unable to problem solve when faced with challenges. Harmony had a few mental health hospital admissions in between staying in crisis accommodation and backpackers. Staff assisted Harmony with applying for several transitional accommodation services during this period but was denied due to the complexity of his mental health. In October 2020 there was a suitable vacancy for Harmony and he was able to move in to a PICYS single unit. Harmony's journey of living independently began challenging due to his mental health, but with the support of the PICYS team, some clear boundaries and Acute Treatment Team Harmony's mental health had begun to stabilize, which as a result Harmony was able to cope better with challenges that came his way. Harmony now has a better understanding of his mental health and can reach out for support when he begins to realise the warning signs that he isn't doing too well. Harmony has much better coping skills around emotional regulation and can often problem solve on his own.

Harmony has really benefited from some conversations and practice around healthy boundaries, with staff, services, friends and family.

PICYS staff have supported Harmony with enrolling in Certificate IV in Community Services and attending the TAFE Open Day. Staff assisted Harmony with booking and getting to driving lessons and tests to enable him to complete his hours and get his P Plates. Harmony already owned his own car but was unsure on things such as registration and maintenance. PICYS staff have provided this information to Harmony and assisted him with applying for RAC Roadside Assist, which he had used many times! Harmony has been maintaining his tenancy at his transitional property well, passing all rent inspections and keeping up to date with his payments. In the past few weeks Harmony has begun working on rebuilding relationships with his sisters, that broke down due to his mental health at the end of 2020. Harmony has recently been picked up by YouthLink after a long 5 months on their waitlist and is attending his weekly appointments. Harmony has begun working through some of the grief he has been suffering with since the passing of his mother and is starting to build healthy relationships and connections with new friends and family members.

YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP REFLECTION

Since engaging with PICYS, Harmony has show a clear shift in their ability to manage stressful life events. Harmony has grown in their trust and belief in both themselves and workers, becoming open to receiving critical feedback on how his behaviours impacted on others, and building on their positive help-seeking methods. PICYS' provision of practical supports was a conduit for Harmony's deeper work, proving their youth worker's trust, reliability and usefulness within a consistent and bounded relationships, whilst also providing Harmony the space to be vulnerable. The staying power of the PICYS relationship showed to Harmony that people weren't just going to walk away, building their hope for the future and willingness to work through the past. An important change is Harmony's increased sense of worth, leading to them now investing in themselves, feeling noticed and recognised, whilst also rebuilding key family relationships. Harmony's focus on their future educational goals is a testament to their significant growth.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

Harmony's story illustrates the life-changing impact of PICYS' work with young people whose histories of trauma, neglect and deprivation have resulted in severe mental health problems, homelessness, and disruption to the usual developmental goals and achievements of adolescence.

Harmony suffered a major loss at the age of 11, when his mother passed away. The grief of losing his mother was compounded when his father then moved overseas. The loss of Harmony's primary attachment figures was a major disruption to his developmental trajectory and consequently, he experienced significant mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, BPD, and complicated grief. Although Harmony was later accommodated with a sister, this was unsustainable due to his mental health problems, and he experienced both mental health hospitalisation and homelessness.

This story already looks like "a recipe for (mental health) disaster" however Harmony's engagement with PICYS has brought about a very positive change in life direction for this extremely vulnerable young person. PICYS supported Harmony to obtain safe, stable accommodation and during this time, a strong and trusting relationship between Harmony and PICYS began. Although there was a lengthy waiting time before

Harmony could access a formal youth mental health service for therapy, the relationship with the PICYS youth worker and the organisation itself, enabled him to start to stabilise his mental health, and to work on coping better with challenges around emotional regulation and problem solving. In this way, PICYS took up some of the vital roles which in other circumstances would be provided by a caring, stable and supportive family. This led to Harmony developing a better understanding of himself, how to recognise signs that he is not doing well, and how to reach out for extra support. Again, the support to build his self-awareness and maturity, which are often assisted by a positive family, were taken up by the PICYS youth worker and team.

PICYS assisted Harmony in many other ways, both practical and emotional/interpersonal. Through PICYS support Harmony was able to commence TAFE studies, work towards - then achieve his driving licence, and successfully maintain his tenancy at his transitional property.

Perhaps Harmony's own words express the impact which PICYS has made on his life, when he says that PICYS has given him the "will to live", "believing in me when I don't" and that his level of gratitude to PICYS "cannot be described in words".

“OVERALL, THE MOST SIGNIFICATION CHANGE HAS TO BE THAT PICYS HAS GIVEN ME THE WILL TO LIVE, THEY HAVE DONE THIS BY PROVIDING ME WITH A UNIT OF MY OWN WHEN I HAD NOWHERE TO GO, BY BELIEVING IN ME WHEN I DON'T, BY PROVIDING A NEVER-ENDING AMOUNT OF SUPPORT WHEN I NEED SOMEONE. MY LEVEL OF GRATITUDE FOR PICYS CANNOT BE DESCRIBED IN WORDS, AND I THANK YOU FOR THAT.”

- HARMONY 18

JAX - 17 YEARS OLD

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

When I first came to PICYS Base Camp aGender I was super anxious and the youth worker supported me on my own and then I gradually joined in and went off on my own if I got anxious again. So it eventually chopped down my anxiety so I am not anxious about Base Camp aGender at all anymore. Then I felt ok to come for support for housing and try Base Camp too.

If it wasn't for PICYS I wouldn't have this house (long term housing) which gives me stability and its reassuring to have somewhere to go. I need this housing because I have no supportive family and having my own place is amazing.

Plus I get a great youth worker to talk to each week. Someone to check up on me to make sure I'm alright and make sure I'm not having a mental crisis or help me when I am. They've linked me to After Hours Support Service for extra support and just listen to me and help me.

YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION

Jax is a 17 year old trans man who lived in PICYS accommodation March - August 2020. He self-referred to our Household Network service after visiting our Base Camp aGender drop-in open time. Jax visited Base Camp aGender for almost two years prior to beginning case management and entering our transitional accommodation. During that time Jax was living in and out of various crisis and transitional accommodation services around Perth (Indigo Junction, AYLA) as well as temporarily staying with his uncle who was unaccepting of his gender and unsafe to live with. Jax suffers significant trauma and anxiety from living in his abusive and neglectful childhood home environment with his mum who suffered her own untreated mental health issues.

