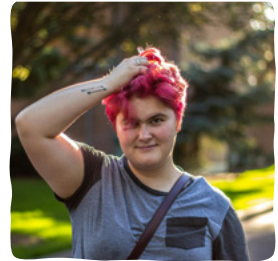
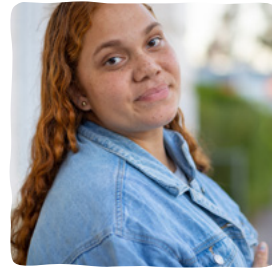


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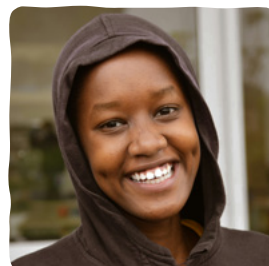
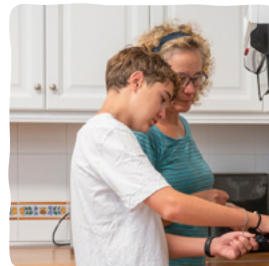
Studio accommodation and service responses for at-risk and justice involved young people

May 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

The authors gratefully acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we live, learn, research, and write this report – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to elders past and present and future, and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are Australia’s first storytellers, artists, communities and creators of culture. We recognise the continuing connection to the land and waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We recognise the continual harm the justice system has caused to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and hope the continuation of this research will go some way to address the inequalities and improve Aboriginal justice outcomes.

Acknowledgements

We extend our thanks and appreciation to the young people, carers and practitioners who generously contributed their time, insights, and experiences to this research. Your willingness to share your perspectives has been invaluable, providing a richer understanding of the challenges and strengths you face. We hope, that due to your openness and willingness to share, this report will inform the growth of this program and inspire future initiatives to better support you. Thank you for your invaluable contribution.

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Key Summary



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What We Found

The findings from this research support what practitioners, carers, and young people have observed: stable, youth-appropriate housing is an important foundation for positive change. For young people involved in or at risk of entering the Youth Justice system, the Kids Under Cover Studio Program offers an environment that can support safety, connection, and development.

The studio can offer young people space to reflect, re-engage with education and employment, and strengthen relationships with family. This summary highlights key insights from the research and the studio's contribution to reducing risk behaviours and encouraging positive pathways.

For young people involved with, or at high risk of contact with, the Youth Justice system, the Kids Under Cover Studio:



Provides the young person with a **space where they feel safe.**



Provides young people with a **space where they feel they belong.**



Facilitates aspirational change in the areas of employment, education, and independent living.



It enables the repair of family relationships and assists in addressing mental health.

In doing so, the studio program has the potential to decrease risk behaviours and in turn reduce further engagement in the Youth Justice system.

The key findings from this research can be summarised as:

The most significant and positive finding was that the studio environment facilitated the space for a decrease in risk behaviours.

The studio offered a stable space where young people felt safe and felt they belonged.

The studios enabled young people to reflect on their future aspirations, engage in education, address mental health issues, and rebuild family relationships, essentially decreasing their risk behaviours.

The studio facilitated a space where young people could focus on their future aspirations, such as pursuing education and work.

By offering stable housing, the project directly contributed to reducing the economic vulnerability of these young individuals, who are often at risk of poverty due to their backgrounds in the justice and welfare systems.

The ability to plan for independent living and gain financial stability is a critical step towards breaking the cycle of poverty and or complex disadvantage and trauma experienced by some of the young people needing studio accommodation.

The studio facilitated the opportunity to address mental health and support the rebuilding of family relationships, which also plays a part in alleviating the broader socio-economic challenges that can lead to poverty.

The findings highlight the importance of the studio as well as the need for tailored wrap-around interventions that are adaptable to address the diverse needs of this vulnerable population.

Recommendations arising from this research (see page 9) indicate positive, achievable ways that the coordination of studio accommodation and service supports can be enhanced, to support better futures young people at risk of homelessness or re-offending.

The findings show that the Kids Under Cover Studio Program can have a positive impact in several areas. The studio space helps young people stabilise, develop positive routines, and consider possibilities for their future. It provides a degree of physical and emotional distance that can assist young people to grow, while maintaining connections with family and community. The research suggests that, if combined with tailored support, the studio can contribute to reducing risk behaviours and improving long-term wellbeing.



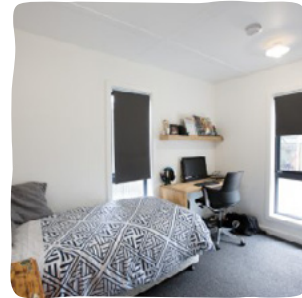
Recommendations

Below are key summary recommendations, for a fuller outline of the recommendations please refer to Chapter 5.

Studio design improvements

Consideration should be given to trialling some self-contained studios.

Future improvements to studio layout and space will benefit from input from young people.



Service enhancement

Findings indicate the need for a centrally funded case coordinator, to ensure that when young people and their carers receive studio accommodation, all necessary support services are also in place, and that these are monitored and maintained to support young people to thrive.

Findings also suggest the need for additional or tailored support for those who continued to struggle.

Program development and investment

The range of positive impacts that young people and their carers report once studios are installed are overwhelmingly positive.

Increased and ongoing evaluation of such future investment will form a critical component of any future funding.

The inclusion of lived experiences of young people and their families/carers, should inform future improvements to the studio program.

Combined with the data from the RFI Global Carers Survey data the findings indicate that ongoing investment and growth of a studio-accommodation pathway for young people at risk of ongoing or increased contact with justice systems, is warranted.



01

Introduction



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Housing Studios for Young People Involved with Juvenile Justice

In the Australian context, Kids Under Cover (KUC) responds directly to the identified need for housing interventions for young people involved with the Youth Justice system.

Specifically, KUC provides a critical intervention to address youth homelessness and prevent further entanglement with the justice system among at-risk young people.

Funding was allocated to KUC through two contracts. The first, supported by the Infrastructure Stimulus Package 2021–22, covered the construction of 45 studios, while the second, for 2022–23, funded the development of 39 studios. The Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria (DJCS) oversaw the delivery of both contracts. Hence, Kids Under Cover delivered a total of 84 studios across Victoria to two cohorts: “intervention”, targeting young people already within the justice system; and “prevention”, targeted at young people demonstrating behaviours that placed them at high risk of imminent future offending.

These one or two-bedroom en-suited studios provide a safe and stable living environment for at-risk young people. The program is designed to stabilise these young people, reduce negative behaviours which lead to offending, and encourage engagement in education and training or employment.

By December 2023, the program had successfully housed 124 young people, with 63% falling within the “intervention” cohort and 37% in the “prevention” cohort. Referrals came from a variety of sources, including the Department of Justice and Community Safety, Community Service Organisations, and the Department of Child Protection.

The program has strict eligibility criteria to ensure support reaches the most vulnerable young people. Applicants must be between 12 and 25 years old and either at risk of entering out-of-home care, experiencing homelessness, or needing additional space for family reunification or foster care. They must also be engaged with a support service and have a carer with a property suitable for a studio. The application process involves multiple stakeholders, coordinated by a central organisation, including Youth Justice Case Managers, Childrens Court Youth Diversion, Community Service Organisations, and the Department of Child Protection.



This research report provides on this pilot program, its impact, and its potential as a model for early intervention in Youth Justice and homelessness prevention among at-risk youth in Victoria.

The report is informed by three modes of data collection aimed to foreground the voices of young people and their families/carers.

These methods include:

01

A scoping review of available evidence for housing interventions for young people involved, or at-risk of involvement, with the Youth Justice system.

02

Surveys with young people to discover broad trends of the impact of the studio.

03

Interviews with key stakeholders, designated carers, and studio occupants to further investigate impact and areas for program improvement.

The research was guided by the following objectives:



Assess effectiveness of program implementation and initial service engagement.



Monitor program quality and ongoing service engagement.



Assess effectiveness of user pathways and outcomes.



Assess program against sustainability goals.



Develop a methodology for ongoing evaluation.

Findings were contextualised using a KUC Carers survey, which was collected and analysed by RFI Global—an external consultant for KUC. The Carers survey was conducted and analysed independently of the current research, with the results provided to us in a collated format, providing an important point of comparison.

(See 'How this study was conducted', page 60, for more details.)

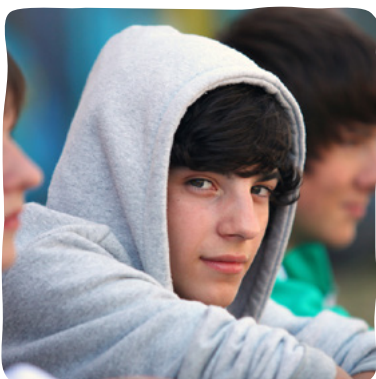
What Does Previous Research Tell Us?

It has been well established that justice-involved youth often experience homelessness and housing insecurity, either as a precursor to justice involvement or subsequent to justice involvement (Almquist and Walker 2022). In a review of research on the 'reciprocal associations' between youth housing instability and criminal legal involvement, Almquist and Walker (2022) found that some studies presented housing instability as a predictor of criminal legal involvement, some presented the opposite trajectory, and some presented the relationship as co-occurring. Of key relevance to this report, the authors recommend that 'more intervention-focused studies' are needed.



Few studies in this review engaged the role of community-based resources or programs in supporting housing unstable youth and/or youth exiting the legal system. Shifting the current research focus from risk-focused epidemiological studies to assessments of practical interventions will help identify tangible mechanisms by which to strengthen the determinants of health for youth at risk of housing instability or justice contact.

Almquist and Walker 2022, 12



The authors also identify the need for more research on experiences of youth with criminal legal involvement (Almquist and Walker 2022, 12). An older review by Thomas (2013) draws on findings from a wide range of sources, including practitioner data, to investigate justice-involved youth's accommodation particularly in the UK. Specifically, the paper examines 'a number of the problems young people face in respect of their living arrangements and how these difficulties can impact on them and the decisions that are made when they are involved in the criminal justice system' (Thomas 2013, 111).

Key insights from Thomas (2013) include:

The most vulnerable subset of these young people is 16- and 17-year-olds because both parents and statutory services may not help them due to their being close to adulthood.

'One of the areas where problems are most evident are to do with custody as accommodation can be lost as a result of a custodial remand or sentence and the ability to be released can be hindered if there is nowhere to go to'. (Thomas 2013, p. 113-119)

There have been successful initiatives that assist young people in finding accommodation after being released from custody, including in partnership with housing departments and housing support projects.

Conceptual Framing

We conceptualised the studio within the broader framework of housing security and its associated non-shelter outcomes. Housing security, often defined as stable, safe, and affordable accommodation, plays a critical role in shaping various life outcomes, particularly for at-risk young people. The studio is more than a physical shelter – it represents a foundational intervention with far-reaching implications for the wellbeing, behaviour change, and future prospects of these young people.

Studios as Housing Security

Housing security serves as a protective factor against homelessness, social exclusion, and involvement in the justice system. For at-risk young people, a secure living environment is crucial for reducing risk behaviours. As the results will demonstrate, the studio is crucial in reducing the disorder that often exacerbates risk behaviours in many of the studio occupants we spoke to. The studios allow young people to remain connected to their families, communities, and support networks, all of which are critical for the reduction of risk behaviours and long-term success. In this way, the studios not only meet basic shelter needs but also create an environment conducive to positive change.



Non-Shelter Outcomes of Secure Housing

This research examines the impact of the studio beyond shelter. Research consistently shows that stable housing leads to significant non-shelter outcomes across various domains, particularly for at-risk young people. In the context of the Kids Under Cover program, these outcomes can be broadly categorised into three key areas: behavioural change, overall mental health, and aspirational change.

The stability and security provided by the studio has led to positive behavioural change. For many young people involved in this program, the studio offered a space where they could retreat to reduce stress. It also has the ability to reinforce positive changes such as staying at home at night instead of being in the neighbourhood.

The provision of the studio is closely linked to improvements in overall mental health. For young people who have experienced trauma and instability, the studio offers a sense of safety and belonging that is vital for their behavioural change.

The stability and security, and improvements in mental health, extend to aspirational change. The provision of the studio reduces the disruptions that can occur due to frequent unstable living conditions or overcrowding, thereby enabling young people to focus on aspirational change. This includes (re-)engaging in education, employment, and other positive changes.

General Program Description

Kids Under Cover installed **84 one or two-bedroom en-suited studio's** into the backyard of designated families/carers (biological family, kith and kin, guardians, foster carers), to accommodate young people within the Youth Justice system, exiting youth detention or at immediate risk of offending.

Studio occupants were aged between **12-25 years old**. However, in some cases, Kids Under Cover worked with young people to the age of 25.

Studio placement length was intended to be **long-term**, for the length of time required by the family due to crowding or other needs.

Kids Under Cover provided some additional support including, for instance, an **education scholarship valued at \$1200 per annum** to assist in educational re-engagement and uptake.



Key Data on Young People who Received a Studio

By the end of 2023, Kids Under Cover had supported:



84

households by providing 1 or 2-bedroom studios to stabilise young people at home.



124

young people who had either had contact with the justice system (63%) or were at imminent risk of future offending (37%).

11

households by providing scholarships to 14 young people to support their engagement in education/training.



Of the young people supported by a Kids Under Cover Youth Justice Studio:

59%

were aged between 15-18 years, with the youngest being 13 and the eldest being 24.

73%

were males (Intervention cohort 87% male and prevention cohort 52% male).

24%

were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

29%

had a reported mental health diagnosis.



23%

had a reported disability.

19%

had reported behavioural challenges.

