Homelessness-No fixed address-can we still deliver care?

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TELETHON KIDS INSTITUTE
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LOOKING FORWARD PROJECT
'Culture is the pathway to wellbeing'

NDRI
national drug research institute

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What I will be talking about

1. Recommendation
2. Definition of homelessness
3. What are the current strategies for addressing Aboriginal homelessness
4. Negative perceptions: Is it impacting policy
5. Profile of homelessness for Aboriginal people
6. Principles for working with Aboriginal Elders
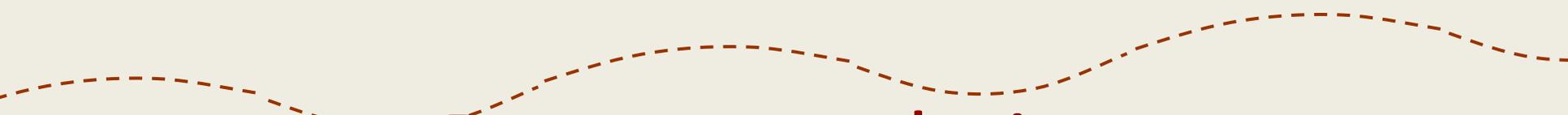
Recommendation

Leaders in the health-care sector must address social policies and structural factors that result in Aboriginal homelessness by <u>working directly with Aboriginal Elders</u>.

ABS Definition of Homelessness

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of homelessness is centred around the following three points:

- Adequacy of the dwelling;

- Security of tenure in the dwelling; and

- *control of, and access to space for social relations.*

Source: Homelessness Australia: National peak body for homelessness in Australia

Source: http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/what-is-homelessness

Aboriginal Homelessness in Australia

There are currently *105,237* people in Australia who are homeless.

25% (or 26,744) are *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.*

In WA there are currently *9,595* people who are homeless.

Aboriginal Homelessness in Australia

Likely reasons for homelessness…

- Racism/discrimination-making it difficult for Aboriginal people to access private rental; even in public housing.

- Aboriginal women experiencing family violence, 35 times more likely; can result in homelessness.

- Lack of cultural education leading to poorly designed housing, unable to accommodate extended families.

Source: Homelessness Australia: National peak body for homelessness in Australia

http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/homeless-statistics

Aboriginal Homelessness in Australia

Likely reasons for homelessness...

- Overcrowding can jeopardise rental agreements leading to eviction of tenants.

- Poverty; a contributing factor to homelessness.

- Mental health and substance abuse.

Source: Homelessness Australia: National peak body for homelessness in Australia

http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/homeless-statistics

Homelessness and Discrimination

Negative perceptions: are they impacting policy

- Speak and Tipple (2006): the public and media portrayal of homeless people as unemployed, beggars, drunks and

- Memmott (2003): The most visible Indigenous 'homeless' people are small groups who live in public places, socialising, sheltering, drinking, arguing and fighting in public.

- Hopper (2007): instance of homeless woman refusing support-what does this mean. As he puts it 'not justice at last-but injustice, consistently applied'.

Aboriginal Homelessness

Profile of Aboriginal homelessness...

- Baker and colleagues (2012) state that there has been little attention given to the plight of Aboriginal people who are homeless despite the disproportionate number who are homeless.

Source: Baker J, et al. Literature Review: Effective interventions for working with young people who are homeless or at risk homelessness.
https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/06_2012/literature_review.pdf

Aboriginal Homelessness

Profile of Aboriginal homelessness…

- Memmott (2003) Three different categories that define Aboriginal homelessness:
  - public place dwellers;
  - those at risk of homelessness; and
  - spiritually homeless people.

    To be homeless in this context, means to be without country. This is a form of spiritual and psychological homelessness. Many individuals and families who have been removed from their traditional countries and wider circle of family kin by government agencies.

Main themes

Key points

Baker and colleagues (2012):

- the existence of relationships is central to any meaningful engagement between service users and workers.
- services that are tailored to the individual needs, that were flexible, had rules that were less restrictive and did not require the disclosure of personal information.
- greater consumer choice and control will more likely produce positive outcomes for clients.

Hwang & Burns (2014): Health-care providers should also seek to address social policies and structural factors that result in homelessness.

Hermann and colleagues (2007): Critical Time Intervention (CTI) is designed to prevent recurrent homelessness among persons with severe mental illness by enhancing continuity of care during the transition from institutional to community living.

Key principles for engaging

To treat me equally you will need to treat me differently...
(Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, 1992)

Key principles for working with Aboriginal people

- Recognition of cultural protocols
- Establishing and building trust = relationships
- Co-production and inclusion
- Services must be responsive and flexible
- Investing and committing to capacity building of staff
- Implementing strategies to ensure sustainability

How to engage…

Duration   Preparation

Frequency   Language

Elders   **Services**

Place
(locate the work)

