

# Can iHelp? An App to Help Young People



**ShelterSA**  
*Housing: a basic human right!*



A limited literature review was conducted in order to investigate the capacity and ability of young people to use an App that would help them in times of need. The main focus of the review was young people and their access to the internet, housing and assistance services. The research was hosted by Shelter SA, the peak body for housing in South Australia.



What is the problem? Australia has the most expensive housing costs of any OECD nation. Rental contracts have gradually become shorter and work contracts for young people are often casual. There is a lack of security of housing tenure for young people and it is likely that they may need assistance from youth and homelessness services at some point in their lives.



Can young people use the internet? Internet access amongst all young people is high. In 2011, there were 17 million mobile internet connections. 90% of 17 year olds have a mobile phone, and 2/3 of young disadvantaged people use the internet regularly. In the past a landline telephone connection, a desktop computer and furniture characterised internet usage but now it all fits neatly in your pocket.



Can young people understand the internet? Social media will play a key role in developing this technology. A 2006 study showed that only 1/3 of people living with disadvantage had used a computer but in 2013, 75% had a social networking account, demonstrating that young people can not only use the internet but understand it and know how to gain the information they need.



What needs to change? 66% of young people do not receive assistance the first time they try to access it because they are not eligible or there is no emergency accommodation available. Rejection can cause young people to avoid seeking help in the future. A simple interface that assesses the users needs and recommends an appropriate service could partially address this issue.



How successful could it be? Similar ideas have been developed in parts of England and the USA. In New Jersey and San Francisco, Jon Bon Jovi was involved in a competition for the public to design an App for veterans seeking housing and stated that the hardest obstacles were creating a database of all the services and marketing the App to potential users.



# Can iHelp? An App to Help Young People



In order to investigate the capacity and ability of young people to access an App that would help them in times of need, a limited literature review was conducted. The main focus was young people and their access to housing, the internet and assistance services. The research was conducted with Shelter SA, the peak body for housing in South Australia.



What is the problem? The findings show that Australia has the most expensive housing cost of any OCED nation. Further, rental contracts have gradually become shorter, whilst work contracts for young people are normally casual. There is a lack in security in regards to housing for young people, and it is likely that they can fall upon hard times and need assistance.



Can they use the internet? Internet access amongst all young people is incredibly high. In 2011, there were 17 million mobile internet connections. 90% of 17 year olds have a mobile phone, and 2/3 of young marginalized people use the internet regularly. The internet once required infrastructures such as secure housing, a landline and furniture, but now it all fits neatly in the users pocket.



Can they understand the internet? Social media will play a key role in developing this technology. In 2006, a study showed that 1/3 of the marginalized population had ever used a computer, but in 2013, 75% had a social networking account. Social networking proves that young people can not only use the internet, but understand it, and know how to gain the information they need from it.



What needs to change? Rejection is a significant issue for service providers. 66% of young people are turned away on their first attempt to access a service, often because they go to one that is not designed for them, which means they are unlikely to use a service again. A simple interface that assess the users needs and recommends an appropriate service could be a simple way to combat this trend.



How successful can it be? Similar ideas have been developed in parts of England and the USA. In New Jersey and San Francisco, an app was founded by Jon Bon Jovi to help veterans find housing assistance. He ran a competition for the public to design the App, and stated that the hardest obstacles were creating a database of all the services, and marketing the App to potential users.