



# LEAVING CARE PROGRAM APPROACH



**WE  
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS  
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Caring for Children,  
Young People and Families

# LEAVING CARE PROGRAM APPROACH

## Abstract

While the outlook for further government funded investment in Australian leaving care programs is uncertain, we must keep progressing the development of opportunities for care leavers to be supported and live life well. As an organisation we wish to be part of the solution – we want to put our values into action and to give effect to “A community for all” and “Partnering with people to change lives”.

**Claire Robbs**  
Chief Executive

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## INTRODUCTION

LWB recognises the importance of successful transition to adulthood, and how difficult this step is for many young people leaving out-of-home care. This paper expresses our commitment and approach to this important area of work – ensuring young adults are supported by LWB and other community services to successfully transition from care, in the pursuit of happy and rewarding lives.

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### WHAT IS LEAVING CARE?

Leaving care is a term used to describe young people who have been living in an Out of Home Care (OOHC) placement for child protection safety reasons, and who are 15 years or older and planning to transition to independent living.

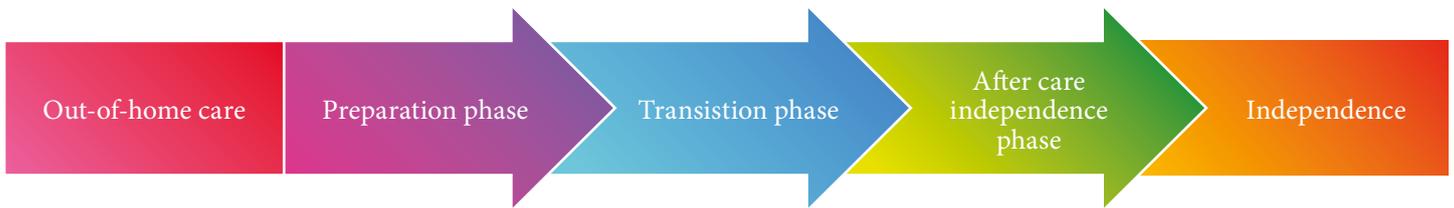
Historically young people have been cared for in OOHC until they reach 18 years of age. When they turned 18 years old they were considered an adult and it was no longer State or Territory governments' responsibility to care for them. From this time they were expected to take responsibility for their adult life and to access any adult services they may require like any other adult in society.

This long standing approach to young people exiting care was based on the legal age of adulthood as opposed to the young person demonstrating the necessary skills and having supports and arrangements in place to make a successful transition to independence.

Over the past decade there has been a growing awareness of the importance of preparing young people so that when they leave OOHC they are more suitably equipped to make the transition to successful independence.

As society changes there is increasing discussion about the appropriateness of transitioning to independence at 18 years – young people remaining at home are transitioning in their twenties rather than at 18 years of age, and they haven't experienced the challenges and disruptions to their development that many in OOHC have experienced. Most Australian State and Territory governments have responded by revising their legislation to increase the age of transition from OOHC to independence from 18 years to 21 years, and increasingly to 25 years, to better reflect community norms. Legislative changes has heightened program expectations that transition be a better planned process commencing from the age of 15 or 16 years, to ensure that skills and knowledge are acquired and access to supports available.

All State and Territory legislation recognise and make provision for supporting young people leaving care beyond 18 years of age. In Victoria, legislation provides for after-care support up to 21 years of age; New South Wales, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia provide support up to 25 years of age. The Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Tasmania have provisions, however the age to which support is provided is not stated. A summary of and links to various State and Territory Child Protection legislation is kept up to date by the Australian Institute of Family Studies#.



## TRANSITION FROM OUT-OF-HOME CARE TO INDEPENDENCE

### NATIONALLY CONSISTENT APPROACH

Expectations that greater attention is paid by OOHC providers to assist Care leavers successfully transition to independence featured in the *National Out of Home Care Standards*\* that were ratified by all Australian States and Territories in July 2011.

The National Standards for out-of-home care have been designed to deliver consistency and drive improvements in the quality of care provided to children and young people. The 13 National Standards focus on the key factors that directly influence better outcomes for those living in out-of-home care.

In particular, Standard 13 outlines expectations for supporting young people to successfully transition from care. Subsequent collaborative work entitled *Transitioning from out-of-home care to Independence: A Nationally Consistent Approach to Planning*† identifies ‘leaving care’ as three (overlapping) phases beginning in care and finishing when the care leaver has become an independent adult:

The paper identifies the core people and elements of planning associated with each phase of leaving care transition (see Appendix 1).

### OUR COMMITMENT

Life Without Barriers (LWB) is a large and leading provider of OOHC services, particularly in NSW and Queensland, but with service provision in most Australian States and Territories.

We recognise the importance of successful transition from Care, and how difficult this step is for many young people in our care. And while the outlook for further government funded investment in Australian leaving care programs is uncertain, we must keep progressing the development of opportunities for care leavers to be supported and live life well. As an organisation we wish to be part of the solution – we want to put our values into action and to give effect to “A community for all” and “Partnering with people to change lives”.

This paper expresses our commitment and approach to this important area of work – ensuring young people are supported by LWB and other community services so that they successfully transition to adulthood, and can pursue happy and rewarding lives.

