

SEPTEMBER 2023

CAITLANS PLACE

FINAL REPORT



PREPARED BY
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Executive Summary

Caitlan's Place is a supported housing project located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, designed to address the housing needs of women and gender diverse individuals who are exiting a correctional facility in Nova Scotia. The project employs a Housing First, Restorative and Harm Reduction approach, emphasizing stable housing as the foundation for addressing complex challenges such as homelessness, mental health issues, and addictions. This report provides an overview of Caitlan's Place, its objectives, operations, outcomes, and impact on the lives of its residents.

Purpose Statement

Caitlan's Place aims to comprehensively address the pressing issue of women being released from correctional facilities into homelessness by developing a multifaceted program that provides safe housing, tailored support services, and a pathway to sustainable reintegration into society, recognizing the unique challenges faced by high-risk women reentering their communities after incarceration.

Objectives

The primary objectives of Caitlan's Place are as follows:

1. To provide stable and safe housing to women and gender diverse individuals exiting jail.
2. To reduce homelessness and housing instability among this population.
3. To support residents in addressing underlying issues, including mental health and addictions.
4. To promote a sense of autonomy and empowerment among residents.
5. To reduce recidivism and improve the overall well-being of residents.

Caitlan's Place Offers

- 13 single occupancy rooms, multiple shared spaces, and amenities
- 2 emergency reintegration/release beds
- 24/7 on-site supportive staff
- In house programs, activities, resources, and services
- Paid employment and volunteer opportunities
- A daily community meal program
- Case Management
- Peer Support
- Eviction prevention
- Bail supervision

Eligibility Criteria

Must identify as woman and/or gender diverse individual age 18+, be experiencing homelessness and the criminal justice system; able to pay rent; and have a willingness to work with on-site supports.

Intake

Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can apply to reside at Caitlan's Place. In keeping with the principals of housing first, the intake process is designed to be low barrier. An applicant completes an initial intake to screen for eligibility and are then placed on the waiting list. The House Director and/or the Case Manager then coordinate an in-person meeting where a needs assessment is completed and the program is explained, including the rules and expectations, rights, and responsibilities of living at the house.

Framework of Practice

Caitlan's Place operates with the following key features:

1. **Housing First Approach:** Housing is provided as a fundamental right, without imposing stringent sobriety or admission requirements. This approach acknowledges that stable housing is essential for addressing other issues.
2. **Harm Reduction Services:** The program offers harm reduction services, including access to clean needles and addiction counseling, to minimize health risks associated with substance use.
3. **Restorative Approach:** The adoption of restorative practices aligns with principles of healing, accountability, and community-building, which can be particularly beneficial for individuals exiting jail who often have complex needs and histories.
4. **Wrap-around Support:** Residents receive individualized support and case management to address their unique needs. Residents are connected to a range of specialized services to address complex needs, including mental health counseling, addiction treatment, and reintegration programs, to help clients break the cycle of criminal involvement and achieve stability in their lives.
5. **Bail Supervision:** The bail supervision program allows individuals awaiting trial to be released from custody under specific conditions and supervision to ensure their compliance with court appearances and adherence to the law. Reducing the time someone spends in custody is an evidence-based practice.

