

YES Shelter for Youth and Families

STRATEGIC PLAN

2017/2018 - 2020/2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of YES' strategic planning process is to take a step back, evaluate the organization's path, and ensure that YES' programs and efforts are well-positioned to adapt and respond to the emerging needs and priorities of homeless youth and families within Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

This plan was developed using the SOAR strengths-based approach to strategic planning, which includes an assessment of organizational strengths, opportunities, aspirations and measurable results. SOAR builds on the traditional SWOT analysis with an additional emphasis on what is working well and how an organization can leverage its unique strengths.

Building upon YES' strengths as an organization, this three-year plan was designed in collaboration with the Youth and Families of YES, Community Partners, Staff, and the Board of Directors. The three-year period of this strategic plan will be an enriching time for YES' approach to homelessness response and will provide a momentous push forward for organizational focus, fund development, judicious program alignment, and community impact.

In the context of rising shelter occupancy rates and best practice dictating an investment in housing and supports, this Strategic Plan serves as a refocusing and recalibrating period for YES. Although the body of YES' work has been to be a place of safety and support for Individuals and Families to attain the most fundamental of needs - shelter, YES' Family and Youth supports programming has grown to be a vital service to this community. With growing demands and limited resources, YES is at a time in its existence where further focus and clarity is required for YES to align its efforts and resources in context with best practices, role within the continuum of services and community needs.

The five priorities identified during our planning process were focused on organizational clarity, strengthening collaborative partnerships and programming innovation and impact. Specifically, they include:

**Clarify YES'
Role within the
Continuum
of Services**

**Sustainable
Growth**

**Youth Support
to Adulthood**

**Family
Homelessness
Prevention**

**Thriving
Personally &
Professionally**

We believe that by focusing on these five strategic priorities, YES will continue to be well positioned to respond to the challenges faced by Youth and Families who are homeless or precariously housed and be able to find new, innovative solutions to complex problems.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The 2017/18-2020/21 Strategic Plan was created using the SOAR strengths-based approach to strategic planning. By focusing on our strengths, we believe we will be better equipped to mobilize our efforts to learn and grow and meet the evolving needs of Individuals and Families facing homelessness and difficult life circumstances.

Based on our values, this process involved the input of multiple stakeholder groups. Input sessions were held with Staff, Community Partners and Board Members. Our Youth and Family communities were involved in the process through open dialogue, surveys and ongoing program feedback. A survey was also sent to Community Partners and Staff Members who could not attend the scheduled sessions.

The planning sessions were centered around four questions:



From this process, the Strategic Planning Committee identified clusters of common ideas, which together informed the creation of YES' five strategic priorities and the specific action steps outlined below.

SOAR SUMMARY

Strengths

What can we build upon?

- Strong network of Community Partners and collaborative agencies.
- Positive image/profile within the community.
- Respected leadership with committed Board.
- Collaborative internal work culture with talented workforce.
- Funding innovation with new corporate partnerships.

Opportunities

What are our stakeholders asking for?

- New community partnership approach to Youth and Family homelessness.
- Increase transitional housing and homelessness prevention support.
- Strengthen Family homelessness response and supports.
- Clarify YES' core purpose and align supports and expectations around focus.
- Improve training, tools and role clarity for Employees, enhancing recognition and capacity.

Aspirations

What do we care deeply about?

- All Youth and Families in Peterborough are supported to lead full and positive lives.
- End Youth and Family homelessness within our community.
- Build private partnerships, core funding supports and alternative funding channels to further YES' mission through stable financial resourcing.
- Increase Staff capacity by adding/expanding program-specific roles (i.e. Staff outreach).
- Further the culture of YES by focusing on Employee wellness, development and professional compensation.
- Expand community image through intentional communication and social media programs.

Results

How do we know we are succeeding?

- YES spends more time building and strengthening its core programs with the confidence that an integrated community approach is furthering homelessness prevention, mental health wellness and other required interventions. YES to play a key role as advocate, partner and community resource.
- The organization continues to deliver exceptionally for Youth and Families and now does so with greater focus and funding stability, leading the way for new programming, professional compensation and increased impact.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Clarify YES' Role within the Continuum of Services

Refine scope of service YES provides and continue to align efforts with Community Partners to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Sustainable Growth

Further enhance our diversified funding model to adequately finance core programming, professional growth and sustainable staffing levels.

Youth Support to Adulthood

Commit resources to advocate for and explore new ways of expanding housing and supports to help Youth successfully transition to adulthood.

