

Transitioning from Care in Australia:

An Evaluation of CREATE's What's the Plan? campaign

create
FOUNDATION

May 2011

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for CREATE Foundation

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Cover

The cover encapsulates the dynamics (and the uncertainty) of a successful transition from care.

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CREATE Foundation

Vision: All children and young people with a care experience have the opportunity to reach their full potential

Mission: Creating a better life for children and young people in care

CREATE Foundation is a national not for profit organisation. Our objectives are to ensure that all children and young people in care are respected, listened to and active participants in decisions which affect their lives. We aim to provide all children and young people in care with opportunities to create better life outcomes and to reach their full potential.

We work to effect systems changes for the benefit of all children and young people in care into the future by building community capacity with key stakeholders.

For more information on how to support CREATE Foundation programs and research projects visit www.create.org.au or email create@create.org.au.

acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some incredible people who have given their time and expertise to the “What’s the plan?” campaign and report Card.

Our collective thanks go to Dr Joseph McDowall who gave so generously of his time and provided CREATE staff with insight and support to make this report the best it could be. Joseph’s insight and understanding of the complexities of research in the out-of-home care sector have guided this project from inception to completion.

To CREATE’s Policy and Research Team, Rosemary Jenkinson, Dr Suzanne Lunn and Danielle Domanski, for their support and input to the project. To CREATE staff across Australia who overcame many obstacles, including limited access to the details of the whereabouts of young people. Their persistence and “no stone left unturned” attitude enabled them to reach young people and do so in amazingly tight timeframes – may the force be with you!

Without the support of our wonderful volunteers our task would have been insurmountable. To our AMP Foundation colleagues we owe a depth of gratitude for their continued financial support and encouragement, for without it, this research project would not have been possible.

My final thank you is a special one – to the young people who eagerly joined forces with CREATE to participate in the survey and endorse our **“What’s the Plan?”** Campaign. You have given your valuable time and shared your care experience with us, allowing us to send a valuable message to Government and the Community. Your voices have been heard, but this is not the end of the journey, our collective task is to now effect change for the better.

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foreword:

Ms Jacqui Reed
CEO CREATE Foundation



CREATE Report Cards are a collaborative effort with the most important component being the independent views of young people.

Without the input of young people CREATE Foundation cannot continue to promote discussion and evoke change within the care system. It is clear from the results of this Report Card that sadly there is still a lot of work to be done in order to ensure all young people have a leaving care plan, and a more secure future.

To support young people in understanding the process of obtaining a Leaving Care Plan CREATE launched an awareness campaign called **“What’s The Plan?”**

nationally. The campaign was jointly funded by every state and territory, and the Commonwealth Government in the spirit of true partnership.

Unfortunately, our **“What’s The Plan?”** campaign, in its first year, had little impact in increasing the number of young people with a leaving care plan, however, the resources produced were considered valuable by the young people, and concepts will be carried forward in future campaigns.

For the young people who do have a leaving care plan, a high percentage do not have a copy of the plan for their own reference. This indicates that young people have not been engaged nor actively participated in the development of their leaving care plans (essentially a plan for their future). This issue has to be a priority for the relevant Departments to ensure young are informed, and are active participants in the process.

One of the key learnings for the CREATE Foundation from the campaign is that in order to change behaviour in a social or systemic context it will take a long-term commitment, and that whilst the process of change has begun, a year to achieve noticeable difference was ambitious. A continued and sustained promotion and advocacy campaign with accompanying resources is needed to ensure all young people have a leaving plan – a plan for their future.

Jacqui Reed
Chief Executive Officer, CREATE Foundation

May, 2011

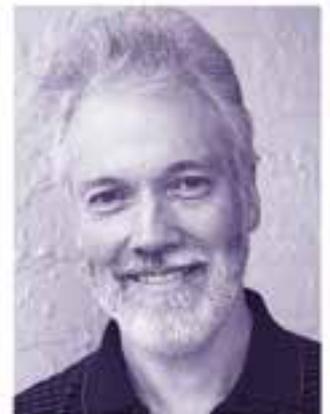
biography:

Dr Joseph J. McDowall

Dr Joseph McDowall has a Bachelor of Science with majors in Psychology and Zoology. He undertook higher degree studies in Social Psychology, completing his PhD from the University of Queensland in 1979.

Since 1974, Dr McDowall has lectured at both the University of Queensland and Griffith University in the areas of research methods, statistics, and social skills training, as well as all aspects of the theory and practice of photography, with particular emphasis on empirical aesthetics. Dr McDowall has provided consultancy services to the Queensland government within the out-of-home care sector and has worked on projects for Recognised Entities.

Joseph also has conducted research, with Ms Jacqui Reed, into how children in foster care perceive "family". Results were reported nationally and internationally (at the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Portland, Oregon, USA). This study also won the Child Protection Week Award for research from the Queensland Government in 2006.



Being passionately concerned with child protection, Joseph, together with a small group of like-minded professionals, formed (in 2007) The Care Connection, a not-for-profit company of which he is the inaugural Chair of Directors. This organisation was created with a view to connect children and young people in care with the community to help build their self-esteem and confidence.

Dr McDowall authored the CREATE 2008 Report Card: Transitioning from Care that marked the beginning of an enduring association with this Foundation. In that year, he also joined the CREATE Board and continues to bring to that role a wealth of knowledge and experience of the child protection sector that enhances the core business of CREATE, namely listening and responding to the voices of children and young people.

Subsequently, Dr McDowall produced the follow-up Report Card 2009 that provided a more comprehensive review of the state of transitioning from care in Australia, and which acted as the precursor to the current project. In 2010, Dr McDowall helped prepare the solutions paper "What's the Answer?", summarising the views of young people regarding what they thought could be done at various levels to improve the experience of transitioning from care. This Report was released recently by FaHCSIA.

Dr McDowall is particularly concerned with monitoring the views of young people in-care and post-care to share their understandings of how to improve the overall care experience. To this end, he has helped develop CREATE's current Be.Heard web-based data collection tool that hopefully will provide a vehicle through which young people who are or have been in care will be able to communicate their ideas more effectively to decision makers, leading to overall improvements in the care system.

executive

summary

To address deficits identified in previous research, in 2010 the CREATE Foundation designed and implemented a campaign to increase the number of young people approaching the stage of leaving out-of-home care who have a clear, formalised plan for life after care (referred to here as a leaving-care plan, but which also may be designated as a transition document or a final case plan). Such a plan should articulate the support young people will need in the short to medium term, and how it can be accessed to facilitate their successful transition to independence. Report Card 2011 documents the outcome of this campaign that was labelled "What's the Plan?". It evaluates the project's success, and suggests actions that may extend its influence in the future.

To achieve the end of having more care leavers with life plans for the years following transition, CREATE decided to use a social marketing strategy whereby processes traditionally employed in commercial marketing are adapted to achieve a specified change in behaviour for the wellbeing of individuals and/or the community. The change required here was in the production of leaving-care plans. The main group whose behaviour needed to alter comprised the caseworkers in child protection departments who ultimately are responsible for formulating the type of leaving-care plan specified in state and territory legislation.

Furthermore, all jurisdictions officially espouse the principle that the young person about to transition from care has the right, and is expected to be involved in the planning process. Because of this requirement, young people also could be considered as active participants, playing a key role in helping change planning behaviour.

However, while young people must be involved, there is likely to be a power differential between them and their caseworker. The young person's interests could receive additional support by the involvement of their carer, particularly in ensuring that the planning process actually occurs. All participants within this tripartite network need to have their awareness of the issues raised if the desired behaviour change is to be achieved.

The classic "4 Ps" as applied within a social marketing context involve Product (e.g., the behaviour to be changed), Place (e.g., the infrastructure and communication channels already in place to facilitate planning), Price (e.g., the cost of not providing leaving-care plans for care leavers), as well as Promotion. The latter describes the main interventions CREATE decided to employ in implementing the "What's the Plan?" campaign.

These promotional mechanisms included mass communication approaches, directed at all care leavers in the 15 to 17 year age groups throughout Australia. These young people were presented with annual calendars extolling the importance of a leaving-care plan and wallet cards providing ready access to contact details for vital support. In addition, more localised group promotions were used to encourage caseworkers and carers to become involved in the campaign. These ranged from initiating discussions at various conferences to sending informative newsletters and posters to departments, along with provision of rewards (e.g., "Tim Tam" chocolate biscuits) and invitations to caseworkers to pause and, while having a break, reflect on the future of the young people leaving their care. Another implemented incentive was the establishment of the award of CREATE Champions to acknowledge caseworkers and/or carers who were outstanding in their efforts to

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behaviour**

only

31.7%

of eligible

young people

report having a leaving care

plan

instigate and facilitate planning.

The duration of this campaign extended over 12 months from March 2010, with interventions occurring regularly over that period to keep the program fresh in the minds of all parties. At the end of that period, care leavers in each state and territory were surveyed to determine how many then had leaving-care plans, how involved they had been in the planning, and how confident they were that the plans would be helpful. A total of 605 young people answered these questions and evaluated the process, impact, and outcomes of the campaign.

Despite the year's intensive campaign, no significant increase in the overall extent of transition planning was observed compared with findings reported previously. Even when considering only the 17 year olds, a minority (44%) had a plan that was at some stage of development. However, large state and territory differences were observed, with NSW and TAS performing poorly in leaving-care planning.

Young people with a plan perceived their caseworkers and themselves as less involved in the planning process than were carers, particularly those young people in Relative and Kinship care. Members of this placement group also were the least confident that their plan would be helpful in assisting them to function independently in the future. While caseworkers may be reluctant to intrude on a "family" context in Kinship care, the need of these young people for support in many areas should not be overlooked. Confidence in plan effectiveness also varied across jurisdictions, pointing to the benefits of having uniform national standards and monitoring of outcomes that will follow the introduction of recent Commonwealth initiatives.

Surprisingly, 42% of the 17 year-old group had never heard of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance, with the number in WA particularly low. Evidence indicates that both caseworkers and carers could be more forthcoming with information in this regard to help young people decide if this is a support they wish to access.

In evaluating the "What's the Plan?" campaign, it became clear that the diffusion of information throughout the care sector in Australia was limited (43% of respondents being aware of the program) and varied across jurisdictions, with NSW (the largest population) and VIC revealing low penetration. Again, caseworkers and carers were not effective vehicles for spreading the word; direct contact with young people by mail was best. Being aware of the campaign was associated with a higher likelihood of having a leaving-care plan, but the actual numbers still were low. However, this could have been a case of "preaching to the converted", with young people who already were in a context of proactive support being more able to access information (i.e., not indicating a causal connection).

Calendars and information packs that were distributed by mail were rated by young people as the most useful marketing elements in the campaign for raising awareness of the need for leaving-care planning. Interestingly, those in Kinship care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents found the materials most useful, perhaps because they had not received much information about leaving care from other sources previously.

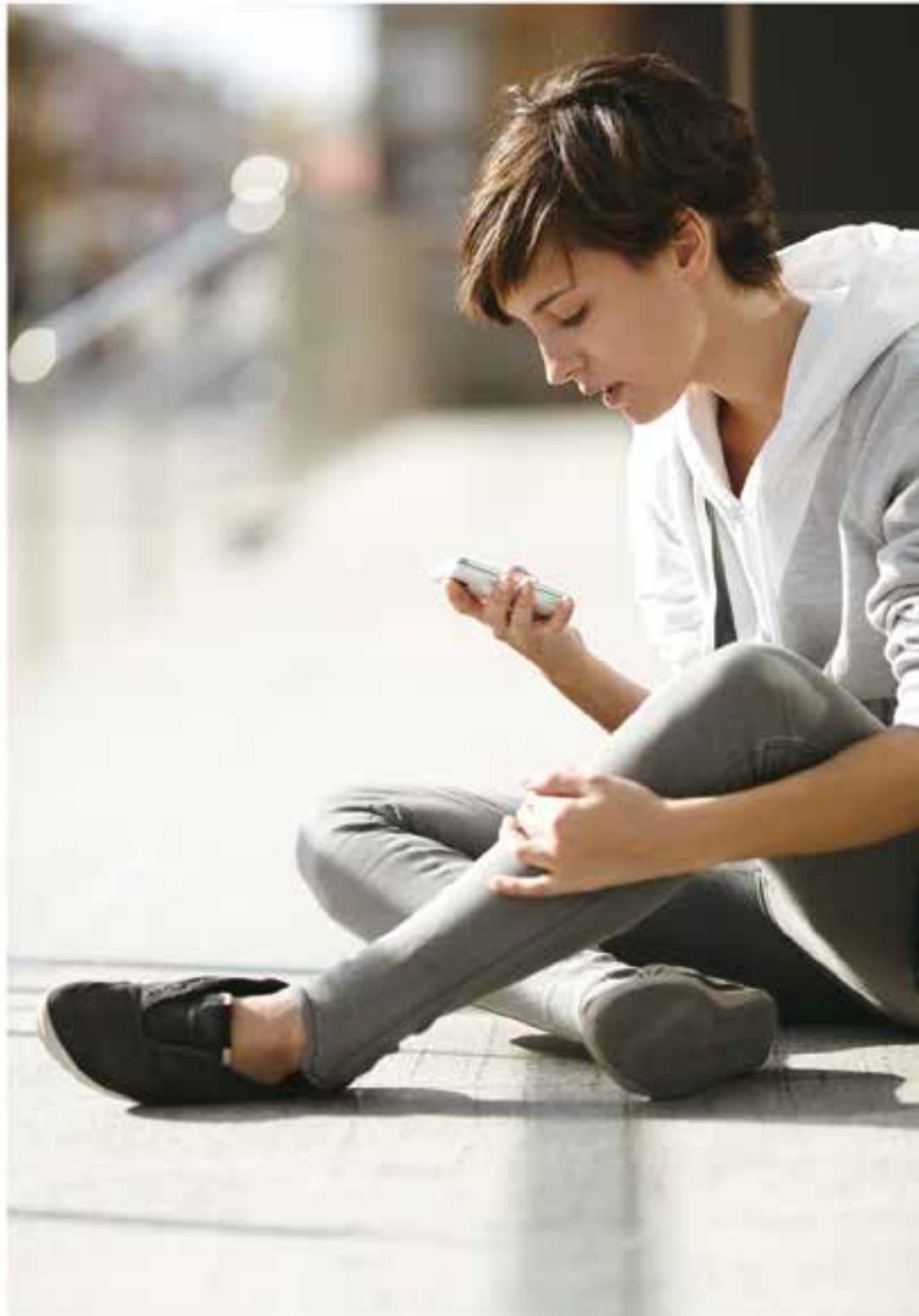
The data collected when evaluating the process and impact of "What's the Plan?" strongly indicate the need for more effective cooperation between governments and CREATE in undertaking this type of research. On one hand, jurisdictions show concern for learning what young people think by providing financial support; however, operationally, they maintain traditional barriers in limiting access to the same young people (under the guise of confidentiality and privacy). Better systems need to be developed (exploiting the partnerships already existing between governments and CREATE) so that all young people who might want to be involved in a particular project have the opportunity to ensure that their voices are heard.

One year on, it appears that this social marketing approach has not had great impact. The overall objective of having significantly more young people than previously leave care with a useful plan for their future has not been achieved.

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CREATE may have been overly optimistic in expecting detectable change within such a relatively short time frame. However, signs in some jurisdictions are positive. If more efficient channels of communication can be opened with young people and carers, continuation of aspects of the program would seem appropriate with a view to effecting longer-term change.

It also is apparent that approaches different from social marketing will need to be employed to encourage and facilitate changes in caseworker attitudes and behaviour involving leaving-care planning. Clearly, more than the mere raising of awareness is required with caseworkers, given the competing forces impacting on their professional lives. CREATE would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with governments to facilitate more caseworker involvement in the mapping of a successful transition for those young people leaving care.



recommendations

1. Continuation of “What’s the Plan?” campaign

Although little impact was effected on leaving-care planning by the “What’s the Plan?” campaign in the initial 12 month period of implementation, the signs of a positive response in some states and territories led to the recommendation that governments undertake to support the continuation of this social-marketing campaign over a longer period. Particular emphasis can be directed at empowering young people to become involved in the planning process, and to encouraging carers to discuss all aspects of the leaving-care process with those for whom they are responsible. This may best be achieved through the continued use of the calendar and information sheets, and newsletters prepared for carers, along with the understanding that such issues will be addressed specifically in carer training.

2. Government collaboration to enhance communication

Since CREATE is the peak body charged with communicating the views of children and young people about the care system to decision makers, it is important for governments to work with the Foundation to develop a functional system that facilitates contact with children and young people in care. This would enable the efficient dissemination of information (e.g., in marketing the “What’s the Plan?” campaign) as well as the monitoring of outcomes. This will ensure that all care leavers, irrespective of jurisdiction, are equally well equipped to plan for their future.

3. Transition-from-Care caseworkers

Of all the key people available to support care leavers when transitioning, caseworkers are best placed to develop significant relationships with young people to assist them in their transition to independence. However, evidence suggests that general caseworkers, because of the demands of their broad-based responsibilities, are not able to devote the time or attention required to facilitate detailed planning with those about to transition. Therefore, it is again recommended that state and territory departments nominate dedicated staff (e.g., Transition-from-Care Officers) to be the people who assume responsibility for conducting needs assessments with care leavers, and for instigating and facilitating consultative planning.

4. Support for Relative and Kinship Care

Even though young people in Relative and Kinship Care generally are placed with family members, and caseworkers may feel reluctant to intrude on the family domain, this group still requires support when moving to independence from a care framework. Departments must ensure that adequate contact and involvement is maintained by caseworkers with carers and young people in the kinship context so that they receive sufficient information to feel supported without being controlled.

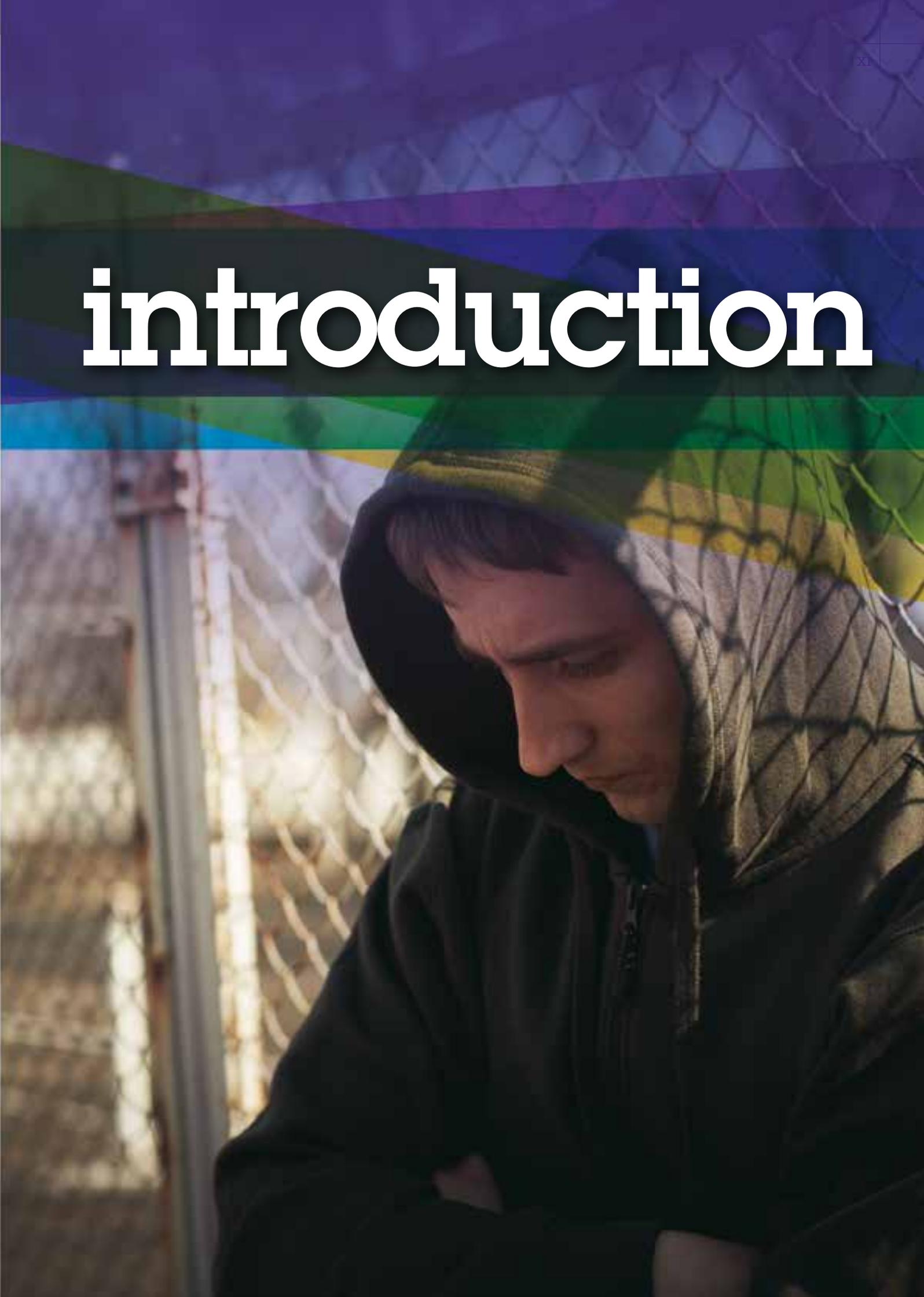
5. Maximising involvement of young people in planning

Departments and out-of-home care services need to explore innovative ways for engaging with young people in the leaving-care planning process. Given the high level of web-based responses to this survey, it is clear that young people can find ways to access this technology and are comfortable using it. Therefore, it is recommended that departments/agencies explore alternate means of communicating with young people, other than face-to-face and telephone contact, to effectively involve them in the planning process. Email, Skype, and messaging systems are common means of standard communication within the community. Departments should recognise these as widely accepted mechanisms and explore ways they could be utilized to make involvement in planning a positive occurrence for young people and a part of their daily experience.

6. Commitment to workforce development

Departments need to introduce mechanisms (e.g., staff development workshops) that will give caseworkers the opportunity to focus on the issues surrounding leaving-care planning and, in doing so, possibly overcome barriers or solve problems that might preclude the implementation of best practice in achieving the desired outcome for care leavers. CREATE hoped that the “take a break” concept would be sufficient to induce in caseworkers self-reflection on practice, but obviously a more structured approach that is adequately resourced is necessary. Such sessions could be incorporated into the training agenda, or could be facilitated by external organisations. The key criterion to be met is that caseworkers feel supported through having continuing opportunities to address planning issues.

introduction



1.0

introduction

Over recent years, the CREATE Foundation has published two Report Cards (McDowall, 2008; 2009) dealing with issues confronting young people transitioning from out-of-home care in Australia.

The specific findings of that research (which will be discussed in more detail in Section 1.1) confirmed other work done at a national and international level. At that time, Stein and Munro (2008) had compiled reviews from 16 countries around the world including Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, and other major European countries, as well as Israel and Jordan that aimed, among other things, to provide "a comprehensive description of young people's transitions from care to adulthood" in the different regions and to present "summary messages for policy and practice" (p. 17). This valuable resource showed that while circumstances varied between countries, there was a "high risk of social exclusion for young people leaving care" which in European social policy discourse "has come to mean both material disadvantage and marginalisation" (Stein, 2008, p. 290). In general, care leavers during their transition are more likely, than their peers living with birth families, to experience unemployment, poverty, mental health problems, social isolation, homelessness, instability, and involvement in crime.

Importantly, Stein (2008) recognised that the experience of those leaving care was not uniformly negative. He identified three groups that reacted to transition differently. The first group comprised those who were able to "move on" with their lives in a relatively "normal" way, whose "resilience had been enhanced by their experiences both in and after care" (p. 300). However, there also were "survivors" who were likely to have suffered instability and disruption in placements, were unemployed, homeless for periods, found personal and professional relationships difficult to maintain, but who saw themselves as self-reliant even though they exhibited "high degrees of agency dependency for assistance with accommodation, money and personal problems" (p.301). After-care support could help this group significantly. Third were the "strugglers" who were the most disadvantaged and often suffered in all areas mentioned above. While after-care support was "unlikely to be able to help them overcome their poor starting points...it was important to these young people that somebody was there for them" (p. 302).

1.1 CREATE Report Card 2009

The CREATE Report Card 2009 (McDowall, 2009) recorded the most recent data collected throughout Australia from interviews with 275 young people (15 years and over) preparing to leave care and 196 who already were attempting to achieve independence. These young people answered questions designed to reveal how the care systems, developed by state and territory governments, were either equipping them for transition or supporting them in adulthood. The overarching finding was that, while most jurisdictions had appropriate legislation and/or policies in place, and funded a range of services developed to support the identified needs of the young people, the care leavers were not receiving the assistance they required. "On paper" relevant issues appeared to be addressed; unfortunately, in practice, the

good intentions distilled from many inquiries and reviews are not translated into useful support for the young people.

Inadequacies were uncovered in all domains of importance in the lives of care leavers, including those articulated in the *Looking After Children* framework: Housing, Education, Employment (and Finances), Health, Identity, Life Skills, and Relationships. In each area, problems were encountered in three critical phases of the process of leaving care: (a) the Preparation Phase, which could reflect a gradual introduction during the whole time in care of the concept of “moving on” after reaching 18 years, but must involve clear, detailed planning from when the young person turns 15 years; (b) the actual Transition Phase that includes the leaving of a care environment and the establishment of an independent life; and (c) the After Care Independence Phase in which the young people are living their “interdependent” lives within the community (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006), drawing on services and support when necessary.

1.1.1 Preparation Phase

This for many young people could (and perhaps should) be the longest phase in which the impact of several of the life domains already would be established. Ongoing Health needs and Education should have been addressed as part of life in care, as should Identity and key Relationship formation, and Life Skills development. After age 15, formal leaving-care planning, in consultation with the young person, should begin, all necessary documentation (birth certificates, personal files, references) should be assembled, and any areas of special need and possible supports identified. All such requirements are to be articulated in a Transition from Care Plan.

