

# Stable Housing, Stable Substance Use?

## Evaluation of Two 'Housing First' Programs for Homeless Individuals

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### Introduction

There is a heightened prevalence of substance use disorders in homeless populations worldwide.

Two housing initiatives based on the Housing First principles have been implemented in Sydney to provide long-term housing to chronically homeless individuals:

1. **Scatter site** (private rental apartments; **SS**)
2. **Congregated site** (apartments in the one building; **CS**).

No study has compared SS and CS housing models in terms of individual outcomes.

### What is 'Housing First'?

1. Provides immediate access to long-term housing
2. Consumer choice
3. Recovery oriented model
4. Supports are individualised for each client
5. Strong focus on integrating each client into their local community

### Aim

Identify changes to clients' substance use and utilisation of health and criminal justice systems over 12 months upon being housed.

### Methodology

Longitudinal, quantitative design comparing measures at baseline and 12 months follow-up.

### Acknowledgements and more information

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### Similarities between the Housing Models

- ✓ Both provide housing and support services to chronically homeless persons
- ✓ Both promote independent living (to different degrees)
- ✓ Both are based on Housing First principles



Scatter site (SS; N=38)



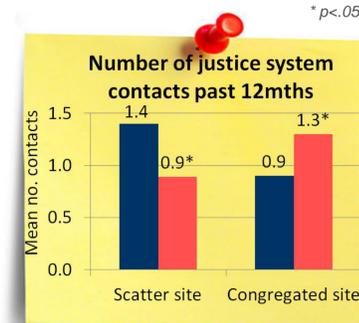
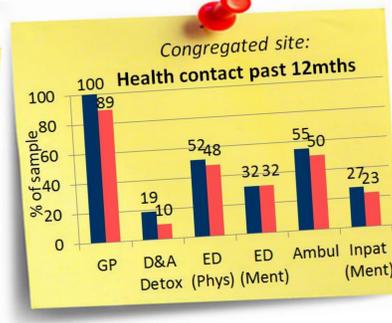
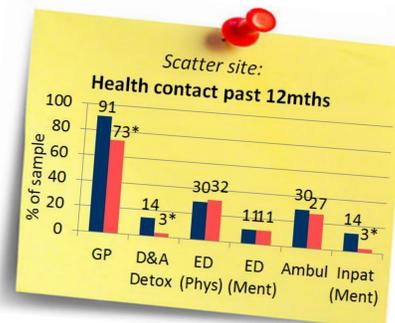
Congregated site (CS; N=26)

### Differences between the Housing Models

- + more independence
- + consumer choice e.g. suburb
- reliant on availability of private rental housing stock
- prices of private rental

- + 24 hour support / security
- + on-site services
- limited number of apartments
- risk of feeling institutional

### Results: Service Utilisation



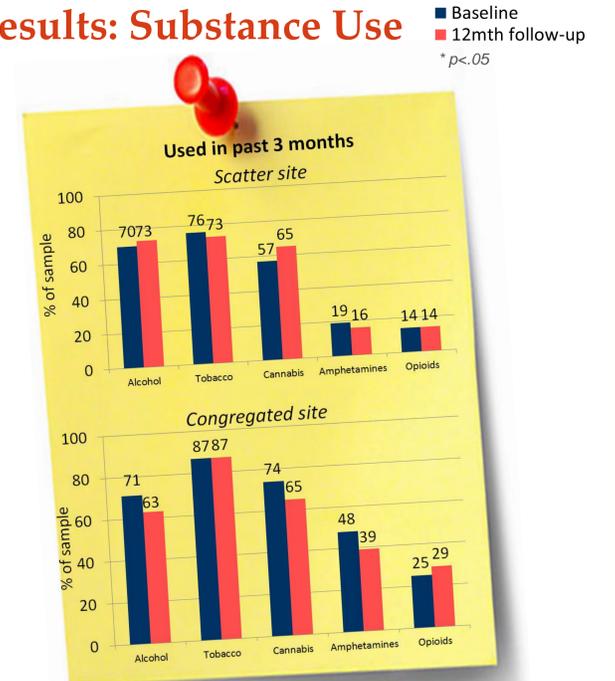
Within groups differences are indicated in graphs above with asterisks.

For between groups differences, CS reported higher:

- a) inpatient hospital admissions for mental health ( $p=0.008$ )
- b) overall justice system contact ( $p=0.002$ ).

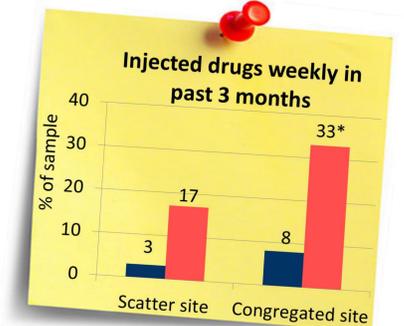
### The Difference is Research

### Results: Substance Use



There were no significant differences in substances used between the models.

A significantly greater increase in the proportion of individuals who injected weekly at CS housing compared to SS ( $p=0.049$ ).



### Take home message

- While both models showed similar changes in most health service and substance use variables, the CS model had significantly more justice system contact and a higher proportion injecting weekly at follow-up than SS.
- Further research on what specific housing and support configuration is best for certain individuals is warranted, particularly with larger sample sizes.