Attending Base Camp aGender gave Jax the opportunity to connect with PICYS and work through his anxiety around accessing new services to gradually become comfortable and build trust with our service. Since beginning case management support we have been able to support Jax with accessing the Perth Children's Hospital Gender Diversity Service to commence his medical transition, processing and updating his priority public housing application and moved him into his long-term housing, referring him into 50 lives 50 homes and the After Hours Support Service, general health and medication management, and managing his mental health and relationships.

PICYS supported accommodation has given Jax the opportunity to have a safe, secure place to live, to achieve his education and personal goals. He is in the process of completing his high school equivalency and also TAFE

Community Services certificate. He has also been able to focus on personal goals such as undergoing an Autism assessment process, planning his career goals and settling into his stable home environment.

We have worked closely to develop rapport and trust with Jax, utilising clear communication and consistency to do so. Through this trustworthy, predictable relationship, we have been able to support Jax to develop his independent living skills and awareness around trust and communication in relationships.

THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP REFLECTION

This young person's story highlights the importance of PICYS' multitude of entry pathways, allowing for Jax to engage with the youth worker in the informal setting of Base Camp aGender. This informal engagement strategy allowed Jax the time and space needed to build a trusting relationship with the youth worker, highlighting the longitudinal nature of PICYS' relational work. The flexibility of Base Camp aGender is the epitome of PICYS' belief in individualised support, allowing for the youth worker to get to know Jax in a safe and trusting environment without the pressures of traditional engagement strategies and expectations.

This story also highlights the value placed on soft entry pathways by other agencies as Base Camp aGender had been suggested to Jax by their other supports, speaking to the reputation of the youth worker within the sector. This strategy also allowed for a continuity of worker as the facilitator of Base Camp aGender subsequently became Jax's youth worker, continuing their support in a more formal manner and avoiding Jax requiring to re-tell their story.

During Jax's time with PICYS, the youth worker was able to support them with more future-focused goals, including attaining their high school equivalency and engaging with the Gender Diversity Service, highlighting how the worker's longitudinal approach assisted Jax to harness periods of stability to work on deeper aspects of their identity attainment.

“I GET A GREAT YOUTH WORKER TO TALK TO EACH WEEK. SOMEONE TO CHECK UP ON ME TO MAKE SURE I’M ALRIGHT AND MAKE SURE I’M NOT HAVING A MENTAL CRISIS OR HELP ME WHEN I AM. THEY’VE LINKED ME TO AFTER HOURS SUPPORT SERVICE FOR EXTRA SUPPORT AND JUST LISTEN TO ME AND HELP ME.”

- JAX 18

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

Jax’s experience with PICYS demonstrates how the multiple entry pathways to PICYS services, over a period of time, provided a wrap around service for a young person that leads to positive, long term outcomes.

Jax’s experience began as a young person of 15 years who was initially supported to attend PICYS’ Base Camp aGender, and then progressed to being able to attend this group on their own. Jax’s involvement with PICYS grew as they began also attending Base Camp and later were comfortable to self-refer to PICYS’ accommodation program.

PICYS holistic support over a two year period has helped Jax live independently and build a connected and trusting relationship with PICYS staff and with other young people. This is also an example of how PICYS’ offers service continuity as the Base Camp aGender facilitator would later become Jax’s youth worker.

Through this long term relationship with Jax, PICYS supported them towards working on future focused goals, including engaging with the Gender Diversity Service, attaining high school equivalency, an autism assessment and planning career goals.

PICYS’ work with Jax highlights the importance of informal engagement with young people over a period of time and building trust. As Jax’s relationship with PICYS grew they were empowered and supported to address past traumas and can continue to build a safe and meaningful life.

LARA - 25 YEARS OLD

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

My life didn't begin when my birth certificate was signed, it didn't begin when I got home, and it didn't begin when I took my first steps. For me life started when I made the decision to be different, to have my own morals and to be myself, that wasn't an exact day in my life. And I'll tell you a bit about it. Them days for me happened in strange and weird ways. It would be when I took a phone call from a caring, supportive, understanding, and compassionate PICYS worker, it would be signing my lease with a landlord and PICYS staff person who had given you a chance to be independent and safe, something I had always wanted. It would be when I received food on a day I hadn't eaten, or it would be when someone supportive sat there and put everything aside just to listen and be validating and make me strong when I didn't think I deserved it. It would be when a lovely person sat beside me in a scary waiting room while I wait to get help for things, I didn't understand but they would sit there and make me laugh and make me see good in the world through them.

They would make me want help when I didn't think I wanted help. These people are different, they change and help the world one person, one conversation, one meeting, one plan and one goal at a time by supporting them and encouraging them to be the best versions of themselves.

They change the world by helping the most broken people become the strongest most successful versions of themselves.

That may not be the president I am now inspired to change, and I have lived through my worst days, and I got through it to become the strong independent person I am today. I know I have a long way to go yet, but I have come so far already and that would not have felt possible without the support of the PICYS team and to me that's my most significant change:

I am now able to see good in a world I thought was broken. I am motivated to be different to the people I was raised by. Inspired in life to be myself and fight for my rights and my morals. I just want to thank all the PICYS staff an amazing team made up of so many different caring individuals from support workers to admins and housing people and everyone I have met along the way that has made my days brighter and given me more purpose in life.

YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION

Lara is a 25-year-old female who has been linked in with PICYS since 2014. When Lara first came to PICYS she was homeless, was dealing with past and present trauma, struggling with her mental health, was using alcohol and other drugs, and found it difficult to trust anyone.

PICYS MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES 20-21

During Lara's time at PICYS there were many changes, but the most significant change she identified was the control she gained over her life and her choices.

When I first started working with Lara in August 2020, she had already had two PICYS workers that she had built great rapport with. Lara really struggled with the fact that her previous worker had left and as a result her mental health had declined, and she had begun using recreational drugs again. Lara was initially reluctant to working with someone new, but it didn't take too long before Lara was engaging extremely well.

The main goal Lara wanted to work on was applying for an NDIS package so that she was able to get the appropriate level of support for her mental and physical needs. With the help of Black Swan, Youthlink and PICYS Lara's application for NDIS funding was approved and Lara was able to begin accessing supports from the NDIS. Although there were some issues along the way, this was a great time for Lara to practise speaking up about what she wanted and needed from the supports the NDIS could offer.

During this year staff also assisted Lara with maintaining her tenancy in her long-term housing. When Lara was feeling very stressed, depressed, or overwhelmed she would often contact the Department of Housing to give up her house and then regret it soon after. Staff were in close contact with the Department of Housing and put strategies in place for when this did occur.