61%

were at risk of being placed in out of home care or becoming homeless.

27%

required reunification with their family.

8%

were already homeless.

02

Case Studies



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Kerrie and Tamara

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Josh

These two case studies serve to illustrate the real-world application of the KUC Youth Justice Studio's. They offer detailed insights into how the provision of studio accommodation has influenced the lives of those involved. By examining individual cases, we can better appreciate the complex challenges faced by at-risk youth and the transformative potential of stable housing as an early intervention tool.

These case studies have been selected to represent different experiences within the program. The stories provide a holistic view of the program's outcomes, showcasing successes, identifying challenges, and exploring areas for improvement.

The case studies are not only illustrative of the program's impact but also serve as a valuable resource for stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners. They offer concrete examples of how housing security can lead to positive non-shelter outcomes. Participants' names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Throughout the report we adopt person-centred language, using terms like "studio occupant" and "justice-involved young people" to emphasise respect and individuality, aligning with disciplinary expectations for respectful and inclusive terminology. In addition, we have chosen to prioritise participant quotes throughout the report. We view this as being essential for centring and amplifying their voices, ensuring that their lived experiences and perspectives are valued over external interpretations. By foregrounding direct quotes, with minimal data cleaning, we aim to provide readers with a more authentic and nuanced understanding of participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. In doing so, we aim to respect participants' voices, humanise the findings, and allowing readers to connect with the participants on a personal level.



Case Study 1:

Kerrie and Tamara

Kerrie is a mother to five children. The family were living in a two-bedroom unit, which was significantly overcrowded. They were able to move into a larger house and also receive a two-bedroom studio from Kids Under Cover for two of her daughters.

Kerrie said the studio has allowed **'the girls [her daughters] to settle down a lot.'** **While one of the girls is still in contact with police, she said that 'she's literally not a missing person and all over social media.'** Prior to the studio, Kerrie said that the girls were missing persons as often as weekly. This was due to the significant overcrowding in the home and them not having their own space.

Kerrie sees the studio as providing the girls with a safe space: something to take pride in, somewhere to feel safe, and some way to feel like they have control of their own lives. The studio allows the girls to have their own space to withdraw and be with their own thoughts, but they can still interact with the main household.



My daughters came back into my care, they have been through quite a bit."

Kerrie

Tamara, one of Kerrie's daughters, echoed these feelings of safety, belonging, and a sense of responsibility. Tamara says the studio allows her to start thinking about her future. It has also given her a sense of responsibility to take care of her own space: **'like we're having to clean in there by myself, basically like my mum's not gonna go in there and clean it. For me, that's our responsibility.'**

Tamara has started her online VCE. The studio allows her a place to study away from the main household.

While the studio helps Tamara and her sister, Kerrie said it has also helped the whole family calm down because everyone has their own space.



Oh, honestly, it does make me think about wanting to start, you know, getting a job, save up, you know, get my own house, my own place.

Tamara



Case study learnings

Feeling a sense of belonging and safety within the physical and relational space of the studio is the first and most crucial step to addressing at-risk behaviours, highlighting the importance of place and space in shaping human experience.

Case Study 2:

Josh

Josh is a young person who received a studio following family violence. Josh had been in the studio for just over a year and liked the setup, in particular the desk which allowed him to play computer games.

His favourite part of being in the studio was **'having [his] own space'** and being separate from the main household, which was still a source of conflict and stress.

Importantly to him, he could have friends over every week – something he felt unable to do when living in the main household. Previously **'it was always out of the house. I couldn't, like, have anyone over.'** Josh felt the studio had definitely had a positive impact on his friendships.

Since moving into the studio, Josh had started working, and felt the studio had helped with that by removing the need to interact with his family when leaving for work.



Yeah, it's a lot better because I don't have to like sneak out of the house anymore. I can kind of just leave when I want to. Come back when I want to."

Josh

Josh said cooking was the hardest part of living in the studio, as he needed to prepare his own food in the absence of his family providing it. The studio is not equipped with a kitchen, in part so families can continue to eat together in the main household and stay connected.

For young people like Josh, the studio may reduce their risk behaviours and their risk of homelessness but may not repair their relationship with their family. As Josh said, he was living almost fully independently, **'even though like the reason for this unit is to be able to socialise and everything with your family, which I don't.'**

Josh's only suggested improvement for the studio was to have **'a little bit more space.'** His goal in the future was to live fully out of home. It appears the studio is helping him towards that transition, including by making it easier for him to go to work and earn an income.



[when going to work] like I didn't have to try and explain to my mum where I'm going."

Josh



Case study learnings

The studio can be crucial for providing independence and reducing difficult interactions with family, where this is a problem for the young person.

03

Findings



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The findings from our research indicate a complex program impact, with a mix of promising outcomes for studio occupants and their families, alongside some persistent challenges. While some young people continued to encounter difficulties with the justice system even after moving into the studio, the most significant and positive finding was that the studio environment facilitated the space for a decrease in risk behaviours. This was evident from most stories that were heard, which were rich and insightful.

The studio offered a stable space where young people felt safe and felt they belonged. This enabled young people to reflect on their future aspirations, address mental health issues, and rebuild family relationships, essentially decreasing their risk behaviours. The findings presented here highlight the importance of the studio but indicate the need for tailored wrap-around interventions that are adaptable to address the diverse needs of this vulnerable population.

The KUC CEO, the Head of Programs, and the Studio Program Manager all discussed the significant challenges they faced “getting these things (wrap-around support) on the ground” (CEO). One of the key difficulties was referrals from Youth Justice and the short-term nature of the service they offered to young people. Consequently, KUC widened its referrals criteria to include community service organisations rather than solely taking referrals from Youth Justice.

The limited access to Youth Justice Workers made it difficult for KUC to contact young people. It also compromised maintenance and inspections as Youth Justice Workers were not available to jointly attend – this has led to increased operating costs.



“I think it’s the number one priority. We find that if someone doesn’t have stable housing, it is very quickly a disaster. That means they can’t usually access a day programme like school or work. It’s a lot more difficult to access other support services because you often need a base and an address to be linked in ... Complete instability for someone if they don’t have anywhere to return to every day.”

Amelia, Stakeholder



From a risk management perspective, we are very cautious about when we send our maintenance techs in and whether we send one or two, and wherever possible we like to try to have a case worker always along. But what we are finding is that the longer it goes from those studios having been placed, if there’s fewer case workers, they are still engaged with those young people. So we’re then kind of just left to have to manage that situation on our own and the police are not interested in escorting our maintenance techs anymore. So that’s something that internally we need to manage and that costs more for us as well as in terms of administrative cost to have to send two workers to a property.”

Head of Programs

Enhancing Program Implementation for Future Take-up of Studios

Practitioners were typically the main point of contact for studio inquiries and submission of the expression of interest (EOI) prior to involving the families. This was important for practitioners as they did not want to get the families' hopes up before knowing the studio would be approved.

However, in some cases practitioners noted that the information provided to them before the approval of an EOI was often unclear, making it challenging for them to effectively communicate the details of the program to carers and young people.

Our findings suggest the need for a review of the process prior to an accepted EOI to ensure practitioners have a uniform understanding of the program. Practitioners need to be well-informed to provide the best support to carers, young people and families, ensuring that the program's benefits are fully realised.



Something like a studio is a really useful tool for trying to help young people stabilise and get on with their lives."

CEO, Kids Under Cover



Key findings



Individual circumstances made the wait time challenging. Approval times varied, with one carer indicating the process took around a year while another reported approval was completed within a matter of months. However, once the studio was approved, the process moved quickly. Carers were satisfied with Kids Under Cover.



Practitioners indicated some frustration and confusion with the EOI process, but were satisfied with Kids Under Cover once the studio had been approved.



A review is needed of the information and communication process with stakeholders pre and post the EOI application.

Application Experiences of Carers, Studio Occupants, and Families

The installation of the studio was discussed by participants as an exciting and positive event for their families. Stories were told of young people sitting in windows watching the process happen and, more importantly, stories of how the excitement around the studio build helped families to begin to repair relationships.



But the studios are also a bit of a slow burn, in terms of the impact that they have on people. So, yes, they get the immediate impact of, OK, I've got a roof over my head, but then in terms of what that that flows on and what it enables for the young person. It's a bit of a longer-term process."

Head of Programs, Kids Under Cover



She literally sat in the window and watched the unit being built in the backyard ... Yeah, it was really beautiful. It was. It's really activity for all of us ... The kids would have been lining the window staring at him."

Kerrie, Carer



I think things moved reasonably quickly because it was just basically like a referral process and. Yeah. Like she was accepted pretty much straight away. But yeah, probably took, I think about two months before we actually got it from getting the 'yes.'"

Sofia, Carer



To be perfectly honest, it was really easy for me because I don't think I did any of it. (...) It was pretty much all handled for us from. From what I understand, it was pretty simple really. We had one of the guys come out to (...) have a look at the backyard and do all the measurements and everyone's been really lovely. It made it really easy for us."

Kerrie, Carer



It was a really long process. It took us. You know, nearly over a year. Yeah, once it got accepted it went really quickly.

Ava, Carer

Why do you think the process took so long? Was it administrative? Was it approvals or?

Interviewer

No, I think it was just more you know. Cause the daughter was running away, coming home, running away, you know, so it's just that stability (...).

Ava, Carer

Even with some waiting, carers, studio occupants and their wider families were excited about the installation of the studio.

Need for the Studio

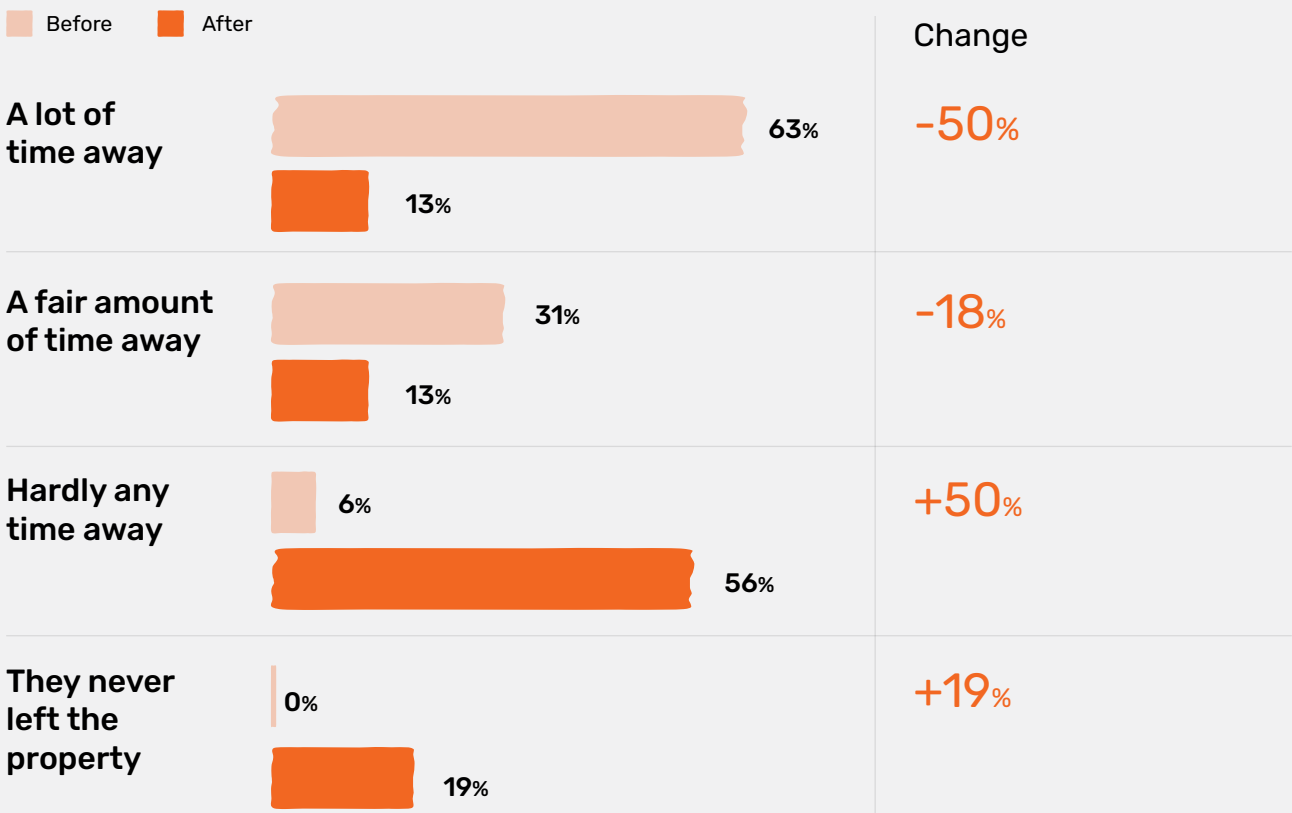
Most participants we spoke with lived in overcrowded spaces, and needed the studio to relieve the stressors that comes with living in such circumstances. Additionally, families/carers faced challenges as the young people often ran away before the studio became available. A number of the young people requiring the studio who we spoke with (or whose carers we interviewed) were involved with the justice system, were managing mental health issues, and/or had experienced trauma from family violence.



I was having trouble with two of the girls running away, although missing persons at least once a week. At one point I think that was mainly to do with them not having their own space because since we've moved into the bigger house and they've got the unit and everyone's got their own space, I have no trouble with any of that anymore.

Kerrie, Carer

Before/after the studio was built, how much time would you say the young person spent/spends away from the property where you were/are unaware of where they were/are?



Source:
RFI GLOBAL

RFI Global (2025)
Data insights supplied by KUC.

