



Submission on the DHCS Discussion Paper

Maximising Potential: improving life transitions for young people in care

November 2010

About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges that Canberra has been built on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered as a result of European settlement. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contribution to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage and low-income citizens of the Territory.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS' objectives are a community in which all people have the opportunities and resources needed to participate in and benefit from social and economic life and the development of a dynamic, collaborative and viable community sector.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

ACTCOSS receives funding from the Community Services Program (CSP) which is funded by the ACT Government.

ACTCOSS advises that this document may be publicly distributed, including by placing a copy on our website.

Contact Details

Phone: 02 6202 7200
Fax: 02 6281 4192
Mail: PO Box 849, Mawson ACT 2607
E-mail: actcoss@actcoss.org.au
WWW: <http://www.actcoss.org.au>
Location: Level 1,
67 Townshend St,
Phillip ACT 2606

Director: Roslyn Dundas
Deputy Director: Kiki Korpinen
Policy Officer: Natalie Oliver

November 2010

ISBN 978-1-921651-37-3 (electronic version)
© Copyright ACT Council of Social Service Incorporated

This publication is copyright, apart from use by those agencies for which it has been produced. Non-profit associations and groups have permission to reproduce parts of this publication as long as the original meaning is retained and proper credit is given to the ACT Council of Social Service Inc (ACTCOSS). All other individuals and Agencies seeking to reproduce material from this publication should obtain the permission of the Director of ACTCOSS.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Extension of age of formal support	4
Planning & preparation for transition	5
Key areas requiring coordinated support	7
Housing.....	7
Education	8
Health.....	9
Coordinated support across government	9
Further support required in transition and after care	10
After Care Service	11
Additional support required by agencies / carers	12
Training.....	12
Resourcing.....	12
Language	13
DHCS proposed model	14
Monitoring.....	15
Other comments	16
Conclusion	16

Introduction

Young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society. Oswald and Bromfield's research brief on young people leaving care highlighted "the vast majority of care leavers suffer from, or are at great risk of suffering, negative outcomes in their social and psychological functioning, financial status, and educational and vocational pursuits."¹ They showed overall:

- Young people leaving care are at great risk of experiencing negative life outcomes;
- Periods of homelessness and committing offences affect close to half of young people after they leave care;
- There are a range of factors that assist or inhibit the transition of young people that need to be acknowledged and addressed prior to the young person transitioning from care to independence;
- Young people need to develop more employment and independent living skills and more social and emotional skills before they can be expected (or are able) to live independently;
- A sense of security, stability, continuity and social support are strong predictors of better outcomes for young people's long-term outcomes after leaving care;
- There is a need for minimum leaving-care standards;
- A range of support services is desperately needed for care-leavers;
- Legislative changes in relation to care-leavers need to be evaluated in each state and territory;
- An integrated model of leaving-care support for young people up to 25 years of age is recommended; and
- A prudent economist would spend a little now to save a lot in the future. The cost of doing nothing is detrimental to young people, society and the economy at large.²

ACTCOSS welcomes the renewed consideration from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) being given to this highly vulnerable group of young people, and is pleased to participate in the discussions about how we can best support and improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care in the ACT.

Extension of age of formal support

The discussion paper states "a young person is identified as having 'left care' when the legal orders supporting their care arrangements have ceased. This is often when the young person has turned 18."³ It is widely recognised not all young people are ready for independence at the age of 18. This is particularly the case for most young people in care who have lacked support and stability during key developmental stages of life.

¹ Osborn, A and Bromfield, L. *Young people leaving care*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Research Brief No.7 2007, p.8.

² Ibid, p.7.

³ DHCS, Discussion Paper, *Maximising Potential: improving life transitions for young people in care*, October 2010, p.6.

Young people in many families have a few 'back and forth' moves to and from home, and receive a wide range of support from family and other networks whilst establishing independence. To formally support young people in care only to the age of 18 is not reflective of the real world, nor is it meeting the needs of these vulnerable young people in particular.

Research shows transitions from care need to be less accelerated. They need to be a gradual and flexible process with a focus on maturity and skill development rather than simply a basis of age.⁴

The recognition young people transitioning from care need further support beyond the age of 18 is welcome. However, there is concern Government is unwilling to take on additional statutory responsibility, and young people in care will still be expected to rely on community supports at the age of 18.

