

Self Reliance and Homelessness in Australia: Challenges of Definition, Conceptualisation and Measurement

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Abstract

What is self reliance? More specifically, can it be defined and measured among people who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless and accessing related support services? These challenges were the focus of research undertaken in Western Australia in 2003-2004. This paper informs policy and program debate on responses to homelessness as well as housing and welfare. The promotion of client self reliance is emphasised as an outcome of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The task of defining self reliance and assessing its attainment among people who have been, or remain homeless is problematic as most journeys through homelessness are characterised by complexity, instability and non-uniformity. Client experiences of homelessness and crisis are multidimensional and shaped by context, history and culture. This presents a major challenge in defining, establishing and making visible people's attempts at and progress towards self reliance. Program administrators, policy makers, service providers and other interested stakeholders identify that the transparent measurement of this complex phenomenon is challenging yet should be attempted in some form. This paper reports on defining, measuring and contextualising self reliance in homelessness service systems. Additionally, it focuses on experiences that illustrate the challenges and complexities of researching and conceptualising self reliance among recipients of SAAP services.

Nola Kunnen, Senior Lecturer & Robyn Martin, Lecturer with the Department of Social Work & Social Policy, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia were joint lead researchers on the project informing this paper. Both have extensive professional practice and research experience with supported/transitional accommodation programs. Robyn is a member of the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the European Network of Housing Researchers Conference, Cambridge, England, June 2004.

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1. Introduction

What is *selfreliance*? More specifically, can it be defined and progress towards it measured in the context of people who are homeless, using support services or living in transitional accommodation? These challenges were the focus of research undertaken in Western Australia. This paper presents initial conclusions drawn from the research, in particular it discusses strategies used in developing an everyday and conceptual definition for self reliance with input from people using supported accommodation services.

2. Background & context

The paper draws on the initial stage of research undertaken for the Co-ordination and Development Committee of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP, see below). SAAP is jointly funded by the Australian and State/Territory Governments, and administered in each State by a State Government Department. The research discussed is a comparatively small scale project, undertaken between October 2003 and July 2004 that comprises the first of a two-part study.

3. Research tasks

The aims of the overall project were to:

- Explore the concept of self reliance within the context of homelessness in Australia, specifically in relation to clients of the SAAP program
- Develop a working and conceptual definition for self reliance in SAAP
- Document models and examples of good practice in building self reliance in people who have experience of homelessness
- Develop and test a survey instrument that measures self reliance in SAAP clients.

This initial study was exploratory and undertaken in three stages.

Stage 1: Preliminary framing of a definition for self reliance was identified through a limited literature review. Simultaneously, focus groups were conducted with SAAP service providers. The focus groups aimed to obtain input in three areas: defining self reliance, the proposed survey/interview guide; negotiating access to SAAP clients for interviewing and testing of the draft interview guide.

Stage 2: Developing and testing the survey/interview guide

Stage 3: The final stage involved development of a working and conceptual definition of self reliance, and refinement of an interview guide that can be used more broadly with clients of this program.

This paper limits discussion to strategies used when exploring the concept of self reliance within SAAP, and summarising key points informing a preliminary working and conceptual definition for self reliance in this context.¹

¹ The final report from part one of this study is being finalised and it is anticipated it will be made available by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services/SAAP IV National Co-ordination & Development Committee, CAD.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, SAAP

In Australia, support and accommodation services for people who are homeless or in crisis are provided by non-government organisations (SAAP service providers) funded jointly by the Australian and State/Territory Governments through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). Service providers are contracted to the government purchaser under a purchaser/provider funding model. The program has operated for more than twenty years and provides short and long term accommodation options (refuges, crisis hostels, emergency accommodation, and medium term transitional housing) as well as an array of support services ranging from short-term crisis support to longer term transitional services. Service delivery is time limited, with some agencies limited to case-management timeframes of six weeks to three months. Others provide longer term support to people living in transitional SAAP housing. SAAP does not perceive homelessness solely as a housing issue but recognises the interplay of complex social, economic and individual factors that impact on pathways into and out of homelessness (see, MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 2003).

