

---

# LEARNINGS FROM THE ABBOTSFORD HOUSING DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

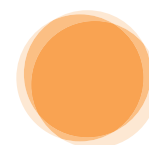
---

## 2012-2013

*DR CHRIS FYFFE*

Written for Summer Foundation, in collaboration with  
COMMON EQUITY HOUSING LIMITED (CEHL)  
TRANSPORT ACCIDENT COMMISSION (TAC)  
ANNECTO, THE PEOPLE NETWORK

Supported by



**SUMMER  
FOUNDATION**

**Prepared by:**

Dr Chris Fyffe for  
Summer Foundation Ltd  
ABN 90 117 719 516  
PO Box 208  
Blackburn 3180  
VIC Australia

Telephone: +613 9894 7006  
Fax: +613 8456 6325  
info@summerfoundation.org.au  
www.summerfoundation.org.au

**Citation Guide**

Fyffe, C, (2015), *Learnings from the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project – 2012-2013*,  
Melbourne: Summer Foundation Ltd.



© 2015 by the Summer Foundation Ltd. A copy of this report is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (international)

ISBN 978-0-980-59 80-7-0

**Acknowledgements**

The core collaborators for the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project comprised representatives from:

- Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL)
- Transport Accident Commission: Claims Management, and Health and Disability Strategy Group (HDSG), Residential Independence Pty Ltd (RIPL)
- Summer Foundation (SF)
- annecto, the people network.



Summer Foundation Ltd wishes to acknowledge the generous financial support of Gandel Philanthropy, which made the production of this report possible.

Also important were the contributions of tenants and their families, builders, architects, suppliers of technology and therapists.

The following people had significant involvement with the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project and provided their reflections and learnings about what was achieved for this report. Each individual's organisational affiliations are correct for the timeframe under consideration.

*Common Equity Housing Limited:* John McInerney, Ilya Iliadis

*Transport Accident Commission:* Fiona Cromarty, Kevin McMahon, Ben Carter, Justin Nix, Doug McDonald, Natalie Butler

*Summer Foundation:* Di Winkler, Astrid Reynolds, Sophie Ryan, Libby Callaway, and Sheridan Vines  
(contract occupational therapist)

*annecto, the people network:* Estelle Fyffe, Adam Schickerling, Lucy Murphy, Jo Stevens.

The continuing contribution of the partners in the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project is also acknowledged. The enduring commitment and enthusiasm of many of the same people involved throughout was a hallmark of the project. Even those who have left their original roles remain interested and proud of what was achieved, and have continued to follow progress.

This report benefited from the work of Julie Crawford (editing) and Antony Brown (design)

**DISCLAIMERS**

The Summer Foundation has contributed information towards this report and believes it to be accurate and reliable. Neither the Summer Foundation nor any of its collaborators make any warranty, expressed or implied, regarding any information, including warranties to the accuracy, validity or completeness of the information. This report is for educational purposes and the Summer Foundation cannot be held responsible for any actions taken on the basis of information outlined in this report.

# CONTENTS

---

<b>REPORT OUTLINE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Report development and structure .....	2
About the core organisations .....	3
<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE ABBOTSFORD MODEL .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Components of the model .....	5
<b>HOW LONG DID ABBOTSFORD TAKE? .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Before the collaboration .....	10
Getting started .....	10
Timelines .....	11
<b>REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Replicating Abbotsford .....	12
About timing .....	13
Expectations of tenants and the role of support staff .....	13
Technology, design and staff – all working together .....	15
Insights from the process of collaboration .....	16
Compromises, bottom lines and risks to the project .....	19
<b>SYSTEM AND POLICY ISSUES ARISING .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Individual and organisational outcomes .....	20
Start with real world choice and control .....	21
Be alert to the ever present risk of re-institutionalisation .....	22
Ask more of technology, design, staff practice...and keep learning .....	23
Still to be tackled: longer term sustainability .....	23
Implications for others .....	24
<b>SUMMING UP: A CASE STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Understanding collaboration and social change .....	25
Questions for the future: .....	27
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>28</b>

# REPORT OUTLINE

---

The development of this report was initiated by the Summer Foundation, in conjunction with the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project collaborating agencies – Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL), Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Residential Independence Pty Ltd (RIPL) and annecto, the people network.

The report is intended for those developing policy and practices to create tailored housing and support living arrangements for people with disabilities, particularly those with more complex support needs. The essential elements which were judged to have contributed to the success of the project are described. Reflections and learnings are available to assist future housing projects. Opportunities for systemic reform are noted.

This report offers reflections and learnings about the origins and set up phase of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project. The report is not a 'how to' for every situation – because for each situation there will be different collaborators and potential tenants, and a diverse range of background and context factors. Neither is this report an evaluation of the project. The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has commissioned the Institute of Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research (ISCRR) to conduct an evaluation based on: Post-occupancy built and technology design evaluation; Evaluation of transition to RIPL developments; and longitudinal quality of life evaluation of RIPL tenants.

---

## REPORT DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE

This report is based on project documentation and discussions with people involved in the development and set up of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project (see Acknowledgements). Interviews took place in November 2014 to January 2015 and focused on the period of the development from 2012 to 2013. There was remarkable consistency in the comments made during the interviews. Quotes in italics are directly from those interviewed when the quote captured a specific finding from the interviews.

The report is organised into the following sections:

- Outline of the report
- Description of the Abbotsford model
- How long did Abbotsford take?
- Reflections and learnings
- System and policy issues arising
- Summing up: A case study in successful collaboration
- References.

---

## ABOUT THE CORE ORGANISATIONS

There were four core organisations involved in the development at Abbotsford.



### **Common Equity Housing Limited**

CEHL is a registered housing association established in 1987 to provide a means for lower income earners to access rental properties that they manage and control on a co-operative and secure basis. As an innovative and growing company, CEHL owns over 2200 properties across Victoria, with a current value in excess of \$600 million. CEHL is committed to providing security of tenure and promoting co-operation and the sharing of responsibilities between individuals as a path to building supportive communities (See: [www.cehl.com.au](http://www.cehl.com.au)).



### **Transport Accident Commission**

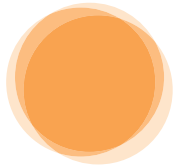
The TAC is a Victorian Government organisation whose role is to promote road safety, improve the state's trauma system and support people who have been injured in a transport accident. There are three arms of TAC involved with the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project:

The Independence Branch sits in the Claims Division of TAC and is responsible for supporting the commission's most seriously injured clients in accessing reasonable medical, rehabilitation and disability services required as a result of injuries from a transport accident.

Health and Disability Strategy Group (HDSG) is a shared service across TAC and Worksafe and is responsible for the management of relationships with the health and disability industry that provide treatment and services to TAC clients and injured workers. Its purpose is to ensure TAC clients and injured workers receive treatment, rehabilitation and disability support at a reasonable and sustainable cost, with a focus on return to work and independence.

RIPL is responsible for developing innovative housing options in response to a shortage of housing and accommodation solutions that meet the needs of TAC's most seriously injured clients. Wholly owned by the TAC, RIPL is working to facilitate independent living through the development of purpose built, highly accessible housing, integration of assistive technology to control the internal and external environment, and access to a client-centred aggregate support model which promotes opportunities to maximise community inclusion and independence. Through this project, there was a desire to test whether more appropriate housing and support, which maximise independence, could also lead to reducing long term costs of support (See: [www.tac.vic.gov.au](http://www.tac.vic.gov.au)).

