

Hands Across Canberra: Issues Finding Housing for Young People with an Out-of-Home Care Experience in ACT

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Introduction

Young people leaving care face challenges in the process of finding accommodation and living independently. They need safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable housing which is necessary for their wellbeing, sense of security, good physical and mental health, engagement in education and employment, and social and community connectedness (CREATE, 2020a; Wade & Dixon, 2006; Mendes & Purtell, 2021).

According to Australian and international research, homelessness and/or unstable housing arrangements are experienced by young people leaving care at higher rates than the general population when transitioning from out-of-home care (Collins & Tuyen, 2016; Mendes & McCurdy, 2020; Mendes et al., 2021).

Young people transitioning out of care are at a disadvantage in this regard, with vulnerabilities related to both pre-care (e.g., experience of abuse; disruptive family structures and functioning, socio-economic disadvantage; inter-generational trauma) and in-care experiences (e.g., multiple placements while in care; reduced access to supportive relationships with reliable and responsible adults; disconnection from culture).

Young people in out-of-home care face added challenges when expected to leave care at 18 years when they may not be developmentally ready to live independently, and may not have the same level of family and community support that other young people have to help them make this transition into adulthood (Mendes & McCurdy, 2020).

Added to this, the “transition” to independence maybe sudden, with an abrupt end to state care without sufficient support or guidance to help them find housing and live independently. For example, McDowall (2020) reported that more than one third of those transitioning received little information and did not know where they would live after leaving care. Faced with so many challenges, young people transitioning out of care are at a high risk of experiencing homelessness.

ACT and context

Focusing in on the Australian Capital Territory, Canberra has the highest median rental prices in Australia, resulting in the highest rates of rental stress in low income private renters (Halter, 2021). Alleviation from this financial strain can come from more affordable public housing. However, as of 2020, there were a reported 2,500 individuals on the public housing waiting list (Mannheim, 2020). While ACT has made investments for future planning to introduce more housing (Fuller, 2021), this will not help address the demand in the short term, that is until new properties have been developed. Current wait times for a standard property is nearly three and half years (Lewis, 2021). The inability to secure affordable housing may increase rates of homelessness.

According to the 2016 Census, there are 40.2 homeless individuals in ACT per 10,000 residents (ABS, 2018a). This is below the National average of 49.8 in Australia. Of the 1596 homeless individuals in the ACT there were 239 individuals aged between 19 – 24 years of age who were homeless. This equates to 15% of all homeless individuals in the ACT being aged 19 – 24 years (ABS, 2018b). Additionally, there were 109 (6.8%) homeless individuals aged between 12 and 18 years of age. Although based on the national Census, these figures are likely an underestimate of the number of individuals who are homeless as not all would have completed the Census survey.

National reports

Homelessness amongst young people with a care experience occurs at high rates, with two thirds of all homeless individuals sampled nationally having been in out-of-home care at some point before (Flatau et al., 2015). Similarly, a different survey found 30% of young people with an out-of-home care experience had also experienced homelessness within the first year after their transition out of



care (McDowall, 2020). Of these young people, more than a third had been homeless for a period of six months or more.

Leaving care support

Leaving care plans and leaving care support have the potential to assist young people to secure accommodation when leaving care and can prevent homelessness. However, care leavers nationally tend to be dissatisfied with the leaving-care support they received, with an average satisfaction rating of 45 out of 100 (0 = *Very dissatisfied*; 100 = *Very satisfied*). Of these, young people sampled from ACT showed similar levels of satisfaction. Care plans and support can be very beneficial, but some young people do not have or know about leaving care plans. While it is reported nationally that 74% Indigenous and 72% non-Indigenous young people had a leaving care plans (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2020), McDowall (2013; 2018) found that among 15 to 17 year-olds, only 24.4% were aware of having a leaving care plan. McDowall (2013; 2018), and Mendes et al. (2020) also highlight that care plans can be of poor quality (e.g., relying on homelessness services in a housing plan). Poor plans can have deleterious consequences for young people, not just in their housing outcomes, but in their success at passing this rite of passage more broadly.

Current consultation

As of June 2020, there were ninety 15 to 17-year-olds in out-of-home care in the ACT. Approximately 22 (24%) of these young people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (AIHW, 2020, Table 5.5). Between July 2019 and June 2020, the number of 15 to 17 year-olds who have been discharged from, or who have “aged out” of out-of-home care was 52. Since 2016, this has been generally rising, between 34 and 59. (AIHW, 2020, Table 5.20).

Despite knowing how many young people are leaving care, not much is known about them once they leave (McDowall, 2020; Mendes et al., 2021). Finding safe, stable, and affordable housing is necessary for young people entering independent living and serves as a foundation for them to flourish in other areas of their lives. However, whether they secure such housing is unknown. Further inquiry is needed to understand their housing outcomes, barriers to securing housing in ACT, how effective their leaving care plans are, and what can be offered to support them in successfully securing and maintaining housing. The current consultation aimed to hear the voices, opinions, and experiences of 17 to 21-year-olds with an out-of-home care experience in relation to the process of finding a safe and secure place to live in the ACT after leaving care.



Method

Participants

A total of 25 young people (15 females; seven males, two non-binary, and one who did not indicate gender) with an out-of-home care experience in ACT participated in this consultation. Ages ranged from 17 to 21 years old. Nine identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (36% of participants) and one identified as half-Samoan. Ten participants identified as having a disability (40% of participants). Nine young people had entered care by the age of 5. A further 13 young people had entered by the age of 12; the remaining three young people entered care by the age of 14.

Most commonly, participants had experienced 3 to 5 placements in care ($N = 9$), followed by 1 to 2 placements ($N = 5$), and by 6 to 10 and more than 10 placements ($N = 5$, both). Further details of participants age and placement history can be seen in Table 1.

Materials

The consultation used a mixed method approach, employing quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Data were collected using a 34-item survey, written and developed by CREATE Foundation (see Appendix A). The survey included 13 demographic questions (e.g., age, placement type, cultural group). The remaining 24–31 closed and open response questions covered transition planning, homelessness, independent living, housing and support services, as well as difficulties encountered and general reflections.

Young people who were not yet 18 years of age ($N = 4$) or were 18 years of age or older who had not left care ($N = 2$) were asked questions about their support received, their plans, and confidence around living independently.

Those over 18 years of age who had left care ($N = 19$) were asked questions about their care plan, support received, confidence around transitioning, the accommodation they found, and difficulties encountered.

Check box questions included options relevant to each question (e.g., “Where did you get information to help you understand your options of where you could/would live?” included options of speaking with caseworkers, carers, family members, accessing support and information from post-care services, other community services, or the Department of Housing, and “other”, with a space for young people to specify other options not listed). Other check-box questions had yes/no/unsure or with other options (e.g., “Did your leaving care plan contain details of where you were going to live after turning 18?” included options were yes, no, unsure, and “I did not have a leaving care plan”).

Rating scale questions used a 6-point Likert scale assessing the degree of confidence or concern about various aspects of transitioning from care (e.g., “How concerned are you about becoming independent once your care order ends?” included options between (1) “Not at all concerned” to (6) “Very concerned”). Several short-answer questions were included, sometimes to allow the opportunity for elaboration on a rating scale question (e.g., “Please explain why you gave the above answer”), or as a follow on from the previous question (e.g., “What might have helped make the support more useful?”). The survey also included a standalone open question at the end (“Is there something else you'd like to add about the topic of housing for young people leaving care?”).

Interviewers conducted the consultations through a telephone call. In the case of closed questions, the question and response options were stated orally allowing participants to select an answer.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographics	Number of Young People
Age (N = 25)	
17 yo	4
18 yo	5
19 yo	4
20 yo	4
21 yo	8
Age first entered care (N = 25)	
0 to 3 yo	8
4 to 7 yo	5
8 to 11 yo	6
12 to 15 yo	6
Number of placements (N = 25)	
1–2	5
3–5	9
6–10	5
More than 10	5
Unsure	1
Placement type (N = 25)	
Foster care	12
Relative/Family/Kinship care	3
Residential care	5
Mental health residential care	1
Combination	4
Living situation immediately after care ended (N = 19)	
Homeless shelter/refuge	3
Partner	3
Public housing	3
With foster carer	2
With birth parents	2
With other relatives	2
With friends	2
Renting alone	1
Renting with others	1

Procedure

Participants were recruited through the *clubCREATE* member database* by two staff members between September and October 2021. CREATE staff members contacted young people by phone and invited them to participate. When recruiting young people to participate, CREATE staff members

* All children and young people who participate in CREATE events and programs are invited to join *clubCREATE*, which entitles them to receive additional invitations to special events, regular magazines, birthday cards, and to be consulted on issues relevant to their lives in out of home care.



explained to young people (and their carers where relevant) the nature of the consultation, that participation was voluntary, and information about confidentiality.

Prior to commencing each survey, researchers obtained verbal consent from all young people recruited. The Consultation was conducted in accordance with CREATE's *Disclosure and Consultation with Young People* Policies. Following participation, young people could elect to receive a \$25 voucher in recognition for their time and insights.

Consultations, taking place over the telephone, took the form of structured interviews, with young people's answers recorded verbatim as much as possible. Quotes in this report captured the word-for-word answers of the participating young people as closely as possible. They were de-identified to protect the anonymity of young people and will be attributed to individuals by gender and age.

Data analysis

Data analysis included statistical analysis of quantitative data and thematic analysis of qualitative data. Analysis of quantitative data involved calculating frequencies and percentages of respondents. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using an inductive grounded theory approach, allowing concepts and themes to emerge from young people's voices, rather than being led by researchers' expectations, theories, or previous research (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). Separate analyses were conducted based on whether young people were still planning for their transition (sometimes individuals were over 18), or whether respondents no longer were subject to a child protection order (these individuals were over 18) and who have been through a transition-from-care experience. In open response questions, young people were able to mention several points in one answer; therefore, the number of comments can exceed the number of participants. Similarly, in some closed response questions, young people were able to select multiple options, hence the total number of options selected can exceed the number of participants. Coding, categorising, and interpretation of themes were assisted by having two researchers examine the data independently.

Limitations

This consultation reported on the experiences of 25 young people with an out-of-home care experience. This is a small proportion of young people with an out-of-home care experience and cannot be generalised. The aims of qualitative research, and this consultation, are to understand the experiences and views of these participants. Further research is needed to determine the prevalence of the views expressed and to explore these issues in more depth.

