

Ending street
homelessness in
the inner city



Adelaide Zero Project

Implementation Plan 2018 - 2020



Version 1.0, published February 2018

Please note that this is a working document and will evolve as the Adelaide Zero Project progresses through Phase Two and beyond.

Acknowledgements

Kaurna acknowledgement

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kaurna people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we work and live on. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Kaurna people to country and we respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs.

Adelaide Zero Project partners

The Don Dunstan Foundation, as the backbone organisation for the Adelaide Zero Project, is supported by a range of project partners and supporters. We thank all of our partners for their commitment to the Adelaide Zero Project and their significant efforts to help achieve the goals set out in this Implementation Plan.

Principal Partner

Bendigo Bank

Government Partners

City of Adelaide

Department for Correctional
Services South Australia

Department for Communities and Social
Inclusion

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia

SA Health

University Partners

Flinders University

The University of Adelaide

Major Partners

Aboriginal Sobriety Group

AnglicareSA

Baptist Care SA

Broadley Trust

Catherine House Inc.

Common Ground

Community Sector Banking

Hutt St Centre

Life Without Barriers

Neami National

OARS Community Transitions

Salvation Army

St John's Youth Services

SYC Limited

Uniting Communities

Supporting Partners

Australian Alliance to End
Homelessness

Community Solutions

End Homelessness SA

Institute of Global

Homelessness

Mental Health Coalition of

South Australia

Message Bureau

Shelter SA

Shiny Ideas

Together SA

Women's Safety Services SA

Foreword

The Adelaide Zero Project has been a collaborative effort since its inception and the development of this Implementation Plan continues that effort.

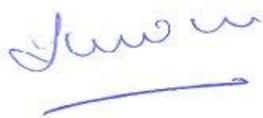
This Plan sets out the next steps in the development of the project, the timeline for key activities and, crucially, which organisations will take responsibility for delivering the various elements of the Project. We're calling this last element the Adelaide Zero Project Accountability Framework (Table 1).

This Implementation Plan is a starting point. One of the core components of the whole project is continuous improvement. To that end this will not be a static document; it will continue to evolve and be refined and that is why we have called it Version 1.0. In particular the mechanism documents that underpin the Plan will become the responsibility of the lead agencies nominated. They will update these and develop them further to ensure they support the Adelaide Zero Project goal of ending homelessness among people sleeping rough in Adelaide's inner city. More work needs to be done in some areas of the Project. Among such areas we need to hear directly from homeless people themselves, as well as to better respond to the needs of Aboriginal South Australians who are experiencing homelessness and issues of excessive alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour. There is also a need to identify and implement ongoing strategies that respond to the mobility of Aboriginal South Australians from rural and remote communities of South Australia.

What we have set out to do is apply the successful Functional Zero Approach from the United States to Adelaide's inner city. The rapid development of this Implementation Plan has only been possible through the support of the South Australian Government in commissioning a 90-Day Project to champion this process. The dedicated work of people from many government departments, the City of Adelaide, the Don Dunstan Foundation, the University of Adelaide and Flinders University, as well as the non-government organisations who provide services in the inner city, has driven the Plan's evolution. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of Bendigo Bank as the Principal Partner in the Project.

Our thanks to all of those who have been involved in the development of this Implementation Plan. There is much more to do. We can end street homelessness in Adelaide.

Sincerely,



Louise Miller Frost & The Revd Peter Sandeman

CO-CHAIRS

**Project Steering Group
Adelaide Zero Project**

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Acronyms

AHWG	Aligned Housing Working Group
AZP	Adelaide Zero Project
BNL	By-Name List
BNLF	By-Name List Framework
DWG	Data Working Group
DCSI	Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
DDF	Don Dunstan Foundation
HSG	Homelessness Strategic Group
ICOG	Inner City Operations Group
ICSMG	Inner City Senior Managers Group
IHP	Integrated Housing Program
KPI	Key performance indicator
PSG	(Adelaide Zero) Project Steering Group
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SPDAT	Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool
TBD	To be determined
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VI	Vulnerability Index
VI-SPDAT	Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool
VPF	Vulnerable Persons Framework

Section 1

Implementing the Functional Zero approach

Introduction

This Implementation Plan is the practical framework and guide for Phase Two (implement) of the Adelaide Zero Project. The Plan builds on and refines prior work by the Adelaide Zero Research Project team, particularly the Adelaide Zero Project Discussion Paper (Tually et al. 2017), available on the Don Dunstan Foundation website. It is a working document and will evolve as the Adelaide Zero Project progresses through Phase Two and beyond.

What are we trying to achieve?

The Adelaide Zero Project is committed to **ending street homelessness** in the inner city using the Functional Zero approach. At its core, the Functional Zero approach is about knowing every person sleeping rough by name and coordinating local resources to quickly meet their needs. It's about using real-time data to track progress and to understand what strategies are working to drive down the number of people sleeping rough on our streets and ensure all people sleeping rough who want a place to call home have one.

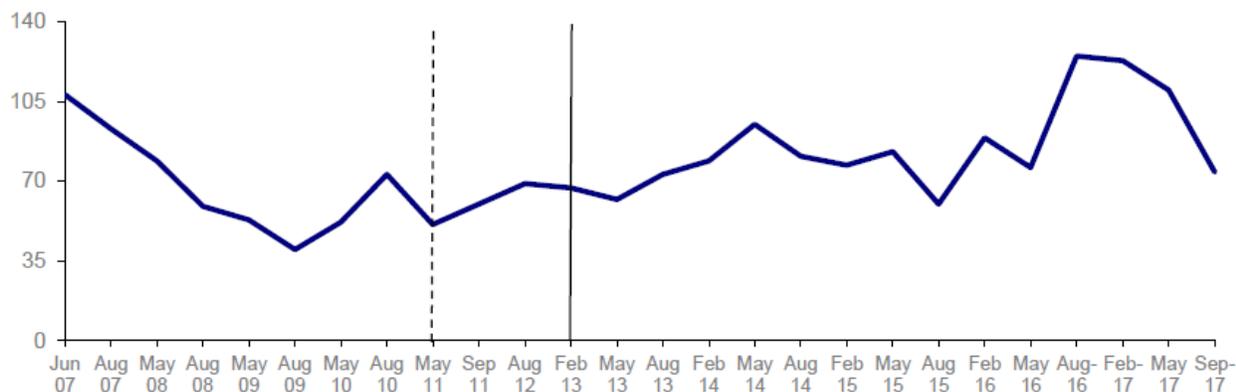
The Adelaide Zero Project has set an interim target to achieve and sustain Functional Zero street homelessness in Adelaide's inner city by the end of 2020.

The Project's interim target will be reviewed three months after Connections Week to ensure it is informed by the data captured in the By-Name List. Following this, organisations and individuals will be invited to commit to this target by signing the Adelaide Zero Project Charter.

What is the current state of street homelessness?

On any given night there are estimated to be up to 120 people sleeping rough in the Adelaide inner city (Figure 1), with the inner city area indicated as having the highest level of street homelessness in South Australia. While the available data about sleeping rough in Adelaide is not definitive on numbers – something the Adelaide Zero Project as a data-driven approach will conclusively address – it is clear that the scale of the issue here means **street homelessness in Adelaide’s inner city is eminently solvable**.

Figure 1: Total number of people sleeping rough per Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count (DCSI), June 2007 to September 2017



NOTE: The solid vertical line indicates the inclusion of additional collection points and the dashed vertical line is to indicate the change in the questionnaire to focus purely on people sleeping rough

Source: DCSI 2017, p. 6.

Note: In 2017, a decrease in the number of people who reported having slept rough the previous night was seen between the Rough Sleep Counts in May (110 people) and September (74 people). Fewer people were approached to participate in the September count (136 people) than the May count (225 people). Of those approached to participate, the proportion who had slept rough the previous night was higher in September (54 per cent) than in May (49 per cent). Given the lower numbers of people approached to participate in the September 2017 survey, the apparent reduction should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 2. Context for Adelaide Zero Project’s target group, coverage and funding for homeless people

This project will engage with all people sleeping on the streets of the Adelaide inner city area.