Three broad sub-sectors operate within the SAAP program: young people, women and children (particularly those experiencing violence) and generalist (predominantly men and families). SAAP clients are diverse, comprising a mix of ages, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Many clients fit criteria of having ‘high and complex needs’ for accommodation and support (see, Bissett, Campbell and Goodall, 1999) with a substantial proportion also having significant drug, alcohol and/or mental health considerations (see, Robinson, 2003). Indigenous Australians have many of the same needs as non-Indigenous people in relation to homelessness, but may experience added dimensions of spiritual homelessness (see, Memmott et. al., 2003) giving rise to specific support requirements in relation to restoring family and community relationships.

Self reliance within SAAP

Self reliance is a significant theme within the SAAP program documentation and legislation. The SAAP Act (1994) identifies self reliance as a core feature of program activities and goals (see, Kunnen, Lee and Martin, 2004). The overall aim of SAAP as described in the Act as

‘...to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum degree of self reliance and independence’

The Act then identifies three goals relating to: enhancing people’s capacity to live independently of SAAP; resolving crisis; and re-connecting people with community networks.

Alongside the aim and goals is a focus on providing support and facilitating homeless people’s access to ‘long-term, secure and affordable housing...or support services’ (SAAP Act, 1994). Recognising the relevance to SAAP clients of their accessing both support and accommodation in order to resolve homelessness, the Act includes among the *Responsibilities of Service Providers* (SAAP ACT, section 7) the ‘integration of people

who are homeless' into the broader community, emphasising life domains including employment, education, housing, health and income support.

A focus on promoting self reliance is also implicitly evident in the SAAP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (2000-2005), agreed between the Australian, State and Territory Governments and also in the National Strategic Plan (2000-2005). Both documents refer to the complexity of homelessness as involving more than a lack of accommodation and emphasise the aims of service provision being prevention of dependency, along with promoting participation and client capacity to live independently of SAAP. The second of four national outcomes noted in the Strategic Plan (2000-2005) is '*to promote self reliance, choice and independence*' while a broad strategic theme is '*strengthening client capacity to live independently of SAAP*' (see, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, 2000).

Policy implications

Although referred to in various SAAP program documents over the past ten years, self reliance is not defined in policy terms. The absence of a definition in the SAAP related literature corresponds with results of the literature review undertaken at the commencement of the study (see, Kunnen, Lee and Martin, 2004). One of the tasks of this research was to operationalise self reliance from service provider perspectives and input from SAAP clients during the interview phase.

Despite the absence of any specific definition for self reliance within SAAP, specific policy implications are evident in the program priorities, program outcomes and service provider responsibilities noted above. The attaining of self reliance is linked with the expectation that SAAP clients will develop the capacity to live independently of SAAP services (see, Kunnen, Lee and Martin, 2004), indicated by clients not returning to SAAP services within a timeframe of six months. Employment is also cited as an indicator of a person achieving self reliance and becoming independent. Relevant to this study was an implicit assumption which anticipated that as clients became more self reliant their need for, or reliance on SAAP services would lessen.

The implicit assumption that reliance on SAAP services would lessen as clients become more self reliant was a sensitive point during dialogue with service providers in this study. The majority argued that for many clients acceptance of, and continued involvement in support services is most appropriately understood as an indicator of increasing self reliance, rather than an indicator of failure to become reliant or independent. This perspective is informed by awareness of the level and complexity of need experienced by SAAP clients, together with the high degree of crisis and disruption many clients experience prior to connecting with service providers. Similar cautions about inferring an association between non-return to the program and clients attaining independence/self reliance had been identified in a previous national evaluation of the SAAP program (see, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, 1999, p.105) which stated:-

...re-entry figures (to SAAP) must be qualified by a recognition that simply because a past client of SAAP (is) not re-accessing a SAAP funded service does not necessarily equate with that client having achieved independent living. Furthermore, return to a SAAP service could be seen as a measure of the success of that service in providing support to a client group that is known for its instability.

The emphasis on self reliance within SAAP program documentation reflects broader priorities and principles informing Australian social policy and welfare programs. The Australian Government's welfare reform agenda states concern about problems perceived as arising from welfare dependency and promotes increased participation by welfare recipients in support programs, education and training as the means towards enhancing potential for employment (see, Saunders, 2000 and Yeatman, 2000). The focus on reintegrating SAAP clients into the broader community and networks can also be understood in terms of programs promoting social cohesion and capacity building, such as the Australian Government's *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*.