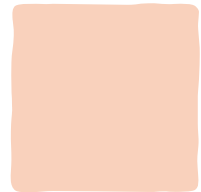
The narrative from Kerrie is consistent with the Kids Under Cover Studio Evaluation 2024 undertaken by RFI Global. Data insights reported on by RFI Global (2025) also show that carers of young people who have been provided with a studio report that the young people in their care are far more engaged with their home and family/care environment than they were prior to receiving the studio. Considering before and after impressions, carers indicate an approximate 50 per cent improvement in remaining at the property and in the studio environs, rather than 'running away' or spending a majority of time elsewhere. Carers reported feeling more confident that they were aware of where the young people in their care were, once studios had been provided.



He deals with a lot of anger issues and a lot of criminal activity does. And yeah, it's classes as very high risk child with the department. But the studio I needed because of the room side of things, there wasn't enough room.

Harper, Carer

While carers were pleased with how fast the studio was built once approved, the waiting period for some was challenging. An immediate response was required for many carers and young people, which Kids Under Cover have addressed with their new mobile pods program.



Stakeholders reflected on the reasons young people need the studio.



So my involvement with Kids Under Cover, I think I've had quite a few referrals. At least 4 referrals and it's usually around overcrowding within the home and so it's been for majority young people getting out of custody and then trying to create that sort of stable home environment cause a lot of the young people were couch surfing at friends' or just going out and about because they were sleeping on the couch in their own home anyway, so a lot of. Why they were leaving the house and was based on where they were sleeping and where they could get a comfy bed. (...)

Alexander, Stakeholder



Actually reducing the reoffending, it's probably been a bit of a mixed bag. I've had some that have. How to order it and then have only been in there? Sort of a week or two and then get locked up again on the long term remands so haven't really even utilised it. And but then I, like this other. I've had a young person, so he had the unit, got locked up a month later, spent almost 18 months in custody and now he's been out on parole since February and it's starting to rate the benefits of it. So he's he hasn't been in any further trouble since February and doing really well on parole.

Alexander, Stakeholder



They, it was a family of four children. One was over 18, but the all the other three were under 18. It was a 9-year-old, 15-year-old and 16-year-old. And then an 18-year-old and the mother. And, it was a 3 bedroom house with a big backyard. But they, the sharing situation of the house was really not something suitable for anyone to be living in. The mother was sharing with a 9-year-old because the 18-year-old didn't want to share with anyone. So, the other two, the 15- and 16-year-old were sharing. But then they fought. So, one would go to the couch and then the 9-year-old would kick the mum out of the bed. So, there were two in the couch. It was. It was not a nice situation to be in. It was very crowded and obviously they had a lot of other issues and complexities within the family dynamic.

Isabella, Stakeholder

And so who went out into the studio?

Interviewer

The 15- and 16-year-old. They gave them a 2-bedroom studio.

Isabella, Stakeholder

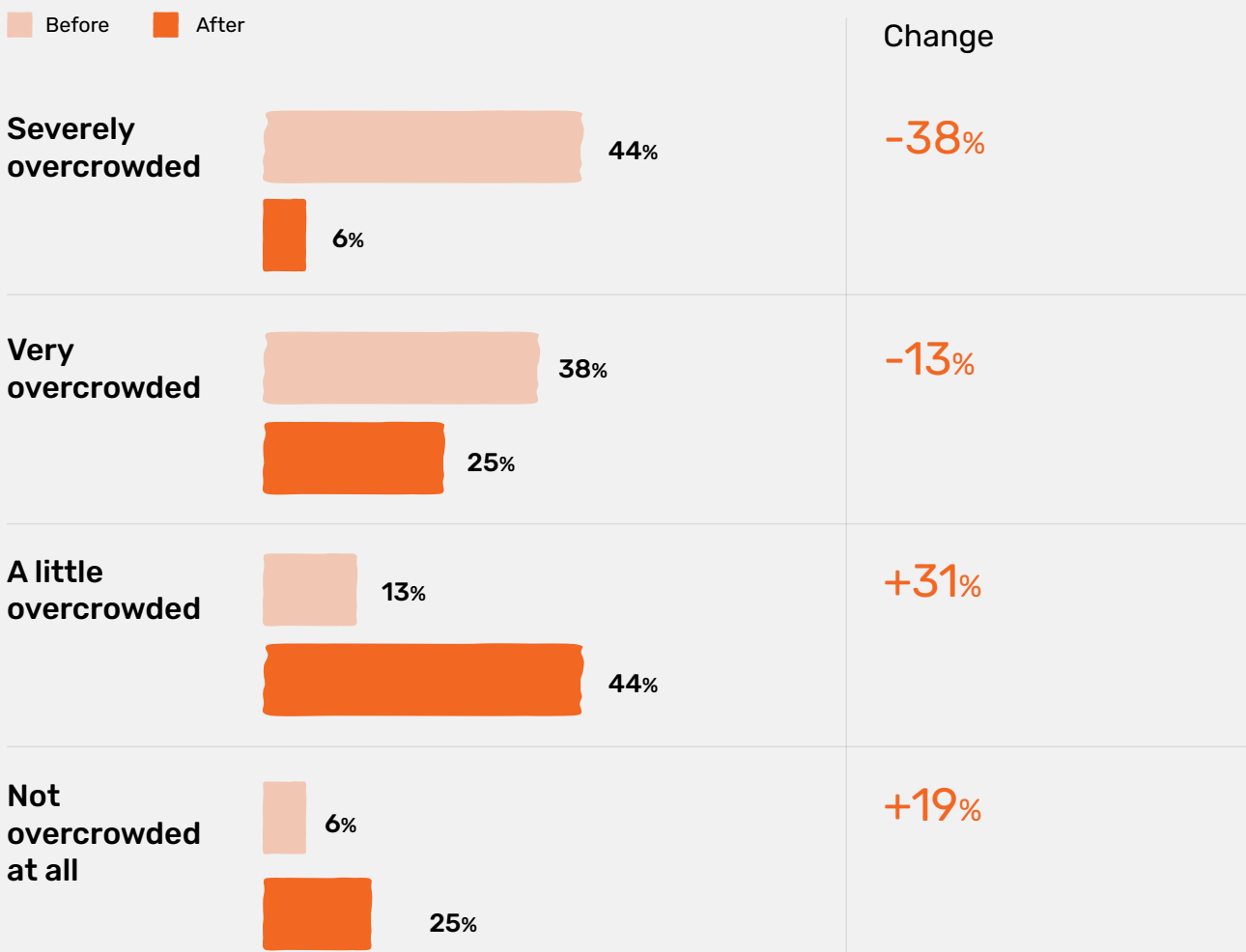


He was 14 years of age and living at home with the family. The family home had mum in the house plus 19-year-old brother and his partner, a 16-year-old sister, this young person and then two younger siblings. All in a 3-bedroom home. So quite overcrowded and the young person had a very long history of family violence in the household perpetrated by dad that no longer lives there, but extensive trauma relating to that and this young person was. He was showing signs of using violence against his female siblings. And so the thought was to apply to Kids Under Cover to get him out of that main house to create some distance and safety.

Sophia, Stakeholder

These findings are consistent with the Kids Under Cover Studio Evaluation 2024 undertaken by RFI Global. Findings from the independent study also found an overall reduction in crowding reported by young people’s carers, once studios were in place. Perhaps most notably were improvements found at the more ‘extreme’ end of crowding, with carers reporting reductions in ‘severe overcrowding’ and in ‘very overcrowded’ conditions at home, once studios were supplied by Kids Under Cover and young people were living in their studio.

Before/after the studio was built, how crowded was the house that you live in?



Application Experiences of Practitioners

A number of practitioners raised concerns about the clarity of information provided leading up to being accepted for a studio. In some cases, the lack of clear information hindered practitioners' ability to effectively support the young people and family through the application process. It caused some confusion and uncertainty, potentially affecting the quality of care or the smooth application process. However, all practitioners found the process easy once they were engaged with Kids Under Cover via an accepted EOI.



Once you've been accepted, obviously Kids Under Cover have been amazing in terms of like managing permits, surveying, the council, it's all been very much easy in the background.

Charlotte, Stakeholder



The process from application to them having the studio. There was like a pretty big piece of work to be done with Department of Housing. Because it was public housing property. It was maybe like six months from application to the studio being completed.

Sophia, Stakeholder



I've had a pretty mixed bag of, so I've had some that are really easy and we're really quick and really and built ready. I've had one where we went through the whole referral process and then they told us that the property actually wasn't big enough for the apartment, so it was, that was really hard because we'd already told the family we'd already got consent.

Alexander, Stakeholder



But I think the guidance through the process was probably what I struggled with. So just knowing, I suppose what information I needed to gather before, like I think the website, I don't know, you could do paper form but also the website form ... I think the other thing is. I guess is like youth justice case managers. We're doing the referral. We're talking to the family about it. I felt a lot of it was kind of coming back onto the youth justice, the referrer to have those conversations with the family around the expectations, the process, what the next steps are ... I didn't feel like I had the information and I could confidently sort of answer what those questions were to the family and ensure that they knew what their requirements were as part of the programme. So I think that was also probably something that was a bit difficult and required multiple conversations with Kids Under Cover ... I think like just to address that like if it was like we put in a referral or expression of interest form rather than going through the entire referral go the family home with a worker from kids.

Oliver, Stakeholder

Alexander (Stakeholder) highlighted difficulties around extra costs of installing the studio and establishing whose responsibility it was to pay for that:



The other issue that I've noticed is there's been a few where they've said 'Oh, we need to do extra plumbing or we need to remove a fence and to get access to the backyard and we're not covering that cost.' Youth justice needs to cover that cost. So there was one where we have to pay an extra \$14,000 just to set up the plumbing and I kind of feel like if that if you're setting up the studio, shouldn't that be part of your role I guess. And so that's been a bit of an issue.

Alexander, Stakeholder



Charlotte (Stakeholder) highlighted the concern of some families living in public housing that having the studio installed at their property would affect their ability to move:



And also for some people, like when they, Kids Under Cover bungalow goes into their garden, that means that they come off the housing registers for, you know, a large property and that sometimes it freaks people out a bit. Because maybe they've had that application in for a transfer or a large property for many, many years and they don't really see in their, you know, Kids Under Cover bungalow is solving that need. They actually generally want to move home, so you know so that can be another kind of barrier as well. Yeah. I mean, feel free to fact check me on that one ... But yeah, that's my understanding the situation. And yeah it, like I know of a family right now who definitely need a Kids Under Cover bungalow, you know, they've got three children in their care and people sleeping in various arrangements. But they don't want to accept one because it, they don't want to be prevented from moving, basically, or like, you know, they want, they want to move house eventually. So yeah, that's definitely something to consider for them.

Charlotte, Stakeholder

In some cases, the type of program the practitioner was engaged with hindered their ability to support the young person through the process.



More flexible. Yeah, that flexibility in the eligibility criteria, looking at the risk a bit more broadly. And. Looking, I guess that you know we can say lots of services can say the risk factors now that might not be at that threshold. But like I said, if youth justice involvement, but we can see that the direction it's heading in. And so to have more early intervention.

Sophia, Stakeholder



I think for diversion young people, it's really hard to get access to the program. If at all. Yeah. And I think I've only had success on one occasion and that's because the young person was still offending, had child protection involved and had supervised bail through youth justice.

Emma, Stakeholder

Some practitioners highlighted ongoing case management challenges.



There was other elements of the programme I know where anyone living inside the programme can have a scholarship. There was funds, there was funds available. That was also fully on the referrer, so like there was like elements of the programme that we're communicating and giving requirements to that we weren't actually privy to the guidelines and the process that that backed those. So I think having the, the Kids Under Cover supporting that and having a greater contact role with the family probably.

Olivia, Stakeholder



I think it's difficult because obviously Kids Under Cover would like there to be ongoing professionals supporting young people and that's just not us and not our role. And it's also not necessarily the role of other services that we might engage to support young people ... Needs to be some kind of service that like some kind of case manager that gets on with the studio, I guess it should have to be tied to the studio, not that the studio has to be tied to the worker. [...] if my young people don't have ongoing case management from somewhere else, this isn't even an option for them, so that makes it difficult because then what do I say? Well, you have to keep offending. So then you get a youth justice case manager, cause then you've got a better chance like that. I don't tell them that, but like that's time for kind of what it feels like ... If the worker isn't tied to the studio like Kids Under Cover aren't providing that, then then the onus is on us to find someone who will stay involved with the young person and for the young person to commit to that. And that's I think sometimes hard because it's actually not in the scope of other programs to be like.

Emma, Stakeholder

Implications for Future Work

We see it as important to continue to prioritise the needs and enthusiasm of the young people and their families, as their positive engagement is crucial to the success of any intervention however strategies must be developed to ensure that practitioners receive clear, detailed, and timely information, which will enable them to better support their clients through the EOI process.

Program Quality and Ongoing Service Engagement

The studio occupants and their carers generally expressed satisfaction with the studio, particularly appreciating the layout and the fact that the young people had their own space. This positive feedback highlights the importance of providing private, well-designed spaces for young people.

While the research findings indicated that overall satisfaction with the studio was high, there was some feedback on how the amenities within the studio could be improved. Issues such as moving carpet tiles, improving storage space, and some mentioned the need for a kitchen. This feedback highlights areas where the studio's functionality and liveability could be improved. In at least one case, a carer we interviewed indicated there has been delays in maintenance, however this experience did not appear to be typical.