Results

Of the 25 participants in this consultation, six identified as still living in care and 19 who had become independent. These two sub-samples will be reported on separately.

Respondents Still Living with Carer

The following results relate to the group of participants still living with a carer—four of whom were under 18, two were over 18. Of these, 3 had no leaving care plans. For one of the remaining three, the leaving-care plan did not outline where the young person was going to live, but for the other two, future accommodation was mentioned in their plan.

Who was spoken with about becoming independent?

Table 2, Note: *Total frequencies are greater than six because more than one response could be selected.*

Table 3, and Table 4 indicate the extent of support these young people received and what their plans were. These young people were somewhat informed although more supporting conversations to explore and help decide on their options were needed.

Table 2. Who Was Spoken With About Independence (N = 6)

Who were spoken with	Frequency
Nobody	3
Case worker	3
Foster carer	2
Kinship carer	1
Birth parents	1

Note: *Total frequencies are greater than six because more than one response could be selected.*

Table 3. Source of Information About Options (N = 6)

Where obtained information about options	Frequency
Carer	4
Case worker	2
Other community organisation	1
Temporary program	1
Received no information	1

Note: *Total frequencies are greater than six because more than one response could be selected.*

Table 4. Where Living After Transitioning (N = 6)

Where planning to live	Frequency
Unsure	2
Foster carer	1
Kinship carer	1
Birth parents	1
Still evaluating options	1

Attitudes toward transitioning to independence

The subsample of young people still living with a carer indicated little concern about being independent as seen in Figure 1. **Error! Reference source not found.** Five of the 6 individuals expressed being either excited, confident, or already independent. Table 5 summarises the attitudes of these young people toward being independent.

Figure 1. Level of Concern about Becoming Independent

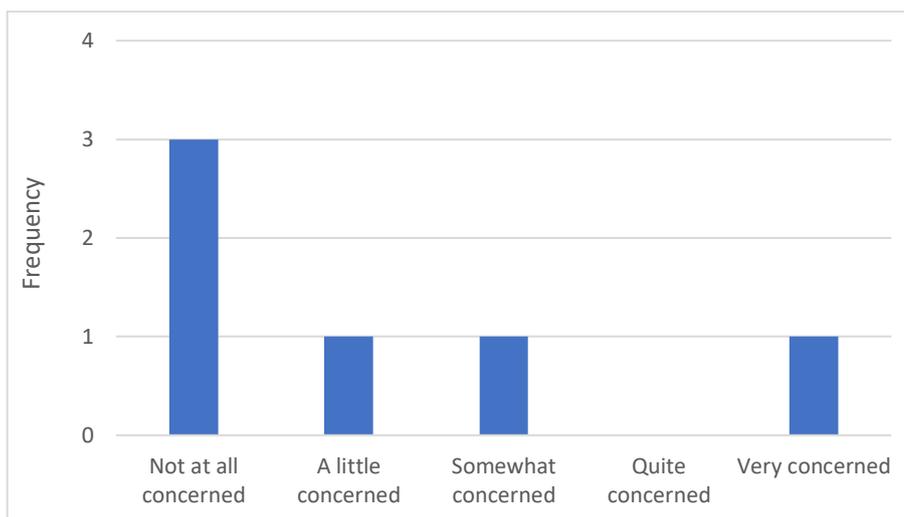


Table 5. Attitudes Toward Being Independent (N = 6)

Theme	TOTAL
It's exciting	1
Already independent	1
Confident owing to support	1
Confident owing to financial/employment stability	1
Anxiety due to lacking life skills	1
Anxiety due to nobody rely on & uncertain finances	1

One these young people considered the endeavour on its own as exciting:

I'm okay with living on my own I guess, it's exciting. (Female, 17 years)

Some indicated they were already capable of being independent:

Because I'm pretty independent myself, like I can look after myself and do my own thing. I support myself. (Female, 17 years)

Being confident about being independent may be owing to social or familial support and being in employment or financially stable:

I'm pretty independent. I have my finances organised, savings and bills - all good with this. I am working. Nothing particular concerning me. I'm focused, been talking to friends about what they are interested in doing as well. So I have a little of concern in case my plans fall through, like if plans fall apart. Nothing is set in concrete yet, but its heading in that direction. (Male, 18 years)

Well all of my foster parents' siblings have already grown up and moved out of the house so if I ever need help I have a lot of people around me. I have spent the past 17 years of my life with them so quite close. (Male, 17 years)

One participant was both confident and anxious, given they are already independent but lack life skills.

I'm a 3 [on the rating scale] coz being independent is good and all but there are some down bits where it'll be hard like paying bills, paying tax, they don't teach this stuff at school. school doesn't teach us real life skills. It's mainly these things. (Male, 18 years)

The participant who was more concerned considered becoming independent “scary” and “nerve wracking” as there would be nobody they could rely on and uncertain finances.

It scary going out living by yourself because you'll be near family but won't have family in the household; you won't have anyone to rely on. Nerve wracking. It's a massive change; financial changes are scary. (Male, 17 years)

Levels of confidence in becoming independent

Participants were asked a series of questions assessing their confidence relating to living on their own. These results are summarised in Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5. On measures such as being able to pay rent, looking after themselves, and for most, understanding their rights and responsibilities as a tenant, they expressed high levels of confidence. However, they showed less confidence in their ability to find a suitable place to live. Note: All ratings were conducted using 6-point scales.

Figure 2. Confidence Finding a Suitable Place to Live

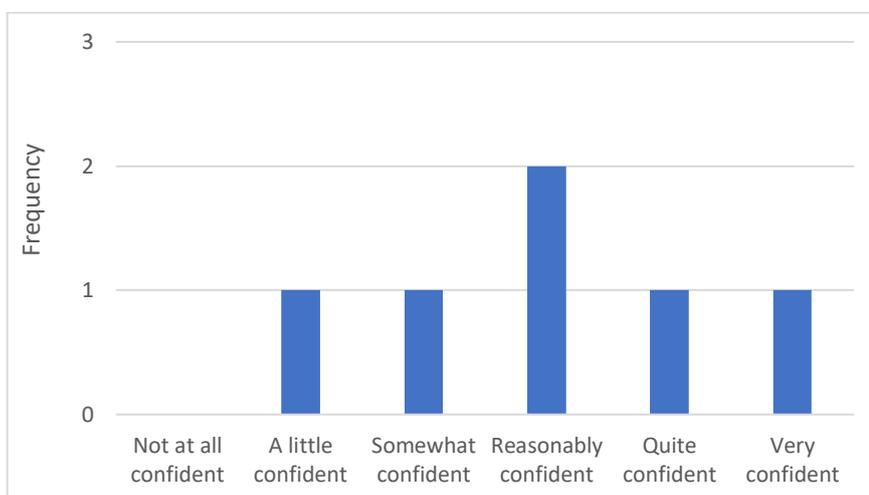


Figure 3. Confidence Being Able to Pay Rent

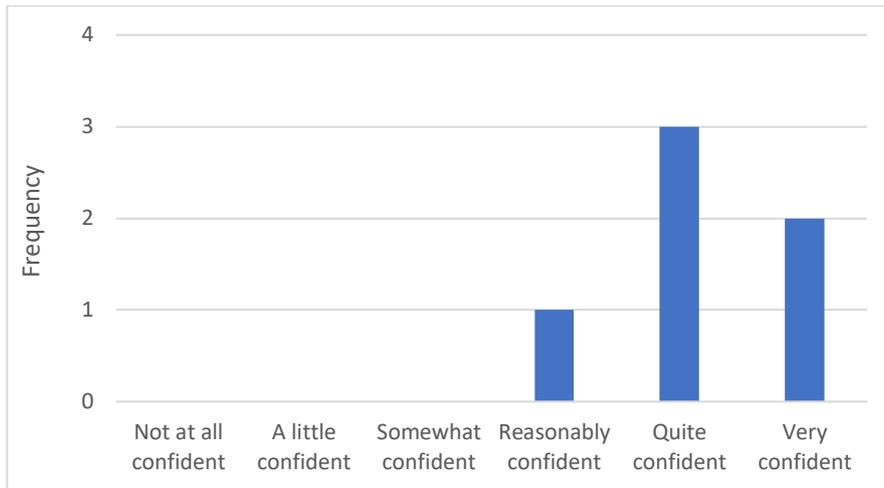


Figure 4. Confidence Looking After Self

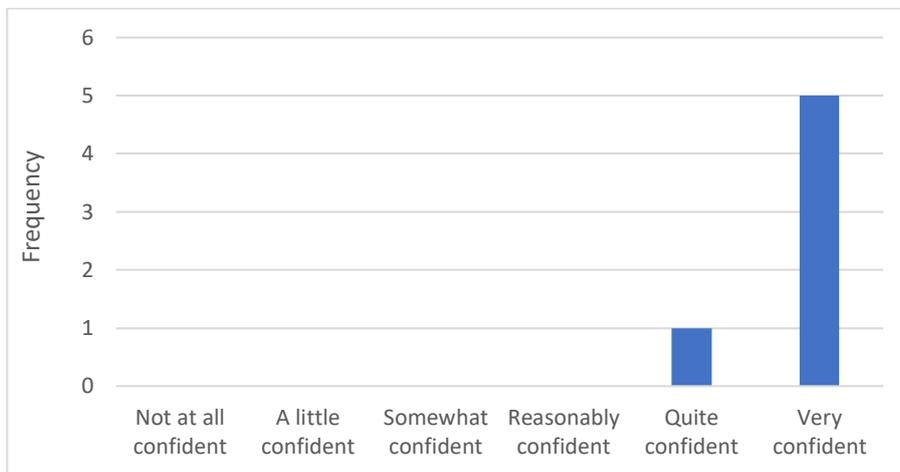
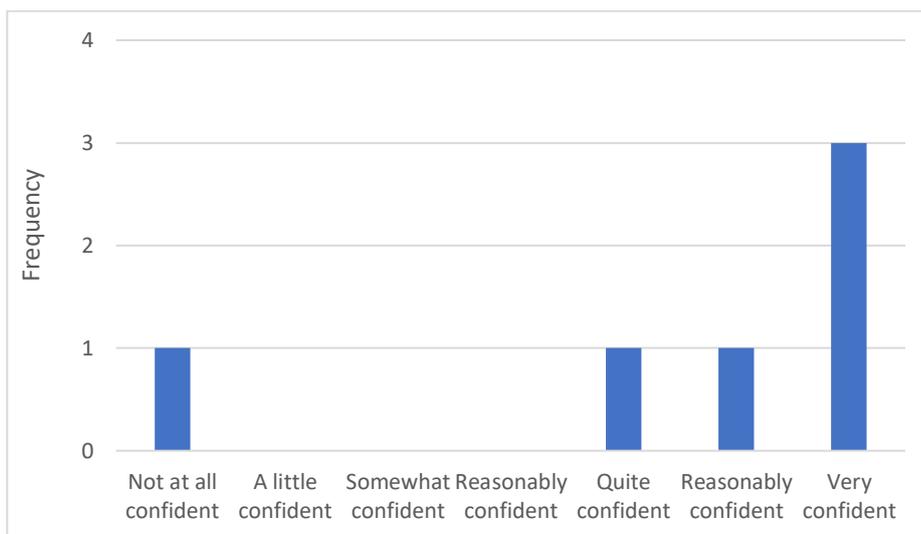