\* [http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pac\\_national\\_standard.pdf](http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pac_national_standard.pdf)

† <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/transitioning-from-out-of-home-care-to-independence-a-nationally-consistent-approach-to-planning-2011>



“ We must keep progressing the development of opportunities for care leavers to be supported and live life well ”

# LEAVING CARE

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Drawing on an extensive review of international research undertaken by Tweedle (2007), The CREATE Foundation's 2009 Report Card<sup>1</sup> identified the following common characteristics of young people who have left OOH. They found young people leaving care are more likely to be:

1. Undereducated (not have completed high school),
2. Unemployed or underemployed, and earning lower wages (if employed),
3. Having children at a younger age,
4. Incarcerated or involved in the criminal justice system,
5. Homeless at some stage,
6. Living in unstable housing arrangements,
7. Dependent on social assistance,
8. Experiencing mental health problems and not able to afford adequate medical support, and
9. At a higher risk of substance abuse.

Child welfare services are in business to ensure that the negative consequences of childhood abuse and neglect are overcome or minimised. LWB aims to support young people leaving care to restore balance in their lives, regain optimism and hope, and move with confidence towards a brighter, happier future.

The personality of the client, the quality of their social network and relationships with helping professionals will impact outcomes for young people leaving care. The following 'resilience' factors have been identified in the international literature as important for children

and young people to achieve successful key transitions in their life cycle, which includes transitioning to independence<sup>2</sup>:

- Having a redeeming and warm relationship with at least one person in the family – or secure attachment to at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute
- Having positive school experiences
- Feeling able to plan and be in control
- Being given the chance of a 'turning point' (such as a new opportunity)
- Having higher childhood IQ scores and lower rates of temperamental risk
- Having positive peer influences
- Having strong social support networks
- A committed mentor or person from outside the family
- Involvement in a range of extracurricular activities that promote learning of competencies and emotional maturity
- The capacity to reframe adversity to recognise beneficial as well as damaging aspects of a situation
- Having the ability or opportunity to make a difference, such as helping others
- Exposure to challenging situations that provide opportunities to develop both problem-solving abilities and emotional-coping skills.

These are important benchmarks to be aware of, and our staff and carers need to look out for opportunities to build these factors in the lives of the young people we are supporting to transition from care.

This is also consistent with LWB's new 'Pillars of Practice' Framework (see Appendix 2) that aims to strengthen our engagement with clients so as to ensure we better understand their needs and aspirations, that we build a strong, respectful working relationship with them, and support them to meet their goals and needs.

Australian Leaving Care research has been undertaken by Philip Mendes, Guy Johnson and Badel Moslehuddin<sup>3</sup>. In summary, they found that the following elements featured in successful transition from care experiences:

- Interventions and supports in custodial settings and post discharge from custody or care
- Access to appropriate and affordable housing
- Potential for family based interventions to reconnect/strengthen family ties
- Promoting positive contact with family members
- Trauma informed approaches guiding individual support
- Strengthened educational supports
- Maintaining links with education and training
- Removing barriers to accessing material and social supports
- Ongoing monitoring and support till at least 21 years of age
- Ongoing and consistent relationship support by workers

More recently, Johnson and Mendes<sup>4</sup> undertook in-depth interviews with 59 young people (aged 18-24) in Victoria and Western Australia who had experienced a volatile transition from out-of-home care. As a group they had a high number of placements in care, many had experienced physical and/or sexual abuse prior to, or while they were in care, most had histories of substance misuse, and all had experienced homelessness at some point since leaving care.

They found that the circumstances of just over half (n=32) had significantly improved and they appeared to be successfully navigating a route to independence. What made the difference? Their study found that a notable feature of those who were 'moving on' was their own agency (work):

“The positive focus and direction of their agency was underpinned by a strong desire for a better life. Some young people who were moving on displayed determination, persistence and resilience and turning their lives around was something they were very proud of”<sup>5</sup>

As well as the young person's strong desire for a better life, the other five factors that made a difference were:

- secure stable housing
- address substance abuse
- improve family relationships
- build meaningful relationships with professional support, and
- find work.

These five factors were often interlinked, and the resulting turnaround in the young people's lives studied by Johnson and Mendes was pronounced.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are an especially vulnerable, over-represented and important cohort of Care leavers who require culturally appropriate planning and service provision as they transition out of Care.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) made a submission in relation to the proposal for a nationally consistent approach to Leaving Care Planning in 2011.<sup>6</sup> SNAICC recommended the following actions occur:

- Adherence to the Aboriginal Placement Principle (during care);
- Connection to culture (during and leaving care);
- Use of Cultural Plans as basis for connection to culture (during and leaving care);

- Support to young people and carers to participate in leaving care planning;
- Reducing the age at which planning for leaving care commences to 14;
- Provision of accommodation and services to connect to education, employment and ongoing training (leaving and after care), and
- Use of Aboriginal caseworkers and Aboriginal organisations to deliver leaving care services.

LWB is passionately committed to being respectful and responsive to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people that we work with and care for. Cultural planning is enjoying increasing prominence throughout the organisation, and we aim to ensure that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and young person has an up to date and active plan so that they are maintain and strengthen their cultural ties and traditions. Leaving Care plans should be able to build on already established cultural plans to ensure a continuing and holistic approach.

“ LWB is passionately committed to being respectful and responsive to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people that we work with and care for ”

<sup>1</sup>McDowall, J. J. (2009). CREATE Report Card 2009 – *Transitioning from care: Tracking progress*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation, p.9

<sup>2</sup>Stein, M. (2005). *Resilience and young people leaving care*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p2 – referencing studies undertaken by Rutter et al (1998) and Newman and Blackburn 2002.