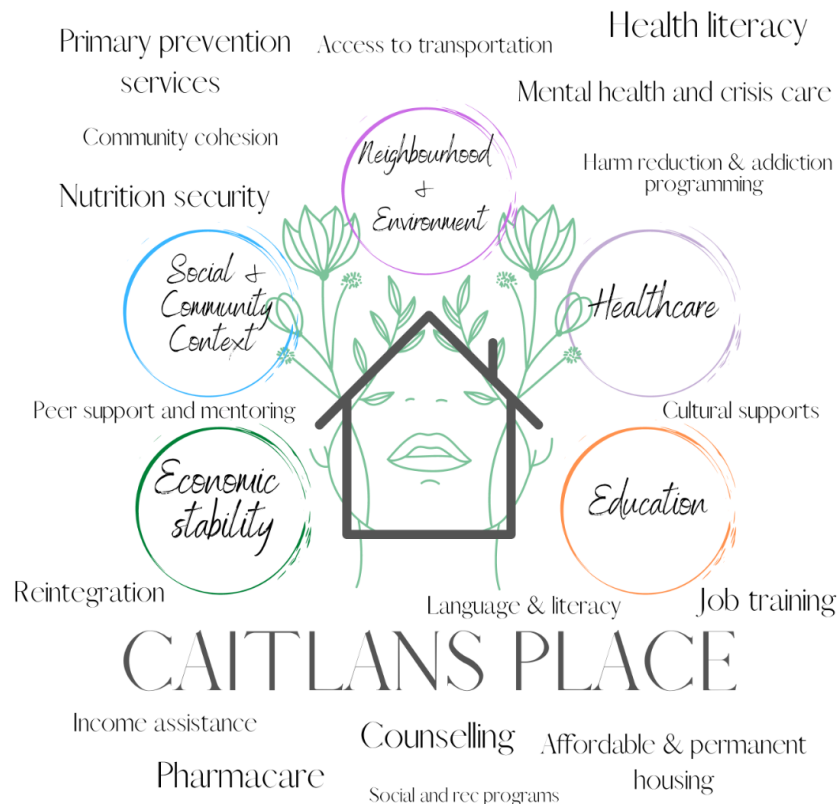
CHECKLIST AT A GLANCE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify Critical Reentry Needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Build Healthy, Trusting Relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Address Substance Use Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Reestablish Family Relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build Links to Mental Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate Payment of Justice System Fines and Fees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Address Physical and Reproductive Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Self-efficacy Through Certified Peer Specialists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide Culturally Competent Services | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide Trauma-informed Services | |

