# Post-Care Services Design Project

## Consultation report

Department for Child Protection

# Contents

# 1 Introduction

The Department for Child Protection ('DCP' / 'the Department') is undertaking a reform project to design a new model for the way it delivers 'post-care services' to young people leaving care.

To inform the reform process, a series of consultations have been undertaken with a range of internal and external stakeholders who are involved with or interface with the Department's post-care services. This includes young people who have accessed the post-care services themselves.

This document provides a summary of the key themes and insights that have emerged from the consultation process.

## 1.1 Context

Post-care support is critical to enable young people to transition successfully from care to independence upon reaching adulthood and leaving their formal care arrangement.

Post-care services have been funded by DCP since 2012 for young people who have left care. Support is available to care leavers who have spent six months or more in out-of-home care in South Australia.

It is important that post-care support services funded by DCP are as effective and efficient as possible. For this reason, DCP is undertaking a review of the post-care services provided in South Australia. The intent of the review is to ensure the current offering best meets existing needs and demands and that any opportunities to strengthen the services and associated ways of working are identified so that these can be explored and acted upon. This will help to ensure that DCP is supporting delivery of the highest standard of service possible, and that any identified changes to service demands are understood and able to be met.

## 1.2 Consultation approach and summary

Consultations with stakeholders were conducted from May to June 2021. Consultations encompassed sessions with the following key stakeholder groups:

- Young people
- Relationships Australia SA
- NGO and ACCO service providers
- DCP staff
- Government agencies
- External bodies.

The focus of the consultation sessions have been to explore:

- the key needs of young people leaving care

- the sorts of services that should be available to care leavers to support their transition to independence

- opportunities to best target and align available funding to meet identified post-care service needs

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

- how best to measure success and support continuous service improvement for young people leaving care.

# 2 Key collective insights

DCP is grateful to all stakeholders who have given of their time to participate in the consultation process for post-care services.

The process has provided a unique opportunity to reflect on existing achievements and identify challenges and opportunities to reshape a service response that best meets the needs of young care leavers.

The key high-level insights and themes that have arisen through the consultation process are summarised below. These together with the consultation feedback summarised in section 3 of this document, provide a foundation to support a service redesign approach to the post-care support service model and changes to ways of working to enhance delivery of support to young people leaving care.

| Post-care services \| Key insights | |
| --- | --- |
| Key insight 1 | That as a community, we should have the same high expectations for young care leavers as we do for any young people transitioning to independent living and adult life. They need the same knowledge, skills, access to information, access to services and supportive connections and relationships. They have the same fundamental needs but in a context of significant and long-standing disadvantage and trauma. |
| Key insight 2 | That in broad terms, the fundamental needs of young care leavers in metropolitan versus country and rural and remote areas are not vastly different. The key differences lie in the accessibility of services (especially face to face services) and the breadth and volume of services available. |
| Key insight 3 | That young care leavers need access to a service and support system that supports and encourages learning, understands mistakes will occur and helps them to understand setbacks and learning are a part of growth. |
| Key insight 4 | That young people transitioning from non-family-based care tend to have more complex and acute post-care needs. |
| Key insight 5 | That access to safe and suitable accommodation is a critical foundation stone for young people leaving care. Without a place to call home and skills and knowledge to maintain that housing, it is very difficult for young people to dedicate energy and focus on the development of other skills needed to successfully transition to adult independent living. Access to appropriate, affordable housing options and support to maintain housing once it has been secured are a significant challenge. |

| Post-care services | Key insights |
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**Key insight 6**  That providing practical support and guidance to young care leavers that helps them draw upon natural helpers and to establish trusting relationships and connections in the community that are not directly linked to a post-care service provider is a critical part of an overall post-care service response.  The ability to form natural connections and to have at least one such connection as part of a post-care journey can provide a young person with access to a trusted advocate, supporter and listening ear through life's inevitable ups and downs. It can also help to manage the risk of social isolation, long after post-care support services may have ceased.

**Key insight 7**  That post-care services need to offer a range of ways to provide information, support and services to young care leavers. Connection should wherever possible be made between young people and services before young people leave care. For some young people this will require a proactive assertive approach which may be flexed up and down over time to meet their needs. It is critical that support and guidance is accessible to all young care leavers, if and when they choose to engage.

**Key insight 8**  That measures of success for any post-care support response should focus on the achievement of 'outcomes' and not on 'activities'. Success should be measured through acquisition of skills, knowledge, confidence and gradual moves towards independence on the part of young people who have left care. Recording the number of times efforts were made to connect with a young person, does not provide enough information about whether the service response is making a real difference.

**Key insight 9**  Post-care service providers must have well established networks and pathways into key services such as housing, physical and mental health, employment and education so that they can better support young people transitioning from care.

# 3  Summary of feedback

The feedback from the consultation sessions held as part of the post-care engagement process has been summarised under the following four key topic areas (set out in sections 3.1 to 3.4 below) for ease of reference:

- What support do young people need post-care?
- When do young people most need support?
- How should services be delivered?
- How will we know what success looks like?