A key evolution of the program is mobile pods. The mobile pods are moveable studios designed to offer immediate support for participants whose circumstances do not allow for the usual wait time and process required to access the KUC regular studio (Kids Under Cover, n.d.). The CEO of KUC identified the need for the mobile pods:



It seemed like there are a lot more cancellations in the justice space. So, you know there's an amount of time after an application's received and ready to go. There is depending on where it is, but it could be up to sort of three months or maybe even a bit longer for the studio to actually get built and keys handed over and so ... My sense is there is a lot more breakdown in in the justice households cause probably, you know, they're pretty tough reunifications happening within families and, the timing of the studio provision, really wasn't helpful ... that's where mobile pod can be in there within days."

Key findings



The general satisfaction with the studio suggests that the project's design successfully met the needs and expectations of the studio occupants and their carers. It also indicates that providing personal space is a crucial factor in the success of such housing initiatives.



The feedback on amenities suggests that while the studio layout and space were well-received, certain practical aspects can be improved. Input from young people should be considered.



While participants generally reported feeling adequately supported during the EOJ process, a small number reported frustration due to delays or lack of communication from their support workers and KUC. In some cases, it may be that carers were unsure of the respective roles of KUC and other services, indicating that clear information about roles and expectations is needed.

Belonging, Safety and Satisfaction with the Studio Space

The most outstanding finding was that all participants appreciated and emphasised the importance of the space and place that studios provide. Space creates a sense of belonging, a feeling of safety, a sense of independence, and contributes to their overall happiness.



And it's a place to feel safe, and you know, because it's that separate area as well. I guess that that gives it more of a feeling of having control over their own space and their own life a bit as well.

Kerrie, Carer



Do you feel safe and secure in the studio?

Interviewer

Yeah.

Jack, Studio Occupant

Yeah. OK. Did you feel the same when you were in the house or is it kind of a different feeling?

Interviewer

Different feeling.

Jack, Studio Occupant

Just a relief.

Jack, Studio Occupant

Yeah. OK. Yeah. So, it's a real relief to have your own room.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Jack, Studio Occupant



Do you feel that the studio contributes to a sense of belonging for your daughter?

Interviewer

Yeah, her own private space, got her space

Evelyn, Carer

Yeah.

Interviewer

She's quite happy with.

Evelyn (Carer)



Yeah, very important. (...) But now, he (is) free there. He like(s) to go inside his room. No-one annoying him.

Jasper, Carer



Lot better because I don't have to like sneak out of the house anymore. I can kind of just leave when I want to. (...) Come back when I want to.

Josh (Studio Occupant)

So, it's giving you that bit of independence?

Interviewer

Yeah.

Josh (Studio Occupant)

The feeling of safety was perceived from different perspectives. From the studio occupant's viewpoint, the studio provided personal space, as discussed above. It also offered safety for others living with the studio occupant, especially if the young person was aggressive. Additionally, carers felt a sense of relief knowing their child was securely at home.



Not sure if this comes under that topic or not, but one of the kids out there, I've had a bit of trouble with, mainly with drug use and just, you know, the side effects of that. But (...) the only reason she's even been allowed to stay living with me from the police perspective is because if it comes down to it and she's come home not a good mood. But I can, I can actually just lock the doors of the house. (...) She you know, she can go out. To her room because it's separate. Main house. She's got her background and she can still be home safe. At least you know where I know that she's OK.

Kerrie, Carer

Most participants also agreed that having the studio contributes to feeling of home. Additionally, all survey participants reported that they feel very much at home in the studio.



Yeah. And it sounds like the studio contributes to this sense of home by just providing that extra space.

Interviewer

Yeah, it does. It does. It's a massive help. Massive actually in my family because I've always got grandkids coming in and out. You know, it's like I'm the stable part of the whole family.

Harper, Carer

Having the space can also be concerning for the carers where they might not have complete supervision of their children. Karrie (Carer) explained a situation where the young person's boyfriend 'snuck in' but this situation was quickly negotiated by the carer and young person to ensure it didn't occur again.



I've really had one boyfriend snuck in there one time, so that was a big worry about mine, but they left the chair up against the fence. So I was on to that. That hasn't happened again. [...] No, that's really the only concern I really had and I was a bit worried.

Karrie, Carer

Reflecting on a family she works with as part of Intensive Family Services, Isabella (Stakeholder) highlights the importance of having a space that isn't crowded and instils a sense of safety for the young people.



They were just bunkering, both of them in there. They literally had a bunk bed in that room and it was just a pile up of everything. They needed a fresh start. They needed somewhere that they could find safety. That they could spend time, you know, just on their own, not being crowded in that house. That was all things everywhere and people everywhere.

Isabella, Stakeholder

This family had a particularly traumatic history with significant family violence, parental incarceration, and histories of child protection, hence a sense of safety is particularly important.

Amelia (Stakeholder) also spoke about seeing how studio occupants benefited from having control over their space.



I think it just gives them something to be proud of. Like I know when I was initially discussing with my young person, he was talking about decorating it and just making it his own space and not letting his brother in and that sort of thing, which I think, you know, just gives him something, a place to be proud of.

Amelia, Stakeholder

Amenities and Functionality

All the studio occupants and carers interviewed were generally satisfied with the studio, its layout, and the fact that the studio occupants had their own space. Some practitioners highlighted how the process of furnishing the studio could be improved, to ensure studios are furnished when young people move in.



I don't know if this is maybe a different area within the programme that could be explored more is in terms of furnishing. Just because we weren't as aware that when it was coming more the timeline of where we can definitely help out with funding with furniture and things like that. But we probably would have planned ahead a bit more. Can be known and it was scheduled and you know done measurements and things like that.

Amelia, Stakeholder



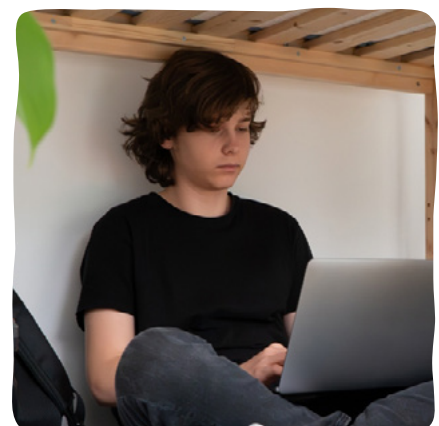
We got him the studio, but then his family couldn't afford to furnish it straight away. So it's sort of just sat there and we, my managers at all that he'd – we put a fair bit of brokerage already into the family. So we weren't in a position to help either. And so that was one of the aspects where it was sort of just sitting there. And he was sort of just had a mattress on the floor. And it wasn't paying utility, like I would feel like it wasn't being utilised to its full potential. So that's where I think whether there was a, more of a follow up or more of a support around furnishing it and making it feel like a home rather than just going here.

Alexander, Stakeholder



Kids Under Cover do the \$1000 for educational purposes, but that's a lot often a bit hard to prove and a lot of them aren't in education, so maybe that money could be reused to make it feel like a home, rather than 'you've gotta be in school.' [...] like we've got some young people, a laptop for that, but they don't, really, they didn't really need a laptop. They were happy to get it, but didn't really need it and would have rather spend the money on something to make it feel more like their home. But yeah, if I yeah, if I was in charge, I'd be spending as much as I could to help out with it.

Alexander, Stakeholder



The studio occupants interviewed described how they had made the studio feel like their own.



Oh well, I've got my bed and I've got like a bedside table next to me. That's next to the window because I like being next to the window. I've got like a dressing table. Just like a full set up. Basically all drawers stuff, my clothes, the bathroom. It's got LED's in it because we thought that would be pretty cool. And yeah, just basically just stopped to make it look nice like mats on the floor and yeah. (...) Yeah, my room's exactly how I always picture it how I want it. Like, that's where it is. So that's good

Tamara, Studio Occupant



Ohh honestly, they [friends] say it's pretty damn cool. (...) kind of like a little house in the backyard to get away to, you know, everyone thinks it's pretty cool and handy.

Tamara, Studio Occupant

All the studio occupants and carers emphasised the importance of young people having their own space. In addition, the studio's proximity to the main house allows studio occupants to easily join the family when needed, which is especially beneficial for those dealing with mental health or anger issues.

The importance of having a bathroom came up in a few interviews. Kerrie (Carer) appreciated that the studio has a bathroom, so the studio occupant doesn't have to enter the main house when it's raining. Jack (Studio Occupant) also liked that the studio includes a bathroom. However, Ava (Carer) and Tamara (Studio Occupant) mentioned that there isn't enough hot water for a full shower, requiring the young person to use the main house for bathing. Tamara (Studio Occupant) also noted that the bathroom lacks sufficient space, while Jack (Studio Occupant) experienced the showerhead repeatedly falling off.



The only thing that my daughter's got the problem with is it's only a little hot water service, so she can only have a shower for probably 3 minutes. (...) So she is coming into the main house to do have her showers everyday. But apart from that, it's great. Yeah, yeah.

Ava, Carer

When asked about issues with the studio, Tamara (Studio Occupant) mentioned that it gets cold in the winter.



I mean, it does get pretty cold in there without some sort of heating going on. (...) I know you can get up like heaters put in like actual proper ones, but that hasn't really happened for us yet. So it does get pretty cold. There, but other than that, it's pretty good.

Tamara, Studio Occupant

Jack (Studio Occupant) noted that the carpet doesn't stay in place and suggested that the studio could benefit from having a cupboard.

Although the kitchen is intentionally excluded from the studio to encourage family connections during meals, Josh (Studio Occupant), who had a strained relationship with their family (see Case Study 2), found cooking particularly challenging, as their carer does not provide meals. Sophia (Stakeholder), from a practitioner perspective, also discussed the potential benefit of providing kitchen facilities:



...it would be really great if they had like a small kitchenette attached to them. I think so that they really could be a little bit more independent 'cause. I think my understanding is the double bedroom one just has the bathroom, which is great. But you know, I think if we're thinking about it as like a protective factor for homelessness and for youth justice involvement and stuff that, yeah.

In this particular instance, having the boys outside of the family home as much as possible. Prevents both of those things. It's, you know, it's keeping them safe from entering into the homelessness system. And it's also. Yeah. So I think something like that would be really helpful.

Sophia, Stakeholder

Harper's children have anger issues, so the studio is waiting to be fixed, before the young person can move back in.



It's a two-bedroom studio. It's a lovely studio. It's just that the kids have sort of wrecked it a bit and now this water's leaking in. I don't know what damage has done and the toilet was blocked out (...).

Harper, Carer

Sofia (Carer) mentioned that they had experienced a few break-ins at the studio, prompting them to install cameras for added security.

Charlotte (Stakeholder) spoke about another case where extra security measures had been put in place to increase the young person's sense of safety.



Yeah, I can think of one situation where a client had experienced sexual abuse at the address and we weren't able – the parents did not want to move from that properly for like various reasons. So the, they did receive a Kids Under Cover bungalow, I think through the wider program. And yeah, that just meant that they could have physical space from that kind of triggering environment really, they had a sense of like, I mean, I could imagine putting myself in that situation of you know, returning to basically a scene of a crime if you like, and that being very traumatic. So for that young person like we even installed like a ring camera on the door of the bungalow. And that's provided again, just a bit more like a kind of sense of knowledge of their surroundings really. And they could check in and feel kind of secure in that space. And I think, gives agency as well, like the young person able to like, pick out furniture and really kind of have like agency on who is coming and going from that property really.

Charlotte, Stakeholder

Some practitioners reported mixed satisfaction about the amenities in the studio:



... we used part of that [the KUC scholarship] to buy a desk to have in there so that he could have a study space which was at his request, which was quite lovely. I think the family had a little bit of a challenge with the studio not coming with any heating or cooling. And that was really difficult for them all. I was regularly getting calls from mum about that and she wasn't very happy.

Sophia, Stakeholder



And even just little things like there's no heating or cooling like I know they say it's designed that the steel's meant to keep the heat in and the... But yeah, again, they often don't have that heating in there, so they're just running those crazy little heaters, which I don't know how safe some of them are or what the electricity bill like then turns for mum.

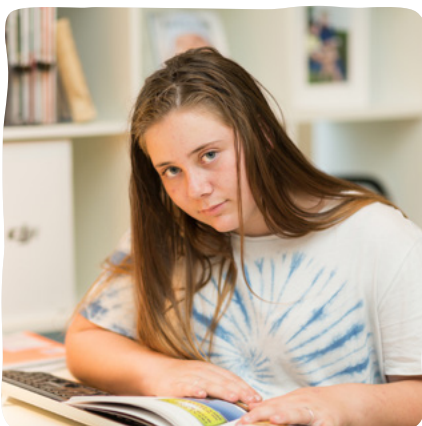
Alexander, Stakeholder

In terms of maintenance, Sofia (Carer) mentioned that KUC personnel regularly check in every few months to assess their situation and address any maintenance needs, with issues being resolved quickly.

The survey assessed studio occupants' satisfaction with various physical aspects of the studio. Most participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the studio's size, quality and condition, suitability for their needs, privacy, comfort, overall satisfaction, and safety and security. One participant indicated dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction with the studio's maintenance and its adequacy of space.

Room for Enhancement

The findings suggest that the studio provides studio occupants and their families with a good living environment that offers privacy and personal space. However, the mixed experiences with communication and the specific feedback on studio amenities indicate areas where the project could be further refined. The feedback on amenities suggests that while the studio layout and space were well-received, certain practical aspects need attention. Addressing these issues could further enhance the comfort and usability of the space, making it more conducive to the needs of studio occupants in reducing their risk behaviours.