Family Homelessness Prevention

Work with Community Partners to gain traction on Family homelessness prevention, including early identification and rapid intervention.

Thriving Personally & Professionally

Improve tools, training and role clarity for increased professionalism and enhanced recognition for the contribution of Employees. Foster a culture and staffing levels that encourage self-care and well-being.

PRIORITY 1

CLARIFY YES' ROLE WITHIN THE CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

Refine scope of service YES provides and continue to align efforts with Community Partners to prevent and reduce homelessness.

SHORT-TERM 3 - 12 MONTHS

- 1.1 Mobilize the organization around YES' core capabilities and strengths, declaring its unique contribution within the continuum of homelessness services.
- 1.2 Position YES as a sector-wide leader, clearly defining its role and expertise in the prevention and reduction of homelessness.
- 1.3 Continue to build towards a re-envisioned funding partnership with the City.

MID-TERM 12 - 24 MONTHS

- 1.4 Find the intersection of YES' core strengths and capabilities with the City's priorities and build a re-envisioned funding partnership positioned towards a joint strategy on homelessness reduction and prevention.
- 1.5 Engage the community in the story of Youth and Family homelessness in Peterborough and the Kawarthas.
- 1.6 Foster an understanding with Community Partners of emergency shelter realities and best practice approaches.
- 1.7 Work to advocate for a systemic approach to homelessness prevention and seamless transitions for Youth.

LONG-TERM 24 - 36 MONTHS

- 1.8 Define objectives and commit resources towards YES' strategic focus to further expand programming, staffing capacities, advocacy and impact.
- 1.9 Find synergies amongst Community Partners and realign efforts, transitioning focus and clearly defining responsibilities and accountability mechanisms.

PRIORITY 2

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Further enhance our diversified funding model to adequately finance core programming, professional growth and sustainable staffing levels.

SHORT-TERM 3 - 12 MONTHS

- 2.1 Develop a plan to diversify funding sources and establish a greater base of committed donors with a target of 15% increase over three years.
 - Might Include: monthly donor campaign, stewardship program, print/social media/phone campaigns, capital investment funding source, revenue opportunities, Board of Directors outreach, legacy gifts and health dollars.
- 2.2 Build internal capacity to engage in grant writing and actively pursue grant opportunities.
 - Might Include: build a list of potential grant providers within Peterborough region, develop a case for support, conduct internal research.
- 2.3 Build towards a re-envisioned funding partnership with the City.

MID-TERM 12 - 24 MONTHS

- 2.4 Continue to implement plan to diversify funding growth.
- 2.5 Acquire appropriate expertise to support the repurposing of YES space.

LONG-TERM 24 - 36 MONTHS

- 2.6 Continue to implement plan to diversify funding growth.
- 2.7 Reassess and renew plan to increase funding.

PRIORITY 3

YOUTH SUPPORT TO ADULTHOOD

Commit resources to advocate for and explore new ways of expanding housing and supports to help Youth successfully transition to adulthood.

SHORT-TERM 3 - 12 MONTHS

- 3.1 Create forums or ways to actively engage Youth in finding solutions to youth homelessness.
 - Might Include: Explore and determine whether to create a youth advisory committee and explore other ways to engage Youth.
- 3.2 Work with Community Partners, particularly Indigenous leaders and community, to further a strategy towards the expansion of housing and supports to help Youth successfully transition to adulthood.
- 3.3 Build out internal capabilities, in alignment with core focus, to further this strategy and advance YES' role in this area.
 - Might Include: Clinical Case Manager, Housing Supports Worker, off-site drop in researching alternative community models (i.e. Waterloo).
- 3.4 Build a transitional housing plan for Youth, with a focus on including Indigenous Youth.
- 3.5 Increase partnership with the child welfare system to collaborate on best practice approaches to preventing Youth homelessness.

MID-TERM 12 - 24 MONTHS

- 3.6 Explore and research best practices around a hub model, consider how it fits with YES' core services and existing community services.
- 3.7 Initiate community and internal discussion to pursue better access to mental health services.
- 3.8 Advocate to prevent systems discharge into homelessness (e.g., child welfare, medical, correctional facilities).
- 3.9 Engage landlords and advocate for affordable housing as resources allow.
- 3.10 Explore opportunities to further align all YES services with our core focus of preventing and reducing homelessness.
- 3.11 Collaborate with Community Partners to explore a joint life skills program.

LONG-TERM 24 - 36 MONTHS

- 3.13 Create additional transitional housing for Youth.