Figure 5. Confidence Understanding Rights and Responsibilities as a Tenant



Confidence stemmed from various reasons, such as having family and friends to lean on (two of six said this):

If I lived with my bro, we'd be on top of everything. My bro lives on his own, he has more experience than i do living with him will make you more confident. If I were to move to a different state on my own, I'm not too confident. (Male, 18 years)

But I always have back up plans, like my mum's house or my family, they're just not permanent solutions. (Female, 17 years)

When asked what could increase their confidence, not much was said. One (Male, 18 years) listed online resources that his case manager advised him to visit for finding a suitable place to live.

Some, while having this new rite of passage to master, were generally confident.

I think I'm all good. I think it's just a learning stage. (Female, 17 years)

I don't still feel too nervous about it though. No reason, I'm just always confident. (Male, 18 years)

Awareness of support services

In terms of awareness of help that might assist these young participants, four of six had heard of life skills workshops (e.g., *CREATE Your Future*). However, none had heard of other sources of help including leaving-care info kits, leaving-care apps, dedicated support officers, or TILA (*Transition to Independent Living Allowance*).

Who they would speak with about housing needs

Most commonly, as shown in Table 6, young people thought they would speak with their birth parents, siblings and/or their carers.

Table 6. Sources Likely to be Approached Regarding Housing Needs (N = 6)

Source	Frequency
Carer	4
Caseworker	1
Birth parents	5
Siblings	4
Other relatives	1
Housing Agency	2
Friends	1

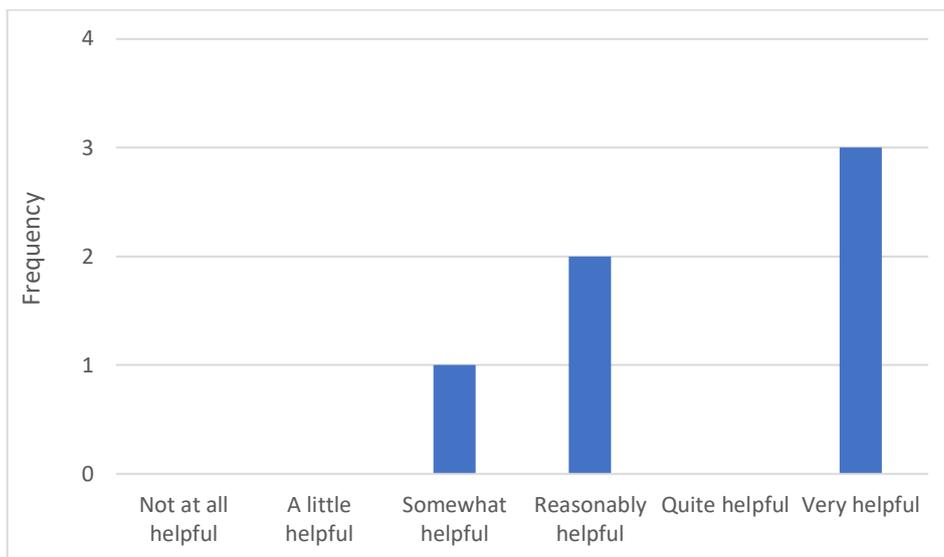
When should preparations for transitioning begin?

In terms of when these participants thought young people should begin getting prepared to find a suitable place to live, three of six (i.e., half) said 16 years of age and half said 17 years of age.

Perceived helpfulness of returning to a supported place

Half this subsample (three of six) considered being able to return to a supported place as being very helpful as seen in Figure 6. The remaining three considered it moderately helpful.

Figure 6. Helpfulness of Being Able to Return to a Supported Place



Participants Who had Left Their Care Placement (Over 18 Years)

Of the 25 participants, 19 were aged above 18 years old and had left their care placement. The following results relate to this group of participants.

Leaving care plans

In this group, 12 participants did not have a leaving-care plan. Of the seven who did, only two had leaving-care plans that detailed where they were going to live after turning 18.

Who was spoken with about what would happen after leaving care?

Approximately one third ($N = 7$) reported not speaking with anybody at all concerning what would happen after their orders end. Seven times participants indicated speaking with a caseworker, two times with their foster carer, and once each with the following: social worker, partner, CREATE worker, and ACT Together. One noted they didn't engage with anyone, stating:

I was so young and disengaged and refused to speak to CYPS and I was running away from the resi homes they were putting me in. They didn't communicate with me about that. I don't even know who you are supposed to talk to. I assume your . . . case manager but none of that happened. (Female, 21 years)

In terms of sources from which participants received information about their options after leaving care, four did not receive any information, six received information from a caseworker or youth centre worker, and two from residential care workers.

Where they lived immediately after orders ended

Of the 19 participants who left care, immediately after their care orders ended, the most commonly cited places they lived included with a partner ($N = 3$) and in public housing ($N = 3$). These findings are summarised in Table 7.



Table 7. Where Respondents Lived Immediately After Orders Ended (N = 19)

Where they lived after orders ended	Frequency
With partner	3
Public housing	3
Foster carer	2
Birth parents	2
Homeless	2
“Couch surfing”	1
Barnado’s Our Place	1
Other relatives	2
Renting alone	1
Renting with others	1

Some participants indicated they were homeless or lived in refuges due to having no options, or arrangements that collapsed, or their circumstances made it difficult to find alternative arrangements (e.g., mental health, financial instability).

My partner had gotten out of jail and I self-placed myself with him at the age of 16. They obviously needed a placement for another young child so they kinda just kicked me out. (Female, 20 years)

So, I didn't have formal care orders. Everything was done weirdly. Our family systems got too involved I guess. There was no discussion about where I would go once I turned 18. I got kicked out of my last placement when I was 16 and I was homeless up until I was 18. (Female, 21 years)

Because I was financially unstable, mentally unstable, it was the best option at the time else I'd be homeless. (Female, 19 years)

Other arrangements were also not by choice, such as living with one’s partner, coach-surfing and moving back with family.

My mum's was the only place I could go. That is why. (Male, 18 years)

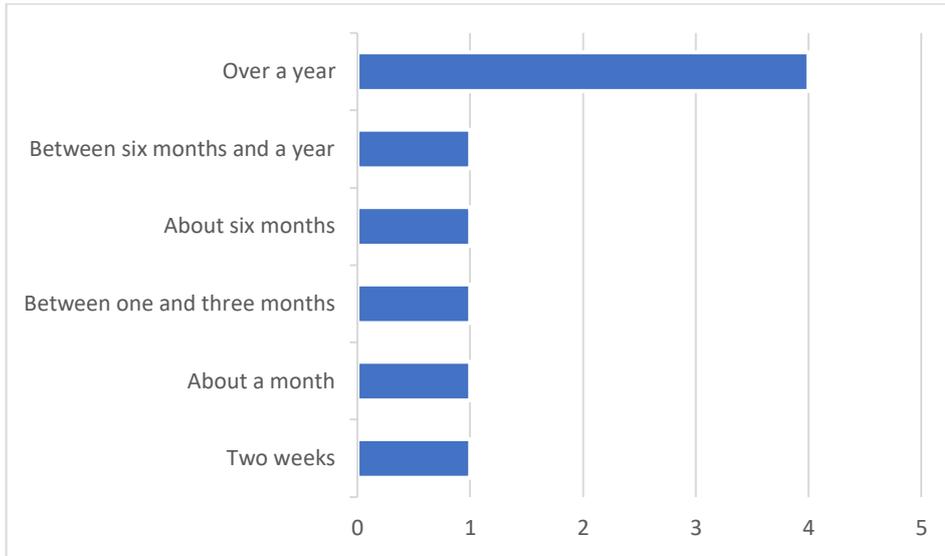
I was in between houses. I was couch-surfing. (Unknown, 21 years)

I was never homeless but moving in with my partner was not a choice, it had to happen. My home situation was unsafe, so I had to move in with him. (Female, 21 years)

Homelessness

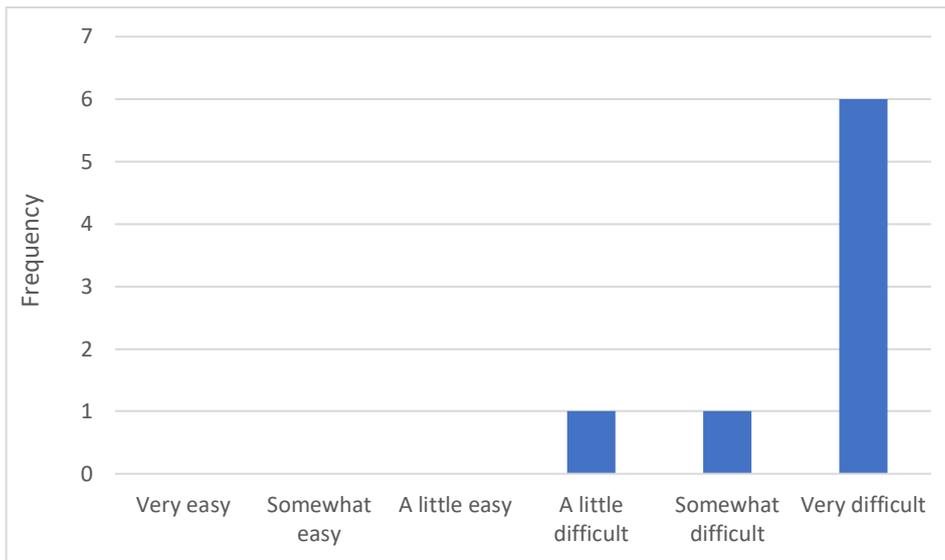
Of the 19 young people who were independent, nine reported experiencing homelessness at some point after leaving care. Figure 7 shows that this occurred across varying durations.