New provisions are required with formal accountability placed on Government to ensure increased support for young people in care throughout their transition to independence. Provisions are also required to ensure support for carers and support agencies if they continue with support of these young people beyond the age of 18. Consultation with stakeholders has indicated 21 should be the minimum extension for mandated support and 25 would be the ideal age. As the statutory authority the Government must recognise their fundamental responsibility to young people in care and ensure their transition to independence is supported appropriately.

There is concern changes to the Youth Support and Family Support programs may have a significant impact on the delivery of services to young people independent of a family unit, and to young people over the age of 18. Support for young people through periods of transitions can have significant positive impacts and as such distinct support for young people through such periods needs to remain.

Recommendation

- Extend the legislative responsibility of the ACT Government to support young people in care up to the age of 21, and consider ways to ensure support is available up to the age of 25.

Planning & preparation for transition

It has been part of policy for some time, in both the ACT and around Australia, all young people transitioning from care would have a plan outlining their needs for the foreseeable future and how these needs will be addressed. However, how these leaving care plans have been implemented to date has been of major concern. CREATE found one-third

⁴ Mendes, P. "Young people transitioning from state out-of-home care: Jumping hoops to access employment" *Family Matters* 2009 No.83, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p.34.

of young people did not even know they had a plan in place, and others who did know they had a plan did not find it useful.⁵

Whilst the department as the statutory authority should remain responsible for ensuring transition planning happens, it is essential young people are at the centre of the planning process and this process results in a plan which is meaningful to the young person. There is absolutely no use in a plan being developed without the direct involvement of the young person and the involvement of other key stakeholders with whom the young person has a close supportive relationship, such as their foster carer or kinship carer. Additionally transition planning should not happen in one meeting, but rather be a process begun early, with flexibility allowing for review over time as the young person's needs, circumstances or wishes can change.

There is also concern young people in care often have multiple plans: care plans, management plans, exiting plans, student placement plans, to name a few. If such an array of plans is necessary, they need to be cross referenced and developed with the direct involvement and direction of the young person.

The development of National Standards for out of home care recognises "transitioning out of care can be one of the most difficult stages" of the care journey. The draft standards propose a transition from care plans be developed from 15 years of age.⁶

Planning and support for transition needs to address both personal issues such as trauma counselling, self esteem and developing relationships of support; and structural issues such as access to stable housing, assistance with education and training, health care and financial supports.⁷ Additionally all care plans must have benchmarks or indicators against which progress can be measured.

There is concern, if not handled well, transition planning may have unintended consequences for some young people. By focusing on the placement's ending it can lead to destabilisation. Approaching discussions about transition must be done carefully and sensitively so as not to reignite the memory of being moved on.

Directly addressing the specific issues associated with leaving care involves another 'tricky balance' between helping them prepare for and adjust to the expected changes and the risk of destabilising the placement by focusing on its ending. This might, however, be counterbalanced by including in the package of

⁵ McDowall, J. CREATE Report Card 2009, *Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress*, Sydney: CREATE Foundation, 2009, p.6.

⁶ Department of Families, Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs *Working Document – Development of National Standards for out of home care* 2010, p.4.

⁷ Mendes, P. "Young people transitioning from state out-of-home care: Jumping hoops to access employment" *Family Matters* 2009 No.83, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p.37.

living skills those that are highly valued by young people as positive indicators of adult status.⁸

Plans need to be holistic with particular consideration given to what skills a young person has, and what further skills need to be developed over time. Including the development of skills such as driving in a transition plan can highlight the positive aspects of planning for independence.

Key areas requiring coordinated support

Consultations have highlighted three key areas: education, housing and health; where additional coordinated support is required by young people both whilst in care and through their transitions out of care.

Housing

A high proportion of young people who have been in care experience instability in housing and many experience homelessness within a short time of leaving care. This can impact on other areas of their life including mental health and ability to access or remain engaged in education or employment.