A person is recognised as a rough sleeper if they are living in a:

- STREET/PARK/OUT IN THE OPEN
- IMPROVISED BUILDING OR DWELLING
- TENT
- BOAT
- MOTOR VEHICLE
- CABIN

Source: DCSI

Coverage
The City of Adelaide boundaries, which includes the Central Business District, North Adelaide and the parklands.

- Central Business District
- North Adelaide
- Parklands

Homelessness Funding in SA

\$60.9 Mil
in funding provided from various sources in 2016/17.

This funded...

39
government and non-government organisations

80
programs over 96 service outlets across the state

17
key government & non-government Specialist Homelessness Services in the inner city

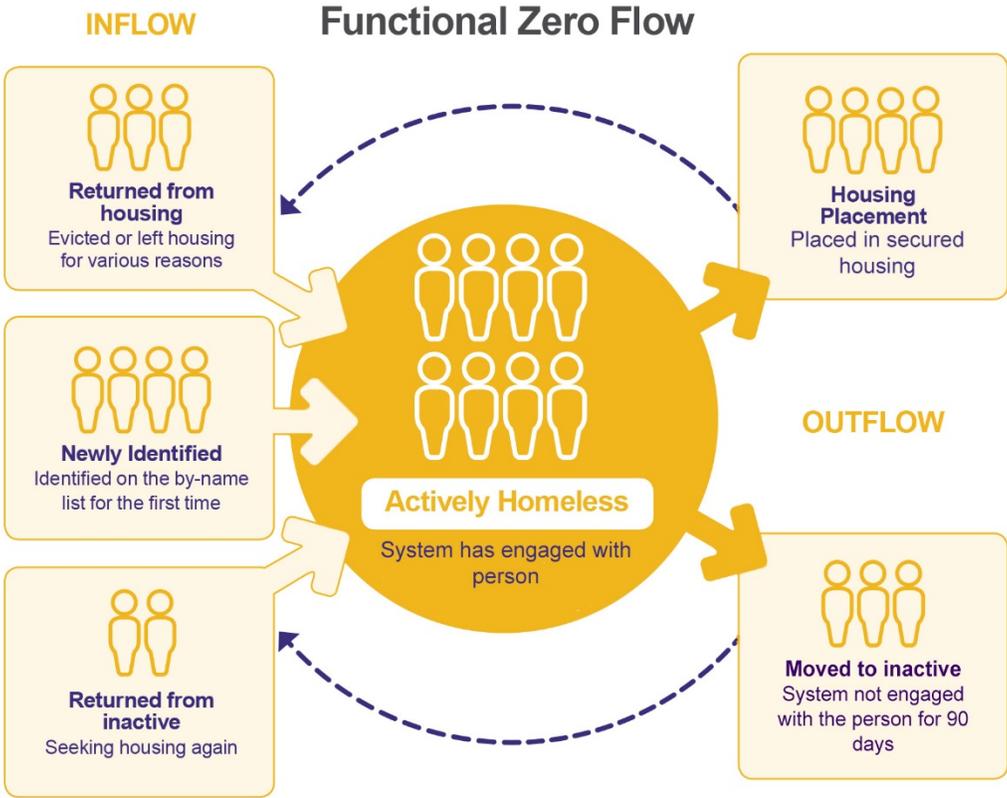
Source: DCSI cited in Tually et al 2017

What is Functional Zero?

A community reaches Functional Zero when the average capacity of its housing system is greater than the existing need and this can be proven with data. Functional Zero will be reached in Adelaide when the number of people sleeping on the streets at any point in time, is no greater than the average housing placement rate for that same period (usually a month). The approach requires clear understanding of six key inflow/outflow data points (Figure 3) and actions to ‘turn off the tap’ (inflow) and drive down the actively homeless population.

Reaching Functional Zero does not mean that there will be no one sleeping on the streets. In some circumstances, people may see sleeping rough as the least worst option available to them. Functional Zero also does not mean that there will be no one on the streets who is hungry or unwell. Functional Zero is a sustainable measure of success in supporting people sleeping rough into secure housing. Other changes to the way our society and economy work are needed to achieve zero poverty in our city.

Figure 3: Understanding inflow and outflow data in the Functional Zero approach



Source: adapted from Community Solutions 2017.

Note: Graphic is for illustrative purposes only and does not show a community that has reached Functional Zero homelessness

Why are we using this approach?

The Functional Zero approach has seen significant progress towards ending veteran and chronic homelessness in more than 75 communities across the United States. Since January 2015, the Functional Zero approach has supported participating communities to house more than 75,000 people in the US alone, including more than 40,000 veterans.

Other successes include:

- **Seven** communities have measurably and sustainably **ended veteran homelessness**
- **Three** communities have measurably and sustainably **ended chronic homelessness**
- More than 50 participating communities have now achieved real-time, by-name data on their local homeless populations
- More than 25 participating communities are driving measurable reductions in homelessness, month over month (Community Solutions 2016).

(Two brief case studies of success from the US are provided in the Appendix to this document.)

The Functional Zero approach is also being used in Canada.

Application of the Functional Zero approach shows that ending homelessness is possible. The approach helps communities to end homelessness by involving the community in solutions to homelessness, adopting best practices that support the most efficient allocation of resources and using real-time data to track and improve performance.

This Implementation Plan has been informed by the work of researchers from the University of Adelaide and Flinders University who have looked at what has worked in the US and also in Canada, the UK and other parts of Australia (see also the Adelaide Zero Project Discussion Paper at www.dunstan.org.au/zeroproject). The conclusions of their research – the Adelaide Zero Research Project – will be set out in a forthcoming Final Adelaide Zero Project Research Report.

Adelaide is one of the first cities outside of North America committed to implementing the complete Functional Zero approach. We have been recognised by the Institute of Global Homelessness as one of two cities globally which are thus far part of their *A Place to Call Home* initiative; a select group of 2020 Vanguard Cities leading the way in tackling street homelessness.

More information about the Institute of Global Homelessness and case studies from the US can be found in the Appendices of this Plan.

Adelaide Zero Project principles

The Adelaide Zero Project is guided by the following principles:*



PERSON-CENTRED AND INCLUSIVE

Commitment to ensure the needs and experiences of people with lived experiences of homelessness and culturally diverse groups and are represented within the Adelaide Zero Project.



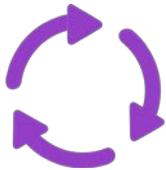
HOUSING FIRST

Commitment to provide immediate access to housing with no housing readiness requirements, whilst simultaneously working with people to promote recovery and wellbeing.



NO WRONG DOOR

Commitment to support people sleeping rough either by direct service provision or providing support to access services from a more suitable agency regardless of whether someone is in the key target group for that agency.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Commitment to learn what works quickly in an evidence-based and data-driven manner and to build on successful strategies and actions.



COLLECTIVE ACTION

Commitment to work together in a coordinated way and to hold each other accountable to reach our shared goal of ending street homelessness.

* These principles will be subject to broader consultation as part of the establishment of the Adelaide Zero Project Charter

Informed by Collective Impact

The Adelaide Zero Project is inspired by the Collective Impact approach, which recognises that complex social issues are best solved by a coalition of organisations and individuals working in the community sector, private sector and all parts of the public sector.

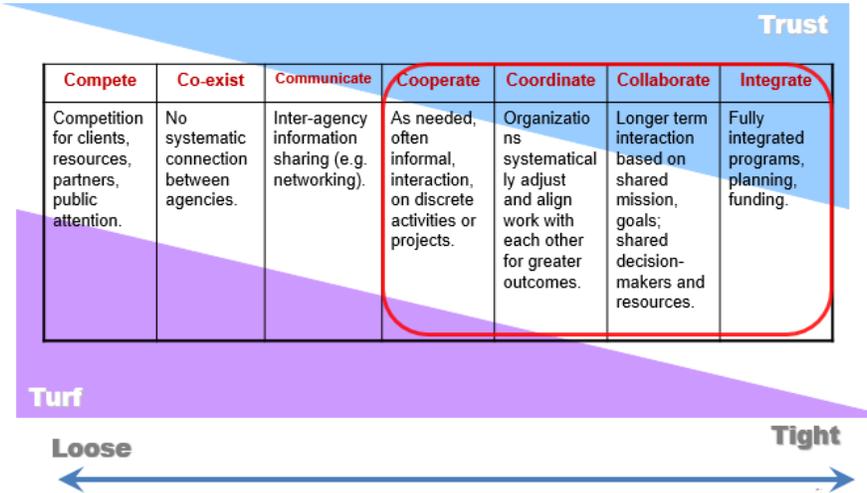
Collective Impact goes beyond just collaboration; it fully integrates the actions and efforts of organisations and individuals (Figure 4). The approach requires:

- A clear common agenda
- A shared measurement system
- Ensuring that the activities of all the partners in the project are mutually reinforcing
- Undertaking continuous communication among project partners
- Ensuring that there is an organisation providing ‘backbone support’ through a facilitative role for the overall project.