Figure 7. Duration of Participants' Homelessness



As shown in Figure 8, the young people in this group found it quite difficult to find suitable accommodation.

Figure 8. Easy of Finding Suitable Accommodation



Services accessed while homeless

The following services in Table 8 were accessed by the nine young people who reported experiencing homelessness. One individual did not know of any support services:

I was alone. Doing everything by myself. I didn't know anything or that anyone could help really. (Female, 18 years)

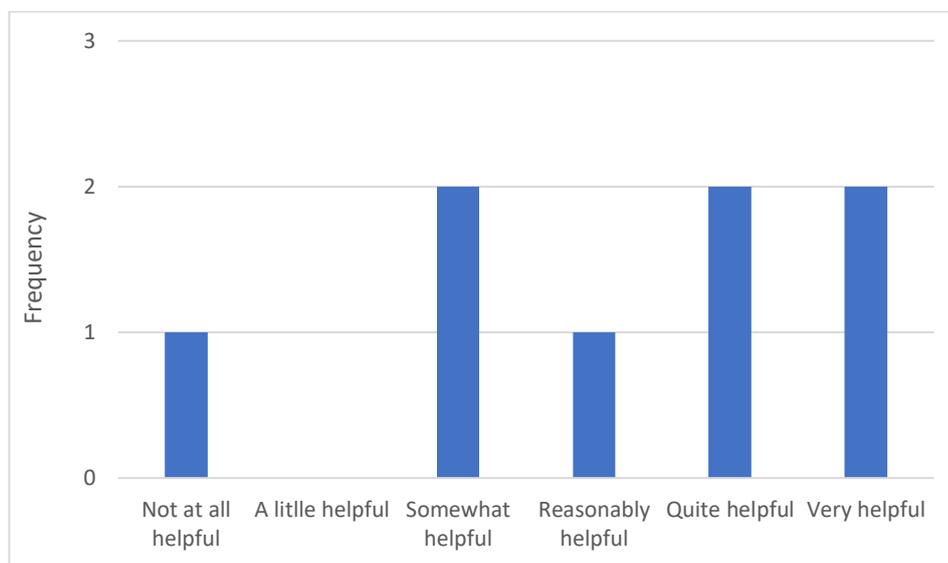
Table 8. Services Accessed While Homeless (N = 9)

Services accessed	Frequency
ACT Housing	4
Onelink	3
Barnado's	3
Salvation Army	2
Gugan Gulwan	1
St Vincent de Paul's	1
CREATE	1
Pets in the park	1
Food hampers*	1

Helpfulness of services accessed

The eight young persons who accessed homeless services experienced a range of helpfulness: only one stated that the service had not been at all helpful (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Helpfulness of Services Accessed



Other supports that helped

Participants were asked what other supports could have helped them; five of the eight indicated they could have benefited from better support after leaving care, such as from a caseworker or mentor.

Maybe just have someone generally check in on me and see how I was doing. Call up for a chat and you know see how I'm doing. (Female, 20 years)

* This individual stated they didn't know who could help

Oh, wow, I mean I guess CYPs and . . . being actively involved in my case and where I was and if I was safe. I don't know, because I was told I was too young for any support. (Female, 21 years)

It would have been good if they did their job because they could have hooked me up with a hotel room while they found me suitable accommodation, but no one wanted to know me. (Male, 21 years)

Three of eight commented that waiting lists for refuge places were long (or that there were not enough places) and housing lists need to be shorter and employ easier application processes.

With Onelink, there was quite a waiting list to get into a refuge. (Unknown, 21 years)

Prior concerns about becoming independent

Before their care ended, young people experienced a range of levels of concern about becoming independent Figure 10. Table 9 summarises the responses made by participants.

Figure 10. Concern While In-Care About Becoming Independent

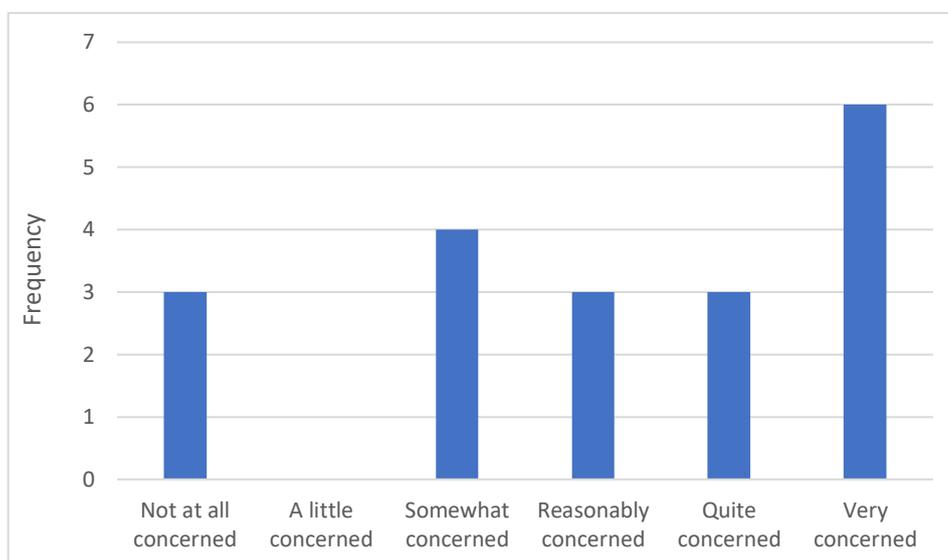


Table 9. Prior Concerns About Becoming Independent (N = 19)

Theme	TOTAL
Concern because of inadequate caseworker support	6
Confidence because already experienced being independent	4
Feeling of panic, anxiety or feeling overwhelmed	4
Concern because losing/lacking family or friend support	3
Concern because of financial instability	3
Reported having 'no idea' about being independent	2
Concern because needed better life skills	1

One of 19 expressed they were concerned because they needed better life skills as well as experiencing financial uncertainty:



Couple of things hadn't been sorted. I didn't know much about shopping for groceries and budgeting. Money was an issue for me—I was concerned if I would keep having enough money. I was searching for a job when COVID hit and that was when I was looking for accommodation. I didn't have employment. This made me concerned. That's about it. I already had a handle on other stuff (e.g., laundry, cooking, cleaning, etc.). (Non-Binary, 19 years)

Financial anxiety was repeated by two others (out of 19):

Losing all of my family support and also how I was going to cope financially. (Female, 21 years)

My panic attacks came when I was worried about who would provide for myself and my expectant baby. I became over-concerned when I had a panic attack. Normally I was 2.5 points and then I was 6 when I had a panic attack. I've been diagnosed with anxiety, so this is a medical issue. (Female, 18 years).

Panic, anxiety, and feeling overwhelmed were experiences that three other young people also reported:

I was sort of keen to be independent but also terrified. (Female, 21 years)

The reason for that was at the time I was very mentally unfit. I did not know how I could possibly look after myself. I just felt like I just couldn't cope with the whole idea of living on my own and looking after myself. (Female, 21 years)

I was concerned, my anxiety did not help towards that either. I tended to panic and freak out as I had no fricken idea what I was doing. (Female, 21 years)

Some expressed concerns stemming from family, carers, and friends. For example, three in 19 expressed losing or having no support of family or friends:

Losing all of my family support. (Female, 20 years)

It was really hard because I didn't really have anyone. I didn't really have friends so I couldn't turn to them. (Female, 18 years)

I had a relationship with the carers and I had to leave. I was a bit sad I guess about leaving my carers. (Non-Binary, 20 years)

Another theme that affected six of the 19 was the lack of adequate support from a caseworker:

I just felt like a lot was left to the unknown. Like um there wasn't any housing lists I was on or anything so... I was explained there was options, but they were never given to me or taught to me. (Female, 21 years)

I was concerned because I didn't have any support when I turned 18. I didn't know who to go to for support. Nobody told me anything. I had a caseworker but she wasn't really there for me. She didn't give me enough time. I didn't really see her frequently. (Male, 18 years)

Whenever I asked for help I don't get a response. Hard to know I am getting help. I am with NDIS, not feeling too well asking case worker for meds, but it took him 3 hours. Had to call the worker myself but I would rather the 1st worker call first. My case worker never communicates with me. It's really annoying. My case worker doesn't talk, that's the problem. No one called out to ask if I needed support. My concerns are I don't get the support I should be getting. I don't really want to gpster [harass?] them, I just want a simple "yes" or "no",

can you support me or not? You are never there when I need you. It's annoying and irritating at times. I know I'm not the only kid that experiences this thing. (Male, 19 years)

Similar feelings may explain why two in 19 young people said they had “no idea” what they were doing.

Having no idea what I was doing and winging life. (Female, 21 years)

Conversely, four of 19 were confident stemming from already being experienced looking after themselves.

I wasn't concerned as when I moved back in with my mum I was looking after myself anyway. So, I wasn't concerned but not in a good way. It wasn't good because I had to look after myself from such a young age but that's why I was able to look after myself. (Female, 20 years)

I think it was because I was forced into situations as a young person where I had to be independent, so I felt confident about becoming an adult and having that full independence. (Unknown, 21 years)

Prior confidence of successful transition when care ended

When considering the challenges in transitioning to becoming independent, young people were not all that confident they could find somewhere suitable to live (Figure 11), pay the rent (Figure 12), or know what their rights and responsibilities were as a tenant (Figure 13). However, more were confident they would be able to look after themselves (Figure 14).