Many care leavers experience housing instability or outright homelessness. This reflects the high mobility of many young people while in care, the unplanned and unprepared nature of many departures from state care, the absence of sufficient life skills required to live independently, and the lack of option to 'return home' if the initial independent living arrangements do not work out. Housing insecurity makes it very difficult for them to focus on career plans and meet employer expectations.⁹

Around Australia many care leavers are exited from care directly into homelessness services. Research in Victoria found for 30% of care leavers this move was actually planned for in their official exit plan.¹⁰ This is unacceptable, particularly in the light of the 'no exit into homelessness' policy. There are some cases where placements break down and transitioning through a homelessness service becomes necessary. In these cases Government needs to accept responsibility to ensure these young people in care receive the material and non-material support they require to transition to independence. Many homelessness service providers report responsibility and support being withdrawn by Care and Protection Services once young people in care are placed in their service.

If accessing public housing is part of their care plan, assistance should be given with application forms and supporting documentation. Given current Housing ACT assessment periods and waiting lists, this must be done in a

⁸ Hunter, M, *Strengthening our Support of Young People Transitioning Out of Care: A New Framework*, October 2010, p.15.

⁹ Mendes, P. "Young people transitioning from state out-of-home care: Jumping hoops to access employment" *Family Matters* 2009 No.83, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p.34.

¹⁰ Osborn, A and Bromfield, L. *Young people leaving care*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Research Brief No.7 2007, p.6.

timely manner to ensure a transitional stay in a homelessness service won't be necessary.

Where young people in care are in a stable placement it should be investigated whether they can be further supported to remain in that placement for longer until they are ready to enter the housing market in the same way as their peers. Care leavers who are supported for longer in a stable placement might be more capable of gaining independent housing and not require public housing.

Young people leaving care, where appropriate, should be provided greater assistance with attempting to access accommodation in the private sector for example student accommodation, share accommodation and private rental so that public housing is not the sole option. Schemes such as Rental Bond Loans could be made accessible to young people transitioning from care.

Young people may also need support preparing for living independently through both informal and formal living skills training whilst in care. This should be an essential part of their transition planning. Additionally when a care leaver is allocated public housing, they must be allocated appropriate support to assist them to sustain their tenancy. Support to sustain tenancies should also be offered to care leavers who access independent accommodation in the private sector. 'Warm referrals' and partnerships could be established so young people can access the array of services already available through the community sector.

Education

Educational outcomes impact on every aspect of life including employment prospects, further education options, self esteem and social skills. Young people in care have been shown to have poorer educational outcomes.

Many young people in care struggle academically due to learning and behaviour problems, lack of continuity in placements and schools, and low expectations from social workers, teachers and carers. Thus, these young people are far less likely to attain satisfactory employment.¹¹

The 2010 CREATE Action Plan recommended a higher priority is placed on programs, policies, practices and service which increase the chances of a young person succeeding in their education.

Education is absolutely key when considering how to best support young people in care and transitioning from care. Closer links need to be developed with the Department of Education in order to ensure particular care and consideration be given to young people in care in the ACT school system. Additional supports are required by these young people in order

¹¹ Mendes, P. "Young people transitioning from state out-of-home care: Jumping hoops to access employment" *Family Matters* 2009 No.83, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p.34.

to have a full educational experience and achieve the educational outcomes of their peers. Teachers need greater professional development, and potentially additional assistance, to meet the educational support needs of young people in care, without isolating or stigmatising them.

In the current climate of the youth commitment, with an 'earn or learn' approach, particular support needs to be provided to young people in care to ensure they can meet the goals of the commitment and aren't inappropriately penalised.

Health

Young people in care and young people transitioning from care should be given priority access to health care services. Access should go beyond mainstream services but also apply to specialist services such as dental and ocular health. Additionally, the mental health needs of young people in care are significant and many will require counselling and other support, sometimes for many years.

As the statutory authority the Government is urged to assist young people in care and young people transitioning from care in accessing required health care services and meet any associated financial cost.