The Western Australian State Homelessness Taskforce identified homelessness as a primary indicator of social exclusion and marginalisation. The provision of economic opportunities and reconnecting homeless people with local communities is considered an important strategy in promoting sustainable communities. The provision of ongoing support to homeless people at all stages was emphasised both in terms of overcoming homelessness and enhancing capacity and connectedness (see, State Homelessness Taskforce, 2002).

Risks

The feasibility of the study, in particular access to SAAP clients during testing of the interview guide, was reliant on service providers facilitating access to the SAAP client population. SAAP service providers comprise an industry sector that has a comprehensive data collection framework and is consistently engaged in research or data collection. Collectively, they have accumulated expertise in understanding homelessness and associated experiences and in developing effective case management responses. This project was being undertaken as a sub-project of the fourth national evaluation of the SAAP program, placing considerable demands on service providers to contribute to multiple research projects being undertaken concurrently.

Service providers identified specific concerns in relation to: the terminology of self reliance; the proposition that self reliance could be meaningfully 'measured' in the context of SAAP clients; the inappropriateness of using survey techniques with the SAAP population. The implicit assumption that SAAP clients were not self reliant was questioned and emphasis placed on the importance of recognising the considerable levels of self reliance often demonstrated by people in resolving their homelessness and/or crises. The difficulties of exploring an abstract notion, in this instance self reliance; with a client population who were predominantly in crisis and homeless was also identified as problematic. Self reliance was understandably, regarded as a policy construct that was unlikely to have relevance to SAAP clients. The vulnerability of the client group, many

of who had recently experienced trauma, dislocation and marginalisation was identified as requiring consideration in deciding the format of an interview guide, and the skills of interviewers.

In responding to these risks and tensions, a process of open dialogue was maintained with service providers at all stages of the research. As researchers with extensive professional practice experience in this area we sought to work with the tensions that accompany research in areas of human services practice where, as Darlington & Scott (2002, p1-3) observe, operationalising concepts is problematic, where politics, ethics and values are critical, and where establishing trust and rapport are important for successful research.

4. Becoming self reliant: narrating the complexity

Focus group input articulated the complexity of client experiences. Two brief case studies noted below illustrate variations in the process of becoming self-reliant:

Self reliance in a women and children's SAAP service:

A women and children's refuge from a regional area told the story of a woman they had worked with for over 8 years. The woman first presented at the refuge due to domestic violence perpetrated by her male partner. The partner was also reportedly abusive towards the couple's children. Over the course of the next 8 years the woman left her partner 14 times. Each time she would return to the refuge for short to medium term stays. The refuge identified that its role was to support her in her process of coming to understand what violence meant in her life, what goals she had for her (and her children's) future and to build her emotional resilience to a point of interdependence. After 14 stays at the refuge and 8 years since first engaging with the SAAP service the woman left her partner for good. She has been free of violence for 3 years and is involved in TAFE, her children's schooling, community groups and according to refuge workers is an active community member. Whilst the refuge did not fully relate to the term self reliance (preferring interdependence), they believed that this woman was 'self reliant', and taking control of her life.

This account illustrates the often long term process of becoming self reliant, particularly where abuse and violence are present. This example problematises the assumption that returning to SAAP services demonstrates a lack of self reliance. In the agency's view, the process of becoming self reliant, for this woman, was an incremental, long term process. Aside from the changes necessary in the woman's understanding of the role of violence, and developing awareness that she had alternatives and choices, the process of becoming self reliant is also impacted upon by structural barriers, such as inadequate access to housing. Access to support services (such as those dealing with domestic violence, trauma in children, substance use and mental health issues) is an

important component of assisting someone to become self reliant in this context.

This service provider group noted the centrality and importance of having the opportunity to build a trusting professional relationship with clients in order to promote self reliance. This relationship was seen as a way in which SAAP clients can test out new skills and self-reliant behaviour. The account also illustrates that overcoming homelessness and crisis can be a journey of many years.

Self reliance in an Indigenous context:

A SAAP service which provides long-term support to families, who have problematic housing histories and few housing options, provided the following account of promoting self reliance with a particular family.