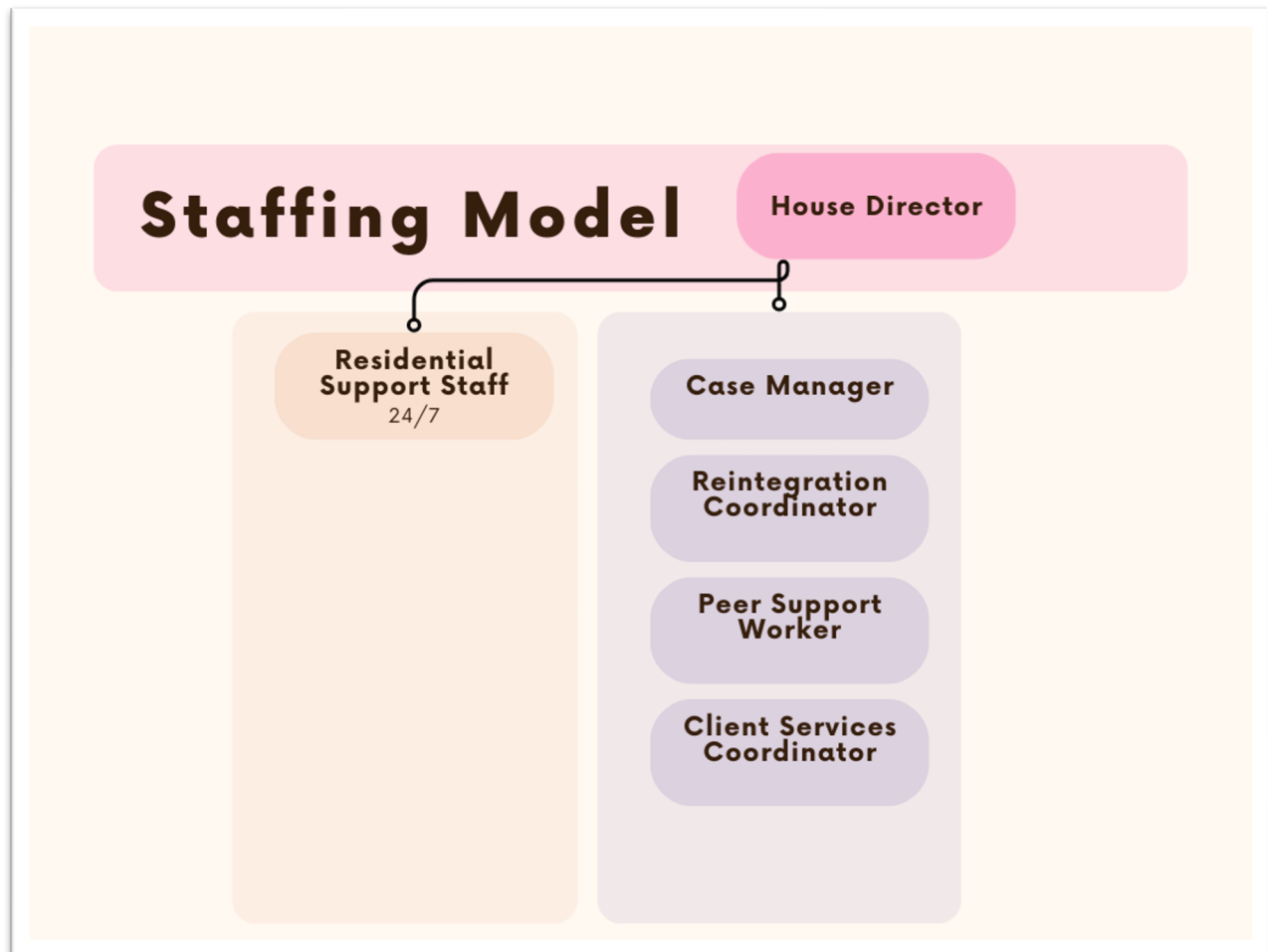
Evaluation

The evaluation process entails a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of five distinct data sources, aimed at determining the extent to which Caitlan's Place is meeting its intended objectives, pinpointing areas where it may need enhancements, and devising strategies for better serving its target demographic. Given our early stage of operation, these evaluations are conducted quarterly, allowing us to continually identify opportunities for program refinement and to generate evidence-based recommendations for program enhancement.

1. **Client Data:** Information about the individuals served by Caitlan's Place, including demographics (age, gender, race/ethnicity), background (history of homelessness, incarceration, mental health, and substance use issues), and their specific risks, strengths, and needs. Collected using HIFIS.
2. **Program Records:** Internal records kept by Caitlan's Place, including court orders, client assessments, case plans, and progress notes documenting the support and services provided to residents.
3. **Outcome Measures:** Data collected to assess specific outcomes, such as housing stability (length of stay, discharges), employment and income status, mental health improvements, substance use reduction, and recidivism rates.
4. **Surveys and Interviews:** Feedback and responses from residents and Caitlan's Place staff on perceptions of the program's effectiveness, and areas for improvement.
5. **Incident Reports:** Information on any critical incidents or issues that occurred within the program, including breaches, conflicts, or emergencies.



Staffing Model



Client Population

Caitlan's Place serves a client population consisting of individuals at high risk for recidivism due to multiple complex factors including individuals who struggle with mental health issues, substance use disorders, a history of homelessness, and previous incarceration experiences. These individuals are particularly vulnerable and face a higher likelihood of re-offending without appropriate support and interventions. What sets this group apart is their previous lack of success in other intervention programs, indicating the need for more intensive and tailored support.

Working Conditions

Front-line staff are exposed to emotionally disturbing events, such as: medical distress, threatened/actual serious injury, violence, abuse, and death; where clients may be experiencing fear, terror, hopelessness, rage, self-harm, and conflict. It is understood and accepted that staff will be working in distress and/or high-stress situations, which may include emergency response where resiliency and stress tolerance and the ability to maintain composure, remain calm and focused is imperative.

Services

Addressing the challenges faced by women and gender diverse individuals post-release from correctional facilities requires a comprehensive, gender-responsive approach that considers their specific needs and circumstances. By providing adequate support, resources, and opportunities for reintegration, we help individuals transition to safe and healthy environments, ultimately reducing the likelihood of reoffending and promoting successful reintegration into society.

Case Management

The Case Manager is responsible for assisting the residents of Caitlan's Place with maintaining their housing, supporting and encouraging education and employment goals among other areas to help program participants successfully transition out of the criminal justice system and homelessness. The case manager builds supportive community relationships, assist with activities of daily living, ensures appropriate frameworks are in place for stability, develops case plans, completes documentation, and reports on outcomes.

Reintegration

The staff work closely with individuals to create personalized reintegration plans that address their unique needs and challenges. This includes connecting residents to housing resources, mental health and addiction services, and educational programs. The coordinator also assists with legal matters, coordinates access to social services, and facilitates family reunification when appropriate. Their goal is to empower residents with the necessary tools and support to successfully reintegrate into society, reduce recidivism, and achieve stability in their lives.