The Collective Impact approach shows that mutually reinforcing activities can leverage the diversity of skills of stakeholders to efficiently achieve a common goal. The Adelaide Zero Project incorporates mutually reinforcing activities through a range of mechanisms (discussed later in this document) including, for example, through work to align housing with individuals’ needs and coordinated care.

Together SA has been a crucial source of advice and guidance regarding Collective Impact and the Adelaide Zero Project.

Figure 4: The collaboration spectrum for Collective Impact



Source: Tamarack Institute of Community Engagement cited by Together SA 2016.

Core components

The Adelaide Zero Project is built on the following core components:*



Coalition of stakeholders

Working collaboratively to make the greatest difference for people sleeping rough.



By-name data

Using street outreach to know the names and needs of every person sleeping rough in the inner city.



Commitment to Housing First

Ensuring people sleeping rough are housed in secure, safe, appropriate and affordable housing with the right supports in place to sustain it.



Shared goals

Consistently collecting person-specific data to accurately track progress toward achieving the Adelaide Zero Project goal.



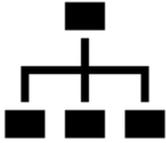
Continuous improvement

Continually learning what works by testing new ideas to quickly build on successful strategies and actions.



Engagement

Involving the community in the solutions for ending homelessness and providing opportunities for people to play a meaningful part in helping to find such solutions.



Governance

Involving the right people to drive progress, ensure accountability and address challenges and system barriers to support the Adelaide Zero Project achieve its goal.



Systems integration

Building coordinated housing and support systems that are simple to navigate, while efficiently targeting resources to those who need them most.

* Determined by the Adelaide Zero Research Project team after extensive review of national and international Functional Zero literature and models.

Mechanisms and Accountability Framework

A number of mechanisms are required to give effect to the Adelaide Zero Project, building on the strong foundation provided by the Project’s core components.

The Accountability Framework below (Table 1) lists each of the mechanisms and which agency has agreed to take the lead role in its implementation. The lead agency is not the only agency involved with each mechanism. They are the organisation responsible for driving the implementation of the mechanism.

The Accountability Framework also outlines where in the governance structure lead organisations are required to report, as well as listing the key resolutions for each mechanisms at this point in time, as agreed by the Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group (PSG).

Documents that fully detail how each of these mechanisms will be developed. It will be the responsibility of the lead organisation to update each of these mechanism documents. These will be made public via the Adelaide Zero Project website at www.dunstan.org.au/zeroproject

90-Day Change Project for Aboriginal South Australians

After engaging with individuals and community organisations which specialise in supporting the needs of Aboriginal South Australians, it is proposed to conduct an additional 90-Day Project focused on Aboriginal homelessness to ensure the Adelaide Zero Project and broader responses to homelessness are culturally appropriate. The timing of this activity is to be determined during Phase Two of the Adelaide Zero Project.

Table 1: Adelaide Zero Project Accountability Framework

Mechanism	Lead agency	Reporting to	Resolutions
M1: Aligned Housing	AnglicareSA	AZP Steering Group	Establish an Aligned Housing Working Group to develop an Aligned Housing Plan for the Adelaide Zero Project. The AHWG will be co-chaired AnglicareSA and a Senior Manager from the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), Government of SA and report to the Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group.
M2: Business Alliance to End Homelessness	City of Adelaide	AZP Strategic Advisory Group	Establish a Business Alliance to End Homelessness with the Don Dunstan Foundation.
M3: By-Name List	Neami	Inner City Senior Managers Group	A Connections Week and By-Name List Working Group has been established. This working group will develop the By-Name List platform and plan its integration with Connections Week.

M4: Charter	End Homelessness SA	AZP Steering Group	Develop a Charter which project partners, community organisations, businesses and individuals can sign to demonstrate their commitment to the Adelaide Zero Project's principles and target. The Charter will be launched following Connections Week.
M5: Common Assessment Tool	Neami	Inner City Senior Managers Group	All services that interact with people sleeping rough will use the VI-SPDAT Version 2.01 (US).
M6: Connections Week	Hutt St Centre	Inner City Senior Managers Group	Undertake a Connections Week, with the Hutt St Centre the lead agency responsible for coordinating Connections Week. VI-SPDAT version 2.01 (US) is to be used for Connections Week. A Connections Week and By-Name List Working Group has been set up to progress Connections Week and development of the By-Name List, chaired by Neami. Date of Connections Week TBD.
M7: Coordinated Care	Uniting Communities	AZP Steering Group	A governance model for coordinated care has been determined: with coordinated care the responsibility of the Inner City Senior Managers Group (ICSMG), actioned through the Inner City Operations Group (ICOG) which comprises the By-Name List Framework (BNLF) and Vulnerable Persons Framework (VPF).
M8: Continuous Improvement and Evaluation	Australian Centre for Community Services Research (ACCSR)	AZP Steering Group	Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group to determine desired outcomes from an evaluation framework.
M9: Governance	Don Dunstan Foundation	AZP Strategic Advisory Group	Apply Collective Impact principles and streamline the sector's existing governance structures including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merging AZP's Project Steering Group and Inner City CEs Group to streamline existing governance in the sector. • Merging the Vulnerable Persons Framework and the new By-Name List Framework into a new meeting known as the Inner City Operations Group (ICOG) to take place fortnightly alongside the Inner City Senior Managers Group.

M10: National and International partnerships	Don Dunstan Foundation	AZP Steering Group	Continue to support and leverage national and international partnerships for advice, resources and advocacy regarding street homelessness.
M11: Research and Data Analytics	Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning	AZP Steering Group	Establish a Data Working Group (DWG), to be Co-Chaired by Professor Chris Leishman from the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning (CHURP), University of Adelaide and a Senior Manager from the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, Government of SA. Develop Terms of Reference for DWG.
M12: Solutions Labs	Don Dunstan Foundation	AZP Steering Group	Establish Solutions Labs as needed to provide a platform for those with lived experience, concerned citizens and relevant community organisations to share their knowledge about what ongoing problems the sector continues to face, and how together innovative solutions can be developed.
M13: Targets and AZP Dashboard	Don Dunstan Foundation	AZP Steering Group	An interim target has been set to functionally end street homelessness in Adelaide's inner city by the end of 2020, with this target to be finalised once Connections Week data has been collated and analysed. An Adelaide Zero Project Dashboard will be launched with as close to real-time data as possible, following Connections Week and development of the By-Name List.
M14: Zero Communications Strategy	Don Dunstan Foundation	AZP Steering Group	A Communications Strategy is being developed for the approval of Adelaide Zero Project's Steering Group.