A woman with children was in a situation whereby regular, extended visits by other family members were a risk to her maintaining safe, secure and affordable housing. The service provider reported that the way the woman managed this issue was to spend the day in a local park, avoiding the visiting family members. For this particular woman maintaining an individual tenancy was a relatively new experience. As an indigenous woman, the situation was made particularly complex given her cultural obligations to enact reciprocity. The service provider went on to note that spending all day at the park was far from ideal. From the woman's perspective this strategy enabled her to maintain her tenancy, minimised the number of housing and support workers she had to deal with on a day to day basis, and provided her with important 'breathing space' during which she could develop strategies to negotiate the complex cultural expectations and protocols with her extended family.

The service provider perceived the woman's action to be a demonstration of resourcefulness and evidence of a degree of self reliance by a SAAP client who was attempting to achieve independence but at that point was likely to remain in close contact with the agency for some time. This account illustrates the importance of cultural dimensions in understanding self reliance. The lack of housing options available to Indigenous SAAP clients is an additional structural constraint to achieving self reliance.

These accounts illustrate the diversity and complexity of individual clients pathways to self reliance, as well as reaffirming that becoming self reliant cannot be understood outside of the broader social, economic and structural factors that influence pathways into and out of homelessness. An additional theme emerging from the focus group input was the significance of change in a person's own understanding of the influences contributing to their homelessness or crises. Pathways to self reliance require that clients have both time and access to resources to support them in identifying an alternative pathway.

Themes from the focus groups confirmed the multi-dimensional nature of pathways into and out of homelessness and the inappropriateness of assuming a 'one size fits all'

definition of self reliance could be applied across the SAAP sector. This confirmed Browton's (2001) research identifying that self reliance is most effectively understood as multi-dimensional. The narratives provided challenged the assumption implicit in the SAAP policy documentation that return to SAAP services equates with a lack of self reliance. The perspective of Western Australian service providers' echoes broader research in Australia and internationally emphasising the importance of support services to people in overcoming the causes and experiences of homelessness. A more comprehensive discussion of research identifying the importance of housing and/or support services is canvassed separately in the literature review (see, Kunnen, Lee and Martin, 2004).

5. Describing and defining Self reliance

As noted above, one of the tasks of this research was to construct a definition of self reliance relevant to SAAP clients and appropriate in the context of the SAAP program. The second stage of the research involved developing and testing a structured interview guide, completed during lengthy one on one interviews with twenty-eight SAAP clients. The purpose of interviews was to establish the appropriateness and effectiveness of the interview guide and gather input to inform a client-identified definition of self reliance, rather than producing generalisable data about client experiences of becoming self reliant, or measuring self reliance.

6. Terminology: Getting back on your feet

As the term self reliance was unlikely to have relevance to this client population, the strategy adopted was to identify an everyday terminology that enabled self reliance to be explored during interviews and for client-identified descriptions to be recorded. Service providers reported using a variety of everyday terms with clients when discussing priorities and plans, with 'getting back on your feet' or 'getting sorted' generally accepted as most useful.

Each interview commenced with a short conversation exploring with each SAAP client their preferred everyday term, using 'getting back on your feet' as an example. This brief exchange also enabled an informal, conversational approach to be adopted by interviewers. The majority of people interviewed found 'getting back on your feet' was relevant. Interviews also identified the following everyday terms:

- Having a normal living style
- Getting control of life
- Picking up the pieces to my life
- Not being lost
- Getting on track
- Getting rid of the crap I've been through
- Getting on the straight and narrow path
- Getting back to work
- Dead for 13 years and by coming to SAAP born again
- Back on the road
- Getting back a normal life

7. Everyday, working definition of self reliance

Based on the initial stages of the study, it was proposed that self reliance be described in terms of an everyday, working definition of ‘getting back on my feet’. The remaining stages focused on confirming the relevance of this terminology and further developing a theoretical and conceptual definition for self reliance in the context of SAAP client groups.