## SUMMER FOUNDATION



### Summer Foundation

The Summer Foundation, established in 2006, is an organisation that works to change the human services policies and practices related to young people living in, or at risk of, entering residential aged care (RAC) facilities. Summer Foundation's vision is that young people with disability and complex support needs will have inherent value as members of our society, with access to services and housing that supports their health and wellbeing.

The Summer Foundation is working in three key ways to support change:

- Research: conducting and fostering research that provides an evidence base for policy change
- Creating a movement: supporting people with disability to tell their story, raise awareness and keep the issue on the political and public agenda
- Housing: developing integrated housing and support demonstration projects in order to stimulate an increase in the range and number of supported housing options (See: [www.summerfoundation.org.au](http://www.summerfoundation.org.au)).



### annecto

annecto is a non – profit community inclusion organisation. annecto's purpose is connecting individuals and communities to realise an inclusive society. annecto does this through embracing: humanity, interdependence, authenticity and emergence.

annecto provides practical assistance and flexible planning to reach personal life goals in areas such as work in education, health, interests and hobbies, home life and connections with family and friends. annecto's goal is for all people to be included in society through economic, social and civic participation, to have a greater role in making choices to improve their life and a greater voice in society, and to build on individual and community resilience and capacity (See: [www.annecto.org.au](http://www.annecto.org.au)).



# DESCRIPTION OF THE ABBOTSFORD MODEL

---

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project was established to take a different approach to personal planning for tenants and to the components of housing and support to enable inclusive community living. The project provides an alternative to the limited range of housing and support models available to people with more complex support needs. Each tenant was supported to make decisions about how they wished to live – both within their apartment and in the wider community. This meant paying detailed attention to the features of tenants' internal and external living environments to address their personal lifestyle choices. It also required an awareness of the systemic outcomes arising from this different approach.

The project tackled the misalignment between three critical components in the approach to addressing inclusive community living: improving personal outcomes; increasing the individual's capacity for more independent living; and reducing the long term support costs for people with complex support requirements. The short term goals were improvements in quality of life and independence for tenants, and to model the possibilities for long term systemic reform in the housing and support sectors. Planning to reduce support (and costs) was never intended to compromise the wellbeing of tenants or to be at the expense of the key features of the Abbotsford model.

---

## COMPONENTS OF THE MODEL

The Abbotsford model was developed through a collaborative process between four organisations. The model aimed to enable people with complex support needs to live in their own fully accessible apartment, with the same rights and responsibilities as other community members living in medium density, inner city housing. Tenants are expected to live as independently as possible in apartments that they rent and for which they are responsible. Tenants pay affordable rent based on their income.

Tenants have housing and tenancy obligations. There are tenancy and property management rules common to everyone living in the housing development, for example, expectations via the building Owners' Corporation regarding the smoking policy in public or shared spaces.

There was no expectation that any relationship would be assumed or developed between tenants. This aspect is critical to the model and distinguishes Abbotsford from typical shared living arrangements. Where shared support is mentioned, it refers to arrangements for sharing of support resources to maximise cost effectiveness which do not involve compromising individualised staff support for each tenant.

### **Collaboration, commitment and a shared direction**

The core collaborators developed a shared vision for Abbotsford: ...*'making a reality the long term impact of increasing independence, decreasing support hours, and maximising control for tenants'*.

The collaborators protected the long term vision and *'guarded the outcomes wanted'* based on clarity about what was being measured from the start; and *'the group held everyone accountable'*.

---

All collaborators were committed to learning about ways to maximise independence, choice and control for tenants living as community members in an inner city apartment complex. The guiding questions for the collaboration were:

- *'What does it take for all in the collaboration to think about tenants' long term independence?'*
- *'How to enable greater individual capability at home and in the community?' 'How can each person be supported to do this?'*

## **About the target group**

The target groups and identification and referral processes were managed by TAC and Summer Foundation.

Identification and selection of potential TAC tenants followed the established TAC selection process. The TAC considered a number of factors to identify and select TAC clients including being over 18 years of age, being in receipt of one-to-one attendant care, have a desire to live more independently in their own home and to have potential to spend some time alone each day and therefore to pool a portion of their support resources.

The Summer Foundation target group comprises people aged 18-55 years, with non-compensable disabilities and at risk of living in or already living in a residential aged care facility, with a focus on people with acquired brain injury (ABI). The Summer Foundation used existing professional networks to identify potential tenants who had sufficient Individual Support Plan (ISP) funds to contribute to individual and pooled resources, and the capacity and motivation for greater independence, including through the use of technology. This limited prospective tenants to people who did not have deteriorating conditions, as the likelihood of increasing support funding was not guaranteed in a pre-National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) climate. This may be different in the future.

## **Funding, built environment and location**

There are six fully accessible one-bedroom apartments integrated into a 59 unit mixed private and social housing development. The multi-storey, in-fill development is located in a prime inner city location, close to transport, shops and community facilities. The apartments and the site incorporate a range of design and technology features to support independence and safety.

Location was important in meeting the project goals. The location encourages involvement in the wider community, enabling easy access to shops and interactions with neighbours. The selection of the site recognised that while lower site prices can reduce initial costs, in the long run, poor location can increase long term support costs through higher transport and support costs arising from the isolation from the community. Such isolation then reduces opportunities for achieving personal goals.

Summer Foundation and RIPL each purchased apartments in the same building. RIPL had been allocated funds for capital. Summer Foundation's capital costs were funded through philanthropic grants and donations.

Purchase of the apartments occurred when the overall property was partly developed. TAC purchased an empty shell for four apartments on the ground floor. This required variations to the design, rather than renovations. Summer Foundation purchased two apartments on the second floor which required the retrofitting of some walls, as well as additional design features. Generic designs were created and then fine-tuned for specific individuals. Additional modifications to improve accessibility of common areas of the apartment development were funded by RIPL and Summer Foundation.



A small room for support staff, containing an office, a bathroom and a bed, was established in the same building, near the apartments. The model is testing out the need for this onsite room for support staff, especially in the longer term. The staff space was created within an office that CEHL had already planned and budgeted for in their building costs. TAC leases the staff room annually from the Owners' Corporation in the development.

Separation of property ownership and tenant support is part of the model. TAC and Summer Foundation have each engaged a professional manager to undertake property and tenancy management for their respective apartments.

## Design and technology

Through careful specification, each apartment emphasised quality household appliances, assistive technology, good design and adaptability to contribute to amenity, convenience, low cost maintenance, security and accessibility. All apartments were designed to maximise consistency with the Livable Housing Design Guidelines Platinum level requirements (<http://www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au>). There were differences in the details of the design of the TAC and Summer Foundation apartments.

Apartments were designed to be aesthetically pleasing to anyone (ie '*able to be sold later*'), functional, and '*accessible but not institutional*'. This focussed the attention of the collaborators on the details in each apartment as well as the accessibility of the doors and pathways in the common areas within the apartment complex, both inside and outside the building. Adaptability in kitchen and bathroom areas proved critical for optimising personal independence.