Peer Support

Drawing from their own lived experiences, peer support workers provide emotional support, guidance, and mentorship to help residents navigate the challenges they face. Peer Support Workers offer practical advice on reintegration, coping with the stresses of transition, and accessing community resources. By sharing their personal journey of recovery and success, they inspire hope, foster a sense of belonging, and help residents build confidence and resilience during their journey.

A Restorative Approach

Incorporating restorative practices into the supported housing program at Caitlan's Place recognizes that addressing the needs of individuals exiting jail goes beyond providing housing and support services—it involves creating an environment that promotes healing, accountability, and community responsibility. Continuously evaluating the impact of restorative practices and refining their implementation has been essential to ensuring their effectiveness within the program.

Restorative Approach Principles:

1. **Community Building:** Caitlan's Place fosters a sense of community and belonging among its residents. Through restorative practices, individuals are encouraged to build positive relationships with staff, peers, and the broader community.
2. **Accountability and Responsibility:** Restorative justice principles emphasize personal accountability and responsibility for one's actions. Caitlan's Place utilizes these principles when someone causes harm to help them understand the impact of their actions and take steps towards making amends.
3. **Healing and Reintegration:** Restorative approaches focus on addressing the underlying causes of harmful behavior and supporting individuals in their journey toward personal growth and reintegration. This aligns with the goal of reducing recidivism and improving overall well-being.
4. **Conflict Resolution:** Restorative practices provide a structured framework for resolving conflicts and addressing harm. This can help to create a safe and supportive environment within the program.

Implementation of Restorative Practices at Caitlans Place:

1. **Restorative Circles:** Caitlan's Place conducts restorative circles or conversations where residents and staff come together to discuss concerns, conflicts, and personal goals. These circles provide a forum for open communication, empathy-building, and conflict resolution.
2. **Conflict Resolution Plans:** When conflicts or breaches of community guidelines occur, restorative plans are developed collaboratively. These plans outline steps for addressing the harm caused, making amends, and preventing future conflicts.
3. **Healing and Recovery Plans:** Individualized healing and recovery plans are created for residents, integrating restorative elements. These plans address mental health, substance use, trauma, and other underlying issues that may contribute to criminal behavior.

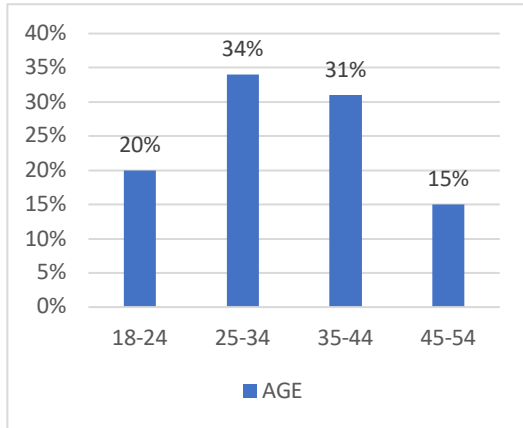
Benefits and Outcomes:

1. **Conflict Resolution:** Restorative practices effectively resolve conflicts within the housing program, reducing tensions and fostering a sense of safety.
2. **Empowerment:** Residents are empowered to take an active role in their own rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.
3. **Accountability:** The restorative approach encourages accountability for one's actions and the opportunity to make amends, promoting personal growth and responsibility.
4. **Reduced Recidivism:** By addressing the root causes of criminal behavior and promoting rehabilitation, the program contributes to a reduction in recidivism rates among participants.

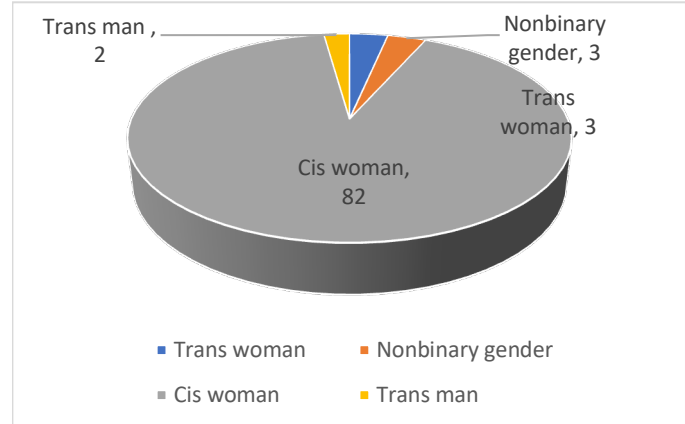
- 5. **Stronger Community:** A sense of community and support among residents enhances overall well-being and provide a foundation for successful reintegration.

