



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 appropriately supported to do so. CREATE believes the leaving-care age should be extended to 21 years, to give young people leaving care the opportunity to transition more gradually with a minimum of stress.

Table 1

Out-of-Home Care National Standards that Apply to Transitioning From 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 invention 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 with their peers who do not have a care history (McDowall, 2009, 2013). Researchers note that data on the outcomes of those transitioning from care in Australia, especially the challenges facing Indigenous care leavers, in many areas are lacking or are unreliable (Campo & Commerford, 2016; Family Matters, 2016; Mendes, Saunders & Badawi, 2016). This is despite the group as a whole being extremely vulnerable, and indigenous young people being “grossly over represented (within) child protection systems” (Family Matters, 2016, p. 7).
- Under the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020, FaHCSIA (2010) called for increased consistency and prioritising transition from out-of-home care for young people. Evidence supports the use of transition services such as the Springboard Program in Victoria to assist young people leaving care. The cost-benefit analysis undertaken as part of this project emphasises the substantial economies possible and the significant returns on investment that could be achieved (Baldry, Trofimovs, Brown, Brackertz, & Fotheringham, 2015).
- 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 reported that 74.4% of young people aged 15 years and over had a leaving care plan. This discrepancy needs to be investigated further to explain the difference between “official” data and the young persons’ perceptions of their individual experience. The GYOW Kit provides a useful resource and a vehicle for communication and engagement of young people, about their leaving care planning.

- 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.
- Results indicate that about half of young people leaving care do not know how to adequately deal with financial issues or 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 would allow the development of greater maturity and enhance positive outcomes for education, service access, and earning capacity (McDowall, 2016).

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, that the leaving care age must be raised nationally to 21 years, and that supports be provided to young people leaving care up to the age of 25 years.

CREATE urges jurisdictions to invest in better planning and targeted resourcing for young people who are leaving care with prioritised and specialised support, 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 supported way, which reflects the involvement of a concerned "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. It is essential that the wellbeing and development of children and young people in care are prioritised when considering placement options to maximise placement stability and support.

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