It is important to note that the summary is intended to address the main points and themes raised during the consultation sessions and is not intended to reflect every piece of feedback provided.

Finally, across the consultation sessions there was a strong emphasis on the importance of supporting young people to develop key foundation knowledge, skills and abilities that will support them in the successful transition from care, well before they turn 18 years of age.

While the focus of the consultation sessions addressed in this paper was on post-care service delivery and supports for young care leavers from ages 18-25 years, DCP acknowledges the valuable feedback about the need to prepare young care leavers for transition at a much earlier age. In this context, DCP will be considering opportunities to implement changes across other services and areas of the care continuum outside the remit of the existing post-care project, as a means of addressing this point.

## 3.1  What support do young people need post-care?

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| NEEDS OVERALL | ▶ Observations and feedback about the needs of young care leavers highlighted the following points about their needs overall:<br><br>— Young care leavers widely acknowledge that like all young people, they 'don't know what they don't know'.<br>— Young care leavers want to be able to live healthy, happy lives as young adults but often don't know where to start.<br>— Initial feelings of freedom, relief and excitement that a young person may feel at the point of leaving care can quickly be replaced by overwhelm, a realisation that it is the beginning of a totally new experience, and feelings of loneliness and social isolation.<br>— Young care leavers are vulnerable to exploitation by others and need awareness of this and the development of skills and strategies to keep themselves safe.<br>— Face to face / in person engagement and contact is more effective overall than more passive forms of contact. Text messages, emails and other forms of engagement can be effective and might be preferred by some young people once a relationship is established.<br>— Young people need the opportunity to access support and services readily and easily when they are needed. Meeting these needs requires innovative approaches to service delivery which might include: face to face engagement; drop in centres; shop front engagement through service providers; after hours help line etc.<br>— The intensity and nature of support needed differs from one young person to another and can be impacted by age, care background, child protection history, cultural and linguistic background, whether the young person is living with a disability or has other special needs and location (metropolitan versus regional). A flexible approach is needed to post-care support.<br>— Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people need access to culturally appropriate services. Critical activities such as securing safe housing can be rendered very difficult due to complexities in navigating visa requirements and accessing security and identification documents including proof of Australian citizenship.<br>— Many Aboriginal young care leavers need support and guidance to help them (re)connect to country, community and culture. Access to culturally safe and appropriate services is so important.<br>— Young care leavers who are parents need access to parenting knowledge and supports.  There is a role here for proactive contact and support given that many young parents carry fear about their children being taken into care if they ask for help. Access to CAFHS services which cease when a child turns 2 can create a gap in services for children between the age of 2 and preschool.<br>— Young people moving back to regional areas from metropolitan areas after they leave care are at risk of isolation and loneliness. There is a need for greater local regional support networks and contact points and/or a key worker that a young person can have a face to face relationship with after they turn 18.<br>— Young people living with disability or who have special needs require access to appropriate ongoing or new supports including in areas including the adult guardianship system through the Office of the Public Advocate. |

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| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| **RESIDENTIAL CARE LEAVERS** | ► The needs of young people leaving residential care are often more complex and acute than for young people leaving family-based care. Reasons for this can include the absence in their life of positive family-based, carer or community connections and trusted people to turn to in times of crisis. Other key feedback includes:<br><br>— Residential care leavers often lack understanding and knowledge about basic life and independent living skills, having come from a living environment where most tasks are undertaken by others or are supported.<br>— Care leavers need support, guidance and encouragement to develop independence, which takes time.<br>— Care leavers often have more complex needs and can exhibit more challenging behaviours than young people from family-based care backgrounds and can require higher levels of support.<br>— Some residential care leavers report feelings of loneliness and isolation after leaving care and a need for access to additional supports to help them discuss and work through these feelings and reduce the risk of them resorting to risky choices or behaviours as a means of managing anxiety and change.<br>— While young residential care leavers may present as streetwise and reluctant to engage, it is very common for them to return to their former care environment seeking support with independent living tasks and skills. |
| **HOUSING** | ► Critical support required in relation to housing is two-fold: (1) support to find appropriate, affordable accommodation and (2) support to maintain housing once it has been secured.<br><br>(1) Regarding support to find appropriate, affordable accommodation, key feedback includes the following points:<br><br>— Finding safe and appropriate housing and avoiding homelessness is the single greatest area of immediate need.<br>— Housing needs for young people leaving residential care are typically more acute given the absence (often) of any available accommodation alternatives with family, kinship carers, foster carers etc.<br>— Feasible housing options are extremely limited with often very long waiting times. Public housing options are limited, don't provide access to the supports young people need, and can perpetuate the negative stigma that many young people feel.<br>— Affordable community and other private housing options are often very limited and out of reach for many young people for reasons including cost and the fact that many landlords and corporations are often reticent to house young care leavers.<br>— For Aboriginal young people, securing stable housing is more than just about placement and is about family links, relationships and re-building connection with community. Aboriginal young people need support from DCP or other agencies in developing stronger relationships with communities to support transition.<br>— Housing options ideally need to be located close to support and other services to maximise the chances of independent living being successful.<br>— Lack of housing availability and housing options is a source of high levels of stress, anxiety and uncertainty for young care leavers about their future. This is amplified for young people with special needs or living with a disability.<br>— Existing legislative and other constraints means that young people are unable to sign tenancy agreements or apply for utilities accounts until they are aged 18. This creates an additional barrier to securing housing at or before a young person turns 18. |

