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| Good Practice Bulletin |
| Spotlight on Better Futures for young people transitioning from care  Office of Professional Practice, Issue 27, November 2019 |

# Chief Practitioner’s welcome

# Chief practitioner Tracy Beaton smiles at camera

**Tracy Beaton**

We know that a more supported, gradual transition from care can help young people to reach their full potential. In Victoria, too many young people transition from care without stable housing and are over-represented in the justice system. These young people, who are most in need of support and connection, experience significant rates of social isolation. We need to focus on better futures for these young people and change their trajectories in life.

Better Futures is a new Victorian government model supporting young people to transition from care to independence. It was trialed across the South division and in Barwon and Goulburn areas. Better Futures rolled out state-wide on 1 November 2019. Community service organisations such as Berry Street, Anglicare and a range of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations who currently work with young people leaving care will now do so through the Better Futures model. Better Futures focusses on young people’s aspirations – their dreams – who they want to be – and it aims to help young people reach their goals.

All young people aged 15 years and nine months living in out-of-home care and subject to a family reunification order, a care by Secretary order, or a long-term care order are eligible for support and will be referred to Better Futures by their case managers.

# What does this mean for young people leaving care?

* *Earlier support*– a referral at 15 years and nine months connects Better Futures workers early to the young person’s care team, and potentially the young person, when they are about 16 years old.
* *Flexible support -* support can flex up and down - Better Futures will work alongside young people based on their circumstances and what they need at any time.
* *Flexible funding* - to support a young person’s goals for independence.
* *Enduring support* - Better Futures support is available until a young person’s 21st birthday.

# What does this mean for you?

* Child protection practitioners are required to make a referral to Better Futures when the young person turns 15 years and nine months. See the link below for information on how to make a Better Futures referral.
* Case managers continue to do case management tasks – however in some circumstances the Better Futures worker may be able to provide direct support to a young person. The Better Futures worker cannot assume lead responsibility for case work support whilst the young person is subject to a statutory order.
* Better Futures workers will provide secondary consultation to care teams including advice about the transition planning process, knowledge of the community, and help with referrals supporting transition to independence.
* The Better Futures worker will gradually increase contact as the young person prepares to transition from care.
* Home Stretch is delivered within the Better Futures model. Through Home Stretch, young people will have the option of remaining with their kinship or foster carer up to the age of 21 years, supported by an allowance. Young people transitioning to an independent living option will be eligible for an allowance to support them with their housing costs up to 21 years of age.
* As well as an allowance for accommodation, case work support and flexible funding is available to support access to education, employment and health and wellbeing supports, and to help young people reach their transition goals. Demand for Home Stretch is expected to exceed supply, with investment affording support to approximately 250 young people over five years.

# Case study

Mandy is almost 17 years old and she has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last couple of years. Her care by Secretary order will expire when she turns 18 and she wants to move in with her boyfriend. Mandy talks about being a vet nurse, she has some good friends, and she is close to her family. She needs a lot of prompting and encouragement to go to school and is smoking a lot of cannabis lately.

You have made a referral to Better Futures and attached Mandy’s 15+ care and transition plan.

# Discussion prompts

Are you clear on how to make a referral for Mandy to Better Futures?

How do you think a Better Futures worker can support Mandy and her care team?

What advice and expertise would you like from Better Futures to support Mandy?

How will you support Mandy’s engagement with Better Futures?

# Tips

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| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Log onto the Child Protection Manual and follow the leaving care procedure - <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/out-home-care/leaving-care> |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | The 15+ care and transition plan is a helpful document you must complete for young people leaving care – go to the LAC forms in the manual <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/forms/out-home-care-and-lac> to get the plan template – put this plan on CRIS and tick the box to say you have done it. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Look at the department’s website for more information about Better Futures <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/better-futures-post-care-service-factsheet> |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Consider whether some young people you work with might be eligible for Home Stretch <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-factsheet-word> |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Watch this Colin Falconer clip – it is all about the way of working with young people that underpins Better Futures – it focuses on their talents and their ability to thrive - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3sDsDOrd5o> |

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