PRIORITY 4

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Work with Community Partners to gain traction on Family homelessness prevention, including early identification and rapid intervention.

SHORT-TERM 3 - 12 MONTHS

- 4.1 Explore the intersection of YES' core capabilities and strengths and the community's response to Family homelessness prevention. Clarify YES' limits of emergency housing and mobilize efforts towards a path forward.
- 4.2 Build partnerships with Community Agencies serving Families and Children.

MID-TERM 12 - 24 MONTHS

- 4.3 Work with Community Partners to integrate community supports for Families facing homelessness. Build coordinated access points, early referral channels, and supports within the system to enhance early intervention and homelessness prevention strategies.

LONG-TERM 24 - 36 MONTHS

- 4.4 Work to continuously strengthen an integrated and prioritized approach to Families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

PRIORITY 5

THRIVING PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY

Improve tools, training and role clarity for increased professionalism and enhanced recognition for the contribution of Employees. Foster a culture and staffing levels that encourage self-care and well-being.

SHORT-TERM 3 - 12 MONTHS

- 5.1 Strengthen YES' internal capacity by committing resources to establish clearer roles and expectations for Staff, Board and Volunteers, enhanced recognition for contribution, and the advancement of professional skillset through focused development opportunities.
 - Might Include: HR tool kit, policy update, job description review and update, compensation review, training opportunities, Volunteer training, Volunteer job descriptions, automatic door opener.
- 5.2 Explore, as an organization, opportunities to further drive YES' culture in the path of self-care and well-being for all.
- 5.3 Review and establish a set of guidelines outlining expectations for Staff and Clients and processes involved.

MID-TERM 12 - 24 MONTHS

- 5.4 Team Members to report back on the impact on the culture developed in short-term, HR and recognition programs and provide joint input on best path forward.
- 5.5 Continue to prioritize a positive Staff culture of self-care and well-being.
- 5.6 Ensure that open conversations are had and that the Team is brought along with redefined focus and service changes.

LONG-TERM 24 - 36 MONTHS

- 5.7 Continue to evaluate professional and career development and make opportunities available as funding and resources allow.
- 5.8 Regularly review staffing and workforce allocations to evaluate internal capacities and external requirements, and that the necessary steps are taken to adjust and grow.

3) Youth and Family homelessness are different and require distinct approaches.

Most Youth entering homelessness come from a situation where they were largely dependent on adult caregivers. Youth are at a significant developmental point in their life and often lack the resources, supports, and skills to transition successfully to adulthood [3]. YES often sees these Youth repeatedly over years in our emergency shelter and other programs.

Family homelessness is an outcome of an interplay of factors including violence, poverty, and a lack of affordable housing [4]. Unlike Youth, Families experiencing homelessness often have many skills when it comes to maintaining housing [5] and are already connected to services. Most often, YES' emergency shelter serves a Family just once.

4) The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls on all sectors of society.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report identifies our collective responsibility to redress the intergenerational trauma inflicted by residential schools. The impact of residential schools can be seen as a direct cause of the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness [1]. Peterborough's Point-in-Time count (2016) found that 26% of homeless Youth surveyed identified as having 'aboriginal heritage' [6]. The National Youth Homeless Study found that 21.5% of homeless Youth surveyed in Ontario identified as Indigenous [7].

5) Ontario's child welfare system is changing.

Children's Aid Society's mandates have been expanded to take Youth into care up to age 18. This will have significant implications for how responsibilities and resources are shared for this age group, particularly since the proportion of Youth age 16 and 17 using YES' emergency shelter services has increased 10% in recent years. Prior to 2017, Ontario was the only province where the age limit for child welfare involvement stopped at age 16.

[1] Gaetz, Dej, Richter, & Redman. (2016). *The State of Homelessness in Canada: 2016*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

[2] Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter. (2014). *The State of Homelessness in Canada: 2014*. Toronto: The Homeless Hub Press.

[3] Gaetz, Stephen. (2014). *A Safe and Decent Place to Live: Towards a Housing First Framework for Youth*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

[4] Albert, Pauly, Cross, & Cooper. (2014). *The Cycle of Impossibility: Pathways into and out of Family Homelessness*. Victoria: Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

[5] Zlotnick. (2014). *Children living in transition: Helping homeless and foster care children and families*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[6] United Way of Peterborough and District. (2016). *GIVING VOICE...Peterborough's 2016 Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness*.

[7] Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, & Schwan. (2016). *Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