Lara often struggled with friends and family taking advantage of her financially. PICYS were able to help Lara to get a Public Trustee to assist her with gaining control of her money again. Lara also learnt skills to put in stronger boundaries with her friends and family so they could not take advantage of her in other ways. PICYS assisted Lara with taking out a violence restraining order out against a family member to help keep her safe and reduce the negative impacts they were having on Lara's mental health. PICYS team continued to build trusting and safe relationships with Lara to help demonstrate what it is she should expect from healthy relationships. I believe this helped Lara see some of the challenges and issues in her current relationships with friends and family and apply the necessary boundaries.

Lara often found it hard to effectively communicate what it was that she needed when her mental health was struggling. In the 12 months staff were working with Lara, she became more open to the idea of attending hospital for mental health admissions when she felt she couldn't keep herself safe at home anymore. This was a huge step for Lara as she had previously been very reluctant to attend hospital for mental health. PICYS team also assisted Lara with attending psychology and psychiatry appointments and organising stays

in Hampden House Step-Up-Step-Down program as an early intervention to prevent hospital admissions.

As Lara was getting closer to aging out of her youth supports, staff worked with Lara's other supports to assist with the transition to adult mental health services. Lara had built such a strong connection and good working relationship with her youth supports at PICYS and YouthLink so transitioning over to adult services was a great challenge for her, but one she knew had to happen.

Although Lara is no longer case managed by PICYS PILLAR program, she still accesses PICYS Base Camp sessions. When case management first stopped with Lara, she found it hard to move from a case management space to the drop-in space, but this is something she has worked hard on and is now able to attend Base Camps and use the space appropriately.

Upon closing as a case managed young person with the PILLAR Program, Lara was still living in long term housing, was actively engaging with her NDIS supports to ensure she was able to receive the level of care she required, maintained a good relationship with her supports at YouthLink, had begun her transition to adult services, had put in strong boundaries with friends and family, but most importantly Lara was able to see a future for herself, a future that involved her taking control of her own life and making choices that were going to be best for her.

YOUTH WORKERS GROUP REFLECTION

Key themes focussed around finding the balance of both independence and getting the support and care Lara needs. This was useful in a multitude of aspects of Lara's life including with family relationship boundaries, and with her mental health care in hospital stays and generally. The youth worker group reflected on how important and helpful the PICYS relational model was in how the honest and respectful approach, along with it's connection as well as limits and boundaries, worked to be empowering for Lara. This enabled her to choose her own values for herself as she developed into an independent adult who could also realise and accept that she does need help as well as being able to make her own decisions. The group reflected on how the relational

approach also embedded her sense of self-worth in her as a person. This recognition of her worthiness enables her to be different from her family of origin, assert what she needs, make decisions for herself and choose her own path forward with confidence. Overwhelmingly, self-worth, confidence and empowerment were realised for Lara through the supportive PICYS relational model.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

Lara was case managed through PICYS for seven years until she was transitioned to adult services. In that time she had three case workers with whom she developed strong and trusting relationships. This illustrates the quality of the workers employed by PICYS as well as the strength of PICYS support model.

Lara eloquently describes the assistance provided by PICYS and states that her life only started with this support. PICYS assisted her to see the world differently and provided her with the confidence to be herself and put in place appropriate boundaries with friends and family.

A key theme is the balance achieved by PICYS in supporting Lara's independence while at the same time ensuring she had the care and support that she needed. This was illustrated by Lara's acceptance of her need to access hospital support for her mental health issues and PICYS relationship with Lara's housing provider.

It is clear that PICYS' focus on supportive, relational case work has enabled Lara to access extremely important supports that she probably would have been unable to organise herself ie. NDIS and Public Trustee. It has also resulted in self-worth and confidence, and a sense that Lara has control over her own life. As Lara states, "I am now able to see good in a world I thought was broken. I am motivated to be different to the people I was raised by. Inspired in life to be myself and fight for my rights and my morals."

Lara has demonstrated great resilience and with the support of PICYS is now living in long term housing, is actively engaging with her NDIS supports, maintaining a good relationship with her supports at YouthLink, and has begun transitioning to adult services.

"I AM NOW ABLE TO SEE GOOD IN A WORLD I THOUGHT WAS BROKEN. I AM MOTIVATED TO BE DIFFERENT TO THE PEOPLE I WAS RAISED BY. INSPIRED IN LIFE TO BE MYSELF AND FIGHT FOR MY RIGHTS AND MY MORALS..."

LIAM - 18 YEARS OLD

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

I've been with PICYS for almost a year now and it has also been the best year of my life. Coincidence? I think not. Throughout this year I have had a reason to get up in the morning for drop-in and appointments. I have made friends that I value and would be worse off without. I have a place to talk about how I feel without judgement. The most significant change to my life as a result of PICYS though is being able to stop couch surfing and actually live in a place where I feel safe.

Before I started going to PICYS, I was living with my mum who is emotionally and mentally abusive. She would gaslight me, yell at me, purposefully trigger panic attacks, and I didn't feel safe. I was extremely suicidal. I would stay in my room all day with the door closed so I wouldn't do anything to set her off, so eventually I just took a bag of clothes and left. Then I started going to PICYS and got to talk out the issues and trauma that came from that and start making a plan to live somewhere stable, and things started getting better. I was more optimistic, getting help and seeing a psychologist, talking regularly with my case worker, and actually had a support network. I felt cared for, probably the kind of care most kids get from their parents that I just wasn't getting.

After a friend and I got into an argument and I was asked to leave her couch, I suddenly felt hopeless again and attempted suicide. The day after I went straight to PICYS to seek help. They told me about crisis accommodation and I decided that was the best option for me. I was too anxious to call alone so they did it with me. Being in crisis accommodation was the first time I felt safe in a house I was living in. After my time was up at crisis, PICYS helped me move into transitional accommodation for the year which gives me time to sort out my next move.

The transitional accommodation PICYS gave to me is the best gift, because it is safety, stability, and comfort. I feel supported and cared about like no one has for me before. They made the most significant change in my life - feeling safe.

YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION

Liam is an 18 year old trans young person who started visiting PICYS drop-in due to couch surfing and a dysfunctional home environment. When I suggested we get him into crisis accommodation it was because he was clearly identifying that his suicidality and depression was directly affected by his mum and lack of a safe home environment and the consequent stress he felt from the instability and sense of feeling like a burden to those he was couch surfing

with. His initial response to the suggestion to go into crisis accommodation was that he didn't deserve it as he still had a home he could theoretically go to. With supportive exploration of what he was facing at home I was able to help him to understand his right to a safe and stable home environment, that he deserved it, and that crisis accommodation was there for people in circumstances like his. I did the referral and he was successfully housed in crisis housing.

Liam continued to regularly visit PICYS Base Camp and Base Camp aGender drop-in times, often stating how important the safe space and support PICYS provided was for him at a time when he was experiencing significant social isolation from previous community networks and friendships due to conflicts between his partner and others that affected him. He also stated the importance of the regular week day drop-in times to help structure and give purpose to his weeks as he was currently searching for work and found that without this his depressive symptoms worsened. Throughout this time he often stated the value he got from the support from PICYS which helped him survive suicide ideation and an attempt and encourage his help-seeking from other supports too.

At the beginning of 2020 Liam was housed in PICYS transitional accommodation and also obtained casual employment at a workplace he highly desired to work at. These were his two goals for 2020 so he was relieved and proud to achieve them early in the year. Since then he has worked on the key goal of managing his depressive symptoms which did worsen while needing to stay at home during the COVID-19 restrictions.

YOUTH WORKERS GROUP REFLECTION

PICYS and the support worker were able to provide a safe space where Liam felt worthy. He felt grateful for PICYS who saved him from his living conditions with his mother and provided him an opportunity to start a new life. Liam's relationship with both PICYS and his support worker helped him to find services, connect with others around him, and navigate the world. This dynamic resembles a level of care that had previously not been given to him when living with his mother. The support provided allowed him to find a new normal and recognise that he was deserving of feeling safe and worthy.

STAKEHOLDERS GROUP REFLECTION

Liam (18) came to PICYS because his home felt unsafe, with a particularly difficult relationship with his mother, who was critical, emotionally abusive and could not come to terms with Liam's transgender identity. Liam had been anxious and suicidal, hiding in his room at home before leaving to couch surf with friends, and finally accessing crisis accommodation when he sensed that he might become a burden to his friends. This anxiety about burdensomeness contributed to his shyness in seeking accommodation support, but PICYS' drop-in function facilitated a "soft entry" by enabling him to introduce himself to PICYS in a more natural way, with time to assess whether the service would be accepting of him or suit his needs before requesting housing. Liam's statement that his time at PICYS had been "the best year of my life" points to the sense of relief this young person felt at having his experiences validated and his authentic self valued and accepted, enabling him to focus on addressing key concerns. PICYS long-term, stable accommodation and the professional expertise and competency of support staff enabled him to relax, feel safe, reduce his social isolation, build his shattered self-esteem and confidence and give him the time he needed to be able to think and plan his future.

In selecting Liam's story, the stakeholders considered both the positive effect of his experience at PICYS on growing as a person, but also what might have happened to this young person if they had not connected with an organisation like PICYS. The critical factor in this young person's story was the sense of acceptance and belonging that enabled them to accept support, experience validation of their authentic self and access the psychological space to grow into themselves. This attests to the value of a service like PICYS in averting negative consequences of homelessness, family dysfunction and suicidality by providing a safe, comfortable environment with the wrap-around care of a network of professional personnel as well as the opportunity to connect with peers and to experience social acceptance and belonging. Liam's story also illustrates a nuanced understanding of homelessness as being more than a physical roof over one's head, where the young person is driven to accept insecure housing options to escape domestic abuse.

“I’VE BEEN WITH PICYS FOR ALMOST A YEAR NOW AND IT HAS ALSO BEEN THE BEST YEAR OR MY LIFE. COINCIDENCE? I THINK NOT. THROUGHOUT THIS YEAR I HAVE HAD A REASON TO GET UP IN THE MORNING FOR DROP IN AND APPOINTMENTS. I HAVE MADE FRIENDS THAT I VALUE AND WOULD BE WORSE OFF WITHOUT. I HAVE A PLACE TO TALK ABOUT HOW I FEEL WITHOUT JUDGEMENT. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TO MY LIFE AS A RESULT OF PICYS THOUGH IS BEING ABLE TO STOP COUCH SURFING AND ACTUALLY LIVE IN A PLACE WHERE I FEEL SAFE.”

- LIAM 18

MILES - 22 YEARS OLD

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

I've been coming to PICYS for about a year, before that I use to go to another homelessness service a lot but PICYS is more my type of environment. Since I've started engaging with PICYS they have helped me out with a lot of things like food, having someone to talk to and getting accommodation. Soon enough my case worker is going to help me with my license and passport so I can get my citizenship. Since moving into PICYS place my life has got better because I don't have to worry about where I'm going to sleep and if I'm going to be with my cats or not. By the time I finish at PICYS accommodation I'm sure I will have a job, half-way through my license and be ready for the adult life and all thanks to PICYS.

YOUTH WORKERS REFLECTION

Miles was referred to our service by another homelessness service at the end of last year due to his long history of homelessness. Miles was already known to PICYS as he had been accessing our drop-in service for a number of years to access our Emergency Relief. Miles struggles with his anxiety so would often attend PICYS and leave straight away. When Miles would present at PICYS the workers would always make Miles feel comfortable and make his experience at PICYS a positive one.

Miles was part of the 50 Lives 50 Homes program and was offered long-term housing. Miles still continued to attend PICYS sporadically accessing our ER. Unfortunately, due to AOD misuse and risk taking behaviours, Miles then decided to give up his long-term housing as he did not feel it was a safe place with him experiencing conflict with nearby residents. Miles then found himself once again homeless with his 2 cats. Miles was able to find temporary accommodation for his cats and engaged in a 6 months rehabilitation program. Miles was very successful in this program but due to him not having stable accommodation Miles found this difficult to maintain in the community. Miles was homeless and couch surfing with friends which was an environment he was trying to avoid.

With PICYS attending the 50 Lives 50 homes program and identifying Miles as most at need for supported accommodation we were then able to accommodate Miles and his 2 cats in one of our transitional accommodation units. The youth worker supported Miles with moving into the accommodation and continued to support Miles with his tenancy.

Since then, there has been some ups and downs at the unit with Miles having failed rent inspections, gatherings which had led to complaints and damage to the property. The youth worker was understanding and would guide Miles with doing

PICYS MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES 20-21

the right thing with reporting, writing apology letters which enabled him to sustain his tenancy.