Timeline

The timeline of next steps for the Adelaide Zero Project is provided below (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Adelaide Zero Project milestones and timeline

Phase One (Establish)	
August 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project launched ● Discussion Paper released
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 90-Day Project commenced
November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adelaide recognised as part of the Vanguard Cities network by the Institute of Global Homelessness, as one of twelve cities leading the way to tackling street homelessness
February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 90-Day Project concluded ● Implementation Plan Version 1.0 released
April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First meeting of the Strategic Advisory Committee ● Establish Aligned Housing Working Group ● Establish Business Alliance to End Homelessness ● Establish Data Working Group
Phase Two (Implement)	
May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connections Week ● Creation of AZP By-Name List ● Charter launched
June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zero Research Project Final Report released
July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Official Target launched – using 3 months of data from Connections Week ● Dashboard launched – counting down to Functional Zero by publicly sharing the number of people sleeping rough
Dec 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aligned Housing Plan released – a plan to ensure there is sufficient housing available in the public and community housing systems to place everyone on the By-Name List
TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commencement and completion of Aboriginal Homelessness 90-Day Project – precise details TBD subject to consultation

Phase Three (Achieve and Sustain)	
Dates TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Original Vulnerable Persons Framework list cleared ● Original By-Name List cleared ● Functional equilibrium achieved – i.e. when the number of people on the By-Name List is equal to the monthly housing placement rate for the first time ● Achieve Functional Zero for particular population groups
December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achieve and sustain Functional Zero for people sleeping rough in Adelaide's inner city
Phase Four (Expand)	
TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand the approach to other areas of South Australia and to other forms of homelessness

Planning for Zero

The following section outlines key steps in planning and implementing the Adelaide Zero Project.

[Step 1 Assemble a committed group of people to lead the Adelaide Zero Project](#)

[Step 2 Know the name and needs of every person sleeping rough in the Adelaide inner city](#)

[Step 3 Rapidly assist the most vulnerable people sleeping rough with housing and support](#)

[Step 4 Consistently track progress towards achieving Functional Zero homelessness](#)

[Step 5 Continually improve responses for people sleeping rough in the inner city](#)

[Step 6 Achieve and sustain Functional Zero](#)

[Step 7 Expand the Adelaide Zero Project](#)

Step 1. Assemble a committed group of people to lead the Adelaide Zero Project

The Adelaide Zero Project requires the commitment and involvement of a broad range of stakeholders for success; from the homelessness services sector to housing, health, mental health, drug and alcohol, youth, domestic and family violence, justice and corrections, and aged and disability sectors.

Homelessness also has an impact on the business community, particularly in the inner city, and they will be invited to participate in the Adelaide Zero Project.

Why it's important

Experience in the US shows that the importance of strong leadership, as well as multi-agency and multi-level government commitment, multi-partisan support and the involvement of philanthropy and the business community, are crucial to end homelessness. Experience also highlights the importance of all stakeholders having a clear understanding of what they can offer, or take responsibility for, as part of a Zero project. Advocates are also important to drive the changes necessary to end homelessness.

A coalition of key stakeholders is therefore essential for driving forward and promoting the Adelaide Zero Project. Such a coalition of stakeholders is important for unlocking the resources needed to implement and sustain the Project. In line with a Collective Impact approach, the Adelaide Zero Project has a backbone organisation supporting stakeholders, project coordination, action and administration through to Phase 4. This function is performed by the Don Dunstan Foundation.

As a Project informed by Collective Impact, the stakeholders driving the Adelaide Zero Project have also committed to a common agenda, shared goals and continuous communication. These central aspects are captured through the Adelaide Zero Project's principles, Charter and Communications Strategy.

The Adelaide Zero Project's governance structure for Phase Two (Figure 7) will be reviewed by the Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group. To streamline project governance, the Project Steering Group will merge with the sector's existing Inner City Chief Executives Group (Figure 6). The sector's existing Inner City Senior Managers Group (ICSMG) will assess and coordinate multi-agency service responses for the Adelaide Zero Project. This will be operationalised through the Inner City Operations Group (ICOG) through two closely aligned structures:

- The By-Name List Framework (BNLF) which is the guideline for the operation, management and monitoring of the AZP By-Name List, as well as a meeting for strategic discussions about the By-Name List, how things are tracking, and raising cases of concern that meet exceptional reporting key performance indicators (KPIs) (TBD as part of the process of developing the By-Name List operational guidelines)
- The existing Vulnerable Persons Framework (VPF) which provides intensive case conferencing of the most vulnerable people sleeping rough

Next steps

- Support the organisations leading each Adelaide Zero Project mechanism as per the Accountability Framework (Table 1)
- Continue to grow the number of organisations and individuals committed to the Adelaide Zero Project's principles, and target through the Adelaide Zero Project Charter
- Formalise stakeholder commitments through the Adelaide Zero Project Charter and underpinning Memoranda of Action
- Investigate ways to meaningfully engage people with lived experience of homelessness in the Adelaide Zero Project, i.e. through Solutions Labs and other structures
- Continue to refine the governance structure to drive the Adelaide Zero Project forward, with particular focus on developing the culture and Terms of Reference for these groups
- Develop a Communications Strategy including key messages to support all partners in the Project
- Continue to develop local, national and international partnerships throughout the life of the Project to maintain momentum and learn from what has and hasn't worked locally and in other places
- Update the Terms of Reference for the Homelessness Strategic Group (HSG) to reflect their association with the Project

Further resources

- Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group Terms of Reference
- Adelaide Zero Project Strategic Advisory Group Terms of Reference
- Inner City Senior Managers Group Terms of Reference
- Inner City Operations Group Terms of Reference
- VPF Guidelines and VPF Terms of Reference
- By-Name List Framework Terms of Reference
- Homelessness Strategic Group Terms of Reference
- Adelaide Zero Project Data Working Group Terms of Reference
- Adelaide Zero Project Business Alliance to End Homelessness Terms of Reference

Further information

- [Solutions Labs](#) in Section 2.5

Step 2. Know the name and needs of every person sleeping rough in the inner city

A By-Name List is a real-time list of all people sleeping rough in the Adelaide inner city to support coordinated access and prioritisation at a service level. A By-Name List is also critical for understanding the inflow and outflow of people sleeping rough at a system level, and system and service gaps.

Why it's important

A By-Name List is the cornerstone of the Functional Zero approach. It allows communities to shift from a system where people are viewed simply as clients of individual services to clients of the entire system. In this way, communities can improve system efficiency by prioritising resource allocation based on need rather than a first-come first-served basis.

Key requirements

- Use of a common assessment (triage) tool
- Use of a common database (to store and manage the By-Name List)
- Use of a common release of information that allows all providers to share required information about people experiencing homelessness

Next steps

- Support all inner city service providers assisting people sleeping rough to start using the common assessment (triage) tool, and ensure a common understanding of the tool across the sector. The Adelaide Zero Project will use the Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritisation Decision Tool (VI-SPDAT) version 2.01 (US), modified for local application
- Determine the scope of By-Name List including who is included on the list, who has access to it and who will host and manage the list. It is suggested that Housing SA has access to, or be the custodian of, the data, and could manage this via consent
- Undertake a Connections Week using the VI-SPDAT version 2.01 (US) to engage people who are sleeping rough in the target area and understand their housing and support needs. Data collected during Connections Week will be used to establish the By-Name List and provide baseline data to track progress towards Functional Zero
- Establish or agree on a shared data platform to host the By-Name List
- Develop and implement policies and procedures for managing By-Name List data to promote data integrity (e.g. inactivity policy, diversion procedures etc.)

- Develop (if required) and implement both a data sharing agreement and privacy guidelines for dealing with personal information and client consent forms
- Use the By-Name List data to coordinate service responses and target housing and supports, based on individuals' needs
- Integrate opportunities for continuous improvement during the use of the VI-SPDAT

Further resources

- [Connections Week sample toolkit](#)
- [By-Name List guide](#) in Section 2.2
- Common assessment (triage) tool– VI-SPDAT in Section 2.3

Step 3. Rapidly assist the most vulnerable people sleeping rough with housing and support

A centrally managed By-Name List helps a community understand the overall demand for resources in real-time including individual needs and acuity, and therefore allowing communities to prioritise the most vulnerable people for housing and support.