Technology was pursued which could:

- Reinforce each tenant's sense of, and capacity for, independence, privacy and personal control (through control of, for example, light, blinds, temperature, door access)
- Reinforce each tenant's confidence and sense of security when they were alone
- Create reliable communication, safety and security arrangements for emergencies and contingencies
- Simultaneously reduce the need for ever-present support staff by increasing each tenant's independence.

There is the same core technology in each apartment:

- Each tenant can alert staff at any time in the event of an emergency or need for urgent unplanned assistance using a range of devices (such as pendant, alert on the wall, alert button on an ipad or smart phone). In response to the alert, staff can make two-way voice contact with the tenant in their unit through hands free speakers and microphones located in all major rooms in their unit
- Via an ipad or smartphone tenants can operate the lighting, blinds, heating and cooling in their units as well as open the door to their unit and open the door to the apartment building to let visitors in.

The home automation technology is a mainstream product that has had some adaptations made to fit the needs of the project

Both the entry gate to the site and the building entry door have been automated to interface with the home automation system. In addition, the lift in the building has been retrofitted to enable control by the use of a remote control device by any tenant who cannot operate normal lift control buttons.

The specific features of physical design of the individual units included:

- Highly accessible internal circulation spaces in each apartment, (such as door and corridor width; room lengths; and turning circles)
- Attractive design similar to neighbouring units, with use of mainstream rather than disability specific design and products wherever possible
- Accessible bathrooms and kitchens with a number of adaptable features that can be tailored to individual requirements
- Robust wall products to reduce damage from wheelchairs.

Tenants are responsible for their own phone and remote controls for television and entertainment systems.

### **Staff support model: practice and funding**

Principles: TAC and Summer Foundation together developed frameworks for providing access to 24 hour support, a purposeful use of technology, and finding alternative approaches to traditional shared supported accommodation models and their recognised shortfalls. The key principles underpinning the support model framework were: a person-centred approach; enhanced independence; the promotion of community inclusion; partnership and collaboration; and capability and experience.

Consistent with these principles, annecto developed and implemented the staff support model of planning, support and facilitation.

The short and long-term goals for support depend on building personal capability so that people with complex needs can live in their own home and can lead the planning and design of their own supports.

Planning, support and facilitation: The annecto staff support model features a dedicated staff member (termed the Community Inclusion Facilitator) for transition and facilitation planning, as well as direct support workers (termed Inclusion Support Facilitators), plus the use of the assistive technology to enable personalised links to annecto's existing After Hours Service.

The Community Inclusion Facilitator supports collaboration between each tenant and their family and friends – to plan personal goals, maintain and develop networks, and provide the practical support needed for each tenant to live well in their own apartment and local community. This role supports people in managing the real life situations which emerge when people start to live more independently in the community, such as tensions which may arise between tenants and staff, among neighbours, or with the Owners' Corporation.

The Community Inclusion Facilitator arranged many meetings with each tenant (and their family/ friends) for up to eight weeks before the decision to move in, and then in the process of moving in, in order to get to know each person and understand how they wished to live. This required planning and decisions to be tailored to each individual arising from the location, and design and technology for each tenant. This planning considered the roles and communication styles of paid staff, family and community members, and included 24 hour on call and emergency support.

Tenants are supported to be active rather than passive in their daily lives. For example, tenants were involved in selecting and training their Inclusion Support Facilitators.

Inclusion Support Facilitators are expected to encourage tenant initiation and assist with '*only what people can't do*'. Staff understand the relationship between each tenant's independence and maximising the use of technology and design features. Staff also understand the importance of not just 'doing things' for tenants – for example, it is the staff role to maximise each tenant's use of the technology, not to use the technology instead of the tenant.

How staff are funded and organised: The staff support role is enabling and extends well beyond attendant care support for personal care. The support model necessitated a costing model that recognised different staff competencies. TAC has a Disability Services Agreement with annecto regarding provision of care and support for the TAC tenants. The two Summer Foundation tenants have support funded through Department of Housing and Human Services ISPs. Support funded through TAC ensures access to support 24 hours a day and is flexible based on each individual changing support needs. For those with state disability funding, arrangements are less reliably aligned to people's support needs and to changes in those needs.

From a tenant perspective, all staff support is individual and tailored. There are only individual responses, and no group-based staff responses. From an organisational perspective, support is delivered through *individual* and *shared* staff support components. The *shared* component enables 24/7 availability so that issues can be responded to which are beyond the support provision developed from each person's individual goals. In addition, there is access to the annecto After Hours Service.

The collaborators are committed to identifying potential cost efficiencies in the ongoing staffing arrangements that do not compromise the support model or tenant outcomes. The requirement for paid support is expected to decrease over time, at least for some people, as the tenants work closely with the Community Inclusion Facilitator to develop confidence and capability; as they become more comfortable and independent using technology and equipment; and as they build their own local networks.



# HOW LONG DID ABBOTSFORD TAKE?

---

## BEFORE THE COLLABORATION

RIPL, Summer Foundation, CEHL and annecto had worked independently in similar policy and practice directions before the collaboration. These developments in each organisation ultimately assisted the emergence of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project.

RIPL had consulted with TAC clients, their families, service providers, allied health professionals and hospitals to develop a comprehensive design brief. This brief was to meet the needs of tenants, and to provide quality support that is cost-effective for people requiring high levels of support. RIPL aimed to provide accessible accommodation for people with complex disabilities and opportunities for them to live as independently as possible. The built environment was to meet or exceed 'Platinum level' of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines; to create independent living units located in close proximity to facilitate sharing of support; to utilise assistive technology to provide greater control and independence; and to separate housing from the onsite support staff provision.

Summer Foundation believed that individual tenant housing and support for people with residential aged-care level care needs could be developed – without creating the restrictions inherent in residential aged care or shared supported accommodation. Summer Foundation's research had identified policies and practices similar to TAC's ideas for new housing opportunities, enabling individualised models of support and greater use of technology.

annecto had developed an approach to planning, support and facilitation that considered tenant needs beyond regular attendant care. annecto focused on inclusion – to support people to live in their own homes and to participate in local communities.

CEHL commenced planning a private and social housing development in 2008, before the opportunity arose to include accessible housing for people with disabilities in the development.

---

## GETTING STARTED

Late in 2012, RIPL and Summer Foundation separately became interested in a housing development that was underway in Abbotsford, Victoria. The building was partly completed.

The two organisations recognised an opportunity to work in collaboration on this site to evolve a new approach to accessible housing with support – an approach that also aligned with their organisational objectives and visions. TAC and Summer Foundation adopted slightly different processes and timelines within the overall project.

---

## TIMELINES

The following timelines describe the significant events in the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project development process. Additional activities occurring within and between the collaborating organisations which will differ in future projects are not itemised here. In just over 12 months from the initial meetings (between CEHL, Summer Foundation and TAC) the first tenants moved in with annecto's support. During this time, the purchase of apartments was finalised; plans were made for the adaptations of the six apartments; tenants were selected; annecto was appointed as the support provider and commenced the tenants' transition planning; the building was completed, and the first tenants moved in. It was almost 12 months later that the last tenant moved in.

### 2012

Mid-year: Regular meetings between CEHL, Summer Foundation and RIPL

November: RIPL and Summer Foundations Boards agree to proceed with purchase of apartments subject to meeting conditions for renovation, adaptability and accessibility

November –December: Advertisements and interviews for the support provider undertaken by Summer Foundation and TAC

December: CEHL commits funds and proceeds with agreed variations to the existing design and building contract with the principal contractor.