Miles now walks into PICYS and engages well with all youth workers, attends our Be-Well mental health group, attends our drop-in and engages well with other young people accessing the service.

YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP REFLECTION

This story shows that by using a non-judgemental approach to working and providing a place where people are understanding, PICYS was able to help Miles on his journey from crisis to stability. Beginning with brief visits to access Emergency Relief and for help meeting other basic needs, over time this has progressed to attending mental health support groups and coming in for longer times.

Losing his Department of Housing house and moving into PICYS transitional, was able to become part of his journey without if feeling like a step backwards. PICYS's low threshold criteria and our ability to work flexibly in a way that suits the young person meant there were fewer barriers to Miles accessing support and housing.

With the patience and acceptance offered Miles could formulate plans for the future and now has an idea of what he wants to achieve by the time he leaves our housing.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

The Stakeholder group selected Miles' story as representing a powerful example of "most significant change", because it demonstrates the commitment of PICYS to go the distance with young people who experience long-term, high levels of difficulty with both mental health and substance use problems.

Miles (22) had an extensive history of homelessness, with severe anxiety and other mental health issues, along with substance dependency problems, when he first accessed PICYS. His needs were very much at the most basic level of obtaining food and shelter. Miles' contact with PICYS was at this level for a number of years. Miles was supported to attain safe and potentially stable accommodation however due to his substance use, and the conflict this created with others, this was not sustainable. He then achieved success in a drug rehabilitation program, but like many others, was not able to maintain this in the community. PICYS continued to patiently support Miles, in a consistent and non-judgemental way, and has now provided him with transitional accommodation.

THE YOUTH WORKERS' GROUP REFLECTION:

“SINCE MOVING INTO PICYS PLACE MY LIFE HAS GOT BETTER BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT WHERE I'M GOING TO SLEEP AND IF I'M GOING TO BE WITH MY CATS OR NOT. BY THE TIME I FINISH AT PICYS ACCOMMODATION I'M SURE I WILL HAVE A JOB, HALF-WAY THROUGH MY LICENSE AND BE READY FOR THE ADULT LIFE AND ALL THANKS TO PICYS.”

- MILES 22

Understandably, Miles had further struggles in this accommodation setting, due to his substance use, neighbours' complaints about gatherings, and property damage. PICYS stood by Miles and supported him to write apology letters, and to respond as the responsible young adult he now shows the capability of becoming. As a result of this non-judgemental acceptance and support, Miles has been able to maintain his tenancy in this accommodation setting. It is also very significant that Miles has been able to have his two cats with him in this accommodation. It is often unrecognised that companion animals can be extremely important to homeless or transient people, as these relationships provide the life-affirming links people need, to both giving care, and being responded to with warmth and affection. Many young people turn down accommodation opportunities when they are forced to choose between a roof over their heads, and their companion animals. PICYS again demonstrates their focus on meeting young people's needs in ways that honours their individuality and their values.

At the time of reflecting on Miles' story, his journey is still far from over. He is now, however, engaging well with staff and other young people at PICYS, and attends a PICYS Be-Well mental health group, whereas before his anxiety was too overwhelming for him to engage in these ways. Miles has moved to a place in his life where he now has hope, and a sense of a positive future. He talks with confidence about getting a job, his drivers' licence, a passport, and citizenship, and to be "ready for the adult life". Very tellingly, Miles attributes these changes in his life as "all thanks to PICYS".

LIAM - 26 YEARS OLD

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

"I am more independent and I can be there more for others, I have been able to give more, be more reliable. It's important for me to be there to help others where I can because then good things can come my way. It's been good having this sort of space for "counselling", the old house is very relaxing. I feel hopeful about my future, I just want to get into work, maybe some construction work and later when I am stable enough I want to do Youth Work. It's been good PICYS, there should be more services like this in different areas"

YOUTH WORKER REFLECTION

Liam is proud Aboriginal young man who came to live in PICYS transitional accommodation in 2020 after his girlfriend and he were unable to secure long term housing in the private rental market. The couple had been staying in another transitional accommodation program, left with a glowing reference but no real estate company would offer them a house, they felt discriminated against.

Before PICYS Liam's only interaction to support services was in a mandatory arrangement through the justice system. Liam had spent most of his young adult life in and out of custody. The last sentence was for 2 years for a crime he didn't commit but was a witness to, a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. These years spent in reflection were fundamental to the shift that was to come as he left prison determined to change his life for the better. It took many months of consistent engagement and time to build rapport with Liam. I believe these barriers were related to various factors including that myself as a white person needed to prove I was a safe person, secondly Liam's shy nature and possibly some gendered cultural elements.

As a worker I endeavoured to provide a flexible framework which allowed Liam to test and slowly warm to. Liam engaged well in case management sessions and really opened up about his personal struggles, his family dynamics and challenges, his relationship with his girlfriend, his mental health and past AOD use. Liam has remained in control of his AOD use being absent from illicit drugs and engaged regularly in counselling with an ACO. Sadly Liam lost his older brother this year and has demonstrated his strength of will and his positive attitude to process and manage his grief to the best of his ability.

Over the past 12 months Liam has maintained his accommodation to a high standard, paid all his bills on time and fulfilled all his community-based corrections order requirements. This is the longest time Liam has gone without

being in prison since being a teenager and is feeling in control of his life and future aspirations. Liam has become a role model to his siblings and his community. With the assistance from PICYS Liam has expressed feeling like there is a broader support network for him and his community which in the past he didn't feel he had. Liam aspires now to be that support to others, especially younger Aboriginal people.

YOUTH WORKER GROUP REFLECTION

The youth worker was able to provide a space for hopefulness, despite previous experiences of discrimination, and experiences with the justice system. These experiences are not just those had by Liam himself, but ones shared culturally due to the history of colonialism that Aboriginal people have faced. The youth worker's flexibility meant that Liam was able to engage on his own terms, giving him the choice that he had gone without when going through the criminal justice system. By providing this flexibility, the youth worker was also able to give space to differing cultural understandings of support. The development of rapport reflects the PICYS model of meeting people where they are at, and Liam's desire to support others acknowledges his own belief that the PICYS model works. Liam's hope for the future allows him to be an aspiration for others, building him up to provide the same support that he received to others.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

Liam's journey with PICYS began with transitional accommodation, but progressed to working with a PICYS worker who supported him through long term case management. Liam's journey with PICYS took many months as rapport was established, noting it took time for Liam as an Aboriginal man to trust a non-Aboriginal worker, and until this time Liam had been in and out of custody for most of his young adult life. PICYS long term, relationship-based approach worked well for Liam as it provided a safe place for him to open up and consider a number of issues, when he was ready, including his mental health, impacts of incarceration and the loss of his brother. Liam has progressed to such an extent that for 12 months he has maintained his accommodation, fulfilled community corrections obligations and remained out of custody, for the longest period since being a teenager. Liam's story illustrates how a young person can overcome significant issues and trauma if they receive consistent support that is flexible, patient and 'walks' alongside them in their journey.