Why it's important

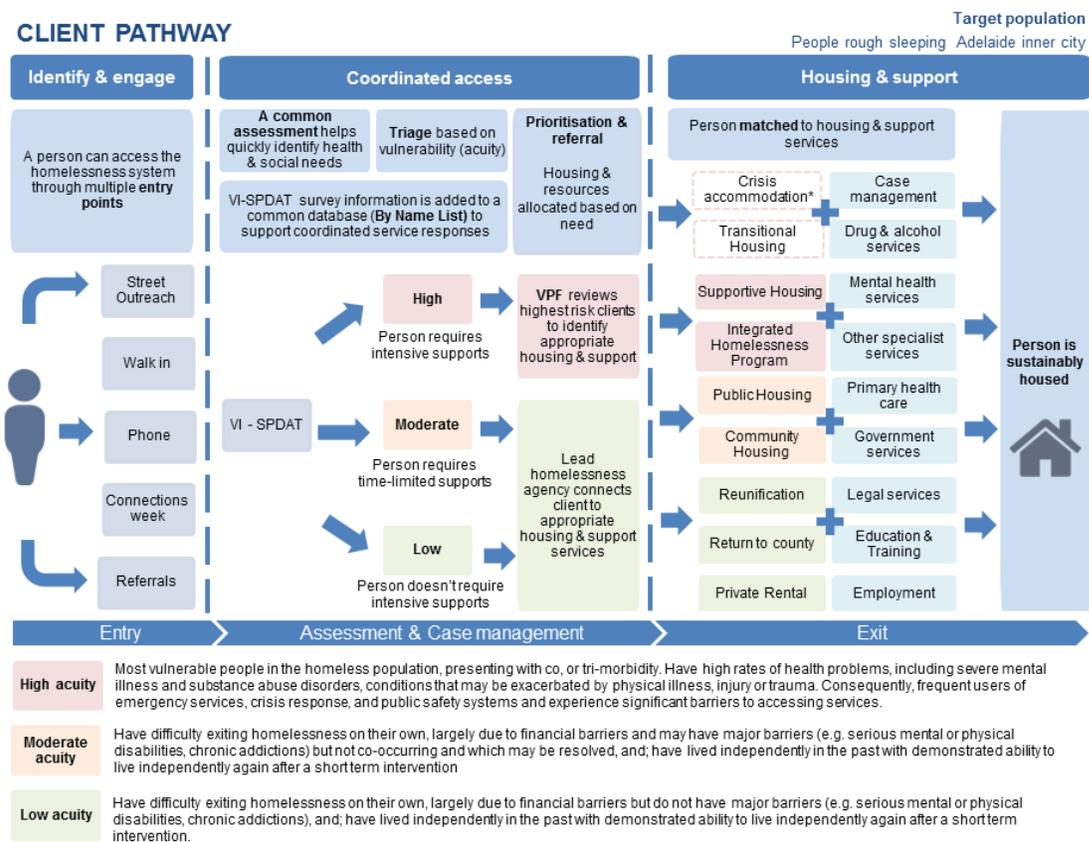
To achieve Functional Zero, it is essential to shift from a system that allocates resources based on individual services 'wait lists' and move towards a synchronised, data-driven system. This model ensures the sector can identify gaps and allocate resources in a triage model, targeting and prioritising the most vulnerable within the target cohort. Not only does this improve system flow and optimise limited resources through service coordination, it also improves the experience for homeless people.

Additionally, as the Functional Zero approach is fundamentally a housing-focused intervention centred on the principle of Housing First, consideration must be given to housing referral and placement pathways (see Figure 8). Of importance here is how housing supply or housing options can be aligned with the Functional Zero approach so that people can be securely housed in accordance with their housing needs (determined through the VI-SPDAT), and in the shortest possible time.

Housing alignment in the context of Functional Zero and ending homelessness requires a solid understanding of people's needs and wants in terms of housing; whether these be for light touch support, rapid re-housing or secure supportive housing.

Developing an Aligned Housing Plan, investigating options/structures to align public, community and private housing supply to meet the housing needs of people sleeping rough, is crucial to the success of the Project.

Figure 8: Current client pathway for people sleeping rough in Adelaide's inner city



Key requirements

- [Common assessment \(triage\) tool – VI-SPDAT](#)
- A centrally managed [By-Name List](#)
- Common referral procedures
- Agreed priority cohort and prioritisation policy
- Inner City Operations Group: the forum whereby relevant stakeholders come together frequently to prioritise people on the By-Name List for housing and support

Next steps

- Establish an Aligned Housing Working Group, tasked with development of the Adelaide Zero Project Aligned Housing Plan. The Aligned Housing Plan will allow investigation of options and structures to ensure housing supply meets the needs of people sleeping rough. It will give consideration to:
 - the stock of existing resources and options, including secure supportive housing options
 - prioritising people sleeping rough in available housing and support options
 - engaging community housing and private sector providers

- providing/extending private rental access or brokerage approaches, such as Housing SA's Private Rental Liaison Officer Program, and investigating options for rapid re-housing through time-limited and longer-term private rental assistance linked to people's needs
 - throughput in housing, particularly from transitional and Integrated Housing Program properties (Housing SA)
 - the appropriate structure within the Adelaide Zero Project for overseeing and coordinating access to housing and support, including how to operationalise a standardised process for relevant housing and service providers to provide vacancy updates to the structure, e.g. a real-time inventory of all available housing resources, categorised by eligibility. The structure could be an evolution of the existing Aligned Housing Working Group, the Inner City Operations Group, Inner City Senior Managers Group or another structure
 - the role of peak bodies and other agencies
 - affordable housing opportunities
- Develop an Adelaide Zero Project prioritisation protocol on the Aligned Housing Plan for housing and support, with prioritisation and rapid assistance to be based on highest need and best fit
 - Document common policies and procedures that reflect agreed referral and prioritisation processes. These should clearly articulate eligibility for housing and the support services available to different levels of acuity
 - Develop strong links between the Aligned Housing Working Group and both the Inner City Senior Managers Group and its Inner City Operations Group to ensure that there is a common understanding of the types of housing and support needed

Further information

- Inner City Operations Group (ICOG) Terms of Reference
- By-Name List Guidelines (under development) and By-Name List Framework
- Vulnerable Persons Framework in Section 2.4
- Adelaide Zero Project governance structure for Phase Two (Figure 7)
- Aligned Housing Plan (under development)

Step 4. Consistently track progress towards achieving Functional Zero homelessness

By-Name Lists are pivotal for tracking progress in driving down the number of people sleeping rough on the streets. Aggregated by-name data helps communities to understand their homelessness inflows and outflows, identify system gaps and areas for improvement.

Why it's important

Currently, the community benchmarks the homelessness system against Point in Time counts (DCSI's Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count), inferring programs and initiatives have been working well when the count reveals a reduction in the number of people sleeping rough, whilst advocating for better responses when there is a spike.

Although Point in Time counts serve a purpose, they do not provide the data communities require to identify gaps in the system and to respond to people's needs in real-time. A quality By-Name List captures such data. Individual and aggregate by-name data allows communities to track their performance, identify blocks or gaps in the system and implement solutions to end homelessness for people sleeping rough. Aggregate by-name data can also easily be de-identified and used to report progress towards functionally ending homelessness. The Adelaide Zero Project Dashboard will be the vehicle to monitor and report this locally.

Next steps

- Define the Adelaide Zero Project goal and what success means for the Project, i.e. what it looks like to functionally end homelessness for people sleeping rough in the inner city
- Improve By-Name List data quality by focusing on the six key data points shown in Figure 3
 - Inflow:**
 - newly identified
 - returned from inactive
 - returned from housing
 - Outflow:**
 - moved to inactive
 - moved into housing
 - Actively homeless** (on By-Name List)
- Regularly review the inflows and outflows of homeless people in the system to identify what's working well, and areas for improvement. This process will be embedded in our governance structure through numerous groups, including the Inner City Senior Managers Group, Inner City Operations Group and the AZP Steering Group
- Develop an Adelaide Zero Project Dashboard to publicly display progress towards the Adelaide Zero Project, as well as promoting transparency, accountability and engagement

Further information

- Adelaide Zero Project Dashboard (to be developed)
- Adelaide Zero Project governance structure for Phase Two (Figure 7)

Step 5. Continually improve responses for people sleeping rough in the inner city

Extensive research has already been undertaken by the Adelaide Zero Research team through Phase One of the Adelaide Zero Project. Moving forward, additional research and data analytics may be needed to understand the challenges facing individuals, and identify system and service gaps.

From time to time we anticipate needing other mechanisms to promote and support better outcomes for people sleeping rough in the inner city, and for continuous improvement in the Adelaide Zero Project. One such mechanism is a Solutions Lab – a group of stakeholders, which includes concerned citizens, working collaboratively to address a complex social problem (Torjman 2012). Solutions Labs vary in name, operation and composition, allowing freedom to develop a structure to suit local needs. Most are comprised of citizens, agencies, government and people with relevant lived experience. An example of Solutions Labs working to end homelessness in the UK is provided in Section 2.5.