Figure 11. Confidence in Finding a Suitable Place to Live

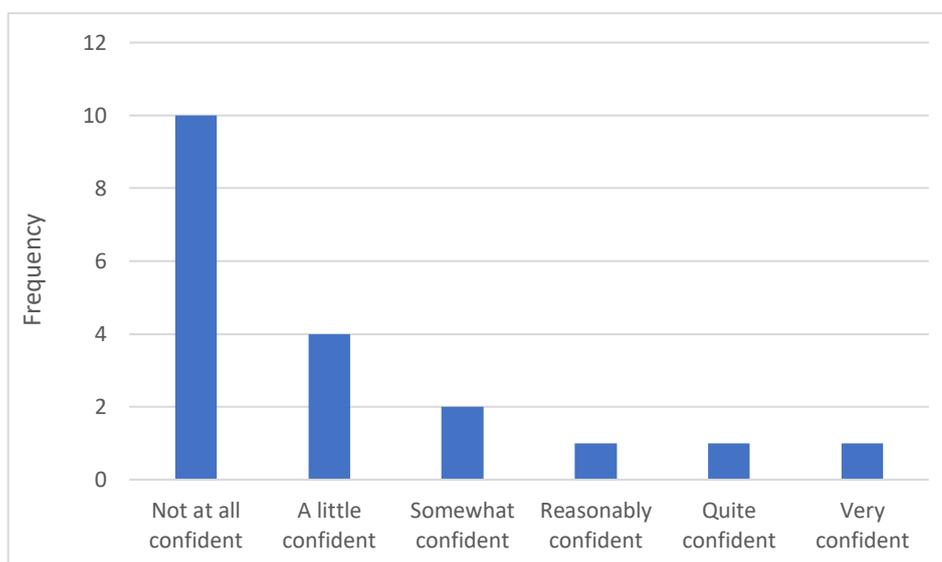


Figure 12. Confidence in Being Able to Pay Rent

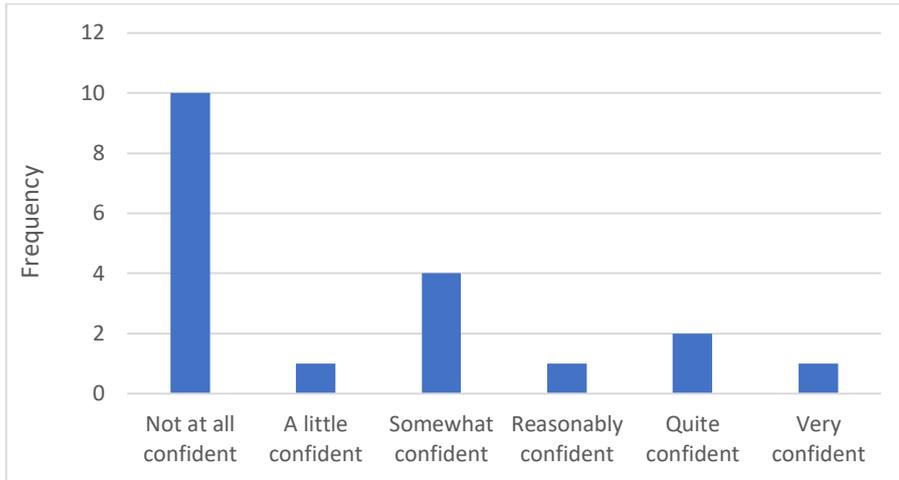


Figure 13. Confidence in Understanding the Rights and Responsibilities of a Tenant

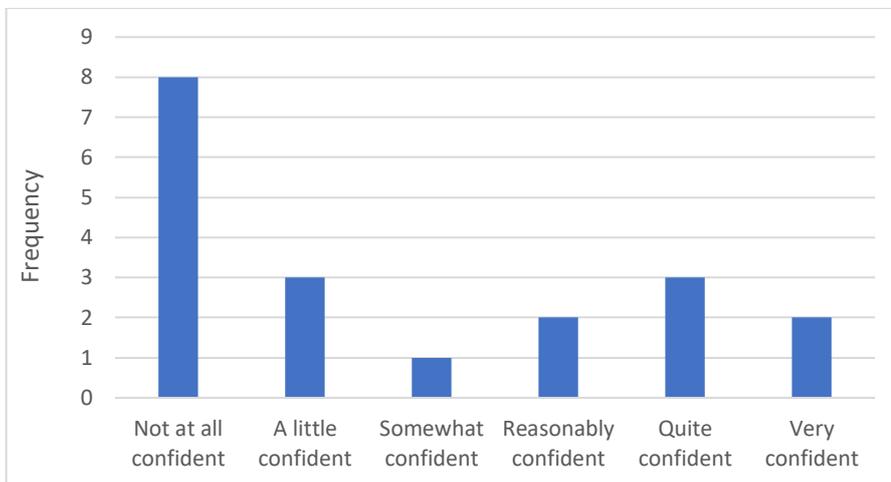
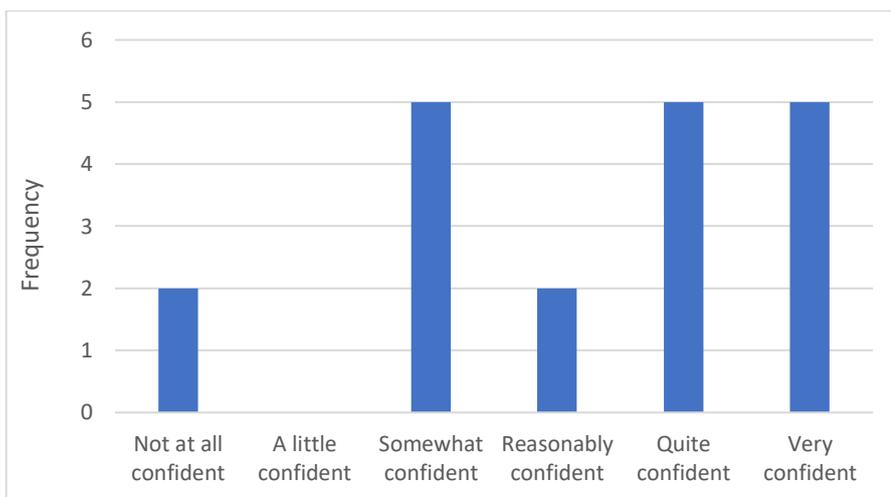


Figure 14. Confidence in Looking After Self



What could help better prepare young people to live independently?

Participants were asked what information and/or resources could have helped increase their confidence in being able to live independently. Their responses are summarised in Table 10 and detailed below.

Table 10. Information and Resources that Could Have Helped Transition (N = 19)

Theme	TOTAL
Resources/services to improve life skills	7
Caseworker support	6
Centrelink support	3
Government housing	2
Financial support	2
From carer	1
Pessimistic (nothing could help)	2

Seven of 19 respondents identified resources that could help improve their life skills, including cooking and cleaning skills, managing finances, understanding what is expected in tenancy, how to maintain a job and study concurrently, and becoming independent and self-reliant. Some avenues to achieve this included education at school and youth centres, information from foster carers, special courses, being referred to other services, tailored individualised support, having a life coach, and being escorted to Centrelink.

Being taught pretty much how to be an adult. Like maybe get taught in schools, at youth centres. (Female, 21 years)

A bit more support before I turned 18 from foster care in terms of getting me prepared for leaving home. (Female, 20 years)

A crash course in how to actually do these things. (Female, 21 years)

...maybe being referred into services that helped and taught you some of these things.
(Unknown, 21 years)

Better communication, someone to sit down and work with you and genuinely want you to become a functional member of society. Having someone show me the ropes while I was in care would have helped. (Male, 21 years)

Mostly assistance in understanding what that's going to entail. So having someone come and offer me documents and providing some assistance in understanding the situation above... Also accompanying me when attending Centrelink appointments and other things that require a bit more help. (Male, 19 years)

In six of 19 cases, aside from what has already been discussed, young people needed more help from their caseworker:

If my caseworker was there more for me. (Male, 18 years)

If I had access to support workers earlier on in my life it would have been a bit better.
(Female, 21 years)

Support with Centrelink or Government housing were also cited by five of 19 participants.

Maybe having a meeting with housing to explain because you don't get told that much while in care. It would have been good to sit down while in care and talk about it all. (Female, 20 years)

Also accompanying me when attending Centrelink appointments and other things that require a bit more help. (Female, 21 years)

Financial issues and being unable to afford rent were stated by two of 19 participants.

*The rent is so f***** high. I don't get enough from Centrelink.* (Female, 18 years)

One expressed wanting more support from their carer:

A bit more support before I turned 18 from foster carer in terms of getting me prepared for leaving home. Being able to sit and actually talk to her about how thing would look when I left home. Getting simple things sorted. Like being able to manage things financially. (Female, 20 years)

Finally, two of 19 felt that, because of their situation, nothing could have helped.

Nothing really, I mean, from CREATE. A teacher went through rights and responsibilities as a tenant. (Unspecified, 19 years)

*Nothing could have helped me feel more confident. The situation is sh** (i.e., not getting to live with mum and dad). It is what it is.* (Unspecified, 20 years)

Information that could increase confidence

In terms of awareness of help that might assist these young participants, eight had heard of Life skills workshops (e.g., *CREATE Your Future*), seven had heard of TILA (*Transition to Independent Living Allowance*), four had heard of leaving care info kits (e.g., *Go Your Own Way*). However, none had heard of leaving care apps (e.g., SORTLI). These young people were most likely to speak with caseworkers or housing agencies about their accommodation needs (see Table 11).

Table 11. Sources Participants Spoke with Concerning their Housing Needs (N = 19)

Source	Frequency
No one	2
Caseworker	6
Housing Agency	6
Birth parent	4
Other relatives	3
Other support agency (youth centre, NDIS, refuge)	3
Friends	3
Post-care support service	2
Carer	2
Counsellor	1

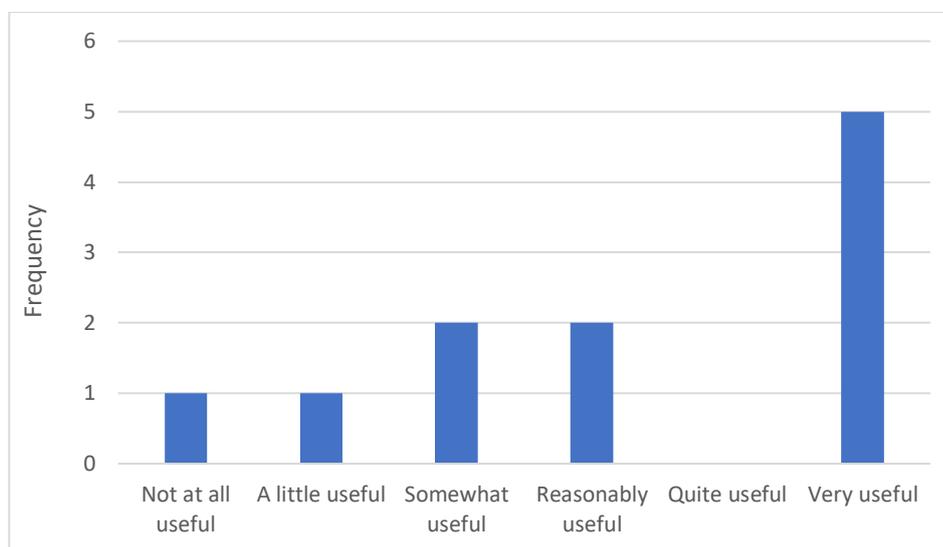
Who was approached for direct assistance with finding housing?