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| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — It should not be assumed that young care leavers exiting family-based care will not have challenges accessing or sustaining housing. Circumstances can change quickly, and young people need knowledge about how to seek support when it is needed.<br><br>— Securing housing is complex and involves numerous factors that young care leavers have very limited, if any, knowledge about or awareness of. These include:<ul><li>Identifying and connecting with prospective housing providers.</li><li>Navigating the rules or requirements pertaining to different housing options and providers.</li><li>Preparing documentation needed to apply for housing in the first place (references, bank statements, birth certificate, driver's licence etc).</li><li>Accessing the most appropriate housing options if a young person has a disability or other special needs or where housing modifications may need to be made.</li></ul>— There is a need for alternative housing models to be considered. Examples include:<ul><li>Share housing (noting that living alone can be a challenging proposition especially for young people who have been in residential care for many years but noting also that shared housing will not be suitable for all young people).</li><li>Transitional housing options such as groups of apartments or units where young people have access to support on site to assist them in building a skill and knowledge base in securing and maintaining their own independent housing.</li><li>Increased access to integrated learning and accommodation settings.</li></ul>— Young care leavers need access to mentors and advocates to assist them in navigating housing options and in supporting them if and when an existing housing arrangement falls through. Help needs to be available whenever it is needed as housing arrangements can change quickly. A young person who is in housing can easily fall into homelessness without access to the right knowledge or support.<br><br>— Housing options for young care leavers need to factor in scope for learning and making mistakes.<br><br>(2) Regarding support young care leavers need to maintain housing once it has been secured, key feedback includes the following points:<br><br>— Maintaining housing once secured requires an additional body of knowledge and skill which young care leavers need support with. This includes:<ul><li>Provision of information about renting including rights and responsibilities of tenants and rental processes (e.g. applying for rental properties, rental bonds and how these work, rental payments, inspections, being a good neighbour, lease renewals and leaving a tenancy).</li><li>Practical knowledge about maintaining a house such as cleaning, looking after gardens and lawns, notifying of any repairs or damage.</li><li>Information about sub-letting or having other people stay at the premises, noting often high rates of domestic violence.</li></ul>— There is a need for access to information and education about being a good tenant.<br><br>— Additional financial support is often needed for costs associated with establishing independent housing e.g. purchasing furniture, a bed, linen and a fridge. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — Awareness is required about eligibility for and access to relevant grants and subsidies to support independent living. This includes the Commonwealth Government Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA), Dame Roma Mitchell Grants, brokerage and other funding sources. |
| **LIVING AND PRACTICAL SKILLS** | ► Young people leaving care need and want to learn how to advocate and make good decisions for themselves, understand and take ownership of what being independent means, build stability, a sense of self and a sense of pride in their achievements.<br><br>► Support and advocacy is needed to help them develop the same basic living and practical support skills that all young people leaving home/care need. Without these skills, safe, healthy independent living is difficult to achieve.<br><br>► Examples include:<br>— Buying cost-effective, healthy fruit, vegetables, and other ingredients.<br>— Cost-effective meal planning, food handling, preparation, and cooking.<br>— Maintaining a clean and hygienic living environment.<br>— Using electrical appliances and managing utilities (washing machine, cleaning and maintaining a fridge, managing a power blackout or blown fuse).<br>— Navigating government and other services and accessing personal records and documents (i.e. signing up for MyGov, interfacing with Centrelink, applying for a birth certificate or driver's licence for identification purposes).<br>— Advice and assistance regarding training and employment options (how and where to access training courses or employment support and advice; understanding about salaries, superannuation and tax; accessing concessions for courses and other fees; how to prepare a resume and a letter of application for a course or job)<br>— Support acquiring a driver's licence, including access to driving lessons/achieving required number of learner driving hours (this is seen as critical to a young person achieving independence and enabling access to job opportunities).<br>— Navigating the criminal justice system.<br>— Identifying and pursuing areas of interest (i.e. sport, the outdoors, reading club, craft, technology). |
| **FINANCIAL LITERACY** | ► Support to develop basic financial literacy needed for adult living and independence, is a key area of need for young care leavers including:<br>— An understanding of the costs of independent living, the breakdown and prioritisation of these costs.<br>— Differentiating between critical versus optional costs and how to manage living costs week to week.<br>— Budgeting, bill paying (including negotiating instalment payments).<br>— Use of credit facilities (Afterpay etc), credit checks and management of any existing or new debts (court fees, fines etc).<br>— Understanding the implications of long-term debts on credit ratings, ability to secure independent housing etc. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