PAIGE - 20 YEARS OLD

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

Since being involved with PICYS, I'm more head strong, more positive to others and myself, grew my independence, responsibilities and working, knowing the support is out there through everything in all sorts of situations.

PICYS has just helped by just being there. It's been a long journey and hard to say on paper! Even when I didn't have food! Even the talking and coming out of my bubble!

PICYS have made me find who I really am and what I'm passionate about. Even with everything I've been through PICYS have always been there to pick me up. The person I am is because of the part PICYS has played in my life.

YOUTH WORKER REFLECTION

Paige was referred to our service when she was 17 by another specialised homelessness service due to Paige being homeless and was currently couch surfing. PICYS then accommodated Paige in one of our transitional accommodation units. During this time the youth worker supported Paige and worked towards building a strong rapport with Paige. Paige had experienced significant trauma in her life and was currently struggling with her drug misuse. The youth worker was able to engage with Paige using a trauma informed approach, being consistent and with the relational work PICYS is able to offer, Paige then started to open up more to the support of PICYS and started to trust PICYS and the youth worker. This then enabled the youth worker to support Paige with accessing AOD support and counselling for her mental health and the traumas she was currently going through. Paige was very vulnerable and with no family support this often placed Paige in very high risk situations. PICYS then supported Paige with regular health checks through Homeless Healthcare and referred Paige to the 50 Lives 50 Homes program and linked her in with the Afterhour Support Service.

Paige has now been supported with PICYS for 2.5 years and has not participated in any drug misuse for over a year now. Due to this PICYS was then able to support Paige with working towards her independence and focusing on her strengths. This has now enabled Paige to gain employment with a permanent part-time job, regular driving lessons and has recently engaged in a women's boxing program for her wellness and self-esteem.

YOUTH WORKER GROUP REFLECTION

The outstanding theme was how the youth worker spent the time and effort to build rapport and trust consistently over a long-term support relationship. This highlights the significance of the relationship model PICYS can offer, using proficient, non-judgemental and reliable ongoing support to open the space for young people to develop confidence to grow and transform as a young adult. The belief PICYS workers have in young people's potential helps them realise their best self.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

Paige has been involved with PICYS for 2.5 years, from the age of 17. During this time, she has been gently supported and guided in a manner, that echoes all of the hallmarks of consistent, tolerant and nurturing parenting that were missing in her own upbringing, while maintaining the respect for Paige as a person who can draw on her strengths to achieve competent adulthood. This included being able to cease the use of alcohol and other drugs and take on adult tasks such as employment, independent housing and working towards getting her driver's licence.

Paige's story highlights the relational, trauma-informed approach that PICYS embodies, and the willingness of PICYS to allow this to proceed at the client's pace, even over years, so that Paige can mature in a more normative way rather than being expected to become a functioning adult immediately. This gave her time to process childhood trauma and to move away from a reliance on drugs towards a life that was more fulfilling for her, at a pace she could tolerate. She says that PICYS was "always there to pick me up", suggesting that there was tolerance and empathy when she made mistakes, that she was encouraged to see things as less catastrophic and that she could always try again and be reliably supported to do so. In this sense the support is quasi-parental without being overbearing, an important consideration for a young person who was described as independent and "headstrong". A "tough love" approach to a young person like Paige would be unlikely to have achieved what PICYS staff have done by walking beside her instead.

MORPHEUS - 21 YEARS OLD

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

I have noticed that I am feeling more comfortable asking for help, it's not that I am more prepared but that I feel that I am worthy. All my life I have been made out to feel that I am a burden. These are feelings that I am still tackling. There have been multiple interactions with PICYS staff where you can tell that my needs and capabilities are being acknowledged, listened to, and respected. In the past, the expectation has been that I should be able to do this myself. It has helped having people around me to let me know it's ok when I can't do something, and not to shame me for it. It also helps that people understand why I might not be able to do something. I don't feel that I have neurotypical expectations put on me. With PICYS, people can see that I am really trying, but still need help, so they help me where I need it.

PICYS has helped tear down a lot of my anxieties around asking for help. For instance, I've not always been open about when I am feeling suicidal out of fear of being sent to hospital. I was told that I would not have to go to hospital if we were able to work out alternatives. I did not trust this at first, but my youth worker followed through with what we both committed to, and I was trusted to stay out of hospital. Going to hospital takes away my control and agency, but in this instance, I was given that control and agency. I was listened to about my personal needs and differences in those needs and felt acknowledged about why hospital was not the best for me. Other services assume the same approach will work for all, and if it doesn't, it's my fault. Having my personal needs listened to and respected consistently has been empowering.

During the time I have been with PICYS, I was given two months from my landlord to vacate my property. PICYS helped with all the paperwork, and things I struggle with usually. I was completely overwhelmed and burnt out, I could not comprehend anything. In that time, PICYS linked me with RUAH After Hours Support Service, which has been great for me to have the additional support. I was given support that I did not expect to receive, such as, helping me to move out, and providing financial support to stay at a lodging whilst arranging other accommodation. PICYS really went above of what I thought were the limits of how they could help. They collaborated with Youthlink, RUAH, and Youth Futures, and worked out plans and offered them to me. This was not done behind my back, but with me participating. Eventually, I was able to go into The Beacon where I am currently staying. The experiences of dissociation and memory issues are clearing up. Without the support of PICYS, I genuinely believe I would have ended up on the street, or dead.

YOUTH WORKER'S REFLECTION

Morpheus is a 21 year-old, non-binary person who was referred to PICYS via Youthlink. When Morpheus first started with PICYS, they were living in a private rental with four other housemates. Morpheus was initially tentative with their engagement and would often feel overwhelmed with making appointments. Morpheus shared that they feared judgment and being considered lazy or scolded for their behaviour. The youth worker maintained engagement via text messages, which Morpheus was responsive to, and would often utilise for support when struggling to motivate themselves.

