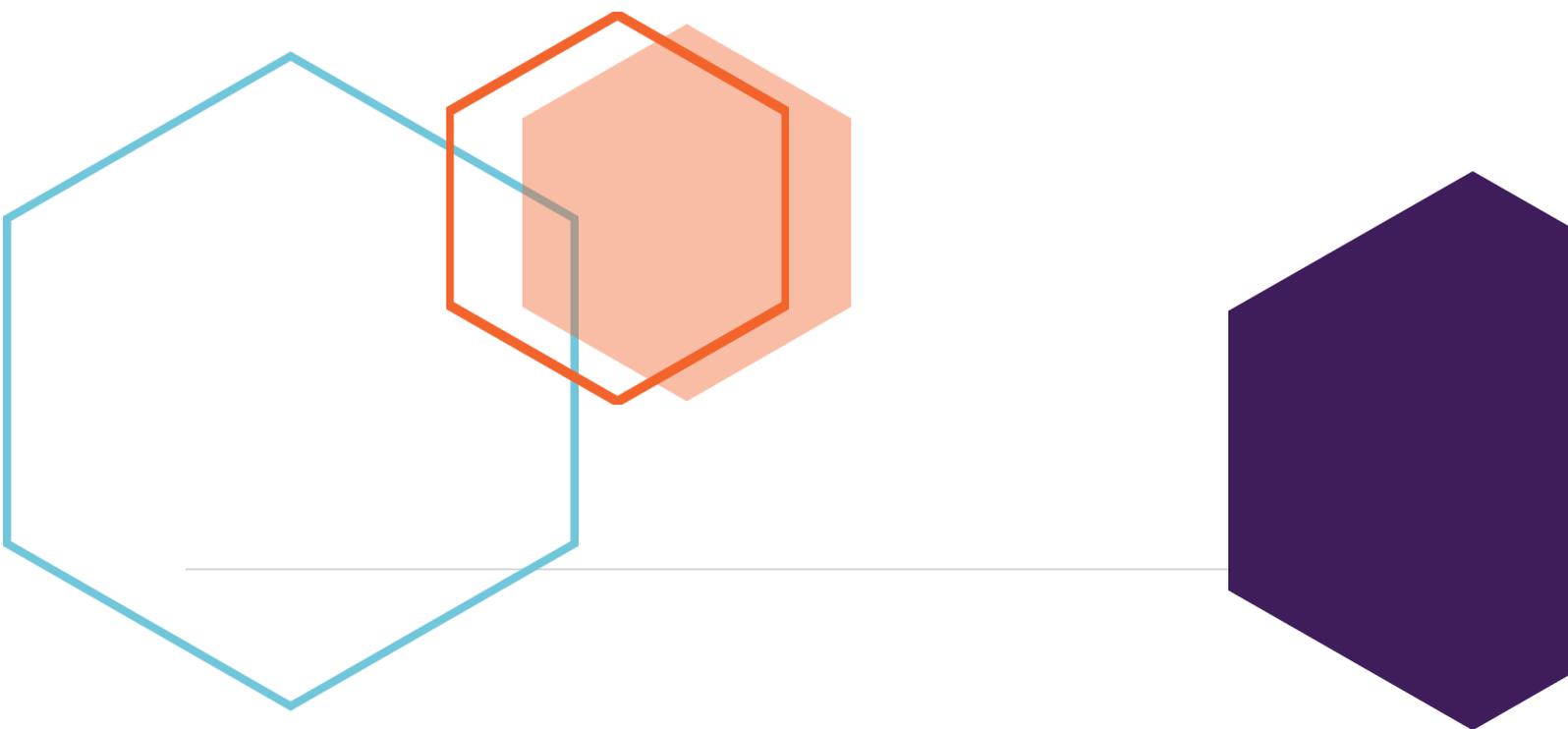




TRANSITIONAL HOUSING THINK TANK REPORT



REPORT ON TRANSITIONAL HOUSING ‘THINK TANK’

Held Thursday April 26, 2018 at Charities House

Hosted By: The Women’s Resource Center (Elaine Butterfield)
& Habitat for Humanity (Sheelagh Cooper)

Facilitated by: Crystal Clay

ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED IN ATTENDANCE:

- The Bermuda Housing Cooperation
- The Centre Against Abuse
- The Salvation Army
- Workforce Development
- Under Konstruction
- Hamilton 7th Day Adventist Church
- The Family Centre
- Teen Services
- The Bank of Bermuda Foundation
- The Coalition for The Protection of Children
- Habitat for Humanity
- The Women’s Resource Center
- Ministry of Social Development & Sports
- EAP
- Cripps Foundation
- Child and Family Services
- Bermuda Anger Management, Mediation and Professional Services
- 3 Formerly Homeless Women

COLLATED NOTES FROM THE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING 'THINK TANK'