8. Conceptualising and defining self reliance as a multi-dimensional pathway

SAAP client and service provider input confirmed the process of becoming self-reliant to be multi-dimensional, but also individually relevant and varying from person to person. Becoming self-reliant is a process that involves an individual moving and/or changing over time, but not necessarily in a linear progression towards self reliance or independence. In describing what it meant to ‘get back on your feet’, SAAP clients identified three different broad themes, referring to their long term aspirations in terms of

- Achieving specific goals in their life
- Changing the direction of their life
- Restoring parts, or all of their life to what it was before homelessness

This emphasised that self reliance could not be effectively conceptualised, or measured, via an empirically based survey instrument nor would progress towards self reliance be linear. The research suggested that the varying experiences of SAAP clients could most effectively be captured describing self reliance in terms of an individual pathway or journey towards self reliance as this approach:

- Avoided a ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition of self reliance
- Enabled multiple dimensions and components of self reliance to be individually identified by participants and recorded in ways that enabled analysis of individual differences in progress towards self reliance
- Incorporated opportunities for individual participants to communicate details of their individual context and needs
- Could be administered in a one-on-one interview with participants recruited via SAAP service providers

Input from the interviews confirms recent Australian research (see, Robinson, 2003; Memmott, et. al., 2003) that experiences of homelessness, and therefore pathways out of homelessness reflect individually relevant experiences and therefore must be understood as iterative and culturally informed.

9. Conceptualising self reliance

In conceptualising and defining self reliance in the context of SAAP and homelessness the research indicates firstly, that self reliance is definable within the context of SAAP and homelessness. Secondly, that self reliance is most usefully:

- Defined by adopting both a working and a conceptual definition
- Described by a working definition of '*getting back on your feet*'
- Explained by describing an individual's pathway or journey towards self reliance.
- *Multi-dimensional* and explained by describing various *dimensions and components* that may inform a particular person's pathway towards self reliance
- Attained via a process whereby an individual moves from one position, status or situation to another over time
- Specific to each individual, so that the relevance of particular dimensions and components will vary from person to person

The research team also observed that when describing pathways to self reliance, participants sometimes referred to pathways they were actually engaged in pursuing. At other times, description referred to projected, future pathways that the person felt they needed to pursue in order to become self reliant. We therefore conclude that the process of becoming self reliant is one that involves *actual* and *projected change*, as follows:

- **Actual** – the change a person is actively engaged in pursuing; such as pursuing an income, becoming safe, resolving relationship issues, obtaining accommodation and/or employment.
- **Projected** – the future changes, or steps a person identifies that need to be achieved in order to become self reliant, in their own terms. In referring to projected pathways, participants identified changes they wanted to achieve, but which they were not yet able to achieve. Examples included re-establishing contact with families/children; engaging in education/training; having a routine or 'normal life'; being able to manage/overcome alcohol or drug use; having enough money to obtain long-term accommodation.

The initial stages of this research (literature review and service provider focus groups) endorsed Browton's (1993) description of self reliance as comprising multiple dimensions and components. The dimensions and components proposed below have been refined through analysis of participants' responses to the interview guide so as to more closely describe pathways to self reliance. The researchers identified seven dimensions that are linked with several additional components. Collectively these dimensions and components can be used when describing a particular person's pathway or progress towards self reliance. Four questions in the interview guide gathered information to inform a client identified definition of self reliance:

- Question 10 invited participants to 'describe what being back on your feet means for you'
- Question 11 explored participant's descriptions further by asking them to describe what they had done to 'get back on your feet' since coming into contact with the SAAP service providers
- Question 16 asked participants to respond to the question 'In 6 months I want my life to look life...'

- Question 23 provided an opportunity for participants to add to their initial descriptions of ‘getting back on your feet’

Responses to these questions were sorted, categorised and reviewed against emerging themes. Themes were then compared with the dimensions and components identified from the initial research. By constantly comparing themes and differences, the research team sought to identify components and dimensions of self reliance that:

- Accurately reflected the client identified descriptions of self reliance
- Were validated by a process of triangulation between preliminary research, the literature review and client identified descriptions of self reliance
- Identified a variety of components of each dimension that assist in describing an individual’s pathway towards self reliance

Responses were sorted according to themes identifiable within each question, then categorised in relation to the proposed dimensions. Examples provided by participants were analysed to assess their relevance in relation to the proposed dimensions and components. This process resulted in substantial revision of the proposed components and the addition of an additional dimension of Control/Security, given the emphasis placed on this dimension by participants. Each dimension of self reliance encompasses two or more specific components. The terms used to describe the components draw on the terminology identified from the literature review that has been adapted through further research and analysis.