However, the CREATE Report Card 2009 data indicated that 64% of young people surveyed had no knowledge of such a plan being in place for them. While governments insist that plans do exist, if the young people have not been involved in their development, the benefit of the process in setting guidelines for the care leavers’ future is lost. Caseworkers would seem to shoulder most responsibility for successful implementation of this phase of transition. However, if the situation observed in Victoria of large numbers of unallocated cases (see data provided in a Report by the State Ombudsman, 2009) is common throughout the child protection system, it becomes unclear who should take responsibility for transition planning for such young people. Relevant organisations (including the Commonwealth Government in an overseeing role) must direct more attention to improving the planning process.

Findings from the CREATE Report Card 2009 also revealed deficits in specific domain areas that need to be addressed. For example, 9.5% of care leavers still found managing their health care difficult. Also, females were significantly more likely than males to use health services. For such support that is so necessary and visible within the community, every effort must be made in the preparation phase to ensure that all potential access problems young people might face are identified and resolved.

In addition, education planning should be well advanced while the young person is in care. The observation that only 35.3% of care leavers in CREATE’s sample completed year 12 indicates that greater support and encouragement should have been provided to assist those in care to complete their education successfully. A related problem is highlighted by the fact that, of the 27% of young people still in care who already had left school, one-fifth did so because they had been expelled. Support through appropriate alternative programs could help get these young people back on track to becoming productive community members.

There also is an expectation that other aspects such as cultural identification, relationship formation, and life-skills development would be well advanced while young people are in care. It was clear from the CREATE Report Card that several respondents, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, valued contact with

“I think kids from the age of 16 should start planning their leaving care plan once they turn 16 with their carer or caseworker, it just gets you organised with where you want to be when you turn 18.”
(Female, 16)

siblings and grandparents and wanted more involvement with these family members. Planning needs to ensure that young people recognise the importance of contact with their community and chosen family, and whatever connections they wish to establish are facilitated. Assessment of their level of life skills acquisition when approaching transition (and implementing remedial action if necessary through appropriate programs) would ensure that, in future, 12.6% of care leavers do not report finding the preparation of meals and looking after themselves challenging.

1.1.2 Transition Phase

The period of Transition, the time for actually leaving care, can be characterized as a “getting established” phase when emphasis is placed on finding a new home base, if required, for the young person and addressing immediate financial assistance issues. Data from the CREATE Report Card indicated that support in this period also was lacking. Of the group, 50% had to leave their placement on turning 18 years and 40% of those didn't know where they were going to live on leaving. Overall, 34.7% had experienced periods of homelessness in their first year of independence for an average of 31 days. Almost 70% received some form of Centrelink payment (53.7% wholly dependent on this support); 21.3% found the management of finances quite or very hard. Positively, 25.5% were financially self-sufficient; however, 28.5% were unemployed. A further 13.8% were continuing their studies at tertiary institutions.

These observations highlight areas where more support is needed when establishing a new life for a young care leaver. Achieving the aspiration that “no young person should exit care into homelessness” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) still remains elusive. Special attention needs to be given to achieving familiarity with the Centrelink procedures, given that so many of the young care leavers initially depend on that support. In addition, extra effort should be directed at reducing unemployment in this cohort by helping them find suitable employment or making it easier for them to enrol in suitable education or training programs. Accessibility of transport becomes vital during this period.

1.1.3 After Care Independence Phase

The critical facets of this phase of transitioning could be classified as monitoring and review. A major problem here is that, because of the relatively low priority given to supporting those who already have left care, often it is not clear who should assume responsibility for tracking the progress of these young people. CREATE has strongly advocated for the establishment of dedicated Transition from Care (TFC) workers in major child protection centres within each state / territory (McDowall, 2008, 2009); these workers would be responsible for monitoring the outcomes achieved by care leavers in their region. This would require workers keeping in touch with young people and having a record of their contact details. This is not done consistently at present. CREATE has worked on many projects in partnership with child safety departments in which it was necessary to make contact with young people to send them information. Unfortunately, often this was not possible because young people could not be located, in some cases this applied even to those still in care.

Other essential functions TFC workers would perform include: tracking young peoples' progress, identifying their current support needs, and in consultation with the young people, reviewing and modifying existing plans and proposals. Such reassessment is deemed necessary due to the statements by care leavers in the CREATE Report Card 2009 that most of the important issues in their lives, such as those mentioned above, were either not covered in their initial leaving-care (LC) plan, or the proposed actions were of little or no value in supporting their transition.

As well as ensuring that particular departmental workers are assigned responsibility for maintaining “official” contact with care leavers over the proposed

Help to find a place and helping out in general when you are leaving. FACS should help us out with financial help, finding a house, finding a job and finding a car. They help us get into care so they should help us get out.
(Male, 15)

eight-year transitioning period (18 to 25 years), it also would be important to establish mentoring relationships between the young people and community members to provide a continuous support base for care leavers as they move towards independence. CREATE's Report Card cited the Victorian tripartite model (Mentoring, After-care services, and Brokerage funding) as one worthy of emulation throughout Australia since it deals with the essential layers of support needed by those transitioning from care.

1.2 Update on Transitioning from Care Research (International and National)

A number of studies have been published since the CREATE Report Card 2009 was prepared dealing with issues surrounding transition from care both in Australia and overseas. SOS Children's Villages (Lerch & Stein, 2010) has produced another comparison across countries of the ageing-out-of-care process; this review covered 13 European and east Asian societies including many that had not been considered in research previously (e.g., Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan). While the data were considered variable in accuracy and reliability, similar trends in disadvantage were reported, particularly concerning young people transitioning from large residential institutions. Other organisations have presented stand-alone analyses of experiences in their own regions, for example, the Human Rights Watch (2010) in California, and DEMOS in the United Kingdom (Hannon, Wood, & Bazalgette, 2010). Both of these point to the same difficulties experienced by care leavers as have been identified, but explore possible solutions for improving transition preparation and after-care support, including Hannon et al.'s eminently sensible "right to return" proposal where young people up to the age of 21 are guaranteed to be able to return to care if they experience significant difficulties when living independently.

Several of the recent studies have concentrated on making recommendations for improvements to support systems in specific areas concerning young people transitioning from care. In the UK, the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services produced a major report drawn from research to formulate proposals for increasing the number of care leavers in settled, safe accommodation (Stein & Morris, 2009). Housing was also the primary focus of the final report from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) team (Johnson, Natalier, Mendes, Liddiard, Thoresen, Hollows, & Bailey, 2010) in which they explored various pathways from out-of-home care. They differentiated those care leavers in their sample who underwent a smooth transition from the majority (76%) who had a more "volatile" experience, and discussed their respective needs and resources available to provide necessary support. Innovative programs were proposed, such as the Secure Tenancy Guarantee Scheme, to assist care leavers establish a stable home base from which to embark on independence.

In his analysis of Australian policy and practice impacting on care leavers, Mendes (2009b) identified specific areas of concern that included: homelessness, drug/alcohol use/abuse, poor mental and physical health, education and employment deficits, poor social support systems, juvenile prostitution, crime, and early parenthood, and indicated that particular attention should be directed to the particular problems of Indigenous and rural care leavers. Mendes has published articles dealing with some of these issues in greater detail including employment (Mendes, 2009c), mentoring and relationship formation (Mendes, 2009a), as well as evaluating a community development support model to assist care leavers in rural Victoria (Mendes, 2011).

Governments in Australia also have been active in updating their policies and procedures regarding transitioning, with clear practice guides being developed, for example, in South Australia (see Families SA document "Transition Planning for Young People Leaving Care (metro region)") and Northern Territory (refer to Chapter 17 of the NTFC Care and Protection Policy and Procedures Manual). Major reviews are underway in other jurisdictions such as the Australian Capital Territory (see DHCS | ACT, 2010).

less than half of

17

year olds have a
leaving care plan

In addition, a strong lead is being taken by the Commonwealth in this area through the work of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) in developing a National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children of which Transitioning to Independence has been established as a National Priority. Two areas have been identified as requiring immediate action: one is a review of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) which already is in the Federal domain; the other is for the Commonwealth to oversee development of a nationally consistent approach to the preparation and implementation of LC plans (FaHCSIA, 2010).

The need for attention to be focused on LC plans was highlighted in the CREATE Report Card 2009 (McDowall, 2009). It seems a self-evident truth that if each young person transitioning from care has been involved in thinking about and discussing their possible future life needs with a supportive adult (e.g., caseworker) and working with that person to identify courses of action or pathways to follow to assist their independent functioning within the community by preparing a LC plan, then their likelihood of a successful transition would be maximized.

Legislation in all Australian states and territories already enshrines this requirement for planning (McDowall, 2009). It is recognised internationally; for example, the second of four broad-based recommendations flowing from the Human Rights Watch (2010) report into "emancipation" from foster care in California stresses that there must be a "guarantee that youth have useful emancipation plans" (p. 63). The authors make specific recommendations about planning to key stakeholders that are worth considering in detail:

To the Governor and State Legislature

- Ensure that existing laws requiring transitional living plans are being implemented and are effective.

To Judges, Attorneys, and Child Advocates

- Inquire and follow up at regular intervals on the status of plans for a youth's emancipation.
- Identify children and youth in foster care who have special needs, ensure that their post-emancipation plans address those needs, and take steps to ensure their needs are met.

To County Child Welfare Agencies and Social Workers

- Ensure that every youth emancipating has a place to live, a source of income, and health coverage prior to emancipation.
- Guarantee that every youth leaving care has an independent living coordinator and knows how to reach that person.
- Evaluate systems and procedures to ensure that the perspectives of children and youth are incorporated in planning and assist them in identifying their goals.
- Work closely with youth to complete the Independent Living Plan, beginning in early adolescence and continuing until the youth leaves care; involve people who care about the youth and can assist him or her in developing the plan; and allow sufficient time to discuss and take action on the youth's goals.
- Provide more information about services, programs, and support that exist post-emancipation. (p. 63-64)

If these ideals were operationalised there would be far more young people making a successful transition to independence.

1.3 CREATE's Current Project: Report Card 2011

The benefits of having a useful LC plan are not just hypothetical. Evidence exists that shows how the lives of young people can be enhanced by having a transition

plan. For example, Forbes, Inder, and Raman (2006) drew attention to the significant associations they observed in their survey of 60 care leavers between having a plan and positive transition outcomes; those with plans were twice as likely to be living in stable housing and three times more likely to be employed.

If it is a legislative requirement for young people to have a leaving care plan, and the benefits of having a plan, and the deficits of not, are well documented, why do all care leavers not have a transition plan? What can be done to ensure that a greater proportion of young people than has been reported leave care with better preparation?

What barriers exist to plan preparation? One possibility is that young people are not aware of their rights and are not well enough informed to raise the issue with key people in their lives (viz., caseworkers and carers). If they had more information, they perhaps could become more proactive in initiating discussions about their future. Unfortunately, this would be more difficult for those of young people who do not have a personal relationship with an allocated worker.

From the caseworkers' perspective, perhaps they could be apathetic or are unaware of their responsibilities regarding transition from care. However, this seems highly unlikely, given the motivation generally possessed by workers within human services and the legislative framework in which they operate. It is much more likely that if shortcuts are taken it is because of the need to set priorities (acute cases entering the system receiving most attention) because of unrealistic caseloads and lack of resources. Carers also could be expected to become more involved in discussing options with the young people; some obviously do, but little is known about the range of emotions caregivers experience leading to the time of transition that might make discussing the impending separation difficult.

Being the peak organisation in Australia representing the views of young people in care and an advocate for systemic changes to improve all aspects of child protection, the CREATE Foundation embarked on a long-term project in 2010 with the aim of increasing significantly the number of young people leaving the care system who had a functional and effective LC plan covering what lies ahead for them in their immediate future. It was proposed to achieve this outcome by initiating an intervention over 12 months that would impact in various ways on all relevant stakeholders involved in the planning process to raise awareness of the critical need for action in this area. This Report Card 2011 will outline the program, describe the interventions, and evaluate the effectiveness of the various initiatives trialled in the program designated "What's the Plan?", (the title reflecting the question all care leavers need to ask) .

However, an important associated outcome that also will be investigated is the identification of barriers that exist that may subvert the ideal, universal occurrence of LC plans. It is essential to determine critical reasons that may limit the success of CREATE's program.

Because of the large number and diversity of concerned parties, operating in different networks, attending to and likely to be influenced by different factors within the community as a whole, it was decided to use a Social Marketing strategy in an attempt to promote the behaviour changes necessary. The following section presents an overview of Social Marketing to explain its relevance and its application in the present study.

1.4 A Social Marketing Approach

Kotler and Zaltman (1971, p. 5) introduced the broad concept "Social Marketing" as the use of standard elements within the commercial marketing mix to "influence the acceptability of social ideas" and, consequently, aid in the solution of social and health problems. Since that seminal work, researchers in this field have felt the need to differentiate social marketing from other approaches (e.g., education, legislation) that also can affect attitudes and behaviour so that its particular effectiveness can be appreciated. Alan Andreasen is one researcher who has

argued for greater precision of definition by stressing that social marketing should be thought of as:

the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part. (1994, p. 110)

The key features of this approach are the emphasis on designing *programs*, changing *voluntary behaviour*, and enhancing the *welfare* of individuals and society. Programs are seen as longer-term interventions leading to sustained change of behaviour; they may comprise a variety of short-term projects that together focus on achieving the program objectives (Robinson, 2009a). The behaviour being targeted must be exhibited by choice and capable of being changed by the relevant person (this does not relate to uncontrolled actions or compulsive addictions), and the change should improve the quality of life of the individual.

Much debate has ensued in the literature as to what precisely social marketing entails (McDermott, Stead, & Hastings, 2005) and how effective programs following this approach might be (Stead, Gordon, Angus, & McDermott, 2007). Social marketing strategies have been applied to a variety of problem issues within the community including smoking (Hastings & McLean, 2006); alcohol consumption (Gordon, Hastings, & Moodie, 2009; Jackson, 2009); gambling (Messerlian & Derevensky, 2006); obesity (Stead, Hastings, & McDermott, 2007); and public health in general (Grier & Bryant, 2005).

Given the diversity of definitions and approaches, and often the lack of systematic evaluation of such studies, it is not surprising that effectiveness reviews usually provide mixed results. For example, Stead, Gordon, Angus, and McDermott (2007) concluded that their review “found reasonable evidence that interventions developed using social marketing principles can be effective” although “effects tended to dissipate in the medium and longer term” (p. 180). Similar outcomes were observed for interventions designed to prevent child abuse and neglect (Horsfall, Bromfield, & McDonald, 2010). It is clear that, for the effectiveness of programs to be monitored, planned evaluation must be incorporated into the program design (Christopoulos & Reynolds, 2009).

Robinson (2009b) argued that problems arise in social marketing interventions when attempts are made to change the “wrong” behaviour; when the influence of the context in which the behaviour occurs is ignored; if a “crop spraying” approach is used employing mass media rather than “fine-grained, conversational, local approaches” (p. 7); and if theoretical structures are imposed on the data rather than researchers interacting with the people affected and “listening intently to their stories” in order to “begin to construct solutions to their needs” (p. 7). As Robinson indicates, many social marketing programs are concerned just with raising awareness of issues. Indeed those evaluations conducted often measure this effect, but awareness does not always result in behaviour change in the desired direction and can lead to defensive bias in response (Leffingwell, Neumann, Leedy, & Babitzke, 2007).

Many authors have provided advice on what features characterise a successful social marketing program. Lefebvre (2008) advocates and elaborates on the 15 principles introduced by Kotler and Lee (2008) in their classic text. In summary, these stress that marketers need to (a) be aware of the needs of their audience, (b) promote change in single, simple, “doable” behaviours, (c) remove barriers inhibiting change, (d) highlight the benefits of change (including the provision of incentives), and (e) use interesting and relevant media to promote desired outcomes. Increasingly, those studies identified as adopting a social marketing paradigm are those that follow Andreasen’s (2002) set of six benchmarks: (a) have clear behaviour-change goals; (b) base intervention on “consumer” research; (c) target appropriate interventions to identified audience segments; (d) use a variety of the standard marketing-mix elements; (e) introduce motivational strategies to encourage voluntary behaviour change; and (f) minimize competing influences that could subvert the desired change. These criteria will be used here to help describe aspects of the intervention developed by CREATE that has been titled “What’s the Plan?”

1.4.1 Benchmarks for Social Marketing: Behaviour Change and Audience Research

Andreasen (2002) believed that *behaviour change* was a fundamental consideration in the design and evaluation of social marketing interventions. As mentioned previously, much attention has been directed at reducing the incidence of problem behaviour (e.g., smoking, or eating / drinking to excess). Some studies have attempted to increase physical activity (Wong, Greenwell, Gates, & Berkowitz, 2008). However, few have explored a process of changing preparatory behaviour as will be required here. One comparable project was Marshall, Petrone, Takach, Sansonetti, Wah-Fitta, Bagnall-Degos, and Novais's (2007) "Make a kit, make a plan, stay informed" campaign designed to help a community avoid panic in future emergency situations. They estimated that their intervention, incorporating the promotion of a detailed information booklet, resulted in 10% of the population (of Rhode Island) changing their preparedness behaviour by engaging in at least one of the three options advocated in the program.

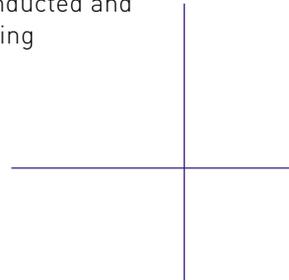
As previously stated, the goal of CREATE's "What's the Plan?" program was to maximize the number of young people who have a formal plan for their short and medium-term future when leaving the care system. This need, and the corresponding behaviour to be changed, were identified in the CREATE Report Card 2009 focusing on Transitioning from Care, the findings of which constitute the audience research underpinning this program.

1.4.2 Market Segmentation

In this area of child protection, many critical groups (stakeholders) can be identified: (a) the young care leavers; (b) caseworkers; (c) carers; (d) government departments; (e) sector agencies; (f) Children's Commissioners / Guardians; and (g) national peak bodies. For this project, attention was concentrated on the behaviour of the three groups most directly involved in the process of transition: caseworkers, young people, and carers. Each sector needs to be targeted with specific strategies to engage them in the program to effect change in their behaviour.

The remainder of this Report Card details how the intervention was conducted and the effectiveness of the "What's the Plan? Campaign in changing planning behaviour for young people approaching transition.

**the goal of
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"What's the
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was to maximise
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young people
who have a
formal plan for
their future**





method

2.0

method

2.1 Design of the “What’s the Plan?” Campaign: Marketing Mix and Motivation

This campaign obviously was developed as an initiative of the CREATE Foundation, but it could not have been implemented to the extent it has without the strong support of all governments throughout Australia. All state and territory jurisdictions contributed seed funding (\$5,000 each) and the Commonwealth provided a grant of \$30,000 to aid in the production and distribution of critical materials used in the intervention. This level of involvement by governments indicates the relative importance they place on the need to improve LC planning.

Strategies employed in this program were developed largely under the influence of Bandura’s (2001) Social Cognitive Theory. To achieve the goal of increasing the number of young care leavers with a transition plan, the three modes of agency Bandura identified (Personal, Proxy, and Collective) were addressed. All stakeholders (young people themselves, caseworkers, and carers) had to play their part, necessitating a different intervention with each group to influence the behaviour change required in the others with whom they interacted. Table 1 summarises the respective interventions and motivations used with each of the key groups. A more detailed account showing the timeline for interventions is presented in Appendix A.

2.1.1 Caseworkers

Interventions with caseworkers involved a mix of marketing’s “4 Ps” with emphasis on the *Product* (behaviour change to increase incidence of plans). *Place* was discussed in relation to the infrastructure already established to facilitate plan production, and *Price* issues centred on the long-term cost to the community of not providing adequate support for care leavers when transitioning (Morgan Disney, 2006). These points were raised in discussions when CREATE staff contacted Departmental offices to introduce the campaign. *Promotion* also involved the production and distribution to child safety departments throughout Australia of “What’s the Plan?” posters and newsletters drawing attention to the need for planning in the lives of care leavers. To encourage workers to reflect on the situation of those transitioning, information packs (that included “Tim Tam” chocolate biscuits) were sent to 277 child protection and Children’s Commissioner’s offices throughout Australia. Staff were invited to “have a break on CREATE” while they considered the future of the young people for whom they were responsible.

In an attempt to strengthen further the connection between departmental centres and CREATE, a worker in each area was invited to become a “CREATE Mate” and be the contact person for that office. In this role, they would assume responsibility for ensuring that information about the program was disseminated as widely as possible to fellow workers. Currently, there are 89 CREATE mates in departments and agencies.

It was proposed to reward caseworkers for involvement in the “What’s the Plan?” program (helping the care leavers for whom they were responsible to formulate a LC plan) by being recognised as a CREATE Champion. Young people who received positive support with planning for transitioning were encouraged to nominate helpful departmental staff members. The workers’ names would then be entered on CREATE’s Honour Roll and included in a report sent to Ministers by CREATE’s CEO

each quarter. This action was to acknowledge best practice by caseworkers who would receive recognition by their peers and at the highest levels within their departments. Despite extensive promotion of this aspect (in four editions of the *clubCREATE* magazine, and at Connections events and empowerment workshops) only 19 people were nominated as “Champions”.

Table 1

Interventions Employing Marketing Mix Elements and Motivational Strategies with Key Participant Groups to Increase the Incidence of Leaving Care Plans

program element	caseworkers	care leavers	community (carers, agencies, government)
Intervention	<p>“What’s the Plan?” Poster distributed</p> <p>Newsletters via hard copy and E-news</p> <p>CREATE staff visit offices for campaign promotion emphasising that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure already established to produce Plans (“Place”) • Long-term cost of not acting is high (“Price”) • “Have a break on CREATE” (encouraging reflective practice) 	<p>Calendar and information packs (distributed to all young people 15 – 17 years through Departments)</p> <p>State information sheets (hard copy, CREATE web site)</p> <p>Wallet cards and posters (distributed to all young people 15 – 17 years through departments)</p> <p>Promote campaign through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clubCREATE magazine • NYAC delegates contacting Ministers 	<p>Conference presentations (NSW, Tasmania and Victoria)</p> <p>National Foster Care Association E-newsletter</p> <p>Australian Foster and Kinship Care Partnership E-newsletter</p> <p>State foster care association newsletters</p>
Motivation	<p>CREATE Champions Award (entry on CREATE Honour Board):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge best practice • Nominations by young people • Minister advised quarterly of workers receiving nominations 	<p>Have a LC Plan that outlines support for the future</p> <p>Prizes: (e.g., T-shirts, phone-socks for involvement in planning, consultations, and completing benchmark survey)</p>	<p>CREATE Champions Award (carers could be recipients if nominated by young person)</p> <p>Achievement publicized through newsletters, conferences, letters to Ministers and agencies</p>

2.1.2 Care Leavers

All young people in care over the age of 15 years who could be contacted through departmental records or as members of *clubCREATE* were sent a “What’s the Plan?” calendar. This was designed to cover the initial 12 months of the program (from March 2010). When opened, one side of the calendar showed the dates for a particular month while the other asked questions and presented essential information about the benefits and content of a transition-from-care plan. It was hoped that this would provide a constant reminder to the young person and the carer not only to take action to initiate the formation of a plan if one was not already in place, but also to seek involvement in the planning process. The “What’s the Plan?” program was promoted to young people through state-relevant information sheets distributed through the departments, on the CREATE web sites, and through the *clubCREATE* magazine and brochures. A final mass contact was made with all care leavers at the beginning of 2011 when Wallet Cards were mailed (credit-card size objects containing essential contact information that care leavers could reference at any time). Examples of the calendar and other promotional material used are presented in Appendix B.

Approximately 6000 calendars and “What’s the Plan?” information packs were distributed throughout Australia to young people in care aged 15 to 17 years inclusive. The methods of dissemination varied depending on departmental policy. One major difficulty in conducting this research was contacting the young people, both initially to give them information and latterly to obtain their survey responses. For confidentiality reasons, departments are protective of young people’s personal

contact details. Therefore, to show their support for the “What’s the Plan?” program, most departments undertook to post the care leavers’ information packs prepared by CREATE staff. Victoria was different in that the department had to send the prepared packs to the relevant non-government organisations that then forwarded them to young people in their care. While this physical and financial support is of great benefit to CREATE, the research team has no way of guaranteeing or monitoring delivery of the information, which are critical aspects of the process.

The strongest, medium-term motivation for young people to be engaged with the program was to have a personal, viable plan for their future. Small prizes (such as T-shirts and phone/iPod socks) were presented as immediate rewards for participation in consultations and the benchmarking survey.

2.1.3 Carers

The active participation of carers was essential for the success of this project. In an effort to gain their widespread support, presentations were made to all major carer conferences throughout Australia, and articles were written for carer association newsletters at both the national and state levels. Carers were entitled to become CREATE Champions if their positive involvement was highlighted. Carer achievements were publicized through letters to Ministers and in communications with Agencies.

2.2 Design of the Evaluation

2.2.1 Participants: Sampling targets

It was planned to survey a greater range of young people than had been accessed in previous Report Cards. A set of targets for this sample was devised based on data published in Child Protection Australia 2010 (AIHW, 2011) showing the proportions of young people in the 15 to 17 age group, representing both sexes, living in the key care placement types (foster, relative or kinship, and residential) in each state and territory in Australia. The age of 15 years was chosen since it is at that stage most jurisdictions recommend that LC planning should begin (see McDowall, 2009). Each state office of CREATE was assigned a notional target to guide data collection in approximating a stratified sample. Only two states (Queensland and Tasmania) reached these targets. Table 2 details the number of young people who participated in this survey, categorised by the variables listed above.

In total, 605 respondents were surveyed, 192 in the 15 year-old age group, 218 16 year olds, and 195 in the 17 year-old cohort. There were a total of 282 males and 323 females; 177 young people identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, along with 348 non-Indigenous Australians, and 80 from Other Cultural Backgrounds. Most (225) were placed in Foster Care, 146 in Kinship or Relative Care (referred to as Kinship Care in this report for brevity), 115 from Residential Care, with 119 in other forms of living arrangements including permanent care, family group homes, semi-independent/transitional accommodation, and independent living.

Overall, the sample includes approximately 12% of the population of young people approaching transitioning from care in Australia. Unfortunately, it was not possible to ensure that the states and territories were represented in proportion to the number of 15 to 17 year-olds in care in the various jurisdictions. For example, because of the large number of young people in NSW eligible to participate in this survey (approaching 2300), locating and surveying even 12% of these would be a difficult task. Therefore, the proportions of the population included in this sample for NSW and VIC were set lower than in other areas. The achieved percentages, based on AIHW statistics are: ACT – 26.3%; NSW – 5.3%; NT – 54.2%; QLD – 15.5%; SA – 18%; TAS – 86.5%; VIC – 9.8%; and WA – 20.8%.