A significant part of rapport building revolved around trust. Morpheus believed that communicating any sign of distress would lead to hospitalisation, which Morpheus did not want due to experiences of mistreatment, including misgendering, and invalidation of their distress. Hospitalisation represented more of a punishment for Morpheus, than a place where they could be safe. On one occasion, Morpheus messaged their youth worker and alluded to having intent to suicide. Morpheus shared they were reluctant to state exactly how they felt, out of fear that an ambulance would be called. The youth worker acknowledged Morpheus' concern and was able to meet them at their house. Together, they went to a quiet place nearby where they completed a safety plan. During the discussion, Morpheus disclosed that they had a suicide plan where they would consume excessive amounts of alcohol. The youth worker and Morpheus discussed a way to diffuse the plan, where the youth worker agreed to support Morpheus to the shops to buy some comfort food and receive their prescription medication. Morpheus said that they would then hand their credit card and medications to their housemate who would keep them locked away. The youth worker acknowledged Morpheus' commitment to keeping themselves safe, and following going shopping, Morpheus returned home.

Here, the trust in the relationship works a few ways. Firstly, the youth worker's trust in Morpheus' ability to keep themselves safe acknowledges their agency and provides them the ability to take responsibility for themselves. This in turn builds Morpheus' trust with the youth worker, as their response has been to work with Morpheus, rather than impose a decision on them. This mutual trust and respect enabled Morpheus to realise their ability to keep themselves safe: to trust themselves.

This trust helped to build a strong foundation, and when Morpheus was given two months to vacate their property, Morpheus sought out PICYS for help. Morpheus and their youth worker discussed plans regarding their immediate short term need for accommodation, and to address their long-standing instability of housing. To respond to their long-term need for accommodation, Morpheus was supported to

apply for public housing, where they received priority status. Following this, Morpheus was referred to the NPAH program ran by Youth Futures. At the same time, Morpheus and their youth worker explored more immediate accommodation options, as well as making a referral to RUAH's After Hours Support Service so that Morpheus had additional support during evenings and weekends.

Whilst searching for accommodation, Morpheus showed a strong willingness to engage with different accommodation options and made great efforts to attend assessments. One such assessment was for Ngatti House, a residential program in Fremantle that provides medium-term accommodation and clinical support for young people facing homelessness. During the assessment, Morpheus raised concerns around being able to fit with the expectations of Ngatti House, and subsequently they were not successful in their application. Morpheus told their case worker that they regretted being open about their concerns, recognising that they were getting short on time, and their need for accommodation was significant. The youth worker and Morpheus talked about how they had decided to voice their concerns because they recognised their concerns as legitimate. This meant that they were being responsible to themselves in recognising their own needs, again developing their ability to trust themselves and their judgments.

By the time Morpheus had to vacate their property, they had no immediate accommodation options. PICYS and Youthlink collaborated on a plan, where Morpheus would stay at Beatty Lodge for a week, with PICYS and Morpheus sharing half of the costs each, and Morpheus would then be referred to Hampton House for a month's stay and being discharged to a friend's place where they could stay temporarily. This gave more time to find other short term accommodation options. Due to the diligence of PICYS staff, within the week of staying at Beatty Lodge, PICYS were made aware of vacancies at the Beacon, and Morpheus was referred to and accepted into the service. Throughout the two months of referrals, assessments, and preparing for vacate, Morpheus was able to keep themselves out of hospital, with only one instance of self-harm. Whilst their current accommodation may not be ideal, Morpheus has shown a strong ability to persevere, and to seek help when needed, engaging regularly with their support network.

YOUTH WORKERS GROUP REFLECTION

The youth worker group selected this story because it highlights the power of PICYS relational work. The youth worker noted "Morpheus was initially tentative with engagement" the youth worker worked creatively and flexibly with Morpheus, adapting interactions to a pace that Morpheus was comfortable with, this allowed the youth worker to gain a deeper understanding of the young person's sensitivity and vulnerability (all their life felt like a burden) eventually leading to Morpheus feeling safe, respected and building a trusted relationship with their youth worker.

PICYS MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES 20-21

Strong themes of empowerment and agency run throughout this Most Significant Story with the young person now feeling they have control of their life. The youth worker has worked effectively and fully supported Morpheus in this transformative process. Morpheus has a new found confidence in themselves, knowing they are trusted to make and execute decisions. Morpheus has gained great insight and understands their strengths and weaknesses and appears motivated to learn and take on new opportunities.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

What is striking about Morpheus' story is the insight it provided into why a young person might not be doing all the things the community expects of them, and the struggle they might be experiencing just getting basic things done, like finding accommodation, dealing with paperwork, or being able to engage in problem-solving thinking. In particular, PICYS was able to acknowledge and respect the challenges of not being neurotypical and not place unrealistic expectations on Morpheus, but rather to help them build the confidence and skills they needed at their own pace. This young person required a dedicated, tailored approach that acknowledged their particular issues and was willing to respond creatively to difficulties.

Morpheus notes their own lack of self-worth, which did not allow them to consider asking for or expecting help, instead being crippled by shame and a lifelong sense of being a burden. By meeting them where they felt safe and comfortable and encouraging genuine exploration of their anxieties, PICYS staff were able to build trust and respect and enable Morpheus to be open about their suicidality, which in turn enabled Morpheus to see themselves as in control of their own life and capable of making good decisions and choices. This allowed them to share their anxieties and work out solutions to keep themselves safe rather than having someone else take charge of their safety, often in distressing ways, and built a sense of self-efficacy. By working in this way, Morpheus was more able to see themselves as competent and to feel comfortable to ask for help when overwhelmed, and to be helped to build the skills they needed to fulfill this.

This story highlights both the individualised and holistic approach that PICYS takes to its work with young people, as well as the commitment to working in partnership with other agencies, to form a secure, wrap-around service that stays with the young person until they feel able to manage independently. For Morpheus, who feared they would end up on the streets or dead, the care they received at PICYS was beyond their expectations, and enabled them to envisage a much more positive future.

**"PICYS REALLY WENT ABOVE OF WHAT I
THOUGHT WERE THE LIMITS OF HOW
THEY COULD HELP."**

- MORPHEUS 21

SMASH - 22 YEARS OLD

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

Getting housing changed everything, it allowed me to work on my goals. I made friends at PICYS, the friends are better influences, who are also working on goals and are more like minded. I was able to be admitted into hospital for a long term stay. During my stay I was able to work on my mental health, get stable, stay away from drugs and people that were bad influences. Between hospital and Ngatti PICYS helped keep me stable by always talking to me, showing me someone cares and helping me get to appointments. I love who I am now.