Why it's important

Quality data on the experiences of people sleeping rough in the community provides opportunities to build an evidence base to identify system gaps and barriers, and to allow for in-depth analysis to inform solutions.

Next steps

- Identify and engage potential partners who have research and data analytic skills
- Develop processes for instigating requests where further data analytics work or research is required
- Develop an evaluation framework for the Adelaide Zero Project to ensure continuous improvement in actions to meet Project goals
- Identify and engage external organisation to undertake evaluation
- Develop a process for establishing Solutions Labs as needed

Further information

Refer to the mechanism supplied at www.dunstan.org.au/zeroproject for:

- Adelaide Zero Project Evaluation Framework
- Adelaide Zero Project Solutions Labs

Step 6. Achieve and sustain Functional Zero

Realising the goal of the Adelaide Zero Project – to achieve and sustain Functional Zero by ensuring all people sleeping rough in the inner city who want a place to call home have one – will require meeting a series of stepped milestones. Such milestones include:

- Having quality By-Name List data to know the names and needs of all people sleeping rough in the inner city area
- Assisting all people on the first Vulnerable Persons Framework list
- Assisting all people on the original By-Name List (the Connections Week data)
- Reaching 'Functional Equilibrium' – where the number of people on the By-Name List is equal to the monthly housing placement rate for the first time
- Achieving Functional Zero for particular population groups
- Achieving Functional Zero for people sleeping rough in the inner city
- Sustaining Functional Zero homelessness

These milestones will inform how we track the progress and outcomes of the Adelaide Zero Project. They are milestones that will be publicly celebrated.

It is important to recognise that sustaining Functional Zero can be just as challenging as achieving it for the first time. Continuous improvement, research and evaluation are thus essential to sustaining Functional Zero. Additionally, attention must be directed to resources to assist people sustain housing, and to ensuring the system responds rapidly to address the needs of people who, for whatever reason, have not been able to sustain their housing and/or support.

Step 7. Expand the Adelaide Zero Project

The Functional Zero approach has been designed to be flexible enough to adapt to different local circumstances and ‘groups’ of homeless people. Once we have achieved and sustained Functional Zero homelessness for people sleeping rough in the inner city, we plan to expand the Adelaide Zero Project to other places and groups within the homelessness population, for example into other metropolitan areas, regional SA, and for other vulnerable homeless populations, such as people sleeping in cars.

Having achieved and sustained Functional Zero for arguably one of the most vulnerable homeless groups – people sleeping rough in the inner city – we will have a Functional Zero model responsive to local needs, systems and circumstances, and a suite of learnings and refinements from which other communities can benefit in their efforts to end homelessness.

Section 2

Further resources to achieve Functional Zero

Additional resources have been designed specifically for the Adelaide Zero Project to assist with delivering core components including Connections Week, By-Name List and common assessment (triage) tool (VI-SPDAT) for capturing essential by-name data and using the Housing First approach in working towards housing that is aligned to people's need.

2.1 Connections Week Guidelines

What's in a name?

The term 'Registry Week' carries some unfortunate connotations – the process is not about 'registering' people, it is about making connections between people who are in need and the services that can provide help. For this reason Connections Week has become the preferred term, highlighting the importance of forming relationships between people experiencing homelessness and the community around them.

Behind the Functional Zero approach is a robust data collection system, initially driven by a Registry Week; referred to in other contexts, particularly Europe, as a Connections Week.

A Connections Week forms the foundation of a real-time By-Name List where all people sleeping rough are known by name, their vulnerabilities (health and other needs) are

captured, and level of housing support determined (assessed/triaged by application of a common assessment tool) (Kanis et al. 2012).

Connections Week is not a methodological count or census; it is an engagement process – with people who are homeless, with homelessness agencies/services and with the community (Australian Alliance to End Homelessness 2017). Connections Week is an important tool for galvanising community support around ending homelessness.

A successful Connections Week sees agencies and services allocated responsibility for following up with those surveyed who are sleeping rough on a regular basis, and acting to meet the needs of those surveyed (Reynolds, pers. comm., May 28 2017). The Registry Week conducted in Newcastle in October 2016 – coordinated by a coalition of agencies back-boned by St Vincent de Paul – offers a recent example of a successful approach in the Australian context (McDaid 2017).

The Mercy Foundation, Australian Alliance to End Homelessness and Micah Projects Inc. (2017) have developed a Registry ([Connections](#)) [Week Toolkit](#) in conjunction with other key players which outlines timelines and resources to consider.

Connections Weeks have a well-established methodology. Held over five consecutive days, Connections Weeks involve four steps: training, surveying, analysis, and community briefing. Before and after a Connections Week is held, work must be undertaken to ensure that the Week runs smoothly and operational matters are taken care of (before Connections Week) and that follow-up is provided for people sleeping rough who have been approached (after Connections Week).

The By-Name List for the Adelaide Zero Project will function as a real-time list of all people sleeping rough in the Adelaide inner city, allowing services to know who is currently sleeping rough, facilitating coordinated access into the system, prioritising housing and service allocation based on an individual's need and measuring progress towards ending homelessness. The List will also build our understanding of the inflow into the system (the number of people becoming homeless each month) and the outflow (the number of people obtaining permanent housing or otherwise leaving the system).

2.2 By-Name List guide

Who should be captured on a By-Name List?

The By-Name List should consist of all individuals currently sleeping rough in the Adelaide central business district, surrounding parklands and North Adelaide including:

- People who are currently receiving outreach services
- People who have a house but are sleeping rough
- People who have recently been housed from a sleeping rough situation
- People who have accessed extreme weather responses (Code Blue/Red)

Data should be reported publicly on:

- Numbers of people newly-documented as sleeping rough
- Numbers of people known to be sleeping rough
- Numbers of people receiving active housing support
- Numbers of housing referrals made
- Numbers of people housed
- Number of people sustaining housing

What about client privacy and confidentiality?

Identifying information should never be added to a By-Name List without a person's consent. People will be asked to share their name, basic information about their homeless experience, and their common assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) score. This information is shared with identified service providers with the person's consent and on a need-to-know basis only to support prioritised access to housing support options. However, processes should also be in place to allow people to be added to the By-Name List (with their consent) without an assessment.

Outreach and engagement should continue for all people experiencing homelessness and everyone should be counted at an aggregate (anonymous) level in a community's actively homeless numbers. Communities must identify policies and procedures for ensuring privacy and confidentiality.

Communities in the US and Canada have overcome privacy concerns by using web forms to input survey information. In this way, multiple agencies can input data without having access to the database.

Next steps

- **List all known individuals sleeping rough** including people that have been identified through street outreach; attended an extreme weather response

- **Assign an unique identifier** to prevent duplication of client records and facilitate coordination between providers
- **Implement an inactivity policy** to govern when people become ‘inactive’ and are moved off the active list. Clients should be moved from the active to inactive list if the system has had no contact with them for 90 days. Where a client makes contact with the homelessness system (outreach/attends extreme weather responses etc.) they are moved from the inactive list to the active list
- **Track status changes**, e.g. when a client is housed, in hospital, in prison or staying in emergency or transitional accommodation etc.
 - If a client is offered housing and refuses, this offer should be recorded as an intervention including the date offered
 - A housing offer will be held for a client for a determined period of time, e.g. if a client can’t be found
- **Maximise provider participation** to maintain up-to-date By-Name List data. Recognising that people sleeping rough interface with a number of stakeholders, there should be channels that allow them to provide information about people sleeping rough
- **Use the By-Name List to coordinate care.** A By-Name List will support the shift from multiple ‘wait lists’ to a central priority list
- **Use the By-Name List data to understand the system.** Over time, the By-Name List will be a useful tool for understanding inflow, outflow and people who are currently sleeping rough. As suggested in Figure 9, the By-Name List will need to track the following to measure inflow and outflow:
 - **Track newly-identified individuals**, i.e. track people newly sleeping rough (people who have not engaged with a Specialist Homelessness Service previously)
 - **Track people without a full assessment**, i.e. people who are sleeping rough but have yet to undergo an assessment or case management
 - **Track chronicity after initial assessment**, i.e. people who have had an assessment and/or are being case-managed but continue to sleep rough
 - **Track returns to the system** i.e. people who are found sleeping rough after being housed, incarcerated, hospitalised or were made inactive as the system had not had contact with them for the specified period (90 days)
 - **Inflow** i.e. newly-identified people who are homeless, those returned to homelessness from housing and those returned to homelessness from being inactive in the homelessness support system
 - **Outflow** i.e. housing placements, people moved to the inactive list

Figure 9. Monthly data categories to track through the By-Name List

Monthly Data Categories

Start by tracking monthly housing placements. As you build a real-time, by-name list over time, you'll be able to track and respond to a more dynamic picture of your full system.



