



*“It's for the person who needs to be fought for the hardest”*

# Together Home practitioners' perspectives on building resilience and relationships

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# Together Home

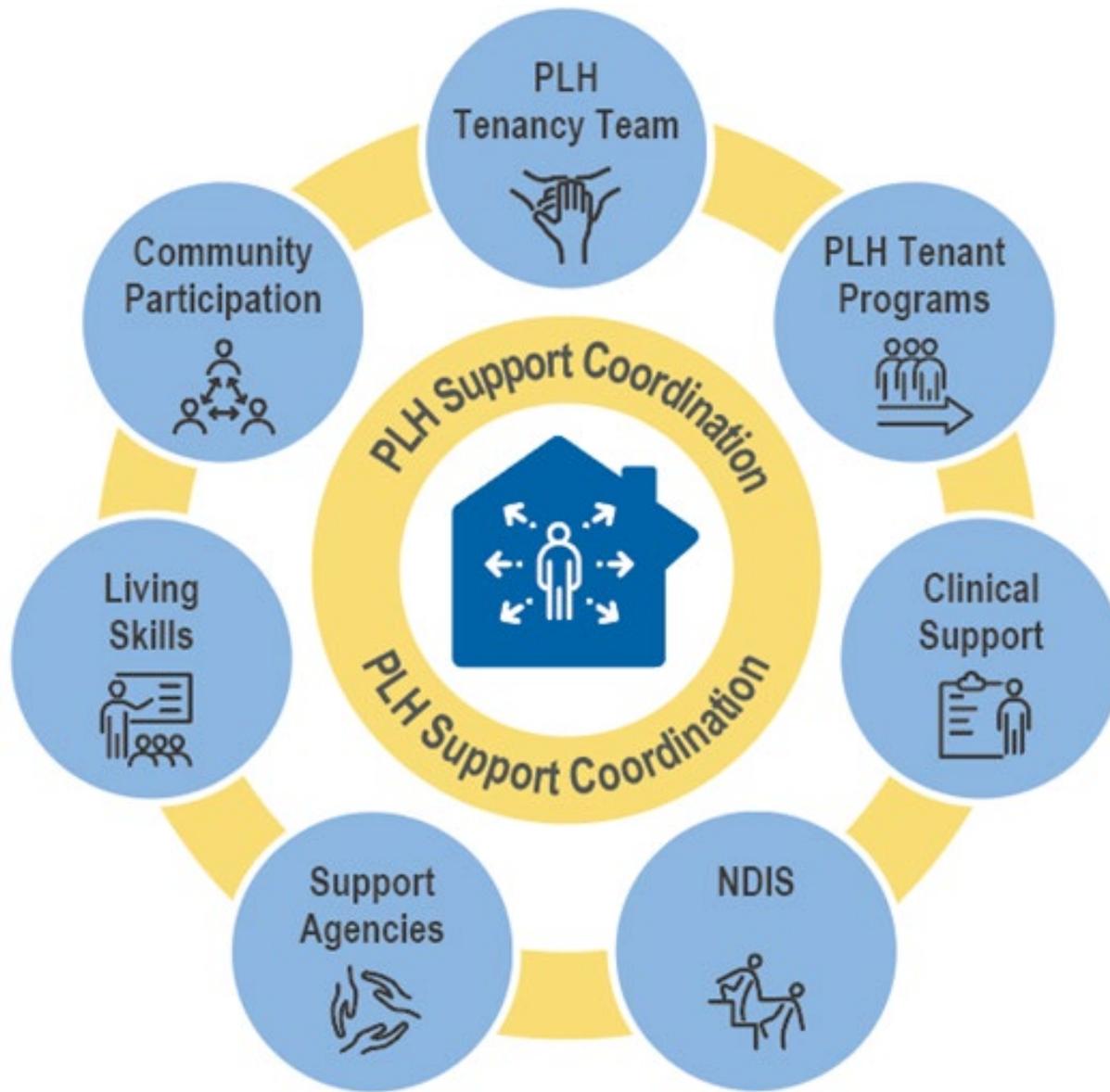
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*Together Home is a program to help people who are street sleeping or have a history of street sleeping across NSW to achieve long-term stable housing with wrap-around supports. (NSW Department of Communities and Justice)*

**Together Home is for the people who fall between the cracks and that's our clients.**

**You are working with a human being, and you have developed a real relationship and rapport and they're telling you exactly what it is.**

**You get to know the ins and outs, the traumas, the strengths, the family, the good things, the memories that they have, the bad memories. Then you see their achievements, the pride that we have in them and the trust that they have in us. It's a very two-way street.**



*Pacific Link Housing's Together Home Operational Model*

# The research

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From the perspectives of various practitioners involved in the delivery of the Central Coast Together Home program:

- What does an 'effective' relationship between a practitioner and participant look like? How are connections formed and relationships sustained?
  - What does 'success' look like for participants? What constitutes meaningful change?
  - How do systems and services facilitate or frustrate efforts towards meaningful change?
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Interviews, small group chats and a workshop with:

**21 practitioners from 9 organisations**

Including government and non-government partners across a wide range of service areas

# **‘Success’ is highly personal and complex** eg. dignity, respect, trust, security, compassion, advocacy, safety, housing and health

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## Housing and a ‘home’

- I was so glad to see the difference in his face and the demeanour from being homeless to that day when I was helping him unpack. ... even if he'd only lasted for a week that was worth it for us

## Health

- I think having that case work around accessing health services so where people may have been living with complex medical issues but not necessarily having the resources to be able to access the healthcare that they need. They've got that support through a case worker to be able to do that, to manage chronic illnesses or medical conditions.