CURRENT SITUATION - TRANSITIONAL HOUSING IN BERMUDA

- Salvation Army Houses **individuals** but not families.
- Bermuda Housing Corporation Provides Transitional Housing for **mothers and children** but the demand exceeds the supply
- Transitional Means:
 - “Not meant to be permanent”
- We should Consider:
 - Multi-purpose transitional housing
 - Putting a Continuum in place

VULNERABILITY: TARGET POPULATION

- Homeless families are a vulnerable, significant and largely hidden population
- Households in precarious situations may include:
 - Women escaping abusive situations
 - Families evicted who are unable to keep up rent payments
- There is no coordinated plan to address this population
- Homeless families are often struggling with trauma, loss and rejection
- Some are struggling with mental health issues
- Some are suffering with multi-generational trauma
- Families do not leave existing transitional housing because there aren't any affordable options. This creates a growing need for more “transitional” housing.

STATE OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There are:

- **2512** people on financial assistance
- **316** are low earners
- **396** are able bodied

Nb. Financial Assistance did not attend the Think Tank discussion although they were invited

DEMAND VS. SUPPLY

REQUESTS FOR HOUSING:

- The Bermuda Housing Corporation are seeing 40 requests per month for housing (not all of which are families)
- The Women's Resource Centre are receiving an average of 10 requests per month for housing for varying reasons relating to: landlord tenant issues, evictions, loss of job, separations and divorce, single parents not being able to make ends meet, sexual exploitation, etc.
- The Centre Against Abuse are receiving an average of 3 requests per month for those who fall outside of domestic violence and 1 per month for domestic violence
- The Employee Assistance Program is receiving about three requests per month for housing. Situations vary in terms of requests i.e. domestic issues, pending eviction, wanting to leave the marital home, etc.
- The Coalition for the Protection of Children estimate that an average of 2 cases per week of women/mothers who are getting evicted and/or seeking affordable housing. According to their data collection from 2017, 246 mothers put affordable housing as the highest priority or cause of stress
- Both Habitat for Humanity and The Coalition receive calls weekly from mothers seeking housing
- The Salvation Army receives on average 1 request per month from women seeking affordable housing

CURRENT AVAILABLE HOUSING:

- Bermuda Housing Corporation statistics within existing transitional housing of their facility:
 - 26% Are single parents
 - 48% Are single persons
 - 11% Extended Family
 - 15% unemployed
- Teen Haven has:
 - 5 Bedrooms for 5 families

- Round the clock case workers
 - Wrap around services
 - 16-25 age group
- There is no current 'Safe House' for women and their families fleeing Domestic Violence

THE BARRIERS/ SYSTEMIC ISSUES

- No minimum wage in Bermuda
- Government Departments are underfunded and understaffed in the social service sector
- There are Barriers for those who seek legal services so that people on financial assistance are automatically denied legal aid because the "aid" puts them over the financial allowable limit
- Men who owe child support are heard in closed Family Court, but women must appear in Open Court becoming subject to humiliation and are threatened with imprisonment
- Bermuda Housing Corporation, Financial Assistance and the Department of Child & Family Services each have a particular set of "tools" but there is a lack of coordination among them. This needs to be addressed
- The Government should have a more robust Financial Assistance Program (so this is not an issue).

GOING FORWARD

- We must empower women & families in a dignified manner
- The establishment of transitional housing should be sustainable, not one source of funding
- It was suggested to provide Social Impact Bonds (Alternative ways to fund)
- The solution (Housing & Programs) should Represent best practice globally
- We need to take a strengths-based approach rather than focusing on the negative behavior or difficulties demonstrated by clients
- Clients need to be mandated by a multi-faceted collaborative of services and programs to sustain their transition through; crisis to healing to independent living

- A Collaborative approach should include access to housing and support services and programs by multiple stakeholder agencies

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Of the 18 organizations and Government departments, and community citizens represented at the 'Think Tank', there was a clear consensus that there is a need for both emergency housing for women escaping abusive situations and transitional housing for homeless families. Although the population of homeless families is largely hidden, there is a general agreement among the agencies serving the population that the need is substantial and the issue is demanding of our attention. It was generally agreed that the goal is to create a safe, holistic, supportive and therapeutic environment for homeless families, while empowering them to become independent and self-sufficient. Such an environment should offer or provide a comprehensive range of services and opportunities including but not limited to: Counseling, Substance abuse rehab, Job readiness, further Education, Training and Life Skills. These Services should be of high quality, client centered, strength based and delivered with respect, dignity, empathy and compassion.

NEXT STEPS

- Establish a Steering Committee to lead the project going forward.
- Examine and document base practice models inter-mutually.
- Approach the Government with a view toward accessing a currently empty building or buildings that might be suitable as transitional housing.
- Develop a Collaborative Data Base that would bring us closer to an estimate of the actual magnitude of the problem on homelessness among families.