The strongest, medium-term motivation for young people to be engaged with the program was to have a personal, viable plan for their future.

2.2.2 Survey

The survey employed in this study was designed to serve two purposes. First, it was important to determine the current incidence of LC plans and explore aspects of the planning process in jurisdictions throughout Australia. Second, it was necessary to conduct an evaluation after the first year of the intervention CREATE mounted in attempting to raise awareness of the need for LC planning. To these ends, a survey was developed that contained two major parts, with various sub-sections (see Appendix C for a copy of this document).

Initially, demographic data were collected on the respondents (e.g., age, sex, location, placement type, cultural affiliation, orders, and disability status). Then they were asked about the planning process, specifically whether or not they had a plan, and if so, how involved in its preparation they, and other key people in their lives, had been. Those who reported having an LC plan also were questioned about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the supports outlined in the plan, with particular reference to the Commonwealth's TILA program.

The second part of the survey dealt with the "What's the Plan?" intervention. Young people were asked how aware they were of the program; if they knew about it, how they had been informed, and how useful they thought the various approaches might be in raising awareness of the need for LC planning. Throughout the survey, respondents were provided with opportunities to record their personal views and elaborate on the questions asked.



Table 2

Number of Participants Categorised by Sex, Culture, Placement Type and Jurisdiction

state	population	australian (other)		indigenous		other culture		N
		m	f	m	f	m	f	
<i>foster care</i>								
ACT	39	1	2	4	0	3	0	10
NSW	358	13	18	5	5	5	7	53
NT	31	3	2	1	8	0	0	11
QLD	586	11	31	7	18	1	2	70
SA	152	3	2	3	4	0	0	12
TAS	44	12	5	1	5	1	0	24
VIC	457	4	12	0	0	0	3	19
WA	143	9	8	4	2	1	2	26
TOTAL N	2410	56	80	25	39	11	14	225
<i>kinship care</i>								
ACT	48	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
NSW	1283	7	6	2	2	4	4	25
NT	16	1	1	2	5	0	0	9
QLD	319	14	6	5	3	1	0	29
SA	127	4	3	6	3	0	0	16
TAS	28	1	4	4	1	0	0	10
VIC	447	9	8	7	6	2	5	37
WA	139	4	3	3	5	0	0	15
TOTAL N	2407	40	31	34	25	7	9	146
<i>residential care</i>								
ACT	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
NSW	54	3	0	1	2	3	2	11
NT	1	0	1	3	1	0	1	6
QLD	76	9	8	5	6	2	1	31
SA	32	2	5	0	1	1	1	10
TAS	2	3	2	1	2	1	0	9
VIC	93	12	9	3	2	1	2	29
WA	16	9	2	4	1	2	0	18
TOTAL N	282	38	28	17	15	10	7	115
<i>other</i>								
ACT		4	1	1	3	0	0	9
NSW		5	7	1	4	11	5	33
NT		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QLD		2	12	2	3	2	1	22
SA		8	8	0	0	2	0	18
TAS		1	14	1	5	0	0	21
VIC		1	9	1	1	1	0	13
WA		1	2	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL N		22	53	6	16	16	6	119
GRAND TOTAL		156	192	82	95	44	36	605

half

of young people
with a leaving care plan
had a copy of the
document

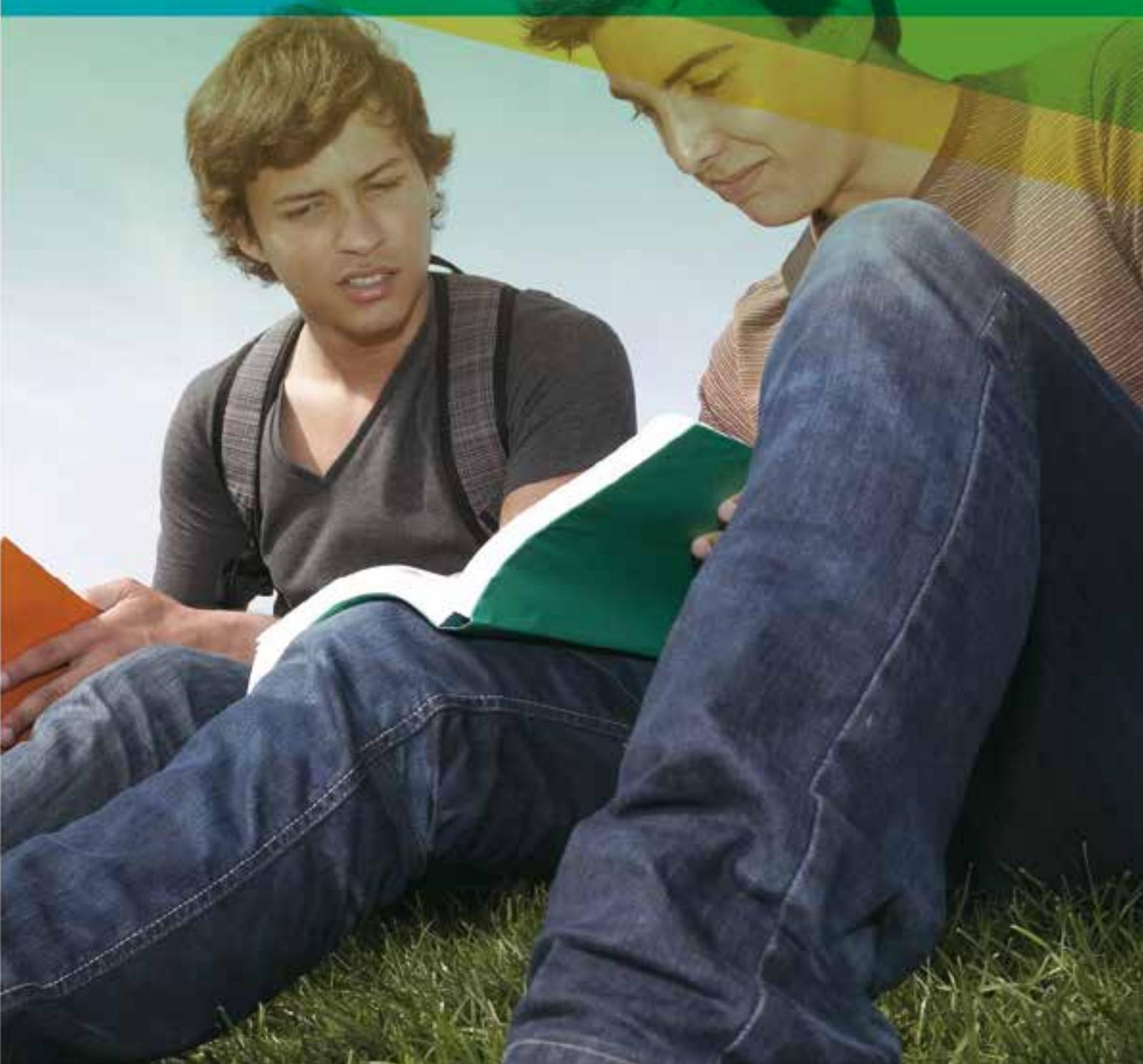
2.2.3 Procedure

To maximize accessibility of the survey for young people, it was prepared and presented in three formats. CREATE staff conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews, hard copies were mailed to departments and agencies, and the survey could be accessed online as a link from CREATE's website. Data were stored in SQL databases on CREATE's secure server. As well as the campaign itself centering on promotion, participation in the survey needed to be encouraged through letters to departments, newsletters, and articles in relevant magazines. The relatively high response rate provides evidence of the success of this aspect of the process.

In total, approximately 25% of responses were obtained from interviews, 10% were completed as hard copy, while the remaining 65% were recorded through direct web access. One advantage of the web presentation of the survey (and with the interview, but not hard-copy collection) was that a notice could be made to appear, or prompts given, if questions were overlooked or ignored. This meant that progress through the survey was halted until the particular question was answered. This process ensured that missing data were kept to a minimum.

Participant numbers were tracked regularly and fed back to the various CREATE offices so that staff could attempt to target demographic categories of low response through their interviews. In spite of these approaches, as can be seen from Table 2, some groupings still were under-represented. Issues surrounding accessing the views of young people in care, and the inherent difficulty of this process, will be discussed later in this report.

results



3.0

results

3.1 Findings Concerning Transition Planning

3.1.1 Extent of Transition Planning

The main aim of this project was to try to increase the number of young people in care throughout the country who had a LC plan to help guide their transition to independence. In CREATE's Report Card 2009, McDowall (2009, p. 63) reported that of 335 respondents, who were either still in care or who had transitioned already, overall 36.4% had some form of LC plan (34.0% of those still in care and 40.3% of those whom were post care). Before beginning the interventions that constituted the "What's the Plan?" campaign, a further baseline study was conducted to determine if these proportions had changed in the 18 months since the data for the previous report had been collected.

A total of 161 young people in care, with representatives from each state and territory, aged 15 to 17 responded to a brief web-based survey asking if they had any form of LC plan, and if so how involved had they been in its preparation and how useful they believed it would be in helping them in the future. They also indicated whom they would be likely to contact to organise a LC plan.

In this limited sample, of which 45% resided in Foster Care, 16% in Kinship Care, and 15% in Residential Care, 31.7% of respondents indicated they had a LC plan. Of these, 62.7% had been at least "Quite Involved" in its preparation, and 70.6% thought it would be at least "Quite Useful". This outcome matched the results reported in the previous large-scale survey. Most young people see their caseworker as a key person in helping organise their plan (64.4%), while only 30.2% and 19.5% respectively would speak to carers or other people (e.g., friends or family).

After the year-long "What's the Plan?" campaign, of the 605 young people who participated in the current survey, 190 (31.4%) reported having a LC plan that was at some stage of development (final or incomplete). The others had no knowledge of the existence of a personal LC plan. Disappointingly, from the viewpoint of young care leavers and CREATE's campaign, these results show no difference from what has been reported previously.

3.1.1.1 Effect of Jurisdiction

In an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of factors that might be influencing this outcome, an analysis was conducted comparing LC planning activity across states and territories. Table 3 shows the number of young people who reported having LC plans in the various jurisdictions. Significant differences¹ were observed across states and territories: In SA and VIC more young people than expected had plans (46.4% and 39.8% respectively), whereas in NSW fewer than expected were recorded (18.0%)².

These data were drawn from respondents who were aged 15 to 18 years. As indicated in the Method, this age group was selected because 15 years is when most jurisdictions require the LC planning process to begin. However, an argument could be mounted that, from a practical point of view, serious planning might be more likely to occur later in the cycle (with those in the 17 year-old group) than at the beginning with 15 year olds. Furthermore, since legislation in NSW and VIC stipulates that LC planning could be delayed until at least 12 months prior to a

**of the 605
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development**

¹ $\chi^2 (7) = 23.12, p < .05$

² A strong result was recorded in ACT as well, but the overall numbers were low thereby limiting generalisations.

young person's leaving care, it might be expected that fewer 15 and 16 year-olds would have plans at this stage compared with the older age groups. Therefore, an analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of plans across age groups within the various jurisdictions.

Table 3

Percentage of 15 to 18 Year-Olds In Care Who Report Having a Leaving Care Plan in Australian States and Territories

jurisdiction	LC plan	total n	percent
ACT	10	25	40.0
NSW	22	122	18.0
NT	7	26	26.9
QLD	48	152	31.6
SA	26	56	46.4
TAS	15	64	23.4
VIC	39	98	39.8
WA	23	62	37.1
TOTAL	190	605	31.4

When only responses from 17 year olds ($n = 195$) were considered, the incidence of those with LC plans increased to 44.1% ($n = 86$). This compared with a value of 37.2% from the corresponding sample obtained in 2009 (29 out of a total of 78 of those participants 17 years and over, who responded to the question on possession of an LC plan). While the percentage has increased, the difference is not significant³ and the value indicates that the majority of young people (56%) on the threshold of leaving care still do not have plans, contrary to legislative requirements.

Comparisons of the incidence of LC plans across age groups revealed a significantly greater number of 17 year olds with plans than expected, but fewer 15 year olds (22.4% of 192)⁴, with those at 16 years being in between (28.0% of 218). This finding suggests that early LC planning is not as yet a priority within the system.

Since the number of young people aged 17 and over with an LC plan was relatively low even in this substantial sample, it was not possible to do meaningful comparisons across all jurisdictions in that age group alone. In the NT, only two young people of age 17 years responded to this survey, so this group was excluded from subsequent comparisons. Data summarised in Table 4 reveal significant differences across states and territories in numbers of those in the older age group having LC plans⁵. Percentages were above 50 for ACT, SA, VIC and WA; NSW was still far below expectation at 23.1%. Clearly, delay in commencing the planning process did not explain the low response in this group.

³ $\chi^2 (1) = 1.13, p > .05$

⁴ $\chi^2 (2) = 23.01, p < .001$

⁵ $\chi^2 (6) = 16.30, p < .05$

Table 4

Percentage of Young People In Care, 17 years and over, Who Report Having a Leaving Care Plan in Australian States and Territories

jurisdiction	LC plan	total n	percent
ACT	7	11	63.6
NSW	9	39	23.1
QLD	21	49	42.9
SA	9	15	60.0
TAS	6	21	28.6
VIC	20	34	58.8
WA	13	24	54.2
TOTAL	85	193	44.0

*NOTE: NT has been omitted from this comparison because of limited numbers of respondents

3.1.1.2 Location, Placement Type, and Culture

Because of the variable numbers across states and territories living in different locations (capital cities, large cities other than capitals, small cities / towns, or rural regions) and placement types (Foster Care, Relative or Kinship Care, Residential Care, or Other including Permanent Care, Family Group Homes, Semi-independent / Transitional Accommodation, as well as Independent Living), it was not possible to conduct statistically valid comparisons in these areas over jurisdictions. Similar issues were encountered when considering responses from the different cultural groups (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, Australian other than Indigenous, or Other Cultural Background).

However, these groupings could be compared overall to determine if there were any differences in attention given to the preparation of LC plans. These analyses are summarised in Table 5. No significant effects were found for any of these variables; no particular location, placement type, or cultural grouping was more likely to be associated with more effective planning for young people about to leave care⁶.

It also should be noted that no sex differences were observed in the likelihood of a young person having an LC plan, with 31.9% of females (n = 103) and 30.9% of males (n = 87) aware of the existence of their plan⁷.

⁶ Location: $\chi^2 (3) = 3.08, p > .05$
Placement Type: $\chi^2 (3) = 2.03, p > .05$
Cultural Group: $\chi^2 (2) = 0.13, p > .05$

⁷ Sex: $\chi^2 (1) = 0.08, p > .05$



no sex differences were observed in the likelihood of a young person having an LC plan

Table 5

Percentage of Young People In Care Aged 15 to 18 Years Who Report Having a Leaving Care Plan Compared Across Living Locations, Placement Type, and Cultural Grouping

factor	LC plan (n)	total n	percent
<i>location</i>			
Capital City	76	230	33.0
Large City (not Capital)	46	140	32.9
Small City/Town	52	193	26.9
Rural Area	16	42	38.1
<i>placement type</i>			
Foster Care	68	225	30.2
Relative or Kinship Care	42	146	28.8
Residential Care	42	115	36.5
Other ¹	38	119	31.9
<i>cultural group</i>			
Indigenous	57	177	32.2
Australian other than Indigenous	109	348	31.3
Other cultural background	24	80	30.0

¹Other placements include Permanent Care, Family Group Home, Semi-Independent/Transitional Accommodation and Independent Living.

3.1.2 Involvement in Planning

Those young people who were fortunate enough to have an LC plan (either final or incomplete) reported that the planning process began for them when they were, on average, 15.2 years old, indicating that for many, planning for transition had begun earlier than the legally stipulated age. However, only half of the 48 with final plans had their own copy of the document. This raises questions about the degree of involvement of young people in the planning process.

Young people who indicated they had an LC plan at some stage of preparation were asked to rate (using a 6-point scale: 1 - Not at all involved; 6 - Very involved) the extent of their own involvement in the planning process, along with their perception of the level of involvement of their main caseworker (department or agency), and their carer. Comparisons were made of these ratings across Jurisdictions and Placement Types. Analyses showed that, while there were no jurisdictional differences, overall the degree of involvement differed for the three concerned parties, with carers (M = 4.03) appearing significantly more involved than caseworkers (M = 3.60) or the young people themselves (M = 3.42)⁸. Similar analyses were performed comparing Involvement ratings across Placement Types⁹.

⁸ Mean ratings were compared using an 8 x 3 (Jurisdiction x Planner) mixed ANOVA (employing the Greenhouse-Geisser correction) with repeated measures on the latter factor. A significant main effect for the person involved in planning was found: $F_{(2,344)} = 7.30, p < .01$

⁹ Mean ratings were compared using a 4 x 3 (Placement Type x Planner) mixed ANOVA (employing the Greenhouse-Geisser correction) with repeated measures on the latter factor. Significant main effects for Placement Type ($F_{(3,180)} = 3.90, p < .01$) and the person involved in planning ($F_{(2,354)} = 7.86, p < .01$) were found, as well as the significant interaction ($F_{(6,354)} = 4.32, p < .01$)

Figure 1 presents the plot of the obtained significant interaction between these variables.

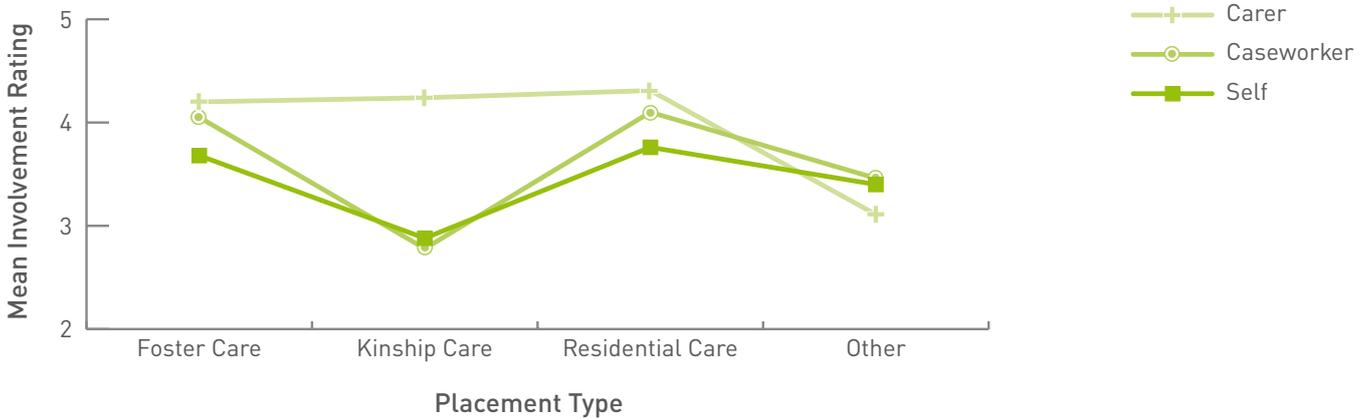


Figure 1. Mean ratings of perceived involvement of Self, Caseworker, and Carer in LC planning by 15 to 18 year olds in four different placement types.

In both Foster Care and Residential Care, all parties are “reasonably involved” in the planning process. However, in Kinship Care, while the carer retains this level of engagement with the planning, both the young person and the caseworker seem to become less active and presumably take less responsibility for considering the care-leaver’s future. This difference needs to be addressed within the context of Relative and Kinship Care.

Young people also were asked to indicate the types of activity they engaged in with caseworkers during the planning process. A total of 184 responded to this question. Of these, 7.6% claimed they had not been involved in planning. The relative popularity of other activities is summarised in Table 6. It is clear that the most common experience is meeting face-to-face with a caseworker or making telephone contact. Emails are less popular. A little over one-third (37%) had the opportunity of contacting support agencies that may be relevant to their future needs.

Table 6

Percentage of Young People In Care Aged 15 to 18 Years Engaged in Specified Planning Activities with Caseworker

activity	n	percent
Face-to-face meetings with caseworker	135	73.4
Telephone conversations with caseworker	84	45.7
Emails to/from caseworker	31	16.8
Contact with support agencies	68	37.0

*NOTE: Total number of respondents = 184.

3.1.3 Perceived Effectiveness of Plan

Young people who knew of the existence of a plan for their leaving care were asked to rate how confident they felt that the plan would be of help to them in coping with ten essential behaviours which they would need to perform in leading an independent life. These included: Finding somewhere suitable to live; Enrolling in appropriate courses of study; Seeking employment; Managing money; Looking after themselves; Contacting family members; Contacting friends / mentors; Contacting members of their cultural community; Accessing support services; and Locating personal documents. Ratings were performed using a 6-point scale: 1 – Not at all confident; 6 – Very confident.

young people placed with kin are

**less
likely**

**to be involved in
their leaving care planning**

It was thought that possibly age might have an effect on confidence, with the older cohort being more confident since they were closer to achieving independence. When tested, only a weak correlation¹⁰ of was found between age and overall confidence (averaged over the 10 behavioural ratings).

Analyses were conducted exploring possible Age, Sex, Placement Type, and Jurisdictional differences in the confidence ratings given to each of the 10 behaviours¹¹. No Age or Sex effects were detected. However, a significant main effect was observed for Placement Type, as well as for the interaction between Jurisdiction and Behaviour, in ratings of confidence.

Figure 2 shows how confident young people living in the various Placement Types feel that their plan will be helpful in their future. Surprisingly, young people in Kinship Care express lower confidence in most areas (with the exception of Contacting family members, Contacting friends / mentors, and Contacting members of their cultural community). Those living in Residential Care appear extremely confident that their plan will be useful.

¹⁰ $r = 0.17, p > .05, n = 184.$

¹¹ Sex: $M_{\text{female}} = 4.1, M_{\text{male}} = 4.2;$
 $F_{(1,61)} = 0.5, p > 0.5$

Age: $M_{15} = 4.0; M_{16} = 3.9; M_{17} = 4.5;$
 $F_{(2,60)} = 1.79, p > 0.5$

Placement Type: $F_{(3,59)} = 2.8, p < 0.5$

Jurisdiction X Behaviour (Figure 3):
 $F_{(41,327)} = 1.45, p < 0.5$
 (Greenhouse-Geisser correction)

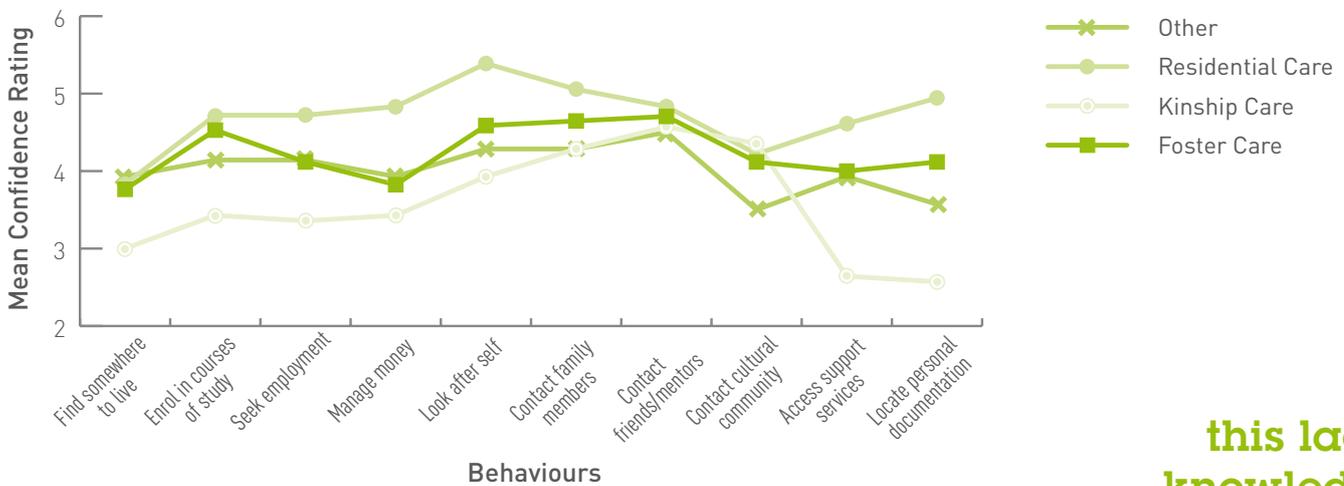


Figure 2. Mean ratings by young people with LC plans, living in four types of placement, of the confidence they have that their plan will help them in the specified behavioural areas.

More research is needed to determine what factors might contribute to such differences in confidence. One clue could be found in the observation that significantly fewer of the young people in Kinship Care compared with those in other placements knew who, or which service, would be responsible for helping them achieve successful independence (see Table 7). This lack of knowledge, possibly exacerbated by lack of involvement by their caseworkers (see Figure 1), could negatively influence their confidence levels.

this lack of knowledge... could negatively influence their confidence levels

Table 7

Percentage of Young People In Care Aged 15 to 18 Years Who Indicated They Knew Who to Contact for Assistance with a Range of Areas to be Addressed When Independent

area	foster care	kinship care	residential care	other	chi square
Housing	66.7	34.1	78.6	60.0	18.76***
Education	63.6	31.7	83.3	65.7	24.19***
Employment	63.6	34.1	69.0	62.9	12.89**
Finances	59.0	24.4	76.2	60.0	23.97***
Life Skills	62.1	34.1	76.2	68.9	17.24***
Family Contact	59.0	34.1	78.6	60.0	16.98***
Support Services	40.9	17.1	42.9	37.1	7.97*
Personal Documents	54.5	29.3	76.2	54.4	18.44**
Total (n) in placement sample	66	41	42	35	184

The significant interaction between Jurisdictions and Behaviours in confidence ratings over the range of activities is represented graphically in Figure 3. For each of the behaviours the pattern of response varies across regions; Figures 4 (A – J) show, in simplified form, these confidence ratings within states and territories.

