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| Better Futures levels of support |
| Practice advice updated December 2021 |
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## Purpose

Better Futures is a new service and practice model designed to improve outcomes for eligible 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 levels of support provided by Better Futures when a young person is in care and transitioning towards independence up to 21 years of age.

## 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.

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

Young people are provided with levels of support which flex up and down according to their needs, existing support networks and the transition goals they have identified.

Refer to other relevant [Better Futures practice advice](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures) documents accessible at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) website <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures> for further information and guidance about eligibility and program requirements.

## Better Futures levels of support

Flexible levels of support are provided to young people both in care and post care, beginning at 15 years and 9 months and ending when the young person turns 21 years.

Young people may be placed on **active hold**, receive **limited support** or **active support.** The level of support a young person receives will be determined by the Better Futures worker in consultation with the young person and/or the care team. The level of support provided is likely to change over time, with the changing needs of the young person.

An initial assessment is made based upon receipt of the referral (via CRIS to CRISSP) at 15 years and 9 months, the 15+ care and transition plan, and other accompanying documentation.

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. Current investment means that Better Futures workers are unable to attend all care team meetings for all young people.

In most instances, young people in care will receive active hold support from Better Futures, with their worker making contact with them on a quarterly basis to check on how their preparation for transition is going.

In limited circumstances, a young person may require active support from Better Futures while still in care (refer Page 3 - Circumstances where active support is required).

As young people near the point of leaving care (approximately six months prior to cessation of their order), their circumstances are reviewed and the level of support from Better Futures may increase.

The Better Futures provider, in consultation with the care team and the young person should regularly review the level of support required from Better Futures.

### Active hold

The decision to offer a young person active hold support is likely to be made in the following circumstances:

* the young person is in care, is supported by a case manager and an active care team and is progressing well whilst achieving their transition goals
* the young person has left care and is doing well, achieving their transition goals and only requires a regular check-in
* the young person is actively choosing not to engage with the Better Futures service.

Better Futures workers should ensure that young people understand the types of support available and ensure that they have the contact details of their worker and know to get in touch if their circumstances change.

Young people receiving active hold support are contacted quarterly (at a minimum) by their Better Futures worker to check in on their circumstances.

Active hold is a function that is also used when the Better Futures provider, due to demand, does not have capacity to offer more active support. When this happens, the Better Futures worker will provide clear communication to the case manager (where applicable) and to the young person about the level of support they can offer.

In circumstances where the young person has left care and the Better Futures provider does not have capacity to deliver more intensive support, the worker will discuss with the young person the level of contact and support available and encourage them to make contact if their circumstances change.

#### Case study - active hold

Sarah is 15 years and 9 months of age, is working closely with her alcohol and other drugs (AOD) worker to address her substance use and is well supported by staff from her residential unit and her contracted case manager. Her case manager has referred Sarah to Better Futures, and she has been placed on active hold.

The Better Futures worker provides secondary consultation to Sarah’s care team and passes on the details of a flexible learning option to support Sarah to re-engage in her secondary education from which she has recently disengaged. Prior to her AOD issues, Sarah was passionate about horses. Her Better Futures worker establishes contact with a local equine facility and arranges some voluntary shifts for Sarah, with a view to potentially securing some part-time work. The AOD worker, case manager, and care team then take a lead role in supporting Sarah to access these opportunities and the Better Futures worker touches base every quarter to see how Sarah’s goals are progressing.

### Limited support

Limited support is likely to be provided to young people who have transitioned from care, have formal or informal support in place and require access to flexible funding, information, referral and advice and/or assistance to address short-term needs.

In limited circumstances, a young person may require limited support from Better Futures while still in care. This may include:

* assistance with one off flexible funding requests
* information, advice and referrals
* practical support such as independent living skills
* linking a young person to community and/or cultural connections to reduce the risk of social isolation
* referring a young person to a mentor.

#### Case study – limited support

Rose (17) is in foster care and is moving to independent living on her 18th birthday. Rose’s foster family will keep in touch and will be an important source of guidance and support, however Rose requires support from Better Futures to access flexible funding to purchase furniture and bedding for the property she is moving into with a school friend and to settle in to this new independent living arrangement.

After six weeks, Rose has bought her new furniture, has settled in well to her new property, and visits her former foster family once per week for dinner. Rose and her Better Futures worker do not identify any further needs and so Rose is placed on active hold, with a quarterly check-in to see how she is going.

### Active support

Active support is likely to be provided when the young person nears the point of leaving care, with support being provided across the five Better Futures service offers of housing and living skills, education, employment, health and wellbeing, and community connections.

The young person is supported to have an active voice in their goal setting and is introduced to the Advantaged Thinking tools (refer to the Better Futures (Advantaged Thinking) Practice Framework for more information).

Provision of active support may include:

* supporting the young person to re-engage with education, employment and training
* supporting access to flexible funding
* assisting the young person to develop networks, relationships and community connections outside the care system
* providing referrals to early intervention support for young people who are caring for children
* supporting the young person to attend appointments and meetings, including with specialist services
* supporting an Aboriginal young person with cultural connections and return to country
* supporting young people to develop life skills such as financial literacy, cooking skills, and other skills required to sustain successful independence
* supporting a young person to secure sustainable housing (whilst the young person is in care this is the role of the case manager and care team)
* provide assertive outreach for young people who may be difficult to contact
* engaging with young people who live in rural communities (this may involve the Better futures worker travelling long distances to provide support)
* supporting the young person to access universal and other services such as dental, medical and sexual health services
* trauma informed service delivery including supporting a young person to access counselling.

#### Case study – active support

Jack (17) is due to leave care in six months’ time and has identified goals across the housing and living skills, employment and education and health and wellbeing offers. Jack was recently charged with affray and is experiencing significant anxiety about his upcoming court appearance – this is impacting his motivation levels and he is requiring regular support to maintain structure and routine in his daily life, including keeping appointments with specialist services.

Jack is withdrawing from his case manager and care team and all agree that he has developed a good relationship with his Better Futures worker whilst on active hold. In consultation with the team leader, the Better Futures worker moves Jack from active hold to active support and begins intensively supporting Jack to keep engaged with TAFE, to find part time work and prepare for independent living*.*

### Circumstances where active support may be provided to a young person in care

In limited circumstances a young person may require active support from Better Futures whilst in care. The Better Futures worker in consultation with their team leader may consider providing active support in the following scenarios (not an exhaustive list):

* a young person is disengaging from education and training and requires additional support from Better Futures to re-engage
* a young person is engaging in risk-taking behaviour, is withdrawing from their networks of support, and the care team (including the Better Futures worker) believe that the Better Futures worker has the best chance of re-engaging them in a positive transition
* the young person does not have an allocated case manager or care team in place and Better Futures can support the young person for a limited period until support is established
* a young person is at risk of social isolation upon leaving care, and Better Futures can support community and cultural connections.

#### Case study – active support (in care)

Thomas (17) resides in residential care and has been disengaged from education and engaging in risk-taking behaviour for some time. The care team recommend active support from Better Futures for the purpose of re-engaging Thomas in education and this recommendation is accepted by the Better Futures worker and his team leader. The Better Futures worker supports the care team with the application and enrolment process for a Certificate II at TAFE and advocates for the application via the Skills First Youth Access Initiative to be expedited.

The Better Futures worker supports a flexible funding application so that Thomas could have the appropriate educational materials and a laptop. Thomas has commenced at TAFE and is enjoying the experience.

## Additional information

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

Further information about Better Futures may be accessed from the DFFH website:

[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>

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

[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.dhhs.vic.gov.au) <<https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au>>

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