### 2013

January–April: TAC and Summer Foundation finalise apartment purchases: four apartments for RIPL, two for Summer Foundation. Each Board formally agrees to purchases

February: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) drawn up between TAC and Summer Foundation to formalise collaborative work: to design, establish and evaluate a shared model of support for tenants for the six apartments. Contract negotiations with successful support provider commence

March–April: TAC confirms tenants selected for Abbotsford

May: Full building completed, including works on TAC and Summer Foundation units and formal opening by CEHL. Support provider contract signed with annecto and transition planning commenced with TAC tenants

May–June: Abbotsford Working Group monthly meetings begin

August: First compensable tenants move in.

# REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS

---

Evidence is emerging that the Abbotsford model is successful, and has quickly improved tenants' quality of life as tenants become more independent in their homes and community environments. The role of the Community Inclusion Facilitator and an emphasis on enabling and building capacity are seen as essential to the ongoing success of such projects. These project results will be attractive to many potential collaborators, particularly the National Disability Insurance Agency/National Disability Insurance Scheme and the housing sector.

There are good reasons to replicate and extend the achievements of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project. Learnings from the Abbotsford experience are relevant to new projects, new policy and new thinking about housing for people with disabilities, including those with complex support needs. The most useful learning from Abbotsford is that organisations with the foresight to recognise an opportunity for a housing development can be successful, despite the challenges of short timelines and a lack of synchrony between organisational processes.

The significance of simultaneously promoting personal independence and increasing long term service effectiveness is just now being realised. Ideally the Abbotsford experiences will commence an ongoing process of learning and development with ever expanding possibilities through improvements in design, technology and staff practices. Experiences from Abbotsford have already led to refinements in other housing developments.

---

## REPLICATING ABBOTSFORD

There is no set model of housing and support that can be developed in the same way each time. In fact, such uniformity would be contrary to the aim of personalising arrangements for each tenant, a foundational driver of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project. Too frequently, experience reveals that expectations of uniformity and short term priorities have led to rigid living arrangements for people with disabilities. Inflexible requirements (often inherent in how organisations operate) together with uniformity (often aimed at increasing accountability), can be barriers to flexibility and innovation. For example, requirements for (government) funding can require certainty too soon about which potential site might prove feasible, or what is the optimal design and technology.

Replicating and maintaining Abbotsford's achievements is not straightforward, and challenges for collaboration and for personalising service responses will arise from the differences between individual organisations. Both collaboration and personalised service activities require compromise, sharing and new ways of operating. Ongoing organisational effort will be required to attend to long term goals alongside short term complications. There will always be trade-offs between personalising housing and service provision, and economies of scale. However when the individual tenant's perspective is given comparable weighting, institutional design and practice are less likely to dominate.

---

## ABOUT TIMING

No one could have predicted that so much would be achieved by four organisations in such a short time. The sequence of events for the development of the Abbotsford model is counterintuitive. Short timelines meant that normally sequential events occurred concurrently or in the wrong order – such as adaptations commencing before funding was finalised. Decisions had to be made quickly or opportunities for this housing innovation would have been lost.

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project was developed in just over 12 months, from the time it was agreed to develop the six apartments in one complex, to the time the first tenants moved in. This was a remarkably short process. Collaborators described an element of '*luck*' in the timing and sequencing of the events leading up to tenants moving in – with '*all factors coming together*'. This luck (that '*Abbotsford happened with few major delays, went smoothly*') combined with '*the short time to implement*' because the building was nearing completion, meant that the project kept the same people '*locked in*'. Longer time frames would have increased the likelihood that key people moved on into other roles. The same collaborators maintained their long term vision for change, and there was limited time to ponder barriers before the project moved on, so that risks disappeared or became no longer relevant.

But more than luck was involved in the success. The collaborators' skills meant that they recognised the opportunity presented by the partially completed building. They understood that: '*Not everything can be planned. Opportunities do present themselves: but they have to be recognised, can't be predicted!*'

---

## EXPECTATIONS OF TENANTS AND THE ROLE OF SUPPORT STAFF

Abbotsford was designed for tenants with complex support needs. The approach depended on people being willing to be responsible, active and more independent both within their apartments and in the community. Tenants had to appreciate their individual responsibilities as tenants; to be capable of living in the apartment; to be attracted to the location; and to be willing to use technology. This was new for all tenants. People who find it difficult to embrace the opportunity for increasing independence will find the model challenging. Such responses then challenge the model.

Support is needed for transition and to deal with the unexpected: Transition and facilitation planning emerged as an essential component to assist prospective tenants and their families to imagine possibilities for living differently, to decide if this way of living was right for them (and people did change their minds), and refine the quality of support offered when people did move in. Each tenant required initial (and repeated) information, and support with decision-making and adjustment in the initial months after moving in to build confidence and reduce anxiety. Involving potential tenants early in the project development creates opportunities to build tenant understanding, personal commitment and the capacity to manage fear and anxiety. Implementation so far at Abbotsford has led to greater understanding about how to respond to ad hoc issues that arise, especially after hours. The annecto After Hours Service has been critical to this response, for example when staff need extra assistance, or if staff don't arrive for work as planned.



Importance of everyone understanding enabling support staff roles: Support staff aim to constantly build individual confidence, capacity, and the desire to be independent. It is a priority for support staff to enable and encourage tenants to do as much as possible themselves...*'and if not, (ask) why not?'* Staff ask tenants *'what is your responsibility in this?'*

Tenants and their families have to be ready or the project is jeopardised. Understanding the anxieties of each individual and their family was part of the transition and facilitation process. A number of (potential) tenants fluctuated over time *'being 'in' then 'out' then 'in' again'*. Safety and feeling safe is very important and time is needed to ensure that people with complex support needs will be safe, and that they trust support staff and technology (for example, that they know what to do if they get sick). Tenants need to understand what will be gained and lost with new arrangements; and recognise what can happen because of living in apartments, such as relevant community resources (for example, the proximity of shops or a gym). People could be worried about feeling isolated; about having no energy left for community involvement because of the effort needed for day to day household living; or about what to do if technology fails or a catheter is blocked.

Tenants also needed time to reflect on comments from their existing support agencies, particularly when those providers did not support or understand the Abbotsford vision.

Educational materials to demonstrate how support, technology and design would operate were helpful for individuals and families. Individuals can now personally explain what living arrangements are like – and what their life is like. But before the project was established, it was difficult for prospective tenants to *picture it*, and it was difficult to convince and inform tenants and their families and support providers about what was possible.

It was not possible to predict which individuals would 'fit' the model beyond a basic profile. Not all potentially suitable and initially keen people proved to be motivated to be more independent. Only some people can make the transition from fully supported daily living to becoming more capable. Different reactions from tenants and a wide range of variables were noted, such as timing in a person's life, support needs, current and previous living situation, funding, health status and views of family members.

Some potential tenants were attracted to the high profile of the development, or because of the absence of other housing arrangements. Some potential tenants decided Abbotsford was not appropriate, for example, if they wanted two bedrooms; or there was inadequate proximity to family or a familiar neighbourhood; or they were uncomfortable with expectations of decreasing staff support. Some potentially suitable people had insufficient support packages.