Quantitative Assessment and Data Analysis

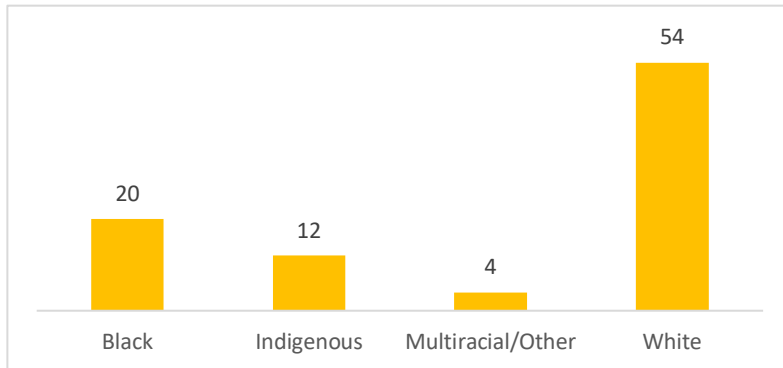
AGE RANGE



GENDER



RACE

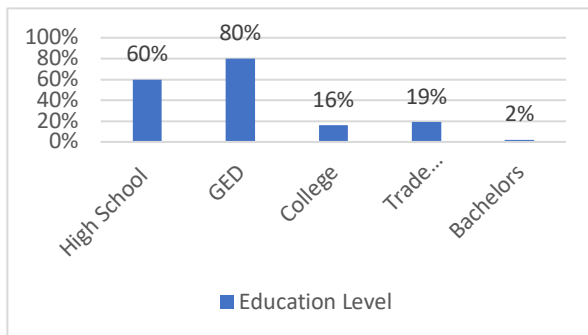


RECIDIVISM

Participants who have re-offended or returned to correctional facilities during their stay at Caitlan's Place

25%

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND



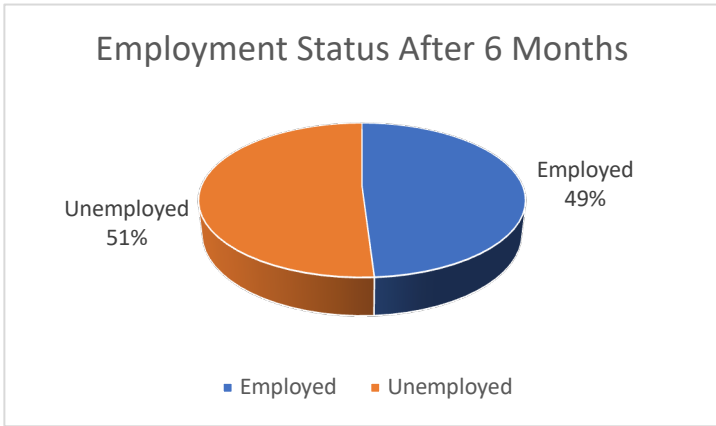
HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION

Participants who were homeless before entering Caitlan's Place

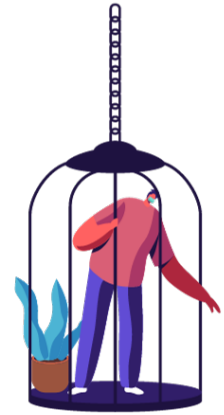
100%

Participants who remained housed after 12 months

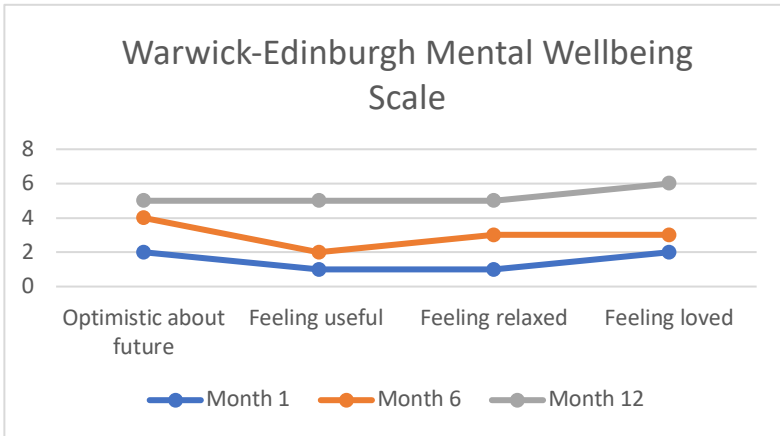
86%



Being on house arrest impacted many participants ability to work outside of the house. In-house employment opportunities helped to keep participants connected to employment skills and meaningful activities.

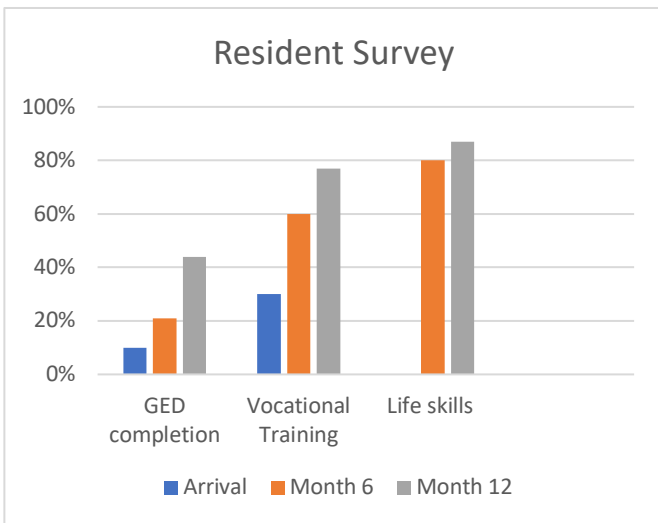


MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



"The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales were developed to enable the measuring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The 14-item scale WEMWBS has 5 response categories, summed to provide a single score. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing, thereby making the concept more accessible. The scale has been widely used nationally and internationally for monitoring, evaluating projects and programmes and investigating the determinants of mental wellbeing." - Prof Sarah Stewart-Brown

EDUCATION AND SKILLS



Est. 2021

92



PROGRAM OUTCOMES



Housing Stability

The program has successfully provided stable housing to a significant number of women and gender diverse individuals who would otherwise be homeless or precariously housed.



Health and Well-being

Residents have reported improved physical and mental health outcomes due to access to healthcare, addiction treatment, and harm reduction services.



Reduction in Recidivism

There has been a noticeable reduction in recidivism among program participants, indicating the effectiveness of the approach in breaking the cycle of incarceration.



Empowerment and Autonomy

Residents have expressed a greater sense of empowerment, self-worth, and autonomy in making decisions about their lives.



Community Integration

The program has facilitated the reintegration of individuals into the community, promoting positive relationships with family, friends, and the broader community.

Critical Observations and Gaps

The vulnerability of women and gender-diverse individuals with serious mental illness or co-occurring substance use disorders, as well as Indigenous and racialized individuals after being discharged from jail is a deeply concerning issue that highlights several intersecting challenges within the criminal justice and social services systems. There are several key factors contributing to this vulnerability including lack of services, stigma and discrimination and complex needs.

Financial Information

The annual operating expense for Caitlan's Place are \$680,000. This budget includes a range of expenses related to operating the program such as personnel costs, support services, food, transportation, security and safety, case management, training and professional development and data management. The Northpine Foundation invested \$767,044 in the Caitlan's Place project, in 2021. Shortly after, the Department of Community Services committed core operational funding to Coverdale (permanent). The Northpine funds were used to subsidize the Departments contribution and to support the organizational growth and development of Coverdale as a result of expanding to 24/7 service provision.

Economic Constraints

The Caitlan's Place operating budget, while conservative, has its limitations, largely due to the escalating cost of living in Halifax, which continues to impact Coverdale's operations. In the Halifax region, the current living wage stands at \$26.50 per hour, whereas Caitlan's Place is funded to pay its frontline staff \$22.50 per hour. While this wage surpasses the compensation offered for comparable positions in most other non-profit organizations, it still falls short, leading to financial struggles for staff members who often juggle multiple jobs, consequently increasing the risk of burnout. Furthermore, the housing vacancy rate is merely 1%, and as of September 2023, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Halifax, NS has surged to \$1,965, marking a 25% increase from the previous year.