Decreasing Risk Behaviours

The most important finding is that the studio created a space where young people could decrease their risk behaviours. The studio facilitated opportunities for young people to reflect on and pursue future aspirations related to education, work, and independent living. This suggests that the studio provided a stable, secure, and supportive environment that encouraged personal growth and positive planning, and it provided the young people with a space where they felt they belonged. The studio also helped young people address their mental health issues and rebuild family relationships. This indicates that beyond providing physical space, the studio played a crucial role in fostering emotional and relational stability, which are key factors in reducing risk behaviours.

Some carers reported that the studio occupants continued to have troubles with the justice system even after moving into the studio. This suggests that while the housing intervention provided a stable environment to begin to reduce risk behaviours, it was not a complete solution for all participants. Factors such as peer associations, family environments, and learned behaviours contributed to these ongoing challenges. Conversely, the RFI Global Carers Survey Data and other measurement data indicates that a high percentage of young people did not face further justice system involvement after getting the studio. This indicates that for a significant number of the participants, the studio provided the stability and support needed to reduce risk behaviours.

Key findings



The findings of this research highlight the complexity of addressing the reduction in risk behaviours for studio occupants. For many young people, the studio had a positive impact. Findings also suggest the need for additional or tailored support for those who continued to struggle.



The studio's role in reducing risk behaviours and promoting positive outcomes, such as improved mental health and family relationships, highlights its effectiveness as an intervention strategy. This suggests that providing young people with a stable, private space can be a critical factor in supporting them.

Health and Wellbeing

Most participants emphasised the importance of providing studio occupants with their own space for mental and physical health and wellbeing.



I think I've already said this before, but honestly just being in control. You know, that's something about me, I like to be in control of my surroundings of everything that's there. And you know it's good to feel like that. Cause when I don't feel in control that just messes up my mental health and it's not just doesn't do too good with me. (...) My mental health hasn't really been the best recently, but it has really helped, you know, being able to just go to my own room. Just be by myself. Process everything and then, come out when I'm ready to talk to people

Tamara, Studio Occupant



I suppose it helps them. They've got some of this where they're cantered. Which helps with both of the guys' mental health, especially mental health and physical health.

Evelyn, Carer



It provided them a safe space as well. They were just bunkering, both of them in there, they literally had a bunk bed in that room and it was just a pile up of everything. They needed a fresh start. They needed somewhere that they could find safety. That they could spend time, you know, just on their own, not being crowded in that house.

Isabella, Stakeholder



They're so used to being let down by services and you know, they're really disadvantaged in a lot of ways and so just to have this thing put on their property, I think it gave them a sense of self-worth as well. Like, 'people actually do care about what happens to us.'

Sophia, Stakeholder



Having the studio has also contributed to carers' mental health as the studio occupants are doing better and the carers do not have to worry as much.



Yeah, I can't sleep. I wake up to go to the work, even in work I'm being tired because I'm not enough sleeping, but now I'm OK. (...)

Jasper, Carer

And is that because a young person is coming home?

Interviewer

Yeah, yeah.

Jasper, Carer

And so the studio obviously has influenced them coming home.

Interviewer

Yeah, not the staying on the street, (...) come home sleeping.

Jasper, Carer



Like I'm sort of here for the most part, but I was even, you know, because I've got younger kids, and then I've got older kids. (...) I just need some quiet zone out time sometimes. (...) But at least that way, like I still get that bit of like that quiet, yeah, and decompressed sort of time at the end of the day.

Kerrie, Carer



Carers who previously had issues with their children running away from home noted that their children are no longer doing so.



Well, they were literally missing persons with the police, once a week. (...) They have their own space, they've taken pride in, you know, having that safe place and that area that's theirs. That's special just for them that they can decorate however they like. If they don't feel like coming out and talking to the world.

Kerrie, Carer

Sofia (Carer) mentioned that since having the studio, the young person has undergone a detox program and things are looking positive for them:



At the moment, we're working on her medical and mental health and all that. (...) And then then we can hopefully focus on going back, doing some more schooling or work or something.

Sofia, Carer

However, Harper (Carer) described that the studio occupant had anger issues, and having a studio has not changed his impact on other household members much.



And when they were in the studio, did you notice any change within (YP name) as far as, was he more settled? Was he less settled?

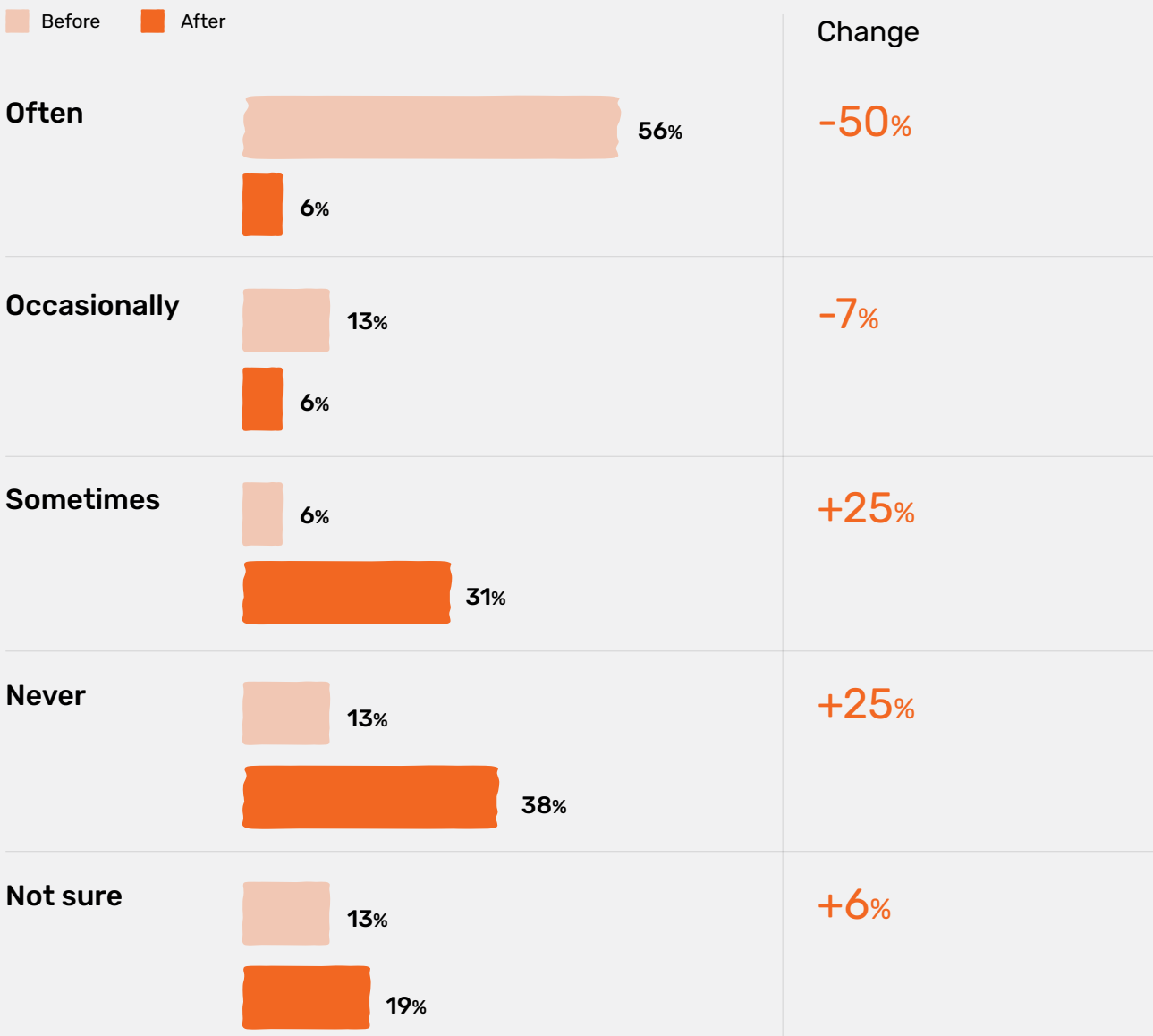
Interviewer

Well, it all depends what day, what sort of day and what mood he was. (...) Yeah, yeah. Just sort of blow it all. It goes on how he wakes up, mate. That's what it is. We don't. I don't know. Until he wakes up and, you know, if he gets woken up from being in a deep sleep, well God help the rest of the house.

Harper, Carer

The above findings are consistent with the Kids Under Cover Studio Carers Survey 2024 undertaken by RFI Global. The independent study findings indicate, importantly, an approximate 50 per cent reduction in 'negative behaviours' among young people, based on the perceptions held by carers. A very marked shift is seen in the Carer's report which indicates that, overall, negative behaviours being exhibited by young people changed from 'often' (56%) prior to the studio being provided, to 'sometimes' (31%) or 'never' (38%) once the studios were in place. An important minority (19%) of carers in this sample were not sure about how often any negative behaviours were occurring, a percentage that increased slightly following studio installation.

Before the studio was built, how often did the young person take part in any negative behaviours



Source:
RFI GLOBAL

RFI Global (2025)
Data insights supplied by KUC.

Note: Examples given for negative behaviours included drug and alcohol use, risky online activity, illegal or dangerous activities, inappropriate friendships or group involvement.*

Education, Employment, and Future Aspirations

Many participants felt that the studio was helpful in assisting with young people's engagement in education and employment. A common theme was that the studio provided the occupants with a space they could study without noise or distraction. For example, Jack (Studio Occupant) felt they had space to do necessary paperwork, while Harper (Carer) and Kerrie (Carer) said that the studio occupants benefited from having study space.



So yeah, it's really helped, cause I mean this is a mad house at the best of times. I've got a lot of people living here, I don't know how that would have gone if she was sort of stuck in here with all of us or, you know, stuck in the common area. So it's good that she's got her space. And her very quiet out there. So she concentrates on her school work.

Kerrie, Carer

Tamara (Studio Occupant) also echoed this:



...cause I do online school like on my laptop. Yeah. So it is really good cause it's hard to focus around all the noise and the people like I just feel like it, there's too much things around me to distract me. So being in my own room in the silence you know, helps me really focus. Otherwise I don't really get much done.

Tamara, Studio Occupant

Sophia (Stakeholder) works with young people on educational engagement, so she sees first-hand the risk factors between educational disengagement and justice involvement. She reflected on the importance of the studio for a young person she works with to concentrate on schoolwork:



I think the space being away from the home ... played a huge role and it played a hugerole for him. He was finding in the house that he was really overstimulated. So really becoming heightened, whereas in the studio it was quiet. He and his brother get along and so it was quiet.

Sophia, Stakeholder

Sophia no longer works with this client, as their school attendance now meets the threshold for exiting from the project but reflects on the massive influence the studio had.



Their school attendance definitely increased ... We'd worked with them for quite a long time, but their attendance was high enough that we were comfortable stepping away, which was a huge change. So, for context, to be a participant in our programme from the outset, your attendance needs to be below 0%. He's had been 0% for more or less 0 for a couple of years. A good couple of years and when we closed, I think his attendance was up around 60 to 70%. Yeah, which is great. So that was a massive change. And there was definitely less reports. I worked with two of the other female siblings as well. They were no longer reporting any concerns around family violence being perpetrated by this young person, which is really significant as well.

Sophia, Stakeholder

Charlotte (Stakeholder) spoke of the importance of the studio for providing stability that benefited education:



I think in terms of just like giving them a chance for some structure. Like, I just couldn't imagine trying to go to school and do everything if I'm sharing a lounge room with a couple of siblings, I don't have a bed, like it's challenging. Like how're you meant to expect clients to do that when they're really, they're struggling, like you know the hierarchy [of] needs, in terms of they're worried about where they're sleeping, where, what they're eating.

Charlotte, Stakeholder

Evelyn (Carer) also felt that the stability of the studio was useful.



Yeah. And so. Do you think it makes it easier for them to access work? Or how do you think that it facilitates that?

Interviewer

It makes it much easier and they [don't?] have to worry about where they're going to the night time, somewhere they can be settled, get up and leave, get into a routine, get up and go to work or education.

Evelyn, Carer



Participants also discussed the benefit of the studio for working towards future aspirations, such as moving out and becoming independent.



It's just it's a really good step into independent living. So ultimately, a lot of our young people are wanting to move out or move independently one day. It's obviously very difficult to do that. So for this reason, young person, he turned 18 around the time that he was released and that is his goal, to move out one day. But I think this is just a really good in between step to, you know, learn how to make his bed. Just do really simple things like that to actually care for it.

Amelia, Stakeholder



Oh, honestly, it does make me think about wanting to start, you know, getting a job save up, you know, get my own house, my own place. Because, you know, sometimes I am in there most of the time by myself because my sister will be sleeping inside. But it is nice to think about having my own place sometime and you know. Their own responsibility of taking care of a like we're having to clean in there by myself, basically like my mum's not gonna go in there and clean it. For me, that's our responsibility.

Tamara, Studio Occupant

Emma (Stakeholder) highlighted that the support systems for the studio occupant were vitally important in helping them.