<sup>3</sup>*Young people leaving state out-of-home care: A research based study of Australian policy and practice*, by Philip Mendes, Guy Johnson and Badel Moslehuddin, 2011

<sup>4</sup>*Taking Control and 'Moving On': How Young People Turn around Problematic Transitions from Out-of-Home Care* G. Johnson & P Mendes, as published in *Social Work & Society*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 2014

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p.5

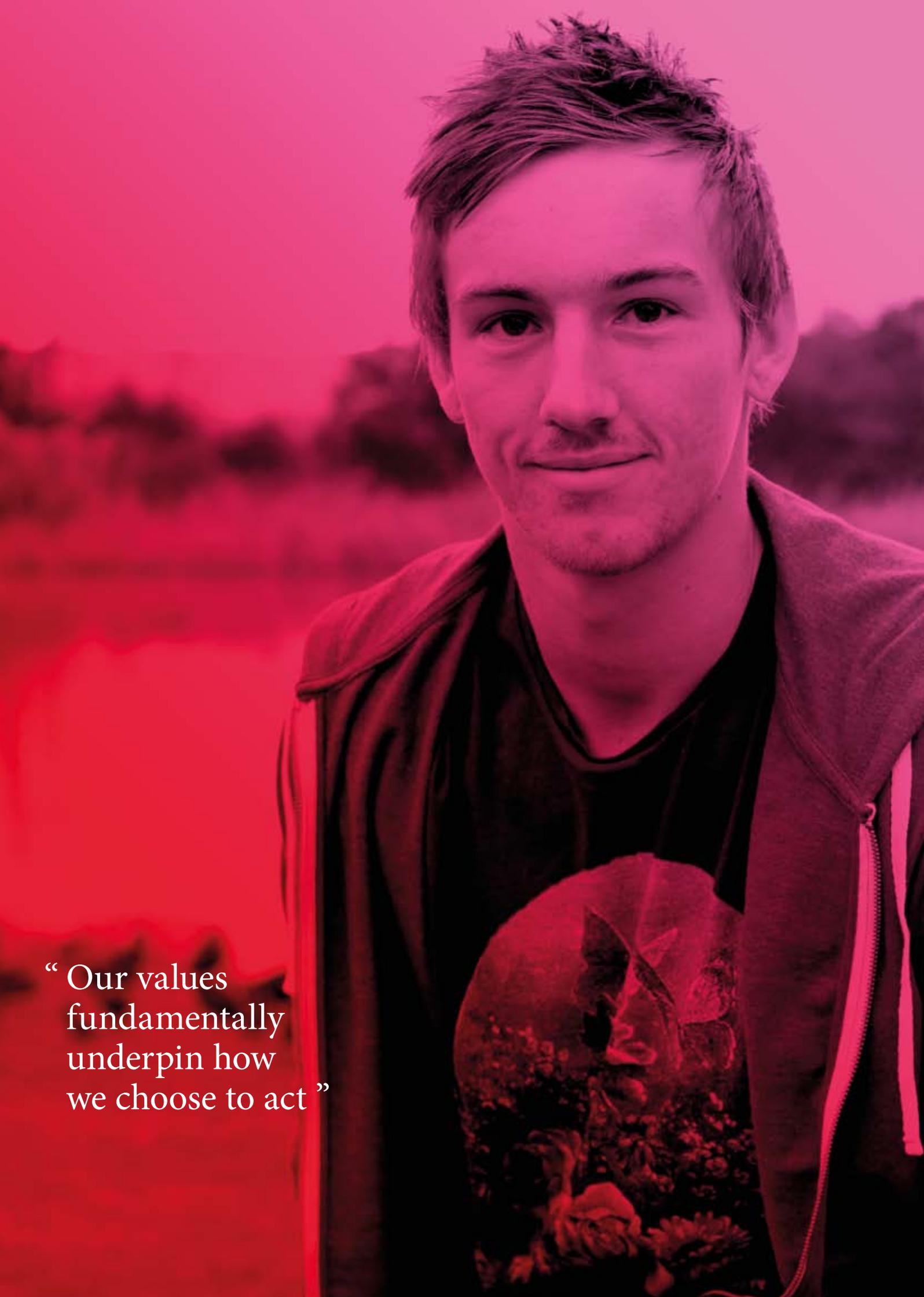
<sup>6</sup>Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Response to the Nationally Consistent Approach to Leave Care Planning 19 August 2011

## HOW OUR VALUES GUIDE OUR LEAVING CARE SUPPORT WORK

Our values fundamentally underpin how we choose to act. LWB's values guide how LWB will perform leaving care support work. Our actions that embody the LWB values are summarised in the table, and further described below.

### Actions that embody the LWB values

1. Partner with the young person and engage them as someone who wants to be in control of their own life
2. Work to empower the young person with a sense of hopefulness and focus on their strengths
3. Work hard at developing the quality and sustainability of relationships the young person has formed – there needs to be at least one good adult in the young person's life
4. Proactively address known and researched needs of young people leaving care
5. Effectively operate in local communities – services will be closely networked into a wide range of local services that young people need
6. Search for scalable models and work creatively to offer a continuum of intensity of services and connections for the young person.