Caitlan's Place residents receive a monthly living allowance of \$380 through the provincial government's income assistance program, which is expected to cover essential needs such as food, clothing, shelter, fuel, utilities, and personal items. Nevertheless, our clients rely on us for support with various necessities. Recognizing that increased investment in meeting people's fundamental needs can reduce their dependence on survival-related activities, we remain committed to addressing these challenges.

Cost Savings

Incarcerating individuals is expensive, with taxpayers bearing the financial burden. Decarceration leads to substantial cost savings by reducing the need for costly jail facilities, healthcare expenses, and personnel costs associated with incarceration. Decarceration focuses on addressing the root causes of criminal behavior, such as mental health issues, addiction, and poverty. By providing support and treatment rather than punishment, individuals are more likely to become productive citizens, reducing long-term economic and social costs.

Cost Savings = (Number of nights Caitlan's Place provided 15 beds) x (Cost to incarcerate one person per night)

Cost Savings = (31 months x 30 days per month) x (15 beds x \$393¹ per night)

Calculating this:

Cost Savings = (31 x 30) x (15 x \$393)

Cost Savings = 930 x \$5,895

Cost Savings = \$5,481,150

Caitlan's Place would have saved approximately \$5,481,150 in incarceration costs over the past 31 months by providing 15 beds to 15 people every night instead of incarcerating them. In comparison to the Caitlan's Place budget, the cost savings is substantial. The economic argument for decarcerating women from jail emphasizes that redirecting resources from punitive incarceration to supportive, community-based solutions can lead to cost savings, increased economic productivity, and improved societal outcomes, ultimately resulting in a more efficient and just criminal justice system.

Resident Stories

African Nova Scotian Youth breaks free from cycle of incarceration and criminalization

In the heart of Nova Scotia, a 23-year-old African Nova Scotian woman found herself at a crossroads. Her journey had been marked by trauma, legal entanglements, and a persistent struggle against the odds. It was a challenging path that ultimately led her to Caitlan's Place, a beacon of stability in her tumultuous life.

The story began with a referral from Nova Scotia Legal Aid, who recognized the need for a lifeline for this young woman. After a stint at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility (CNSCF), she was at a pivotal moment in her life. Her past was plagued with a series of court no-shows and unsuccessful attempts at bail release. An assessment had determined her fitness to stand trial, but her history told a tale of mental health and addiction hardships, and a recurrent involvement with the criminal justice system.

¹ According to the Corrections Key Indicators 2021-2022 the average daily cost per adult in custody in Nova Scotia is \$393 (<https://novascotia.ca/just/publications/docs/corrections-key-indicators-report-2021-22.pdf>)

For 16 months, this resilient young woman called Caitlan's Place her home. It was here that she managed to untangle the web of her criminal matters, leaving no court date unattended and no return to incarceration. She steered clear of fresh legal entanglements, proving to herself and others that a life free from the shadows of her past was possible. Month after month, she diligently paid her rent and followed community guidelines, reinforcing her commitment to rebuilding her life. Beyond the confines of her room, she actively participated in group activities and programs, weaving herself into the fabric of the community she now calls family.

Caitlan's Place wasn't just a house; it was a support system. It was here that she found accessible healthcare through the MOSH Justice Health program, catering to her physical and mental well-being. The Caitlan's Place meal program nourished not only her body but also her spirit. And in the warmth of the Peer Support Program, she discovered that she was not alone in her struggles.

Resident turns life around and now works at Caitlan's Place

A resident arrived at Caitlan's Place in March 2021, having just been released from the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility under house arrest. This individual's future was uncertain, burdened with challenges such as addiction, loneliness, and mental health struggles.

Caitlan's Place's provision of supervised outings and transportation for residents on house arrest, like this individual, allowed them to visit family, complete essential errands, and engage in various activities, alleviating feelings of confinement. They also actively participated in house activities, fostering a sense of community.