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| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| **HEALTH AND WELLBEING** | ► Many young care leavers don't know where to start when it comes to health and wellbeing. It feels like there is so much to know but they are unsure how to access the information and skills they need.<br><br>► Practical support and assistance is needed to access information and develop skills so that young care leavers can take care of their own physical and mental health and seek professional help if and when needed. Examples include understanding how to:<br><br>— Independently manage their own health conditions and support wellness and wellbeing, including through healthy nutrition, hydration, good hygiene practices and rest.<br><br>— Find an appropriate medical practitioner, dentist or other allied health provider.<br><br>— Manage payment for health and wellbeing services, including bulk billing options and whether alternatives such as ambulance cover or private health cover may be more cost-effective options for them if they can afford it (i.e. what does it cost, how does it work, is it worth having?)<br><br>— Make appointments or arrange mental health or other health and wellbeing assessments and schedule check-ups.<br><br>— Fill a prescription and manage medications.<br><br>— Navigate Medicare, NDIS, the adult mental health system and registering for and using on-line services such as MyGov.<br><br>► Young care leavers see access to mental health care services and supports as a critical area of need for them and important in helping them to manage ongoing impacts of trauma:<br><br>— The impacts of trauma do not stop when they turn 18, but it can be at this time that ready access to mental health support stops or becomes much more difficult.<br><br>— Transitioning from care into independent living can involve such huge change and anxiety. Not having ready access to mental health support can have significant consequences and impact the ability of a young care leaver to live successfully in the community.  The experience of learning to live independently can be a triggering experience in itself because it is so different.<br><br>— The impacts of trauma can strike and cause relapses at any time. Access to mental health support and advice must be ongoing and not time limited.<br><br>► Young people need their mental health needs recognised and addressed by skilled, knowledgeable people who understand their unique and individual circumstances.<br><br>► Meeting a young person's emotional and wellbeing needs can be challenging as it is influenced by their willingness to engage. Some young people show willingness to engage but not all want emotional/wellbeing support. Young people who don't want to engage however still need to know where to go and who to connect with in the event they want support at a later point. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| **CREATING CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS** | ▶ Supporting young care leavers to develop safe, natural connections, relationships and networks of belonging is vital.<br><br>▶ Creating new or rekindling old connections and relationships at the point of leaving care is important because many long-standing relationships and connections a young person may have had in care change or come to an end post-care.<br><br>▶ Young care leavers are no different to any cohort of the population. Having a safe and trusting connection even with one person can make a significant difference. Having a person to go to for support, to talk to, seek advice from, to go to in times of crisis and who has the best interests of the young person at heart is so important.<br><br>▶ A safe and secure connection might take many different forms depending on the young person and their circumstances and include: a family member, community member, kinship carer, foster carer, mentor, peer (another person who themselves were once in care), a case manager, DCP Young Person's Group, sporting or special interest club, Aboriginal granny groups, men's groups or other groups, service provider or worker.<br><br>▶ Connections that transcend a particular service or service provider, make use of the existing social capital and which can be sustained longer term in adult life are vitally important.<br><br>▶ Other considerations relating to young people creating connections include:<br>  — That it is not uncommon for young care leavers to seek reconnection with family members/community/culture after many years.<br>  — That young care leavers may want support to connect with siblings who are still in care.<br>  — The need for young people to have support to identify, develop and manage safe and healthy relationships and minimise exploitation.<br>  — That young people lose the connection they've built with DCP case workers when leaving care, which may lead them to experience feelings of loss, grief and depression.<br>  — That young people often have to tell their story multiple times to new people as part of accessing support services or building new relationships.<br>  — Young people often contact their former DCP case worker or residential care worker after leaving care if they do not have any other trusting relationship with a person who understands their circumstance and history. |
| **EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION** | ▶ Links to education and employment are critical to enabling young care leavers to earn income necessary to support everyday living and to feel part of and engaged in the community in a meaningful way.<br><br>▶ Considerations include:<br>  — Moving away from engendering a 'welfare' culture. Young people want to have agency.<br>  — Supporting young people to explore their goals and aspirations and accessing services to assist them in achieving these and linking them to courses for ongoing learning.<br>  — Supporting young people to engage/re-engage with studies, including building their confidence in learning. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