What information is captured by a By-Name List?

The By-Name List should be informed by a common assessment tool – the VI-SPDAT – to ensure consistency in the data collected. Data fields at a minimum should include:

- Client name
- Client date of birth
- Client H2H (Homeless To Home) Number
- Lead case management agency
- Client status (casual, active, inactive)
- Date of first engagement
- Homelessness status or outcome and the date the status was changed
 - Active – sleeping rough
 - Active – connected
 - Inactive – no contact (no system contact for 90 days)
 - Inactive – transferred (moved to another community)
 - Inactive – system (incarcerated, treatment facility)
 - Sheltered – crisis
 - Sheltered – transitional

- Housed – supportive
- Housed – Integrated Housing Program (IHP, Housing SA)
- Housed – other
- Housing contact
- Common assessment (triage) tool score via the VI-SPDAT
- Date VI-SPDAT undertaken
- Number and cumulative length of all homeless episodes within the last 3 years. Include time sleeping rough and in crisis or transitional accommodation
- Geographic location/grid reference (Assertive street work)
- Date and location of last contact
- Safety alerts

2.3 Common assessment tool – Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)

The VI-SPDAT is an evidence-informed triage tool designed to determine the acuity and key issues related to a client’s housing needs. The tool produces an acuity score (based on 15 dimensions related to the client’s needs) which when considered in conjunction with case notes can be used to prioritise clients according to their needs and to more efficiently allocate housing and support resources. The process focuses on serving those with the most acute needs first and to accurately match resources to needs.

The VI-SPDAT does not make decisions; it informs decisions. It provides data that communities, service providers and people experiencing homelessness can use to help determine the next course of action. The VI-SPDAT asks specific questions about and provides a point in time acuity score on the following areas of a client’s life:

- History of housing and homelessness
- Current risks
- Socialisation and daily functions
- Health and wellbeing

Why triage for housing and support?

Triaging people for housing and support focuses limited resources on the most vulnerable.

The VI-SPDAT triages individuals to one of three housing needs categories (Community Solutions 2014, c.2015):

- **Permanent (Secure) Supportive Housing:** Individuals or families who need permanent housing with ongoing access to services and case management to remain stably housed

- **Rapid Re-Housing:** Individuals or families with moderate health, mental health and/or behavioural health issues, but who are likely to be able to achieve housing stability over a short time period through a medium or short-term rent subsidy and access to support services
- **Affordable Housing:** Individuals or families who do not require intensive supports but may still benefit from access to affordable housing. In these cases, the tool recommends affordable or subsidised housing, but no specific intervention drawn uniquely from the homeless services world (In most cases, this amounts to saying simply, no case management)

How was the VI-SPDAT developed?

The VI-SPDAT was created through the merger of the Vulnerability Index (VI) developed by Community Solutions and the Service Prioritisation Assistance Tool (SPDAT) Pre-Screen Tool developed by OrgCode Consulting.

- The VI is a street outreach tool that helps determine the chronicity and medical vulnerability of homeless individuals
- The SPDAT is an intake and case management tool which helps to allocate resources based on the needs of individuals

Can we use the VI-SPDAT with young people?

- The VI-SPDAT has a youth version for people under 24 years-old
- Youth should be compared to youth
- Youth VI-SPDAT has additional questions, however, these questions do not affect the final VI-SPDAT score (Qs. 7, 14, 20, 22 and 27)
- Abuse and trauma is asked about in two questions appearing earlier in the Youth VI-SPDAT. Both questions can result in a score of 1

Can we use the VI-SPDAT with Aboriginal people?

- Micah Projects Inc. in Queensland presented the creators of the VI-SPDAT (OrgCode) with research around Aboriginal Australians and requested changes to scoring based on this. This change to the tool was approved, resulting in the score of 1 for persons 60 years old or older, being lowered to 45 for Aboriginal Australians

Does the VI-SPDAT consider Domestic and Family Violence?

- The VI-SPDAT is a triage tool for assessing acuity of need. It does not replace risk assessments
- The VI-SPDAT is not designed to assess the level of risk to a client. For example, it does not assess for domestic violence and does not ask any domestic violence-specific questions. Workers need to use professional judgement when completing the VI-SPDAT and undertake a domestic violence risk assessment

2.4 Vulnerable Persons Framework

The Vulnerable Persons Framework (VPF) is a multi-agency service response to improve the safety and wellbeing of people sleeping rough in the Adelaide inner city. Local agencies meet fortnightly to case conference the top 10-20 most vulnerable people within the cohort of people sleeping rough to ensure they are connected to case management, housing and other supports.

Why it's important

Using the By-Name List as the central priority list from which the VPF operates, will facilitate the effective flow of people through the system by ensuring:

- Vacancies are filled according to prioritisation
- There is central oversight of the housing and program vacancies (designated for this cohort) facilitating coordinated access
- People are housed in accordance with their housing needs (determined through the VI-SPDAT), securely, and in the shortest time

Further information

- VPF Terms of Reference
- VPF Guidelines

2.5 Solutions Labs

A Solutions Group or Solutions Lab is a group of stakeholders, including concerned citizens, working collaboratively to address a complex social problem (Torjman 2012). Solutions Labs vary in name, operation and composition, allowing freedom to develop a structure to suit local needs. Most are comprised of citizens, agencies, government and people with relevant lived experience. A useful example here in the context of homelessness (and Functional Zero) is the Solutions Group developed by Evolve Housing + Support (UK; see below) as part of their Croydon Zero 2020 initiative. The Solutions Group is a vehicle to help Croydon Zero 2020 meet their aim of no one sleeping rough on the streets of Croydon and finding ‘new ways to help our rough sleepers, so we can end chronic homelessness in Croydon for good’. It is a key vehicle for local community engagement with Croydon’s Zero project.

The Solutions Group comprises ‘concerned citizens, who want to help rough sleepers, third-sector organisations, housing and health departments and faith-based groups, to look at breaking down the barriers that prevent people from coming off the streets, and successfully staying off’. It meets bi-monthly, with their work currently focused around five work streams: implementing a Housing First service; Croydon Council system changes; policy and influence; health; and supported housing. The Group has developed what it calls ‘task and finish’ groups ‘... committed to challenging “the system” to make it work in ways that increase the chances of rough sleepers succeeding’. The Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK c. 2017) offers another model for consideration.

About Evolve Housing + Support (UK)

Evolve Housing + Support is an early adopter of the Functional Zero approach in the UK and part of the European End Street Homelessness Campaign, being driven by World Habitat (formerly Building and Social Housing Foundation, BSHF) and FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) (Evolve Housing + Support 2016; World Habitat 2018).

Glossary

As part of the Adelaide Zero Project Communications Strategy a comprehensive Glossary is being developed. This will be completed once a number of definitional issues have been determined by the Adelaide Zero Project's Connections Week and the By-Name List Working Group. For now, we think it is important to define the following:

Core components

The core components are the key elements in establishing a Zero project, as determined by reviewing the work of Community Solutions in the US, and adapted across North America.

Mechanisms

The Adelaide Zero Project mechanisms are the operational elements of the Project, tailored to the specific needs of the local context, resources and systems. They have been developed for the Adelaide Zero Project through the 90-Day Project, and guide the Project's implementation process.

Principles

The Adelaide Zero Project principles reflect the core values of all the partners and of the Project itself. Dedication to these principles through action is a fundamental part of the Adelaide Zero Project.