Despite facing numerous setbacks and relapses, their unwavering determination bore fruit. In September 2021, they were honored with the Caitlan Greenwell award from Recovery Day Halifax, acknowledging their strength and resilience throughout their six-month journey of recovery. On October 14th, 2021, they departed Caitlan's Place, not as a farewell, but as a "see you soon." Today, this individual serves as a Peer Support Worker at Caitlan's Place. Their story is a testament to the remarkable power of resilience, determination, and the unwavering support of a caring community.

Challenges and Future Directions

While Caitlan's Place has achieved significant success, there are ongoing challenges, including:

1. **Resource Constraints:** Resource constraints are intensifying as the complexity and severity of people's needs continue to rise, demanding more specialized and

comprehensive supports and services. The cost of living is driving up our costs, but funding is not increasing.

2. **Stigma and Discrimination:** Addressing stigma and discrimination, both within the community and the criminal justice system, continues to be a priority. This is particularly true when it comes to substance use. The one size-fits all approach to reintegration and a reliance on abstinence only interventions leave many vulnerable people out.
3. **Access to Affordable Housing:** Expanding access to affordable housing options outside of the program is essential for the long-term success of residents.
4. **Justice System Collaboration:** We have not had success in seeking collaboration or meaningful investment in our programs and services from the provincial justice department. This poses significant challenges, impeding effective rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Considering the ongoing challenges that Caitlan's Place faces, our commitment to our mission is more critical than ever. While these challenges may seem daunting, we firmly believe that with determination, collaboration, and innovation, we can continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

Here are the next steps we plan to take to address these challenges:

1. Resource Constraints:

- **Diversify Funding Sources:** We will actively seek out additional funding sources, including grants, donations, and partnerships, to bridge the resource gap. This will allow us to expand our services and offer more specialized support to meet the increasing complexity of our clients' needs.
- **Advocate for Policy Change:** We will advocate for policy changes at the provincial level to secure more sustainable funding that reflects the rising costs of living and the demands of our programs.

2. Stigma and Discrimination:

- **Community Education:** We will continue to engage in community education and outreach efforts to challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma related to substance use and criminal justice involvement.
- **Collaboration with Experts:** We will collaborate with experts in the field to develop and implement evidence-based interventions that focus on harm reduction and individualized reintegration plans.

3. Access to Affordable Housing:

- **Expansion:** We have scaled the Coverdale housing portfolio and are opening Honour House, a 12-bed house that will provide the same level of supports and services offered at Caitlan's Place. Additionally, we will continue to explore partnerships with local housing organizations and government agencies to increase access to affordable housing options for our program participants.

4. Justice System Collaboration:

- **Engage in Dialogue:** We will actively engage in dialogue with the provincial justice department, emphasizing the value and effectiveness of our programs in reducing recidivism and promoting successful reintegration. We will work to build a shared understanding of the importance of investing in Coverdale.
- **Leverage Data and Research:** We will continue to gather data and conduct research to demonstrate the positive outcomes of our programs and their cost-effectiveness. This evidence will be used to make a compelling case for collaboration and investment from the justice system.

Conclusion

Caitlan's Place stands as a beacon of hope and support for women and gender diverse individuals exiting jail in Nova Scotia. By embracing the principles of Restorative Justice, Housing First and Harm Reduction, the program has not only provided stable housing but has also contributed to improved overall well-being, reduced recidivism, and empowered its residents to build better futures. The challenges ahead are significant, but the commitment to compassionate, client-centered care remains unwavering.

In conclusion, this report reflects the dedication and passion that drive our organization forward in our mission to make a positive impact on our community. While we are immensely grateful for the support and resources provided thus far, we are not resting on our laurels. Instead, we are eagerly looking ahead to our next project, Honour House, with the same determination and commitment that has characterized our work thus far. Honour House represents another vital step towards our vision of a more just and compassionate society, and we are excited about the transformative potential it holds. It is a testament to our enduring commitment to serving those in need and providing them with the support, resources, and care they deserve.

As we continue to dream big and envision a future where our impact knows no bounds, we are also exploring new opportunities and innovative approaches to make a lasting difference in the lives of the individuals and communities we serve. We believe that together, with the continued support of our valued partners and donors, we can achieve even greater heights and create a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

Thank you for being a part of our journey, and we look forward to the exciting possibilities that lie ahead. With your ongoing support, we are confident that the best is yet to come.