OFFICIAL

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — Assistance with course enrolment, paying course fees and associated costs which can be a barrier to training and study.<br>— Assistance to engage with TAFE and other learning institutions, including practical support (i.e. someone taking them there and showing them how to get involved) and understanding course requirements.<br>— Assistance entering the workforce and sustaining employment. |
| DISABILITY | ▶ Young care leavers living with a disability or who have special needs require access to support and advocacy from individuals and/or care workers who understand the disability/special needs landscape and can assist them in learning about and navigating services.<br><br>▶ Access to or the relationship with NDIS services can deteriorate when DCP is no longer involved in supporting a young person in this space. These young people are particularly vulnerable and at high risk of isolation.<br><br>▶ Young people with a disability need someone to monitor their NDIS plan, provide hands-on engagement supervision and case management.<br><br>▶ Young people with a mild disability who do not have an NDIS plan require additional support and services.<br><br>▶ These young people often cannot find jobs or access study, and it is unclear what happens to them after the age of 21 if family-based carers cannot continue to support them.<br><br>▶ Specialised support and assistance are needed to help young people with a disability who may never have the capacity to fully self-manage. Adult guardianship arrangements may need to be put in place from age 18 years which are complex and take time to arrange.<br><br>▶ Young people with a disability living in regional areas may need support to relocate to Adelaide to access appropriate ongoing care and services. |

## 3.2  When do young people most need support?

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| GENERAL POINTS | ▶ Ages 18-21 is seen as being a critical period to support young people leaving care:<br><br>— The initial transition from care is a significant step for most young people and is marked by significant change across all life domains.<br>— In the early weeks and months a young person needs to navigate various systems and processes needed for independent living simultaneously (identifying safe and stable housing, furnishing a house and buying food, nutrition and self-care, job seeking and managing cultural, social, physical and mental health needs).<br>— Strong connections and supports are needed particularly at this time.<br><br>▶ While young care leavers typically need a greater level of support when first leaving care, delays in young people themselves recognising this need can result in a delay in seeking help or engaging. It is common for assistance to be sought at around age 21 when young people find themselves in crisis. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

OFFICIAL

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | ► There can be an assumption that as adults, young people leaving care should be left to choose if they want to access support, however many stakeholders observe that some young people will not self-identify until they are in crisis. Those with the greatest need are often the hardest to engage with. |
| | ► The needs of young care leavers and the time when they need the most support will depend on the individual young person and be impacted significantly by their independent knowledge and skill base at the point of leaving care. Undertaking a baseline assessment at or prior to age 18 is likely to assist in identifying young people at higher risk and with higher support needs. |
| | ► If young people have the right access to knowledge, information, skill development and support, a successful transition to adult life and independent living may see young people requiring less intensive and frequent support as they develop and mature. |
| | ► Intensity of service provision to individual young people needs to adjust over time, with the greatest intensity required early in the post-care planning process, which decreases over time. Ideally, by age 25 a young care leaver would be demonstrating strong independence and autonomy and have at least one (but ideally more) trusting, safe connection. |
| | ► In addition to transition planning from 15 years of age, the efficacy of post-care support could be bolstered significantly by any contracted post-care support service first engaging with a young person before they turn 18 (as a 'warm introduction'). This could improve the chances of a more established and trusting relationship being sustained post-care. |
| | ► Access to post-care services for young people should not be removed due to lack of active engagement. Services should remain accessible and available for a young person until they turn 26. Some young people may not want to engage with services upon leaving care and should be provided with information and a pathway for accessing the service later/at any time needed until age 26. |

## 3.3 How should services be delivered?

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| OVERARCHING SERVICE APPROACH | ► There are several factors that need to be taken into account in any post-care service model to maximise the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives and experience of young care leavers. These include:<br>— An aspirational vision for young people leaving care that extends to stable housing, education and employment.<br>— Respect for the desire and need of young people to have agency over their lives and support for young people in building and developing a sense of autonomy while simultaneously building skills for life.<br>— A strong focus on providing ongoing support and guidance to young people to foster and develop natural connections and relationships in their life (at least one connection) that can be sustained and remain in their life ongoing, beyond any specific post-care service or model.<br>— Minimising the risk of longer-term case worker/service coordinator reliance and instead supporting young people to achieve independence and agency through encouraging family, community and cultural connections. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