90-Day Project

Version 1.0 of this Implementation Plan is the product of collaborative work coordinated by the Don Dunstan Foundation and undertaken through the Adelaide Zero Project 90-Day Project, with strategic oversight from the Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group and input from the Adelaide Zero Research Project team. We gratefully acknowledge the efforts dedicated to the 90-Day Project by the following individuals:

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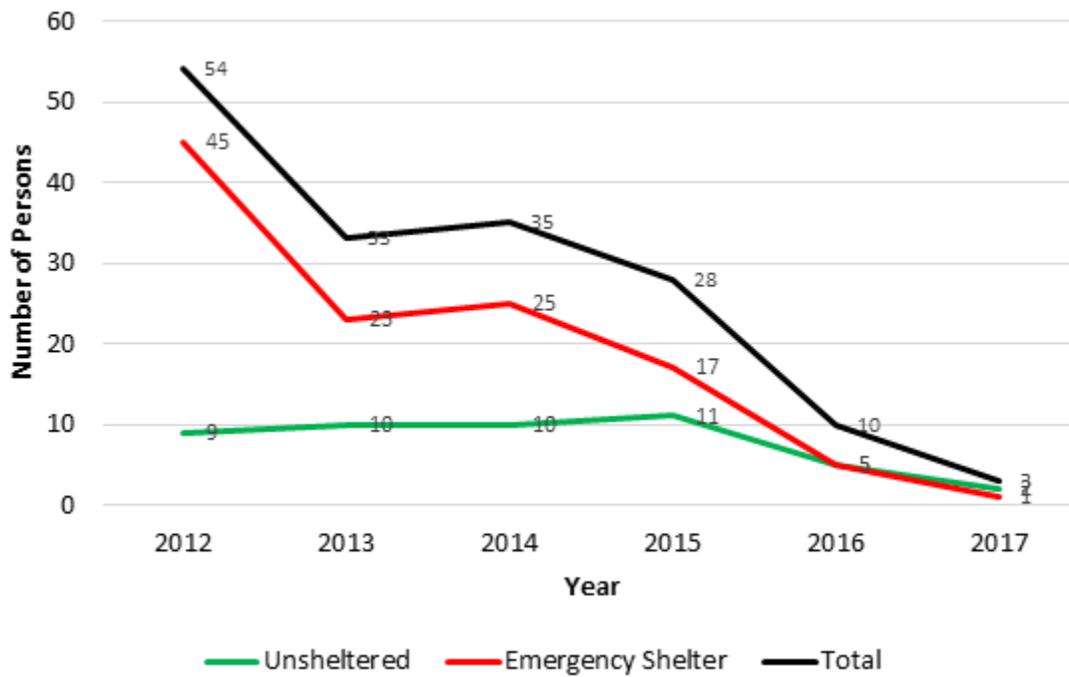
Appendices: Case studies of success from the US

Case Study 1: Bergen County, New Jersey

First community in the US to end chronic homelessness

Bergen County, New Jersey (part of the New York City Metropolitan Area), is credited and certified by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and Community Solutions with being the first county in the US to 'measurably' and 'sustainably' end chronic homelessness (Maguire 2017). In this context chronic homelessness is defined as 'someone with a long-term disabling condition, who has been continually homeless for a year or more, or at least four times in the past three years where the length of time in those episodes add up to a year or more Any family with a head of household who meets this definition is considered a chronically homeless family' (Monarch Housing Associates 2017, 12). Figure A1 highlights the trends in chronic homelessness for Bergen County and it is clear chronic homelessness decreased by 51 persons or 94.4 per cent from January 2012 to 2017. By March 2017 the County had made headlines for ending chronic homelessness and reaching zero.

Figure A1: Six year comparison of chronic homelessness population by housing situation in Bergen County US, January 2012-2017.



Source: Monarch Housing Associates 2016, 2017.

How has this been achieved?

The County's success can be credited to a number of factors:

- In 2007 the County implemented a Housing First Approach which meant all people who were declined access to shelter because of behavioural, mental drug or alcohol issues were prioritised for shelter and housing (Knotts and Thompson 2017)
- In 2009 the County built an \$11 million Housing, Health and Human Services Centre (BCHHHC). This one-stop shop (Command Center) has been a critical element in the success of ending chronic homelessness. This Centre replaced all the sub-standard shelters, provides overnight accommodation to individuals, and a full range of supportive services including access to permanent housing assistance. This centre optimises coordination across multiple housing and service providers by co-locating many of them in the same building, a building that also accommodates individuals needing assistance. Of importance was that 'groups committed to assess people using the same coordinated assessment tool and prioritise resources according to a shared set of criteria' (Maguire 2017; Pinto 2017)
- Since 2011 the County has worked with Community Solutions and participated in the Built for Zero approach. As a result of this they instigated a By-Name List and they persisted in engaging with the people on this list until they accepted help and the offer of permanent housing. This list meant that they had real-time data allowing them to develop responsive strategies and shift resources around as needed in real-time (Knotts and Thompson 2017; Maguire 2017)
- The County's coordinated assessment criteria means available housing resources are allocated to those most in need and other options are found for those people with lesser needs. As stated by Orlando, the Director of the BCHHHC 'everyone plays by the same set of rules. Members of the local Continuum of Care have worked to ensure collaboration both inside and outside the walls of the BCHHHC in a philosophy local partners call "housing without borders".' (Maguire 2017)
- The public housing authority participated by allocating 20 per cent of housing vouchers to homeless people when they became available (Maguire 2017)
- The County was part of the push to end veteran homelessness and was part of the *100,000 Homes Campaign*. In August 2016 the County ended veteran homelessness (Pinto 2017)
- Although Bergen County is one of the wealthiest counties in the US, Beth Sandor from Community Solutions insists they achieved an end to chronic homelessness not because of greater financial means or greater knowledge than other communities, but because of a desire to achieve a set goal, and through a coordinated housing system (Maguire 2017)

What's next?

While Bergen County has been able to eliminate both veteran and chronic homelessness, youth and family homelessness remain an issue and the next target – to reduce homelessness overall.

Source: Knotts and Thompson 2017; Maguire 2017; Monarch Housing Associates 2016, 2017; Pinto 2017.

Case Study 2: New Orleans

The first city to end veteran homelessness

In just six months from making a commitment to end veteran homelessness, New Orleans was able to house its 227 formerly homeless veterans; the first city to achieve this goal (in January 2015). This was achievable because of the commitment of the Mayor and the efforts of UNITY and its partners.

How has this been achieved?

Utilising the Department of Veterans Affairs grants available to not for profit organisations to provide services to very low income veterans in housing need (Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF)) UNITY developed a system to move every homeless veteran off the streets and quickly into rental accommodation prior to locating them into more permanent housing.

The rapid housing of individuals was possible because:

- The Mayor committed city funds for housing and was able to bring new players to the table
- The City prioritised its most vulnerable and chronically homeless residents for its permanent supportive housing stock
- A Housing First approach was adopted by all housing providers with, as a general rule, no referrals able to be refused
- Ending homelessness was not seen as just the responsibility of Veteran Affairs
- Different Federal agencies worked together towards the common goal
- Developed a By-Name List through a rigorous street and shelter outreach strategy – to gain the trust of veterans the City recruited 150 former and active duty members of the military to help with outreach
- Tracking of progress towards the goal and reporting the performance data weekly to partners therefore increasing the accountability of every organisation
- The local business community engaged in project

What's next?

UNITY NGO are now focused on ending homelessness for other population groups.

About UNITY GNO

Founded in 1992, UNITY of Greater New Orleans is a non-profit organisation leading a collaborative of 63 organisations providing housing and services to the homeless. UNITY's mission is to coordinate community partnerships to prevent, reduce and end homelessness. In addition to raising and distributing funds for the provision of housing and service by the collaborative, UNITY conducts homeless outreach on the streets and in abandoned buildings, develops non-profit-owned apartment buildings for those who are homeless or on low income, helps the public locate affordable housing and advocates for public policy to prevent and reduce homelessness (UNITY GNO 2017).

Source: Gibbs 2015; Sandor 2015; UNITY Greater New Orleans 2017

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