Coordinated support across government

MOUs and other formal arrangements should be developed across Government to ensure priority access and targeted services are provided to young people in care. Key links should include the Department of Education, Housing ACT, ACT Health and federal agencies such as Centrelink. As links are developed coordination will be required:

The larger jurisdictions (in Australia) have recognised the benefit in establishing partnerships between different arms of government to provide more holistic support for young care leavers. As more of these interconnections are introduced, challenges will arise in terms of coordinating the contributions from the various sectors.¹²

Recommendation

- Develop formal coordinated arrangements across Government ensuring priority access and targeted services are provided to young people in care and young people transitioning from care, especially in addressing their housing, educational and health needs.

¹² McDowall, J. CREATE Report Card 2009, *Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress*, Sydney: CREATE Foundation, 2009, p.6.

Further support required in transition and after care

Young people transitioning from care require a range of other supports which will vary as they get older. Support needs to be flexible and responsive and extend from psychological and emotional to practical supports. Several stakeholders have indicated support should not be in the form of traditional case management. Where case management may be appropriate with some young people, as they get older most resent any reference to being 'managed' in some way.

Once care payments have ceased young people may require assistance in obtaining independent youth allowance or another benefit from Centrelink. However, further financial support over and above a regular allowance is likely to be needed by young people as they transition towards independence.

A common form of support required is financial assistance to acquire essential goods and services to make independent living possible... Clearly it is preferable for eligibility criteria and entitlement to be specified as precisely as possible to reduce the formulation on the part of young people, and to minimise the discretionary control that could be exercised by bureaucratic "gatekeepers".¹³

TILA (Transition to Independent Living Allowance), whilst a welcome program, does not sufficiently cover the extensive costs required in establishing independence. Additional financial support at this stage, be it for course fees, costs associated with obtaining employment, or home establishment costs, can make the difference between a young person being able to successfully transition to independence, or remaining reliant on welfare indefinitely.

Young people transitioning from care need to be able to access their files and personal documentation such as birth certificates free of charge. If there have been photographs, school reports, or other key documents collected while a young person has been in care these should be kept securely and made available to them when asked for.

It is often during transitions out of care young people try to re-establish contact with their birth family. Services assisting young people transitioning from care need to be able to support young people as they seek to reconnect with their birth family. This may include practical support such as transport costs to visit family members as well as emotional support while they navigate this often difficult process. Consultations have highlighted the significant extra support required when reconnections involve a birth parent who has a disability. Support is required by the young person to assist them understand their parent's disability, and support is also required by the parent to help them

¹³ McDowall, J. CREATE Report Card 2009, *Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress*, Sydney: CREATE Foundation, 2009, p.7.

negotiate a relationship with their child who they may not have seen or been in contact with for many years. .

After Care Service

After care support is an area which requires further resourcing. A proposal has been put forward for a dedicated after care service to be developed to support anyone who has been in care. However, where there is an existing relationship with a support agency, the possibility of extending this relationship through transitions and after care should be made available.

Where possible, after care should incorporate existing support structures to promote continuity for young people. Research has demonstrated felt security, continuity and social support beyond care were the most significant predictors of young people's outcomes four to five years after leaving care.¹⁴

Young people would be best served with a choice of options where they can access after care support, whether from a community service agency where they have already developed an existing relationship or from a designated after care service provider.

An after care service would have several identified functions, such as providing many of the supports discussed above, but would also need to be both responsive and flexible to adapt to the individual needs of any care leaver seeking support – irrelevant of age or time since being in care. A specific after care service would also have an important role in meeting the needs of young people who disengage from the care system prior to the age of 18 and have historically 'fallen through the cracks'.

The after care service could act as a conduit between young people and the department in accessing the supports they require and the government resources they are entitled to such as financial assistance and access to files and personal documentation. The service would also be a resource to other support services working with young people transitioning from care.

Stakeholders have suggested once an after care service is established, developing a relationship with that service would be an important part of transition planning. Young people could be taken to visit the service on a couple of occasions, introduced to the staff who would explain the kinds of supports available.

Recommendation

- Resource a choice of after care supports.

¹⁴ Osborn, A and Bromfield, L. *Young people leaving care*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Research Brief No.7 2007, p.3.

Additional support required by agencies / carers

Training

Further support and training should be provided to foster carers, kinship carers and residential care workers (as well as Care and Protection and Youth Justice workers) to assist them better prepare young people for transition. In particular training around discussing sensitive issues such as what transition means, family relationships, trying to reconnect with birth parents and what will happen with their relationship with current care providers. As language and subject matter are quite loaded, discussions about transition can be destabilising for young people if they are not handled appropriately.