“ Our values  
fundamentally  
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# THE LWB VALUES

Our newly revised LWB values apply to all that we do in the leaving care space. They are:



**WE BUILD  
RELATIONSHIPS**



**WE ARE  
IMAGINATIVE**



**WE ARE  
RESPECTFUL**



**WE ARE  
RESPONSIVE**



**WE ARE  
COURAGEOUS**

The LWB 'Pillars of Practice' Framework builds on these values to articulate a set of actions that we undertake to create positive results for clients. These are: listening to our clients; acknowledging cultural sensitivity; planning around the individual; supervising our staff effectively, working as a team, and choosing models of intervention that have been proven to work (see Appendix 2)



**PARTNER WITH THE YOUNG PERSON AND ENGAGE THEM AS SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BE IN CONTROL OF THEIR OWN LIFE**

Partnering with each young person in our care is important, as they have the right and we have the responsibility to support them to choose their goals and aspirations, and to plan for and take the right steps aimed at achieving their goals. We aim to partner with the young person and engage them as someone that wants to be in control of their own life.

We must ensure their voice is heard at every step of the way on their journey from care to independence.

**WORK TO EMPOWER THE YOUNG PERSON WITH A SENSE OF HOPEFULNESS, AND FOCUS ON THEIR STRENGTHS**

Work to empower the young person with a sense of hopefulness that they can achieve their goals through focusing on their strengths, teaching problem solving skills, and building up their resilience and sense of self-worth.

We aim to make a difference, drawing on therapeutic support approaches, and helping young people to identify their many strengths and insights, and to help them build on these to achieve a positive future.

**WORK HARD AT DEVELOPING THE QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF RELATIONSHIPS THE YOUNG PERSON HAS FORMED**

Many young people have experienced multiple placements and shifting around between schools and neighbourhoods, often resulting in broken or transient relationships.

The research shows the importance of relationships, with wellbeing of young people in care vastly improved where they have at least one, ongoing relationship with an adult whom they can count on<sup>7</sup>.

Consequently we will aim to support each young person to develop good and sustainable relationships, starting with the identification of people whom they know or have known. Where no supports are identified, we will assist them to identify other possible relationships that they could benefit from.

“ We aim to partner with the young person and engage them as someone that wants to be in control of their own life ”

<sup>7</sup>My World Survey National Study of Youth Mental Health Ireland

<sup>8</sup>National Framework implementation Working Group Transitioning from OOHC to independence: a national consistent approach to planning



### **PROACTIVELY ADDRESS KNOWN AND RESEARCHED NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE**

The research (referred to in an earlier section of this paper) has highlighted the areas of need for care leavers to be able to successfully transition to adulthood. They fall within the following seven domains:

- Housing
- Employment
- Education and training
- Financial security
- Social relationships and support networks
- Health
- Life skills<sup>8</sup>

Therefore our planning and practice needs to ensure goals are set and the young person's skills and competencies strengthened in these areas.

'Choosing models that work' in order to get better results is one of the new pillars of practice that we are striving to achieve. Our behaviours that make this real for our clients will be to:

- Provide options and models that are proven to work
- Try a different model if the results aren't good enough
- Be open to change when we can see a better way to do things
- Look to peers to see what they are doing that is new and working<sup>9</sup>

### **EFFECTIVELY OPERATE IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES – SERVICES WILL BE CLOSELY NETWORKED INTO A WIDE RANGE OF LOCAL SERVICES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED**

Planning for where the young person intends to reside must include a thorough identification of services and supports that are available, and how they can be accessed. This is a great opportunity to engage practically with each young person to assess their needs, and what is on offer in their preferred community. Services and supports to help them to achieve results in all of the aforementioned domains, satisfying the core needs of care leavers.

But just knowing about helpful community resources and services isn't sufficient. Meaningful connections need to be made. Therefore, assistance to engage with and participate in local service networks and to build contacts and supportive relationships is particularly necessary during the transition and aftercare – independence phases of leaving care.

### **SEARCH FOR SCALABLE MODELS AND WORK CREATIVELY TO OFFER A CONTINUUM OF INTENSITY OF SERVICES AND CONNECTIONS FOR THE YOUNG PERSON**

The specific needs of each young person will be different, our funding level will vary depending on which State/Territory we provide the service in, and also on the availability of other leaving care services and supports in the community in which we are operating.

We must search for and be able to introduce 'scalable' service delivery models that always allows us to work creatively and effectively with each young person whatever their needs and wherever they live, and be able to offer a continuum of intensity of services and connections for each young person, consistent with their individual need.

<sup>8</sup>See *Pillars of Practice Framework* at Appendix 2.

# CREATING RESULTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

As we put our values into practice, we should focus on supporting the following outcomes in our work with young people leaving care.

A LWB leaving care program will seek to ensure four key areas of attainment for every young person. These are:

1. Build a young person's resilience
2. Secure at least one positive attachment for each young person
3. Help them develop a secure base and access to supports such as extended family, and
4. Nurture positive education/employment and community involvement for each young person.

## 1. BUILDING RESILIENCE

Resilience is about overcoming the odds. Stein<sup>10</sup> says that resilience is that quality that enables some young people to find fulfillment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, the problems or adversity they may have undergone or the pressures they may experience. It's about overcoming the odds, coping and recovery.