Of the participants who had left care, 12 reported needing help finding housing. Table 12 shows the sources they went to for such help. Most commonly again were professional support persons/agencies. When asked how useful the housing support they received was, most of the participants who responded considered it “very useful” (see Figure 15).

Table 12. Sources Young People Approached for Help Finding Housing (N = 19)

Source	Frequency
Other Support Professionals (youth worker, Refuge, NDIS, homes services)	5
Housing Agency	3
Other relatives	3
Friends	3
Post-care support service	2
Carer	1
Caseworker	1
Birth parents	1
Partners	1

Figure 15. Usefulness of Housing Support Obtained



Participants were asked what might be done to make the support more useful. A dominant theme centred around better support from workers and more accurate information (six of 13).

Just more people to push for it more. I had a youth worker and a case worker. They were good and helped me do a lot of stuff, but they didn't push for the housing as much and that was the biggest thing. (Female, 18 years)

I keep going back to more information because the support I did get didn't really know how to help me. They didn't know where to go or who to access. (Female, 21 years)

I was meant to get a place, but I didn't get it. I only found out recently that my caseworker... left the agency and didn't transfer me to a new person. I got forgotten. It happens to a lot of us actually. They just kick us out of the door once we turn 18. (Female, 18 years)

One young person mentioned they wanted continued involvement in the help they were receiving.

It's still continuing so I'm in the in between stage. A bit more open communication regarding my housing application. This would give me more predictability about what/s coming and what I need to do next. If there's any issues, I can talk openly with my worker about what is going on, rather than them doing everything in the background. I like to be involved. I like to know what's going on. (Female, 20 years)

Finally, two of 13 stated there needs to be more government housing, with more emergency accommodation for the homeless and providing respite.

Even though it took 3 years, I still managed to get it. The thing is there are limited houses and quite a lot of people who are trying to do the same thing. Um, even like if ah, if there was respite residential places you could go to if you don't really have a carer that's supportive. You can go to one of the residential places and they can help you. You stay for a while and they help you to find another place to live. That's easier said than done I know. (Female, 21 years)

I think it was just it wasn't useful to me at some points because I was put on a waiting list. If there was more homelessness accommodation, then it would have been more useful. (Unknown, 21 years)

Difficulties finding a suitable place to live

Several difficulties were mentioned as barriers to finding somewhere suitable to live (see Table 13). The most common concerns were the long waiting lists for public housing, difficulties meeting rent payments, and a general state of confusion resulting in not knowing what to do, often because no plan had been developed to guide life after care.

Table 13. Difficulties Encountered When Finding a Suitable Place to Live (N = 19)

Difficulty	Frequency
Long waiting lists, e.g., social/public housing	12
Didn't know where to start	11
Unable to afford rent	10
No leaving care plan	10
Unsuitable housing options	8
Changes in arrangements (e.g., relationships)	7
Rental criteria	5

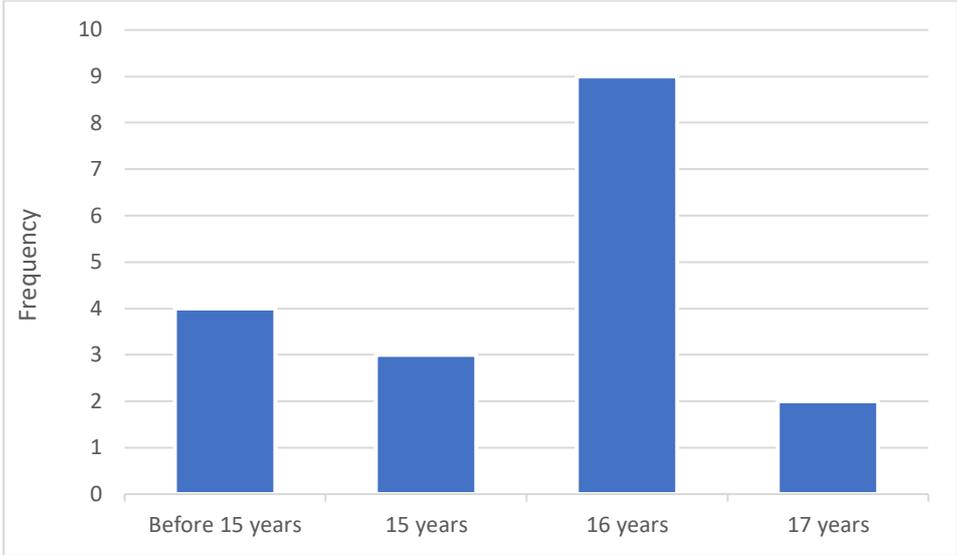
Difficulties staying in accommodation once found

Similar reasons were given for difficulties encountered in maintaining accommodation once it had been found (e.g., changing arrangements because of relationship breakdowns [N = 6], paying rent [N = 3], and lack of suitable housing options [N = 3]). One young person also mentioned mental health issues.

When should preparations for transitioning begin?

Most participants believed young people should begin getting prepared to find a suitable place when they turn 16 as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Age at Which Preparation for Transitioning Should Begin



Perceived helpfulness of being able to return to a supported place

When asked how helpful it would be to be able to return to a supported place (e.g., return to a carer or into supported accommodation), nearly half considered it would be “very helpful”; only two considered it would be not at all helpful, as shown in Figure 17. Reasons given for these responses were varied, as shown in Table 14.

Figure 17. Perceived Helpfulness of Option to Return to Supported Place

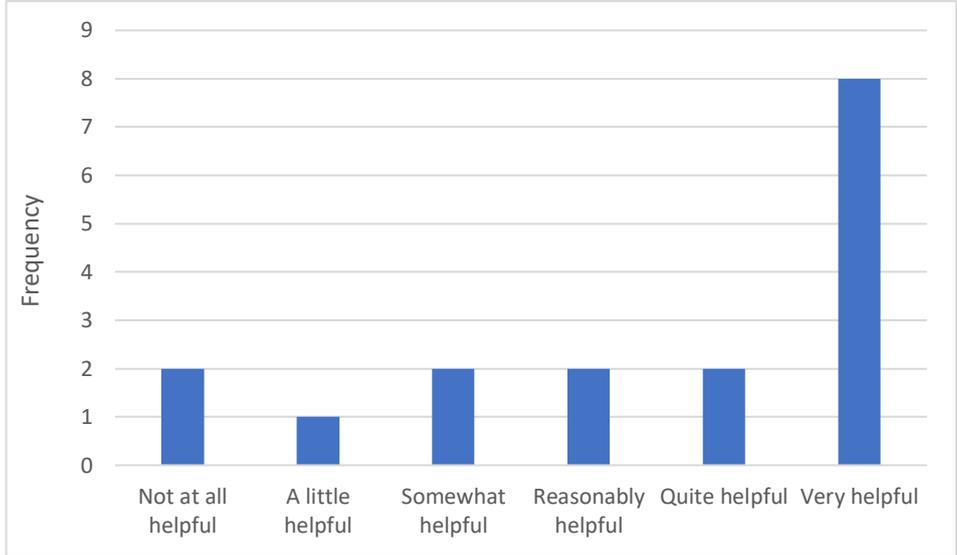




Table 14. Thoughts About Returning to a Supported Place (N = 19)

Comment	Frequency
Needed further life skills	4
Attachment to carer and home	3
Lonely	2
Not ready to be independent	1
Unaffordable to live independently	1
Concern about sharing accommodation	1
Enthusiastic	1
Too young to be independent	1
Bad experience in care	2
Stigma attached to returning	1

Four of the 19 respondents indicated they needed further life skills that they could have learnt at home:

In hindsight, it would have been really good. Because there were so many things I didn't know if I would be able to do, e.g. budgeting, managing money, paying rent. I need this knowledge. it would have been good if the residential care places I was in, if they trained me in this.
(Unknown, 19 years)

I could have used a carer to come over and help me with things like cooking. I definitely could have learned a lot more if I had a lot of help earlier on. (Male, 21 years)

In a similar vein, some may not be ready to be independent straight away:

It would be good to have a second option if you can't succeed at being independent straight away. (Female, 20 years)

*The procedure with being in youth accommodation and you have to leave after 18. your still technically a youth though... But I think it doesn't have to be strictly 18 though. That is sh**.*
(Unknown, 20 years).

Three wanted the option to return for sentimental reasons, such as attachment to their carers or always have the sense there is a loving home to go back to:

Needing a loving home to come home to never ends. You need that for your whole life.
(Female, 21 years)

I think that would be helpful because I think having something to come back to is always great. (Female, 21 years)

It would be really helpful coz the foster parents are there for you and they would know a lot more about you. (Male, 18 years)

Other participants liked the option of going back to foster care because they were lonely living by themselves:



Kinda like after I left care, I didn't have any sort of contact with anyone. It was kinda just like I was left by myself which was pretty rough. (Female, 20 years)

It's very lonely living alone and having to do everything myself. I don't need someone to do basic stuff. I mainly need someone to talk to and just be there. That's the only downside; I don't really have friends, so no one really comes except my parents or older brother, i.e., not many face-to-face people. I have phone call friends. (Male, 19 years)

One participant was quite enthusiastic about it, but seemingly because it is better than most accommodation available to adults:

To be able to would make such a big difference. After turning 18, the only supported living that was available was either a refuge or a mental health placement type thing so being able to go back to that option should be a thing. (Female, 21 years)

Another participant indicated it was unaffordable to live independently, but also it was rather daunting:

Affordability is one big thing and also being with people that you know. It's a bit daunting to move out on your own or into shared accommodation with people that you don't know. (Female, 21 years)

Issues around sharing accommodation were raised by other participants:

*It was really hard to find people I could trust. Every place that I've been to they have taken my sh**. I was at the point where I was wearing the same clothes for a month. Thinking that I was in a stable place they would get me to steal for them and now I have a criminal record. (Female, 18 years)*

A few young people saw returning to care as having negative outcomes. One young person was averse to going back to a supported place, stating they want to avoid the stigma as being labelled “in care”.