## Looking for and getting work

- But he now has got his own property, he's got a car, he's still trying to find work ... he's handing out his resume and he's still doing job trials

# **‘Success’ is highly personal and complex** eg. dignity, respect, trust, security, compassion, advocacy, safety, housing and health

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## Reconnections and relationships

- I know that he now has a relationship with his daughters which he had lost contact with for many, many, many years. In fact, they wanted nothing to do with him because he was just a homeless bum. Yeah, you can't put a price on that.

## Feeling safe

- ...when I first went out to the property ... she started to bring out her coin collection, and all this stuff that she loved. She goes, I'm actually safe to keep this with me, now.
- When we spoke to this person they've never had someone sit and just feel normal and say, these are my pets. They've been my protector, they've been my family, they've been present through thick and thin.

## Dignity in Death

- she would have passed away without this program, on the street. ... I don't think the family would have showed up... ...I don't think there wouldn't have been the funeral that she had. Lots of positive things.

# The art of practice: building relationships, trust, time, understanding, dignity of risk

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## Understanding needs and strengths

- I think we need to understand that we need to work where people are at. We can't have expectations where we think people should go. The expectations should come from the client at the start of the first interview.

## Dignity of risk

- A lot of these clients are told what they have to do, and what we think they should do, but the way that this program works – I guess the case plans are set out – is it's all on them. What do you want to do? What do you want to work on? What are things that you find that are stopping you from moving forward?

## Time to build relationships and trust

- I think too having that two years' worth of support too, journeys aren't linear. So you're building that rapport, you're building that relationship so that you can continue on that journey together and whether things aren't travelling too smoothly, you're there, you're there if things are travelling smoothly.

# The art of practice: building relationships, trust, time, understanding, dignity of risk

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## Wraparound support

- So I guess the difference with the Together Home is we've had access to immediate housing, long term housing for the individuals. So we've really been able to I guess try and move away from more sort of that crisis case management into a holistic Housing First case management space.
- They pick the support worker depending on the client's needs and that's exactly what they need. They need that wholistic wrap around care and not just cookie cutter.

## Building trust

- Someone in Together Home has probably been through the round-about with different types of services, probably felt that they've been let down by different types of services. It takes a way longer time to develop rapport with somebody in Together Home than what it does in many of the other programs because you're seen as, oh you're just a person that's going to show up once and we'll never see again. So that rapport, it takes a lot longer to develop and it's only until then that you start to see some of those needs.
- Because some people with what they've been through they don't trust services at all. We had to just find a way to say, we know we have let you down in the past...

# Connections to the health and human services system

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## Advocating and mediating with other services

- I think as workers, we would act as a little bit of a buffer with services. Particularly people who have some mental health challenges, or they might have some trauma in their background and things like that. They just find it really hard to regulate in challenging conditions, and so they might have a bit of a blow-up in the [name of service] office, for instance, and that then leads to them – [name of service] sometimes is like, oh well that's it, you're banned from here. So, that becomes a barrier, they can't access the service anymore.

## Connecting with ongoing support

- If you look at them [Together Home participants], they've got no capacity to work. Never...So, basically, to get the DSP, we needed to be able to get them in to see a clinical psychologist, to try and get a clinical psychologist, you need dosh [money], and that's what Together Home program gave us. That opportunity to get them into clinical psychologist that could help to make this person's life a lot better. Because what comes with that DSP package is a lot more resources.
- ...spending all of that time trying to find particulars and health information to advocate for NDIS... And that's why we don't see, I guess, big outcomes until towards the end of the two years because it takes so long to get that rapport but also get the evidence to get the support what they need.

# Access to housing that would otherwise have been impossible

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- ...in regards to housing stock. It's just not out there. DCJ [NSW Department of Communities and Justice] just doesn't have the stock to meet the demand, either. They never will. If someone puts their housing application in today, they're never going to be housed, for the fact is that there's most probably another 40,000 people in front of them.
- There's still a lot of stereotypical thoughts around real estates and things like that. Even that hurdle, in itself, and the competition with people applying for rentals and things like ...the majority of the people that I referred into [Together Home partner service] are people receiving Centrelink payments...
- They would have had to repay their debt or shown a rental history in the open market or things like that, which are impossible.
- Long term housing, these folks would've never have made it that far - ever... if they were a tenant, they wouldn't have been a tenant for very long.

# Service collaboration and shared responsibilities

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- ..... one of the good things about Together Home, is ... the case managers if you will, are from other organisations and they're from a good array of organisations.
- I think when you've got a group of people in the room... who all have a common cause which is around supporting this client, it really promotes that sense of everybody having input and giving advice and giving feedback on what we could do as a group and also within our individual departments or spaces, but having something like the CRAG [Client Referral Assessment Group] has been a really beneficial part of the program because that's where that information sharing is a part of, that's what it's about.
- It makes for more prompt and positive outcomes that have longevity.
- No one gets exited from the program without taking it to the CRAG...So I really liked it because it also helped us to hear what other resources and supports are available as well because sometimes when you're working with a participant the allocated service provider might not be able to do everything...it just helped to come up with so many good ideas to make it smooth.

# SOME KEY LESSONS

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- The complex, long-term and dynamic nature of the issues experienced by Together Home participants requires the type of multi-faceted, well-funded support available through the program;
- The Together Home program allows practitioners to learn about a participant's contributing factors and complexities, creating space for person-centred, tailored, non-judgmental, harm reduction strategies;
- The flexibility of brokerage funds and service provider partnerships has enabled participants to access otherwise unaffordable medical, allied health and dental care;
- The program facilitated long-lasting linkages across various parts of the health and human services system on the Central Coast; and
- The collaborative, but delineated functions of Pacific Link and service partners, and the ways that all partners worked closely alongside Together Home participants were invaluable.