OFFICIAL

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — Early communication and engagement with young care leavers about post-care support services, what they are and how they can assist, and working with young people to identify their skill and knowledge base areas for focus to support a safe transition to independent living. Examples include 'road shows' and other means of getting information to young care leavers about support available to them.<br><br>— A service system that supports young people as they are learning and growing and allows them to make mistakes.<br><br>— Consideration of a change of name from 'Post-Care Services' to something that resonates better with young people and clearly describes what the service is about.<br><br>— An individual but programmatic service response.<br><br>— Strengthened dedicated service support in regional and remote areas.<br><br>— Development of a sector-wide framework that identifies the foundation life skills and knowledge young people need to support transition from care and key milestones to be achieved by particular ages/stages (able to be adjusted to individual circumstances).<br><br>— Use of a baseline assessment (a form of 'triage') to understand where a young person is at in terms of foundation living and life skills when they turn 18. This can be used to inform a more focussed service/support response (noting the strong feedback that any work that can be undertaken to support skills development prior to leaving care is important).<br><br>— A service based on genuine, proactive, accessible, responsive, and assertive active engagement with young people relative to their identified need. Features may include:<br><br>  ▪ A central person (or small team) known to and trusted by a young person to support them in their journey to establish agency and independence post-care, including coaching and mentoring, helping to coordinate and create links with other services and supports based on the needs of the individual young person.<br><br>  ▪ Regular and assertive engagement and follow up, especially during periods of disengagement, missing appointments etc.<br><br>  ▪ Being available and responsive when a young person is ready to engage.<br><br>  ▪ Willingness to visit locations where young people spend time, including where they live.<br><br>  ▪ Recognition that it will take time for a young person to build a new trusting relationship.<br><br>  ▪ Ongoing periodic engagement and check-ins even when it may seem that a young person is progressing well (things can change quickly and we all like to know someone cares about us).<br><br>— Face to face service provision wherever possible, noting that calls (including video calls/FaceTime) and texts may be effective once a trusting relationship is established. Communicating by email may be less engaging for young people.<br><br>— A flexible and agile service that can address the diverse needs of young people, manage and respond to changes in their needs over time and support young people who may be more transient or live in rural and remote areas.<br><br>— Access to support out of hours and on weekends.<br><br>— Workers who are trained in trauma informed engagement, understand the complexity and disadvantage faced by young care leavers, have strong interpersonal and relationship building skills and knowledge of community agencies and networks. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — Focus on a 'warm' service introduction in care environment or other safe environment in the months prior to leaving care to allow time for a young person to build familiarity and trust with main post-care worker/service provider point of contact. Existing DCP case worker or residential care worker could be involved in the process to facilitate a smooth transition.<br><br>— Easily accessible information and resources for young care leavers about what services are available and how to access them, including consideration of online and social media presence.<br><br>— Regard for respectful and appropriate information sharing between DCP, carers and post-care support service/s to better support transition from care and to minimise the need for young people to have to repeat their stories multiple times.<br><br>As part of the consultation process, many different ideas were put forward for a possible post-care service format or elements that could form part of any revised post-care service response. These are underpinned by the considerations set out immediately above. The summary below captures some of the ideas put forward, arranged under key topics for ease of reference.<br><br>While overall, stakeholders agreed on the foundations for a sound model (per the section above), a variety of different suggestions were put forward for the way that services might best be delivered. Where different suggestions were put forward on the same topic, this is reflected below. |
| SERVICE RESPONSE | ► **Introduction of service/service response to young person:**<br><br>— Service response to ideally 'reach in' to care environment early to support a relationship being built before a young person leaves care and therefore increasing the chance of an ongoing connection once a young person turns 18.<br><br>► **Location/format of services:**<br><br>— A flexible approach that provides different options for young people to access support when they need it, in ways that feel non-threatening and accessible to them, and which combines:<br><br>  ▪ Local, place-based service to provide young people with a tangible/visible place they connect with and can go to access support (service provider shop front concept; co-located with other services or based in DCP offices).<br><br>  ▪ Scope for outreach service provision that can support meeting young people where they are or at places that are most convenient for them (close to work, at a familiar known location, a park etc).<br><br>  ▪ Weekend and after hours support through a help line or number to call for advice when it is needed (i.e. in the case of an electrical black out on a weekend, mental health challenges etc). Consider a 24/7 phone line staffed by a rotating roster of support workers for young people to access a range of practical assistance and emotional support.<br><br>  ▪ Access to activities including interest-based programs for young people to attend (e.g. community based), structured activities offered weekly/regularly (e.g. building relationships). |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

OFFICIAL

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | - Access to information and resources whether via a social media page, dedicated internet page etc.<br><br>— Drop-in centres: There were differences of opinion about the value of establishing drop-in centres such as 'post-care hubs'. Some stakeholders expressed concern that hubs may stigmatise young people and/or duplicate similar existing services. Others saw benefit of drop-in centres to promote diverse service approaches and engagement, community involvement, volunteer participation by former care leavers and others and leverage off a broader base of worker skills and knowledge that a specialist service could provide.  Supporters suggested:<br><br>  - A community location (e.g. shopping centres) to assist young people to develop a sense of belonging.<br>  - Utilisation of diverse service approaches/touch points to maximise engagement with young people, including those with particular needs (e.g. cultural, gender, sexual identity, disability).<br>  - Provision of access to resources at the hub (e.g. purchase of public transport tickets, sexual health, internet access, social connection, food bank).<br>  - Use of volunteers including former care leavers; peer support provided by people with lived experience; DCP staff volunteering to be accessible to young people they have previously worked with.<br><br>► **Online services and phone apps:**<br><br>— While face to face and phone contact are generally more effective, online approaches do suit some young people (Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram especially).<br><br>— Engagement with young people could be undertaken with young care leavers to advise on best methods for engagement and language that is most accessible.<br><br>— Technology should be utilised as effectively as possible as a secondary/backup service approach, noting that not all young people have ready access to social media or online services.<br><br>— Traditional web-pages may have limited appeal for young people. Use of avatars or online problem solving/support tools may be more attractive.<br><br>— Provision of a post-care handbook (information and service links) could be enhanced through an on-line format.<br><br>► **Method of delivering service/model:**<br><br>— Centralised lead worker to engage, support and advocate for the young person:<br><br>  - Providing young people with a generic link to a service is not sufficient and unlikely to support good engagement.<br>  - Young people feel it important to have a tangible link to post-care support – ideally a single person/team to engage with the young person, support and educate them in understanding and navigating various services and supports and advocating for them. Often there are multiple services and supports to be accessed and navigated which is overwhelming.  It is not enough to provide information to young people about how or where to access services. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