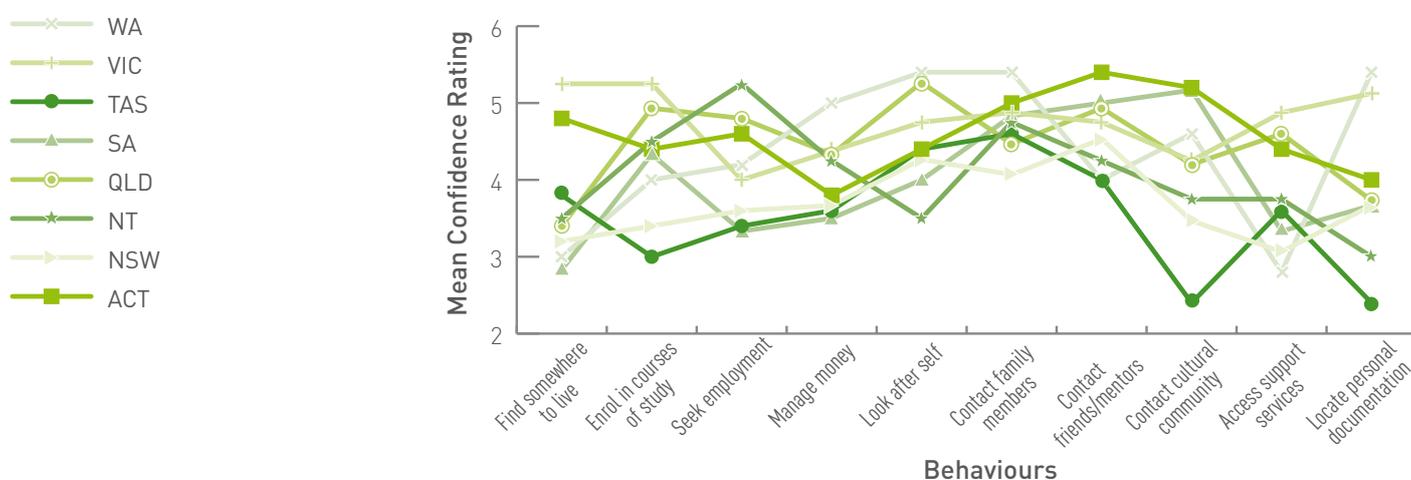


Figure 3. Mean ratings by young people aged 15 to 18 years in care within Australian states and territories expressing how confident they are that their LC plans will be helpful when achieving independence.

It would seem from these analyses that states and territories are setting priorities in different areas when providing information for young people during planning. For example, when considering "Finding somewhere to live", young people in VIC and ACT express confidence in their plan, whereas those in SA are not as sure. When "Locating personal documents" those in WA and VIC feel positive, while young TAS care leavers are not as confident. This may reflect the actual emphasis placed on the respective areas within the support system of a particular jurisdiction, or the way access to support in the area has been promoted. It is unfortunate that all young people in care in all jurisdictions don't have high levels of confidence that their plans will be useful in all areas. Perhaps the involvement of the Commonwealth in setting national standards within the out-of-home-care sector may serve to unify support available and help raise the confidence of care leavers generally.

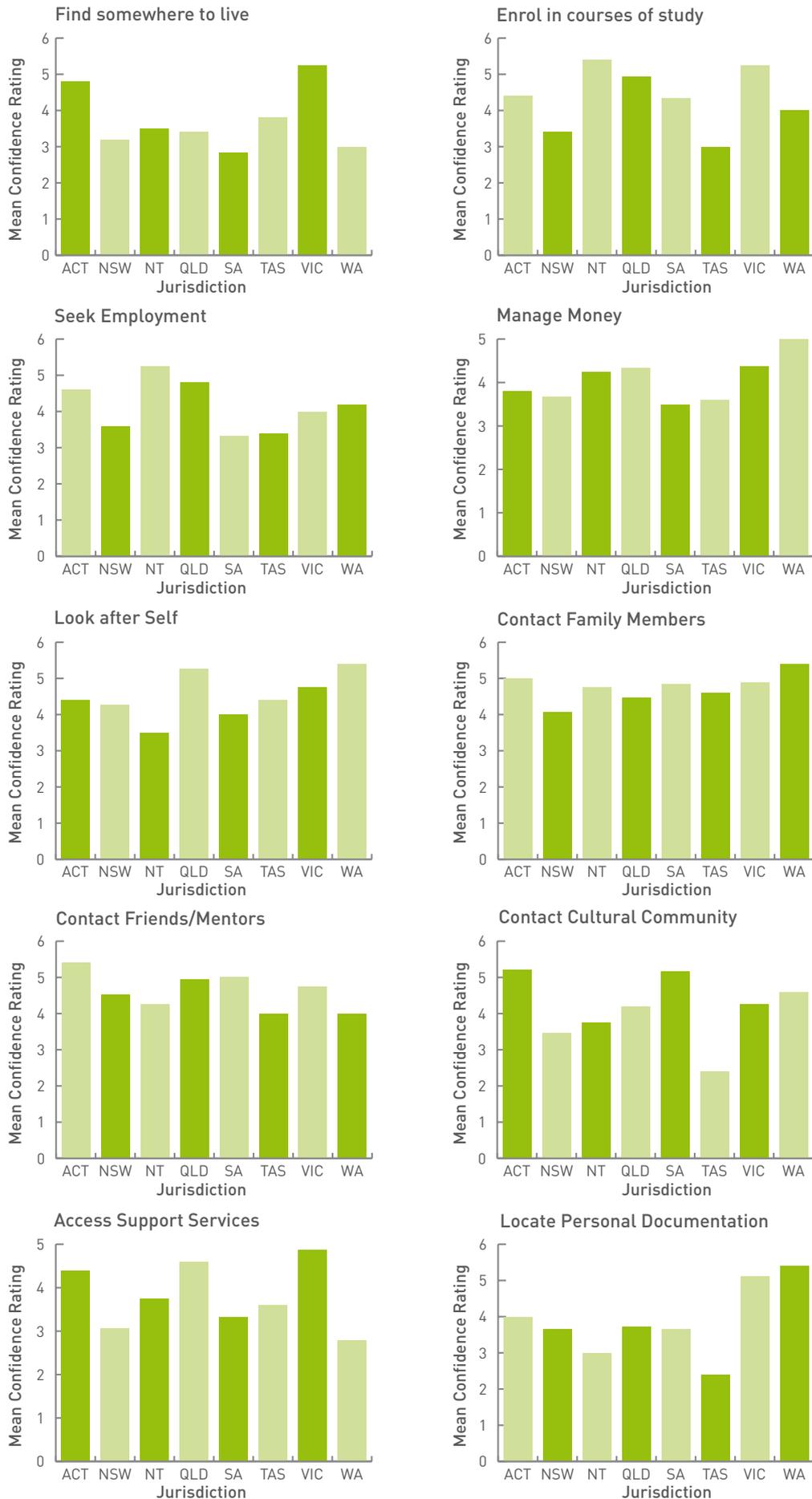


Figure 4. Mean ratings indicating young people's confidence in the helpfulness of their LC plan compared across states and territories for 10 areas likely to be addressed by young people on achieving independence.

3.1.4 Access to Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

Young respondents were requested to indicate which persons or organisations had given them information about the support TILA can provide as part of the LC planning process. They also were asked if they had already, or were considering applying for the allowance, and if not, why not? Since TILA is most relevant to those about to leave care in the immediate future, it might be expected that people with information would be more likely to impart it to the older respondents. Therefore, an age-group comparison was performed on the number of young people to whom someone had spoken of TILA. Significantly more of the 17 year-old group than expected had received information about TILA from someone, while fewer than expected of the 15 year olds had¹². However, even for the older group, these numbers are relatively low [57.7%].

No significant differences were found in the numbers of 17 year olds receiving information about TILA from any source within the three Cultural groups or across Placement Types¹³; however, significant Jurisdictional differences were observed¹⁴.



Figure 5. Percentage of young people aged 17 years and over who reported that someone had informed them of TILA over the range of Australian jurisdictions.

As with many other areas of transitioning support, young people in care throughout Australia received quite different treatment. In this case, finding out about TILA depended on in which state or territory they resided. Here, relatively few of those in WA received this useful advice, whereas care leavers in ACT and QLD were better informed. However, as can be seen in Figure 5 there is room for improvement in most jurisdictions in promoting the availability of this important Commonwealth initiative.

The responses of all young people in this sample when asked from whom they specifically received information about TILA are summarised in Table 8. Two aspects are worthy of note: (a) the numbers receiving information from key people are relatively low, with the highest value for those contacts with major responsibility (viz. caseworkers) being 36% in ACT; and (b) the percentage obtaining details, particularly from carers, varies significantly across jurisdictions with few carers in WA and NSW imparting necessary information, while more of those in ACT and SA were able to give young people insights about TILA. Other sources of relevant information mentioned by young people included Centrelink staff, youth workers, youth justice workers, school teachers/counsellors, community visitors (QLD), and even a driving instructor.

¹² Age: G17: 57.7%; G16: 50%; G15: 37.6; n = 590; χ^2 (2) = 50.55, p < .001

¹³ Culture: Indigenous: 52%; Australian (other): 60.7%; Other Cultural Background: 56.3% n = 189; χ^2 (2) = 1.10, p > .05

Placement Type: Foster Care: 55%; Kinship Care: 48.9%; Residential Care: 62.1%; Other 65.5% n = 189; χ^2 (3) = 3.19, p > .05.

¹⁴ Number of respondents in the respective Jurisdictions were: ACT = 11; NSW = 38; NT = 2; QLD = 49; SA = 13; TAS = 21; VIC = 32; WA = 23. χ^2 (6) = 12.82, p < .05. (NT removed from analysis because of low numbers).

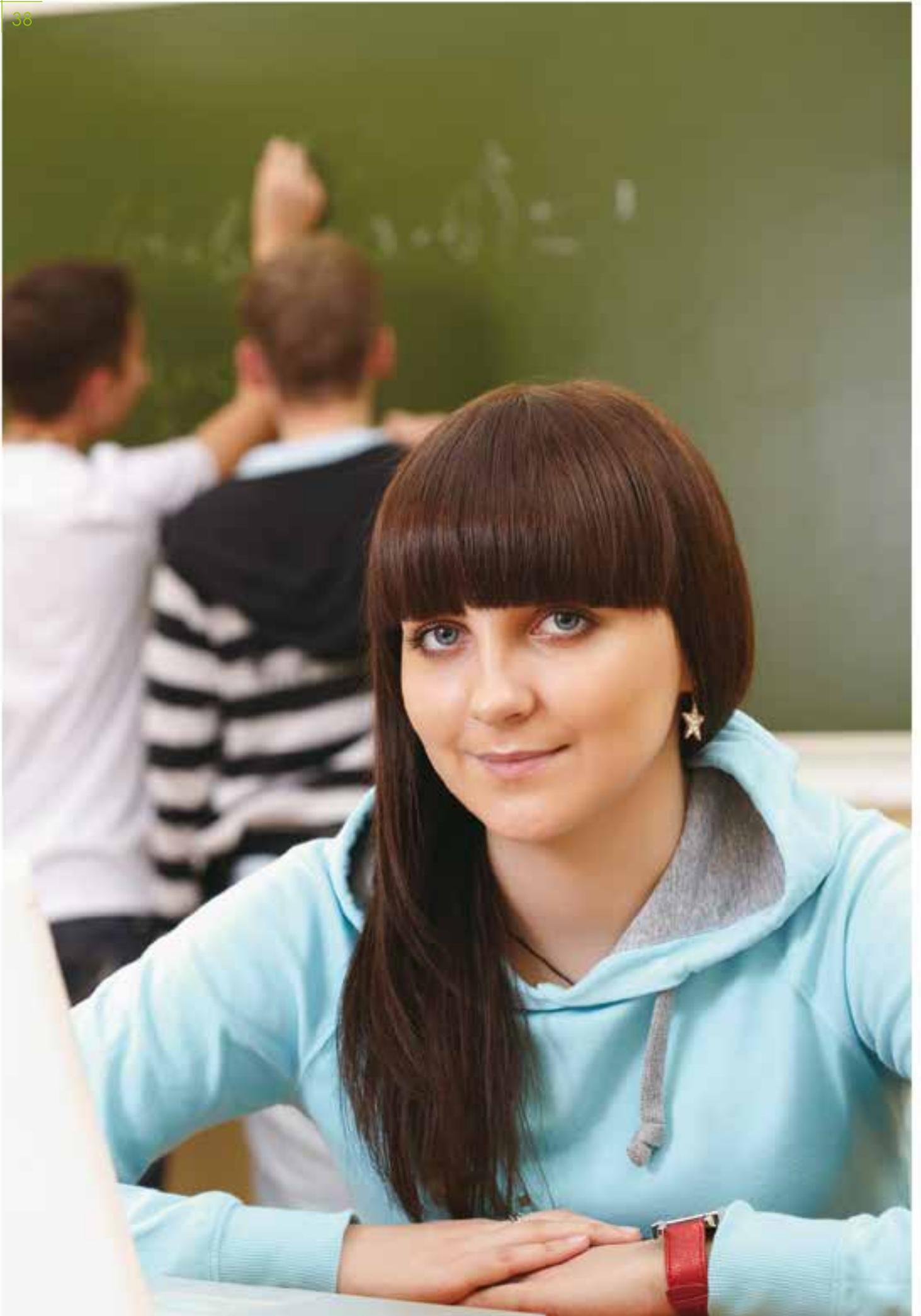


Table 8

Percentage of Young People In Care Aged 15 to 18 Years in Various Jurisdictions Who Indicated That the Listed Sources Provided Information about TILA

source	act	nsw	nt	qld	sa	tas	vic	wa	chi square
Carer	44.0	8.5	19.2	13.3	34.0	11.3	21.9	4.9	41.98***
Main Casework	36.0	19.7	15.4	24.7	24.5	21.0	17.7	11.5	9.63 ^{ns}
Other Worker	24.0	6.8	0.0	8.0	17.0	3.2	9.4	3.3	20.66**
CREATE	16.0	5.1	26.9	8.7	11.3	24.2	2.1	6.6	35.11***
Indigenous Community Member	12.0	0.0	7.7	1.3	1.9	1.6	0.0	.0	na
Family Member	4.0	1.7	3.8	3.3	9.4	1.6	3.1	1.6	na
Friend	8.0	5.1	3.8	2.7	7.5	1.6	4.2	3.3	na
Other	0.0	4.3	3.8	8.0	0.0	4.8	4.2	1.6	na
Total number of respondents	25	117	26	150	53	62	96	61	

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; na: Numbers too small to analyse statistically; ns: Not significant

¹⁵ A correlation of $r = 0.78$, $p < .05$ was obtained across states and territories

¹⁶ Age: G15: 59.3%; G16: 63.2%; G17: 63.0%; $n = 590$; $\chi^2 (2) = 0.80$, $p > .05$.

Placement Type: Foster Care: 64.3%; Kinship Care: 53.8%; Residential Care 63.7%; Other: 65.5%; $n = 590$; $\chi^2 (3) = 4.83$, $p > .05$.

¹⁷ Jurisdiction: ACT: 80.0%; NSW: 53.8%; NT: 61.5%; QLD: 74.7%; SA: 62.3%; TAS: 69.4%; VIC: 65.6%; WA: 24.6%; $n = 590$; $\chi^2 (7) = 55.07$, $p < .001$.

¹⁸ Culture: Indigenous: 65.1%; Australian (Other): 63.9%; Other Cultural Background: 45.5%; $n = 590$; $\chi^2 (2) = 10.18$, $p < .01$.

The importance of care leavers' having someone impart information about TILA is indicated by the fact that a significant correlation was observed between the receiving of information and the likelihood of a young person's applying for the allowance¹⁵. No Age or Placement-Type differences were found, with an average of 61.9% of the 590 respondents interested in accessing this support¹⁶. A significant jurisdictional difference was largely accounted for by the fact that far fewer of the WA cohort considered applying compared with those in the other states and territories¹⁷. In addition, the lower number of potential TILA applicants from Other Cultural Backgrounds led to the recorded cultural differences¹⁸.

Of the 72 explanations provided by those 17 years and over for why they hadn't applied for TILA, 64% indicated that they hadn't heard of the scheme or didn't have enough information. Others were quite positive about their future needs:

"I'm pretty good at the moment" (Female, 17.7 years)

"I've got everything I need" (Male, 17.3 years)

"I like to be responsible for myself without depending too much on outside support" (Male, 17.8 years)

but some expressed a more negative point of view:

"I don't want to have anything to do with DoCS, and they're the only ones that can get me the TILA" (Male, 17.7 years)

"I have heard it is hard to get and I might not be eligible" (Female, 17.3).

3.2 Evaluation of CREATE's "What's the Plan?" Program

As well as providing current data on the incidence of LC planning throughout Australia, a major aim of this study was to evaluate the "What's the Plan?" campaign mounted by CREATE during 2010 in an effort to improve the number of care leavers who formally have mapped out clear pathways for their transition to independence. The first step was to determine how effectively the message about the need for planning had been communicated to young people, how many knew about the campaign, and what were the key mechanisms by which those who were informed learned of the program.

3.2.1 Effectiveness of Communication

As a general question, young people were asked if they had received any information about the “What’s the Plan?” campaign since it began in March 2010. Of the 605 respondents, 43.3% indicated that they had some knowledge of the program. However, even though CREATE operates at a national level, relevant information about the initiative did not permeate uniformly through the states and territories. Figure 6 shows the significant differences across jurisdictions in the percentage of respondents who claimed to be informed¹⁹.

¹⁹ χ^2 (7) = 55.4, $p < .001$

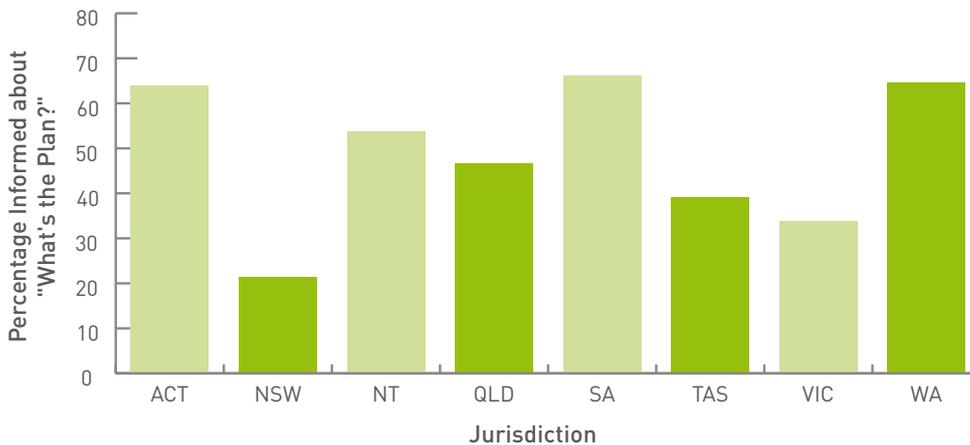


Figure 6. Percentage of care-leaver participants from each state and territory throughout Australia who indicated that they had received information about CREATE’s “What’s the Plan?” campaign. The number responding in each jurisdiction were: ACT = 25; NSW = 114; NT = 26; QLD = 150; SA = 53; TAS = 62; VIC = 94; WA = 61.

More young people in ACT, SA, WA, and NT were informed than expected, while fewer had received any details of the study in NSW and VIC. Possible reasons for such differences will be presented in the relevant discussion later in this report. Unfortunately, such variability in familiarity with the essence of the intervention does make overall evaluation of the program difficult.

Comparisons of the extent of information penetration also were conducted over Age and Cultural groups, as well as Placement Types. No differences were observed across Age groups²⁰, however significantly more of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents knew of the program, and more of those living in Kinship Care²¹.

²⁰ Age: G15: 39.4% (n = 188); G16: 49.1% (n = 212); G17: 45.4% (n = 185); χ^2 (2) = 3.83, $p > .05$.

²¹ Culture: Indigenous: 57.1% (n = 175); Australian (other): 40.8% (n = 336); Other Cultural Background: 33.8% (n = 74); χ^2 (2) = 16.62, $p < .01$.

Placement Type: Foster Care: 47.0% (n = 217); Kinship Care: 58.3% (n = 144); Residential Care: 35.7% (n = 112); Other: 32.1% (n = 112); χ^2 (3) = 22.09, $p < .001$.

3.2.2 Sources of Information

Young people who had been informed about the program were asked to name the sources from which they received their insights. Key sources were identified, including caseworkers, carers, the “What’s the Plan?” Pack that was sent to all 15 to 17 year-olds in out-of-home care (which included the “What’s the Plan?” Calendar and Information Sheets), clubCREATE newsletters, the CREATE website, or word of mouth (family and friends). An “Other” category was provided for those who possibly found out about the campaign in another way. Figure 7 indicates the percentage of respondents who heard of “What’s the Plan?” from the various sources.

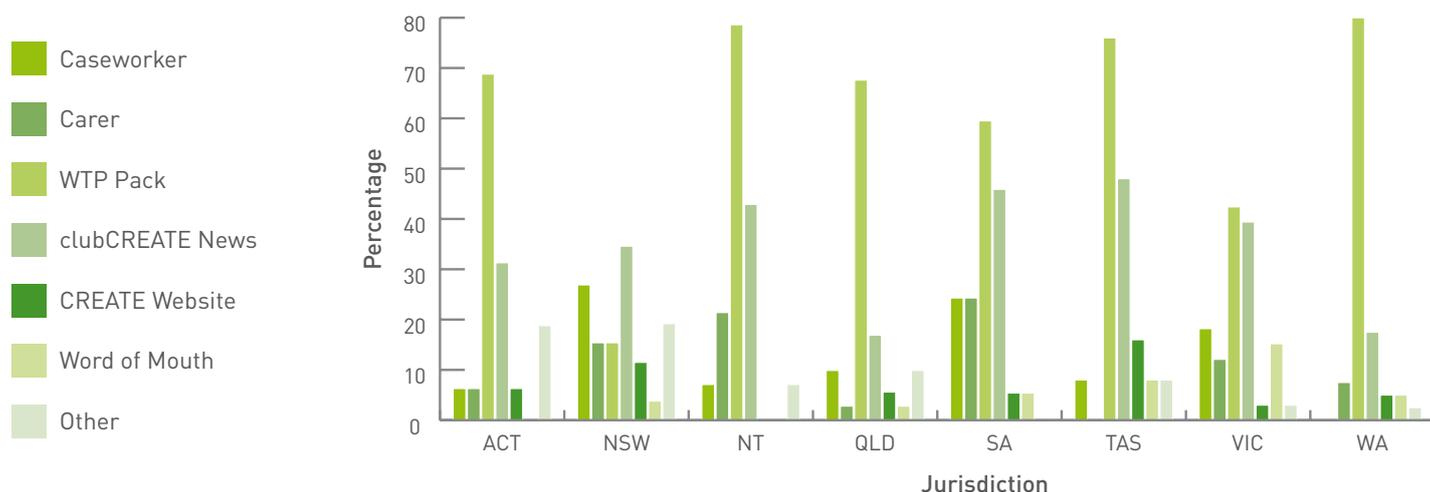


Figure 7. Percentage of respondents from each state and territory in Australia who received information about CREATE's "What's the Plan?" from the sources listed. The number responding in each jurisdiction were: ACT = 16; NSW = 26; NT = 14; QLD = 71; SA = 37; TAS = 25; VIC = 33; WA = 40.

Clearly, the "What's the Plan?" Information Pack was the most effective mechanism for providing information to the care leavers in all jurisdictions except NSW. The next most frequently cited source was the clubCREATE newsletter. Caseworkers generally were not major communicators about the program, notifying most young people (26.9% and 24.3% respectively) in NSW and SA. Carers also were relatively ineffective at passing on details of the campaign, reaching most young people in SA and NT (24.3% and 21.4% respectively). Interestingly, even though more young people in Kinship placements were informed of the campaign, their carers were not significantly more likely to be the source²². Additional suppliers of information mentioned by young people included agency staff other than the main caseworker, CREATE staff, youth leaders at camp, and youth justice workers.

An analysis was conducted to determine if young persons' knowing about the campaign in any way influenced the likelihood of their having an LC plan. Unfortunately, the relatively small numbers in some jurisdictions precluded a comparison of this issue across states and territories. However, overall, 34.7% of those informed (total n = 262) had an LC plan compared with only 26.9% of those who had not heard of the program (total n = 323). While both percentages are low, the difference is statistically significant²³.

3.2.3 Effectiveness of Marketing Elements

CREATE's intervention with the care leavers relied on using mass and individual communicative devices as part of this social marketing campaign. As discussed in Section 2.1.2, the key elements used included Brochures promoting the campaign, Information Sheets focusing on state-specific issues, the CREATE website, the "What's the Plan?" Calendar, and "What's the Plan?" Wallet Cards. Young people who had received information about the campaign were asked to rate the perceived usefulness of each of these elements in raising awareness of the need for LC plans, using a 6-point scale (1: Not at all useful; 6: Very useful).

As with the sources of information, comparisons of mean perceived usefulness ratings of elements were made across Age groups, Cultural groups, Placement Types, and Jurisdictions. It was planned to conduct analyses with repeated measures on Elements. However, it became apparent that the young people knew about the program from contact with a limited and different set of Marketing Elements which is reflected in Figure 8 that shows the percentage of respondents who were not aware of the designated Elements. Access to information communicated through the various approaches varied considerably across jurisdictions. It is difficult to expect that Elements (e.g., Information Sheets and the Website in QLD and WA; Calendars in NSW and WA; or Wallet Cards in ACT and VIC) would have the desired impact when such large proportions of young people had not encountered them. Because of this, it was not possible to conduct statistical

²² Carer as source: Foster Care: 7.8% (n = 102); Kinship Care: 14.3% (n = 84); Residential Care: 10.0% (n = 40); Other: 5.6% (n = 36); $\chi^2 (3) = 3.05, p > .05$.

²³ $\chi^2 (1) = 4.15, p < .05$.

young people in residential care are

extremely

confident that their

leaving care

plan will be

useful

²⁴ One-way ANOVAs were performed on each Element separately. Significant differences were found for: Information Sheets - $F_{(7, 130)} = 2.26, p < .05$; Calendar - $F_{(7, 175)} = 2.21, p < .05$; Wallet Cards - $F_{(7, 147)} = 2.38, p < .05$.

analyses of the reported differences in Usefulness of Elements across Jurisdictions. Figure 9 provides a visual comparison; separate analyses for each Element showed that significant differences existed for Information Sheets, the Calendar, and to a lesser extent Wallet Cards²⁴. Respondents from ACT, NT, and VIC gave particularly high Useful ratings to these Elements, while young people in NSW and TAS indicated that these approaches were not all that useful. Brochures received the lowest rating across all states and territories.