The research team draws attention to *Stability*, which is listed against more than one dimension. A theme of stability was identifiable in participants’ comments on aspects of self reliance that relate to different dimensions. For example, *stability* may refer to people achieving changes in their *status* by securing stable accommodation, employment or income. For other participants, *stability* meant achieving greater control over their own life, perhaps through making decisions or becoming physically safe. A third example is of stability in *relationships*, achieved by resolving or addressing relationship issues.

The research team concludes that six dimensions of self reliance inform a conceptualisation of self reliance and we identify these as being:

Affect

- Goals/visions
- Confidence/self-esteem
- Beliefs
- Acceptance of assistance
- Resilience

Control/security

- Personal safety
- Stability

Knowledge

- Life skills
- Problem solving abilities
- Knowledge of resources and supports

Behaviour

- Assuming responsibility
- Coping behaviours
- Substance use behaviours

Status

- Stability
- Resolution of structural barriers to independence/self reliance
- Availability, adequacy, accessibility of service and supports
- Attitudes of officers/authorities/service providers

Relationships, connectedness and capacity

- Establishing/restoring relationships
- Resolving relationship issues

Stability

- Accessing support networks
- Connecting with broader social networks

10. Validating the working and conceptual definition

In order that the proposed working and conceptual definitions could be considered against other research exploring conceptual aspects of well-being, the working and conceptual definitions of self reliance outlined above were compared with definitions of conceptual policy terms developed in two other areas:

- World Health Organisation's definition of quality of life
- The Recovery Paradigm within the mental health field

Additional considerations were also identified from a limited exploration of conceptualisations of homelessness emerging from recent Australian research. On the basis of these comparisons, the following principles are proposed to guide the process of conceptualising and mapping a person's pathways in relation to self reliance:

- An individual needs to be able to identify the relative importance (to her/him) of each dimension so that the definition accurately reflects the individual's situation
- Unless descriptions and definitions of self reliance are personally relevant (client or person centred) they are unlikely to have 'accuracy and usefulness' because they are unlikely to measure anything relevant to the people involved

- Any strategies used to assess or measure self reliance must be culturally relevant
- Any 'instrument' or interview guide for capturing a person's description of self reliance must also be culturally relevant

Short term goals: stability and resolution?

The SAAP clients interviewed appear to refer to two themes of *stability* and *resolution* as possibly having particular relevance in the near future. We draw this conclusion based on a question that asked people to indicate what they wanted their life to be like in six months time, as opposed to previous questions that had explored 'getting back on your feet' in the longer term.

Stability referred to attaining, in the near future, stable accommodation; financial security; and stability in personal/family relationships (including establishing secure accommodation for children)

Resolution referred to resolving a range of barriers or concerns impacting negatively on SAAP clients, including: resolving conflict (personal/family); dealing with legal issues (charges, fines, legal proceedings); resolving circumstances so that children were returned to their care; resolving custody disputes (enabling access to children).

The limited number of people interviewed precludes firm conclusions about the significance of stability and resolution at this stage of the research, however, the responses from people interviewed during part one lead us to question whether themes of *Stability* and *Resolution* may be of particular significance in the initial stages of becoming self reliant.

11. Conclusions

Interim conclusions validate the relevance of pathways into and out of homelessness, but emphasise that pathways are individually defined varying over time. In becoming self reliant, pathways out of homelessness do not appear to be linear, in that an individual's support and accommodation requirements may vary over time and the process of becoming self reliant may involve achievements and apparent setbacks.

The multi-dimensional and non-linear characteristics of self reliance confirm that it is inappropriate to associate a return to SAAP service providers with a failure to achieve self reliance. Both service providers and SAAP clients perceived ongoing availability and accessing of support services as an important resource in the process of becoming self reliant. The research does however suggest that the type of support required varies over time.

The researchers emphasise that a large proportion of participants in the study faced significant adversity leading up and prior to their engagement with the SAAP service, yet the majority were able to identify pathways of hope and vision for their future. This is often an under-reported factor in homelessness experiences. The researchers heard participants' stories of resilience, hope and self reliant behaviours from people living within disrupted, unsafe or crisis experiences. The research team recommends that mapping individual client experiences in relation to self reliance be undertaken in ways that can identify, recognise and validate people's ability to demonstrate self reliant behaviours within complex situations.

We emphasise the important of ensuring that mapping a person's progress in relation to self reliance needs to capture and acknowledge what has been achieved and not focus solely on what remains to be achieved.

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