The older we get the less inclined we are to want to be labelled and stuck in care. (Female, 21 years)

Other individuals did not want to return to their supported placement because they had bad experiences there, be it foster care or residential care:

I was in residential care. It wouldn't be too helpful for me. Resi wasn't really a good place for me at that time as I was immature and didn't get on with them. (Female, 19 years)

Bad memories, being taken off your parents and being put in a family that is not your own, it was traumatic. (Female, 19 years)

Final comments about housing

In response to the final question asking for additional comments about transitioning and housing, seventeen young people provided insights from their experience in care. A major theme ($N = 6$) concerned the need for more information and better communication with those in a supportive role; related to this was a call for stronger relationships with carers / caseworkers ($N = 5$).

The kids need to learn this stuff earlier. Their housing options, their support networks. The list you read to me, I'd never heard in my life and it got to me. I didn't know about any of it. I had to do it all by myself and it broke me. The kids need to know that there are support networks. Even if they don't remember, they need to start learning things young. (Female, 18 years)



It helps young people be prepared and having the info and confidence in their brain. They start the application for a government house in early so they can get a house once they turn 18. (Female, 18 years)

There needs to be more communication. I have support with learning life skills. Fine I need more skills with other things like paying taxes, voting. I did courses on relationships, budgeting, basic cooking. But we didn't have any learning support on tax, tenancy. (Male, 19 years)

Current [case manager] is very supportive. Always accessible to talk to, always answer phones and contact me to make sure I am okay and discuss my options when I turn 18—I had this discussion early. Past caseworkers weren't good coz they didn't call me very much. I think they had a lot of people to look after. Biggest thing: People should know their options. They need to be given their choices. This is centred on having a good case manager to provide them with their options. It's important they know their options. (Male, 18 years)

In addition, young people emphasised that planning for future housing should begin as early as possible and should include consideration of financial concerns and mental health support.

There should be more options for housing. Maybe more financial support as well. I'm pretty sure there was supposed to be a grant for people leaving care to afford furniture and stuff because someone at CREATE told me about it. I looked for it, but I could never actually find anything about it. (Female, 20 years)

If for example, care and protection had provided a refuge or temporary accommodation and that placement has broken down at any point for the young person, I think they should target what is happening for that person and link them into the proper supports so future placements don't break down. For example, if a young person is having bad mental health issues, I think they should be supported with their mental health. Or you know, helping with finances by providing food vouchers or knowledge for how to pay rent. I think it needs to be targeted help for why that person's placement is breaking down. (Unknown, 21 years)

Maybe just to make sure that those that are assisting in helping young people leaving care, making sure they are working their hardest and covering all bases. Making sure they try their best to reach all kids in care. Kids can look fine and happy on the outside but can be struggling. (Female, 21 years)



Discussion

The Australian Government considers improving housing outcomes for young people a priority and has produced an agreement with the states to provide ongoing support (Australian Government, 2018). Obtaining and maintaining safe, suitable and affordable long-term housing is necessary for all people to thrive and advance in life. It enables them to advance in areas such as education, employment, health, relationships, well-being and connections within their communities. Young people with an out-of-home care experience who are expected to transition into independent living are at risk and are vulnerable by being unable to obtain and maintain this necessary base, and consequentially can fall into homelessness. This may be prevented by increasing the supply of government housing and reducing the long housing waiting lists. Other reasons why these young people are at such a high risk include a lack of family, lack of emotional and financial support, and inadequate support transitioning them out of care.

This consultation explored the thoughts and experiences around transitioning into independent living among young people with an out-of-home care experience who have made or were planning to make this transition. This consultation focused on factors including preparing for transition, finding safe and suitable housing, homelessness, how young people can be supported before and after their transition to obtain safe and suitable housing. As a group dependent on external supports, it was important to hear and understand the experiences and views of young people in this consultation to inform ways of better assisting young people in future.

Leaving care plans

Of the group who had left care, 60% did not have a leaving care plan. This is consistent with previous research by McDowall where 40% of 17 to 18-year-olds still in care knew about a leaving care plan (McDowall, 2018) and a similar proportion, 36% of 18 to 25-year-olds who had transitioned had a leaving-care plan (McDowall, 2020). Of those young people who knew about their leaving-care plans, they found information therein concerning accommodation *Somewhat to Reasonably* helpful. Care plans can be made more helpful when young people are made aware that they should have a plan, are involved in its development, and can access it even years after they have left formal care.

Caseworker support

A common disappointment expressed by young people, who relate to their own difficult housing outcomes, was support quality from caseworkers. Sometimes, a new caseworker was not assigned when the current one moved on, sometimes their case worker could not give enough time to the young person, or adequately equip them to be ready to become independent when they turned 18. As an example, 32% of young adults who had left care in this consultation were concerned about becoming independent because of inadequate caseworker support. CREATE has found consistently that young people want communication to be open, honest, empathic, and appropriate (CREATE, 2020b; McDowall, 2020). This kind of communication is integral to establishing and maintaining positive working relationships with young people. In research evaluating two leaving care support programs in Victoria, Australia, continuity and a sense of trust with workers facilitated positive engagement with young people and facilitated successful transitions into independence (e.g., reduced anxiety around leaving care, development of life skills, attainment of secure and affordable housing, and pursuit of other life goals; Mendes & Purtell, 2021).

Homelessness

It is disturbing to know that homelessness is a difficulty that some children with an out-of-home care experience have to endure. For example, McDowall (2020) found that 30% of young people reported being homeless within their first year of transitioning from care. The recommendation for more affordable public housing and easier access to it, if properly addressed, can no doubt minimise this problem. However, with a shortage of public housing residences, young people who do not have the financial standing to rent, need to rely on refuges. Not only should there be more beds, but



awareness of them and other supports available should be raised. Availability and access to affordable, secure, safe and appropriate housing is vital for care leavers.

Readiness to become independent

Another recurrent theme emerged identifying that many young people were not confident becoming independent. This was for reasons ranging from lack of life skills, and financial instability, to not having a sense of belonging. Some are expected to transition into living independently with little preparedness. Even when young people have lived rough lives and have become resilient, there will still be a sense of anxiety. More training, knowledge, and skill development is needed for independent living. This can include training in tenancy knowledge, applying for Centrelink and Government housing, budgeting, time management, and cooking.

It was also apparent that preparations to become independent should begin early. This includes arranging accommodation like government housing, securing income, and learning life skills; 73% of participants thought young people should begin preparations to find accommodation by 16.

Despite the importance of making early preparations, some young people in this consultation have stressed that one cannot be ready in all areas. This suggests, psychological and developmental readiness are also important factors.

The need to belong: Returning to a supported place

Another very human need that emerged in this consultation is the need to belong. Most young people want a home to go back to just so they know they have stability. They crave for family, loved ones, those who care about them. The majority of respondents appreciated the idea of having a supported place to return to. The reasons for this were a mixture of emotional attachment with those back home, not being ready to leave (both in terms of maturity and life skills), being lonely and the unaffordability of living alone.

Actions

In response to issues raised in this consultation, the following Actions are suggested to help address the needs of young people when transitioning and seeking suitable housing.

Need for pre-transitioning support:

- Each young person needs a dedicated caseworker / mentor with enough time and resources to assist when needed before the young person ages out of care to help with the transition and prepare the young person to live independently. This would mean employing more caseworkers with a lower-case load of young people, or adopting a model similar to the Personal Advisors scheme that has been shown to be extremely successful in the UK, to the extent that the support is now offered to all care leavers up to the age of 25 (UK Department for Education, 2018)
- Leaving care plans should be drafted by young persons and their caseworker; the young people must be involved. Plans need to be comprehensive in detail and coverage and must include actions to attain safe and affordable housing, steps to secure employment and/or Centrelink benefits, and programs for continuing life-skill development. These plans should be made and acted upon early and in consultation with the young person. The young person should have access to a copy when needed and supported to enact its proposals. The young person should be able to update it with support when needed.



Need for post-care support:

- A caseworker or mentor needs to remain in regular contact with the young person after aging out of care. This can be seen as an extension of their leaving-care plan, encompassing the constituent components to monitor and support the young person.
- Should a young person become homeless through change of circumstances, linking them with supportive services and support accommodation should be immediate until the securement of safe, affordable housing has been achieved.
- Where possible, caseworkers or mentors should attempt to reinforce a sense of belonging and social connections amongst care leavers. This could be through support for reunification with family, or assistance with establishing and maintaining of peer networks.

Government action:

- Continue to provide more government housing options and reduce waiting lists.
- Support caseworkers or mentors to stay motivated and continually trained to provide high quality assistance. This should be of high priority to help support young people succeed at becoming independent adults and establish a foundation in their lives to go on to thrive and flourish.

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Appendix A: Consultation Survey



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

WHAT IS THIS SURVEY ABOUT?

Having a safe place to live is important for our health and wellbeing. Children and young people who exit the care system often experience times where they do not have a safe or stable place to live, or may even find themselves without a home. It is important to prevent this from happening as much as possible.

CREATE is interested in speaking to young people who are preparing to, or who have recently aged out of the care system, about their experiences in planning where they will live once they leave, the supports they believe would be helpful, challenges they have encountered, and how the process in finding suitable housing could be improved.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY

Please answer all questions and leave comments where applicable. You can click through the sections by clicking "NEXT" at the bottom of the screen. At the end of the survey click the "DONE" button to submit your responses.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before you begin, we would like to remind you of a few things:

- Doing this survey is completely voluntary. You can stop doing this survey at any time and this will not affect you joining in with any other CREATE events and activities.
- You can skip questions if there is a reason you would rather not answer them; however, we at CREATE hope that you will want to share as many of your views as possible.
- Everything you tell us in this survey will be kept confidential (this means private) unless you tell us something that makes us concerned for your safety or for the safety of another young person in care, then we may have to tell someone.
- You can have a support person help you with the survey if you would like.
- We may use the information gained from the survey for reports and presentations but we will NEVER use your name. You will be anonymous in these reports.

Having understood the above information, if you continue and complete this survey, it will be considered that you have given your consent to participate.

For more information on consultation participation, you can refer to [CREATE's website](#), or ask your local CREATE Office (1800 655 105) for a Consultation Participation Information Sheet.

* 1. What method are you using to complete this survey?