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| | <ul><li>Support for a case management model, including as a mechanism to share information, prevent a young person having to retell their story and provide information and records to services, ensure key information is considered, identify the young person's needs and strengths and work with a young person on progressing a plan to move to independence.</li><li>Alignment with other useful and successful tools and models to support young people to develop emotional intelligence and strength (e.g. the Sanctuary Model that DCP is implementing in residential care).</li><li>Consider 'matching' a young person with a worker if feasible to maximise the opportunity for formation of a positive, trusting relationship.</li><li>Consider a name for the support service/worker that engenders a positive, capacity-building connotation (i.e. 'life coach' versus 'social worker' or 'case manager'.)</li></ul>— Mentoring:<ul><li>Incorporate concept of volunteer mentors into a post-care service response so that young people have the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship outside the context of the formal government-auspiced post-care system.</li><li>Evidence from other services and jurisdictions may indicate mentors with lived experience of the care environment may have a positive impact with some young people.</li><li>Recruitment of volunteer mentors from local geographical areas to aid links with young person and familiarity with locale.</li><li>Reference other similar initiatives to provide useful insights and learnings to inform model.</li><li>Preferable to identify volunteer mentor before a young person leaves care.</li><li>Mentoring models require effort (including training) and time to establish but can deliver strong benefits.</li></ul>— Family Conferencing-type approaches.<br>► **Frequency and intensity of service provision:**<br>— Flexibility is required to adapt the frequency and intensity of service provision to suit the individual needs of each young person.<br>— Conceptually, contact could be more frequent initially to provide the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with a young person (i.e. weekly/fortnightly contact), with capacity to adjust to less frequent visits over time (i.e. monthly/bi-monthly) if the young person is progressing well and feels they have access to adequate support.<br>— As a young person progresses more with their journey to full independence, frequency of contact may taper off.<br>— It is preferable to introduce a young person to a service provider/support person prior to leaving care. This may impact the frequency and intensity of contact required post-care. |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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— Assertive efforts to engage regularly with young care leavers are extremely important, especially in the initial stages of relationship building. It is important for a young person to feel they have someone who is thinking about their wellbeing. Absence of willingness on the part of a young person to engage initially should not result in a passive response (i.e. a service stopping contact and waiting for a young person to engage).

— Annual reviews could be undertaken between ages 18 to 25 to monitor progress being made by care leavers against a transition plan agreed at the point of them leaving care, to ensure service response is delivering value and the goals of a young person are being met/progressed. Service frequency and intensity may increase or decrease subject to review of annual progress or as indicated by the young person.

— Even once a young person feels they are progressing well, periodic check-in mechanisms are important as circumstances can quickly change.

► **Cross-sector service prioritisation/protocols:**

— Identify and consider opportunities for cross-sector agencies and services to implement service prioritisation models and protocols to better support young care leavers. Examples include:

▪ Young care leavers being given priority for accessing housing.

▪ Income management between DCP and Centrelink as a standard approach to minimise risk of tenancy breakdowns.

▪ Waiving or significantly discounting fees for study, scholarship and apprenticeship/placement opportunities across government and private sectors.

▪ Reduced application fees for key documentation including licenses, passports and birth certificates.

▪ Priority access to physical and mental health care services and supports for reduced fee structures for accessing these services.

**COUNTRY AREAS**

► It is important for service response in country areas to be largely the same as for metropolitan areas with adjustments to meet local needs as required.

► Face to face contact is just as important for young people living in rural and remote areas as for metropolitan living. Existing post-care model facilitates limited support to rural and remote areas.

► Having workers based in or able to travel across rural and remote areas is necessary to deliver the right levels of support to young care leavers.

► While telehealth is technically an available service delivery option for country areas, data costs for young people will often make this prohibitive.

► Young people returning to country areas from care in metropolitan areas may need support to rebuild relationships and connections that have been lost over time.

► Service response for young people returning to country areas may need to include mechanisms to support the transition, including minimising the need for a young person to repeat their story many times.

► Opportunities exist in country areas for collaboration between multiple services and stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive post-care service offering.