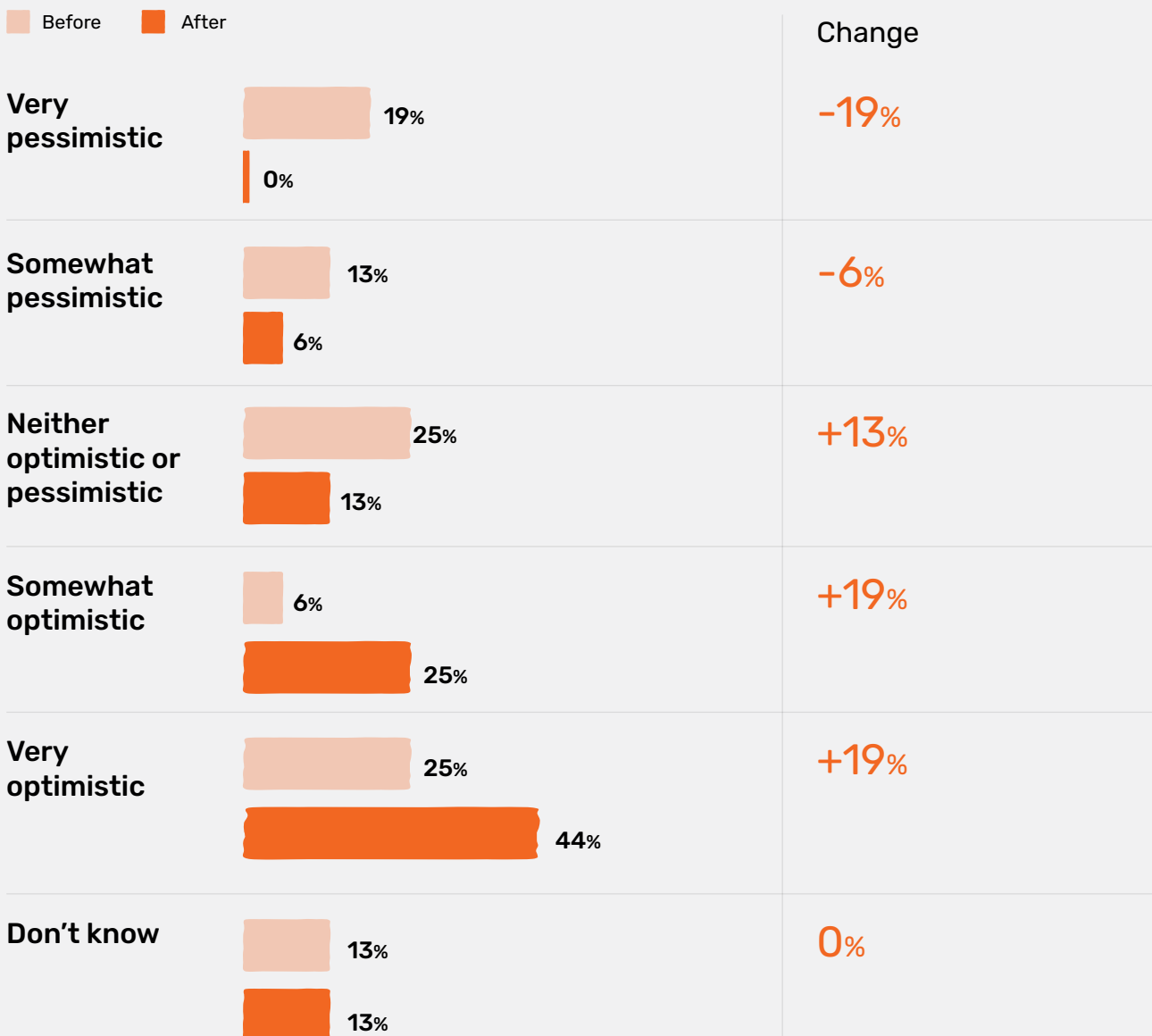


Young people don't exist in isolation, though true. It's not about just the young person, it's about the systems and structures around them so.

Emma, Stakeholder

These findings are consistent with the RFI Global Carers Survey 2024. A very clear change occurred in the outlook of carers, according to their own reports, about their level of optimism for their young person’s future, once studios were installed. Prior to studios being provided to young people, 32 per cent of carers reported that they were ‘very pessimistic’ or ‘somewhat pessimistic’ about their young persons’ future. Once young people were living in the studios, none of the carers reported feeling ‘very pessimistic’, with findings instead indicating that 69 per cent of carers were either ‘somewhat optimistic’ or ‘very optimistic’ about the future of the young person in their care.

Before/after you got the studio, how did you feel about the young person’s future?



Relationships with Family

In many cases, participants indicated that the studios improved relationships between the studio occupant and their family by providing space. This provision of space made it more appealing for the studio occupant to stay with their family and be at home.



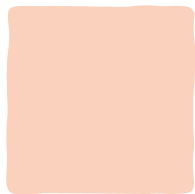
Ohh it's been amazing. Without it she wouldn't be back home

Ava, Carer



If they haven't got that ... time-out place, yeah, in their own room, they're going up the street, you know what I mean?

Harper, Carer



A major theme for both studio occupants and carers was that the studios allowed the occupants to process their emotions in a safe and separate space. Jack (Studio Occupant) said he was 'lot less angry ... lot calmer now' which had had a positive impact on his family relationships. Tamara (Studio Occupant) similarly spoke of getting a necessary 'break' from family by going to the studio.



Well, I feel like if you're just if you're, if you're in the same house with family, too much of the time and you know, everyone's just getting on your nerves all the time. I feel like it kind of just choose[?] that relationship because you don't get that breaks that you need. Like, you don't get that, you know, just times [to] yourself that you need. So there's kind of good being able to go out there, you know and go and talk to family and all that, but then be able to go back out to your own space when needed.

Tamara, Studio Occupant

Carers indicated that although arguments and conflicts still occurred in the family, the studio made it easier to manage these.



[the studio is] place to breathe ... if you're arguing, she can go out there, and you're inside.

Evelyn, Carer



...get her own space, you know, sort of regulate back down and then come in the family home.

Ava, Carer

Kerrie (Carer) articulated this benefit of the studio strongly:



But at least because she's got that space away and I've got that, even if I, like I said, there's been some, but I've had to lock the back door or whatever so that you know, you're away, sometimes you it's better off having that bit of separation in a sense. So that things don't just keep us waiting and escalating to the point where you sort of can't come back from it and you know, and it does do damage to relationships you can't sort of come back from.

Kerrie, Carer

Isabella (Stakeholder) spoke of the importance of the studio providing a balance between space and supervision, and the need for family support to continue while the young person was living in the studio:



I think it's a very good way of giving them their space, but they also need supervision and appropriate parental care ... I think that's what happens to a lot of young people, you know, they're turning 16 and then they move away from home and they don't have anyone to give them guidance, guidance or support or, you know, even just help them out when they need something and that's when wrong decisions can be made, so I think it's very important that they're still there.

Isabella, Stakeholder



Oliver (Stakeholder) spoke of how an improved relationship with family led to a flow-on of positive impacts throughout the studio occupant's life:



I definitely think the relationship between [a young person] and his parents and his entire family, really, we seen a really positive shift and I think that flow had the flow and effects to a lot of the other stuff. So the engagement with the supports, the progression towards employment and getting that support from family because the relationships weren't as conflictual as they were before. And obviously that's staying home and then being home meant he that he was attending his appointments more. He was engaging with his support services. So I think that was probably the biggest shift that that then flowed onto the other areas.

Oliver, Stakeholder

Finally, the survey asked whether the studio has contributed to changes in various areas of the occupants' lives. Figure 1 shows that most of these changes have been positive, including improvements in general happiness, relationships with friends, feelings of safety and security, the ability to cope with life events, mental health, social life, and an overall sense of feeling settled.

Has living in the studio contributed to a change in...

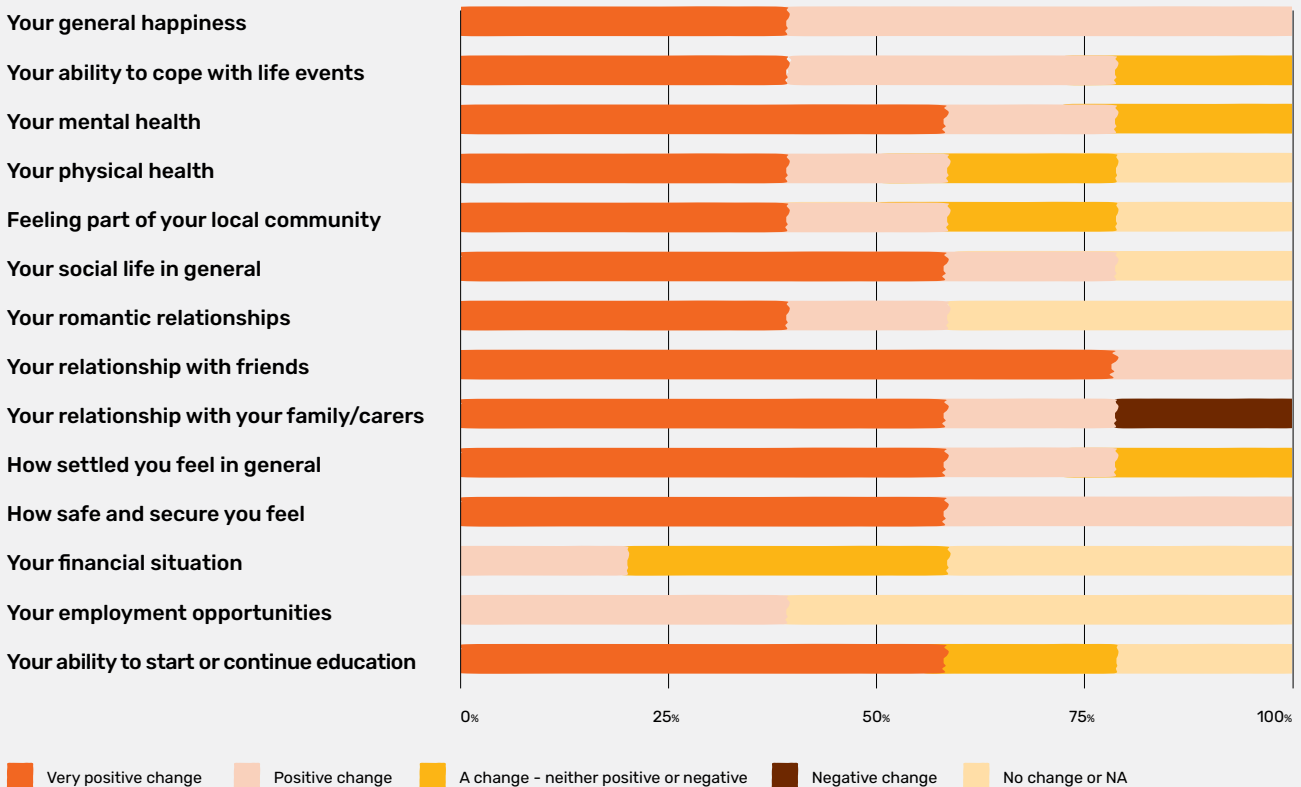
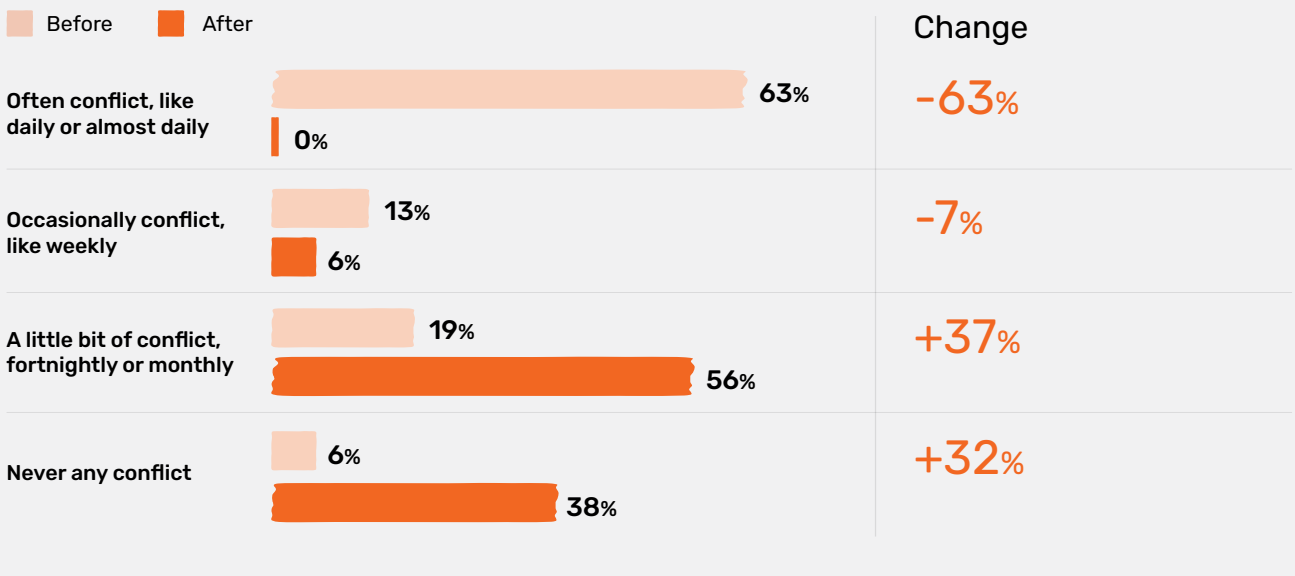


Figure 1. Whether living in a studio has contributed to a change in various areas of participant's lives
 Source: Living in a Kids Under Cover Studio: Young Person's Survey, (n=5)