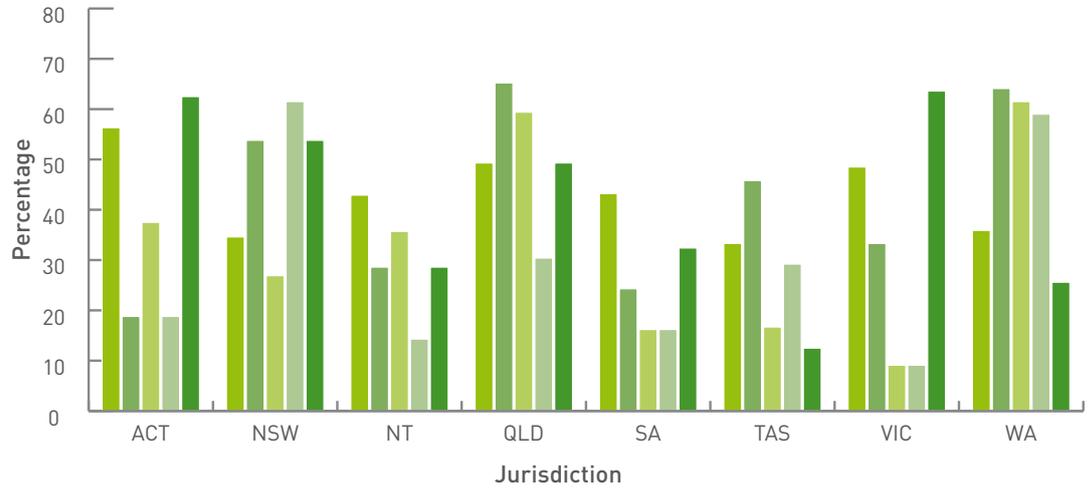
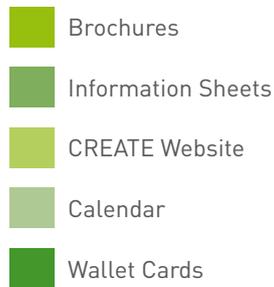


Figure 8. Percentage of respondents in the various Jurisdictions who knew of the “What’s the Plan?” campaign but were unaware of the designated Marketing Element.

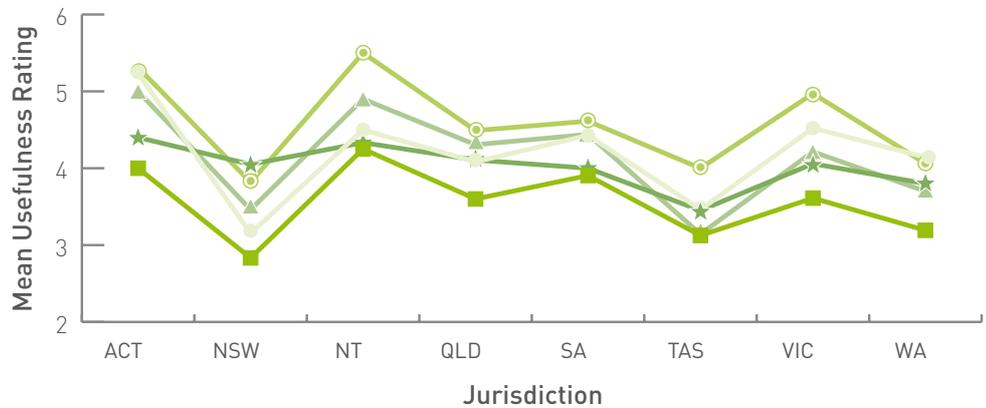
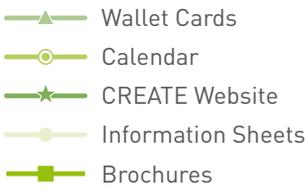


Figure 9. Mean Usefulness ratings for the five Marketing Elements used in this campaign given by 15 to 17 year-old young people in care, familiar with these items, across Jurisdictions.

²⁵ Brochures: G15: M = 3.5, SD = 1.2; G16: M = 3.9, SD = 1.2; G17: M = 3.0, SD = 1.4; $F_{(2, 146)} = 7.04, p < .01$

²⁶ Information Sheets: Australian (Other): M = 3.9, SD = 1.7; Indigenous: M = 4.7, SD = 1.5; Other Cultural Background: M = 3.7, SD = 1.6; $F_{(2, 135)} = 4.95, p < .01$.

Calendar: Australian (Other): M = 4.1, SD = 1.7; Indigenous: M = 5.3, SD = 1.3; Other Cultural Background: M = 4.3, SD = 1.4; $F_{(2, 180)} = 11.80, p < .01$.

²⁷ Brochures: $F_{(3, 145)} = 4.42, p < .01$.

Information Sheets: $F_{(3, 134)} = 5.93, p < .01$.

Calendar: $F_{(3, 179)} = 6.26, p < .01$.

A significant Age effect was found only for Brochures. The 17 year-olds found them far less useful than did the group of 16 year-olds with the 15 year-olds in between²⁵. This could relate to the fact that, since the prospect of leaving care is imminent for the older group, raising awareness of the issues now in a general way is a little late. Cultural differences appeared only with the Calendar and Information Sheets, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents thought these were more useful than did the other groups²⁶.

Placement-Type effects also were observed in the Usefulness ratings of the Elements. A summary of the findings is presented in Figure 10. It can be seen that those respondents in Kinship Care tended to give higher ratings for the various Elements than did the young people in other placements or living independently [the differences were significant for Brochures, Information Sheets, and the Calendar]²⁷.

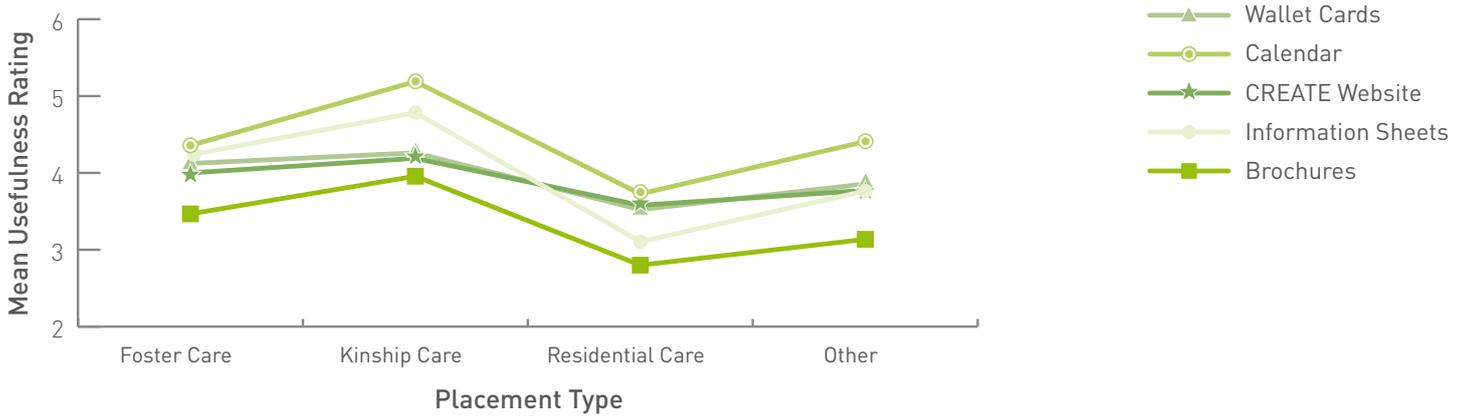


Figure 10. Mean Usefulness ratings given to the five Marketing Elements by young people living in four Placement Types in out-of-home care.

The positive disposition of those in Kinship Care to the Elements used in the program could partially be explained if this cohort had greater access to the promoted resources than did other groups. This could occur if living with relatives meant that they had a more stable placement and were more able to be contacted to receive the relevant information. To explore this possibility, an analysis was performed comparing the numbers of respondents from the various Placement Types who were familiar with the Marketing Elements used in this study; the results of this review are recorded in Figure 11. These data indicate that more young people from Kinship Care were familiar with the range of approaches used here to raise awareness of the need for LC plans (differences were significant for Information Sheets, Website, and Calendar)²⁸. Greater familiarity may have led to higher Usefulness ratings within this group.

²⁸ Information Sheets: $\chi^2 (3) = 10.5, p < .05$.
 CREATE Website: $\chi^2 (3) = 18.6, p < .01$.
 Calendar: $\chi^2 (3) = 24.2, p < .01$.

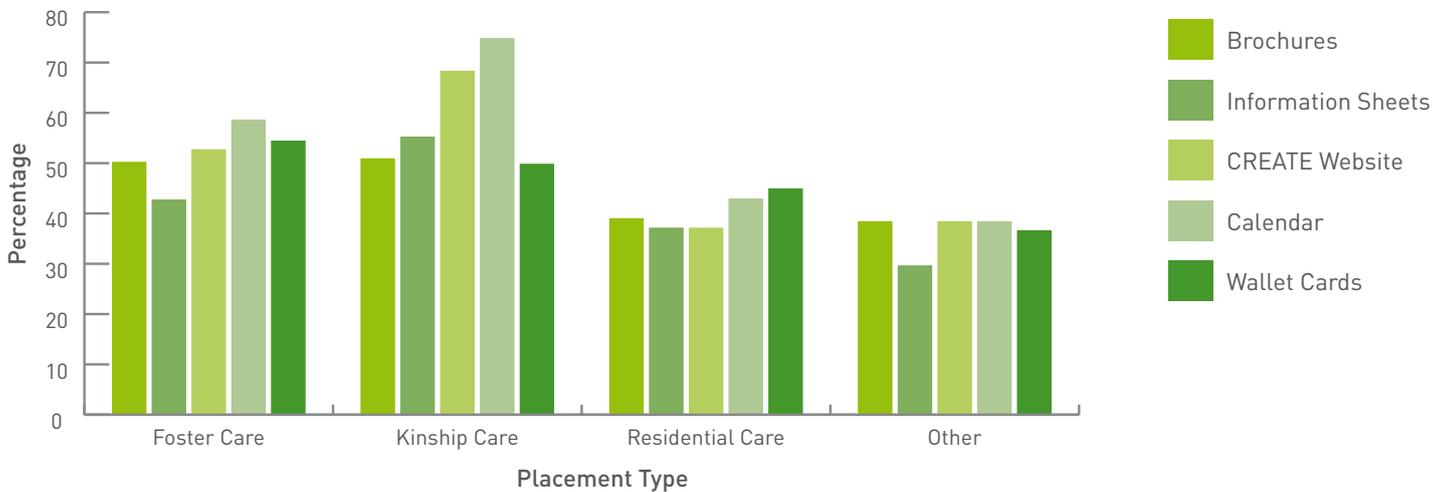


Figure 11. Percentage of respondents living in the various Placement Types who were aware of the various Marketing Elements used in this study.

3.2.4 Overall impact of the Program

Young people who knew about the “What’s the Plan?” campaign were asked to rate on a 6-point scale (1: No impact at all; 6: Extreme impact) the overall impact that they thought the program had on their planning for the future. These ratings again were compared across Jurisdictions, Placement Types and Cultural groups. The pattern of response was similar to the Usefulness ratings. Indeed, a significant correlation was found between Impact ratings and a total Usefulness score computed by summing over ratings given to the five Elements by each respondent²⁹.

²⁹ $r = 0.52, p < .01, n = 254$.

Jurisdictional differences show the trend established elsewhere in the data for the ACT, NT, SA, and VIC to report higher scores (indicating “reasonable impact”), while NSW, TAS, and WA recorded lower ratings. These findings are presented in Figure

³⁰ Comparison of Jurisdiction means using a univariate ANOVA gave significant results: $F_{(7, 246)} = 6.11, p < .01$.

³¹ A point biserial correlation was performed on these data: $r = .07, p > .05, n = 254$.

12³⁰. It was thought that this response may be related to the observation presented in Section 3.1.1.1 that young people in the former jurisdictions also were more likely to have an LC plan, leading them to believe that awareness raising about planning for the future is important. However, the correlation between the likelihood of having a plan and the mean Impact rating of those informed of the program was not significant³¹.

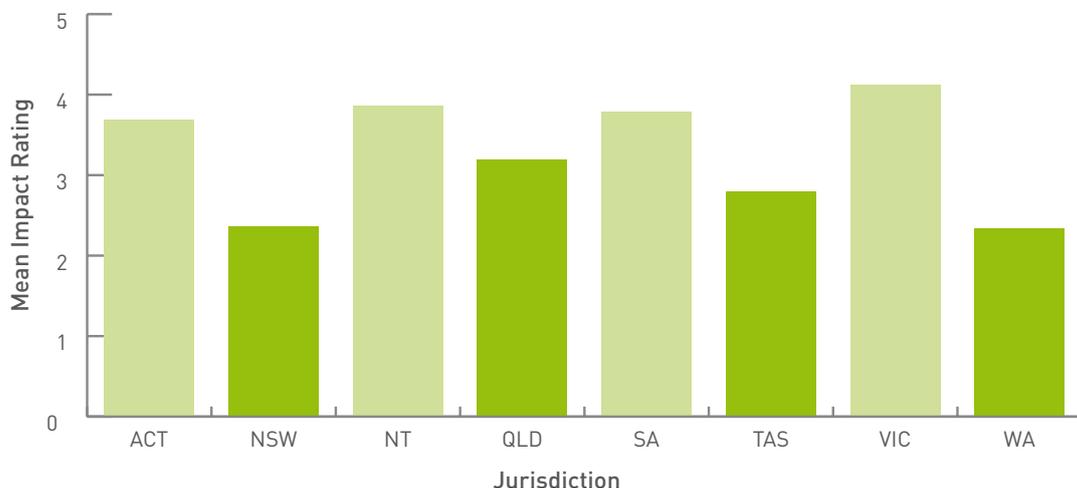


Figure 12. Mean ratings for the overall perceived Impact of the “What’s the Plan?” campaign by care leavers in Australian states and territories who knew of the program.

³² Foster Care: $M = 3.1, SD = 1.5$;
Kinship Care: $M = 4.0, SD = 1.6$;
Residential Care: $M = 2.4, SD = 1.3$;
Other: $M = 2.6, SD = 1.7$;
 $F_{(3, 250)} = 11.65, p < .01$.

³³ Australian (Other): $M = 3.0, SD = 1.6$;
Indigenous: $M = 3.6, SD = 1.6$;
Other Cultural background: $M = 3.1, SD = 1.8$; $F_{(2, 251)} = 3.50, p < .05$.

Overall, young people living in Kinship Care clearly felt that the program had greater impact than did those in other Placement Types³², and there was a tendency for Indigenous respondents to see more value in the initiative than the Australian (Other) group³³.

In an attempt to determine what survey participants thought was important about the “What’s the Plan?” program and to identify aspects that may have contributed to the level of impact it had, the young people were asked to comment on things that “worked” for them. Detailed quotes from those who responded are included in Appendix D. Some are particularly insightful and poignant. The general themes that emerged included the fact that someone gave them information about a critical event in their lives; several “had nothing before” and claimed this was the “only time heard about it”. For many, it started their “thinking of the future” and was the stimulus for beginning a dialogue with carers and workers which was the overall aim of the project. In addition, the various marketing elements employed were seen as accessible (reliable sources they could read and understand, and could look at over and over again “on the fridge”), colourful, “awesome”, but perhaps more importantly, sent to them personally. Indeed, one of the few negative comments made by one young person questioned why this hadn’t happened with his calendar, and complained that he only received a “dodgy copy from my friend who is in a resi”.

At the conclusion of the survey, young people were given the opportunity to comment on anything that they thought could be done to improve the planning process. Many of these responses have been included verbatim in Appendix E. One 15-year-old female seemed to sum up the significance of this project when she said, "I didn't know that a leaving-care plan was important. This survey has made me think about it and realise how important the plan is." Generally, young people wanted more information about the process and for people, particularly caseworkers, to listen to them when determining what their future needs might be. All the comments are worthy of consideration; these two seem to capture the general sentiments expressed:

I would like help getting my own place so I don't have to move back to my family just to have a bed to sleep in and not be on the streets. I needed help before I left care, I needed someone to sit down with me and explain what was happening and going to happen. I didn't need a phone call from the Department to just tell me there was no longer an order. (Male 17)

There needs to be more emphasis on understanding the system more, some kids really need direct information. Most important suggestion is that the caseworker needs to see the kids more. Only seeing them once a year at the scheduled meetings - it's not enough. That needs to be changed. (Male 17)



**the
involvement
of the
Commonwealth
in setting
national
standards
within the
out-of-home-
care sector
may serve to
unify support
available**



discussion

4.0

discussion

4.1 Incidence of Leaving Care Plans

Staff of the CREATE Foundation must be commended for the valiant contribution they made during 2010 in implementing the “What’s the Plan” campaign. It is disappointing that the results suggest that the hard work has had little impact on planning outcomes for young people leaving care. The most positive result overall was the finding that those who knew about the campaign were more likely than others to have a plan; but this cannot be assumed to be a causal connection, and the percentage is relatively small. Clearly, the majority (approximately two-thirds) of care leavers still do not have a useful plan for their future.

However, evidence indicates that closer inspection of the data is required because of the considerable variability in the incidence of plans across jurisdictions. With numbers possessing a leaving care (LC) plan ranging from 18% (NSW) to 46% (SA), the quoting of overall figures is somewhat misleading. These data emphasise that much more work needs to be done within jurisdictions to ensure that as many as possible of those transitioning from care are prepared with a plan. Particular attention must be directed to determining why young people in NSW and TAS are at such a disadvantage in this regard. One factor that does not seem to be critical is the number of care leavers in the respective jurisdictions. No association was found between this measure and the likelihood of a young person’s having a LC plan³⁴.

4.2 Involvement in Planning

Actually having a copy of your LC plan in your possession is the ultimate indicator of involvement in the process for a young person. It was hoped that a reasonable number of the 17 year-olds would meet this criterion; unfortunately, only 24 of the 195 in that age group in this sample could make this claim.

In placements where carers played a key role (all placements except “Other”), the perception of young people was that the carers were “reasonably involved”, as were the respondents themselves and their caseworkers for Foster and Residential care placements. However, in Kinship care, the perceived involvement of the latter two groups (the young people and their caseworkers) seemed much lower. Being in a “family” context, possibly these young people were not too concerned about what was likely to happen to them after they turned 18 years. On the other hand, workers may believe that, because the young people are being cared for by “relatives” or “family” now and possibly in the future, they didn’t need to be as involved in informing them of their options following transition. This finding suggests that VIC might not be the only state (see Ombudsman Victoria, 2009) in which poor support is provided by departments for Kinship Care.

It was not surprising that most involvement in planning took the form of face-to-face meetings between the young person and a caseworker, with telephone conversations less common. It was a little unexpected that email contact was not used to a significant extent. There would seem to be advantages in this form of communication because discussions can be documented and young people have something tangible to which they could refer in future. Perhaps the belief is that young people don’t have adequate access to computers, although judging by the proportion of web-based responses to this survey, at least two-thirds would be online enough to be able to check emails. Possibly workers find writing emails too time consuming, but if this were formalised, it could become part of the standard

³⁴ A post hoc correlation between the size of the care-leaver population and the percentage having LC plans produced a Spearman’s $\rho = 0$ over the eight states and territories.

evidence indicates that closer inspection of the data is required because of the considerable variability in the incidence of plans across jurisdictions

casework. Also, as a planning activity, more caseworkers could actually help young people contact the support agencies they might need to access when independent so that more care leavers than the 37% recorded here would have these connections established.

4.3 Effectiveness of Plans

4.3.1 Placement Type

Two factors are of interest concerning the perception by young people of the effectiveness of plans that had been prepared. One positive observation is the high level of confidence those in Residential Care express in the contents of their LC plan, particularly regarding the support it articulates in the areas of employment, life skills, and accessing personal documents. Obviously, this is the response that would be desired within all placement types. It would be worthwhile reviewing the procedures followed in Residential Care facilities to determine what best-practice examples could be identified concerning their staff's involvement in LC planning.

In contrast, those young people in Kinship Care report low levels of confidence in most areas covered except, as would be expected, contact with family, friends, and cultural community. They also had far less knowledge of how to get assistance in any of the key domains in which they will operate when independent. Possibly, this reflects the apparent "laissez faire" attitude of caseworkers involved in these placements. While these young people may have the benefit of being in more stable placements, still within the family context, as individuals they have the right to the same level of information (quantity and accuracy) as all other young people who will transition from the responsibility of the "corporate parent". The provision of this is an important function the caseworker could serve in this situation without being overly intrusive. Hopefully, this would help produce more confident young people moving from Kinship Care into the broader community.

4.3.2 Jurisdictional Variation

Another key observation concerning the confidence young people have in the usefulness of the plans prepared is the jurisdictional variability. Care leavers in a particular state or territory could feel able to handle whatever is likely to eventuate in one area yet have much lower confidence in another. This possibly could reflect the availability and accessibility of support services in a jurisdiction, the priorities of caseworkers, or that an adequate analysis of future needs of the young person was not performed as part of the planning process. It is of some concern that potential care leavers in the states of NSW and TAS show relatively low confidence levels in most of the domains covered. It would seem that not only do fewer young people in these states have LC plans, but also those who have a plan do not feel that its contents provide adequate preparation for their future. These states will need to review their whole LC planning process thoroughly.

As suggested previously, it would seem that a reasonable aim of planning would be to ensure that all care leavers approached transition with high levels of confidence that they could handle, or knew how to obtain support to deal with most of what they were likely to experience in life. The variability observed in this study is not desirable. This obviously should be an area considered by the Commonwealth when monitoring the national standards established for transitioning from care.

4.4 Transition to Independent Living Allowance

One area of transition-from-care support in which the Commonwealth already plays a role is the provision of TILA. Since only 58% of the 17 year-old group preparing to transition knew about TILA, it would seem that this form of assistance needs much more effective promotion within the out-of-home-care sector if it is to be offered as a serious support mechanism for those moving to independence.

Although TILA is a Commonwealth initiative, its availability needs to be communicated to interested parties largely at a "local" level. Again there were

57.7%

of 17 year olds

know about

TILLA

significant jurisdictional differences, with those young people in WA being particularly uninformed about TILA. Unfortunately, few care leavers obtained this useful information from key figures in their lives (caseworkers and carers). If both of these two potential sources, which should be in regular contact with the young people for whom they are responsible, do not actively promote the availability of TILA, from where will care leavers obtain this information? Relying on other sources makes the process extremely ad hoc and ineffective.

Such a finding has implications for case management and carer training. Clearly, LC planning needs to be guided by a pro forma document or checklist that deals with all critical life domains and includes a standard reference to TILA (such as the excellent resource available in QLD to aid planning). Caseworkers must become proactive in introducing reference to TILA as a fundamental support for those young people who need financial assistance. Carers also must be made more aware of this allowance, and be trained in assisting young people to prepare and lodge their applications. To provide the necessary redundancy in this communicative system, it also would be useful if staff from an organisation such as Centrelink (that will deal with many of the care leavers) were prepared as part of their training to convey details of the TILA scheme to the young people.

It is important to note that 62% of respondents had applied, or were considering applying for TILA (several after they found out about the allowance while participating in this survey). The explanations provided by those young people who thought that they would not apply fell into three broad categories. Several commented that they were doing well, had everything they needed (generally because of carer support), and therefore did not need TILA assistance. Others wanted to find out more about the scheme before they would commit themselves, but didn't particularly want to get more involved with governments. The third group thought that, from what they had heard, the process of application was too difficult and the eligibility criteria too onerous for them to bother trying. It is the latter two groups that need information and reassurance so that they can make appropriate decisions to facilitate their transition to independence.

4.5 Evaluation of the "What's the Plan?" Program

As Nutbeam, Harris, and Wise (2010) outline in their discussion of Social Marketing as a model to guide communication, the last two essential steps in what is described as the social-marketing wheel are (a) assessing effectiveness of the program, and (b) providing feedback to refine future actions. The aim of this section of the Report Card was to achieve these outcomes. This discussion follows the framework for evaluation proposed by Horsfall et al. (2010) in investigating (a) Process; (b) Impact (immediate results); and (c) Outcomes (possible long-term implications).

4.5.1 Awareness of the "What's the Plan?" Campaign: Process

The first issue to be addressed is how effectively the "What's the Plan?" campaign was conducted. It should be emphasised that this survey only addresses the project from the point of view of care leavers. Subsequent reviews will be conducted of the participation of caseworkers and carers.

Interestingly, more of those young people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural group and those in Kinship Care knew about the "What's the Plan?" campaign. It is only possible to speculate on why such differences might have occurred. The result with the Indigenous group could be due to a "positive discrimination" effect, where those people distributing materials tried to ensure that people identified as Indigenous would definitely receive the relevant documentation³⁵. Possibly those in the Kinship Care group, living within a family network in arguably a more stable placement (Winokur, Crawford, Longobardi, & Valentine, 2008), were more able to be contacted and therefore could receive information from a variety of sources.

³⁵ Post hoc analyses indicated that the Indigenous respondents (73%) were significantly more likely to have received the "What's the Plan?" Information Pack than the other groups (Australian - Other: 56.2%; Other Cultural Background: 44%; $\chi^2 (2) = 10.44, p < .01$)

Evidence collected here showed significant differences across jurisdictions in the number of young people who were aware of the program. For example, while two-thirds of young people in SA had received some form of communication about what CREATE was attempting, only one-fifth of those in NSW were so informed. The “patchiness” of communication about this campaign highlights a major problem faced by CREATE in general in being able to contact children and young people in care.

The Foundation’s mission and mandate (acknowledged by government funding) are to ensure that the “voices” of those in out-of-home care are heard by the relevant decision-makers who have the capacity to change the child protection system for the better. To do this effectively, CREATE staff need to contact the young people in the system to determine their views on relevant issues.

Over recent years CREATE has been establishing its own database of contacts, drawn from the membership of its clubCREATE program. However, even though all children and young people in out-of-home care are entitled to join, participate in the empowerment programs, and receive regular magazines with information on events and activities in their respective states and territories, at present only one quarter of those in care are official members.