### **What it means to be safe at home**

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project is changing expectations for everyone about *'what is safe at home'*. Support focused on independence goes beyond *'what people ask for'*, as people may not choose to do more for themselves, look after their health or learn how to problem solve. Person-centred planning includes individual tenants attending to *'their health, safety and independence'*.

A critical role in support was being sensitive to tenants' anxieties, and their emotional adjustment to living alone without staff present all the time. Many people had never been alone in their lives, or since their accident. Now they were living in their own apartment, reliant on technology and on-call staff, and this transition seemed to be more difficult for people who had lived in staffed settings. Times of high anxiety for tenants (such as housing transition, ill health, return to work) will lead to short term support cost increases, as transition and facilitation workers set up new problem-solving strategies.



---

## TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN AND STAFF – ALL WORKING TOGETHER

Ongoing attention is needed to the interface between the capability of an individual tenant, the technology and equipment that can maximise independence, and the support staff. The Abbotsford project widens a typical understanding of support. This is because the project recognises aspects of the built form in housing which affect quality of life and long term support costs– such as housing location and design, purposeful adaptation, and the effectiveness of household appliances and technology. Design aspects are also associated with changes in staff training and roles. To avoid only providing *attendant care*, staff need to be prepared to use/engage with assistive technology, and to understand their role in facilitating inclusion and independence. Those monitoring staff practices must be alert to occasions when staff may be being asked *to do*, or are offering to do what a tenant could do. This includes using the technology.

The same technology footprint in each apartment proved suitable for most people, perhaps with minor adaptations. Providers of home automation (such as controls for blinds and lights) learned how to use or adapt their systems for a new customer group, and learned how to retrofit an apartment building. Some tenants didn't readily adapt to using technology and some initial technology failures reduced tenant confidence. This in turn increased a fear of being alone, which reduced confidence in the support arrangements. The collaborating organisations constantly reviewed and refined these arrangements to maximise reliability of technology and adaptation to individual needs and preferences and to ensure backups for safety and security.

Small-scale practical approaches will support tenants to carry out their daily routines and can avoid accumulated staff support hours and costs over many years. For example:

- Carefully analyse typical routines such as what it takes for each tenant to get food from the fridge to the microwave, to have a meal, and then to put dishes in the dishwasher and turn it on
- Purchase superior kitchen equipment (such as ovens with telescopic shelves) to enable personal capability. Costs can be recouped in a few years rather than spiralling into ongoing support-worker costs
- Customise low cost household supplies and appliances. For example replacing laundry powder with capsules for tenants unable to tip the powder into the washing machine; bathroom shampoo can be placed in a holder tailored to a tenant's movement span.



---

## INSIGHTS FROM THE PROCESS OF COLLABORATION

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project was established in a very short time frame via a highly successful collaboration between the four core organisations that ensured design, technology and support staff tailored for each tenant and apartment. Future projects will have different collaborating organisation profiles, but how the collaboration process operated emerged as critical to the progress and success of the project. Collaborators shared commitment, passion and a common vision, plus effective modes of communication, problem-solving and idea generation, where *'everyone went the extra mile'*. The art of success lay in developing the committed collaboration with the right people, and producing shared directions which people *'didn't walk away from'*.

### Collaboration and a non-sequential process

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project did not develop sequentially and did not follow classic project management processes and timelines. This was a dynamic project where opportunities, barriers and obstacles were recognised and managed, often at speed as they arose; and where it was important to anticipate needs which might emerge in the months ahead. Trust, and the use of transparent processes between collaborators, helped them make decisions on behalf of their organisations. The collaborators expended effort to optimise collaboration. There was ongoing checking between collaborators, confirming directions and updating documentation to reflect the latest agreements and understandings.

This was a more operational role for the managers involved than is usually the case, so that those managers were kept aware of issues which could derail the project. Close management involvement allowed different approaches to *'what is usual'*.

Achieving more than the sum of the parts: Abbotsford is a complex project which delivered through collaboration more than could have been achieved by identifying key core roles and assuming that these can be implemented in isolation. Each collaborator had different reporting requirements within their organisations but everyone was involved in discussing the project overall, beyond each member's specific roles. Everyone needed to understand the key project elements (for example, how the design/ technology aspects interfaced with support staff roles) and not just attend to their own specific responsibilities or risks. This led to an identification of dependencies in the project not typically recognised in less collaborative projects. Learning about roles and responsibilities beyond each specific role meant everyone had a better understanding of all aspects of the project and their interrelationships. People working in different roles were exposed to wider issues determining whole project outcomes, for example, collaborative sharing *'educated the builder and architect about the benefits of more inclusive housing developments'*.

### Start with a clear and shared vision

The importance of a clear and shared vision was an essential starting point for the collaboration and remained a constant throughout the process. This vision bound individual tenant outcomes (for a more independent life) and organisational imperatives (for long term budget control). The collaborating organisations *'kept a check on each other'*, and thereby protected and reinforced the shared vision. Processes were in place to monitor the project against the shared vision at each project meeting. If new people joined the project, the use of words by everyone in the collaboration was agreed (for example, what did 'support' mean to everyone). Inherent in a shared vision was matching the priorities of individual organisations with the project priorities, which included:

- Recognition by the (compensable and non-compensable) disability support sectors that many people with high support needs were in less than optimum housing and support arrangements; and that people with high support needs could live more independently, side by side with community members, and not require the same level of long term support funding

- Recognition of the importance of tailored location, design, technology and staff roles to maximise each tenant's long term independence. Tailored staff roles determine that the opportunities from location, design and technology can be optimised
- Rigorous attention to what the project will achieve, and recognition that the process of how to do this will evolve. This meant not just the ability to concentrate on the overall directions and goals, but also identifying processes and decisions which could undermine this goal along the way
- Priority to best practice in everything – design, technology, and staff planning, support and facilitation practice which embeds a commitment for everyone to keep on learning and developing
- Importance of strong research and evidence base. This meant a requirement for research to be embedded in the service agreements, the MOU, and the project philosophies.

### Features of the collaboration

Each organisation benefited from the collaboration and this was a significant factor in achieving the overall project outcomes. None of the Abbotsford project collaborators felt that any one organisation could have proceeded alone and achieve the same positive results. There were advantages described for each member agency in being part of the collaboration and *'individual agency priorities also could be satisfied'*.

Time was spent clarifying the expertise, capability and roles of collaborators. There was expertise unique to specific collaborators (such as knowledge of the compensable or non-compensable systems and networks) and there was shared capability. In addition, roles and the relative contributions within the collaboration changed over the course of implementation. It proved important initially, and during the process, to spend time in core group meetings and in project team workshops to clarify roles. annecto introduced that Art of Hosting approach to participatory engagement and collaboration which has been a *'significant contributor to enabling and maintaining (working group) governance arrangements'*.

Everyone owns the collaborative project, including the tenants. It is always important to acknowledge everyone. No one organisation was the lead agency. The project benefited from adopting an *'always learning'* environment. Trust and support between collaborators meant it was recognised that mistakes could happen – and individuals in the group would identify mistakes and work through them. There was an emphasis on building capability across the project team, the staff team and tenants; and a commitment to *'not just doing things because that's the way we've always done it'*.