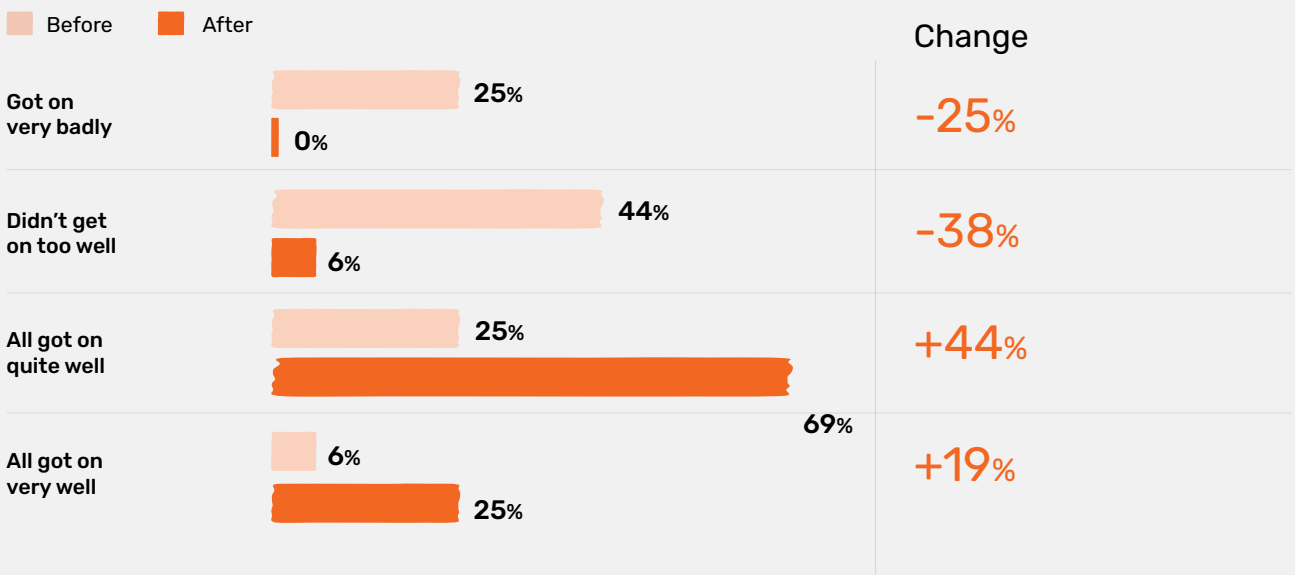
The above findings are consistent with the Kids Under Cover Carers Survey 2024 undertaken by RFI Global. Of the 16 carers with a Youth Justice studio who responded to the RFI Global evaluation, almost all reported that following the installation of the studio conflict 'in the house' had reduced. Most of the 16 carers reported that once the young person was living in the studio, there was only **'a little bit of conflict' (56%)** or **'never any conflict' (38%)**. This important finding is similar to the findings of the present research, with these types of reductions in overall conflict within family and carer homes likely to strongly support the positive outcomes reported across other domains, described above, including optimistic outlooks for the future and greater engagement within the home environment by young people, once studios were in place.

Further underpinning the importance of reduced conflict inside the main home, the RFI Global insights, again are consistent with findings of the present research, indicating that while only a quarter of carers reported that prior to the studio, the family was able **'to get along together' (25%)**, **more than two thirds (69%) felt families got along well once a studio was in place for their young person.**

Before/after the studio was built, how often was there conflict in the house?



Before/after you got the studio, how did you feel about the young person's future?



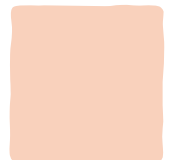
Opportunity for Enhancement

The programs impact cannot be easily defined as entirely positive or negative but involves various factors. For instance, while some studio occupants continued to experience challenges with the justice system, the studio environment was instrumental for many young people in reducing risk behaviours and facilitating positive life changes. This reflects the complexities of supporting young people, where 'success' varies based on individual circumstances and the availability of additional support.

The studio's ability to provide a space for young people to belong demonstrates its value as more than just a physical dwelling. It facilitated personal development, empowering studio occupants to take steps toward a more positive future. This suggests that the program should further develop not only the provision of physical space but also the creation of supports that enhance wellbeing.






Findings have also identified some achievable ways that the studio and support provision can be improved. Most notably, future development of the studio program would benefit from integrating more tailored support services alongside the provision of housing. This could include targeted interventions for those who continue to struggle with emotional regulation, as well as ongoing mental health and family support.

The indicated success of the studio in reducing risk behaviours underscores the importance of creating spaces where young people feel they belong. Future monitoring and adaptive strategies to ensure that the housing and support intervention remains responsive to the changing needs of young people is likely to underpin ongoing positive impacts of the studio program.



Summary Table for Youth Justice Studios

The RFI Global research findings are consistent with the original findings presented in this research, showing that studios appear to reduce conflict and crowding in the home, and are associated with a raft of positive improvements for young people and their families or carers, including reduced risk-taking behaviour and optimism about the future.

| | Before | After | Net diff. |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
|  Crowding in the house <small>[severely / very overcrowded]</small> Youth Justice (n=16) | 81% | 31% | 50% |
| | 93% | 22% | 71% |
|  Conflict in the house <small>[often / occasional conflict]</small> Youth Justice (n=16) | 75% | 6% | 69% |
| | 76% | 16% | 60% |
|  Risk-taking behaviours in young person <small>[often / occasionally take part]</small> Youth Justice (n=16) | 69% | 13% | 56% |
| | 39% | 4% | 35% |
|  Time spent away from property <small>[lot / fair amount of time]</small> Youth Justice (n=16) | 94% | 25% | 69% |
| | 49% | 11% | 38% |
|  Family's ability to get along <small>[very / quite well]</small> Youth Justice (n=16) | 31% | 94% | 63% |
| | 34% | 92% | 58% |

Source:

RFI GLOBAL

Base: Youth Justice Studios: n=16.
 Treat results indicatively only.



General mood in young person

[always / usually happy]

Youth Justice (n=16)

All Households (n=166)

Before After Net diff.

6% 75% 69%

22% 84% 62%



Meet required school attendance

[always]

Youth Justice (n=16)

All Households (n=166)

50% 100% 50%

43% 54% 11%



Level of achievement at school

[doing quite / very well]

Youth Justice (n=16)

All Households (n=166)

50% 100% 50%

51% 80% 29%



Optimism about young person's future

[somewhat / very optimistic]

Youth Justice (n=16)

All Households (n=166)

31% 69% 38%

31% 73% 42%



Independent living skills

[medium / high]

Youth Justice (n=16)

All Households (n=166)

4% 94% 90%

36% 95% 59%

Mapping the Project Outcomes to the SDGs

The provision of the studio has both immediate 'shelter' and broader 'non-shelter' impacts. Consistent with the United Nations (UN) Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) approach to prioritising interventions around key identifiable goals, shelter and non-shelter outcomes of studio provision relates to SDGs focused on poverty reduction, improved health and wellbeing, and sustainable cities and communities.

By providing stable housing that supports economic empowerment via a low-cost stable housing option (SDG 1), promoting mental health and wellbeing (SDG 3), and contributing to the creation of inclusive, sustainable housing options (SDG 11), studio-based intervention can play a critical role in supporting the transition of young people into healthier, more stable, and independent lives.



SDG 1: No Poverty

The provision of an independent studio to young people enables both the young person and the family/carer additional housing space at low cost to themselves. The studio can provide a foundation for the young person to engage with education or training, and employment, from a secure home base.



SDG 3: Good health and well-being

Independent supported living within the studio is intended to provide young people with the space and security needed to attend to basic health and wellbeing needs. These include: seeking medical support; engaging with support services; living in a calm environment in which they feel autonomy and empowerment; and having the foundational security in which to (re)build healthy habits and routines.



SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

The quality and sustainability of the studio is designed for optimal life span, low emission production, re-use and repurposing across multiple occupants over time, and a low environmental footprint. The mobility of the studio means that the built form can be co-located across multiple types of existing housing forms and be adjusted over time as needs of young people and their families change.



SDG 1: No Poverty

The studio facilitated a space where young people could focus on their future aspirations, such as pursuing education and work. By offering stable housing, the project directly contributed to reducing the economic vulnerability of these young individuals, who are often at risk of poverty due to their backgrounds in the justice and welfare systems. The ability to plan for independent living and gain financial stability is a critical step towards breaking the cycle of poverty, thereby aligning with SDG 1's goal of ending poverty in all its forms.

The studio facilitated the opportunity to address mental health and support the rebuilding of family relationships, which also plays a part in alleviating the broader socio-economic challenges that can lead to poverty.



SDG 3: Good health and well-being

The project's success in providing a space where young people could address their mental health issues directly contributes to SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. The studio facilitated better mental health outcomes, which are essential for the overall wellbeing and reducing risk behaviours for young people. The reduction in risk behaviours and the focus on future aspirations like education and employment also contribute to the holistic wellbeing of young people.



SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

The studio aligns with SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. By providing a safe and stable housing option for young people with risk behaviours, the project contributes to creating inclusive communities that support vulnerable populations. The emphasis on creating a space where young people can rebuild their lives, plan for the future, and reconnect with family supports the goal of fostering sustainable and inclusive communities.



04

Methodological Considerations



58

Access, Trust, Rapport

Communication Barriers

Cohort Availability and Willingness

Engaging the hard-to-reach cohort of young people who are at-risk of offending or who have offended, and their carers, in research presents a series of methodological challenges that can hinder the collection of a large amount of data.

These difficulties often stem from issues related to access, trust, communication barriers, and the cohort's unique circumstances, which may affect their availability and willingness to participate. Reflecting on these struggles provides insight into potential solutions that can enhance the effectiveness of future research endeavours.

Initial phases of data collection have indicated that carers and studio occupants respond to telephone contact but struggle to engage with written documents. While we cannot say for certain that carers and studio occupants have reading and comprehension issues, we applied or an ethics amendment to move to verbal consent procedures.

Consent in research can be expressed orally, in writing, or through other means, indicating flexibility in how consent can be obtained. This acknowledges that verbal communication can be as valid and binding as written consent, as long as it meets the qualifiers set for such circumstances.

Verbal consent procedures allow for a more fluid and conversational approach, which can help ensure that carers and studio occupants freely choose to participate without feeling coerced or pressured. Through verbal communication, researchers can gauge their understanding and willingness to participate in real-time, fostering a more genuine and voluntary decision-making process.

Verbal consent procedures facilitate direct interaction, allowing researchers to explain the research project comprehensively and address any questions or concerns participants may have immediately. This ensures that carers and studio occupants have sufficient information and understanding of the research and its implications, aligning with the guiding principle of informed consent.

Verbal consent procedures offer a dynamic approach to obtaining consent that prioritises the quality of interaction and comprehension over mere formalities. It mitigated some of our experiences in the first round of data collection, but the same issues still remained.



Access, Trust, Rapport

One of the primary challenges is gaining access to the cohort. In general, hard-to-reach populations are often sceptical of researchers due to past negative experiences with authorities or institutions. This scepticism can lead to a lack of trust, making it difficult to establish the rapport necessary for meaningful engagement. While carers and studio occupants place a significant amount of trust in Kids Under Cover, the rapport was not strong enough to fully engage this population.

Communication Barriers

Effective communication is crucial for understanding and accurately representing the research to the cohort. However, significant barriers due to well justified ethical procedures pose significant access issues. This leads to the introduction of the research taking place by those not as close to the research as the researchers. These barriers can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the research or the purpose.

Cohort Availability and Willingness

The unique circumstances of this cohort, including highly complex lives with high levels of service intervention, can impact their availability and willingness to participate in research. What we saw was, often, a genuine willingness to participate but time was difficult to find.

While we tried many ways to engage this cohort, the flexibility to try new methods of contact was often delayed or not possible due to necessary ethical processes. In addition, while we have outlined some ways in which participation was made challenging, we feel the most significant issue was trust and rapport.

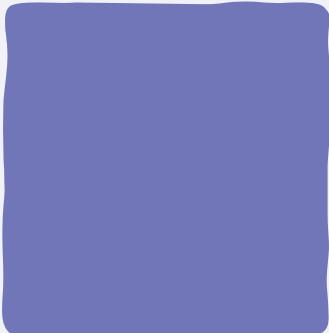
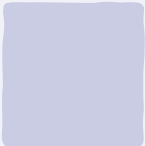
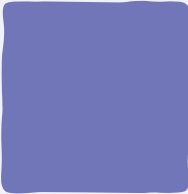
For Consideration in Future Research

Building trust requires time and consistent effort. In this program, due to the large geographic reach, researchers cannot lean on support organisations or community leaders to leverage established relationships to increase participation.

In future the research would need to be done over a longer period of time where the research can be socialised. This would require significant investment from Kids Under Cover to consider new ways to have sustained engagement with the cohort.

While we thought that our ethics revision might have assisted with communication barriers, and in some senses it did, we feel that trust and rapport still stood in the way of decent participation.

Flexibility in research design and data collection methods is essential. We considered using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives, given the complex lives of research participants. However, shorter surveys or responses which could be recorded via youth-friendly means could also be considered.



05

Recommendations Arising from this Research



- 62 Studio Design Improvements
- 64 Service Enhancement Recommendations
- 66 Program Development and Investment
- 68 Future Research Directions

The studio facilitated better mental health outcomes, which are essential for the overall wellbeing and reducing risk behaviours for young people. The reduction in risk behaviours and the focus on future aspirations like education and employment also contribute to the holistic wellbeing of young people. The emphasis on creating a space where young people can rebuild their lives, plan for the future, and reconnect with family supports the goal of fostering sustainable and inclusive communities.

The following recommendations arising from the research and are geared towards the continued success and enhancement of the studio program and services supporting young people and their carers.