CREATE must depend on the cooperation and goodwill of government departments and authorised non-government organisations to try to contact young people in care. Some departments will not release contact details of the wards of the state for privacy reasons, even though CREATE has been funded to report on young people’s issues of concern. Many departmental staff, while wanting to assist, are so busy with their allocated commitments that CREATE’s requirements take low priority. Hence the distribution of materials in a program such as this (and even the sampling of respondents for the final evaluation) raises many logistical difficulties.

Many of these problems could be removed by a clearer statement of cooperation between CREATE and the states and territories. Nutbeam et al. (2010) posits a model of intersectoral action ranging from networks, through alliances, partnerships, coalitions, and finally full collaboration. It would seem that, since CREATE already has Service Agreements with all state and territory governments (i.e., a formal contract), a relationship at least at the level of “Partnership” should be acknowledged which could make the sharing of some essential information (viz., contact details of young people in care) possible. The capacity for cross-checking such data when exchange of information occurs also would be likely to enhance its accuracy which, from experience in sampling for this study, is questionable.

4.5.2 Sources of Information

Further evidence of the need to establish direct communication channels with young people was provided by their responses regarding the source of information they received about “What’s the Plan?” A considerable majority in each jurisdiction (except VIC) obtained their knowledge from the Information Pack that was mailed to all young people at the start of the program. Despite CREATE’s sending posters, newsletters, and email updates to caseworkers (not to forget the “Tim Tams”), and writing articles for carer newsletters, presenting at their national conferences, and communicating with local carer organisations, neither caseworkers or carers were very effective in promoting the campaign.

Because both carers and caseworkers should be critical influences in the lives of young people in care, particularly if LC planning is to be improved, CREATE will need to reflect on what it as an organisation can do to help these groups become more involved in the overall process of LC preparation.

It is imperative that more attention be focused on the role of carers since ultimately the out-of-home-care system depends on them. This group is in daily contact with their young people and are in the ideal position to provide information and advice, and to identify any concerns those approaching the age for leaving care might have and help them access necessary resources for support. However, the carers cannot

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carers**

do this in a vacuum. They need the knowledge and understanding to share with the young people and this can only come from ongoing training and “carer development” that must be provided, either by governments or carers’ professional associations, to assist them in their vital role.

From the point of view of maintaining continuity of contact with young people in their placement, or particularly if they have to move from placement to placement, the carer is the obvious conduit for channelling communications. CREATE, in consultation with carer organisations and governments, will be exploring ways to harness carer networks to assist in recording the current location of young people in the system, thereby improving the accuracy of contact details for those in care.

However, the inescapable fact is that caseworkers are still the key agents responsible for organising the planning of a young person’s transition from care (at least for those in care who have an allocated worker). The previous CREATE Report Cards dealing with transitioning (McDowall, 2008, 2009) both recommended that specific workers, who are dedicated to dealing with those who are transitioning from care, should be identified in all child-protection centres. At present, evidence is not available from all states concerning the adoption of this recommendation, although it would appear that it is far from universal³⁶.

Caseworkers need to be proactive in initiating discussions with young people, making sure they have necessary information, responding to ideas the young people offer, and treating plan development as a collaboration. However, this takes time, and workers are under pressure in this regard. Comments by several young people that they had a plan “given” to them (without their involvement) suggest that caseworkers are responding mainly to system requirements rather than the needs of young people. Munro (2010), when commencing a major review of child protection in the U.K., warned against placing “too much emphasis on getting the process right, rather than on improving outcomes for children, of the process being driven by fear of getting it wrong” (p. 39). The system must be restructured so that the most critical aspect for a worker is not ticking a box in a data management tool to indicate that a plan has been prepared, but rather knowing that each young person has the necessary information, knowledge, and skills they need to leave care confidently as a functioning member of society.

4.5.3 Effectiveness of elements: Impact

The problems of information penetration already mentioned were exacerbated when the effectiveness of individual marketing elements was considered. Evidence revealed that not only did awareness of an individual element (e.g., the calendar, website etc.) vary across jurisdictions but also the awareness of the various elements differed within jurisdictions. Given that items such as the calendar were produced in such numbers that they could be sent to “all” young people in care in the specified age groups, it is difficult to explain why so many were not aware of them. Perhaps they received the items, and threw them away as “junk” mail without even opening the package. This would be unusual, since many respondents indicated that they liked receiving personal correspondence. More likely, as indicated previously, it would appear that some breakdown in the transmission process, at the final stage of departments’ contacting young people, has occurred after CREATE supplied the materials. Possibly, this could reflect staff priorities in some areas, or the inaccuracy of contact details. Either way, CREATE will need to develop stronger more collaborative ties with departments to facilitate improving the process of contacting young people in care.

However, even when considering the scores given by those who were familiar with each element indicating how effective they thought the approach was in raising awareness of the need for planning, it is difficult to explain why young people in ACT, NT, SA, and VIC found the approaches overall more useful in this regard than did those in NSW and TAS. As previously noted, not only do fewer young people in these state have LC plans, but when in possession of one, the care leavers from

³⁶ One state where data are available has indicated that of 50 service centres, only six have dedicated Transition-From-Care workers.

NSW and TAS also showed low confidence in the usefulness of it. The recorded lack of usefulness of the “What’s the Plan?” marketing elements simply could be an indicator of a pessimistic perception of the possibility of improvements being made in the LC planning process in these jurisdictions.

Clearly, most young people saw the Calendar as a useful device for keeping planning at the forefront of their attention. Several commented that they liked looking at it “on the fridge” because it was informative and colourful. In any future interventions, this type of element would seem more worthy of investment than Brochures and flyers that were not well received, particularly by the older group.

The extremely positive Usefulness ratings given to some Elements by those identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, as well as by the Kinship Care group, may be a result of these young people not having received much information in the past. They seem to believe that the new materials they have received must help to raise awareness of, and improve the planning process for them.

4.5.4 Overall Outcome

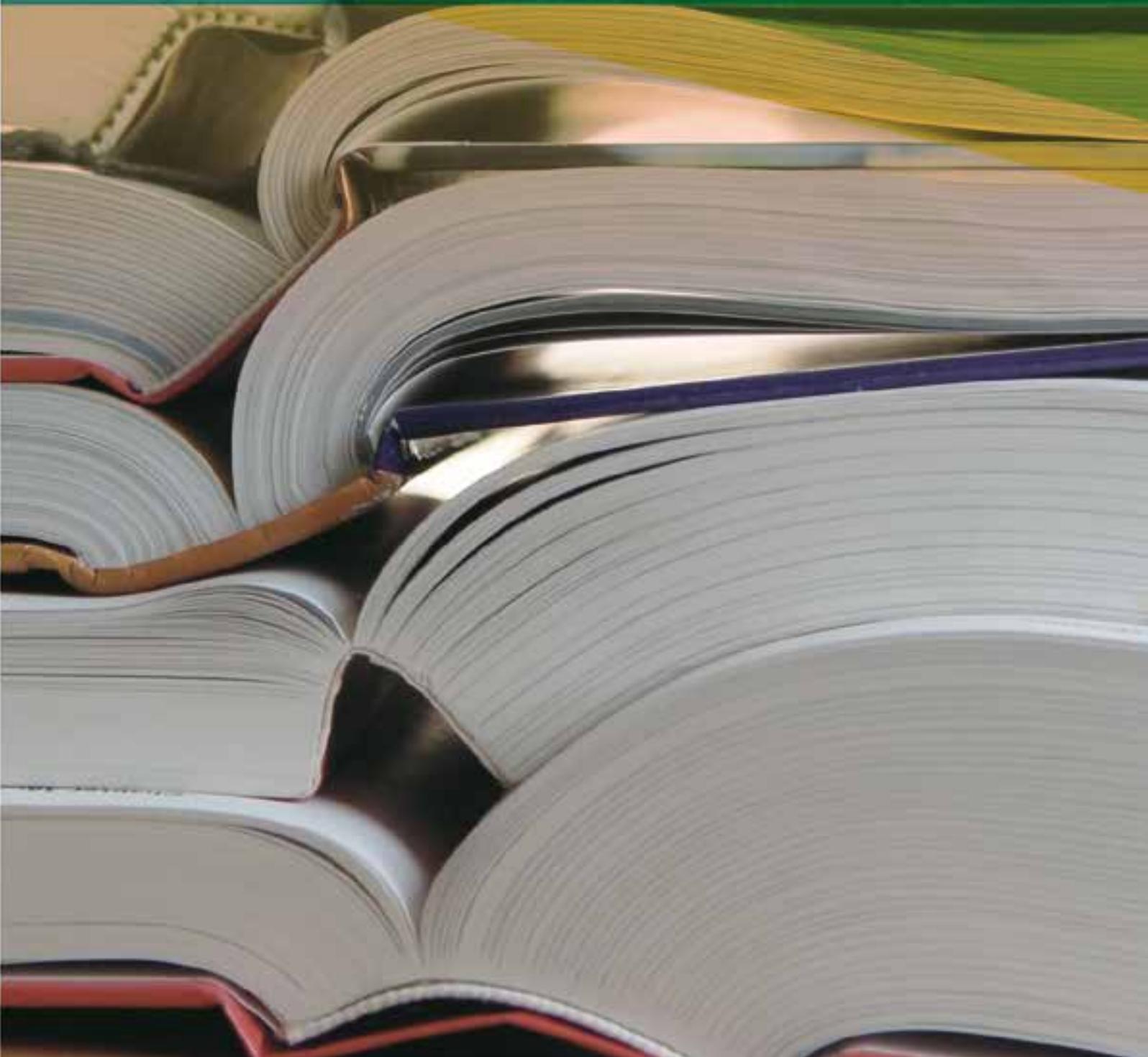
Perceived Impact ratings for the “What’s the Plan?” campaign followed a similar pattern across jurisdictions as did the overall awareness-raising Usefulness scores with which they correlated strongly. Again, the more pessimistic view of those in NSW and TAS, as well as young people in WA, was a key observation. More work needs to be done to determine what factors may explain this consistent finding. It would be of concern if this response reflects an attitudinal malaise permeating care leavers in these jurisdictions leading to the belief that nothing can be done to improve the current situation.

A key assumption being tested in this study was that, if awareness of the need for transition planning could be raised in all interested parties (young people, carers, and caseworkers) then more dialogue between the parties might ensue, and more LC plans ultimately could be produced. However, current data (compared with previous findings) do not point to increases overall in the incidence of planning.

The observation that those young people who were aware of the program were more likely to have a LC plan was encouraging. However, the low proportion of care leavers with a plan, and the fact that, in general, the numbers haven’t increased over what was reported previously, indicate this social-marketing campaign largely has not been effective, at least to date. Perhaps this is a critical point. As Jackson (2009, p. 261) emphasised, “Social marketing is a long-term process and there are no ‘quick wins’.” CREATE may have been overly optimistic to expect a detectable change in LC planning outcomes within 12 months. However, as a result of this endeavour, much has been learned that could lead to improvements in the system. It is clear in which directions future efforts must be directed, both in forging stronger relationships with carers and caseworkers, and in communicating more effectively with young people. When this is achieved in coming years, hopefully a longer-term measure will demonstrate that care leavers in Australia are receiving the support they need, when planning for transition, to give them the best chance of achieving their aspirations for the future.

**social
marketing is
a long term
process and
there are no
‘quick wins’**

references



5.0

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young people who identify as

Aboriginal

or Torres Strait Islander
were more likely to know about

**“What’s
the Plan?”**

appendix a

timeline for interventions in the “What’s the Plan?” campaign



6.0 appendix a:

timeline for interventions in the “What’s the Plan?” campaign

month	care leavers	caseworkers	community (carers, governments, agencies)
2010			
February	Website content developed	E-newsletter sent Report Card article in Connections	Report Card article in Connections
March	6000 calendars and “What’s the Plan?” information kits sent to 15-18 year olds across Australia “What’s the Plan?” article in clubCREATE magazine		
April			Article in Fostering our Future (NSW) Insert into Families Australia newsletter
June	CREATE Champions promoted in clubCREATE magazine “What’s the Plan?” article in clubCREATE magazine Baseline survey included in magazine		
July	“Create Your Future” website launched, focussing on transitioning from care	Launch of CREATE Champions to encourage best practice in assisting young people to get a leaving care plan	“What’s the Plan?” July news and poster sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 279 government agencies • Placement agencies: 266 • Residential: 91 • Foster Care Associations: 22 • Peak bodies: 29
August			CEO presented “What’s the Plan?” at the Tasmanian Foster and Kinship Carers Conference Stand at conference: approx. 300 contacts Dr Joseph McDowall presented “What’s the Plan?” to ACWA Conference National media campaign initiated
September	CREATE Champions promoted and acknowledged in clubCREATE magazine “What’s the Plan?” article in clubCREATE magazine	Newsletter plus “Take a break on CREATE campaign” distributed (251 departments and agencies)	Newsletter plus “Take a break on CREATE” campaign distributed (26 Children’s Commissioners’ offices)
October			Stall at Grandparent and Kinship carers Conference (approx. 180 people)
December	CREATE Champions promoted and acknowledged in clubCREATE magazine	Mailing to departments “All I want for Christmas is a Leaving Care Plan”; 1,200 pieces sent nationally	“What’s the Answer?” article in Connections.
2011			
February	6000 x wallet cards and posters sent to 15-18 year olds across Australia		

young people in

kinship care

were more likely to be aware of

“What’s
the Plan?”

appendix b

examples of marketing material used in the “What’s the Plan?”
social marketing intervention

SO WHAT'S THE PLAN



Our Report Card 2009, Transitioning from Care Tracking Progress interviewed 471 young people across the country. We found out that over 65% of young people had no Leaving Care Plan, that means NO plan for the future. CREATE is very concerned about this and wants to do something to improve the number of young people with a plan.

We are working with young people, carers, agencies and case workers to reach our goal of EVERY young person having a plan for their future. CREATE will be sending out resources to all young people 15-18 years to provide them with information about the following:

- What is a Leaving Care Plan?
- How do you get one?
- What should the plan contain?
- Who should you contact to get a plan?
- Who you can go to if you have not been able to get a plan

If every young person is aware of the importance of having a plan, and has the necessary information to know how to get one we hope that the numbers of young people with a plan will drastically improve!

Know **WHAT** you need to do;
 WHEN you need to do it;
 WHO'll help you get there;
 HOW you can do it!



My school
 My job
 My home
 My family
 Our Plan... My Future

For more information on What's the plan? go to www.create.org.au or contact your local CREATE office.



A leaving care plan can change your life for the better... and remember you deserve the best!

www.create.org.au
 1800 655 105
 1800 655 105
 1800 655 105



create

SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE

There are support plans for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For extra info check out www.create.org.au/leaving-care for downloadable facts about the plan.

WHO DO I SPEAK TO FOR REFERRAL AND INFO?

CREATE Head Office

1. 1800 655 105 (24hr helpline)
2. Email: leavingcare@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

Department of Disability Services (DSS) Community Services Unit

1. 1300 300 300
2. www.dss.gov.au

WHERE DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT OR OFFER MY FEEDBACK?

Department of Disability Services (DSS) Community Services Unit

1. 1300 300 300
2. Email: community@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT?

Financial Counselling (Financial Counselling Centre)

1. 1300 300 300
2. Email: financial@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

Healthcare (Healthcare Support Unit)

1. 1300 300 300
2. Email: healthcare@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

CREATE Your Future website is here!

CREATE is very proud to announce that our new CREATE Your Future website has been launched and is ready for you to use! The CREATE Your Future website was developed as a guide as you move into independence. There is heaps of useful information on just about everything you could ever need to know for getting yourself organised to move out of care. CREATE Your Future offers you helpful info on topics such as employment and finding a job to suit you, health and nutrition

including tips about Medicare and plenty of healthy eating ideas, plus guidance and suggestions on heaps of other important topics like education and training; money; transport and housing. Check it out - createyourfuture.org.au What else would you like to know? What other information do you think you could use? Email your thoughts magazine@create.org.au



What's the Plan?

CREATE has been busy squirrelling away creating awareness amongst carers, workers and young people in care about the importance of a Leaving Care Plan. Do you have a Leaving Care Plan? It's really important to start thinking about it from the age of about 15 or 16. Your Leaving Care Plan helps you to plan for your future. If you don't have a plan then it is hard to know what you need. It's designed to reduce the stress involved in leaving care and to help you to live independently. In your Leaving Care Plan you should include the steps that you plan on taking to help you on your way to independence and success. Your Leaving Care Plan should include information and goals surrounding you:

- Housing** - Making sure you have enough financial assistance and support to help you find accommodation.

- Education** - Finding the right education and training for you. Have you thought about what you want to do when you leave school?
- Employment** - How will you support yourself when you move into independence? Your Leaving Care Plan will assist to find a job that you enjoy and suits your personality!
- Counseling and other services** - make sure you have all the support and services you need when you move out. If you would like more information on Leaving Care Plans in your state then call 1800 655 105 and we'll arrange to get a leaving care info kit sent out to you immediately.



A leaving care plan can change your life for the better... and remember you deserve the best!

www.create.org.au
 1800 655 105
 1800 655 105



create

SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE

There are support plans for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For extra info check out www.create.org.au/leaving-care for downloadable facts about the plan.

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CREATE Head Office

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2. Email: leavingcare@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

Department of Disability Services (DSS) Community Services Unit

1. 1300 300 300
2. www.dss.gov.au

WHERE DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT OR OFFER MY FEEDBACK?

Department of Disability Services (DSS) Community Services Unit

1. 1300 300 300
2. Email: community@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT?

Financial Counselling (Financial Counselling Centre)

1. 1300 300 300
2. Email: financial@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

Healthcare (Healthcare Support Unit)

1. 1300 300 300
2. Email: healthcare@create.org.au
3. www.create.org.au

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

TO ENSURE EVERY YOUNG PERSON LEAVING CARE HAS A LEAVING CARE PLAN

Improving the lives of children and young people in care
www.create.org.au
 1800 655 105



A leaving care plan can change your life for the better and remember you deserve the best

www.create.org.au
 1800 655 105

create
SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE

There are supports in place for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For more info, check out www.create.org.au and our Learning.com to download a handy sheet for you.

WHO DO I SPEAK TO FOR REFERRAL AND ADVICE?

CREATE Foundation
 1. 1800 655 105
 2. 1800 655 105
 3. www.create.org.au
 4. www.create.org.au

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

Department of Health and Human Services
 1. 1800 655 105
 2. 1800 655 105
 3. www.create.org.au

WHERE DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT OR GIVE MY FEEDBACK?

1. www.create.org.au
 2. 1800 655 105
 3. www.create.org.au
 4. www.create.org.au
 5. www.create.org.au
 6. www.create.org.au
 7. www.create.org.au
 8. www.create.org.au

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT?

1. www.create.org.au
 2. www.create.org.au
 3. www.create.org.au
 4. www.create.org.au
 5. www.create.org.au
 6. www.create.org.au
 7. www.create.org.au
 8. www.create.org.au

Remember also to check out the www.create.org.au Learning.com



WELCOME TO clubCREATE MAGAZINE



Hello there
 Well it has been a very busy time at CREATE with our second Summit taking place in Sydney in February. It was fantastic to hear the views of young people and to see them in action. Have a look inside this edition for some great pics of the Summit Dinner.

Congratulations to the winners of our competitions from last month, we gave away dozens of great prizes and encourage you to enter this month. Also, if you would like to share a poem, a story, a personal experience or give us some feedback about a movie we would love to hear from you.

This is YOUR magazine, so help us make it even better. Tell us what you like (or don't like) about it and we will try our best.

Happy reading!
 Anqui Reed, CEO, CREATE Foundation
 aka Head Honcho

CREATE CHAMPION AWARDS

If you have a great club worker experience to share...

part of our What's the plan? Campaign is to recognise the Club Workers, Careers and Social Workers who have assisted young people to get a Leaving Care Plan. We want you to write and submit a story about a great worker who has helped you. It would be fantastic if you could include a photo (if you know). That's sometimes the hardest part!

CREATE will be putting these stories in the clubCREATE magazine and will be publishing a list of CREATE Champions for every story we receive. We will share the stories and photos with all our carees.

We look forward to hearing great success stories and then to the address on the back of your clubCREATE magazine.



A leaving care plan can change your life for the better and remember you deserve the best

www.create.org.au
 1800 655 105

create
SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE

There are supports in place for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For more info, check out www.create.org.au and our Learning.com to download a handy sheet for you.

WHO DO I SPEAK TO FOR REFERRAL AND ADVICE?

CREATE Foundation
 1. 1800 655 105
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 3. www.create.org.au
 4. www.create.org.au

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

Department of Health and Human Services
 1. 1800 655 105
 2. 1800 655 105
 3. www.create.org.au

WHERE DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT OR GIVE MY FEEDBACK?

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 3. www.create.org.au
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 5. www.create.org.au
 6. www.create.org.au
 7. www.create.org.au
 8. www.create.org.au

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT?

1. www.create.org.au
 2. www.create.org.au
 3. www.create.org.au
 4. www.create.org.au
 5. www.create.org.au
 6. www.create.org.au
 7. www.create.org.au
 8. www.create.org.au

Remember also to check out the www.create.org.au Learning.com

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

Improving the lives of children and young people in care.

www.create.org.au



MARCH 2010

... LONDON SET THE
... BOND TO BE FROM SET / NEW
... CAROLINA MAY ACT
... LONDON MAY FIVE
... KEEP IN LINE WITH THE
... ASSURE OUR OFFICE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

What is a transition plan?

Well it's a plan about what is going to happen in YOUR future that you should be involved in developing.



What should go in the plan?

This is really different for each person, and you should think of what your needs are and make sure that all areas are covered. Some things that should be included are:

- Education – do you want to continue at school, go to TAFE or Uni, take up a course?
- Housing – where are you going to live, with friends, family, carers, by yourself?
- Health – are there specific health concerns that need ongoing treatment?
- Connections – who will support you?
- Life skills – do you know how to look after yourself if you live independently? Can you wash, cook, clean, budget and pay your bills, and if not how will you learn these skills before you leave care?
- Financial – how will you support yourself?
- Employment – what type of job do you want, how will you get a job or traineeship?



What if I cannot get my worker to develop a plan?

This can be a problem for some young people. Usually it happens when workers leave, or when you change workers. Sometimes it can also take a while due to the workload of the workers.

If you do not have a worker you can ask to be assigned one.

Sometimes you need to be patient, and ask several times. CREATE suggests that you should keep a record of who you spoke to and the date of your request, and try several times.

You could also ask your Carer to advocate for you if you are in a foster care placement.

Each state has support people that can help you. Refer to the Information package for details.



Can they develop a transition plan without me?

You should always be actively involved in the development of your transition plan. Sometimes workers do lots of background work before they meet with you and they might have started to fill out parts of the plan before they come. Some Case Workers welcome young people's participation as it makes their job much easier, and gets a much better result for the young person.

Remember it is YOUR plan and you should have a say about what happens in your life. If you do not feel that you have been involved enough, tell your Case Worker, or ask your carer or support person to help you. Let them know if you are not comfortable doing so.

Do I get a copy of the plan?

Of course you do!

You should ask your Case Worker to ensure you get a copy. Sometimes it takes a while to come as Government Departments have lots of processes that have to be followed, and it has to be signed by Managers in some states. So be patient.



How do I know if I have a plan?

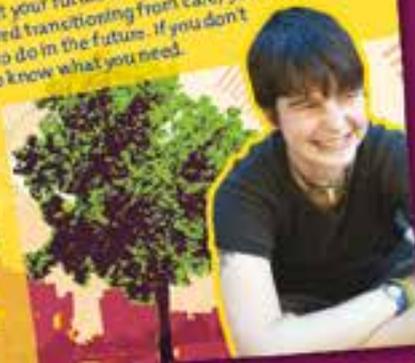
You can contact your Case Worker, Agency Worker, Resi Care Worker, or speak to your Carer and they should be able to tell you.

What is so important about having a plan?

Good Question!

When you start to think about your future and moving on from being in care (sometimes called transitioning from care) you need to think about what you want to do in the future - if you don't have a plan then it is hard to know what you need.

The benefit of having a plan is that you know what you need to do, when you need to do it, who will help you and how you can do it.



How long does a plan last?

Each plan is different, and state legislation is also quite different - check out the information package to learn more.

Generally plans last for the duration of your transition; some start at 15 and some start 6 months before you turn 18.



WHO can help me to develop my plan?

Well this can be different for each young person. Check the Information package for more information but generally the following people are responsible.

- Your Case Worker
- Your Resi Care Worker

Foster parents can also help you if you are in foster care.



What does a plan look like?

In most cases they tend to be documents that have sections for the Case Worker and you to fill out. They are different in each state/territory.

When you are talking with your Case Worker you should ensure that you understand what's written and if you don't understand, ask them to write it in a way that you can understand. Sometimes this is called "plain English" or "jargon free".

It's your plan and

YOU

should understand it.



Get a copy of my plan?

How should I?

To make sure that your plan is up to date, you should make a copy of your plan and keep it in a safe place. You should also make a copy of your plan and keep it in a safe place. You should also make a copy of your plan and keep it in a safe place.



What happens if I change my mind and I want to do something different and it is already in my plan?

This happens all the time, and young people's circumstances, and choices are expected to change. It is part of life. The best thing is to talk to your Case Worker and let them know that you would like to make some changes. You could try emailing or ringing them to let them know that you would like to meet to talk about changing the plan.



State Governments get their report cards

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE IN THIS NEWSLETTER, READ THIS!

This is CREATE's second report card on kids transitioning from care to independence. It's an annual performance review for state governments. CREATE's quest to improve the lives of kids in care means that it is beholden upon us to measure each state's performance and help the responsible departments understand what is working and what isn't.



REPORT CARD LUNCH

Sadly progress has been slow this year. We can all imagine that entering care is traumatic and of course being in care is difficult but leaving care seems to be the stage of care that is most ignored. This year's report card showed that, shockingly 68% of young people leaving care didn't have a care plan. No wonder 28.5% were unemployed, 34.7% were homeless and a tragic 45% of male respondents had troubles with the justice system in their first year of leaving care. It's easy to understand these figures when you consider that some young people are returned from their care arrangements on their 18th birthday with no plan in place to help them survive, many end up on the streets.

Unfortunately these horrible figures highlight that there has been little improvement in policy implementation since the 2008 Report Card.