The pathway to innovation introduced uncertainties and untried processes: *'not everyone or all organisations can work like this. Not everyone has tolerance for uncertainty'*. Organisations were each being asked to work differently. This challenged organisational boards and internal staff who were not necessarily familiar with alternative ways of working, and internal systems that had to adjust to be able to apply this model. For example, human resource departments were challenged by tenants interviewing potential new staff members.

Keeping other key decision-makers up to date was essential. Constant education and high quality information about reasons and benefits were necessary for those decision-makers not directly involved in the collaboration (especially for senior staff and board members). Keeping others up to date built commitment and understanding, acknowledged other views, and helped justify recommendations. The importance of identifying who to involve early at the conceptual stage of a collaborative project in order to promote broad understanding of the intent of a new project was identified. This process avoids and minimises *'push back'* later, if and when people (including board members) are asked to work or make decisions differently

The collaborators had:

- Foresight to recognise a housing development opportunity and preparedness to act and collaborate
- Credibility and trust between project team members, willingness to share and to use influence informally and '*behind the scenes*', within and between organisations
- Commitment to gathering an evidence-base about the effectiveness of all aspects of the model, using reflective practice and action research as well as longer term outcome evaluation
- Experience operating in a commercial context with social housing development and management
- Knowledge and expertise about a wide range of housing and support options – including the strengths and shortfalls – and in the compensable and non-compensable disability support systems
- Understanding of the importance of integrated support in the widest sense, bringing together contributions from design, technology and staff planning, support and facilitation practice
- Understanding of how to share support staff resources without requiring tenants to live together or do activities together
- Understanding of the issues for overall implementation and therefore the perspectives and priorities of the collaborating organisations. This was particularly important for managing the misalignment between commercial imperatives and slower bureaucratic processes
- A view to the long term. Allowing time to '*think through*' issues related to identifying housing options and improving quality of life for people with high support needs and not narrowing responses to short term costs and issues
- A commitment to strengthening the process of collaboration and communication. Collaborators worked on their skills in maintaining partnerships and were '*attuned to the anxieties of others*' – both individuals and organisations – and were prepared to support each other to further the project.

### **More informal than formal agreements**

Much of the work between collaborators was based on informal agreements and trust – which preceded finalising some of the major decisions. Informal meetings between CEHL, TAC and Summer Foundation established the shared vision for the project. The Abbotsford Working Group was formed after the appointment of annecto (the support provider), and became the main forum for communication and problem solving. The Abbotsford Working Group was '*collaborative and participative, rather than hierarchical, and with an emphasis on relationships*', avoiding hierarchy and potentially losing information between the layers and stopping or slowing progress. There was no overall project leader and everyone had the responsibility to share.

Clear purpose and processes, shared accountability and internal checking processes were followed, and outcomes were defined in the terms of reference established by the Abbotsford Working Group. The Abbotsford Working Group met (and continues to meet) monthly. Individuals also report back to ongoing internal meetings within each member organisation. Principle and policy statements have been produced by the Abbotsford Working Group describing the model, the vision and the target group.

The first formal document was an MOU with a set of core principles signed off between TAC and Summer Foundation. This MOU was the framework for review, and for a dynamic process of making progressive changes applicable to meeting objectives.

There is a formal agreement between the TAC and annecto for the provision of care and support for the TAC tenants.

---

## COMPROMISES, BOTTOM LINES AND RISKS TO THE PROJECT

All collaborators agreed that there were issues which could not be compromised without jeopardising the project and the shared vision. These were:

- The model of support emphasising greater personal capability for tenants and reducing long term costs, incorporating staff roles emphasising planning, support and facilitation
- Housing arrangements which reinforced people's responsibilities as tenants
- Tenants had to be committed to increasing their independence
- Commitment to '*doing something new*' with design, technology, and staff support without losing sight of considerations of tenant safety
- Representing the collaboration, not just the individual organisations. Any of the partners presenting the project must refer to the collaboration, and explain what it takes to achieve this.

Each organisation had '*deal breakers*', or issues which from their perspective had to be included or resolved or they could not continue. Factors identified that had the potential to place the project at risk included:

- Lack of understanding of the difference between traditional attendant care support and support which is person-centred, flexible and emphasises personal capability building
- Boards of member agencies not appreciating the opportunity arising from the collaboration, and being too slow or risk focused in decision making
- Collaborators who did not understand commercial imperatives and collaborators being financially exposed awaiting alignment with governance or bureaucratic processes in member organisations
- Failure to ensure physical access such as inaccessible paths of travel from the main street frontage entrance of the proposed site
- Asking tenants to share support arrangements by spending time in a group with each other
- Any of the collaborators acting unilaterally despite implications for other members, or not recognising the contributions of other members.

Compromises which did not threaten the shared vision for the project were possible. The questions raised, the issues identified and the trade-offs negotiated are all important learnings for future projects. Trade-offs are inevitable and required discussion. Collaborators deliberated on how best to make these decisions, and a useful consideration was '*what is reasonable?*'

# SYSTEM AND POLICY ISSUES ARISING

---

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project is embedded in a mixed private equity and social housing development, and has produced accessible apartments suitable for people with complex support needs. By demonstrating what is possible for people with the highest disability support needs, the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project outcomes become relevant by implication for anyone with a disability. There are many yet to be explored opportunities to build personal independence through housing design and technology coupled with enabling staff support which aim to maximise long term quality of life and minimise life time support costs.

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project flourished because of the strength of the formal and informal collaborations; the capacity to review adaptations throughout the process and to trade off what was possible with what was most important; and the commitment to remaining attuned to tenants' individual differences. Such successful collaborations leading to innovative results do not follow rigid development and implementation processes. Pursuing innovation can be contrary to existing business and organisational practices.

There are many possibilities and challenges for systemic reform in the housing and support sectors.

---

## INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES

Abbotsford is an example of how to develop and manage a flexible and non-standard project. The learning is that any approach which is personalised and tailored for individual tenants /clients will require flexibility and distinct responses. This is contrary to how organisations usually operate with an emphasis on consistency and uniformity. Without a means to make personal outcomes as important as organisational imperatives such as control of budget and risk, organisational imperatives over time will undermine the vision for people with disabilities to have better lives. The responses to budget and risk can become more important than the risks to increasing dependency or isolation for people with disabilities. What Abbotsford shows is that alongside an emphasis on people with disabilities having better lives, organisational imperatives can be responded to, as long as individual tenant priorities and organisational priorities remain interdependent.

### Challenges remaining for future developments

There are ongoing challenges in reconciling personal and organisational outcomes.

Collaboration takes effort and time: Much unfunded time was committed by collaborators and suppliers for Abbotsford. The assumption was that not as much effort would be needed next time. However, this is probably not true; collaboration takes time, each time. This was a hidden cost in the Abbotsford development.

Concurrent rather than sequential processes: Many processes in the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project occurred concurrently rather than sequentially, and '*leaps of faith*' were required between collaborators when formal processes did not dovetail precisely. It remains to be seen whether the need for implementation stages to follow a nonconventional sequence is a feature of other developments, especially those with longer timeframes.

Recognising all components of the model of support: Location, design and technology alone will not lead to greater independence for many people. The role of the Community Inclusion Facilitator helped offset the dynamic of re-institutionalised living, by ensuring each tenant considered what it was possible to achieve beyond their usual capability and experiences.