Recommendations relate to:



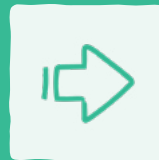
Studio Design Improvements



Service Enhancement Recommendations



Program Development and Investment

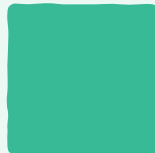
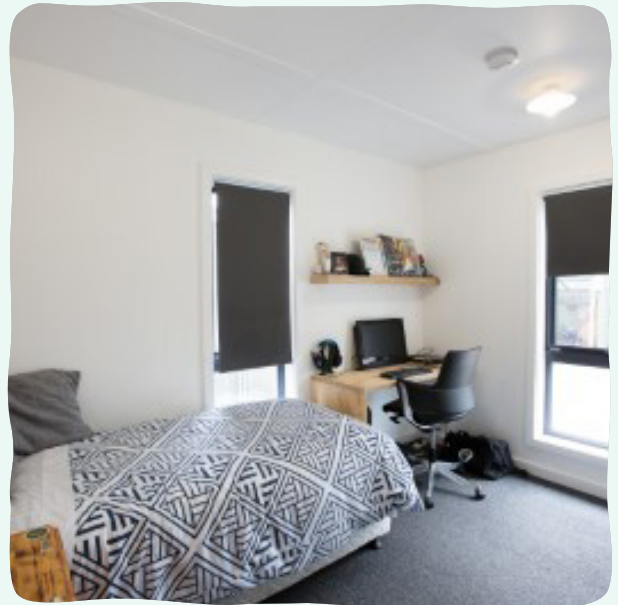


Future Research Directions

Studio Design Improvements

As reported in this research, “The most important finding is that the studio created a space where young people could decrease their risk behaviours.

The studio facilitated opportunities for young people to reflect on and pursue future aspirations related to education, work, and independent living. This suggests that the studio provided a stable, secure, and supportive environment that encouraged personal growth and positive planning, and it provided the studio occupants with a space where they felt they belonged.”



Overwhelmingly, this research has identified that the processes of studio installation as well as the impact of the studio provision on the lives of young people and their families/carers, is positive. The research has also identified some ways in which future studio provision may be enhanced.

Educational engagement following installation of studios appears to be a more complex matter, that warrants greater investigation in and of itself. Very early findings of this evaluation suggest that re-engagement with education, once studios are in place, may require additional support for young people and their carers, than is currently provided.

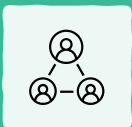
Young people and carers generally reported that the process of installation and quality of the studio was high however personalisation and furnishing of the studio appears to be an area that could be investigated for future improvement/input from young people and their carers.

Consideration should be given to trialling some self-contained studios.

Positive impacts of studio installation include:



Health and wellbeing benefits



Social and relational benefits



Perceived 'negative behaviour' or 'risk behaviour' reduction benefits.

Future improvements to studio layout and space will benefit from input from young people.

Service Enhancement Recommendations

Findings of this research indicate that the studio as well as support services that young people and families/carers receive are each important to the positive journey of young people in contact with Youth Justice.

While findings reported here are based on a relatively small sample size only, they suggest a need for understanding how services provided to young people and their families/carers can be optimally coordinated, to reduce any 'gaps' in service provision in the form of time delays and/or services not being delivered to young people who could benefit from them.



Strategies to ensure that practitioners receive clear, detailed, and timely information, will enable them to better support their clients through the EOI and studio installation processes.

Findings indicate the need for a centrally funded case coordinator, to ensure that when young people and their carers receive studio accommodation, all necessary support services are also in place, and that these are monitored and maintained to support young people to thrive.

Findings also suggest the need for additional or tailored support for those who continued to struggle.

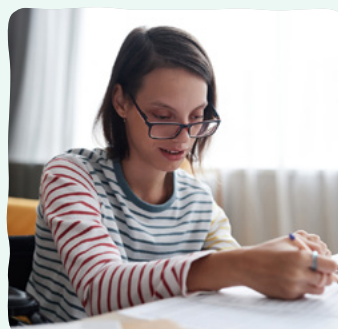
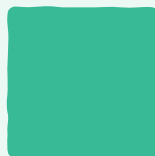
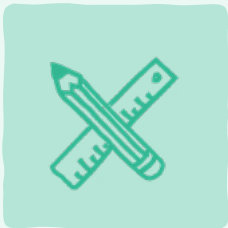
Findings indicate that there is a need for clarification that receipt of a studio does not affect allocation of social housing for families, as this can act as a barrier for carers seeking studio installation in some cases where young people are at risk.

A methodological recommendation is that a service mapping be conducted, to understand how young people involved in youth justice, and their families/carers, can be best supported.

Program Development And Investment

While a small number of young people continued to experience challenges with the Youth Justice system, the studio environment was instrumental for many young people in reducing risk behaviours and facilitating positive life changes.

This reflects the complexities of supporting young people, where 'success' varies based on individual circumstances and the availability of additional support. The studio's ability to provide a space for young people to belong demonstrates its value as more than just a physical dwelling. It facilitated personal development, empowering studio occupants to take steps toward a more positive future. This suggests that the program should further develop not only the provision of physical space but also the creation of supports that enhance wellbeing.

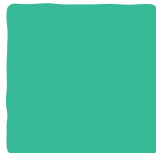


The range of positive impacts that young people and their carers report once studios are installed for young people in contact with the justice system, are overwhelmingly positive.

Increased and ongoing evaluation of such future investment will form a critical component of any future funding, to ensure that outcomes of studio interventions can be optimally targeted for young people in need.

Combined with the data from the RFI Global Carers Survey data the findings indicate that ongoing investment and growth of a studio-accommodation pathway for young people at risk of ongoing or increased contact with justice systems, is warranted.

The methodological and service considerations outlined in the recommendations above, are likely to enhance future studio provision. Critically, inclusion of lived experiences of young people and their families/carers, should inform future improvements to the studio program.



Future Research Directions

A major focus of future research for assessing the impact of the studio intervention in the lives of young people and their carers is maximising opportunities and methods for inclusion of young people. This can usefully include:



Increased socialisation of the project by administering organisations to inform young people and their carers about the research, before research is commenced.



In-situ points of contact for young people to participate in short surveys or interviews, such as in KUC or support services offices or other spaces associated with the studios.



Trialling of group discussions, such as focus groups, online focus groups, or 'dinner conversations' where young people provide their perspectives over a meal, in a relaxed and high trust environment with researchers.

Engaging carers in future research is likely to be successful and can be additionally enhanced by providing:



Great flexibility to carers about how their responses are provided (for example via email, phone messages, face-time online or in person) as well as flexibility about when their input can be given.



A main concern in engaging carers is the time and complex caring roles they are managing, while also participating in research interviews.



As this program continues to evolve, and the need to create an evidence base grows stronger, it is essential to consider areas where further research might learn from the work undertaken with this project. Three key areas for future research identified in this study, are:

01

Understanding desistance, or the process by which young people reduce and ultimately cease offending behaviour, is central to evaluating the long-term success of the program. By examining how stable housing and supportive environments contribute to desistance, we can refine our interventions to better support lasting positive change.

02

Additionally, **improving engagement with studio occupants and their families** is crucial for ensuring that the benefits of the program are fully realised. This includes exploring new ways to foster communication, build trust, and involve families in the ongoing support of studio occupants as they transition into adulthood.

03

Finally, **an enhanced sustainability framework** that includes environmental sustainability (built form of the studio and surrounding neighbourhood), social sustainability (feeling of safety, feeling of belonging, future aspirations, relationships with family and friends, wellbeing and risk behaviour), and economic sustainability (qualitative assessment of costs and avoided costs, if data is available) should be considered to create environments that further support the program's goals and serve the community as a whole.



Together, these future directions provide a roadmap for enhancing further research in this space.

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How this Study was Conducted



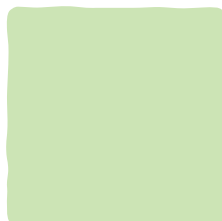
Methodology

In order for a comprehensive research design, we employed a mixed-methods approach for researching the impact on justice-involved youth and those at risk of future offending.

First, a scoping review was conducted to explore existing literature on housing as a diversion or intervention for justice-involved youth. This scoping review was conducted to guide our data collection process, ensuring that our approach was well-informed by existing research and relevant frameworks. This review allowed us to identify key themes, concepts, and methodological considerations that shaped our data collection strategy and informed our understanding of the topic.

Second, surveys were administered to young people housed in a Kids Under Cover studio (n=5). Third, in-depth interviews were conducted with young people (n=3), carers (n=7), and stakeholders (n=8). While there are only a small number of interviews, which is not uncommon for research with hard-to-reach populations, the interviews offer deep, nuanced perspectives. Further details on the survey and in interview method can be found in the following sub-sections.

Given the vulnerability of those involved with the KUC program, survey and interview participants (studio occupants and carers) were first contacted by KUC representatives, who introduced the research. Those interested in participating were then contacted by the researchers. Over half of the studio occupants were reached out to by KUC, of whom 60 agreed to participate, leading to 10 interviews with carers and studio occupants and 5 survey responses. Each survey participant received a \$20 voucher as a thank you, and those who completed an interview received a \$30 voucher. Stakeholders were contacted directly by the researchers.



Survey Method

The survey was designed to capture quantitative data on the impact of the Kids Under Cover program from the perspective of the studio occupants. The survey aimed to capture key outcomes related to:

01

The application process for the studio

02

Satisfaction with the studio

03

How the studio contributes to various aspects of participants' lives (e.g. health and wellbeing, education, employment, relationships)

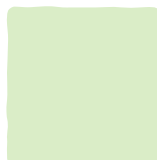
04

Their socio-demographic information

The survey questions were developed through a collaborative process that involved reviewing existing surveys and incorporating input from representatives of the Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria and Kids Under Cover. The questions were structured to be straightforward and accessible to the target demographic, taking into account literacy levels and potential sensitivities related to justice involvement. The survey was administered online and took 10-15 minutes to complete.

Surveys, including information statement and consent forms, were distributed through the Qualtrics platform. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and consent was obtained from the parent or carer prior to obtaining separate consent from the studio occupant. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and no identifying information was collected to maintain privacy.

Descriptive statistics from the survey responses were analysed using the Qualtrics platform, and the data was visualised with MS Excel.





Interview Method

The interview component of the study was designed to gather in-depth qualitative data from studio occupants, carers, and stakeholders. The interviews aimed to explore the impact of the program beyond what could be captured through surveys, delving into personal experiences, perceived benefits, and areas for program improvement. Semi-structured interview guides were developed for each group of participants, allowing for flexibility in probing specific topics while ensuring consistency across interviews.

The interview guides with studio occupants were structured around the following themes:

Initial introduction to the studio and transition process

Experience since moving into the studio

Studio setup and personalisation

Positive aspects of the studio

Challenges faced in the studio

Autonomy and control over living conditions

Concept of home

Perceptions of the studio by others

Impact of the studio on future outlook

Future planning and aspirations

Alternative living arrangements

Neighbourhood and location suitability



The carer and stakeholder interview schedules adhered to a very similar process, ensuring consistency in approach and alignment in the exploration of relevant themes across both groups. This parallel structure facilitated a comprehensive understanding of perspectives from both carers and stakeholders, allowing for a more integrated analysis of the data.

Studio occupants were invited to participate in an interview once they had completed the survey. Carers were invited to participate separately. There were some minor deviations from this recruitment strategy.

In addition, interviews were conducted with the CEO of KUC, the KUC Head of Programs, and the KUC Studio Program Manager. This was a valuable component of this research, providing critical insight into the program's development, strategic direction, operational challenges, and implementation. These interviews provided insights into challenges faced in service delivery including logistical and administrative issues, what adaptations have been necessary, and how those affected outcomes.

Interviews were conducted over the phone. Each interview lasted between 15 to 60 minutes, with the conversation recorded and transcribed for analysis. Interviews with studio occupants were conducted in a youth-friendly manner, with language and tone adjusted to ensure comfort and understanding.

The interview data was analysed using thematic analysis, to identify, analyse, and report on patterns within the data. The process involved the following steps:

01

Transcripts were read and re-read to gain an initial understanding of the data.

02

Key phrases, ideas, and concepts were coded systematically across the entire data set.

03

Codes were grouped into broader themes that reflected the key findings of the interviews.

04

Themes were reviewed to ensure they accurately captured the data and were relevant to the research objectives. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consultation with the research team.

05

The final themes were interpreted in the context of the research questions, and connections were made between the qualitative findings and the quantitative survey data.

06

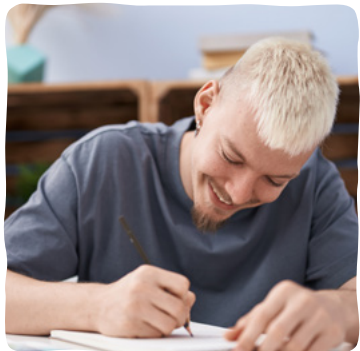
This project was approved by the Department of Justice and Community Safety, Justice Human Research Ethics Committee, CF/23/19191.

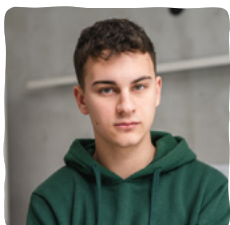
Additional data insights

Throughout the report, additional data insights that are directly relevant to KUC Youth Justice studios, provided to the authors by KUC are included as 'pop out boxes'. This data was gathered and analysed by RFI Global – a global data and insight company for KUC, and undertaken separately from the current research, and provided to the authors in a collated form. The insights are based on 16 short survey responses provided by families/carers representing 20 young people to whom a KUC Justice studio had been provided.

Carers were asked about young people's experiences, and about their own perceptions of outcomes for young people in receipt of a studio, using both closed and open option responses shown per 'pop out'. Overall findings of the independent analysis indicate significant progress and improvement for young people's health, wellbeing, social relationships, family engagement, and safety.







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