But just like any good performance review there has to be a section that deals with how the problem areas can be addressed and CREATE has done just that. SCARF Reed, CEO of CREATE Foundation, announced a plan of the Report Card launch in mid November. Because there is little improvement since the previous Report Card we would like

to announce the "What's the Plan?" campaign to increase the number of young people with a transition plan and involve the young people in planning their own exit from care - the help.

The "What's the Plan?" campaign aims to inform young people in care of their entitlements and how to engage in their own Leaving Care plan. This is a collaborative effort between State and Territory Governments, carers and non-government organisations.

Many young people end up on the streets

The announcement was greeted with applause and some what. NSW's Minister for Community Services Linda Burney thanked CREATE for the Report Card and noted that it provides important insights into the effectiveness of practices around Australia and suggests relevant ways to improve.

The Report Card was ignored by the AMF Foundation and is another wonderful example of how corporate social responsibility programmes that target their funding in a way that highlights priority issues can make a big difference to hundreds of lives. With 32,000 children in care it's not even a small improvement can make a big difference.



AMF CD 11

CREATE Foundation is proud to have been selected as the

WHAT'S THE PLAN

Are you 15 years or older?

Do you have someone in your care aged over 15?

If yes you should have recently received a What's the Plan information kit and calendar from CREATE Foundation.

This kit is very important as it will help you start to get your plan for leaving care sorted with your case worker.

The big question we want to ask is ... did you receive your kit?

If yes! fabulous! If no! please urgently contact us so we can send you one out ASAP.

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

to ensure every young person leaving care has a leaving care plan!

A leaving care plan can change life for the young person and ensure they deserve the best possible future.

There are 4 steps to be taken for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For more info check out www.create.org.au/leaving-care to download a fact sheet for you.

WHO DO I SPEAK TO FOR REFERRAL AND ADVICE?

CREATE Foundation
 1. 1800 655 105
 2. 300, 1st Queensland Street, North Brisbane QLD 4013
 3. info@create.org.au
 4. www.create.org.au or www.create.org.au/en

Call the 1800 number to request your Leaving Care Package

1. 1800 655 105
 2. info@create.org.au
 3. www.create.org.au

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

Some people are referred to:
 1. your case worker or leaving care package coordinator
 2. an independent leaving care package coordinator
 3. www.create.org.au

WHERE DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT OR OTHER FEEDBACK?

The Office of the Child Safety Commissioner
 1. www.ochildsc.com.au
 2. Level 20, 5th Street, Queensland Government House
 3. www.ochildsc.com.au

For further information:
 1. www.create.org.au
 2. www.create.org.au/leaving-care
 3. www.create.org.au/leaving-care

Many thanks to our volunteers, leaving care staff, and support staff.

1. www.create.org.au
 2. www.create.org.au/leaving-care
 3. www.create.org.au/leaving-care

There are also 4 steps to take and information about leaving care at www.create.org.au/leaving-care



www.create.org.au
www.create.org.au
info@create.org.au
1800 655 105

create FOUNDATION

SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE

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www.create.org.au
1800 655 105



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DO YOU HAVE A GREAT CASE WORKER EXPERIENCE TO SHARE?

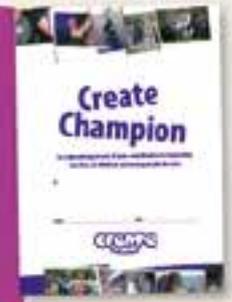
CREATE Champion awards

Part of our What's the Plan? campaign is to recognise the Case Workers, Carers and Sector Workers who have assisted young people to get a leaving Care Plan. We think great work deserves to be acknowledged.

We want YOU to write and tell us a story about a great worker, carer or case worker who has helped you. It would be a wonderful bonus if you could include a photo.

CREATE will be putting these stories in the clubCREATE magazine and will be publishing a list of CREATE Champions. For every story we receive, we will provide the worker and YOU with a Certificate.

Download a nomination form from www.create.org.au/champions



Send your nominations to:
Reply paid 83994,
Sydney NSW 2000
(you don't need a stamp)
or email to
magazine@create.org.au

There are options in place for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For extra info check out www.create.org.au/leaving-care for a checklist for the UK.

WHO DO I SPEAK TO FOR REFERRAL AND ADVICE?

CREATE Champions
1. 1800 455 105 (18-24 yrs)
2. 1800 455 105 (25-34 yrs)
3. info@create.org.au
4. www.create.org.au

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I DON'T HAVE A PLAN?

Department of Children and Families
1. 1800 455 105 (18-24 yrs)
2. 1800 455 105 (25-34 yrs)
3. info@create.org.au
4. www.create.org.au

WHERE DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT OR FEEDBACK?

The Children's Commissioner
1. 1800 455 105
2. www.create.org.au
3. info@create.org.au
4. www.create.org.au

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT?

Department of Children and Families
1. 1800 455 105
2. www.create.org.au
3. info@create.org.au
4. www.create.org.au

The Ant Invasion

I was eating my sandwich in the kitchen when they attacked. It was a deliciously unsurpassed sandwich with white bread, ham, beetroot and cheese. When I put my sandwich down, they moved in and took my sandwich. Where would they take it? To with it!

I knew where all the food had been taken. My sausage roll, mars bar, jam sandwich and now my mouth-watering ham sandwich.

The ants were taking all my FOOD! What will I do? How will I destroy the tiny, black robbers?

I marched back to the kitchen. I opened all the kitchen cupboards. Ah! I had found some insect spray. Back to the shed I went with my gas mask for protection.

See

There are options in place for when you transition from care to make that process a little easier. For extra info check out www.create.org.au/leaving-care for a checklist for the UK.

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WHAT'S THE PLAN? July 2010

CREATE Foundation is very concerned about what planning occurs with young people as they transition from out-of-home care and how well they are supported afterwards. Why? Because the lack of a plan has serious implications for their life outcomes. So we have implemented the What's the Plan? campaign! And we need your help!

The background to the campaign...

2009 Report Card on transitioning from care
Your CREATE Foundation interviewed 473 young people across Australia (273 in care and 200 who had left care) to understand their experiences and learnt that over 60% interviewed did not have a Leaving Care Plan developed for them. It means that over half the young people leaving care may not know about their basic entitlements and are at higher risk of homelessness and being in prison. *Journalist Report Card 2009: Transitioning from Care from the CREATE website.*

CREATE launches What's the Plan? campaign

That all young people need leaving care plans, but with over half the people interviewed not having a plan, CREATE decided that a new plan was needed. So we launched the What's the Plan? campaign.

Resources for young people

In March this year we sent a 'what's the Plan?' brochure to every young person between the ages of 15-34 who will be transitioning from care to independence over the next few years.

It informed them of the benefits of a leaving care plan, explains how to get a plan, what makes a good one, and who to contact should they have difficulty accessing one.

It also included an important survey. Please encourage those young people you have contact with to complete it. It can be downloaded from the CREATE website: www.create.org.au/whatstheplan

Want to be a create champion?

We know that it will be tricky to start efforts that young people you have contact with get a plan. So we want to thank you for your efforts! We have implemented the CREATE Champion award for young people to acknowledge those who are influential in them getting their leaving care plan. This could be case workers, foster families, social workers etc.

We will publicise nominees in our clubCREATE magazine and will reward them with certificates and prizes (that's to ensure appropriate acknowledgment). CREATE will also be advising the Ministers of Industry departments of those who have been nominated and will involve an online survey later.

Nominations are accepted online at www.create.org.au/whatstheplan

How can you help turn around life outcomes for young people leaving care?

Send your help to ensure every young person in care has a Leaving Care Plan! You can help CREATE make this aim a reality. Encourage the young people you work with about why they need a leaving care plan. Encourage them to share their leaving care plan with their family, especially if it hasn't been developed with their input. Encourage them to pursue their leaving care plan if you aren't the person responsible for developing it. Encourage CREATE Foundation and clubCREATE - that way we'll be able to help them behind the scenes. Encourage them to complete their What's the Plan? survey from CREATE - if they haven't got to know and we'll get some in the next immediately.

TOGETHER we'll ensure a brighter future for young people transitioning from care! For more information? Visit the CREATE website at www.create.org.au/whatstheplan or call 1800 455 105



A leaving care plan can change your life for the better and remember you deserve it!

1800 455 105
www.create.org.au
info@create.org.au

WHAT'S THE PLAN? CAMPAIGN

create FOUNDATION

SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE

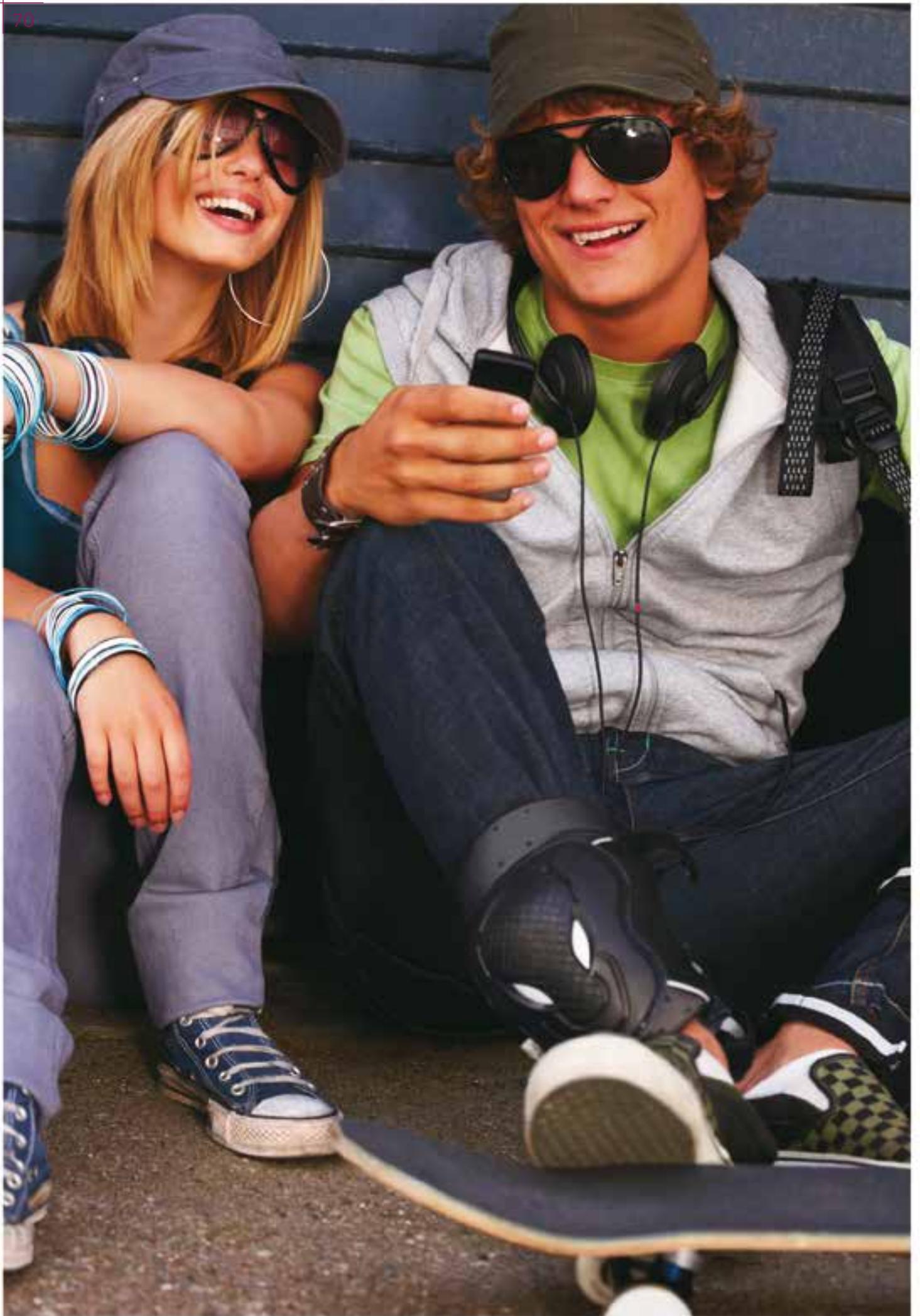
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WHAT'S THE PLAN? CAMPAIGN

create FOUNDATION

SMOOTHING YOUR TRANSITION FROM CARE



appendix c

survey used to evaluate the effectiveness of the
“What’s the Plan?” campaign

8.0 appendix c:

survey used to evaluate the effectiveness of the “What’s the Plan?” campaign

CREATE Report Card 2011 Planning for Transitioning from Care Young Person’s Survey

Following on from Report Card 2009: Transitioning from Care, CREATE has embarked on a program, with young people approaching the age at which they will leave care, to try to maximise the number who:

- (a) have a formal plan for their future, and
- (b) are actively involved in the planning process.

This survey is designed to evaluate how well the “What’s the Plan?” program worked so that CREATE can report on the outcomes and make suggestions to governments about what else could be done to improve planning for young people.

Young people 15 to 17 years of age who are in out-of-home care now are encouraged to respond. Because you choose your own password to access the survey, you cannot be identified; all information collected is anonymous and will be treated confidentially and stored securely. If something a young person says is used as a quote, the source will be indicated using only the age and sex of the participant.

However, remember that if you do provide your name and address at the end of the survey, you will be eligible to be in the draw for an iPhone 4 (black, 16 GB) nationally, or two \$50.00 iTunes vouchers in each state and territory.

If you want to be involved in this important survey, please choose a 6- character password and write it in the box below. This will be used to keep all of your information together.

Choose your own Password (max 6 characters):

Instructions:

Questions will take a variety of forms in this survey. Some will provide optional answers where you will need to select a response from a list or to tick the box or button associated with the item that best represents your choice of answer. Other questions will give you a space for writing your response.

Several questions ask you to choose one answer from a scale. If you feel really strongly about the item, use the ‘Very’ option. If your feelings are strong, but not as extreme, use ‘Quite’. If neither of these levels represents your opinion, use the appropriate mid-range values to show the extent of your feeling.

The Planning Process

In Australia, various types of plans can be prepared to help map out the future for young people leaving Out-of-Home care. Plans are called different things depending on which state or territory you live in (e.g., Leaving Care Plans, Transition from Care Plans, Special Services Case Plans etc.). The following questions relate to whatever type of plan exists in your state or territory.

Q13

Do you have some form of formal Leaving Care Plan?

Final, complete Plan Incomplete Plan No Plan Not Sure

If you answered "No Plan" or "Not sure" to Q13, go to Q23.

Q14

Do you have a copy of any Plan prepared for you? Yes No

Q15

If formal planning for your future has occurred, how old were you when planning began?

Younger than 12 12 years 13 years 14 years
 15 years 16 years 17 years

Q16

How involved have you been in leaving-care planning?

Not at all involved A little involved Somewhat involved
 Reasonably involved Quite involved Very involved

Q17

How involved has your case worker been in helping you plan (i.e., the main person from either the Department or Agency who has supported you)?

Not at all involved A little involved Somewhat involved
 Reasonably involved Quite involved Very involved

Q18

How involved has your carer been in helping you plan?

Not at all involved A little involved Somewhat involved
 Reasonably involved Quite involved Very involved

Q19

What has your leaving-care planning involved (you may check as many as relevant)?

Not involved in planning Face-to-face meetings with case worker
 Telephone conversations with case worker Emails to/from case worker
 Contact with support agencies relevant to your needs (e.g., health services, educational support services)
 Other activity

Q20

If 'Other activity', please give details:

Effectiveness of Dealing with Issues

Q21

How confident do you feel that your Plan will help you do the following things after you turn 18 years?

Find somewhere suitable to live Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Enrol in appropriate courses of study Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Seek employment. Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Manage your money. Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Look after yourself. Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Contact family members. Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Contact friends / mentors. Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident
 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident
 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Contact members of your cultural community (if relevant). Area not covered in Plan
 1: Not at all confident 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident
 4: Reasonably confident 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Access necessary support services e.g., health, housing, employment, education etc.

Area not covered in Plan 1: Not at all confident 2: A little confident
 3: Somewhat confident 4: Reasonably confident 5: Quite confident
 6: Very confident

Locate personal documentation needed for identification. Area not covered in Plan
 1: Not at all confident 2: A little confident 3: Somewhat confident
 4: Reasonably confident 5: Quite confident 6: Very confident

Who Will Help?

Q22

Who, or which service, will be responsible for helping you achieve independence in the following areas (according to your Plan)?

Housing: Don't know

Education: Don't know

Employment: Don't know

Finances: Don't know

Life Skills: Don't know

Family Contact: Don't know

Other Support Services: Don't know

Personal Documents: Don't know

Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

Q23

Who, if anyone, has given you information about TILA (you may choose more than one person)?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No one | <input type="checkbox"/> Your carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Your case worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Another worker in placement organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> CREATE staff | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An Indigenous community person | <input type="checkbox"/> Family members | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone else | |

If 'Someone else', please give details:

Q24

Have you already, or do you intend to apply for TILA? Yes No Not Sure

Q25

If 'No' or 'Not sure', why not:

Comment

Q26

Even if formal planning for your future has not occurred, if you have had any discussions with anyone about what might happen to you when you turn 18 years, please give details:

No discussions

Evaluating CREATE's Program

Q27

Have you received any information about CREATE's 'What's the Plan?' campaign since it began in March 2010? Yes No

If you answered "No" to Q27, go to Q34.

Q28

From what source did you receive this information (select as many as relevant)?

- Did not receive any information Case worker Carer
 'What's the Plan?' resources by mail clubCREATE newsletter CREATE web site
 Word-of-Mouth (Family, Friend) Other

Q29

If 'Other', please give details:

Q30

List any things you know about that CREATE has done to raise awareness through the 'What's the Plan?' campaign.

End of Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. The information you have provided will be important in arguing for changes to the care system.

We hope you will tell other young people about the survey and encourage them to have their say. You can all help to make a difference.

If the survey has upset you or raised any concerns, it might be useful to talk with someone, such as your carer, parent, or case worker. If you are not sure who to talk to, you can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, or Lifeline on 13 11 14 to talk about any worries.

CREATE is not a counselling service, but we might be able to answer your questions or let you know who else might be able to help you. Telephone CREATE on 1800 655 105.

If you would like to be included in the draw for a prize in your state, please provide us with your name and postal address, email address, and phone number.

Personal Details

Name

Address

State: ACT NSW NT QLD SA TAS VIC WA

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Tick here if you would like to know the outcomes of the survey.

To find out more about how to join clubCREATE for children and young people with a care experience, click the clubCREATE button; otherwise click END.

To be in the prize draw, you need to complete this survey and provide your contact details by 2 April 2011. Winners will be chosen on 30 April and notified as soon as possible after that. The prize winners will be required to show proof of a care experience, e.g., by a letter from a foster carer or case worker, or other document showing evidence of being in care.

Contact details will be stored confidentially. They will be separated from survey answers and will not be shared with anyone outside CREATE.



appendix d

comments from young people about the effectiveness of the
“What’s the Plan?” campaign

9.0 appendix d:

comments from young people about the effectiveness of the “What’s the Plan?” campaign

Author’s Note. At times, while analyzing these data when preparing this Report, I was filled with a sense of despondency, a feeling that making significant change to the transitioning-from-care aspect of the child protection system (in the light of current observations and the persistent findings from other national and international studies) might be an impossible task. Then I read these comments from the young people who are living the uncertainty forced on them by “the system”. Some of the insights they provided were more than sufficient to inspire me to persevere.

Comments by Young People in Response to question:

“If you feel that the campaign has had any impact, why do you think it was effective?”

Note. These are verbatim quotations from young people who responded to this question. Only minimal punctuation has been added and typographical errors corrected to aid legibility.

Females 15

Because I now have a small amount of information about the plan.

Because it helped me decide what I want to do with my life and to push for my CSO to inform me of more things.

Because we knew what to do and what the plan meant.

Because it was never done before.

Because it has given me something to take when I see my worker.

Because someone told me.

Cos I knew where I could go to get help.

Don’t like to be pointed out as foster kids too much.

Gave more info on where to get help, and if you planned on leaving how you would go about it help-wise.

I don’t know because I don’t think about my future.

It had lots of information and was colourful.

It has definitely affected my case manager.

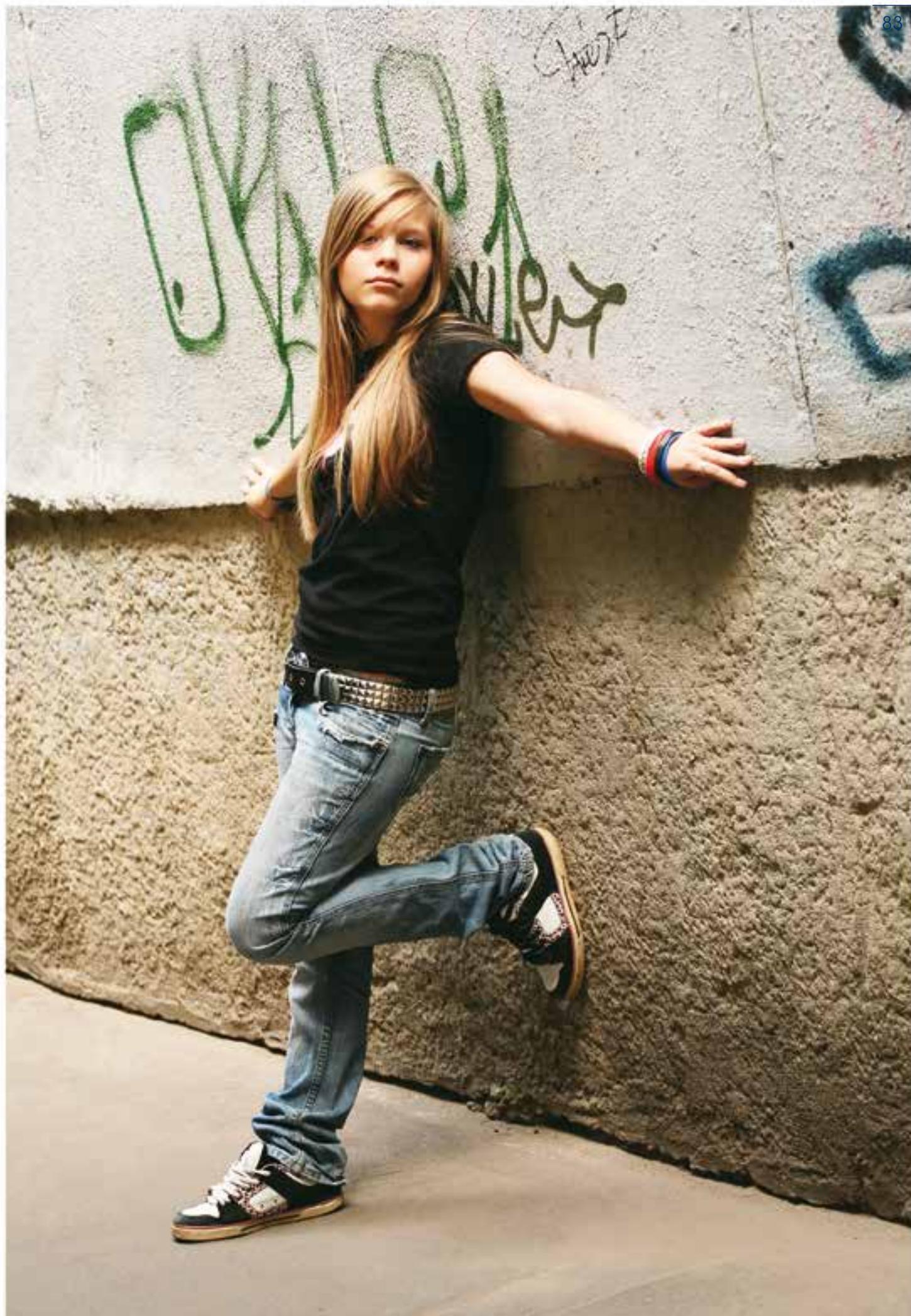
It is the only time I heard about it.

It provides awareness to young people about being prepared for leaving care.

It’s some information for me.

My CSO used it to start talking to me about leaving care.

Well at least I got to speak to my worker and tell them I should have a plan.



Females 16

Because it was the first time I knew about it.

Because it's getting the word out there, and letting young people know what their rights are when it comes to TFC and that we can have a plan.

Cos I now know about the TILA.

Did not know much before I heard from my friend and I got paper in the mail.

Gets me thinking about it even though I don't want to.

Good having some pamphlets.

Good to get newsletter and know about it.

Good to get the mail stuff.

Good to talk to other people at the event about leaving care and what happens.

Got the carer to know about it and help me know what was in it.

I liked it that someone cared about telling me and helping me.

Information (on what) you can do when you leave care.

It doesn't make me get a plan, it just says I should.

It helped me and my carer to get information.

It was cool.

Just thinking about it all.

Lets us know what to do.

Magazines are good to hear about what other young people are doing.

No one else has given me things to tell me what I can do.

The pack was useful cos I was able to read it myself and understand it.

Useful contacts.

Was good to get for my aunty as she is helping me.

Well it could be better to get out stuff direct to the kids.

Females 17

Info came from someone who has experience, not from a book that you might misinterpret.

There has been change through the Department, but they still haven't done a lot to do with TFC.

Because I don't have a plan its not relevant to me.

Because it gets us ready for the real world.

Because it helps me to know what I get to choose. To live in an apartment or not and that.

Cos I heard about stuff I did not know before.

Cos I was staring at it every time i opened the fridge!!!

Create awareness.

Good to have the resources to talk to my carer.

Helped start talking about plan with caseworker.

I haven't much with the program, however I am looking forward to and think it's a great idea.

It helped me understand it more.

It is helpful because it gets you thinking about the future.

It just made my thoughts a little clearer.

It made me aware of the leave of care plan. I was never aware of it before.

It was just some more information on after care planning.

It would be putting into line all the things that should have been put into line a very long time ago.