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| **ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE** | ► The service response for young Aboriginal community members must be culturally aware and appropriate to allow young people to feel understood, heard and to trust in the service supports offered. This should include access to Aboriginal staff where possible and links to existing cultural groups and services.<br><br>► Young Aboriginal care leavers need support to develop real cultural connections with family and community. This is a gradual process and can take time, especially if commencing from age 18. Critical needs for young people establishing/re-establishing cultural and community connections include:<br><br>— Establishing two-way connections (bringing community into the life of the young person and in turn preparing the young person to return to country).<br><br>— Understanding who they are related to.<br><br>— Knowing the true kinship structure and who to make first contact with.<br><br>— Understanding kinship responsibilities.<br><br>— Meeting community members.<br><br>— Developing connections that can be sustained and bring consistency and permanency.<br><br>► Important elements for consideration include:<br><br>— Assertive engagement or efforts to engage over time.<br><br>— Increased capacity for face to face service support.<br><br>— Services that are easy to access (recognising that online services may not be appropriate).<br><br>— Access to translation or other assistance to address language barriers.<br><br>► Incorporating a general healing/restorative approach and the capacity to source parenting support for stolen generation descendants may help a post-care service response to be relevant for Aboriginal young people<br><br>► Aboriginal young people are likely to benefit from having access to cultural mentors and Aboriginal workers from a young person's area with good community knowledge (i.e. a worker or mentor that is known to and/or has a culturally significant relationship with the young person to avoid generic service provision).<br><br>► Work may be required once a revised service model is established to create awareness and increase confidence in the model amongst the Aboriginal community given there are not strong levels of confidence in the existing model as a result of capacity and other limitations. |
| **CALD YOUNG PEOPLE** | ► Young CALD community members should have access to services that are culturally aware and allow young people to feel understood, heard and to trust in the service supports offered. This should include access to CALD staff where possible and links to existing cultural groups and services.<br><br>► Important elements for consideration include: |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — Assertive engagement or efforts to engage over time. |
| | — Increased capacity for face to face service support. |
| | — Services that are easy to access (recognising that online services may not be appropriate). |
| | — Access to translation or other assistance to address language barriers. |
| | ► CALD young people are likely to benefit from having access to cultural mentors and workers with good community knowledge (i.e. a worker or mentor that is known to and/or has a culturally significant relationship with the young person to avoid generic service provision). |

## 3.4  How will we know what success looks like?

| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| MEASURES OF SUCCESS | ► Practical measures, including direct input from young care leavers are critical. |
| | ► Merely attempting to engage a young person is not of itself a sufficient measure of success.  It is important to measure outcomes as well as relevant activities. |
| | ► Ultimate measure of success is a happy, healthy young person who is progressing in line with their transition plan to successful autonomous living. |
| | ► Many different means of measuring success. Outcomes may be different for specific groups (Aboriginal, CALD, disability). Indicators might include: |
| | — progress of a young person against a baseline assessment transition plan |
| | — introduction to / engagement with post-care services prior to turning 18 |
| | — engagement with post-care services after a period of non-engagement |
| | — reduced levels of homelessness amongst young people leaving care |
| | — positive/stable mental health and wellbeing /reduced mental health admissions |
| | — use of self-care practices |
| | — finishing year 12 |
| | — staying in education/training |
| | — gaining employment |
| | — making/retaining family, community and/or cultural connections (Tracey Westerman tool) |
| | — having at least one natural connection outside of a post - care service response (i.e. volunteer mentor, family, friend) |
| | — establishing, maintaining, and retaining suitable housing |

**Post-Care Services Design Project | Consultation report**

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| AREA | KEY POINTS FROM CONSULTATION |
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| | — reduced number of 18–25-year-olds contacting DCP and requesting support<br>— a young person who is ready to leave / 'graduate' from post-care services, having achieved a level of skill, autonomy and confidence that the young person is comfortable with<br>— evidence of breaking the child protection cycle (longer term measure)<br><br>— young person having less reliance on services, and increasing their resilience<br>— young person demonstrating knowledge of what is available to them and who to contact for services, information and assistance<br>— small successes that show life skills are being learnt (i.e. paying bills via BPAY)<br><br>► Consider basing some measures on agreed milestones. For example, completing year 12 or maintaining stable housing for more than 12 months.<br>► May also be opportunities to include a measure/s with a specific service provision focus. For example:<br>    — Effective liaison and service coordination between post-care service and other related services (housing, disability etc).<br>    — Consistent approaches across post-care services and providers that form an effective overall continuum/suite of services and approaches. |
| METHODS FOR MEASUREMENT | ► Methods for measuring success should include direct feedback from young care leavers, possibly through a survey or annual check in. Suggestions include:<br>    — Tracking the progress of young people via existing groups/forums.<br>    — Encouraging young people to participate in feedback sessions by providing a meal/voucher.<br>    — Undertaking on-line surveys.<br>    — Use of a 'suggestion box' at service touch-points (e.g. drop in centres).<br>► Assessment could be made about whether young people are thriving across life domains using an existing methodology/tool.<br>► Life domains outlined in existing DCP Transition from Care Plan may provide a useful framework for data collection, outcomes achieved by young people and service accountability.<br>► Consider conducting exit interviews with young people leaving post-care service at age 25 to gather data and obtain views about what has and hasn't worked well and apply findings to continuously improve services over time. |