Recommendation

- Provide training to carers and other support workers to assist them prepare young people for transitions.

Resourcing

Where placements have been stable, and support relationships are in place it should be investigated whether it is appropriate to continue placements beyond the age of 18. As acknowledged in the discussion paper:

It is also essential at this time that they can maintain the significant relationships they have established, often with a kinship or foster carer or a mentor. Resources may be needed to make this happen.¹⁵

There are many current cases where both carers and support agencies are supporting young people beyond the age of 18, even after care payments to families have ceased and when no funding is in place for agencies to engage in this work. Often this is happening in circumstances where the young person has been in a stable placement with their kinship family or foster family for a while. Agencies and carers are being encouraged to 'continue care and consideration' for young people beyond the age of 18, however are simultaneously being told there is no funding available to support this. It is unreasonable to expect appropriate levels of support can be provided without adequate resourcing.

In other cases young people are no longer supported by their foster families once they turn 18. It should be investigated whether these placements could be continued until the young person is ready to transition into independence if appropriate supports remain in place for the carers. Support required for carers is not only financial - emotional support is required by carers to assist these young people through the transition to independence.

¹⁵ DHCS, Discussion Paper, *Maximising Potential: improving life transitions for young people in care*, October 2010, p.2.

More research is required as to what helps foster carers and young people form 'forever families'. 'Forever families' is the term sometimes used for the situation where young people in care placements become a life-long member of their carer family..

If the Government is serious about supporting young people transitioning from care it must be serious about supporting those caring for these young people, and the agencies supporting the carers. Any policy moving forward has to be realistic about adequately resourcing carers and services to continue to provide supports throughout these transitions. If required resources are not allocated now to support these young people longer, the cost to society in the long run will be exponential.

Research suggests the long term costs of care-leavers can have an enormous impact on a state's budget. For example:

Unemployment, crime, health, housing and child protection costs for the intergenerational cycle of care are estimated at \$738,741 per young person leaving care, over a 42 year timeframe. This cost is over and above an estimated \$125,000 investment that the state has already made in young people while they are in statutory care.¹⁶

This report provided "a very clear rationale for governments to invest in young people leaving care and highlighted if governments do not provide support there are enormous political and economic costs both to the young people and society."¹⁷

Recommendations

- Allocate appropriate funding to young people, carers and support agencies to support young people in care through transitions beyond the age of 18.
- Conduct research into what helps foster carers and young people form 'forever families'.

Language

Many stakeholders have expressed concern over the language used in the discussion paper and in practice. It must be recognised terms such as 'transitioning from care', 'transitioning out of care', 'care leavers', 'after care' can be quite confronting with potential implications for young people who are especially vulnerable at this stage. Terms such as 'care plans' and 'case plans' are also frequently used yet many have suggested better terms could be applied.

¹⁶ Raman, S., Inder, B. & Forbes, C. *Investing for success: The economics of supporting young people leaving care* (Monograph No. 5). Melbourne: Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

Cited in: Osborn, A and Bromfield, L. *Young people leaving care*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Research Brief No.7 2007, p.6.

¹⁷ Ibid.

To say to a young person in care they need a plan to 'transition out of care' can be especially destabilising. It may bring up memories of trauma, abandonment and fear they 'have to leave' their new family as they did their birth family. As one stakeholder articulated to ACTCOSS "this is about becoming an adult, not necessarily about leaving home." While it is recognised planning needs to happen early and must involve the young person, we need to ensure they are not unnecessarily destabilised by the thought they 'have to leave'. Some agencies have suggested terms such as 'transitioning towards independence', and 'pathways plans'.

For the purpose of this submission ACTCOSS has used many of these terms. However, new terminology should be discussed with stakeholders and agreed upon in order to develop a language without the implications and potential destabilisation which may result from using the current terminology.

Additionally, terms such as 'exit-points', and 'moving through the system' can be useful, however it can lead to the belief if young people return to services or carers for support, there has been a failure in some way. This fails to recognise the norm that many young people continue to access a range of family supports and often move out and return home several times in their journey towards independence.