According to Gilligan<sup>11</sup> (2003, p.2) resilience is not so much a fixed trait in a person, but a quality which may be displayed when sufficient support of the right kind help the person to withstand the impact of adversity. He goes on to say that resilience in children and young people grow out of a strong sense of belonging, good self-esteem, and out of a sense of self efficacy – being able to achieve things and make a difference.

Therefore, our LWB leaving care program needs to take account of this by having a focus on building and supporting resilience through individual planning and by providing support that gives them security, and builds their abilities and problem solving skills so as they can develop an increased sense of self-worth and well-being.

Strategies we can use to identify opportunities and build the reliance of young people include:

- Using Strengths based approaches
- Actively moving control to the young person
- Valuing naturally occurring supports and resources
- Responding to what young people want, taking account of their age and stage of development as well as their expressed preference
- Maximising young people's input to our leaving care program to ensure it meets their needs, and
- Providing opportunities for young people to help others (as this is also known to promote a sense of personal wellbeing)

We need to develop a strong and trusting relationship with the young person if we are to be able to help them explore and build their resilience, as well as provide the support to achieve the other three key elements for a successful transition from care.

In order to do this, we should consider drawing on a variety of approaches to more effectively partner with young people and build on their strengths. The following techniques/approaches can facilitate good rapport and strengths-based support:

- Motivational interviewing
- Life coaching
- Group conferencing
- Ensuring a youth orientated delivery style
- Life story, life book
- Encouraging young people accessing our service to think about how they might in turn assist others

<sup>10</sup>Resilience and young people leaving care, Mike Stein, 2005, p.1

<sup>11</sup>Promoting Children's Resilience – Some Reflections, Robbie Gilligan, 2003, p.2

## 2. SECURING AT LEAST ONE POSITIVE ATTACHMENT

One of the critical success factors to assist young people to make the transition to independence is the quality and sustainability of relationships formed while in care. At least one secure attachment with a good, committed adult is required. This is a reliable person who cares about the young person and is prepared to be involved with them. It is not necessarily someone they have lived with.

To facilitate a young person having at least one secure attachment, our leaving care services need to:

- Assess the capacity of Carers – from the outset, the possibility of long term continuity of relationships – beyond the statutory care leaving age – needs to have been discussed and actively considered. In our Carer recruitment and training we should canvass this with all applicants and gauge their understanding and willingness to form an ongoing relationship with young people they will look after and/or play an active role in a young person's transition to independence.

- Provide professional supervision – Good supervision will factor in long term needs and issues of the young people we care for. We need to ensure that our case workers are always planning ahead to when young people will be leaving care and helping them to build in opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development, as well as identifying and maintaining healthy, long-term relationships.
- Explore if there is somebody out there already – we need to work directly with the young person to help them identify and reflect on their relationships, using a range of engagement tools such as an ecomap. This can help build the young person's insight and awareness, and allows the case worker to identify possible relationships for building and supporting.

It is important to identify somebody in the young person's past, current network or neighbourhood on which to build a strong connection. Gilligan<sup>12</sup> argues that this is particularly important as professionals are often too focused on seeing 'deficits, pathology, failure, inadequacy' rather than tapping in to the 'strengths and resources of a young person, and their social context' where, he argues, they have a better chance of mobilising the help they need.

## 3. A SECURE BASE WITH ACCESS TO FAMILY AND SUPPORTS

A secure base incorporates a number of elements including housing, family and friends.

To facilitate a young person having secure and sustainable housing and support after they have left care, it is vitally important that this area is given early attention, and available options explored.

Government housing providers, supported accommodation options, transitional houses options should be explored.

Also, are there relatives or friends that the young person could explore moving to live with? Might there be the possibility of an ongoing board arrangement with their current Carer, or is there a property that LWB has that can be used for transitional housing? These options need to be methodically explored, and the young person's preference supported.

As well as accommodation, and whether or not they might plan to live with family or friends, part of building a secure base is to make or strengthen family and friendship connections. In order to do this, we need to:

- Support the young person to explore their own feelings and to better understand their family relationships
- Help them to work on strengthening their connection with family, siblings and/or extended family, utilising family therapy or other helping modalities as appropriate
- Assist them to review their past and current people connections and associations (using tools such as eco-mapping) to look for opportunities to build on.

<sup>12</sup>Promoting Children's Resilience – Some Reflections, Robbie Gilligan, 2003, p.14

- Assist the young person to identify and develop interests that will extend their friendship networks
- Capitalise on cultural support planning that has occurred with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island young people
- Explore mentoring opportunities for the young person, through either accessing a community service or attracting mentors to work with us.
- Develop a safety plan, where people are nominated as their safety person whom they can turn to

When exploring family ties, a useful way to think about working with young people in care – particularly those that are older and who may have had range of negative experiences with family – is to consider which of the three ‘R’s’ are we aiming to achieve with the young person:

- **Repairing** – What can be done to repair relationships? This may be as tentative as helping the party’s spend an enjoyable couple of hours in each other’s company.
- **Resolution** – Can a reasonable resolution of family conflict be achieved? This would potentially involve a higher level of skilled intervention that could help the parties resolve feelings of loss, abandonment and shame. It is important to realise that resolution may mean the termination of relationship in certain situations.
- **Reunification** – Can we achieve a physical reunion of the family?

#### 4. POSITIVE EDUCATION/ EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Education should be an enriching and rewarding experience, building work opportunity and fostering a life time of diverse interests to explore.

