



CREATE Position Paper

Issue: Transitioning from Care

CREATE's Position

Young people preparing to transition from care are among the most vulnerable groups in our society. Transitioning from care is a critical and challenging time for young people. A clear and well planned transition process is critical for increasing the likelihood of successfully leaving care, and also for the longer term positive outcomes for young people across all developmental domains once they have transitioned from care. CREATE aims to ensure that children and young people in out-of-home care, are able to successfully transition from care and are closely supported to do so. CREATE believes the leaving care age should be 21 years, to ensure young people leaving care transition to independence safely and with a minimum of stress.

Table 1

Out-of-Home Care National Standards that Apply to stability in care (FaHCSIA, 2011)

| National Standards | Measures |
|---|--|
| 13. Children and young people have a transition from care plan commencing at 15 years old which details support to be provided after leaving care | 13.1 The proportion of young people aged 15 years and over who have a current leaving care plan. 13.2 The proportion of young people who, at the time of exit from out-of-home care, report that are receiving adequate assistance to prepare for adult life. |

Evidence

- In 2014–2015, there were 43, 399 children and young people in out of home care across Australia (AIHW, 2016). Of these, 11,138 were discharged from out-of-home care, 11% of whom had been on continuous care and protection orders for more than 8 years AIHW, 2016, Table A21). Of those who exited care, 29% were aged 15-17 years, (AIHW, 2016, Table A32). The young people aging out of care, having experienced a child protection intervention for a significant length of time, will likely require additional supports as they mature, in the same way that children leaving parental care would.
- Young people leaving care experience significantly reduced life outcomes compared to their peers who do not have a care history (CREATE 2009; 2016). CREATE made ten recommendations (McDowall, 2016) directly related to support required for young people preparing to transition from care. These are critical to enhance life outcomes for young people leaving care.
- According to the Go Your Own Way Evaluation (McDowall, 2016) while 42% of young people knew about their leaving-care plan, significantly more young people who received a GYOW Kit had a plan compared with those who did not have access to a Kit, suggesting that such resources are vital to assist young people preparing to leave care. In contrast, AIHW (2016) data notes that 74.4% of young people aged 15 years and over had a leaving care plan. What this contrast suggests is that while 74.4% may have a leaving care plan, only 42% may know they have such a plan and are engaged in the process. The GYOW Kit provides a useful resource and a vehicle for communication and engagement of young people, about their leaving care planning.
- Results indicate that about half of young people leaving care do not know how to adequately deal with financial issues, accommodation and face deep uncertainty about what the future would hold for them. However, those who had a plan felt more confident about the future than did those without a plan.

- Delaying the transition from care to the age of 21 years, facilitates the acquisition of greater maturity and positive outcomes for education, service access and earning capacity (McDowall, 2016).
- The National framework for Protecting Children 2009 -2020 calls for increased consistency and prioritising transition from out-of-home care for young people. There is clear evidence to support the use of transition programs to assist young people leaving care. With regard to housing, an evaluation of the Springboard Program in Victoria included a cost-benefit analysis. The conservative cost-benefit analysis demonstrated that program would break even in four years and return of 134% on investment in year five, less conservative estimates had it breaking even at in less than 3 years. This demonstrates the benefit of having sound service models to assist with housing for young people leaving care (Baldry, 2016).
- Researchers note that data on where young people transition to, and Indigenous care leavers are lacking and unreliable (Campo & Commerford, 2016; Family Matters, 2016; Mendes, Saunders & Badawi, 2016). This is despite indigenous young people being “grossly over represented (within) child protection systems” (Family matters 2016, p. 7).

Actions

CREATE calls on all child protection ministers to implement strategies based on developing a strong understanding of young people’s lived experience in out-of-home care, and their expressed needs regarding how they are supported to transition from care. CREATE maintains that additional supports are required and to this end we are seeking all state and territory governments to provide an option, whereby the provision of care can be extended to any young person until 21 years. For some young people this would include support for them to stay with foster and kinship carers, for other young people this may involve other types of supported accommodation.

CREATE urges jurisdictions to invest in better planning and targeted resourcing for young people who are leaving care with prioritised and specialised services, and provide further funding to much-needed after-care services.

CREATE will advocate for the implementation in each state and territory of policy to ensure that:

1. Children and young people who live in out-of-home care, are able to transition in a well-planned and highly supportive way, which reflects an approach of a ‘corporate parent’ in terms of the supports and assistance provided.
2. Commonwealth, state and territory governments raise the age that a young people must transition from care to 21 years, in line with positive child and young person directed outcomes, based on current research and practice, focussed on wellbeing and development through enhanced stability of children and young people in care, are prioritised when considering placement options.

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