Recommendation

- Develop new terminology in consultation with stakeholders.

DHCS proposed model

The discussion paper asks "do you think the proposed model will meet the needs of this group of young people?"

Consultation with the sector has found support for a framework which involves planning and preparation, transition, and after care. However, there has not yet been enough information provided in the discussion paper for the proposal to be referred to as a model.

The proposed model is vague and has no outlined commitments. More detail is required in outlining how the framework will be implemented including what supports will be provided, by whom, and who is ultimately responsible to ensure these young people receive appropriate support. The broader role of DHCS has not been defined, nor has the responsibility of Care and Protection Services.

The discussion paper indicates the community sector will likely be providing many of the new supports to young people transitioning from care. The community sector is well positioned to support young people through transitions and after care, if it is resourced appropriately to do so. The community sector has no capacity to take on further work without corresponding resourcing.

Whilst the community sector is likely to provide significant support to young people transitioning from care under the new framework, ultimate responsibility that these young people are supported appropriately must continue to lie with the Government as the statutory authority. It remains the Government's responsibility to ensure young people who have been in care receive the support they require to develop independence and achieve the social, educational and vocational outcomes of their peers.

The model will need to be broad enough to capture young people in residential care, foster care, kinship care, youth detention and the many young people in care but not in formal placements such as those who are accommodated in homelessness services, or who are couch surfing. The sector looks forward to further consultation with the department as the model continues to be developed.

Transitioning from care has been an issue for a long time. The CREATE report card has highlighted support in this area has been appalling across Australia. It is not sufficient to simply develop policy to address the issue. There has been policy in place for years stating all young people in care need a leaving care plan. This has not happened effectively, which gives weight to the argument policy alone is not sufficient to drive better support for young people in care, legislative change is necessary to improve outcomes.

The ACT Greens have put forward a proposal to guide legislative change. ACTCOSS has written in response to Meredith Hunter's discussion paper *Strengthening our Support of Young People Transitioning Out of Care: A New Framework* A copy is attached.

Monitoring

There has been insufficient monitoring in the ACT to date of the outcomes for young people transitioning from care, and the effectiveness of different supports provided. Monitoring should be an essential part of any new model developed to ensure the support provided is appropriate, sufficient and is achieving improved outcomes for these vulnerable young people. This was a key recommendation of the CREATE Report Card 2009.¹⁸

Monitoring needs to go well beyond data collection on outcomes achieved. Young people in care and young people who have transitioned from care must be consulted about their experiences of transition and their recommendations. If anything will inform what is required to support young people leaving care, it is the life experience of young people themselves.

¹⁸ McDowall, J. CREATE Report Card 2009, *Transitioning from Care: Tracking Progress*, Sydney: CREATE Foundation, 2009, p.8.

Recommendation

- Monitor and review the process of supporting young people transitioning from care and the outcomes achieved.

Other comments

Many stakeholders have expressed concern not enough recognition has been given to the harrowing journeys these young people have experienced to this point. It seems to present an idealistic view, assuming these young people have had a stable long term care placement up until the age of 18 and assumes a quick and smooth transition out of care. Whereas the reality is the majority of young people in care have had lots of disruptions in their care, have had many different carers, and have had many stop-starts. When young people in care have not had a stable continuum of care up to this point, to presume there will be a quick process to transition them out of care is unrealistic.

Other feedback suggested more support and information needs to be provided to both young people and carers when entering care. For example kinship carers need to be provided with more information on the financial implications of adoption. It was also suggested more needs to be done when young people first enter care to mediate the long term effects of trauma.

As outlined in the discussion paper there are a range of other plans and papers informing the delivery of services for young people in care. A rights based approach as articulated in the ACT Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care must remain a key component of revised transition policy.

Conclusion

Young people transitioning from care are some of the most vulnerable in our society. They must be provided with significant support in order to achieve independence and the outcomes of their peers. A framework which addresses three stages (planning and preparation, transition and after care) is a good beginning. Any new framework must be appropriately resourced for it to be successful. The sector looks forward to participating in discussions about the model of support as it is further developed.