Transition to independence requires the pursuit of academic and vocational goals, as well as proficiency in those day to day life skills, such as budgeting, transport, shopping, cooking and cleaning, as well as knowing how to find out about and to access health, social and recreational services and supports available in the community.

To facilitate stronger education and training involvement, we should consider:

- Active cooperation with schools – including Carer involvement
- Volunteers from University, etc supporting transitioning youth to improve their education
- Connections with existing groups that will tutor young people
- Partnerships with TAFEs to ensure specialised programming that employs methods of teaching that can reach young people who have experienced trauma
- Use of resources such as ‘Calmer Classrooms’ to improve the learning opportunities for this cohort
- Inclusion of Recreation/Sports and Arts/Cultural activities to unlock natural talents and creative interests, while also fostering richer and more positive engagement with education.

Other ways his can be strengthened include:

- Engaging the support of ‘buddies’ who have previously been in OOHC, and who can provide positive peer-based support and leadership, with the aid of support networks like the CREATE Foundation
- Teaching awareness and skills in social media and use of the internet to find information they need
- Ensuring that the young person’s life skills mastery is assessed, and that plans are fully mapped out for them to achieve proficiency in the key essential areas of managing money, shopping, travelling, cooking and household management, as well as ensuring they gain personal and relationship skills that will build their identity and their social interaction capabilities.

<sup>10</sup>Resilience and young people leaving care, Mike Stein, 2005, p.1

<sup>11</sup>Promoting Children’s Resilience – Some Reflections, Robbie Gilligan, 2003, p.2

<sup>12</sup>Promoting Children’s Resilience – Some Reflections, Robbie Gilligan, 2003, p.14

# SERVICE MODEL ELEMENTS

As well as supporting young people to individually pursue desirable outcomes (as outlined in the previous section), LWB needs to have a service approach that can adapt the elements of the service model to the location, funding, scale and intensity of service need and the services network context in which we are delivering leaving care services.

Some of the ways we can effectively use our expertise and resources are discussed in this section.

## **SUCCESSFULLY PARTNERING TO ACHIEVE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE**

Other relevant services within LWB, such as foster care and their support workers – as well as departmental case workers – need to work in partnership to ensure the success of an out of home care placement, and continue working together to plan and transition a young person to independence.

In whichever State or Territory we operate the service, we aim to continue a successful and stable foster placement during the transition phase, adapting the funding approach as appropriate. Assisting the young person and the foster family to identify and connect with other transitional and after care services will then set the young person up for a gradual transition to full independence as they mature during their twenties, as their age peers do.

And where continuing foster care isn't an option, or the young person is transitioning from other forms of care, we know from the research is that young people with strong connections

to their carer/s do well. Young people need continuity of people they trust in their lives, and so all local out of home care and leaving care services need to work together to link and integrate the leaving care experience for the young people.

## **OFFERING TIME LIMITED INTERVENTION AIMED AT ADDRESSING SPECIFIC PROBLEMS**

Especially where the scale of our leaving care service is quite small, we will draw in other relevant community services and use our resources to solve particular needs that complement (rather than duplicate or replace) what the other services provide. Our focus may be effectively connecting the young person in our care with needed community services, or on particular, time-limited support, such as resolving housing, or providing time limited family intervention or other practical assistance.

Also, where our leaving care service is small and time limited we sure ensure a gradual tapering off of our role as the young person gains familiarity and confidence with receiving the support of other providers.

## **OFFERING A RANGE OF INTENSITY OPTIONS**

LWB's larger-scale NSW and Queensland out of home care service systems have enabled LWB to build expertise and diverse solutions to meet client needs. This ranges from our YAP style intervention through to telephone advice/referral and information.

As a large organisation we can tap this expertise to assist to provide advice and support wherever it is needed, and with the potential for larger services to 'buddy' with smaller or new services to help them build service effectiveness or solve arising issues. Ways this can happen includes:

- Central contact for advice/information about accessible resources
- drop in
- case support online/telephone
- support groups
- brokerage assistance
- peer mentoring networks

## **MINIMISING NUMBERS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED/CHANGES AND FRAGMENTATION OF RELATIONSHIPS**

Wherever the various state systems to support young people leaving care and after care remains fragmented, continuity of support people in young people's lives needs to be maximised.

LWB will search for ways to minimise or reduce these multiple people changes. An example of positive solutions to this issues is the "Staying Put" program where a young person's former Carers continue to act as the parental anchor after the young person has left their care. This approach should be replicated wherever possible for those young people unable to continue with stable Carers after they leave care.

# CONCLUSION

As previously stated, LWB recognises the importance of successful transition to adulthood, and how difficult this step is for many young people in our care. While extra government funding would be desirable, we must work and create opportunities with what we already have, so that our clients are prepared well to leave care and live life well as an adult. As an organisation we wish to be part of the solution – we want to put our knowledge of what success looks like (as outlined in this paper) into practice as we engage with and support our young people to transition successfully to live a full and independent life.