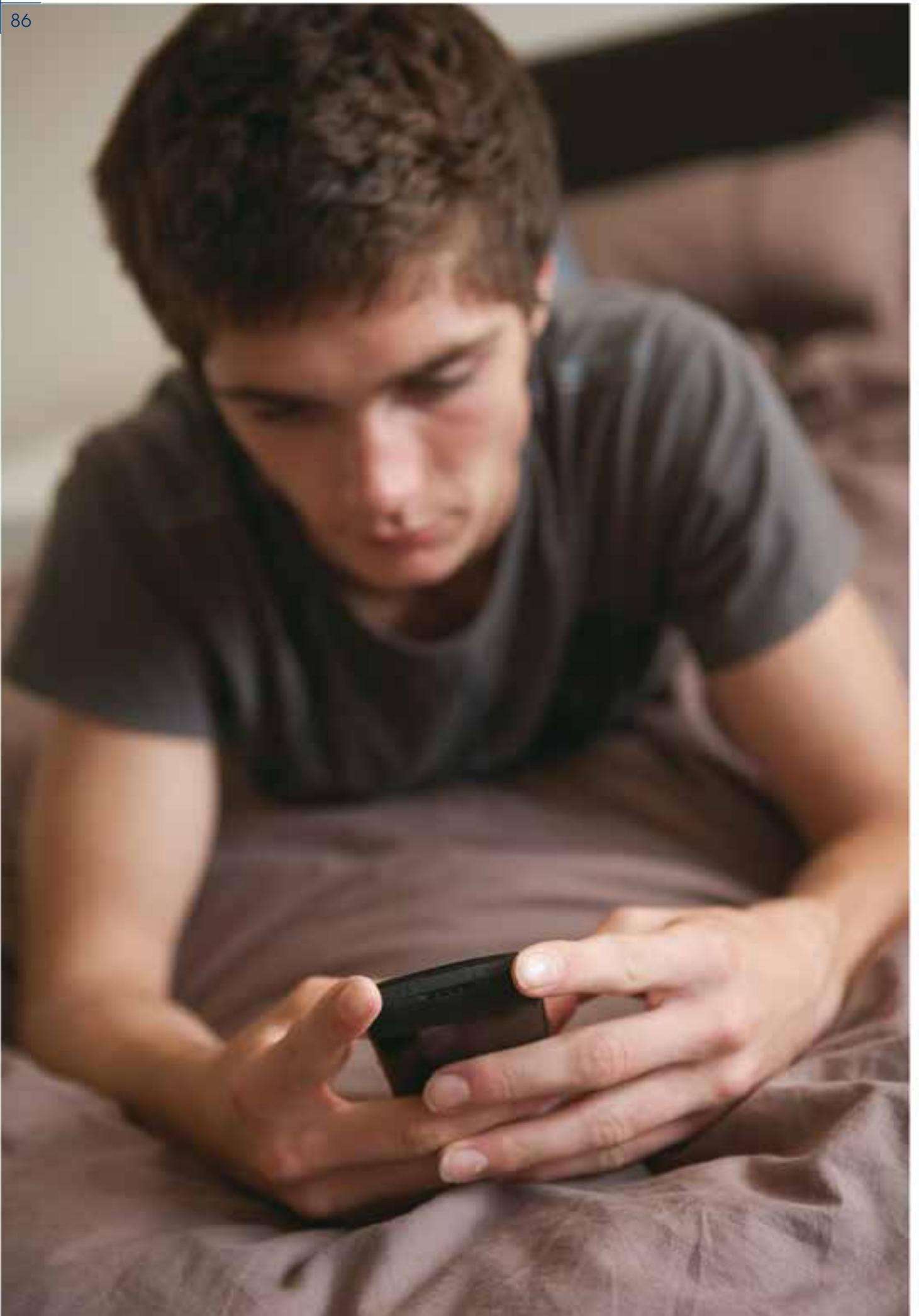
Just reading through gives you an idea of who to ring.

Made my caseworker start my plan.

Shown me what is essential for me to move out and what to look for.

Without it I would not have known what to do next.

Yes - carers and caseworker aware.



Males 15

Better than getting nothing and good to have the calendar to put on the fridge.

Colourful.

Create made me aware of other communities.

Did not know anything about leaving care before got stuff in the mail.

Encouraged me.

Found out about stuff.

Getting an idea about what a plan is.

Got to know about the TILA.

It helps kids think of what they will do when they leave care.

Had nothing before.

It was good to know stuff, but I am not really OK to talk to the worker as I never see her.

Letter raised awareness.

Made me think.

Realise I have no plan.

The right information.

The stuff in the mail was good for us young people and was easy to read. It helped me and my carer but we have not had much luck with the worker.

They send out so much stuff that it gets to you over time. They give you numbers and tell you where to get stuff.

To think a plan.

Told us some good information.

Well it made us talk about it and know our rights.

Would like more information that I can put on my fridge to remember.

Males 17

All I have seen about it, apart from the worker telling me they have done my plan which is rubbish.

Aware of needing a plan.

Awareness.

Became aware of what's out there.

Because there was activities and it was easy to understand.

Cos I tell other kids about it and then they tell their friends.

Gets me thinking.

Getting the right people talking about (my) future.

Good in that it makes young people aware of their rights.

Got stuff in the mail that allowed me to know about what to do.

Helped me know about my rights.

I can see what I can do when I move out.

I need a plan.

Information on what is important and how to plan.

It's important information and there's a few good tips in there.

Only because I am with my carer I can stay, but good to get the stuff.

Only stuff I have got about leaving care, so it is good.

Raises awareness.

Started planning things myself.

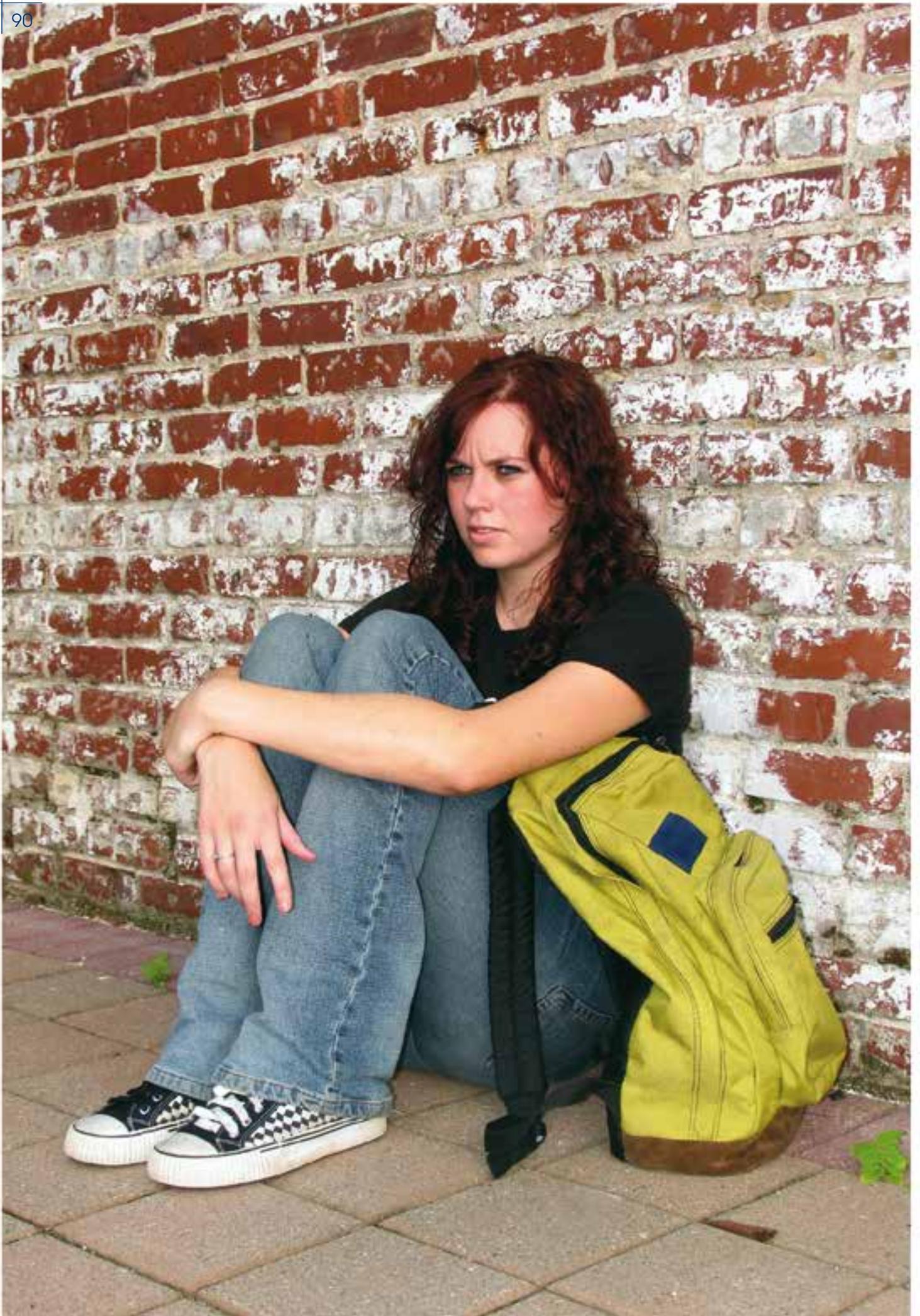
Started us thinking about it.

The information is stuff I already know. I knew it from my CSO.

Too much writing, hard for me to read, good to get stuff that came to me.

Tried to get it started and my carer is helping, but we have not had much luck getting to the worker to get a time to do it.

Wish I could have got it myself in the mail instead of getting a dodgy copy from my friend who is in a resi



appendix e

comments from young people about what might improve the transition-from-care process

10.⁰ appendix e:

comments from young people about the effectiveness of the “What’s the Plan?” campaign

Comments by Young People in Response to question:

“In general, what do you think could be done to make the whole leaving care planning process more effective?”

Note. These are verbatim quotations from young people who responded to this question. Only minimal punctuation has been added and typographical errors corrected to aid legibility.

Females 15

A bit more support, would like to sit with the case worker and do a formal leaving care plan.

Access to more services, TILA sounds good, still have services after 18 so you still have some support.

From experiences from my sister, the furniture didn’t come for two months, people were reluctant to help her. DoCS said they would one thing but would do something different.

I didn’t know that a leaving care plan was important. This survey has made me think about it and realize how important the plan is. I threw CREATE mail in the bin, I thought it was junk mail. I didn’t know what CREATE did. I am interested in YAG now I have been told about it. I think young people need to be involved in meetings; have a say, be supported and know that after care support is in place for them.

If they let every person know about it, it would help.

It should be spoken about something that’s exciting, not something that’s scary. It’s turning 18 - means you’re an adult and who cares if you have to leave care, at least the department won’t be telling me what I can and can’t do - only when it suits them.

More face-to-face visits. More escorts from custody to prepare.

More help from DoCS, more independent placement services.

More information about what’s out there for me, and how to get a job and find housing.

More options spoken about, more awareness over a long period of time. Spoke to key worker but not me.

No, not really. I’m pretty mellow.

Not sure, probably seeing my worker more regularly.

Not sure. I guess make the people aware, more aware than what they are now.

Talk to me about what is actually going to happen and when it’s happening, don’t just tell me I’m leaving care.

Talking more about money, managing money.

Talking to people about it, telling people how I am feeling and if I am safe or not.

The whole clothing allowance and trips to see family have been really good, the department has been good about that. I dislike how the department moves young people

order you are on (Long-term guardianship to the Department or to another). I reckon they should [have] a bit more to do with us older kids. The only time we see them is when they come to question and that's all I have to say.

I think a little more trust should be given to some kids. I think we aren't as needy as some workers think :)

I would like to live by myself and not have to share.

I'm pretty set for it.

Know more about other services.

Lots more information and calendars for the youth.

Make people more aware of it because I haven't heard anything about it really.

Make sure that everyone has a plan and make sure that young people are on the housing list when they turn 15 and they then have a house when they leave care at 18.

Meeting with case worker.

More communication not assume young people know what to do.

More information and making sure kids are involved in the plan.

More information about what's going on.

More information all the time would be good not just for this year.

More money.

More money is needed to set up.

More time needs to be spent on this.

More time with workers they are always too busy.

More workers.

No body helped me at all. I left care because they wouldn't help or explain stuff to me.

Send out information about what to expect when you leave care.

Some more effort by third party groups could be made to support those leaving care, but other than that I think the process is fine.

Some more information, maybe a fridge magnet.

Support Services to keep checking in after 18.

Talk about it more.

Tell kids earlier.

Telling workers what they are supposed to do.

The new permanency planning has made it easier to leave care. Birth parents have agreed.

There are a lot of things wrong in the territory and there is too much wrong to talk about. They need to keep workers in the NT and stop having so many new staff who you have to tell your story to.

When I turn 18 they should put me in a house.

Workers knowing how to help and tell you where to go to get a place.

Workers who follow up with you.

Yes it could be more organised by the worker and they should make sure you know what the plan is.

Females 17

Better programme and support, you just leave and no help.

CSO should have more involvement in the case especially when the young person is getting older. When you get older it shouldn't be less contact, but more.

For Centrelink payments to be above the poverty line, more financial support for school and TAFE students, more support for mental health, crisis support with rent, living skills programs, a grant larger than \$1500 to transition to independent living (or ACTUAL REASONABLE Centrelink payment) The biggest deterrent is private rental HOUSING STRESS and not being able to feed yourself because there is no disposable income.

Get feedback from clients, professional development, be more competent.

Getting caseworker to see you face to face. More organisations needed in care and protection where caseworkers leave and appears to be no hand over of client notes and follow up on arrangements that have been previously made. In my time in care and protection, I have had a variety of caseworkers which is disruptive and at times we have had no workers.

Good communication, sending out info.

I really like the life skills CREATE teaches for example, finding work. It's something everyone needs to be taught, however, being in care it is hard. I really like the fact that CREATE talks about things no one else wants to or are to scared to. Making sure case workers are speaking to kids.

Let kids know about it, because not every kid in care knows about it because the Department doesn't usually tell them.

More Help from DoCS, more Independent Placement Services.

More support after kids have left care.

Support from caseworker, information and help. Carers as well.

Support with food, looking for places.

Support, don't rush them, allow the right amount of time, you should start at 15 years old.

Talk about it more. Not just adults talking about it, but asking the young people.

The department doesn't listen, and they don't let me do anything I want to do. They also take stuff away from me.

Yeah, not sure what though.

A house I can afford and careful planning for the future.

Actually talk to me properly about long term stuff.

Ask me what I want.

Being active in talking to the young people so they understand their plans better.

Could be good to have someone who just does leaving care stuff.

CREATE helped me by getting the mail but my carer wouldn't help me do the things it said.

Emailing the adolescents with information and sending a link to the CREATE website in the email, but making sure you send information in the mail first so that they know what it is and don't assume the email is junk.

Everyone should do the CREATE Your Future program. Moving around so much makes it difficult and changin' case workers all the time.

Forums about leaving care with lot of other young people.

Good following up with young persons and making sure the plan is what they want.

Have a survey that works!! Other kids I know don't get the same as I do as they not with Barnardos.

Have case worker contact and ask what I want in there, and see it before they put things in there. Be more involved.

Have caseworkers do their job properly.

Have events and seminars about it.

Have someone come out and talk to kids about getting a house or flat.

Having a great home base (carers) means we don't have to worry.

Having workers who give a shit.

I need more information.

I think it's all pretty good.

I think there more support for young people and protection from bad people especially ones who are looking after you. More rules for reporting.

I want these things discussed with the DHS and Westcare workers.

I was happy with mine. Talking to case worker.

Information about leaving home.

Information and discussions.

It's pretty good as it is. Community Visitor should do it and give more responsibility to the CV.

Just a lot more support from the CSOs because I find it that most YP leaving care find it very traumatic and a life changing experience.

Making more workers listen to us and having some money to get things that you need like a bed.

More flyers and more people out there showing/advertising.

More information.

More meetings.

More money and support.

More people to tell you.

More support - people distancing themselves because I am turning 18.

More training.

My CSO should come and see their kids more.

My CSO should talk to me about what I think should happen. My CSO talks to my carer a lot but not to me. How do they know what I want to do when I turn 18.

No more contact with DCP.

People should talk about it more.

Sitting down with the parent/carer and child and people that have all been involved, and letting each other know about what they have been doing and that, and what kind of help they need and that. I reckon that would be a good thing to help with the transition from care.

Stay away from people who get me into trouble.

They could organise functions for people in care who don't know about CREATE and get them involved in it.

They should talk to me about what I want to do. They always ask my carer but they don't know what I want to do when I leave when I'm 18. They're telling the department what they want me to do.

They're doing pretty good I think.

To have people who actually care help me and just talk about it all.

Trial plans before leaving.

Workers making sure they get to listen to the kids instead of telling us.

Males 15

Early preparation, discussions - maybe counselling for child and carers. Step by step examples of what is to come and what needs to be organised to have a successful transition.

Give more details, Ask more questions.

Have a plan.

Having more than my CSO helping me, but some more workers. My CSO isn't always around when I want to talk about leaving care.

Help to find a place and helping out in general when you are leaving. FACS should help us out with financial help, finding a house, finding a job and finding a car. They help us get into care so they should help us get out.

It's a scary thing to do, so they should give me lots of time to think about what I want to do.

No comment, would like to know what's going to happen when I turn 18.

No one has really talked to me about, I don't know how good it is or not.

People listen to me, I was always in friendly environment, very welcoming. I could always talk freely about what I wanted. Hearing everyone's opinion. Giving every one the chance to speak. Great to have people listen and let me speak my thoughts.

Stick at it with the kids and just do it, they need it.

Time management. I've got to be more organised. Do what you say you are gonna do - stick to what you want to achieve, stick to your plan, be happy all the time - don't be negative.

After care support.

Anything can help.

Be told what's happening from Case Worker - more info on TFC planning.

Being on the housing list at a young age so that when I turn 18 I will have stable accommodation.

Better guidelines & planning; people to help me more.

Finding out more about through worker.

Have a form with ideas that you can look over.

Have a person dedicated to it.

Having a job and a house to move into.

Having a what's the plan big event or camp.

I personally think they should start at a earlier age so they more plans for the future and set goals.

I'd like more information please.

If I actually decided to go to the care plan meetings (I have started to attend now).

Information and discussion possibly meeting with relevant people... Whether that's family or caseworkers. Even through the phone and this survey and contact helps. On the website there should be a forum where people can talk!

It's alright. They're pretty good at the moment.

should be more involved with children transitioning from care.

More info about it at a younger age. Advertising.

My CSO needs to talk to me about it, not my carer.

My workers and my CSO need to be more involved in the process. For me, I know what I want to do, but it's help with practical things like work shoes that is important. I am [in] independent living and work on a really tight budget; I really need some practical stuff and I can't always afford it. I go to the Department for support but their approval processes take so long.

No, I don't think anything [should] be done. I'll be with my foster parents for a while.

Think about more, not 3 months before the person is about to go out of care maybe 1-6 months before-hand to get everything organised.

To create a plan; to have goals for the plan to work that are achievable; to be able to develop a plan and to have a contract with all parties involved; to make sure all parties are made accountable for the plan.

Want more of a plan. [I would] feel heaps better if I knew what I was going to be doing.

Yeah, information. Care and protection should be a bit more supportive, the independent living allowance isn't enough to live on.

A bigger budget and more planning towards TFC. Needs more support around court cases.

A lot more information.

Actually listen to what the kids have to say. Provide information with people who can help you when you leave care.

Because me and mum get support.

Case worker needs to talk about it more to me and in general.

CREATE and DCP have provided a lot of information.

Doing a Leaving Care Plan when you're 16 besides doing it when you're almost leaving Care.

Don't make me leave care at 18.

Find somewhere permanent to live.

Get some furniture for kids leaving and help them out more.

I need a TV with my new house.

I think the carers need to talk about it a little more, and the case-worker should as well because it's their job, but not too much.

I'm really happy with the leaving care program I'm doing – it's teaching me a lot.

If I can live in a unit when I turn 18.

If my case worker knew what she was doing and found out what my opinion on certain things is, instead of just presuming by what she thinks she knows about me.

It is just all crap really, they don't care when we leave and no one helps us much.

It should actually happen.

Listen to me!

Lots of training and some more leaflets.

Making it so kids can know their plan and not just hear about it from a worker cos it is there life.

Making workers talk to kids more to find out what they want instead of doing stuff when kids don't know.

Meeting with case manager and mum.

More awareness and more communication.

More carers that have room for us kids when we get older instead of getting new kids in.

More communication with the caseworkers.

More face to face meetings.

More help for parents from DHS to make it easier for parents look after their kids if they want them.

More information.

More information and help being put out there for children leaving care.

More information around job opportunities and development.

More money to set kids up when they leave.

More one-on-one meetings.

More one-on-one teaching. [I] don't read mail.

More right information to kids, and also workers not pressuring us to know what we are doing for the rest of our lives.

My caseworker to give me a copy of any plans.

My family and current carer.

Probably getting good information out to the kids in care before they leave.

Social workers need to listen! Social workers need to tell young people about it.

Start talking with people.

The caseworkers could be handled a bit better. They could meet the kids. It takes a long time to get a caseworker. All kids in care need a caseworker whose job is to do transition from care. Caseworkers move to other jobs a lot.

The caseworkers should have more contact with the kids more often and explain these types of things to them.

They should tell us more about it. Give us more information. My CSO should talk to me.

This took a long time coming.

You should still be able to go back to your caseworker after [you leave care] if you need help.

Young people in Resi need more support about leaving care.

Males 17

Males 17

Budgeting, finances somebody helping me with that. Learn to cook, help me with getting those things figured out.

Delay exiting kids until they're 21 for a start. I don't know any of mates who are going to get kicked out of home the night they turn 18!! What the shit's that all about????? Maybe make sure workers are trained in the importance of these meetings, so that things stay sweet between kids and the workers in the lead up to the meetings. (My worker, who I'd never caused grief with, and had always been at school and NEVER run away, chose to hang up on me when I simply called to see if the meeting time could in anyway be rescheduled, as my grandparents (my foster mum's parents) were going to be interstate. I'd never met my worker before this phone call, and she hung up on me, saying I was being deliberately difficult, and that the world doesn't revolve around me. No shit Sherlock, I grew up in a country where bullets and fire-bombing were a daily part of life! I think I get that the world doesn't revolve around me. As a result of this conversation between my DHS and me, I didn't want to attend my leaving care meeting. So if you're looking for improvement, I reckon training staff at DHS with basic manners would be a great start! Thanks for listening.

Don't see the point of the plan, didn't get any help from DOCS even though asked many many times and went to the office to fill out the plan.

Give young people a chance, reduce carer's times. Maybe have more independence. No one learns from people telling us what to do, you learn from mistakes and asking if you need to.

Haven't thought about it, but more stuff in the mail would be good.

Having more jobs for 16, 17 and 18 year olds.

I have not really thought about or discussed this topic with anyone, but I think to have some money in a savings account that you cannot touch unless you absolutely need it, or to have some money to help you get on your feet when you decide to move out and set up somewhere and to help you pay for the bills and food.

I think that there needs to be more than one case worker/ carer put onto the case. One person is not enough and cannot provide enough ears to listen to what the children/ adults will want and need for their futures. I also think that there needs to be a lot more time and effort put into a leaving after care plan, as it is something that helps these people for 7 years to be on their own but grow stronger for their futures.

I would like help getting my own place so I don't have to move back to my family just to have a bed to sleep in and not be on the streets. I needed help before I left care, I needed someone to sit down with me and explain what was happening and going to happen. I didn't need a phone call from the Department to just tell me there was no longer an order. They could have called me.

I would like to have access to counselling, more support with my own emotional challenges. They should be looking after your best interest. Even just being able to have hobbies and be able to have the basketball paid for, they should make an effort and have funding for community based [activities]. If you have a hobby and a sense of community then they will not turn to drugs. Start when they are younger, get them out there. Having more of a plan and routine and for things to be able to be predictable, things we can rely on. A Resi unit is supposed to be a home, cupboards should not be locked, it needs to be more "homey", it feels like a jail cell, we haven't done anything wrong why do we have to feel like we are locked up?

More information, more sessions where they get to talk to teenagers about it [leaving care].

There needs to be more emphasis on understanding the system more, some kids really need direct info. Most important suggestion is that the case worker needs to see the kids more. Only seeing them once a year at the scheduled meetings - it's not enough. That needs to be changed.

They need to start it earlier because when they started mine it was a rushed process and the things they said would happen didn't happen. It goes really slowly, it takes 5 months for anything to be decided and the department needs to talk to department of housing more. My CSO tells me that I can move in there when I turn 18, but housing tells me a different story. The departments need to talk to each other more.

More respect from staff and residents towards [young people].

Adults need to stop telling me what they think and let me do it myself. I know what's best for me.

[It would] be good if my case worker could tell me what money was available.

Being able to stay with my carer for longer.

Better CSO's and people that know what they've done.

Better information and getting workers to know about it [leaving care planning].

Get more leaving care workers and get back to the young person ASAP.

Housing.

I find it helpful to have plenty of talk about it - nothing is worse than not knowing what is going on.

[This campaign] has made me more aware of the process than I ever was before. It is easy to access and I have been sent several letters about it as well as emails. I found it very satisfying.

Involve the young person whenever possible and provide support including independent advice from a counsellor (including internet and phone service).

It should be done 2 years before you turn 18. So you have the chance to change anything because some people leave early. If anything happens after you do your plan it can be easily changed.

Its fine the way we are.

Just make it happen.

Lots of more information.

[To caseworkers] Make sure you're [in your] job for the right reasons and for the kids - they really rely on you to help them. Don't let them down or betray them by not helping them. I was abandoned by my worker and got messed up in some really silly stuff because I had no one, and no one to turn to and got myself in a lot of trouble. Workers should think about this when they are supposed be helping young people.

Making the workers understand about your real family.

More contact.

More help with getting your own place and stuff to have like furniture.

More information.

More information and communication with DHS.

More information without scare tactics. We should be getting more information from 16-18 so that we know what will happen and we are not left in the dark. We should know our options.

More listening from workers about what we need instead of them just telling us what they think.

More money.

More support from carers.

Need more information in W.A.

People should talk about it.

Possibly learn more about home maintenance.

Process more relaxed.

I'm planning on going to the youth worker so I'm not left alone in the process.

Telling everyone that it is important.

There should be a lot more information on the T.V.

To get a job and start my future.

To have a program to help know about what to expect.

To know DCP will help if support at home ends. Support with disability, some form of community if anything changes.

Too much information.

Want more info on what happens when you leave care.

Workers being available and listening to us so we can get what we need.

Workers to sit down to talk to the young people about it. Workers not showing interest.

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