---

Missed opportunities for increased independence: Choosing a pathway to greater independence requires more effort from staff, tenants and family and raises anxiety for many. If staff simply *'do what people ask'*, there is the likelihood they will be *'doing for'* people. The result can add to people's dependence and isolation from the wider community and increase long terms support costs.

The *'right balance'* between risk and quality of life: Having one's own apartment provides more opportunities for improving quality of life and also potentially introduces more risks.

Implications if independence does increase but costs don't reduce: Support hours will not decrease for everyone and may increase again (with illness, older age, and degenerative conditions). Linking increasing personal independence to a reduction in support costs may not always be possible. Other personal outcomes such as improving personal wellbeing and quality of life can also be specific considerations.

Finding the balance between the building design in general (factors such as generalised access) and customised design for each person: The interaction between property developers and a (person-by-person) response to people with high support needs is still evolving. Debate is needed about what is a reasonable building adaptation, what is reasonable for access, and when further adaptations for specific tenants should be made and who meets the costs. Variables can include tenants moving or having changing support needs.

Personal privacy and organisational achievements: There is a specific tension between identifying the suburb and the apartment building to promote organisational achievements versus protecting the privacy of tenants, minimising the risk of stigma and drawing attention to where vulnerable people are living.

Arrangements which interfere with the obligations of tenants, occur when the same organisation provides housing and support, or when the housing provider works through the support provider and not through the tenant.

---

## START WITH REAL WORLD CHOICE AND CONTROL

This project revealed the importance of a focus at the *'normal (housing) world end – not the disability end'*. That is, the focus emphasised how people who do not have a disability would do the same thing. Starting *'in the real world'* means thinking through the implications arising from really increasing personal choice and control and emphasising personal responsibility at home.

Essential role for support staff and real choice: Personal responsibility entails tenants being active and having specific responsibilities; reciprocating effort; and understanding that things change or unfold not solely based on what someone wants. This requires a more complex support role for staff than simply doing what tenants ask. Support staff can too easily slide to providing only *'personal care'* and *'doing for'* people, particularly if tenants don't understand, or don't want more independence. People being supported may be satisfied, but is this a reasonable choice? Can individuals/ families choose options involving more dependence (for example, wanting two hours of a support worker per day) and thus opt out of increasing quality of life (by learning to cook)? Or, are there situations where staff involvement in the household will enable a tenant to participate in a community activity (for example, attend a meeting) and this is a more important than the tenant personally completing household tasks.

Support focusing on independence goes beyond what people ask for: Person-centred planning means the person is not in a position to reject health, safety or independence considerations. It takes time to work with people and identify whether what is available or possible links with what they want. Choice and control can mean selecting between *'options that aren't perfect, but that's what's there'*.

Tenants informed about *'real world'* implications can make better decisions: It is important not to protect people with disabilities from information and *'real world issues'*. For example one person was informed that they could choose staff support but not told about the costs to the support provider of *'chopping and changing'* staff. The tenant was protected from real world realities and taking personal responsibility in relation to staff conditions, reasonable staff turnover and costs. *'Choice and control'* are not expressed through changing the staff roster every day.

---

## BE ALERT TO THE EVER PRESENT RISK OF RE-INSTITUTIONALISATION

Re-institutionalisation means a move away from *'real world'* housing with tenants being responsible in their homes, towards more organisation-dominated decisions with passive tenants. It means a focus on group-based rather than individual support, which is understood in terms of facilities that are primarily workplaces and not as people's homes; and this all occurs apart from community members. It also means staff roles which are limited to attendant care and fail to focus on opportunities for enablement, personal development and community inclusion.

Projects seen as innovative are able to be treated within organisations as exceptional, and are often released from the requirements of established organisational processes. The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project depended on some of the collaborators *'doing things differently'* in order to achieve long term benefits. However, there is a tendency for organisations, perhaps without realising, to *'revert back to what we know'*: that which is familiar, routine and takes less effort. Bureaucracies can drift back to treating people's homes as a public facility, employing standardised rather than personalised responses (for example in areas like risk and fire safety) and overlooking privacy when there are assumptions about access to the living space. There is a desire for organisational uniformity (in occupational health and safety, finance, personnel and purchasing) which can overwhelm or act against improving quality of life and independence for individuals.

Confused thinking can arise between the new way and usual way. The usual way, for example, *'we give people places and look after them'* versus the new Abbotsford way, *'this is their home and they are responsible'*. It is important to emphasise that this is each tenant's own home; it is not a facility. The circumstances are the same as for anyone living in their own private homes.

Institutional thinking can also arise via the particular training of different professionals. Each profession has a set way of identifying issues and problem solving. For example, basic training for lawyers may argue against trusting collaborative projects. Architects may plan for all aspects at the start of a build as if they are of equal importance; and therapists can base decisions on sets of recommendations for groups of people in certain circumstances, rather than for individuals each in a differently designed environment. This could be a barrier to a project like Abbotsford, which benefited from professionals using their expertise to respond in a more individualised manner.

One *'sleeper'* in the model is the potential contribution of onsite staff in regard to independence and personalisation. It is possible that where tenants know staff are present, an unconscious dynamic is established that means *'it's easier to call on staff'*. Tenants may defer to a staff member on what is best for them for their lifestyle, rather than rely on their own judgement to make a decision. This highlights again the complex judgements required of support staff.



---

## ASK MORE OF TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN, STAFF PRACTICE...AND KEEP LEARNING

Abbotsford has widened the typical understanding of support by identifying those aspects of the built form in housing which can affect quality of life and opportunities for independence. Support to each tenant therefore incorporates contributions from housing location, design, adaptation, household appliances and technology, as well as staff roles and practice.

There are critical inter-relationships between support staff processes and the optimal use of technology, design, location and staff support personalised to how each person wants to live. Staff need to be prepared to promote the use of assistive technology, and to understand their role to encourage independence and facilitate inclusion.

Technology and design are changing rapidly and promise much for future independence with possibilities for controlling the environment, cueing and reminding, and enabling communication. Technology can contribute to the feeling and reality of safety and security. More attention is needed from a property development perspective to the use of technology and design to reduce the requirements and costs for building personalisation; and for people (with cognitive impairment who find technology harder to understand) to be more able to initiate and maintain their use of technology.

---

## STILL TO BE TACKLED: LONGER TERM SUSTAINABILITY

This report offers reflections and learnings about the origins and set up phase of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project. The project is now entering a new stage, with a new set of issues emerging around ongoing implementation. The systems which are needed to keep things going, and (probably) with fewer resources than the initial set up, are being identified. The Abbotsford Working Group is starting to work on strategic versus operational issues, such as:

- Identifying the continuing collaborative processes needed for managing overtime and checking progress against the vision and outcomes wanted
- Managing the emotions and responses when staff are asked to do something by a tenant that the tenant could do themselves
- Developing the relationship between shared and individual support as tenants become more independent
- Identifying opportunities for optimum use of staff resources without compromising the vision and the model
- Clarifying the responsibility of the building Owners' Corporation and the implications of tenancy; for example, who has responsibility for wheelchair damage in shared areas?

---

## IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHERS

The achievements and learnings from the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project have broad relevance to developing housing and support for people with disabilities.