- Online by yourself
- Face-to-face with a CREATE Staff Member
- Online with a CREATE Staff Member or Support Person
- Other (e.g., hard copy)
- Over the phone with a CREATE Staff Member

* 2. In what state or territory do, or did, you live when in care?

3. What is your post code?

* 4. How old are you?

5. Do you identify as:...

- Female
 Male
 Another gender
Please specify:

* 6. Culturally, do you identify as:...

- Aboriginal Other Cultural Group (non-English speaking background)
 Torres Strait Islander No specific group
 Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

If "Other Cultural Group", please specify:

* 7. How old were you when you came into care?

* 8. What type of placement do you live in, or did you live in while in care?

- Foster care Residential care
 Relative/Family/Kinship care Semi-independent supported accommodation
 Permanent care (long-term guardianship) Independent living
 Other (please specify):

9. About how many placements did you have while in care?

- 1-2 More than 10
 3-5 Unsure
 6-10

10. Do you identify as someone living with a disability?

- Yes
 No
 Prefer not to say



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

11. What type of disability or impairment do you have? Please describe in your own words.

12. Are you receiving any support for your condition or disability? (This could include accessing an NDIS package, medication, special education, or counseling)

Yes

No

Any comments?



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Transition Planning

13. Please select which of the following applies to you:

- I have turned 18
- I have not yet turned 18



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Transition Planning

14. Does your leaving care plan contain details of where you are going to live after turning 18?

- I do not have a leaving care plan
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

15. Who has spoken to you about what will happen to your placement when you turn 18? (You may select more than one response.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No one has spoken to me | <input type="checkbox"/> Birth Parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caseworker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foster Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kinship Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

16. Where did you get information to help you understand your options for where you would live? (You may select more than one response.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to Caseworker | <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to Other Relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to a Residential Care Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessed post-care support service (e.g., Next Steps Plus, Aftercare, Relationships Australia, Better Futures) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Contacted other community organisation (e.g., Homestretch, Uniting Care) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to Birth Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Information from the Department of Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to Siblings | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |



17. Where are you planning to live immediately after your care orders end (when you turn 18)? (Please select one.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Remain with Foster Carer | <input type="radio"/> Partner/ Girlfriend/ Boyfriend |
| <input type="radio"/> Remain with Kinship Carer | <input type="radio"/> Semi-Independent supported accommodation |
| <input type="radio"/> Return to Birth Parents | <input type="radio"/> Renting with others |
| <input type="radio"/> With siblings | <input type="radio"/> Renting alone |
| <input type="radio"/> Student accommodation | <input type="radio"/> Public Housing |
| <input type="radio"/> Other relatives | <input type="radio"/> Unsure |
| <input type="radio"/> Friends | <input type="radio"/> Other |

Please explain why you chose the above. (If you selected "Other", please give details here.)



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Independent Living

18. How concerned are you about becoming independent once your care order ends?

Not at all concerned (1) Very concerned (6)

19. Please explain why you gave the above answer.

20. How confident do you feel that you can manage in the following areas?

	Not at all confident	A little confident	Somewhat confident	Reasonably confident	Quite confident	Very confident
Finding a suitable place to live	<input type="radio"/>					
Being able to pay rent	<input type="radio"/>					
Looking after yourself	<input type="radio"/>					
Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a tenant	<input type="radio"/>					

21. Based on your ratings above, what information and/or resources would help increase your confidence to be able to live independently?

22. Do you know about any of the following? (Please select all that apply.)

- Leaving care info kits (e.g., Go Your Own Way)
- Leaving care apps (e.g., SORTLI)
- Life skills workshops (e.g., CREATE Your Future)
- Dedicated support person (e.g., Leaving Care Officer)
- TILA



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Housing Support and Services

23. Who would you speak with about your housing needs? (Please select all that apply.)

- No one
- Carer
- Caseworker
- Birth parents
- Siblings
- Other (please specify)
- Other relatives
- The Child Safety Department
- Housing Agency
- Post-Care Support Service
- Friends

24. At what age do you think young people in care should begin getting prepared to find a suitable place to live after their care orders end?

- Before 15 years
- 15 years
- 16 years
- 17 years
- 18 years

25. How helpful do you think it would be to be able to return to a supported place (like supported accommodation or with a carer) after turning 18 and becoming independent?

- Not at all helpful
- A little helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Reasonably helpful
- Quite helpful
- Very helpful



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Transition Planning

26. Did your leaving care plan contain details of where you were going to live after turning 18?

- I did not have a leaving care plan
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

27. Who did you speak with about what would happen to your placement once you turned 18 years? (You may select more than one response.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't speak with anyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Birth Parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caseworker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foster Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kinship Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

28. Where did you get information to help you understand your options of where you would live? (You may select more than one response.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with a caseworker | <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with other relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with a residential care worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessed post-care support services (e.g., Next Step Plus, Aftercare, Relationships Australia, Better Futures) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Contacted other community organisation (e.g., Homestretch, Uniting Care) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with birth parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Information from the Department of Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with siblings | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |



29. Where did you live immediately after your care orders ended (when you turned 18)? (Please select one response.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Remained with foster carer | <input type="radio"/> Partner/ Girlfriend/ Boyfriend |
| <input type="radio"/> Remained with kinship carer | <input type="radio"/> Semi-Independent supported accommodation |
| <input type="radio"/> Returned to birth parents | <input type="radio"/> Renting with others |
| <input type="radio"/> With siblings | <input type="radio"/> Renting alone |
| <input type="radio"/> Student accommodation | <input type="radio"/> Public Housing |
| <input type="radio"/> Other relatives | <input type="radio"/> Homeless Shelter or Refuge |
| <input type="radio"/> Friends | <input type="radio"/> Other |

Please explain why you chose this answer. If you selected "Other", please give details.

30. Have you been homeless for any period since leaving care? ("Homeless" here means living in unsafe or inappropriate circumstances for five nights or more continuously.)

- No
 Yes



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

31. For how long, in total, would you estimate you have been homeless?

- About a week
- Two weeks
- About a month
- Between one and three months
- About six months
- Between six months and a year
- Over a year

32. How did you find locating suitable accommodation?

- Very difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- A little difficult
- A little easy
- Somewhat easy
- Very easy

33. What services did you access for support while homeless?

34. How helpful did you find the supports for homelessness you accessed?

- Not at all helpful
- A little helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Reasonably helpful
- Quite helpful
- Very helpful

35. What other support would have helped while your were homeless?



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Independent Living

36. How concerned were you about becoming independent before your care order ended?

Not at all concerned (1) Very concerned (6)

37. Please explain why you gave the above answer.

38. How confident did you feel about the following areas before leaving care?

	Not at all confident	A little confident	Somewhat confident	Reasonably confident	Quite confident	Very confident
Finding a suitable place to live	<input type="radio"/>					
Being able to pay rent	<input type="radio"/>					
Looking after yourself	<input type="radio"/>					
Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a tenant	<input type="radio"/>					

39. Based on your ratings above, what information and/or resources would have helped increase your confidence in being able to live independently?

40. Did you know about any of the following? (Please select all that apply.)

- Leaving care info kits (e.g., Go Your Own Way)
- Leaving care apps (e.g., SORTLI)
- Life skills workshops (e.g., CREATE Your Future)
- Dedicated support person (e.g., Leaving Care Officer)
- TILA



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Housing Support and Services

41. Who did you speak with about your housing needs? (Please select all that apply.)

- No one
- Carer
- Caseworker
- Birth Parents
- Siblings
- Other (please specify)
- Other relatives
- The Child Safety Department
- Housing Agency
- Post-care support service
- Friends

42. Once you left care, did you need any help to find housing?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

Housing Support and Services

43. Who did you go to for help with housing arrangements after you left care? (Select all that apply.)

- Carer
- Caseworker
- Birth Parents
- Siblings
- Other Relatives
- Other (please specify)
- The Child Safety Department
- Housing Agency
- Post-care support service
- Friends

44. How useful did you find the housing support you were able to obtain?

Not at all useful (1) Very useful (6)

45. What might have helped make the support more useful?



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

46. Was there something that made it difficult to find a suitable place to live? (Select all that apply.)

- Didn't have a Leaving Care Plan
- Didn't know where to start
- Unable to afford rent
- Rental criteria
- Other (please specify)
- Unsuitable housing options
- Changes in housing arrangement (e.g., relationship/friendship breakdown)
- Long waiting list (e.g., social/public housing)
- Unsure

47. Was there something that made it difficult to stay in accommodation you found? (Select all that apply)

- Unable to afford rent
- Unsuitable housing options
- Changes in housing arrangement (e.g. relationship/friendship breakdown)
- Other (please specify)

48. At what age do you think young people in care should begin getting prepared to find a suitable place to live after their care orders end?

- Before 15 years
- 15 years
- 16 years
- 17 years
- 18 years



49. How helpful do you think it would be to be able to return to a supported place (like supported accommodation or with a carer) after turning 18 and becoming independent?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Not at all helpful | <input type="radio"/> Reasonably helpful |
| <input type="radio"/> A little helpful | <input type="radio"/> Quite helpful |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat helpful | <input type="radio"/> Very helpful |

Additional comments



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

50. Is there something else you'd like to add about the topic of housing for young people leaving care?



ACT Housing (16 - 21 years)

END OF SURVEY

Thank you for completing this survey. As you have given your consent for CREATE to use your unidentified responses in our reports, we would like to thank you for the time and effort you have taken in answering these questions by giving you a \$25 gift voucher. If you would like to receive this gift, please copy and paste the link below into your web browser and fill in your contact details.

Please be sure that, after copying this link (and before pasting it into a new browser window), you click the "DONE" button below to submit your responses.

Link for voucher:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CREATE_Consent_Thank_You_Housing

If you have any questions about the survey, or if you would like to know more about what CREATE does for children and young people in out-of-home care, contact your local CREATE Office on 1800 655 105



About CREATE

CREATE Foundation is the national peak consumer body for children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We represent the voices of over 45,000 children and young people currently in care, and those who have transitioned from care up to the age of 25.

Our vision is that all children and young people with a care experience reach their full potential.

Our mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care.

To do this we:

- **CONNECT** children and young people to each other, CREATE and their community to
- **EMPOWER** children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard to
- **CHANGE** the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services and increase community awareness.

We achieve our mission by providing a variety of activities and programs for children and young people in care, and conducting research and developing policy to help us advocate for a better care system.