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# APPENDIX 1

## TRANSITIONING FROM OUT-OF-HOME CARE TO INDEPENDENCE: A NATIONALLY CONSISTENT APPROACH TO PLANNING

### CORE ELEMENTS OF PLANNING INCLUDED IN ALL PHASES

Participants:	Planning and support processes:	Life domains:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>young person:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is central</li> <li>• is empowered to be an active and informed participant:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– has the opportunity to be involved in planning such as identifying those people they would like included; setting goals; identifying actions, responsibilities and timeframes; and giving input into how the planning and review processes could occur</li> </ul> </li> <li>• is guided by a user friendly transition from care plan that covers aspects such as goals, actions, responsibilities and time frames</li> <li>• has access to practical and emotional support throughout the transition process</li> <li>• is supported to reconnect with/or establish effective relationships with family, where necessary and appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>workers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the young person has an allocated caseworker who facilitates the young person's participation and engagement in the planning process and their access to supports during the transition</li> <li>• a primary worker with whom the young person has a positive relationship is available to provide support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>carers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are involved, where appropriate, and support the young person's engagement and participation in the planning process</li> <li>• are informed participants in the transition process</li> <li>• are supported, so that they can effectively support the young person</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>family members:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the young person's family is supported to work towards safe and effective reconnections, and to be involved in transition planning, where possible, appropriate and desirable. Support is provided to maintain existing connections.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>significant others and community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are supported to be involved in the planning process, where appropriate and desirable</li> <li>• relationships are supported and fostered to encourage broader support and social networks.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>other agencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are made known to the young person who is assisted to constructively engage with specialist and/or mainstream services, appropriate to their identified needs.</li> <li>• all agencies work together in a coordinated way to support the young person to access an appropriate and integrated service response with the consent of the young person.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is comprehensive and based on individual needs</li> <li>• considers needs against life domains</li> <li>• incorporates young person's views and perspectives</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is tailored to individual needs</li> <li>• is responsive to cultural backgrounds and needs</li> <li>• is responsive to changing circumstances: flexible, provides a safety net and includes contingencies that are based on assessment of need</li> <li>• directly involves the young person where possible</li> <li>• supports regular review of the transition from care plan and updates of the plan as required.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>support processes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• goals of the plan are monitored and reviewed by a key person/s</li> <li>• roles and responsibilities are clearly identified to ensure that the planning includes all relevant participants and facilitates their involvement</li> <li>• the young person is supported to increasingly take responsibility for progress towards goals</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Housing/accommodation</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Health (physical, emotional (including self-esteem), mental, sexual and dental)</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Education and training, employment or other suitable activity</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Financial security</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Social relationships and support networks</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Life (and after care) skills</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Identity and culture</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Legal matters</b></li> </ul>

Focus through Preparation phase	Focus through Transition phase	Focus through After Care phase
<p>Holistic baseline assessment identifies the young person's strengths and areas requiring development, as well as possible ongoing needs. Develop clear and documented goals, actions, responsibilities and timeframes for identified needs and life domains. Young person participates in the planning process.</p>	<p>Review progress with young person having greater responsibility for the planning process.</p>	<p>Review progress.</p>
<p><b>Focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; stability of care arrangements</li> <li>&gt; health care needs – including therapeutic support needs and parenting information and supports, where applicable</li> <li>&gt; engagement in education, training, employment or other suitable activity</li> <li>&gt; relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify positive relationships in the young person's family of origin and significant others</li> <li>• family members – reconnections are facilitated where appropriate and effective relationships are re-established</li> <li>• explore, develop or consolidate relationships with significant others. This may be through a variety of means such as face to face contact, telephone email, or online social networking, with consideration given to the safety of the young person</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; core life skills development including managing money, meal preparation, preparing for employment, transport, accessing health services, legal services and advocacy, social and relationship skills</li> <li>&gt; personal and other documents – for identification, independent living and citizenship (where relevant). Practical support is provided to understand the information and secure it in safe and accessible storage</li> <li>&gt; cultural needs and connections</li> <li>&gt; special needs – in relation to risks, vulnerabilities or disengagement are acknowledged and relevant agencies are engaged, for example, Disability Services, Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug providers.</li> <li>&gt; services – are identified, clear information is provided and engagement is facilitated</li> </ul> <p><b>Key actions – introduce the concept and idea of the young person beginning to plan for their life as an adult, including discussions about changing relationships</b></p> <p><b>For young people with special needs, early referrals and discussions with specialist support services</b></p> <p><b>Clarify with the young person who is responsible, with them, for their preparation and planning. Consider strategies for example, mentoring.</b></p>	<p><b>Focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; securing safe, affordable and appropriate accommodation and living arrangements after the order expires</li> <li>&gt; health care needs that require ongoing attention into adulthood are attended to</li> <li>&gt; consolidate engagement in education, training, employment or other suitable activity</li> <li>&gt; financial support – facilitate access to income support and other financial entitlements such as: TILA, Youth Allowance, Rent Assistance, and Brokerage (where available)</li> <li>&gt; identity and culture – supporting the young person with their emerging independent identity</li> <li>&gt; relationships – continue and consolidate with significant others (includes mentoring where appropriate) and/or family members</li> <li>&gt; carers – support needs are addressed to enable them to assist the young person in their care through the transition</li> <li>&gt; independent community engagement and connections</li> <li>&gt; core life skills are further developed and consolidated</li> <li>&gt; personal and household items are obtained</li> <li>&gt; other agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disclosure of care leaver status is discussed and skills developed to support safe disclosure for those who choose</li> <li>• individual vulnerabilities are raised with relevant service providers and agencies (with the young person's consent)</li> <li>• young person is aware of post care support and other services and how to contact them</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Key actions – consolidate efforts from Phase 1 supported by ongoing assessment of needs. Confirm support of relevant services.</b></p>	<p><b>Focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; accommodation – support to access or retain suitable accommodation</li> <li>&gt; relationships important to the young person are supported or mediated</li> <li>&gt; after care needs – assessed against relevant life domains. Relevant information is provided. Where required and desired by the young person; access to relevant services and/or supports is facilitated, including referrals</li> <li>&gt; other agencies – relevant services are engaged to continue support after the young person has left out-of-home care. Focus is on clear goals identified by the young person. Services may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specialist and/or mainstream including financial support services and payments</li> <li>• targeted, intensive, specialised support and/or counselling specific to pre – or in-care experiences</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Key actions – maintain and build on progress from Phases 1 and 2 based on individual needs and desire for ongoing assistance.</b></p> <p><b>Empower the young person to achieve ongoing independence</b></p>