### National Disability Insurance Agency

Increasing independence, leading to increasing power and control; increasing social and economic participation; and cost effectiveness in support costs are all critical for the NDIA. The learnings from Abbotsford relevant to the NDIA are:

- Potential tenants need information and examples of what's possible to encourage them to want to be more independent and more responsible
- Importance of operating in the real world, with individuals as tenants first and foremost, rather than creating facilities and artificial conditions for housing away from the rest of the community
- Housing location and design sets the scene for people with disabilities minimising transport and staff costs as part of being in their community
- The approach of planning, support and facilitation staff can optimise use of design and technology for greater independence and community inclusion
- Support providers in general will need motivation to be more personalised, to emphasise increasing independence and to aim to reduce support dollars: otherwise, *'there is a perverse incentive to maintain existing budgets'*
- It is yet to be resolved what constitutes reasonable building infrastructure for NDIA to fund which is beyond normal housing, which could then be adapted for each specific person from their ISF's.

### Disability service providers involved in similar projects

Disability support providers need to develop a model of support and staff practice which demonstrably increases independence, quality of life and community participation for people with disabilities. They need:

- To recognise that support for a person includes design, technology and what staff do – and that these are inter related. *'Caring for'* people does not lead to greater independence
- To have data to understand the costs of support and the outcomes achieved
- To identify effective staff practices which achieve individual outcomes, and where possible to reduce support costs over time
- To have systems to ensure that personal capability building for tenants is at least as important as organisational imperatives.

### Housing providers and property developers

Be ready for opportunities. This project demonstrated that a tailored housing development can happen quickly. What was achieved was exceptional, in part because the project was seen as a demonstration project and therefore able to be partitioned from the usual activities within collaborating organisations.

# SUMMING UP: A CASE STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

---

The vision for the Abbotsford development was ...*'making a reality the long term impact of increasing independence, decreasing support hours, and maximising control for tenants'* (Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project documents).

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project is on the way to achieving its vision. There has been concerted attention to the roles and responsibilities of tenants; to maximising each tenant's independence and confidence; and to tenants having greater control in their daily lives. It was also recognised that greater personal control is a product of the interaction between the tenants and the personalisation of design, physical layout, and technology and that more independence is enabled by support staff in their various person-centred planning and facilitation roles. Time will tell whether greater tenant capability translates to reducing support costs, but the possibility for this to occur has been established.

What has happened in the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project is unusual. A clear and shared vision, which recognises individual outcomes and organisational imperatives, has emerged as an essential point of difference with other housing projects.

---

## UNDERSTANDING COLLABORATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

This report aimed to present the findings in a manner that allows others to learn from the experiences of the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project even when conditions in other situations are different (as they likely will be) and even though the projects may differ. It is useful to draw on literature about inter-organisational collaboration and social change, (see References) which suggests the following:

- Complex social change requires collaboration between organisations
- Collaboration is essential for social change for complex social problems that one agency cannot tackle alone; and when a social problem cuts across the core interests of multiple stakeholders
- Interagency collaboration is more likely when there is an environmental context typified by shortages of resources; or where there is concern about organisational and sector performance (which may be both complex and unpredictable)
- Guiding principles for successful collaborations include: a commitment to ongoing learning and adaptation; collaborators who appreciate and respect each other's realities; and agreement about outcomes and impact, that is, what is to be achieved and why is it important
- Signs of successful inter-organisational collaboration are: willingness to work together; shared vision; trust; previous, successful collaborative experiences; good communication; and an understanding of respective organisational cultures.

- Factors contributing to unsuccessful collaborations are: lack of support from upper management; lack of commitment and trust; lack of common vision and goals; no negative consequences applied if a partner organisation is not collaborating; change of personnel, or a lack of understanding of collaborating agencies' cultures; lack of time to collaborate; and hindrance from rules and regulations
- Leadership within inter-organisational collaborations is increasingly framed in terms of bridge building, in contrast to traditional leadership which is defined by relationships between leaders and followers or subordinates. Bridging leadership is seen as a means to establish trust and new types of relationships in order to achieve more than could be achieved by one leader or by one organisation and therefore increasing the likelihood of enduring change
- All people involved in bridging collaborations are involved in leadership. Bridging leadership is defined by interactions between people within and across organisations committed to working together for real change. Bridging leaders are skilled listeners who are more interested in the social change than attracting the credit for change
- Bridge-building recognises the importance of change at many levels: individual, interpersonal, organisational, and between organisations
- While inter-organisational collaborations are essential for social change and seem a logical approach at face value – such collaboration in practice is not normal or automatic for many individuals and organisations, as group members have different interests, goals, capacities and values. Projects involving inter-organisational collaboration need protection from attack by internal interests who resist new directions that threaten what exists now, or who judge challenges to current practices, boundaries and interests as unreasonable
- Experience shows that even when initiatives are successful, efforts to expand and sustain them may require a lot more effort than expected. Not all bridge building-efforts succeed in becoming sustainable.

In summary, successful bridge-building initiatives which contribute to social change have the following elements:

- Convincing and locally generated goals which have not been imposed by external forces and priorities
- Cross-boundary leadership which is credible and can creatively manage differences between collaborators
- Group processes to define and communicate project outcomes, guide progress, hold stakeholders accountable, encourage learning and enable flexible and imaginative ways to respond to the unexpected
- Processes that enable and protect innovation. Successful initiatives find ways to protect and nurture innovations while bringing along others not directly involved with the innovation
- Investment in long-term sustainability, integrating innovation into established organisations and systems – in order to expand and embed cross-boundary innovations and the projects they create. This allows for the turnover of influential people or groups and requires attention to ongoing cooperation across boundaries.

The Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project is an exemplar of successful inter-organisational collaboration designed to create systemic change through implementing change in the housing and support arrangements for six people with complex disabilities. The project has many of the features associated with successful bridge-building initiatives which contribute to social change. Following this set up phase, the challenge is to embed these changes for the long term.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

- What is needed for the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project to endure and remain true to the shared vision?
- What are the implications for personalisation and innovation where organisations and government are looking to develop uniform procedures, economies of scale, and uniform responses?



# REFERENCES

---

The following is a sample of literature reviewing partnerships, collaboration and more recent understandings about bridge building between organisations and the impact on complex social situations.

Austin, J. and Seitandi, M. 2012. Collaborative value creation: a review of partnering between non-profits and businesses: Part 1: Value creation spectrum and collaboration stages. *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41, 726-758.

Brown, D. 2015. Bridge-building for social transformation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter, 34-39.

Bryson, J., Crosby, B. and Stone, M. 2006. The design and implementation of cross sector collaborations: propositions from the literature. *Public Administration Review*, 66, 44-52

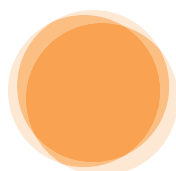
Harris, M. 1997. *The secrets of successful inter-organisational cooperation: a review of the literature*. Adelaide: Behavioural Technologies.

Johnson, L., Zorn, D., Tam, B., Lamontagne, M. and Johnson, S. 2003. Stakeholders views of factors that impact successful interagency collaboration. *Exceptional Children*, 69, 195-203.

Pierce, S. 2015. *Bridging differences and building collaboration: the critical role of leadership*. New York: Synergos Institute.

Zeitsma, C. and Lawrence, C. (2010) Institutional work in the transformation of an organisational field: the interplay of boundary work and practice work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55(2), 189-221.





SUMMER  
FOUNDATION