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| Better Futures allocation and prioritisation |
| Practice advice updated December 2021 |
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## Purpose

Better Futures is a new service and practice model designed to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care to supported independence, up to the age of 21. It is guided by a Better Futures (Advantaged Thinking) practice framework and support is tailored to meet the individual needs of young people.

This practice advice outlines the allocation and prioritisation processes when eligible young people are referred to Better Futures.

## Audience

Child protection practitioners, community service organisations (CSOs) contracted case managers, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) case managers (herein referred to as case managers), Better Futures workers, Agency Performance and System Support (APSS) advisers, divisional Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officers and other key workers supporting young people in scope of Better Futures.

## Introduction

Better Futures aims to support young people achieve successful and independent adult lives; helping them to have an active voice in decisions about their future and guiding their transition to adulthood and independent living across a range of life areas, including:

* housing
* health and wellbeing
* education
* employment, and
* community and cultural connections.

These five life areas are referred to as “offers” under the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework.

Young people are eligible for Better Futures support from 15 years and 9 months until their 21st birthday.

The model promotes early referrals at 15 years and 9 months ensuring all eligible young people are aware of and are linked to a post care support service. Early referrals also provide Better Futures the opportunity to offer secondary consultations to care teams in the development and implementation of the 15+ Care and Transition Plans.

When young people are in care and still some time away from transitioning to independence, the primary role of Better Futures is likely to be the provision of secondary consultation to case managers and care teams and facilitating access to flexible funding to support the implementation of the 15+ Care and Transition Plan. As young people near the point of leaving care (approximately six months prior to cessation of their order), their circumstances are reviewed, and the Better Futures service response may intensify to ensure their smooth transition from care.

Better Futures service response includes:

* direct case work support (levels of support will flex up and down according to their needs, existing support networks and the transition goals identified)
* information and advice
* access to flexible funding to facilitate the young person’s access to housing, education, employment, health and wellbeing support
* community connections, and
* Home Stretch.

## Referral to Better Futures

Depending on Better Futures local area implementation arrangements, referrals are accepted by:

* a nominated Better Futures provider/s who is the central point for referrals for Better Futures in that area/s; or
* an ACCO for Aboriginal young people; or
* a Better Futures provider who is the sole provider operating in the area; or
* other agreed local arrangements.

## Better Futures procedures for allocation

When a Better Futures provider/s is responsible for accepting and coordinating referrals on behalf of other Better Futures providers in the area/s, the responsible provider/s undertakes the following steps:

* organises an allocations meeting[[1]](#footnote-1) with the other Better Futures providers in the partnership to discuss referrals
* organises virtual allocation meetings outside the scheduled meetings if earlier decisions are required
* coordinates and chairs the allocations meeting, recording the decisions and actions on Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP)
* allocates referrals to the responsible Better Futures provider on CRISSP.

Allocation decisions should take into account:

* circumstances where a young person already has links to a Better Futures provider (e.g., the Better Futures provider is also the placement provider)
* the young person has established connections in a particular area which that provider services
* capacity of the Better Futures provider to support connection to community and culture for Aboriginal young people
* capacity of the Better Futures provider to accept the referral
* the Better Futures provider has expertise that will assist the young person’s goals and aspirations - for example, in the areas of education, training and employment, and cultural safety.

A Better Futures provider can accept all referrals for young people when they are the sole provider in an area.

## Acceptance of referrals

A Better Futures provider completes the following steps upon receipt of a referral:

* confirms eligibility
* accepts the referral on CRISSP
* undertakes an initial assessment to determine the required service response, drawing on information provided by the referrer including:
* the 15+ care and transition plan
* the cultural plan (where relevant)
* other documentation including the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) client overview, areas of concern, and the actions table (from the case plan)
* any other critical information is to be included in the comments section of the CRIS referral such as security alerts or safety risks.
* The allocated Better Futures worker then makes contact with the referrer and:
* seeks further information about the young person if required
* clarifies roles and responsibilities
* agrees the level of support to be provided to the young person based on their circumstances, needs and capacity of the organisation to meet demand.

## Prioritisation

A fundamental principle which guides Better Futures service delivery is that all young people transitioning from care should be able to receive a level of support commensurate with their needs, however current investment means there will be a need to prioritise referrals, and some young people who require active support will likely need to be placed on active hold or receive limited support. Where prioritisation is required due to an inability to meet all demand, the following factors should guide allocation decisions:

* the young person is at risk of isolation when they transition from care and would benefit from opportunities to build sustainable community connections
* the young person is disengaged from education or employment and requires support to re-engage
* the young person is Aboriginal and requires support with connection to community and culture
* the young person has transitioned from care and is experiencing crisis requiring immediate support
* the young person is nearing the point of leaving care or has just left care, is highly motivated and wants to work on one or more goals requiring an increased level of support from Better Futures worker.

## Additional information

See Better Futures Referral CRIS to CRISSP documents for information on the Better Futures CRIS referral and the CRISSP acceptance process. These documents are accessible via the CRIS/SP Launch Page (4 Help! Ask CRIS icon).

Additional practice advice documents and information can be found on department’s website via the:

[providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>

[providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch>

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[services.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care>

[Funded Agency Channel](https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/) <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au>

[Child Protection Manual](https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/) <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au>

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| **Subject** | **Details** |
| Guide author | Transitions from Care Team, Care Services  Children, Families, Communities and Disability Division  Department of Families Fairness and Housing |
| Authorised by | Transitions from Care Team, Care Services  Children, Families, Communities and Disability Division |
| Guide created/last reviewed | 7 December 2021 |
| Version number | V2 |

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| To receive this publication in an accessible format email [Children and Families Policy Branch](mailto:Children%20and%20Families%20Policy%20Branch), [ChildrenYouthFamilies@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:ChildrenYouthFamilies@dffh.vic.gov.au)  ISBN 978-1-76096-315-6 (online)  Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.  © State of Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing December 2021.  Available at [providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures> |

1. - It is recommended that allocation meetings occur monthly (at a minimum) to ensure timely responses to referrals [↑](#footnote-ref-1)