Connection builds
- ✓ capacity
- ✓ confidence
- ✓ competence

Aboriginal people

= Trust +
Relationships
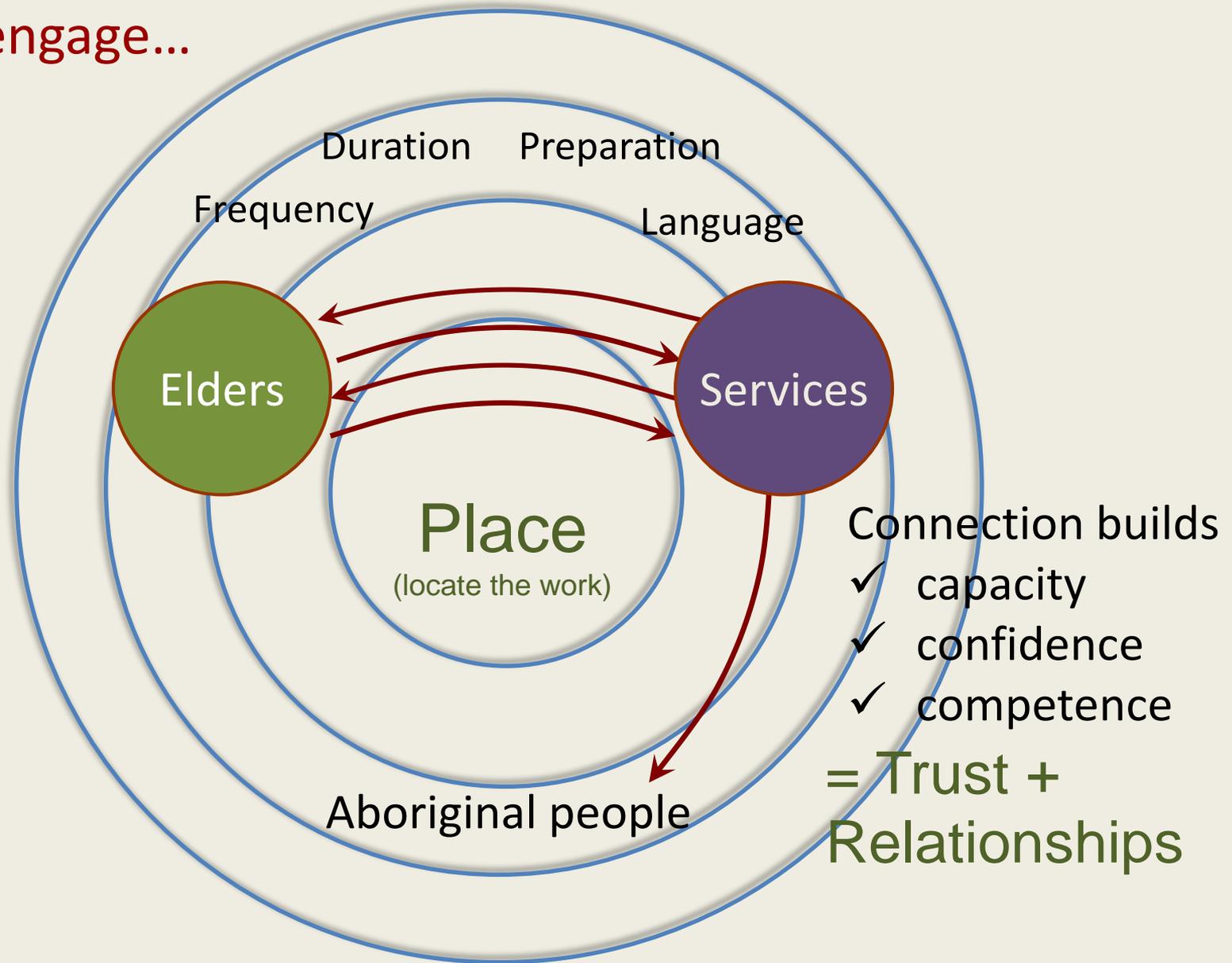
"If you want to treat me equally, then you have to treat me differently…"

Skillset?

Engaging with the community as partners to develop solutions:

- Humility is key – give up "being the expert"

- Non-judgemental

- Open to ideas of others cultivates curiosity:

  "We can get an awful lot done if we don't care who takes the credit" (Harry Truman)

- Elders are a portal to and foundation of community

Dr Eric M. Meslin PhD, FCAHS; President and CEO | Council of Canadian Academies, *From Evidence to Impact: How to Inform Policy Decisions Through the Power of Science,* Telethon Kids Institute, 4 Nov 2016.
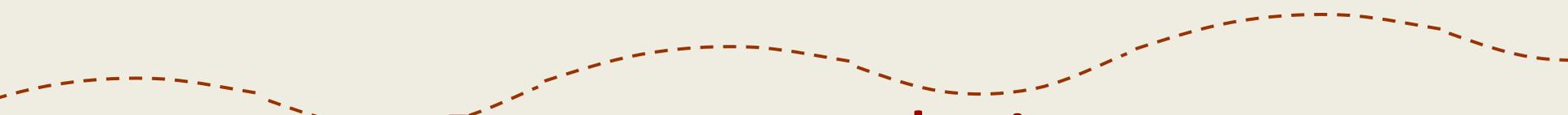
Recommendation

Leaders in the health-care sector must address social policies and structural factors that result in Aboriginal homelessness **by working directly with Aboriginal Elders.**

Publications

Looking Forward Project reports, journal articles and the project handbook available at: http://aboriginal.telethonkids.org.au/centre-for-research-excellence-(cre)/looking-forward/

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