(Description of the table: Table 1 includes the three core elements of the planning process for the transition from out-of-home care to independence, which are participants to be involved, the planning and support processes and the life domains to be addressed. The bottom half of the table outlines the particular focus and the key actions to be considered in each of the three phases, noting that the process is a continuum, rather than discrete phases.)

# APPENDIX 2

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS: PILLARS OF PRACTICE FRAMEWORK						
Desired Outcome	Clients Live Life to the Full – and choose what’s right for them					
OUR PILLARS – HOW WE CREATE RESULTS FOR CLIENTS	<b>LISTEN TO OUR CLIENTS</b> and demonstrate that they are being heard	<b>ACKNOWLEDGE CULTURE</b> and remove the barriers to participation	<b>PLAN AROUND THE INDIVIDUAL</b> and create a plan that expresses their goals and aspirations	<b>SUPERVISE OUR STAFF WELL</b> have a better understanding of performance, capacity and outcomes achieved	<b>WORK AS A TEAM</b> to multiply our energy and achieve more for our clients	<b>CHOOSE THE MODEL THAT WORKS</b> and get better results
OUR VALUES – AND WHAT WE STAND FOR	 <b>WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS</b>	 <b>WE ARE IMAGINATIVE</b>	 <b>WE ARE RESPECTFUL</b>	 <b>WE ARE RESPONSIVE</b>	 <b>WE ARE COURAGEOUS</b>	
OUR PURPOSE	TO PARTNER WITH PEOPLE AND CHANGE LIVES FOR THE BETTER					

## LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS: PILLARS OF PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Our Goal	Clients Live Life to the Full – and choose what’s right for them					
<b>OUR BEHAVIOURS THAT MAKE OUR PILLARS REAL FOR CLIENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open and invite feedback</li> <li>• Listen carefully and check that you have understood them</li> <li>• Find out what clients think and feel about what we are doing</li> <li>• Listen to words, observe behaviour</li> <li>• Tell clients what we have changed based on their input</li> <li>• Use warm and friendly language and show kindness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be respectful to all people at all times</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to genuinely engage with and listen to people with lived experience</li> <li>• Be authentic in all interactions</li> <li>• Be prepared to change how we do things to remove any barriers to involvement</li> <li>• Do not make assumptions about how things should be done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge that the client is expert in their own life</li> <li>• Speak up for our client’s interests without fear</li> <li>• Strive to help a client achieve goals</li> <li>• Think ‘nothing is too hard, impossible or too bizarre’</li> <li>• Make your planning with relevance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire, engage and support team members</li> <li>• Foster the sense that they can change people’s lives</li> <li>• Do the right not the easy thing</li> <li>• Be open to new ideas and be prepared to fail and learn</li> <li>• Keep accurate records of what we do and share information regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge and congratulate others on doing well</li> <li>• Invite team members to provide feedback on how we do things</li> <li>• Develop shared objectives</li> <li>• Communicate regularly and openly</li> <li>• Create forums where staff can offer news ideas</li> <li>• Rewards new ideas that make a real difference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide options and models that are proven to work</li> <li>• Try a different model if the results aren’t good enough</li> <li>• Be open to change when you see a better way to do things</li> <li>• Evaluate what you are doing regularly</li> <li>• Look to peers to see what they are doing that’s new</li> </ul>
<b>OUR PILLARS – HOW WE CREATE RESULTS FOR CLIENTS</b>	<b>LISTEN TO OUR CLIENTS</b> and demonstrate that they are being heard	<b>ACKNOWLEDGE CULTURE</b> and remove the barriers to participation	<b>PLAN AROUND THE INDIVIDUAL</b> and create a plan that expresses their goals and aspirations	<b>SUPERVISE OUR STAFF WELL</b> have a better understanding of performance, capacity and outcomes achieved	<b>WORK AS A TEAM</b> to multiply our energy and achieve more for our clients	<b>CHOOSE THE MODEL THAT WORKS</b> and get better results
<b>OUR VALUES – AND WHAT WE STAND FOR</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>WE ARE IMAGINATIVE</b></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>WE ARE RESPECTFUL</b></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>WE ARE RESPONSIVE</b></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>WE ARE COURAGEOUS</b></p> </div> </div>					
<b>FOUNDATION POLICIES</b>	Organisation structure, pay & conditions, capability framework, risk management, quality systems, induction frameworks etc.					
<b>OUR PURPOSE</b>	<b>TO PARTNER WITH PEOPLE AND CHANGE LIVES FOR THE BETTER</b>					

**WE  
LIFE  
VE**



**WE  
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS  
VE**

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Caring for Children,  
Young People and Families