YOUTH WORKER REFLECTION

Smash is a 22 year old non-binary young person who was encouraged to come to PICYS by friends who were being supported at PICYS. By being referred to PICYS by close friends this enabled the team to build rapport and trust with Smash. Smash presented with complex mental health, physical health concerns, AOD use and long-term homelessness. Smash began working with their previous case worker in January, Smash identified that they would like to stabilise their mental health before going into transitional housing. Lots of work was done with Smash to help address their hesitance when engaging with new services and to address their anxiety that often led to last minute change of minds.

Smash decided they would accept an offer of a property in late January after having more bad experiences while couch surfing with friends and having discussions with their previous case worker around looking at the common patterns that arose when staying with friends. Smash moved into their PICYS unit in late February after a stay at Neami. Once in the unit Smash continued to work on their mental health with some issues around attending appointments with YouthLink.

After a few months in the unit Smash began to have seizures and was transported to the hospital on multiple occasions via ambulance. Due to past issues with hospitals Smash was reluctant to stay more than a day or two. Smash's previous worker worked with them to try overcoming some of their anxieties around hospitals. Because of the seizures, which were happening multiple times a day, Smash was feeling a deep lack of control over their life leading to a sharp decline in their mental health. During this time Smash was able to begin a tentative relationship with their family who they had not spoken to in years.

Smash attempted suicide in late May, they were hospitalised to stabilise and manage their seizures before being transferred to the mental health unit. Overall Smash spent almost 3 months in hospital. Smash's previous support worker and YouthLink worked together to advocated for a long-term hospital stay to address Smash's physical and mental health needs. The previous support worker also had to regularly encourage Smash to stay in hospital as they disliked being there, this was done with visits and making sure Smash's other supports were staying engaged. During their stay, Smash chose to give up their unit as they felt they needed a more supported accommodation option. Once Smash's seizures were managed and they were transferred to the mental health unit they improved, beginning to be more hopeful about the future and enjoying the new relationship with their family. Referrals were being made to mental health supported accommodation with support from the hospital social workers and Smash's YouthLink worker.

A few weeks before Smash was discharged from hospital their previous support worker left PICYS, Smash was transferred to their current support worker. Smash was distressed about their previous worker leaving but they were able to transfer to their current worker without losing the rapport and trust as that had been fostered among the PICYS team. Towards the end of Smash's stay they identified that they were ready to leave hospital and felt that staying much longer would be detrimental, the hospital agreed. The support worker worked with Smash to come up with a plan as they had not been accepted by any of the accommodation services they were referred to yet.

Several of the mental health supported accommodation services that Smash was referred into rejected them due to deeming them too high risk. Their support worker attempted to encourage Smash to stay in hospital while working on trying to find stable accommodation, however Smash was adamant that they were ready to leave so the support worker worked with them to obtain crisis accommodation so they would be able to leave hospital.

Shortly before leaving hospital Smash was able to obtain an assessment with Ngatti, they were very positive about Ngatti being a good option for them and were very hopefully about being accepted. Smash's workers from various agencies had been encouraging Smash to consider Ngatti for almost two years, after their hospital stay and continued encouragement from their workers, Smash felt they were ready to engage in the Ngatti program. Having a tour of Ngatti and meeting some of the workers during their assessment also helped Smash become comfortable with the service. During this process Smash's support worker continued to assist Smash with attending

appointments, advocating for Smash and focusing on the long-term goals when setbacks came up.

In the 6 weeks between leaving hospital and entering Ngatti there was a lot of uncertainty for Smash, we were able to reengage After Hours Support Service during this time to help support Smash. They spent just over a week at Tom Fisher house before a friend offered Smash to stay with them. Smash's support worker helped Smash to maintain that relationship by offering practical support to both Smash and their friend, including food, hygiene products and bedding.

Now they are settling into Ngatti and PICYS is supporting Smash to transition into their program.

YOUTH WORKERS GROUP REFLECTION

In the time that Smash has been engaging with PICYS, they have built significant trust with the team of youth workers, and PICYS as a whole. This assisted with the difficult transition when their primary worker left, and they were assigned another youth worker.

When Smash first became involved with PICYS, they were aware of the service through friends who attended. Smash also attended drop-in for some time prior to accessing case management. This 'soft entry' meant that they were able to become familiar with PICYS and take things at their own pace. Smash's youth worker supported them through an initial hesitancy to engage with services and facilitated a long-term hospital stay which was a huge step for them. Smash's youth worker demonstrated that they would continue to walk alongside Smash through different levels of engagement which assisted Smash to build relational trust. Smash gained insight into what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like and built relationships and trust with other young people who attend PICYS.

Through ongoing case management, Smash has shown empowerment to make complex life decisions that support their safety, wellbeing, and life goals. Smash has always

known what they wanted, but having the opportunity to sound their ideas off trusted people has gone a long way towards their confidence and assertiveness around their decisions.

Long term support has helped Smash gain willingness to seek help and access supported accommodation through a service external to PICYS. After six years of transience, this is a huge change point in Smash's life.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP REFLECTION

Smash presented with complex mental and physical health concerns, AOD use and long-term homelessness. Smash's story was chosen as it illustrates the importance of PICYS workers maintaining their support through crisis periods and different levels of engagement.

Not long after Smash first engaged with PICYS and was living in one of the PICYS units, they suffered significant physical and mental health issues and attempted suicide which required long term hospitalisation. The youth worker successfully maintained contact with Smash over that three month period and ensured that other services maintained contact as well.

A few weeks before Smash was discharged from hospital their previous support worker left PICYS and Smash successfully transferred to their current support worker. Although they were distressed about their previous worker leaving, the support and trust fostered by the PICYS team meant that the shift worked well.

PICYS worked to obtain supported housing that Smash was happy with for when they were discharged. When things didn't quite go to plan, alternatives were found and support was provided to Smash and their friend until a place at Ngatti was secured. PICYS continued support even when things got difficult and other services would not accept Smash as they were considered 'high risk'. This is an excellent example of the value of the PICYS service model for young people with complex issues.

“BETWEEN HOSPITAL AND NGATTI, PICYS HELPED KEEP ME STABLE BY ALWAYS TALKING TO ME, SHOWING ME SOMEONE CARES AND HELPING ME GET TO APPOINTMENTS. I LOVE WHO I AM NOW.”

- SMASH 22

